

## Our FoodIntegrity work package 'Check X' takes a trip to Spain

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Before we attended the 4th Organic Processing Conference in Seville, we met with some very interesting stakeholders and a fellow project participant for our work package in the FoodIntegrity ("Ensuring the Integrity of the European Food Chain" funded by the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme) project. Southern Spain gave us ample opportunity to better understand some of Spain's major exports: olive oil and organic vegetables and fruit. Starting with olive oil, we had the opportunity to meet with one of the other participants of the FoodIntegrity consortium, the Instituto de la Grasa of the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas. The Instituto de la Grasa focuses on chemical and biochemical research of fats. Here, we got a crash course in all things scientific related to olive oil. We learned about the rigorous testing that takes place along the supply chain, 22 possible different tests in total. One of the most interesting lessons for us was to better understand how olives, and then olive oil, in all of its different qualities, moves along the supply chain. With such a strong emphasis on extra virgin olive oil, we can forget about the other olive oil quality types and the role they play in the supply chain. From Spain, a significant amount of Spanish olive oil is exported to Italy for bottling, which presents an interesting opportunity to monitor the volumes of olive oil based on origin and quality type, so that consumers can be sure that when they buy extra virgin olive oil from Italy, that it is indeed extra virgin olive oil made from olives grown in Italy.

Hitting the road, we travelled to a stakeholder in the olive oil supply chain to understand how it deals with supply chain risk. From this organisation, we learned about the extensive measures it takes to minimise risk in its supply chain, including its use of a thorough traceability system. We also learned about the extensive quality controls it employs to deliver a high-quality product and the steps the Spanish government has taken to protect this export oriented industry from potential problems. In understanding how such an organisation functions, it could be interesting to map out such an organisation's supply chain beyond the already rigorous traceability system in use.

Switching from olive oil to organic fruits and vegetables, we also had the pleasure of seeing one organisation's rigorous system to minimise supply chain risk. Talking through the challenges of this supply chain, which as a fresh product does not undergo processing, means that there are a different set of issues than with olive oil. Here, we talked about the challenges of ensuring the organic integrity of the product received from suppliers. These challenges included of course the issue of pesticide residues, but also ensuring that suppliers are certified and adhere to a larger list of criteria to continue to be able to supply their product. This was again an interesting opportunity to think about mapping out suppliers back to the producer level.

All in all, it was a great learning experience and we want to wholeheartedly thank those organisations who took the time out of their busy schedules to meet with us. If you are also interested in sharing your insights with us about supply chain risks, please do not hesitate to contact our FoodIntegrity project manager, [Nina Kuljian](#).

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