Question 2 - Score the risk of emerging microbiological issues within specific food groups that could arise following drought?

In this guide

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Like flooding, the ACMSF participants agreed that VTEC/ STEC contamination of crops (specifically leafy greens) as well as RTE fruit and vegetables were the biggest risk caused by drought (scoring 10 and 9 respectively). The participants agreed that drought will lead to marginal water sources, leading to poor hygiene practices on farms due to improper disinfection or recycling of contaminated water.

The participants also agreed that *Listeria* was a risk to crops and RTE fruit and vegetable sectors during drought. During individual group discussions *Listeria* in crops and RTE fruits and vegetables were assigned different scores (8 or below).

However, a consensus was reached during the all-group discussion, and they scored 8 and 7, respectively. The key causes driving the increased risk include poor hygiene practices and increased import levels needed to meet demand if domestic food production was to be negatively affected. The participants agreed that increasing import may put a strain on infrastructure, leading to breakdowns in the cold chain.

After scoring the risks 10-7, the groups had different opinions on which emerging microbiological issues, and the impacted food sector should be assigned the scores 6-1. Moreover, some groups also struggled to assign a score (as previously described) and instead identified food sectors and emerging microbiological issues that may occur during drought.

Groups identified VTEC/STEC, *Salmonella* and *Listeria* in raw milk and raw milk cheeses as being a risk during drought. The key causes were a lack of hygiene practices at all industry levels and the potential of stressed animals becoming more prone to infection.

All groups identified *Campylobacter* and *Salmonella* in poultry as being an increased risk following drought (variable scoring across groups). It was also largely agreed that the beef sector would also be affected by drought as *Salmonella* and VTEC/STEC may cause emerging issues. The participants agreed that drought will lead to stressed animals with increased susceptibility to infection.

The participants agreed that fish, shellfish, UK eggs, imported eggs, dairy (including milk and cheese), and chilled foods were food sectors least likely to be affected by drought and were not highlighted as concerns for emerging microbiological issues following drought. A table summarising the consensus results can be found in Annex 3.