

# Abstract book 2026

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## 8 Biofilm-Forming Bacteria in Rabbit Meat Processing: A Research Framework for Improved Food Safety

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➤ **Abstract:** Biofilms represent a persistent challenge in food-processing environments, where bacterial attachment to surfaces and subsequent biofilm development may contribute to microbial persistence, cross-contamination, and reduced effectiveness of routine cleaning and disinfection procedures. Although rabbit meat is recognized as a nutritionally valuable food, information regarding biofilm-associated microbiological hazards throughout its processing chain remains limited.

The ongoing research project aims to investigate the occurrence and distribution of biofilm-forming bacteria in a rabbit meat processing facility in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Serbia, with particular attention to the production of fresh rabbit meat sausages. The study is designed to identify potential contamination hotspots throughout the processing chain and to evaluate their relevance for hygiene management and microbiological food safety.

Planned sampling will include food-contact surfaces, processing equipment, utensils, and final products at selected stages of production, from raw material handling and processing to packaging and storage. Microbiological analyses will include total viable counts, *Enterobacteriaceae*, *Escherichia coli*, *Salmonella* spp., *Listeria monocytogenes*, and *Staphylococcus aureus*. Selected bacterial isolates will be further evaluated for their biofilm-forming capacity. In parallel, current cleaning and disinfection practices will be assessed, while microbiological changes in fresh rabbit meat sausages during storage will also be monitored.

The project is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of potential contamination routes and biofilm-associated hotspots within the rabbit meat processing environment. The generated data should support the development of targeted hygiene and biofilm-control recommendations and contribute to improved microbiological safety of rabbit meat products. By addressing biofilms under real food-processing conditions, this research provides an applied framework for translating biofilm-related evidence into practical food-safety and hygiene management strategies.