

Investing in innovative new solutions – a Distributor’s perspective

An exclusive interview with Julia Deininger, National Sales Manager at Foodtech AG

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Michelle Müller, Marketing Assistant at NEMIS Technologies:

It is a great pleasure to talk to you today, Julia! How did you become aware of NEMIS, and what convinced you to be the very first distributor to include our Listeria rapid test in your product portfolio?

As a distributor, I am always looking for new, better solutions to existing problems for my customers. Unfortunately, the existing tests to detect *Listeria monocytogenes* have never been entirely satisfactory for me, and I had therefore been looking for alternatives. I became aware of NEMIS through a contribution article part of the Rapidmicrobiology newsletter, which immediately sparked my interest.

The advantages of your test were apparent from the start. In addition, NEMIS is a Swiss company, making it easy to establish a trusted contact relationship. I also know Prof. Dr. Lars Fieseler from my studies at ZHAW, which reassured me further in terms of who the people behind the company and this new solution are.

Where do you see the transformative potential of this solution in the context of your product range?

When it comes to pathogens, customers want a maximum level of safety. There is still a lot of potential for improvement within the current market for safe and reliable methods for pathogen detection. I believe that with NEMIS, our customers finally have a tool in their hands which they can trust. It has the potential to ignite a change of the status quo, namely, to detect dangers at an early stage through the combination of environmental monitoring and increased testing volume. In this way, food producers can significantly improve their risk management when it comes to the food processing environment, and not just the end products.

Foodtech AG is reaching around 20 customers that are using N-Light™ Listeria monocytogenes – what are the first impressions and experiences collected?

Several customers were surprised to get fewer positive results than expected. This is likely to be related to the fact that many customers do not have an accurate understanding of where *Listeria monocytogenes* is commonly found, how it lives, grows, and how it spreads in a factory environment. With increased testing, customers will learn more about how pathogens behave.

Now that customers have a tool that works reliably, we can observe the emergence of new ideas about other use cases. For example, we have many customers that are very vocal about using the test for specific applications, such as smear water in the cheese production or meat carcasses. Of course, the test must be validated before any conclusions can be drawn as each method has its limitations. However, through trial and error, you can test those limits.

Do you see a difference in customer buying behavior since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic?

This year has indeed been unusual, and I am not sure whether I have an explanation for the change in buying behavior I have witnessed. When it comes to environmental monitoring, we have received unexpected orders, for example, from banks. Also, laboratories seem to be investing a lot more in the automation than in previous years. Here I believe they are trying to reduce risks that are associated with employee absence, because that can lead to knowledge gaps when processes and information is not always documented or accessible.

Where do you see trends in the future of the food industry in terms of food safety?

Having been working for Foodtech for eleven years now, I can see a clear pattern towards an increased focus on hygiene monitoring and rapid testing. Companies are becoming more aware of their responsibilities and don't simply follow the motto of "let's just send some tests to the lab; nothing has ever happened here." Instead, I see how companies look around in the market to discover how they can protect themselves best from damage, recalls and how to keep risk control in-house. Another important topic on the rise is tracking data through Whole Genome Sequencing. Questions about what happens with the data arise and what this means from a legal perspective.



Julia Deininger is National Sales Manager at Foodtech AG and has worked there for eleven years. She is very passionate about food production and gets excited every time she has the opportunity to visit a production site. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Lifescience from ZHAW.