Strengthening national food control systems

# A quick guide to assess capacity building needs

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FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
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## ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations |
| GAP | Good Agricultural Practice |
| GHP | Good Hygienic Practice |
| GLP | Good Laboratory Practice |
| GMP | Good Manufacturing Practice |
| HACCP | Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point |
| IEC | Information, Education and Communication |
| QA | Quality Assurance |
| RIA | Regulatory Impact Assessment |
| SPS | Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures |
| SPS Agreement | Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures |
| SWOT | Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats |
| TBT Agreement | Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| WHO | World Health Organization |
| WTO | World Trade Organization |

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# FOREWORD

The safety and quality of food is a matter of concern for people everywhere. Ensuring food safety and quality is essential to achieve improvements in human health and nutrition, which is the ultimate goal of food security. This is reflected in the Declaration of the World Food Summit, convened in Rome in November 1996, which reaffirmed the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger.

Ensuring food safety and quality is also vital for economic development. Growing membership of World Trade Organization (WTO) and the need to comply with the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement) and the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT Agreement) has transformed the global context for trade in agricultural and food products. This has influenced developing countries' food exports and food markets, and demonstrated that effective food control systems are essential for countries to be able to participate in and benefit from food trade.

FAO has been working for more than forty years to improve the safety and quality of food in collaboration with national governments, the World Health Organization (WHO) and other international organizations, bilateral donor agencies, food enterprises, academic and scientific institutions, NGOs and other stakeholders. This guide has been developed by FAO, in collaboration with WHO, to enhance the results and impact of food safety capacity building activities in the future.

By providing a systematic approach to identify and prioritize needs and produce an action plan to strengthen the capacity of the food control system, this guide will improve the ability of food safety regulatory authorities to plan, implement and monitor their activities. It will also help to make the use of available resources more efficient and to raise additional resources for unmet needs.

This guide is a companion document to the FAO Guidelines to assess capacity needs in the core components of a food control system[1], and builds on and complement the FAO/WHO Guidelines for strengthening national food control systems[2], which focus on the development of an integrated regulatory system for food control founded on a transparent, risk-based approach and the involvement of all the concerned stakeholders from farm to table.

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[1] FAO. 2006. *Strengthening national food control systems: Guidelines to assess capacity building needs*. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Rome, Italy (available at: ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/009/a0601e/a0601e00.pdf ).

[2] FAO/WHO. 2003. *Assuring food safety and quality. Guidelines for strengthening national food control systems*. Food and Nutrition Paper No. 76. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Rome, Italy (available at: ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/006/y8705e/y8705e00.pdf).

# About this guide

## Purpose

Effective national food control systems are essential for food security, public health, consumer protection and international trade. However, in many countries, food control systems are unable to ensure an adequate supply of safe food for domestic consumers or to meet international sanitary and phytosanitary requirements for food exports. Capacity building is recommended in response to these concerns.

This guide has been developed to support capacity building in food control systems. It focuses on the identification of needs, which is an important initial stage in any capacity building programme (see Figure 1). It provides a fast and straightforward approach to systematically assess the capacity building needs of the entire food control system all at once. As such it complements the FAO Guidelines to assess capacity building needs (FAO, 2006) which include in-depth modules tailored to each of the core components of a national food control system. To illustrate, countries that want to get a quick sense of what is needed to strengthen their food control system should use this guide. Countries that want to focus on a particular component (e.g. food inspection, food legislation) of their food control system should apply the relevant module(s) of the FAO Guidelines to assess capacity building needs.

## Target audience

This publication is targeted at regulators in national authorities who have the primary responsibility for developing and managing food control systems. External organizations and consultants involved in activities to strengthen the capacity of food control systems will also find the guide useful.

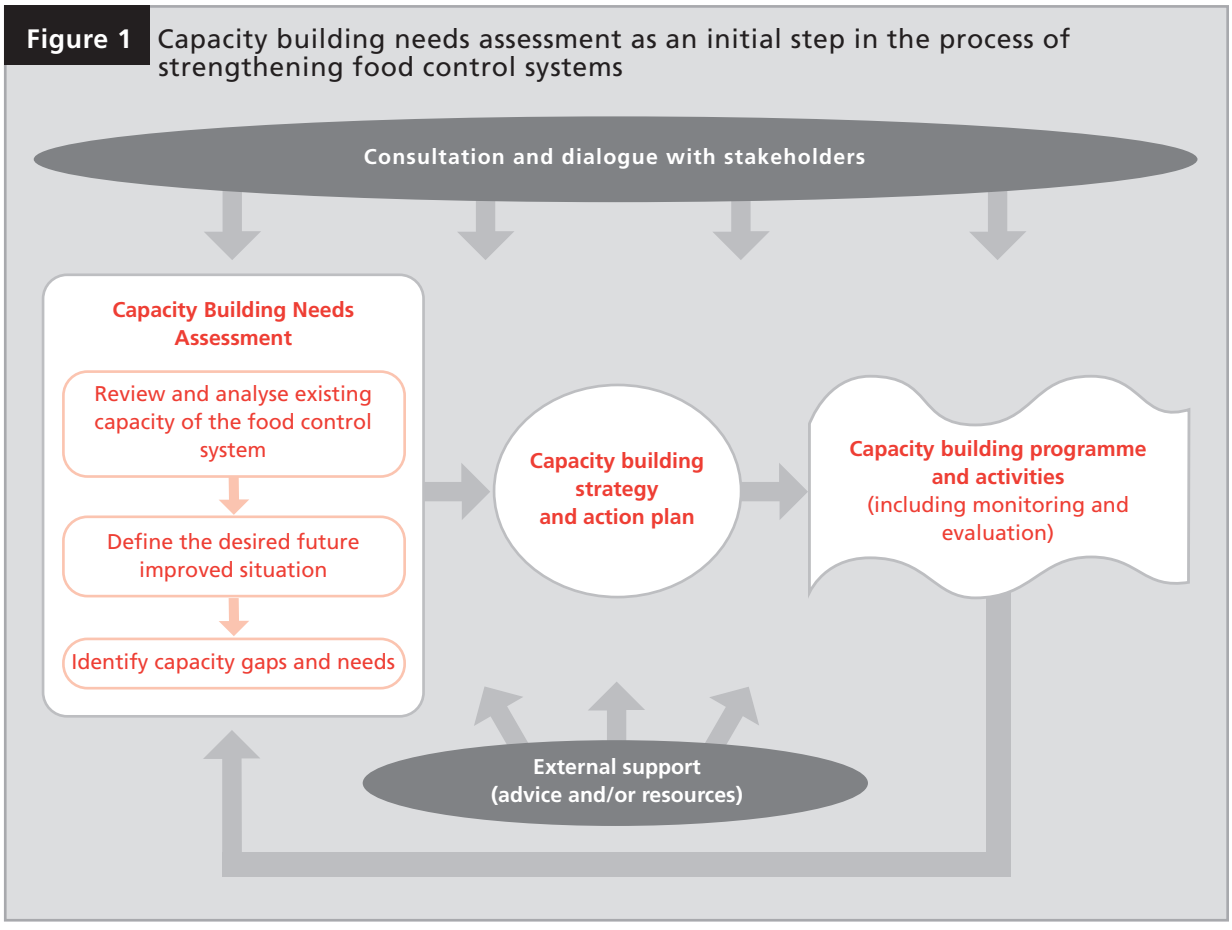
## Expected outputs and benefits

Use of this guide will enable countries to evaluate the performance of the existing food control system from the perspective of different stakeholders, generate a medium-term vision of an improved food control system, and identify capacity building needs and options to address them. This will enhance decision- and policy-making, contributing to improved results, more efficient resource allocation and greater satisfaction from stakeholders. It will also enable countries to demonstrate their commitment to safe food to trading partners and potential donors, helping to attract new sources of funding.

## How to use this guide

The way in which this guide is used will vary according to country circumstances and needs. Officials from different parts of the food control system will generally take the lead in applying the methodology. In some cases, one or more external consultants may be

**Figure 1** Capacity building needs assessment as an initial step in the process of strengthening food control systems




involved. The timeframe may also vary. For instance, the guide may be applied during a meeting that runs for one or two days or, in other cases, information collection, analysis and needs identification may be spread over weeks. Similarly, there may be different entry points and, as such, the sequencing of the steps should be adapted as needed to fit the particular setting. Whatever the case, it is recommended that stakeholders involved in the food chain from farm to table are consulted and involved as far as possible.

The guide may be used in connection with the more detailed FAO Guidelines to assess capacity building needs in each of the core components of a national food control system. For example, use of this quick guide may indicate that the priority capacity building needs are in food legislation and food control management, motivating the country to apply the relevant two modules of the aforementioned guidelines to obtain a more detailed assessment.

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# INTRODUCTION

Food control encompasses a number of activities to provide consumer protection and ensure that all foods provided for human consumption are safe, wholesome, conform to safety and quality requirements, and are honestly and accurately labelled as prescribed by law. Most countries have some sort of food control system in place to achieve this goal. Generally, such systems incorporate various components that may include food policies and legislation, food control management, diagnostic and analytical laboratories, food inspection, enforcement and certification, emergency preparedness and response, food-borne disease surveillance, and public information, education and communication.

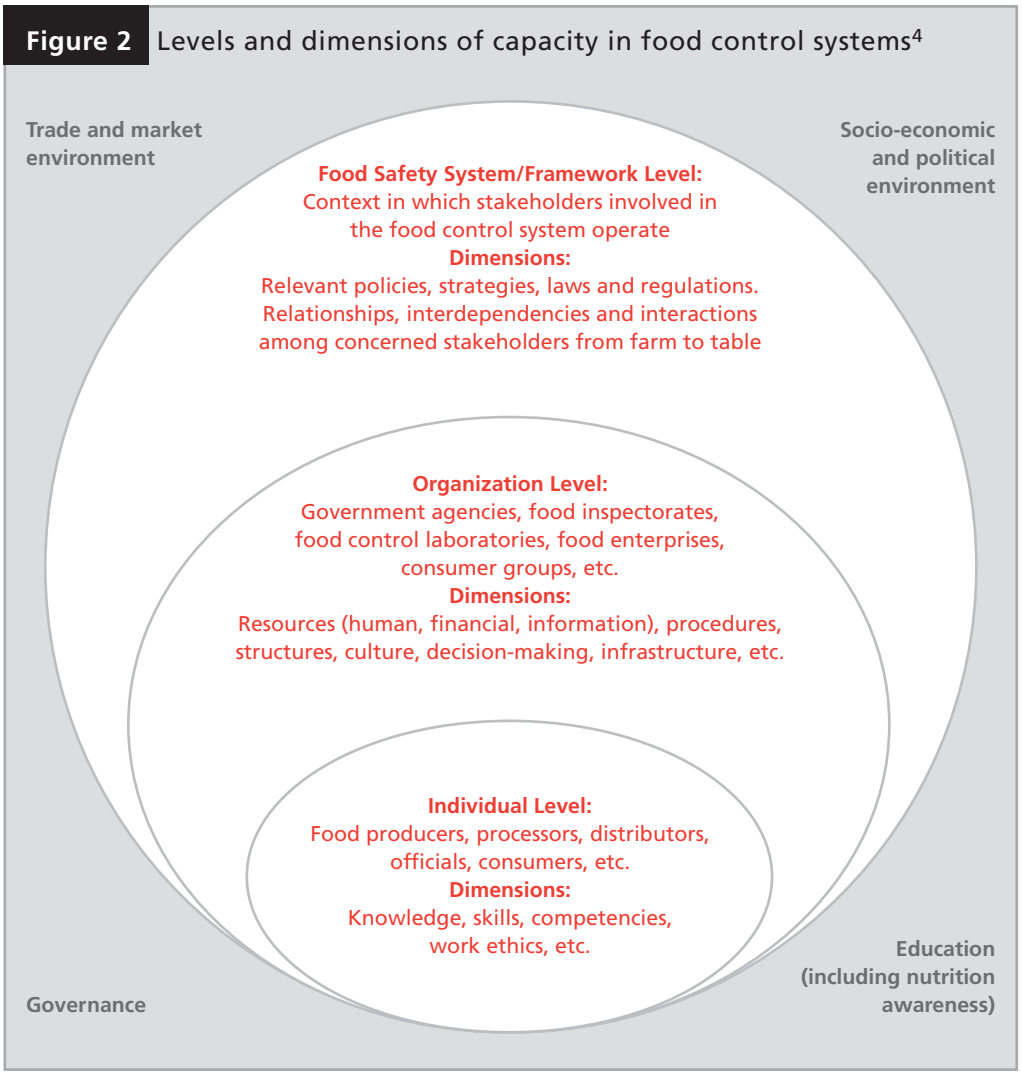
The capacity of a national food control system relates to its ability to perform appropriate functions effectively, efficiently and sustainably in order to provide safe and quality food for domestic consumption and export. Achieving food safety is a shared responsibility and different types of stakeholders – including government, the food industry, consumers and their organizations, academic and scientific institutions, etc. – contribute to this capacity as illustrated in Figure 2. In particular:

- Government agencies (at central and lower levels) are responsible for establishing and managing an enabling institutional, policy and regulatory framework for food safety, and carrying out food control activities that protect consumers from risks arising from unsafe food and fraudulent practices.
- Food producers, processors, handlers, manufacturers, traders, retailers and caterers (hereafter referred to as the food industry) have the primary responsibility for delivering safe food to consumers. This includes responsibility for developing and managing systems that ensure that the food supplied and/or served is safe and complies with official food safety requirements.
- Consumers and their organizations are responsible for ensuring that food is handled, stored and prepared in accordance with good hygienic practices (GHPs), and for requesting appropriate standards of food safety.

While these stakeholders each have distinct responsibilities and accountabilities, the multidimensional nature of food safety and quality means that their roles are highly interconnected and interdependent. Active collaboration among the stakeholders involved in the food chain from farm to table is therefore essential to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of the results achieved.

This guide recognizes the diversity of food control systems and circumstances across countries. While it accepts that the optimum type of food control system for one country may not be appropriate for another, it presumes that all food control systems should be developed and operated in accordance with certain fundamental principles including a

**Figure 2** Levels and dimensions of capacity in food control systems[4]






food chain approach, risk analysis[3], transparency and the involvement of all the concerned stakeholders from farm to table.

## Analytical framework

This guide covers the identification of capacity building needs across the food control system as a whole. Accordingly, it focuses on:

### 1. Food safety outcomes and performance from the perspective of different stakeholders

Government agencies, the food industry, consumers and other stakeholders (e.g. academia, interest groups) have diverse views about the outcomes and performance of the food control system, the results it should achieve, and the types of interventions required. Depending on their roles, interests and perceptions of food safety and related risks, they may consider food safety from different perspectives such as public health, the price of

[3] Modern approaches to food safety are based on the principle that food safety is not an absolute concept but is expressed in terms of risk to consumers' health. Policy decisions, strategies and measures taken in regard to food safety should therefore be based on risk analysis. As defined in the Procedural Manual of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (15th Edition), risk analysis is a process consisting of three components: risk assessment, risk management and risk communication. For detailed information on food safety risk analysis, see FAO/WHO. 2006. *Food safety risk analysis: A guide for national food safety authorities*. FAO Food and Nutrition Paper No. 87 (available at: ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/009/a0822e/a0822e00.pdf).

[4] Figure developed based on the concept of capacity within a systems context. UNDP. 1998. *Capacity assessment and development in a systems and strategic management context*. Technical Advisory Paper No. 3 (available at: http://magnet.undp.org/Docs/cap/CAPTECH3.htm).

food, economic productivity and sustainability of food production and distribution, consumer confidence, etc. For instance, national governments often approach food safety in terms of public health, food security, nutrition and/or trade objectives. Food producers and enterprises generally view food safety interventions in terms of their implementation costs (financial, time, expertise, etc.) and potential impact on sales and profits. This could be positive (e.g. access to new markets may result in greater profits) and/or negative (increased cost of business may result in higher consumer prices, reduced sales and lower profit margins, or even push some enterprises out of business or into the informal sector). Depending on the context, consumers also approach food safety and quality from very different perspectives. For some poor households, the price of food may be paramount. By contrast, other consumers may be most concerned about the origin of food or the processing methods used.

Considering food safety outcomes and performance from the perspective of key stakeholders is important to obtain a complete picture of how well the food control system functions, and how it meets (and should, if possible, meet) the needs of these different groups.

### 2. The country context for food safety

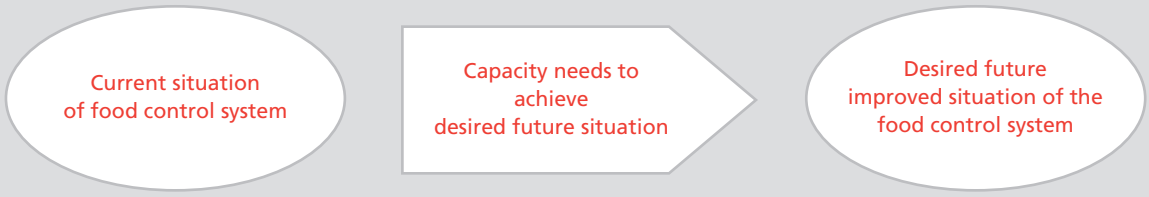
Specific circumstances and trends at the country level influence the challenges and priorities faced by food control systems. These include food intake and consumption patterns, public health status and the incidence and prevalence of food-borne diseases. The characteristics of food production, processing, handling and distribution, are very relevant. For instance, improper agricultural practices (e.g. excessive use of pesticides or veterinary drugs), poor hygiene at particular stages of the food chain, contamination of raw materials, ingredients and/or water, inadequate or improper storage facilities, lack of preventive controls in food processing and preparation, misuse of chemicals and/or the existence of naturally-occurring toxins may be of particular concern. Understanding these factors is essential to be able to identify priority areas for food control.

Population size, structure and distribution, the economic system, market differentiation and trade patterns, geographic and climatic conditions, etc. are also relevant. For instance, the issues of concern to a small island state that depends on food imports for a large share of its domestic food consumption needs will differ from those of concern to countries that produce a lot of the food consumed nationally. Countries that rely significantly on exports to generate foreign exchange earnings will have different concerns than countries with limited food exports. Within countries, the concerns of particular market segments (e.g. export market, informal sector, urban retail system, etc.) may differ depending on the health and commercial risks faced. These contextual factors shape the food control system by providing drivers of, and constraints to, change. Therefore, they should be identified and understood.

### 3. Capacity of the national food control system

The nature, sophistication of and results achieved by food control systems varies widely across countries. There may be differences in the way in which these systems are structured, operated and managed, the underlying principles on which they are based, the institutions and groups involved and the resources available. Generally, food control systems cover all the food that is produced, processed and marketed within the country. However, in some cases, there may not be a national food control system as such but rather different systems targeting different market segments. For instance, in some countries it is not unusual to find a modern and effective safety and quality assurance system that meets international requirements for food exports and has licensed enterprises

**Figure 3** Identification of capacity building needs




using good manufacturing practices (GMPs) and GHPs to produce pre-packaged foods for an emerging urban retail segment, existing alongside an informal food sector that is subject to minimal or no food safety or quality control.

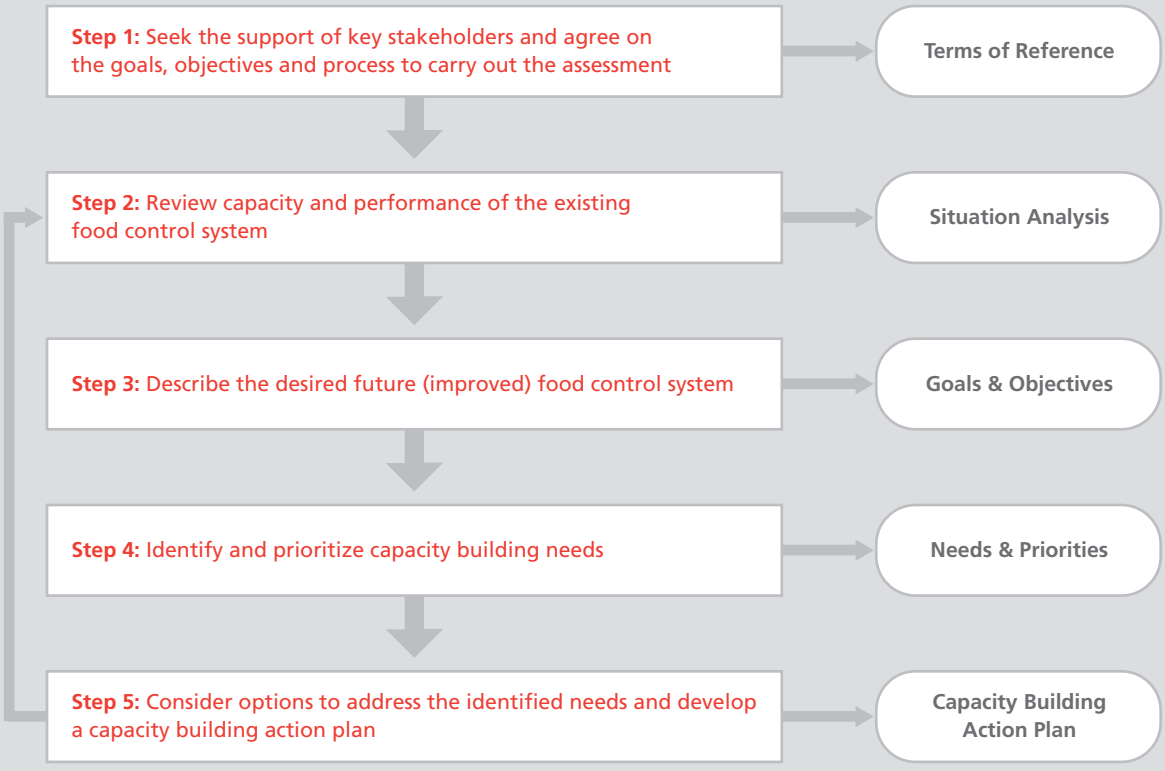
This guide will examine the capacity of the current and desired future food control system in terms of its outputs, components and characteristics. This will encompass a focus on the legal, policy and institutional framework for food control, the structure and components of the food control system(s) and the way in which it operates, its achievements and the products and services provided, the inputs/resources available and the way in which they are allocated.



### Process to assess capacity building needs

The methodology is based on a systematic process to examine critically the capacity and performance of the existing food control system, envisage the improved future system, pinpoint areas for improvement and identify options to address the identified needs. It

**Figure 4** Process to assess capacity building needs



approaches capacity building needs as gaps between "what is" (the present) and "what should be" (the desired future). Accordingly, it identifies these needs based on the differences between the current capacity and the desired future capacity as illustrated in Figure 3.

The five steps in this process, and their expected outputs, are illustrated in Figure 4. Each step incorporates a number of key questions to guide the assessment, as well as practical tips and suggestions to support those using the guide. More detailed guidance including survey questionnaires, key questions for discussions, checklists of capacity and capacity building needs, are annexed as resource materials.

The guide recognizes that the proposed assessment process is an ideal one. Time and information constraints may make it impossible to fully comply with the suggested steps or sequencing. In such circumstances, the process should be adapted as required. It accepts that circumstances and needs differ substantially across countries. In particular, countries have varying abilities to ensure food safety and quality. The goals and objectives of the future improved food control system may differ. Similarly, capacity building needs and options to address them may vary even though many of the difficulties faced may be similar.

Finally, in applying the methodology, it is essential to remember that capacity needs and priorities change over time. As such, the identification of needs - like capacity building in general - should be monitored and reviewed regularly to take account of changing circumstances and opportunities. The feedback obtained during this review will enhance the design, implementation and impact of future capacity building activities.

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# FIVE STEPS

# TO ASSESS CAPACITY BUILDING NEEDS

## STEP 1

# SEEK THE SUPPORT OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND AGREE ON THE GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND PROCESS TO CARRY OUT THE ASSESSMENT



Before starting the assessment, the very first step should be to obtain the support of the key stakeholders concerned including leaders of relevant government agencies. The endorsement of these decision-makers is vital to ensure that the needs assessment process and the capacity building action plan produced have broad sponsorship and legitimacy, as well as allocated resources. Clearly explaining why it is necessary to strengthen food control as well as the potential benefits of carrying out a capacity building needs assessment will be important in this context. Once this support has been obtained, consensus should be reached on the goals and objectives of the assessment, as well as its scope and the process to be followed. This is required to get the most out of the assessment and ensure transparency.

Defining the goals and objectives of the assessment is necessary to ensure clarity about why the assessment is being undertaken. For instance, is the purpose to produce a capacity building plan of action to help raise funds from donors? Is it to prove to consumers that the government is serious about improving food safety? Is it to find ways to lower the rate of food recalls and export rejections, better cope with food safety emergencies or improve the quality and efficiency of public services? Is it to demonstrate commitment to food safety and quality to trading partners as a means to attract private sector investment and/or establish a market position? Or, if none of these reasons apply, why is the needs assessment being carried out?

Discussing process aspects of the assessment is also important. A carefully planned process is important to make the best use of the available resources and maximize the results. Discussing the following key questions will help to structure the needs assessment process:

- Who will lead and carry out the assessment (e.g. officials from one or more concerned government agencies and/or external consultants)?
- What will be their specific roles and responsibilities?
- How will consumers, the food industry and other stakeholders (e.g. academic and scientific institutes) be involved (e.g. as part of the team carrying out the assessment, as a source of information)?
- Will international donors or organizations be involved and, if so, how (e.g. as a source of technical and/or financial support)?
- How will coordination and transparency be ensured?
- What resources (financial, human) are required and available? If there is a shortfall, how will it be met?
- What is the expected time frame?
- What indicators will be used to measure the success of the assessment?

### Raise awareness about the importance of food safety and quality and the usefulness of assessing capacity building needs

In some countries, there may be a general lack of awareness about the importance of food safety and quality or the need to strengthen food control. Moreover, there may be limited data on the incidence and prevalence of food-borne diseases making it difficult to demonstrate the effect of weak food control capacity on human health and economic development. In such cases, government leaders and heads of concerned agencies may need to be convinced of the importance of food safety and quality and the need to carry out a capacity building needs assessment. This can be done in different ways. For instance, it may be useful to organize a high-level meeting to press the case for improvements to food safety and quality and demonstrate the benefits of a needs assessment and capacity building action plan in this regard. Linking the needs assessment to regional initiatives or international obligations (e.g. SPS requirements) or working with local media can also help to increase awareness and generate support.

### Encourage the involvement of stakeholders from farm to table

Several parts of government and other stakeholders (the food industry, consumers, consumer organizations, academia and scientific institutes, etc.) have responsibilities for food safety and quality. These groups can provide valuable information and insights about the performance and operation of the food control system and it is therefore beneficial to involve them. In cases where the assessment is carried out as part of project formulation activities, the concerned donor agencies may also be interested to participate.

The involvement of stakeholders may be achieved in different ways. For instance, interviews or discussions may be organized or representatives of key stakeholders may be invited to join the team carrying out the assessment (see below) or to participate in certain steps in the assessment process.

### Assemble a team to carry out the capacity building needs assessment

Different countries will carry out the capacity building needs assessment in different ways. In some cases, the assessment may be initiated and managed by one or more government agencies. In other cases, one or more international consultants may play an active role. Regardless of the approach, establishing a small team of representatives from the main government agencies responsible for food control (e.g. food safety agencies, relevant units in agricultural/health ministries, standards organizations, food inspectorates, laboratories, etc.) can provide practical support for information collection and analysis. In some cases, representatives of the food industry, consumer organizations or academic and research institutions may be invited to join this team. Assembling a multi-stakeholder team can help to foster information exchange and collaboration among the agencies concerned; and build ownership creating a more sustainable basis for follow-up action. However, it will be important to balance broad stakeholder representation with pragmatic considerations such as the size of the team and the need to include individuals who can work together effectively.

### Clearly describe and communicate the goals, scope and process

To enhance transparency, it will be useful to prepare and distribute a short work plan or terms of reference describing the goals, objectives and scope of the assessment, as well as the practicalities (e.g. roles and responsibilities, time frame, expected outputs, etc.) of the process.

## Accessing resources to assist capacity building

An effectively carried out capacity needs assessment will come to nothing unless resources are available for capacity building activities. It is wise to identify as many possible sources of funding for follow-up to the needs assessment as early as possible in the process, and to inform potential donors that the assessment is being carried out. Potential donors may be interested in observing, supporting and/or participating in the needs assessment process. Indeed, in some cases, they may be more likely to support the findings and provide resources for follow-up activities if they have been actively involved from the outset.

Potential sources of financial and technical support for the needs assessment may include international agencies such as FAO, WHO or the World Bank, as well as bilateral donors. Other global mechanisms such as the Standards and Trade Development Facility (http://www.standardsfacility.org) and regional fora, such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Food Safety Cooperation Forum (http://www.apec.org and http://www.foodstandards.gov.au), also provide support for food safety capacity building. Information about funding opportunities and available resources is available on the Internet.

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## STEP 2

# REVIEW CAPACITY AND PERFORMANCE OF THE EXISTING FOOD CONTROL SYSTEM



The purpose of this step is to examine the existing capacity and performance of the food control system. This will provide a baseline of the current situation, which will be useful to help identify capacity building needs and subsequently measure progress in responding to these needs.

The capacity and performance of food control systems varies widely across countries. Legal and institutional frameworks for food control have generally developed in different ways, resulting in diverse arrangements and outcomes. Responsibilities for food control may be shared among a number of government agencies with wide-ranging goals, approaches, resources and capability. The food industry, consumers and other stakeholders may play different roles and have varying levels of capacity. They may also have contrasting views about the operation and performance of the food control system, and how effectively it meets their needs.

Based on the analytical framework already presented, this analysis will address:

- food safety outcomes and performance from the perspective of government, the food industry and consumers;
- the context for food control at the country level; and
- the outputs, components and characteristics of the food control system.

Important areas of interest for this review and analysis are described.

### Stakeholder perceptions of food safety outcomes and performance

Views of government agencies, the food industry and consumers regarding food safety outcomes and performance in terms of:

- the general level of food safety and quality in the country;
- public health outcomes, specifically the incidence and prevalence of food-borne diseases;
- the safety and quality of domestically produced food, imported food and exported food;
- the results and impact of food safety measures implemented by different stakeholders on a day-to-day basis and in response to emergencies; and
- the cost of food safety measures and regulations; etc.

### Country context

- Food intake and consumption characteristics;
- public health status and the incidence and prevalence of food-borne disease;
- characteristics of the food chain from farm to table;
- characteristics of food and agricultural production, processing, handling and distribution including the use of good agricultural/manufacturing/hygiene practices and the types of groups involved;

- existence of naturally occurring toxins in particular foods;
- trends in food and agricultural exports and imports; and
- other relevant country characteristics such as geography, climate, location, per capita income, national development priorities and plans, membership of international and regional bodies (e.g. Codex Alimentarius Commission, WTO, ASEAN, Mercorsur) and resulting obligations; etc.

### Capacity of the food control system

- Legal and policy framework for food safety;
- institutional framework including stakeholder roles, responsibilities and relationships;
- structure, components and operation of the food control system;
- outputs of the food control system in terms of achievements, and the products and services provided; and
- available inputs/resources (e.g. human, financial, infrastructure, equipment and supplies, data and information, etc.) and the way in which they are allocated; etc.

Detailed questionnaire surveys to guide information collection in each of the above areas are provided in Annexes 1, 2 and 3, and capacity checklists are included in Annex 4. They may be used to facilitate the gathering of information during face-to-face interviews with representatives of different stakeholders, focus group discussions[5] or desk research. In addition, a number of useful tips and suggestions on practical ways to organize and enhance the information collection, review and analysis process are described below.

The insights generated through this process will help to produce a picture (situation analysis) of the current capacity and performance of the food control system, which will address:

- the current roles and responsibilities of government agencies, the food industry and consumers with respect to food safety and quality;
- the measures taken by different types of stakeholders to promote food safety and quality;
- the outcomes and impact (effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability) of these measures from the perspective of different stakeholders; and
- the overall capacity of the food control system to ensure the safety and quality of foods for domestic consumers and export, including where there are gaps.

## TIPS > > > > > > > > > > > > > > > > > > > >

### Consult different stakeholders

Different government agencies will have relevant information to contribute to the review and analysis of the existing situation. The competent authority with operational responsibility for food control will be an important source of information. Government ministries or agencies involved in the agricultural and food sector, public health, trade or development planning may have relevant information. Other types of stakeholders (such as the food industry, academic and scientific institutions, consumers and consumer organizations) also have pertinent views and insights about the performance of the food control system and could make a useful contribution.

[5] Focus groups are small groups of people representing particular stakeholder groups (e.g. food inspectors, managers of food enterprises, consumers) who are selected and interviewed through facilitator-led discussions to obtain opinions and views about a particular aspect of food safety (e.g. safety of domestically produced or imported food, legal and policy framework for food safety, performance of food inspection, etc.). These discussions produce qualitative information which can provide useful insights on strengths, weaknesses, capacity gaps, etc.

## Take stock of existing reports and evaluations

Many countries have already evaluated particular aspects of the food control system, sometimes as part of a development project. In some cases, a lot of relevant information may have been gathered and the major additional work required will be to review, analyse and synthesis this information. Making use of relevant reports that already exist will save time and contribute to a more effective use of resources.

## Use different techniques to gather and analyse information

Information can be collected and analysed in different ways depending on the availability of time and financial resources, and needs. Possible methods to gather information include interviews, focus group discussions, surveys or a desk review of documents.

Different techniques may also be used to analyse information:

- Conducting a stakeholder analysis provides a means to identify the roles and responsibilities of all the groups directly or indirectly involved in the food control system. Different parts of government may make policy decisions related to food safety and quality, plan and implement food control activities, or provide technical and/or financial resources. In some cases, third party organizations may be contracted to implement particular food control activities (e.g. food inspection, certification). Other stakeholders (such as the food industry, industry associations, consumers, consumer organizations, scientific and research institutes, academia, etc.) also have responsibilities for food safety and quality, and are affected (positively and/or negatively) by national legislation and programmes focused on food safety and quality. A stakeholder analysis provides a systematic way to identify and document these diverse roles and responsibilities. A suggested template for a stakeholder analysis is provided in Annex 5.
- Carrying out a SWOT analysis can be useful to identify and reach consensus on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that are relevant for the food control system. SWOT analysis is a strategic planning tool to examine the (internal) strengths and weaknesses of, and (external) opportunities and threats facing the food control system. It can help to structure, summarize and evaluate the information gathered during a situation analysis. A SWOT analysis for a food control system is presented in Annex 6 as an example.

## Double-check information and emphasize confidentiality

Double-checking information collected from different sources is useful to ensure accuracy. Emphasizing confidentiality may help to increase access to all relevant information (including information that is considered sensitive).

## Document and distribute the findings

The findings and conclusions of this review will help to identify capacity building needs and will serve as useful indicators for planning and monitoring subsequent capacity building activities. Therefore, they should be documented as clearly and comprehensively as possible, and shared with all those concerned. This will enhance transparency and help to build support for subsequent capacity building activities.

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## STEP 3

# DESCRIBE THE DESIRED FUTURE (IMPROVED) FOOD CONTROL SYSTEM



This step in the process concentrates on describing the desired future improved food control system. It provides a means to visualize the outcomes that stakeholders would like to see achieved by the food control system in the medium term[6] and the type of improved food control system that would exist *after* capacity building. This step is an important one because it focuses attention on the future (as opposed to the problems of the present) and sets a positive direction for what stakeholders would like to accomplish. This provides a basis on which to develop goals and objectives for capacity building. It also helps to foster cooperation and commitment among the various stakeholders involved and contributes towards the development of a set of shared expectations.

A description of the desired future food control system can be developed through open discussions and brainstorming sessions involving relevant parts of government and other stakeholders. Depending on country circumstances and the resources available, the approach, type and number of participants, and time frame may vary. In some cases, this vision may be developed through brainstorming sessions that extend over a half or whole day with a relatively small number of participants. In other cases, there may be more extensive consultation with stakeholders, which will require more time and resources.

The following key questions provide a simple and convenient starting point to discuss and arrive at a shared vision of the desired future (improved) food control system:

- Why should the food control system exist?
- What purpose should it fulfil?
- What should it achieve?
- What should its essential characteristics be?

Given the roles of diverse stakeholders, and the interdependencies and synergies of their responsibilities, it is recommended to include representatives of all the concerned groups (government agencies, the food industry and consumers) in these discussions as far as possible. However, it is important to be aware that these groups may have very different views about the desired future food control system reflecting their particular roles, interests and concerns, and professional facilitation may be necessary. During these discussions, it may also be useful to consider what can be learned from other countries (see tips below).

The indicators in Box 1 are provided to guide those responsible for developing appropriate performance measures and targets for improvements. More detailed benchmarks for each of the core components of a national food control system are presented in Annex 7. The FAO/WHO Guidelines for strengthening national food

[6] Approximately five years or some other point in time that is consistent with national planning and budgetary processes.

control systems (FAO Food and Nutrition Paper 76, 2003) provide further guidance on strategies to strengthen national food control systems.

This improved future situation can be expressed as a short description of the vision of the food control system or in the form of a set of goals and objectives that map out a strategic direction for it. Regardless of how it is expressed, this vision should push the food control system towards a higher standard of excellence challenging stakeholders to achieve a superior level of performance. It should depict an expected end-state at a particular point in time and clearly convey the desired outcomes or results that would be achieved in the future, not the means or course of action to achieve these results (see Box 2).

While the resulting vision should be ambitious, it should also be realistic and credible based on an understanding of the present level of capacity and resources available. For instance, if none of the core components of a food control system are in place, it may not be realistic to expect the food control system to do everything effectively within a few years. Finally, the vision and/or goals that emerge from this step should be convincing and attractive to those concerned so that they are motivated to do what is necessary to achieve this situation in the future.



**Box 1** Performance indicators for a national food control system

An effective national food control system is based on:

- Clear government commitment to protect consumers' health and interests, and ensure fair practices in food trade.
- An integrated food chain approach, transparency and the participation of all concerned stakeholders from farm to table.
- The use of risk analysis to inform and support decision-making and establish food safety control measures.

An effective national food control system:

- Encompasses a number of essential elements including: i) organizations with clearly defined roles and responsibilities for food control management, and mechanisms for communication and coordination between them; ii) an enabling policy, legal and regulatory framework for food safety; iii) functioning food inspection and certification systems; iv) capable diagnostic and analytical laboratories; and v) working mechanisms for information, education and communication with stakeholders.
- Conforms with relevant policy and legal frameworks and ensures the delivery of an efficient food control programme.
- Provides an appropriate level of protection (expressed as a percent of the population) against food safety risks for domestic consumers.
- Is able to meet, and demonstrate compliance with, international food safety and quality requirements and obligations, notably Codex, the SPS Agreement, requirements of trading partners, etc.

**Box 2** Examples of different ways to describe the desired future situation of the food control system

Different countries will have different goals and objectives for their food control system reflecting their particular national circumstances and needs. While the overall purpose should be to ensure safe food for consumers, this may be expressed in different ways. Alternative ways to describe the desired (improved) future food control situation are given below as examples:

- **Country A** has an integrated food control system that is based on the food chain approach and the involvement of all the relevant stakeholders from farm to table. The competent authority makes decisions based on risk analysis and collaborates with other parts of government that are involved in the food chain approach. The food industry has the knowledge and ability to apply quality assurance practices and HACCP. Consumers are aware about matters related to food safety and quality, including how to minimize food safety risks.
- The competent authority in **Country B** protects consumers' health and interests by ensuring that all food consumed, distributed, marketed or produced in the country meets the highest standards of food safety and hygiene.
- The competent authority in **Country C** is an independent, world-class and credible authority that protects the safety of food in the country. It provides a timely response to food safety hazards and risks, clearly communicates with stakeholders, promotes healthy lifestyles and contributes to the improved health of all citizens.

## TIPS > > > > > > > > > > > > > > > > > > > > >

### Consult the food industry, academic and scientific institution, consumers and other concerned groups

Food safety is best achieved through the collaboration of diverse stakeholders based on their respective roles, responsibilities and strengths. In view of this, it is beneficial to consult these different stakeholders, including government agencies, the food industry, consumers and their organizations, scientific and academic institutions, etc., and ensure their views are heard in the process of developing goals and objectives. In addition to enhancing transparency, this will contribute to the development of a set of goals and objectives that are supported by as many stakeholders as possible. This will help to commit these groups to taking the steps required to achieve the improved future situation, resulting in improved results and sustainability of capacity building activities.

### Use facilitators where there are many diverging views

Reaching consensus on the nature of the desired future food control system and agreeing on goals and objectives is challenging, particularly when diverse groups with different backgrounds and perspectives are involved. In some cases, overlapping responsibilities and inter-agency rivalries may exacerbate the difficulties. Involving facilitators (from inside or outside the country) who are seen as being neutral may be useful to promote open discussions, enable diverse views to be voiced, and/or incorporate approaches, experiences and lessons from other countries. Encouraging particular types of stakeholders to work out their own vision separately before trying to reach consensus on one vision may also assist the process.

### Consider experiences and lessons from other countries

Considering experiences from countries that have already taken steps to strengthen their food control systems can be useful to inform the process of developing a vision of the desired future improved food control system. Consulting available case studies may be useful in this context.[7]

### Review the desired future situation (and goals and objectives) periodically

The description of the desired future situation, and goals and objectives that emerge from this step, should be reviewed periodically. This is important to take into account technical progress, advances, policy development, etc.

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[7] See: i) case studies of food control systems in Canada and Ireland in Annex 9 of FAO/WHO. 2003. *Guidelines for strengthening national food control systems*. FAO Food and Nutrition Paper No. 76. (available at ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/006/y8705e/y8705e00.pdf); and ii) case studies for Canada, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom in United States Government Accountability Office (GAO). 2005. Report to Congressional Requesters. *Food Safety. Experiences of Seven Countries in Consolidating their Food Safety Systems* (available at: http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d05212.pdf).

## STEP 4

# IDENTIFY AND PRIORITIZE CAPACITY BUILDING NEEDS



This step in the process focuses on the diagnosis of capacity building needs. An accurate and comprehensive diagnosis of needs is important to be able to determine the requirements and priorities to strengthen the food control system. Given the variations in national circumstances, the identification of capacity building needs will demand an honest and introspective examination of the present situation (the results of step 2) and the future goals and objectives (the results of step 3). The needs can be derived from the gaps between the existing situation and the desired future situation as illustrated in Figure 5.

Facilitated workshops and discussions can be used to discuss the capacity of the existing food control system and the desired future improved system, and to brainstorm about the gaps. The following key questions and Table 1 will provide a starting point and focus for this dialogue.

- What is required to move from the current situation to the desired future situation?
- What minimum level of capacity is necessary for the food control system to function effectively?
- What maximum level of capacity could be properly utilized?
- What are the critical capacity needs (i.e. those that should be addressed first)?
- What developments and trends (e.g. trade requirements, membership of international or regional bodies), if any, are likely to influence (positively or negatively) these needs?

Often the needs identified will be numerous and impossible to address at once. Therefore it will be important to differentiate between what is essential and what is simply desirable, and to prioritize the identified needs by focusing on the areas, resources and capabilities considered most important, as well as time and sequencing requirements.

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### Involve concerned stakeholders in the identification of needs

The process of identifying capacity building needs should be participatory to the extent possible. Encouraging the involvement of concerned stakeholders and seeking their views will help to ensure that all existing needs are identified. It will also increase acceptance of any proposed changes, enhancing the implementation and sustainability of capacity building activities carried out in follow-up. Using facilitated workshops is one way to encourage this participation.

### Set priorities for capacity building

The capacity building needs assessment is likely to result in a large number of potential needs. Deciding on the priorities that should be addressed immediately is therefore

**Figure 5** Bridging gaps between existing capacity and desired future capacity

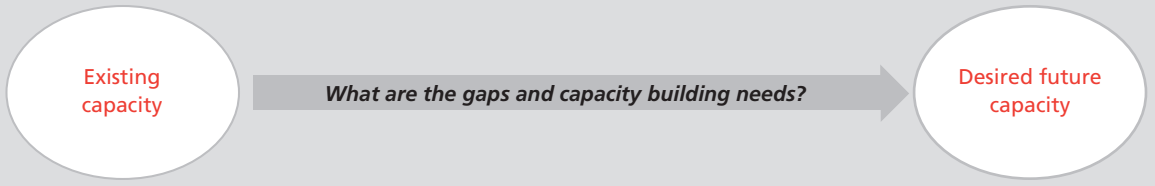


**Table 1.** Matrix to help identify capacity building needss

| *Existing food control system* | *Desired future food control system* | *Capacity building needs* |
|---|---|---|
| • What are the strengths and weaknesses of the food control system?<br>• What are the opportunities and threats facing the food control system?<br>• What opportunities could be leveraged in the future? | • What tangible outcomes should be expected of an improved food control system?<br>• What would the food control system achieve if it worked effectively?<br>• Which values would underpin an improved food control system? | • What are the main gaps between the existing food control system and desired future (improved) system?<br>• What is needed to bridge this gap?<br>• What are the priorities?<br>• What minimum level of capacity is necessary for the food control system to function effectively?<br>• What maximum level of capacity could be properly utilized?<br>• What developments and trends, if any, are likely to positively or negatively influence these needs? |

essential. However, this is often a complex and difficult task. Different countries and cultures have their own accepted practices and systems (e.g. voting, consensus-building or letting the leaders decide) for reaching decisions on priorities. Nevertheless, it is constructive to agree in advance on a set of core criteria by which priorities will be ranked. This helps to ensure transparency in the selection process and reduces the potential for choices to be based on hidden agendas.

Some criteria to rank priorities could include: i) impact of the problem/need on food safety and quality issues; ii) availability of effective solutions; iii) number of people or organizations affected; iv) cost of the problem; v) resources likely required to address it; vi) support for addressing the need; vii) urgency of addressing the need; and viii) alignment with national priorities and international recommendations; etc. Often it is beneficial to enable small groups of those involved to discuss and rank priorities separately before discussing priorities in a larger group setting. This approach helps to encourage greater participation of all those involved.

## Review capacity needs periodically

Capacity needs change over time and capacity assessment should be an ongoing process. The identified needs should therefore be reviewed periodically to take account of progress made and other relevant circumstances in the country.

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## STEP 5

# CONSIDER OPTIONS TO ADDRESS THE IDENTIFIED NEEDS AND DEVELOP A CAPACITY BUILDING ACTION PLAN



Once there is agreement on the capacity building needs, the final step is to identify and decide on options to address those needs. This will help to determine the most appropriate course of action to reach the type of improved food control system that is desired in the future. The output of this step will be a capacity building action plan.

Deciding on options to address the capacity building needs is very context specific. Several options may exist. Moreover, the range and suitability of these options is likely to vary across countries depending on the characteristics of the existing food control system, its strengths and weaknesses, the opportunities and threats facing it, and other specific country conditions. The latter may include the political and administrative system and way in which decisions are made, the availability of financial resources and technical expertise, compatibility with national priorities, the relationship between the public and private sector, etc.

In broad terms, options to strengthen the capacity of the food control system may be focused on strategies such as (but not limited to) the following:

- Review and clarification of roles and responsibilities.
- Updating legal and policy documents related to food safety.
- Development of new and/or improved operating principles and procedures for food control functions (food inspection, food analysis, etc.)
- Education and training.
- Development of mechanisms to improve coordination, information exchange and communication between stakeholders involved.
- Replacement and/or upgrading of infrastructure, equipment and instruments.
- Use of alternative financing mechanisms (e.g. cost recovery) for particular services such as inspection of certain types of food enterprises.
- Stakeholder consultation and/or development of new types of partnerships for service delivery.

The checklist of key areas for capacity building in Annex 8 may be used to help identify what is needed to respond to capacity and performance gaps.

It is advisable to refrain from judging or assessing the options identified until all the alternatives have been expressed. Once a wide range of options have been identified, they can be reviewed and evaluated in terms of:

- Expected impact on: i) food safety regulators (e.g. savings in regulatory and enforcement costs); ii) consumers (e.g. reduction in food-borne disease, greater buying confidence, larger choice of safe foods); iii) the food industry (e.g. implementation costs, economic development, new trade opportunities, income generation opportunities, etc.).

- Feasibility (e.g. financial and human resources available, time required, level of support among leaders and staff of the agencies concerned, ease of implementation, political acceptability, etc.).
- Affordability (e.g. capital costs, recurrent costs, economic returns to investment, cost recovery opportunities, overall economic viability, etc.).
- Legitimacy (e.g. consistent with national development goals and priorities, international recommendations, expert opinion and scientific knowledge, etc.).
- Timeliness (e.g. is the proposed intervention timely and can it be implemented on schedule - a good option implemented late will lose all its value).

The costs and benefits of the various options are likely to differ for different groups. For instance, they may be spread unevenly across government, food industry, scientific and academic institutions, consumers, etc. Considering the nature, size and distribution of these costs and benefits will generate information that can be used to select the most valuable option(s) and help to reduce uncertainty during decision-making.

Estimating costs and benefits of different options is a challenging task. In some cases, the expertise, resources and/or information required may not be readily available. Nevertheless, in spite of these challenges, it is useful to discuss the effects of different capacity building options and to assemble the available data (quantitative and qualitative) on the impact and respective costs and benefits of each option. Comparing these costs and benefits will help to provide a justification for the capacity building activities to be carried out. It may also support fundraising efforts since potential donors will be more interested to support activities that are shown to be most cost-effective and to have the greatest positive impact.

This process will result in a list of capacity building actions and priorities for follow-up that will outline the steps necessary to reach the goals and objectives for the desired future improved food control system. These actions may be documented in the form of a capacity building action plan, which should describe:

- the specific activities necessary;
- the priorities for capacity building;
- roles and responsibilities for implementation of the actions required;
- the timeframe in which the specified actions are to be carried out;
- the resources required and available; and
- indicators to monitor and evaluate progress.

A suggested template for a capacity building action plan is provided in Annex 9.

Developing a capacity building action plan is just the beginning. Implementing this action plan will be essential to bring about changes and improvements in the food control system. Before implementation can commence, it will be vital to communicate and advocate the action plan to decision and policy-makers in the country to obtain their endorsement of it (see tips below). High-level leaders of the various agencies that play a role in the food control system should clearly and publicly commit to this action plan. This is important to encourage the effective participation of staff from their agencies in follow-up and to ensure the availability of adequate resources (staff time and funds). Sharing the action plan with international donors can also help to secure additional resources for follow-up.

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### Come up with as many reasonable alternatives as possible

During this step it is useful to produce as many reasonable alternatives as possible. Those involved should feel comfortable to share ideas without any obligations or commitments.

Experts with technical knowledge of food control systems can provide useful information on how capacity building needs can be met. Involving an external facilitator may help the participants to identify options they may not otherwise consider.

### Review the costs and benefits of the various options identified

Costs and benefits can be considered in qualitative and/or quantitative terms. However, it is often difficult to measure the costs and benefits of changes to food control systems in pure monetary terms. For instance, it is difficult to put a financial value on many of the costs and benefits associated with changes in the performance of food control systems (e.g. human life and health, market penetration, loss of reputation). Regulatory impact assessment (RIA) and cost-benefit analysis are two techniques that can be used to examine the impact of various options from the perspective of different types of stakeholders. Further guidance on the use of these techniques is available in the FAO Guidelines to assess capacity building needs in national food control systems (FAO, 2006).

### Actively communicate and advocate the capacity building action plan

Obtaining clear support and endorsement from national decision- and policy-makers, including the leaders of key agencies involved in the food control system, is essential to ensure that the action plan developed through the capacity needs assessment process is implemented effectively. Informing high-level officials about the capacity building needs assessment at the start of the process is important, as is the need to actively communicate to them the final capacity building action plan that is developed. It will be essential to clearly explain and highlight the improvements and benefits to be achieved through implementation of this action plan. Involving the national media (e.g. inviting newspapers or television stations to report on needs assessment workshops) can support communication and advocacy efforts. Organizing a half-day workshop or signing ceremony for leaders of the main stakeholders involved can also be useful to promote and visibly demonstrate high-level endorsement.

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# RESOURCES

# ANNEX 1

## Key questions to obtain stakeholder perspectives about food safety outcomes and performance[8]

### Government agencies

1. What are the views and concerns of officials of government agencies with regard to the safety and quality of food that is: i) available for domestic consumption (locally produced and imported); and ii) exported? This could be discussed in terms of the incidence and prevalence of food-borne diseases, compliance with food safety standards, food recalls, detentions and rejections of food imports and exports, etc.
2. How do officials in government agencies view their own roles and responsibilities for food safety? How do they rate the impact of food safety measures implemented by different parts of government on a day-to-day basis and in response to emergencies?
3. How do officials of government agencies view the roles and responsibilities of the food industry for food safety? How do they rate the impact of food safety measures implemented by the food industry?
4. How do officials of government agencies view consumers' roles and responsibilities for food safety? How do they rate consumers' knowledge about food safety, and the impact of food safety measures implemented by consumers?

### Food industry

1. What are the views and concerns of the food industry with regard to: the safety and quality food that is: i) available for domestic consumption (locally produced and imported); and ii) exported?
2. How does the food industry view its own roles and responsibilities for food safety and quality? How do they rate the impact of food safety measures implemented by different types of food enterprises on a day-to-day basis and in response to emergencies?
3. How does the food industry view government roles and responsibilities for food safety?
4. How does the food industry rate food safety measures (e.g. food regulations, food inspection, laboratory analysis) carried out by government agencies? For instance, what are the costs and benefits of food safety regulations on production, sales, etc.?
5. How does the food industry view consumers' roles and responsibilities for food safety?

### Consumers

1. What are the views and concerns of consumers with respect to: i) food that is produced in the country and imported food; ii) food safety in shops; and iii) food safety in the catering sector? This could be discussed in terms of use of chemicals/fertilizers/veterinary drugs, packaging, food hygiene and handling, freshness/sell by date, origin of food, how food is transported and stored, fraudulent practices, contamination, etc.
2. How do consumers view their own roles and responsibilities for food safety and quality?
3. How do consumers view government's roles and responsibilities for food safety and quality? How do they rate the impact of food safety measures implemented by government agencies?
4. How do consumers view the food industry's roles and responsibilities for food safety? How do they rate the impact of food safety measures implemented by the food industry?

Resources

[8] These questions provide a broad framework for discussions with key stakeholders and should be adapted and supplemented as required.

## ANNEX 2

**Key questions to examine the country context for food safety**[9]

### Food production, processing and distribution

1. What is the structure and characteristics of the food chain from farm to table, and what are the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders:
   - primary food production for domestic consumption and export (nature, volume, value, use of quality assurance (QA) and good agricultural practices, etc.)?
   - food processing industry (formal or informal, scale, types of products, capacity, use of QA and good hygiene/manufacturing practices, etc.)?
   - food distribution and market segments (e.g. export segment, urban retail segment, informal sector, use of QA and good hygiene practices, etc.)?
2. Which trends in the production, processing and distribution of food and agricultural products, including imports and exports, are relevant for food safety (e.g. HACCP, cold chain in perishable products, use of pesticides, increased production and export of value-added products, etc.)?
3. What is the level of knowledge and awareness about food safety and quality among stakeholders involved in the food chain from farm to table?
4. What other trends affect, or are likely to affect, the food control system?

### Food consumption and public health

1. What are the characteristics of food consumption:
   - types and quantity of food consumed (e.g. domestically produced, imported, fresh or processed)?
   - energy/protein intake?
   - place of consumption (e.g. home, restaurants, street foods, etc.)?
2. What food habits, customs, preferences (including relevant cultural or historical factors) are relevant?
3. What is the level of consumer awareness about food safety and quality issues (including the role of consumer associations)?
4. What is the incidence and prevalence of food-borne diseases (e.g. main foods concerned, types of contamination, vulnerability of particular population groups, trends, etc.)?

### Constitutional and legal framework

1. How does the country's constitution and legal system (e.g. civil law, common law, Napoleonic Code, traditional or community laws and practices, etc.) influence the regulatory framework for food safety?
2. How are roles, responsibilities and rights related to food safety defined in existing legislation?
3. Is the country a member of any relevant international (e.g. WTO, Codex Alimentarius Commission) or regional organizations or groups (e.g. Africa Union, ASEAN, APEC, Mercosur)?
4. What are the resulting obligations, responsibilities and rights?

| | |
|---|---|
| **Trade, environment and development** | 1. What is the nature of trade flows (imports and exports) in food and agricultural products (e.g. products, volume, direction, detentions, rejections, etc.)?<br>2. Which environmental factors influence food safety?<br>3. What is the per capita income? What percentage of this is spent on food?<br>4. What are the national development priorities?<br>5. Which national policies/development plans, etc. contain goals, objectives and priorities (e.g. improvements to human health, income generation, export promotion) of relevance for food safety and quality?<br>6. Which other factors (such as urbanization, lifestyle changes, environmental pollution, deliberate contamination, natural and human-made disasters, etc.) are relevant for food safety, and why? |



[3] These questions are illustrative of the types of inquiries that should be made, and should be adapted and supplemented as required based on the particular circumstances in the country.

# ANNEX 3

## Key questions to examine the capacity of the food control system[10]

### Scope, structure and operation of the food control system

1. Is there one national food control system for all the food produced and consumed in the country (i.e. domestically-produced food, imported food and exported food)? Or are there different systems for particular market segments (e.g. food exports, urban retail system)?
2. Which stakeholders (e.g. government ministries and departments, National Codex Committee or SPS Committee, city municipalities, food industry, consumers, academia and scientific institutes, etc.) are involved in the food control system? What are their respective roles and responsibilities?
3. What are the relationships, communication flows and linkages between the various stakeholders involved? Do they work together and, if so, how? Are their activities coordinated and complementary?
4. What projects and activities to improve food safety and quality have been completed recently, are being implemented or are planned? What are the experiences and lessons learned?

### Food control management

1. Is there a national policy for food safety and quality?
2. How is the food control system organized (e.g. centralized or decentralized, single agency or multiple agency)?
3. Which agencies (at different levels) are involved?
4. What are their respective roles and responsibilities on a day-to-day basis and in response to emergencies? Are there any overlaps or gaps?
5. What are the linkages and flows (information, resources, etc.) between them and with other stakeholders (e.g. food industry, consumers, food regulators in other countries, etc.)?
6. What operational principles and procedures, if any, guide food control management?
7. What resources (financial, human, equipment, information, etc.) are available for food control management? How are they allocated to different activities, agencies, levels, etc.?
8. How are priorities set and resources allocated? Is risk analysis used?
9. Is there a system for food-borne disease surveillance? If existing, how is it used, which stakeholders are involved and what have been the experiences to date?
10. Is there a plan for emergency preparedness and response in the case of food safety incidents? What is the level of capacity to implement this plan if existing?
11. Do national authorities responsible for food control management communicate and/or share information with concerned authorities in other countries? Why and how? What have been the experiences to date?
12. What are the overall outputs and results of food control management activities?

### Legal and regulatory framework for food control

1. What is the scope of food law(s) (number and type of national/sub-national laws and their form, definition, content, date, amendments, etc.)?
2. How does food legislation define the rights, roles and responsibilities (e.g. provision of information and labelling, food hygiene requirements, trace back and recall of contaminated food, etc.) of government agencies, the food industry (including food importers and exporters), consumers and others involved in the food chain?
3. What regulations and standards related to food safety and quality exist? What do they cover? Who is responsible for establishing/revising these regulations/standards? What are the enforcement responsibilities? What are the mechanisms and penalties for non-compliance?
4. Are national regulations and standards harmonized with relevant international guidelines and recommendations (Codex), and regional requirements (if any)?

[10] These questions are illustrative of the types of inquiries that should be made, and should be adapted and supplemented as required based on national circumstances. They are intended to guide information collection and may be posed to different groups (e.g. government agencies, the food industry, consumers) as appropriate.

5. Are there differences in food safety regulations/standards for exported food and food provided for domestic consumption?
6. How knowledgeable are different groups (i.e. government agencies, the food industry, consumers, etc.) about their roles, rights and responsibilities as defined in food legislation?
7. How do different types of stakeholders (i.e. government, consumers, the food industry) view the impact of food legislation (e.g. on protection of human health, compliance costs, impact on food prices, etc.)?

## Food inspection and enforcement of food legislation

1. What is the scope of food inspection (e.g. definition and types of food/premises, stage of production and distribution process, continuous on-line inspection, examination of finished products, auditing quality assurance systems, etc.)?
2. Which agencies[11] are responsible for food inspection and enforcement? What are their respective roles? Are there overlaps and/or gaps?
3. What principles (e.g. risk assessment, transparency, harmonization, non-discrimination, etc.) underpin food inspection?
4. How is food inspection planned and carried out on a day-to-day basis and in response to emergencies?
5. What resources are available for food inspection: number of food inspectors (per establishments served, per thousand population, etc.); technical knowledge and skills; training; terms of employment; financial resources; infrastructure, equipment and supplies; etc.?
6. How are priorities set and resources allocated? Is resource allocation based on high, medium and low risk?
7. What relevant information (e.g. types of food businesses, risks, inspection outcomes, etc.) is available? How is information managed and record keeping performed?
8. Are inspection activities carried out consistently by different agencies and/or in different parts of the country? Is there a transparent appeals process?
9. What are the linkages between food inspectorates and other concerned stakeholders (e.g. laboratories, consumers)?
10. How do stakeholders (e.g. food industry, consumers) rate food inspection in terms of effectiveness, performance, costs, etc.?

## Certification

1. Which certification schemes are used in the country? What are their requirements? What have been the experiences to date?
2. Are there established policies and regulations for the certification of food?
3. Which stakeholders are involved in food certification (official food control authorities and/or third party certification bodies)?
4. What are their respective roles and responsibilities?
5. What resources do they have available?
6. What operational principles (if any) guide the certification of food?

## Food control laboratories

1. How many food control laboratories exist? Where are they located? What is the scope of their work (physical, chemical, microbiological specializations, etc.)? What is their institutional affiliation (public or private)?
2. What operational principles and procedures (sampling, quality assurance, use of international standards, method validation, general housekeeping, etc.), if any, underpin the work of food control laboratories?
3. What managerial, analytical and support staff are available? What is the level of their education, training and specialized skills?
4. What infrastructure, equipment, instruments and supplies are available? What is the condition of available infrastructure, equipment and instruments (operational, unusable, obsolete, calibrated, etc.)?
5. Which analytical methods (e.g. in-house, external) are used? Are they validated, documented, etc.?
6. Which reference standards are used? Are they certified, appropriately labelled, recorded, stored, etc.?
7. Are good laboratory practices and quality assurance used? Are laboratories accredited?
8. What financial resources are available and how are they allocated (salaries, maintenance, supplies, equipment, etc.)? Is there any cost recovery?

[11] Different agencies may be involved in food inspection including veterinary inspectors, drug inspectors, national health inspectors, food inspectors, etc.

9. What information is available (e.g. on international standards, scientific knowledge)? How is information managed and record keeping organized? Is there a laboratory information management system?
10. Are there any linkages with related institutions (e.g. other laboratories, hospitals, public health institutions) for coordination of sampling plans/techniques, inter-proficiency testing, validation of results, food-borne disease surveillance, monitoring and evaluation, etc.? What is their purpose? What are the results?



### Information, education (including training) and communication

1. Is there a policy or strategy for information and communication on matters related to food safety and quality (including labelling)?
2. Which organizations are responsible for information and communications on matters related to food safety and quality? What are their roles? What is the scope of their activities (messages, target audiences, tools, media, language, etc.)?
3. Which organizations are involved in food safety education and training? What are their roles? What is the scope of their activities (type of training, content, target audience, etc.)?
4. What operational principles (e.g. transparency, unbiased, two-way dialogue with stakeholders, etc.) guide information and communication activities? Are risk communication principles used?
5. What resources (e.g. staff, expertise, skills, financial resources, audio-visual and other equipment, data/information on food safety risks and consumer attitudes/perceptions, etc) are available? How are they used?
6. Are there any linkages with other groups (e.g. health/agriculture extensionists, food industry, consumer organizations, media etc.)? What is their purpose? What are the results?
7. How knowledgeable are different types of stakeholders from farm to table about food safety and quality issues and good practices?

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# ANNEX 4
## Capacity checklist

The capacity checklist below can be used to help guide discussions on the existing capacity and performance of different aspects of the food control system. It can be used to discuss whether capacity in each of these areas is non-existent, partially in place, mostly in place or comprehensive and sustainable.

**Level of existing capacity**

- **X** insufficient information to assess
- **1** non-existent
- **2** partially in place
- **3** mostly in place
- **4** comprehensive and sustainable

| | *Capacity level* | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *X* | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* |
| **Food control management** | | | | | |
| Government commitment to protect consumer's health and interests, and to ensure fair practices in food trade | | | | | |
| Existence of a food safety policy | | | | | |
| Participation in relevant regional and international fora | | | | | |
| Existence of administrative structures with clearly defined roles, responsibilities and accountabilities | | | | | |
| Operational coordination across all the agencies involved in food safety and quality | | | | | |
| Operation of a national food control programme based on risk analysis principles | | | | | |
| Ability to set regulations and standards based on science and in accordance with international recommendations | | | | | |
| Strategic and operational plans for food safety and quality are implemented and regularly reviewed | | | | | |
| System for resource allocation and management exists | | | | | |
| System for continuous review and evaluation of the management structures is in place | | | | | |
| Food legislation enforcement policy exists and is followed | | | | | |
| Procedures for the authorization of officers (inspectors, analytical personnel, etc.) exist and are followed | | | | | |
| Procedures for the authorization of official food control laboratories exist and are followed | | | | | |
| Database covering food inspection, food-borne disease analysis, etc. exists and is used | | | | | |
| Communication among government agencies involved | | | | | |
| Training programmes for officials involved in food safety | | | | | |
| Procedures for stakeholders consultation exist and are followed | | | | | |
| Ability to respond to and manage food-related crises | | | | | |

Resources

| | Capacity level | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *X* | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* |
| **Food legislation** | | | | | |
| Clearly protects consumer health and consumer interests | | | | | |
| Clearly defines roles, responsibilities and rights | | | | | |
| Includes clear definitions to ensure consistency and legal security | | | | | |
| Incorporates checks and balances | | | | | |
| Provides for appropriate enforcement and control measures | | | | | |
| Clearly defines enforcement powers and procedures | | | | | |
| Includes obligations to ensure that only safe and fairly presented food are placed on the market | | | | | |
| Includes provision for accurate and sufficient information on food products | | | | | |
| Provides for the approval, registration or licensing of food premises | | | | | |
| Defines the appointment of authorized officers | | | | | |
| Provides for the tracing of food products and their recall in case of problems | | | | | |
| Is harmonized with international and/or regional requirements | | | | | |
| **Food inspection** | | | | | |
| Documented policies and procedures for risk-based inspection of domestically-produced, imported and exported food | | | | | |
| National database of food premises categorized according to risk | | | | | |
| System for collection, reporting and analysis of information related to food inspection | | | | | |
| Planning, implementation and monitoring of food inspection activities is based on high, medium and low risk | | | | | |
| Adequate number of food inspection officers | | | | | |
| Inspectors have suitable qualifications, training and experience | | | | | |
| Access to adequate resources, facilities, equipment and supplies | | | | | |
| Reliable transportation and communication systems for delivery of inspection services | | | | | |
| Food inspection is carried out consistency, fairly and honesty | | | | | |
| Procedures for the collection and submission of food samples to laboratories, the request for analysis and reporting of results are documented and followed | | | | | |
| Procedures to respond to and manage food emergencies are documented and followed | | | | | |
| Procedures for the investigation and management of food-borne disease outbreaks are documented and followed | | | | | |
| Procedures to respond to consumer complaints are documented and followed | | | | | |
| Inspection procedures are followed as part of a quality management system | | | | | |
| Mechanism for review and evaluation | | | | | |

| | Capacity level | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | X | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Food control laboratories** | | | | | |
| Adequate number of suitably located food control laboratories | | | | | |
| Adequate number of specialized (reference) laboratories for contaminants, food-borne disease organisms, etc. | | | | | |
| Documented procedure for the approval and accreditation of laboratories according to international standards | | | | | |
| Existence of a network of laboratories accredited to carry out specific analytical tests, and for appellate purposes as necessary | | | | | |
| Adequate number of food analysts with suitable qualifications, training, experience and integrity | | | | | |
| Adequate management staff | | | | | |
| Adequate support staff, laboratory technicians | | | | | |
| Adequate infrastructure, facilities, equipment, supplies and reference materials | | | | | |
| Access to calibration and maintenance | | | | | |
| Operational quality assurance programme including participation in inter-laboratory proficiency testing | | | | | |
| Validated analytical methods are used wherever available | | | | | |
| Manual of official analytical methods and Standard Operating Procedures | | | | | |
| Effective linkages between laboratories and the food control system including food inspection | | | | | |
| Effective linkages between laboratories and the public health system | | | | | |
| **Information, education (including training), communication** | | | | | |
| Policy for information, education and communication with external audiences (food industry, consumers, etc.) exists | | | | | |
| Government commitment to engage in dialogue with stakeholders from farm to table | | | | | |
| Programme for information, education and communication activities with consumers and the food industry exists and is implemented | | | | | |
| Consumers are knowledgeable about food safety and quality | | | | | |
| Food industry is knowledgeable about food safety and quality and good practices | | | | | |
| Mechanisms to facilitate two-way communication with stakeholders exist and are used | | | | | |
| Existence of appropriate IEC materials in local languages | | | | | |
| Adequate number of trained officials with communication and training skills | | | | | |
| Access to appropriate equipment | | | | | |
| Existence of up-to-date data and information on food safety behaviour, concerns, attitudes, dietary patterns, etc. of consumers | | | | | |
| System to evaluate the performance and impact of IEC materials and programmes exists and is implemented | | | | | |

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# ANNEX 5

## Template for a stakeholder analysis of the food control system

| Stakeholder[12] | Mandate / role regarding food safety and quality | Particular interests | Views regarding the food control system |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
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Resources

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[12] Insert all the relevant stakeholders in this column. These may include particular government agencies (e.g. Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Trade, Food Inspectorate Authority, etc.), national committees (e.g. Codex, SPS, etc.), municipal and city authorities, food industry associations, consumers and their organizations, academic and research institutes, etc.

# ANNEX 6

## Illustrative SWOT analysis for a food control system[13]

| | *Positive* | *Negative* |
|---|---|---|
| *Internal factors* | **Strengths**<br>• Recent decision to formulate a policy for food safety and quality<br>• Managers of organizations involved in food control management have new knowledge about effective food control systems following overseas study trips<br>• Some regulations and standards developed to respond to national economic and cultural requirements<br>• Some food inspectors trained in modern sampling and inspection techniques<br>• One official food control laboratory accredited by external accreditation body<br>• etc. | **Weaknesses**<br>• Duplication in roles and mandates of agencies involved in food control at central and lower levels<br>• Inadequate coordination and transparency in planning, implementation and monitoring of food control activities<br>• Decision-making processes for food control management are not based on risk<br>• Food law is fragmented and incoherent<br>• Overlapping legal provisions and enforcement responsibilities<br>• Variations in how food legislation is implemented by different agencies and in different parts of the country<br>• National standards and regulations not harmonized with Codex<br>• Food inspection focused on detection of food safety problems after they occur and not risk-based<br>• Periodic reports of corruption and fraud in food inspection<br>• High probability of cross-contamination during collection and delivery of food samples for laboratory analysis<br>• Overlapping mandates of agencies involved in food inspection and laboratory analysis<br>• Laboratories have poorly functioning equipment and lack essential supplies<br>• Laboratory analysts have inadequate skills in modern analytical techniques and quality assurance<br>• Food industry has limited knowledge and skills to apply good hygiene practices, good manufacturing practices, HACCP, etc.<br>• Limited transparency in food safety decision making and little provision of information to consumers and other stakeholders<br>• etc. |
| *External factors* | **Opportunities**<br>• Membership of Codex Alimentarius Commission<br>• Membership of the World Trade Organization<br>• Donor interest in trade-related capacity building to comply with SPS requirements<br>• Legal reform commission established<br>• Development of new consumer associations and industry associations<br>• Increased use of GAPs, GHPs, HACCP systems, etc. by food industry<br>• etc. | **Threats**<br>• Resistance to change from some government agencies and ministries<br>• Increased frequency of food-borne disease outbreaks in region<br>• Global retailers and governments have low confidence in the safety and quality of food produced in the country<br>• Competing development priorities and needs<br>• Limited resources from central budget<br>• Political instability along parts of the border with neighbouring country<br>• etc. |



[13] This SWOT Analysis is an example that illustrates some of the typical strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that are relevant for food control systems in different countries.

# ANNEX 7

## Benchmarks for the components of a food control system[14]

The following benchmarks provide a descriptive guide of what countries should aim to achieve in each of the core components of a national food control system. They should not be seen as prescriptive because there is no one model that suits the diverse needs and conditions of different countries.



### A. Internationally-accepted benchmarks for food control management

#### Government commitment

1. Government commitment to protect consumer's health and interests, and to ensure fair practices in food trade.
2. Agreement at the highest level of government on the importance of food safety and quality, and provision of adequate resources (human, financial, other) for this purpose.
3. Existence of a government policy that:
   a. is based on an integrated food chain approach;
   b. is science-based and applies risk analysis principles;
   c. is transparent and includes the participation of all the stakeholders from farm to table; and
   d. ensures broad consultation in the development and implementation of food legislation.
4. Recognition of the importance of the regional and international dimensions of food safety and quality, and agreement to participate in relevant regional and international fora.

#### Organizational capability and performance

1. Operational coordination at the national level across all the agencies involved in food safety and quality.
2. Existence of administrative structures (single agency, multi-agency system, integrated system) with clearly defined roles, responsibilities and accountabilities.
3. Development and implementation of an integrated national food control strategy and operation of a national food control programme based on risk analysis principles.
4. Ability to set regulations and standards based on sound science and in accordance with international recommendations (Codex).
5. Existence of strategic and operational plans (that establish priorities, targets and indicators) for food safety and quality and are reviewed regularly.
6. System in place to effectively allocate and manage resources available for food control management, including the ability to transfer resources to high priority areas as required.
7. System in place for continuous review and evaluation of the overall management structures.
8. Existence of a documented food legislation enforcement policy including preventive approaches.
9. Existence of a documented procedure for the authorization of officers including food inspectors, analytical personnel, etc.
10. Existence of a documented procedure for the authorization of official food control laboratories.
11. Existence of a national food control database for the systematic collection, reporting and analysis of food-related data (food inspection, analysis, etc.).
12. Existence of an internal programme for information, education (training, continuous upgrading of knowledge and skills) and communication with relevant government agencies that makes use of modern information technology.
13. Existence of established procedures for consultation with different stakeholders.
14. Ability to respond to and manage food-related crises.

### B. Internationally-accepted benchmarks for food legislation

Within the overall context of the country's constitution, food legislation:

1. Protects consumer health and consumers interests.
2. Clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of government agencies responsible for food control, and mechanism for interactions between them.
3. Provides an enabling framework for rules and regulations needed for the effective operation of a science-based food control system.

[14] Reproduced from FAO. 2006. *Strengthening national food control systems: Guidelines to assess capacity building needs.*

4. Includes clear definitions to ensure consistency and legal security.
5. Is based on risk analysis governed by high quality, transparent and independent scientific advice.
6. Ensures transparency in the development of food regulations and standards, and access to information;
7. Incorporates checks and balances to avoid abuse of powers.
8. Clearly defines enforcement powers and procedures (e.g. Prohibition orders, improvement notices, closure and other orders, etc.).
9. Provides for appropriate enforcement and control measures including effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions and penalties.
10. Includes clear provisions that indicate that primary responsibility for food safety and quality rests with producers and processors.
11. Includes obligations to ensure that only safe and fairly presented foods is placed on the market.
12. Includes provisions for accurate and sufficient information on food products.
13. Provides for the approval, registration or licensing of food premises.
14. Defines the appointment of authorized officers.
15. Provides for the tracing of food products and their recall in case of problems.
16. Recognizes the country's international obligations, particularly in relation to trade.

### C. Internationally accepted benchmarks for food inspection

1. Existence of documented policies and procedures for risk-based inspection (including sampling) of domestically-produced, imported and exported food.
2. Existence of a national database of food premises that categorizes premises according to risk and includes food inspection records.
3. System for the collection, reporting and analysis of information related to food inspection.
4. Planning, implementation and monitoring of food inspection activities is based on high, medium and low risk.
5. Number of officers authorized to carry out work outlined in food legislation is adequate.
6. Food inspectors have suitable qualifications, training and experience, consistent with their authorization under food legislation.
7. Access to adequate resources, facilities, equipment and supplies for food inspection.
8. Reliable transportation and communication systems to ensure delivery of inspection services and transmission of samples to laboratories.
9. Consistency, fairness and honesty in the implementation of food inspection.
10. Documented procedures for the collection and submission of food samples to official food control laboratories, the request for analysis and reporting of results.
11. Documented procedures to respond to and manage food emergencies.
12. Documented procedures for the investigation and management of outbreaks of food-borne illnesses.
13. Documented procedures to respond to consumer complaints.
14. Documented procedures for food inspection are part of a quality management system.
15. Mechanism for review and evaluation of the food inspection system.

### D. Internationally-accepted benchmarks for official food control laboratories

1. Adequate number of suitably located food control laboratories to support the food control system.
2. Adequate number of specialized (reference) laboratories for contaminants, food-borne disease organisms, etc.
3. Documented procedure for the approval and accreditation of official food control laboratories according to international standards.
4. Existence of a network of official food control laboratories, accredited to carry out specific analytical tests, and for appellate purposes as necessary.
5. Adequate number of: i) food analysts with suitable qualifications, training, experience and integrity; ii) management staff; and iii) support staff.
6. Official food control laboratories have adequate infrastructure, facilities, equipment, supplies and reference materials, and access to calibration and maintenance.
7. Official food control laboratories have an operating quality assurance programme including participation in inter-laboratory proficiency testing
8. Validated analytical methods are used wherever available.
9. Existence of a manual of official analytical methods and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

10. Effective linkages between official food control laboratories and the food control system including food inspection.
11. Effective linkages between official food control laboratories and the public health system for food-borne disease surveillance, as well as any other relevant laboratories.

### E. Internationally-accepted benchmarks for food safety and quality information, education and communication

1. Food control agency has a policy for IEC related to food safety and quality targeting external. audiences (consumers, consumer organizations, food industry, professional associations, etc.).
2. Existence of a programme for planning, developing and implementing IEC activities in a coordinated manner.
3. Existence of, or access to, appropriate IEC materials (in local languages).
4. Food control agency has adequate number of trained staff with appropriate IEC skills.
5. Access to appropriate equipment (e.g. computers, printers, mobile education units, audio-visual) and financial resources.
6. Staff of the food control agency actively pursue IEC with external stakeholders including the mass media.
7. Involvement of relevant groups (e.g. agricultural extensionists, local communities, public health workers, food industry, social/religious and academic institutions) in IEC activities.
8. Regular collection of data and information about consumer behaviour, attitudes, concerns, dietary patterns, etc.
9. Existence of a system for risk communication, particularly during food emergencies.
10. System to evaluate the performance and impact of IEC materials and programmes.

# ANNEX 8
## Examples of areas for capacity building

| *Capacity building areas* | *Priority* | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *high* | *med* | *low* |
| **Food control management** | | | |
| Policy analysis, development and strategic planning | | | |
| Development of administrative structures with clearly defined roles, responsibilities and accountabilities | | | |
| Development and delivery of a food control programme based on risk analysis | | | |
| Development and operation of mechanisms for communication and coordination among government agencies | | | |
| Development and operation of mechanisms to promote dialogue with other stakeholders | | | |
| Development and operation of information management systems related to food safety | | | |
| Development and delivery of training programmes | | | |
| Monitoring and surveillance of food-borne diseases | | | |
| Systems to respond to and manage food-related emergencies | | | |
| Fundraising and financial management | | | |
| Information exchange and communication with national, regional and/or international stakeholders | | | |
| Participation in regional and international fora related to food safety and quality | | | |
| Other (insert below): | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| **Food legislation** | | | |
| Drafting and/or updating of food law | | | |
| Drafting and/or updating of food safety and quality regulations and standards | | | |
| Harmonization of food safety regulations and standards with regional / international recommendations | | | |
| Other (insert below): | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

| *Capacity building areas* | *Priority* | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *high* | *med* | *low* |
| **Food inspection** | | | |
| Drafting and/or implementation of policies and procedures for risk-based inspection of domestically-produced, exported and imported food | | | |
| Development and/or delivery of systems for information collection, reporting and analysis | | | |
| Development of training materials and delivery of training programmes | | | |
| Tools and equipment to apply modern inspection techniques | | | |
| Evaluation of HACCP plans and their implementation | | | |
| Auditing food establishments | | | |
| Management and response to food emergencies, food-borne illnesses outbreaks, etc. | | | |
| Other (insert below) | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| **Food control laboratories** | | | |
| Sampling and sample preparation protocols | | | |
| Analytical methods and procedures | | | |
| Use of international standards (ISO/IEC 17205, Good Laboratory Practices, etc.) | | | |
| Scientific, technical and managerial knowledge and skills | | | |
| Analytical quality assurance | | | |
| Contaminant monitoring | | | |
| Reporting and documentation | | | |
| Human resource development and training | | | |
| Approval and accreditation of food laboratories | | | |
| Equipment, instruments, reference materials, facilities, etc. | | | |
| Other (insert below) | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

| *Capacity building areas* | *Priority* | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *high* | *med* | *low* |
| Information, education and communication | | | |
| Policy/strategy for IEC with consumers, food industry, etc. | | | |
| Knowledge and skills in communications, public education | | | |
| Development, implementation and monitoring of IEC activities | | | |
| Collection and analysis of data and information about consumer behaviour, attitudes, concerns, dietary preferences, etc. | | | |
| Strategies and procedures for risk communication | | | |
| Mechanisms for private sector and consumer involvement | | | |
| Communication equipment | | | |
| Other (insert below) | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Resources

# ANNEX 9
## Template for a capacity building action plan

**GOAL**

**Objective**

**Outcome desired**

| ***Actions*** *What will be done?* | ***Responsibilities*** *Who will do it?* | ***Timeframe*** *By when?* | ***Resources*** *What funds are needed / available?* | ***Indicators*** *How to track progress?* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | | | | |
| 2. | | | | |
| 3. | | | | |
| 4. | | | | |

**Objective**

**Outcome desired**

| ***Actions*** *What will be done?* | ***Responsibilities*** *Who will do it?* | ***Timeframe*** *By when?* | ***Resources*** *What funds are needed / available?* | ***Indicators*** *How to track progress?* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | | | | |
| 2. | | | | |
| 3. | | | | |
| 4. | | | | |

Resources

**Objective**

**Outcome desired**

| ***Actions*** *What will be done?* | ***Responsibilities*** *Who will do it?* | ***Timeframe*** *By when?* | ***Resources*** *What funds are needed / available?* | ***Indicators*** *How to track progress?* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | | | | |
| 2. | | | | |
| 3. | | | | |
| 4. | | | | |

**Objective**

**Outcome desired**

| ***Actions*** *What will be done?* | ***Responsibilities*** *Who will do it?* | ***Timeframe*** *By when?* | ***Resources*** *What funds are needed / available?* | ***Indicators*** *How to track progress?* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | | | | |
| 2. | | | | |
| 3. | | | | |
| 4. | | | | |

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Effective national food control systems are essential for food security, public health, consumer protection and international trade. However, in many countries, food control systems are unable to ensure an adequate supply of safe food for domestic consumers or to meet international sanitary and phytosanitary requirements for food exports. Capacity building is recommended in response to these concerns.

This guide has been developed by FAO to enhance the results and impact of food safety capacity building activities in the future. It sets out a simple five-step process to systematically assess the capacity building needs of the entire food control system. Each step incorporates a number of key questions to facilitate the assessment, as well as practical tips to support those carrying it out. More detailed guidance including survey questionnaires, key questions for discussions, checklists of capacity and capacity building needs, are annexed as resource materials.

By providing a systematic approach to identify and prioritize needs and produce an action plan to strengthen the capacity of the food control system, this guide will improve the ability of food safety regulatory authorities to plan, implement and monitor their activities. It will also help to make the use of available resources more efficient and to raise additional resources for unmet needs.

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