



Report of a Survey to Evaluate the Impact of the FAO/WHO Global Fora of Food Safety Regulators

Summary

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) jointly convened two Global Fora of Food Safety Regulators to facilitate an exchange of information and experiences among food safety authorities on pertinent issues related to food safety management. The global fora provided an opportunity for food safety regulators from different parts of the world to consider, discuss and share experiences on food safety issues that are of common concern. At the request of donors, FAO and WHO administered a survey to assess the benefits of participation in the global fora at the country level. The responses to the survey were overwhelming positive and indicated that participants not only gained new knowledge, but used this information for the development of national food control systems. Based on the results of the survey, it is clear that the global fora are an important and effective capacity building activity.

1. Introduction

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have jointly convened two Global Fora of Food Safety Regulators to facilitate an exchange of information and experiences among food safety authorities on pertinent issues related to food safety management. The first Global Forum (GF-1) was held in Marrakesh, Morocco from 28 to 30 January 2002 with the theme “Improving efficiency and transparency in food safety systems”. The second Global Forum (G-2) took place in Bangkok, Thailand from 12 to 14 October 2004 with the theme “Building Effective Food Safety Systems”.¹

The purpose of the global fora was to provide an opportunity for food safety regulators from different parts of the world to consider, discuss and share experiences on food safety issues that are of common concern. GF-1 provided the first opportunity for food safety regulators from 110 countries to meet and discuss food safety issues of international importance. It was also attended by representatives of 17 international organizations and NGOs. Food safety regulators from 90 countries participated in the second Global Forum, as well as representatives from international and other organizations with an interest in food safety matters.

2. Purpose of this survey

This survey was administered by FAO and WHO to assess the benefits of participation in GF-1 and GF-2 following a request from the donors who supported GF-1 and GF-2 for information on the tangible impact of these meetings at the country level. The survey was designed to determine the positive developments (e.g. changes to food control systems linked to participation in GF-1 or GF-2) as well as problems and difficulties encountered in follow-up.

¹ GF-2 had the following two sub-themes: i) strengthening official food control services; and ii) epidemiology-surveillance of food-borne diseases and food safety rapid alert systems.

This report presents and analyses the findings and conclusions of this survey including the impact of participation in GF-1 and/or GF-2 on the operation and performance of national food control systems. It contains information on the outcome and benefits of participation in GF, as well as suggestions for improving the organization and results of global fora to be convened in the future.

3. Findings

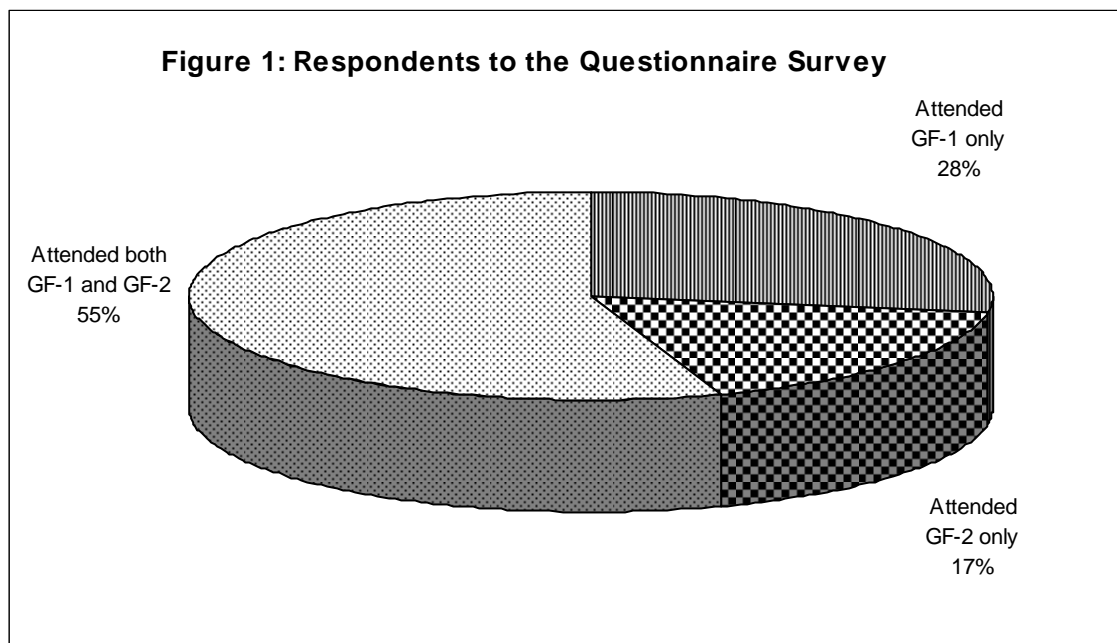
The following sections present and analyse the feedback received in response to this survey. The analysis is based on the structure of the questionnaire.

3.1 Coverage and distribution of respondents

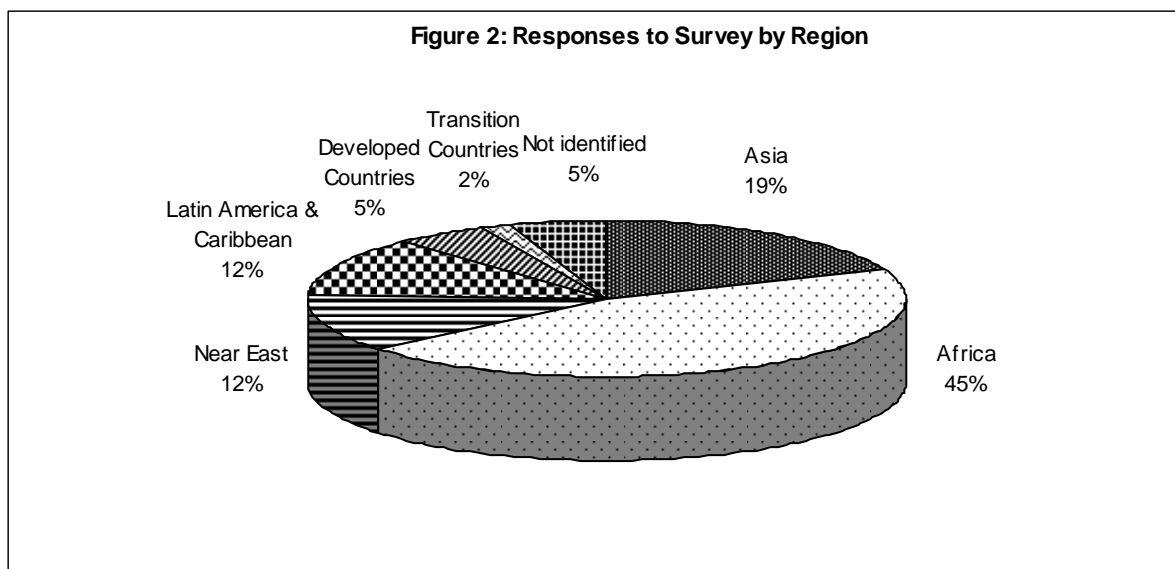
The questionnaire was sent to 600 experts from 127 countries who participated in GF-1 and/or GF-2. A total of 58 responses were received, equivalent to a feedback rate of 9.6 percent.

It is estimated that some 20 percent of the questionnaires distributed by e-mail were not received by the targeted recipients due to e-mail difficulties. In addition, some of the targeted recipients had retired and could not be contacted. Based on this information, the actual feedback rate is adjusted to 12 percent.

Among the respondents to the survey, 55 percent attended both GF1 and GF-2, 28 percent attended only GF-1 and 17 percent attended only GF-2 as illustrated in Figure 1 below.



Responses to the survey were received from experts in 34 countries. A list of countries from which responses were received is attached as Annex 1. In addition, three surveys were submitted by experts in countries that were not identified. The majority of respondents to the survey came from countries in Africa, followed by Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and the Near East as illustrated in Figure 2.



3.2 Benefits of participation in GF1 and or GF-2

Question 2: Did you gain: a) any new information or knowledge about food safety, b) new contacts or relations or c) other benefits through your participation in GF-1 and/or GF-2?

a) *New information or knowledge about food safety*

All respondents to the questionnaire confirmed that they received various types of new information or knowledge through participation in GF-1 or GF-2. A total of 97 percent of respondents indicated that they obtained new information or knowledge about an integrated approach to food safety management along the entire food chain from farm to table.

More than 70 percent of respondents confirmed they obtained new information on: i) global regulatory trends related to food safety and quality (76 percent); ii) ways to enhance the legal and regulatory framework for food safety including harmonization with Codex and international requirements (74 percent); iii) the role of FAO and WHO in supporting food safety and quality (74 percent); and iv) the use of HACCP systems to enhance food safety and quality (72 percent).

More than half of the respondents indicated that they obtained new information and knowledge about the following: i) the use of risk analysis as a framework for a food control system (64 percent); ii) risk-based food inspection and modern inspection techniques (62 percent); iii) import export control and certification (62 percent); iv) prevention and response to intentional contamination of food (62 percent); v) emerging food safety risks related to the environment and/or new technologies (57 percent); vi) the use of international and/or regional mechanisms for food contaminant monitoring and food-borne disease surveillance (58 percent); and vii) advances towards equivalence of food control systems with other countries (57 percent).

A significant share of respondents also reported that they acquired information and knowledge on: i) new approaches towards capacity building and technical assistance (50 percent); ii) the international portal on food safety, animal and plant (50 percent); and iii) improved laboratory methods, facilities and accreditation requirements (46 percent).

In addition, respondents indicated that they obtained various other types of new information and knowledge. This covered INFOSAN and INFOSAN emergency, rapid alert systems, new technologies (e.g. radiation), importance of multi-sectoral approach to food safety management, participation and communication in food safety, challenges faced by developing countries to develop and implement food safety infrastructures, collaboration with consumers' organizations, etc.

b) *New contacts or relationships*

A total of 83 percent of respondents reported that they gained new contacts or relationships through their participation in GF-1 and/or GF-2. The overwhelming majority of these new contacts were reported to be with food safety regulators from developing countries (96 percent). 77 percent were said to be with food safety regulators from developed countries and 60 percent with representatives of donors or international agencies. Some respondents also reported having established new relationships with representatives of food industry and producers' organizations, NGOs and universities.

c) *Other benefits of participating in GF-1 and or GF-2*

In addition, 67 percent of respondents indicated that they gained other benefits from their participation at the global fora. Some examples of the additional benefits reported by participants include the following:

- “new information about global trends related to food safety and quality and deeper insight and critical thinking towards shaping food safety policies”
- “closer cooperation with colleagues and counterparts”
- “improved skill and confidence to implement food safety initiatives at national level”
- “an opportunity to discuss the role of NGOs in national food safety programmes”
- “importance of understanding the role of surveillance of microbiological and chemical risks linked to the food supply and protection of consumers”.

Question 3: On return to your country, did you make use of the information and knowledge you gained at GF-1 and/or GF-2?

Based on the feedback received, all respondents confirmed that they made use of the information and knowledge gained at GF-1 and/or GF-2 on return to their country. One hundred percent of respondents indicated that they shared conference papers and documents with others in their work place, 95 percent reported that they informed and briefed colleagues on what they learned, 72 percent reported that they introduced changes to their work plan and activities based on information and knowledge gained at the global fora, 67 percent reported that they used this information as a basis to suggest changes to the food control system. In addition, 43 percent reported that they followed up on contacts and relationships made at GF and 25 percent indicated that they used the new information and knowledge as a contribution to develop proposals for funding.

Respondents indicated a number of other practical ways in which they made use of the information and knowledge gained at the global fora. These included:

- finalization of membership of INFOSAN;
- increasing awareness of high-level political leaders about new approaches to food safety;
- used information obtained to:
 - ~ suggest changes to food safety regulations and standards and to build new food safety infrastructures;
 - ~ enhanced stakeholder involvement in development of food safety regulations;
 - ~ increase public awareness of food safety and quality among consumers and importers;
 - ~ improve individual performance in delivery of technical assistance to other developing countries;
 - ~ organize seminars on particular subjects; and
 - ~ strengthen capacity of food inspection system.

Question 4: Did the information and knowledge you gained at GF-1 and/or GF-2 alter your perceptions about what is needed to strengthen the food control system in your country? If yes, how?

A total of 88 percent of respondents reported that the information and knowledge gained at the global fora altered their perceptions about what is needed to strengthen the food control system in their country.

Respondents cited many different ways in which the global fora contributed towards a change in their perceptions. These generally focused on the following main subjects:

- the importance of an integrated approach to food control along the entire food chain that is based on collaboration and coordination among relevant parts of government and other stakeholders;
- the importance of risk analysis as a framework for food control;
- the usefulness of a risk-based approach to food inspection and the value of a preventive approach;
- the need to update and harmonize national legislation with international standards and requirements (including Codex and requirements of the WTO SPS Agreement);
- the importance of increasing public awareness and knowledge about food safety among stakeholders at the country level including high-level leaders, politicians and consumers;
- laboratory accreditation; and
- the value of partnerships with other countries to promote food safety.

Question 5: Did participation in GF-1 and/or GF-2 prompt, or contribute towards, any positive outcomes related to food safety in your country?

A total of 91 percent of respondents reported that participation in the global fora prompted or contributed towards positive outcomes related to food safety in their country. Among those who replied positively to this question, more than half indicated that it resulted in:

- the development of a national food safety policy or strategy (77 percent);
- increased awareness among politicians and government leaders of the importance of food safety for public health and trade (70 percent);
- greater involvement of stakeholders (e.g. consumers, consumer groups, food industry, industry associations, academia, etc.) in food safety matters (64 percent);
- new or improved information, education and training programmes (64 percent);
- improvements to food control management such as clarification of roles and responsibilities, enhanced organizational arrangements for food control, improved coordination, better communication with stakeholders, etc. (62 percent);
- improvements to the legal and regulatory framework for food safety (60 percent);
- improvements to food inspection such as adoption of farm-to-fork approach, priority setting based on risk, improved methods, greater reliance on industry self-regulation (53 percent); and
- adoption of a risk analysis approach for food safety decision making (51 percent).

A smaller share of respondents who replied positively indicated that participation in the global fora resulted in positive outcomes, specifically: i) improvements to food control laboratories such as improved methods, development of quality assurance programmes, accreditation, etc. (43 percent); ii) new partnerships with food safety authorities in other countries (36 percent); iii) new or improved systems for contaminant monitoring and food-borne disease surveillance including early warning systems (28 percent); and iv) new sources of funding or advice for activities related to food safety (21 percent).

In addition, two respondents indicated that attendance at the global fora led to participation in INFOSAN and to new knowledge on food safety education programmes being carried out in the European Union.

Question 6. If you answered yes to any of the points in Question 5 above, please briefly describe the experience and outcomes.

In response to this question, many respondents provided additional information on the positive experiences and outcomes in their countries that were linked to their participation in the global fora. Some examples from specific countries are described below²:

² Where respondents identified their country in response to this question, the country name is indicated.

- **Benin:** An inter-agency survey was conducted to evaluate the food safety situation in the country, identify the causes of weaknesses in food control management and identify possible actions to improve the situation and strategies for implementation. There is also improved coordination of Codex activities in the country.
- **Canada:** Contributed to policy discussions towards a proposed Strategy for Safe Food being developed to strengthen the Canadian food system through improved coordination of efforts by different levels of government, agreed priorities and approaches, and linkage of activities to public health outcomes.
- **Indonesia:** Follow-up activities, supported by the Dutch government, included: i) government regulation No. 28/2004 related to food quality and safety; ii) Indonesia GAP on fresh fruit products; iii) construction of a bio-safety centre in the agricultural quarantine agency in 2004; and iv) national food inspection system for fish and processed products. In addition, plans are underway to establish a national centre for food safety alert and response which will strengthen communication internationally (GOARN, INFOSAN, WHO, SEARO, FAO, OIE, etc.) and nationally (MOH, MOA, MOLT, Mo Trade, local government etc.) based on a food chain approach.
- **Jordan:** The Jordanian Food and Drug Administration (JFDA) established a twinning project with the Danish Veterinary Food Administration and formulated (in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and WHO Jordan) a nutrition and food safety policy and strategy.
- **Madagascar:** Establishment of one single agency for food control in 2005 following GF-2 in line with the recommendations reached at GF-2. Development of curriculum to train food inspectors in 16 regions of 4 provinces. Dissemination of the WHO Five Keys to Safe Food at the municipality level targeting traders selling food to the general public.
- **Mali:** Establishment of a national Codex committee, development of a national plan for the control and surveillance of all food products, training of officers of food control and inspection agencies and of staff of food industry in good hygienic practices, HACCP, organization of a national seminar on food safety with strong participation from civil society.
- **Republic of Guinea:** stakeholders involved in the food chain have more contact with each other and share information on the particular experiences during regular meetings.
- **Senegal:** The strengthening of food control management was decisive following the two global fora and was demonstrated during the occurrence of avian influenza in Senegal. Coordination and cooperation between the different stakeholders were essential to effectively manage the situation. Concrete control measures could be taken in order to ensure enhanced health protection of consumers and food producers and operators engaged in poultry production. A national campaign on the prevention of food risks was organized at the start of the summer season.
- **Uganda:** following GF-1, Uganda reviewed food safety laws with a view to take into consideration emerging trends. A food safety strategic plan was developed and funds are being solicited to cover the activities therein.

Other examples of ways in which participation in GF-1 and/or GF-2 prompted or contributed to positive outcomes related to food safety at the country level are summarized below:

- More involvement from stakeholders (consumer groups, food industry, chambers of commerce, academics, etc.) in food safety. Increased awareness of the need for monitoring and surveillance and funding to support it. Improved education with incorporation of information on food hygiene and WHO 5 Keys to safer food in school curriculum, improved regulations, improved risk assessment (e.g. salmonella in poultry), better implementation of HACCP systems.
- Currently we participate in the certification, accreditation and standard-setting project for quality within UEMOA/ECOWAS countries. Improved collaboration with laboratories as part of the UEMOA food safety and quality project. Development of a project on standards and strengthening of selected reference laboratories. Development of a national biosecurity centre responsible for increasing awareness at all levels.
- Through participation in GF-2, we have developed improved food safety programmes (e.g. implementation of food safety risk assessment, risk management and risk communication).
- Better understanding of policy-makers towards laboratory accreditation.

- Creating awareness on INFOSAN among role players in the government, industry and consumer groups.
- Greater awareness about food safety issues. Agencies involved in food and agricultural exports have knowledge of HACCP requirements and have introduced HACCP systems. Factories with HACCP systems take more responsibility to manage their systems and do not rely on regulators to point out shortcomings. Food inspection now covers the entire food chain. Training has been conducted for personnel in the food chain and related organizations on principles and implementation of HACCP in food safety management. Training of inspectors, community leaders, religious leaders and school teachers.
- Interactions at the global fora made me appreciate how we had to change our education and training programmes to better adapt to the national culture and situation and move away from a “one size fits all” approach. Programmes have raised awareness among food industries and consumers to increase understanding that food safety is a shared responsibility.
- The country passed new comprehensive legislation in 2006 (Food Safety and Standards Act) in 2006 to integrate various provisions under different regulations. The Act also envisages setting up a food authority to provide scientific action and technical support to the government.
- Some stakeholders have applied for certification of their food safety management system.
- The implementation of a risk-based system for food control in the local market.
- Coordination with the consumer protection body and the updating the consumer’s law has strengthened enforcement in cases of non-compliance.
- A regulation to strengthen the integration of food control systems at the national level through the establishment of a coordination body has been proposed.
- Access to new sources of funding has made it possible to support supervisory activities, health registries, epidemiological surveillance, and online services for import authorization.
- Regulations for good hygienic practices have been revised, industry and trade is more actively involved in relevant discussions and committees, a traceability project is being developed based on a risk analysis framework, and the integration of the results of a research project on pathogens in meat in the operative framework of the national health authority is being promoted.
- The adoption of legal texts, food control based on risk analysis, implementation of HACCP in agri-food businesses, development of agreements regarding production, imports, information exchange with other countries, support from the French Government (FSP), improvement of sanitary measures in fish products.
- Greater coverage of food safety in the national television and radio and follow-up letters received; programmes on prevention of food safety risks broadcast on national radio; food safety programmes aired on the UN radio in the Central African Republic.
- Legal texts developed to establish a national Codex committee and an inter-ministerial committee for support to food safety activities.
- Organization of market places for food products by the Mayor of Bangui.
- Development of a national policy on animal health and endorsement of this policy at a round table.
- Creation of a national commission for food safety following a Presidential Decree.
- Involvement of professionals and consumer associations in food safety and quality activities.
- Increased awareness of politicians and parliamentarians and health and trade ministries about the importance of food safety for public health and trade.
- Implementation of HACCP.
- Development of conventions for bilateral cooperation focused on the quality control of food and agricultural products.
- Implementation of projects to revise and implement food legislation and food control and on the reorganization of the national food control system based on risk analysis.

Question 7. Have you encountered any difficulties in trying to implement ideas and knowledge acquired at GF-1 and/or GF-2?

The majority of respondents to the survey (90 percent) reported that they encountered difficulties in trying to implement ideas and knowledge gained at the global fora. Only 8 percent of respondents indicated that they have not encountered difficulties in this regard.

For those who confronted difficulties in follow-up to the global fora, the main difficulties faced were as follows:

- inadequate financial resources (81 percent);
- weak coordination among government agencies involved in food control (73 percent);
- inadequate and/or obsolete infrastructure, facilities and equipment for food inspection and laboratories (67 percent);
- lack of awareness about food safety among consumers, food industry and other stakeholders (65 percent); and
- inadequate knowledge or skills among staff of government agencies (65 percent).

In addition, a significant share of respondents reported facing difficulties in the following areas: i) weak political commitment (56 percent); ii) outdated food legislation (50 percent); iii) other development needs competing for priority and resources (46 percent); and iv) institutional resistance to change (42 percent).

Question 8. Describe any other benefits (if existing) of your participation in GF-1 and/or GF-2: i) for you personally; ii) for the food control system in your country.

ii) Benefits for individual participants

Respondents reported a number of benefits of their participation in GF-1 and/or GF-2 for them personally. Most of these focused on the following areas:

- networking opportunities and the possibility to meet and share experiences with food safety regulators from developed and developing countries and international experts;
- opportunities to acquire new knowledge and enhance understanding about a variety of topics including risk analysis, risk-based food inspection, ways to carry out risk-based control of food imports with comparatively few resources, a preventive approach to food safety, stakeholders involved in food safety, etc; and
- opportunities for professional development.

One respondent reported that attendance at the global fora contributed to his selection as a member of the newly-created National Codex Committee in his country.

The following responses illustrate some of the particular personal benefits that resulted from participation in the global fora:

- International fora are a meeting place to give and to receive. My participation in GF-2 enabled me to understand my responsibilities in food safety, to evaluate myself, and to identify the problems, weaknesses and actions necessary to improve food safety.
- More information related to the improvement of food inspection, food safety and food management in many countries; new ideas, sharing experiences, developing networking, opportunities to meet and discuss with experts from global society. GF-2 contributed to improve my understanding and knowledge about the importance and effectiveness of one official agency coordinating the food inspection, regulatory and enforcement activities as an appropriate approach towards a more efficient and saving of resources system.
- Professional development in the area of food safety and provided a new perspective on food control management based on an integrated and participatory approach.

ii) *Benefits for food control systems in participants' countries*

Respondents reported several benefits of participation in the global fora for the food control systems in their countries. These included the following:

- Strengthened coordination among concerned government ministries and agencies and establishment of a food safety commission.
- Resulted in real progress in the creation of a national commission for coordination of government agencies responsible for food safety and the development of a new approach for food control based on analysis of risks, as well as committed reflection on the need for institutional restructuring.
- Led to the development of new collaborative relationship with institutions responsible for food safety in the Netherlands.
- Re-engineering of the food control system in the country and the commitment to move forward and be compliant with international best practices.
- Receive routine publications from INFOSAN Secretariat.
- Improved capability to develop new system for surveillance, promotion and extension.
- Greater capability to implement SPS requirements, improved inspection, education and training of food hygiene in restaurants and canteens, adoption of some Codex standards, use of regulation and education to reduced pesticide use.
- Improvements to the national food control laboratory in preparation for accreditation (ISO 17025).

Question 9. Were there any negative aspects or drawbacks of your participation in GF-1 and/or GF-2?

The large majority of respondents (78 percent) replied that there were no negative aspects of their participation in the global fora. Eight respondents indicated that there were some negative aspects. These related to specific difficulties faced at the country level including limited knowledge and awareness of food safety among politicians and leaders, inadequate financial and human resources to apply new knowledge gained at the global fora and implement capacity building activities, a traditional sector-based approach and lack of willingness to change, and/or disagreements among heads of agencies.

Question 10. Please provide any other comments below (including suggestions for changes or improvements to future global fora):

A large number of comments were provided in response to this question. Many of these included suggestions and ideas on ways to strengthen the delivery and impact of future global fora.

Comments provided in response to this question are summarized below:

- **Preparations for the global fora:** Prepare an action plan in advance to ensure commitment from participating countries; organize more regional/subregional meetings before and after the global fora; disseminate information and documentation to participants in advance; actively involve least developed countries (like Benin) in preparations for future meetings to ensure that the topics covered reflect the real situation in these countries; use feedback and comments received from participants at GF-1 and GF-2 to enhance future global fora.
- **Participants at the global fora:** Increase participation from Africa and other developing countries; invite resource speakers from least developed countries; ensure adequate participation of high-level government officials, decision- and policy-makers (especially ministers of health, agriculture and trade) to ensure commitment for food safety including budgetary allocations; invite representatives of political authorities and consumers; invite representatives from agriculture, health, producers and communicators; limit the participation of technicians and include representatives of consumers and other stakeholders involved in the food chain from farm to table.
- **Content:** Limit the number of subjects covered to those of interest to a large number of countries, especially developing countries; include adequate focus on chemical contaminants; address the special needs of developing countries (e.g. traditional food processing); include field visits (e.g. to farms and market places); include country presentations on food safety regulations before and after

the global fora; include discussions on one official agency for food regulation and enforcement; include items of interest to developing countries as well as experiences from developed and developing countries and results of recent public health research.

- **Delivery of the global fora:** Keep presentations short and allow more time for discussion; increase the time (days) of the global fora; encourage more panel discussions to permit a deeper exploration of the topics; a single presentation followed by panel reaction and then broad discussion with participation by plenary delegates would improve the design; the panel should reflect least developed, developing and developed countries' perspectives; allow two days for group work and two days for plenary discussion; documenting the conclusions of the global fora in the form of a resolution for signature by countries would enhance implementation; increase the length of the global fora.
- **Follow-up to the global fora:** Strengthen the involvement of FAO regional offices in follow-up activities at the country level; encourage developed countries to offer technical assistance to strengthen capacity of food control systems; provide funding and logistical support for follow-up activities; give FAO and WHO country offices the opportunity and capacity to monitor the implementation of recommendations at the country level; create a system for contact with participants.
- **Future global fora:** The global fora should be held regularly; a suggested theme for GF-3 could be "the role of policy-makers in strengthening food safety control services". This should be considered as the main objective of GF-3; organize GF-3 in 2008 to allow sufficient time on reporting the benefits of GF-2; ensure participation of same experts to contribute towards continuous training; organize a meeting of experts who attended GF-1 and GF-2 to share experiences to enable GF-3 to focus on experiences of developed countries enables recommendations to be drawn and regional/international plans of action; ensure the attendance of the same experts in GF-3 to ensure continuity in achievement of desired outputs.
- **General comments related to the global fora:** This meeting was very important for food regulators, especially from developing countries, to follow the global concern of food safety; supporting each other, especially countries with poor food safety systems, is important; opportunity to meet colleagues from other countries including sharing information; the GF have been really helpful as they have improved our knowledge in food safety measures. However, we need funding so as to properly empower us to enact new legislation that will replace those old ones that are ineffective; provide documentation in other languages (including Portuguese); avoid conflicts of interest between developing and developed countries.
- **Other comments (including recommendations and areas for follow-up):** Need to build capacity for food regulation and enforcement in developing countries; need to harmonize rules and regulations, protocols for testing and assay; certification; increase awareness on food quality control through translation of documents into other languages (Creole) and training people along the chain in HACCP; organize meetings to increase awareness and knowledge on aspects related to food safety in developing countries; clearly define food safety objectives and expected results for developing countries and develop new projects to strengthen capacity and provide technical assistance; greater support from FAO and WHO for development plans to increase awareness on food safety and training of food control managers on risk analysis; promote the harmonization of quality standards and standardize methods and tools for quality control; develop coherent programmes to monitor training and infrastructure/equipment needs for food control and surveillance; create networks for rapid alert on food contamination risks of concern to particular countries; solve coordination problems and develop mechanisms for sub-regional cooperation; commitment to set deadlines to inform stakeholders and promote their participation in nutrition, food safety, etc.; strengthen capacity on the WTO SPS and TBT Agreements and on systems for surveillance and rapid alert; many thanks to those who initiated this survey and for involving participants.

Countries from which replies were received

Country	Total no. of responses to survey
Algeria	1
Bangladesh	1
Benin	1
Brunei Darussalam	1
Burundi	1
Cambodia	1
Canada	1
Central African Republic	3
Chad	1
Ecuador	1
El Salvador	1
Guinea	2
Guinea-Bissau	1
Haiti	1
Hungary	1
India	2
Indonesia	5
Jordan	1
Liberia	3
Madagascar	1
Mali	3
Mexico	3
Morocco	2
New Zealand	1
Nigeria	3
Philippines	1
Senegal	2
South Africa	2
Sweden	1
Syria	2
Togo	2
Turkey	1
Uganda	1
Uruguay	1
Non identified countries	3
Total	58

Survey to Evaluate the Impact of the FAO/WHO Global Fora of Food Safety Regulators

Introduction

FAO and WHO have convened two global fora (GF) of food safety regulators to facilitate the exchange of information and experiences on food safety issues of common concern. GF-1 was convened in Marrakech, Morocco in 2002; GF-2 took place in Bangkok, Thailand in 2004. The purpose of this survey is to assess the benefits of participation in GF-1 and GF-2, including the impact of this participation on the operation and performance of food control systems at the national level. The survey is designed to determine the positive developments (e.g. changes to food control systems linked to participation in GF-1 or GF-2) as well as problems and difficulties encountered.

The following questionnaire should take about 20 minutes to complete. All responses received will be treated as confidential. The information obtained will be analysed and used to support preparations for the proposed GF-3. FAO and WHO appreciate your willingness to participate in this survey, and thank you in advance for your time and interest.

Completed questionnaires should be sent, before **1 November 2006** to:

Food Quality and Standards Service
Nutrition and Consumer Protection Division, FAO
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00100 Rome
E-mail: Food-safety-GF@fao.org; Fax: (+39) 06 57054593

1. Did you participate in GF-1 and/or GF-2? Please circle as appropriate:

▪ GF-1 (Marrakech, Morocco, 2002)	YES	NO
▪ GF-2 (Bangkok, Thailand, 2004)	YES	NO

2 a. Did you gain any new information or knowledge about food safety through your participation in GF-1 and/or GF-2?

YES	NO
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If yes, what did this information or knowledge cover? Please select all applicable boxes from the following list:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ▪ an integrated approach to food safety management along the entire food chain from farm to table | |
| ▪ ways to enhance the legal and regulatory framework for food safety including harmonization with international requirements and Codex | |
| ▪ global regulatory trends related to food safety and quality (e.g. SPS Agreement, non-mandatory standards, certification, etc.) | |
| ▪ the use of risk analysis as a framework for a food control system | |
| ▪ risk-based food inspection and modern inspection techniques | |
| ▪ improved laboratory methods, facilities and accreditation requirements | |

- emerging food safety risks related to the environment and/or new technologies
- import/export control and certification
- use of HACCP systems to enhance food safety and quality
- advances towards equivalence of food control systems with other countries
- prevention and response to intentional contamination of food
- the use of international and/or regional mechanisms for food contaminant monitoring and food-borne disease surveillance
- International Portal on Food Safety, Animal and Plant Health
- new approaches towards capacity building and technical assistance
- the role of FAO and WHO in supporting food safety and quality
- other (please describe)

2 b. Did you gain any new contacts or relationships through your participation in GF-1 and/or GF-2?

YES	NO
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If yes, with whom? Please select all applicable boxes from the following list:

- food safety regulators from other developing countries
- food safety regulators from developed countries
- donors or international agencies
- other (please describe)

2 c. Did you gain anything else from your participation in GF-1 and/or GF-2?

YES	NO
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If yes, please describe:

3. On return to your country, did you make use of the information and knowledge you gained at GF-1 and/or GF-2?

YES	NO
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If yes, how? Please select all applicable boxes from the following list:

- shared conference papers and documents with others in your work place
- informed and briefed colleagues on what you learned
- followed up on contacts and relationships you made at GF
- introduced changes to your work plan and activities
- used it as a basis to suggest changes to the food control system
- used it as a contribution to develop proposals for funding
- other (please describe)

4. Did the information and knowledge you gained at GF-1 and/or GF-2 alter your perceptions about what is needed to strengthen the food control system in your country?

YES	NO
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If yes, how?

5. Did participation in GF-1 and/or GF-2 prompt, or contribute towards, any positive outcomes related to food safety in your country?

YES	NO
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If yes, what? Please select all applicable boxes from the following list:

- increased awareness among politicians and government leaders of the importance of food safety for public health and trade
- improvements to the legal and regulatory framework for food safety (e.g. harmonization with relevant international and regional agreements, Codex standards, etc.)
- development of a national food safety policy or strategy
- adoption of a risk analysis approach for food safety decision making
- improvements to food control management (e.g. clarification of roles and responsibilities, enhanced organizational arrangements for food control, improved coordination, better communication with stakeholders, etc.)
- improvements to food inspection (e.g. adoption of farm-to-fork approach, priority setting based on risk, improved methods, greater reliance on industry self-regulation, etc.)
- improvements to food control laboratories (e.g. improved methods, development of quality assurance programmes, accreditation, etc.)

- greater involvement of stakeholders (e.g. consumers, consumer groups, food industry, industry associations, academia, etc.) in food safety matters
- new or improved information, education and training programmes (e.g. on WHO 5 keys to safer food, certification, accreditation, quality assurance schemes, HACCP systems, etc.)
- new or improved systems for contaminant monitoring and food-borne disease surveillance (including early warning systems)
- new partnerships with food safety authorities in other countries
- new sources of funding or advice for activities related to food safety
- other (please describe below)

6. If you answered yes to any of the points in Question 5 above, please briefly describe the experience and outcomes:

7. Have you encountered any difficulties in trying to implement ideas and knowledge acquired at GF-1 and/or GF-2?

YES	NO
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If yes, what kinds of difficulties? Please select all applicable boxes from the following list:

- weak political commitment
- outdated food legislation
- institutional resistance to change
- weak coordination among government agencies involved in food control
- staff of government agencies have inadequate knowledge or skills
- lack of awareness about food safety among consumers, food industry and other stakeholders
- inadequate financial resources
- inadequate and/or obsolete infrastructure, facilities and equipment for food inspection and laboratories
- other development needs competing for priority and resources
- other (please describe)

8. Describe any other benefits (if existing) of your participation in GF-1 and/or GF-2:

i. for you personally:

ii. for the food control system in your country:

9. Were there any negative aspects or drawbacks of your participation in GF-1 and/or GF-2?

YES	NO
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If yes, please describe:

10. Please provide any other comments below (including suggestions for changes or improvements to future global fora):

Thank you very much for your time and response