Food Safety Policies and Regulatory Frameworks

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This programme aims at equipping high level officials from developing countries with cutting-edge knowledge and strengthening their capacity to base their decisions on sound consideration and analysis of policies and strategies both at home and in the context of strategic international developments.

Related resources
- See all material prepared for the FAO Policy Learning Programme
- See the FAO Policy Learning Website: http://www.fao.org/tc/policy-learning/en/
Food Safety Policies and Regulatory Framework

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About EASYPol

The EASYPol home page is available at:  www.fao.org/easypol

This presentation belongs to a set of modules which are part of the EASYPol Resource package:  FAQ Policy Learning Programme : Specific policy issues: Food safety policies and regulatory frameworks

EASYPol is a multilingual repository of freely downloadable resources for policy making in agriculture, rural development and food security. The resources are the results of research and field work by policy experts at FAO. The site is maintained by FAO's Policy Assistance Support Service, Policy and Programme Development Support Division, FAO.
Outline

- International framework for food safety: Codex Alimentarius
- Use of Codex at national level and National Food Control Systems
- Guiding principles for food safety policies
Objectives

After reading this module, you should know about:

- The international regulatory framework for food safety
- The Food Control Systems and the guiding principles for ensuring a safe food supply
Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC)

- **What is the CAC?**
  - A Joint FAO/WHO inter-governmental body with 176 member countries (as of July 2008) plus observers
  - Responsible for implementing FAO/WHO Joint Food Standards Programme since 1962

- **Main functions of the CAC**
  - To protect the health of consumers
  - To ensure fair practices in the food trade
  - To coordinate food standards work internationally
  - To finalise and publish international standards, codes of practice and recommendations in the Codex Alimentarius
The Codex Alimentarius

- Codex Alimentarius” means “Food Code”
- Comprises 14 volumes
- All standards available at Codex web-site
- Codex standards are recommended (not mandated) food quality and safety standards

http://www.codexalimentarius.net/web/index_en.jsp
CAC Structure and Procedures

- CAC Secretariat is located at FAO Headquarters
- Rules and procedures for CAC and its constituent bodies are outlined in the Procedural Manual
  - http://www.codexalimentarius.net/web/procedural_manual.jsp
- Procedures for elaborating standards facilitates broad stakeholder input
National Codex Structures

- Codex Alimentarius Commission/Codex Secretariat
- National Governments
- National Codex Committee
- Industry Groups
- Scientific Community
- Consumer Groups
- Contact Point
Intuitive approach to a food safety problem

- Recognize the problem
- Understand the problem
- Deal with the problem
- Checks to be sure that the problem has been dealt with efficiently
Essential food control components

*System to recognize/solve problems*

- Food law, regulation, and standards  
  *(make use of Codex)*

- Food safety control management
  - Inspection services
  - Laboratory services

- Monitoring
  - Surveillance of food borne diseases
  - Capacity for emergency response

- Training
  - Public information, education and communication
Challenges facing national food control systems

- Outdated or incomplete food laws and regulations
- Absence of a national food control strategy, poorly defined and overlapping mandates among agencies involved
- Limited infrastructure, equipment, supplies, skilled personnel
- Inadequate scientific and technical resources for food inspection and compliance
- Limited knowledge about, and ability to comply with, food quality and safety assurance systems
- Weak capacity to participate fully in international bodies and agreements governing trade in food
Food safety policies are not to be conceived in isolation (1/2)

Existing parameters directly or indirectly related that may influence the implementation of the policy such as:

- **Decentralization policy**: that may confer to decentralized bodies (such as Municipalities) a responsibility in food control,

- **Export promotion strategies**: that may include activities like bringing laboratories to accreditation or setting up accreditation bodies

- **Education programmes**: where synergies can be leveraged when it comes to awareness raising about food hygiene issues

- **Research programmes**: that may include themes regarding improving traditional food handling or storage conditions
Food safety policies are not to be conceived in isolation (2/2)

- **Environmental sustainability**: that may include components directly or indirectly related to food safety such as organic farming, POPs integrated pest management etc.

- **Agriculture Development policies**: that may contain mentions to agriculture inputs supply

- **Food security policies**: that may include actions aiming at improving food safety

- **Land tenure legislation**: that may influence greatly growers efforts to implement GAP
Guiding principles to be reflected in a food safety policy (1/4)

Food Chain approach

- Food Safety is not a static, permanent attribute of the food...
- Food Safety requires all players involved along the food chain (food producers, processors, retailers and households) to recognize their primary responsibility and to share a common goal: **ensure safe food at all steps of the chain**
- Can materialize through good practices (GHP, GMP, GAP) and monitoring systems (e.g. HACCP)
Guiding principles to be reflected in a food safety policy (2/4)

Risk based approach

- Conduct risk analysis (risk assessment, risk management and risk communication)
- Develop science-based strategies
- Maximize risk reduction
- Helps make decisions in proportion to public health risks
- Establish risk-based priorities
- Integrated, economically feasible initiatives
- Ensure transparency
Guiding principles to be reflected in a food safety policy (3/4)

Transparency

- Helps stakeholders to **contribute effectively** to decision making
- Improved **efficiency and compliance**
- Builds **consumer’s confidence** in the safety and quality of food supply
- Improved **communication of food safety information** (science based information to clear up the unjustified fears sometimes spread by the media)

Traceability

- Keeping **record** of all operations/inputs during production
- Allows tracing **back source of contamination or disease**, identifying contaminated/infected products and subsequently applying control measures
- **Costs** can be high for producers
- Helps **differentiate** foods
Guiding principles to be reflected in a food safety policy (4/4)

Contingency planning

- Well established **product recall** systems
- Established **procedures for containment**, quarantine and/or eradication in case of spread of pest/disease
- Clear **attribution of roles** in case of emergency, lines of authority and coordination mechanisms
- **Training** of the persons involved in the plan and periodic drills
- Well established **communication channels**
- Secure a **budget for emergencies** (provisions)
- Revise the plan in line with progress in techniques and/or knowledge as well as similar experiences in other countries
Conclusions

- WTO agreements have deeply modified the food control practices

- Global trend towards harmonization and transparency

- Developing countries must reinforce their participation in these negotiations *fora* (Codex, SPS and TBT Committees)

- Importance to set up effective and modern Food Control Systems:
  - Structure is less important than interaction and coordination
  - Focus is on prevention
  - Not only science based, but also risk based
Useful links ...

- FAO (AGNS)– Food Safety web site web
  http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/agns/

- Codex website
  http://www.codexalimentarius.net/web/index_en.jsp

- SPS and TBT agreements
  http://www.wto.org/english/docs_e/legal_e/legal_e.htm#annex3

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