



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR ASIA

Nineteenth Session

Tokyo, Japan, 3 – 7 November 2014

FAO / WHO ACTIVITIES RELEVANT TO THE REGION, IDENTIFYING PRIORITIES AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

(Prepared by FAO and WHO)

INTRODUCTION

1. This paper describes FAO/WHO activities in the areas of capacity building and the provision of scientific advice implemented since the 18th Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Asia (CCASIA18) which are complementary to the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

TECHNICAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW

2. Under their respective mandates, goals and workplans, FAO and WHO are engaged in a range of food safety and quality capacity development activities at national and regional levels. These capacity development activities directly support the Codex Strategic Plan 2014–2019; in particular, activities related to objectives 2.2, 2.3, 3.1 and 3.2. Furthermore, FAO and WHO capacity development activities also contribute to the Strategic Plan for the CCASIA, especially objective 3 (development and enhancement of the capacities of national Codex Contact Points), Objective 4 (the exchange of scientific and technical expertise in the region) and Objective 5 (promote procedures to review Codex codes, standards, guidelines and recommendations to facilitate their use as the basis for national standards).

3. FAO and WHO capacity development activities are generally aimed at:

- Upgrading the capacity of developing member countries in food safety, quality control and quality assurance and supporting their effective participation in the work of Codex;
- Enhancing the respective roles of the agriculture and health sectors and trade and industry in ensuring the safety and quality of the food supply; and
- Strengthening cooperation and collaboration between FAO and WHO and partner organizations, in the field of food safety and quality.

4. Since CCASIA18, FAO and WHO (either jointly or together with partner organizations and donors) have commenced or are continuing to work with countries of the region on a range of activities (including direct technical assistance projects on food safety and quality, regional projects and events addressing food safety issues). Detailed information is provided below in tables shown in paragraph 15 below. More background on FAO and WHO technical capacity development activities is available at <http://www.fao.org/food/food-safety-quality/home-page/en/>, www.fao.org/ag/aginfo/home/en/index.htm, <http://www.fao.org/asiapacific/en>, <http://www.who.int/foodsafety/capacity/en/> and <http://www.wpro.who.int/foodsafety/en/index.html>.

5. Important information on capacity building activities was provided to the CAC37 and is available in CX/CAC 14/37/14 Add.1 (ftp://ftp.fao.org/codex/meetings/CAC/cac37/cac37_14e_Add1.pdf). The working paper provides information of relevance to the all regions and describes the range of supporting materials (e.g. guidelines, manuals and online resources), key initiatives, international events and global projects which have been delivered or initiated since the last session. Issues of relevance include ongoing work on dealing with food legislation, coordination between different Ministries and Departments on food safety issues, food standards issues, food safety emergencies, risk-based food inspection including imported food control, foodborne disease surveillance systems, laboratory strengthening, adoption of safe food practices by food chain operators, science based food safety systems, improved guidance on evidence based food safety policy making, assessment and planning for national food safety programmes and consumer education.

Specific focus on regional initiatives

6. Joint FAO and WHO capacity-building activities organized by the Codex Trust Fund in collaboration with Codex partners for the period in question appear in the annual reports and progress reports of the Codex Trust Fund which are submitted to CCEXEC69 and CAC37 (http://ftp.fao.org/codex/Meetings/CAC/cac37/cac37_13e.pdf).

7. Specific to the forthcoming CCASIA19, FAO and WHO with funding from the CTF are holding a pre-CCASIA training workshop on “Food recall/traceability within the risk analysis framework - Prevention of food safety emergencies”, in Tokyo, Japan on 2nd November 2014. The overall objective of the workshop is to provide technical guidance and support to CCASIA delegations on the topic of establishing and implementing an effective national food recall system to respond to food safety events. The specific objectives are to: i) share knowledge on the basic concept of risk analysis and relation between risk management and crisis management in food safety; ii) enhance understanding on application of food recall and traceability system in the national food control system with specific reference to food safety events and emergencies; iii) raise awareness on the FAO/WHO guides for applying risk analysis during food safety emergencies and for developing and improving national food recall systems; iv) discuss a possible roadmap for introducing traceability and food recall in emergency scenario in participating countries; and v) strengthen regional collaboration on the topic. The workshop will present demonstrated best practices, elements for an effective national food recall system, and the process for establishing/reviewing/improving the national food recall system within the larger framework of a national food control system.

8. On a regional level, in the thirty second FAO Regional Conference for the Asia & the Pacific held in March 2014 in relation to food safety, the Conference requested FAO to assist member countries strengthen food safety programmes, including efforts to harmonise and improve food standards, and help support institutions that lead to improved management of food safety risks (<http://www.fao.org/unfao/govbodies/meeting-docs/rc/aprc32/en/>).

9. FAO has also developed the Country Programming Framework (CPF) for certain countries in Asia region while for others the same is currently under development. This determines the programme focal areas (including for food safety) for FAO assistance during the period 2013- 2017 in alignment with the UNDAF.

10. Some key initiatives include:

Food Retail: A Regional Workshop for Asian Countries on Hygiene and Safety in Food Retail organised by FAO in collaboration with National Environment Agency, Singapore was held in Singapore from 12-14 September 2013. 41 representatives from 22 countries were present. This led to two main recommendations; first the finalization of a regional guidance document on Hygiene and safety in the food retail sector (available at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3986e.pdf>) and second creation and implementation of a retail Asian Network to facilitate regional cooperation. The development of the network or platform is being supported by FAO after which it will be handed over to countries to manage for a year each starting with Singapore, and subsequently India, Thailand, Philippines and Bangladesh. The workshop report is available at http://www.fao.org/asiapacific/rap/home/meetings/list/detail/en/?meetings_id=858&year=2013.

GMP/HACCP: A regional consultation workshop on Implementation of GMP/HACCP in Asia- a status review was held during 23-25, June 2014 in Bangkok, Thailand. The meeting was jointly organized by the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAP) and the Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office (FSVO) of Switzerland. A total of 56 persons from 20 countries participated, mostly Government officials responsible for managing national food control system in the Asian region and some from private sector/ trade federation / Non-Government Organization. The major outcome was a review the current status of GMP/HACCP in Asia with the aim of further promoting them and development of a regional guidance on criteria for GMP/HACCP for Asian countries. This document adapts the Codex texts into requirements or criteria which can be included by governments in their legislation to provide a basis for compliance of GMP/HACCP based food safety management systems, which could be applied either on mandatory or voluntary basis. The document has been covered under two parts – Criteria for GMP/GHP and criteria for HACCP. Governments may incorporate both or a single part into their requirements depending on the situation of their businesses. (Both the report and guidance document are currently under publication.)

GAP: In view of the importance of the food value chain approach to ensuring safety of final food products, with the support of an ADB funded and a Japanese funded project, a training module on “Implementing ASEANGAP in the fruit and vegetable sector: its certification and accreditation” has been recently published (RAP Publication 2014/2) and is available at <http://www.fao.org/docrep/019/i3576e/i3576e00.htm>. Further to strengthen this activity in the SAARC region, work is ongoing to develop a GAP scheme for SAARC region to cover criteria, certification norms and accreditation norms. The same will then be piloted in 4 countries namely Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Maldives.

Strengthening food control coordination in countries: Due to the multi-sectoral and multidisciplinary nature of food safety involving in some cases more than 8-10 departments, and its significant complexity, it is important to focus on addressing the issue. In a Regional Consultation on Food Safety Policies held in December 2012, the ineffective or lack of coordination, cooperation and communication between ministries, departments and stakeholders was an area identified for future work and to see how the same could be strengthened in countries. A detailed study of the food safety scenario has been carried out in specific countries namely Indonesia, Laos and Cambodia to analyse the overlaps and gaps and come out with recommendations on how the same should be addressed. The results will be presented and discussed in a regional workshop to share experiences and lessons learnt which is scheduled during the latter part of 2014.

11. The Informal Consultation on Strengthening Surveillance for Foodborne Diseases was held in Manila, Philippines on 25-27 February 2014. Experts in communicable disease surveillance and response, food safety and laboratories from a range of countries in the WHO Western Pacific Region and beyond participated in the consultation. This information consultation was aimed to develop a technical guidance on strengthening surveillance and response systems for foodborne diseases. Through the consultation, the purpose, scope and principles of the guidance document were defined. Also, the participants identified three key stages of development within a surveillance and response system and mapped the objectives and components required in each stage specific to the foodborne disease context. A guidance document on foodborne disease surveillance is currently under development and will be completed by the end of this year.

12. In WPRO, the Mekong Project in Communities and Schools has been implemented in six primary schools in Cambodia and six primary schools in Lao PDR. The twelve schools have been selected to participate in a pilot project to create supportive physical environments, enhance availability for healthy, nutritious and safe food options, and train food vendors, primary school teachers and students on good nutrition and food safety. The project aimed to achieve healthier and safer food for poor urban women and children. The Mekong Project was an encouraging collaboration at country level between national government (education and health sectors), local authorities, youth and women organisations.

13. The Food Safety Cooperation Working Group (FSCWG), which includes representatives from the APEC Food Safety Cooperation Forum, the ASEAN Expert Group on Food Safety, OIE and the FAO, and WHO, serves as a platform for sharing information and coordinating actions for food safety. It aims to strengthen national food control systems by improving cooperation, sharing knowledge and expertise, and pooling resources related to food safety work among technical agencies and development partners in Asia and the Pacific regions. The group met for the second meeting in December 2013.

14. Food safety information sharing has been improved between countries/areas and the management of food emergencies has been better coordinated owing to the strengthened partnerships through INFOSAN in Asia network. WHO organized in collaboration with FAO a regional meeting on Strengthening INFOSAN and National Food Control Systems in Asia on 10-12 December 2013 in Manila, Philippines. It was reported that countries and area have made good progress in strengthening INFOSAN and national food control systems. Countries' capacity to prepare and response to food safety emergencies has been strengthened.

15. Activities completed or ongoing in terms of Regional/ National events organized in the Region since the CCASIA18 are detailed in the following table.

Activities	Organizers	Dates	Venue
Regional Consultations/ Workshops/ Seminars/ Meetings/ trainings			
Training Workshop: Food recall and traceability -Application in National food safety control-	FAO with funding support from Japan	15 -17 February 2013	Chiang Mai, Thailand
Technical workshop on Chemical Risk Analysis in the Food Chain	FAO/WHO with support of Codex Trust Fund	13-16 March 2013	Beijing, China
Regional Training Course "Strengthening Capacity in Data Collection and Generation for Food Safety Risk Analysis"	FAO with funding support from Japan	10-13 June 2013	Tokyo, Japan
Technical Training on Risk Analysis for SAARC Countries	FAO in collaboration with QCI, India	17-21 June 2013	Delhi, India
'Regional Workshop for Asian Countries on food hygiene and safety in food retail	FAO in collaboration with National Environment Agency Singapore	12-14 September 2013	Singapore
Technologies to ensure traceability for food safety (as a part of the 1st SRII Asia Summit Research & Innovations in Agriculture for	FAO in collaboration with The Ministry of Science and Technology, Ministry of	17 September 2013	Bangkok, Thailand

Activities	Organizers	Dates	Venue
Sustainable Development)	Information and Communication Technology, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives of Thailand together with the National Science and Technology Development Agency		
Regional training course on Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria	FAO with funding support from Japan	16 November 2013	Hanoi, Vietnam
Meeting on Strengthening INFOSAN and National Food Control Systems in Asia	WHO/FAO/ INFOSAN & in collaboration with & support from Ministry of Food & Drug Safety of the Republic of Korea	10-12 December 2013	Manila, Philippines
2 nd Food Safety Cooperation Working Group Meeting	FAO/WHO/APEC Food Safety Cooperation Forum/ASEAN Expert Group on Food Safety/OIE	12 December, 2013	Manila, Philippines
Informal Consultation on Strengthening the Surveillance of Foodborne Diseases in the Western Pacific	WHOWPRO	25-27 February, 2014	Manila, Philippines
APPPC regional workshop on practical aspects of pesticide risk assessment and phasing out of highly hazardous pesticides	FAO in collaboration with the Government of People's Republic of China	19-22 May, 2014	Nanjing, China
"Ensuring Biosafety through legal and regulatory instruments: South Asian Perspectives" South Asian Regional Workshop on Biosafety	FAO in collaboration with UNEP on a GEF project (National Biosafety Framework Project in the SAARC region) to provide technical assistance on biosafety.	27-29 May 2014	Paro, Bhutan
Regional Consultation Workshop on Implementation of GMP/HACCP in Asia – a status review	FAO in collaboration with the Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office FSVO, Switzerland	23-25 June 2014	Bangkok, Thailand
Regional training Workshop on "Design and Evaluation of Mycotoxin Sampling Protocols"	FAO with funding support from Japan	11-12 September 2014	Manila, Philippines
Regional Consultation Workshop on Implementation of Good Agriculture Practices in SAARC Countries: SAARC GAP Scheme'	FAO in collaboration with SAARC Agriculture Centre	22-24 September 2014	Bangladesh
Regional workshop on Strengthening food control coordination in countries	FAO	2014	Bangkok, Thailand
Country Activities			
National workshop on the implementation of the Rotterdam Convention in China	APPPC, Rotterdam Convention Secretariat, China	5-6 June 2013	Ningbo, China
Workshop on Risk Assessment in Food Safety in Bangladesh	FAO, DGHS, Government of Bangladesh	8-9 June 2013	Dhaka, Bangladesh
National Seminar on 'Food Safety and sustainable aquaculture'	FAO, Department of Fisheries, Government of Bangladesh and private sector	7 July 2013	Dhaka, Bangladesh
National Workshop on Food Standards Formulation : Options for Bangladesh	FAO, BSTI, Government of Bangladesh and private sector	23 July 2013	Dhaka, Bangladesh
Training workshop on "Strengthening Food Standard Setting and participation in Codex activities in Cambodia"	FAO in collaboration with CAMCONTROL, Ministry of Commerce, Cambodia	19-21 February, 2014	Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Training of Trainers on Good Hygiene Practices and monitoring of street food vending	FAO and Khulna City Corporation	18 March 2014	Khulna, Bangladesh
National Workshop on 'Enhancing Codex Capacity in Bangladesh	FAO and Government of Bangladesh (BSTI)	23-24 April 2014	Dhaka, Bangladesh
National training on risk-based food inspections (a series of trainings)	FAO and Government of Bangladesh	April-June 2014	Bangladesh

Activities	Organizers	Dates	Venue
Stakeholder Workshop in Indonesia in Food Standards and Food Safety Control Systems: Strengthening Coordination Activities	FAO in collaboration with National Agency of Drug and Food Control (Indonesia) and Mahidol University (Bangkok)	29-30 April 2014	Jakarta, Indonesia
Stakeholder Workshop in Laos in Food Standards and Food Safety Control Systems: Strengthening Coordination Activities	FAO in collaboration with FDD, MOH, Lao PDR and Mahidol University (Bangkok)	10-11 June 2014	Vientiane, Lao PDR
Workshop on the Development of National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Rotterdam Convention in Cambodia	APPPC, Rotterdam Convention Secretariat, Cambodia	1-4 July 2014	Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Stakeholder Workshop in Cambodia in Food Standards and Food Safety Control Systems: Strengthening Coordination Activities	FAO in collaboration with CAMCONTROL (Cambodia) and Mahidol University (Bangkok)	11-12 August 2014	Phnom Penh, Cambodia
National workshop on Evidence-based food safety decision making and policy development using multi-criteria approaches with Thailand as pilot country	FAO in collaboration with BFSES (MOH) and ACFS (MOAC)	25-27 August 2014	Bangkok, Thailand

PROJECTS/DIRECT ASSISTANCE TO COUNTRIES

Summary of activities	Countries	Status
FAO /WHO continued their technical assistance activities in the region: enhancing food safety by strengthening national food control systems. Components of activities include; technical support to enhancing food safety policy, management and regulatory framework; strengthening of national Codex committees, strengthening of foodborne disease and food contamination surveillance/monitoring; training for food inspectors, development of food safety emergency response plans, responding to food safety emergencies, food safety concerns during disasters, managing the food safety aspects of mass gatherings and consumer food safety education projects. Regional food policy and advisory technical assistance; formulation of project proposals on food quality control.	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Vietnam	Ongoing
FAO supported projects		
Support to Capacity Building and Implementation of International Food Safety Standards in ASEAN Countries GCP/RAS/280/JPN	ASEAN countries	Ongoing (started January 2012 for 5 years)
Promotion of pesticide risk reduction through strengthening policy and capacity building initiatives in Asia (GCP/RAS/229/SWE)	Asia, with focus on Greater Mekong Subregion (Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam)	Ongoing (started in 2007, up to June 2018)
Promotion of Rural Development through Development of Geographical Indications at Regional Level in Asia (GCP/RAS/281/FRA)	Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand	15 March 2012 – 14 March 2015
Development of Standards and Scheme for Good Agriculture Practice (GAP) Implementation and Certification in countries of SAARC	SAARC countries	March 2014- Feb 2016
Strengthening Food Standard Coordination Mechanism	Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos	December 2011 – December 2014
Improving food safety in Bangladesh (GCP/BGD/047/NET)	Bangladesh	July 2012- December 2015
Institutionalization of Food Safety in Bangladesh for safer Food (GCP/BGD/054/USA)	Bangladesh	July 2013 – June 2016
Strengthening of Food Safety and Standards in Bhutan (TCP/BHU/3401)	Bhutan	April 2012 to December 2014
FAO/WHO project on " Control of microbial and antimicrobial resistance (AMR) hazards along the poultry chain, in Cambodia"	Cambodia	Ongoing

Summary of activities	Countries	Status
Formulation of a Food Law (TCP/CMB/3502)	Cambodia	June 2014 – May 2015
Technical Assistance for the further development of the SPS related legal framework in the Lao PDR (UTF/LAO/019/LAO)	Lao PDR	2014 Onwards
Strengthening Capacity of Mongolia to Implement Codex TCP/MON/3401	Mongolia	April 2012 to December 2014
Capacity building to improve market access for fish and fishery products" (FAO TCP/MYA/3401)	Myanmar	March 2012-December 2013
Policy assistance for biosecure agro-food supply chain for enhanced market access and food security for the small holding rural sector (TCP/NEP/3402)	Nepal	September 2012 – December 2014
Enhancing Sanitary and Phytosanitary capacity of Nepalese ginger exports through Public Private Partnerships (MTF/NEP/068/STF)	Nepal	March 2012 – Feb 2015
Institutional Strengthening on Food Safety and Quality Control in Supply Chain Management of Livestock Products	Thailand	September 2014-September 2016
Capacity building for testing of hazardous substances in livestock production testing laboratory	Thailand	September 2014-September 2016
Strengthening Vietnamese SPS capacity for trade 'Improvement of safety and quality of fresh vegetables through the value chain approach' (MTF/VIE/052/UNJ)	Vietnam	2014
Strengthening the food safety information, education, communication capacity to assist efficient implementing the Food Safety Law and the National Strategy on food safety in the period of 2011-2020 and with a vision to 2030" of Vietnam (UNJP/VIE/050/UNJ)	Vietnam	2013-2016

Challenges

16. The challenges identified during capacity building include:

- Food safety is a cross-cutting area and most Asian countries involve multiple agencies to manage the food control system, but in the absence of national food policies or food law that defines the roles and responsibilities of each agency, coordination is hampered and requires strengthening.
- Limited funding and resources means that many countries focus on short term actions, without a broader strategic plan for strengthening national food control systems and the infrastructure to manage the same.
- A comprehensive food chain approach is yet to be developed by countries. Linkages and integration of food safety and quality into the agriculture sector needs to be facilitated. Traceability is not well addressed. Enhancing partnerships between government and industry will also facilitate an improved whole of sector approach to food safety and quality.
- Steps towards better utilizing national food control systems to contribute to the prevention of dietary related non-communicable diseases and micronutrient deficiencies have been undertaken, but could be expanded further.
- The role of voluntary and mandatory standards is not well understood in the countries in the region which leads to both confusion and inability to utilize country resources in a better way.
- Limited data on foodborne disease, food contamination and micronutrient deficiencies continues to prevent evidence based policy development.
- Limited capacity and resource in food inspection and certification services prevents effective implementation of food legislation. Risk-based inspection approaches are yet to be adopted.
- The capacity of small and medium size food manufacturers to meet international food safety requirements is limited and certified GMP/HACCP systems are generally confined to a few larger processors or those operating in export-oriented markets.
- Retail sector like street food and organized retail requires greater focus. Food handler training and consumer education requires substantial resource and more structured activities.
- Food safety emergency response systems vary between countries, although there is a widespread interest to further develop such systems.

Priorities

17. Looking ahead, priorities for the coming year in the region, which may be implemented jointly by FAO and WHO, or in association with other partner organizations, aim at strengthening national food control systems in Asian countries, including:

- Providing expertise in the drafting of laws, regulations and standards in compliance with SPS with specific reference to Codex and facilitating regional harmonization and understanding;
- Supporting national Codex programmes (including Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committees) to facilitate effective participation in Codex and providing tailored Codex training to further enhance participation in Codex activities at regional and national levels.
- Supporting countries to strengthen their risk analysis capability including risk assessments, risk management and risk communication.
- Strengthening cooperation among members of the FSCWG on all aspects of food safety, and establishing close lines of communication between CCASIA and FSCWG.
- Adopting approaches to enhance surveillance of foodborne disease outbreaks through closer linkage with ongoing disease outbreak surveillance systems following the principles outlined in the Informal Consultation on Strengthening the Surveillance of Foodborne Diseases in the Western Pacific Region.
- Improving coordination at a national level through the development of food safety policies and enhancing linkages between the agriculture, health, trade and commerce, industry and other related sectors.
- Developing tools and training materials to assist food safety and quality control activities.
- Strengthening the role of voluntary standards and food controls by providing for the same in legislation and use of mechanisms such as certifications and accreditations
- Advocating the importance of foodborne disease surveillance information to public health officials.
- Promoting risk-based food inspection systems including risk-based import control systems.
- Targeted training for food safety officials and technical staffs (food safety managers, food inspectors, and food analysts) in carrying out their respective duties.
- Building capacity of small and medium size enterprises to implement preventative approaches including GAP/ GMP/HACCP, etc for compliance to standards on food quality and safety.
- Improving consumer education through sharing experiences between countries.
- Strengthening regional and international food control information exchange and cooperation activities including networks such as on food retail.

18. Capacity development activities at national and regional levels are implemented according to organization-wide strategic planning, as well as in response to direct requests from member countries. Greater focus will be on collaborating and coordination between FAO and WHO in the implementation of food safety related activities.

19. ***The membership of CCASIA is invited to engage with FAO and WHO*** to provide feedback on:

- Ongoing FAO and WHO activities to strengthen food safety and quality in the region.
- Priority needs at national and regional levels which require further support from FAO and WHO.