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Agenda Item 3

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR EUROPE

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REPORT ON ACTIVITIES OF FAO AND WHO COMPLEMENTARY TO THE WORK OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION, INCLUDING CAPACITY BUILDING

Introduction

1. This paper describes FAO/WHO activities in the areas of capacity building and the provision of scientific advice implemented since the 24th Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Europe which are complementary to the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.
2. In the achievement of the overall objectives of FAO, an important reorganization has taken place in 2006 in the area of food and food safety. The Food and Nutrition Division, recently renamed the Nutrition and Consumer Protection Division, which hosts the Codex Secretariat, JECFA Joint Secretariat, JEMRA Joint Secretariat and the staff working in the field of food quality and safety, has been moved from the Economic and Social Department to the Agriculture, Biosecurity, Nutrition and Consumer Protection Department. This move is in line with the farm-to-table approach to nutrition, food safety and consumer protection and the important role that operators in the food chain play in this field. This should provide new opportunities for cooperation between all units involved in the production, processing, handling, storage and distribution of food products, as well as in food safety control and standards development.
3. Similarly in WHO, the Food Safety Department has been renamed Department of Food Safety, Zoonoses and Foodborne Diseases following the merger of the units covering zoonoses and food-borne disease previously under the Department of Communicable Diseases with the Department of Food Safety. The new Department illustrates the existing WHO strategy of addressing food safety issues along the entire food chain continuum from primary production to consumers.
4. Information on FAO's and WHO's main capacity building activities in food safety and quality during the reporting period is provided below.

FAO/WHO Global Forum of Food Safety Regulators

5. A preparatory meeting for a possible third FAO/WHO Global Forum of Food Safety Regulators was held in Geneva, Switzerland, in conjunction with the 29th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. The purpose of the preparatory meeting was a preliminary discussion on the objective, format, content and funding of a possible third Global Forum. The meeting unanimously recommended that a thorough

evaluation of GF-1 and GF-2 should be conducted prior to convening GF-3. A survey to evaluate the impact of the FAO/WHO Global Fora of Food Safety Regulators is now underway by the joint secretariat, the results of which will be presented at a side event to be held during the next session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

Funding Mechanisms to Improve Food Safety and Quality

6. FAO, WHO, OIE, WTO and the World Bank established a Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) to coordinate the capacity building efforts of these organizations in the areas of food safety and plant and animal health and to provide a funding mechanism for countries and stakeholders to undertake their activities in these areas. The STDF is both a financing and a coordination mechanism. Grant financing is available for private and public organizations in developing countries seeking to comply with international SPS standards and hence gain or maintain market access. Interested countries and stakeholders are encouraged to propose projects and submit them to the STDF for consideration. Further information on the STDF, including the exact deadlines for submission of proposals and meeting dates, the Business Plan, application forms and information on projects approved can be found at the STDF website www.standardsfacility.org.

7. FAO and WHO have established a Trust Fund for Participation in Codex to increase the participation of developing countries and countries in transition in the vital work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. The fund provides financial support to increase their capacity to implement those standards in their own country.

8. Following the success of the Codex Training Course funded by the Codex Trust Fund in December 2005, further expenditures on training will be promoted during 2006 to facilitate wider dissemination of the Codex Training Package and supplement other FAO/WHO training courses on this subject.

Technical Assistance and Supporting Material for Capacity Building

9. FAO and WHO are engaged in a programme of technical assistance activities and projects at national, regional and international levels. The areas covered include training of food control officials and technical staff (food control managers, food inspectors, food analysts), provision of fellowships for future food regulators, enhancement of food control laboratory capabilities, implementation of risk analysis, risk assessment of microbiological hazards in food, support in establishing national Codex committees, policy advice and establishment of regulatory frameworks. Furthermore, fresh fruits and vegetables quality and safety, mycotoxin prevention and control, implementation of the FAO/WHO Guidance to Governments on the Application of HACCP in Small and/or Less Developed Businesses, HACCP in aquaculture, traceability of fish and fish products, good practices for the feed industry, prevention of BSE and other zoonotic diseases and others are included.

10. FAO is presently conducting a programme for improving the quality and safety of fresh fruits and vegetables, which focuses on the application of good practices (GAP, GMP, and GHP) to prevent hazards at appropriate points in the fresh fruits and vegetable chain (production and post-harvest stages - *food chain approach*). Subregional workshops have been held in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and the Near East (China, Egypt and Morocco) and are planned for other parts of the world. Activities for awareness raising and training at the national level have also been initiated through the implementation of National Action Plans. Four case studies (Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Uruguay) on the implementation of quality and safety schemes are under preparation. FAO has prepared a Training Package (available in CD-ROM and printed format), providing information that can be used by countries to develop training programmes and implement safety and quality requirements to suit their specific needs and thus enhance their capability to apply Codex guidelines and standards, meet importers requirements, as well as improve the quality and safety of fresh produce on the domestic market. An on-line database (also produced as a CD-ROM) with over 800 documents related to the safety and quality of fresh fruits and vegetables is also available. See also www.fao.org/ag/agn/index_en.stm.

11. In May 2006 FAO completed implementation of a global project to address the problem of mycotoxin contamination of coffee and protect the health of coffee consumers. Initiated in 2000, the project,

“Improvement of coffee quality through the prevention of mould formation”, was formulated in collaboration with the International Coffee Organization (ICO) and the European coffee industry, and was executed by FAO in Brazil, Colombia, Côte d’Ivoire, India, Indonesia, Kenya and Uganda. Financing was provided by the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC), with co-financing from the Government of the Netherlands and the Institute for Scientific Information on Coffee (ISIC). For more information on the project, training resources and guidelines on the prevention of mould formation in coffee, visit www.coffee-ota.org.

12. FAO and WHO have recently been engaged in the development of a number of manuals, guidelines and training materials that should facilitate the capacity building effort. They are particularly relevant to policy makers responsible for strengthening food control programmes. Most of these materials are developed jointly except for a few which are prepared under specific field projects operated either by FAO or WHO. These materials include the following:

- Improving the Safety and Quality of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables training manual and resource database (available from FAO web pages or as a CD-ROM in English, Spanish, French and Chinese - see further description above);
- “Food Safety Risk Analysis and an accompanying CD-ROM training pack: a joint FAO/WHO publication are under finalization;
- The FAO tool “Strengthening the capacity of national food control systems: Guidelines to assess capacity building needs” was pilot tested under the framework of AGNS and STDF projects in Benin, Cameroon and Myanmar, and positive feedback received. The Guidelines have been published in hard copy and on CD-ROM, and posted on the AGNS web site. A complementary, condensed version of these Guidelines “A quick guide to assess capacity building needs” is currently being finalized;
- FAO, together with WHO and ICD, have developed a Basic Awareness Course on Microbiological Risk Assessment (MRA). The primary objective of this course is to acquaint governments with the general concept of Risk Analysis and how MRA fits into the framework of Microbiological Risk Management (MRM). This course was used as a basis for a training course for South-East European countries in September 2005. In addition, a one day workshop on this issue was implemented in Sydney, Australia targeting participants from the Asian Pacific region. A training course was implemented in Brazil in October 2006, for participants from Spanish speaking Latin American and Caribbean countries. A course is also planned for South-East Asia in November 2006. A preliminary version of the course material (English) is now available on CD-ROM and the Spanish version is being finalized;
- Enhancing Participation in Codex Activities - An FAO/WHO Training Pack designed to strengthen national food safety and quality systems through enhanced participation in the Codex process. It should serve as reference document for those involved in national Codex activities and as a training tool on Codex. A CD-ROM containing the visual aids and relevant reference documents will be included in the manual. It is available in several languages at: www.fao.org/ag/AGN/food/capacity_codex_en.stm. An electronic web-based training course is under preparation based on this Training Pack;
- The FAO/WHO guidance document for governments on the application of HACCP, in small and less developed businesses (SLDBs) was finalized. The document is available at http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/food/quality_haccp_en.stm;
- FAO and WHO have been engaged in preparing a standardized training package to assist countries in implementing relevant Codex texts related to the food safety assessment of products derived from modern biotechnology. This training package may include a pilot training manual package containing both theory and practical examples of risk assessments of foods derived from modern biotechnology and a guide for training regulators;
- WHO has issued "A Guide for Healthy Food Markets", which contains an annex on measures to reduce transmission of avian influenza in wet markets in developing countries. The publication is available at www.who.int/foodsafety/capacity/healthy_marketplaces/en/;
- WHO has completed the development of the GEMS/ Food Consumption Cluster Diets, which will be used by JECFA and JMPR in estimating long-term exposure to chemicals in food. The diets are available at www.who.int/foodsafety/chem/gems/en/.

13. All these materials, once finalized, will be issued in multi-lingual form for wider use by member countries.

Information Exchange Mechanisms

14. The International Portal on Food Safety, Animal and Plant Health (www.ipfsaph.org) - a joint initiative with IPPC, OIE, Codex and WTO - has continued to develop during its second full year of operation. Numbers of page requests to the website on a monthly basis regularly exceed 400 000; numbers of visitors per month are typically in excess of 35 000. The portal is adding a number of new data sets on pesticides and food additives and now contains over 25 000 records, while collaboration has been strengthened with the EU through contacts with DG Trade's Exports Helpdesk. A particular initiative worth highlighting is the ongoing work to develop a low bandwidth version of the portal to facilitate access from developing countries which has been made available progressively from April 2006.

15. With funding from the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), work is now proceeding to reinforce the technical system which underpins the portal, while STDF-funded projects are actively encouraged to make use of the portal as a resource, and consider possible further national data sets for inclusion.

16. INFOSAN, the International Food Safety Authorities Network, developed and maintained by WHO in collaboration with FAO, was inaugurated in October 2004. Identified as a priority need by both Codex and the World Health Assembly, 150 Member States have joined the network as of May 2006. INFOSAN is an information network for the dissemination of important global food safety information and serves as a vehicle for food safety authorities and other relevant agencies to exchange food safety information and improve collaboration among them. Since its creation, INFOSAN has responded to requests for information for Member States by providing 11 INFOSAN Information Notes on timely food safety topics including avian influenza and genetically modified foods. INFOSAN EMERGENCY, the emergency arm of the network, has so far investigated 11 incidents of contaminated food in international commerce and issued to INFOSAN Emergency alerts. INFOSAN EMERGENCY is intended to complement and support the existing WHO Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network ([GOARN](http://www.goarn.org)) which includes a Chemical Alert and Response component.

17. The WHO International Health Regulations (IHR) have recently been updated to cover agents causing serious health risks connected to food in international trade. The adapted IHR version will come into effect by June 2007.

18. In 2004, WHO inaugurated its new Strategic Health Operation Centre (SHOC). The SHOC is a shared information and communications centre designed to facilitate collaboration and problem solving in order to better improve health outcomes in countries. The SHOC both virtually and physically supports WHO Operations at HQ, Regional and Country Office levels in responding to crises in public health. INFOSAN EMERGENCY is part of the operational support structure of SHOC.

19. FAO also supports the development and maintenance of FishPort, a web-based system for dissemination of scientific and technical information on fish safety and quality.

INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

20. The FAO/IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) Training and Reference Centre for Food and Pesticide Control held a training workshop on "Introduction to Quality Assurance/Quality Control Measures in Pesticide Residue Analytical Laboratories". The workshop took place at the FAO/IAEA Agriculture and Biotechnology Laboratory, IAEA Laboratories, Seibersdorf, Austria from 12 September to 7 October 2005. More detailed information on the course can be found at: www.elearning.iaea.org/ATutor/bounce.php?course=34.

21. FAO held a workshop on "Genetically Modified Food Safety" at FAO Headquarters from 13 to 14 October 2005. The purpose of this workshop was to expose FAO professional staff to a range of expert

opinions on selected questions related to the safety of GM foods. Further information on this workshop can be obtained from: www.fao.org/ag/AGN/food/meetings_workshops2005_en.htm.

22. The FAO Expert Consultation on Biosafety (Rome, 28 February to 3 March 2006) considered a number of present and future applications of new biotechnologies in various sectors with the aim of seizing opportunities for consolidating future activities on Biosafety for sustainable agriculture and food production, within a *Biosecurity* context. Discussion focused on three issues: governance for Biosafety, cooperation for Biosafety, and technical grounds for Biosafety. Within these, the Consultation made several recommendations on establishing a coherent interdisciplinary approach on Biosafety, strengthening the policy and legislative frameworks for Biosafety in food and agriculture, technical assistance and capacity building, cooperation with external partners, information capacities and data sharing, and research.

23. FAO/WHO/OIE organized a joint Expert Consultation on “Antimicrobial Use in Aquaculture and Antimicrobial Resistance” from 13 to 16 June 2006 in Seoul, Korea. The Consultation addressed all aspects related to regulation, marketing, distribution and use of microbials in aquaculture, the magnitude of their use in aquaculture and the public health impact of such use. Further information on this consultation may be obtained from: www.fao.org/ag/agn/foodrisk_antimicrobial_en.stm.

24. FAO participated at the Symposium on Methods for Probiotics which took place during the International Dairy Federation/International Organization for Standardization Analytical Week in Vilnius, Lithuania from 29 May to 2 June 2006. More information on the Symposium may be obtained from: <http://milkgenomics.fil-idf-pr.com>

25. FAO participated as part of the scientific advisory committee of the EC Mycoglobe project at the International Conference on "Advances on genomics, biodiversity and rapid systems for detection of toxigenic fungi and mycotoxins" which took place in Monopoli, Italy from 26 to 30 September 2006. The conference was organized by the Institute of Sciences of Food Production ISPA-CNR. More information on the conference, entitled "Advances on genomics, biodiversity and rapid systems for detection of toxigenic fungi and mycotoxins" is available from: www.ispa.cnr.it/mycoglobe/conference/index.php?id_conf=13

26. FAO participated and moderated as part of the scientific panel at the First International Conference on "Developing Probiotics as Food and Drugs - Scientific and Regulatory Challenges" which took place in Adelphi, Maryland, from 16 to 17 October 2006. The conference was organized by the Drug Information Association in collaboration with the International Scientific Association for Probiotics and Prebiotics. Further information on the conference may be obtained from: www.diahome.org

Global projects

27. The Government of Norway recently signed a Programme Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with FAO, with the overall objective of supporting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in developing countries through the work of FAO, for the period 2005-2006. One of the principal objectives of this project is “Improved Food Safety and Quality at National Level and along the Food Chain”. Activities are being conducted in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Cambodia, Laos, Nicaragua and Burkina Faso. Outcomes to be reached include: acceptance and use of Good Agricultural Practice (GAP); capacity building and awareness raising for integrated natural resource governance and management (SARED), support to food quality and safety and Codex related work and guidelines, advice and instruments related to small-scale/artisanal fisheries implemented/developed.

28. Under the same Programme Cooperation Agreement, Norway is also supporting a series of activities aimed at strengthening FAO’s earlier work on the integration of food safety, animal health, plant health and biosafety under the Biosecurity framework. The activities include application of the biosecurity framework at national level, development of additional tools and guidelines, as other practical guidance material.

Global tools under development

29. FAO conducted an expert panel from 2 to 4 November 2005 in Rome to peer review three parts of the FAO *Biosecurity* Toolkit designed to assist countries in their effort to integrate *Biosecurity*-related

disciplines and activities, namely the *Biosecurity Principles and Components* (Part 1), *Biosecurity Capacity Assessment Tool* (Part 2) and *Biosecurity Risk Analysis Manual* (Part 3). This toolkit is being pilot tested and will then be made widely available. More information on FAO's approach to and work in the area of *Biosecurity* is available from: www.fao.org/biosecurity.

30. FAO/AGNS is preparing a manual on food inspection and auditing of food safety management systems.

31. FAO, in collaboration with the Italian Istituto Superiore di Sanità, is working on the preparation of a video on mycotoxin sampling which is currently being finalized.

CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES IN EUROPE

REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

Regional Workshops

32. An FAO/WHO-EURO/ICD "Basic Awareness Course on Microbiological Risk Assessment" was held in Ljubljana, Slovenia from 27 to 29 September 2005. The objectives of this course were to acquaint governments with the general concept of Risk Analysis and how MRA fits into the framework of Microbiological Risk Management (MRM) and to assess the feasibility and usefulness of establishing an informal network for microbiological risk assessment in the region. The workshop was attended by 15 participants from the following countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo (Serbia & Montenegro), Moldova and Romania.

33. FAO/WHO-EURO held a three-day regional training course on Codex in Vilnius, Lithuania from 25 to 27 October 2005. The objectives of this training course were to enhance the capacity of countries from the region to actively participate in Codex activities in general, and to increase their participation in the activities of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Europe (CCEURO). This training course served as preparation for the next (25th) Session of the CCEURO, to be held in the first quarter of 2007. The workshop was attended by 25 participants from the following countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Romania, Kosovo (UNMIK), Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

34. A subregional training course "Enhancing participation in Codex" took place from 21 to 23 March 2006. The host organization was the Croatian National Institute of Public Health, Zagreb and representatives from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, FYR Macedonia, Kosovo (UNMIK) attended the training course.

35. FAO, in collaboration with WHO/EURO, organized a three-day subregional training course on Strengthening National Food Control Systems in Tajikistan, from 25 to 27 July 2006. The course was destined for food control officials from the health, agriculture and standards sectors. Further information may be obtained from: food-quality@fao.org.

36. FAO participated in a regional workshop on the coordination of SPS Procedures and working group meetings III, in Dubrovnik, Croatia June 2006. The workshop was organized by the Commercial Law Development Program (CLDP), of the U.S. Department of Commerce. with representatives from Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Kosovo (UNMIK), Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Montenegro. The workshop addressed means of strengthening capacity in the region on the importance and benefits of Codex Alimentarius, and determining ways to implement the bilateral Free Trade Agreements in the area of SPS and TBT requirements. Follow-up activities include the preparation of a matrix on food control systems in the region (best practices), and a questionnaire on laboratory systems – to identify strengths and capacity in the region. Another workshop for this network is planned to take place in early 2007.

Regional Projects

37. An FAO project in the South Eastern European subregion (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Kosovo, Moldova, Romania) on “Strengthening food safety in South East European transition countries – A regional approach to food legislation and control” was approved in December 2004. Project activities are ongoing. The overall objective of the assistance is to assist these transition countries in establishing a modern food safety and control system and is being implemented by AGNS and the FAO Legal Service. The project plans to convene several workshops to assist in the development of national food safety policies, including inspection, control and legislation. Additionally, training courses are planned to train food inspectors in modern approaches to food inspection and food industry experts in food hygiene (HACCP, GMP). The project will be finalized in 2007 with the convening of a subregional workshop for all participating countries to discuss significant project outputs and propose follow up activities.

38. An FAO/AGNS TCP project to improve food safety in the Food Quality and Safety System of Armenia and Georgia was approved in early 2005. The main objectives of the project are to strengthen the priority components of the system for strategic planning and coordination of food control activities, harmonization of food standards, inspection programmes and laboratory networks, and quality assurance programmes in agro-processing sectors.

39. The WHO Food Safety Programme in Europe continued assisting Member States in the development of their food safety strategies as part of the development of the Food and Nutrition Policy and Action Plans in Europe 2000-2005. WHO Europe, in collaboration with different FAO divisions and national offices, OIE representatives, and other international agencies, has provided technical assistance to several countries from the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Central Asian Republics and countries from South Eastern Europe, to develop their food strategies (http://www.euro.who.int/foodsafety/Assistance/20050426_1). The document “*Essential Elements for the development of Intersectoral Food Safety Strategies*” is being published by WHO Europe within this framework. The second Food and Nutrition Policy and Action Plan in Europe 2007-2012 is currently being developed.

40. A subregional project for the promotion of Food Safety Education in Schools in Central Asian Republics was funded in 2005. The WHO Food Safety Programme in Europe in collaboration with UNICEF organized seminars and other activities to promote the dissemination of the “Five Keys for Safer Food” in schools in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan http://www.euro.who.int/foodsafety/Otherissues/20051221_1

41. The WHO Surveillance Programme for Control of Foodborne Diseases in Europe collected in 2005 data on food-borne diseases (2001-2004) from 45 countries in Europe. The WHO Surveillance Programme has been publishing quarterly newsletters in English and Russian which have been distributed to more than 1500 institutions (see http://www.euro.who.int/foodsafety/Surveillance/20020903_3).

42. The WHO Global Salmonella Surveillance (GSS) network training courses (levels II and III) were organized for European countries in Warsaw, Poland and Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation in 2004, 2005 and 2006. The WHO GSS network in collaboration with MedVetNet organized a seminar/workshop on food-borne pathogens and diseases surveillance, detection and response in new EU Member States and candidate countries in Warsaw, Poland in 2006 for 16 countries of the region.

43. The Global Environmental Monitoring Systems (GEMS) for Food Contamination Programme in Europe launched at the end of 2004 a website for the dissemination of the GEMS European data as a part of the System for Information of Global Health Trends (SIGHT) database. Recent data include intake data and exposure data from Czech Republic, Belgium, Estonia, Hungary, Germany Netherlands, and Slovakia. Data on Total Diet Studies from Czech Republic and France have been included. European data on dioxins and aflatoxins from the EU SCOOP projects are also available in the database (http://www.euro.who.int/eprise/main/WHO/Progs/FOS/Chemical/20040728_1).

44. The WHO Regional Office for Europe has been implementing a project to “Strengthen Food Safety and Nutrition Services in South Eastern Europe (SEE)” in the framework of the Stability Pact for the South

Eastern Europe (Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Moldova and Serbia). In 2004, the formal decision on the Food Safety and Nutrition Project Component One was signed. Two meetings were held in Component One in March and in June 2005, both in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to assess project implementation.

45. The second meeting of the South-eastern Europe (SEE) Health Network on Food Safety and Nutrition (FSN) was held in August 2006 in Brussels, Belgium, with the theme "Self Governance on the Food and Nutrition System in SEE". The aim of the meeting was to find ways to mobilize the SEE governments to focus on the development of an effective FSN system that prevents food-borne and dietary related illness and emphasizes the role of the health sector.

NATIONAL ACTIVITIES

NATIONAL PROJECTS

46. An FAO TCP project TCP/AZE/3101 "Food safety capacity building in Azerbaijan" was approved in April 2006. National arrangements are ongoing to facilitate project implementation. The project objectives are to strengthen national capacity for strategic planning and coordination of food control activities, to ensure the adequacy of food law and harmonized food standards, and ensure compliance through development of effective inspection programmes, laboratory network, and quality assurance programmes in agro-processing sectors. Specific activities include the development of a national food control strategy and implementation of a number of training courses to enhance capacity in standards development, and food inspection and laboratory programmes.

47. An FAO/AGNS TCP project to provide assistance in improving a laboratory of safety and quality of food and agricultural products in the Ukraine was initiated in March 2005 and is scheduled to be completed in early 2007. The project aims to a) provide on-site technical advice in planning and organizing the new Ukrainian Laboratory for Quality and Safety of Food and Agricultural Products; b) provide assistance in preparation for accreditation of this laboratory according to ISO 17025; c) build capacities of laboratory technical staff in specific advanced analytical techniques; and d) create awareness and develop effective dialogue about food safety related issues among all stakeholders.

48. Biannual Collaborative Agreements to develop National Food Safety Strategies have been signed between the WHO Regional Office for Europe and the Ministries of Health of Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Russian Federation, Serbia and Montenegro and Uzbekistan for the period 2004-2005.

49. As part of the implementation of the Biannual Collaborative Agreement with Albania, the WHO Food Safety Programme in Europe provided technical assistance and training to public health officials on Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) during 2005.

50. The WHO Office in Albania has implemented the EU CARDS project aiming to reinforce Albanian Veterinary and Phytosanitary Border Inspection Services (BIPs) by supporting Albanian government authorities in their efforts to align Albanian inspection systems with EU veterinary acquis. Project achievements include: i) approval of regulatory framework as per EU acquis; ii) established good working conditions at the main border crossing points; iii) established an internet communication system connecting border crossing points with competent central authorities; and iv) capacity building, including a workshop held in July 2005 on the EU phytosanitary and veterinary inspection system followed by the practical training in the field.

51. Within the framework of the Biannual Collaborative Agreements with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro, the WHO Food Safety Programme provided technical support to the Ministries of Health in 2005 for the development of national food safety strategies and update of their Food Law.

52. The WHO Food Safety Programme in Europe in collaboration with several FAO units and national offices FAO and OIE representatives, promoted the development of intersectoral national food safety

strategies and Codex work in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan, in 2005, as part of the implementation of the Biannual Collaborative Agreements.

53. In October 2006, upon request of the Albanian Ministry of Health, the expert team of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe project provided technical advice to the government on their draft Food Law and Food Control System.

54. Within the framework of the above-mentioned Stability Pact initiative, the WHO Regional Office for Europe held a SEE-network consultation on the improvement of the food control system in September 2006 in Chisinau, Republic of Moldova. This network consultation provided a platform to share knowledge, expertise and experience of different countries in the SEE subregion with regard to their food control systems, and thus offer the Republic of Moldova tools to identify necessary changes in the food control system.

NATIONAL WORKSHOPS

55. A one-day seminar on risk analysis and organization of food control systems was held in October 2006, in Croatia. FAO supported the workshop through funding and technical support. Over 250 delegates attended the workshop representing all key stakeholder groups in Croatia and discussions focused on issues including roles and responsibilities and different means of enhancing coordination.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES/PROJECTS

56. A bilateral project between Albania and Italy, with FAO (AGNS) as the implementing agency, is currently in the final stages of approval. The project seeks to strengthen the Albanian national food control system, in particular the laboratories.

57. FAO has received a request from Belarus for technical assistance in strengthening national food control activities, and the assessment of foods derived from biotechnology. A mission to assess the priority needs in these areas and draft a project is planned.

58. Biennial Collaborative Agreements to develop National Food Safety Strategies have been signed between the WHO Regional Office for Europe and the Ministries of Health of Bulgaria, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Serbia and Uzbekistan for the period 2006-2007. With further funding availability, activities will also be implemented for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

59. With the completion of Component Two, WHO Regional Office for Europe will continue to support the SEE Health Network in the implementation of the project, "Strengthen Food Safety and Nutrition Services in South Eastern Europe (SEE)", in the framework of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.

60. A publication summarizing all accomplishments in the SEE countries regarding food control systems will be published. This publication will provide important information on the deliberations, conclusions and recommendations of each country in the South East Europe Network, needed to ensure an effective science based food safety and adequate nutrition system. It will also serve as a corporate document to which individuals and organizations can refer to.

61. The EU CARDS project, implemented by the WHO Country Office in Albania to reinforce Albanian Veterinary and Phytosanitary Border Inspection Services, has been extended until early 2007. Possible launch of a follow up project is being discussed.