

codex alimentarius commission



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JOINT OFFICE: Viale delle Terme di Caracalla 00100 ROME Tel: 39 06 57051 www.codexalimentarius.net Email: codex@fao.org Facsimile: 39 06 5705 4593

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

PART A - CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Introduction

1. This paper describes FAO/WHO activities in the areas of capacity building and the provision of scientific advice implemented since the 14th Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean, 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 Regional Conference on Food Safety for the Americas and the Caribbean

5. FAO/WHO jointly convened the Regional Conference on Food Safety for the Americas and the Caribbean (San José, Costa Rica, 6-9 December 2005). This event was the last in a series of regional conferences organized by FAO and WHO at the request of member countries to meet their needs for policy guidance and capacity building in food safety. The Conference made a number of recommendations to member countries, to FAO/WHO, other relevant organizations and to donor governments. The report of the Conference, complete with CD ROM containing the report, the working documents and conference room documents, has been distributed to participants and is available from secretariat upon request.

6. FAO/WHO convened an informal meeting with delegates from the Americas and the Caribbean attending the 29th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission in Geneva in order to discuss follow-up to the Conference, as well as current and future capacity building activities in the region.

FAO/WHO Global Forum of Food Safety Regulators

7. 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.

Inter-American Meeting at Ministerial Level on Health and Agriculture (RIMSA)

8. RIMSA 14 was held in Mexico City D.F. on 21 and 22 April 2005. The purpose of RIMSA 14 was to promote synergy between the health and agriculture sectors for the optimal use of human and financial resources to accelerate the development process. The 4th Meeting of the Pan American Commission for Food Safety was held on 20 April 2005, prior to RIMSA 14. At this meeting, representatives of the health and agriculture public sectors, consumers and producers evaluated progress in technical cooperation in food safety in 2003-2004 and formulated food safety recommendations for the attention of RIMSA. The full report of RIMSA, including the report of COPAI 4 and the Proposed Plan of Action for Technical Cooperation in Food Safety 2006-2007 can be found at: www.paho.org/english/ad/dcp/vp/rimsa-home.htm.

Funding Mechanisms to Improve Food Safety and Quality

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. Following the success of the Codex Training Course initiated by the Codex Trust Fund in December 2005, further expenditures on training and the wider dissemination of the Codex Training Package is envisaged in 2006.

Technical Assistance and Supporting Material for Capacity Building

12. 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.

13. FAO and WHO are involved in supporting food and clinical laboratories in the Americas' region through the INFAL (Inter-American Network of Food Analysis Laboratories), <http://www.panalimentos.org/rilaa/flash/rilaa.asp> and WHO, in collaboration with the CDC through the PulseNet Latin America network (fingerprinting of food-borne disease-causing bacteria by pulsed-field gel electrophoresis (PFGE)) www.panalimentos.org/pulsenet. The American chapter of the WHO Global Programme for Surveillance and Response of Food-Borne Diseases and other Enteric Infections (WHO-GSS), www.panalimentos.org/salmsurv has accomplished the three cycles of courses in standardized protocols for Salmonella and Campylobacter and has begun the fourth round including new pathogens, E. coli O157 and Shigella. Furthermore, the programme now includes training in tools to assess the burden of food-borne diseases.

14. 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.

15. 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.

16. 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. 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, Chinese, French and Spanish - 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 website. 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 further training course is being planned for Spanish speaking Latin American and Caribbean countries in October 2006 and one for South-East Asia in November 2006. A preliminary version of the course material (English) is now available on CD-ROM;
 - 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 active 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 will soon be available at http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/food/quality_haccp_en.stm;
 - WHO has updated the training manual in GMP-HACCP and auditing for the food industry and has developed subregional workshops in Central America with the collaboration of other subregional organizations (OIRSA and IICA);
 - 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/.
17. All these materials, once finalized, will be issued in multi-lingual form for wider use by member countries.

Information Exchange Mechanisms

18. 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 unique 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. Two particular initiatives worth highlighting are:

- The regional portal in Latin America (Portal regional de inocuidad y sanidad agroalimentaria or PRISA), accessed at <http://prisa.fao.org> which was launched at the regional conference in Latin America in April 2006. In addition to the official data on food safety, animal and plant health, PRISA contains other information which users in the region have been requesting, such as information on training events, courses and other capacity building activities, as well as more detail on unofficial contacts in countries (research institutes, agencies, certifying bodies, export promotion boards) and information on private sector, or "voluntary" standards. This regional portal may provide a model which could be adopted in other regions such as Southern Africa, West Africa, or the countries of the ASEAN grouping; and
- 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.

19. 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.

20. 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](#)) which includes a Chemical Alert and Response component.

21. 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.

22. 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.

23. 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

24. The FAO Animal Production and Health Division and the International Feed Industry Federation held a "Global Food and Feed Congress" in Sao Paulo, Brazil from 11 to 13 July 2005. Further information is available from the Congress website: www.globalfeed-food.com

25. 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.

26. 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.

27. 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.

28. A joint FAO/WHO/OIE Expert Consultation on Antimicrobial Use in Aquaculture and Antimicrobial Resistance was held in Seoul, Republic of Korea from 13 to 16 June 2006. The Consultation addressed all aspects related to regulation, marketing, distribution and use of antimicrobials in aquaculture, the magnitude of their use in aquaculture and the public health impact of such use. For more information on this consultation please visit: http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/food/risk_antimicrobial_en.stm.

Global projects

29. 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.

30. 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

31. FAO conducted an expert panel from 2 to 4 November 2005 in Rome to peer review two of the tools designed to assist countries in their effort to integrate *Biosecurity*-related disciplines and activities, namely the Manual on Risk Analysis in the Field of *Biosecurity* and the *Biosecurity* Capacity Needs Assessment Guidelines. These tools are 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.

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

CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

Regional Workshops

33. As member of the scientific committee, FAO made a presentation at the Mycoglobe project Mycotoxin Conference for South America, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 15-17 March 2006. FAO also sponsored the participation of several participants from developing countries. Further information on this Conference is available at www.argentinamycoglobe.com.

34. FAO and the Secretaría de Agricultura, Ganadería, Pesca y Alimentos of Argentina, as the Codex Contact Point for Latin America and the Caribbean, organized a seminar on traceability for the countries of Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean from 21 to 23 March 2006 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Further details may be obtained from the FAO website: www.fao.org/ag/AGN/food/meetings_workshops2006_en_stm.
35. A workshop on “Enhancing participation in Codex” was held immediately prior to the FAO/WHO Regional Conference on Food Safety for the Americas and the Caribbean, from 4 to 5 December 2005 using the FAO/WHO package developed on this matter by FAO/WHO.
36. FAO organized a Subregional Training Course on “Enhancing Participation in Codex” Antigua and Barbuda, from 6 to 9 June 2006. The objective of this course was to strengthen national Codex activities in the region and to enhance participation in the standard setting work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. Further information may be obtained from the FAO website: www.fao.org/ag/AGN/food/meetings_workshops2006_en_stm.
37. A subregional training course on the WHO-GSS programme was held in Buenos Aires from 15 to 26 May 2006 with the participation of 10 South American countries. The objective of the course was to train the clinical laboratories in standardized protocols in Campylocater, E. coli O157:H7 and Shigella. During the course a joint workshop with epidemiologists of the countries was held to train and develop protocols in the burden of illness for food-borne diseases. Further information is available from: www.panalimentos.org/salmsurv
38. A regional training course to strengthen the national and regional capacity in analysis of the PFGE profiles was held in Buenos Aires from 19 to 23 June 2006. The workshop also gave emphasis to the exchange of relevant information regarding the sample in clinical aspects (symptoms), epidemiological (time, place and person) and laboratorial (origin of the sample, serotype, fagetype, type of toxin, antimicrobial resistance profile). Further information is available from: www.panalimentos.org/pulsenet/
39. A regional workshop to increase the capacity in Latin American countries in the area of knowledge synthesis and translation, through the application of tools designed to improve public health decision making will be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in October 2006. The workshop will provide on-hands training in systematic reviews and meta-analysis to food safety regulators from MERCOSUR countries.
40. WHO and OIRSA have been working with the Central American countries since the beginning of 2006 on a harmonized food code for the region. A seminar will be held in Panama from 23 to 25 November 2006 to validate the Central American food code.
41. An Integrated Antimicrobial Resistance Surveillance Workshop for Central America was held in Nicaragua from 27 to 28 February 2006 in collaboration with WHO, CDC and Public Health of Canada. An action plan to develop AMR systems was developed.
42. A pilot project for the adaptation, validation and adoption of WHO’s Five Keys to Food Safety has been implemented in urban and rural primary schools in Guatemala and Venezuela since July 2005. The WHO’s 5 keys to food safety manual has been adapted as a result of the project in Guatemala. A teacher’s guide with training/learning activities has been produced, as has a guide to help parent advisory councils have healthy schools. The project is being executed with extra budgetary funds from DFID obtained through WHO. Additional information can be found at <http://www.paho.org/Spanish/AD/DPC/VP/fos-5-claves-afiche.htm>. The project has also been implemented in two states of Venezuela and the Ministries of Health have decided to implement it at national level.
43. With extra-budgetary funds from the *Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations* (AGFUND), PAHO/WHO is conducting a project on food safety in municipal markets in Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Guyana and Paraguay. Specific project outputs in Bolivia include: methodology for evaluating basic hygiene and sanitation, and knowledge, attitude and practices (KAP) of food handlers, together with training/learning modules for food vendors and consumers.

Regional Projects

44. Two FAO subregional projects to strengthen the analytical activities, laboratory quality assurance and capacity building of the Inter-American Network of Food Analytical Laboratories (INFAL/RILAA), were approved in December 2004 (countries are assigned into one of the two projects in Central America or South America, based on geographic location). The main objective of these projects is to assure that the laboratories provide reliable analytical results for the national food control system, as well as for the certification of food imports and exports. The project's activities attempt to facilitate the product conformity assessment through harmonization or establishing the equivalence of the analytical results at the international level. The main activities to be undertaken by the project include the implementation of training activities and the elaboration of national action plans for strengthening the technical, analytical and administrative skills for laboratory analysis of microbiological and chemical contaminants. A total of nineteen countries from the Latin American and Caribbean Region are benefiting from the implementation of these projects. The project is implemented by the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and AGNS.

45. A subregional project to strengthen the analytical activities, quality assurance and capacity building in the English-speaking countries in the Caribbean is currently in the approval stage.

Other Regional Activities

46. With FAO's support, the Latin American Food Composition Network (LATINFOODS) continued working on the update of the Regional Food Composition Table which is available from: www.fao.org/Regional/LAmerica/bases/alimento/default.htm. A CD-ROM with this table was published and distributed.

47. An Expert Consultation on the Chagas disease as a food-borne illness was held in Rio de Janeiro from 4 to 5 May 2006. The complete report is available from: www.panalimentos.org/panalimentos/files/informe_eta.pdf.

NATIONAL ACTIVITIES

48. FAO is supporting the Instituto de Ciencias Biomedicas, Universidade de Sao Paulo, Brazil, in the implementation of a study on Biomass, phenotypical and genotypical characterization of *V. cholerae*, *V. parahaemolyticus* and *V. vulnificus* isolated from water, zooplankton and bivalves samples from Sao Paulo Coast, SP that will contribute to the filling of some gaps identified by JEMRA.

49. Since June 2006 FAO/AGNS has been providing advice to Costa Rica on the harmonization of standards based on risk assessment for additives and contaminants, as well as advice to the national Codex Committee of Costa Rica and to the Central American region. FAO also provided a consultant to assist with the regional seminar on the Codex General Standard for Food Additives and Contaminants which took place in San José from 12 to 14 June 2006 and was jointly organized by FAO, in collaboration with the Ministerio de Economía, Industria y Comercio and the Ministerio de Comercio Exterior.

50. In August 2006 FAO, in collaboration of the National School of Biological Sciences, Mexico, implemented a training course on the application of risk analysis at international level. The course was intended for food control managers, scientists, representatives of food industries and consumer groups to make them aware of the importance of risk analysis framework and its application at the international level. Further information may be obtained from foodquality@fao.org.

51. FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries of Suriname held a five-day workshop in Paramaribo from 31 July to 4 August 2006. The workshop addressed a practical approach to improving the quality and safety of fresh fruits and vegetables. A similar workshop is being planned in Dominica in November this year. More information may be obtained from: www.fao.org/ag/agn/food/meetings_en.stm.

52. WHO and the Instituto Interamericano para la Agricultura (IICA) developed an intersectorial (health and agricultural) workshop to strengthen the national food safety system in Ecuador from 29 to 31 May 2006. The result of the workshop was an action plan developed by the country in order to improve the national food safety system. Similar workshops will be held in Bolivia and Peru during September and October 2006 respectively.

53. WHO will be holding national seminars on the burden of illness in food-borne diseases in Paraguay, 24-26 October 2006, Costa Rica, 30-31 October 2006 and Perú, 21-23 November 2006.

Field Projects

54. A TCP project on Strengthening the Food Control System in Guyana: Development and Delivery of a Communication and Education Pilot Programme on "Food Safety" in Guyana was completed in May 2006. This TCP dealt not only with food trade matters, but food issues and the development of a food safety programme to support the food control system in Guyana.

55. The Ministry of Agricultural Development in Panama has requested FAO (AG) assistance in the area of food safety, animal and plant health. The project commenced in May 2006 and is scheduled for completion in May 2008.

56. The Government of the Dominican Republic has requested FAO (SLC/AGNS) assistance to strengthen the food trade sector. The project has been approved and implementation will commence in September 2006. A TCP project has also recently been approved to complement the development of the sub-component on food safety in strengthening the national food control system. The project will be implemented with the assistance of the FAO Subregional Office for the Caribbean in the upcoming months.

57. An FAO project to strengthen the biosecurity framework in Belize was initiated in April 2006 and is scheduled to continue until early 2007. The objectives of this project are to: support the up-dating of the biosecurity legal framework and strengthen the national capacity for effective implementation of biosecurity approaches and system. The project is led by the FAO Development Law Service, with AGNS providing technical support.

58. An FAO/AGNS TCP project on the prevention of mould formation (Ochratoxin A-OTA) in coffee in Ecuador started in July 2004 and is expected to be completed in December 2006. The project is being implemented with the participation of the public and private sectors. The main objective is to create awareness at the national level of the effect that mould formation in coffee, due mainly to Ochratoxin A, could have on public health, as well as the subsequent economic and social implications. The project's activities include the identification of cost-effective control systems and the implementation of a HACCP-based training programme targeting the actors involved. One of the outputs of the project will be a national action plan for the prevention and control of mould formation in coffee, which will be elaborated by consensus among the food chain actors and disseminated at the national level.

59. An FAO TCP project to provide technical assistance to the nutmeg industry in Grenada was approved in March 2004 and was scheduled for completion in mid-2006. Activities under the project suffered delays due to the widespread disruption caused by Hurricane Ivan in September 2004. A Phase 2 has therefore been requested to allow completion of the project activities. The objective of the project is to enhance farmer returns from the production of nutmeg and mace, through improving the overall quality of these products and their oil extractives for international trade and minimizing the environmental contamination due to nutmeg processing by-products. The immediate objectives are to: upgrade harvesting, post-harvest handling, treatment, processing of nutmegs and mace; to strengthen the capacity to support a quality assurance programme for the nutmeg and mace industry; and to build capacity in by-product processing. The project is implemented jointly by AGNS and the FAO Agricultural and Food Engineering Technologies Service.

60. FAO/SLAC has been assisting in the Establishment of a National Codex Committee in Jamaica and will assist the Jamaica Bureau of Standards in preparing its Plan of Action for the Codex National Committee.

61. An FAO project to strengthen the food control system of Suriname continued through early January 2006. The main objective of the project is to strengthen the National Food Control System by providing training, upgrading laboratory facilities and supporting the functioning of the National Codex Committee and its Working Groups. The expected project outputs include amended national food laws, regulations and standards which comply with international guidelines, improved food inspection service which applies modern quality assurance and HACCP principles, improved laboratory facilities capable of contamination monitoring in primary agricultural products and processed foods and a plan of action on food safety, conforming to Codex Commission recommendations. The project is being implemented by AGNS and the FAO Subregional Office for the Caribbean.

62. An FAO/subregional project on “Improving the food safety of street foods through establishing a food inspection system based on the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system in Barbados and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) countries” commenced in September 2005.

63. Based on the results of several studies to identify the main safety and quality issues in the production and marketing chains for a range of fruits, vegetables, spices and oil crops in Latin America and the Caribbean countries, a Regional Workshop was organized by FAO/AGS and the FAO Regional Office. This workshop was aimed at awareness creation and identifying the issues to be addressed, as well as the planning and initiation of specific programmes.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES/PROJECTS

Field Projects

64. The Government of Argentina has also requested assistance from FAO (AGNS) to assist the city of Buenos Aires in training in food hygiene and nutrition. The project is in the formulation phase.

65. The Government of Dominica has requested assistance from FAO in the area of coffee production development. The project is currently in the formulation phase.

66. A regional project for capacity building in Latin American consumer organizations is being prepared by FAO and Consumers International Latin American Regional Office.

67. The Government of Nicaragua has requested assistance with the prevention of OTA in coffee. The project is currently in the formulation phase.

68. FAO/AGS is currently formulating a project in Uruguay on strengthening the agri-food chains suppliers to national food and nutrition programmes, with emphasis on those directed to primary schools. One of the objectives of the project is to improve the quality and safety of foods delivered to schools, including nutritional quality, as well as those properties of benefit to children’s health.

69. The Ministry of Trade and Industry in Trinidad and Tobago has requested technical assistance in the food and beverage industry in the form of consultancy services to create a unified Food Safety Authority and in the development of a national food safety programme. Similar assistance has also been requested in the fish and fish processing industry to update regulations for food safety standards in fish and fishery products and to develop a Fisheries Management Plan for Trinidad and Tobago.

70. A regional project for “Strengthening the national Codex Committee and national Codex Contact Point” in the counties of Dominica, Grenada, St Kitts and Nevis and St Vincent and the Grenadines is currently under elaboration by the Subregional Office for the Caribbean.