

FAO's mandate calls for "raising levels of nutrition and standards of living... and contributing toward an expanding world economy and ensuring humanity's freedom from hunger" (FAO Constitution).

Developing the capacities of member countries to effectively manage food safety and quality is key to safeguarding the health and well-being of people as well as to supporting economic development by promoting access to domestic, regional and international markets.

"Capacity development is the process whereby people, organizations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create and maintain capacity over time".

(OECD-DAC definition adopted in 2009 FAO Capacity Development strategy)

What is Capacity Development for Food Safety and Quality?

Capacity Development for Food Safety and Quality is the process through which relevant stakeholders from farm to table (including government agencies, food enterprises, academia and consumers) are able to better perform their functions and to assume their responsibilities, to ensure safety and quality of food for domestic consumption and export.

Effective and sustainable capacity development in food safety and quality management systems must be driven by national policies and programmes. Design of activities must be guided by careful and participative needs assessment that takes full consideration of existing national and local capacities and institutions.

Capacity Development must also be forward looking - it must consider emerging trends that could impact food safety priorities.



A 2008 FAO publication reviewing potential implications of climate change on food safety and its management.

A 2006 FAO publication providing guidance on assessing needs for strengthening national systems of food control.

What capacity development activities does FAO engage in?

At the request of member countries, FAO engages in diverse capacity development activities at different levels:

- Policy/enabling environment - advising on policies and legislative and regulatory frameworks for food safety/quality management;
- Institutions- supporting national institutions to design and effectively manage and implement food control programmes;
- Individuals- ensuring that all people have the knowledge and skills required to carry out their roles and meet their responsibilities for food safety and quality management.

Multidisciplinarity - Food safety issues are usually complex and developing optimal approaches for addressing them calls for expertise in a range of areas. FAO's food safety work commonly involves multidisciplinary teams to holistically consider "food chain" solutions to food safety problems.

Capacity Development in Food Safety and Food Quality

►► Overview

There are various modalities by which FAO provides support in these areas to member countries.

Projects

FAO has been implementing food safety/ quality projects for many years: generally there are 30-40 on-going projects in different countries at any time. Many of these projects are funded through the FAO Technical Cooperation Programme and others are funded through Trust Funds established by other donors. In other cases, countries provide their own financing for FAO to work with them in designing and implementing activities.

Coordination - FAO seeks to ensure optimal coordination with other technical agencies working on food safety capacity building through formal and informal coordinating mechanisms at national, regional and international levels.

Projects can be national, regional or global: the choice of the most appropriate level of action depends on the nature of the problem and the expected outcomes. Improved networking and transfer of know-how among neighbouring countries can be facilitated through working beyond national border.

Training Activities



Training activities are carried out both at national and regional levels. FAO uses mixed training approaches to facilitate learning: combinations of formal classroom-based learning, individual coaching, experiential learning, distance learning are typically used to achieve the target results.

Training activities cover a range of topics related to: design and implementation of risk-based food inspection programmes; food analysis and analytical quality assurance; application of the risk analysis framework to a range of food safety issues; application of GMP and HACCP programmes and other aspects of food safety/ quality management.



Guidance documents and technical publications

The Food Quality and Standards Service develops manuals and other publications used directly by member countries or by other development partners to improve food safety/ quality programmes.

Partnerships - FAO fosters partnerships that facilitate effective channeling of technical and scientific know-how and of financial resources to support capacity development in member countries. Partnerships at national and local levels are essential for ensuring sustained impact.

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