TECHNICAL TRAINING ON RISK ANALYSIS FOR SAARC COUNTRIES

organized by

FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAP), Bangkok, Thailand in collaboration with the Quality Council of India
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Concept Note

Introduction and Background

Risk Analysis is an internationally accepted structured process that consists of risk assessment, risk management and risk communication. Over the past decade risk analysis has become the main methodology applied across the food chain with the objective of improving the food and feed control systems to achieve safer food, reducing the numbers of food-borne diseases and facilitating both domestic and international trade in food.

Risk assessment is the science-based component of risk analysis. Risk assessment provides the framework for collecting, organizing and interpreting the data and information on the inter-relation between hazards in the food chain, foods and human, plant and animal health. The risks for food and feed along the food chain may be of different natures, including biological and chemical risks. Depending on the identified food and feed hazards in specific countries, governments may undertake microbiological, chemical or other kinds of risk assessment. National governments need to have a good understanding of the relevance of risk Analysis and how to apply this in a consistent manner to provide the scientific basis of decision-making (risk management options). They also need to have a better understanding of essential conditions to effectively incorporate the risk analysis framework into the functional food safety system with all main components – food laws and regulations, food control strategy, effective inspection and laboratory services, food monitoring, foodborne disease surveillance, and education and communication.

Food control systems in the target countries – Generally in most of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries[1], systems for food control are in place with a network of laboratories and food inspection, resource of scientific know-how and expertise however challenges exist in a more systematic application of risk assessment in food standards development and food safety risks management. The food safety system require strengthening, raising the coordination among ministries and services involved in food control, networking the food science and food control and modernizing the food inspection on risk-based principles.

Existing level of understanding of the risk analysis paradigm: The extent of knowledge of the principles of the risk analysis framework varies in the sub-region. The common problem is the weak integrative inter-sectoral approach in addressing risk analysis components. Functional linkages of different institutions have to be strengthened to ensure food safety risk management and preventive measures that are

[1] Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka

based on real data of each country and efforts at country level are focused on most stringent and specific food safety and public health problems. There needs to be a deeper appreciation of the sub- components of these aspects of risk analysis by the National Food Control Authorities in the region as they are distinct activities. However, there seems to be a general tendency to blur the boundaries between risk assessment and risk management.

During the 18th CCASIA session held from 5-9 November 2012 in Tokyo, Japan, many SAARC countries expressed the view that they did not have much exposure to risk analysis and requested for training in this area. No Regional programme for SAARC on this subject has been carried out so far.

By the end of the training, all the three components of risk analysis would have been dealt with in detail and the participating member countries should be in a position to understand the principles of risk analysis, the distinction between the activities and the functional separation needed between risk assessment and risk management. The practical application of food safety risk analysis will be addressed at the training including international risk assessment approaches in Codex. The process of risk analysis in routine activities as well as in emergencies will also be made clear.

Objectives of the training: The overall objective of the training is to strengthen the understanding of the risk analysis principles, increase the application of the risk analysis framework at country level in the support of food safety systems and ensure that risk management decisions are based on science and best available scientific data. The training will build capacity among representatives of the Ministries of Agriculture, Ministries of Health, Food Safety Authorities and scientific institutions that are involved in risk assessment and risk management activities, in the following areas:

(i) Review of the risk analysis process, its components, scope of applications for ensuring food safety;
(ii) Improved knowledge on the use of risk analysis methodology in the development of national and international food standards and application in food safety control.
(iii) Practical training exercises on the risk analysis application in both routine and emergency situations for chemical and biological hazards in food;
(iv) Exchange of information among participating countries on the experience and process of application of risk analysis in food safety control systems;
(v) Setting national and regional priorities on risk analysis and improving collaboration for furthering risk analysis in the region

Training outputs: After attending the training, the participants will have raised their understanding of risk analysis as a tool to strengthen food control systems; they will have increased their knowledge on the application of risk analysis in Codex; and they will have increased capacities for the *practical* application of the risk analysis framework at the country level. Particularly they will have:

- strengthened their understanding of the risk analysis process, its components, scope of applications for ensuring food safety;

- improved knowledge and practical application on the use of risk analysis methodology in the development of national and international food standards and application in food safety control including analytical and inspection programmes in the country;
- an understanding of the need for coordination and linkage between scientists (assessors) and decision makers (risk managers);
- a greater understanding of the situation of participating countries' capacity in the process of risk analysis application in food safety control systems;
- identified national and regional priorities on risk analysis along with methods for improved collaboration for furthering risk analysis in the region
- training module developed/published and made available to countries

Participants

SAARC Countries - Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka

Three participants from each of the SAARC countries will be supported, one each from the Food Safety Authorities and Veterinary Inspectorates staff (Ministries of Agriculture), Food Hygiene Departments staff (Ministry of Health), where possible or relevant scientific institutes. The supported officials should be directly involved in some aspects of risk analysis.

Organizer

The workshop is being organized by the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAP), Bangkok, Thailand in collaboration with the Quality Council of India, India and with support of FSSAI.