

Key features and benefits of risk-based food inspection:

- *Focuses on points of the food chain that pose highest risk; maximising consumer safeguards and safe food production;*
- *Promotes preventive rather than reactive approach to food control;*
- *Risk-based regulations are more transparent than many prescribed regulations and promote mutual recognition and equivalence among trading partners;*
- *Provides greater time and resources for food inspection; optimizing the efficiency of food control and use of inspection resources;*
- *Minimises costs to food operators; inspection and sampling focus on high risk products or processes reducing unnecessary inspection and testing costs*

Governments world-wide are moving to implement risk-based approaches to food control that require all operators in the food supply chain to share responsibility for food safety and quality and apply measures to reduce food hazards.

Official monitoring of the compliance of food operators with food regulations is largely undertaken through food audit and inspection and risk-based approaches to food control require food inspection systems to move toward programmes that prioritize inspection based on the risks posed by the food or food operator practices.



The Nutrition and Consumer Protection Division (AGN) of FAO delivers a range of activities to support member countries implement or strengthen risk-based food inspection systems and related food safety and quality management systems. These activities include specific in-country capacity development projects, and the provision of broad policy and technical advice through the publication of a number of manuals, guidelines and training materials designed to meet the needs of concerned stakeholders from both public and private sectors.



Guidelines for risk-based food inspection

The ***Risk-Based Food Inspection Manual***¹ (FAO, 2008) was developed with the needs and circumstances of developing countries in mind to help orient food inspection to a risk-based approach. The manual provides food inspectors and food safety risk managers with practical guidance for conducting modern risk-based inspections across the food chain. It includes specific advice on inspection procedures and on the knowledge and skills needed by food inspectors in carrying out compliance, enforcement and recall processes. Sample inspection checklists and links to further advice are also provided.



¹ Available on line from <http://www.fao.org/documents>

Capacity Development in Food Safety and Food Quality

▶▶ Risk-Based Food Inspection

The *Guidelines for Risk Based Fish Inspection*² (FAO, 2009) was developed to assist developing countries upgrade inspection systems to meet the food safety requirements of major fish importing countries. The guidelines integrate the risk-based inspection principles in the above manual, with additional guidance on developing and implementing risk-based fish inspection regulatory frameworks and fish inspection systems. The guidelines also promote the harmonization of fish inspection systems nationally and internationally and support implementation of key international policy guidance provided by the Codex Alimentarius Commission. Private sector operators can also use these guidelines to raise awareness of risk-based systems, including their food safety obligations and the role of the fish inspector.



Strengthening risk-based inspection systems at country and regional level-selected examples

FAO is directly assisting member countries implement risk-based inspection systems through a variety of capacity development activities including:

- In Cape Verde, government food control agencies are being assisted to improve and harmonize their food inspection activities through a series of training programs focusing on cross-agency inspection policy, planning capacity and operational frameworks;
- In Lao and Vietnam, FAO is assisting to strengthen food legislation and operational frameworks that will facilitate transition to risk-based food inspection systems at the country level; and
- *Enhancing Food Safety by Strengthening Food Inspection Systems in ASEAN Countries* is a regional project that aims to strengthen food inspection systems across various ASEAN countries to enable compliance with international standards and guidelines.



Forward looking

Globalization of the food supply has the potential to expose people world-wide to food hazards and many countries rely heavily on food imports for their food security. Risk-based food inspection helps minimize exposure to food hazards in food trade and thus lead to a reduction in market access restrictions and the significant economic loss that may result.

An **Imported Food Control Manual** is currently being developed to replace the FAO publication on food import inspection published in 1993. This manual will provide guidance to governments and their agencies on means to establish assess and review imported food control programmes, bearing in mind the level of development of the national food control system and budgetary and resource capacities. The manual will be field-tested in a number of countries to maximise its focus and utility prior to being finalised. The manual is expected to be published in 2011.

For further information, contact:
The Nutrition and Consumer Protection Division (AGN)
food-quality@fao.org

To access FAO Food Safety and Quality guidelines and tools:
www.fao.org/ag/agn/agns

² Available on line from <http://www.fao.org/documents>