



# RISK-BASED FOOD INSPECTION



**Inspection and monitoring programmes are at the heart of the enforcement in food safety regulatory systems.** The shift of the modern food safety conception from “reactive” to “preventive”, has led governments world-wide moving towards risk-based approaches to food control and requiring all operators in the food supply chain to share responsibility for food safety. This in particular requires food inspection programmes to prioritize controls based on risks posed by the food or food operator practices. In many countries, the shift to risk-based food inspection may require significant changes to food inspection policy, legislation as well as changes to inspector training programmes; and new education and information programmes targeting the private sector. 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.

## KEY FEATURES AND BENEFITS OF RISK-BASED FOOD INSPECTION

- › *Focuses on points of the food chain or processes that pose highest risk*
- › *Minimises costs to food operators by reducing unnecessary inspection and testing costs*
- › *Promotes preventive rather than reactive approach to food control*
- › *Optimizes the efficiency of food control and use of inspection resources*

## Strengthening risk-based inspection systems at country and regional level

- › Supporting national food control agencies 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 (e.g. project in Cape Verde). Assisting countries to strengthen food inspection systems including food legislation and operational frameworks to facilitate transition to risk-based food inspection systems and enable compliance with international standards and guidelines (e.g. projects in Lao and Vietnam, ASEAN regional project)





## Guidelines for risk-based food inspection

➤ The Risk-Based Food Inspection Manual<sup>1</sup> (FAO, 2008) was developed with the needs 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 chain, and includes specific advice on procedures and on the knowledge/skills needed by food inspectors.

The Guidelines for Risk Based Fish Inspection<sup>2</sup> (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.



## Looking forward

➤ Globalization of the food supply can expose populations worldwide to food hazards. This needs careful consideration, particularly in the context of countries that heavily rely on food imports for their food security. Risk based imported food inspection helps minimizing exposure to food hazards in food trade, while making more efficient use of the available resources, that may be scarce for many developing or transition countries.

FAO is currently finalizing an imported food control manual for the use of Governments and food control agencies, aiming at: (i) providing guidance for assessing and reviewing imported food control programmes; (ii) understanding the different options available for these programmes and balancing them according to specific situations, needs and resources. This includes also due regard to the variety of legal and institutional frameworks, as well as the

different support services that may be needed. The development of this guidance has been consistently supported by field research and testing at each stage, complemented by international peer review processes, to maximize its focus and utility prior to being finalized. The manual is expected to be released in 2012.

<sup>1</sup> Available at <http://www.fao.org/food/food-safety-quality/food-safety-quality/publications-tools/en>

