



STRENGTHENING PREVENTION AND RESPONSE TO FOOD SAFETY EMERGENCIES

Around 2 million people die every year from diarrhoeal diseases largely due to contaminated food and water.¹

Food safety threats cause an enormous burden on economies globally due to frequent disruptions or restrictions of global and regional agri-food trade, loss of food and associated income, increased cost of health care, and also contribute to food insecurity and the poverty cycle affecting the most vulnerable populations. To prevent some of their adverse impacts, FAO assists countries in building food safety emergencies prevention and management systems, thus contributing to strengthen country resilience to food chain crises.

Need for well co-ordinated surveillance throughout the food chain

- Food can become contaminated with biological, chemical or physical hazards at any point in the food chain. Therefore, prevention and control must be implemented at every step of the continuum. Food safety is rarely the responsibility of a single authority. Several countries with well-developed food control systems have operational protocols in place that clearly outline the roles, responsibilities and process for early detection, prevention and control of food safety incidents. However, many countries with less-developed food control systems still need to develop, implement and evaluate similar plans and protocols.



INPUTS



FARM



TRANSPORT



HANDLING/PROCESSING



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CONSUMER

¹ WHO Factsheet No. 237. Accessible at: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs237/en>





Importance of prevention of foodborne outbreaks

➤ It is difficult to estimate the burden of foodborne diseases: only a small fraction is recognized by concerned authorities. The ultimate goal of food safety and public health officials is to prevent such outbreaks. Surveillance systems allow authorities to better understand major food

safety risks and to refocus prevention efforts. It also allows early detection of adverse food safety events and prompt and effective response. FAO collaborates with WHO in a number of activities aimed at prevention and management of food safety emergencies.

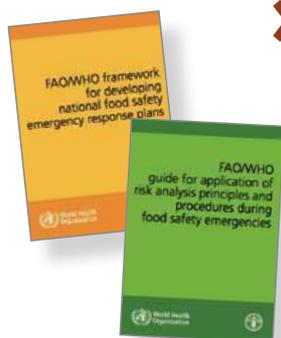
Joint FAO/WHO International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN) promotes rapid information exchange on important food safety events and assists countries in strengthening their capacity to manage food safety emergencies.

Strengthening resilience to food safety emergencies at the country level

➤ FAO is directly assisting countries in developing or enhancing their national food safety emergency plans. **The FAO/WHO framework for developing national food safety emergency plans** outlines key organizational aspects and general and country-specific

considerations that should be taken into account when developing such plans. A well-co-ordinated, multi-agency response and collaboration among various stakeholders is necessary to ensure effective control of food safety emergencies.

The FAO/WHO guide for application of risk analysis principles and procedures during food safety emergencies documents best practices and provides useful tips for ensuring organizational preparedness and transparency of risk assessment, management and communication activities during such emergencies.



Impacts of recent projects and looking forward

➤ The **Framework** and **Guide** documents were presented and discussed at interactive FAO/WHO regional workshops reaching over 50 member-countries. FAO, in collaboration with WHO, has directly assisted Laos, Fiji, Thailand, Panama and Bangladesh to develop their national food safety emergency response plans through the implementation of interactive country-level and regional workshops. The format allows the participants to learn about their roles and

responsibilities in food safety preparedness, to share unique insights and experiences, and to develop or enhance their existing plans.

A recently completed **FAO/WHO Guide for developing and improving national food recall systems** is being published in 2012. These documents should be mainly used for general guidance in the development of country-specific plans and protocols.

A group of the workshop participants work on the development of their plan, Bangladesh - March, 2012

