

Record of Proceedings



Regional Consultation Workshop
Guidelines for Development of Food Safety Policies for Countries in Asia
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Bangkok, Thailand

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Foreword

Food safety is gaining importance globally as well as in the region. Food safety contributes significantly to food security as unsafe and poor-quality food leads to illnesses, malnutrition and food wastage. Thus, it becomes important to emphasize not only on the availability of food, but also ensure that food safety issues are given due significance in our effort to attain food and nutrition security.

The major food safety concerns relate to the residues of substances used in production (such as pesticides and veterinary drugs), food additives, environmental contaminants, microbial pathogens, pests and various aspects of hygiene controls. Although governments in the region have been working towards addressing food safety concerns, they face numerous challenges. A major issue continues to be clarity on the role of multiple agencies due to the multidisciplinary nature of food safety. In many countries, there are as many as 10-15 ministries or departments involved in the various aspects of food safety and control systems that span the entire food chain but often implemented in a piecemeal manner with little or no coordination. Other important issues include lack of clarity on food safety indicators and low capacity for risk analysis.

Investments and resources allocated to food safety are limited in most countries. It is therefore important that governments clearly identify priorities and goals for food safety and control systems and implement them in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. Policies play an important role in providing a common vision, goals and guiding principles and directions for organizing food safety across the food chain. Policies need to be agreed upon by all responsible ministries/ departments and supported by clear roles that are understood by all stakeholders.

Despite the various efforts and initiatives in the region, it has been observed that much more emphasis on food safety is needed in terms of objectives and priorities of each country, clarity on roles and responsibility of different government agencies and other actors and appropriate investments in terms of resource allocations (physical, human and financial resources).

With the above background, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations organized this regional food safety policy consultation, bringing together more than 50 senior representatives from 11 countries representing various sectors – health, agriculture (horticulture/livestock), fisheries, standards organizations, accreditation bodies, planning and policy departments, NGOs, academia and industry. The intention was to share experiences and learn from each other's initiatives on food safety. The deliberations led to identification of priority areas and actions for enhancing the development, coordination and implementation of food safety policies that cover the food continuum; as well as identify a path forward so that they could evaluate their progress with food safety policy development and the capacity needs to support that process.

I take this opportunity to convey FAO's appreciation to the Bureau of Food Safety, Extension and Support, Ministry of Public Health, Thailand, to the resource persons and to all the participants for their contribution to this important regional consultation. I hope that the report will provide useful guidance to governments in establishing their food safety policies and thus a focused approach towards food safety.



Hiroyuki Konuma
Assistant Director-General and
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Acronyms

BAFRA	Bhutan Agriculture and Food Regulatory Authority
BSE	Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy
BFSES	Bureau of Food Safety Extension and Support (Thailand)
CRM	certified reference materials
DALY	disability adjusted life year
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FDA	Food and Drug Administration (Thailand)
FNSP	Food and Nutrition Security Policy (Bhutan)
FSSAI	Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (India)
GAP	good agricultural practices
GHP	good hygiene practices
GMP	good manufacturing practices
GNHCS	Gross National Happiness Commission Secretariat (Bhutan)
HACCP	risk analysis and critical control point
ICDDRB	International Centre for Diarrhoeal Diseases Research (Bangladesh)
ICT	information and communication technology
IT	information technology
KFDA	Korea Food and Drug Administration
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (Japan)
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MFAFF	Ministry for Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (Republic of Korea)
MOAC	Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (Thailand)
MHLW	Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (Japan)
MOFALI	Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Light Industry (Mongolia)
MOFPI	Ministry of Food Processing Industries (India)
MOHFW	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (Bangladesh)
MOLGRDC	Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives (Bangladesh)
MOPH	Ministry of Public Health (Thailand)
MOU	memorandum of understanding
NABL	National Accreditation Board of Laboratories (India)
NFNSP	National Food and Nutrition Security Policy (Bhutan)
NFSAC	National Food Safety Advisory Council (Bangladesh)
NFSP	National Food Safety Policy (India)
NFSP	National Food Security Programme (Mongolia)
NFSQC	National Food Safety and Quality Commission (Bhutan)
NGO	non-government organization
NIFC	National Institute for Food Control (Viet Nam)
NIFSC	National Integrated Food Safety Committee (Indonesia)
NWFPS	non-wood forest products
RA TWG	risk analysis technical working group
R&D	research and development
SMEs	small and medium-sized enterprises
SNV	Netherlands Development Organization
SOP	standard operating procedures
SPS	Sanitary and Phyto-sanitary Standards
SSOP	sanitation standard operating procedures (Republic of Korea)
SWOT	strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis
UBINIG	Policy Research for Development Alternative (Bangladesh)
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VFA	Vietnam Food Administration
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive summary

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations arranged an Asia–Pacific regional consultation to bring together senior government, industry, NGO and academic representatives to address the issue of food safety policies. The principle objectives of the three-day workshop were to share experiences and learn from each other’s initiatives. The deliberations were further intended to identify ways forward for countries to evaluate their progress in addressing food safety policy development in a comprehensive and coordinated manner.

The programme was structured to provide a range of perspectives on developing food safety policies. The first-day presentations provided delegates with information on international and regional experiences, the development of food safety policies in three countries of the region and an analysis and discussion of priority issues that emerged through a pre-workshop questionnaire exercise.

The following two days were primarily structured around working group sessions dealing with the drivers and factors influencing food safety policies, identification of indicators for food safety and priority areas to be addressed in food safety policies. The final session centred on helping country delegates identify and analyse their country’s capacity-development needs.

The analysis of the questionnaire-generated country responses and the priorities identified in the working group sessions highlighted the institutional and technical complexities of the food system and associated policy development needs. The most commonly identified factors for advancing the food safety policy agenda were:

- high-level political support for food safety as a priority
- a food chain approach that addresses safety risks throughout the food continuum
- coordination and cooperation among stakeholders
- risk-based food laws and inspection regimes
- harmonization with international standards
- enhanced capacity for risk assessment, management and communication
- education and training programmes for all stakeholders
- surveillance (including food-borne illness surveillance and monitoring) and laboratory facilities
- enhanced research capacity
- balancing the policy needs of small/medium-sized enterprises and larger enterprises (importers/exporters)
- market access issues (for domestic as well as international)
- enhanced participation of consumers
- strengthened infrastructure (both for quality assurance activities and ensuring the safe production and distribution of foods).

The process for countries to address these priorities will follow different paths, depending on their individual circumstances. It is vital, however, that the chosen path incorporates all the elements essential to developing and implementing a comprehensive food safety system. It must span the entire food spectrum and reflect the needs of all stakeholders. A model was presented that illustrated the essential elements that governments may consider in developing their food safety policies. The model depicted the critical importance of building policies and programmes from a solid base. The most frequently identified deficiency by all of the working groups and countries was the lack of effective coordination and communication between ministries, departments and stakeholders. The absence of this fundamental building block will lead to the inability to specify clear mandates, harmonize regulatory controls, prevent gaps and overlaps in services, maximize the efficient use of scarce resources and ensure that the interests of all stakeholders are represented.

The workshop discussion recognized that countries are at different stages in their policy development processes and thus must evaluate their particular situations and limitations when developing strategies to address the vast array of food safety challenges. In many cases, incremental progress may be necessary, in consideration of the country's political commitment to food safety as a priority and associated levels of financial, human and technical resources.

The regional consultation identified issues for further consideration and focus, such as building on the workshop deliberations through FAO-supported pilot reviews of the food safety approach in two or three countries, with a focus on strengthening their coordination mechanisms. Food safety indicators were identified as another major issue that requires further discussion; it was recommended that FAO organize a similar three-day regional consultation on food safety indicators. Enhancing capacity for risk analysis (including risk assessment, management and communication) was recognized as important by many countries, around which FAO would consider to organize workshops in the near future. Information sharing on the subject of food safety policies through study trips was also proposed, and such trips could integrate into projects or programmes already in place in various countries.

i. Introduction

1. Background

With globalization, food safety has become increasingly important to all countries due to various factors such as volume and diversity of trade in foods, the greater public demand for health protection, changing hazards (example resistant microbes), more sophisticated methods for detection of hazards and changes in production and consumption patterns. Food safety contributes significantly to food security as unsafe and poor-quality food leads to both illnesses as well as food wastage. Thus, the importance of a strong need to emphasize not only on availability of food but also ensure that the same is safe.

The food system spans a vast spectrum, including agricultural inputs (feeds, antibiotics, fertilizers, pesticides, etc.), production, transportation, processing, raw and secondary preparation, retail sale and, ultimately, consumer handling prior to consumption. Protection of the food supply throughout the spectrum is complex and systemic, extending from the production environment to the end consumer. Major food safety concerns relate to residues of substances used in production (such as pesticides and veterinary drugs), food additives, environmental contaminants, microbial pathogens, pests and various aspects of hygiene controls. The protection of food throughout the continuum requires the management of a complex matrix of policy considerations. Policies must also take into account the interests of diverse groups, including those of government, the food industry¹ and consumers.

The response to these complexities often crosses multiple levels of government and many departments within each level. In many countries in the Asia–Pacific region, there are as many as 10-15 ministries/departments involved in the various aspects of food safety and control systems. It has been observed that food control activities in many countries are still being managed by different ministries or departments in a piecemeal manner, with little or no coordination. Policy development processes often have failed to involve key stakeholders, and decisions on priorities have been made without sufficient information. This has led to policies that are not widely supported and do not meet the needs of food safety for both the domestic and international trade markets.

In view of the above, it was recognized that there is a strong need for countries to address their food safety and food control systems in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. To be successful, policies must be agreed upon by all responsible ministers and supported by clear roles that are understood by all stakeholders, including the different ministries and departments.

This regional food safety policy consultation was organized to bring together senior representatives from countries of the Asia–Pacific region with the aim of sharing experiences and to learn from

¹ The use of the term “food industry” in this report refers to all sectors of the food system, from production through to retail sale.

each other's initiatives to address food safety in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. The deliberations were also intended to identify priority areas and actions for enhancing the coordination, development and implementation of food safety policies that cover the food continuum and thus strengthen food safety. Additionally the consultation was to provide guidance to countries for evaluating their progress in food safety policy development and their associated capacity needs.

The participating countries included Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Thailand and Viet Nam, with around 50 representatives from such sectors as health, agriculture (horticulture/livestock), fisheries, standards organizations, accreditation body, planning department and policy departments. Experts and resource persons, representatives from NGOs, academia and industry also participated (see Annex A for the list of all participants).

Delegates were welcomed to the workshop by Hiroyuki Konuma, Assistant Director-General, FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. The opening address was delivered by Vichai Tienthavorn, Vice Minister Public Health, Thailand (see Annex B and C for the transcript of both remarks) and a vote of thanks was given Shashi Sareen, Senior Food Safety and Nutrition Officer, FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.

2. Objectives of the workshop

The consultation was structured to achieve the following main objectives:

- i) Share background information and status on policies and strategies that guide the development of national food safety systems.
- ii) Identify current drivers or factors that influence food safety in the country and region.
- iii) Share country experiences on the development of food safety policies.
- iv) Identify key issues and priority actions to be addressed in securing high-level policy support for food safety, including the necessary resources (financial, human and technical) to strengthen each country's food control systems.

3. Expected outputs

The following outputs were expected from the strategically structured working group sessions:

- i) A status report on each country's food safety policy development, including current and future influences or drivers.
- ii) A deeper understanding of the "food environment" in countries, including safety challenges and concerns, dynamics of agriculture and food production, important value chains, trade and market access and regional dimensions.
- iii) Issues and priorities that can be used by countries as guidance when developing or reviewing their food safety policy strategies.
- iv) Priority and actions at the country level and the capacity needs required for implementation.

4. Programme structure

The first day of the workshop was structured to present a wide range of perspectives on the development of food safety policies. The presentations provided the delegates with information on international and regional experiences, the status of food safety policy development in three countries of the region and an analysis and discussion of priority issues that emerged through the pre-workshop questionnaire responses.

The following two days were generally the working group sessions with discussions on dealing with the drivers or factors that influence food safety policies, identifying indicators for food safety, priority areas and individual country analysis (by the country delegates) of their capacity needs (see Annex D for the programme).

ii. Food safety policies

1. Context and considerations

The presentations on food safety policies first looked at the international perspective, followed by analysis of the regional perspective.

a. International considerations

Larry Copeland, an international consultant on food safety policies, spoke about his experiences in developing or evaluating food safety policies for multiple levels of government (see Annex E for presentation slides). He emphasized the following key points:

- Governments must initially address two critical questions: who in their country will ultimately determine the safety of the food supply, and what are the key responsibilities of government in the management of the food safety system? These questions need to be considered carefully because they will fundamentally influence a government's response to the complexities of developing food policies that are responsive to all stakeholders' needs.
- An essential first step in policy development is the establishment of an effective means of intergovernmental and interdepartmental coordination and communication. Mr Copeland suggested setting up a senior-level ministerial food safety committee. The committee's mandate would be the enabling of effective communication and coordination between the multiple levels of government and multiple departments within those levels. An essential first task in accomplishing those objectives is articulation and agreement by all parties on the principles and objectives of the country's food safety system.
- Governments must support their policies with systems that are responsive to a complex matrix of rapidly changing influences, including newly recognized pathogens, chemical hazards, new technologies, impacts of trade on domestic markets, competing priorities, the elimination of natural barriers through the global movement of products, consumer trends and preferences and the scarcity of resources.
- Food laws must be modernized to protect the food supply and at the same time enable the food industry and a government's approval agencies the flexibility to apply innovations and new technology. Many jurisdictions have amended their legal regimes to provide risk-based laws that articulate the desired food safety outcomes rather than prescriptive requirements. Codes and standards must be developed that interpret the ways and means for reaching the outcomes prescribed in law.
- Education and training are essential elements for inspection staff, the food industry personnel and consumers. In respect to the food industry, training programmes should be based on the understanding that the overwhelming number of food-borne illnesses are caused by the actions of people. Hence, influencing the attitudes and behaviours of personnel who handle food should be the primary objective. Training of inspection staff should focus on risk-based inspection techniques and ensuring consistency in the interpretation and application of food laws. Consumers need to be aware of the risks and how to protect themselves.

- Laboratory and surveillance programmes are essential elements in supporting and verifying the effectiveness of food safety programmes. In many developing countries, the cost of laboratories and the difficulties in recruiting qualified workers can be problematic. In such cases, partnerships between departments can maximize the scarce resources through the sharing of specialized services between ministries.
- The management of the food system requires a vast array of professionals and technologists. Separately, they represent many backgrounds, interests and priorities. These resources must be harnessed, and the diverse interests enabled to work together in a collaborative, supporting manner rather than in a competitive, antagonistic fashion.
- New expertise must be sourced that can cope with the rapidly changing influences on food safety, such as the effects of climate change, the economic cost or benefits of food safety, new technologies (such as nanotechnologies) and cultural food practices.
- Governments have traditionally over-relied on laws that affect the way food establishments are constructed and equipped. Although those factors form an important base, human behaviour and employee discretion are so inherent in the food industry that equipment and structure can only do so much. Food-borne illness data suggests that food safety programmes need to focus on the way food managers and employees operate as opposed to just the way their establishments look.
- A pyramid depicting a hierarchy of needs for the development and attainment of a comprehensive food safety system illustrates how the essential building blocks necessary for coordinated policy development must be grounded in the country's capacity to undertake inter-ministerial collaborations and to reach agreement on the principles and objectives that will frame the array of food policy considerations and priorities. The successful progression to higher levels of the food safety pyramid will be determined largely by the success in attaining these essential first elements.
- Human behaviour is the leading cause of the majority of food-borne illness outbreaks. Government must ensure the provision of education, surveillance and inspection systems that are capable of preventing problems, identifying hazards as soon as possible once they occur, discover what went wrong and ensure corrective measures are undertaken that will prevent the same problem from recurring in the future.

b. Asia-Pacific experiences

Shashi Sareen, Senior Food Safety and Nutrition Officer, FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, described her experiences in working with countries in the Asia-Pacific region (see Annex F for presentation slides), highlighting the following key points:

- Many issues in Asia conspire against the provision of safe food, including very large populations to feed, a high degree of malnutrition, food wastage and losses, and emergencies arising because of disasters, such as floods, earthquakes and tsunamis.
- Although actual data is lacking in Asian countries, there is little reason to believe that food-borne illness isn't any more rampant here as it is in the United States (48 million affected per year) or Australia (5.4 million cases of gastroenteritis alone per year).

- Food safety policy-makers must act as the guardians of food safety to protect consumers from acute and chronic effects of contaminated food. Areas that require urgent action include international trade obligations; the reduction of waste from contamination, spoilage and destruction; new or emerging issues and technologies; linking food safety with food security; and the promotion of consumer and international confidence in the country's control systems.
- Governments in Asian and Pacific Regions face many challenges in advancing their food policy agendas. Key factors encompass challenges due to globalization, including increasing regional trade where levels of standards and safety differ, pressures from the private sector to over-focus on international trade, imported food controls, establishing the appropriate relationship between domestic and international commodity standards and the need for a high degree of coordination between governments, departments, industry and consumers.
- In most countries, the lack of adequate surveillance has failed to provide governments with the true impact of food-borne illness. As a result, food safety is not generally recognized as a high priority programme. This has led to deficiencies in the necessary capacities to operate a comprehensive network of food safety programmes, including deficiencies in legislation, research, laboratories, inspection systems, human resources and overall financial support.
- Food safety policies provide countries the support they need to address food safety in a focused and targeted manner. Priority policy development needs include coordination between ministries and agreement on government-wide vision, goals and guiding principles for the food system. Each country may differ in its environment, drivers, potential and priorities, but governments need to tackle their particular circumstances in a coordinated and supportive manner. This entails enabling all stakeholders to participate and ensuring that their interests are represented in the development and implementation of the food control system.

Ms Sareen presented a conceptual model for developing and implementing food safety policies that illustrated the evolution, from the drivers and challenges to developing the vision and goals to the determining of guiding principles and priorities leading to developing a documented approach to priorities and then to the assessment of the impact of policies through baseline surveys and evaluated indicators.

2. Country experiences in developing food safety policies

Delegates from Thailand, Japan and Bangladesh provided an overview of their country's experience in developing food safety policies. Each presentation was asked to focus on specific areas, including the development process, considerations and challenges, and positive experiences (such as the benefits and links to other policies) to provide the other consultation delegates with a comparative perspective in which to consider their own country's context.

a. Thailand – presented by Kraissid Tontisirin, Prime Minister's National Food Committee (see Annex G for presentation slides).

- Food quality and safety are among the most important factors affecting people's health as well as trade and other economic aspects. Thailand's food production chain involves over 30 agencies and more than 10 laws.
- The National Food Committee Act created a National Food Committee to serve as the main agency for national food management and to promote cooperation and integration of budgetary and other resources during normal times as well as during emergencies. The Committee was given the authority to propose policies and strategies on food security, quality, safety and education and to create an action plan and food alert system.
- Food security means that each citizen has access to an adequate supply of food that is safe and is nutritionally suitable for all ages. Ensuring a sustainable food security requires the effective management of all food production resources by engaged stakeholder participation.
- The principle of food quality and safety is to ensure high-quality safe food and thus protect consumer health and facilitate domestic and international trade. The principle of food education is research and development and knowledge utilization through engaging stakeholders in the sustainable and effective use of food production resources along the food chain and also strengthens the desirable consumption behaviours for their well-being.
- The principle of food management is effective food management systems along the food chain that can deal with current and emerging food issues.
- Expected outcomes of the Strategic Food Management Framework are: maintaining sustainable food production resources; efficiency in food production at the community level through effective management systems that also enhance economic growth and deal with both normal and crisis situations; and high-quality, safe and nutritious domestic and imported foods that are accessible to consumers.
- Food quality and safety is a key strategy of the Strategic Food Management Framework. Harmonized food standards on food production and added value will be implemented at all levels for consumer protection and the facilitation of domestic and international food trade. The Strategic Food Management Framework aims to ensure good-quality and safe food supply for food security and human well-being.

b. Japan – presented by Tetsuo Urushiyama, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (see Annex H for presentation slides)

- Behind the enhancement of Japan's food safety policies lay diverse and complex food safety problems, such as the globalization of the food supply chain, the development and application of new technologies, the detection of trace hazardous substances by advanced analytical methods and concern about food-borne illness and zoonotic infections. But the biggest trigger for the restructuring of the food safety framework was the finding of first case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE)-positive cow in 2001.
- In the aftermath of that incident, the advisory panel to the related Ministers on the BSE problem recommended (in April 2002) improvement of the food safety administration.

They recommended placing the protection of consumers' health as the first priority, implementation of risk analysis, strengthening the cooperation between related organizations, establishing a new comprehensive law for ensuring food safety with primary focus on consumer protection and restructuring the administrative organizations.

- Following the recommendations, the Government enacted the Food Safety Basic Law² (the Basic Law) in July 2003. The purpose of the Basic Law is to comprehensively promote policies that ensure food safety by establishing basic principles, clarifying the responsibilities and roles of stakeholders and determining the important issues for policy formulation.
- The principles of the Basic Law, which are the core of Japan's national food safety policies, are as follows:
 - Food safety shall be ensured by basing necessary measures on the recognition that the protection of consumers' health is the top priority.
 - Food safety shall be ensured by taking necessary measures appropriately at each stage of the food supply chain.
 - Food safety shall be ensured by taking necessary measures on the basis of science and sufficient consideration of international trends and the opinions of citizens, for the purpose of preventing adverse effects on the consumers' health.
- At the same time the Government constructed a new food safety administrative framework: The Food Safety Commission (FSC) was established as an independent risk-assessment body; and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW), were reorganized as the risk management bodies to promote science-based regulation. More recently, a new agency, the Consumer Affairs Agency (CAA), was established to promote consumer administration, including food safety. In addition, several other organizations are dealing with food safety and, in order to accomplish the affairs under their jurisdiction, are guided by their own specific food safety policies, which are based on the policies in the Basic Law.
- The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare are the primary players and have an important responsibility in ensuring food safety as risk-management bodies. In most cases, risk assessment is described first in the three components of risk analysis; but in fact, preliminary risk management activity is a starting point of risk analysis. Consequently, risk managers have significant roles in preventing food-related health problems. To conduct risk management on the basis of scientific principles, in accordance with an internationally accepted risk analysis framework (namely Codex), the two Ministries together established in 2005 the standard operating procedures (SOP) for food safety risk management. The SOP objectives are also to ensure consistent and transparent risk management and to reflect

² The Food Safety Basic Law is available at:

<http://www.japaneselawtranslation.go.jp/law/detail/?id=1839&vm=04&re=02&new=1>

stakeholders' opinions in risk management processes. At the same time, "Regulatory science" was introduced to promote and facilitate science-based risk management decisions in the administration of food safety. "Regulatory science" is defined as a complex integration of regulatory research and regulatory affairs.

- Japan's BSE crisis led to the enhanced food safety administration, but the Government had to pay a high price to clean up. The influence of confusion at that time still remains in today's food safety administration. As well, the importance of prevention measures only seems to be recognized when a disaster strikes. The development and implementation of measures to prevent a crisis or accident are critically important but remain a challenge. In addition, shortage in human resource continues even after the new food safety framework has been introduced. Therefore building capacity of both the risk managers and the risk assessors is a high priority issue for enhancing the system for food safety. Regulatory research is also a big challenge in science-based decision-making in terms of securing sufficient budget under the severe fiscal situation.

c. Bangladesh – presented by ABM Abdul Hannan, Director, Institute of Public Health, and Shah Mahfuzur Rahman, National Advisor Food Inspection, FAO Food Safety Project (see Annex I for presentation slides).

- Food safety and quality are important determinants for improving public health, ensuring food security and enhancing food trade, both in the domestic and international markets. In Bangladesh, assurance of safe and quality food is a shared responsibility of a number of ministries and their agencies without clearly defined mandates, which leads to gaps and overlaps and inadequate coordination in regulatory mechanisms. The situation is exacerbated by the inadequate commitment to safety and quality by food producers, processors and traders. All these factors result in rampant food contamination and adulteration, which affect consumers' confidence and the food trade.
- The lack of clearly defined mandates and inadequate capacity and capability of technical agencies to analyse risks, to generate data from monitoring and evaluation, and to prevent and control food safety emergencies have affected the assurance of safe and quality food in the country.
- To address this situation, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in collaboration with other ministries including the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, the Ministry of Industries, the Ministry of Fisheries and Live stock, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Ministry of Food, and with other stakeholders including food businesses, consumers' groups, civil society and NGOs and with the support of the FAO drafted the Food Safety and Quality Policies in 2012.

Developing the policies

- The first step involved analysis of the food safety and quality situation of the country; a review of the existing legislation related to food safety and quality, the policies and the action plan related to food safety as well as FAO and WHO guidelines; and a review of all documents, records and other literature on food safety or food safety policies.

- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare constituted an Experts Working Group in January 2012. The 1st draft was prepared by the EWG.
- Several meetings, discussions and consultations (national seminars and workshops) were organized with stakeholders to gather inputs for the first draft of the policies.
- After incorporating comments and suggestions from the different quarters, the Experts Working Group prepared the final draft and submitted it to the Ministry in November 2012 for finalization for Cabinet endorsement. Following endorsement by the Cabinet, it will then proceed to the Parliament for approval.

Vision

- The overall vision of the policies is to ensure a stronger, well-coordinated, effective and integrated food safety and quality-control system, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities of the various ministries, agencies and other stakeholders involved along the food chain in providing food for domestic consumers and for international trade.

General objective

- Protection of the public's health by ensuring the safety and quality of all food.

Specific objectives

- Ensure safe food production, processing, packaging, storage, distribution, preparation, retailing and consumption.
- Reduce morbidity and mortality caused by food-borne illness.
- Facilitate domestic and international trade of safe food.

Scope

- In addition to presenting the Government policies in the area of food safety and quality, the policies also guide the development of a framework for an effective national food control system, in line with other relevant sectoral policies of the Government.

Basic principles

- Protection of public health and ensuring safe and quality food are ensured throughout the food chain.
- Efforts of the competent authorities are well coordinated, with clearly defined roles.
- Assurance of food safety and compliance with the standards are the primary roles of the food producers and processors.
- Up-to-date food standards and legal requirements are formed, maintained and enforced for the functional operation of the national food control system.
- Required information should be provided to consumers in an open and transparent way.
- The roles of civil society and consumers' groups in public awareness development are recognized.
- Risk analysis, monitoring and surveillance should be the foundation of a science-based preventive food control system.
- International and regional standards, recommendations and guidelines are to be adopted or harmonized where appropriate.

Strategies

The following strategies were used to achieve the policy objectives:

- embrace the food chain approach
- multi-sector involvement and cooperation
- risk analysis
- national food analysis capacity and networking
- risk-based food inspection
- information, education and communication
- food-borne illness surveillance and residue monitoring
- food safety emergency response
- standards and regulations.

Institutional framework

- The policies call for the establishment of a Food Safety Coordination Authority. Considering the mandate and decentralized organizational structure, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is proposed as the lead ministry. The Food Safety Coordination Authority will review and update the Food Safety and Quality Policies on a regular basis. The National Food Safety Advisory Council will be strengthened in its capacity to provide oversight on food safety activities under the different ministries throughout the food chain.

Links with other policies

- The Food Safety and Quality Policies links with the Food Policies, the Food and Nutrition Policies, the National Fisheries Policies, the National Livestock Development Policies, the National Poultry Development Policies, the Export Policies, the Import Policies Order, the National Health Policies, the Health, Population, Nutrition Sector Development Plan, the Perspective Plans and the Five-Year Plans, among others.

Challenges

- During implementation of the policies, possible challenges are: inadequate institutional capacity; fragmented and outdated legislation; inadequate awareness among food producers, processors and food traders; limited consumer awareness; and limited resources.

Positive experiences during policy drafting

- During drafting of the Food Safety and Quality Policies, the Expert Working Group gathered several positive experiences, such as the commitment of the regulatory bodies; the interest of consumers from all walks of life, civil society and NGOs; participation of the private sector; and facilitation by the development partners, particularly FAO.

Opportunities

- In implementing the policies, the Government has the opportunity to strengthen the organizational structure and infrastructure of individual ministries, especially the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare; to work with and strengthen commitment from civil society and consumers' groups and NGOs; and to obtain support from the development partners, particularly FAO.

Conclusion

- The assurance of food safety and quality through implementation of the Food Safety and Quality Policies will reduce the food-borne disease burden, improve consumers' confidence and enhance food trade, thus contributing to the sustainable development of the country.

iii. Status of policies in countries: Facilitated discussions

1. Responses to the pre-workshop questionnaire

Prior to the workshop, delegates were sent a questionnaire that asked a series of questions on the status of food safety policy development in their country. The questionnaire covered the following aspects:

- Are there any food safety policies, either independent or part of other policies; which department has issued them and which departments are involved; what points are covered in each policy; how long did it take to develop the policies; what is the level of endorsement; and is there reference in it to any other policies in the country?
- Is there any reference to the policy in national or sector development plans?
- Is there an action plan for implementing the policies?
- Who monitors the implementation of the policies?
- If there is no policy, are there any plans to develop one; what are the details of the plan or “vision” on the future strategic direction for food safety decisions?
- What is the scope or planned scope of the food safety policies?
- What is the background to development of the policies – what were the drivers; what were the data and data sources considered; what challenges or difficult issues were encountered; and have any gaps been identified?
- What are the indicators for food safety?
- What is the impact of the food safety policies?
- Is any capacity strengthening needed to implement the food safety policies?

The responses were compiled and circulated to the delegates (see Annex J for a compilation of the country responses).

2. Reflections on the questionnaire

Based on the responses received to the questionnaire, four key issues were identified and were discussed during the consultation’s open forum.

a. Considerations for food safety development in countries

- Multiple jurisdictions (national, departments, provincial and regional) overly complicate effective communication and coordination.
- Difficulties in gaining the appropriate level of government endorsement (example Parliament, prime minister, minister, national food committee) lead to unclear mandates in food policy development and implementation.
- Should the food safety policies be independent or linked to other related policies, such as food security, nutrition, agriculture, trade and commerce?
- Should the food safety policies be linked or referenced to other national or sector development plans?
- Typically in many countries, food safety legislation is spread over multiple ministries and developed independently; should there be a single law to facilitate greater coordination and clarity over mandates?

The discussion of the five points brought out individual country perspectives. It was evident that, as sovereign nations and cultures and because of their varying stages of policy development and different political systems, a single approach or resolution to the issues was neither practical nor desirable. Each country would have to consider the appropriate solutions, given their particular circumstances. A consensus emerged, however, regarding how important it is to be aware of and consider these factors when addressing policy issues.

b. Scope of policies

- Considerable variation exists between countries over whether food safety policies should be addressed independently or combined with other related control systems or policies (Box 1). Responses from three countries indicated they considered the food safety policies independently from all others. Responses from the remaining ten countries cited the partnering of food safety with a variety of other programmes, including food security, nutrition, food quality, risk analysis and risk communication, food management and education systems.
- The relationship between law and food policies are interpreted differently between countries. Some governments consider them to be the same instruments, while others believe that policies are the instruments that interpret and ensure consistent application of the intent of the law, while still others believe policies override the law and are more overarching.

Box 1 Scope of policies, based on the questionnaire responses

Bangladesh: Provide policy orientation to guide the development of a framework for an effective national food control system.

Bhutan: Food and nutritional aspect; however, food safety is captured under the utilization goals of the policy.

Cambodia: Food safety.

India: All aspects of food safety as per the definition of food.

Indonesia: Food security, food safety, food quality and nutrition.

Japan: Risk analysis (including separating risk assessment and risk management) and risk communication.

Republic of Korea: Build a preventive and effective food safety management system.

Lao PDR: Food safety.

Malaysia: Food safety.

Mongolia: Availability, nutritious and safe food and reduce malnutrition.

Philippines: Potential hazards in foods, from farm to fork.

Thailand: Four themes: food security, food quality and safety, food education and food management.

Viet Nam: Food safety and nutrition (handled by the Ministry of Health and food security (domain of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and some aspects by the Ministry of Health).

In the ensuing discussion of these two points, delegates presented their views in a lively discussion of their particular circumstances and stages of legislation and policy development. A consensus was evident that no one option could or should be applied across all countries. Again, each government would apply its own interpretation to best address its particular circumstances.

It was however, acknowledged that more than one department or ministry was involved, often more than one law was covered; food safety policies could be managed at different levels (national, departmental and provincial). Additional important points that were identified included the need for effective coordination between departments; the entire food chain should be addressed; the roles of multiple agencies and stakeholders should be well articulated; and communication and networking are important.

c. Process for policy development

- Time frames for developing the policies ranged from one to three years; in some cases, it was indeterminate (Box 2). Many countries experienced delays that were problematic and symptomatic of the lack of senior-level support. The involvement of stakeholders was considered an asset, specifically in relation to acceptability, completeness and inclusion of varying viewpoints, although it sometimes added considerably to the development process, including a longer time frame needed for the development.

Box 2 **Time period for formulation** **(selected responses)**

Bangladesh: 10 months for the first draft
Bhutan: 2 years
Japan: 2 years
Republic of Korea: different aspects took different time
Lao PDR: 3 years (2006–2009)
Malaysia: 1 year
Mongolia: 2 years
Thailand: 1 year
Viet Nam: 2 years for the food law and 1–2 years for decrees and circulars

- Multiple levels of government, departments and stakeholders make coordination very difficult and lengthen the process. In certain cases, more than 18 government departments were involved along with other stakeholders. This also presents difficulties in keeping discussions focused on achieving desired outcomes for all stakeholders.
- Countries identified many potential data sources (Box 3), although few could be considered to reliably produce the type of data that can be used to influence decision-makers on the true impact of the absence of comprehensive policies across the food spectrum. The lack of reliable data is seen as a major obstacle in securing the resources and capacities to effectively deliver food safety programmes. Data gaps were also identified and included the status of public health, contamination and adulteration levels in the food supply, monitoring and surveillance data, food-borne illness monitoring and surveillance, food-borne disease incidence and national consumption data.

Box 3
Data sources

- Status of public health data
- National consumption data
- Food production methods
- Monitoring and surveillance data (regular and specific); lab analysis from different departments
- Establishments' compliance or non-compliance data
- Food-borne disease incidents/data, epidemiological surveillance data
- SWOT analysis
- Media reports
- Food safety risk assessment research, special studies and toxicological data
- Poverty analysis and assessment reports
- Vulnerability analysis and mapping
- Renewable natural resources statistical publications and living standard surveys
- Annual health bulletins
- National nutrition survey and related documents
- Literature, including policy documents
- Activities in other countries and international bodies

d. Implementation issues

For many countries, implementation issues will need to be addressed at a later stage as they were still in the policy development stages. However issues that will need to be addressed include:

- inclusion of stakeholders
- detailed action plans to track progress and the attainment of objectives
- clearly identified agencies responsible for monitoring and reporting on progress
- identification and tracking of measureable indicators
- consistent application across the country
- implementing strategies linked to the policy drivers.

NOTE: As a result of the time constraint, the process for policy development and implementing issues could not be discussed as fully as the first two issues. Data sources and data gaps were discussed to some extent and data sources are highlighted in Box 3. The issues were summarized for the delegates from the compilation of responses to the pre workshop questionnaire.

iv. Working group sessions

Much of the workshop's final two days centred on discussions within working group sessions. In the first three sessions, the delegates were formed into groups based on their ministerial or departmental association, such as health, agriculture, trade and commerce, and a mixed group of non-government delegates, including from NGOs, academia and industry. The intention was to analyze three critical food safety policy issues from their groups' unique perspective, areas of expertise and departmental mandates in the food system.

In the fourth session, the task was to analyze the capacity development needs for developing food safety policies within countries, hence the delegates were regrouped with their national colleagues.

Session 1: Drivers or factors influencing the development of food safety policies

Task

- Identify five major drivers or factors in relation to the group's areas of expertise.
- Discuss the importance and implications of each on food safety policies, including both positive and negative factors.

NOTE: See Annex K for a compilation of the presentation slides for each group.

Analysis of session 1

Within the groups, the delegates identified the drivers and factors that would normally be expected of their areas of expertise – health primarily on health-related issues, agriculture on farm-based initiatives, trade and commerce on trade and economies of the food industry and the mixed group on a variety of issues spanning the food system. These disparate views demonstrate the complexities of the food system and the absolute need for effective communication and coordination between all sectors. It further demonstrates that no single ministry or department represents all interests and that the integration of the collective needs is essential to achieve a truly comprehensive food safety system.

On the positive side, great synergies can happen when divergent needs are coordinated to achieve a common goal. For example, the trade and commerce group identified enhanced growth in tourism as a priority – something not likely that health and agriculture officials would normally rate highly on their list. However, the health sector's interest in enhancing food protection and the agriculture sector's interest in promoting or increasing local food production could all be linked with tourism. A coordinated effort between the three ministries could satisfy all their interests through enhancements to popular tourist venues, such as street food vendors, farmer's markets and restaurants, while other stakeholders, such as consumer groups, could ensure appropriate communication mechanisms with broader sections of tourist populations.

Session 2: Indicators/outcomes for food safety

Task

- Identify five key indicators to measure food safety.
- Identify systems of surveillance – existing, new or ones that need to be strengthened to measure the desired indicators/ outcomes.

NOTE: See Annex L for a compilation of the presentation slides for each group.

Analysis of session 2

All the groups identified at least a few negative impacts as essential indicators of food safety: food-borne illnesses, outbreaks, contamination, recalls, consumer complaints and import rejections. Paradoxically, they also identified in the other sessions significant gaps in the provision of surveillance and inspection programmes needed to support an information system capable of producing data on the desired indicators. The inability to provide the necessary supporting information to senior levels of government is often viewed as one of the primary reasons for failing to establish food safety as a priority in government and consequently leads to the failure in gaining the necessary resources to carry out the desired programmes and services across the food continuum.

Other priority areas were highly associated with traditional roles of government, including more inspectors and inspections, policies, laws and regulations, harmonization of standards, penalties and laboratories. Even though these attributes form important parts of an integrated food safety system, singularly it is doubtful they can have a significant impact on improving the status of food safety in a country. They must be combined with a host of other initiatives to provide the array of services needed to ensure a safe food supply. Greater success may be achieved by some of the other factors that the groups highlighted that are more closely aligned to empowering industry and consumers. These include training and education programmes, consumer and industry awareness, media reporting, increase in certified operations for good manufacturing practice (GMP), hazard analysis and critical control points (HACCP), and ensuring the financial stability of small and medium-sized producing and processing enterprises. Another set of factors include the volume of production, the number of destination countries, farmers' income and the cold supply chain.

A possible omission from the group recommendations was the growing importance of the identification and tracking of food-borne zoonotic diseases. Worldwide crises associated with emerging diseases, such as BSE and avian influenza, have heightened concerns, particularly in consideration of the rapid movement of goods around the world.

There was agreement that these aspects need to be discussed further in a larger workshop or consultation on food safety indicators.

Session 3: Issues and priority areas to be addressed in food safety policy development

Task

- Identify the five most important areas to be addressed.
- What are the issues and approaches to address the five priorities?
- What are the roles of related departments and stakeholders?
- What coordination will be needed?

NOTE: See Annex M for a compilation of the presentation slides for each group.

Analysis of session 3

The groups again identified a disparate number of priorities, largely based on their professional interests and ministry mandates. A common theme among the groups, however, suggested a paramount goal of government must be to integrate and coordinate all the food safety programmes across ministries. Priority should be placed on clarifying the respective ministry responsibilities across the food continuum, including for imported and exported food products. Specifically, the process of coordination should include the following three areas that were identified by the groups:

1. Standards

- i) Food safety** – The goal is to have harmonized food safety standards that are nationally recognized, reflect international developments and allow the continued viability of small-volume food production businesses.
- ii) Establishments** – The goal is to harmonize the various ministry processes and structural standards and to reflect international developments. Standards will be harmonized to reflect food safety outcomes or be performance based, where practical. Commonality will extend to the manner and environment under which food is produced, processed and distributed.
- iii) Laboratories** – The goal is to develop standard methods (or equivalent) for laboratory testing and reporting that reflect international developments. The rationalization of laboratories in terms of number and location is also of critical importance as well as networking them for the effective sharing of facilities within the country.
- iv) Product identity standards** – The goal is to develop common standards for product identity, including grade, composition, net quantity and product description.

2. Inspection methods – Health and safety inspection systems should be based on the scientific assessment of risk to verify compliance with established criteria throughout the food chain. The goal is to develop more uniform procedures and practices in delivering inspection programmes. Included in these inspection systems are education, inspection methodologies and frequencies, sampling, laboratory analyses, training programmes, enforcement and reports.

3. System delivery – The goal is to integrate all parts of the food protection system while at the same time clarifying and respecting ministry mandates and jurisdiction. An integrated system will identify and rectify overlaps and gaps in services through coordinated discussion and agreement on lead ministry responsibilities. Costs and benefits will be evaluated continuously as integration progresses to ensure optimal efficiency and effectiveness of government services and support for industry competitiveness.

Session 4 – Country capacity needs to develop and implement the national food safety policies

Task

- Identify five priority areas.
- Identify challenges to the development and implementation of each priority.
- Identify the actions needed to support the development and implementation.
- Identify three areas required to support the development and implementation.

NOTE: See Annex N for a compilation of the presentation slides for each country.

The deliberations of the first two and a half days of the workshop and the first three working group sessions were designed to generate an array of opinions and experiences in the development of food safety policies. Session 4 was intended to use that information as a backdrop for the delegates to identify elements that they consider crucial to advancing food safety policy development and implementation in their country. The working groups' composition was thus altered and consisted solely of members from the same country (see the next section for the discussion of the individual country responses).

v. Summary of country responses

The structure of the workshop and deliberations by the delegates provided valuable insights into the complexities of developing a country's regime of food safety policies. The food system spans a vast array of disparate interests, including agricultural inputs, large and small producers, importers and exporters, distributors, processors, retailers and ultimately the consuming public. The working group sessions underscored that no single ministry, department or interest group possesses the mandate or all of the professional or technical expertise necessary to manage the entire food system. Interventions throughout the food system require a sophisticated network that links the resources of government, the food industry and consumers.

The majority of deficiencies in the food safety system are grounded in a government's failure to establish: clear mandates, close working relationships and effective means of communication and cooperation. The ultimate impact of the failure to address these issues is often reflected in the gaps in the food safety system in which sectors are left unregulated or lacking in the needed standards and surveillance to ensure compliance. Conversely, poor communication and coordination can also result in overlaps and duplication of roles and activities, leading to the unnecessary allocation of scarce resources.

The pre-workshop questionnaire and the deliberations provided verification of a host of needs in advancing food safety policy development. Countries are at varying stages of development and implementation of their food policy agendas. Contributing factors include the political environment, varying degrees of support for food safety as a priority, cultural issues, economies and funding and the influence of stakeholder groups. Collectively, these contributing factors determine the country's interest and ability to develop and implement effective food safety regimes.

An analysis of the country responses and the series of priorities identified in the other three working group sessions substantiate the institutional and technical complexities of the food system and associated policy development needs. The following emerged as the most commonly identified factors or priority issues in advancing food safety policy agendas:

- high-level political support for food safety as a priority
- a food chain approach that addresses safety risks throughout the food continuum
- coordination and cooperation among stakeholders
- risk-based food legislation and inspection regimes
- harmonization with international standards
- enhanced capacity for risk assessment, management and communication
- education and training programmes for all stakeholders
- surveillance (including food-borne illness surveillance and monitoring) and laboratory facilities
- enhanced research capacity
- balancing the policy needs of small and medium-sized enterprises with those of larger enterprises (example importers and exporters)

- market access issues (for domestic as well as international markets)
- enhanced participation of consumers
- strengthened infrastructure (both for quality assurance activities and ensuring the safe production and distribution of foods).

The primary instruments identified by all the countries to address these priorities are laws and regulations. Legal frameworks are internationally recognized as vital to establishing the necessary food safety standards and corrective measures and penalties for those found to be in non-compliance. Countries that over-rely on laws to ensure food safety, however, have likely not adequately considered two initial and fundamental questions: who will ultimately determine the safety of the food supply, and what are the government's roles and responsibilities as the gatekeepers of the food safety system? Jurisdictions must recognize that their responsibilities go beyond just the provision of legislation. They must provide the vision, goals, programmes and services that will empower the food industry to export, import, produce, process, sell and serve safe food and empower consumers to not only demand but also prepare and consume safe food.

The process for achieving these objectives will follow different paths, depending on the circumstances in the country. It is vitally important that the chosen path incorporates the elements essential to developing and implementing a comprehensive food safety system. It must span the entire food spectrum and reflect the needs of the country including all stakeholders.

vi. Conclusions and a path forward

A comprehensive food safety system must encompass all the priority areas that have been identified and agreed to by the government departments, agencies and stakeholder groups. It is also important to follow a risk-based approach so as to use limited resources efficiently. The most frequently identified deficiency by all the working groups and country responses was the ineffective or lack of coordination, cooperation and communication between ministries, departments and stakeholders. The absence of this fundamental aspect will lead to the inability to set clear mandates, harmonize regulatory controls, prevent gaps and overlaps of services, maximize the efficient use of scarce resources and ensure that the interests of all stakeholders are represented.

Significant barriers often exist within countries that if left unresolved will impede significantly the country's interest in modernizing its food system. Efforts to establish inter-ministerial coordination are often not successful largely because they fail to gain the necessary support from the political levels of government.

The future success of the modernization of and continued growth in a country's food system will be determined in large part by a government's ability to achieve success in two areas of critical importance:

- i) Inter-ministerial agreement on the principles and objectives that define the country's common vision for the coordinated management of the food system.
- ii) Effective management of the complex matrix of ministries, departments, programmes and services that encompass an integrated food safety system.

A high-level inter-ministerial food safety committee (IMFSC), with its primary mandate being the development, coordination and efficient delivery of government's food safety policies, needs to be supported at the political level. It is of absolute importance that approval and authority for the existence of this committee be granted through the ministers responsible for a country's food safety system. Failure to gain the highest level of approval will inhibit the ability of the committee to carry out its essential roles and responsibilities. Formation of this high-level committee and agreement by all ministries and departments on the principles and objectives of the country's food safety system provide the essential platform to progress to other elements and levels of food safety policy development.

The workshop participants discussed both the complexities and the enormity of the task of developing policies and programmes that span the entire food system. A suggested useful first step would be for each country to review its status and progress against the priority areas presented in the following chart. Further, an incremental approach in which priority areas that could have a reasonable expectation of success be targeted as initial areas for consideration. It is better to experience success in a few areas than only partial or incomplete achievement of too many projects. Political, financial and capacity limitations are key considerations in how far and how fast a country can move through the various components and levels of food safety policy development.

Countries must evaluate their circumstances and abilities to achieve progress in developing their solutions to the vast array of food safety policy issues. The workshop identified that countries were at different stages in their policy development processes. In many cases, as noted above, incremental progress is necessary due to the limitations in political commitment and financial and human resources.

The following table presents a sequence of priority actions from the institutional and technical perspectives that governments can consider from their own unique perspectives.

Priority actions for governments to consider	
Institutional	Technical
1. Establish a senior-level inter-ministerial food safety committee	1. Develop/ harmonize requirements, technical regulations and standards within the country and with international standards where appropriate
2. Develop an agreement on the principles and objectives of the country's food safety system	2. Develop risk-based monitoring and inspection procedures, including forms and formats
3. Identify lead ministries and areas of jurisdiction and mandates	3. Provide inspectors with essential tools and equipment to undertake risk-based inspections
4. Develop a strategic plan for the development and implementation of the country's food safety system	4. Undertake risk assessments of food establishments (farm to retail) subject to regulations
5. Develop risk-based laws and regulations	5. Develop risk-based education/training for inspectors
6. Strengthen infrastructure for monitoring and inspection as well as other food safety infrastructure needed	6. Develop codes of good practice to interpret outcome-based regulations
	7. Establish a food safety emergency response system, including traceability and recall
	8. Establish mechanisms for data collection (food-borne disease surveillance, contaminant monitoring programmes, etc.)

Should concurrent progress not be possible in all areas, it is recommended that countries view the items as being listed in priority order. Whichever path a country chooses it must ensure the essential building blocks that will enable effective cooperation and coordination be established as its primary objective.

vii. Next steps

The regional consultation was very valuable in that it provided participants with a forum for sharing information, experiences and the status of food safety policy development in their countries. The working group sessions facilitated significant discussions in identifying the drivers and factors that influence policy development, the indicators for food safety and the issues and priority areas for moving the food safety priority agenda forward. The participants also identified areas that, in their view, would be a priority in their country's scenario, along with the challenges and needed capacity support.

The delegates recommended FAO led support specifically in the following four identified areas which in their view would be very beneficial to countries:

- i) Organize pilot projects in two to three countries to review their food safety approach/policies, particularly focusing on addressing their coordination mechanisms.
- ii) Organize a regional workshop of similar size and duration to share experiences and identify the most appropriate indicators for measuring food safety across the food continuum.
- iii) Organize workshop(s) on enhancing capacity for risk analysis; assessment, management and communication.
- iv) Organize study trips to foster information sharing between countries and jurisdictions on strategies, programmes and successes. Such study trips could integrate into ongoing projects or programmes in various countries.

FAO is keenly interested in building on the successes experienced in the three-day regional consultation. FAO is actively investigating the feasibility of sponsoring a risk analysis workshop and potential pilot projects to review coordination mechanisms in interested countries. FAO will also further pursue the other two recommended activities.

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Welcoming address

Hiroyuki Konuma

Assistant Director-General and
FAO Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific

***H.E. Dr Vichai Tienthavorn, Vice Minister of the Ministry of Public Health, Thailand,
Distinguished participants from various countries of Asia,***

Resource persons,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the regional food safety policy consultation for Asia – organized by the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health. I would like to thank the Ministry of Public Health for supporting FAO in organizing this important regional consultation. I am very glad to see that various departments at the senior level and stakeholders from 13 countries are represented in this consultation.

Food safety is a very important subject and has been increasingly gaining importance globally as well as in the region. Food safety, as you are aware, contributes significantly to food security because unsafe and poor-quality food leads to illnesses and malnutrition as well as food wastage. This leads to a strong need to emphasize not only the availability of food but also to ensure that food safety issues are given importance in our effort to attain food security and better nutrition. Recent concerns on food safety relate not only to the common microbiological and chemical contamination but also the ever newer emerging hazards due to technological development innovations, such as nanotechnology, climate change, use of new packaging materials and others.

Although governments in the region have been working towards addressing food safety in their countries, the challenges faced by them are many. One of the major issues continues to be the clarity of the role of multiple agencies due to the multidisciplinary nature of food safety, which needs the involvement of not only a large number of departments to oversee and coordinate the food safety aspect but also involvement of multiple stakeholders, the producers, processors, handlers, retailers and the consumers – all of which have a role in ensuring that there is no neglect in any portion of the food chain for ensuring safe food.

Another important challenge is the lack of appropriate indicators on food safety as well as reliable data due to the fact that the food safety status of countries is not easily measureable and the impact of food safety is not readily felt during normal times and usual circumstances. Only when cases of major incidents or emergencies, such as melamine contamination, dioxin contamination or the latest E. coli O104:H4 bacteria contamination case in Germany, have occurred; then the impact of food safety is more evident.

In view of this, the resources allocated towards food safety in terms of physical, human and financial resources are not always appropriate to the real needs. There have been instances in countries where

state-of-the-art laboratories have been established, but funding for testing has not been suitably allocated. In other cases, governments have allocated funding for ensuring the safety of export to meet the needs of importing governments while efforts for safety of products for the local market are often neglected.

It therefore becomes imperative that countries clearly identify their priorities and goals in relation to food safety and that they work towards addressing them in a comprehensive and coordinated manner, with the involvement of relevant stakeholders. These may cover a range of issues, including public health, protecting consumer rights, maintaining access to international and regional markets, protecting the image of the country, providing an environment for growth of industry, reducing food waste and losses and others. Policies play an important role in providing a common vision, goals and guiding principles and directions for addressing food safety in a country.

Many countries have already formulated or are in the process of formulating food safety policies. It is important that the policies are formulated with multi-stakeholder involvement and consultation so that these are not skewed towards specific goals relating to a single sector (such as exports) or only catering to the interests of specific groups in the food chain.

FAO activities

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has been focusing on food safety at the international level as well as the regional level. FAO also responds to the needs of individual countries and works with them in addressing food safety concerns and supports their capacity development.

Food safety has been recognized as a priority area in the FAO Regional Conference for the Asia and the Pacific; in the thirty-first FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific, in March 2012, FAO was requested to assist member countries to:

- harmonize food safety and quality standards in value chain development
- strengthen legal and institutional frameworks that govern food safety and quality in value chain development
- enhance capacity for participation in the design of animal health and food safety standards.

FAO is currently supporting 15–20 projects in various countries of the Asia–Pacific region on food safety, covering capacity strengthening in aspects of food safety and quality policies, food legislation, laboratories, standards and Codex-related activities, control and inspection procedures, public awareness and education on food safety and consumers' health, implementing preventive risk-based approach in industry sectors and others.

Despite the various efforts and initiatives in the region, it has been observed that much more is needed in the area of food safety in terms of a clear focus, based on objectives and priorities of the country, clarity on roles and responsibility of different government agencies and other stakeholders and appropriate investments in terms of resource allocations (physical, human and financial resources).

The purpose of this consultation, therefore, is to bring together multiple stakeholders from various countries of the region, with differing food safety scenarios, so that:

- issues and challenges relating to food safety are identified and reflected upon
- country experiences on developing and implementing food safety policies are shared
- issues and priority areas are identified and defined that can further be used by countries as a guidance while developing or reviewing their food safety policies
- country-level priority actions are identified, with the support required for implementing them (including resource requirements).

Some experiences of countries, such as Thailand, Japan and Bangladesh, in the development of food safety policies will also be shared.

Prior to the consultation, I understand that an exercise was carried out to gather data from countries on the scenario of the food safety policies, covering the background of establishment of the policies, the drivers, the goals to be achieved and the challenges being faced towards their implementation. This will form a basis of discussion during the consultation.

Based on this consultation, FAO could further explore support to countries in developing or reviewing their policies or even in facilitating the implementation of them. Let me add that FAO is currently supporting some countries, such as Bangladesh in developing its food safety and quality policies and Mongolia in developing its policy for food standards.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to assure you of FAO's commitment to capacity building for food safety.

It is indeed a pleasure for FAO to organize this important regional consultation. I would like to thank the Ministry of Health for collaborating with FAO and coordinating all the logistical arrangements, which indeed is a very difficult task. I would also like to thank all the countries present for sparing their time as well as providing their inputs and sharing their experiences to support this important meeting.

Finally, I wish you a successful regional consultation and look forward to the outcome of your deliberations in this crucial field of food safety policies.

Thank you.

Opening address

Vichai Tienthavorn

Vice Minister for Public Health, Thailand

Dr Hiroyuki Konuma, Assistant Director General, Regional Representative of the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

Ms Shashi Sareen, Senior Food Safety and Nutrition Officer, FAO

And participants,

On behalf of the Ministry of Public Health and the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand, I have the great honour and pleasure to welcome FAO representatives and all participants from countries in Asia to the Regional Consultation on Workshop Guidelines for the Development of Food Safety Policies for Countries in Asia. I would like to extend my warmest welcome to those of you who have come to Thailand to participate in this workshop and I hope that your stay here will be enjoyable and productive.

I am very grateful for the support that FAO gave the Ministry of Public Health of Thailand to organize this valuable workshop. The Bureau of Food Safety Extension and Support, which is the responsible authority as the intermediate organization to drive food policies to public health officers in all 77 provinces, has realized on consumer health, food safety and nutrition. Therefore, a briefing on a development of the food safety policies of Asia countries, including Thailand for strengthening the food safety systems is the aim of the Regional Consultation Workshop on Guidelines for the Development of Food Safety Policies for Countries in Asia. During the regional meeting, a status report on food safety policies in each country covering both the existence of policies and main drivers influencing food safety policies will be discussed.

At present, agricultural land is affected by climate change and development of various diseases in Thailand. The Thai Government has announced the policies that promotes “Kitchen of the World” project, focuses on quality and safety of Thai food along the food supply chain, giving a major boost to research work, so that Thai cuisine would gain greater recognition at the international level. Policies for food safety, therefore, need to take account of a range of issues, including public health, but additionally impact on food production, trading patterns or socio-economic aspects. The Ministry of Public Health is accelerating the implementation of its food safety policies in response to the Government’s project. In implementing the food safety policies, emphasis would be placed on hygienic and sanitary conditions throughout the food chain under the “from farm to table” concept. It will assure that more efficiency of food production in the food chain is involved with all steps, ranging from production to transportation, processing, and distribution to consumers. The key to a successful response usually falls to all agencies in the food supply chain and the governmental sectors. Multi-agency collaboration, both nationally and regionally, will be required.

Currently, the Ministry of Public Health has prepared healthy food as a way for people to turn to a healthy lifestyle by working with public health administrators in all 77 provinces to focus on food safety to promote good health among the people and cope with gastroenteritis-related diseases. Meanwhile, regarding to the national policies, the Government has set a target to increase the number of restaurants with food safety standards by 5 percent a year. The Ministry of Public Health is thus working with the Thai Restaurant Association in developing the quality of Thai restaurants and food shops to international standards. A target has been set to develop 150 local restaurants and food shops to international standards by 2009. In recent years, around 122 000 food outlets, out of 168 000 across the country, have passed the food safety standards set by the Ministry of Public Health in terms of hygienic and sanitary conditions to ensure safety for consumers.

Food safety policies are important issues and all countries deem it necessary to adjust in order to maintain food security and improve food safety standards. Also, governments should develop documented comprehensive national food safety policies and establish effective partnership among relevant stakeholders. This requires leadership, political will and a commitment to food safety, especially in view of the competing priorities in the health agenda. Agreement on the issues and priority actions must be addressed to ensure high-level policy support for food safety, including adequate resource allocations (in terms of physical and human resources) aimed at strengthening the food control systems.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I wish the consultation workshop will provide opportunity for various countries in formulating and implementing guidelines for the development of food safety policies for your countries. This is a great chance for all participants to learn from the experts team and share their experiences. I hope that our three-day workshop will be a fruitful one and will come up with successful outputs. I wish you a pleasant stay in our country.

At this auspicious moment, may I now declare the Regional Consultation Workshop on Guidelines for the Development of Food Safety Policies for Countries in Asia open.

Thank you.

**Programme of Regional Consultation Workshop
Guidelines for Development of Food Safety Policy for countries in Asia,**

Day 1 (December 17, 2012)	
Time	Programme
08.00 – 09.00	Registration
Opening Session	
09.00 – 10.00	<p>Opening session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome Address - Dr. Hiroyuki Konuma, Assistant Director General/Regional Representative, FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific • Opening Address –Dr.Vichai Tienthavorn,Vice Minister for Public Health, Thailand • Vote of Thanks - Ms. Shashi Sareen, Senior Food Safety and Nutrition Officer, FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific • Group photo
10.00 – 10.15	Tea Break
Overview & Status of Policies in Countries	
10.15 – 10.45	Objectives, outline and structure of the programme and introduction of participants - Ms Shashi Sareen (FAO)
10.45 – 11.30	Food Safety Policies: Context and Consideration – Mr Larry Copeland (International Consultant) & Ms Shashi Sareen (FAO)
11.30 – 12.15	<p>Country experiences in food safety policies 1: National Food Safety Polices – Development process, considerations, challenges, positive experiences, linkages to other policies, etc</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thailand experience - Prof Dr Kraissid Tontisirin, Prime Minister’s National Food Committee, Thailand • Discussions
12.15 – 13.30	Lunch
13.30 – 14.15	<p>Country experiences in food safety policies 2: National Food safety policies – the policies, development process, challenges and positive experiences including benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Japan experience – Mr Tetsuo URUSHIYAMA, MAFF, Japan • Discussions
Experiences in food safety policies:	
14.15 – 15.15	<p>Status of Policies in Countries : Facilitated discussion 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Summary of responses - Reflections on questionnaire
15:15 – 15:30	Tea Break
15:30– 16.30	<p>Status of Policies in Countries : Facilitated discussion 1Contd</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Summary of responses - Reflections on questionnaire
16.30 – 16.45	Discussions and Conclusion of Day 1

Day 2 (18 December 2012)

Time	Programme
08:30 – 10:00	Working Group Session 1–Drivers/ factors influencing development of food safety policies (4 groups based on sectors)
10:00 – 10:15	Tea Break
10:15 – 11:15 11:15 – 12:45	Presentation by groups and open discussion, Q&A (10 min each) Working Group Session 2: Indicators for food safety (same 4 groups) Frame:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify indicators to measure food safety (measurable) ● Systems of surveillance (existing/ need strengthening)
12:45 – 13:45	Lunch
13:45 – 14:45	Presentation by groups and open discussion, Q&A (10 min each)
14:45 – 15:30	Country experiences in food safety policies 3: National Food safety policies – the policies, development process, challenges and positive experiences including benefits
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bangladesh experience - Prof Dr ABM Abdul Hannan, Director, IPH, Bangladesh and Dr Shah Mahfuzur Rahman, National Advisor (Food Inspection), FAO Food Safety Project, Bangladesh ● Discussions
15:30 – 15:45	Tea Break
15:45 – 17:45	Working Group Session 3 – Issues (priority areas) to be addressed in food safety policies (same 4 groups) Frame:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Issues and approaches to these ● Departments/ stakeholders that have a role and their role ● Coordination needed

Day 3 (19 December 2012)

08.30 – 09.30	Presentation by groups and open discussion, Q&A (10 min each group)
09.30 – 10.30	Facilitated discussion on food safety policies 2: Topic : Impact of food safety policies in the country
10.30 – 10.45	Tea break
10.45 – 12.15	Working Group Session 4– Capacity Development needs to support development and implementation of National food safety policies (country wise groups) Frame:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Priority areas ● Challenges to development/ implementation ● Actions needed ● Support needed (internal and external) – for development & implementation
12.15 – 13.15	Lunch
13.15 – 15.15	Presentation by groups and open discussion, Q&A (10 min each)
15:15 – 15:45	Tea Break & Drafting of Recommendations/ Follow up
15:45 – 16:30	Recommendations/ Follow up and Conclusions- FAO

Presentation Slides, International Experience, Mr. Larry Copeland, International Consultant

Food Safety Policies: Context and Considerations

at the

Regional Consultation Workshop
Guidelines For Development of Food Safety Policy for *Countries In Asia*
November 17-19, 2012

Larry Copeland
Food Safety and Public Health
Consulting Services

Related Professional Experience

- Retired, Director, Food Protection Services, BC Centre For Disease Control
- Chair, Canadian Food Inspection Implementation Committee
- Chair, Federal, Provincial, Territorial Committee on Food Safety Policies
- Lead Consultant, Provincial Inter-Ministerial Food Safety Policy Committee

THE BURDEN OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Reductions In Mortality/Morbidity From Many Infectious Diseases Have Been Described As The Single Most Significant Public Health Achievement Of The Past Century – Many Associated With Enhancements To Food Safety.

“The Biggest Mistake Any Organization Can Make Is Assuming What Worked In The Past Will Work In The Future”

“Even If You Are On The Right Track You’ll Get Run Over If You Just Stand There”

Will Rogers

World Crises in the Food System

- Melamine in many food products
- Mad Cow Disease
- Bird Flu
- Dioxins in pork
- Insecticide in dumplings
- Listeria in ready to eat meat products
- E.coli 0157:H7 contamination of beef

The Policy Challenge

New approaches are necessary to enable food safety policies and programs to effectively address today's challenges. Food safety policy development and implementation needs to reflect the interests and responsibilities of government, the agri food industry and consumers

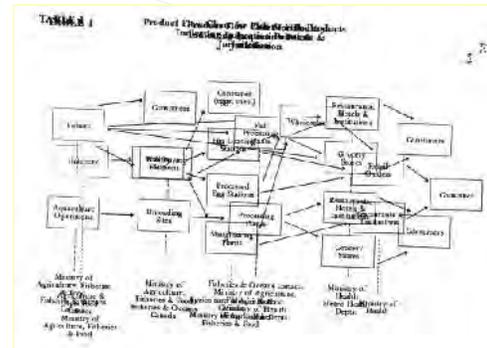
"Often the problem is in the system, not in the people."



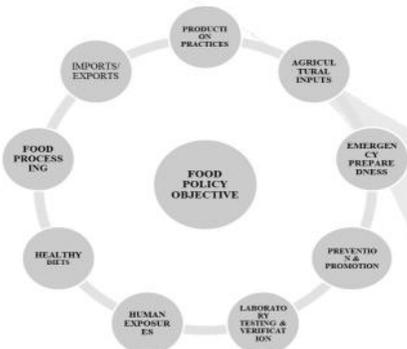
"If you put good people in irrelevant systems, you don't get the results you want."

Foodborne Pathogens Since 1960

1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s
ETEC	B. cereus	Aeromonas	Crypto-sporidium
Plesiomonas	(emetic) Campylobacter	E.coli 0157:H7	Cyclospora
	EIEC	Giardia	EAggEC
	Norwalk virus	Listeria mono.	Non-0157 VTEC
	Yersinia enterocolitica	Streptococcus	NvCJD
		zooepidemicus	Staphylococcus intermedius
		Vibrio vulnificus	



THE FOOD SYSTEM A COMPLEX MATRIX OF EVERCHANGING VARIABLES



A Matrix of Ever Changing Variables Across the Food Spectrum

AGRICULTURE INPUTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate change Pesticides Microbes(new) Organics Safe water 	PRODUCTION PRACTISES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intensive agri/aquaculture Bio technology Growth promotent 	IMPORTS & EXPORTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worldwide distribution 	FOOD PROCESSING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trend to larger operations New technology
HEALTHY DIETS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural foods - less preservatives organics 	HUMAN EXPOSURES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surveillance Risk assessments Zoonoses 	PREVENTION AND PROMOTION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulation Inspection education 	EMERGENCY PREP/RESPONSE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early detection, early warning Outbreak

OBSTACLES WITHIN GOVERNMENT

- Competing priorities
- Lack of commitment by senior levels of government
- Scarce resources
- Conflicting demands from industry
- Export/import standards vs domestic markets

Complex Matrix of Levels of Government and Departments

Multiple Levels of Government

- Federal
- Provincial
- Regional
- Municipal

Multiple Departments Responsible For Food Safety

- Agriculture
- Fisheries
- Health
- Environment
- Trade and Commerce
- Consumer Affairs

A Vast Array of Professionals are Needed

- Epidemiologists
- Veterinarians
- Physicians
- Economists
- Microbiologists
- Surveillance Analysts
- Environmental Health Officers
- Agrologists
- Chemists
- Entomologists
- Climatologists

How Much Influence Does Government Really Have

- Government undertakes 4 hours of inspection per year (2 inspections @ 2 hours each).
- Food establishment operates 10 hours a day 360 days a year.
- Inspector is present in food establishment (4/10x365)
0.109% of its operating hours

Traditional Tools to Ensure the Safety of the Food Supply

- Legislation/ Standards
- Inspection/Enforcement

Why Have Traditional Food Policy Regimes Not Resulted Lasting Change

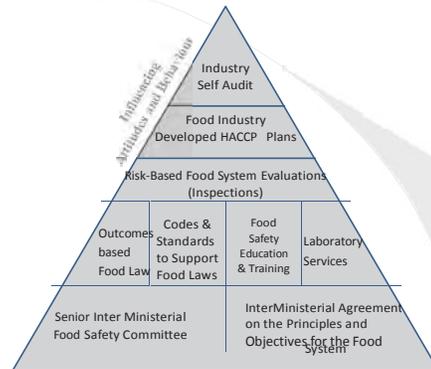
“The importance of structure is engrained in the food policy psyche. If a problem can engineered out we try to do so. However it remains that human behavior and employee discretion are so inherent in the food industry that equipment and structural improvements can only do so much. It would seem from the list of significant factors causing food borne illnesses that we need to affect the way food managers and employees operate as opposed to just the way their establishments look”

John Guzewich, State of New York Health Department

What Needs To Be Done The Food Policy Imperative

“A coordinated government partnership with industry and consumers which will result in a healthier population and securing a sustainable agriculture, fisheries and food Industry”

Pyramid of Needs to Achieve a Comprehensive Food Safety System



Presentation slides, Regional Experience, Ms. Shashi Sareen, Senior Food Safety and Nutrition Officer, FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific




Regional Consultation Workshop
Guidelines for Development of Food
Safety Policies for Countries in Asia
November 17-19, 2012

**Food Safety Policies: Context and
Consideration**

Coverage

- Asian scenario
- Importance of food safety
- Food safety challenges in the region
- Food safety policies
- Purpose/ Expected outcome of the Consultation

Scenario in Asia

- More than 50 percent world population live in Asia
- Globally 870 m persons undernourished 2010-12 (12.5% of global population);
- Of which 852 m (14.9%) in developing countries
- Of total world undernourished population, 536 m ie ~62% in Asia
- Food wastages and losses : 30-40% of food produced for human consumption (1.3 b ton/yr)
- Disasters – floods, sunami, earthquakes...
- Issues of food safety – melamine; radionuclide contamination, pesticide residues, formalin...
- Foodborne illness data mostly not available

Some Data on Foodborne Illnesses

- WHO estimates that foodborne and waterborne diarrhoeal diseases cause ~2.2 m deaths worldwide annually (1.9 m children)
- US – around 1 in 6 Americans (or 48 million people) gets sick, 128,000 hospitalized, 3,000 die of foodborne diseases (20% known pathogens & 80% unknown agents) (Source CDC)
Top five - Norovirus, *Salmonella* nontyphoidal, *Clostridium perfringens*, *Campylobacter spp*, *Staph aureus*
- Australia – 5.4 million cases/ year of gastroenteritis
- Data from Asia ??

Importance of Food Safety

- Protecting health of consumers – acute food borne illnesses; long term health impacts (chemical substances & toxins)
- Meeting requirements for international trade - market access
- Reduction of food wastes and losses (contaminations; spoilage; destructions)
- Constantly emerging new factors & challenges - influence food safety
- An important component of food security (access, availability, utilization)
- Promote consumer confidence
- Strengthen national reputation

Food Safety policy makers are guardians of food safety

Food Safety Challenges in Asia 1/2

- Globalisation leading to increasingly new challenges & risks to the health & safety of consumers
- Regional trade also important – but levels of food safety differs
- Food safety is complex, need for a preventative risk-based approach across entire food chain
- Food safety is a cross cutting area across sectors – role of multiple agencies & coordination important
- Role of multiple stakeholders – FBOs (producers; processors; handlers; retailers...): government: consumers

Food Safety Challenges 2/2

- Low importance to food safety by government/other stakeholders - food safety incidents often unreported so impact of food safety not well recognized - measurement of FS status poor
- Lack of suitable environment in terms of
 - political, regulatory, scientific (research); technical; financial; infrastructure needed to support food safety
- Investments towards physical /human resources in many cases low /not appropriate to the situation
- Singular approach - Pressures from private sector for eg to target exports
- Lack of data – foodborne diseases surveillance, food monitoring...

Food safety needs to be addressed in a focused and targeted manner



FOOD SAFETY POLICIES

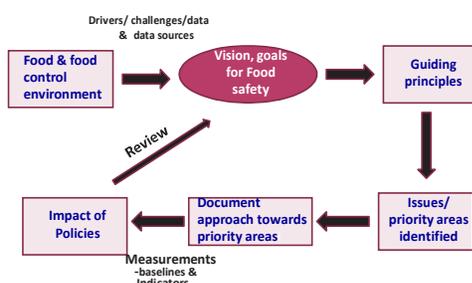
Food safety policies! 1/2

- **Provide support to address food safety** in the country in a comprehensive and coordinated manner
- Provide the **vision, goal & guiding principles** for addressing food safety in a country. May cover an overall framework
- **Differs in countries**—environment, drivers, potential, priorities
- Address **various issues** such as objectives; basic principles; application of an integrated farm to table approach; cooperation/collaboration; defines responsibilities of CA, food/ feed operators

Food safety policies! 2/2

- **Ownership National**
- **Multistakeholder & multidisciplinary**
 - Requires multistakeholder inputs
 - Involvement for implementation as per their roles/ responsibilities/ activities, within countries' system
- **Powerful document that motivates by clear targets, ideas & approaches**

Conceptual Model for Developing & Implementing Food Safety Policies



Purpose/ expected Outcome of Consultation

- **Reflect on key issues** surrounding policy development & implementation
- **Sharing of experiences** of countries – development, implementation, challenges... (cross sectoral, resources..)
- Reflect on **measureable indicators** – importance of evidence/ data – to measure impact
- **Identifying Issues and priority areas** in the region & approaches towards these – a possible guidance to countries (developing/ reviewing their food safety policies)
- Identifying **priority areas and actions** as well as support needed (countrywise)



**Regional Consultation Workshop
Guidelines for Development of Food
Safety Policies for Countries in Asia**
November 17-19, 2012

**Objectives, expected outputs,
outline & structure of the
programme**

Background

- International support to food safety programmes & projects in region
- Programmes stop once project is completed
- Disconnect b/w managers and political decision makers – resources not allocated sufficiently, lack of clarity on goals/ trained manpower
- Policy documents exist in many countries – weak implementation – departmental - low coordination
- Aim
 - Bring together countries/ stakeholders
 - share experiences, discuss issues, problems and brainstorm – clear focus on how to ensure that food safety is an area of focus at national level

Objective of the Consultation

1. Share background & status on policies & strategies at national level that guide national food safety systems & investments in the same;
 2. identify current drivers/ factors that influence food safety in countries/ region;
 3. share country experiences on development of FS policies;
 4. reflect & agree on issues & priority actions to ensure high-level policy support for food safety, including adequate resource allocations (in terms of physical & manpower) aimed at strengthening the food control systems
- Not solve issues – identify issues – brainstorm – clarity on how to proceed toward food safety policies

Expected Outputs

- A **status report on food safety policies** in each country covering both the existence of policies & main drivers influencing food safety policies.
- A **deeper understanding of the “food environment”** in the countries (safety challenges and concerns, dynamics of agriculture & food production, important value chains, trade & market access, regional dimensions....)
- **Issues and priority areas** identified and defined which can be used by countries as a possible guidance (while developing/ reviewing their food safety policies)
- **Country level priority areas & actions needed with support required** for implementing the same (internal & external)

Outline/ Programme structure

1. National Food Safety Policies of few countries as examples – Development process, considerations, challenges, positive experiences, linkages to other policies, etc
2. Response of countries & reflection on some important issues
3. Understanding of the food environment in countries/ factors that influence policy development
4. Indicators for food safety (measurable)
5. Issues/ priority areas (regional) to be addressed in FS policies
6. Impact of food safety policies in the country
7. Countrywise priority areas/ actions & support needed (development & implementation) of national FS policies
 - Presentations – Facilitated discussions – WGs
 - Informal interactions - Dinner cruise & cultural programme

Resources

- International expert on food safety policies development
- Country experiences
- Individual experiences of multiple stakeholders

Questions?