



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE  
ORGANIZATION  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS



WORLD  
HEALTH  
ORGANIZATION

**E**

**Agenda Item 4.3 a)**

**GF/CRD Vietnam-1**

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**

## **FAO/WHO GLOBAL FORUM OF FOOD SAFETY REGULATORS**

*Marrakech, Morocco, 28 – 30 January 2002*

### **FOOD SAFETY ACTIVITIES IN VIETNAM**

*by*

*Prof.Dr. Phan Thi Kim*

*Director*

*Vietnam Food Administration*

*138A Gian Vo, Hanoi, Vietnam*

*Email: [cucqltp@hn.vnn.vn](mailto:cucqltp@hn.vnn.vn)*

### **SUMMARY**

The Vietnam Food Administration is responsible for managing food hygiene, safety, and quality and has made significant progression since its establishment in 1999.

Food safety remains a high priority in Vietnam with growth of export markets and increasing food imports, there is a need to rapidly build the capacity of the food Administration to reduce the threats of foodborne disease. The Food Administration has demonstrated commitment to the food safety challenges it faces, and has embarked on an innovative capacity building activity with technical assistance from the World Health Organization.

### **KEY WORDS**

Vietnam Food Administration, Food Safety, Capacity Building

### **CONFERENCE ROOM DOCUMENT PROPOSED BY VIETNAM**

*The views expressed in the Global Forum documents are those of the author(s), and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of FAO or WHO. Designations employed and presentation of material do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of FAO or WHO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.*

## FOOD ADMINISTRATION

In recent years the Vietnam government has shown considerable attention to reducing the risks to food safety. The most significant even was the creation of the Food Administration, within the Ministry of Health in 1999. The food Administration is headed by a Director, has six divisions, and receives strategic direction for a consultative council chaired by the Vice-Minister of Health.

The Food Administration was established to advise the Ministry of Health on the management of food quality, hygiene, and safety. Under this role, the tasks and responsibilities of the food Administration are quite broad and include: drafting food standards and co-ordinating safety regulations; IEC on food safety; testing food products; inspecting and licensing joint venture enterprises; investigating food poisoning outbreaks; and working with Provincial Preventive Health Centres and District Preventive Medicine Teams to achieve food safety goals.

The public health significance of food safety in Vietnam is not well known, with little quantitative data on the actual incidence of foodborne disease. The incidence of diarrhoeal disease (which includes foodborne and waterborne aetiologies) may be considered quite high, with passive diarrhoeal disease surveillance resulting in 984,671 cases of acute-unspecified diarrhoea reported to the National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology in 2000.

The Food Administration also has a passive foodborne disease outbreak surveillance system that captures what is considered only a small percentage of foodborne disease outbreaks. It can be assumed that most foodborne disease outbreaks are not detected, and hence not reported. In 2001, there were 245 outbreaks of foodborne disease, with 3,901 cases and 63 deaths. Approximately 38 percent of such outbreaks are due to microbiological agents. 16 percent are due to chemical agents. 32 percent are toxic natural occurred in food and 14 percent are not determined. Causes determination mostly bases on clinic symptoms but not laboratory confirmation.

Because of the relative recent creation of the Food Administration, it is still developing its capabilities and programmes. It is actively working to establish pilot foodborne disease surveillance system in selected provinces, and has recently obtained Minister of Health approval to create the Food Hygiene and Safety Laboratory. The laboratory is supported by funding from the Japan Government through Japanese International Cooperation Agency. The Administration is also actively undertaking a range of information, education, and communication activities in food safety for stakeholders at all stages of the food chain. A major event involves the *Action Month for Food Safety*, which annually promotes food safety nationally, to all consumers.

The Food Administration has actively collaborated with the World Health Organization a range of food safety initiatives for more than a decade. This collaboration demonstrates the importance of ongoing and timely technical assistance to achieve food safety goals.

## CAPACITY BUILDING FOR THE PREVENTION OF FOODBORNE DISEASE

Recently, the Food Administration signaled its ongoing commitment to food safety via the signing of a Technical assistance agreement with the Asian Development Bank to undertake a capacity building project titled *Capacity Building for the Prevention of Foodborne Disease*. Under this agreement, the Food Administration is working with a World Health Organization team on a series of activities that will develop its food safety programme, promote food safety, and reduce the incidence of foodborne diseases. the agreement will also position the Food Administration as the national lead agency for food safety matters in Vietnam.

The Technical Assistance Agreement commenced in July 2001, and included the following specific components:

**(a) Policy Review, Law Reform and Assistance for more Effective Law Enforcement**

This involves a review of existing food safety policies, laws, and regulations with the objective of elaborating a coordinated and comprehensive national policy on food safety. This will be complemented by regulations tailored to Vietnam's needs and resources, and will facilitate the development of more effective food safety enforcement programmes.

An important goal is to better define the roles and responsibilities of the different ministries and agencies involved in food safety activities in Viet Nam. Work will also extend to describing operational activities in Viet Nam. Work will also extend to describing operational activities and procedures at provincial, district, and local authority levels; as well as the provision of information and advice to consumers and the food industry.

**(b) Strengthening the National Food Safety Laboratory Network**

Current and future laboratory capacity and needs are being assessed and identified in terms of food contaminant monitoring and surveillance, and disease identification activities. Laboratory inventories have been prepared, and will lead to the development of specifications for future supplies and equipment, the preparation of training materials, training programme, and assistance to establish inter-laboratory collaboration activities.

**(c) Implementation of Foodborne Disease Surveillance System**

A pilot foodborne disease surveillance system for the collection, collation, manipulation, and reporting of epidemiological information on foodborne diseases in sentinel sites is being trialled. The system will build upon existing systems for the epidemiological surveillance of communicable diseases in Viet Nam, but involves extensive consultation with all relevant stakeholders to develop a sustainable system.

**(d) Establishment of a Centre for Information, Education, Communication and Training in Food Safety**

The Food Administration is exploring the creation of a centre designed to develop and promote food safety messages to a wide range of audiences and stakeholders. Qualitative research is being used to design, trial, and refine training packages and materials, and this will be followed by enhancing the technical knowledge of trainers. Important targets are rural communities and street food vendors.

## **THE FUTURE**

The Technical Assistance Agreement will operate until August 2002 and will lead to a strengthening of the capacity of the Food Administration. Measures designed to meet the future technical and financial needs of the Food Administration will also be examined during the tenure of the Agreement.

Activities such as this *FAO/who Global Forum of Food Safety Regulators* and the upcoming forum on foodborne disease surveillance systems in Leipzig enable developing countries to examine the approaches of other countries at similar stages of their development, and to consider innovative approaches to the challenges we all face. Our approach in Vietnam may provide a model for other countries seeking to adopt a strategic and holistic approach to the creation of food safety systems. With commitment and high level support we will achieve a positive impact and ensure the status of food safety as an essential public health priority.

**TARGET STRATEGY OF HEALTH SECTION IN FOOD QUALITY, HYGIENE  
AND  
SAFETY ASSURANCE 2001-2005**

1. To carry out National Microbiological Chemical Residue control Programme
2. Adopt adequate and up-to-date food legislation document (Food Ordinance, Regulations...)
3. Establish National Standards in Food Quality, Hygiene and Safety
4. Promote and improve information awareness in food safety. Training of Food Hygiene and Safety knowledge for food manufacturers, producers, services, consumers...
5. Application of GHP, HACCP for food industry and street food
6. Strengthen control, inspection of food hygiene and safety.
7. Capacity building for personnel working at the laboratories (chemical and microorganism analysis).
8. Development of international cooperation