

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR AFRICA

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CAPACITY BUILDING FOR FOOD STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS

1. A new international food and agriculture trade environment has emerged as a result of the Uruguay round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations and subsequent agreements on the application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures and on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT).
2. Members of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) are required to base their domestic technical regulations or standards on standards developed by international organisations. These organisations include, the Joint FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission for food safety; the Office International des Epizooties (OIE) for animal health; and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) for plant health.
3. The evolution of the conditions for international trade in relation to food and agriculture affects numerous cross-cutting sectors in every country, including human, animal and plant health, environmental welfare and economic development. The regulatory systems and infrastructure needed to conform to the new international trading environment are weak in many developing countries. This puts these countries at a competitive disadvantage in the international trade arena and constitutes a major limitation to the effective participation of these countries in the discussions and decisions taken at the level of international standardisation bodies.
4. Both the SPS (article 9) Agreement and the TBT (article 12) Agreement make specific reference to increasing the capacity of developing countries and remaining cognisant of the unique needs of developing country Members. Specifically section 12.3 of the TBT¹ states "Members shall, in the preparation and application of technical regulations, standards and conformity assessment procedures, take account of the special development, financial and trade needs of developing country Members, with a view to ensuring that such technical regulations, standards and conformity assessment procedures do not create unnecessary obstacles to exports from developing country Members". Reinforcing these views, the Executive Heads of FAO, WHO, WTO, WB and OIE, in a joint statement issued at the occasion of the WTO Ministerial Meeting held in Doha in November 2001, expressed their commitment to strengthening the capacity of developing countries to meet the requirements of the SPS agreement.

¹ World Trade Organisation: *Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade*, Article 12

5. At the 23rd Session of the Codex Commission (July 1999), FAO and WHO were called upon to strengthen capacity building activities, particularly in relation to risk analysis capabilities in developing countries.

6. In keeping with these mandates, FAO and WHO engaged in diverse capacity building activities designed to assist developing countries in improving their food safety and plant and animal health systems. Together with international organisations, national governments, international and regional financial institutions and NGOs, various capacity building and technical assistance initiatives have been undertaken. This report will focus on capacity building activities in the region undertaken in part or in whole by FAO and WHO during the period since the last Regional Codex Co-ordinating Committee meeting (27-30 November 2000). It also provides a brief on regional or national capacity building activities that are in the process of being approved.

RECENT AND ONGOING CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES

7. In order to support countries desiring to harmonise their national standards with those of Codex and comply fully with international trade regulations, FAO and WHO engaged in a variety of capacity building activities. While the activities and strategies differ and are tailored to specific regions and countries, the overall objective is to support and strengthen national food control systems. This is often done by providing technical assistance in reviewing and analysing the institutional set up for food control and evaluating its effectiveness, identifying main weaknesses, and formulating recommendations and proposals for the establishment of technically sound food control systems which are harmonised with current international standards. Specific activities falling within the realm of capacity building include, training of food control officials and technical staff (food control managers, food inspectors, food analysts) in the form of seminars, workshops and study tours to broaden in-country skills and increase the ability of local governments to implement comprehensive food control systems, enhancement of food control laboratory capabilities, preparation of training manuals and guidelines, support in establishing and strengthening National Codex Committees, policy advice and establishment of regulatory frameworks. The remainder of the report will focus on these activities, occurring at global, regional and national level.

GLOBAL ACTIVITIES

International Workshops

8. An *International Workshop on Food Safety Management in Developing Countries* was organised and sponsored jointly by Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement (CIRAD) and FAO, with financial support from Languedoc-Roussillon region. The workshop was held in Montpellier, France from 10-14 December 2000. Fifty-one participants (including participants from Asia) representing twenty-two countries benefited from this event. Topics such as the impact of the SPS and TBT agreements in developing countries, and risks of undesired substances in foods and feed were presented and discussed. Working groups met to discuss five food safety and development priority areas: risk assessment, food safety regulatory systems, quality assurance, developmental finance and research needs. The working groups presented a series of recommendations which were then discussed during the plenary session. The report may be obtained from CIRAD on request.

9. FAO and WHO jointly convened a *Global Forum of Food Safety Regulators* in Marrakech from 28-30 January 2002 to bring together food safety regulators from every region of the world to discuss and share experiences on food safety issues that are of global concern. Forum discussions were based on the principle that regulations must be science-based and built on risk assessment as appropriate to circumstance. These discussions demonstrated a global recognition that actions need to be taken throughout the food production chain from farm and fishing boat to the consumer. Participants agreed that actions need to be taken urgently to develop the capacity in particular in developing countries to assure the safety of the food supply to their populations. Building such capacities will also assist in strengthening exports, improving public health and reducing poverty.

10. An *International Workshop on the Application of HACCP Principles in the Prevention and Control of Mycotoxins* was held in Greenwich, UK from 17-28 June, 2002. The workshop was co-sponsored by FAO and the National Resources Institute (NRI). The purpose of the workshop was to present and train the participants on the use of the Manual and the application of the HACCP system in Mycotoxin prevention and

control. The manual was written jointly by FAO and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in collaboration with NRI. The manual was published in 2001 by FAO as Food and Nutrition Paper 73². It can be obtained from FAO on request.

Global Projects

11. A global project for the *Enhancement of Coffee Quality through Prevention of Mould Formation* was started in December 2000, and is due to end in December 2004. This project is being implemented by FAO in Brazil, Colombia, Ivory Coast, India, Indonesia, Kenya, and Uganda, with collaboration from Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement (CIRAD) and Institute for Scientific Information on Coffee (ISIC) and the University of Surrey, U.K.. The project has received funding from the Common Fund for Commodities and the Dutch Government. An additionally funded component for training and dissemination of best practice in ochratoxin A (OTA) control in Ecuador has also been incorporated.

12. The project approach emphasises capacity-building in coffee-producing countries, with the aim of formulating codes of practice for the coffee industry. Key initial activities under the project involve defining mould formation mechanisms, identifying critical control points, evaluating optimal drying conditions, and developing the necessary tools (e.g. GAP, GMP and HACCP) to control and monitor both mould formation and OTA production. Specifically, the project builds capacity at national level within the industry and responsible government agencies in:

- The application of internationally-agreed principles of food hygiene and a HACCP-based approach to food safety throughout the coffee production and processing chain
- The analytical capacity and capability required to support national programmes for prevention and control of OTA- contamination of coffee

13. In 1999-2001, FAO formulated and implemented an *Umbrella Programme for Training on Uruguay Round and Future Negotiations on Agriculture*. The first phase of the programme included the implementation of 14 sub-regional training courses conducted in Africa (4 courses); Asia (3 courses); Near East (2 courses); Europe (2 courses); and Latin America (3 courses). The programme was co-financed by FAO, European Union and several donor countries. It was designed taking into account the complementarities and synergies of the countries involved in the programme, including the more general training on multilateral trade conducted by other international institutions (notably WTO, WB, ITC, UNCTAD, etc). The project aimed at improving understanding of existing WTO agreements to enable countries to more fully participate in the negotiation process and debate issues of special concern to the region. Topics which were covered during training included various UR agreements concerning agriculture, such as SPS measures, Technical Barriers to Trade and Trade related Intellectual Property Rights.

144. A second phase of training has recently been formulated and will be submitted to donors for financing.

15. A two year project to create a Global Inventory, Reference Materials and Food Safety Training Programme for Improving the Quality and Safety of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables was recently approved. It is funded by FAO's Prevention of Food Losses Fund (PFL) and will be implemented by the Food Quality and Standards Service (ESNS), in collaboration with Agriculture Support Systems (AGS) and Plant Production and Protection Division (AGP). The project's main objective is to improve access and availability of information, through provision of resource materials and training activities, to countries desiring to enhance the quality and safety of their fresh produce. The project will create an inventory of all available food safety training materials and develop a database of existing training programs. This information will be developed into an electronic database with information relevant to all aspects of the production chain, from harvest to transport and marketing. Several training activities will be carried out at regional and national levels, including Latin America and the Caribbean. A series of training materials such as videos, CDs and Manuals will accompany the planned training.

² International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and FAO, 2001. *Manual on the Application of the HACCP system in mycotoxin prevention and control*. FAO Food and Nutrition Paper 73, Rome, 2001.

Global Initiatives

156. *FAO Trust Fund for Food Security and Food Safety* – This fund was established by FAO as an important source of demand-driven funding to supplement the present trust funds, which support key components of the Organization's Field Programme³. The initial funding target is of US\$500 million.

17. The projects to be funded from this Trust Fund will assist Member Governments in initiating, strengthening, accelerating and expanding activities in the following two areas: *Food Security and Emergency Prevention of Transboundary Pests and Diseases of Animals and Plants*.

168. Transboundary animal diseases are epizootic diseases that are highly contagious or transmissible with the potential for very serious and rapid spread, irrespective of national borders. These diseases are of serious socio-economic or public health consequence and can be a major constraint to international trade of animals and animal products. This can have an adverse effect on the food security situation in the countries concerned and also on the food safety of consumers around the world. The same is true for locusts and other migratory pests that can fly over great distances and threaten crops hundreds or thousands of kilometres away from their places of origin.

1719. Through its ongoing *Emergency Prevention System (EMPRES)*, approved by the Council at its 106th Session, FAO is adopting a new approach to an old problem by emphasizing early warning, early reaction and networking of research capacities to ensure the use of more effective and environment-friendly methods. The programme is focusing on strengthening existing surveillance and control in affected countries.

20. The *FAO Integrated Programme for Building Capacity for Biotechnology, Food Quality and Safety, and Phyto- and Zoonository Standards* has been developed for consideration by potential donors to address the needs of developing and transition countries in the establishment or enhancement of appropriate policies, institutions and human resources concerned with biotechnology and sanitary measures in the context of food and agriculture, and in connection with trade related and environmental issues. The food safety component of this Programme valued at US\$56.5 million covers such areas as: guidance for decision makers, regulatory and legal aspects, institutional strengthening at regional and national levels, human resource development, improvement of laboratory capabilities, and management of food control programmes.

21. *Joint FAO/WHO/OIE/WTO/WB Framework for Capacity Building in SPS-related Matters*. This initiative was launched by the 5 organizations following the joint Statement made by their respective Executive Heads in November 2001 in favour of increased capacity building efforts for developing countries to enhance their ability to fully participate in the work and decision making process of international standards setting bodies. A draft framework has been prepared by FAO and is currently under active discussion by the concerned units within the organizations.

REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

FAO Regional Projects

22. A project designed to train private small/medium size industries in HACCP/Good Hygiene Practices (GHP) and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) covering Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger and Senegal began in September, 2001. The main objective of the project is to support the member states in their efforts to improve food quality to protect consumers and facilitate access to international markets. This objective will be supported through training courses at the regional level for Training of Trainers in GHP and HACCP and at the national level for industry. In total there will be one regional training course and six national courses. To date three of the seven training sessions have been completed.

23. The Special Regional Program for Food Security covers the UEMOA countries and was initiated in December of 2001 and will continue through December 2003. The project is being implemented by several divisions within FAO. The objectives of the activities which will be undertaken by the Food Control and Consumer protection group under phase one are to improve harmonization of regulation and upgrade the institutional capacity of food control institutions. The activities of the project include review of existing food legislation and regional harmonization, training of food control inspectors and upgrading laboratory

³ http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/y1262e/y1262e00.htm#P5_1

facilities. To date the review of existing food legislation should have been completed and regional level proposals for harmonisation should have been elaborated at a regional workshop.

Regional Workshops

24. A Training of Trainers Course on Quality and Safety Based on Good Manufacturing Practices and HACCP was held in September 2000 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Participants were from Zimbabwe, Botswana, Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania and represented food regulators, food industry, academia and other government agencies. The objective of the course was to develop training skills in food safety and Quality Control personnel within the Government and the food processing industries and to improve the awareness among the food industry operators of the need to comply with the international standards. The course included presentations by a team of three consultants, practical working group sessions, where participants developed a HACCP plan for a particular food product and a field visit to two food processing plants. At the end of the course each participant was assigned a topic to present to reinforce their capacity as future trainers.

WHO Food Safety Activities in the AFRO Region: Issues and challenges

25. Poverty is the principal cause of consumption of unsafe food in the African region. Other factors such as weak institutional structures, demographic pressures, trade liberalization and poor environmental conditions merely exacerbate this situation. The main challenges in food safety include:

- Strengthening food safety in the public health functions of countries.
- Strengthening of technical capability on food safety.
- Formulation and implementation of efficient food laws.
- Transfer of management of knowledge and skills.
- Introduction of new principles of a preventative risk based approach and to be adapted to local situations.
- Strengthening of surveillance systems of food borne diseases.

WHO Strategic View and Approach

26. The WHO regional office for Africa regards food safety as a priority public health and developmental issue. The office acknowledges that investing in food safety is investing in economic growth and human development. In this scope, it has taken a more prominent role in supporting and strengthening food safety activities within the countries of the region. The WHO's main objective with regards to food safety is to create an environment which enables the health sector effectively and promptly to assess, communicate and manage food-borne risks.

27. The Food safety functions and activities of WHO include the following:

- Developing and strengthening national food safety programs;
- Assisting in the development of human resources in various areas of food safety, including food inspection, application of the HACCP system, risk assessment, and surveillance of foodborne disease;
- Promoting the development of national food standards and codes of practice based upon the Codex Alimentarius;
- Disseminating information and educational materials on food safety;
- Collaborating with national governments and the international community in the development and implementation of prevention and control strategies for foodborne disease outbreaks and emergencies;

- Identifying collaboration and partners willing to invest resources in food safety programmes in countries.

28. The office promotes a holistic and integrated approach to addressing food safety issues, hence food safety activities are integrated/included in other areas of work. The “Healthy Settings” concept is one example, the office through the Healthy Market Places initiative promotes the safety and wholesomeness of foods sold and traded at the markets by improving knowledge and behaviors of food vendors in food handling and sanitation. In view of the fact that poverty is largely the cause of foodborne illnesses within the region, the office integrates food safety concepts with poverty reduction activities.

29. The regional office has provided expertise to assess the impact of beverage additives, and supported the training of street vendors in safe food handling practices. Furthermore, the office through the “Healthy Market Places” initiative provided technical support to countries such as Tanzania, Nigeria to improve food safety within the context of the “Buguruni Healthy Market Initiative”. Efforts are currently being made to replicate and expand the scope of this initiative to other countries of the region.

30. To obtain more evidence for decision-making on the sources and magnitude of food borne illness in the African region, the regional office recently undertook a regional situation analysis on food safety and hygiene. Through the orientations of the situation analysis, the office aims to develop strategic interventions and action plans to further strengthen the food safety programs of the countries. In addition, an awareness-raising workshop has been planned, wherein it will also aim to identify strengths and constraints in relation to national food safety programmes, identify regional and country needs.

Programme perspectives

31. In the near future, more will be done to capitalize on the increasing awareness of food safety and hygiene concerns. Furthermore, the fact that food safety and hygiene is a global priority for WHO will be seized upon to mobilize additional resources and required expertise. However, sensitization efforts will have to be strengthened so as to ensure that decision-makers and populations are fully informed of food related health risks. Countries will have to considerably strengthen their institutions and capacities to address this issue.

32. AFRO will also aim to develop an approach for food-borne disease surveillance system, as an integral part of national epidemiological surveillance systems. Since street-vending of foodstuffs is very widespread in the region, and that this food is consumed by millions of people in African cities, training materials for safe food handling for street vendors will be developed. Finally, advocacy for food safety and hygiene will be constant.

NATIONAL ACTIVITIES

FAO Field Projects

33. A project to Improve the Quality of Streetfoods in Bobo Dialasso, Burkina Faso began in September of 2002 and will continue through the end of 2003. The main activities of the project will be to undertake a survey on the quality and safety of street foods, provide training on Good Hygiene Practices (GHP) to streetfood vendors and to formulate a municipal strategy for further improving the safety of street foods.

34. A project to improve the quality of street foods in Dakar, Senegal began in 2000 and ended in 2001. The project was very similar in nature to the above mentioned project in Burkina Faso. The main activities involved training street vendors in food hygiene practices and the conception and production of educational materials on improved preparation and handling of street foods.

35. A project to Strengthen the National Food Control System in the Gambia begin early in 2001 and will continue through 2002. The project aims to increase the capacity of the government to ensure the safety and quality of both locally produced and imported foods. This will be accomplished by enacting national food laws, establishing a country-wide food inspection network, upgrading the capabilities for laboratory analytical services and training of food control personnel and street food inspectors.

36. A project to strengthen the National Codex Committee in South Africa began in November 1999 and was concluded in September 2000. The main objective of the project was proper structuring and functioning of the South African National Codex Committee, establishment of its working groups and effective operation as an advisory group to the government on matters related to food standardization and food safety and implementation of the Uruguay Round Agreements on Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures and Technical Barriers to Trade. The project was successful in conducting high-level workshops to increase awareness among senior officials of the critical importance of the Codex in the post-Uruguay Round period which should result in enhanced participation of South Africa in Codex activities. Project activities also led to the establishment of a national Codex website for South Africa to disseminate information about the Codex and broader food safety and regulatory matters to all interested parties. Additionally, the project conducted a systematic review of the import/export system.

37. A project to Improve the Quality of Streetfoods in South Africa was approved in 1999, but due to delays in project implementation was continued through 2001. The main objective of the project was to improve the quality of street food and vending in South Africa in order to ensure consumer safety and to provide vendors and handlers with health education and training regarding acceptable street food preparation and handling practices. This objective should have been met through a thorough evaluation of the street food situation and identification of critical control points in streetfood preparation, handling and selling, training seminars for food control inspectors and streetfood vendors, and a consumer education campaign on streetfood safety and environmental hygiene.

38. A project designed to Strengthen the National Food Control System in Swaziland was funded in September of 1999 and continued through 2001. The main objective of the project was to improve quality, safety and nutritional value of food produced in Swaziland and to ensure the acceptability of food entering into the country. The activities undertaken to accomplish this include, using the experience gained in similar national food legislation in the sub-region, to prepare a draft national food law; setting up effective Food Control Administration for the country; upgrading the training programme for food inspectors, and training of 5 local trainers in food inspection who will train 20 food inspectors. The capabilities of the existing food analysis laboratory were enhanced by providing training to 2 analytical chemists and microbiologists and providing some essential analytical equipment and other laboratory materials.

39. A second phase project aimed at enhancing the coffee quality in Uganda through prevention of mould growth began in early 2002 and is scheduled to continue through early 2003. Functional linkages are in place with the Global coffee Project (see para 11). The main objective of the project is to develop a centre of excellence in the field of coffee quality assurance in Uganda, which can serve as an important regional resource. The specific activities to be undertaken include, elaborating guidelines for the production, processing and handling of coffee, identify suitable technologies for small scale coffee producers and processors, upgrade analytical laboratory capacity for carrying out quality control measures related to coffee and prepare and disseminate training materials on good agricultural practice, good manufacturing practice and HACCP for the coffee sector.

40. An eighteen month FAO project to strengthening the Government Analyst Laboratory, Food Standards Advisory Board and Port Health Authority in Zimbabwe received funding in June 1999. The main objective of the project was to improve the food control system and services in Zimbabwe by up-grading the food analytical capabilities of the Government Analyst Laboratory (GAL), improving the information-handling capacity of the food control secretariat at the GAL, strengthening the Secretariat of the Food Standards Advisory Board (FSAB) and optimising the food inspection operations of the Port Health Authority. The objective were accomplished by provision of technical assistance in analytical quality assurance and food control management and food import inspection. Training workshops were held on increasing the efficiency of food control systems and utilisation of new computerized information systems. Seventeen port health officers from 10 ports of entry received training in imported food inspection planning, policies and procedures. A complete assessment of the capabilities of the Government Laboratory was undertaken and recommendations made for increasing the effectiveness in meeting international requirements for laboratory accreditation.

Other Activities

41. A FAO Training Manual for Hygienic Practices in Streetfood Production and Sale is being prepared in collaboration with the University of Benin.
42. A FAO Cooperative program with World Bank is being undertaken in the region to develop a conceptual framework for improving regional food control systems. Two missions were undertaken, one to Ghana and another to Senegal.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

43. FAO has received many requests by national governments for future projects.
- The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has requested assistance with a National Strategy for Food Control. This request is currently under review.
 - The Government of Gabon in collaboration with ESNS staff has formulated a proposal to Strengthen the Food Control System. This project is still in the formulation phase.
 - The Government of Guinea, Conakry, has requested assistance with food control and quality of the informal food sector in Conakry. The request is currently under review.
 - The Government of Guinea Bissau has requested assistance with improving the safety of streetfoods through a technical cooperation program aimed at training of street food vendors in safe food handling and preparation. This request is currently under review.
 - The Government of Tanzania has requested assistance in strengthening the National Food Control System and National Codex Committee. The request is currently under review by ESNS.
 - The Government of Senegal has requested assistance in strengthening and supporting Quality Assurance Systems in Food Safety Laboratories. The request is in the formulation phase.
44. Future WHO Activities include:
- Expansion of global network of participating institutions to monitor chemical contamination of food supply.
 - Promotion of use of all food technologies which may contribute to public health e.g. pasteurization, food irradiation and fermentation.
 - Promotion of the work of a WHO/FAO expert advisory body to assess microbiological risk in food.
 - Support member states in providing the scientific basis for health-related decisions regarding foods derived from biotechnology.