

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD
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ORGANIZATION



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Agenda Item 7

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

FAO/WHO REGIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR EUROPE

Twenty-third Session, Bratislava, 10-13 September 2002

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR FOOD STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS

NEED FOR CAPACITY BUILDING IN 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 standards-setting bodies. These bodies 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,

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

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.

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 (23-26 November 1999). 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 carried out 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. IPSM 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.

14. Phase one training for East and Southeast Asian Countries took place in Kathmandu, Nepal, November 2000 and Los Baños, Philippines, December 2000 and included participants from Cambodia, Indonesia, People's Republic of Korea, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Thailand and Vietnam.

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

Global Initiatives

16. *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. The projects to be funded

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.

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

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*.

17. 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.

18. 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.

19. The FAO Integrated Programme for Building Capacity for Biotechnology, Food Quality and Safety, and Phyto- and Zoösanitary 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.

20. 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

WHO Food and Nutrition Policy and Action Plans

21. The WHO Food Safety Programme in Europe has been assisting Member States in the development of National Food Safety Strategies within the framework of the development of the Food and Nutrition Policy and Action Plans in Europe, which integrates a food safety strategy, a nutrition strategy and a sustainable food supply strategy.

22. The Food Safety Strategy in Europe aims to develop and strengthen National Food Safety Programmes through the development of modern food legislation, strengthening of surveillance of food-borne disease and monitoring of food contamination for the provision of data for risk assessment, and the promotion of risk based food control systems.

23. The WHO Nutrition, Food Security and Food Safety European Programmes have prepared the book "Food and Health a Basis for action in Europe" which promotes the development of food and nutrition policies which protect and promote health and reduce the burden of food related diseases, while contributing to socio-economic development and a sustainable environment.

24. Several workshops have been held in the European Region during the last two years including: The first and second Workshops on Intersectoral Development of Food and Nutrition Action Plans in South East Europe in Malta 2000 and in Bulgaria 2001 respectively, the second workshop for development of the Food and nutrition Action Plan for the Nordic and Baltic countries in Latvia, June 2001, and the first workshop WHO/FAO to develop Food and Nutrition Action Plans for countries in southern Europe, Rome 2002.

Regional Workshops

25. The WHO Food Safety Programme in Europe in collaboration with the EU-Joint Research Centre of Ispra organised three training courses on detection techniques for Genetically Modified Organisms in foods in October, November and December 2000. Almost 100 technicians from 34 different countries have been trained. The electronic version of the manual will be posted on a joint WHO/JRC website.

26. The WHO Mediterranean Zoonosis Control Programme jointly with the WHO Food Safety Programme in Europe organized a regional training workshop on food safety risk management tools (e.g. HACCP) in Teramo, in December 2000.

Regional Projects

27. An FAO project on Sub-regional Training on Meat Inspection and Meat Technology for Albania, Croatia, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia was approved in October 2000. The overall objective of this project is to enable increased market access for the participating countries to lucrative meat and meat product markets. This will be accomplished by improving national capacities for the production of higher quality and quantity meat and meat products, which meet European Union standards. A core of 30 persons trained as trainers will carry out national training in meat inspection and relevant technology including the HACCP system. Each country will develop a training program and plan of action for improving the standards of the meat sector. A final workshop will provide both a forum and a mechanism for discussing a co-ordinated regional approach for access to the broader European Market.

28. The WHO Food Safety Programme in Europe initiated a multi-country public health initiative for training Food Safety Officers of the Central Asiatic Republics at the Kazakhstan School of Public Health. Five training modules will be organized on this project: food legislation, epidemiology, food microbiology, chemical analyses on foods and risk analyses. The basic texts and standards of the FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission are being translated into Russian in order to enhance regional food safety legislation.

National Activities

29. In November 2001, a training course for food inspectors was held in Malta. The course was sponsored by WHO and included training for food inspectors on food safety and street vendors with follow-up training for food microbiologists.

30. The WHO European Food Safety Programme organized a training workshop on HACCP for sanitary and veterinary inspectors, April 2001 in Albania. A similar course will be organized for the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia.

31. In November 2001, a training programme for food inspectors was held in Malta. The training was sponsored by the WHO Food Safety Programme in Europe and included training for food inspectors on food safety and street vendors with follow-up training for food microbiologists.

Field Projects

32. A project to Improve the Food Control Administration and Strengthen Food Import/Export Control and Food Analytical Services in Lithuania began in May of 1999 and was completed in November 2001. The project aimed to support further development of food control systems in the country in order to assure adequate consumer protection and promote export of agricultural products through greater compliance with internationally recognised standards and procedures. The main project outputs included; establishment and training of an import/export task force, establishment of a food legislation task force, training of planners and policy makers in risk analysis and improved capacity of food control laboratories.

33. A project in Slovakia to Strengthen Food Quality and Control was funded in January 1999 and completed in December 2000. The main objective of the project was to assist the Slovak Republic in strengthening its regulatory food control system in order to improve consumer protection by ensuring the safety and quality of the food supply. This objective was met through a thorough review of existing regulations and elaboration of recommendations for improvement and/or modification. An assessment of the existing food laboratory network capabilities, including analytical methods, performance standards and the needs for equipment, supplies and personnel training was undertaken. Study tours on Food Control Administration, Food

Inspection and Food Laboratory Management in two European countries were arranged for three Slovakian food control personnel. A training course for laboratory personnel, establishment of certification testing procedures for qualifying food control laboratories was provided.

34. A project in Moldova to Strengthen the Organisation of the National Codex Committee was recently completed. The main objective of the project was to provide the basis for the establishment of an effective system for food standardization and safety, consumer protection and market access through the strengthening of the National Codex Committee and its operational mechanisms, with the ultimate aim of enhancing government capacity to improve the level of national standards in both local food control matters and international trade. The main project outcomes were: establishment of a 23 member National Codex Committee; establishment of a codex information system and national office; review of national legislation with the goal of harmonization with Codex official standards; training in modern food control methods for key persons in the food control organization of Moldova.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES/PROJECTS

35. There are a few projects currently in the formulation and approval phases.

- The countries that have signed the Stability Pact (Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Slovenia & Yugoslavia) have prepared in collaboration with WHO/EURO and the Council for Europe a sub-regional project to Strengthen Food Safety & Nutrition Services in South East Europe. The first component for capacity building on Food Legislation has just been funded.
- The Czech government has requested assistance of FAO in strengthening non-governmental organisations of Central and Eastern Europe related to the implementation of Food Safety Guarantee Policy. The general objective of the requested project is to improve communications with consumer public on food safety matters in Central and Eastern European Countries. The proposed outputs of the project include a manual for risk communications with consumers and capacity building in the areas of food safety and consumer communications.
- The Government of Croatia has requested FAO's assistance in Improving Food Safety. This proposal is currently in the formulation phase.
- The Government of Cyprus has requested FAO's assistance with food safety standards with the objective of becoming more competitive in international trade markets. The proposal is currently in the formulation stage.
- The Russian Federation and Ukraine have requested to WHO/EURO the organization of training on epidemiological investigation of food-borne outbreaks and on food microbiological analyses.
- Tajikistan has requested to the WHO Food Safety Programme in Europe to provide training on microbiological/chemical risk assessment and communication.
- The Government of Turkey has requested assistance with strengthening food control programs. The request is currently under review by FAO.