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WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

JOINT OFFICE: Viale delle Terme di Caracalla 00100 ROME Tel: 39 06 57051 www.codexalimentarius.net Email: codex@fao.org Facsimile: 39 06 5705 4593

Agenda Item 5

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR NORTH AMERICA AND THE SOUTH WEST PACIFIC

Eighth Session, Apia, Samoa, 19-22 October 2004

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR FOOD STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS

A. INTRODUCTION

1. This paper describes FAO/WHO capacity building activities on food safety issues, including food standards and regulations, that have been implemented since the 7th Session of the Codex Committee for North America and the South West Pacific, and are relevant to member countries in North America and the South West Pacific.

B. NEED FOR CAPACITY BUILDING

2. 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).

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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 TBT 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.

6. In keeping with these mandates, FAO and WHO engage in diverse capacity building activities designed to assist developing countries to improve 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 often involves a review and analysis of the institutional set up for food control: 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 with in 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.

C. RECENT AND ONGOING CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES AT GLOBAL LEVEL

International Events

7. As a follow-up to the successful first Global Forum of Food Safety Regulators and with the support and approval of the FAO and WHO member countries, FAO and WHO held the Second Global Forum of Food Safety Regulators (GF-2) in Bangkok, Thailand from 12-14 October 2004, under the main theme of: “Building Effective Food Safety Systems”. In order to allow greater focus during discussions, and to promote practical and pragmatic actions, the topics to be discussed were limited in scope, namely under the two following sub-themes: 1) Strengthening official food control services and 2) Epidemio-surveillance of foodborne diseases and food safety rapid alert systems. Many countries provided financial and in-kind support to FAO and WHO to assist in the organization of GF-2. More information on the First and Second Global Fora can be found at: www.foodsafetyforum.org/index_en.htm

8. Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand, in cooperation with WHO implemented an International Symposium on Food Safety Systems on 15 October 2004 in Bangkok immediately after GF-2. This symposium was entitled "In Search of Better and More Effective Food Safety Systems: Thailand towards the Kitchen of the World". It aimed to utilize the outcomes from the GF-2 as a thought starter and a stimulator of improvement in food safety systems, taking Thailand as an example. Participants had an opportunity to discuss with the GF-2 delegates, Thai and international food sector personnel involved in food safety, and those who need further research direction for the next steps. More information on the symposium is available from: www.ahs.chula.ac.th/foodsafety2004/

9. FAO and the Institut de Recherché pour la Developpement (IRD) held a conference in Jaen, Spain, from 6 to 8 September 2004 to address the issues of food-borne pathogens, anti-nutritional and toxic factors in fermented foods produced in small-scale producing units. The conference promoted sharing of information and viewpoints between scientists and experts from Africa, Europe and the Mediterranean countries on progress in scientific and regulatory knowledge of small-scale units. More details are available from: www.fao.org/es/ESN/food/meetings_fermented_en.stm

10. FAO co-sponsored the xi international IUPAC symposium on mycotoxins and phycotoxins from 17 to 21 May 2004 in Bethesda, Maryland, USA. The symposium assessed progress or advances made since the previous symposium in 2000 in relation to overall goals of the series and the evolving global perspective of food safety. Topics addressed included: advances in methodology; the value of risk assessment and its regulatory use; laboratory quality assurance and quality control, accreditation and method validation, particularly in developing countries. Advances in genomics for detection and evaluating the impact of mycotoxins and phycotoxins on human and animal health, as well as control strategies were also discussed. More information on the symposium is available from: www.aoac.org/meetings1/iupac/main.htm

11. FAO and WHO, in collaboration with ILSI facilitated a workshop on 5 March 2004 on the Detection of Protein and/or DNA in Foods Derived from Modern Biotechnology. The workshop was held in the same venue and immediately prior to the 25th Session of CCMAS and was attended by 23 participants from 9 countries. The purpose of this workshop was to give an introduction to the tools, information and experiences available to test for protein/DNA from foods derived from modern biotechnology to the CCMAS delegates and other interested parties. Emphasis was placed on similarities and differences among chemical analytical methods available, with particular attention to how biological factors can affect measurement results. Current efforts in methods development, standardization and validation, including those within ISO, were described. The complete workshop programme can be accessed from: www.fao.org/es/esn/food/capacity_workshops2004_en.stm

12. FAO held a Ministerial Round Table on 3 December 2003, on the occasion of the 32nd session of the FAO Conference, on the Dimension of Food Safety in Food Security. The background document and final report for this round table discussion can be accessed from: www.fao.org/es/ESN/food/meetings_mrt_en.stm

13. FAO and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) jointly facilitated a workshop on the subject of: "Strengthening Capacities for Implementing Codex Standards, Guidelines and the Recommended International Codes of Practice for Control of the Use of Veterinary Drugs" from 20-24 October 2003 in Vienna, Austria. Technical training courses for scientists/ technicians/ laboratory managers to complement these workshops have also been held in various regions of the world. More information on this workshop and training courses can be found at www.iaea.org/programmes/nafa/d3/index.html.

14. FAO is involved in a number of events relating to Good Agricultural Practices and food safety. These include: a Food-Feed Safety Conference jointly with the International Feed Industry Federation (IFIF) in Rome, from 29 to 31 October 2004; an International Symposium on Dairy Hygiene and Safety with the International Dairy Federation (IDF), in South Africa, 2-5 March 2004; and an International Workshop on Good Practices for the Meat and Livestock Sector in Windhoek, Namibia from 6 to 8 April 2004. A workshop related to Echinococcosis was held in Morocco on the 19 September 2003 and another on Fascioliosis, diagnostics and control in Egypt on the 12 of January 2004. A presentation on Cysticercosis: FAO perspectives - FAO support possibilities, was presented on the 19th International Conference of the World Association of Veterinary Parasitology (WAAVP), USA on the 12 August 2003.

15. FAO and WHO jointly facilitated an international seminar on *Acrylamide in Food: Current State of Affairs* in Arusha, Tanzania on 16 March 2003, held immediately prior to the 35th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants. This seminar provided for the exchange of views, an update on ongoing research, and identification of gaps in the area of acrylamide in foods. Presentations were given by representatives of FAO/WHO, the US, JIFSAN, the EU, Australia, Japan, and Norway and are available for viewing from FAO's website at: www.fao.org/es/ESN/jecfa/acrylamide_en.stm.

Global Projects

16. An FAO- implemented global project for the *Enhancement of Coffee Quality through the Prevention of Mould Formation* started in December 2000, and is due to end in June 2005. This project is being carried out in Brazil, Colombia, Ivory Coast, India, Indonesia, Kenya, and Uganda, with ongoing collaboration from the Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherché Agronomique pour le Développement (CIRAD) and the Institute for Scientific Information on Coffee (ISIC), and earlier collaboration with the University of Surrey, U.K. The project is funded by 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 was incorporated, and completed in 2002.

17. 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 the 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 project also builds the analytical capacity and capability required to support national programmes for prevention and control of OTA contamination of coffee.

18. As part of a two-year project initiated in 2002, FAO has recently conducted a series of sub-regional training courses in Latin America and the Caribbean to improve the safety and quality of fresh fruits and vegetables. Sub- regional workshops have been held in the Southern Cone Region (17-21 March 2003), Central American and Spanish Speaking Caribbean Countries (21-26 July 2003), Andean Countries (22-27 March 2004), and the Caribbean Region (24-28 May 2004). Through this project, a training manual and database of resources available in the area have been prepared and are now freely available on the FAO web pages or as a CD-ROM, in English, French, and Spanish. 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 improve the quality and safety of their fresh produce. More information is available from:

www.fao.org/es/ESN/food/foodandfood_fruits_en.stm

Global Initiatives

19. FAO, WHO, OIE, WTO, and the World Bank established a Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) in 2003 to coordinate the capacity building efforts of these organizations in the areas of food safety, plant, and animal health and to provide a funding mechanism for countries and stakeholders to improve in meeting WTO SPS standards. The STDF has already and will continue to facilitate or support information exchange, development of databases, tool kits, and learning materials on trade-related SPS issues. It facilitates consultations to better coordinate inter-agency capacity building projects and funding of projects in capacity building in individual countries or through regional initiatives, including activities involving both public and private sectors. The specific projects supported with funding by the Facility are identified by partner institutions in consultation with the developing countries concerned. An FAO/WHO project to assist the low income countries of Asia and the Pacific in Developing Food Standards within a Risk Analysis Framework was approved for funding from this Facility in early 2004 and will be implemented in late 2004. Interested countries and stakeholders are encouraged to propose projects and submit them to the STDF for consideration. More information on the STDF is available from: www.standardsfacility.org

20. In February 2003, FAO and WHO launched a Project and Trust Fund for Enhanced Participation in Codex to increase the participation of developing countries and countries in transition in the vital work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. The fund provides financial support to increase their ability to participate in the establishment of global food safety and quality standards, as well as improve their capacity to implement those standards in their own countries. Thanks to the generosity of several donors, the minimum threshold of US$ 500 000 was reached at the beginning of March 2004, allowing the Fund to become fully operational. Over eighty applications from all Codex regions were received by April 2004, with delegates from Ghana, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea already benefiting from the Fund. More information and application forms are available from www.who.int/foodsafety/codex/trustfund/en/ in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

21. In early 2004, FAO and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) launched a joint initiative entitled a "Global Framework for the progressive control of Transboundary Animal Diseases" (GF-TADs). Some of the diseases addressed in GF-TADs are of public health interest and the FAO-OIE activities will have a global objective of re-enforcing Veterinary Services.

22. In response to resolutions of the World Health Assembly calling for enhanced communication between WHO and its Member States on matters of food safety, WHO, in collaboration with FAO, is now establishing an official International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN) to be used for targeted and rapid distribution of various information for the protection of public health. One part of INFOSAN will be dedicated to food safety emergency situations (INFOSAN EMERGENCY) where imminent risk of serious injury or death is present.

23. WHO also manages a global network of laboratories and individuals involved in surveillance, isolation, identification and antimicrobial resistance testing of *Salmonella* (Global Salm-Surv). The network, which links around 800 members from nearly 500 institutions in 138 countries, is currently being extended to include other major foodborne pathogens, e.g. *Campylobacter*. The Global Environment Monitoring System/Food Contamination Monitoring and Assessment Programme (GEMS/Food) has now been introduced to 13 francophone countries, mainly from Africa, through the Third International Total Diet Study Workshop and Training Course held in May 2004. The workshop presented the latest developments in methods and technology which continue to make total diet studies the most cost-effective exposure assessment tool available for assessing human exposure to chemicals in food.

Global Tools Available

24. Apart from the direct implementation of activities in the area of food quality and safety in developing countries, FAO and WHO elaborate guidance and technical materials to be used by other implementing agencies working in these areas. This ensures broader and more sustainable impact of the technical assistance provided in the tools. Several tools are also under development. Some of the tools developed on food quality and safety include:

25. FAO, often in collaboration with WHO, convenes ***Expert Consultations/ workshops*** to provide guidance and advice to the Codex system and to national governments on specific issues such as Safety Assessment of Foods from Genetically Modified Animals (www.fao.org/es/esn/food/risk_biotech_animal_en.stm), Non-human Antimicrobial Usage and Resistance (www.fao.org/es/ESN/food/meetings_antimicrobial_en.stm), the use of a Good Agricultural Practice Approach (www.fao.org/prods/GAP/gapindex_en.asp), and Pathogens of concern in powdered infant formula (www.fao.org/es/ESN/food/risk_mra_riskassessment_entero_en.stm). Some of these Expert Consultation reports are available electronically from the FAO website and printed copies of most are available in multiple languages from the FAO publications page: www.fao.org/es/ESN/publications/publications_en.stm.

26. FAO and WHO publish a series of guidelines on topics related to ***Microbiological Risk Assessments***. For example, the third publication in this series, Hazard Characterization for Pathogens in Food and Water guidelines, (MRA Series No. 3) endeavours to provide a practical framework and a structured approach for the characterization of microbiological hazards. It is aimed at assisting governmental and research scientists in identifying the points to be addressed, the methodology for incorporating data from different sources, and the methodology of dose-response modelling. These guidelines are available from: www.fao.org/es/esn/food/risk_mra_hazard_en.stm

27. FAO and WHO have jointly prepared and published (2003) ***Assuring Food Safety and Quality - Guidelines for Strengthening National Food Control Systems*** to enable national authorities, particularly in developing countries, to improve their food control systems. This publication replaces the previous (1976) guidelines. The guidelines seek to provide advice on strategies to strengthen food control systems to protect public health, prevent fraud and deception, avoid food adulteration and facilitate trade. In addition to national authorities, the guidelines will also be of assistance to a range of other stakeholders including consumer groups, industry and trade organizations, farmer groups and any other groups or associations that influence national policy in this area.
The guidelines are now available electronically in English (www.fao.org/es/ESN/food/control_FCS_en.stm) and Spanish (ftp://ftp.fao.org/es/esn/food/guideFCS_es.pdf) and will soon be available electronically in French and Arabic. Printed copies can be ordered in English, French, Spanish, and Arabic from: www.fao.org/es/ESN/publications/pub_control_en.stm.

28. An example of a possible ***structure of a food law*** has been developed by FAO and WHO and is based on a number of food laws currently in force in developed and developing countries. Since different countries place responsibility for food control with different Ministries or agencies, the draft has been prepared in a general way so that it can be adapted to local conditions. It has been reviewed and endorsed by Joint FAO/WHO meetings of countries of the Africa and Asia regions and is available from FAO's website at: ftp://ftp.fao.org/es/esn/food/foodlaw.pdf

29. ***Food Quality and Safety Systems - A FAO Training Manual on Food Hygiene and the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) System*** is available electronically in English (http://www.fao.org/docrep/W8088E/W8088E00.htm),
French (ftp://ftp.fao.org/es/esn/food/HACCPManual_fr.pdf),
Spanish (ftp://ftp.fao.org/es/esn/food/HACCPManual_es.pdf), and
Russian (http://www.fao.org/DOCREP/006/W8088R/W8088R00.HTM) or as a printed publication in these four languages from: http://www.fao.org/es/ESN/publications/pub_quality_en.stm.

30. ***FAO/IAEA Manual on the Application of the HACCP System in Mycotoxin Prevention and Control*** is available electronically in English (ftp://ftp.fao.org/es/esn/food/mycotoxin_manual.pdf) or as a printed publication (in En, Fr, Es) from: http://www.fao.org/es/ESN/publications/pub_quality_en.stm. The manual will soon be available electronically in Spanish and French as well.

31. Training manuals and guides on ***food safety in the street food sector*** are also available in multiple languages in publication format from the FAO publications page: http://www.fao.org/es/ESN/publications/publications_en.stm. A *Training of Street Food Vendors didactic guide*, materials designed for training courses are available electronically in English and Spanish from: www.rlc.fao.org/prior/segalim/accalim/Guias/faoguias.html

32. FAO has also published many ***manuals on food inspection***, including a series of fourteen Manuals on Food Quality Control. Printed copies of these manuals are available in multiple languages from the FAO publications page: http://www.fao.org/es/ESN/publications/publications_en.stm.

33. FAO has developed a ***training manual as well as a database of resources*** available in the area of ***Improving the Safety and Quality of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables***, which are freely available from FAO web pages or as a CD-ROM in English, French, and Spanish from: http://www.fao.org/es/ESN/food/foodandfood_fruits_en.stm

34. FAO and WHO provide a platform for the exchange of current information on the topic of Acrylamide through an electronic ***Acrylamide InfoNet***, which is operated by the Joint (United States Food and Drug Administration and the University of Maryland) Institute for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (JIFSAN). The Research Database now lists more than 100 projects and a "Call for Data on Levels of Acrylamide in Food and the Total Diet" was issued in July 2003. The Infonet is available from www.acrylamide-food.org/

35. FAO has prepared a series of ***fact sheets on trade-related issues*** for the 2003 WTO Cancun Ministerial Conference. Sheet # 14 in this series deals with the prevalence of non-tariff measures, such as food standards, and FAO's activities to assist countries in dealing with these measures. The entire series of fact sheets is available from: www.fao.org/docrep/005/y4852e/y4852e00.htm

36. In January 2004, FAO, jointly with IDF, published a ***Guide to Good Dairy Farming Practice***. FAO is finalizing the publication of a ***"Manual on Good Practices for the Meat Industry",*** with funding from the private sector. The manual will provide practical guidelines for primary producers and is also intended to guide managers of abattoirs and the meat industry. The manual takes a risk analysis approach and will be of value to veterinarians, with their supervisory roles in meat hygiene. The book covers topics such as application of risk management principles to the meat sector, meat hygiene applying to primary production, animals transport, handling, stunning, traceability and control of processing operations.

37. In an effort to allow users to access complete information on international standards, national regulations, scientific evaluations, and other supporting official information on sanitary and phytosanitary measures from a single source, FAO is leading an interagency initiative to develop and maintain an internet-based portal - ***the International Portal on Food Safety, Animal and Plant Health***. This portal allows users to by-pass secondary (interpreted) information, as well as material which may be out of date – both of which can be found using typical internet search tools - and focus on the definitive official sources across the three main disciplines of food safety, animal health and plant health.

38. As of October 2004, the portal contains references to over 15,000 items, drawn from the three SPS-recognized standard setting bodies, as well as from CBD, FAO, WHO, and WTO. It also includes demonstration 'nodes' of nearly 400 items each from the US and the EU, and smaller data sets from selected developing countries. Version 1.0 of the portal was formally launched on 25 May 2004, on the occasion of the FAO/WHO Regional Conference on Food Safety for Asia and the Pacific (Seremban, Malaysia). It is now freely accessible from the FAO Biosecurity PAIA webpage (www.fao.org/biosecurity) or directly from www.ipfsaph.org. Interested users are invited to utilise the portal, share the link with other users, and provide feedback to the FAO project team on the portal content and usability. Work is now underway to include more detailed information from the current sources, including from Codex, JECFA and JMPR, as well as data from additional countries. A capacity building programme related to the portal is also planned. More information on the portal project is available in CAC27/INF/4.

39. In an effort to improve information exchange and communication with stakeholders in food safety and quality, FAO distributes a monthly electronic newsletter, the ***Food Safety and Quality Update***, to over 2,500 subscribers to provide information on recent developments and upcoming activities of FAO and Codex that are related to food safety and quality. Other parties interested in receiving the newsletter can also subscribe by following the simple instructions listed in the newsletter itself. The current newsletter and an archive of past newsletters are available from: http://www.fao.org/es/ESN/fsqu_en.stm. WHO also periodically sends an electronic newsletter, the ***Food Safety News***, to interested parties regarding the activities of WHO in food safety, available from: http://www.who.int/foodsafety/publications/newsletter/en/.

Global Tools Under Development

40. Work has commenced with the newly created IDF/ISO/AOAC lactic bacteria action team on ***methods for the assessment of probiotic microorganisms*** as a follow up of the recommendations of the FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on Health and Nutritional Properties of Powder Milk with Live Lactic Acid Bacteria, held in Cordoba, Argentina 2001.

41. FAO/WHO are in the process of finalising a CD-ROM training package on ***Food Safety Risk Analysis***, which includes a framework and overview manual, a training module presentation, case studies in risk analysis, and access to FAO/WHO resources related to food safety risk analysis. A workshop was held in Bali, Indonesia on 4 March 2004 to introduce the package to some potential users and to provide participants with practical tools for risk analysis. The workshop report is available from the following: ftp://ftp.fao.org/es/esn/food/meetings/bali_report_mar04.pdf

42. In order to assist countries in ***Evaluating Capacity Building Needs for Food Control***, FAO and WHO are preparing a joint publication on the subject to assist countries to identify and prioritise the areas where capacity building is needed.

43. FAO and WHO are currently developing a training manual on ***Improving Participation in the Work of Codex***, designed to strengthen national food safety and quality systems through enhanced participation in the Codex process. It has been field-tested in Africa and the Pacific and it is expected to be available in final form in late 2004. The manual provides information on the Codex process and the development of national Codex programmes. It should serve both as a reference document for those involved in national Codex activities and as a training tool for national/regional training courses on Codex. In addition, the manual is an important capacity building tool within the ongoing FAO and WHO programmes to increase effective participation in Codex activities, and it is anticipated that it will be of great support when used in conjunction with direct participation in Codex meetings of increasing numbers of countries through the funds of the FAO/WHO Codex Trust Fund.

44. As part of a field project on the safety of street foods, FAO is in the process of preparing a ***Training of Trainers Manual in Street Food Safety*** to assist countries in improving the safety of this important source of nutrition for many cultures.

45. FAO is finalizing publications on the following topics:

- -A manual on the ***Prudent Use of Antimicrobials***.
- -A manual on ***Marine Biotoxins***
- ***-Worldwide Regulations for Mycotoxins in Food and Feed in 2003***

46. In recent years, WHO has elaborated rules to promote the production and handling of safe food, the ***Five Keys to Safer Food***: keep clean, separate raw and cooked food, cook food thoroughly, keep food at safe temperatures and use safe water and raw material. WHO is now developing a food safety training manual based on the Five Keys to Safer Food. The purpose of this manual is to facilitate implementation of the Five Keys at country level. The manual will provide relevant food safety information when disseminated.

47. All these materials, once finalized, will be issued in multi-lingual form for wider use by member countries.

D. RECENT AND ONGOING CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES AT REGIONAL LEVEL

Capacity Building Activities in the South West Pacific

48. In an effort to facilitate the discussion of practical actions and capacity building recommendations to promote food safety in the countries of the Asian and Pacific region, FAO and WHO convened a *Regional Conference on Food Safety for Asia and the Pacific* in Seremban, Malaysia from 24 to 27 May 2004. This Conference is the second in a series of regional meetings, the first of which was held in European Region in February 2002, that FAO and WHO are convening at the request of member countries to meet their needs for policy guidance and capacity building in food safety. The discussion papers and background information on the Conference, in addition to the final report are available from the Conference website: www.foodsafetyforum.org/asian/index_en.asp and will be available at the CCNASWP meeting.

49. In an effort to strengthen food safety in the Pacific, the "Future Action on Food Safety in the Pacific: a WHO/FAO/SPC Meeting" was conducted from 28-31 May 2004 in Seremban, Malyasia with 21 temporary advisers drawn from many of the Pacific island countries as well as experts from elsewhere. This meeting developed guidance to Pacific island countries on mechanisms, based upon a sharing of resources and expertise, that can be applied to (1) develop food safety laws, regulations and standards suitable to the Pacific and based on Codex; (2) obtain data on the contamination of food in the Pacific; (3) obtain data regarding foodborne diseases in the Pacific; and (4) strengthen the competency of food inspectors in the Pacific. The meeting was held in conjunction with the FAO/WHO Food Safety Conference for Asia and the Pacific. A full report of the outcome of the Meeting will be made available at the CCNASWP meeting. .

WHO WPRO Regional Activities

50. The importance of national food safety programmes founded on risk assessment or its elements (hazard identification, hazard characterization, exposure assessment and risk characterization) is clearly identified in both the WHO global and regional food safety strategies. Consequently, WHO WPRO strengthened the capacity of its Member States through support for targeted contaminant monitoring in Fiji on mercury in tuna; arsenic in drinking water, cadmium in taro and *Salmonella* in eggs and poultry products. In addition, Papua New Guinea was provided technical expertise and other support to enable it to plan a food consumption survey as the basis for determining dietary exposure to hazards in food, and a trial survey period was initiated. Also, in collaboration, with CDC, the Fiji School of Medicine and the Ministry of Health, initial steps towards foodborne disease surveillance were taken in Fiji.

51. As stated in the endorsed[1] Western Pacific Regional Strategy for Food Safety, policies, plans of action and legislation are key elements of any effective national food safety programme. WHO collaborated with Fiji on food legislation and as a consequence the Food Safety Act was approved by parliament in that country.

52. As part of the process of enhancing the sharing of food legislation information in the Western Pacific, the legislation of several Pacific island countries has been collected and collated on the website http://fsi.wpro.who.int. To facilitate more effective enforcement, 16 import inspection and health personnel from eight Pacific island countries (Cook Islands, Fiji, the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) were trained in the use of the WHO web-based database and on import inspection planning and practices. Countries, including Federated States of Micronesia and Tonga, were provided technical advice and supplies and equipment to strengthen their participation in the work of Codex; and WHO WPRO finalized and distributed a reference manual on the Codex process for Pacific island countries. The reference manual will be made available at the CCNASWP meeting.

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1 Resolution WPR/RC52.R2, 52nd session of the Regional Committee

53. Also WHO supported the training of inspectors in the Solomon Islands in order that they would be able to more effectively apply Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) principles in their inspections. A web-based network of trainers of food safety regulators was finalized and a forum initiated to identify core competencies that need to be addressed in the training of food inspectors (http://www.wpro.who.int/fsiguide/index.asp). In cooperation with the New Zealand Food Safety Authority, inspectors from Fiji were trained in various aspects of food safety including Codex, HACCP and import inspection. The competency of regulators was also enhanced through undergraduate training of Fiji regulators in New Zealand; training of inspectors from Kiribati at the Fiji School of Medicine; training of Fiji inspectors in relation to the new food legislation; and training of inspectors in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

FAO-SAPA/RAP Regional Activities

54. Based upon a request from the Government of Tonga, FAO SAPA organized an international consultancy to review the existing food control set up and make proposals for appropriate alternative organizational structures for a "Food Division".

55. The FAO sub-regional project for Strengthening Capacity Building in Codex, Food Regulation and International Food Standards Harmonisation involving the Cook Islands, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu has conducted a 3 week training course on Food Regulation and Standards - Food Control and Quality Assurance and a 2 week course on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification.

56. The FAO sub-regional project on Strengthening Food Analytical Capabilities in the Pacific Region conducted two 1 week training courses on basic food analysis and food contaminants for delegates from the project member countries Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.

Upcoming Activities/Projects

57. The Government of Malaysia has requested FAO assistance to facilitate a Regional Training Programme on Strengthening National Capacities on Risk Assessment and Traceability in the Seafood Trade for the South West Pacific Region. The project is currently in the formulation stage. The Government of Tonga has requested FAO assistance for a project to develop an integrated National Food Control & Quality Assurance System for Tonga in accordance with Codex, with emphasis on drafting appropriate Food Legislation, Regulations and Food Standards and training government officers to ensure proper implementation and enforcement. The project is in the formulation stage.

58. The FAO project on Strengthening Capacity Building in Codex is organising a sub-regional training course on Codex Information System and Management of Codex Contact Point due to be held in Apia, Samoa in the second half of 2004. The project is also providing/upgrading essential equipment needed for information retrieval and distribution as well as the production of training material for the offices of the codex contact points to enable their effective operation.

59. An FAO/ WHO project to Develop Food Standards within a Risk Analysis Framework with pilot application in the low income countries of Asia and the Pacific has been funded by the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) in early 2004. Following final logistical for implementing the project, the project will be implemented with the assistance of Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ).

60. Funding has been sought from the FAO/ Government of Japan Cooperative Framework to implement 2 projects to assist the low income countries of Asia and the Pacific. The first proposal is to strengthen the availability of data from developing countries of the Asian region be utilized in conducting international food safety risk assessments. The second project is to implement improved institutional frameworks for food safety management and control in the Least Developed Countries of Asia.

61. WHO will focus its future efforts on enhancing food safety through a number of key strategies. WHO will facilitate coordinated international action and extend its partnership activities in food safety in the Region. Key partners in this respect include national food safety authorities, FAO, SPC, Consumers International, development banks and aid agencies, as well as universities. Attention will continue to be paid to strengthening national capacity to develop policies, plans of action and legislation, to empowering Member States to more effectively participate in the Codex standards development process and enabling them to establish national standards consistent with Codex guidance.

62. As surveillance is the basis for the formulation of national strategies to reduce food-related risks, WHO will collaborate with Member States to strengthen their capacity to obtain, utilize and share reliable data on (i) foodborne diseases and (ii) food contamination. This information will be used to apply to risk profiles and assessments and to enhancing the capacity of countries to make risk-based decisions regarding food safety. Such data and assessments will further serve as the basis for setting international standards and guidelines, and for national food regulations or other initiatives. WHO will also work to ensure that health authorities contribute effectively in the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission in order to ensure that consumer health concerns are reflected in the priorities of the Commission. To ensure that all those with due responsibility for food safety (including governments, industry and consumers) are able to effectively participate in efforts to ensure the safety of food and are able to respond appropriately to outbreaks, emergencies and disasters, WHO will build risk communication capability in its Member States. The Organization will encourage governments to review training of food inspectors and encourage Member States to empower their enforcement officers through better training. Member States will also be encouraged to work more collaboratively with both industry and consumers and health authorities will be supported so they can provide the public accurate and timely information in outbreaks and emergencies.