



REGIONAL WORKSHOP FOR DEVELOPING NATIONAL INTERVENTION PLANS FOR EMERGENCY SITUATIONS RELATED TO FOOD SAFETY

13 to 15 March 2012, Panama City

Panama

FINAL REPORT



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1. BACKGROUND

Many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), most of them with well-developed systems of food control, have prepared contingency plans to support their actions during an emergency. However, currently there is no reference to document best practices to use during the development of such plans, or what they should contain. Emergency management of food safety is rarely the responsibility of a single national authority, and requires a timely and coordinated collaboration among all stakeholders to ensure effective intervention.

Population growth, global trade, climate change and crisis in emergency situations, challenge the control systems of food safety, jeopardizing an adequate supply of safe food and compliance with SPS requirements at both national and international level for food marketing. The capacity building in emergency situations is promoted in response to these concerns.

During 14 to 16 June 2012, was presented the “Regional Workshop for developing national intervention plans for emergency situations related to food safety” for countries of South America (Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Colombia, Chile, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela) in Santiago, Chile. Among conclusions of this workshop was considered working on a new workshop, focused on realities and emergency situations of countries in Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean (Cuba and the Dominican Republic).

Since, at present, food chains and the threats to food safety are often global in nature, FAO is in a unique position to evaluate these vulnerabilities, from production to consumption, and to provide advice on potential threats and guidance, and how to cope with them. In addition, it is also very important that all countries count on mechanisms to respond to crises related to food safety quickly and coordinated, because not all threats can be anticipated.

FAO has a solid experience in the efficient implementation of programs of food safety. Collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) on issues related to food safety is sound. FAO and WHO ensure, by working together, that the agricultural and health sectors work jointly at national level to deal with crises and threats to food safety.

Moreover, the International Regional Organization for Plant and Animal Health (OIRSA) is an intergovernmental organization specialized in plant and animal health, founded over 59 years, to provide technical cooperation to the Ministries and Departments of Agriculture and Livestock of the nine member States: Mexico, Central America and the Dominican Republic in the protection and development of agricultural resources, aquaculture and forestry, through a safe food production for the welfare of the population.

Disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, tropical storms or volcanic eruptions, specific events, continuous dangers, such as outbreaks of *Escherichia coli* in Germany and *Salmonella* in the U.S.A, or other crises that arise as cholera in Haiti and the Dominican

Republic are all situations that make evident the need to be prepared to intervene in an organized and coordinated manner. Therefore it is important to establish a National Emergency Intervention Plan related to Food Safety, based on science and risk analysis.

To strengthen preparedness, in addition to recognition and quick response to deal with these emergencies are key elements of the emergency programs in food safety of FAO and WHO, specifically the Emergency Prevention System for Food Safety (EMPRES food safety) and the International Food Safety Authorities (INFOSAN).

In this context, FAO, in collaboration with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and OIRSA, organized and presented the "Regional workshop for developing national intervention plans for emergency situations related to food safety" convened in Panama City, between 13 and 15 March 2012.

2. OBJECTIVES

1. To present guidelines and documents prepared by FAO and WHO related to Emergencies Situations and Food Safety, as well as tools developed by OIRSA and networks implemented (EMPRES food safety, INFOSAN);
2. To train participants in developing emergency plans related to food safety, with the help of the Framework document developed by FAO and WHO;
3. Case study examples in some Central American countries and their approaches in the context of emergency related to food safety.

3. PARTICIPANTS

At the "Regional workshop for developing national intervention plans for emergency situations related to food safety" were represented the following countries:

- Guatemala
- El salvador
- Honduras
- Costa Rica
- Nicaragua
- Panama
- Mexico
- Belize
- Dominican Republic
- Cuba

With the support from FAO, PAHO and OIRSA representative offices in the different countries it was required to the relevant authorities to propose at least three experts from their countries' to attend the workshop. Selected were a total of 35 experts from different governmental institutions related to food safety, food quality and control systems from 10 countries.

For the selection of candidates to be sponsored, special consideration was given to the following criteria:

- 1) Ability of the candidate to present his experiences on the topics to be discussed;
- 2) Relevance of the candidate's background and job responsibilities with respect to safety and food quality, and control systems
- 3) Experience and participation in interventions to deal with emergencies related to food safety.

The complete list of participants appears in Annex II.

4. MATERIALS PROVIDED

The workshop participants were provided with the following materials:

Folder containing the following printed documents:

- Workshop agenda
- Document "FAO / WHO Framework for developing National food safety emergency response plans"
- "FAO / WHO guidelines for the implementation of principles and risk analysis procedures in emergency situations related to food safety"

Furthermore, participants were also provided with a pendrive (USB) containing:

- Workshop presentations
- Complete list of participants and lecturers
- FAO documents presented:
 - FAO / WHO Framework for developing National food safety emergency response plans
 - FAO/RLC guidelines for food safety in emergency situations

5. WORK METHODOLOGY

The workshop was worked out in three phases:

- 1) Conference presentation of the different issues and support tools for addressing an emergency situation: EMPRES Food Safety, INFOSAN, documents prepared by FAO, PAHO and OIRSA; international regulations;
- 2) Speeches about food safety emergency cases occurred in different countries of Central America (Guatemala, Honduras and Costa Rica);
- 3) Fundamental elements were set forth for development of a National food safety emergency response plan, through inputs from three working groups, using the document FAO / WHO framework.

6. WORKSHOP PERFORMANCE

The “Regional workshop for developing national intervention plans for emergency situations related to food safety”, was held at the meeting room “Corotu” of the Central Park Hotel Casino & Spa, Central America. Ave. Ricardo J. Alfaro, calle Miguel Brostella, Centro Comercial Camino de Cruces (www.centralparkpanama.com), Republic of Panama, from 13 to 15 March 2012. The organization of this workshop was shared between the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the International Regional Organization for Plant and Animal Health (OIRSA) and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The full agenda is presented in Annex I of this document.

Welcome remarks and opening of the meeting were offered by the Secretary of Agriculture of the Republic of Panama, Mr. Oscar Osorio Casal, who highlighted the joint work between FAO, PAHO and OIRSA to conduct this workshop.

After the presentation of the Minister and the press conference held proceeded with the workshop presentations, where FAO, PAHO/WHO and OIRSA talked about the tools of information for each organization. The first speaker was Mr. Enrique Perez from PAHO/WHO. In his presentation, Mr. Perez spoke about the virtual library that PAHO has, where direct inquiries can be made, and which issues a monthly newsletter, and mentioned that only those who register on this page can receive the latest articles. Mr. Perez emphasized the various editions of the Technical-Informative Bulletin on food safety that they produce; the 5 HACCP manuals, the Manual on Chagas Disease and Oral Transmission, which was prepared based on consultations with experts and that covers: definition, detection, diagnosis, monitoring, etc., and guidelines for the management of risk analysis. As regards Panalimentos, Mr. Perez made reference to the Training Manual for Food Handlers, published in Portuguese and Spanish, and their Communication Campaign for Healthy Food: "Monica and her friends", aimed to children and distributed in English, Spanish and Portuguese. He described the well-known booklets and manuals of the "5 key ways to keep food safe" in their various formats and languages, and finished his presentation by showing the tools of the Web page of PAHO / WHO.

The second speaker was Mr. Rodolfo Rivers, Consultant on Food Safety and Quality from the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean. In his presentation Mr. Rivers talked about the FAO manuals and guidelines, of the team in charge of safety and food quality as related to the Codex Alimentarius, guidelines for safety emergencies, the "FAO / WHO framework for developing national plans of action in emergency situations related to food safety, the manuals used to strengthen the National Systems for Food Control, guides and manuals for Risk Analysis, tools and manuals of good practices, HACCP guidelines and manuals and guides for the assessment of genetically modified foods.

Mr. Rivers presented the audio and video tools that have been developed as support materials for manuals and guides, and then proceed to explain the three E-learning courses developed by the safety team FAO / RLC that include: course "Hygienic Food Handling - MHA"; course "Safety Control Systems-SCIA"; and course "Risk Analysis in Food Safety-ARIA", which are held biannually through the platform FAO /RLC Training Nucleus. He also described the E-learning course "Enhancing participation in Codex activities." And to finish, he showed the Web pages FAO / RLC, FAO / HQ and the website of Codex Alimentarius and mentioned the information that users can get from these sites.

Next, Mr. Oscar Garcia, OIRSA Regional Coordinator on Food Safety, spoke about the tools they are developing which can be downloaded via the Web page www.oirsa.org. He stressed that these publications are worked through drafts which are discussed and once agreed, they proceed to edit and publish such information.

Through the above mentioned page you can access the various institutions linked with OIRSA and, just like with FAO, there also are good practice manuals either prepared by member countries or headquarters.

Following the agenda began the presentation by Mr. Carlos Garzon PAHO / WHO entitled "Program of PAHO / WHO for emergency preparedness and disaster relief." In his presentation Mr. Garzon said that PAHO has 110 years of work on health issues and disasters. Its beginning was in 1902, and described that PAHO has presence in a total of 6 regions, with headquarters in Washington. They handle all issues related to health and one of the topics covered are disasters. Mr. Garzon emphasized that too few governments spend money in these issues and information on such issues should be clear, concise and comprehensive, since it is not only governments but also organizations, who want to be informed about those issues. He said that although each agency has its own organization, it is very important to work in a transnational way.

Mr. Garzon added that there is a Strategic Plan 2008-2012, and in due time one for 2013-2017, both of which can be downloaded from the www.paho.org / disasters. In addition, he noted that as regards health PAHO is working on supporting countries in their sanitary response to disasters, protection of health, what should be done before events occur, improve partnerships with additional partners, at both regional and global level, and include the reduction of disaster risk.

He stressed the importance of working as a team, and as regards disasters, even more. In 1976 was created the Disaster Program, but if this is not improved, it will be impossible to advance ever. Each country has an emergency operations center (EOC). For the health sector there must be a specific COE.

Mr. Garzon said that it is impossible to make a decision without information. There have always been situation rooms, their existence is very important because it is necessary to make an assessment according to the type of emergency (diseases or disasters). He also mentioned that a safe hospital is one that keeps operating before, during and after any event. It is necessary to support countries since it is very worrying that quite often they do not have enough personnel to work in teams of disaster response. It is vital to be part of this.

Mr. Christian Zaragoza representative of Mexico, said that in his country due to its two boundaries, they are vulnerable and added that currently, Mexico is experiencing a disaster due to drought, and the scarce water is not of good quality.

It is important to disseminate the information. Each country keeps its information. PAHO is working on this issue, since are topics that need to be more elaborated; the epidemiological alert is worrying (Cholera).

Mr. Mateo Cabrera, representative of Cuba said that due to their geographical location they are subject to frequent hurricanes and face droughts like Mexico, but they have a hydraulic structure with a "Linking center", important tool for decision making.

He concluded saying that it is essential to know what to do at the moments when events occur, and even make more efforts in terms of information and action.

Next, Mr. Enrique Perez made a speech about "INFOSAN: International Food Safety Authorities". In his presentation Mr. Perez explained that the rapid globalization of food production and trade have increased the potential of international incidents involving contaminated food, and dealing with these events requires the rapid exchange of information in food safety, both nationally and internationally.

By sharing experiences between countries, issues of food safety can be managed more efficiently and effectively, therefore it is important to have in place a mechanism to facilitate collaboration among countries and to this end, INFOSAN fulfills this role. INFOSAN has a secretariat; has 2 units at country level, one in the Ministry of Health and the other in the Ministry of Agriculture; has a consulting group and is linked with various networks including: the International Health Regulations. When something is detected, INFOSAN communicates it to the various links and vice versa.

Mr. Christian Zaragoza from Mexico, intervened giving an example of a Venezuelan wedding in the Dominican Republic, where the entire INFOSAN network was activated due to presence of cholera.

Information related to contaminated products that INFOSAN receives, should be communicated to the other countries.

There are many nations that support INFOSAN, which has its website where each member has its own page, so it is possible to make searches for members of INFOSAN. It is also possible to create working groups related to a determined topic and exchange the information. Mr. Perez noted that INFOSAN conducts evaluations to gather information on emerging issues.

Mr. Daniel Montes of the Dominican Republic intervened, stating that following products introduced Asian strain of cholera, has handled the issue well and the Ministry of Health, through its emergency center has decreased mortality from each infected.

Mr. Daniel Montes of the Dominican Republic intervened and stated that due to Asian products that introduced the strain of cholera, the emergency center of the Ministry of Health has properly handled the issue and has reduced the mortality from each infected.

Next, Mr. Montes asked: What has done INFOSAN for Haiti?

Mr. Perez said that to avoid cases of contaminated food or water, they have been monitoring the situation and have distributed educational posters and booklets containing guidelines for hydration of patients.

After the presentation of INFOSAN, Mrs. Masami Takeuchi, Officer Food Safety and Quality FAO / HQ, presented the topic "Food safety EMPRES - Emergency Prevention Systems". She noted that as regards a food safety emergency, there are three important points: anticipate, prevent and respond, since she considers that to improve early warning, one has to observe key signals, with a monitoring method. Not only is it important to include reviews and evaluations regarding decisions of an emergency plan, but to provide accurate information (risk communication).

The representative of Costa Rica, said that communication should begin at the moment of identifying the event and take appropriate actions, since, in some cases involving contamination of imported food, it was believed that each institution assumed due actions. However, when analyzing these cases, they were not responding promptly and all the institutions involved received a call of duty.

The representative of Costa Rica stated that assessments are important because from there can be rescued the necessary responses to emergencies and that the plan must comply with the conditions of the country; in addition it is important to understand that the countries represented are accountable to the population and there must be good communication between nations, since this facilitates the development of a plan.

WHO, developed a system for countries to report their events and where it is possible to trace those that occur year after year. The most commonly reported are related to food safety. Often, information is only collected, but their data is not analyzed, and sometimes it happens that it is not widespread.

Ms. Takeuchi said that it is expected to have 5 different brochures aimed to food safety officials, which will highlight best practices that can be applied by the countries.

It is important the public communication, but you must know how to do it, when and to whom. Noting that only when you have some scientific information it can be communicated to the public, because otherwise the government would lose credibility.

In concluding her presentation Mrs. Takeuchi highlighted that EMPRES-Food Safety supports the FAO Member States to address, prevent and minimize the impact by emergencies in food safety with scientific advice; to improve the capacities of member countries to predict , prevent and effectively manage food safety emergencies and complements existing activities such as INFOSAN.

Following the workshop, Ms. Takeuchi presented the working document "FAO / WHO Framework for Developing National Plans for Intervention in Emergency Situations Related to Food Safety" in her presentation she stressed that the development of this guide was due to the request of member states of FAO - WHO / PAHO and FAO and that WHO / PAHO are aware that strengthen preparedness is a key element of all activities related to an emergency and there is a need for an International Guide for best practices in the process of developing plans for intervention in emergency situations related to food safety (IEIA).

Ms. Takeuchi emphasized the definition of emergency related to food safety, such as "A situation whether accidental or intentional, in which a competent authority declares an uncontrolled risk of serious adverse effects on public health associated with food consumption and requires urgent action". At the same she described steps to take before developing an IEIA plan.

Then, Dr. Monica Guardo, Sub Regional Advisor for International Health Regulations & Epidemic Alert and Response PAHO / WHO presented the subject "Detection, Verification, Risk Assessment and Response to Food Safety Events under the International Health Regulations". She began her presentation indicating that from only three diseases that were notifiable for the member countries (cholera, pest and yellow fever), it has been increased to report all events that may constitute a public health emergency of international concern.

In her presentation, she explained the overall scope of the International Health Regulations (IHR) which is legally binding for 194 states around the world and which purpose and scope are to prevent the international spread of disease, protect against such spread, control and provide a weighted public health response restricted to public health risks, while avoiding unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade. In closing Dr. Guardo noted that the IHR requires notification of events that may constitute a public health emergency of international concern and the need to establish and maintain capacities that allow detection, verification, reporting and timely response to events related to food safety as required by the IHR.

Before the end of the first day of the workshop Ms. Masami Takeuchi, Food Safety Officer FAO / AGN, introduced two new guides FAO / WHO, the first "Guide FAO / WHO for the Application of Principles and Procedures for Risk Analysis in Emergency Situations Relating to Food Safety ". She stressed that the purpose of this guide is to assist countries in understanding the essential elements of the application of risk analysis during emergencies, in the context of its plan FSER (Food Safety Emergency Respond) and the targeted recipients are national authorities with food safety responsibility for risk assessment, risk management and risk communication in emergencies or incidents related to food safety. She also said that the document describes the best practices for application of risk analysis in food safety emergencies and suggests practical alternatives for incorporating processes in systems that are already underway.

As regards the "Guide FAO / WHO Development and Improvement of National Food Retirement," Takeuchi said that the objectives of this guide are to deliver the instructions for developing an effective national for food recall, based on good practices and lessons learned, and describe the essential elements of an effective national system of recall and establishment of processes to review and improve this system as an essential part of national monitoring of food safety. It was stressed that for developing these guidelines there were lots of consultations with regional experts and officials from FAO and WHO. Currently the officers of FAO/WHO, are reviewing the documents for April. After the review it will be published a technical edition, since the brochure should be concise and practical. The first version will appear from May to June in English, then will be prepared the Spanish version.

During the second day of the workshop, Mr. Rodolfo Rivers, Consultant, Food Safety and Food Quality of FAO / RLC talked about the FAO / RLC Guide for Food Safety in Emergency Situation, noting that it was developed in less than 24 hours, just after the earthquake in Chile in February 2010 and it was divided into 4 subjects:

1. It is compulsory to integrate a team which includes experts in food safety, and these people should interact with others to create additional working teams with physicians, nutritionists, those who manage pest control, etc..
2. Characteristics of food (color, flavor, etc.) must be checked as well as supplier information. Suspect food should be clearly labeled clearly and separated from those in good condition. At this point there was talk about cross-contamination that occurs not only in the preparation of food, but also in storage.
3. Indicate that when handlers are trained, even in a semi-formal way (publicly) information must be transmitted on how to avoid food contamination.

4. In emergencies, many organizations provide food to the affected population and we must assess the condition of food storage facilities in the country where the emergency occurred.

The participant Juana Alfaro from El Salvador, said donations from countries where there are zoonotic diseases are not accepted in places where emergencies occur. For example, El Salvador received food from countries with FMD and it was not allowed entry. She asked if this has been considered within the plans. Can you change this in emergency situations?

Dr. Maya Piñero, answered this question, stating that each country has its own conditions and donor countries should know the restrictions of each to avoid sending foods that can be returned. Very often only perishable foods are allowed entry. In addition it should be taken into consideration the infrastructure of the country where the event occurred and whether there is a place to store them or not.

Next, Mr. Juan Carlos Paguada presented the case of cantaloupe from Honduras. On 21 March 2008 was received an alert from FDA due to contamination of cantaloupe with *Salmonella*. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) reported 58 cases in 16 states. Mr. Paguada emphasized that this alert was received during Easter, so it is important that countries are prepared for an emergency at any time of the year, either on holidays or Christmas, among others. He said coordination meetings were held for taking actions between private sector and government, with the support of the Regional Coordination of Food Safety (CRIA) OIRSA. Alert was suspended in December 2008, after a series of visits from the USA to Honduras. The sector had an estimated loss of more than \$ 11 million and the affected area reported an increase in poverty rate of 63.4%. Among the general findings it was indicated that it is essential a timely and efficient coordination between the public and private sectors; a need exist for adequate institutional coordination at governmental level and other agencies which should rely on duly established procedures; simulations in times of crisis and finally, all the links in the chain play an important role in times of crisis to succeed in these emergencies.

To continue with the agenda, Dr. Gisella Kopper, International Regulatory Affairs Analyst, Regional Office for Latin America of the FDA presented the subject "Intervention Plan for Emergencies FDA, USA". In her presentation Dr. Kopper explained that the food emergency intervention, and specifically in the place where the event occurs, the FDA investigates the first outbreak, and if it becomes stronger, then FDA coordinates with the Department of Agriculture and other agencies. She explained that the process begins investigating the site where the outbreak began, assumptions are made (to investigate where the patient ate, what did he eat?). Patient samples are taken and also of the ingested food. If not correct, the investigation continues and a second hypothesis is made. 33% of cases are not identified. Once the source is identified, that is to say from where contamination came, then an order is issued to recall the product from the market and alerts are released. Sometimes, this is extremely complicated because there are too many factors to be investigated to reach the source of the outbreak. When a contaminated product is received, the importer is notified and it is him the one who has to inform the supplier, the company or entity responsible.

Maria Ortiz, Mexico's representative provided an example of his country on papaya contaminated with *Salmonella*. The alert was issued by FDA in August and by December it

was suspended. She emphasized that this was thanks to the productive sectors, who had a good disposition, and the Mexican authorities (SENASICA). They had some meetings with the U.S.A, to strengthen relationships and ensure that the FDA relies on certifications of Mexico.

A representative of the Dominican Republic, stated that although each country is sovereign and must protect its own nation, there are also large concerns in the Dominican Republic for the production of fresh produce and inspections, since it will increase the costs of inspection. The representative asked, what makes FDA?

Dr. Gisella Kooper replied that all regulations also undergo a public consultation at the WTO, and any interested party may submit comments at any time of their choice and explained that as regards inspections, explained that the FDA makes the first inspection without charge although reinspection does have a cost of U.S.\$325.00 per hour, after it is notified to submit the report (estimated at about U.S.\$ 10.000 / 15.000), but private certifications are much more expensive.

She clarified that these re-inspections occur when problems are very serious and significant for the population. She also noted that if a reinspection is required, with the new Law on Food Safety Modernization (FSMA), if the company does not allow FDA to inspect the registry is removed and the company can no longer export.

Next, Dr. Maya Pineiro described the experience of FAO in "Haiti: Assistance for Capacity Building in Food Safety and Hygiene Practices in Emergencies." In her participation, Dr. Pineiro highlighted the experience of Haiti and all the technical assistance received from the safety and food quality team, including the development of a draft TCP project which is currently under evaluation. Finally, she explained the campaign "Eat Healthy", its radio spot, and the comics released in Haiti. This campaign aims to provide simple tips on the care people should have when choosing and preparing food for consumption. She stressed the importance of communication to all sectors of the population to raise consumer awareness, ensure food safety and prevent foodborne diseases, so that consumers themselves are the guardians of health.

Among successful experiences was presented a "Case Study: *Cyclospora cayetanensis* in raspberry", which highlighted the role of Guatemala as one of the major suppliers of raspberry for the U.S. market with significant growth in the areas of production for this market. However, in 1996, an outbreak of contamination with *Cyclospora* in the United States affected 1,465 people. Initially raspberries from California were considered the source of the outbreak and, as a result bringing millions in losses. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) of the United States declared the raspberries from Guatemala as responsible for the outbreak. After registering a new disease outbreak in 1997, exports of raspberries from Guatemala to the United States market were temporarily suspended and the U.S. government in 1998 issued an alert about raspberries from Guatemala, despite having no evidence to support it. The Guatemala Exporters Association, with support from the Government, initiated a cooperative work with FDA to evaluate possible solutions to the problem. A "Model Plan of Excellence" was launched in order to ensure product safety, from production areas to the port of entry of the importing country. The plan included training of inspectors, strengthening of inspection systems, classification of farms, analysis systems (clinical and microbiological laboratories), and the application of a system of traceability and good agricultural and manufacturing practices.

In 1999, with the approval of the program of safety assurance implemented by Guatemala, the United States again allowed imports of Guatemalan raspberries. However, during the period when the market was closed, losses for exporters and producers amounted around U.S. \$ 120 million.

Mr. Victor Hugo Guzman, participant from Guatemala spoke about PIPPA, the counterpart institution of the USA-FDA in conducting inspections on farms and exporting facilities of raspberry. To participate in this, the interested parties must contact the program to require an assessment of their plantations and packing area to define eligibility, noting that such participation is not mandatory.

The second successful experience was the "Procedure for Coordination, Attention and Follow-up to Notifications and Alerts of Contaminated Food for human consumption" that was prepared in Costa Rica. A first draft was elaborated as a basis for collecting information from other actors. A group of technicians was formed to participate in the feedback of the draft; three meetings were held to refine the document in both form and substance; and the final document was submitted to the highest level. The document was validated; new players were added and staff executing the procedure was trained to become acquainted with their responsibilities. Finally, the document was disseminated to all levels of institutions and an online system was implemented to allow access to the information for everyone.

The third day of the workshop began with a presentation by Dr. Irene Cespedes, from the Regional Center for Disaster Information for Latin America and the Caribbean, explaining the "Guide: The Role of Information Centres in the Response to Emergencies and Disasters". In her presentation she said that the Regional center for disaster Information (CRID) for Latin America and the Caribbean is an initiative sponsored by six organizations that decided to join efforts to ensure the collection and dissemination of information on the issue of disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean. Among its services is a collection of documents with more than 18,500 papers on risk prevention, thematic portals such as health and risk management, climate change and risk management, education and risk management, Centre d'Information sur les Catastrophes in Haiti; thematic CDs on various topics such as: safe hospitals, climate change, etc. Dr. Cespedes emphasized that the information centers and units specialized in risk management have a wealth of information, with varying degrees of expertise, which is useful and practical for risk management and preparedness and response to emergencies and disasters. However, these centers or units do not have the knowledge or practical experience to provide support in information management during emergencies and disasters. She explained that this guide is addressed to managers responsible of the information center; responsables for management and technical handling of information and institutional authorities responsible for making decisions for the operation of information centers in emergency situations.

The main function of this guide is to allow identification of the role of the center in the processes of emergencies and disasters; relate the users with profiles of information required in an emergency situation; plan the work of the center to support users during emergencies and implement operating procedures for activation, response, systematization of information on the emergency; closing of operations and evaluation.

Later, Mr. Oscar Garcia Suarez, Regional Coordinator for Food Safety-OIRSA, made a presentation on "The General Principles of Food Hygiene of the Codex Alimentarius." In his presentation Dr. Garcia introduced to the participants the General Principles of Food

Hygiene of the Codex Alimentarius and established a relationship between programs based on good hygienic practices and HACCP systems. To this end, he outlined some specific codes of practice and the General Principles of Food Hygiene of the Codex Alimentarius; emphasized the most important definitions in the area of food hygiene and described each of the essential principles of the Codex Alimentarius; primary production; facilities: design and services, control of operations; facilities: maintenance and sanitation; facilities: personal hygiene, transportation, product information, consumer awareness and training.

In his participation, Dr. Garcia also made reference to the procedure for recall of food products. In conclusion Dr. Garcia stated that The General Principles of Food Hygiene of the Codex Alimentarius should be the foundation of any program to ensure safety and suitability of food at all stages of the food chain and the general guidelines should be interpreted in relation with the operations along the food chain, according to an assessment of the associated risks. He also expressed that all participants in the food chain have to comply with GHP before they can consider the HACCP, and the government must implement appropriate regulatory programs and technical support to ensure that internationally accepted hygiene practices are observed.

7. WORKING GROUPS

Working groups were divided in three teams:

Team 1:

Number	Name	Country
F	Maya Piñeiro	Uruguay
1	Buenaventura	Panama
2	Argelis Centeno	
3	Rolando García	
4	Mónica Sandí	Costa Rica
5	Roxana Céspedes	
6	Josefina Tavárez	Dominican Republic
7	Cecilia Velásquez	Mexico
8	Hebert Pezzarossi	Guatemala

9	Celia de Hidalgo	El Salvador
10	José Carrera Vara	Cuba
11	Yolandina Lambur	Honduras

1. - Main challenge to have emergency plans regarding food safety

- Decision makers ignorance on food safety subjects
- Lack of a food safety control system (regulations, inspection, analysis, management, divulgation and communication)

	Effort/Cost	Hard to do	Easy to do
Impact	Greater Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A food safety control system is lacking • Political will • Having food safety policies 	Decision makers are ignorant on food safety subjects
	Less Impact	Control system legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interinstitutional coordination • Creation of an emergency committee
Specific activities to be performed			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of a food safety control system • Political will • Set forth food safety policies 		To design a model for national food safety control based on diagnosis, action plans and its programs	
		Include in the annual operation plan the cost of implementing the plan and its program	

	That the national budget includes an allotment to comply with the food safety action plan
	To have financial and human resources and equipment for implementing the action plan and legislation
Control System Legislation	Develop and approve food safety laws
	To have financial and human resources for its accomplishment
	Develop law specific regulations and have them approved
Decision makers' ignorance on food safety subjects.	Meetings, workshops, training, media (advertisement, communication campaigns, brochures, newsletters)
	Present statistics of costs due to lack of food safety
	Submit this document to a meeting involving the highest authorities and international organizations representatives
	Proper divulgation of the information to all interested parties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inter-institutional Coordination • Creation of an emergency committee 	Order the creation of an intra- and inter-institutional committee for food safety
	Establish liaison offices at each ministry
	Common database for sharing information regarding food safety (sanitary, phytosanitary and food safety)
	Creation of focal points in each institution

Action Plan

What to do and how	By whom?	When?	Performance indicator
Identify the actors on a multidisciplinary team	Pertinent Ministers	Short term	Team creation
Creation of a permanent committee	Directors or their representatives	Short term	Committee formed and working
Operational regulations	Technical committee	Medium term	Regulations approved and published
Diagnosis (gathering of existing information, surveys, workshops)	Technical committee	Medium term	Diagnosis accomplished and analyzed
Gathering of statistical and epidemiological information (regarding food and diseases)	Technical committee	Immediate	Databases completed and operating
Create a procedure to assign responsibilities for each actor according to the emergency	Technical committee	Short term	Procedure developed and approved
Defining and emergency plan according to diagnosis	Technical committee	Immediate	Plan developed and validated
Create a program of annual operations (training strategy, legislation reinforcement, budget, etc)	Technical committee	Medium term	Program developed, approved and being implemented

Team 2:

Number	Name	Country
F	Masami Takeuchi	Italy
1	María Citlalli Ortiz Rico Guevara	Mexico
2	Victor Hugo Guzman	Guatemala
3	Juan Carlos Paguada	Honduras
4	Manuel De Leon	Nicaragua
5	Katia Jiménez	Costa Rica
6	Daniel Montes de Oca	Dominican Republic
7	Miguel Figueroa	Belize
8	Karla Lopez	AUPSA
9	Mateo Rolando Cabrera Marquetti	Cuba
10	Celia Frias	MIDA-DINASA
11	Bertha Spiegel	Cold chain chairmanship
12	Enrique Bieberach/Damaris Contreras	Zoonoses/MINSA

Poor communication and institutional coordination

STRENGTHS	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trained personnel (public and private) • Existence of national and international legislation on the subject • Emergency plans in the countries • International cooperation support for food safety emergency plans • Existing emergency plans can provide basis for developing a regional plan • There are guidelines that can strengthen national emergency plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of existing human resources and infrastructure • Application of existing guidelines and emergency programs
WEAKNESSES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no network of experts and institutions • Delimitation of responsibilities at the time of an emergency (dual functions) • Institutional coordination • Implementation by authorities • Agility in resources implementation • Donation management • Lack of budget for dealing with emergencies • Response time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closing of markets for not having an appropriate response mechanism • Suboptimal use of resources • Increased risks due to poor responsiveness • Misuse of resources

EVALUATION OF SOLUTIONS

		EFFORT/COST	
IMPACT	GREATER IMPACT	HARD TO DO	EASY TO DO
		Institutional Coordination 1. Delimitation of responsibilities Resource agility Timely decisions Healthcare institutions Laboratories, Hospitals	Creation of a national and a regional coordination entity Creation of a list of experts by country Use and awareness of existing tools Assessment and risk management (Allowed products, donations, etc.) Information and divulgation programs
	LESSER IMPACT	HARD TO DO	EASY TO DO
		Recovery and product recall Traceability	Food monitoring Field inspection and monitoring (GAPs and GHPs)

<p>List of type 1 and 2 activities, for quick action</p>	<p>List of activities types 3 and 4 in this column to rank, so as to come up with something to be addressed by developing long term action plans.</p>
<p>1. Creation of a national and regional coordination entity (FAO/OPS/OIRSA)</p> <p>2. Creation of a list of experts by country</p> <p>3. Compilation of national emergency plans</p> <p>4. Compilation of technical guides (FAO)</p> <p>5. Management and risk assessment *Development of a database of restricted products</p> <p>a)Medicines</p> <p>b)Food</p> <p>c)Pesticides</p> <p>d)Veterinary products</p> <p>6. Food surveillance *Strengthening of field and plant inspections (BPAs and BPMs)</p> <p>7. Offer information and divulgation programs</p> <p>8. Strengthening of staff's technical capacities</p>	<p>1. Institutional coordination * Delimitation of responsibilities</p> <p>2. Resource agility *Suggest efficient administrative mechanisms</p> <p>3. Healthcare facilities *Strengthening of official laboratories *Suggest minimum equipment for hospitals to deal with emergencies</p> <p>4. Recovery and product recall *Implementation of traceability mechanisms</p>

Team 3:

Number	Name	Country
F	Rodolfo Rivers	Chile
1	Emma Madrid	Panama
2	Omar Lucero	
3	Leonel Montes	
4	Irene Cespedes	Costa Rica
5	Alfie Scarborough	Dominican Republic
6	Christian Zaragoza	Mexico
7	Clara Soto	Nicaragua
8	Eugenia Amador	El Salvador
9	John Bodden	Belize
10	Gustavo Urbina	Honduras

Problem identification

1. Teams are formed and decisions are made, but they do not go up.
2. Solution: The plan must consider giving autonomy for decisions.
3. Risk communication: There is no planning on this subject.
4. There is little infrastructure and lack of mechanisms and procedures for detecting and declaring an emergency.
5. Political aspects can influence the integration of Inter-sectorial groups and the decisions they make.
6. Dual functions: in an emergency, everyone wants to be a main character. There is lack of coordination.

Action plan**CONFORMATION:**

- Ministries/Health departments (depending on countries)
- Institution representatives (all dependencies concerned)

Indicator:

- Number of accomplished sessions /Number of scheduled sessions per cent

DEVELOPMENT OF PROTOCOLS FOR EMERGENCIES:

Reference terms (PROCEDURES)

- Preset formats
- Structure
- Official observers

COMMUNICATION (before/during and after)

- Key messages for the population
- Spokespersons
- Social communication

SOCIALIZATION OF THE PLAN

- Bring the plan to responsible institutions

8. RESULTS

Here are the results obtained at the Regional workshop for development of intervention plans for emergency situations regarding food safety:

- Participants from ten countries were trained for preparing Intervention plans in such a way that they can adapt what they learned to their own context and develop a National Plan per country, according to its reality. FAO/OMS framework for development of National intervention plans for emergency situations regarding food safety was studied along with cases occurred in some countries from the Central American sub region (Guatemala, Costa Rica and Honduras);
- Key elements for elaborating Intervention plans for emergency situations were identified through team working where strategic points were discussed;
- Attendees were familiarized with FAO, OMS and OIRSA's systems for supporting countries and their Food safety control systems, such as EMPRES Food Safety and INFOSAN;
- The capacities of professionals in charge of the National Food Control Systems from ten participant countries were strengthened;
- Government representatives from countries invited to the workshop, members of the FAO/RLC Food Safety and Quality team and participants from OPS/OMS, exhibitors and organizers from OIRSA, exchanged experiences and realities by communicating and transmitting information among all participants;
- Information regarding FAO, OPS and OIRSA manuals and tools was delivered to participants along with Codex Alimentarius web page, available for consulting.

9. ANNEXES

I. Agenda



Food and
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**“REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL FOOD SAFETY
EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLANS”**
13th to 15th March 2012
Panama City

Preliminary Agenda

Time	1 st DAY – Tuesday 13 th March	Responsible
8:30 to 9:00	Participants' Registration	Organizing Committee
9:00 to 9:30	Welcome Address	Mario Francisco Castejón FAO Regional Representative Joaquín Molina OPS/OMS Representative Abelardo De Gracia OIRSA Representative
9:30 to 10:00	Workshop Objectives, Working Methodology, Expected Results	Enrique Pérez-Gutiérrez OPS/OMS
10:00 to 10:30	Participant's Introduction	All Participants
10:30 to 11:00	Coffee Break	
11:00 to 11:30	FAO, PAHO/WHO and OIRSA Information Tools	Masami Takeuchi FAO/AGN Enrique Pérez-Gutiérrez OPS/OMS Oscar García Suárez OIRSA
11:30 to 12:15	PAHO Program in Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Relief	Carlos Garzón, PAHO



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12:15 to 12:45	INFOSAN: International Food Safety Authorities Network	Peter Ben Embarek WHO/FOS
12:45 to 13:15	EMPRES Food Safety: Emergency Prevention System	Masami Takeuchi FAO/AGN
13:15 to 14:15	Lunch	
14:15 to 15:00	FAO/WHO Framework For Developing National Food Safety Emergency Response Plans and examples of national FSER Plans	Masami Takeuchi FAO/AGN
15:00 to 16:00	Detection, Verification, Risks Assessment and Response of Food Safety Events Under the International Health Regulation	Mónica Guardo OPS
16:00 to 16:30	Coffee Break	
16:30 to 17:00	FAO/WHO Guide For Application of Risk Analysis Principles and Procedures During Food Safety Emergencies	Masami Takeuchi FAO/AGN
17:00 to 17:30	FAO/WHO Guide For Developing and Improving National Food Recall Systems	Peter Ben Embarek WHO/FOS

Time	2 nd DAY – Wednesday 14 th March	Responsible
8:00 to 8:30	FAO/RLC Food Safety Guidance in Emergency Situations	Maya Piñeiro FAO
8:30 to 9:30	Plan de Intervención en Situaciones de Emergencia del FDA, EEUU	Gisella Kopper FDA regional Office
9:30 to 10:30	The cantaloupe case in Honduras	TBD
10:30 to 11:00	Coffee Break	
11:00 to 11:30	FAO in Haiti: Assistance on Food Safety Capacity Development and Good Hygienic Practices in Emergency Situations	Maya Piñeiro FAO



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11:30 to 12:30	First Working Group: What Needs to Be in a FSER Plan to Effectively Address Incident Identification	Coordination: FAO / OPS / OIRSA
12:30 to 13:00	First Working Group Conclusions	All Participants
13:00 to 14:00	Lunch	
14:00 to 14:30	Case Study of a Food Safety Emergency	TBD
14:30 to 15:30	Second Working Group: What Needs to Be in a FSER Plan for Effective Incident Management	Coordination: FAO / OPS / OIRSA
15:30 to 16:00	Coffee Break	
16:00 to 16:30	Second Working Group Conclusions	All Participants

Time	3 rd DAY – Thursday 15 th March	Responsible
8:00 to 9:00	Guía: rol de los centros de información en la respuesta a emergencias y desastres	Centro Regional de Información sobre Desastres para América Latina y el Caribe.
9:00 to 10:00	Codex – Inocuidad de Alimentos – Principios Generales de Higiene	Oscar Garcia, OIRSA
10:00 to 10:30	Coffee Break	
10:30 to 11:30	Third Working Group: Identifying Challenges in Internal and External Communications	Coordination: FAO / OPS / OIRSA
11:30 to 12:00	Third Working Group Conclusions	All Participants
12:00 to 13:00	Final Conclusions and Workshop Closure	Organizing Committee
13:00 to 14:00	Farewell toast	



**Food Safety and Quality
Group - FAO/RLC**

II. List of Participants

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