



World Health Organization

An integrated approach to food safety and zoonoses



Building capacity to detect, control and prevent foodborne infections

Need for surveillance and control

Food and food products contaminated with foodborne pathogens often look and smell the same as safe food. Therefore, visual inspection is not enough to ensure safe food and ingredients.

Laboratory-based surveillance of animals, food and humans is important, both to detect and prevent foodborne pathogens from entering or spreading through the food chain, as well as to identify foodborne disease outbreaks so that appropriate and evidence-based control measures can be taken.

Many countries still lack the necessary surveillance capacity for outbreak detection and response. In addition, foodborne disease outbreaks go undetected, in part due to lack of communication between the human, veterinary, and food sectors.

Due to the globalization of animal and food trade, national food safety issues can have global implications. It is, therefore, imperative that countries are able to detect and deal with clusters of foodborne pathogens and disease.

What is WHO doing?

The Global Foodborne Infections Network (GFN) is a network institutions and individuals committed to enhancing the capacity of countries to detect, respond and prevent foodborne and other enteric infections and fostering collaboration between human health, veterinary, food and other relevant sectors.

GFN is an example of multisectoral and multi-institution collaboration working within International Health Regulations (IHR) framework to build capacity.



Who we are

Facilitating organization:



World Health Organization

Steering committee: provides direction and is a collective pool of multifaceted resources for GFN activities.



Affiliated organizations: Food and Agriculture of the United Nations (FAO), International Organization of Animal Health (OIE)

Laboratory & Epidemiology Subcommittees

Regional centres: Argentina, Cameroon, Costa Rica, South Africa, Thailand

GFN Members: General members, Institutional members

The mission of the WHO Department of Food Safety and Zoonoses is to lower the burden of foodborne diseases, thereby strengthening the health security and ensuring sustainable development of Member States.

○ Goal of GFN

To support Member States' capacity to strengthen national and regional integrated surveillance, investigation, prevention, and control of foodborne and other enteric infections by:

- Promoting the benefits of integrated surveillance through the engagement of decision-makers;
- Fostering multi-sectorial partnerships relevant to regional and country goals and need; and
- Supporting Member States to generate data to drive evidence-based decision-making in order to ultimately reduce the incidence of foodborne diseases.



○ Activities

GFN influences capacity building through the following core activities:

- **Training:** Blended delivery mode (face-to-face & e-learning) based on country and participant needs
- **Mentoring:** Provide standardized tools and protocols, reference testing services, post-training implementation projects, and the External Quality Assurance System (EQAS)
- **Targeted communications:** Focused strategic and political communications to Member States and relevant stakeholders to support GFN's main goal and sustainability

○ Lessons learned

The network is over 10 years old and has adapted itself to function effectively based on lessons learned:

- Training is a means to an end and not an end in itself;
- Post-training interventions are important to measure uptake of knowledge and its translation at the workplace;
- Success depends on influencing change through appropriate identified needs and reach. Sustainability of integrated surveillance systems depends on obtaining the political support backed by required resources
- To obtain this political support demonstration of the power of these surveillance systems becomes essential;
- The GFN Steering Committee is always working to provide political support and strengthen partnerships.

WHO contacts

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