JOINT WHO/FAO WORKSHOP ON STRENGTHENING FOOD SAFETY SYSTEMS, WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON CODEX RELATED ISSUES

REPORT

Organized by the WHO Regional Office for Europe (WHO ECEH Rome Office and WHO Country Office in Uzbekistan)

Tashkent, Uzbekistan
16-19 November 2010
# Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .................................................................................................................. 3  

I. Introduction........................................................................................................................................ 4  

II. Opening Remarks....................................................................................................................... 4  

III. Objectives and Description of the Training Course................................................................. 4  

IV. Presentations, Discussions and Outcomes ................................................................................. 5  

V. Course Evaluation .......................................................................................................................... 7  

VI. Conclusions and Recommendations ............................................................................................ 8  

Annex I: Programme .......................................................................................................................... 9  

Annex II: List of participants ............................................................................................................. 11
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The organizational and technical support of the WHO Country Office in Uzbekistan and the Ministry of Health of Uzbekistan as a host country is acknowledged and appreciated. Speakers and participants at the regional workshop are thanked for sharing their expertise and practical knowledge of Codex and the issues at hand. The WHO Regional Office for Europe and the WHO Country office in Uzbekistan is recognised for its support in organizing travel and logistics for 39 participants and the trainers supported by the CTF, while the secretariat of the FAO/WHO Codex Trust fund is recognized for its financial support. Without CTF support it would not be possible for the participants from different institutions to get together, receive new information and exchange opinions with colleagues from different countries.
I. Introduction

The training course took place from 16 to 19 November at the Hotel Dedeman in Tashkent. The training course was organized by the WHO Regional Office for Europe (WHO ECEH Rome office and the WHO Country office in Uzbekistan), and conducted jointly with FAO. The workshop was funded mainly by the Codex Trust Fund. The provisional Programme is attached as Annex I.

Trainers to the course came from the WHO headquarters (Dr Danilo Lo-Fo-Wong), WHO Regional Office for Europe (Dr Hilde Kruse), FAO headquarters (Mary Kenny) and FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (Eleonora Dupouy). In addition, Dr Jeronimas Maskeliunas was a trainer under a short term consultant contract.

There were 39 participants at the workshop representing Kazakhstan (4), Kyrgyzstan (5), Tajikistan (5), Turkmenistan (1) and Uzbekistan (24, including 5 observers). The participants were working in the area of foodborne disease surveillance and response, either in the laboratory service or the epidemiological area. They mainly represented public health, however, there were also participants from scientific institutions including universities, from the food/veterinary sectors, food industry, food standards agency and a participant from the Plant Protection and Quarantine Service. Thus, the participation reflected different stages in the whole food chain. The List of Participants is attached as Annex II.

II. Opening Remarks

The workshop was opened by the Deputy minister of Health of Uzbekistan, who emphasized the importance of this sub-regional workshop in improving of the common understanding of the food safety problems globally and on the national and sub-regional levels, and emphasized that the Ministry of Health of Uzbekistan constantly pays due attention to this problem in the country.

The meeting was welcomed by the WHO country Representative Dr Michel Taihades who informed participants about the work done by the WHO office inside the country. The meeting was also welcomed by Dr Hilde Kruse (WHO) and Dr Eleonora Dupouy (FAO).

III. Objectives and Description of the Training Course

The purpose of the workshop was to provide capacity building on food safety, in particular on Codex Alimentarius related issues and food safety systems, for the Central Asian Republics. The four-day workshop addressed various major topics related to a modern integrated whole food chain food safety system, such as Codex Alimentarius, HACCP, surveillance and monitoring, antimicrobial resistance from a food safety perspective, and food safety risk communication. This will ultimately benefit the safety of the food in the countries involved and thereby public health.

The agenda of the four-day workshop was structured in a way to deliver lectures on major food safety topics with the subsequent country presentations and the discussions afterwards.

Every attending country had possibility to chair a separate session(s) of the workshop, which was very well accepted by participants.
Simultaneous interpretation (English-Russian) was organized by the WHO office in Uzbekistan and was of a high quality.

Copies of all presentations, all background and meeting documents, including the list of participants and pictures taken during the workshop were copied on CDs and given to each participant.

All participants after completion of the workshop received Certificate of Attendance. This is considered important for the participants.

IV. Presentations, Discussions and Outcomes

DAY 1: After the opening remarks and the introductory lecturers on food safety and foodborne diseases, the last part of the day was dedicated to country presentations on the food safety situation, and their discussion. Countries informed about what was done in this area. It should be noted that in all countries food legislation exists, however it was not possible to assess the quality of this legislation.

• There was a discussion on what can be done with the system of certification of food products, as the Russian Federation in its new legislation changed its prescriptive status to a more modern one. All countries of this sub-Region continue to rely heavily on food safety requirements established by the Russian Federation.

• Countries also exchanged views about the status of food fortification as a problem in this respect, especially iodine deficiency disorders are quite common. Some participants questioned what should be the right process and procedures for registration of the so-called Biologically Active Substances or food additives inside countries.

DAY 2: The second day started with the presentation on Outbreak detection and response/INFOSAN, followed by Antimicrobial resistance from a food safety perspective, Introduction to the risk analysis framework, Introduction to Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) and on Good Hygienic Practices (GHPs) and Hazard Analysis Critical Control Systems (HACCP). The session followed country presentations and afterwards country experiences on implementation of the HACCP system were discussed:

• The HACCP system has only been introduced in one country of the sub-region, mainly with the export companies most commonly operating as joint ventures with multinationals.

• In other countries the understanding of the HACCP system and its benefits was still weak. Some participants were of the opinion that national workshops on the implementation of the HACCP system would be very useful in order to improve food safety in their countries.

One of the tasks of the workshop was to train participants in the HACCP system using local manufacturers in which it was implemented. Due to the fact that none of the Uzbek companies had this system in place, there was only a theoretical explanation about the use and benefits of HACCP.

DAY 3: The first half of the third day was dedicated to the understanding of how food safety is controlled in Uzbekistan. In order to visit the local food production facilities, all participants were split in two equal groups: one attending the local dairy manufacturer ‘Biosut” and the
other group - local meat manufacturer “Moskovskij Delikates”. Each group selected a rapporteur who informed about the results of the visit, which were then discussed by the participants in the first afternoon session. In both places the participants were informed by the administration what was done in ensuring the quality and safety of the products. Rapporteurs presented their findings and highlighted that the official control was done by using documents approved in the Republic of Uzbekistan. Dairy and meat industry is mostly regulated by the set of guidelines issued by the state authorities. During the discussion, a representative from the local meat industry “Moskovskij Delikates” expressed the willingness to implement HACCP. Some participants drew attention to the fact that there was not enough readiness to implement the HACCP system, because the overall food trade took place between the countries with no legal requirement to use the HACCP system. The problems for small producers to implement HACCP were also touched upon.

It should be noted that some countries in the sub-region are more advanced in the implementation of the HACCP system than other participating countries; therefore most probably there is a need for a more specialized training in this area.

The rest of the day was dedicated to becoming familiarised with Food safety risk communication, to receive the Tajikistan experience in botulism prevention and how to train the trainers in risk communication. Countries informed what they were doing in this area and exchanged their views. Some participating countries expressed their interest in the work done in Tajikistan on the prevention of botulism and proposed that Tajikistan should send their recommendations to other countries to make these recommendations more applicable inside the Sub-Region. Countries pointed out that there were problems in relation to botulism prevention and exchanged views on how they addressed them.

DAY 4: The first session of the last day of the workshop was dedicated to the presentations from countries on “Country experiences on food safety risk communication based on the WHO 5 Keys to safer food”. It should be noted the work done on the implementation of the WHO’s 5 Keys to Safer food had been taken very seriously, and the material had been translated into national languages and adapted to the local specificities and circumstances. Some participants highlighted that more work should be done in this area as sanitary level among the general population and inside countries is not yet sufficient.

The following sessions were dedicated to receive information on Setting national food safety standards and measures, on the Codex Alimentarius and on the Codex Trust Fund. Participants exchanged their views on how the work of Codex Alimentarius is organized in their countries. Many participants stressed the view that it was very difficult for them to participate in Codex activities due to the language barrier, and pointed out that Russian language should be more widely introduced in Codex meetings; and that the acquisition of Codex standards in Russian was very useful for them. Countries were also informed about the procedures on how to apply to the Codex Trust Fund. A number of countries from this Sub-Region received support from the Codex Trust Fund to attend the Codex meetings; however it was not possible to evaluate what impact it had on the improvement of the work of Codex inside countries. From the discussion, it seemed that the work of their Codex Contact Points needs strengthening.

It should be also noted that all information booklets and technical guidelines sent to this workshop from FAO and WHO in Russian were taken by participants and none of them remained on the desk after the first day of the workshop.

The last session was on the evaluation of the workshop. In order to better evaluate results of the workshop and prepare more focussed recommendations, a questionnaire was distributed.
to the participants. The questionnaire covered three main blocks of issues: (i) format and administration of the workshop; (ii) presentations and technical aspects and (iii) overall evaluation. Each section contained four questions specified for better assessment. Participants were asked to rate the questions using the evaluation scale of four ratings: poor, fair, good and excellent. In addition, participants were asked in which areas they needed more FAO/WHO trainings, what they liked more at the workshop, what they liked less, and were asked to give their suggestions for improvement of similar activities. The participants were also asked to formulate the three most important food safety problems in which they needed training from FAO/WHO and were asked to name the most important areas of food safety in which they need capacity building from FAO/WHO.

Replies were received from 29 participants out of 37 (81%). Although not all participants replied to all questions or formulated their replies clearly, their replies made the evaluation of the workshop much more transparent and based on the participants’ perceptions and experience, rather than on the subjective opinion of a consultant who drafted the report from the workshop.

V. Course Evaluation

Format and administration of the workshop

27 out of 29 participants rated that the Workshop Programme in relation to the Provisional Agenda (sequence of topics, duration of coffee break, lunch break) was either good (9) or very good (18 participants). None of them indicated that the programme was poor. All 29 participants indicated that the workshop venue and facilities were good (6) or excellent (23). With regard to the duration of the workshop, 29 participants indicated that it was either good (14) or excellent (13) and two indicated that the duration was fair. To the question “How do you perceive the information and assistance you received prior to the workshop”, one replied that it was fair, 15 that it was good and 13 that it was excellent.

Presentations and technical aspects

With regard to the number of topics presented within this timeframe, 17 participants indicated that it was good and 12 - excellent. None of them were of the opinion that it was poor or fair.

As for the opportunity to ask questions, it should be noted that 21 participants indicated it was excellent and 8 that it was good. Handling of questions raised, was rated by 4 participants as fairly satisfied with replies, 17 rated it good and 8 excellent. The question regarding the use of slides, one participant indicated that it was fair, 15 that it was good and 13 that it was excellent. 2 participants indicated that technical level of presentations was fair, 15 good and 12 excellent.

Overall evaluation

To the question “Has the workshop succeeded in giving you new insights or viewpoints”, 17 participants indicated that it was good and 12 that it was excellent. To the question “How much this workshop helped increase your technical knowledge about CODEX’, 12 indicated that it was good and 17 excellent. On the question “To what extent you will be able to teach your colleagues on the topic”, 3 indicated that they can do it fairly, 20 good and 6 excellent. To the last question “How satisfied are you with the training material”, 2 replied that they were fairly satisfied, 15 good and 12 excellent.
Based on the above replies, there is no doubt that the majority of the participants concluded that the quality of the workshop programme, presentations/technical aspects were good or excellent. So they did in relation to the overall evaluation of the workshop.

With reference to the question “What additional topics you wish the workshop had covered” replies were quite dispersed, and it was not possible to draw very precise conclusions, as it seems that different experts attending the workshop proposed issues of their interests. However based on written replies from participants and discussions during plenary and coffee breaks it became evident that there was a strong need for further sub-regional and national workshops in the future in the following three areas: harmonization of safety standards, more training on the implementation of HACCP, and strengthening the work of Codex Alimentarius in the countries. Some participants wished to have more information on the use of additives and pesticides in food products and their evaluation, while others were of the opinion that more data is needed on accreditation of laboratories. A number of participants wished for more information on outbreak investigation. There were proposals to present information on the prevention of diet-related non-communicable diseases, food safety in relation to climate change and advice on how to get financial assistance from FAO/WHO.

To the questions what was liked most or least about the workshop, many participants pointed out that they appreciated all subjects, and refrained from the negative or critical comments, the latter which may be because of the cultural background.

To the question “What would you suggest to improve the workshop”, a number of participants indicated that training on HACCP would be more effective if the field visit was organized in a facility where HACCP was already in place, and if the training could include more practical exercises.

VI. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the evaluations and feedback received, 3 main recommendations can be concluded from this training workshop:

- There is a strong need for sub-regional and national workshops in the future, in the following specialized areas:
  - outbreak investigation;
  - harmonization of safety standards;
  - implementation of HACCP; and
  - strengthening the work of Codex Alimentarius in the countries.
- While planning sub-regional or national workshops or trainings, it should be noted that there is a very limited ability in this sub-region to use any other working language than Russian.
- As it is pointed above, there is a high demand for technical literature in Russian, so it would be advisable to develop a mechanism for dissemination of information about publications that are available in Russian.
## PROGRAMME

### Tuesday, 16 November

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08:30-09:30</td>
<td>Registration of participants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09:30-10:00</td>
<td>Opening session</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00-10:45</td>
<td>Introduction to food safety and foodborne disease</td>
<td>Hilde Kruse</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:45-11:30</td>
<td>International agreements governing food trade – national obligations</td>
<td>Jeronimas Maskeliunas</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:30-12:00</td>
<td>Coffee break</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12:00-13:00</td>
<td>Strengthening national food control systems – focus on transition countries</td>
<td>Eleonora Dupouy</td>
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<tr>
<td>13:00-13:30</td>
<td>General discussion</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13:00-14:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:00-15:00</td>
<td>Surveillance of foodborne disease and monitoring of food contamination in the food chain</td>
<td>Danilo Lo Fo Wong</td>
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<tr>
<td>15:00-16:00</td>
<td>Chemical food safety hazards in the region</td>
<td>Eleonora Dupouy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:00-16:30</td>
<td>Coffee break</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:30-16:45</td>
<td>Country presentation on the food safety situation</td>
<td>Representative from Turkmenistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:45-17:00</td>
<td>Country presentation on the food safety situation</td>
<td>Representative from Kazakhstan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:00-17:15</td>
<td>Country presentation on the food safety situation</td>
<td>Representative from Kyrgyzstan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:15-17:30</td>
<td>Country presentation on the food safety situation</td>
<td>Representative from Tajikistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:30-17:45</td>
<td>Country presentation on the food safety situation</td>
<td>Representative from Uzbekistan</td>
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<tr>
<td>17:45-18:00</td>
<td>Joint discussion</td>
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### Wednesday, 17 November

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09:00-10:00</td>
<td>Outbreak detection and response/INFOSAN</td>
<td>Danilo Lo Fo Wong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00-11:00</td>
<td>Antimicrobial resistance in a food safety perspective</td>
<td>Hilde Kruse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00-11:30</td>
<td>Coffee break</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11:30-12:30</td>
<td>Introduction to the risk analysis framework</td>
<td>Mary Kenny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30-13:30</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:30-15:30</td>
<td>Introduction to Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs), Good Hygienic Practices (GHPs) and Hazard Analysis Critical Control Systems (HACCP)</td>
<td>Jeronimas Maskeliunas, Eleonora Dupouy, Mary Kenny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:30-16:00</td>
<td>Coffee break</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:00-17:30</td>
<td>Country experiences on HACCP, 10 min each country</td>
<td>Jeronimas Maskeliunas</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Thursday, 18 November

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Presenter(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09:00-13:00</td>
<td>Field visit on GHPs and HACCP to a food business e.g. dairy</td>
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<tr>
<td>13:00-14:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:00-16:00</td>
<td>Discussion on GHPs and HACCP - lessons learned from field visit</td>
<td>Jeronimas Maskeliunas, Eleonora Dupouy, Mary Kenny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:00-16:30</td>
<td>Coffee break</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:30-17:15</td>
<td>Food safety risk communication</td>
<td>Hilde Kruse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:15-18:00</td>
<td>Botulism prevention in Tajikistan</td>
<td>Khadicha Boymatova</td>
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<tr>
<td>18:00-18:15</td>
<td>Training the trainers in risk communication</td>
<td>Zulfia Atadjanova</td>
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<tr>
<td>18:15-18:30</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>20:00</td>
<td>Social dinner</td>
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</table>

### Friday, 19 November

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Presenter(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09:00-10:00</td>
<td>Country experiences on food safety risk communication based on the WHO 5 Keys to safer food</td>
<td>KAZ, KGZ, TJK, TKM, UZB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00-10:30</td>
<td>Coffee break</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30-11:00</td>
<td>Setting national food safety standards and measures</td>
<td>Mary Kenny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00-13:00</td>
<td>Codex Alimentarius: What it is and how it works</td>
<td>Jeronimas Maskeliunas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:00-14:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:00-15:00</td>
<td>Codex Trust Fund</td>
<td>Eleonora Dupouy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:00-16:00</td>
<td>Country experiences on Codex work, 10 min each country</td>
<td>Moderator, Jeronimas Maskeliunas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:00-16:30</td>
<td>Coffee break</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:30-17:00</td>
<td>Evaluation/feed-back/follow up</td>
<td>Hilde Kruse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:00-17:15</td>
<td>Closing session</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Annex II: List of participants

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