



SECOND GLOBAL FORUM OF FOOD SAFETY REGULATORS

Summary Report of the Preparatory Meeting Rome, 8 July 2003

1. Opening of the meeting

In his introductory remarks, Mr de Haen welcomed the delegates (see List of Participants in Annex 1) on behalf of FAO and the World Health Organization (WHO) and reiterated the importance of food safety for consumer protection as well as for food trade, and the transboundary nature of the related issues because of the increasing international trade in food products. Collaboration between countries is required, in particular, in the setting of standards within the framework of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. In addition, food safety regulators need to exchange information and experiences on food safety management at gatherings that should not duplicate Codex activities. This was the purpose of both the First Global Forum of Food Safety Regulators (GF-1) and the Pan-European Conference on Food Safety and Quality held early 2002.

GF-1 had recommended that a Second Global Forum should be held in a developing country with, as a main theme, "*Building Effective food Safety Systems*". Mr de Haen recalled that at a Preliminary meeting convened in Geneva in February 2003, G-8 countries and the European Community had generally supported the convening of GF-2 and requested that the FAO/WHO Secretariat consult Member countries on the topics to be covered under the above main theme. He also informed the meeting that the FAO Council had agreed that FAO, jointly with WHO, initiate preparations for the convening of GF-2, and welcomed the offer of the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand to host it in 2004. The main theme of GF-2 coincides with the emphasis given by the Governing Bodies of FAO and WHO to capacity building in developing countries, and is consistent with the recommendations of the Evaluation of the Codex Alimentarius and Other FAO and WHO Work on Food Standards.

2. Election of Officers

Mr Hartwig de Haen, Assistant Director-General, Economic and Social Department, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) chaired the meeting on behalf of FAO and WHO.

3. Adoption of the Agenda

The Provisional Agenda (document GF 02/INF 3) was adopted without change.

4. Outcome of GF-1

The meeting noted that the success of GF-1 was made possible because of the special features of the event and which should be retained for GF-2. These features included:

- its informal nature permitted free exchanges of information on experiences and on pertinent food safety issues,

- its emphasis on practical aspects led to pragmatic conclusions,
- its food chain approach took into account all stakeholders from producers to consumers,
- there was neither a formally adopted report, nor recommendations. Action plans could be considered insofar as they do not become formal recommendations,
- it was relevant to the need of capacity building in developing countries.

The meeting further noted that the place and role of GF-2 in relation to Codex, FAO and WHO missions, must be clearly defined, so as to prevent duplication or overlapping. It was also important to get a more systematic feedback on the benefits and impact of GF-2.

5. Main theme and Sub-Themes of GF-2

a) The meeting agreed that the main theme of GF-2 should be “*Building effective food safety systems*” as recommended by GF-1. At the suggestion of the Preliminary meeting, a questionnaire (document GF 02/INF 4) was sent with the invitation letter inviting governments to select from a list of possible topics, those which they considered of particular importance/priority to include in GF-2. Only ten countries, all OECD member countries, submitted their replies before the Preparatory Meeting, from which it was possible to identify five priorities:

- epidemio-surveillance and alert systems,
- strengthening official food control services,
- development of national strategies and/or action plans,
- developing an effective legal framework for importation,
- implementing HACCP and quality assurance systems.

In addition, the meeting examined the results of FAO needs assessment questionnaire for capacity building in food safety conducted in 2002-2003. Participants from 48 countries in different regions, attending the regional pre-Codex workshops completed this questionnaire; the 4 first priority areas identified were:

- quality assurance systems/HACCP/GHP/GAP,
- risk analysis,
- food control administration and management,
- import/export control- certification.

After thorough discussion, the meeting considered two sub-themes for GF-2:

- **Strengthening food control services**

This sub-theme received most support. It includes the presentation of different typologies of organization of official services and bodies; it covers both official and non-official control systems services and addresses the development of national strategies with the definition of the tasks of different stakeholders, and the implementation of HACCP.

- **Epidemio-surveillance of foodborne diseases and food safety rapid alert systems**

The support for this sub-theme was less unanimous. It includes the international cooperation on food safety monitoring systems, and the prevention and response to intentional food contamination, including bioterrorism.

b) The meeting requested the Secretariat to finalize the detailed content of each sub-theme, after seeking the views of developing countries to ensure that the selected topics are relevant to their needs.

Once the description of the content of each sub-theme has been finalized, two introductory papers would be prepared for discussion. Participating countries could prepare topic papers to be discussed, on the understanding that all countries will be in a position to present their views in Conference Room Documents (CRDs).

6. Date and Place of GF-2

The meeting welcomed with appreciation the offer the Kingdom of Thailand to host GF-2, probably in Bangkok. Thailand suggested that GF-2 should be held in the first or second week of November 2004.

7. Practical Arrangements

a) Format

As only two sub-themes were retained, the meeting agreed that there was no need to hold parallel sessions of discussion groups, and that all the papers would be discussed in plenary sessions. A suggestion was made to devote one day to the discussion of each sub-theme. In addition, a working group on partnerships could be held during GF-2 as a promising and practical vehicle to follow-up effectively on GF-2.

b) Languages

The meeting agreed that as for GF-1, GF-2 should be held in all the official languages of FAO and WHO: i.e. Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. However, some delegations recommended that languages used in the GF-2 should be limited to the minimal number to reduce the cost of translation and interpretation.

8. Budget and Contributions

The budget of GF-2 was estimated by the Secretariat at U\$510,000. Commitments made so far by Canada, the European Community, France and Germany represent 61% of the estimated budget. The delegate of the United Kingdom announced that his country would also contribute towards the funding of GF-2.

The Secretariat was encouraged to approach G-8 countries and non G-8 countries for additional financial support towards the convening of GF-2 and participation of developing countries. Support could be provided either through direct financial contribution to the budget of GF-2, or through donations in kind, such as support to the participation of representatives of developing countries of the donor's choice or through secondment of staff to assist with the preparation of the GF-2.

The meeting noted that the budget of GF-1 had permitted the least developed countries to send two delegates to GF-1. This was very much appreciated and it was agreed that this objective should be retained for GF-2.

The meeting also agreed that mid-October 2003 would be the deadline for deciding whether sufficient budgetary support was available for the convening of GF-2.

9. Timetable for the preparation of GF-2

The meeting endorsed the timetable as proposed by the Secretariat (see Annex 2).

10. Other matters

No other matters were raised.

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**Preparatory Meeting
Malaysia Room, FAO Headquarters
09:00 hours, 8 July 2003**

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Timetable for the Preparation of GF-2

July 2003:	Updating of the existing website
October 2003:	Initiation of the preparation of working papers by volunteer countries Confirmation of the exact venue and date of GF-2
January 2004:	Deadline for submission of working documents
January-February 2004:	Finalization of working documents
March-May 2004:	Translation of working documents
June 2004:	Dispatch of invitations and agenda to member countries
November 2004:	2 nd Global Forum
January 2005:	Dispatch of the proceedings