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**Capacity Building for Food Quality and Food Safety: Selected Activities in the Americas and
the Caribbean of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)**
July 2004-November 2005
(Prepared by FAO)

INTRODUCTION

In keeping with its mandates, FAO engages in diverse capacity building activities designed to assist developing countries to improve their food safety and quality systems. Together with international organisations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), national governments, international and regional financial institutions and NGOs, various capacity building and technical assistance initiatives have been undertaken. This report will focus on capacity building activities undertaken in part or in whole by FAO since July 2004.

While the activities and strategies differ and are tailored to specific regions and countries, the overall objective is to support and strengthen national food control systems. This is often done by providing technical assistance in reviewing and analysing the institutional set up for food control and 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 within 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. The remainder of the report will focus on these activities and tools, occurring at global, regional and national level.

GLOBAL ACTIVITIES

International Events

The FAO Food Quality and Standards Service (FAO/ESNS) and the Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD) facilitated a conference (Jaen, Spain, September 2004) to address the issues of food-borne pathogens, anti-nutritional and toxic factors in *fermented foods produced in small-scale units*. This 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 information is available from: www.ujaen.es/huesped/foodsafe/index.htm.

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/ESNS and the Food Safety

Department (FOS) of 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". The forum focused on the two following sub-themes: 1) Strengthening official food control services and 2) Epidemio-surveillance of food-borne diseases and food safety rapid alert systems. A number of related side events were also held before, during, and after GF-2, the reports of which are available from the forum website. The complete proceedings (in all languages of the Forum), including the chairmen's summary and all working documents, as well as the nearly 100 Conference Room Documents presented at the Forum are available from: www.foodsafetyforum.org/index.asp. Bound copies in all language versions, including a CD of all documents in all languages is also available. The delegates at GF-2 were generally supportive of holding a Third Global Forum (GF-3), but proposed that further discussion should be held on the objective, format, themes, and timeframe/location of a GF3. Accordingly, the FAO/WHO Secretariat convened an e- forum from 4 April to 13 May 2005 to further solicit the views of the Member countries and all interested parties on the possible convening of a GF-3. Detailed results of the e-forum, including a summary report and an archive of all comments are available from the GF3 e-forum website: http://www.foodsafetyforum.org/global2/eforum_en.asp.

The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), in partnership with FAO/ESNS, WHO/FOS, and the International Association of Consumer Food Organizations (IACFO), sponsored a *Safe Food International Conference*, under the theme of *Crafting a Public Health Agenda for Modern Food Safety Systems* in Geneva, Switzerland (8-10 June 2005) at WHO HQ. The Conference intended to bring together consumer groups from all regions of the world to share their concerns about food safety and develop consensus guidelines for monitoring and improving national food safety systems. More information on the Conference is available from: www.safefoodinternational.org.

FAO/ESNS and WHO/FOS, along with the World Food Safety Organization, World Animal Health Organization (OIE), the International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI) and the Association for Automatic Identification and Mobility (AIM) sponsored a NextGen Food Conference in Berlin, Germany on 13 and 14 June 2005. Representatives from FAO and WHO delivered the keynote speech on the topic of: *Achieving Food Safety: A Challenge for all Stakeholders*. More information is available from the Conference website at: www.nextgenfood.com

FAO/ESNS was on the international scientific board of the 1st International Food and Nutrition Congress, which had the main theme of "*Food Safety and Quality Through the Food Chain: Farm to Fork*". The Congress was held in Istanbul, Turkey from 15-18 June 2005. FAO presented a conference on the "FAO programme for improving the quality and safety for fresh fruits and vegetables along the food chain". More information is available from the Congress website: www.tubitakcongress2005.org

The FAO Animal Production and Health Division and the International Feed Industry Federation held a *Global Food and Feed Congress* in Sao Paulo, Brazil from 11 to 13 July 2005. More information is available from the Congress website: www.globalfeed-food.com

The FAO/IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) Training and Reference Centre for Food and Pesticide Control held a training workshop on "*Introduction to Quality Assurance/ Quality Control Measures in Pesticide Residue Analytical Laboratories*". The workshop was held at the FAO/IAEA Agriculture and Biotechnology Laboratory, IAEA Laboratories, Seibersdorf, Austria from 12 September to 7 October 2005. More detailed information on the course can be found at: <http://elearning.iaea.org/ATutor/bounce.php?course=34>.

FAO/ESNS participates and acts on the advisory committee for a MYCO- GLOBE (Integration of Mycotoxin and Toxigenic Fungi Research for Food Safety in Global System) Conference on "*Learning from the EU: Reducing the Impact of Mycotoxins in Tropical Agriculture with Emphasis on Health and Trade in Africa*". The Conference was held in Accra, Ghana from 13 to 16 September 2005. More information on the project and the Conference is available from the Conference website: <http://www.iita.org/mycotoxinconf/index.htm>

FAO/ESNS organized a parallel symposium on food safety, as well as one on Community nutrition and intervention programmes at the *18th International Nutrition Congress* in Durban, South Africa, from 19 to 23 September 2005. The Congress was organized by the International Union of Nutritional Sciences. More information is available from the Congress website: <http://www.puk.ac.za/fakulteite/voeding/iuns/scientific%20programme.htm#PS>.

UPCOMING EVENTS

A sampling of the relevant international events that FAO and/or WHO currently have planned for the next year are as follows:

The FAO Biosafety Working Group is planning to hold a technical consultation on Biosafety in food and agriculture in early 2006. More information on the event will soon be available from <http://www.fao.org/biosecurity/>.

Global Projects

FAO/ESNS implemented a global project for the *Enhancement of Coffee Quality through the Prevention of Mould Formation*, which started in December 2000 and concluded in October 2005. This project was implemented in Brazil, Colombia, India, Indonesia, Ivory Coast, Kenya, and Uganda, with ongoing collaboration from the Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche 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 was funded by the Common Fund for Commodities and the Dutch Government.

The project approach emphasised capacity building in coffee-producing countries, with the aim of formulating codes of practice for the coffee industry. Initial activities under the project involved investigation of factors influencing mould growth and ochratoxin A (OTA) formation in green coffee, evaluation of the potential of selected processing and drying technologies to reduce the risk of mould growth and OTA formation, development of guidelines for the application of good hygiene practices along the coffee chain, and building the capacity of national authorities to control and monitor OTA contamination of coffee. Specifically, the project built 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 built the analytical capacity and capability required to support national programmes for prevention and control of OTA contamination of coffee. An electronic training resource (web and CD-ROM based) on good hygiene practices along the coffee chain was developed to guide authorities in the development of national training programmes for various target groups. More information on the project can be found at www.coffee-ota.org.

FAO/ESNS is presently conducting a *programme for improving the quality and safety of fresh fruits and vegetables*, which focuses on the application of good practices (GAP, GMP, and GHP) to prevent hazards at appropriate points in the fresh fruits and vegetable chain (production and post-harvest stages- *food chain approach*). Sub-regional workshops have been held in Latin America and the Caribbean and in Asia, Anglophone Africa and the Near East and are planned for other regions of the world. Activities for awareness raising and training at the national level have also been initiated through the implementation of National Action Plans. Three case studies on the implementation of quality and safety schemes are under preparation. FAO has prepared a Training Package (available in CD-ROM and printed format), providing information that can be used by countries to develop training programmes and implement safety and quality requirements to suit their specific needs and thus enhance their capability to apply the Codex guidelines and standards, meet importers requirements, as well as improve the quality and safety of fresh produce on the domestic market. An on-line database (also produced as a CD-ROM) with over 800 documents related to the safety and quality of fresh fruits and vegetables is

also available. A side event was held in Mexico City, Mexico on 17 May 2005 in conjunction with the 12th Session of the Codex Committee of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables to demonstrate the training package and database. More information on this project, training package and database is available from: www.fao.org/es/ESN/food/foodandfood_fruits_en.stm.

FAO/ESNS is a part of the working consortium for a European Commission- sponsored project to work to *identify food-related emerging risks*, with FAO utilizing case studies on mycotoxins. More information on FAO's programme related to mycotoxins is available from: www.fao.org/es/ESN/food/quality_mycotoxins_en.stm.

In 2004, the FAO Ag Support Systems Division (AGS) initiated a strategic program "*Enhancing Food Quality and Safety by Strengthening Handling, Processing and Marketing in the Food Chain*" to help stakeholders along the food chain, from production to consumption, in utilizing practical cost-effective technologies, marketing approaches, and management practices to assure that consumers have high quality and safe foods available. FAO is assessing priority problems in over 30 countries in 4 regions to guide the search for cost-effective solutions. Examples of these activities are studies on quality and safety in the fresh produce marketing chain of Asia (case studies in Nepal, India, Philippines, Pakistan, Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar and China) and quality and safety in food chains in Latin America and the Caribbean. Case studies in Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Peru; quality and safety in food chains in Africa including issues on traceability, mycotoxins, organic horticultural products, and incentives to implementation of quality systems (case studies in Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia); studies on honey quality (Asia, Europe); compliance with food quality standards impacting enterprise choices and profitability in Balkan countries (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Serbia-Montenegro and Romania); packaging systems (Mexico, Morocco and Tunisia); water and ice quality; methodological analysis on causes and economic impacts of food-borne diseases for popular foods at the urban and rural levels (Central America), and training tools for quality management (Peru). The information gathering is completely on-site.

By the end of 2005, FAO/AGS plans to have completed the country reports and will start to develop solutions. As there is a need for high quality food and, at the same time, the farmer and other food chain stakeholders need to assure the competitiveness and sustainability of their businesses and to make a profit, the solutions must be cost-effective, feasible and practical. One of the strategies to transform these outputs into high-impact contributions to FAO's Member Countries is to develop effective partnerships with relevant organizations.

Global Initiatives

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. An FAO (ESNS) /WHO project to assist the low income countries in Developing Food Standards within a Risk Analysis Framework- pilot application in Asia and the Pacific was approved for funding from this Facility and a pilot regional training course will be implemented in Bangkok from 12 to 16 December 2005. Another project was funded to support national implementation of the International Portal on Food Safety, Animal and Plant Health. 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.

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. Participants from 91 countries were selected to participate in Codex meetings in 2005 with help from the Codex Trust Fund.

The Fund enabled a total of approximately 330 participants to participate in Codex meetings in 2005. More information on the trust fund is available from www.who.int/foodsafety/codex/trustfund/en/ in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

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.

Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) is a multidisciplinary area of work in FAO which is attracting a significant and growing demand for assistance from members. GAP work in FAO is focusing on provision of information, technical assistance and capacity building to help developing countries cope with changing and globalizing food systems and the proliferation of GAP standards developed mainly by the food industry, while not compromising their sustainable development objectives. A database of activities relating to GAPs has been developed in the Agriculture Department, and is available, along with more information on GAPs, from the FAO website at: http://www.fao.org/prods/GAP/gapindex_en.htm.

Global Tools Available

Apart from the direct implementation of activities in the area of food quality and safety in developing countries, FAO, often in collaboration with WHO, elaborates 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. Some of the tools developed on food quality and safety include the following.

FAO/ESNS and WHO have developed a training manual on ***Enhancing Participation in Codex***, designed to strengthen national food safety and quality systems through enhanced participation in the Codex process. It has been, and will continue to be, used in training activities in various countries and regions of the world. A workshop utilizing this manual will be held immediately prior to the FAO/WHO Regional Conference on Food Safety for the Americas and the Caribbean, from 4 to 5 December 2005 in San José, Costa Rica. It will soon be available in final form (in five languages). 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. A CD-ROM containing the visual aids and relevant reference documents will be included in the manual. It is available from the FAO website at: www.fao.org/es/esn/food/capacity_codex_en.stm.

In an effort to improve information exchange and communication with stakeholders in food safety and quality, FAO/ESNS distributes a monthly electronic newsletter, the ***Food Safety and Quality Update***, to over 3,500 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.

During its first year of activity, the ***International Portal on Food Safety, Animal and Plant Health*** (www.ipfsaph.org) - a joint initiative with IPPC, OIE, Codex and WTO - has handled over 2 million page requests and built up a regular user base of over 5,000 users. In addition to the international standards, notifications, and other official information from the partner international agencies, the portal also provides a view on national legislation and related texts from the EU, USA, and smaller data sets from a pilot group of developing countries (24,000 records in November 2005). The latest version includes up-to-date information on the Codex-established maximum residue limits (MRLs) for veterinary drugs and pesticides, as well as the JECFA and JMPR evaluations of these substances;

navigation in English French and Spanish; and a "help desk" for any questions users may have regarding the portal.

A regional portal for the Latin America and the Caribbean region is also under development. The "Portal Regional de Inocuidad y Sanidad Agroalimentaria (PRISA)" will exclusively focus on food safety and animal and plant health concerns of the region. It will include national information on standards, regulations and legislation, notifications, organisations and contact points, as well as relevant news and events from across the region. The prototype version of the system will be launched at the end of the first quarter 2006, and the site will be available in Spanish, Portuguese and English.

FAO/ESNS released in 2004 the *Worldwide Regulations for Mycotoxins in Food and Feed in 2003*. The number of countries with specific regulations for mycotoxins has increased over the years, reflecting the general concern that governments have about the potential effects of mycotoxins on humans and animal health and their implications for trade. The publication describes the situation of worldwide mycotoxin regulations as of December 2003. The publication, along other FAO publications in the area of mycotoxins is available in:

English: www.fao.org/es/ESN/food/quality_mycos_en.stm
French: www.fao.org/es/ESN/food/quality_mycos_fr.stm
Spanish: www.fao.org/es/ESN/food/quality_mycos_es.stm

In 2004, FAO/ESNS published an FAO Food and Nutrition Paper on *Marine Biotoxins* in an effort to support the exchange of scientific information on an important subject of concern for food safety worldwide. This paper provides an extensive review of different aspects of five shellfish poisoning syndromes, as well as one fish poisoning syndrome. The paper is currently available in English and Spanish and will soon be available in other languages from: www.fao.org/es/ESN/food/food_marine_en.stm.

As part of the previously-mentioned global project on the same subject, FAO/ESNS has developed a *training package and manual* to assist in *Improving the Safety and Quality of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables*. This manual contains materials for trainers to conduct workshops to improve the quality and safety of fresh fruits and vegetables. The training package is freely available in hard copy, as a CD-ROM, or can be downloaded from the FAO web pages in English, French, and Spanish from:

http://www.fao.org/es/ESN/food/foodandfood_fruits_en.stm (English)
http://www.fao.org/es/ESN/food/food_fr.stm (French)
http://www.fao.org/es/ESN/food/food_fruits_es.stm (Spanish)

As part of the same global project, FAO/ESNS has developed a *database of resources* available in the area of *Improving the Safety and Quality of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables*. The main objective of the database is to improve the safe production, harvesting, handling, storage, transport and marketing of fresh fruit and vegetables by providing access to reference information and information exchange among the chain actors, and tools for training, extension and awareness creation. The database is freely available from FAO web pages in English, French, and Spanish from: <http://www.fao.org/es/esn/fv/ffvqs?m=catalogue&i=FFVQS&p=nav>

As part of the global project on the enhancement of coffee quality through the prevention of mould formation, FAO/ESNS has developed an *electronic training resource* (web and CD-ROM based) on *good hygiene practices along the coffee chain* to guide authorities in the development of national training programmes for various target groups. The resource is available from www.coffee-ota.org.

FAO/ESNS 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 Infonet is available from www.acrylamide-food.org/

In 2004, the FAO Animal Production Service (AGA) published a Manual on ***Good Practices for the Meat Industry***. The manual provides a practical basis for the implementation of the recommendations of the Codex Committee on Meat and Poultry Hygiene and practical guidelines for primary production and the meat industry. The Manual is currently available in English and is in process of translation into French, Spanish, Arabic and Chinese. A Manual on ***Good Dairy Farming Practices*** was produced in January 2004 jointly between FAO/AGA and the International Dairy Federation (IDF).

The FAO Fish Utilization and Marketing Service published in 2004 the FAO Fisheries Technical Paper #442: ***Application of risk assessment in the fish industry***. This document is available at: http://www.fao.org/documents/show_cdr.asp?url_file=/docrep/007/y4722e/y4722e00.htm .

More recently, the FAO Fish Utilization and Marketing Service published the FAO Fisheries Technical Paper #455 entitled ***Application of modern analytical techniques to ensure seafood safety and authenticity***. The document is intended to provide an overview of the application of some analytical techniques to ensure seafood safety and species authenticity.

The FAO Agricultural and Food Engineering Technologies Service (FAO/AGST) works to add value and improve the quality of fresh fruit and vegetables, strengthen the capacity of public and private sector organizations to provide relevant post-harvest services to their clients, assist in the development of small-scale agro-enterprises in the food supply chain, and disseminate post-harvest information through the ***Information Network on Post-harvest Operations (INPhO)***, found at: <http://www.fao.org/inpho/>.

FAO/AGST published the following bulletins in 2004:

- The ***Role of Post-Harvest Management in Assuring the Quality and Safety of Horticultural Produce*** (FAO Agricultural Services Bulletin 152), which reviews the factors that contribute to quality and safety deterioration of horticultural produce and describes approaches to assure the maintenance of quality and safety throughout the post-harvest chain.
- ***Quality and Competitiveness of Rural Agroindustry in Latin America and the Caribbean – Efficient and Sustainable Use of Energy*** (Bulletin 153), which proposes comprehensive ways to improve quality and also safety of food products as well as the competitiveness of rural agro enterprises.
- ***Food Engineering, Quality and Competitiveness in Small Food Industry Systems*** (Bulletin 156), which proposes to apply the systems approach to establish the factors affecting food quality and safety, and hence food industry competitiveness.

Global Tools Under Development

FAO(ESNS)/WHO have peer reviewed and 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.

In order to assist countries in ***Evaluating Capacity Building Needs for Food Control***, FAO/ESNS has developed a tool to assist countries to identify and prioritise the areas where capacity building is needed. The tool has been peer reviewed and is currently undergoing pilot testing in selected countries.

FAO (ESNS) and WHO are in the process of developing guidance for governments to address the ***obstacles to the application of HACCP, particularly in small and less developed businesses***

(SLDBs) and approaches to overcome them. A technical meeting was held on the subject in December 2004 to review existing materials and further develop the guidelines. The draft document was presented to national governments at the 37th session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene as CRD6. The draft was peer reviewed in June – July 2005 and is expected to be finalised in early 2006.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), FAO/ESNS, and WHO are preparing a **monograph on mycotoxin prevention**. The publication is currently undergoing finalization and will be available in the upcoming months.

FAO/ESNS and WHO together with the Industry Council for Development (ICD) are developing a **Basic Awareness Course on Microbiological Risk Assessment** in the context of its use in risk management. This course has been developed with both risk managers and scientists/future risk assessors in mind. It is aimed towards participants from both government and scientific institutions or academia. The course will be implemented initially on a regional basis following pilot testing in September 2005 and subsequent finalization.

Work has commenced with the newly created IDF/ISO/FAO 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. The Team will soon finalize standard methods on determining antibiotic resistance and on determining species and strain identity. More information on this work is available from: www.fao.org/es/ESN/food/food_probio_en.stm

An FAO inter-departmental working group on **Biosecurity** (encompassing the areas of food safety, animal and plant health, as well as biosafety) is in the process of developing a number of tools to assist countries in their effort to integrate **Biosecurity**-related disciplines and activities. These tools include a) **Guidelines to Assist Countries to Develop and Implement National Biosecurity Frameworks**; b) **Biosecurity Capacity Needs Assessment** and c) **Manual on Risk Analysis in the Field of Biosecurity**. The tools address the commonalities between the various sectors and complement the existing sector- specific tools available in each of these areas. These tools have been peer reviewed and will be pilot tested and published in early 2006. More information on FAO's approach to and work in the area of **Biosecurity** is available from: <http://www.fao.org/biosecurity/>

FAO and WHO are in the process of developing **guidelines for the implementation of the Codex guidelines on foods derived from modern biotechnology**. A training tool and capacity building programme to assist countries in assessing dossiers is also under development. An expert working group will meet in Rome to discuss the tools from 19-21 December 2005, after which they will be finalized and distributed widely.

As part of a field project on the safety of street foods, FAO/ESNS is in the process of preparing a **Training of Trainers Manual in Hygienic Practices for Street Food Production and Sale** to assist countries in improving the safety of this important source of nutrition for many cultures. FAO/AGS is working to develop training materials for trainers of associations for small and medium entrepreneurs. The training materials currently in the pilot phase are related to the **application of cost-effective technologies and management practices for improvement of food quality and safety**, under a quality management approach.

The FAO Fish Utilization and Marketing Service is in the process of developing the following tools related to **fish safety and quality**: a) a primer on risk assessment; b) Responsible use of antibiotics in aquaculture; c) Detentions and rejections in international fish trade; d) Proceedings of 5th World Congress on fish inspection; e) HACCP audit and verification; and f) WTO related training material. All these materials, once finalized, will be issued in multi-lingual form for wider use by member countries.

Capacity Building Activities in Latin America and the Caribbean

REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

Regional Events

FAO/ESNS and the WHO Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO)/ Instituto Panamericano de Protección de Alimentos (INPPAZ) implemented a workshop on Food Control Systems immediately prior to the 14th Session of the Codex Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean meeting on 28 November 2004 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The programme included presentations of the FAO/WHO guidelines for Strengthening National Food Control Systems, national case studies on the development of a national strategy for food control, and related topics. More information on the workshop is available from: http://www.fao.org/es/ESN/food/meetings_workshops2004_en.stm.

As a follow-up to the recommendations of the first Global Forum of Food Safety Regulators, in line with the 123rd FAO Council's instructions and at the request of the Codex Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean, FAO and WHO are holding an FAO/WHO Regional Conference on Food Safety for the Americas and the Caribbean in San Jose, Costa Rica from 6-9 December 2005. More information is available from the Conference website: <http://www.foodsafetyforum.org/americas/index.asp>

Regional Projects

Two FAO sub-regional projects to strengthen the analytical activities, laboratory quality assurance and capacity building of the Interamerican Network of Food Analytical Laboratories (INFAL/RILAA), were approved in December 2004 (countries are assigned into one of the two projects in Central America or South America, based on geographic location). The main objective of these projects is to assure that the laboratories provide reliable analytical results for the national food control system, as well as for the certification of food imports and exports. The project's activities attempt to facilitate the product conformity assessment through harmonization or establishing the equivalence of the analytical results at the international level. The main activities to be undertaken by the project include the implementation of training activities and the elaboration of national action plans for strengthening the technical, analytical and administrative skills for laboratory analysis of microbiological and chemical contaminants. A total of nineteen countries from the Latin American and Caribbean Region are benefiting from the implementation of these projects. The project is implemented by the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and ESNS.

An FAO regional project (TCP/RLA/2904) to strengthen the management of National Codex Committees and Application of the Codex Alimentarius standards of the Andean Countries was initiated in September of 2002 and continued until December 2004. Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela participated in this project. The main objectives were to strengthen the management of the National Codex Committees; to develop a national and sub-regional training program and to promote the harmonization of the national standards to Codex. The project was implemented by the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and ESNS. The complete project, including objectives and activities with the corresponding reports and documents, is available at: www.rlc.fao.org/prior/comagric/codex/rla2904/default.htm

Other Regional Activities

With FAO's support, the Latin American Food Composition Network (LATINFOODS) continued working on the update of the Regional Food Composition Table which is available from: www.fao.org/Regional/LAmerica/bases/alimento/default.htm. A CD-ROM with this table was published and distributed. The Second Electronic Conference on Food Data Quality Evaluation for the Data Base and Food Chemical Composition Table was carried out in October 2004 (<http://www.rlc.fao.org/foro/latinfoods/default.htm>).

NATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Field Projects

The second phase of an FAO TCP project to Strengthen food control and safety of fish for export from Antigua and Barbuda was approved in January 2004. The objective of the assistance is to provide the basis for the establishment of an effective national food control system, capable of ensuring the quality and safety of food supply in the country. Specifically, the project will assist the Government in: a) the inspection and certification of export fish and fishery products; b) training of food control personnel i.e. food analysts; and c) upgrading of the analytical capabilities of the food control laboratory. The project is implemented jointly by ESNS and the FAO Fish Utilization and Marketing Service.

An FAO TCP project to evaluate the capacity, infrastructure and logistics for post-harvest management of living modified organisms (LMOs) and identification of strategies to apply Article 18,2a) of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety in Argentina was implemented from March 2003 - November 2004. The scope of the project included the evaluation of field operations, handling, storage, infrastructure, transportation logistics, and export of grains, as well as the estimation of the capacity to establish segregated production and post-production chains with traceability, with emphasis on corn and soybeans. The project was led by the Seed and Plant Genetic Resources Service (AGPS), with the Agricultural and Food Engineering Technologies Service (AGST) and other FAO Services providing technical support.

An FAO project to strengthen the biosecurity framework in Belize was funded in April 2005 and is scheduled to continue until 2006. The objectives of the project are: (a) support the up-dating of the biosecurity legal framework and b) strengthen the national capacity for effective implementation of biosecurity approaches and system. The project is led by the FAO Development Law Service, with ESNS providing technical support.

An FAO/ESNS TCP project on the prevention of mould formation (Ochratoxin A - OTA) in coffee in Ecuador started in July 2004 and is expected to be completed in 2006. The project is being implemented with the participation of the public and private sectors. The main objective is to create awareness at the national level of the effect that mould formation in coffee, due mainly to Ochratoxin A, could have on public health, as well as the subsequent economic and social implications. The project's activities include in the identification of cost-effective control systems and the implementation of a HACCP-based training programme targeting the actors involved. One of the outputs of the project will be a National Action Plan for the prevention and control of mould formation in coffee, which will be elaborated by consensus among the food chain actors and disseminated at the national level.

An FAO TCP project to improve the quality and safety of spices produced in Grenada was approved in March 2004 and is scheduled to be completed in April 2006. The objective of the

project is to enhance farmer returns from the production of nutmeg and mace, through improving the overall quality of these products and their oil extractives for international trade and minimizing the environmental contamination due to nutmeg processing by-products. The immediate objectives are to: a) upgrade harvesting, post-harvest handling, treatment, processing of nutmegs and mace; b) strengthen the capacity to support a quality assurance programme for the nutmeg and mace industry; and c) build capacity in by-product processing. The project is implemented jointly by ESNS and the FAO Agricultural and Food Engineering Technologies Service.

An FAO project designed to strengthen the Food Control System in Guyana began in May 2002 and was completed in October 2004. The project assisted the Government in upgrading the food law and harmonising national food standards with international standards. Efficiency of the food inspection system was improved in order to facilitate compliance with the WTO Agreements on SPS and TBT. The analytical capabilities of the Government food control laboratory were upgraded, to ensure the monitoring of food contaminants and permit the certification of exported products. The capability of the Guyana National Bureau of Standards (GNBS) and the National Codex Committee was strengthened, facilitating more active and effective national participation in Codex work. The project was implemented by the FAO sub-regional office for the Caribbean and ESNS.

An FAO/ESNS project to rehabilitate the analytical capacity of laboratories in the faculty of agronomy and veterinary medicine in Haiti began in December 2004.

FAO/SLAC has been assisting in the Establishment of a National Codex Committee in Jamaica and will assist the Jamaica Bureau of Standards in preparing its Plan of Action for the Codex National Committee.

An FAO project to strengthen the National Codex Committee in Paraguay (TCP/PAR/2801) began operations in October 2002 and was completed in July 2004. The main objectives of the project were to support the work of the National Codex Committee and Codex focal point, to establish linkages between government sectors, industry and consumers, develop an action plan to update national food standards in harmony with Codex guidelines and to establish a web site for exchange of information on Codex. The project was implemented by the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and ESNS. More information can be obtained from: www.rlc.fao.org/prior/comagric/codex/par2801/default.htm.

An FAO project to strengthen the food control system of Suriname will continue through January 2006. The main objective of the project is to strengthen the National Food Control System through providing training, upgrading laboratory facilities and supporting the functioning of the National Codex Committee and its Working Groups. The expected project outputs include amended national food laws, regulations and standards which comply with international guidelines, improved food inspection service which applies modern quality assurance and HACCP principles, improved laboratory facilities capable of contamination monitoring in primary agricultural products and processed foods and a plan of action on food safety, conforming to Codex Commission recommendations. The project is being implemented by ESNS and the FAO sub-regional office for the Caribbean.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES/PROJECTS

Field Projects

The Government of Argentina has requested assistance from FAO (ESNS) for an Integrated Program for Mycotoxin Prevention and Control. The project is in the formulation phase.

The Government of Argentina has also requested assistance from FAO (ESNS) to assist the city of Buenos Aires in training in food hygiene and nutrition. The project is in the formulation phase.

The Government of Dominica has requested assistance from FAO in the area of coffee production development. The project is currently in the formulation phase.

The development of a sub- component on food safety in strengthening the national food control system in the Dominican Republic under the International Development Bank loan (DR-0138) “Support to the Competitive Transition of the Food and Agriculture Sectors” has been approved and will be implemented with the assistance of the FAO sub-regional office for the Caribbean in the upcoming months.

A regional project for capacity building in Latin American consumer organizations is being prepared by FAO and Consumers International- Latin American Regional Office.

The government of Nicaragua has requested assistance with the prevention of OTA in coffee. The project is currently in the formulation phase.

FAO/ AGS is currently formulating a project in Uruguay on strengthening the agri-food chains suppliers to national food and nutrition programs, with emphasis on those directed to primary schools. One of the objectives of the project is to improve the quality and safety of foods delivered to schools, including nutritional quality, as well as those properties of benefit to children’s health.

An FAO/ sub-regional project on “Improving the food safety of street foods through establishing a food inspection system based on the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system in Barbados and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) countries” is scheduled to begin in the upcoming months. .

