



SECOND FAO/WHO GLOBAL FORUM OF FOOD SAFETY REGULATORS
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The training of personnel of food safety control services in France
(Prepared by France)

1/ **The control services**

In France, the control of food safety is ensured by the joint action:

- of the Veterinary Services of the ministry responsible for agriculture and food, which are concerned with animal products throughout the food chain, from the “fork to the table” (feed, veterinary medicines, animal health, animal welfare, production, transformation, transport and distribution, etc),
- of Services of crop protection of the ministry responsible for agriculture and food, for crops before transformation,
- of Services of the ministry of finance responsible for consumption, which have a cross-disciplinary assignment to protect consumers and are concerned with all foodstuffs and at all stages,
- of Services of the ministry of public health, more specifically for drinking water but also concerning foodstuff.

France is a centralised state. Each central administration relies on decentralised services, at departmental or regional level, according to a direct chain of command. In each *département*, the *Préfet* - or State representative - coordinates the action of State services.

2/ **Training: the general framework**

The agents of the official control services have the status of State civil servants. They are recruited through entry examinations and generally stay with the administration for their whole professional lives, with the possibility of changing positions during their careers.

For a long time now, the French administration has implemented procedures which make it possible to ensure that its agents are professionally trained after their recruitment. In addition to the initial training required in order to apply for the recruitment competition, the agents receive ***initial specialised training, implemented by the employer***, whose aim is to give them technical, administrative and legal skills which are targeted towards their future profession.

The training of civil servants is entrusted to specialised schools, which will be presented below. The trainees receive a salary during their training and undertake that they will continue to work for the State for a fixed length of time. Besides acquiring skills, these initial post-recruitment training periods also promote a shared administrative culture.

The schools which give this initial training are also responsible for ***staff development training***, in the form of short thematic courses. This staff development training is a basic right of the agents, which enables them to adapt to developments in the assignments of State services or to prepare for a

change in position; this is notably the case for senior executives, who often fill very diverse positions. The costs are paid by the employer, i.e. the French State.

3/ **The training of agents of Veterinary Services**

3.1/ **Official veterinaries**

Official veterinaries are “Inspectors of veterinary public health”, and are destined for duties of advanced management, notably within the *Direction générale de l'alimentation* and the *Directions départementales des services vétérinaires*¹. They are recruited through entry examinations, after veterinary studies, and attend a two-year training course at the *Ecole nationale des services vétérinaires (ENSV)*.²

Created in 1974, this institute of higher education depends on the ministry responsible for agriculture and food. It provides support for a specialised diploma in veterinary public health. The training tackles the whole procedure of food safety in the whole food chain.

The teaching alternates between theoretical lessons, tutorials, personal work in groups and placements in professional positions, both in France and overseas. The ENSV calls upon speakers from administrations, the economic world, universities (law, economics and languages) and research.

As it is considered that the students have acquired the know-how taught at the veterinary school, including contagious diseases and food hygiene, the main subjects taught are:

- public law (constitutional, administrative, criminal, community),
- public administration (status, budget, public policies),
- international food and health policies (European Union and international organisations),
- economics and sociology applied to veterinary public health,
- the management of human resources, management and communication,
- operational epidemiology and animal welfare (scientific and regulatory aspects)
- abattoir inspections, the technology of foods, HACCP, inspection methodology, etc
- environment and public health (international conferences, scientific basis, regulations relating to breeding and food and agriculture industries, etc).

A final examination confirms whether the agent will be recruited to the civil service or not.

Continuous training: the ENSV organises the training of agents from veterinary Services in many areas, such as: law, criminal responsibility, international policies on veterinary public health, veterinary medicine, animal welfare, boarder inspections, emergency plans and crisis management, etc. These courses are also open to other administrations and private bodies.

International actions: the ENSV is involved in many actions of collaboration and cooperation. Its courses are open to agents from overseas inspection services. Bilaterally, it also organises training programs, trains instructors and supports the implementation of homologous organisations. Within a multilateral framework, it offers training courses or organises them upon request. It has been the *Collaborating Centre of the OIE*³ for the training of official veterinaries since May 2004.

¹ The Directorate General for Food and the Departmental Direction of Veterinary Services

² National School of Veterinary Services

³ Office International des Epizooties (World Organisation for Animal Health)

3.2/ The technicians of Veterinary Services

Technicians work in Veterinary Services under the authority of official veterinaries. They are not required to have any university training other than the diploma of general studies, known as the Baccalaureate (Bac).

They attend a two-year training program in a specialised school, the *Institut de formation des personnels du Ministère de l'Agriculture (INFOMA)*⁴.

The subjects taught enable its agents to work in different positions in Veterinary Services – in areas of animal health and food hygiene. The inspection of meat in abattoirs represents a large part of the course, as the technicians carry out production line inspections in all abattoirs.

4/ The training of agents from the Direction générale de la concurrence, de la consommation et de la répression des fraudes (DGCCRF)⁵

The agents of the DGCCRF are responsible for the protection of consumers (physical, economic and legal), fair trade and business practises.

Inspectors carry out their duties of management at the DGCCRF and at the *Directions Départementales de la concurrence, de la consommation et de la répression des fraudes (DDCCRF)*⁶. They carry out surveys and inspect companies with cooperation from controllers.

Laboratory engineers supervise the running of 9 official inspection laboratories, make assessments and carry out analyses and official tests with assistance from laboratory technicians. Each of the 9 accredited laboratories has several specialised branches in the food and agriculture sector (e.g. GMO, dietetic products, etc). A joint laboratory service has been established with Customs.

Their training is therefore not targeted towards food alone.

The inspectors, controllers and scientific laboratory personnel who are recruited by competition attend one year of professional training at the *Ecole de formation et d'application de la Direction Générale de la Concurrence, de la Consommation et de la Répression des Fraudes (ENCCRF)*⁷.

In theory, laboratory inspectors and engineers are recruited after three years of university studies, and the controllers and technicians have a “baccalaureate” level (BAC). In practise, however, the increased number of applicants over many years has often set the mark at BAC +5 (five years of study after the Baccalaureate): the success rate for all competitions taken together is around 1%. There are two recruitment channels for inspectors and controllers: the first is scientific and technological, whereas the second is legal and economic. The ENCCRF prepares the trainee inspectors and controllers for the profession of investigator:

- with the necessary legal, economic, scientific and technical knowledge (e.g.: food technology, microbiology, nutrition, criminal law, national and international environment, etc),
- theoretical and methodological knowledge (legislation, procedures, etc),
- learning the investigative procedure and methods of intervention (prevent, dissuade, reprimand).

Moreover, it prepares scientific laboratory personnel for the profession of laboratory director and analyst :

⁴ The Training Institute for Staff of the Ministry of Agriculture

⁵ Directorate General for Competition, Consumption and the Repression of Frauds

⁶ Regional Directions for Competition, Consumption and Repression of Frauds

⁷ Training and Application School of the Directorate General for Competition, Consumption and the Repression of Frauds

- mastering the analytical environment: standards and official methods of analysis,
- knowledge about the administrative, national and international environment,
- interaction with the inspection.

Teaching is given by permanent instructors (law, sciences, etc), experienced investigators for practical exercises of real-life situations and experts from the central administration to explain regulatory developments.

ENCCRF training is rounded off by practical sandwich course placements organised in the field in operational units.

Continuous training

The year-long initial professional training is supplemented throughout the agent's career by continuous training courses, organised by the School or specialised organisations on specific subjects, depending on requirements. In 2003, for example, almost a third of agents were involved in continuous training.

Welcoming foreign internees

The school regularly welcomes French-speaking foreign civil servants from developing countries, some of which join classes of inspectors or controllers. They can also join central or local services. Cooperation and training actions can be organised on-site within the framework of a program for international cooperation.

5/ The training of agents from Directions départementales des affaires sanitaires et sociales

The agents are not specialised in food control. Their training is therefore not targeted towards this specific field but includes it.

Sanitary Technicians, Sanitary Engineers and Public Health Medical Officers are trained by a specialised school, the Ecole nationale de la santé publique (ENSP)⁸.

Sanitary Technicians are trained through continuous courses.

Sanitary Engineers are recruited after a 4 year post "BAC" course targeted on public health and environment. They collect and analyse information, prepare the management of risk, implement policies, control and communicate in the field of environmental health. Sanitary Engineers are trained after their engineer degree through a one year course that is intended to complete their initial knowledge (food business, food safety, water treatment). Their major responsibility is to protect public health. Within the "Directions départementales des affaires sanitaires et sociales (DDASS)", the sanitary engineers set up, implement and appraise environmental health policies. They contribute to manage and evaluate environmental health risks, including those related to food.

Finally, Public Health Medical Officers are also trained at the ENSP. They can work at the Ministry for Public Health as well as in local services (DDASS and DRASS). They are key actors in monitoring food borne diseases. They co-operate to investigate after the notification of diseases whose declaration is mandatory.

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⁸ National School for Public Health