



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS



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GF02/INF1

SECOND GLOBAL FORUM OF FOOD SAFETY REGULATORS

Summary Report of the Preliminary Meeting for the organization of the Second Global Forum of Food Safety Regulators Geneva, 12 February 2003

1. Election of Officers

Dr. David Nabarro, Executive Director, Sustainable Development and Healthy Environments, World Health Organization (WHO) chaired the meeting on behalf of WHO and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). In his introductory remarks, Dr. Nabarro welcomed the delegates and expressed the gratitude of both Organizations for the generous support received from the countries and from the European Community (EC). He noted the general expression of satisfaction by the Member States for the outcome of First Global Forum of Food Safety Regulators (GF-1) and expressed the wish of the two Organizations to see a similar framework for the second Global Forum (GF-2).

2. Adoption of the Agenda

The Provisional Agenda (see Annex 1) was adopted without change.

3. Outcome of GF-1 – Lessons Learned

The meeting expressed general satisfaction with the outcome of GF-1. In particular, the large and active participation of developing countries, the number of practical experiences shared, together with lessons learned, the frank and non-binding exchanges of opinion on challenges met and successes achieved in the regulatory systems in rich and poor countries alike were highlighted as important elements that contributed to the success and uniqueness of the GF-1. One particular noteworthy result was the advice and priority given to capacity building of food safety systems in developing countries.

a) Purpose

The Secretariat recalled that the purpose of the Global Forum, as included in the Concept Paper (see Annex 2), was to “...promote exchange of information and approaches and experiences in dealing with current food safety issues of potential importance to public health and international food trade; to advance the process of science-based public consultations; and to facilitate capacity building, particularly in developing countries”. To keep the discussion as open and frank as possible, there was neither a formally adopted report, nor recommendations, issued at the conclusion of GF-1. Instead, detailed Proceedings, including experiences shared and lessons learned from numerous countries were published.

The meeting agreed on the usefulness and relevance of this approach and agreed that it should be retained for GF-2.

In response to calls for more detailed reporting of the results of GF-2, the Secretariat offered to undertake this in the preparation of the Proceedings of GF-2.

Some Delegations expressed their interest in having a more precise feedback from the participating countries on the benefits and impact of GF-1 prior to finalizing preparations for GF-2. The Secretariat offered to undertake this assessment through an appropriate mechanism in order to assist in the planning and implementation of the GF-2.

It was decided to request the Secretariat to develop a clear statement of the expected outcomes of the GF-2 and how these would be evaluated in the future.

b) Format

The meeting took note of the format adopted in GF-1. It agreed that a discussion on the appropriate format to retain for GF-2 should take place at the Preparatory Meeting once details are available on the main theme, the topics to be covered, and the cost implications.

c) Target audience

The meeting agreed that the target audience for the Global Forum are senior food safety regulatory officials who participate in decision-making concerning the management of food safety issues or are responsible for food control management in their countries.

d) Languages

GF-1 was conducted in six languages. In discussing the number of languages to be used in GF-2, the meeting expressed two opinions:

- In order to preserve the global nature of the meeting and to ensure maximum access to the discussions, several delegates were in favor of retaining all 6 official languages of FAO and WHO.
- Considering that the discussion at the Global Forum is of a non-binding and informative nature, and in order to contain the cost of the meeting, other delegations recommended the use of a reduced number of languages, keeping in mind those used by developing countries.

The meeting decided to postpone a decision on this issue to the Preparatory Meeting when more information will be available on cost, contribution and participation.

e) Documentation

The meeting was unanimous in recommending that the documentation of GF-2 should be kept to a minimum. It should preferably consist of short papers introducing in a practical manner the themes and sub-themes/topics to be addressed as well as articulating key questions to guide any discussion.

f) Coordination with other initiatives

The attention of the meeting was drawn to the several initiatives undertaken recently in the field of food safety, and in particular to promoting alliances in capacity building. The meeting recommended that in the preparation of GF-2, duplication of work should be avoided and that optimal synergy be sought with these initiatives.

4. Main Theme and Content of GF-2

The meeting unanimously supported the Main theme recommended by GF-1, namely: *“Building Effective Food Safety Systems”*.

In discussing possible sub-themes/topics under this above main theme, the following proposals were made: legislative schemes; administrative organization; communication and education; role and responsibility of private sector; involvement of other stakeholders, The use of case studies was also suggested (one each from a developed, a developing and a least developed country). In order to further explore ideas for sub-themes, the meeting accepted the suggestion of the Secretariat to seek further suggestions through an appropriate consultative mechanism ensuring in particular input from developing countries.

It was further suggested to include bioterrorism (intentional tampering of the food supply) as a discussion item in GF-2.

5. Venue

The meeting agreed to hold the GF-2 in a developing country as recommended by GF-1 tentatively during fall of 2004. It took note of the expression of interest by Chile, Mexico and Malaysia. It further confirmed the criteria to be used in the selection of the host country for GF-2, as proposed by the Secretariat.

The meeting requested the Secretariat to confirm and/or further explore the interest of potential hosts for GF-2, and recommended that these be invited to participate at the Preparatory Meeting.

6. Budgetary contributions

The Secretariat presented a draft summary of the budgetary situation of GF-1, indicating the contributions of the G8 countries and the EC. It also informed of the contribution in-kind received from the USA and Australia, and of the additional financial contributions by France and Italy. A complete financial report will be presented at the Preparatory Meeting.

The meeting took note of the following statements:

The Delegation of the United Kingdom indicated that they were not in a position to make any financial commitment at this point.

The Delegation of Germany informed that it was prepared to contribute at least to the same level as for GF-1, subject to confirmation later in 2003.

The Delegation of Canada informed that it would contribute to GF-2 by a similar amount as for GF-1. It further suggested to approach non-G8 potential donors as broader financial responsibility would be key to successful Global Forums in the years ahead.

The Delegation of Japan informed that it will try to contribute to the budget of GF-2. However, in view of the current economic situation in Japan, it stressed the need to contain the cost, and requested a more detailed budget in order to assess the scale of its contribution.

The Delegation of France informed the meeting that their contribution to GF-2 would consist of: the secondment of a technical staff member to FAO for a period of 2 years to assist the

GF-2 Secretariat; and a financial contribution of Euros 100,000 which could possibly be slightly increased pending an appropriate justification..

The Delegation of the European Community informed the meeting of a preliminary commitment to a contribution to GF-2 similar to their contribution to GF-1, and requested a more detailed budget proposal.

The Chairman thanked the Delegations on behalf of FAO and WHO for their generous pledges and concluded this item by expressing the need to:

- develop options to reduce cost in the preparation of the budget;
- link budget to purpose and format;
- widen the sharing of the burden of the budget to other donors including private foundations;
- prepare more detailed budget proposals.

The Representative of WHO drew the attention to the substantial contribution of FAO and WHO in terms of staff time, and expressed his keen interest in receiving in-kind contribution in form of secondment of technical staff.

7. Date, Agenda and Venue of the Preparatory Meeting

The meeting agreed on the usefulness and necessity of a Preparatory Meeting to take into account the views of a larger group of countries in the preparation of GF-2. It recommended limiting the number of participating countries (25 –30) while ensuring appropriate representation from FAO and WHO regional groupings, others regional groupings and from countries at all levels of development.

The meeting further agreed that the Preparatory Meeting would take place in connection with the next Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (end June –beginning July 2003). The exact date would be established by the Secretariat in consultation with the Codex Secretariat.

8. Concluding remarks

The Chairman thanked the Delegates for their constructive interventions. He acknowledged the importance of the Global Forum of Food Safety Regulators in enriching and empowering effective management of food safety systems. He further stressed that seeds had been successfully planted at GF-1 in fostering better communication between regions, creating a shared identity and a shared set of principles and actions related to promoting food safety and to build up a network of food safety regulators to address common challenges, to facilitate learning and capacity building. He concluded that building on the progress achieved at GF-1 through harmonization of ideas and creation of natural and self-sustained networks amongst regulators and their systems are keys to further success.