Report of recent events

1st National Training Workshop on “Strengthening Food Standard Setting and Participation in Codex activities in Cambodia”
Phnom Penh, 19-21, February, 2014

A National Training Workshop on “Strengthening Food Standard Setting and Participation in Codex activities in Cambodia”, was held during 19-21, February, 2014, at Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The general objective of the training workshop was to enhance capacity for international food safety standards setting. Specific objectives of this training course were as follows:

1) To understand the importance and Principles of SPS/TBT in relation to Standards development
2) To enhance understanding of basic concept of Codex risk analysis framework and Codex standard setting procedures
3) To enhance knowledge about Codex Standards setting structure, procedure and activities
4) To strength participation in and contribute to Codex standards setting activities
5) To understand Cambodia’s National standardization structure and activities and support to strengthen the same
6) To discuss and consider national road map for harmonizing national standard setting procedures
The training workshop methodology consisted of lectures related to International agreements on food standards, Codex and food standards activities at the international and national level, sharing of other country experiences followed by discussions and group work for considering national road map.

The workshop was attended by 34 participants from Cambodia belonging to six ministries; Ministry of Commerce (MOC), Ministry of Industry and Handicrafts (MOI), Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), Ministry of Tourism (MOT) and Ministry of Economy and Finance (MOEF). They were from the agencies mainly responsible for food safety control with regard to standards development and implementation as well as the work of the Codex.

**Opening session**

The welcome and introductory remarks were provided by Ms. Shashi Sareen of FAORAP. She defined the food safety and quality and stressed the importance of mandatory and voluntary food standards and their role in protecting the health of the consumers and in promoting trade. Referring to the World Trade Organization (WTO) provisions, she stressed the importance of Codex standards and the need for Cambodia with a multiagency food control system to adhere to international principles in standard setting and participating in Codex activities and the context under which the training workshop is being organized.

Ms. Nina Brandstrup, the FAO representative in Cambodia, in her opening remarks, thanked the Government of Cambodia and Japan for assistance in organizing the training workshop. She referred to the issues of food security, food safety in the context of ASEAN Common Market by 2015; called for an improved National food quality control system in the country and requested the participants to take full advantage of the training workshop.

The Cambodian Senior Minister of Commerce, H.E. Sun Chanthol referred to the success of Cambodia in offering quality and safe food with sufficient nutrients to its population and stressed the need to have guidance and assistance from FAO, especially in further revising the food safety legislation in Cambodia. Emphasizing the role of free trade, he assured that the standards that will be formulated based on the model of the Codex will not be used as a trade barrier. He expressed the hope that the workshop will be fruitful in building national regulations, sharing best practices all of which should ultimately protect the consumers and promote tourism.

The opening session was also attended by H.E. Pan Sorsak
and H.E. Tek Reth Kamrang, both Secretaries of State, and H.E. Mak Pichrith, Director General of CAMCONTROL. Mr. Phan Oun, Depty Director General of the CAMCONTROL officiated as the Master of Ceremonies. The opening session was concluded by a vote of thanks by Mr. Atsuhiro Meno, FAORAP followed by a photo session of participants taken along with the dignitaries.

**Introduction: SPS/TBT agreement, Codex and risk analysis**

Ms. Shashi Sareen introduced the global scenario on food safety, key provisions of SPS/TBT agreements and their link to Codex, including legal status of Codex standards by countries and a role in resolving trade disputes. She explained the relevance and benefits of Codex to member countries, such as facilitating import/export trade and helping in regional collaboration especially in the ASEAN region.

Ms. Sareen explained function and structure of Codex, it’s vision, strategic goals and broad activities. She briefed on the principles of Codex elaboration procedure and standards development procedures as well as Codex strategic plan 2014-2019. She elaborated on the code of good practice for standard development in TBT to include aspects such as harmonization, avoiding duplication, collaborative work by involving all stakeholders, arriving at consensus in a transparent manner. After explanation of Codex output and role and function of National Codex contact point, Ms. Sareen emphasized principles and good practice for standard development.

Mr. Atsuhiro Meno elaborated on the concept of risk analysis including the risk assessment, risk management and risk communication along with their definitions as given in Codex and its relation to standard setting. He provided examples of Government structures to deal with risk analysis from several countries including EU and Japan, providing example of standard operating procedure and priority list of hazards for food safety.

**Codex standard setting**

The Codex standard setting procedure and activities with elucidation of Codex structure for standard development was provided by Mr. Raj Rajasekar. The regular 8 steps for advancing the work of standards development with opportunities for countries to offer comments at least twice, which normally takes 4 years and the accelerated procedure were explained. He also summarized the Codex outputs of
general standards and principles, codes of practice, maximum residue limits, and also the current activities such as the strategic plan 2014-2019.

Current situation in Cambodia

The current situation of national standard setting in Cambodia was explained by Mr. Dim Theng of CAMCONTROL (Ministry of Commerce) under three heads viz., Cambodian food safety management system, legal and institutional framework related to food standard setting and implementation of Prakas 868 (Inter ministerial agreement). He explained the role and function of Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC), National Codex Committee (NCC) under the multiple agency system which followed a farm to table approach and with responsibility involving six ministries under the Prakas 868. He explained the policy on food safety standards of not reinventing the wheels and by harmonizing with the international standards as well as ASEAN regional standards. The Government is adopting the Codex standards as technical regulations for food wherever relevant to Cambodian situation. He raised the issue of lack of consensus amongst involved authorities for adapting the Codex standards as an issue to be addressed. He explained that a draft of new food safety policy (led by Ministry of Health) is currently under circulation and a new food safety law under Ministry of Commerce will soon be developed.

The role of the Institute of Standards of Cambodia (ISC), the National Standards Body (NSB) under the Ministry of Industry and Handicrafts, and the development process of technical regulations/standards were dealt by Mr. Chheng Uddara. The objectives of national standardization, priority of development, types of standards development, both technical regulations/standards and their process of development, and the conformity assessment procedure for regulated products were also explained. According to the Law on Standards of Cambodia, for the purpose of ensuring safety to prevent harmful effect, any kind of products or systems shall conform to any specific standard, and the said standards shall be considered determined as mandatory standard, asserted Mr. Uddara. The determination of a mandatory standard shall be made by a ministerial technical regulation within 60 days after the regulation mentioned above.
Mr. Raj Rajasekar highlighted the critical components of the national Codex systems: administrative structure, policy development, consultation and management, monitoring and analysis, and areas for action in the same after presenting typical issues/problems at the national level. He explained the hallmarks of a well-managed national Codex system consisting of dedicated national administration for Codex with strong leadership, sound consultative structures and processes and high level support underpinned by clear policy framework. He further explained on the need for well-developed international linkages including ASEAN and systematic programme monitoring, analysis and future planning.

He elaborated the role and functions of the National Codex Committee (NCC) and National Codex Contact Point (NCCP) as the two central institutions for effective management. The composition, terms of reference, secretariat and frequency of meetings of NCC, as well as it’s subcommittees were explained. Regarding the NCCP, its key functions, communication mechanisms and some critical requirements such as a clear responsibility and authority, building experience with continuity, confidence and developing relations were stressed. The various issues to trigger group discussion was also mentioned by Mr. Rajasekar.

Ms. Shashi Sareen provided glimpses of the standardization structure and activities of countries in ASEAN region. She started her presentation with a summary of FAO capacity development activities in Asia on strengthening standard development and implementation with regional projects as well as country projects in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Mongolia. The aspects of status of national Codex activities in each of ten countries of ASEAN country compiled in a booklet which included food control system framework, institutional infrastructure, national standards, level of Codex implementation, data collection and analysis system and prioritized needs for capacity building were explained. While clarifying the meanings of standards, measures and regulations (mandatory), she highlighted some important points on both standards and Codex aspects. On standardization, some important aspects included need for unified standard, clarification of role of NSBs and regulatory bodies, regulatory standards to focus on food safety rather than compositional or quality related parameters, need to also develop primary product standards. On Codex issues, she highlighted on participation in Codex meetings through the right representation, comments on national position in Codex committee at different steps.
of the process, system for data collection, strengthening technical capacity for carrying risk analysis, need for inputs of private sector stakeholders, methodology of adoption of Codex norms as national regulations

Experiences in ASEAN countries

Ms. Panpilad Saikaew explained the role and functions of two national agencies in charge of food control in Thailand; Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives for food production (Agricultural Standards Act) and the Ministry of Health for health (Food Act). She showed three category of Thailand agricultural standards: Commodity standards, System standard such as Good Agricultural Practices(GAP), Good Manufacturing Practices(GMP) and organic agriculture production, and General standard such as pesticide residues(MRL). She explained Thailand’s experiences on national standard development and their implementation, application of risk analysis principles, education and communication and active participation in Codex activities. She elaborated working process for Codex Standard setting by showing consideration process of draft standard. She explained various activities for participation in Codex standard setting such as provision of written comments and discussion paper, participating working group, submitting scientific data and hosting meeting and so on. She completed her presentation introducing examples of adoption of Codex standard as national standards.

The experience of data collection and utilization for standard setting, both at national and international level was exemplified by a case study of MRL by Ms. Saikaew. The details of the data needed for setting MRLs, supervised residue trials data/monitoring data, toxicological data, consumption data and other data were explained by her. For both acute and chronic exposure assessment, methodologies, data collection tools and consumption data reporting system were made clear to the participants. She concluded her presentation by explaining benefit of own national data collection.

The Indonesian experience of development of national capacities for effective implementation of regulation was narrated by Ms. Tetty Helfery Sihombing, Indonesia. After emphasizing the importance of regulations for the various sectors such as Government, industry and consumer, she highlighted the various principles of the Good Regulatory Practices (GRP) as enunciated in the ASEAN GRP Guide. Also she narrated the management of their standardization system, process of developing standard, involvement of different sectors
and monitoring of regulation. She concluded her presentation by presenting two case studies viz., developing nutrition and health claim regulation and developing food additive regulation. She emphasized on the importance of awareness and the need of regulation and timing for the same.

**Participation in Codex work**

Mr. Raj Rajasekar enlightened the participants on i) the methodology of preparing for Codex meetings, ii) proposing and leading new work in Codex iii) management of Codex at national level and critical requirements for effective performance. The various key steps needed for Codex meetings, identifying priority issues, preparing national positions and consultations, selection of national delegations, collaboration and partnership with other members, actual participation in meeting or through physical and electronic working groups, and managing work between sessions were highlighted. In addition preparing a standardized project document manual for new work proposal, criteria for work priorities for general subjects/commodities were elaborated and a template of project document was shown. Key element for effective management of national level including prioritization, resourcing, preparation, consultation, representation, collaboration and capacity building were also elaborated.

**Summary of issues on standard development**

Summary of issues on standards development was handled by Ms. Shashi Sareen. She requested the participants to come forward with issues on standard development and led the discussion by raising the following issues: i) voluntary vs mandatory standards: role of national and regulatory bodies ii) the process of developing mandatory food standards, independently through standard bodies iii) having a process in place for adoption of Codex norms as national regulations, iv) how to arrive at a consensus and the need to use Codex documents v) involvement of various stakeholders like various departments of the government, food industries, consumer associations, academia and producer groups vi) transparency provisions, sharing information with different stakeholders, circulation of drafts, and placing materials on the website etc. vii) the fee charged vs making them available free especially those meant for regulatory purposes viii) interagency coordination and coordination of implementation arrangements.

**Group exercise**

The group work, moderated by Dr. Ramesh V Bhat with support of other faculty members was mainly for discussing the 1) the process for National standards development including coordination mechanisms 2) strengthening of national Codex structures and process for participating in Codex work. Each group members
participated in discussions on the issues, the challenges, solutions and action points of these topics based on the issues raised by Ms. Sareen in previous slot. Care was taken to ensure that each of the group had a representative from each of the Ministries participating in the workshop.

Presentation of each group is shown;

After the presentation by each group and plenary discussion on given topics, each group elaborated to developed a road map for improving standard development and strengthening Codex activities under the action points discussed in previous session.

Road map (action plan) elaborated by each group is also uploaded as follows;  

**Recommendations - Blueprint for action**

The recommendations that emerged from the training workshops were discussed and agreed to. These are given below under two separate heads, one dealing with Food Standard Setting and another pertaining to management of Codex activities and participation in Codex activities in Cambodia.

The recommendation for strengthening regulatory standards/ requirements/ norms setting are as follows:

1) necessity of a achievable and freely available unified set of regulations/ requirements
2) necessity of a clear delineation and separation of role and responsibilities in respect of voluntary standard and mandatory standard
3) generally tendency of the responsibilities for food safety regulations/ requirements/ standards assigned to the national regulatory body for food safety and the National Codex Contact Point and responsibility of national standards bodies for development of industrial standards as for voluntary application.
4) accountability to be taken of “Law on the Management and Quality and Safety of Products and Services” to promulgate technical regulations/ requirements/ specifications/ norms for protection of health of consumers and ensuring fair trade practices
5) responsibilities towards TBT and SPS – only what is not covered under the SPS will be covered under TBT. Codex’s important reference in SPS – recognized a baseline for adoption
6) importance of adapting regulations/ requirements based on Codex standards/ guidelines and Codes of practices to suit national needs – through a clear process and structure
7) necessity of clear definition of national structures and processes for the development and implementation of national food safety regulations/ requirements with clear differentiate between technical regulations and voluntary standards
8) purpose and importance of voluntary standards including certification schemes
9) importance of transparency of the process followed for regulatory, including standard Step 8 process
10) importance of clearly define and formalize the inter-relationship between mandatory standards and voluntary standards for the same product and establishment of clear lines of communication
11) necessary of all inclusive stakeholders to cover government, departments, scientific institutions, academia, consumer groups, processor associations/ representatives and producer representatives,
12) importance of clearly laid down time frame (generally not exceed 6 months- 1 year) and separate procedure for emergency standards,
13) definition of good principles of regulation development: collaboration, inclusiveness, transparency, consensus, national applicability, timely, freely available to all interested, science-based, objective to be consumer health protection and fair trade practice
14) necessity establishment of a six-monthly work programme to increase transparency
15) importance of determining national priorities for international harmonization and development of national food safety standard and technical regulations.

The recommendation for strengthening the management Codex activities at the national level and effective participation at the international level are as follows:

1) review and update the list of NCC members in the light of changes and ensure that it is current and up to date
2) enhancing information sharing between various parties (the NCCP, SOM and ministries and stakeholders) – possible website for information sharing
3) establishing a generic email address within the domain of CAMCONTROL to support communication on Codex matters
4) activating NCC Secretariat
5) developing a work plan and updating the ToR of the National Codex Committee and the Technical Working Group
6) formalizing links and coordination between the NCC/Inter Ministerial Committee and the National Standards body
7) review Terms of Reference of Technical Working groups
8) approach the Codex Trust Fund for continued funding
9) implementing national training programme
10) developing working procedures/Codex Country Manual to guide the management of Codex activities at the national level
11) activating the National Codex Committee and institute regular meetings
12) developing a National Policy framework for Codex and standards harmonization
13) request FAO support for strengthening the Codex activities
14) twining arrangements with other countries in the region by considering to provide technical familiarity and support

And additional Recommendations for both area are provided as follows
1) set a time table to achieve the adoption of food safety requirements/ norms/ standards under regulatory framework
2) seek assistance from International development partners such as FAO for new Food safety and consumer protection law, strengthening NCC, in preparing Codex country manuals, hosting websites etc.
3)sssess the resources required for ensuring a robust structure of development of the requirements/ norms/ standards – financials others.
4) work out the procedure for awareness on regulatory requirements to the stakeholders.
5) there needs to be transparency while translating Codex standards to National Standards.
6) enhance information sharing between Codex Secretarat and SOMA MAFF (MOC and MAFI)
7) continuous training programmes

Details of recommendation is shown in http://foodsafetyasiapacific.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Recommendations.pdf

**Closing session**

During the concluding session Ms. Shashi Sareen provided an opportunity for the participants to provide their views on the training workshop and raise any additional issues. It was felt that that since several ministries have participated in the workshop, the further communication and coordination would be easy. The knowledge gained during the workshop was appreciated. Though the subjects were difficult, it was possible for arriving at effective conclusions. Responding the suggestions and points raised in the evaluation proforma, Ms. Sareen pointed out to the time
constraints and appreciated the positive contributions by the representatives of six ministries represented, for the success of the training workshop which enabled evolving a blue print for action with appropriate recommendations.

The DDG, CAMCONTROL, Mr. Hang Moeun, thanked the FAORAP and the resource persons for providing the inputs during the workshop, which is of great importance to Cambodia. The capacity development exercise is of vital importance to the relevant ministries, National Codex Committee, Codex Contact Point and the Ministry of Commerce as a whole. He assured the FAO that the various issues discussed will be implemented and the results of the training workshop would soon be evident.

Note: The summary of each presentation as given above has been prepared by the secretariat of the project. The presented material and related documents are available at project webpage; http://foodsecurityasiapacific.net/document-of-national-training-workshop-in-cambodia/

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Ongoing/ Forthcoming events

A survey on edible insects in Thailand is now underway

The Institute of Nutrition, Mahidol University, Bangkok is now conducting a survey on edible insects in the region as a first case study of the project for contributing to regional Codex standard setting. The research team had already organized a preliminary survey of 21 cricket farmers and 3 distributors with a specifically designed tool for survey such as interview guide and checklist for in-depth study. As the result of the survey, general situation about cricket farming from breed, feeding management, harvesting and distribution has been outlined. More data collection and analysis on cricket farmers and distributors will be carried out in the near future. Information obtained by the study will be provided in a future issue of the newsletter.
From Project Team

The project would like to express special gratitude to Cambodian Government for co-hosting the 1st national training workshop on “Strengthening Food Standard Setting and Participation in Codex activities in Cambodia”, during 19-21, February, 2014, at Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Thanks to generous support of the national focal point of Cambodian government, CAMCONTROL and FAO Cambodia, the training could be completed successfully. Also we would like to express special thanks to all participants and resource persons to the training as well as supporting staff of the training workshop.

The previous issues of this newsletter are available at a newsletter page of the project webpage; http://foodsafetyasiapacific.net/news/
Also for a reader who wishes to register as a subscriber, registration is possible through this same page.
The project welcomes all of you to visit our webpage http://foodsafetyasiapacific.net/.

Project Team

Readers are welcome to provide their feedback on the newsletter.
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