



Technical Newsletter of the Project
*“Support for Capacity Building for International Food Safety Standard
Development and Implementation in ASEAN Countries”*
(GCP/RAS/295/JPN)

FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAP), Bangkok

Forthcoming events

Regional Training Workshop on Enhancing Effective Participation in Codex Activities in ASEAN Countries: A workshop entitled “Enhancing Effective Participation in Codex Activities in ASEAN Countries” will be held in Bangkok, Thailand from 9 to 11 January 2017. The main objectives of the regional training workshop are to provide participants with:

- 1) An enhanced understanding of the impact of Codex standards on international trade, the structure and function of CAC, up-to-date information of recent Codex meetings, food safety risk analysis and risk assessment including the role of scientific expert bodies such as JECFA, JMPR, and JEMRA
- 2) An opportunity to share knowledge and experience on current national Codex activities in ASEAN countries and;
- 3) Training on development of regional/national positions through mock sessions to enhance participants capacity to contribute effectively to Codex work



The training workshop methodology will consist of lectures, case study, and group work (including a mock training session).

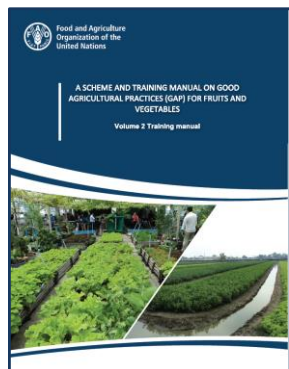
Three participants from each ASEAN country will be officially invited to the workshop through the national focal points of the project. **Other participants who are interested in the topics are welcome to participate in the workshop as observers on their own funding arrangements.** Please contact Mr. Makoto Sakashita, Project Coordinator (makoto.sakashita@fao.org) for further information. The provisional agenda and concept note are available on the website:

<http://foodsafetyasiapacific.net/the-5th-regional-training-workshop-enhancing-effective-participation-in-codex-activities-in-asean-countries-will-be-organized-in-bangkok/>

National Training Course in Myanmar on capacity development for Codex standards setting and implementation: The project GCP/RAS/295/JPN is in discussions with the national focal point of Myanmar for the organization of a national training course which will focus on capacity development of Codex standard setting and implementation. The concept and agenda of the training is being currently finalized by the project and national counterpart in Myanmar. The training will be held in December 2016 and invitations to participants will be sent out shortly.

Report of recent food safety events in FAORAP

Workshop on “Implementation of Good Agriculture Practices in SAARC Countries: Sharing Experiences of the SAARC GAP Scheme”:



‘Implementation of Good Agriculture Practices in SAARC Countries: SAARC GAP Scheme’ since 2014 and the project is now close to completion. This project supported the development of a Regional Scheme on GAP for South Asian countries which included a GAP standard and certification system. Countries were supported to develop a national GAP standard and establish infrastructure required for its. As the Scheme documents had been developed and piloting in four countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka) was either complete or close to completion, a three-day Regional Workshop was organised with the objective of learning from the experiences of these countries **from 25-27 May 2016, in Bangkok, Thailand**. Some countries in the ASEAN Region also participated to learn and share their experiences.

The training manual on implementation of GAP in the fruits and vegetable sector in SAARC countries is being printed and will be available soon.

National Training Course on capacity development for Codex standard setting and implementation in Lao PDR:

A National Training Course on “Strengthening Food Safety Standard Setting and Effective Participation in Codex activities in Lao PDR” was held from 27-29 June 2016 at Vientiane, Lao PDR. The training course was attended by 23 participants from four ministries and two academic institutions of Lao PDR.



The main objectives of the training were as follows:

- 1) Enhanced understanding of the structure and function of Codex Alimentarius Commission in relation to SPS/TBT Agreements and elaboration of Codex standards
- 2) Enhanced knowledge of the basic concept of the Codex risk analysis framework and its link to standard development and data collection and utilization
- 3) Enhanced understanding and a strengthened National Codex Contact Committee
- 4) Enhanced knowledge about effective participation in Codex activities
- 5) Draft road map for improving standard development activities and strengthening Codex activities

The training consisted of lectures, sharing of other country experiences followed by discussions and group work. Two groups were formed and held discussions on the issues below for Lao PDR.

Group I

- Item 1: Develop the process of establishing national standards
- Item 2: Propose the process and structure for risk assessment
- Item 3: Identify areas where risk assessment is needed
- Item 4: What are the existing data and what data is needed?
- Item 5: Identify areas where standards are needed (and develop a road map)
- Item 6: Propose systems of data collection
- Item 7: Identify a pool of experts for risk assessment
- Item 8: What is the existing lab capacity and what is needed– identify gaps



Group II

- Item 1: Prepare a draft Codex country Manual to include what it should cover and points under each section
- Item 2: Develop contents of a Lao PDR Codex website
- Item 3: Discuss the areas for participation in Codex and prioritization of Codex committees for participation
- Item 4: Elaborate the process for participation in Codex
- Item 5: Draw up the composition for the NCC and sub committees with stakeholder participation – and work out its TORs
- Item 6: NCCP – what strengthening is needed, work out the TORs



After presentations by each group on the above topics, the plenary session discussed on the development of a road map for improving standards development and recommendations for strengthening Codex activities. Based on the discussions, four recommendations were suggested.

General

Sensitization of political leadership and the bureaucracy about food safety and Codex was considered the most important recommendation. In order to fulfill a shortage of human resources for Codex activities, considerations should be given to hire new human resources for food safety, national Codex Contact Point and laboratories, and to provide necessary training for them. In order to do this, budget outlay should be estimated and high level approval should be obtained.

1) Enhanced understanding of the structure and function of Codex Alimentarius Commission in relation to SPS/TBT Agreements and elaboration of Codex standards

An important point of consideration is the responsibilities towards TBT and SPS – as clearly indicated in the Agreements, SPS relates to food safety, animal and plant health and life and only what is not covered under the SPS will be covered under TBT. Both SPS and TBT are therefore, applicable to standards. Codex is a key reference

point in the SPS agreement– important to recognize that Codex standards are a baseline and may be considered for adoption – which will be the most convenient route for development of standards.

2) Enhanced knowledge of the basic concept of Codex risk analysis framework and its link to standard development and data collection and utilization

Under the SPS agreement, Lao PDR should establish standards based on risk assessments performed according to the procedures elaborated by Codex, or adopt Codex standards, which were developed based on risk assessment.

Therefore knowledge of the basic concept of Codex risk analysis framework and its link to standard development is a priority area for capacity building for food safety officials in Lao PDR. Further, a national risk assessment body should be established. The body should also network with risk assessment bodies in ASEAN countries and other regions for enhancing data collection and information exchange. New areas for data collection for risk assessments should be identified and prioritized.

In order to perform exposure assessment, which is the most country specific part among the four risk assessment components, national food consumption data and data related to food handling/preparation should be collected. To do so, it is important to conduct a review of the current capacity of laboratories and training needs. To enhance laboratory capacities, considerations should be given to strengthen networks with other laboratories in this region.

3) Enhanced understanding of strengthened National Codex Contact Committee

The training recognized the importance of strengthening national structures and systems for management of Codex activities at the national level and enhancing Lao PDR's ability to participate in international standards development. The training also identified the needs to develop a National Strategic Plan for food safety and Codex with clear goals, and to review the NCC role and responsibilities, and to establish sub-committees.

The training identified the following issues in relation to Codex management at the national level;

- 1) No clear work plan and frequency of NCC meetings established
- 2) No clear policy on Codex and standards development
- 3) Delays in harmonization with and adoption of international Codex standards

4) Enhanced knowledge about effective participation in Codex activities

Throughout the training, the need of capacity building for relevant government officials, industry and academia in order to participate in the Codex standard setting activities more effectively was identified as an important issue. To help this capacity building activities, the development of a National Codex website in the local language was strongly recommended.

During the three-day training course, six main objectives were addressed and the outcomes are as follows:

- 1) Participants gained an understanding the importance and principles of SPS/TBT in relation to Codex standard development.
- 2) The basic concept of the Codex risk analysis framework and data collection and utilization were fully understood by the participants.
- 3) Knowledge about the Codex standards setting structure, procedure and activities was enhanced.
- 4) The recommendation for strengthening effective participation and contributing to Codex standards setting activities was discussed and reflected on the national road map.

- 5) Lao PDR's national standardization structure and activities and support to strengthen the same were discussed.
- 6) National road map for improving standard development activities and strengthening Codex activities in Lao PDR was developed.



The report is now available on the project website:

<http://foodsafetyasiapacific.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Field-Documents-Report-of-Lao-FAO-Training-final.pdf>

Side-event “Revitalization of Regional Coordinating Committees (RCCs) and Strengthening Standard-setting and Implementation of Codex Standards” at CCASIA 20:

The side-event was organized on the occasion of the 20th Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Asia (CCASIA 20), on Friday, 30 September 2016. It was attended by more than 40 participants representing more than 15 countries and international organizations. This event was dedicated to CCASIA Members to share their lessons-learned in the process in strengthening standard-setting and implementing Codex text at the national level. Mr. Makoto Sakashita, Project Coordinator of the project GCP/RAS/295/JPN, shared information through a presentation titled “FAO activities relevant to strengthening standard-setting and implementation of Codex standards in the region”. Three ASEAN countries (Cambodia, Myanmar and Lao PDR) also shared their Codex activities with participants.



Information on this event is available on the project website:

<http://foodsafetyasiapacific.net/side-event-of-our-project-will-be-organized-on-30-sep-2016-in-new-delhi-india-during-the-ccasia-20/>

From Project Team



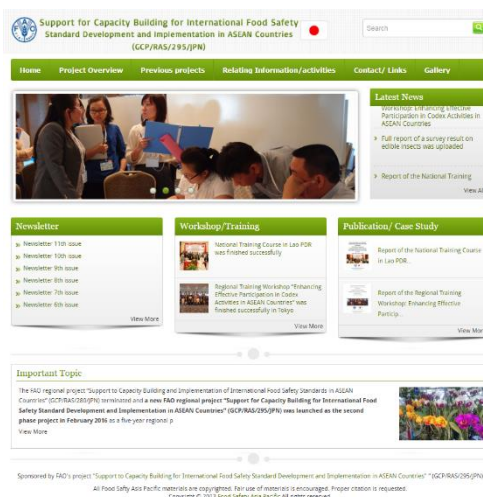
We are happy to announce that **Mr. Sridhar Dharmapuri has joined FAORAP as Senior Food Safety and Nutrition Officer effective 1 October 2016**. In his previous position as Food Safety Officer for nearly 5 years in Bangladesh, Mr. Dharmapuri coordinated and provided technical support to two of FAO's largest food safety projects. He will be involved with our project GCP/RAS/295/JPN as Lead Technical Officer (LTO) and will be in regular communication with national focal points of the project. We thank the previous LTO, Ms. Shashi Sareen, for her continuous guidance and are happy to note that she will continue to provide her expertise and support to this project and other activities in region in her capacity as Senior Advisor, Food Safety and Quality.

Feedback from ASEAN countries on achievements and challenges of the previous Codex capacity building project, GCP/RAS/280/JPN: As is well known, the FAO regional project “Support to Capacity Building and Implementation of International Food Safety Standards in ASEAN Countries” (GCP/RAS/280/JPN) terminated in February 2016. It was followed up immediately by the current phase, GCP/RAS/295/JPN. In order to obtain feedback on the achievements and challenges of the previous phase and prioritise activities under the current phase of the project, a questionnaire was sent to each focal point of ASEAN countries in December 2015. Responses were received from 7 countries: Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. In principle, all the countries are satisfied with the overall approach of the project and its coverage. They responded that their needs had been taken into consideration in relation to planning workshops and training courses and that the project provided opportunities to share experiences on food safety among ASEAN countries. Several points were suggested for further improvements in the scope as well as for successful implementation of the activities.



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We are happy to inform you that **our project website has been remodelled**. The website provides latest news such as current and forthcoming events as well as publications of the project. Please visit our renewed website: <http://foodsafetyasiapacific.net/> and provide your feedback which would be very useful for future activities of the project.



*Your feedback on the newsletter is highly appreciated and will help us to improve our ability to serve our readers.
Please contact Project Coordinator; Makoto Sakashita (Mr.) e-mail: makoto.sakashita@fao.org*

Project Team