National Food Control System –
Key elements and functions
(Agenda Item 10)

at

“Strengthening Food Safety Standard Setting and Effective Participation in Codex activities”
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Outline of the presentation

• Introduction and context
• Effective food control systems – objectives/functions (why?), scope, principles
• Elements of an effective food control system
• FAO Initiatives to strengthen food controls in the region
Introduction

- **Globalization** - increasing demand by consumers for variety of foods
- Creation of global market - *transboundary movement* and trade of food across countries – imports/exports
- Potential for **spread of contamination** high
- Leading to **increasingly new challenges** & risks to the health & safety of consumers
- **Quality, health, safety, labelling, food fraud** incidents (melamine, horsemeat) acquiring global focus
- Governments have mandate to ensure health and safety of populations (ensure safe food supply) through **effective food control systems**
- Take into account **global considerations**
Global Considerations

International Trade

SPS and TBT Agreements

Codex Alimentarius Commission and standards
World Trade Organization

- WTO established 1 Jan 1995
- Succeeded GATT (1948-1994)

- 161 members
  - Decisions taken by consensus
  - Dispute settlement mechanism
  - Transparency

- Series of Negotiated Agreements
  - Agreement on trade in Goods and Services
  - Agreement on Intellectual Property Rights
  - Several additional agreements on trade in goods example Agriculture, Textiles, **SPS, TBT, PSI**
SPS and TBT Agreements

They can have similar remits: food safety, animal and plant life and health, but they have different scopes

**SPS – purpose of measures**

Covers all measures whose purpose is to protect

- Human or animal health from food safety risks or or animal/plant carried diseases
- Animals and plants from diseases or pests
- Territory of a country from diseases caused by pests

**TBT – type of measure**

- Covers all technical regulations, voluntary standards and procedures to ensure that these are met
- The reach is very broad. Our concern is those pertaining to human health. Example labelling, information on nutrition, quality, packaging

Used only to protect the human, animal and plant health on the basis of scientific information

Used only to meet certain objectives - example national security or to prevent deceptive practices
SPS Agreement - Key Provisions

- Non discrimination  *Article 2.3*
- Harmonization (Codex, OIE, IPPC)
  - Higher standards based on risk assessment  *Article 3*
- Scientific Justification  *Article 5*
- Equivalence  *Article 4*
- Regionalization/ Disease-free areas  *Article 6*
- Transparency (NNA, Enquiry point)  *Article 7*
- Technical assistance  *Article 9*
- Special & differential treatment  *Article 10*
- Control, inspection and approval procedures  *Annex C*
SPS **Article 3** Harmonization

- Encourage use of international standards
  - Food safety & Animal health
  - Animal health & zoonoses
  - Plant health

- SPS permits higher standards based on risk assessment

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*Codex* = Joint FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission

*OIE* = World Organisation for Animal Health

*IPPC* = International Plant Protection Convention (FAO)
TBT Agreement – Important Features

• Came into force in 1995
• Covers products other than those under SPS
• Avoidance of unnecessary obstacles to trade
• Country has right to adopt voluntary standards & technical regulations (mandatory standards)
• Non-discrimination & national treatment
• Code of good practice for standards development
• Encourages adoption of international standards
• Equivalence of technical regulations
• Mutual recognition of CA procedures - encourages Members to enter into negotiations for agreements for MR of results of each others CA procedures
• Transparency, Tech assistance, Special & diff treatment
Codex Alimentarius Commission

Codex Alimentarius Commission - An Intergovernmental body

**Founded** 1962 – jointly hosted by FAO/WHO

**Mandate**

- protect the health of consumers
- ensure fair practices in international food trade
- Coordinate all international food standardization

**Membership** - 186 countries + 1 member org (EC) – representing 99% of world population

**Observers:** 220 international organizations: scientific, industry, trade, consumers

**Codex documents:** (standards/ GLs/ Recommendations)

**Codex Committee** on Food import/export inspection & certification
Food import/export inspection & certification

- **Principles** for food import & export inspection & certification
- GL for food **import control** systems
- GL for the **design, operation, assessment & accreditation** of food import & export inspection & certification systems
- Generic **official certificate** formats & production & issue of certificates (GL)
- GL for Development of **Equivalence** Agreements Re Food Import & export inspection & certification systems
- GL on the **judgement of equivalence** of sanitary measures associated with food inspection & certification systems
- Principles & GL for exchange of information in **FS emergency situations**
- GL for exchange of info b/w countries on **rejections** of imported foods
- Principles for **traceability**/ product tracing as a tool within a food inspection & certification system
- Principles & GL for National Food Control Systems
- Principles and GL for the exchange of information between importing and exporting countries to support the trade in food
Definitions

Food control: a **mandatory regulatory activity** of enforcement by national or local authorities to provide **consumer protection** and ensure that all foods during production, handling, storage, processing, and distribution are **safe, wholesome and fit for human consumption**; conform to safety and quality requirements; and are honestly and accurately labelled as prescribed by law.

Food Control System: the integration of a **mandatory regulatory approach** with preventive and educational strategies that protect the **whole food chain**.

Includes: effective enforcement of mandatory requirements, along with training and education, community outreach programmes and promotion of voluntary compliance.

[FAO/WHO Definition]
Effective food safety control systems – Objectives/Why?

- Protection of health & safety of domestic populations – acute food borne illnesses; long term health impacts (chemical subs & toxins)
- Protection from fraud – mislabeled, adulterated, unwholesome foods
- Providing a regulatory foundation for food trade (regional/international) including for Mutual Recognition & equivalence agreements
- Reduction of food losses & wastes (contamination; spoilage; destructions)
- Promoting consumer confidence and strengthen national reputation
- Contributing to economic development by maintaining confidence in food systems

Government or Food Safety policy makers are guardians of food safety
National food control systems – Scope

- Cover all food produced, processed and marketed domestically, including imported food, and food for exports. Such systems should have a statutory basis and be mandatory in nature.

- Covers food control systems at provincial and local levels

- Covers control systems operated across the food chain – roles of multiple competent authorities
Effective food control systems - Principles

- Protection of consumers
- The whole food chain approach (comprehensive system)
- Transparency & access to information
- Roles & Responsibilities – all actors in food chain
- Consistency & impartiality
- Risk based, Science based & evidence based decision making
- Cooperation & coordination between multiple CAs – partnerships and agreements
- Preventive approach
- Self assessment & review procedures
- Recognition of other systems (including equivalence
- Legal foundation
- Harmonization
- Resources
Framework for the Development of a National Food Control System

- Policy Setting
- Continuous improvement
- Implementation
- System Design
- Monitoring & System Review

Key Aspects:
- Inspection, testing, FSER, import/export, preventive approaches
- Proactivity
- Training
- Situational awareness
Food control systems - elements

- **Policy/ management** framework – food control management, strategy, governance, administrative structures

- **Food laws and regulations** - regulations, requirements or procedures, standards

- **Implementation/ inspection/ enforcement & surveillance** (inspection, testing, FBDS, food safety emergency preparedness, response & management, import/ export controls) across food chains; including preventive approaches

- **Certifications and accreditation** (labs, voluntary programs)

- **Information, Education, Communication and Training**
Policy Framework/ Food control management

- **Policy**
  - covering goal or objective
  - Commitment and support

- **National Strategy/ annual control plan** – 2 years, 5 years with clear targets/ indicators

- **Institutional setup**
  - one/ multiple CAs, coordination,
  - administrative structures, programs, resources,
  - central/ local government,
  - integrated control across food chain,

- **Risk assessment set-up**

- **Information sources for planning**

- **Accountability**
Laws/ Regulation (1)

- High level of **health protection**
- **Preventive, risk-based** approach: RA/GP/HACCP
- Based on high quality, independent **scientific advice** using RA
- **Precaution & adoption of provisional measures**
- **Consumers** to have information (accurate/ sufficient)
- **Primary responsibility** for food safety & quality is FBOs
- **Authority to CA** (enforce, monitor, verify through inspection & control)
- Approval/registration of establishments/ listing of certified units, penalties, fees
- **National surveillance programmes** – FBDS, RMPs
- Recognise GMP/HACCP systems of **FBO/ voluntary initiatives**
- Establish standards – recognize/ harmonise with Codex
Implementation /inspection/enforcement/ Surveillance

- **Inspection** to ensure that food laws/ regulations complied with

- Focus on **Risk-based** inspection – high risk foods/ establishments...

- **Responsibilities** include
  - Routine inspection and monitoring
  - FBD Surveillance and monitoring programs (eg NRCP)
  - Inspection, sampling, certification of food for **import/export**;
  - Dealing with food safety **emergencies** & recalls
  - Ensuring lab activities/ capacity
Testing

- Legal and regulatory framework
- System of networking of labs – vision for labs
- Organizational structure – NRL
- Procedures and methods of analysis
- Accreditation system and requirement
- Analytical capabilities – equipment, manpower, financial resources
- Data management and use for risk-assessment/management activities
- Use of private labs for official controls
- Surveillance programmes being managed
- Calibration services
- PT testing, SRM, etc
Information, education, communication and training

• Inspectors:
  ➢ food safety and quality;
  ➢ food processing operations, food microbiology & chemistry
  ➢ prerequisite programmes; HACCP system
  ➢ Risk-based inspection techniques;
  ➢ food sampling techniques and broad testing methods

• Extension workers in agri, education, health sectors

• Food businesses in adopting pre-requisite programmes (GAP/GMP/GHP...) and HACCP

• Consumers – food safety awareness

• Trainers
References

- Principles and Guidelines for National Food Control Systems CAC/GL 82-2013
- Guidelines for strengthening National Food Control Systems: FAO Food and Nutrition Paper 76
- Risk-based Food Inspection Manual: FAO Food and Nutrition Paper 89
- Strengthening national food control systems: Guidelines to assess capacity building needs
- Country food control profiling questionnaire
FAO Activities on food control systems
Some Important Activities on food controls

- Support to countries in strengthening coordination between Ministries/Departments for food safety
- Assessment of Food Control System: Sri Lanka, Mongolia
- Support in review of legislation/regulations – Bangladesh, Laos, Cambodia, Nepal, Mongolia
- Standards and **Codex** – understanding working of CAC, facilitating country participation in CAC...
- Guidelines for **risk categorization** of food & food establishments for ASEAN, Bangladesh
- **Imported food control manual** - risk-based import controls manual – pre-border, border, post-border
- **Pesticide Residue Monitoring Programme Development** - Training Workshop for Asian Countries
Some Important Activities on food controls

- Strengthening food testing laboratory capacity – Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand
- Early warning & horizon scanning, INFOSAN – projects (Thailand, Bangladesh), National FSER Pilots
- **Hygiene** and safety in food retail sector; **Regional network** - Food retail network in Asia [http://foodretailnetwork.asia/](http://foodretailnetwork.asia/)
- **Regional guidance** on criteria for GMP/HACCP for Asia
- Risk communication
- **Primary production aspects** - Strengthening GAP through development of schemes & certification systems
Important websites

• FAO Food Safety and quality home page

• Web page on Vet & Public Health, Feed & Food Safety;

• Emergency prevention & early warning in area of food safety:
  EMPRES-FS@fao.org

• INFOSAN – International food safety authorities network – for
disemination of important global food safety information –
INFOSAN Community Network https://extranet.who.int/infosan/

• *FAO Regional office for Asia and the Pacific

• *Capacity Building and implementation of international food
  safety standards in ASEAN countries
  http://foodsafetyasiapacific.net/

• Food retail network in Asia http://foodretailnetwork.asia/
THANK YOU

Any Questions?
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