



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR ASIA

Nineteenth Session

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SUMMARY OF THE FAO AND WHO TECHNICAL WORKSHOP “FOOD RECALL/TRACEABILITY WITHIN THE RISK ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK – PREVENTION OF FOOD SAFETY EMERGENCIES”

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Tokyo, Japan

Food safety emergency response preparedness is a key element in the food safety emergency risk management. Food recall is one of the fundamental tools in the management of risks in response to food safety events. Some countries are still in need of an effective recall system and the necessary infrastructure to support it. For example, a robust legal basis, regulatory framework, effective pre-established protocols and the necessary collaboration between competent authorities and food business operators are required. In addition, foods and the ingredients in food products are increasingly grown, processed and consumed in different locations around the globe. This poses new challenges in the conduct of key activities associated with food recalls, such as the trace-forward and trace-back activities required for a food suspected or confirmed to be unsafe. Many countries have expressed their needs to have their capacity to be strengthened in this area.

Therefore FAO and WHO have developed: 1) a guide for emergency planning to assist countries in the formulation and implementation of national food safety emergency response plans (<http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i1686e/i1686e00.pdf>); 2) a guide to the application of risk analysis principles and procedures during food safety emergencies (<http://www.fao.org/docrep/014/ba0092e/ba0092e00.pdf>); and 3) a guide on food recall to assist countries in the establishment and implementation of an effective national food recall system which may also be used during food safety emergencies (<http://www.fao.org/docrep/017/i3006e/i3006e.pdf>).

Based on the needs expressed by many CCASIA countries, FAO and WHO organized a one-day workshop prior to the 19th session of the CCASIA, entitled “Food recall/traceability within the risk analysis framework – prevention of food safety emergencies” with the overall objective to provide technical guidance and support to CCASIA delegations on the topic of establishing and implementing an effective national food recall system to respond to food safety events.

The workshop was attended by 46 participants from 20 countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam as well as a few other observers.

Background information was provided through presentations on:

- Managing food safety emergencies: role of INFOSAN and IHR;
- Preventing food safety emergencies: FAO EMPRES Food Safety;
- FAO/WHO guide for application of risk analysis principles and procedures during food safety emergencies;
- Food recall and traceability: Codex work; and
- FAO/WHO guide for developing and improving national food recall systems.

Through tabletop exercise sessions, participants worked on a simulated scenario to discuss and consider the needs and possible processes of risk assessment, communication and risk management options including food recall. Participants were divided into four groups and two groups were tasked to work on the scenario from the exporting country's point of view and the other two were tasked to work on the scenario from the importing country's point of view. In addition, the participants were also encouraged to consider their real country situations and experiences when conducting the simulations.

In the last session of the workshop, participants also discussed several action points that may possibly be used to formulate their national roadmaps to strengthen the food recall and traceability aspects of national food control systems. These action points included the followings:

- Identification of clear roles and responsibilities of all relevant government authorities and stakeholders involved in risk analysis and food recalls;
- Review of the national legal frameworks to ensure that the system captures all elements for a food recall and is functional in case urgent food recall is required;
- Review of the existing traceability and food recall systems in place and based on the same consider any improvements needed;
- Assessment of the national food recall systems to identify possible gaps in managing and implementing effective food recalls;
- Addressing the aspect of strengthening multisectoral communication and coordination mechanisms
- Capacity development of professionals on risk analysis, especially on traceability and recall systems;
- Strengthening of institutional capacities including imported product inspections specifically in view of cases a recall is required for imported products; and
- Sensitization of stakeholders on effective traceability and recall systems;

Participants stressed the importance to continue strengthening the capacity needed to take action on food recall and traceability including manpower, technical expertise and institutional capacity. Further trainings on food safety including risk analysis and traceability are needed. FAO and WHO will consider how best to respond to such requests for technical assistance in these areas.

42 participants (93%) completed the workshop evaluation that formed an important feedback to FAO and WHO for both improving further programmes as also identifying subjects of relevance for future such activities including trainings. The workshop was concluded with a great appreciation being expressed by FAO and WHO to the participants, resource persons, colleagues from FAO/WHO, Government of Japan for providing in-kind contributions for the venue and refreshments, administrative assistance and IT support. The FAO/WHO Codex Trust Fund provided financial support to allow many of the participants to attend the workshop. The full meeting report, including the outputs of work groups and the results of the workshop evaluation, will be produced in due course and will be sent to the participants.