

FAO SUB-REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

Course Report

**FAO Sub-Regional Seminar on
Developing Food Standards within a Risk Analysis Framework**

Apia, Samoa 24-28 July 2006

Funded through
Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF project 9, Rev 1)

Report prepared by:

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**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS**

Seminar on developing Food Standards within a Risk Analysis Framework - FAO Sub-Regional Office for the Western Pacific, Apia, Samoa 24-28 July 2006

Acknowledgments

The consultant wishes to thank the FAO Sub-Regional Representative for the Pacific, Dr Vili A Fuavao and the FAO Food and Nutrition Officer, Mr Dirk Schulz for their support in ensuring the smooth conduct of the seminar.

Background

The FAO/WHO Regional Conference on Food Safety for Asia and the Pacific (Seremban, Malaysia, 24-27 May 2004) underlined the importance of risk-based standards and recommended that FAO and WHO implement training and capacity building for the countries of the region in the development of food standards. FAO received funding from the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF project 9, Rev 1) to implement the pilot application of this training programme in Asian and Pacific countries, jointly with WHO, in response to these recommendations. The programme is intended to increase the capacity of the low income countries of the region to:

- 1) develop their own food standards
- 2) participate in the Codex standard-setting process; and
- 3) understand and comply with, in the development of these standards, international obligations under the relevant WTO Agreements.

The implementation of the STDF funded project involved the development of a Training manual on Food Safety Risk Analysis, and the conduct of two sub-regional training courses. The first course, in which the manual was trialed, involved participants from 9 countries of the Asia region and was conducted in the FAO Regional Office for Asia in Bangkok in December 2005. A second course for selected Pacific Island Countries was organised with the remaining funds and held in the FAO Sub-regional Office for the Pacific in July 2006.

Results achieved: Implementation of the training course:

A training course for the Pacific sub-region was held in Apia, Samoa from 24-28 July 2006. FAO provided support to one participant each from Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, and two participants from Tonga (funds for the second participant were provided by TCP/RAS/3005, as the course was particularly pertinent and complementary to current ongoing support to draft a food legislation for Tonga). An additional participant from the Ministry of Health in Papua New Guinea was funded by WHO-WPRO in support of the food chain approach. Three participants (one each from Ministries of Agriculture, Health, and Commerce, Industry and Labour from the host country, Samoa also attended the seminar. A list of participants is attached in annex 2.

The consultant, Mr. Simon Brooke Taylor of Australia, was hired to develop and deliver the course content, at the suggestion of Food Standards Australia New Zealand (the original initiator of the idea for the course). The outline of the course (see annex 1 for programme) was based on the original project document and the course had previously been given as a pilot at the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, in Thailand in December 2005. The consultant utilized FAO/WHO and Codex materials, such as the outcome of relevant expert consultations and other data sources, in the development of the course. Many of these materials were provided to the participants in hard copy as reference materials and all the course presentations, background materials, group photo, etc were provided to all the participants on a CD at the conclusion of the course.

The course commenced with participants briefly describing their national food standards system, followed by a group discussion. It was evident that in many cases, the countries have very limited food safety systems in place but that all countries are in the process of developing systems along FAO/WHO guidelines.

The consultant presented background information on risk analysis and the development of standards to the participants, in accordance with the outline of the course. The participants were then asked to utilize the knowledge gained in the presentations to work together as a group to complete various exercises related to the presented topics, and eventually to work together to develop a risk-based food standard. Participants greatly benefited from the group work, as it forced the participants to look at a specific issue (microbiology, contaminants, food additives, etc) and ask specific questions, as necessary. All participants had excellent knowledge of the English language and actively participated in class discussions and group exercises. Particular attention was paid to discussing Pacific relevant issues, such as how to consider and utilise codex standards when reviewing food regulations at national level, how to approach regionally relevant contaminants such as mercury in seafood, cyanide in cassava and cadmium in taro, etc.

Throughout the course, information on FAO/WHO's activities in the areas discussed was provided as appropriate. Participants were particularly interested in enhancing their participation in Codex, the legislation of regionally produced foods (eg cassava), and other issues related to the development of food standards. Various relevant FAO publications were also provided to all course participants.

Conclusion

The seminar was completed as scheduled and an evaluation showed that participants found the content and methods appropriate and useful to their work and current food safety issues in the region. The course was also complementary to ongoing efforts to revise / update food legislation and standards in a number of participating countries.

It is noteworthy that this was the first capacity building event addressing food safety risk analysis held in the Pacific. Given the growing importance of science based approaches, especially in view of their role in the WTO SPS agreement, this work needs to be continued, to both deepen and broaden knowledge on food safety risk analysis to enhance the safety of consumers and facilitate fair trade in food. This also important given the regional trade agreements (PICTA/PACER) involving Pacific Island Countries.

Technical follow up support may be needed to assist countries in their efforts to integrate risk analysis in their food safety work as they modernise their food control systems. The continued presence of FAO and WHO in the Pacific region will go along way towards that end. It was encouraging to see that a number technical issues for possible follow up at national level were already discussed between participants and the FAO Food and Nutrition Officer at the fringes of the seminar.

**Annex 1: Seminar on developing food standard within a risk analysis framework
Programme
FAO Sub-Regional Office for Pacific, Apia, Samoa, 22-28 July**

	Mon- 24 July 2006	Tues- 25 July 2006	Wed- 26 July 2006	Thurs- 27 July 2006	Fri- 28 July 2006
8.00-9:00	Registration	Module 3 - Introduction to risk analysis, international trends and its relevance in establishing food standards.	Module 5 - Risk management and Standard Setting 5.A. Identifying the need for a food regulatory measure Includes Group Exercise	5C cont Includes Group Exercise ----- 5D. Developing options and assessing regulatory impact/ competition policy aspects	5G. Analysing issues and revising standards 5H. Final decision making (legislative process or other political consideration)
9:00-9:30	Opening				
9:30-10:00	Morning Break				
10:00-10:30	Administrative issues / housekeeping				
10.30-10.45	Round of Introduction by participants	Morning Break	Morning Break	Morning Break	Morning Break
10.45-12.30	Module 1 - Introduction	Module 4 - Introduction to Risk Analysis	5A cont -----5B. Involving the Community and Consulting Effectively - Preliminary Consultation	5D cont Includes Group Exercise	Module 6 - Round up & workshop close
12.30-14.00	Lunch Break	Lunch Break	Lunch Break	Lunch Break	
14.00-15.30	Module 2- Discussion of national food safety systems	Module 4 cont . Includes introduction and group discussion of Codex RA principles and case studies	5B cont Includes Group Exercise	5E. Drafting a Standard Includes Group Exercise	
15.30-15.45	Afternoon Break	Afternoon Break	Afternoon Break	Afternoon Break	
15.45-17.00	Discussion of national food safety systems (continued)	Module 4 (continued)	5C. Considering issues: scientific, regulatory, international obligations	5F. Notifying stakeholders about the proposed standard and undertaking further consultation Includes Group Exercise	

Annex 2: List of Participants
 Seminar on Developing Food Standards within a Risk Analysis Framework
 FAO Sub-Regional Office for Pacific, Apia, Samoa, 24-28 July

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