Online inspection, control and surveillance system for food of animal origin

The aim of this project is to create an online system with an application for mobile devices. The application will be used to register and monitor establishments that prepare food of animal origin and to follow up on inspections carried out in these establishments. It will also be used to monitor the reasons for product seizures in abattoirs, and sample-taking under the National Residues Plan.

The application will provide SENASA users with timely and reliable access to information on establishments that prepare food of animal origin and enable them to follow up on inspections and areas of nonconformity. This will enhance SENASA's capacity to properly oversee the entire production chain and thus ensure the safety of products of animal origin produced in the country for domestic consumers and trading partners.

**STDF/PG/578**

**Status**
Completed

**Start Date**
15/12/2017

**End Date**
15/06/2020

**Project Value (US$)**
$242,904

**STDF Contribution (US$)**
$95,421

**Beneficiaries**
Costa Rica

**Implementing Entities**
Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)

**Partners**
National Animal Health Service (SENASA), Costa Rica

**Background**

As part of its remit, SENASA is responsible for ensuring the safety of food of animal origin. It carries out this task in accordance with the guidelines of its Directorate for the Safety of Products of Animal Origin (DIOPA). SENASA registers and monitors
(through inspections and follow up activities) establishments that produce food of animal origin. This monitoring function covers both establishments that supply the domestic market and exporters. In 2016, 14,336 establishments producing food of animal origin were registered in the country. While monitoring and follow up are vital for the domestic market and exports, DIPOA lacks a system that facilitates information management in such a way as to improve the monitoring of establishments. This was pointed out in Costa Rica’s PVS Evaluation Follow up report (2015), which emphasized the need to improve methods for disseminating information to the parties concerned and "to design a single system for the collection and processing of information on slaughter findings in establishments authorized to export and supply the domestic market, which would enable this information to be shared with the Operations Division and Epidemiology Department with a view to its inclusion as input in cattle disease and zoonoses programmes". The notified project thus aims to consolidate SENASA's activities in this area.

Results

SENASA strengthened its capacities to ensure the safety of products of animal origin

SENASA strengthened its capacities for the health monitoring and follow up of establishments engaged in the production of food of animal origin by designing and setting up an online platform known as the Sistema de Inspección y Control de Establecimientos, SICE (Inspection and Control System for Food Production Establishments). In order to set up the platform, a training, validation and feedback process was carried out with internal users (SENASA veterinarians and technicians) and external users (veterinarians, technicians and managers of establishments engaged in the production of food of animal origin). The online system was launched in 2020 and the project trained more than 400 people from the public and private sectors in the use of the system.

SENASA transparency has been strengthened

The system ensures that domestic and international users have rapid and transparent access to information and to the traceability of processes, so as to be informed about the status of audits and the implementation of requested corrections.

Inclusion of the risk based inspection model by SENASA

The risk based model is being implemented, incorporating a preventive rather than reactive approach, in establishments that prepare food of animal origin for human consumption, taking into account information generated by the system. This leads to strengthened scientifically based decision making and optimized use of resources, enabling the institution to direct its efforts to other areas.

Recommendations

Development of flexible solutions and tools tailored to national requirements

This allows for tools that respond to the country's individual circumstances and needs. This means that it does not have to use systems created for other circumstances and which in the long run may generate higher implementation and adjustment costs to achieve the objectives. In addition, the flexibility facilitates adjustments to changes and new contexts.

Use of virtual tools for meetings and training and awareness raising activities

Following the guidelines issued by the national authorities to address the COVID!9 pandemic, many face to face activities had to be carried out using virtual tools, which made it possible to meet the proposed objectives and demonstrated that virtual platforms enable better use of time and greater participation. However, a good internet connection is required, and some users must be trained in how to use the tools. This takes account of the fact that face to face meetings and activities may have to be included in work plans when the activities so require.

Implementing multidisciplinary visions in processes

During the development and validation stage, it was essential to have a quality multidisciplinary team including personnel from different areas of SENASA and external users. It is recommended that this practice be followed in other similar experiences, by selecting a suitable and representative team with technical expertise and experience in teamwork and the use of virtual tools.