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Safety Forum **22**

Outcome Document

Vienna Food Safety Forum 2022



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Prepared by: *Gabor Molnar*, Project Officer and
Madeleine Smith, Senior Expert on Inspection Policy.



Introduction

The 2022 Food Safety Forum was held in Vienna from October 3-5. The Forum was sponsored by the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) and focused on data driven innovation in food safety. Four hundred participants from competent authorities, industry, and academia from all continents attended in person and remotely.

After a warm welcome and opening comments from global leaders in the area of food safety, **Session I** was informed by a recently approved Codex document: Principles and Guidelines on the Assessment and Use of Voluntary Third Party Assessment (vTPA) (CXG 93-2021). This new innovative approach was successfully piloted in the United Kingdom feed sector where the Red Tractor Scheme, as a vTPA, has shared data with the Food Standards Agency. Germany also served as an interesting case study which built on the European Union (EU) Regulation 2017/625 on official control. How the approach can be adapted and used in different countries was illustrated by a presentation from

Belize. One of the benefits highlighted in this session was how an enhanced relationship can develop between the Food Business Operator and Competent Authority as a result of a successful v. While there is still some hesitation among stakeholders for wider roll-out, national authorities, food businesses and vTPA programme owners indicated how vTPA can enhance risk-based decision-making and information sharing. There were further discussions on the need for building trust and public-private partnerships.

Session I: Using the voluntary third-party assurance (vTPA) approach to improve food safety outcomes: What lessons exist?



rator: Tom Heilandt, Secretary
dex Alimentarius Commission



Speaker: Gabriel Hanne, Head of
Quality Assurance, METRO



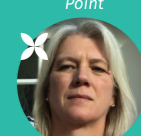
Speaker: Delilah Cabb Aya
Coordinator of the SPS Eng
Point



aker: Mike O'Neill, Head of
x Policy and Strategy at the
3d Kingdom Food Standards
Agency



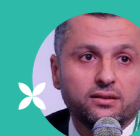
Speaker: Peter Wend, Head of Unit
114 - Monitoring Strategy and
Coordination, Federal Office of
Consumer Protection and Food
Safety Dept. Food Safety



Speaker: Philippa Wiltsh
Head of Operation, Red
Tractor Scheme



Speaker: Marlynne Hopper, Deputy
Head of Standards and Trade
Development Facility



Speaker: Ali Badarneh, Chief, Food
Security and Food Systems Unit,
UNIDO

Session II considered data integrity and sharing in the context of public-private interactions. Data quality, data ownership, confidentiality and enforcement were the main discussion points among regulators. Acquiring accurate data in the correct timeframe to underpin decision making is critical for the regulators and could make data-sharing for food business also easier. For the industry, there should be a value proposition to incentivize data-sharing, ultimately resulting in higher revenue. Technical issues relating to harmonisation of data systems will be in the forefront of upcoming work and discussion to ease data sharing for both parties.

Session II: Sharing data for improved food safety decision- making: What is the role of public- private dialogue?



Moderator: Samuel Godefroy,
President of Global Food Regulatory
Science Society (GFRSS)



Speaker: Donald A. Prater, Associate
Commissioner for Imported Food
Safety, U.S. Food and Drug
Administration



Speaker: Bobby Krishna Thulasi,
Food Safety Dept, Dubai
Municipality



Speaker: Julie Pierce, Director of
Openness, Data and Digital, UK
Food Standards Agency



Speaker: Friedrich Sövegjarto,
Head of Area for Food Safety,
Austrian Agency for Health



Speaker: Nima Bahramalian,
Industrial Development Expert,
UNIDO

Session III was also informed by recently approved/updated Codex document: Guidance on Paperless Use of Electronic Certificates (revision of CXG 38-2001). A key presentation explained how Brazil designed electronic certification and the development needed to move from analogue (human input, paper based) to digital format. Practical issues relating to the exchange of certification, language, storage, access and control of data and implementing electronic systems in participant countries were described. The Covid-19 pandemic has contributed to the acceleration of electronic certificate, particularly in e-phyto. Participants discussed the importance of considering vwhich

type of solutions should be adopted by countries, depending their trade practices and food systems.

Although there was some use of remote practices in food safety prior to the start of the Covid -19 pandemic, it was not widespread. The travel restrictions imposed by 'lockdown' in so many countries accelerated the use of remote audit and remote inspection by competent authorities and the food industry to ensure compliance during the continued production of food. The remaining sessions of the forum (sessions IV-VII) considered aspects of the use of remote practices in food control and quality assurance.

Session III: Establishing electronic exchange of health certificates and how it changes certification



Moderator: Matthew Moore, Director
eCert and Paperless Trading,
Department of Agriculture and
Water Resources, Australia



Speaker: Vidal Zapparoli Melo,
Professor, e-CERT Project Coordinator at
GAESI - University of Sao Paulo, Brazil



Speaker: Sarah Kahn, Senior
Consultant, Australia



Speaker: Craig Fedchock,
Adviser, e-Phyto Group Lead,
International Plant Protection
Convention, Italy



Speaker: Erik Bosker, Senior
Policy Advisor, Ministry of
Agriculture, Nature
and Food Quality, Netherlands



Speaker: Gabor Molnar, Project
Officer, UNIDO

Session IV was entitled 'the costs and benefits of remote audit and verification in the regulatory framework'. In reality, the benefits and limitations of remote practices were discussed in all the sessions on remote practices, forming a common thread through sessions IV-VII. The main benefit was that the use of remote audit and/or remote inspection allowed some regulatory control and certification as the food industry continued working during the pandemic. Individual presentations highlighted other aspects, such as the value of remote practices in an archipelago country like Indonesia or the ability to visit several geographically dispersed premises in the supply chain. The



main constraints were created by the use of electronic communication, mainly inconsistent Internet connectivity.

Session IV: Costs and benefits of remote audit and verification in regulatory frameworks



Moderator: Jan Kranghand, Global Head of Center of Excellence for Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance (LRQA), Netherlands



Speaker: Annelies Deuss, Agricultural Policy Analyst, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)



Speaker: Cláudia Zucherato, International Audits Division, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply, Brazil



Speaker: Pamuji Lestari, Head of Fish Quarantine and Inspection Agency (BKIPM), Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, Indonesia



Speaker: Javier Tellechea Vertiz, Deputy Head of Unit F1, Food in the Directorate for Health and Food Audits and Analysis, European Commission



Speaker: Khov Kuong, Deputy Director General, Fisheries Administration (FIA), Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Cambodia

Session V provided excellent examples of how remote practices have been used. The European Commission (via The Directorate for Health and Food Audits and Analysis) audits competent authorities in third countries on behalf of all member states to facilitate trade. In session IV, this action was described from the Commission point of view and in session V from the view of the third country Competent Authority (Kenya). Both concluded that when carried out remotely, the process of audit tends to be spread over a longer period than the on-site version. The use of electronic communication was found by the auditee to be intensive and tiring, leading to the need for more meetings each of shorter duration. The document interrogation stage was also found to be time consuming. A presentation by GlobalG.A.P. explained how risk can be used to segment premises, separating those appropriate to receive a remote audit and those which should not be subject to remote practices. Remote audit was not felt to be appropriate for the initial audit or for high risk premises. In the interests of transparency, whether the audit was remote or on site was included on the certification documentation. This method of targeting was supported by a 2020 survey of accreditation bodies reported by TÜV Rheinland

Group. In a highly informative presentation from the food industry, Tesco PLC explained how they have developed a bespoke system which allows confident remote auditing of their suppliers. Using this system remote audits were found to be more likely to identify documentary non compliances than on

Session V: Use of data and ICT in food safety for improved audit outcomes and regulatory enforcement functions



Moderator: Stephane Vidry, Global Executive Director, International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI), United States



Speaker: Choi Eun Ju, Deputy Director, Global Policy and Strategy for Food and Drug Division, Ministry of Food and Drug Safety, Republic of Korea



Speaker: Cristina Martins, Global Product Manager Food, TÜV Rheinland Group, France



Speaker: Clare Rapa-Marley, Head of Global Supplier Standards and Audits, Tesco PLC, United Kingdom



Speaker: Kristian Möller, Chief Executive Officer, GlobalG.A.P., Germany



Speaker: Peter Kamuti, Ag. Head, Analytical Chemistry Laboratory and Food Safety, Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service, Kenya

Session VI included further examples of the use of remote practices, highlighting advantages, limitations and requirements. Presentations by both a regulator (Singapore Food Agency) and audit organisation (FSSC Foundations) reiterated the need to risk rate premises as mentioned in session V. As with GlobalG.A.P., FSSC Foundation has only allowed certification bodies to conduct audits where prior certification of food establishments existed. The value of a blended approach was presented, evaluating documents and data remotely but using onsite mode to check compliance in a premises. An assessment of 4000 audits carried out by FSSC Foundation confirmed the findings reported by Tesco in session V. There was no significant difference in the gradings or nonconformities identified, but remote practices tended to identify more documentary non compliances. A survey of regulators and food industry representatives was carried



out by UNIDO in the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Committee and Codex focal points in 2022 as part of an STDF project. The results, some of which were presented in session VI, supported the conclusions of the other presenters – the value of blended audits, the need for targeting according to risk, the difficulties of connectivity and, as stated by the Agriculture and Livestock Service in Chile, the need for internationally accepted guidance on the use of remote practices, especially remote audit and remote inspection. This need for internationally accepted guidance had been raised by presenters in previous sessions. The lack of such guidance was proving to be a significant problem as countries could be obliged to meet varying standards according to which trading partner was conducting the remote audit/inspection.

Session VI: Existing guides and tools for implementing remote practices in food safety control



Moderator: Chair of CCFICS and A/g Deputy Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Australia



Speaker: Álvaro Díaz Gallmetzer, Food Safety and Certification Department, Livestock Protection Division, Agriculture and Livestock Service, Chile



Speaker: Sara Mortimore, Vice President, Global Food Safety Compliance, Walmart, United States



Speaker: Madeleine Smith, Senior Expert on Food Safety & Inspection Practices, UNIDO



Speaker: Jenny Loi, Deputy Director, Risk Management and Surveillance Department, Joint Operations Division, Singapore Food Agency



Speaker: Elsabe Mathee, Technica Director, FSSC Foundation, Netherlands

The final session of the forum, **Session VII**, shared experiences of remote practices from a number of countries including Australia, where remote practices had been in use prior to the start of the Covid 19 pandemic. Focusing on dairy, eggs and seafood exports, Australia found that using remote audits did not improve food safety outcomes, could be more time consuming and in some cases more costly for the industry. As described in session VI, blended or hybrid practices were felt to be most effective.

This was supported by Global Food Safety Initiative, who do not accept the use of fully remote audits at the beginning of the pandemic but will allow remote evaluation of documents. Vietnam raised the issue of internet coverage as a barrier to successful use of remote practices and suggested the saving in travel time and costs was a benefit. Another advantage was the wide range of expertise that could be made available using electronic communication.

Session VII: Remote inspection and trade verification practices: what are the lessons learned?



Moderator: Marlynne Hopper, Deputy
Head of Standards and Trade
Development Facility



Speaker: Ashok Mengi, National Manager,
Canadian Food Inspection Agency,
Canada



Speaker: Erica Sheward, Director,
Global Food Safety Initiative, France



Speaker: Nguyen Quang Hieu, Director of
International Affairs and Public Relations,
Plant Protection Department of the
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural
Development, Vietnam



Speaker: Stewart Davey,
International Market Access
Manager DEAP Program
& Market Access, Dairy Australia



Speaker: Shayne Daniels, Director -
Dairy, Eggs and Seafood Exports,
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries
and Forestry, Australia

The Vienna Food Safety Forum has met its objectives to share knowledge and experience on data-driven innovation among members of the food safety community. The Covid-19 pandemic appears to have acted as a catalyst for the deployment of new solutions which may transform food safety practices in the long-term.



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