



**FOOD AND  
AGRICULTURE  
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**FAO/WHO PAN-EUROPEAN CONFERENCE  
ON FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY**

*BUDAPEST, HUNGARY, 25 – 28 FEBRUARY 2002*

**CONFERENCE ROOM DOCUMENT**

**Summary of the keynote address by Minister Brinkhorst**

Minister Brinkhorst in his keynote address complimented the FAO and WHO for their joint organization of this Pan-European Conference on Food Safety and Food Quality. He supported the appeal of FAO ADG Mr de Haen for a successful World Food Summit: five years later. Mr Brinkhorst underlined the essential link between food safety and food security. He underlined that FAO traditionally focussed until now on food security. And FAO should continue to do so, he said, looking to the number of undernourished people worldwide. But looking to the developments in Europe a link between food security and food safety, which is one of the political issues in Europe, is essential. In that context FAO has a challenge for the European Region.

Europe is going through a historically important period. Through enlargement of the European Union from the present 15 to possibly 25 countries a large Internal Market is being created. On the one hand harmonization of food safety standards is at stake, on the other hand quality is at stake in terms of the wish to maintain diversity of food products. The challenge is to find a balance between harmonization and diversity.

Globally, consumer preference is shifting towards higher-quality products. In response to this, a shift of the agriculture sector, which was traditionally product-oriented, to a sector driven by demand, is needed.

A fundamental condition of enlargement is non-discrimination between farmers in the European Union and farmers in the accession countries. Consequently, a balance should be pursued between phasing in of income support to farmers in accession countries and phasing down of income support to farmers in EU-countries. Minister Brinkhorst was of the opinion that food safety plays up till now a far too limited role in the enlargement discussions. Enlargement will

only be successful if consumers in the EU can trust food imports from the accession countries. Free circulation of safe food in Europe requires standardisation of food safety systems.

The minister indicated that he expected from the conference tangible results in the field of:

- strengthening of the work on Risk Analysis which will get an impulse by the creation of the European Food Safety Authority;
- support to institution and capacity building in developing countries in order to enable these countries to fully benefit from market access opportunities in Europe, which need to be increased; developed countries have a moral duty to support developing countries; it is particularly difficult for developing countries to meet European food safety requirements; however, Europe owes it to its own consumers to maintain the safety standards at high levels;
- increasing co-operation between national institutions in different European countries on science and policy, where FAO, WHO and OIE could play an important role;
- development and improvement of information and communication systems, including systems which could provide early warning of potential food safety risks; examples are the existing Rapid Alert System and the Emerging Risk Identification System (yet to be developed).