

codex alimentarius commission



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Agenda Item 3

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR AFRICA

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REPORT ON ACTIVITIES OF FAO AND WHO COMPLEMENTARY TO THE WORK OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION, INCLUDING CAPACITY BUILDING

Introduction

1. This paper describes FAO/WHO activities in the areas of capacity building and the provision of scientific advice implemented since the 16th Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Africa which are complementary to the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.
2. In the achievement of the overall objectives of FAO, an important reorganization has taken place in 2006 in the area of food and food safety. The Food and Nutrition Division recently renamed the Nutrition and Consumer Protection Division, which hosts the Codex Secretariat, JECFA Joint Secretariat, JEMRA Joint Secretariat and the staff working in the field of food quality and safety, has been moved from the Economic and Social Department to the Agriculture, Biosecurity, Nutrition and Consumer Protection Department. This move is in line with the farm-to-table approach to nutrition, food safety and consumer protection and the important role that operators in the food chain play in this field. This should provide new opportunities for cooperation between all units involved in the production, processing, handling, storage and distribution of food products, as well as in food safety control and standards development.
3. Similarly in WHO, the Food Safety Department has been renamed Department of Food Safety, Zoonoses and Foodborne Diseases following the merger of the units covering zoonoses and food-borne disease previously under the Department of Communicable Diseases with the Department of Food Safety. The new Department illustrates the existing WHO strategy of addressing food safety issues along the entire food chain continuum from primary production to consumers.
4. Information on the main capacity building activities of FAO and WHO in food safety and quality during the reporting period is provided below.

FAO/WHO Regional Conference on Food Safety for Africa

5. FAO/WHO convened an informal meeting with delegates from Africa attending the 29th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission in Geneva in order to discuss the Project proposal on Improving Food Safety and Quality in Africa as a follow-up to the FAO/WHO Regional Conference on Food Safety for Africa (Harare, Zimbabwe, October 2005) and also current and future capacity building activities in the

region. The report of this meeting is available at: www.fao.org/ag/agn/food/meetings_workshops2006_en.stm.

FAO/WHO Global Forum of Food Safety Regulators

6. A preparatory meeting for a possible third FAO/WHO Global Forum of Food Safety Regulators was held in Geneva, Switzerland, in conjunction with the 29th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. The purpose of the preparatory meeting was a preliminary discussion on the objective, format, content and funding of a possible third Global Forum. The meeting unanimously recommended that a thorough evaluation of GF-1 and GF-2 should be conducted prior to convening GF-3. A survey to evaluate the impact of the FAO/WHO Global Fora of Food Safety Regulators is now underway by the joint secretariat, the results of which will be presented at a side event to be held during the next session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. The report of this meeting is available at: www.fao.org/ag/agn/food/meetings_workshops2006_en.stm.

Funding Mechanisms to Improve Food Safety and Quality

7. FAO, WHO, OIE, WTO and the World Bank established a Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) to coordinate the capacity building efforts of these organizations in the areas of food safety and plant and animal health and to provide a funding mechanism for countries and stakeholders to undertake their activities in these areas. The STDF is both a financing and a coordination mechanism. Grant financing is available for private and public organizations in developing countries seeking to comply with international SPS standards and hence gain or maintain market access. Interested countries and stakeholders are encouraged to propose projects and submit them to the STDF for consideration. Further information on the STDF, including the exact deadlines for submission of proposals and meeting dates, the Business Plan, application forms and information on projects approved can be found at the STDF website www.standardsfacility.org.

8. FAO and WHO have established a Trust Fund for Participation in Codex to increase the participation of developing countries and countries in transition in the vital work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. The fund provides financial support to increase their capacity to implement those standards in their own country.

9. Following the success of the Codex Training Course initiated by the Codex Trust Fund in December 2005, further expenditures on training and the wider dissemination of the Codex Training Package is envisaged in 2006.

Technical Assistance and Supporting Material for Capacity Building

10. FAO and WHO are engaged in a programme of technical assistance activities and projects at national, regional and international levels. The areas covered include training of food control officials and technical staff (food control managers, food inspectors, food analysts), provision of fellowships for future food regulators, enhancement of food control laboratory capabilities, implementation of risk analysis, risk assessment of microbiological hazards in food, support in establishing national Codex committees, policy advice and establishment of regulatory frameworks. Furthermore, fresh fruits and vegetables quality and safety, mycotoxin prevention and control, implementation of the FAO/WHO Guidance to Governments on the Application of HACCP in Small and/or Less Developed Businesses, HACCP in aquaculture, traceability of fish and fish products, good practices for the feed industry, prevention of BSE and other zoonotic diseases and others are included.

11. FAO is presently conducting a programme for improving the quality and safety of fresh fruits and vegetables, which focuses on the application of good practices (GAP, GMP, and GHP) to prevent hazards at appropriate points in the fresh fruits and vegetable chain (production and post-harvest stages - *food chain approach*). Subregional workshops have been held in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and the Near East (China, Egypt and Morocco) and are planned for other parts of the world. Activities for awareness raising and training at the national level have also been initiated through the implementation of

National Action Plans. Four case studies (Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Uruguay) on the implementation of quality and safety schemes are under preparation. FAO has prepared a Training Package (available in CD-ROM and printed format), providing information that can be used by countries to develop training programmes and implement safety and quality requirements to suit their specific needs and thus enhance their capability to apply Codex guidelines and standards, meet importers requirements, as well as improve the quality and safety of fresh produce on the domestic market. An on-line database (also produced as a CD-ROM) with over 800 documents related to the safety and quality of fresh fruits and vegetables is also available. See also www.fao.org/ag/agn/index_en.stm.

12. In May 2006 FAO completed implementation of a global project to address the problem of mycotoxin contamination of coffee and protect the health of coffee consumers. Initiated in 2000, the project, "Improvement of coffee quality through the prevention of mould formation", was formulated in collaboration with the International Coffee Organization (ICO) and the European coffee industry, and was executed by FAO in Brazil, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, India, Indonesia, Kenya and Uganda. Financing was provided by the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC), with co-financing from the Government of the Netherlands and the Institute for Scientific Information on Coffee (ISIC). For more information on the project, training resources and guidelines on the prevention of mould formation in coffee, visit www.coffee-ota.org.

13. FAO and WHO have recently been engaged in the development of a number of manuals, guidelines and training materials that should facilitate the capacity building effort. Most of these materials are developed jointly except for a few which are prepared under specific field projects operated either by FAO or WHO. These materials include the following:

- Improving the Safety and Quality of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables training manual and resource database (available from FAO web pages or as a CD-ROM in English, Spanish, French and Chinese - see further description above);
- "Food Safety Risk Analysis and an accompanying CD-ROM training pack: a joint FAO/WHO publication are under finalization;
- The FAO tool "Strengthening the capacity of national food control systems: Guidelines to assess capacity building needs" was pilot tested under the framework of AGNS and STDF projects in Benin, Cameroon and Myanmar, and positive feedback received. The Guidelines have been published in hard copy and on CD-ROM, and posted on the AGNS web site. A complementary, condensed version of these Guidelines "A quick guide to assess capacity building needs" is currently being finalized;
- FAO, together with WHO and ICD, have developed a basic Awareness Course on Microbiological Risk Assessment (MRA). The primary objective of this course is to acquaint governments with the general concept of Risk Analysis and how MRA fits into the framework of Microbiological Risk Management (MRM). This course was used as a basis for a training course for South-East European countries in September 2005. In addition, a one day workshop on this issue was implemented in Sydney, Australia targeting participants from the Asian Pacific region. A further training course is being planned for Spanish speaking Latin American and Caribbean countries in October 2006 and one for South-East Asia in November 2006. A preliminary version of the course material (English) is now available on CD-ROM;
- Enhancing Participation in Codex Activities - An FAO/WHO Training Pack designed to strengthen national food safety and quality systems through enhanced participation in the Codex process. It should serve as reference document for those involved in national Codex activities and as a training tool on Codex. A CD-ROM containing the visual aids and relevant reference documents will be included in the manual. It is available in several languages at: www.fao.org/ag/AGN/food/capacity_codex_en.stm. An electronic web-based training course is under active preparation based on this Training Pack;
- The FAO/WHO guidance document for governments on the application of HACCP, in small and less developed businesses (SLDBs) was finalized. The document will soon be available at http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/food/quality_haccp_en.stm;
- FAO and WHO have been engaged in preparing a standardized training package to assist countries in implementing relevant Codex texts related to the food safety assessment of products derived from modern biotechnology. This training package may include a pilot training manual package

containing both theory and practical examples of risk assessments of foods derived from modern biotechnology and a guide for training regulators;

- WHO has issued "A Guide for Healthy Food Markets", which contains an annex on measures to reduce transmission of avian influenza in wet markets in developing countries. The publication is available at www.who.int/foodsafety/capacity/healthy_marketplaces/en/;
- WHO has completed the development of the GEMS/ Food Consumption Cluster Diets, which will be used by JECFA and JMPR in estimating long-term exposure to chemicals in food. The diets are available at www.who.int/foodsafety/chem/gems/en/.
- Building on the experience gained on several field projects in West and Central Africa, FAO is currently finalizing a training manual on "Good Hygienic Practices for Street foods Preparation and Selling". The manual will initially be published in French, but should be translated in English soon.

14. All these materials, once finalized, will be issued in multi-lingual form for wider use by member countries.

Information Exchange Mechanisms

15. The International Portal on Food Safety, Animal and Plant Health (www.ipfsaph.org) - a joint initiative with IPPC, OIE, Codex and WTO - has continued to develop during its second full year of operation. Numbers of page requests to the website on a monthly basis regularly exceed 400 000; numbers of visitors per month are typically in excess of 35 000. The portal is adding a number of new data sets on pesticides and food additives and now contains over 25 000 records, while collaboration has been strengthened with the EU through contacts with DG Trade's Exports Helpdesk. A particular initiative worth highlighting is the ongoing work to develop a low bandwidth version of the portal to facilitate access from developing countries which has been made available progressively from April 2006.

16. With funding from the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), work is now proceeding to reinforce the technical system which underpins the portal, while STDF-funded projects are actively encouraged to make use of the portal as a resource, and consider possible further national data sets for inclusion.

17. INFOSAN, the International Food Safety Authorities Network, developed and maintained by WHO in collaboration with FAO, was inaugurated in October 2004. Identified as a priority need by both Codex and the World Health Assembly, 150 Member States have joined the network as of May 2006. INFOSAN is an information network for the dissemination of important global food safety information and serves as a vehicle for food safety authorities and other relevant agencies to exchange food safety information and improve collaboration among them. Since its creation, INFOSAN has responded to requests for information for Member States by providing 11 INFOSAN Information Notes on timely food safety topics including avian influenza and genetically modified foods. INFOSAN EMERGENCY, the emergency arm of the network, has so far investigated 11 incidents of contaminated food in international commerce and issued to INFOSAN Emergency alerts. INFOSAN EMERGENCY is intended to complement and support the existing WHO Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network ([GOARN](http://www.goarn.org)) which includes a Chemical Alert and Response component.

18. The WHO International Health Regulations (IHR) have recently been updated to cover agents causing serious health risks connected to food in international trade. The adapted IHR version will come into effect by June 2007.

19. In 2004, WHO inaugurated its new Strategic Health Operation Centre (SHOC). The SHOC is a shared information and communications centre designed to facilitate collaboration and problem solving in order to better improve health outcomes in countries. The SHOC both virtually and physically supports WHO Operations at HQ, Regional and Country Office levels in responding to crises in public health. INFOSAN EMERGENCY is part of the operational support structure of SHOC.

20. FAO also supports the development and maintenance of FishPort, a web-based system for dissemination of scientific and technical information on fish safety and quality.

INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

21. The FAO/IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) Training and Reference Centre for Food and Pesticide Control held a training workshop on “Introduction to Quality Assurance/Quality Control Measures in Pesticide Residue Analytical Laboratories”. The workshop took place at the FAO/IAEA Agriculture and Biotechnology Laboratory, IAEA Laboratories, Seibersdorf, Austria from 12 September to 7 October 2005. More detailed information on the course can be found at: www.elearning.iaea.org/ATutor/bounce.php?course=34.

22. FAO held a workshop on “Genetically Modified Food Safety” at FAO Headquarters from 13 to 14 October 2005. The purpose of this workshop was to expose FAO professional staff to a range of expert opinions on selected questions related to the safety of GM foods. Further information on this workshop can be obtained from: www.fao.org/ag/AGN/food/meetings_workshops2005_en.htm.

23. The FAO Expert Consultation on Biosafety (Rome, 28 February to 3 March 2006) considered a number of present and future applications of new biotechnologies in various sectors with the aim of seizing opportunities for consolidating future activities on Biosafety for sustainable agriculture and food production, within a *Biosecurity* context. Discussion focused on three issues: governance for Biosafety, cooperation for Biosafety, and technical grounds for Biosafety. Within these, the Consultation made several recommendations on establishing a coherent interdisciplinary approach on Biosafety, strengthening the policy and legislative frameworks for Biosafety in food and agriculture, technical assistance and capacity building, cooperation with external partners, information capacities and data sharing, and research.

Global projects

24. The Government of Norway recently signed a Programme Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with FAO, with the overall objective of supporting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in developing countries through the work of FAO, for the period 2005-2006. One of the principal objectives of this project is “Improved Food Safety and Quality at National Level and along the Food Chain”. Activities are being conducted in Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Kenya, Laos, Nicaragua, Tanzania and Uganda. Outcomes to be reached include: acceptance and use of Good Agricultural Practice (GAP); capacity building and awareness raising for integrated natural resource governance and management (SARED), support to food quality and safety and Codex related work and guidelines, advice and instruments related to small-scale/artisanal fisheries implemented/developed.

25. Under the same Programme Cooperation Agreement, Norway is also supporting a series of activities aimed at strengthening FAO’s earlier work on the integration of food safety, animal health, plant health and biosafety under the *Biosecurity* framework. The activities include application of the *biosecurity* framework at national level, development of additional tools and guidelines, as other practical guidance material.

Global tools under development

26. FAO conducted an expert panel from 2 to 4 November 2005 in Rome to peer review three parts of the FAO *Biosecurity* Toolkit designed to assist countries in their effort to integrate *Biosecurity*-related disciplines and activities, namely the *Biosecurity* Principles and Components (Part 1), *Biosecurity* Capacity Assessment Tool (Part 2) and *Biosecurity* Risk Analysis Manual (Part 3). This toolkit is being pilot tested and will then be made widely available. More information on FAO’s approach to and work in the area of *Biosecurity* is available from: www.fao.org/biosecurity.

27. FAO/AGNS is preparing a manual on food inspection and auditing of food safety management systems.

28. FAO, in collaboration with the Italian Istituto Superiore di Sanità, is working on the preparation of a video on mycotoxin sampling which is currently being finalized.

CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA

FAO REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

29. FAO and the Tanzanian Bureau of Standards held a five-day subregional workshop for English-speaking African countries in Arusha, Tanzania, from 10 to 14 October 2005 on “A practical approach to improving the quality and safety of fresh fruits and vegetables”. Further information on the workshop is available from the FAO website: www.fao.org/ag/agn/meetings_workshops2005_en.stm

30. FAO implemented a two-day training workshop on “Food safety risk analysis” for the North African countries in Tunis, Tunisia from 25 to 26 November 2005. The Workshop was organized at the request of the Maghreb countries and involved over 40 participants representing the various regulatory and technical and scientific institution involved in food control and food safety assessment in the three countries. Experts from FAO Headquarters, the French AFSA and OIE participated in the Workshop which used as a basis the draft FAO guide under preparation at that time on food safety risk analysis. Further details may be found on the FAO website www.fao.org/ag/agn/meetings_workshops2005_en.stm.

31. A subregional training of trainers course on the application of good hygiene practices throughout the coffee chain was held in Zambia in July 2006 and included participants from Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. This training course was the final activity under a CFC-funded project on “Improving coffee quality through the prevention of mould growth” which started in 2001. The main objective of the project was to assist coffee producing countries in their effort to prevent and control Ochratoxin A contamination of coffee.

32. FAO, in collaboration with the Tunisian Agence Nationale de Contrôle Sanitaire et Environnemental, organized a subregional workshop on “Improving the quality and safety of fresh fruits and vegetables in North Africa” in Hammamet, Tunisia, from 11 to 16 September 2006. The workshop was intended for the French speaking countries in the Near East and provided capacity building using the recently developed FAO training pack on “Improving the quality and safety of fresh fruits and vegetables”.

33. FAO and WHO convened a Workshop on the Application of HACCP in Small and Less Developed Food Businesses in Gaborone, Botswana from 28 November to 1 December 2006. Participants from the public and private sectors were invited to attend from Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The Workshop discussed the FAO/WHO Guidance to Governments on the Application of HACCP in small and less developed food businesses and developed practical measures for their application at national and regional level. Further information is available from: foodquality@fao.org.

34. FAO, in collaboration with the Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS), organized a subregional Workshop on Capacity Building of National Food Control Systems. The workshop took place in Bagamoyo, Tanzania from 4 to 8 December 2006. Core national stakeholders from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda participated. The main objectives of the workshop were to: discuss the current country situation as assessed by international and national consultants; further review, to finalize the draft of the 5-year strategic national action plans; and to review and evaluate the recently developed FAO Food Inspection Manual. The project was funded by the Government of Norway through the Programme Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with FAO, with the overall objective of supporting the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Further information may be obtained from: foodquality@fao.org.

WHO REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

35. Resolution AFR/RC53/R5 on food safety guided the work of the WHO African region. The key issues that were addressed included: limited capacity for food-borne disease surveillance; poor participation of countries in the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission; outdated food legislation; limited education in food safety and lack of awareness about the public health implication of unsafe food exposure to mycotoxins, especially, aflatoxins through food. There is increased participation of the health sector in food safety activities at the country level and this is evidenced by the presence of Food Safety Focal Points at the WHO country offices and the Ministries of Health in the region.

36. With WHO cooperation, a draft Strategy on Food Safety for the African Region, entitled "Food Safety and Health: A strategy for the WHO African Region" was prepared. The WHO Regional Committee for Africa will discuss and adopt a resolution on the Regional Food Safety Strategy in September 2007. The objectives of the documents are: to provide a platform for advocacy for food safety; to provide Member States with a framework for the development and implementation of national policies for food safety and; to facilitate the development of intersectoral collaboration and partnerships for food safety.

37. The Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) provided a project preparation Grant for Benin and Tanzania. A consultant was engaged who conducted a situation analysis of the national food safety and quality programmes in the two countries and prepared proposals for submission to the STDF. Promotion of food safety in schools activities were conducted in Angola, Cameroon, Kenya, Mali and Mozambique and with support from the Italian Expert Fund.

38. Benin and Mali were supported to organize training workshops on Codex Alimentarius and several countries strengthened their national Codex Committees. Gabon, Guinea and the Democratic Republic of Congo conducted national food safety surveys and national strategies/action plans were prepared by Gabon, Mali and Rwanda. Algeria also prepared and launched its national food safety action plan with support from WHO. Support was provided to Kenya to review their draft food safety policy in July 2006. WHO is working with the Swedish International Development Agency to organize an Advance International Training Course on Quality Infrastructure for Food Safety in 2007. This is specifically for Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia through bilateral agreements with these countries. This will build capacity for food safety and support the countries to prepare their national food safety policies.

39. Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Madagascar, Senegal and Togo conducted a number of food safety capacity building training workshops, including workshops on food-borne disease surveillance, the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points, food inspection and Codex Alimentarius. Lesotho and the Republic of Congo re-launched their national Codex Committees. In collaboration with WHO, the Codex Secretariat organized a Subregional workshop on sources of Codex Information in October 2006 in Brazzaville, Congo and was attended by Chad, the Republic of Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In order to improve the participation of Member States in the work of the Codex Alimentarius, WHO in collaboration with the US Codex Office organized a workshop in April 2006. This was attended by the national Codex Committees of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. An informal consultation for Regional Cooperation was organized in September 2006 for Botswana, Cameroon, Ghana, Morocco, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda by the US Codex Office.

40. With cooperation from WHO, a number of countries including Ghana and Mali instituted the celebration of food safety week. Mali celebrated its first food safety week from 13–19 March 2006 to share experiences in the implementation of the national food safety policy. The celebration also sensitized consumers and industry on the importance of food safety and coincided with the celebration of International Consumers Day.

41. There were a number of outbreaks, including the outbreak of acute aflatoxicosis in Kenya and cholera in a number of countries. The country was provided with technical support for investigation, management and control of the outbreak. In particular, resources were provided for the strengthening of the National Public Health Reference Laboratory for monitoring of food, serum and other biological specimens for aflatoxins.

42. Recognizing the implication of exposure to aflatoxins through food, the Regional Office organized an Expert Group Meeting in May 2005 which reviewed twelve scientific papers and made recommendations for prevention and control of exposure, management of acute exposure, capacity building and appropriate methods of analysis. A number of research needs were also identified. The report is in print and will be made available in due course. In addition to the consultation report, a number of papers on the outbreak investigation were published in peer-reviewed journals.

43. Ethiopia received support to investigate an outbreak of acute watery diarrhoea. The hygiene of food enterprises was evaluated and food vendors were trained in safe food handling. Similarly, Cote d'Ivoire received technical support for the chemical incident that occurred in August 2006. Botswana was provided with technical support during an outbreak of infantile diarrhoeal diseases. Technical support was provided to Senegal for the establishment of food-borne disease surveillance system.

44. The Global Environment Monitoring System/Food Contamination Monitoring and Assessment Program (GEMS/FOOD) was introduced into six Francophone African countries, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Madagascar, Senegal and Togo, through the Third International Total Diet Study Workshop held in May 2004. The Fourth International Training Course and Workshop held in Beijing, China were attended by Cameroon and Ghana in October 2006.

45. WHO, in collaboration with the Institut Pasteur, organized a course on food-borne disease surveillance and microbiological monitoring of foods for the francophone countries in the region. The fourth regional training courses on food-borne disease surveillance were held in Yaoundé, Cameroon in December 2005. Participants were from Algeria, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Gabon, Madagascar Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Senegal and Tunisia. A Global Salm-Surv training course for Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and the Seychelles is planned for January 2007 in Madagascar. In collaboration with WHO, the Institut Pasteur, Paris organized a workshop on Salmonella Antisera Production in November 2006 which was attended by scientists from Cameroon and Cote d'Ivoire.

46. In response to the detection of H5N1 influenza virus in certain countries in the region, the regional office supported all the countries to develop their national action plans for management of epidemics and a possible pandemic. As at October 2006, 38 countries have prepared their national action plans while the remainder are at different stages of preparation including two which are still in the preparatory stage. Two regional conferences were also organized to determine the way forward.

47. A Regional Guide for the Development and Implementation of Food Law is being finalized and a number of countries have prepared/drafted food safety national action plans and policies. A Regional Guide for Microbiological Monitoring of food was prepared. A document on the adaptation of the WHO Five Keys Manual, Bringing Food Safety Home for African schools was drafted. Several information and advocacy materials for food safety were developed and disseminated, including a regional newsletter. Information has also been collected from countries to document national food safety activities.

48. As part of the efforts to promote the exchange of information and best practices, the second edition of the regional newsletter was published and information was collected from countries to document national food safety activities. A database on food safety issues was also started in order to establish an evidence-based system. The Regional Office created and disseminated an information series on a number of topics. These are available at <http://www.afro.who.int/des/fos/index.html>.

49. The WHO Five Keys for Safer Foods were implemented in Botswana, Guinea, Lesotho, Mali Mozambique and the Republic of Congo. In Lesotho the programme was used to sensitize the public and policy makers on the importance of food safety. Several food premises were inspected and large quantities of expired products seized and destroyed.

FAO Field Projects

50. Since 2000, the special regional project for food security has been implemented jointly with the Commission of UEMOA and other technical units in FAO (ESCP, AGAH, AGPP and LEGN); its objectives include, among others, the preparation of harmonized regulations covering food safety, animal and plant health, as well as capacity building among member countries on these issues and the provision of basic equipment where needed to run initial control activities. Draft regulations were discussed in December 2006 in Lomé, Togo, and regional training activities were implemented. Once these regulations are approved by the relevant Ministries of member countries, more training activities will be carried out, as well as the delivery of specific equipment, to allow the test run of food control actions in the eight countries.

51. Under its Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP), FAO has implemented numerous projects on critical aspects of food control in many countries. FAO/TCP is designed to assist Member Nations in solving their most pressing development needs. In the field of food safety these include: strengthening of national food control systems, enhancing laboratory facilities and analysis capacities and improving the ability of member countries to comply with new trade regulations. TCP projects are generally of one to two year duration, with the possibility for a second phase of funding if warranted. Projects have also been implemented from other funding sources as indicated.

52. FAO/AGNS has implemented a project to improve the quality of street foods in Benin. The project aimed at reducing the negative impact of urban pollution on consumer's health and to improve food safety at all the production-to-consumption levels. Activities were conducted between May 2004 and October 2005 and included an important training component for the benefit of horticulture producers, wholesale and retail food vendors and to food inspectors. A national plan was drawn to define the actions to be taken by the relevant governmental and non-governmental institutions to ensure the sustainability of the project outcomes.
53. An FAO/AGNS project was approved in May 2004 to support the implementation of a strategy to control and monitor the quality and safety of food products in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The project is scheduled to continue until February 2007. The objective is to improve the food safety and quality in the Congo, by setting the basis of a national food surveillance and control policy and defining a strategy for implementing an efficient food control system.
54. An FAO/AGNS project to Support the Informal Food Sector in Guinea began in June 2003 and was completed in December 2006. The objective of the assistance was to help the Government to define the strategies necessary to improve the quality of food prepared and sold on the street. The project carried out surveys and pre-test feasible actions to improve the safety and quality of food sold on the street. Consumers received information on associations and other institutions working to protect the safety and quality of food.
55. FAO/AGST coordinated a training of trainers for extension staff in Kenya to raise awareness of mycotoxin contamination and develop appropriate post-harvest practices for its control. To ensure sustainability, trainees were mandated to sensitize farmer groups and facilitate development of action plans for aflatoxin control at farm level. The action plans are intended to serve as pilot projects that can be replicated in other communities. A second phase of the project targeting other stakeholders was on-going in 2005.
56. At the request of the National Food Research Institute of Botswana a project proposal was prepared for FAO assistance in strengthening its national food safety system. This project was developed by AGNS in collaboration with the FAO subregional office for Southern and Eastern Africa and was approved in 2005. The objective of the project is to assist the country in strengthening its food control system in order to improve consumer protection by ensuring the safety and quality of the food supply, be it domestically produced or imported food.
57. A project was implemented in Senegal in May 2003 to assist in the control of pesticide residues in fruit and vegetable products for export. The project was led by FAO's Plant Production Division, in collaboration with AGNS. The aim of the assistance was to support the Government in its efforts to set-up a control and certification system for fruits and vegetables, to train laboratory personnel in pesticide residues analysis and the establishment of MRLs, and sensitize political leaders on the importance of these topics.
58. FAO/AGNS commenced work on an FAO TCP project in early 2006 to assist in the control of mycotoxins in South Africa. The objective of the project is to carry out a preliminary assessment of the level of contamination by mycotoxins (mainly OTA and DON in selected commodities) and to enhance the government's capabilities in the sampling, monitoring, prevention and control of mycotoxins in foodstuffs with a view to ensure maximum consumer protection and promote international trade in foodstuffs. The proposed activities are currently centred on data generation and analysis, with a view to improve monitoring and control activities, perform scientific based risk assessment with local data, as well as to feed in the network of information exchange in SADC countries.
59. An FAO/AGNS project, funded under the TCP programme, was recently approved for Morocco (July 2006). It aims at creating and organizing a National Consumer Centre to provide information to consumers on food related matters and promote the involvement of the consumer in promoting food quality and safety. The project is expected to run until November 2007.
60. A TCP project has recently concluded its activities in Algeria. The project provided support to the establishment and operation of the National Codex Committee (NCC). This included the training of the core

members of the NCC, the provision of information technology equipment and software, and the operation of the national secretariat of the NCC.

61. Assistance to the reorganization of the street foods sector has been granted through a TCP project, under AGNS technical responsibility, to Guinea Bissau. Approved in May 2003, the project concluded its activities in October 2005.

62. An FAO/AGNS TCP project was approved in June 2004 for Benin, aiming at developing quality assurance systems for specific production chains. Project activities included the review of key production chains to identify major food quality and safety problems, where they occur and why. They were followed with practical recommendation to prevent these problems and promote the quality of final products. The activities were finalized in December 2005.

63. A TCP project was approved for Nigeria, and technically led by AGNS, in September 2004. Its main objective was to promote a National Integrated Food Sanitation Programme, with a view to enhance food safety and food security. The project was implemented in close collaboration with the local WHO office and successfully closed in March 2006.

64. An FAO/AGNS project on “Support to the strengthening of the national Codex Committee in Madagascar” was approved in May 2006 for a duration of 12 months. Its global objective is to help the government in its efforts to strengthen food quality and health control activities and to promote the exports of agricultural products in the country. Its specific objectives are to: reinforce the capacity of national inspection and certification systems of imports and exports to respond to national and international requirements; provide the national Codex committee with the necessary tools and working methods to enable it to strengthen the safety of foods put on the Madagascan market or for export; promote the dissemination of information in the field of quality control of foodstuffs and the Codex Alimentarius; ensure increased participation by Madagascar in the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission through an adequate structuring and functioning of the national Codex Committee and its different working groups and a more active participation by all concerned parties.

Direct cooperation with developing countries

65. At the request of the Government of Cameroon, FAO is providing advice and support to the Centre Pasteur du Cameroon, Laboratoire de Chimie de Hygiène Environnement, for the implementation of a study on exposure of the inhabitants of Yaoundé to pesticide residues using a total diet study (TDS) protocol which considers FAO/WHO recommendations on this matter.

66. During 2006 FAO/AGNS provided direct assistance to the Government of Mozambique in the establishment of a national Codex committee. FAO/AGNS also assisted in the organization of a stakeholders consultation and workshop.

67. FAO/AGNS provided direct assistance to the Government of Djibouti during the second half of 2006 in the organization of a national Codex committee.

68. FAO/AGNS, jointly with the Institute of Sciences and Food Inspection, Bari, Italy, contributed to a national survey on mycotoxin contamination of food in Nigeria.

69. A request to FAO (AGNS) has been received from the Government of Cote d’Ivoire to formulate a project to strengthen the food control system. This project is in the formulation stage.

70. A request has been received from the Government of Rwanda to address the Hygienic Handling of foods of animal origin. This project is in the formulation stage. The request was submitted to the FAO Animal Production Service, in collaboration with AGNS.

71. The Government of Senegal has requested assistance from FAO/AGNS in strengthening and supporting Quality Assurance Systems in Food Safety Laboratories. The request is currently in the approval process.

72. Funding is currently being sought for a subregional programme proposal developed by FAO/AGNS to facilitate trade in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) member states through food standards and food safety management.

73. Following a request from the Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) to AGNS, a TCP project for strengthening the capacity for improving the safety and quality of fresh fruits and vegetables produced in Tanzania is currently under formulation.

74. A request was recently sent by the Ministry of Health of the Government of Mozambique requesting technical assistance to strengthen the quality assurance system of their National Laboratory for Food and Water Hygiene (LNHAA). Terms of reference have been prepared for an initial audit mission as well as for the future project formulation.