

Evaluation Report

Assessing the capacity building needs of national food control systems

September 2008

ASSESSING THE CAPACITY BUILDING NEEDS OF NATIONAL FOOD CONTROL SYSTEMS

Introduction

In November 2007, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations and Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) delivered a project to strengthen the capability of developing APEC Member Economies to:

- assess the capacity building needs of food control systems; and to
- develop capacity building action plans.

The project was funded under the Standards and Trade Development Facility in response to a grant application by the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine of the People's Republic of China (AQSIQ). Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) were the joint implementing agencies for the project.

20 participants from nine APEC Member Economies attended a workshop in Beijing from 19-23 November 2007 and participated in follow-up activities.

Project goals

The goal of the project was to improve the capacity of developing APEC Member Economies to develop and implement activities that enhance the safety and quality of food.

The outcomes for developing APEC Member Economies are:

- an improved ability to plan and conduct capacity building needs assessments regarding national food control systems; and
- the development of national capacity building actions plans based on the outcome of the assessments.

Project Activities

The project included three activities:

1. Survey of experiences in capacity building needs assessment of participating economies.

A needs assessment of developing APEC Member Economies was undertaken in August 2007 to improve the design and delivery of the training activities to follow.

2. Provision of training on capacity building needs assessment and the development of related capacity building action plans.

A workshop was held in Beijing from 19-23 November 2007 for 20 participants from nine APEC Member Economies.

3. Development of national action plans.

A questionnaire was distributed to participants six months after the training workshop to monitor and assess progress in the assessment of capacity building needs and national action plans.

Replies were received from: China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam. Chile has not provided a response at this stage.

Report on Results

All participant economies were asked to report results in four areas:

1. Needs assessment activities undertaken since the training course, including details of stakeholder participation.
2. Development of a national plan of action.
3. Experiences in using the FAO Guidelines and Quick Guide.
4. The relevance of the training to each participant's professional work.

Eight economies responded to the questionnaire, however not all economies responded to all questions. The responses are summarised below. A copy of each questionnaire and Action Plan (where provided) is at Appendix 1a – 1h to this report. A summary table is at Appendix 2.

Needs assessment activities undertaken since the training course, including details of stakeholder participation.

The project was very successful in encouraging economies to undertake needs assessment activities. Of the eight respondent economies, six reported they had undertaken some form of needs assessment since the training course.

In most cases, stakeholders included in these activities were largely from the government sector. In only two cases, private sector organisations or individuals were included in the needs assessment. One economy is yet to hold a workshop, but plans to include the full range of stakeholders.

One economy indicated that limited funding was a reason for not being able to consult more widely with stakeholders, beyond the government sector.

Overall, most economies included a broad range of government agencies and ministries in their needs assessment. The most common government agencies involved in needs assessment were agriculture and health agencies.

Development of a national plan of action

Five economies reported that they had developed action plans since the workshop. Two more economies are in the process of developing the plan, and one economy reported that there was not broad government support for a National Action Plan at the present time.

Again, the involvement of the broad range of stakeholders was low, with most economies reporting government sector stakeholders as the main participants.

Some constraints to the development of these plans were reported as; time, human resources, conflicting priorities of other agencies, and uncertainty about the level of support from senior managers in the key ministries.

The processes used to develop the plans were commonly reported as: face-to-face meetings, email, more formal working groups and workshops.

Experiences in using the FAO Guidelines and Quick Guide

All economies overwhelmingly agreed that the FAO Guidelines and the Quick Guide were very useful. In particular, the SWOT analysis was mentioned by at least four economies as an important tool which they had reported using in national action plan development.

Other comments noted that the guidelines assisted in providing a better perspective of the issues and required action.

The following comment typifies the responses to this question:

They have been very useful tools and have become major references for all the activities of the project. The FAO guidelines were used specifically during the needs assessment workshops where each component of the food control system were discussed and evaluated.

One economy also noted that the step by step process was very helpful and allowed flexibility. In a couple of cases, economies specifically described how they implemented the step by step process.

The relevance of the training to each participant's professional work.

All economies reported a high relevance of the training to their work. Many economies also reported that the training could also be usefully applied in other areas of their responsibilities outside the food safety control system.

Specifically they noted benefits in better planning of activities, taking into consideration and addressing any constraints, identifying the expected outputs and required resources.

One economy clearly reported the integration of the development of national action plans (and their pre-requisite needs assessment process), into broader government sector policy development, describing it as a continuous process with regular updates.

Assessment against identified deliverables

The initial project plan identified a number of specific deliverables. These are listed below with a short assessment indicating a ranking of: Achieved, Partially achieved, Not achieved or not able to be assessed on current information.

Deliverable	Assessment
20 food safety regulators and private sector representatives from developing economies in APEC have new knowledge and new skills to plan and carry out a capacity needs assessment of the national food control system using FAO tools on this subject.	Achieved. 20 participants attended the Beijing training course and demonstrated new knowledge and skills.
Creation of a network of trainers who could facilitate and lead future training on capacity building needs assessment and follow-up activities in developing APEC Member Economies and other developing economies.	Achieved. However, it would be useful to know how many trainers were subsequently 'trained' in-country.
Organisation of national workshops by participating economies on assessing the need for capacity building in the national food control systems in participating APEC Economies.	Partially achieved. It should be noted that at this stage, one economy had not organised a needs assessment workshop; and the majority of the economies did not include the full range of stakeholder groups in consultations.
Development of action plans by participating economies for strengthening the capacity in the national food control systems in participating APEC countries within six months of completion of the training workshop;	Partially achieved. Five economies have developed action plans within six months, two are planned to be finalised by the end of the year and one economy did not develop an action plan.
Summaries of national experiences by participating economies in applying the FAO tools to assess	Achieved. This report provides a summary of economies' reported

food safety capacity have been prepared	experiences.
Development and testing of an approach and methodology for training in the assessment of capacity building needs, which could be further replicated in other regions in the future	<p>Achieved.</p> <p>The overwhelming positive response of participants to the FAO Guidelines and Quick Guide demonstrates that this training methodology could be replicated. In addition, nearly all economies have reported the development or partial development of action plans which should be read as a direct endorsement of the general training methodology.</p>

Conclusions

All project deliverables were either achieved or partially achieved.

While most economies reported completion of a **needs assessment** activity, the involvement of the broad range of stakeholders outside of the government was very limited – evident in only two economies. This may be a result of either an unwillingness to include all stakeholders at the beginning of the process, or difficulties in identifying appropriate representative stakeholder groups or individuals. More information would be needed from economies to determine the specific reasons for low stakeholder involvement.

A very strong outcome from the workshop is that seven economies have reported that they have either developed, or plan to develop, a **national plan of action** to strengthen national food control systems.

Given this very positive outcome in terms of the high number of action plans reported to be completed or commenced, it may be useful to conduct a more detailed assessment of the work undertaken, within 12-18 months of the original workshop (by mid 2009). This could be carried out in a workshop where each economy presents its plan and shares its experiences in: disseminating the outputs of the original workshop; stakeholder engagement/consultation; undertaking a needs assessment; the development of national action plans – including the constraints that may have hindered progress in any of these areas. This type of follow-up activity will be important to support the continued development of the plans and their capacity to meet the future needs of the economies.

There was a very positive response to the usefulness of the **FAO Guidelines and the Quick Guide**. Many economies gave specific examples of using the guidelines to step through the development process.

Only one economy mentioned their subsequent extension of training to other trainers, and in turn, their delivery of needs assessment workshops with stakeholders. It may be useful to seek some additional information from economies on the actual numbers of ‘trainers’ this project has enabled.