

Performance, Vision and Strategy (PVS) for



Technical
Capability



Human and
Financial Capital



Interaction
with the
Private
Sector



Access to
Markets and
Safeguarding
Public Health

National Food Safety Services

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Introduction

The availability of a safe food supply is fundamental to ensure human health and productivity, national economic well-being and poverty reduction. On the contrary, food-borne illnesses can have negative social and economic impacts. In many countries, as food trade has increased, so has the incidence of food-borne illnesses caused by microbial contamination, such as *Salmonella* spp, *Campylobacter* spp and *Escherichia coli* O157:H7. Similarly, chemical contaminants in the food chain continue to be significant sources of food-borne illnesses and health concerns. These contaminants include natural toxins, such as mycotoxins and marine toxins, environmental contaminants, and residues from the improper use of pesticides and veterinary medicines. In addition we must continue to address emerging food safety challenges that have an impact on public health, such as highly pathogenic avian influenza (H5N1) and bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). These trends and events have affected, public confidence in the ability of the countries' official services to protect public health and assure the availability of safe foods.

"To respond to the challenges of the current climate, as well as growing global demands for food, food safety programs must reflect an expanded mandate and a broader vision, transcend the traditional topics and include the whole of the agri-food chain, from material for production to the final product."

To respond to the challenges presented by current food safety issues and by the growing global demand for food, national food safety services must adopt expanded mandates and a broader vision, extending their traditional range of activities to include the entire food chain from inputs for production to the final product for consumption.

To strengthen national food safety services it is essential to promote and support their development based on a solid science-based foundation. Risk analysis must also be incorporated into the design, execution, and management of national programs.

Initiatives aimed at ensuring the sustainability and reliability of the national food safety services should be based on the identification of needs, their analysis and prioritization. To accomplish this, it is useful for countries to have an instrument that guides the discussion and characterization of the institutional and operational capabilities of the national food safety services, as well as measures advancement, and defines strategic actions for technical cooperation.

To assist in this effort, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and the Pan American Health Organization of the World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) joined forces to adapt the Performance, Vision and Strategy (PVS) instrument.¹ The PVS instrument can assist national food safety services to establish their current level of performance,

"This will entail stronger alliances and closer cooperation with its users, other countries and their national food safety service counter parts."

form a shared vision with the private sector, establish priorities, and facilitate strategic planning in order to take full advantage of the new opportunities and obligations of globalization.

The goal of the WHO and its Regional Office for the Americas (PAHO/WHO) is to reduce the social and health impact of food-borne illnesses. This objective is pursued through the following lines of action: promoting and supporting the development of sustainable and integrated food safety services across the entire food chain (farm-to-table); formulating science-based measures to prevent exposure to unacceptable levels of biological, chemical, and physical agents in food; and disseminating information in cooperation with other sectors and partners.

For its part, IICA's efforts are directed at assisting countries to strengthen their national food safety services with the goal of contributing to the protection of consumer health, improving efficiency, and helping to successfully compete in national and

"scientific principles – the fundamental basis of operation to ensure that international trade is free of discrimination and scientifically unjustified restrictions."

1. *The PVS instrument was originally developed jointly by the World Animal Health Organization (OIE) and IICA for Veterinary Services.*

international markets. This is achieved by helping improve their regulatory mechanisms and science-based technical capacities. Such improvements enhance a country's ability to create leadership skills and technical capacities in food safety throughout the food chain, and help identify in advance, emerging issues that may impact public health or food trade.

Both organizations share a common interest to help countries comply with the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) of the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the standards, guidelines and recommendations of the Codex Alimentarius, the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC).

Countries with highly credible food safety services have the following four fundamental components in common: 1) the **technical capability** to address current and new issues based on scientific principles; 2) the **human and financial capital** to attract resources and retain professionals with technical and leadership skills; 3) the **interaction with the private sector** to stay on course, identify needs and conduct joint programs and services; and 4) the **ability to safeguard public health and access markets** by complying with existing standards and the flexibility to adapt to new standards. These four components provide the basic structure of the PVS instrument.

Applying the PVS Instrument

In order to best establish a current level of performance, form a shared vision, set priorities and facilitate strategic planning, a series of six to eight critical competencies have been developed for each of the four fundamental components. Qualitative levels of advancement are described for each critical competency. To help visualize the potential or cumulative level of advancement within each critical competency, a pie chart is shown next to the text explanation for each level.

In addition to the description of the qualitative levels, additional space has been provided after each critical competency either to expand upon or clarify responses, if so desired. The following hypothetical example illustrates the level of advancement determined, with an explanation, for **harmonization**, one of the twenty-seven critical competencies covered in the PVS instrument.

3. Harmonization

The capability and authority of the national food safety services to be active¹ in harmonization, to ensure that national regulations covered by their mandates are consistent with international norms, guidelines and recommendations.

Levels of advancement:

- The national food safety services have no process in place for being informed of international standards. National regulatory norms do not take account of international standards, guidelines and recommendations.
- The national food safety services are aware of relevant standards but have no process in place for identifying gaps, inconsistencies, and non-conformities between national regulations and international standards, guidelines and recommendations.
- The national food safety services *monitor* the adoption of new standards, guidelines and recommendations and periodically *review* national regulations with the aim of *harmonizing* them with international norms, guidelines and recommendations.
- The national food safety services are also active in *reviewing and commenting* on draft standards, guidelines and recommendations.
- The national food safety services *actively and regularly participate at the international level* in the formulation of international standards, guidelines and recommendations.

The national food safety service has reviewed and

harmonized all regulatory norms in the dairy production

chain, and is currently reviewing the regulatory norms

relevant to the fresh vegetable production chain.

1. The PVS instrument was originally developed jointly by the World Animal Health Organization (OIE) and IICA for Veterinary Services.



Using the results

The PVS instrument is easy to understand, flexible and easy to use. More than a diagnostic tool, it is a process geared to the future that can be used in a passive or active mode, depending on the level of interest and commitment of the users and the official services to improve its national services over time.

In the passive mode, the PVS instrument raises awareness, improves understanding, and teaches the different participating sectors the basic components and critical competencies needed for national food safety services to function adequately. In this mode, the instrument can also be used to develop a shared vision, foster dialogue, and adopt a common language for discussion.

The active mode generates maximum potential and yields the best results, assuming both the official and private sectors are committed to the process. In this mode, performance is assessed, differences are explored, and priorities are established. Leadership from the official sector is critical to success. It is in the active mode that actions happen, investments are made, and commitments are fulfilled. Continuity of the PVS process is assured when a true partnership exists between the official and the private sectors.

For example, the director of a national food safety service might use the instrument to monitor advances in each of the four components. Furthermore, the different users can participate in the analysis and discussion of results to assist in defining common policies, identifying priorities, and proposing actions to be taken.

The results of the PVS instrument can help: 1) ascertain overall performance in each of the four components; 2) rate the relative performance of each of the competencies; 3) compare the performance of the national food safety services with that of others in the region or globally, for the purpose of exploring areas for cooperation or negotiation; 4) identify differences in the responses of different users with a view to arriving at a common point of view; 5) foster common understanding in order to achieve greater levels of advancement; 6) help determine the benefits and costs of investing in national food safety services and obtaining assistance from financial and technical cooperation agencies; 7) provide a basis for establishing routine monitoring and follow-up mechanisms for assessing the overall level of performance of national food safety services over time; and 8) help identify and specify objectives and needs when applying for financial support (grants).

Fundamental Components

I. Technical Capability

II. Human and Financial Capital

III. Interaction with the Private Sector

IV. Safeguarding Public Health
and Market Access

I. TECHNICAL CAPABILITY



The capability of the national food safety services to establish and apply sanitary measures and science-based procedures.

Critical Competencies:

1. Diagnostic and food analysis capability
2. Early detection and emergency response capability
3. Inspection and registration services
4. Surveillance
5. Emerging issues
6. Risk analysis
7. Technical innovation

1. Diagnostic and food analysis capability

The capability and authority of national food safety services to identify and record those biological, physical, and chemical agents that can adversely affect public health and food safety.

A. Levels of advancement (clinical diagnosis):

-  For food-borne illnesses, the national food safety services can carry out the clinical diagnosis, but not the laboratory confirmation.
-  For the *most prevalent* food-borne illnesses, the national food safety services can collect samples anywhere in the country and immediately ship them to a laboratory for confirmation.
-  For the *most prevalent* food-borne illnesses, the national food safety services can carry out the clinical diagnosis and laboratory confirmation on samples from anywhere in the country through *a nationwide clinical laboratories network*.
-  Same as previous level, plus the reference laboratory of the national network actively participates in *international networks* in order to harmonize its protocols for analysis, improve its quality system, and strengthen scientific and technical cooperation.
-  In the case of *new and emerging diseases*, the national food safety services have access to national or international reference laboratories, and can collect and ship samples to the most qualified laboratory for confirmation.
-  The national food safety services promote the accreditation of national network laboratories and audits the quality of their clinical diagnostic, collection of samples and shipment procedures. National network laboratories have diagnostic quality assurance programs and provide reliable and up-to-date information on incidents of food born illnesses to the surveillance system.

B. Levels of advancement (food analysis):

- For food contaminants, the national food safety services can carry out the clinical diagnosis, but not the laboratory confirmation.
 - For the *most prevalent* food contaminants, the national food safety services can collect samples anywhere in the country and immediately ship them to a laboratory for diagnosis and confirmation.
 - For the *most prevalent* food contaminants, the national food safety services can analyze samples anywhere in the country through *a nationwide food analysis laboratory network*.
 - Same as previous level, plus the reference laboratories of the national network actively participate in international networks, for example voluntarily participating in the *Inter-American Network of Food Analysis Laboratories (INFAL)* in order to harmonize their protocols for analysis, improve their quality systems, and strengthen scientific and technical cooperation.
 - In the case of *new and emerging hazards*, the national food safety services have access to national or international reference laboratories, and can collect and ship samples to the most qualified laboratory for confirmation.
 - The national food safety services promote the accreditation of the national network laboratories and audit the quality of their clinical diagnostic, collection of samples and shipment procedures. National laboratories have diagnostic quality assurance programs and provide reliable and up-to-date information to food safety surveillance system.
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2. Early detection and emergency response capability≈

The capability and authority of national food safety services to *respond* rapidly to unexpected outbreaks of food-borne illnesses or situations that put the public health at immediate risk.

Levels of advancement:

-  The national food safety services do not have a system for determining whether or not a sanitary emergency exists; if they have such a system, they do not have the authority to declare an emergency and take action.
-  The national food safety services have a system to determine whether or not a sanitary emergency exists but lack the necessary legal authority and financial support¹ to take action in response to sanitary emergencies.
-  The national food safety services have a system that facilitates timely decision making on whether or not a sanitary emergency exists. The national food safety services have the legal authority and financial support to take action in response to outbreaks of food-borne illnesses.
-  Same as previous level, plus the national food safety services have institutional guidelines and mechanisms in place that enable them to coordinate the response to outbreaks of food-borne illnesses with other relevant State organizations, institutions² involved in the food chain, and the private sector.

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1. Legal authority and financial support: the national food safety services already has in place the legal framework and financial resources needed to be able to take immediate action.
 2. Relevant organizations or institutions: any official institutions responsible for control or surveillance in any part of the food chain.

3. Inspection¹ and registration² services

The capability and authority of national food safety services to prevent the contamination of food products along the food chain.

Levels of advancement:

-  The national food safety services have a national registration service but it is not linked to an inspection service.
-  The national food safety services have a national registration service but inspection services are reactive based on problems presented or perceived.
-  The national food safety services have inspection and registration services capable of making periodic inspections, taking samples, and certifying food for local consumption, assuring compliance with national standards and facilitating surveillance.
-  The national food safety services have inspection and registration services that strengthen the voluntary observance by food companies of the application of procedures and food safety assurance systems in businesses (self regulation).
-  The national food safety services have specific food safety inspection and registration services carried out in coordination with the private sector that provide verifiable results that products and procedures throughout the food chain meet existing national standards and sanitary guidelines.

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1. Inspection service: has as its principle objective to ensure that food products meet their sanitary standards throughout the food chain.
 2. Registration service: government-regulated sanitary authorization for individual products or establishments that process, pack, transport or commercialize foods.

4. Surveillance

The capability and authority of national food safety services to *Maintain* an ongoing and systematic process of collection, analysis, and interpretation of food safety data as relates to potential problems in human health, which can be used to establish science-based policies, norms and standards based on risk.

Levels of advancement:

-  The national food safety services do not have established monitoring¹ or surveillance programs.
-  The national food safety services conduct surveillance programs based only on information from suspected cases.
-  The national food safety services conduct surveillance programs based on food contaminant monitoring results and clinical laboratory reports *for the most prevalent hazards*, in a part of the food chain.
-  The national food safety services execute integrated surveillance programs throughout the entire food chain².

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1. Monitoring: *refers to the performance and analysis of routine sampling to detect changes in human health, the environment or in the state of the food products.*
 2. Integrated surveillance program throughout the entire food chain: *combines data from feed, animals, food and humans.*

5. Emerging issues¹

The capability and authority of national food safety services to *identify in advance* sanitary problems or sanitary situations covered by its mandate which may put at risk, harm or benefit the public health or the trade of food products.

Levels of advancement:

-  The national food safety services do not have mechanisms to *identify in advance* emerging issues that may put at risk, harm or benefit the public health or the trade of food products.
-  The national food safety services *gather and summarize information* on emerging issues at the national or international level that may put at risk, harm or benefit the public health or the trade of food products.
-  The national food safety services *assess the risks, costs or opportunities* of the emerging issues previously identified.
-  Based on scientific risk analysis, the national food safety services implement, with other relevant State institutions and/or their users, prevention or risk control actions to address adverse emerging issues, or alternately, benefits associated with emerging issues.
-  Based on scientific risk analysis, the national food safety services coordinate and implement actions with other countries in order to anticipate emerging issues, including audits of exporting countries' services and participation in international emergency networks.

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1. Emerging issues: the emergence of new situations associated with competitiveness, market access, protection of public health, agricultural health, and the environment. Depending on their nature, emerging issues may represent threats but may also provide opportunities. The appearance of an emerging pathogen, changes in standards, and biotechnology are examples of emerging issues.

6. Risk analysis¹

The capability of national food safety services to make decisions and take action based on scientific principles and evidence, including the assessment, management and communication of risk.

Levels of advancement:

-  The national food safety services do not compile data or other types of information that can be used to identify potential sanitary hazards and to analyze risk.² Sanitary decisions are not supported by scientific evidence.
-  The national food safety services compile and maintain sources of information or can access the information necessary only for hazard *identification*. Sanitary decisions may be based on scientific evidence.
-  The national food safety services have systems for actively seeking and maintaining relevant data and information for *risk assessment*³ and use this information in their surveillance systems. They also have personnel dedicated to this task. Scientific principles and evidence provide the basis for options considered by sanitary decision makers for *managing risk*.
-  Same as previous level, plus the national food safety services are consistent in conducting scientifically based risk assessments and developing food safety policies (managing risk) in this regard.
-  Same as previous level, plus the national food safety services are consistent in managing risk and communicating the decisions taken to the WTO/SPS, trading partners and users.

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1. Risk analysis: the assessment, management, and communication of risk.
 2. Risk: the likelihood of manifestation and probable magnitude of the consequences of a prejudicial health incident produced by one or more hazards present in food products.
 3. Risk assessment: the integration of hazard identification, hazard characterization, exposure assessment, and risk characterization.

7. Technical Innovation

The capability of national food safety services to *update their overall service* in accordance with the latest scientific advances and based on the sanitary norms and guidelines of Codex Alimentarius, OIE, IPPC and the WTO/SPS Agreement.

Levels of advancement:

- The national food safety services have only *informal access* to technical innovations through personal contacts or external media sources.¹
- The national food safety services maintain an information base on technical innovations and international norms through subscriptions to scientific journals and electronic media.²
- The national food safety services have specific programs that identify technical innovations that can improve their operations and procedures.
- The national food safety services incorporate technical innovations into selected functions and procedures with specific resources and the collaboration or contributions of its users.
- The national food safety services have a dedicated budget and the collaboration and contributions of their users to continually implement technical innovations throughout the national service. In addition, they can rely on their capacity to secure outside cooperation and technical assistance funds for innovation improvements.

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1. External media: sources of information to which the national food safety services may not be subscribed, such as scientific publications and magazines.
 2. This includes consulting publications and news in the web pages of the international reference organizations (Codex, OIE, and IPPC, WTO) as well as the regular participation in international forums, codex committees, International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN).

II. HUMAN AND FINANCIAL CAPITAL



Institutional and financial sustainability, based on the level of professional talent and financial resources available

Critical Competencies:

1. Human talent
2. Training
3. Funding sources
4. Stability of policies and programs
5. Contingency funds
6. Technical independence
7. Capability to invest and grow

1. Human Talent

The capability of national food safety services to efficiently carry out professional and technical functions. It assesses professional staff in two ways: on the basis of their academic degrees¹ and their qualifications and training.²

A. Levels of advancement (academic degrees):

- Within the national food safety services, it is estimated that less than ten percent of the professional personnel hold a relevant university degree³ recognized by the State.
- Within the national food safety services, it is estimated that more than ten percent but less than a quarter of the professional personnel hold a relevant university degree recognized by the State.
- Within the national food safety services, it is estimated that more than a quarter but less than half of the professional personnel hold a relevant university degree recognized by the State.
- Within the national food safety services, it is estimated that half but less than three quarters of the professional personnel hold a relevant university degree recognized by the State.
- Within the national food safety services, it is estimated that three quarters or more of the professional personnel hold a relevant university degree recognized by the State.

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1. Not all professional positions require a university degree. Nonetheless, the percentage of university degrees serves as an indicator of professional excellence within the national service.
 2. Not all national food safety services have sufficient professionals for the required functions; thus, the percentage of qualified and trained professionals is indeed an indicator of excellence in the service.
 3. Relevant university degree: one that applies to the position held or to the general disciplines of the organization.

B. Levels of advancement (professional staff qualifications):

- Within the national food safety services, it is estimated that less than ten percent of the personnel are qualified and trained to carry out the functions of their position.
- Within the national food safety services, it is estimated that more than ten percent but less than a quarter of the personnel are qualified and trained to carry out the functions of their position.
- Within the national food safety services, it is estimated that a quarter but less than half of the personnel are qualified and trained to carry out the functions of their position.
- Within the national food safety services, it is estimated that half but less than three-quarters of the personnel are qualified and trained to carry out the functions of their position.
- Within the national food safety services, it is estimated that three-quarters or more of the personnel are qualified and trained to carry out the functions of their position.

2. Training

The capability of national food safety services to keep their personnel up-to-date in terms of relevant information and knowledge, measured in terms of the implementation of an annual, needs-based training plan.

Levels of advancement:

-  The national food safety services have no training plans.
-  The national food safety services have an annual training plan but it is not updated or funded.
-  The national food safety services have an annual training plan that is updated and funded but only partially implemented¹.
-  The national food safety services have an updated and funded annual training plan that is largely implemented.
-  The national food safety services have an up-to-date annual training plan that is implemented for everyone.

1. Partially implemented: only implemented for some personnel or partially implemented for all personnel.

3. Funding Sources

The ability of national food safety services to access financial resources for their continued operation and sustainability, free of pressure from political sources or users.

Levels of advancement:

-  Funding for the national food safety services is neither stable nor clearly defined. The national food safety services budget competes with those of other State institutions and depends entirely on resources from the general treasury.
 -  The national food safety services are funded from a specific line item prescribed within the national budget.
 -  The national food safety services are funded from a specific line item prescribed within the national budget and with fees collected from users for the provision of specific services (i.e., inspection, registration, and certification services).
 -  Same as previous level, plus the national food safety services also receive additional funds from their users to execute specific programs; management and administration of cooperation funds is adequate.
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4. Stability of policies and programs

The capability of national food safety services to implement policies and programs that are sustainable, improve over time, and incorporate new demands, independent of political changes; measured in two ways: national food safety services reorganization and coordination capability

A. Levels of advancement (national food safety services reorganization):

- The national food safety services are reorganized frequently at all levels.
- The national food safety services are reorganized frequently at some levels.
- The national food safety services are reorganized *only at the political level* whenever political changes occur.
- The national food safety services are stable¹ at the technical and political levels.

B. Levels of advancement (coordination and management capability among government institutions):

- National food safety legislation do not clearly define the obligations and competencies of all official sector institutions that comprise the food safety services.
- Legislation exists that defines the obligations and competencies of official sector institutions at the national and local levels.
- Coordinated inter- and intra-institutional activities in the official sector take place at least at the national level.
- Coordinated inter- and intra-institutional activities in the official sector take place at both the national and local levels.

1. Stable organization: one that has maintained its core structure and functions for 5 years or more.

5. Contingency Funds

The capability of national food safety services to access extraordinary financial resources for responding to emergency situations or emerging issues; it is measured by the ease of the process and the ease with which contingency resources can be secured.

Levels of advancement:

-  No contingency fund exists and any extraordinary resources can only be obtained through legislation or by presidential decree.
 -  A contingency fund with *limited* resources has been established but additional resources must be approved via legislation or presidential decree.
 -  A contingency fund with *limited* resources has been established but additional resources must be approved by the competent Ministry.
 -  A contingency fund with *substantial* resources has been established but additional resources must be approved by the competent Ministry.
 -  A contingency fund with *substantial* resources has been established and includes additional resources previously made available by users.
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6. Technical Independence

The capability of national food safety services to carry out their duties with autonomy and free from political interference that may affect technical and scientific decisions. Two aspects are measured: political appointments¹ and technical support for decisions.

A. Levels of advancement (political appointments):

- The directors and technical professionals of the national food safety services are political appointees.
- The directors of national food safety services are the only political appointees.
- There are no political appointees in the national food safety services. All positions are selected on the basis of merit.

B. Levels of advancement (technical support for decisions):

- The technical decisions made by the national food safety services are almost always based on political considerations.
- Technical decisions *incorporate* scientific principles but are frequently modified to conform to political considerations.
- Technical decisions are *based on* scientific principles but may be subject to review and possible modification based on political considerations.
- Technical decisions are *based only* on scientific principles and are not changed to meet political considerations.

1. Political appointments: appointments made by the political party in power, at the discretion of the president, and subject to immediate removal.

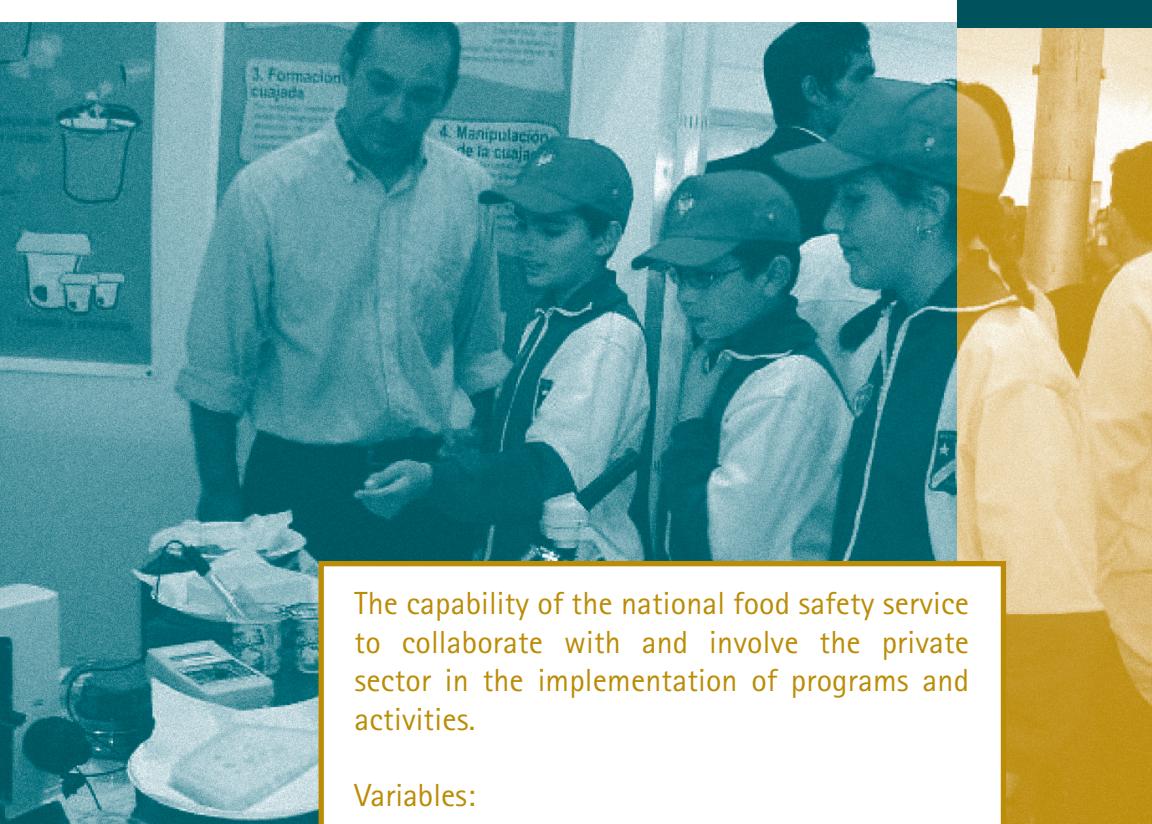
7. Capability to invest and grow

The capability of national food safety services to secure additional investments over time for the sustained improvement of the entire service; the use of these resources is not subject to pressure from political sources and/or from users.

Levels of advancement:

-  There are no sustained actions to invest in the overall structure of the national food safety services.
-  The national food safety services elaborate and present proposals for structural improvements and secure investment funds from cooperation or donor agencies.
-  The national food safety services secure over time significant resources for structural improvements through special allocations from the general treasury or special line items.
-  Same as previous level, plus the national food safety services receive resources and capital investment from the private sector for improvements and jointly planned programs.

III. INTERACTION WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR



The capability of the national food safety service to collaborate with and involve the private sector in the implementation of programs and activities.

Variables:

1. Information
2. Communication
3. Official representation
4. Accreditation
5. Capability to respond
6. Food Safety Awareness

1. Information

The capability of national food safety services to inform their users, in an effective and timely manner, of activities, programs and sanitary developments.

Levels of advancement:

-  The national food safety services have no mechanisms in place to keep users informed of activities, programs and sanitary developments.
 -  The national food safety services operate official communication outlets, which users can consult regarding standards, regulations and notifications.
 -  The national food safety services routinely¹ publish the results of their activities and programs, and information on sanitary developments.
 -  The national food safety services make up-to-date information available, via the internet, on sanitary developments, their programs and current activities, and also actively seek inputs from the private sector.

1. In this case, every six months.

2. Communication

The capability of national food safety services to maintain fluid communication with the public sector and with their users.

Levels of advancement:

- (○) The national food safety services have no communication mechanisms in place to facilitate dialogue between the relevant State institutions and the private sector.
- (◐) The national food safety services maintain *informal* channels of communication with the relevant State institutions and the private sector.
- (◑) The national food safety services establish and promote official dialogue with different users on *proposed and current regulations*.
- (◐◑) Same as previous level, plus the national food safety services hold forums and meetings with the different users in order to establish or improve *programs and services*.
- (●) Same as previous level, plus the national food safety services actively promote dialogue with and solicit feedback from the different users regarding national regulatory norms and official representation at the WTO/SPS, Codex Alimentarius, OIE and IPPC.

3. Official representation

The capability of national food safety services to regularly and actively participate, coordinate, and provide follow up to the meetings of international organizations such as the WTO/SPS, Codex Alimentarius (through the national Codex Alimentarius committee), OIE and IPPC.

Levels of advancement:

-  The national food safety services do not participate in or follow-up on the meetings of the WTO/SPS, Codex Alimentarius, OIE and IPPC.
-  The national food safety services participate sporadically or passively¹ in the meetings of the WTO/SPS, Codex Alimentarius, OIE and IPPC.
-  The national food safety services take into consideration the opinions of their users and participate regularly and actively² in the meetings of the WTO/SPS, Codex Alimentarius, OIE and IPPC.
-  The national food safety services, in consultation with their different users, identify strategic topics, provide leadership, and coordinate topics with the delegates that represent the national agenda in the meetings of the WTO/SPS, Codex Alimentarius, OIE and IPPC.

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1. Passive participation: being represented at but contributing little during the meetings.
 2. Active participation: preparing in advance for and contributing during the meetings; includes exploring common solutions and generating proposals for possible adoption.

4. Accreditation (Authorization)

The capability and authority of national food safety services to accredit and delegate to third parties (i.e. private professionals, laboratories, etc.) the responsibility of executing specific official services.

Levels of advancement:

- The national food safety services have neither the authority nor the capability to accredit or authorize third parties.
- The national food safety services have the authority to accredit or authorize third parties to conduct a *specific activity* but not a *specific service*.
- The national food safety services have programs to accredit or authorize third parties to offer *specific services*.
- The national food safety services can develop and implement accreditation or authorization programs for *new services*.
- The national food safety services carry out quality assurance audits of their accreditation or authorization programs in order to maintain the trust of trading partners and users.

5. Capability to be responsive to users needs

The capability of national food safety services to collaborate with their users in developing new programs and services to respond to changing priorities and opportunities.

Levels of advancement:

-  The national food safety services do not involve their users in discussing changing priorities and opportunities.
-  The national food safety services have *informal dialogue* with their users regarding their current capacity and changing priorities and opportunities.
-  The national food safety services *hold meetings and forums* with their users to identify changing priorities and opportunities.
-  The national food safety services and their users *collaboratively* identify resources, roles, and responsibilities of potential programs and services in response to changing priorities and opportunities.
-  The national food safety services, with the active participation and contribution of their users, periodically implement new programs and services.

6. Joint programs implementation

The capability of national food safety services and the private sector to formulate and implement joint programs on an annual basis.

Levels of advancement:

-  The national food safety services have no joint programs.
-  The national food safety services have established joint annual programs but they are not updated or funded.
-  The national food safety services have joint annual programs that are updated and funded but only partially implemented.¹
-  The national food safety services have joint programs that are annually updated, funded and fully implemented (i.e. food safety education programs).

1. Partially implemented: only some activities are implemented, or all activities are only partially implemented.

IV. SAFEGUARDING PUBLIC HEALTH AND MARKET ACCESS



The capability and authority of national food safety services to protect public health and provide support for accessing, retaining and expanding markets.

Critical Competencies:

1. Compliance with regulatory norms
2. Setting of regulatory norms
3. Harmonization
4. Certification
5. Equivalency and other sanitary agreements
6. Traceability
7. Transparency

1. Compliance with regulatory norms¹

The capability and authority of national food safety services to ensure that their users are in compliance with the regulatory norms covered by their mandate.

Levels of advancement:

-  The national food safety services have no inspection or verification compliance programs to ensure user compliance with regulatory norms.
 -  The national food safety services have implemented inspection or verification compliance programs of the regulatory norms for *selected* products and/or processes but *only report* instances of non-compliance.
 -  The national food safety services have implemented compliance programs consisting of inspection and verification of regulatory norms for *selected* products and processes, if necessary *imposing penalties* for non-compliance.
 -  The national food safety services have implemented compliance programs consisting of inspection and verification of regulatory norms for *all* products and processes covered by their mandates, if necessary *imposing penalties* for non-compliance.
 -  The national food safety services conduct audits of their inspection and verification compliance programs.

1. Regulatory norms: sanitary measures that include all relevant laws, decrees, regulations, prescriptions, and procedures.

2. Setting of regulatory norms

The capability and authority of national food safety services to formulate and adopt regulatory norms for processes and products covered by their mandates.

Levels of advancement:

-  The national food safety services do not have the authority to propose national legislation and set regulatory norms.
-  The national food safety services have the *technical capability* to adopt national legislation and formulate regulatory norms.
-  The national food safety services based on national legislation have the flexibility and *legal framework* necessary in order to adopt legislation and set regulatory norms.
-  The national food safety services based on national legislation *adopt legislation and set regulatory norms*, applying procedures that take into consideration the opinions of their users and that comply with international standards.

3. Harmonization

The capability and authority of national food safety services to be active¹ in harmonization, to ensure that national regulations covered by their mandates are consistent with international norms, guidelines and recommendations.

Levels of advancement:

-  The national food safety services have no process in place for being informed of international standards. National regulatory norms do not take account of international standards, guidelines and recommendations.
-  The national food safety services are aware of relevant standards but have no process in place for identifying gaps, inconsistencies, and non-conformities between national regulations and international standards, guidelines and recommendations.
-  The national food safety services *monitor* the adoption of new standards, guidelines and recommendations and periodically *review* national regulations with the aim of *harmonizing* them with international norms, guidelines and recommendations.
-  The national food safety services are also active in *reviewing and commenting* on draft standards, guidelines and recommendations.
-  The national food safety services *actively and regularly participate at the international level* in the formulation of international standards, guidelines and recommendations.

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1. A country can be active in international standard setting without actively pursuing national changes. The importance of this element lies in the promotion of change in the country.

4. Certification

The capability and authority of national food safety services to certify products and processes covered by their mandates, in accordance with national and international regulatory norms, guidelines and recommendations.¹

Levels of advancement:

-  The national food safety services have neither the capability nor the authority to certify products or processes.
-  The national food safety services have the authority to certify *selected* products or processes.
-  The national food safety services *conduct* certification programs for *selected* products or processes.
-  The national food safety services can develop and conduct certification programs for *new* products or processes.
-  The national food safety services have the certification programs necessary for all relevant products and conduct audits of their certification programs in order to maintain confidence in the system..

1. In conducting certification programs, the national food safety services must always operate free of political interference or from the private sector. However some of these programs can be executed by independent parties which have been delegated to and/or audited by the national food safety services.

5. Equivalency¹ and other sanitary agreements

The capability and authority of national food safety services to negotiate, implement and maintain equivalency and other sanitary agreements with other countries regarding the norms and processes under their mandates.

Levels of advancement:

- The national food safety services have neither the authority nor the capability to negotiate and approve equivalency and other sanitary agreements with other countries.
 - The national food safety services have the authority to *negotiate and approve* equivalency and other sanitary agreements with other countries.
 - Same as previous level, plus the national food safety services *evaluate and propose* equivalency agreements with other countries for selected products and processes.
 - Same as previous level, plus the national food safety services actively *pursue the development* of equivalency agreements with other countries on new products and processes.
 - Same as previous level, plus the national food safety services have programs that provide feedback from their users as well as information on advances in international standards, guidelines and recommendations, and pursue specific equivalency agreements with other countries.

1. Equivalency: alternative sanitary measures proposed by an exporting country to an importing country which offer the same level of protection as those in use by the importing country.

6. Traceability

The capability and authority of national food safety services to ensure, across the entire food chain, that they can track the history, location, and distribution of any food and related products covered by their mandates.

Levels of advancement:

-  The national food safety services have no tracking programs for food products.
-  The national food safety services or authorized third parties can inspect and document the sanitary status of *selected* food and related products at *specific points* of the food chain.
-  The national food safety services have established procedures in place and can track *selected food* and related products across that *portion* of the corresponding food chain covered by its mandate.
-  The national food safety services, along with other relevant State institutions and the private sector, have coordinated procedures in place for tracking food and related products *across the entire food chain* for all foods.
-  Same as previous level, plus the national food safety services, in cooperation with other relevant State institutions and the private sector, carry out audits of their traceability procedures.

7. Transparency

The capability and authority of national food safety services to notify the WTO/SPS and regional integration initiatives (when applicable) and the INFOSAN network of their national regulations and epidemiological status, in accordance with the procedures established by those organizations.

Levels of advancement:

-  The national food safety services do not notify the WTO/SPS of their regulatory norms, nor do they voluntarily inform INFOSAN or INFOSAN-Emergency of their epidemiological status, whichever is relevant.
-  The national food safety services *partially* notify the WTO/SPS of their regulatory norms, and voluntarily inform INFOSAN or INFOSAN-Emergency of their epidemiological status, whichever is relevant.
-  The national food safety services notify the WTO/SPS of their regulatory norms, in full compliance with the notification criteria of those bodies, and voluntarily inform INFOSAN or INFOSAN-Emergency of their epidemiological status, whichever is relevant.
-  Same as previous level, plus the national food safety services *inform their users* of changes in national and international regulatory norms and underscore with their users the importance of being transparent.
-  Same as previous level, plus the national food safety services, along with other relevant State institutions, conduct audits of their transparency procedures.

Glossary of Selected Terms

Audits: A systematic and functionally independent examination, the objective of which is to determine if an activity or process and subsequent results meet prescribed objectives.

Codex Alimentarius: An international organization established to facilitate world trade in foods by developing internationally acceptable standards, guidelines and recommendations which meet the objectives of freer trade and consumer health protection.

Food contaminant: All biological, physical or chemical agents, foreign material or other substances not intentionally added to food which may compromise food safety or suitability.

Food chain: Includes all the activities involved in the production, processing, transportation, distribution, commercialization, and consumption of food products.

International norms, guidelines and recommendations: As regards food safety, those established by the Codex Alimentarius; as regards to animal health and zoonoses, those established by the OIE; as regards phytosanitary aspects, those established by IPPC.

Laboratory: A properly equipped facility endowed with competent technical personnel to carry out different food analyses and clinical diagnostic methods and tests. The laboratory should be authorized by the respective national food safety services, and work under its control or supervision.

National food safety services: All the public institutions involved in food control, surveillance and monitoring across the food chain; also includes officially accredited private professionals or institutions.

Users of national food safety services: This includes the private sector, academic institutions, public-private associations, and consumer associations.

WTO/SPS: The Sanitary and Phytosanitary Committee of the World Trade Organization, made up of member countries and oversees the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures.

Check List

I. Technical Capability

- Diagnostic and food analysis capability
- Early detection and emergency response capability
- Inspection and registration services
- Surveillance
- Emerging issues
- Risk analysis
- Technical innovation

II. Human and Financial Capital

- Human talent
- Training
- Funding sources
- Stability of policies and programs
- Contingency funds
- Technical independence
- Capability to invest and grow
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III. Interaction with Private Sector

- Information
- Communication
- Official representation
- Accreditation (Authorization)
- Capability to be responsive to users needs
- Joint programs implementation

IV. Safeguarding Public Health and Market Access

- Compliance with regulatory norms
- Setting of regulatory norms
- Harmonization
- Certification
- Equivalency and other sanitary agreements
- Traceability
- Transparency



OPS/OMS Oficina Central
525 Twenty-third Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20037
United States of America
Country/City Code: (202)
Tel: 974 3000 • Fax: 974 3663
www.paho.org • webmaster@paho.org



Agricultural Health and Food Safety
Telephone: (506) 216-0184 / Fax: (506) 216-0173
P.O. Box 55-2200 Coronado, Costa Rica
e-mail: sanagro@iica.ac.cr • www.infoagro.net/salud
www.iica.int

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