

MATRA Training for European Cooperation

(MTEC)

Food Safety

Strengthening Food Safety Systems in Bulgaria,
Romania, in the (potential) candidate Member States of
the European Union and in the neighbouring countries

October 14th - November 2nd, 2007



Key Information

- The general aim of this MTEC course is
 - to train staff working for (semi-) public sector organisations in the development and effective operation of food safety systems
 - to prepare staff for new tasks and responsibilities at personal, organisational and institutional level that emerge
 - during the pre- and post EU accession-period in case of Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Turkey;
 - during the trade relationships with the EU in case of the neighbouring countries.
- Period: October 14th - November 2nd, 2007;
- Location of training program: The Hague and Wageningen, The Netherlands;
- Accommodation during the training program:
 - NH Hotel Beatrixkwartier, The Hague, The Netherlands
 - Wageningen International Conference Centre (WICC), Wageningen, The Netherlands
- Target group: Government officials as well as persons working for semi-public agencies who are professionals in food safety policy development or are engaged with development of systems for delivery of services (e.g. inspection, monitoring, communication, enforcement, etc.) that are essential for the food safety systems to function and develop effectively;
- Participants: 50 in total, from Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Turkey, Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Jordan and Morocco.
- Application deadline: before 31st of August 2007.

Introduction

The course on Food Safety, organized by Wageningen International of the Wageningen University & Research (WUR) Centre, is centred around the implementation of the European food safety regulations and directives (for example the General Food Law and the EU Food Hygiene legislation) in new and future EU member countries and in the neighbouring countries.

2007 is the fourth year that Wageningen International (formerly International Agricultural Centre) has been requested to organize the course on food safety which reflects, on one hand, the high level of need and interest for the subject matter among the target audience, and on the other hand, the positive feedback of the participants of previous MTEC food safety courses.

The course programme is based on the experiences of Food Safety courses of the last three years that had similar objectives and which were prepared after consultations with colleagues from amongst others the Department of Food Quality and Animal Health of the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, the Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (VWA) and the Institute of Food Safety (RIKILT of the WUR). The program of last year has been updated to address the latest food safety issues and developments and to incorporate feedback and suggestions of previous course participants.

Context

Food safety is an integral part of the EU policy on consumer protection and health, agriculture and trade. Important elements of the EU legislative framework that cover food safety issues and related aspects are:

- Food legislation, including general rules for hygiene and control, food labelling, food additives, food packaging and genetically modified food;
- Veterinary legislation, including animal health, animal welfare, animal identification and registration, internal market control systems, external border controls and public health requirements for organisations dealing with animal products;
- Phytosanitary legislation, including plant health (harmful organisms, pesticides, etc.), seeds and propagating material and plant hygiene;
- Animal feed legislation, including the safety of feed materials and additives, contaminants in feed, labelling, control and inspections.

Food safety is an element of the enlargement process where the EU made it clear from the beginning that it cannot accept a situation that might lead to lower food safety standards or any risks to consumers. Compliance with the above mentioned legislative acts by the new and future member states is therefore essential. Also in countries neighbouring the European Union it is important to have a food safety system in place that is compatible with the EU standards as agri-food chains are becoming increasingly integrated across national borders. Food health scares can affect all consumers and undermine the confidence of the European citizens in the agricultural sector and food industries as well as the authorities involved in setting and controlling the safety and quality standards. A common European market cannot function properly without a well functioning food safety system that is fully harmonised and of a consistent high standard. It is essential that consumers in all member states have trust and confidence in the products they consume. The scope of the various legislative acts is therefore broad and the process of compliance is demanding not only in terms of transposing the EU regulations and directives on food safety into the national legislation, but also related to the implementation and enforcement.

The effective implementation and enforcement of the food safety framework implies:

- The understanding of the history, objectives and practical implications of the EU food safety laws;
- The strengthening and reforming of institutional arrangements, administrative structures and procedures;
- Redefinitions of organisational and staff responsibilities;
- Changes in staff attitudes and the development of new skills and approaches.

Objectives of the course

The general aim of this MTEC course is to train staff working for (semi-) public sector organisations in the development and effective operation of the food safety systems and to prepare them for new tasks and responsibilities at a personal, organisational and institutional level that will emerge during the pre- and post EU accession-period and during trade relations with EU member states in case of the neighbouring countries.

More specifically the food safety course is designed to ensure that by the end of the course the participants are able to:

- Explain the principles, objectives and key elements of the EU legislative framework pertaining to food safety;
- Explain the importance of an integrated chain approach as key to enhanced food safety;
- List the main trends and developments in research and development on detection and inspection techniques, food safety monitoring and health risk assessments;
- Outline the main institutional responsibilities of the European and national institutions involved in planning and operation of the food safety systems at national level;
- Summarise the key features of the Dutch food safety system and the role of the main stakeholders as an example for future reference;
- Indicate if and how the division of responsibilities between public institutions on the one hand and industry, producers and suppliers in the agri-food sector on the other should change in order to comply more effectively and efficiently with EU food safety standards;
- Explain the importance of transparency in the agri-food chain;
- Explain consequences of complying with standards in terms of costs / benefits and trade;
- Discuss the importance of organisational culture, staff attitudes and institutional arrangements in the light of quality food safety services and integrity;
- Analyse and plan change processes within their own professional context aimed at strengthening the food safety systems;
- Effectively communicate the proposed changes and innovations to different stakeholders;
- Explain the main management principles and approaches that lead to successful organisational and/or institutional change.

Course outline

The main aim of the MTEC course on Food Safety is to stimulate a critical reflection and dialogue on the objectives and preconditions for a well-functioning food safety system vis-à-vis the arrangements, attitudes and approaches applied within the context of the current and future member states. For participants from the countries neighbouring the EU the challenge will be to identify possibilities for enhancing the compatibility of their national food safety systems with the EU standards thereby increasing the opportunities for expanding trade relations in the agri-food sector. The course will therefore not focus so much on technical skills and knowledge, but will primarily concentrate on interpreting and understanding the aims and objectives of the General Food Law and other important pieces of EU legislation, the institutional options for translating the European food safety regulations and directives into practice, the roles, responsibilities and attitudes of various professionals involved in food safety, and the mechanisms of planning, cooperation and communication within the EU-context.

In order to achieve the general objectives listed above and to allow for sufficient flexibility to meet the individual participant's needs and interests the three-week course is sub-divided into different components. Each course component contains several presentations, excursions, discussions, group work and individual assignments which will enable the course participants to tailor the programme within the context of the overall objectives towards their own areas of needs and interest. The participants will work towards an action plan that addresses a critical issue in the food safety system at home. New skills, insights and approaches gained during the course will be integrated in this action plan.

Structure and content of the course programme

Component I: Introduction to course and to the context of food safety

The objectives, programme and approach of the course are explained. Furthermore the background, leading principles and objectives of the EU food safety system are introduced and discussed; the importance and philosophy behind the EU food safety systems in the context of a common market, consumer confidence and integrity will be explained. Comparisons are made with the situation in the respective countries of origin of the participants. Also the chain approach used to pursue integrated food safety from 'farm to fork' is explained with an emphasis on chain analysis techniques and practical applications.

Component II: Multi-stakeholder approaches

Tools and techniques for developing food safety systems with the active participation of public and private sector stakeholders are introduced. The participants are familiarised through presentations, manuals and practical assignments with stakeholder assessments, situation analyses (SWOT, issue analysis, problem tree), strategic and policy planning techniques within a participatory context. The practical assignments will be centred on realistic cases to enable participants to test their newly acquired skills in a relevant context. By encouraging a critical reflection among the participants and the Wageningen International resource persons the insight on the functioning of multi-stakeholder processes will be enhanced. The participants will be sub-divided into two groups on the basis of their professional backgrounds; assignments will be done in smaller groups of 4 – 6 participants.

Component III: Roles and cooperation in public & private sectors in the area of Food Safety

The participants are briefed on the institutional set-up and current policy issues within the Netherlands and the EU through visits to the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV) and The Dutch Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (VWA).

Through a series of excursions to various representative organisations in the agri-food industry and the inspection services under the VWA, the participants will be familiarised with the division of responsibilities between (semi-)public and private sector organisations to ensure food safety within the Dutch context. Ample opportunity will be given to see and discuss how the Dutch colleagues perform their duties. The participants will be split up into two groups – veterinarians and non-veterinarians – as much as possible to cater for their specific needs and interests.

Component IV: Research & development on Food Safety

Research and development on detection and inspection techniques, food safety monitoring, health risk assessments, traceability, etc. is an extremely important part of the European food safety system. Participants are familiarized through visits to Dutch food safety laboratories (Institute of Food Safety (RIKILT), Animal Health Services (GD) and other institutes on various state-of-the art techniques and developments. Furthermore R&D capacity development is stressed and the institutional linkages between the laboratories and the other public and private stakeholders are explained. During an important part of the programme the participants are sub-divided into two groups (veterinarians and non-veterinarians) in order to meet the specific subject matter interests of the participants.

Component V: Planning for change

During the three weeks of the course, participants will prepare in small groups (4 – 6 group members) a plan of action around a current food safety related theme – chain approach, institutional reform, risk analysis, R&D, transparency and communication. The sub-groups will be facilitated and supported by Wageningen International and other WUR resource persons. The sub-group assignments will enable the participants to apply the newly acquired skills and insights from the previous course components and thus will consolidate the process of learning.

The successful implementation of the new food safety laws requires changes in staff attitude, new institutional arrangements and new organisational cultures to ensure efficient food safety control, to avoid conflicts of interest and to enhance overall integrity. A one-day “open space” session will be organised to share insights, experiences and current problems within this context. By inviting a number of resource persons from the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV), The Dutch Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (VWA), Institute of Food Safety (RIKILT), etc. the participants will have an opportunity to interact with their Dutch colleagues on a range of institutional and organisational issues that may need to be addressed within this context. On the last day the sub-groups will present their plans of action which will be discussed during the last day’s plenary session.

Organisation

Wageningen International
Website: www.wi.wur.nl

Wageningen International (formerly International Agricultural Centre (IAC)) of the Wageningen UR will be responsible for the overall organization and coordination of the MTEC course on Food Safety. Wageningen International builds capacity for sustainable development in the agriculture, food, rural development and natural resources management sectors. To meet clients' needs, Wageningen International takes an integrated approach to capacity development. In the field of food safety and quality systems, agri-business development and food industry development the Wageningen International has broad experience in the organization of courses, advisory projects, study tours, etc. which are organized in close cooperation with subject matter specialists of departments of WUR and various knowledge institutes. The MTEC 2007 course will be organized together with the following department and knowledge institutes:

1. *Institute of Food Safety (RIKILT, WUR)*

RIKILT is a Dutch independent scientific organization. It carries out high-grade research in the safety and quality of Dutch food and provides consultancy services to national and international governmental authorities. Research is focused on food quality, health and the safety of food and animal feed.

2. *Law and Governance Group (WUR)*

The Law and Governance Group is responsible for teaching and research in the field of the legal - and governance dimensions of the Wageningen University mission of ‘Safe Food in a Vital World’. This mission entails normative notions like sustainability, responsible management, (livelihood) security, and food safety.

3. *The Central Institute for Animal Disease Control Lelystad (CIDC, WUR)*

CIDC has specific expertise in the control of notifiable animal diseases related to Dutch and European legislation. As national reference institute CIDC is responsible for the diagnostics for export certification and supervises diagnostic standards for other Dutch veterinary laboratories. CIDC is responsible for the surveillance of notifiable infectious animal diseases of farmed livestock. CIDC performs diagnostic tests related to export certification, and evaluates veterinary medicinal products and feed additives on behalf of the Dutch government. To guarantee both independence and confidentiality the tasks of CIDC are totally separated from commercial research and production activities. Highly infectious pathogens can be handled in the institutes High Containment Facility. CIDC is certified for ISO-17025 for specific diagnostic tests and ISO-9001 for other activities. CIDC has an important role in providing laboratory facilities and expertise in crisis situations such as BSE, Foot and Mouth Disease, Classical Swine Fever, Anthrax and Avian Influenza.

4. *Netherlands Controlling Authority for Milk and Milk Products (COKZ)*

COKZ is the Netherlands Controlling Authority for Milk and Milk products. It ensures compliance with process and product quality criteria by means of controls, inspection, laboratory examination, certification and its knowledge of dairy legislation. COKZ performs these activities for the government and the dairy sector. COKZ is an independent quality control institute; it neither produces nor markets dairy products. COKZ carries out activities within the framework of national or European legislation under the supervision of the Dutch Government.

5. *The Dutch Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (VWA)*

The Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority is an independent agency in the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV) and a delivery agency for the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport.

The task of the Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority is to protect human and animal health. It monitors food and consumer products to safeguard public health and animal health and welfare. The Authority controls the whole production chain, from raw materials and processing aids to end products and consumption.

The three main tasks of the Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority are:

- a. Supervision, risk assessment and risk communication;
- b. Incident and crisis management and policy advice for the Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality;
- c. Liaising with other ministries and maintaining international contacts.

Dates and locations

The course will be held in The Hague and at the Wageningen International Conference Centre (WICC) in Wageningen (www.wicc-wir.nl):

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| • Wageningen International Conference Centre | 14 October – 20 October |
| • The Hague | 20 October – 25 October |
| • Wageningen International Conference Centre | 25 October – 3 November |

From The Hague and Wageningen excursions and visits will be organized, among others, to:

- Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality
- The Dutch Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (VWA)
- RIKILIT, Wageningen University & Research Centre (an independent institute for contract research in the food chain)
- Netherlands Controlling Authority for Milk and Milk Products (COKZ)
- Poultry slaughterhouse and/or meat processing plant
- Horticultural wholesale organisation 'The Greenery'
- NAK, the Dutch General Inspection Service for agricultural seeds and seed potatoes
- Animal Health Services (GD)

Fees/Accommodation

The Netherlands government will provide fellowships. The fellowship includes costs such as international travel, board and lodging, visa and insurance, tuition fees, lecture materials and excursions insofar as included in the programme. Participants will be accommodated in the NH Hotel Beatrixkwartier, The Hague and the Wageningen International Conference Centre.

Admission Requirements

The participants should be professionals in food safety policy development or be engaged with the delivery of services (e.g. inspection, monitoring, communication, enforcement, etc.) that are essential for the food safety systems to function and develop effectively. All participants have (or are about to have) a position in the middle or higher management in their organisation and should be fluent in spoken and written English.

Training approach

Since a group consisting of 50 individuals is too big for interactive didactical working methods, most of the time the group will be split up into two groups of 25 persons. Assignments will be carried out in small working groups of 4 – 6 participants or on an individual basis. Only the opening and closing of the course as well as some of the (social) excursions will be organized as plenary sessions.

Participants will be sub-divided into two groups on the basis of the following criteria:

- Veterinary or non-veterinary food safety professionals;
- Food Safety professionals engaged in policy development and planning or involved in inspection, enforcement and communication.

Applications

Applications should be made through the Netherlands Embassy in the applicant's country. Application forms should be downloaded from the website: www.cross-agency.nl.

Go to Downloads, click on application form for the relevant course, click on your country; you can then download the application form.

Applications (duly signed by the applicant and his or her employer) should be submitted before the **31st of August 2007**, through the Royal Dutch Embassy in the applicants' country. By this date, all forms, including the signed employer statement, must be received by the Royal Netherlands Embassy. Please note that the application instructions on the website need to be followed carefully.

Only fully documented applications will be considered. The total number of applicants will be limited to 50. Admission will be on a competitive basis.

Applicants who have been accepted for the course are expected to duly attend. In case of no-shows or (too) late cancellations (i.e. within three weeks before the course commences), the course organiser has the right to claim all costs incurred from the candidate's employer.

Information and course organisation

More information on the application procedure and course organization of MTEC Food Safety course 2007 can be obtained from:

Wageningen International -Wageningen UR
P.O. Box 88
6700 AB Wageningen
The Netherlands
Telephone : +31 317 495 289
Fax : +31 317 495 395
E-mail : monika.sopov@wur.nl
Contact person : Ms. Monika Sopov

More information on other courses developed under the MTEC programme can be obtained from:

EVD/CROSS:

P.O. Box 17355

2502 CJ The Hague

The Netherlands

Telephone : +31 70 778 81 39

Website : www.cross-agency.nl

E-mail : crossonline@info.evd.nl

Contact person : Mr. Diederik ter Haar