

REPORT ON ACTIVITIES

Statement by the World Health Organization (WHO)
at the meeting of 22-23 June 2004

Global Forum II and The International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN)

1. Because of the rapid globalization of food production and trade, and the potential likelihood of international incidents involving contaminated food, it is important to exchange routine information on food safety issues among food safety authorities at the international level and to have rapid access to information in case of food safety emergencies.

2. At its Okinawa Summit in 2000, the G8 encouraged FAO and WHO "to organize periodic international meetings of food safety regulators to advance the process of science-based public consultations". The First FAO/WHO Global Forum of Food Safety Regulators took place in Marrakech (Morocco) in early 2002. Due to generous funding from G8 and other countries, the Second Global Forum is to take place on 12-14 October 2004 in Bangkok (Thailand) on the theme *Building Effective Food Safety Systems*. Two sub-themes will be: (1) strengthening official food control services; and (2) epidemic surveillance of food borne diseases and food safety rapid alert systems. More information can be found at http://www.foodsafetyforum.org/global2/index_en.asp.

3. On the occasion of the forthcoming Global Forum in Bangkok, a new *International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN)* will be launched. This network is currently being set up by WHO, with support from the Government of Spain. WHO member states have recently called for WHO to be more proactive in communicating about food safety, and this new network will serve not only to improve the flow of information between food safety authorities worldwide, but also to enable WHO to instantly and easily disseminate vital information whenever necessary.

4. WHO has also been asked to provide tools and support to member states to increase their capacity to respond to health emergencies posed by natural, accidental and intentional contamination of food. Hence a food safety emergency network (INFOSAN EMERGENCY) will be an integral part of INFOSAN. The food safety emergency network is intended to complement and support the existing WHO Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN). More information can be found at http://www.who.int/foodsafety/fs_management/infosan/en/

Call for Data

5. I would like to inform the Committee of the two call for data for the joint FAO/WHO expert meetings.

6. Codex standards are based on risk assessments made by WHO in collaboration with FAO. Use of data generated by both developed and developing countries is key in ensuring that scientific assessments reflect a truly global picture. Therefore the submission of data from member countries and other relevant stakeholders worldwide is a key issue.

7. The first call for data is for the Joint FAO/IOC/WHO ad hoc Expert Consultation on Biotoxins in Molluscan Bivalves.

8. In order to respond to the request from the Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products (CCFFP) and to provide scientific advice to the CCFFP to enable the establishment of maximum levels in shellfish for shellfish toxins, and to provide guidance on methods of analysis for each toxin group and to provide guidance on monitoring of biotoxin-forming phytoplankton and bivalve molluscs, in conjunction with its work on Proposed Draft Standards for Live and Processed Bivalve Molluscs, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) are planning to hold a joint expert consultation from 27 September to 1 October 2004, in Oslo, Norway.

9. Governments, interested organizations, companies and individuals are invited to submit any information related to the toxicology; epidemiology; exposure assessment; analytical methodology; formation, fate and occurrence in molluscan bivalves; and control measures related to the following toxin groups:

- Saxitoxin group (including analogues, e.g. neosaxitoxin);
- Domoic acid group;
- Okadaic acid group (including diol- and 7-O-acyl-esters etc.);
- Pectenotoxin group;
- Yessotoxin group;
- Brevetoxin group;
- Azaspiracid group;
- Cyclic Imine group (incl. spirolides, pteriatoxins, pinnatoxins etc.).

10. Even though the deadline has passed, we are still in the process of collecting data for this work and in particular we need data on prevalence and concentration of each toxin in molluscan bivalves and outbreak investigation reports including what molluscan bivalves were involved, which toxins were detected from the implicated food and the concentration of the toxin in food, etc. Therefore we look forward to receiving whatever data you can provide.

11. The other call for data is for the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives. The sixty-fourth meeting of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) to be held 9-17 February 2005 in Rome, Italy, will evaluate or re-evaluate the following substances:

- Acrylamide;
- Arsenic;
- Ethyl carbamate;
- Polybrominated diphenyl ethers;
- Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, including benz[a]pyrene;
- Tin (inorganic form).

12. All information related to the toxicology, epidemiology, exposure assessment, analytical methodology, formation, fate and occurrence in food of those compounds is invited to be submitted before **31 July 2004**. More information can be found in <http://www.who.int/pcs/jecfa/call64.pdf>.

***Enterobacter sakazakii* and other microorganisms of concern in powdered infant formula**

Background information

13. A food safety issue of *E. sakazakii* in powdered infant formula was considered at the 35th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH). The CCFH requested FAO and WHO to

convene an expert meeting on pathogens of concern, including *E. sakazakii* and *Clostridium botulinum*, in powdered infant formula at the earliest opportunity.

14. To respond to this request, FAO/WHO convened an expert meeting on this issue in February 2004 and presented the report to 36th Session of the CCFH. The report of the meeting is available from <http://www.who.int/foodsafety/publications/micro/feb2004/en/>. The CCFH at its 36th session agreed to proceed with the revision of the International Code of Hygienic Practice for Foods for Infants and Children and develop microbiological criteria on *E. sakazakii* and other relevant microorganisms, and to proceed with this work as quickly as possible. To facilitate the revision of the code, this two areas of work are proposed.

- (a) Further development of the risk assessment model

Current status

15. A flexible model with decision-support properties has been developed. After some testing and review, the model can be used to consider various scenarios as defined by the risk management group.

16. The output of this work would be risk estimates associated with a number of different scenarios. These will be considered by the Codex drafting group which will meet in November to work on revision of the Code of Hygienic Practice for Foods for Infants and Children.

- (b) Development of microbiological criteria

17. The outcome is a selection of microbiological criteria for certain micro-organisms together with the appropriate sampling plan and if possible an estimate of their efficacy using the risk assessment model.

Timeline

18. The objective is to have this information ready in advance of the meeting of the Codex Drafting Group to be held in Canada in November 2004, and the work of the Codex Drafting Group further discussed at the 37th CCFH in early 2005.

19. The issue of *E. sakazakii* in powdered infant formula was briefly discussed at the World Health Assembly in 2004, and will be further discussed at the WHO Executive Board meeting in January 2005.
