Training Course on Risk-Based Food Inspection and Certification in the Pacific

30 November–3 December 2009 Wellington, New Zealand
REPORT

TRAINING COURSE ON RISK-BASED FOOD INSPECTION
AND CERTIFICATION IN THE PACIFIC

Convened by:

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
SUB-REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE PACIFIC

and

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE WESTERN PACIFIC

(In collaboration with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
as an integral component of the Regional Trade Facilitation Programme)

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NOTE

The views expressed in this report are those of the participants in the Training Course on Risk-Based Food Inspection and Certification in the Pacific and do not necessarily reflect the policies of the Organization.

This report has been prepared by the World Health Organization Regional Office for the Western Pacific for governments of Member States in the Region and for those who participated in the Training Course on Risk-based Food Inspection and Certification in the Pacific, which was held in Wellington, New Zealand from 30 November to 3 December 2009.
Effective risk-based imported and exported food control systems are measures considered sustainable and preventive with the aim of significantly reducing the occurrence of foodborne diseases.

This training course is aimed at enhancing food inspection and certification for imported and exported food in Pacific island Member States. Such a training course is consistent with the commitment of FAO and WHO to implement the Integrated Food Standards project of the Pacific Regional Trade Facilitation Programme, currently coordinated by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.

The objectives of this training course were for participants to:

1. Identify the value of risk-based food inspection and certification systems, and evaluate options for their application in the Pacific;

2. Recognize the role of imported food control regulations, manuals and guidelines in ensuring effective imported food control; and

3. Contribute to regional efforts to:
   a. Identify and assess Competent Authorities for export inspection and certification;
   b. Map accredited food analytical capacity that can support Pacific island governments; and
   c. Facilitate the dissemination of data on imported food management in the Pacific.

The training course addressed five key areas for action in the Pacific: (1) Regional Trade Facilitation – Steps to Improve, (2) Imported Food Control in the Pacific, (3) Strengthening Risk-based Imported Food Control in the Pacific, (4) Exported food inspection and certification agreements and (5) Managing Special Issues and Food Safety Events in Risk-based Imported Food Control in the Pacific.

The training course concluded that imported and exported food management in the Pacific can be improved at a national level by using the tools and capacity development discussed during the training course, and at a regional level through further collaboration and development of harmonised agreements and Standards.
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Key words

Food safety, food legislation, foodborne disease, food contamination, risk-based imported foods, export certification, Pacific Island Countries
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AQIS</td>
<td>Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service</td>
</tr>
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<td>CCFICS</td>
<td>Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCNASWP</td>
<td>FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for North America and South-west Pacific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFIA</td>
<td>Canadian Food Inspection Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAFF</td>
<td>Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (Australia)</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations</td>
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<td>FSANZ</td>
<td>Food Standards Australia New Zealand</td>
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<td>FICs</td>
<td>Forum island countries</td>
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<td>HACCP</td>
<td>Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point</td>
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<td>IFSP</td>
<td>Integrated Food Standards Project</td>
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<td>IHR</td>
<td>International Health Regulations (2005)</td>
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<tr>
<td>INFOSAN</td>
<td>International Food Safety Authorities Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>MoU</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCD</td>
<td>Non-communicable diseases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZFSA</td>
<td>New Zealand Food Safety Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PACER</td>
<td>Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFSQLEG</td>
<td>Pacific Food Safety and Quality Legislation Expert Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PICTA</td>
<td>Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTFP</td>
<td>Regional Trade Facilitation Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPARTECA</td>
<td>South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Co-operation Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPS</td>
<td>Sanitary and phytosanitary agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USP</td>
<td>University of the South Pacific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHA</td>
<td>World Health Assembly</td>
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<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
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<td>WPRO</td>
<td>WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific</td>
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<tr>
<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Trade Organization</td>
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1. INTRODUCTION

Improvements in food and transportation technologies, together with the globalization of the marketplace and changes in working expectations and hours, have led to an increase in consumer demand for readily accessed and easily prepared processed food. Associated with this is an increase in the international distribution of raw materials, food ingredients, food additives and food products. While international distribution adds to the diversity of food available to consumers, it also has the potential to result in the cross-border distribution of food that is improperly labelled and/or expired and potentially unsafe, leading to foodborne diseases and of food that is high in fat, salt and sugar, contributing to noncommunicable diseases (NCD).

In the Pacific, the potential of such food being consumed is enhanced by the increasing reliance on imported food from a variety of sources and by limitations in:

(1) the crafting of food laws, regulations and standards;

(2) the enforcement of imported food control (including the management of informal trade); and

(3) human and financial resources available to inspect, analyse and assess food entering Pacific island countries and areas.

Recently, Pacific island countries have detected a range of contaminated foods only after they had become available to consumers, including melamine-contaminated food products, Salmonella-contaminated peanut-based products, products associated with a variety of recalls in the United States of America and histamine-contaminated canned seafood. In addition, concerns remain regarding food labelled only in a foreign language, expired food, foods high in fat such as turkey tails, mutton flaps and canned corned beef and the need for food to meet with the national requirements to manage public health issues, such as fortification requirements.

Because of the potential public health implications associated with the international distribution of food, food safety authorities in higher-income countries recognize the management of imported and exported food as an integral part of their national food safety control system. Food safety authorities have an obligation to put in place systems that help ensure only safe and suitable food is sold in their country and exported. However, at the same time, there is a need to recognize that the increasing quantities of food in international trade require Pacific island food safety authorities to:

(1) Focus their efforts on foods with the greatest potential to have an adverse impact on public health through risk-based imported food control.

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1 “Suitable” in this context includes labelling, foods sold within their expiry dates and meeting any other national requirements, including quality (including fat content) and fortification. Available at:
http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/_srcfiles/Food%20Recall_WEB.pdf
(2) Be aware of international obligations and agreements with regard to importing and exporting food, including those under the World Trade Organization’s (WTO) Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade, the International Health Regulations (2005) and Codex Alimentarius.

(3) Work together with the food safety authorities of the exporting countries so that imported food is compliant with Pacific island regulatory requirements and is safe for consumption, ensuring better control of food before it reaches the Pacific consumers.

(4) Establish and enforce laws, regulations and standards that place responsibility on the importers and local manufacturers to ensure their products are safe and healthy for humans.

(5) Strengthen the capacity of their officers to implement imported food control and to inspect and certify food for export from or within the Pacific.

The 53rd World Health Assembly in 2000 adopted Resolution WHA53.15 to recognize food safety as a significant public health concern and encouraged Member States to formulate and implement systematic and sustainable preventive measures aimed at significantly reducing the occurrence of foodborne diseases. Effective risk-based imported and exported food control systems are measures considered sustainable and preventive in reducing foodborne disease. Imported and exported food management systems also provide a means of ensuring suitability, that labelling requirements are met and that information is gathered about the distribution of contaminated food. The latter is critical in responding to alerts and requests for information issued by the International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN), including events under the International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005).

In response, WHO, in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), conducted a training course aimed at enhancing food inspection and certification in Pacific island Member States. Such a training course is consistent with the commitment of the FAO and WHO to implement the Integrated Food Standards Project of the Pacific Regional Trade Facilitation Programme currently coordinated by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.

1.1 Objectives

(1) Identify the value of risk-based food inspection and certification systems and evaluate options for their application in the Pacific.

(2) Recognize the role of imported food control regulations, manuals and guidelines in ensuring effective imported food control.

(3) Contribute to regional efforts to:

(a) Identify and assess Competent Authorities for export inspection and certification.

(b) Map accredited food analytical capacity that can support Pacific island governments.
1.2 Opening remarks

Anthony Hazzard, Regional Adviser in Food Safety, WHO, welcomed the participants and gave an opening address (Annex 3) on behalf of Dr Shin Young-soo, WHO Regional Director for the Western Pacific Region. Dirk Schulz, Food and Nutrition Officer, FAO, welcomed the participants to the training course on behalf of the FAO Subregional Office for the Pacific Islands. Schulz said the FAO is conducting national consultations to identify country priority needs. Assessments in Pacific island countries recently have been completed and all countries raised food safety as a priority issue. Schulz reiterated that the training course is a good opportunity to address food safety issues associated with imported and exported foods.

1.3 Participants

There were 15 participants from 11 countries of the Pacific. They were government-nominated senior food safety officers who have responsibility for their national imported and/or exported food programmes, senior officers responsible for biosecurity enforcement and/or members of the Pacific Food Safety and Quality Legislation Expert Group (PFSQLEG). Annex 1 provides a full list of participants, representatives and Secretariat members.

The training course was conducted from 30 November to 3 December 2009 in Wellington, New Zealand. At the inaugural session, Eden Ridep Uchel, Ministry of Health, Palau, was elected Chairperson. Uchel suggested a rotating Chairperson process for the training course, which was agreed to by participants. The training course agenda (Annex 2) was adopted at the opening session.

2. PROCEEDINGS

2.1 Session 1 -- Steps to facilitate regional trade

2.1.1 Regional food standards development and the Integrated Food Standards Project under the Regional Trade Facilitation Programme in the Pacific

Peter Hojskov, WHO, provided a summary of the Regional Trade Facilitation Programme (RTFP). The Integrated Food Standards Project (IFSP), which is a subcomponent of the RTFP, is being implemented with the overall objective of strengthening the capacity of Pacific Forum Island countries to establish and enforce internationally recognized food laws, standards and inspection procedures to promote unhindered trade in safe and wholesome food.

The project is being implemented as a result of increased global and regional trade with food and agricultural products and to address the issue about only a few of the Pacific Forum Island having up-to-date food regulations and standards in place. During the first three years of the project, technical advice and guidance to establish and implement food laws, regulations and standards have been provided. Guidance documents on imported food
control management and the implementation of food standards also have been put into effect. Training and capacity-building activities on auditing, good hygienic practices, imported and exported food inspection and certification and technical assistance to implement national food summits also have been provided.

In addition, two meetings of the PFSQLEG have been organized. Project outputs also include strengthened dialogue with food safety Competent Authorities in the Pacific Forum Island countries, strengthened networking and exchange of information among the Pacific Forum Island countries, establishment of a regional approach to food fortification and formulation of both common standards for fortification and of a framework for dealing with food standards and harmonization. Planned future activities under this programme include providing technical assistance to the Pacific Forum Island countries about the advancement of food control, food regulations and standards, finalization of the “Practical Guide to Introducing Food Standards to Promote Health and Trade for Small Island States” and finalization of national risk-based imported food control guidelines for inspectors of imported food.

2.1.2 The WTO and Codex considerations in regional trade facilitation

Schulz said that trade facilitation is essential for economic development. The regional trade agreements -- the Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA), the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER), PACER Plus and the South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Co-operation Agreement (SPARTECA) -- were worked out to facilitate trade and economic integration. The trade agreements all refer to countries following regional and international standards or best practice, which, in the area of food, is Codex. Schulz then explained the WTO agreements on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) and the role of Codex under these agreements.

2.1.3 Overview of Codex Activities of the Coordinating Committee for North America and the South West Pacific (CCNASWP)

Raj Rajasekar, from the New Zealand Food Safety Authority (NZFSA), gave a presentation on major developments in the North America and the South West Pacific (NASWP) region of Codex. Rajasekar noted that Tonga was confirmed as the Regional Coordinator for a second term covering the period 2009-2011 and will be hosting the next meeting in Tonga in October 2010. Although the NASWP region is small compared with other regions of Codex, it is unique because it brings together the major economies of North America with the high-income and low-income members of the South-West Pacific. The region’s major priority in recent years has been to strengthen the capacity for food regulation and participation in Codex. At its last meeting in 2008, the region agreed on a new strategic plan covering the period 2008-2013. The main objectives of the plan are to:

1. maximize participation in Codex;
2. strengthen the capacities of Codex contact points;
3. strengthen scientific expertise;
4. promote procedures for a review of standards at the national level;
5. improve regional coordination and communication; and
(6) promote the development of standards for products of interest to the region.

The presentation noted the good progress that has been made on many of the objectives. The Codex Trust Fund has enabled many Pacific island countries to participate in Codex meetings of particular interest in the region and the region has had a significant involvement in the development of the Codex Standard for bitter cassava, which will be submitted to the next session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission for adoption. However, Rajasekar noted that more effort is needed to achieve results in other areas, particularly in food regulation and standards formulation at the national level. It is planned to address these issues at the next meeting of the CCNASWP.

2.2 Session 2 – Strengths and weaknesses of imported food control in the Pacific

2.2.1 Review of the imported food control systems in the Pacific

Participants conducted discussions in groups to review the current imported food control situation in Pacific island countries and areas and the strengths and weaknesses that exist. The key strengths and weaknesses are described in the findings section of this report for each of the 11 countries represented.

2.2.2 Overview of the imported food control system of Australia

Dr Mark Salter, Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), provided an overview of the Australian imported food system. Dr Salter explained that FSANZ is responsible for food safety standard-setting and the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS) is responsible enforcing the standards as they apply to imported food. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is in place between FSANZ and AQIS which outlines the arrangements between the two agencies. Currently, imported foods, which are considered to be of risk, are tested and held until results are available. Fully 100% of food consignments, which are included on the risk list, are monitored in this way until a compliance history is established.

The risk list initially was established by including foods which historically have been of concern. More recently, criteria have been established to determine if a food should be included on the risk list. The criteria are designed to identify systemic and not country-specific issues. However, there is the ability to ban a food from a country, if necessary. A random surveillance system is also in place in which 5% of foods are tested and released if they comply with requirements. Additionally, a voluntary system in which certification can be provided is also in place. Dr Salter said the system will be reviewed in the future and a move towards including offshore assurances is likely.

2.2.3 Overview of the imported food control system of Canada

Sylvie Bruneau, Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), presented a summary of the imported food control system of Canada. The responsibility of food safety associated with imported food lies with CFIA and the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA). An MoU defines the roles of the two responsible agencies. It was noted that imported food policy in Canada is based on the following six elements:

(1) foreign equivalency and certification;

(2) point of entry control;
tracking and informatics;

(4) importer quality management systems;

(5) inspection programmes; and

(6) new technology.

These elements are the basis of each stage of a three-tiered approach -- before the border (upstream), first point of arrival (midstream) and inspection at destination (downstream). An additional and new initiative for Canada as outlined by Bruneau is the creation of the “Single Window” -- a paperless, electronic, single point system allowing for the submission of information required to meet regulatory requirements.

2.2.4 Overview of the imported food control system of New Zealand

Dr Chris Kebbell, New Zealand Food Safety Authority (NZFSA), reported on the New Zealand imported food control system, which is undergoing significant review. Currently, the imported food control system includes monitoring of “prescribed foods”, in which a food is considered to be of high risk. Emergency food standards also may be issued for specific serious food safety concerns, which allows for management of the food at the border. In addition, limited monitoring of low-risk foods is undertaken through specific food safety projects. The rate of monitoring or inspection is based on compliance history. Switching rules are used to facilitate this.

NZFSA are reviewing the imported food control system and are moving towards importers taking on more responsibility and to use control measures other than product testing, such as exporting country assurances and post-border controls. Dr Kebbell also explained “regulatory interest categories”, which is an assessment of foods based on risk, political interest, consumer interest and other factors. The assessment leads to the identification of high, medium and low categories and requirements are set for each of these categories.

Under the proposed system, all food importers will be registered and have an obligation to ensure the food they import is in compliance with New Zealand laws, ensure appropriate transportation and storage and that they obtain and retain records. Other requirements for each risk category are under development but will recognize several management options including:

(1) mutual recognition;

(2) equivalence;

(3) government and commercial assurances; and

(4) a wide range of assurance options.

In addition to the high, medium and low categories, the emergency food standards process will be retained and a scanning process is also proposed under the new regime. The scanning list will be a monitoring tool used to respond to known food safety issues.
2.2.5 Plenary discussion

A plenary discussion examined the systems in Australia, New Zealand and Canada and identified the value of risk-based food inspection and certification systems in the Pacific. The participants noted common elements of value that would prove useful for Pacific island countries and areas that seek to enhance imported food control to facilitate trade in safe and suitable food. These included:

1. A risk-based regulatory framework largely based on Codex at the national level that will contribute to a more science-based approach for Pacific island countries.

2. There are great benefits to imported food control, food safety and trade facilitation, ensuring close collaboration among agencies such as customs, health and quarantine.

3. Control programmes on imported foods also can benefit from “regulatory interest categories”, which is an assessment of foods based on risk, political interest, consumer interest and other factors to facilitate trade and food safety.

4. The emphasis on greater application of offshore food control management options is both practical and sustainable in the Pacific.

5. The emphasis on imported food control systems that pay attention to assessing the equivalence of control systems as a management option is both practical and sustainable in the Pacific.

6. Registration of importers and placing responsibility on food businesses, including importers, is an important element to include in imported food control in the Pacific.

7. Imported food control regulations, manuals and guidelines are important aspects of ensuring that all key stakeholders understand imported food requirements and enforcement procedures.

2.3 Session 3 -- Strengthening risk-based imported food control in the Pacific

The third session, recognizing the value of risk-based imported food control, focused on discussions about how such a risk-based system can be applied in the Pacific.

2.3.1 Regulatory risk-based imported food control – how it can be applied in the Pacific

Jenny Bishop outlined that, given the myriad hazards which can cause contamination of food, the increase of global trade and the limited human and financial resources to manage the hazards, there is a need to ensure interventions are prioritized and that regulatory control efforts are focused on the hazards which are considered to be of greatest risk. Additionally, those interventions should be proportionate to the risk associated with a food. Bishop then briefly explained the risk assessment steps, as defined by Codex.
2.3.2 Determining the risk of food groups

Bruneau, Dr Salter and Dr Scott Crerar, NZFSA, outlined how risk is assessed for imported foods by their respective agencies. Bruneau reported that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) uses an approach which involves an environmental scan and hazard identification by experts. This information is assessed further by consideration of the health risk. Other issues such as media and interest-group pressures and consumer, industry and political interests also are considered, although to a lesser extent.

CFIA was reviewing this system and was considering an approach which includes a multifactorial risk prioritization framework. The public health impact is assessed using the United States of America’s Food and Drug Administrations “iRisk”, together with consideration of other elements, including market-level impacts, consumer perceptions and acceptance and social sensitivity. Dr Salter reported that FSANZ uses a “risk food criteria”, which is a series of questions intended to identify foods which should be included on the risk list. The main questions are:

1. Has the food been associated with a microbiological or chemical food safety concern?
2. What is the likelihood that the hazard could be in imported food at levels that could cause a food safety concern?
3. Is the adverse effect associated with the hazard medium/high severity for any subpopulation?
4. Will there be appropriate risk mitigation strategies for the relevant subpopulation post-import?

NZFSA, Dr Crerar stated, was working on a semiquantitative model which weighs food safety risk factors and also considers other risk management factors, such as public interest and trade obligations, using a transparent qualitative approach. Expert groups have determined ratings for the risk factors, and it was noted that the severity of a hazard significantly impacts on the final ranking.

2.3.3 Group work – risk ranking

Considering the risk ranking processes in place in CFIA, FSANZ and NZFSA, and a draft model being prepared for Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, groups discussed ways to provide guidance about how a country can establish a list of “foods of interest”. The discussions were guided by a review of the foods subject to import control by Australia, the European Union, Papua New Guinea and New Zealand. The groups then modified the food and hazard combinations to suit Pacific island countries and added foods commonly imported into those countries and identified the associated hazards. The FSANZ criteria then were applied to the food and hazard combinations, which are in Table 1 below. In addition, participants discussed foods of regulatory interest (Table 2) that also might be part of an intensified imported food control programme. These lists (or at least the approach to their preparation and application) can be used as a starting point for individual Pacific island countries when they begin to work out a preliminary list of risk foods and a list of foods of regulatory interest which will be subject to prioritized imported food control.
### Table 1. Risk foods in the Pacific

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Hazard(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canned meat</td>
<td><em>C. botulinum</em>, Lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canned fish</td>
<td><em>C. botulinum</em>, Histamine, Lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant formula</td>
<td><em>B. cereus</em>, Cronobacter sakazakii, Melamine, Salmonella</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>Aflatoxins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td>Salmonella</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peanuts, peanut butter and derived products</td>
<td>Aflatoxins, Salmonella</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spices</td>
<td>Aflatoxins, Salmonella</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soy sauce</td>
<td>Chloropropanols</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chilli and chilli products</td>
<td>Sudan dyes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2. Foods of regulatory interest in the Pacific

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Regulatory Requirement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flour</td>
<td>Fortification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>Fortification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt</td>
<td>Fortification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally, the need for further research and information on the additives used in confectionary and the presence of residues on produce was discussed. Both issues could be considered when preparing a list of food and hazards for general surveillance.

#### 2.3.4 Group work – development of controls

Based on the presentations provided by temporary advisers from CFIA, FSANZ and NZFSA, participants also considered and worked out possible control measures for high- and low-risk imported foods. The following is a summary of the groups’ work, which again may be used as a starting point in Pacific island countries when strengthening their imported food control systems. Groups concluded that differentiating between high- and medium-risk groups was difficult and whether such a separation is useful should be determined once more experience is gained.

All importers of food

Low-risk group

This is based on a survey approach to identify other food and hazard concerns. This ensures that importers of foods that are not on the risk list are aware that they may be subject to random surveillance. It also provides a mechanism to research issues further, if needed, or to gather data if necessary.

High-risk group. The following chart outlines the control options advocated for foods categorized as high risk.

2.4 Session 4 - Exported food inspection and certification agreements
2.4.1 Critical elements of export inspection and certification, moving towards mutual agreement about the equivalence of exported food inspection and certification systems and an overview of the Australian and New Zealand systems

Laura Timmins, Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS), and Neil McLeod, NZFSA, made presentations and facilitated discussions on critical elements of export inspection and certification, mutual agreement about the equivalence of exported food inspection and certification systems and the Australian and New Zealand systems, respectively. They noted that the national export system should include a sound legislative framework, consistently applied regulatory powers and an integrated and coordinated network across jurisdictions and between the food industry and government.
Timmins said the export system must ensure that the export certification issued must be correct and truthful, in compliance with importing country requirements, verifiable by the competent authority and able to withstand scrutiny by importing countries. She also explained mutual recognition and equivalence and the steps involved in achieving both.

She reported that mutual recognition is an agreement by two or more trading partners to accept that a commodity can be traded freely even though differences in their regulatory systems continue to exist. For example, the free trade between European Union members is facilitated by mutual recognition agreements. Equivalence is the process of countries accepting the sanitary or phytosanitary measures of other countries as equivalent, even if these measures differ from their own or from those used by other members trading in the same product.

The exporting country must objectively demonstrate to the importing member that its measures achieve the importing member’s appropriate level of sanitary or phytosanitary protection. Timmins further outlined the key steps of determining equivalence, referencing the Codex document “Guidelines on the Judgement of Equivalence of Sanitary Measures Associated with Food Inspection and Certification Systems” and the associated appendix (available at: http://www.codexalimantarius.net/download/standards/10047/CXG_053e.pdf).

Auditing of Competent Authorities focuses on the national food control system, which reduces the need to audit all food businesses supplying exported foods. The Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) was preparing “Principles and Guidelines for the Conduct of Foreign On-Site Audits”. Training to undertake audits of competent authorities is critical. This training could include officials from Pacific island countries taking part in audit preparation by authorities in higher-income countries and reviewing assessments of competent authorities undertaken by other countries. It is also important for countries to determine when audits of foreign systems are necessary and to consider how the findings of the audit will be used.

2.4.2 Group work - Steps in negotiating a Pacific island country agreement about whether exported food inspection and certification systems meet the requirements of the Pacific island countries.

The training course participants discussed the steps in negotiating Pacific island country agreements about whether exported food inspection and certification systems meet the requirements of the Pacific island countries. The group's findings are in the Conclusions section of the report.

2.4.3 Opportunities for mentoring Competent Authorities

Codex promotes giving technical advice and other forms of support from higher-income countries to lower-income countries to empower them to strengthen their food control systems in accordance with Codex guidance. Providing mentoring opportunities among regulatory authorities is one such mechanism for one country's regulators assisting another country's regulators to build the expertise necessary for effective and efficient risk-based enforcement.
Dr Salter provided an overview of opportunities for mentoring Competent Authorities and noted that mentoring is being discussed as part of the APEC Food Safety Cooperation Forum. In discussions that followed, the importance of mentoring was agreed. However, it also was noted that for such mentoring to occur, there might be a need for funding support to facilitate the travel of those being mentored and those providing the mentoring and that sources of such funding would need to be identified.

2.4.4 Competent Authorities responsible for inspecting and certifying food flowing into the Pacific

Shirley Laban, Ministry of Health, Vanuatu, outlined work undertaken to build a database of Competent Authorities, as recommended by the 2008 PFSQLEG meeting, “Create a contact database on Competent Authorities with the capacity to certify food products”. Laban proposed that the following information will be included in the database: Name of the Competent Authority (Competent Authority as defined by Codex and identified by national governments); physical address of the Competent Authority; contact information for the Competent Authority; a contact person and e-mail with whom Pacific island countries can correspond; and a list of all countries exporting to Pacific island countries. It also was recognized that each country may have more than one Competent Authority and that, for low-risk foods, there may be no Competent Authority.

2.4.5 Mapping analytical capacity in the Pacific

Gaylene Tasmania, Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Niue, presented a summary of work undertaken to create a compendium of accredited laboratories in the Pacific region. This project prompted a recommendation from the 2008 PFSQLEG meeting, “Draft a guidance document that enables countries to be better prepared for food safety events by identifying accredited food analysis capacity in the Region, and by identifying how samples need to be treated and transported between countries”.

The compendium was being prepared by administering a questionnaire to PFSQLEG members and undertaking a desktop study and web search. The group discussed the use of the compendium for imported and exported food. For imported foods, the compendium can be used to identify any supplied certificate of analysis that has been issued by an accredited laboratory. To facilitate this, contacts or websites of accredited organizations which can determine if the laboratory is accredited need to be included in the compendium. This information for exported food is also important so that exporters can provide a certificate of analysis from an accredited laboratory to accompany their exports. A series of steps forward were discussed by the group and follow as conclusions.

2.5 Session 5: Managing special issues and food safety events in risk-based imported food control in the Pacific

Hazzard and Bishop facilitated a plenary discussion on the management of special issues and food safety events in risk-based imported food control in the Pacific. It was agreed that understanding and managing the variations in date marking, to which Pacific island countries are exposed, would require guidance from international organizations and the PFSQLEG. Other issues for which it was felt there was a need for international and PFSQLEG guidance were managing imported food for personal use, assuring the safety of domestic food consolidated and exported to Pacific island countries without adequate regulatory control, control of chilled products sold frozen in Pacific island countries and
identifying what needs to be considered before governments ban imported foods high in fat, salt and sugar.

Bishop also explained and facilitated a plenary discussion on INFOSAN. It was created by WHO in cooperation with the FAO to facilitate collaboration among countries to exchange information about routine and emerging food safety issues; 177 countries are members of INFOSAN. It also has an advisory group of 10 members from national food safety authorities around the world. The exchange of information about routine food safety issues are provided by INFOSAN’s Information Notes publication. INFOSAN focal points nominated at a national level facilitate two-way sharing of information between their country and the INFOSAN Secretariat, including the dissemination of INFOSAN Information Notes to interested parties in their country.

Focal points from different countries also are encouraged to communicate with each other to share expertise and information. During food safety events, INFOSAN helps in managing food-related outbreaks of international concern. INFOSAN Emergency contact points officially are designated by INFOSAN member countries and provide information on events to the INFOSAN Secretariat. Contact points also receive INFOSAN Emergency alerts and ensure that appropriate action is undertaken in their country.

The IHR (2005) is a legal instrument that is binding on 194 countries, including all WHO Member States. Its aim is to help the international community prevent and respond to acute public health risks that have the potential to cross borders and threaten people worldwide. INFOSAN Emergency facilitates the identification, assessment and management of food safety events of international concern, including WHO’s obligations under the IHR for surveillance, verification and assessment of food safety-related events and information dissemination of public health risks associated with food.

Dr Salter presented information about the Australian National Food Incident Response Protocol and the Australian National Food Recall Protocol. He said the National Food Incident Response Protocol had been established to ensure response and communication is timely, consistent, appropriate and coordinated. It also formalizes current arrangements and links Commonwealth and state and territory protocols. The protocol applies to imported or domestically produced food and seeks to manage incidents for widely distributed foods.

Graduated responses depending on the incident are defined and include alert, action and stand-down phases. Food incidents associated with imported food are managed by FSANZ in liaison with several agencies, including AQIS, customs, OzFoodNet (human cases), diplomatic posts, direct communication with other countries and WHO through INFOSAN and the National IHR Focal Point. The protocol includes MoUs and predetermined contacts (generic, if possible) in relevant domestic and overseas agencies. Lastly, Dr Salter noted the importance of testing the protocol and reminded participants that the time to create an incident and emergency response protocol is not during an emergency.

The Food Recall Protocol provides definitions and terminology, legal requirements, roles and responsibilities of industry and government, a description of the recall process and guidance about how to write a recall plan. Dr Salter also introduced a decision tree which assists in determining the management of a food incident. The decision tree also aids discussion and agreement and provides a record of decision.

2.6 Closing
Hazzard and Schulz acknowledged the important input from AQIS, CFIA, FSANZ and NZFSA. They also thanked the presenters and participants for a successful meeting, noting the participatory and collaborative nature of all taking part, which facilitated its success. Laban thanked presenters, the FAO and WHO and noted that the course was a success. She summarized the training course, which follows as conclusions in this report. Hazzard and Schulz closed the training course on behalf of the FAO and WHO.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The main conclusions of the workshop were as follows:

3.1 General

3.1.1 Based on the presentations, group work and plenary discussions during the Training Course on Risk-based Food Inspection and Certification in the Pacific, held in Wellington, New Zealand, from 30 November to 3 December 2009, participants concluded that:

With regard to imported and exported food control in Pacific island countries:

(1) International food trade is an essential part of economic development.

(2) There is a lack of a legislative framework in most countries to facilitate adequate control of imported and exported foods. However, interagency communication and collaboration is a common strength in these countries and will assist in the creation of imported and exported food control systems.

(3) It is useful to consider components from other countries’ imported and exported food systems when building or strengthening such systems. Key components include risk assessment and offshore control measures for imported foods, use of assessments undertaken by other authorities and the key elements of an export system.

(4) Imported and exported food control systems will be built up further in collaboration with other national agencies and relevant stakeholders using the information and tools provided during the course and data available internationally.

(5) Given the lack of analytical capacity and the limitations of end-product testing, it is critical that offshore control measures such as accessing equivalence and certification from Competent Authorities are used.

(6) Assessments undertaken by other authorities will assist Pacific island countries in implementing imported food control measures.

(7) Equivalence may be assessed directly with the exporting country or countries may choose to access assessments undertaken by other importing countries.
(8) Given the limitations of resources and the need to focus regulatory efforts on issues of most public health importance, risk-based imported food control needs to be implemented.

(9) Given resource constraints and limited capacity at a national level and the trade among Pacific island countries, there is a need to cooperate to build a strong basis to negotiate imported food and regional imported food requirements that would assist in imported food control. The requirements include standards for determining if exporting countries meet Pacific island country requirements, date marking, content labelling and the management of chilled food sold as frozen and personal-use quantities. To facilitate this, a proposal between Pacific island countries and FSANZ will be initiated to attempt to facilitate funds from regional trade programmes and/or the Standards and Trade Development Facility.

(10) Generic legislation for the control of imported and exported food control would assist in the creation of imported and exported food control systems.

(11) The draft imported food control manual for Solomon Islands will be prepared further to include the FSANZ “risk criteria” and the list of high-risk of foods that have been identified and their associated control measures for use in other Pacific island countries.

(12) The FSANZ criteria to identify risk foods is a useful model for country use and will be simplified and developed further to incorporate regulatory interest issues.

(13) Data-sharing to assist in the application of the revised FSANZ criteria to identify risk foods will be facilitated through the PFSQLEG and WHO’s Pacific Food Safety Initiative web database.

(14) The FSANZ criteria to identify risk foods are not appropriate for use to determine which foods should be monitored for fortification requirements and allergen concerns. However, given the limited food standards requiring fortification and that allergens are best managed through general surveillance, it was deemed not necessary to set a criteria for these two issues.

(15) Banning of specific foods to control NCD is challenging, given the SPS requirement to prove the direct effect of the product and considering other foods or portioning of food may also cause a public health concern. Therefore, the control of NCD associated with diet is best dealt with through consumer awareness campaigns, content labelling, changing eating habits and lifestyles. However, micronutrient issues controlled by fortification of food may be best handled at the border.

(16) Food summits are important forums to discuss the role of imported food control in managing NCD.

(17) Date marking and other labelling requirements are best managed through regulation of importers, ensuring over-labelling as necessary.
(18) Data about imported food rejections should be shared with other Pacific island countries through the WHO Pacific Food Safety Initiative web database.

With regard to strengthening national food control systems (other than imported and exported food control) in Pacific island countries:

(1) The databases of Competent Authorities and analytical capacities are important tools for national food control.

(2) The database of analytical capacities can be built up further to include the following:

(a) a list of links to accredited organizations, including those in countries from where food could be exported;

(b) use or list laboratories which are accredited by a recognized accreditation body and to the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 17025;

(c) Other services that laboratories offer, such as training services, etc.;

(d) fortification analysis; and

(e) guidance on meeting biosecurity requirements when sending a sample overseas.

(3) Mentoring of Competent Authorities is an important way to build capacity, but the need for funding to facilitate such mentoring is required. Therefore, the input of experts in training courses and the sharing of information and experiences among countries through forums such as the PFSQLEG are the most feasible options to facilitate mentoring.

With regard to food safety events and INFOSAN:

(1) INFOSAN Emergency remains an important tool for the control of unsafe food which has entered international trade.

(2) To support the operation of INFOSAN, the INFOSAN Secretariat (infosan@who.int) will be informed of any changes in focal and Emergency Contact Points or their contact details. Additionally, the INFOSAN Emergency Secretariat (emergencyinfosan@who.int) will be informed of any food safety concerns associated with imported food, notified by trading partners, but not communicated by INFOSAN Emergency.

(3) Given the critical role of INFOSAN Emergency Contact Points, the creation of a backup system to ensure 24-hour, seven days a week coverage is essential.

(4) Informal trade among Pacific island countries is commonplace and any INFOSAN Emergency Alert received by only selected Pacific island countries will be shared with all Pacific island countries through the PFSQLEG e-mail list.
(5) Although Internet access has improved and countries can now access INFOSAN Emergency Alerts via the INFOSAN secure web site, there is a need to ensure web links included in INFOSAN messages work or include the relevant attachment. INFOSAN Information Notes need to be included as attachments in e-mails -- not limited to a web link to the secure web site -- to allow easier access.

(6) The development of food safety emergency response plans and recall systems are important to ensure a rapid and effective response to food safety events. A training course, possibly in conjunction with a PFSQLEG meeting, on food safety emergency response planning and food recall system development would be beneficial.

(7) Food safety alerts from CFIA, FSANZ, NZFSA and the United States of America’s Food and Drug Administration will be sent to Pacific island countries via the PFSQLEG e-mail list.

(8) Decision trees created in response to food safety events and which may be of use to other Pacific island countries will be shared through the PFSQLEG e-mail list.

(9) Information on the control melamine in China to Pacific island countries via the PFSQLEG e-mail list will be provided by the Western Pacific Regional Office so that import controls put in place in Pacific island countries on melamine in powdered infant formula can be revised as necessary.
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ANNEX 2

TRAINING COURSE AGENDA

1. Opening
2. Steps to facilitate regional trade.
3. Imported food control in the Pacific.
5. Exported food inspection and certification agreements.
6. Managing special issues and food safety events in risk-based imported food control in the Pacific – facilitator led plenary discussions.
7. Closing
It is a pleasure for me to open this FAO/WHO Training Course on Risk-Based Food Inspection and Certification in the Pacific.

Improvements in food and transportation technologies, together with the globalization of the marketplace have led to an increase in consumer demand for readily accessed and easily prepared processed food. In the Pacific this is being translated into an ever increasing reliance on imported food from a variety of countries around the world.

While international distribution adds to the diversity of food available to consumers, it also has the potential to result in the cross-border distribution of food that is improperly labelled and/or expired and potentially unsafe, leading to foodborne disease and of food that is high in fat, salt and sugar, contributing to non-communicable diseases.

Recently, Pacific island countries have detected a range of contaminated foods only after they had become available to consumers, including: melamine-contaminated food products; Salmonella-contaminated peanut-based products; products associated with a variety of recalls in the United States of America; and histamine-contaminated canned seafood. In addition, concerns remain regarding: food labelled only in a foreign language; expired food; foods high in fat such as turkey tails, mutton flaps and canned corned beef; and the need for food to meet with the national requirements to manage public health issues, such as fortification requirements.
Food safety authorities have an obligation to put in place systems that help ensure only safe and suitable food is sold in their country, and that only safe and suitable food is exported. However, at the same time, there is a need to recognize that the increasing quantities of food in international trade require Pacific island food safety authorities to better focus their efforts through risk-based food control programmes and through the gathering and sharing of information on the distribution of contaminated food through the International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN).

This training course aims to help you to strengthen risk-based imported and exported food control back in your home countries. It also aims to increase your awareness of international obligations and agreements with regard to importing and exporting food, including those under the World Trade Organization’s Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, and the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade, as well as the requirements under the International Health Regulations (2005). The emphasis of the course is on helping Pacific island authorities to work together with the food safety authorities of the countries exporting to the Pacific so that imported food is compliant with Pacific island regulatory requirements and is safe for consumption.

The course builds on the FAO/WHO Meeting on Food Standards to Promote Health and Fair Trade in the Pacific, held 3-6 December 2007, in the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific, Manila, Philippines and the First and Second informal meetings of the Pacific Food Safety and Quality Legislation Expert (PFSQLE) group held 3-4 November 2008 and 27 to 28 November 2009 respectively.

I would like to acknowledge gratefully the support provided by the Australian and New Zealand Agencies for International Development who committed resources to the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat coordinated Regional Trade Facilitation Programme.

I am happy to welcome food authorities from around the Pacific — willing to join hands to facilitate trade in safe and suitable food in the Region and I wish you success in your
course and a pleasant stay in Wellington. I look forward to reviewing how you apply what you learn at this training course to imported and exported risk-based food control back home.

Thank you.