

REPORT

Seminar on Handling Food Emergencies/Crises in the Food Chain 28/29 April 2010 in Kiev, Ukraine

Introduction:

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) aims to forge closer ties with countries to the South and East of the EU. Through this policy, the EU seeks to promote greater economic development, stability and better governance in its neighbourhood.

Aims of the seminar: The workshop informed the participating countries on how to handle a food crisis. It explained the respective roles of the risk assessor, the risk communicator and the risk manager in the EU. The seminar mentioned in particular the tasks of DG SANCO, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and EU Member States in the event of a food crisis. Furthermore, the functioning of the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) was illustrated. The participating countries reported on their existing crises handling systems.

Invited: Food safety authorities from the Eastern Partnership countries of the European Neighbourhood Policy

The workshop was organised and financed by the TAIEX programme of the European Commission in co-operation with EFSA, DG SANCO and DG RELEX for the 6 Eastern Partnership countries of the EU Neighbouring countries (ENP countries).

The seminar was the first regional seminar between the EU food safety bodies and the Eastern ENP countries food safety authorities.

The Eastern Neighbourhood countries participated with 3-6 high level experts per country plus the host country Ukraine with about 30 experts.

Vitalii Bashynskyi, the State Committee of Veterinary Medicine of Ukraine welcomed the participants to Ukraine and explained the recent development on food safety in Ukraine.

Natalya Korchakova, Sector Manager, Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine also welcomed the participants and highlighted that the Neighbourhood Policy enables neighbouring countries to integrate into the EU's internal market of more than 500 million consumers and that the seminar provided a valuable platform to outline how the EU food safety system works during a crisis situation, but also for the EU Institutions to gain insight into the situation on crises preparedness in the 6 Eastern Partnership countries.

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In continuation *Nicolas Lilienthal*, from the European Commission (Directorate General for Enlargement) presented the role of TAIEX and the possible benefits for ENP countries.

After the break *Aude L'hirondel*, DG SANCO in the European Commission gave an overview of the history of food safety crises, explained the role of the European Commission in an emergency/crisis situation and the existing procedures at EU level. She also gave some practical examples.

Aude L'hirondel, DG SANCO in the European Commission and *Sylvia de Jong* from the Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety in Germany talked about RASFF, how it works and how third countries can participate.

Andrea Gervelmeyer from the Emerging Risk Unit in EFSA talked about the preparedness and procedures of EFSA with information on the different steps in a possible crisis situation and she explained the 4 activity levels.

After lunch *Philippe Houdart*, the Head of the Crises Unit at the Belgium Food Safety Agency gave a general overview on 'How to tackle crises at national level' followed by a long discussion on who to do what in a crisis.

His speech was followed by *Karen Talbot* from EFSA Communication Department who gave practical examples on 'Managing communication in a crisis' where she highlighted the importance of early information and openness during the whole crisis period.

After the coffee break the 6 ENP countries each explained their preparedness and their procedures in a crises situation. They all have establish a crisis

The 2nd day started with a speech by *Raymond Ellar*, Director at the Iris Food Safety Authority with examples from a case study on dioxin in pork.

Jeffrey Moon (EFSA) introduced the crisis exercise. The participants were divided in 4 groups, each with a rapporteur and they were informed that the exercise will consist of 4 parts.

The exercise took 2 hours and went well as all participants were active and the 4 groups discussed and gave feedback to the different stages of the exercise.

The seminar was chaired by *Finn Sheye* from EFSA on the first day and by *Aude L'hirondel* (DG SANCO, European Commission) on the second day.

Enclosed the agenda for the seminar in annex I and the list of possible additional topics for future seminars in annex II

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An evaluation questionnaire was sent out to all participants after the seminar and gave the following feedback:

There were a total of 53 representatives of different competent authorities and stakeholder groups from the ENP countries attended the seminar. 13 participants sent back replies to the evaluation questionnaire. Responses to the questions regarding presentation skills of the speakers, the content of speeches and responsiveness to the questions showed that the majority of the participants were very satisfied. **85 %** of the participants found presentations being on the right level and **83 %** of the participants felt they had enough opportunity to express their opinion. The majority of the participants (**77%**) considered that this seminar was an excellent or very good opportunity for improving their knowledge on this topic. When asked to assess the overall value of the seminar the majority of the participants, **77 %** stated the overall value of the seminar was excellent or very good while **15 %** considered it to be good.

Please find the list of suggested additional topics for future seminars in annex II

Conclusions and future prospective:

The seminar gave the EFSA and the other EU Institutions a good possibility to initiate closer cooperation with the food safety authorities in the Eastern Partnership countries and the ENP countries got an overview of the European Union system on crisis handling and also about their possibility to take part in the RASSF system.

The seminar provided a good platform for networking and gave good indications for the future cooperation.

In addition the participants have received a CD with all the material from the seminar, EFSA has updated the mailing list for the ENP countries for sharing information on EU food safety.

The scientist in the ENP countries were invited to apply to the EFSA expert database and the participants will receive further information via the created network.

TAIEX invited the participants to apply for expert mission to the ENP countries, workshop or seminars in the ENP countries and study visits in the EU Member States as TAIEX have possibilities to support such initiatives under the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument.

This seminar was funded by TAIEX. A similar seminar on crises handling will be arranged for the 10 Mediterranean ENP countries in October 2010 and it is foreseen that a multicountry programme will be set up in 2011 for the cooperation between the European agencies and the Neighbourhood countries following the experiences from the IPA Programmes.

Wednesday, 28 April 2010

Chair : Finn Sheye

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| 09.00 - 09.30 | Registration |
| 09.30 – 09.50 | Welcome
<i>Vitalii Bashynskyi, State Committee of Veterinary Medicine of Ukraine</i> |
| 09.50 – 10.10 | Welcome
<i>Natalya Korchakova, Sector Manager, Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine</i> |
| 10.10 – 10.30 | TAIEX instrument of the European Commission
<i>Nicolas Lilienthal (DG Enlargement, European Commission)</i> |
| 10.30 – 11.00 | Coffee break |
| 11.00 – 11.30 | Handling of food emergencies/crises – preparedness and procedures at EU level
<i>Aude L'hirondel (DG SANCO, European Commission)</i> |
| 11.30 – 12.00 | Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) – an essential tool
<i>Aude L'hirondel (DG SANCO, European Commission)</i> |
| 12.00 – 12.30 | Handling of food emergencies/crises – preparedness and procedures at the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)
<i>Andrea Gervelmeyer (Emerging Risks Unit, EFSA)</i> |
| 12.30 – 14.00 | Lunch |
| 14.00 – 14.30 | Handling of food emergencies/crises – preparedness and procedures in EU Member States
<i>Philippe Houdart (Director prevention and management crises of the Belgian Food Authorities, Belgium)</i> |

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- 14.30 – 15.00** **Risk communication - examples**
Karen Talbot (Communication Unit, EFSA)
- 15.30 – 16.00** **RASFF and third country participation**
Sylvia de Jong (Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety, Germany)
- 16.00 – 16.30** *Coffee break*
- 16.30 – 16.50** **Handling of food emergencies/crises – preparedness and procedures in Armenia**
- 16.50 - 17.10** **Handling of food emergencies/crises – preparedness and procedures in Azerbaijan**
- 17.10 – 17.30** **Handling of food emergencies/crises – preparedness and procedures in Belarus**
- 17.30 – 17.50** **Handling of food emergencies/crises – preparedness and procedures in Georgia**
- 17.50 – 18.10** **Handling of food emergencies/crises – preparedness and procedures in Moldova**
- 18.10 – 18.30** **Handling of food emergencies/crises – preparedness and procedures in Ukraine**

End of Day I

Thursday, 29 April 2010

Chair : Aude L'hirondel

- 9.00 – 09.30** **Case study – dioxin in pork case**
Raymond Ellard (Chief Executive, Food Safety Authority, Ireland)
- 09.40 – 09.50** **Introduction to emergency/crisis exercise**
Jeffrey Moon (EFSA)
- 09.50 – 10.10** **Coffee Break**
- 10.10 – 12.20** **Emergency/crisis exercise**
Jeffrey Moon (EFSA)
- 12.20 – 13.00** **Plenum discussion on the exercise**
- 13.00 – 13.30** **Conclusions**
- 13.30 – 15.00** **Lunch**

End

This meeting was being organised by the

**Technical Assistance Information Exchange Instrument
of the European Commission**

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Additional topics suggested by the participants for future seminars:

- Risk based inspection
- Further introduction of HACCP for the food industry enterprises
- The core research on traceability
- Risk management, risk management and risk communication
- Veterinarian certification of food and about risk assessment
- Workshop on transboundary animal diseases e.g. African Swine fever
- State control of food processing companies in the EU (inspection, laboratory testing of samples) and monitoring procedures. Assessment of results and process of making decision from several alternative decisions. Communication with producers and consumers.

Comments/suggestions to improve the future seminars:

- Prints of material for participants
- Good organised seminar and it processed in a very interesting way. There were discussed topics which are very important for developing food safety system in Georgia. Especially important was the EC and Member States experiences.
- Thanks for valuable information