

BETTER TRAINING FOR SAFER FOOD

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About this newsletter

This newsletter contains information on training activities organised within the Better Training for Safer Food initiative of the European Commission Directorate-General for Health and Consumers. It also gives details of all other issues related to the initiative.

Further information on Better Training for Safer Food can be found at: http://ec.europa.eu/food/training_strategy/index_en.htm

Training programmes

Launch of feed law training reflects shifting EU focus

Animal feed production is an important sector of agricultural activity and around 230 million tonnes of feedstuffs are fed to farmed animals in the EU each year. Previously, EU animal feed rules were mainly focused on fostering high levels of productivity in livestock farming. The emphasis has shifted over time and EU measures in this area are now geared towards the protection of human and animal health. A wide range of measures have been developed at European level aimed at ensuring feed safety and high standards of hygiene at all stages of production.



Additives are another important issue in the area of animal feed. These can improve the quality of feed and the food produced from the animals which eat it or provide health benefits for the animals. The EU only allows products of this kind to be placed on the market following scientific evaluation demonstrating that they have no harmful effects on human and animal health or the environment.

Against this background, training on EU feed law begins within Better Training for Safer Food in 2009. Ten workshops are to take place during 2009 and 2010 in Brussels, Warsaw and Madrid. They will be organised by the Commission's external contractor, the consortium made up of Euro Consultants, JVL and the British Standards Institution. The training is aimed at spreading knowledge and best practice amongst national-level control staff in Member States and Third Countries. This will contribute to increased levels of feed safety expertise throughout the entire process of production, processing and distribution.

Guarding against unsafe imports by land and sea

Effective veterinary and food safety checks at the EU's borders are vital for protecting public and animal health. It is thus essential that staff in Border Inspection Posts (BIPs) have the necessary expertise to carry out effective checks.

The EU has established health and supervisory requirements for imports and transits of animals and animal products. These requirements aim to ensure that imports meet the same standards as are required for production and trade within the EU and that transits adhere to relevant animal health standards. Training personnel responsible for border checks has long been considered a key factor in improving their knowledge of these requirements and thus ensuring a consistently high standard of, and a harmonised approach to controls throughout the EU.

Programmes on best practices for controls at BIPs have featured in Better Training for Safer Food since its launch in 2006. Initially, the training was for personnel working in seaport and airport BIPs but the focus was widened in 2008 to take in veterinary and food safety control checks in road and rail BIPs. As well as checks carried out in BIPs, the training also covers supervision of specific imported and transited consignments outside of BIPs, such as in customs warehouses.



May 2009 sees the first workshop in the 2009-10 programme covering seaport, road and rail BIPs with a workshop on seaport BIPs in Southampton. The training is organised by the Euro Consultants-JVL-British Standards Institution consortium. Four further workshops follow on seaport BIPs, also in Southampton. Two workshops are to take place on road and rail BIPs in Poland. Training on airport BIPs may also be re-launched in due course.



Continued promotion of EU standards worldwide

The EU is the world's biggest food importer and has extensive legislation aimed at ensuring that imports reach its food safety standards. These standards are geared towards guaranteeing the highest possible levels of consumer and animal protection and are intended to serve as a global point of reference in the field.

This being the case, the promotion of EU food safety standards in third and particularly in developing countries is a vital part of the mission of DG Health and Consumers. At the same time, the effect on the EU's trading partners of setting such high standards must be borne in mind.

EU standards are necessarily demanding and the need to comply with them may limit developing countries' export capacity. This is partly due to the lack of production surveillance in developing countries and their inability to provide safety guarantees. In areas such as fruit and vegetables, safety checks are often the responsibility of private organisations and importers.

Improvements to developing countries' safety control systems will increase their opportunity to trade in food products on the global market. Given the predominantly agrarian nature

of the economies of many developing countries, this is a key factor in alleviating poverty.

The EU has been training third country control staff in effective enforcement of EU food safety rules under Better Training for Safer Food since 2006. At first, the training covered only fruit, vegetables and fishery products. In subsequent years it has branched out to include areas such as labelling and traceability, meat, plant protection products and residue and contaminant monitoring.

The EU food standards programme launched in 2008 is to be rounded off in May 2009 with two workshops on plant protection products and pesticide residues and residue and contaminant monitoring in Argentina and Brazil respectively. The contractor charged with organising these events is the consortium made up of the European Application of Technology and Services (AETS), the Spanish Association for Standardisation and Certification (AENOR) and Ainia. It is expected that a new round of EU food standards training will begin later in 2009.

Upcoming events

4-8 May: Feed law, Brussels, Belgium

5-7 May: EU legislation for plant protection products and pesticide residues in fruit and vegetables, Buenos Aires, Argentina

11-15 May: Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point Principles, Stratford upon Avon, UK

11-15 May: Hygiene and controls on meat and meat products, Lyon, France

11-15 May: Hygiene and controls on milk and dairy products, Brescia, Italy

18-22 May: Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point Principles, Budapest, Hungary

25-29 May: Hygiene and controls on meat and meat products, Toulouse, France

25-29 May: Hygiene and controls on milk and dairy products, Brescia, Italy

25-29 May: Hygiene and controls on fishery products and live bivalve molluscs, Seville/Cadiz, Spain

26-28 May: EU legislation for residue and contaminant monitoring plans, Sao Paulo, Brazil

26-29 May: Veterinary and food safety checks in seaport border inspection posts, Southampton, UK

For further information on all of the 2009 training programmes please visit:

http://ec.europa.eu/food/training_strategy/training/index_en.htm

