



الاجتماع العالمي
الأول للإنفوسان
1 st GLOBAL MEETING
of **INFOSAN**

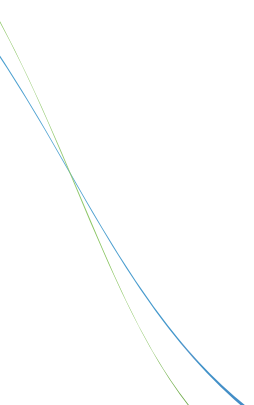
أبوظبي ١٤ - ١٦ ديسمبر ٢٠١٠
ABU DHABI 14-16 DEC 2010

REPORT OF THE FIRST GLOBAL MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITIES NETWORK (INFOSAN), Abu Dhabi, UAE



World Health
Organization







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We also wish to express our thanks to all participants and presenters for their valuable technical input, contributions and collegiality during the meeting. Finally, many thanks to Mr Carmen Joseph Savelli for acting as Rapporteur during the meeting, and for compiling this report.

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Acronyms

ADFCA	Abu Dhabi Food Control Authority
BTSF	Better Training for Safer Food
CDC	Center for Disease Prevention and Control
CFIA	Canadian Food Inspection Agency
CNP	Central Notification Point
Codex	Codex Alimentarius Commission
EC	European Commission
ECDC	European Centre for Disease Control
EFSA	European Food Safety Authority
EMPRES	Emergency Prevention System
EON IMS	Emergency Operations Network Incident Management System
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FCC	Food Chain Crisis Management Framework
FDAAA	Food and Drug Administration Amendments Act of 2007
FOS	Department of Food Safety and Zoonoses
FSANZ	Food Standards Australia New Zealand
GLEWS	Global Early Warning System for Major Animal Diseases, including Zoonoses
HAV	Hepatitis A Virus
IHR	International Health Regulations
INFOSAN	International Food Safety Authorities Network
IT	Information Technology
JRC	The European Commission's Joint Research Centre
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
OIE	World Organisation for Animal Health
RASFF	Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
US FDA	United States Food and Drug Administration
WHA	World Health Assembly
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive summary

Introduction

INFOSAN is a joint programme of the FAO and WHO, which aims to prevent the international spread of contaminated food and foodborne disease and strengthen food safety systems globally. In the past, most interactions among Network members have occurred electronically or by telephone, never in the context of a “face-to-face” meeting. In May 2010, the World Health Assembly (WHA) adopted a resolution on advancing food safety initiatives,¹ which re-enforced the importance of INFOSAN. It was recognized that in order to meet expectations, members of the Network would need to come together to discuss current approaches and existing mechanisms, as well as potential improvements and future needs of the Network. With the generous support of the ADFCA, the first global meeting of INFOSAN was held on 14–16 December 2010 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Purpose

The overall purpose of the meeting was to provide a forum for members to discuss the requirements of the Network, to develop a plan to enhance INFOSAN and to strengthen members’ capacity to participate in the Network.

Keynote address

The keynote address was delivered by Professor Alan Reilly of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland. Participants were reminded that quality and safe food sustains life; however, quality information sustains food safety. Professor Reilly also emphasized the importance of INFOSAN members to share food safety information and draw from the experiences of others in order to make food safer for people everywhere.

Plenary sessions

During the plenary sessions, food safety experts from around the globe shared their expertise on a variety of food safety topics. Dr Andrea Ellis presented highlights of INFOSAN activities, recognizing that the Network has been utilized for a great many food safety events since its inception in 2004. During a facilitated discussion by Dr Masami Takeuchi, meeting participants provided feedback on the proposed content of the new INFOSAN Members’ Guide and the process for its revision. Dr Tobin Robinson discussed the development of a process for the identification of emerging risks in the food chain, including lessons learnt and requirements for international networking. During the subsequent discussion, it was noted that work being carried out by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) can be used as a model for Member States when implementing systems for risk analysis. Dr Andrea Ellis described the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005) and their role in food safety events. It was suggested that stronger links between INFOSAN Emergency Contact Points and IHR National Focal Points could enhance communication during such events. Dr Jean-Michel Poirson explained how the Emergency Prevention System (EMPRES) Food Safety Programme will complement and strengthen the existing INFOSAN event-identification activities through horizon-scanning and the analysis of low-key signals and indicators of food safety threats. Dr Karim Ben Jebara explained the aim of the Global Early Warning System for Major Animal Diseases, including Zoonoses (GLEWS) and that through collaboration, FAO, WHO and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) are better able to cover a wider range of outbreaks and exceptional epidemiological events with the provision of a multidisciplinary range of expertise.

Regional breakout sessions

In order to identify region-specific opportunities and challenges for collaboration and communication among INFOSAN members, participants were divided into groups relating to their respective region. The groups then participated in facilitated discussions. Within each group, facilitators led discussions on: 1) communication between countries during food safety issues or emergencies; 2) the sharing of experiences of colleagues from other countries; and 3) areas requiring strengthening in order to participate fully in INFOSAN. The outcomes from the facilitated discussion groups were brought together and presented by Dr Jørgen Schlundt.

Sharing challenges and best practices

One of the roles of INFOSAN is to ensure that lessons learnt from past food safety events are shared widely so they can be applied in the future. Five sessions were presented to illustrate the challenges and best practices related to the management of food safety events. Dr Barbara Butow and Dr Paul Brent discussed the importance of developing national response protocols and the application of such protocols during the management of food incidents in Australia. Ms Francoise Fontannaz and Ms Penny Campbell discussed health promotion in food safety, and described how synergies can be created by sharing best practices, experiences, and tested solutions. Regional and national

1 - Resolution WHA63.3. Advancing food safety initiatives. In: Sixty-third World Health Assembly, Geneva, 17–21 May 2010. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2010 (http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA63/A63_R3-en.pdf, accessed 10 December 2010).

alerting systems were discussed by Dr José Luis De Felipe and Ms Ellen Morrison, who described, respectively, the European Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF), and the United States Food and Drug Administration (US FDA) Emergency Operations Network Incident Management System (EON IMS). Dr Jørgen Schlundt facilitated a panel discussion with representatives from China, Canada and WHO on the melamine contamination incident of 2008. Dr Jean-Michel Poirson facilitated a panel discussion with representatives from Australia, the Netherlands and Turkey on the link between an outbreak of hepatitis A infections and semi-dried tomatoes. Each of the sessions discussing challenges and best practices provided elements applicable to other countries. It was reaffirmed that INFOSAN will continue to coordinate support for Network members during food safety events and encourage proactive international information sharing. In addition, INFOSAN will identify and address capacity-building requirements for the analytical and coordination aspects of emergency management, as well as event identification and early warning.

The way forward

The outcomes of the meeting included an improved sense of community among Network members, practical recommendations to enhance communication and collaboration within the Network, and the identification of opportunities to strengthen core capacity at country and regional levels which will promote participation in INFOSAN. Moving forward, the INFOSAN Secretariat will:

- revise the current Members' Guide;
- identify capacity-building needs and link with partners to meet those needs;
- formalize agreements with other international networks and programmes;
- improve the web-based communication platform for all Network members;
- develop regionally-based strategies for enhancing participation in INFOSAN activities; and
- develop a resource mobilization plan to ensure sustainability.

1. Introduction

1.1 Meeting background

The joint FAO/WHO INFOSAN programme aims to prevent the international spread of contaminated food and foodborne disease and strengthen food safety systems globally, by:

- promoting the rapid exchange of information during food safety-related events;
- sharing information on important food safety-related issues of global interest;
- promoting partnership and collaboration between countries; and
- helping countries strengthen their capacity to manage food safety risks.

In the past, most interactions between Network members have occurred electronically or by telephone, but never in the context of a "face-to-face" meeting. With continually expanding global food trade, food safety emergencies with an international scope are being identified with increasing frequency, posing new challenges to food safety authorities everywhere (see Box 1).

In May 2010, the WHA adopted resolution WHA 63.3 on advancing food safety initiatives, which re-enforced the

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