

## **Food Safety Cooperation Forum Partnership Training Institute Network:**

### ***Capacity Building to Support Food-Safety Related Laboratory Needs***

Food safety is critically important to achieving the larger APEC goals of improved public health, food security and greater trade and investment in the region. Attaining the high-level food safety assurance systems that are the foundation of international best practice, however, requires a well functioning standards and conformance infrastructure. In particular, laboratory infrastructure is integral to the hazard identification and control validation protocols essential to maintaining the food safety standards contained in rigorous food safety assurance systems. Indeed, the Food Safety Cooperation Forum (FSCF) identified laboratory capacity building as a priority in its 2007-2011 plans to strengthen food safety standards and practices in the APEC region.

The FSCF's plan to strengthen food safety standards seeks to build on, and not duplicate, the work of other organizations. Several international and regional organizations, including notably the Specialist Regional Bodies (SRBs)<sup>1</sup> in APEC, have collective mandates and established programs aimed at building institutional and human laboratory capacity to advance food safety. Still, the scope of needs and the challenges to sustained success are considerable. Participants in the activities of the FSCF Partnership Training Institute Network (PTIN) have shown considerable interest in identifying ways in which the partnerships developed through the PTIN can be used to support the efforts of other organizations in strengthening laboratory capacity -- including by building on the outcomes and "lessons learned" of past activities and by catalyzing resources and momentum to advance ongoing programs.

Specifically, in May 2010, the FSCF PTIN convened an "Experts Working Group on Food Safety" (EWG) to develop a roadmap to improve the accessibility, effectiveness and use of training material on international standards and best practices relating to food safety, including in the area of laboratory capacity. The report of the EWG<sup>2</sup> outlines the infrastructure prerequisites (including access to stable sources of funding, water, electricity, metrology resources and reference standards/materials); delineates eleven segments of training needs (including setting the global context of food safety, needs assessment, safety, quality assurance, metrology, sampling, management, accreditation, analytical methods, data analysis, and maintenance/troubleshooting); and provides an initial survey of available

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<sup>1</sup> The Specialist Regional Bodies are: the Pacific Area Standards Congress (PASC), the Asia Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (APLAC), the Asia-Pacific Metrology Programme (APMP), the Asia-Pacific Legal Metrology Forum (APLMF) and the Pacific Accreditation Cooperation (PAC).

<sup>2</sup> 2010/SOM3/SCSC2/028, "FSCF PTIN Expert Working Group on Food Safety, Developing Training Modules and Delivery Mechanisms for the APEC Region - Final Report," Second Sub-Committee on Standards and Conformance Meeting, Sendai, Japan 20-21 September 2010

training material (including FAO/ PAHO Red Interamericana de Laboratorios de Análisis de Alimentos (RILAA), Inter-American Network of Food Analysis Laboratories (INFAL), Global Foodborne Infections Network (GFN), Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling (CCMAS), Asia-Pacific Metrology Programme (APMP), Asia Pacific Food Analysis Network (APFAN), and the Asia Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (APLAC)).

The EWG report noted that efforts are needed to build understanding of the role of laboratory testing in support of food safety systems and global trade; to improve needs assessment in building laboratory infrastructure; to better target and coordinate interventions and training; and to increase the effectiveness of resources used to support of capacity building. Indeed, these conclusions are consistent with a major study by the World Bank<sup>3</sup> in an internal review of its lending programs in support of laboratory investments in developing economies. Building on this work, as well as the considerable work undertaken by the APEC SRBs, to strengthen the standards and conformance infrastructure that underpins food safety, this note outlines a proposed FSCF PTIN timetable to make a positive contribution to advancing laboratory capacity in support of food safety.

Work is underway to secure funding for FSCF PTIN work on laboratory capacity building from several sources, including the Technical Assistance and Trade Facilitation Fund (TATF) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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<sup>3</sup> 2009, World Bank. "Guide for Assessing Investment Needs in Laboratory Capacities for Managing Food Safety, Plant Health, and Animal Health," Report #55006, Agriculture and Rural Development, Sustainable Development Network, June 2009.

Action	Timetable	Outcome
Conduct consultations with FSCF and PTIN stakeholders	Ongoing through March 2011	Outline of substantive elements of work plan for endorsement by FSCF in Big Sky
Meet with experts from international and regional organizations on laboratory capacity	February - May 2011	Establish collaborative linkages on forward work
Convene Lab Capacity Experts Group (LCEG)	March - August 2011	FSCF PTIN concept paper on the "Global Context of Food Safety" and scoping paper on "Conducting Economy Needs Assessments"
Conduct a Laboratory Capacity Needs Assessment Survey among APEC economies	April - June 2011	Results of survey on Laboratory Capacity Needs among APEC economies will guide further work
Hold an FSCF PTIN "Lab Capacity Workshop"	August - September 2011	Individual economy action plans and recommendations for forward collaboration on training modules
Develop training modules	Through April 2012	Reproducible, accessible curricula on the "Global Context of Food Safety" and "Evaluating Laboratory Needs"