The World Health Organization’s Food Recall Activities

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National and Global Activities associated with Food Recalls

National Level Activities

In the absence of a food recall system – a case study

2007 Cacuaco, Angola
• 467 cases of bromide intoxication
• Drowsiness, blurred vision, walking difficulties and difficulties in muscular control

In the absence of a food recall system – a case study

• Sodium bromide sold as salt was identified as the cause
No recall system in place =
• Delay in action
• Massive resource input
• Additional cases
WHO assistance at a National Level for Food Recalls

- Working in collaboration with National Counterparts, WHO aims to strengthen National Food Control Systems.
- WHO works in partnership with FAO.

Activities include:
- In-country missions providing technical assistance
- Technical assistance from afar
- Regional/sub-regional training courses/workshops
- Guideline development
- Assisting in gaining high level support

FAO/WHO Key Components of National Food Control Systems

- Food Legislation
- Food Control Management
- Inspection Services
- Laboratory Services
- Information, Education, Communication and Training

Food Recall Key Principles - Prevention

Prevention is better than cure… or food recall

Food Recall Key Principles – Risk Analysis

Risk Assessment
- Examining the science

Risk Management
- Defining and implementing the policies

Risk Communication
- The exchange of information

Food Recall Key Principles – Farm to Fork

- Vehicle emission
- Agricultural practices
- Waste
- Livestock
- Crops
- Seafood
- Processing
- Storage
- Distribution
- Retail Preparation
Food Recall Key Principles – System needs to reflect local situation

'Traditional' recalls may not be appropriate and other options may need to be considered.

Food Recall Key Principles – Meet International Obligations

WPRO Food Recall Guidelines

- Developed in 2007 and has been subject to international peer review.
- Not yet published, but available for use by National Governments.
- Outlines key components of a recall system.
- All input is welcome!

WPRO Food Recall Guidelines

- Legal basis
- Risk assessment
- Role and responsibilities
  - Food business
  - National authority
  - Consumer
  - International obligations

WPRO Food Recall Guidelines

- Planning, implementing and reviewing a food recall
  - Planning a recall
  - Implementing a food recall
  - Reviewing a food recall
  - Inspector skills
- Guidance questions to be considered when drafting or reviewing food legislation
- Food business recall plan
- Recall plan for National Authorities
- Checklist for public notices

Food recall systems in WPRO countries and areas
Case Study: Fiji

- Fiji is a small island developing state in the Pacific
- Population of 850,000
- WHO supported Food Recall Protocol developed in 2002:
  - The roles and responsibilities of involved stakeholders
  - Who should be notified of the recall
  - Notification procedures
  - Post recall reporting

Challenges in developing recall systems

- Risk assessment in urgent situations
- Action proportionate to risk
- Defining the scope of a recall
- Action in time critical situations
- Development of communication mechanisms
- Management of ‘informally traded foods’

Global Action – INFOSAN

International Food Safety Authorities Network

International foodborne disease outbreaks:
Rapid spread worldwide by movement of food

Globalisation of Food Trade

Chicken Kiev

- Salted butter - Ireland
- Garlic puree - China, USA, Spain
- Garlic salt - China, USA, Spain
- Lemon oil - USA
- Parsley - France, UK
- Pepper - Indonesia
- Water - Ireland

Herb Butter

- Chicken - Ireland, Belgium
- Batter: Flour - Belgium, France
- Water - Ireland

Bread Crumb

- Bread crumb - Ireland, UK
- Rapeseed oil - EU, Australia
- Eastern Europe

What is INFOSAN?

A global network of national food safety authorities that...

- Promotes the rapid exchange of information during food safety related events
- Shares information on important food safety related issues of global interest
- Promotes partnership and collaboration between countries, and between networks
- Responds to requests for assistance during international food safety events
- Helps countries strengthen their capacity to manage food safety risks

As of today, there are 177 country members of INFOSAN
**Mandate for INFOSAN**

World Health Assembly (WHA) Resolutions

Codex Guidelines


International Food Safety Conferences

Reinforced by the Beijing Declaration on Food Safety (2007)

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**International Health Regulations (IHR)**

- Old IHR (1969) only covered Yellow Fever, Cholera and Plague
- New IHR (2005) include *all public health emergencies of international concern* - including those caused by food
- All WHO Member States are obliged to declare all public health emergencies of international concern to WHO

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**The International Health Regulations and INFOSAN**

[Diagram showing the process of event risk assessment, notification, and response involving various sources and stakeholders, including the INFOSAN Secretariat, National INFOSAN Focal Points, and INFOSAN Emergency Contact Point.]
### Examples of INFOSAN Emergency Alerts

- **August 2009** - *Listeria monocytogenes* associated with chicken wraps served on an aeroplane
- **December 2009** – Excessive levels of iodine in an internationally distributed seaweed product causing illness
- **January 2010** - Multi-state outbreak of *Salmonella Montevideo* infections in the United States of America linked to internationally distributed salami
- **November 2009** – March 2010 Possible link between Hepatitis A and semi-dried tomatoes

### INFOSAN Emergency and National Food Recall Systems

- Relevant national food recalls should be notified to WHO via the INFOSAN Emergency Contact Point or the National IHR Focal Point
- Food recalls maybe triggered by INFOSAN Alerts
- Reflect this in the recall procedures
- Please let me know if you would like the contact details of the INFOSAN Emergency Contact Point for your country

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“Only if we act together can we respond effectively to international food safety problems and ensure safer food for everyone”

Dr Margaret Chan – Director-General