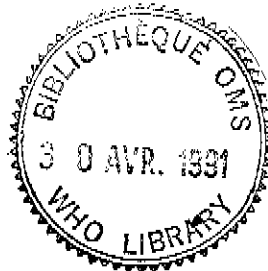




Second UNDP Steering Committee
Meeting on Food Safety

Budapest, 19-22 March 1990



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DRAFT REPORT

RER/87/015: EFFECTIVE SYSTEM APPLICATIONS FOR FOOD SAFETY

1. INTRODUCTION

The second meeting of the Steering Committee was convened by the WHO Regional Office for Europe in agreement with the Government of Hungary. The meeting was attended by 14 participants from 10 countries (UNDP/IPF) as well as a representative from UNDP, 4 temporary advisers and 4 observers. The meeting was addressed by Professor G. Biro, the Director-General of the National Institute of Food Hygiene and Nutrition and of the National Institute of Hygiene in Budapest and Dr A. Vass, Department of Hygiene, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The meeting was officially opened on behalf of the Minister of Social Affairs and Health by Mrs Z. Jakab, Head of the Department for International Relations.

The Steering Committee elected Professor G. Biro (Hungary) as chairman of the meeting and Dr S. Michaelidou-Canna (Cyprus) as vice-chairman. Mr G.O. Kermode was appointed as rapporteur to the committee. The Steering Committee adopted the provisional agenda (ICP/FOS 029/3) without amendment.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

Approaching the end of the decade, the Regional Office organized several surveys and consultations to assess whether all Member States would achieve the food safety target by 1990, reducing significantly health risks from food contamination and implementing measures to protect consumers from harmful chemicals. Results of the surveys indicated that national food safety services in Europe had developed over the years under different social, political and economic circumstances, revealing a wide diversity in structure, staffing and organization (WHO/EURO 1989). In most European countries central government responsibility was still shared by two or more departments without appropriate intersectorial collaboration, leaving some areas with ill-defined preventive strategies and inappropriate control measures. At the same time

the rapidly expanding international trade in food products and international tourism had resulted in increased hazards from transboundary foodborne infections and intoxications.

A marked increase in foodborne diseases in Europe during the past few years, as well as in the contamination of food with microbiological, chemical and radioactive pollutants, had prompted public health officials to propose international action in the prevention and control of foodborne infections and intoxications. A recent resolution of the World Health Assembly (May 1989) urged Member States to collaborate in the area of food safety emphasizing that they should intensify their epidemiological surveillance services and strengthen international and intersectorial collaboration in the control of foodborne infections.

It was evident therefore that the UNDP intercountry project entitled "Effective system applications for food safety" would not only be prudent but also timewise most appropriate for the less developed countries of the Region. Following the first UNDP steering committee meeting in Novi Sad (October 1988) the project had been approved and signed by most of the countries approached. Reflecting as accurately as possible the actual needs of the participating countries, the main objective of the project would be to develop close collaboration between all European countries through the establishment of self-sustaining international networks of the food safety related national focal points. The project would be capacity building and has three major objectives: development of an international food safety network for reporting, early warning and surveillance system; application of hazard analysis critical control points system; and development of a food safety information system.

3. THE PROJECT AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION

The Project Document and general workplan were prepared by the Executing Agency (WHO/EURO) and during the First Planning Steering Committee Meeting in Novi Sad, Yugoslavia in October 1988. Following recommendations developed during the UNDP mid-term programme review meeting, Geneva, 16-22 March 1989, the final project document was modified accordingly and two additional activities were introduced to emphasize the environmental and research issues: a) development of European environmental monitoring programme for food contaminants; and b) development of an international coordinated sentinel study of foodborne diseases. The general workplan indicates the timing of project activities, specifies the responsible parties and interrelationships of the main project operations including assignments of experts and other key inputs. A detailed workplan for use in management of the implementation phase of the project was prepared after discussions with governmental authorities of the participating countries and was based upon the various country workplans. The plans prepared at the beginning of the project in consultation with the Steering Committee, will be reviewed periodically.

The project is being coordinated by the Regional Office for Europe of the World Health Organization (WHO/EURO) in Copenhagen as Executing Agency. A network of institutions is being established through a focal point in each participating country. The network will be supervised by the Steering Committee comprising each participating country and operating with a rotating chairmanship. A part-time regional network secretariat in one of the participating countries will be established.

The secretariat is presently located in WHO/EURO, Copenhagen, but is to be transferred to one of the participating countries as soon as the prerequisites have been met. The country to which it is transferred will be regarded as the permanent host country for the regional network secretariat, and will be invited to cover the local support costs of housing and maintaining it.

Participating countries are expected to establish national mechanisms for the coordination of the project activities considered to be of paramount importance for the overall success of the project. Each participating country should organize national planning meetings in order to adapt their national workplan and to harmonize these plans with the regional food safety project plan of work.

4. SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

The steering committee had been convened to review project implementation at international as well as at country level. Based on a current situation analysis, and particularly in view of recent developments in Europe, the general strategy was to be examined and the plan of activities further developed. Special emphasis was to be given to the definition and organization of the network and its functioning, as well as to the establishment of the network secretariat. It was also expected that the participating countries would indicate their possible commitments with respect to implementing activities at the national level. The steering committee would be expected to ascertain that the project, as being currently implemented, reflected as accurately as possible the needs of the participating countries and that the project was directed towards developing close collaboration among all European countries to establish selfsustaining international networks.

The steering committee would also review progress in the implementation of the various components of the project to date. Participating countries would also be expected to provide progress reports on the implementation of project activities within their countries.

5. PROGRESS OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES - INTERCOUNTRY LEVEL

Immediate Objective One

Development of a European self-sustaining surveillance and reporting system, early warning (alert) system, and emergency response system for foodborne infections and intoxications

Activity 1.1.1 - Survey of the existing national surveillance and notification systems and their connection to the international systems (1989)

A survey of the existing national surveillance and notification systems for foodborne diseases and their links with the international programme was performed by the Robert von Ostertag Institute, Berlin (West). This survey is part of the Report of the Surveillance Programme on Foodborne Diseases.

Activity 1.1.2 - Nomination at national level of the person or institution responsible for reporting to the WHO European food safety system (1989)

The persons responsible at national level for the prevention of infectious diseases and for epidemiological surveillance have been designated in each of the participating country to be also responsible for reporting on foodborne diseases to the WHO Regional Office for Europe and/or to the WHO Surveillance Programme for Control of Foodborne Infections and Intoxications in Europe, Berlin (West).

Activity 1.1.3 - Seminar to evaluate the existing national and international systems and to recommend improvements needed for the establishment of self-sustaining systems (1989)

Based on the survey a consultation was held at the FAO/WHO Collaborating Centre for Research and Training in Food Hygiene and Zoonoses in Berlin (West), October 1989. The objective of the consultation was to make an evaluation of the existing national and international systems and their interaction.

The consultation concluded that all recent indicators suggest that foodborne diseases had increased during the last few years to epidemic proportions, primarily due to infections with *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* strains. Most of the increase in at least eleven countries had been attributed to *Salmonella enteritidis*, and it was also predicted that the epidemic would most probably spread to all countries of the Region. The current incidence rate of more than 1200 cases per one million inhabitants, as an average for Europe, is about three times higher than that recorded in 1984. Reporting of outbreaks of foodborne diseases was still inadequate and it was assessed that probably not more than 10% of acute cases were reported in most of the European countries. Taking into account the rate of underreporting, the current number of cases should be multiplied at least by a factor of 10 to obtain a more realistic incidence rate. This assessment was confirmed in the sentinel studies of foodborne diseases carried out in some of the European countries. The Consultation recognized the achievements of the surveillance programme under the leadership of the Collaborating Centre in Berlin (West), which has grown from its start in 1980 to currently include 27 participating countries. A wide range of specific recommendations aimed primarily to further improve national and international programmes for reporting and surveillance of foodborne infections, were made emphasizing that without accurate and adequate epidemiological data it would be very difficult to make the most appropriate management decisions. This programme should provide vital data for the HFA indicators related to food safety. It was also concluded that a follow-up meeting should be organized in one year's time to assess whether the situation had improved and to recommend other necessary measures to prevent further spread of foodborne infections.

The Meeting also reviewed the current situation in Europe concerning chemical contamination of food, based on the report of the Joint UNEP/FAO/WHO Food Contamination Monitoring Programme (GEMS/Food 1989). The current median/mean levels of contaminants in individual foods and in total diet in most of the European countries were generally well within

established health criteria, guidelines or standards and the trend was generally downward, as the use of persistent pesticides and other toxic chemicals was curtailed or banned altogether. However, there were situations where the general population might not be at risk, but specific population groups could be unduly exposed; considerable contamination of food was noted, such as organochlorine pesticides, PCBs in human milk, mercury and PCBs in fish, lead in canned foods and aflatoxins in nuts and cereals. Since food is, besides water and air, the major vehicle for the entry of environmental pollutants into the human body, it was concluded that the chemical safety of food was of special concern for an industrial region such as Europe, and therefore improved collaboration among the sectors concerned with chemical food analysis, epidemiology, food ingestion and environmental protection should be ensured in the future.

Immediate Objective Two

Establishment of the most cost-effective food safety control system through implementation of the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point System (HACCP)

Activity 2.1.1 - Identification of the primary focal points (expert and/or institution) on HACCP development in each participating country (1989)

Preparatory work. The primary focal points on HACCP development in each participating country were identified and the specific food processing industry or the specific area in tourism was selected on the basis of available epidemiological evidence.

Activity 2.1.2 - Training seminar to introduce the HACCP system in each participating country (1989)

In order to achieve the adoption of the HACCP concept as a cost-effective food safety control system, the WHO Regional Office organized in Brussels (November 1989) an intergovernmental meeting of chief food safety officers to advise on main strategies and activities for the next decade. In the light of new political developments with enhanced international trade among all countries in the Region, and particularly in view of the Single European Market in 1993 with removal of all trade barriers within the EEC countries, emphasis was given to achieving, through a closer cooperation among inspection services, mutual recognition of national control systems on effective food safety throughout the European Region. It was recommended that the strategy for the 1990s should focus on (a) strengthening of international collaboration in the regional programmes on reporting, monitoring and surveillance of food contamination and foodborne diseases, (b) harmonization in education and training of food safety personnel and (c) implementation of national policies for an integrated intersectorial approach to food safety. Based on the overall situation analysis the meeting proposed the following recommendations concerning the short- and long-term objectives and activities to ensure effective food safety control systems in Europe in the 1990s.

In order to harmonize manpower development in the area of food safety the introduction of a permanent international training programme for trainers was recommended. It was also recommended that the safety and hygiene aspects could be controlled properly and more cost-effectively by developing and applying the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) programmes rather than relying exclusively on the end-product testing. It was therefore foreseen that specific training programmes on HACCP should be developed in Europe for food inspectors and food technologists in industry.

Since it was recognized that without accurate and adequate epidemiological and monitoring data it would be very difficult to make the most appropriate decisions with respect to priorities, resources and management, a special effort should be made to establish full functioning of regional programmes on reporting, monitoring and surveillance of foodborne diseases. It was recognized, therefore, that in spite of significant achievements of the regional foodborne diseases surveillance programme, there remained a need for further improvements and appropriate support of national authorities in line with the Berlin (West) recommendations. However, it was concluded that the current UNEP/FAO/WHO Food Contamination Monitoring Programme (GEMS/Food 1989) - needed many additions and improvements to meet more effectively the requirements of European countries and that the overall programme could benefit from the resources and expertise available in Europe. In this respect it was recommended that a broad European food contamination monitoring programme should be established with a network and principles similar to the WHO/EURO foodborne diseases surveillance programme. This programme should be based on the GEMS/Food programme, but should be extended from the present 13 European countries to all Member States of the Region. Strict requirements regarding sampling, methods of analysis, analytical quality and the consistent submission of data on agreed contaminants and foods would need to be adhered to and this could best be effected through the establishment of a European laboratory analytical quality assurance scheme. A selection of contaminants and foods to be monitored would need to be made to reflect regional priorities.

The lack of appropriate intersectorial collaboration was considered to be a major problem for Member States in sustaining food safety at national level. It was concluded, therefore, that the European Food Safety Conference, which was to be organized by the Regional Office in 1992 could play a very important role in the implementation (promotion) of intersectorial food safety policies. This Conference could be seen both as an essential step in increasing the momentum of the comprehensive food safety strategy and as a commitment to the Member States for their support and collaboration in the regional programmes related to food safety.

Immediate Objective Three

To develop a European food safety information system on legislation, services, and international recommendations

Activities 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 - Survey of existing information systems (1989) and Development of the network of national focal points (1989)

The Steering Committee was informed of the progress made by the WHO Regional Office for Europe concerning a survey of existing information systems with a view to determining their suitability for inclusion in the proposed food safety information network. Various potential sources of data were examined and contacts were established between WHO/EURO and the persons responsible for various networks and activities such as the Codex Alimentarius, the International Register of Potentially Toxic Chemicals, WHO Health Legislation and the food harmonization directives of EEC. Other organizations concerned with food safety and legislation were contacted, such as the European Food Law Association and the Council of Europe. It had emerged from these contacts that there was a need to establish as an essential minimum a mechanism for rapid contact among countries of the European Region to obtain information on national food legislation provisions, the requirements of EEC directives as well as sources of food safety information such as the outputs of GEMS/Food, JECFA, JMPR, international standards and rulings of the European Court of the EEC on food matters. WHO/EURO was also investigating the possibility of arranging for future issues of its "Survey of Food Safety Services in Europe" to be printed in loose-leaf form so as to facilitate the prompt issue of amendments. This procedure would also be followed regarding the various lists of contact points of the networks. The next steps would need to deal with the feasibility of computerization of the various components of the proposed food safety information system. Work was already in hand in this regard concerning Codex, IRPTC, GEMS, JECFA and JMPR. The CEC had also initiated a considerable amount of work for the possible computerization of the EEC Directives and related information. The European Food Law Association, in cooperation with the Food Law Institute of the Free University of Brussels, had been compiling legal files of the details of the food laws of the European countries and had indicated its willingness to participate in the food safety information system by expanding the coverage of its newsletter. In view of the approaching "Single Market of the EEC" in 1993 and the interest of the other European countries in this development and its implication in the food safety, legislation and trade fields all parties contacted had stressed the importance and need for a food safety information system to be established. WHO/EURO has currently in hand the establishment of a network of national focal points for reporting system on their legislation concerning food safety based upon the recommendations of the Brussels Consultation, November 1989.

The Berlin (West) Consultation, October 1989 recommended that all countries of the Region should promote computerized systems and take care that different services at national level involved in the collection of data should use the same information systems and communication protocols. It was also recommended that WHO/EURO should consider the development of a standardized data output format and communication protocol for participating countries in the surveillance programme. Finally it was concluded that a Centre should be designated to collect and distribute information on existing computerized surveillance systems, develop a computerized expert system and a computerized network with an electronic mail box for communicating data and information among countries.

6. PROGRESS OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES - COUNTRY LEVEL

The Steering Committee received oral reports from the countries participating in the project and the other IPF countries of the European region. In nearly all countries measures had been taken to ensure the general implementation of the project and key personnel and institutions had been designated for participation in the project activities to facilitate implementation at the country level. All activities concerning objectives one to three had been addressed and significant progress was reported by all countries. The Steering Committee considered it would be of considerable value to all countries if WHO/EURO would circulate to all participants copies of country progress reports as soon as practicable after the meeting. Reports had been prepared by all participating IPF countries; Albania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Turkey and Yugoslavia.

ALBANIA

A propos du travail effectué jusqu'à présent et les problèmes à résoudre afin de réaliser le projet régional concernant "les applications du système effectif pour le bon entretien des aliments".

L'application dans notre pays, au cours de cette année du projet régional concernant les applications du système effectif pour le bon entretien des aliments dirigée par le Bureau régional de l'Organisation mondiale de la santé pour l'Europe et soutenue par le PNUD, vise à réaliser d'une façon incessante le processus de développement pour la création des réseaux d'institutions auto-gestionnaires.

1. Les engagements généraux pour le projet

Après avoir approuvé le 26 septembre 1989 le projet, nous avons créé un groupe de travail qui s'occuperait de la supervision des travaux de ce projet. Ce groupe de travail a convoqué beaucoup de réunions et a élaboré un programme de travail provisoire. Nous attendons les spécialistes envoyés par le comité du Bureau régional de l'Europe pour élaborer le programme définitif. Dans une réunion de Bruxelles nous avons été d'accord de recevoir dans notre pays le directeur du programme et un spécialiste du Bureau régional de l'Europe. Nous attendons qu'ils viennent. Notre organisation étatique concernant le contrôle des produits alimentaires crée de grandes possibilités pour la réalisation de ce projet régional. La tâche primordiale que nous avons fixée est l'appréciation de l'hygiène qui doit être fondée sur des méthodes modernes appliquées dans le domaine du contrôle et des différentes définitions analytiques. C'est pour cette raison qu'il est nécessaire, dans le cadre de l'application de ce projet et s'appuyant toujours sur le Bureau régional de l'OMS pour l'Europe, d'élever le niveau de la qualification dans quelques domaines de l'appréciation hygiénique et analytique et de renforcer la base matérielle et technique en l'élevant au niveau contemporain.

Nous avons élu les officiels qui représenteront notre pays dans la représentation et le comité de direction. L'Institut de recherche de l'hygiène et de l'épidémiologie de Tirana est le centre de toutes les communications avec les agences exécutives dans ce projet particulier.

2. Les activités qui concernent l'objectif No.1

Notre pays n'a pas participé à la consultation des systèmes nationaux et internationaux pour dénoncer, rapporter et observer l'intoxication et l'infection des aliments, qui s'est tenue au cours de 1989 à Berlin-Ouest. L'Institut de recherche de l'hygiène et de l'épidémiologie de Tirana est officiellement nommé pour le programme européen de surveillance des maladies d'origine alimentaire.

Dans notre pays, on observe et enregistre toutes les maladies infectieuses et celles d'origine alimentaire. Nous n'avons pas encore réalisé le programme international de l'observation des maladies d'origine alimentaire. Une unification de la méthodologie se révèle nécessaire.

L'Institut de recherche de l'hygiène et de l'épidémiologie de Tirana est devenu le centre principal pour la dénonciation urgente et la protection de l'alimentation dans notre pays.

Notre pays ne participe pas au programme de GEMS/FOOD de la contamination alimentaire. Nous estimons qu'il faut voir encore les revendications de ce programme.

3. Les activités concernant l'objectif No.2

Notre pays a participé à la réunion de Bruxelles. Les recommandations de la réunion de Bruxelles concordent avec les plans de notre pays pour leur mise en oeuvre. Le soutien du Bureau régional de l'Europe et du PNUD est aussi nécessaire pour le renforcement de la base matérielle technique des équipements modernes et l'élévation du degré de la qualification du centre national. C'est l'Institut de recherche de l'hygiène et de l'épidémiologie à Tirana qui s'occupera de la qualification des inspecteurs d'alimentation en collaboration avec l'Institut des industries alimentaires pour la qualification des technologues alimentaires.

3. Les activités concernant l'objectif No.3

C'est l'Institut de recherche de l'hygiène et de l'épidémiologie de Tirana qui est devenu le centre du système d'information concernant la création de la législation en Europe et d'autres activités internationales importantes.

4. Les plans visant les engagements aux activités futures

Le programme provisoire national qui s'occupera de l'application de ce projet a visé aussi quelques activités. Pour réaliser ces activités, il faut faire une consultation avec les spécialistes du Bureau régional de l'OMS pour l'Europe avec lesquels nous allons collaborer pour la coordination et l'élaboration du programme national définitif du travail.

Dr Kristo Haxhi
Directeur du programme national

Tirana, 12 mars 1990

BULGARIA

The project was signed by the Government in 1989.

At this stage a national committee has been established which is composed of representatives of public health services responsible for the problem of food safety in the country. Other administrative bodies dealing with this same problem will also be involved.

During its meetings the coordinating committee has discussed the present status of the problem and future activities in the light of the main objectives of the international project. The following decisions have been reached.

1. Improvement and better coordination of all activities in the area of microbiological food safety. An open information system to be established on the following:

- the system for surveillance, control and criteria for microbiological food safety;
- the actual status of microbiological food contamination and risks of foodborne diseases;
- the system for surveillance, registration, diagnostics and prophylaxis of foodborne diseases.

2. Improvement of the national system for chemical food safety assessment and control:

- the scientific background: criteria, toxicological evaluation and methods for analysis and control of chemical compounds originating from the environment, food processing;
- updating and strengthening of the national chemical food contamination monitoring system and its inclusion within the scope of the international project.

3. Special emphasis to be given to the application of the HACCP system.

The following key officers and permanent representatives of the steering committee have been delegated:

- Associate Professor Rumyana Boyanova Vachkova-Petrova, M.D., Ph.D., Coordinator, Institute of Gastroenterology and Nutrition;
- Dr Maria Borisova Haralanova, Head, Department of Prophylaxis and State Sanitary Control, Ministry of Public Health and Social Care.

The key focal point responsible for all communication with the executing agency on this particular project is the Institute of Gastroenterology and Nutrition, Medical Academy, Sofia.

An official representative of Bulgaria's Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare as the national focal point was present at the Consultation on

national and international systems for early warning, reporting and surveillance of foodborne infections and intoxications, held in Berlin (West) in October 1989. The national committee became acquainted with the summary report conclusions and recommendations of the Berlin consultation.

Meanwhile the institutions for the European surveillance programme have been identified and nominated as follows:

- Ministry of Public Health and Social Care, Sofia, 5 Lenin Square:
 - (a) Dr Maria Haralanova, Head of Nutrition and Food Safety Department
 - (b) Dr Stanislava Popova, Head of Epidemiology Department.
- Institute of Infectious Diseases, Sofia, Zaimov bul. 26.
- Institute of Gastroenterology and Nutrition, Sofia, D. Nestorov bul. 15.

When considering the situation of the national surveillance programme with respect to the conclusions and recommendations of the Berlin meeting, the following comments could be made.

The situation of foodborne illness registered in this country is very similar to the situation established in other European countries (see Table 1). Campylobacter infection of foodborne origin is not a current problem but it is supposed to be a future problem because of the epidemic present in some other countries.

According to our present regulations an outbreak is defined as follows: if 5 or more people become ill from the same food. The WHO definition could be accepted by all Member States including Bulgaria.

Our country is ready to follow a unified reporting system and to provide the collaborating centre with an annual analysis of foodborne illness as was agreed at the Berlin meeting.

The system for computerized data processing is now being elaborated within the public health services (Ministry of Public Health - Hygiene-epidemiological inspections). It will be at least two years before we are able to join the international system.

Bulgaria is ready to participate in an international project for sentinel study on foodborne diseases. At this stage we are able to present the results of long-term study now completed. The study was carried out on different foods, related potential hazardous agents, conditions which might be a prerequisite for foodborne disease and microbiological criteria for food safety.

A risk group of food commodities has also been studied: dried egg products, dried baby formula, sterilized canned infant foods. Different safety criteria have been established: microbiological norms, technological requirements, date of durability and storage instructions.

Bulgaria does not participate officially in the GEMS/Food contamination programme but a national system for monitoring chemical food contaminants was built up and has been operating for the past five years. The focal points for this objective have been nominated as follows:

- Institute of Gastroenterology and Nutrition, Medical Academy;
- Department of Prophylaxis and State Sanitary Control, Ministry of Public Health and Social Care, 5 Lenin Square, Sofia.

Our country did not take part in the Brussels meeting but it endorses the initiative for better international cooperation in the area of food safety. It shares the problems which have alerted public awareness of the need to improve international cooperation and multisectoral collaboration:

- recent outbreaks of foodborne diseases;
- contamination of food with microbiological, chemical and radioactive pollutants;
- rapidly expanding international tourism and international trade;
- the introduction of a single European market in 1992.

The recommendations of the Brussels meeting are appropriate to the plans of our country. Bulgaria supports all activities concerning the implementation of the European food contamination monitoring programme/GEMS/Food/Europe, and the HACCP system.

Our country would adhere to all requirements of the internationally agreed approaches.

In order to be able to compete with other Member States which joined the project earlier and have taken part in the Brussels meeting, we wish to propose to the Regional Office that a national workshop be held in Sofia, with the participation of two consultants, on the following main topics:

- the present status of the national system for food safety assessment and control system, and
- the application of the HACCP system.

The primary focal point in our country for the development of food safety personnel (key institution for training of food inspectors and technologists) will be the Institute of Gastroenterology and Nutrition, Medical Academy, Sofia.

The institution nominated to be the focal point for information systems dealing primarily with the development of legislation in Europe and other relevant international activities will be the Department of Prophylaxis and State Sanitary Control, Ministry of Public Health and Social Care.

Table 1. Foodborne diseases registered in Bulgaria
for the period 1987-1989 period 1987-1989

	1987		1988		1989	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Outbreaks	24		7		12	
People affected	2351		214		560	
Etiological structure of outbreaks:						
<u>Salmonella</u> (preffer.S.enteritidis)						
Outbreaks	11	45.8	6	85.7	10	83.3
People affected	1247	53.04	188	87.8	530	94.6
<u>Staphylococcus</u>						
Outbreaks	6	25	1	14.3	1	8.3
People affected	122	5.13	26	12.1	20	3.6
<u>Potential pathogens</u>						
Outbreaks	2	8.3				
People affected	78	3.31	-	-	-	-
<u>Shigella zonae</u>						
Outbreaks	2	8.3	-	-	-	-
People affected	848	36.06	-	-	-	-
<u>Botulism</u> (not laboratory confirmed)						
Outbreaks					1	8.3
People affected					10	1.8

CYPRUS

Introduction

Food safety is an important and high priority issue for the Government of Cyprus, both for public health protection and economic development reasons. The economy of Cyprus depends mostly on the rapidly growing tourist industry and on the export of agricultural products to the European markets. Cyprus is also expecting to become a member state of the European Community. The implementation of the "Effective system applications for food safety" project is therefore considered both appropriate and an integral part of the Government's overall policy.

The project document was signed by the Director General of the Ministry of Health, on behalf of the Government of Cyprus, on 9 September 1989.

1. General project implementation

1.1 Establishment of the National Food Safety Committee (NFSC)

A National Food Safety Committee is to be established in April-May 1990, after the presentation of the project and its main issues in two seminars organized by the Ministry of Health.

All preparatory work has been completed and a preliminary decision has been taken on the representation of ministries and services on the national committee. Representation would be as follows:

- Ministry of Health - two members:
 - (a) State General Laboratory, member of the International Steering Committee on Food Safety, coordinator of the NFSC;
 - (b) Department of Medical Services and Public Health, member (?);
- Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources - two members:
 - (a) Department of Veterinary Services;
 - (b) Department of Agriculture;
- Ministry of Commerce and Industry - two members;
- Planning Bureau - one member;
- Department of Data Processing Services - one member.

Close links are to be established with the Cyprus Tourist Organization, the Federation of Manufacturers and Traders as well as other nongovernmental organizations relevant to the project.

1.2 Delegation of key officers

The following key officers have already been delegated. The delegation of the others is pending until the establishment of the NFSC.

- (a) Dr Stella Canna-Michaelidou, State General Laboratory: member of the International Steering Committee, responsible for communication with the executing agency for this particular project.

(b) Mrs Agathi Anastasi, State General Laboratory:
Focal point for information systems on food safety.

2. Objective 1: Development of a European self-sustaining surveillance, reporting and early warning/emergency response system for foodborne infections and intoxications

2.1 Activities related to objective 1

Cyprus participated at the Consultation on national and international systems for early warning, reporting and surveillance of foodborne diseases, held in Berlin (West) in October 1989. Cyprus strongly supports recommendations 2, 3, 9 and 10 of the Berlin meeting. Contact point for this activity is Dr Charitini Komodiki, Department of Medical and Public Health Services.

Two laboratories have been identified for the implementation of the European Surveillance Programme for Foodborne Diseases (ref. our letter no. 4.7.01 of 17.10.88).

Final official nominations are pending establishment of the NFSC. These are namely:

- The State General Laboratory, Kimonos 44, Acropolis, Nicosia
Tel. 2-305063, Telex 5734 MHealth, Fax 303498, and
- The Investigation Centre for Foods of Animal Origin, Department of Veterinary Services, Athalassa, Nicosia
Tel. 2-402135, Telex MINAGRI 4660.

2.2 Situation concerning the national surveillance programme

The following have been undertaken since the Berlin meeting:

- strengthening the surveillance of foodborne diseases and intoxications by appointing a public health doctor in all district hospitals who, among other duties, will be responsible for the early notification of foodborne diseases/intoxications reported at each of these hospitals;
- refresher courses for all health inspectors on the surveillance and epidemiological investigation of foodborne diseases.

As far as the international programme is concerned, no contacts have been established other than those at the Berlin meeting.

Cyprus is very interested in participating in the Global Environmental Monitoring System/Food Contamination (GEMS/FOOD/EUROPE) programme and strongly supports the relevant recommendations (No. 2-7) of the Brussels meeting held in November 1989.

The State General Laboratory has been nominated as the Focal Institution for GEMS/FOOD/EUROPE.

3. Objective 2: Development of the most cost-effective food safety control system through implementation of Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point System (HACCP)

3.1 Activities related to objective 2

Cyprus participated in the Brussels meeting and agreed on the recommendations made.

4. Objective 3: Development of a food safety information system

4.1 Activities related to objective 3

For the future development of information systems on food safety, a national focal point has already been nominated: Mrs Agathi Anastasi.

5. Plans for implementation of future activities

5.1 Food safety and the introduction of HACCP concept

In order to inform all relevant parties (both governmental and nongovernmental) and secure their effective participation in the project activities, the following seminars are to be organized in April 1990 by the Ministry of Health:

- presentation of the "Effective System Applications for Food Safety" Project - scope, targets and implementation;
- a special seminar to introduce the HACCP concept; this seminar will be addressed mainly to food and tourist industries aiming at stimulating their interest and securing their commitment.

5.2 Surveillance of foodborne diseases and intoxications - early warning systems

Cyprus is very interested in improving its national reporting system. We are in full agreement with recommendation 2 of the Berlin meeting and we shall try to put it into practice.

In this respect we intend to include a number of private doctors in the surveillance system for early warning notification of foodborne diseases/intoxications (sentinel studies).

Acknowledgement: The contribution of Dr Charitini Komodiki in the preparation of this report is highly appreciated.

Dr Stella Canna-Michaelidou
Member of the International Steering
Committee on Food Safety

HUNGARY

1. General implementation of the project

1.1 On behalf of the government the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health signed the project in September 1989.

1.2 The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, in mutual understanding with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Commerce, established a committee composed of medical and veterinary doctors, under the direction of the National Institute of Food Hygiene and Nutrition (NIFHN). This committee is entrusted to coordinate the programme activities.

1.3 The competent ministries and organizations held three meetings in 1989 in connection with this programme. The themes of these discussions were the acceptance of WHO's suggestions, the elaboration of the given tasks and the definition of the critical control points of the national food industry and the organization of internal control on the basis of the HACCP system. A particular topic of discussion was the application of the international reporting system of foodborne diseases.

1.4 Professor Gyorgy Biro, M.D., director of the NIFHN, has been delegated as a key officer and permanent member of the steering committee.

1.5 The key focal point in Hungary is the National Institute of Food Hygiene and Nutrition, which is responsible for communication with the executing agency.

2. Activities related to objective 1

2.1 Professor Gyorgy Biro and Dr Barnabas Sas were present at the Berlin (West) meeting. The Institute of Food Hygiene and Nutrition is charged with the duty of WHO's programme. Address: Budapest, IX. Gyalí ut 3/a. Postal address: Budapest, P.O. Box 52. H-1476.

2.2 Our country has accepted the suggestions and recommendations of the Berlin (West) meeting and willingly takes up the charge of WHO's programme. It is necessary to mention that the present eastern European political and economic situation is obstructive to cooperation and the implementation of the programme.

2.3 As director of the NIFHN, Professor Biro has been nominated as focal point for the food safety early warning system.

2.4 Hungary is participating in the GEMS/Food contamination programme. The Department of Toxicology and the Department of Microbiology of the NIFHN have been nominated as focal point. We have begun the introduction of the HACCP system as the tool of choice for effective inspection.

3. Activities related to objective 2

3.1 Hungary participated in the Brussels meeting.

3.2 We accepted the recommendations of the Brussels meeting, and we offered our participation in the work of the WHO Regional Office for Europe and to be the contact point in our region. These recommendations are identical with the efforts in Hungary concerning food safety.

3.3 In Hungary the medical and veterinary universities are responsible for the education of experts. The Postgraduate Medical University also contributes to this training. The chair of Public Health including Food Hygiene of this University is situated in our Institute. Technologists are trained in different secondary and high schools.

4. Activities related to objective 3

The National Institute of Food Hygiene and Nutrition has been nominated as focal point for information systems. The collection and evaluation of reported food infections and intoxications is carried out in the NIFHN. This institute has at its disposal data on the chemical and microbiological contamination of foods. Detailed data on the examination of foods investigated during the processing courses and their evaluation are available from the institutions of the Ministry of Agriculture.

5. Plans for implementation of future activities

On 1 March 1990 the new rule in connection with food infections and intoxications came into force. We have started the execution of this rule.

For the introduction of the HACCP system the inspectorship of Public Health and Epidemiology issued a programme to competent human and veterinary institutions and organizations as well as to food industry establishments engaged in the processing of meat and poultry eggs, and to commercial branches for the preparation of their own internal control and reporting system.

On receiving the reports we shall begin analysis and evaluation and introduce the necessary measures.

MALTA

1. Late in 1987 the Government, in line with its electoral promise, gave the go-ahead for a thorough evaluation of food safety services in Malta, in particular to determine how far the country was geared to ensure food safety taking into consideration the ever increasing problems in this area. The significant expansion in the tourist sector, which is the leading industry in Malta, resulted in an increase in the potential risk to food safety through the considerable increase in food preparation areas. Control of imported food, which constitutes a high percentage of food consumed on the island, as well as of local agricultural practices, necessitated a thorough evaluation in line with our commitments both at local as well as international level. Public awareness has increased.

For the purpose of this evaluation, the help and advice of the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) in Rome was sought, and the experts who visited Malta in 1988 made a thorough assessment of our food safety services, identified various deficiencies and made proposals for bringing our food control infrastructure into line with that needed to meet present-day challenges. Following the recommendations made in their reports, the Department of Health, which is the authority responsible for food safety in Malta, made a specific proposal for the setting up of a Directorate of Food and Water Control which will also be responsible for environmental health monitoring. The proposal for such an upgraded, more functional division within the Department of Health was recently approved by the Cabinet and steps are being taken to ensure adequate staffing of this division. A director is soon to be appointed. Concurrent with this decision steps have been taken to ensure that the necessary equipment is made available. A crash update course for health inspectors in food safety is being held in the next few weeks. We would like to be able to introduce the HACCP concept to the participants of this course.

There is still, however, a great need to further develop human resources in this field so as to enable us to meet our commitments. The creation of this division comes at a time when the whole civil service in Malta, and indeed each individual public sector or department, is due for a major reform and reorganization with the creation of such support systems as are necessary to render them more effective.

The time is perhaps near when the decision for Malta to join the project will be taken. A meeting between representatives of health, agriculture, trade and industry as well as the UNDP local coordinator is intended to be held next month. It is expected that a formal decision in this respect will be taken when the appointment of the director of the new division to which I have referred is made in the very near future. Keeping in mind the small size of the island (300 km) and the relative population (350 000), it is envisaged that the head of this division, with the support of his team, will be the national mechanism for coordination of the programme activities. Until the necessary formalities are concluded, the Department of Health, through myself, will be the focal point for communication with the executing agency on this particular project.

2. Activities related to objective 1

Following our participation at the Berlin (West) meeting last October, action was taken to review the recommendations. Apart from steps to improve notification of foodborne infections in accordance with ICD codes, a Joint Committee of the Department of Health and of Agriculture was set up for the purposes of ensuring better salmonella surveillance with monitoring and evaluation activities related to its control. At the same time steps are being taken to further the training of staff in laboratory diagnosis of foodborne diseases. In this way we hope to have more complete identification and reporting. In view of the small numbers involved and the limited sources of data, this will remain a central function and data will continue, for the time being, to be handled manually.

The institution for reporting infections will be the Health Services Information Unit of the Department of Health, through its director as the focal point. However, there has been an unavoidable delay in establishing formal connections with the international programme. It is hoped that the formal link will be made concurrently with our joining the Food Safety Project. Meanwhile, we will continue to cooperate on early warning, and the first data for 1989 will shortly be submitted to the Berlin Institute.

We are not a participating country in the GEMS/Food contamination programme, although we had the opportunity some years ago to participate in a joint study relating to heavy metals (lead and cadmium) in food together with Belgium and Sweden under the GEMS/FOOD programme. With the establishment of the Directorate of Food, Environmental Health and Water Control, this section could function through its director as the institution to coordinate future activities under this programme. It is anticipated that external support will be needed for analytic work in the initial years until the division I referred to above is fully functional.

3. Activities related to objective 2

Unfortunately, we were not in a position to participate in the Brussels meeting. The recommendations of this meeting have been found to be very relevant and broadly conform to our plans. However, we will again require, for an initial period, external support for staff training most of which will be carried out by the newly established Directorate in conjunction with the university.

4. Activities related to objective 3

At the moment we lack the necessary structures and facilities for an information system dealing primarily with the development of legislation in Europe. Until such a structure is created (and the reorganization of the Department of Health envisages such a situation with a Directorate responsible for management information systems), we will have to rely on information which is made available through such legislation data banks kept by other sectors such as the law courts, to which we have been offered access. We will continue to report to the WHO Regional Office for Europe on all health legislation introduced each year.

It is to be pointed out that priority will be given to this field particularly in view of our intention to apply to join the EEC in the near future.

5. Future activities

I have indicated the activities which have already been initiated in Malta as a result of a top-level government decision to improve food safety services.

These activities are currently gaining momentum and will continue over the next years. For this a significant investment in terms of equipment and personnel training has already been made, and funds will continue to be allocated for the purpose - in line with the recommendations of the recent international meetings. As I have already mentioned, external support will be needed for an initial period.

POLAND

1.1 On 18 October last year the Effective System Applications for Food Safety Project was signed on behalf of the Polish Government by the Deputy Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Professor A. Wojtczak.

1.2 The following three institutions were appointed as a committee for the coordination of programme activities:

- Department of Food Examination at the National Institute of Hygiene in Warsaw, which supervises, from the point of view of hygiene, the production and distribution of food other than that of animal origin;
- Institute of Veterinary Studies in Pulawa, which supervises the production of food of animal origin;
- Quality inspection Office of the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations for the quality of food exported from Poland.

The above-mentioned institutes would work in cooperation with health service laboratories, especially with sanitary-epidemiological stations, as well as with veterinary laboratories, which cover their activities throughout the country.

The director of the National Institute of Hygiene is appointed as the person responsible for coordinating the activities of all institutions in the field of food safety.

1.3 In December last year a meeting was organized for these three institutes. The problem of food safety and of the above-mentioned project was discussed. The activities of the particular institutions were established.

1.4 The heads of the institutes were appointed as key officers in this project.

1.5 The Director of the National Institute of Hygiene was appointed as the key focal point responsible for all communication with the executing agency on this project.

2.1 Dr Hanna Stypulkowska-Misiurewicz represented the national focal point at the Consultation on national and international systems for early warning, reporting and surveillance of foodborne infections and intoxications, held in Berlin (West) in October 1989. The Department of Epidemiology and the Department of Bacteriology of the National Institute of Hygiene were nominated in 1984 as the official institutes for the European surveillance programme of foodborne diseases.

2.2 Connections with the international programme have been developed since 1984 and continue in the form of cooperation with the Berlin cooperation centre for foodborne infections and intoxications in Europe and with the WHO Regional Office for Europe in Copenhagen.

The situation concerning the national surveillance programme with respect to the conclusions and recommendations of the Berlin meeting may be evaluated as good. Nearly all the important recommendations are either already fulfilled or will be fulfilled this year, with the exception of laboratory confirmation of Campylobacteriosis, which is impossible due to the lack of technical facilities in the country's laboratories.

2.3 Professor Danuta Naruszewicz-Lesiuk and Dr Hanna Stypulkowska-Misiurewicz employed at the Department of Epidemiology and the Department of Bacteriology of the National Institute of Hygiene are nominated as the focal points for the food safety early warning system.

2.4 Poland participates in the Food Contamination Monitoring Programme. The Department of Examination on Food of the National Institute of Hygiene is the FAO/WHO Collaborating Centre in Poland. The results of monitoring examinations of food contamination with heavy metals are being sent to Geneva. In 1989, in the framework of this cooperation, the Department sent the results of measurements of lead and cadmium levels in vegetables from regions polluted by industry and vehicle emissions of 18 vojvodships of Poland, collected in the period 1986-1988.

The main objective of this programme is to inform governments, the FAO/WHO Food Code Commission, other responsible institutions and the public on levels and trends in food contamination, on the proportion of food contamination to which people are exposed, as well as on the importance of food contamination for public health.

3.1 A representative of Poland, Mgr Kazimira Cwick from the Department of Food Examination of the National Institute of Hygiene participated in the Brussels meeting.

3.2 Recommendations from the Brussels meeting will be included in the Polish plans. This refers to both the GEMS/Food/Europe and the HACCP programmes. However, Poland expects the WHO Regional Office for Europe to organize a basic, international course on risk analysis and assessment. The course participants would be persons responsible for food safety in the food industry and sanitary supervision. The objective of the course should be to train the trainers on the HACCP programmes and on the indication of critical control points for various branches of the food industry. The report and the teaching material from such a course would be very useful in the preparation of the HACCP teaching programmes.

Information on the HACCP system has been transmitted by the National Institute of Hygiene to the leaders of vojvodship sanitary-epidemiology stations as well as to the chiefs of the Division of Food and Nutritional Hygiene and the Division of Epidemiology supervising food hygiene problems and the epidemiological situation caused by food. The principles of the system, its application in the food industry and food distribution, as well as the role of sanitary supervision of food have been presented. Moreover, the article on the HACCP system has been submitted to the journal Food industry, addressed to readers involved in food production and processing, for publication in August 1990.

3.3 Primarily the National Institute of Hygiene and the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, as well as the Veterinary Institute and the Quality Inspection Office will be nominated to be the focal point for information systems.

5.1 Poland intends to participate in the HACCP activities outlined in the project document, provided that WHO will organize the training course according to points 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 on page 18 of the project document.

PORTUGAL

1. General implementation of the project

1.1 The project has not yet been signed but will be signed soon.

1.2 Considering the national activities that have been established, the National Institute of Health was designated by the Ministry of Health as the coordinating institution for this project. The Director of the National Institute of Health has nominated a group of four people, with Professor Amorim Cruz, member of the Steering Committee, as coordinator. The group includes people working in the fields of chemical contamination of foods, epidemiological and laboratory investigation of foodborne diseases and a representative of the Centre for Epidemiological Surveillance of Communicable Diseases, which will be the national service for collecting data and elaborating the annual report for submission to the collaborating centre in Berlin.

The National Institute of Health and the designated group will have as main objective to establish contact with WHO and the several national institutions involved in this project. An additional task will be to communicate all information on the project to those persons working in the field of food inspection and control.

1.3 As soon as the project has been signed by the Government, the nominated group intend to organize a meeting with the other institutions involved in food inspection and control, in order to establish a National Steering Committee.

1.4 Not yet.

1.5 Professor Amorim Cruz, member of the Steering Committee, is the key focal point in Portugal.

2. Activities related to objective 1

2.1 Until now Portugal has not participated in the WHO surveillance programme for the control of foodborne infections and intoxications in Europe. With a view to active participation, we have submitted for consideration to WHO a project entitled Development of a national surveillance system for control of foodborne infections and intoxications. If this project is approved, as we expect, the situation can be improved with regard to the designation of a national service for collection of data, elaboration of the annual report and the compulsory notification of incidents.

2.2 As already explained, we are trying to solve the problem at national level with a view to subsequent contact with the international programme.

2.4 Portugal does not participate in the GEMS/Food contamination programme but for several years the Food Chemistry Department of the National Institute of Health has been investigating food contaminants and food additives. Recently, this Department proposed a project concerning the study of dietary intake of chemical contaminants. The focal point, probably someone from the Department, will be indicated at a later date.

3. Activities related to objective 2

3.1 Portugal participated in the Brussels meeting.

3.2 We agree with the recommendations of this meeting. We are very interested in the education and training facilities provided under the HACCP project. It will be an opportunity to train trainers who can subsequently set up training programmes in their own countries.

4. Activities related to objective 3

4.1 The institution is the Institute of Food Quality.

5. Plans for implementation of future activities

We are expecting our government to sign this project soon. Afterwards, the group designated in the National Institute of Health will organize a meeting with representatives of the other national institutions involved in food inspection and control. Key institutions and focal points will then be nominated and indicated for the person in charge of the project.

ROMANIA

The Ministry of Health of Romania has not participated in any of the meetings which have taken place to date within the framework of the WHO regional project on food safety in Europe in the 1990s. The reason for this was the politics of isolation and drastic restrictions imposed by the late dictatorial regime in Romania which, until December 1989, steadfastly prevented our scientists from attending any international meetings. Consequently, neither the Ministry of Health nor any other departments have been involved in the project mentioned above and, moreover, no special measures have been taken in this respect although Romania formally adhered to the project in 1989.

1. General implementation of the project

1.1 The project was signed by the Ministry of Health in September 1989.

1.2 No national mechanism (committee, task force) has been set up to coordinate programme activities.

1.3 It is not the case since no coordinating body has existed.

1.4 As a representative of the Ministry of Health in the Steering Committee of the project, Dr Sebastian Dumitrache, Chief of the Laboratory of Food Hygiene, Institute of Hygiene and Public Health, Bucharest, and lecturer at the Chair of Hygiene, Faculty of Medicine, Bucharest, has been delegated.

1.5 The Institute of Hygiene and Public Health, Bucharest, is the focal point responsible for communication with the executing agency of the project.

2. Activities related to objective 1

2.1 The delegate of the Ministry of Health (Dr Sebastian Dumitrache) did not attend the Consultation on national and international systems for early warning, reporting and surveillance of foodborne infections and intoxications, held in Berlin (West) in October 1989.

No institution has been nominated so far for the European surveillance programme of foodborne diseases.

2.2 No actions have been implemented at national level with respect to the conclusions and recommendations of the Berlin meeting, and no contact has been established with the international programme.

2.3 The focal point for the food safety early warning system will be the Institute of Hygiene and Public Health, Dr Leonte Str 1-3, 76256 Bucharest.

2.4 Romania did not participate in the GEMS/Food Contamination Programme.

The Institute of Hygiene and Public Health will be nominated as the focal point of the framework defined at the Consultation on Food Safety in Europe in the 1990s: hazard analysis critical control point system as the tool of choice for effective inspection.

3. Activities related to objective 2

3.1 Romania did not participate in the Brussels meeting.

3.2 The recommendations of the Brussels meeting are appropriate to the plans of our country. Nevertheless, Romania needs material support for the implementation of the HACCP programme (especially with regard to equipment and certain chemical substances necessary for carrying out food control using the methods suggested).

3.3 The primary focal point for the development of food safety personnel will be the Institute of Hygiene and Public Health, Bucharest. The following will also participate in the training of food inspectors and technologists:

- the Institutes of Hygiene and Public Health of Iasi and Cluj-Napoca respectively;
- the Faculty of Medicine, Bucharest;
- the Faculties of Veterinary Medicine of Bucharest and Cluj-Napoca,
- the Faculties of Chemistry and Technology of Food Products and of Fishing Technique, Galati;
- the Dr I. Cantacuzino Institute, Bucharest;
- the Central Laboratory for the control of animal products, Bucharest.

4. Activities related to objective 3

4.1 The focal point for the information systems dealing primarily with the development of legislation in Europe and other relevant international activities will be the Institute of Hygiene and Public Health, Bucharest.

5. The actual situation in Romania concerning the control of food safety

5.1 The control of food safety from the chemical (polluting and additive agents respectively), radioactive and microbiological viewpoints is carried out by several ministries/departments through the following specialized units.

(a) the Ministry of Health, through:

- the sanitary-antiepidemic centres in the 40 districts of Romania and in Bucharest;
- the Institutes of Hygiene and Public Health in Bucharest, Iasi and Cluj-Napoca;
- the Centre of Hygiene and Public Health in Timisoara.

(b) The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry, through:

- the sanitary-veterinary laboratories in all districts of the country;

- the zonal interdistrict sanitary-veterinary laboratories (six in number) which have more appropriate technical equipment and personnel than the district sanitary-veterinary laboratories;
- the Central Laboratory for Animal Food Control, Bucharest;
- the laboratories in the big factories and large food warehouses (factories for dairy, meat and bakery products respectively, canned food, vegetable oils, soft drinks etc.);
- the Institute of Plant Protection (against pesticide wastes).

(c) The General State Inspectorate for food quality control (after the Romanian Revolution of December 1989, this unit joined the Romanian Standardization Institute under the name of the National Commission for Standards, Measurements and Quality), through:

- the Larex Central Laboratory, Bucharest;
- the Larex Zonal Laboratories (six in number) which are subordinate to the central laboratory.

Collaboration between the three departments mentioned is unsatisfactory, occurring only occasionally.

Material ground. In general, existing equipment is old and of poor quality. Chemical reactivities were inadequately provided because of the drastic shrinkage of all funds (especially in currency) carried out by the late dictatorial regime. Subsequently, no extension could be made to the list of chemical polluting agents, additives, pathogenic and conditionally pathogenic microorganisms to be controlled in food. Examples are:

- among pesticides, only the organo-chlorides, organo-phosphorates and carbamates are controlled by the Institute of Hygiene and Public Health, by the Central and Zonal Sanitary-Veterinary Laboratories, by the Larex Laboratories and by the Institute for Plant Protection;
- hormones, tranquilizers, beta-blocking agents, antibiotics, sulphamides, antioxidants are checked only by the Central Laboratory for Animal Food Control and by the Larex Central Laboratory, both in Bucharest;
- among mycotoxins, only aflatoxins are controlled and very occasionally other mycotoxins, by the Institute of Hygiene and Public Health, the Central Sanitary-Veterinary Laboratory and the Larex Central Laboratory;
- the following items were very rarely checked, on a poor number of samples and only as a form of research work:
 - (a) aromatic polycyclic hydrocarbons;
 - (b) certain metals with toxic or oncogenic potential (mercury, cadmium, selenium, chrome, aluminium, nickel);
 - (c) some food-toxic infection-causing microorganisms (*Yersinia enterocolitica*, *Campylobacter*, *Lysteria*).

5.2 Besides the food safety action, the control of hygiene conditions in alimentary units (in industry, warehouses, commercial network, public and collective food consumption) is organized in Romania. This control is carried out by hygiene specialists and veterinarians, who work as inspectors in:

- the district sanitary-antiepidemic centres;
- the institutes of hygiene and public health;
- the Department of Preventive Medicine of the Ministry of Health;
- the veterinary stations of food safety;
- the district sanitary-veterinary laboratories;
- the General Sanitary-Veterinary Department and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry.

In our opinion, the WHO Project on Food Safety in Europe in the 1990s has paid too little attention to the mode of organizing the control of hygiene conditions in food units and food markets.

5.3 Specialization and consummation (?) of personnel who carry out the control of food quality and hygiene conditions in food units (hygiene specialists, veterinarians, chemists, microbiologists, biologists, parasitologists) is performed through courses and practical post-university stages organized by:

- the Faculties of Medicine in Bucharest, Isai and Cluj-Napoca;
- the Institutes of Hygiene and Public Health in Bucharest, Isai and Cluj-Napoca;
- the Faculties of Veterinary Medicine in Bucharest and Cluj-Napoca;
- the Central Laboratory for Animal Produce Control in Bucharest;
- the Dr I. Cantacuzino Institute in Bucharest.

The Faculty of Chemistry and Technology of Food Products and of Fishing Technique in Galati trains engineers specialized in the food industry.

Romania has wide experience in this field and could participate at any time in international programmes of professional training.

Dr Sebastian Dumitrache
Delegate of the Ministry of Health

TURKEY

1. General implementation of the project

1.1 Has the project been signed by the Government and when?

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has given direction to the Permanent Turkish Delegation to the United Nations about signing the project. The project document was signed by the Ambassador of Turkey on 6 December 1989.

1.2 Has a national mechanism (committee, task force) been established which will coordinate the programme activities?

A national committee has not been established until now because the project is still not signed. Preparations for programme activities are being made by the Primary Health Care General Directorate of the Ministry of Health, to be carried out by the proposed committee.

1.3 Has a meeting of this coordinating body already been organized, and if so, what were the main decisions?

Although a special committee has not been established, the Primary Health Care General Directorate of the Ministry of Health, taking into consideration the close relationship between infectious diseases, environmental health care and food safety, decided on the following activities at the first meeting with the related sectors.

- frequent control of food against agents of infection and intoxications;
- the data that is outlined will be gathered and discussed according to the strategies decided;
- frequent porter control of professionals dealing directly with all sorts of food production and delivery;
- provide and standardize the personnel, equipment and methodological needs of the food controlling laboratories;
- as well as in-house education of food control providers, planning ongoing education of the consumers and evaluating programmes that are proposed in the project.

1.4 Have key officers been delegated including permanent representatives and member of the steering committee?

Until the project is signed by the Government, the responsibilities of the key personnel will be carried out by the Primary Health Care General Directorate of the Ministry of Health.

1.5 Who is the key focal point in your country responsible for all communication with the executing agency on this particular project?

As indicated in answer 1.4, the General Director of Primary Health Care will be responsible, and this includes communication with WHO until the project is signed.

2. Activities related to objective 1

- 2.1 Was the national focal point present at the Consultation on national and international systems for early warning, reporting and surveillance of foodborne infections and intoxications, Berlin (West), October 1989, and has an institution for the European surveillance programme of foodborne diseases been identified and officially nominated (name and address)?

Parallel to the meeting in Berlin in October 1989 on early warning, reporting and surveillance of foodborne infections and intoxications, instead of assigning anybody under the responsibility of the Primary Health Care General Directorate, Infectious Diseases Section Director and Toxicological Centre Management were assigned.

- 2.2 What is the situation concerning the national surveillance programme with respect to the conclusions and recommendations of the Berlin (West) meeting? Have connections been developed with the international programme?

In our country, the principles in finding out and following the diseases which must be reported are being carried out according to the decisions of WHO on this subject. On foodborne intoxications outcomes of WHO are considered carefully on this subject. Connections with the international programme are being carried out by the institutions mentioned under 2.1.

- 2.3 Who will be nominated to be the focal point for the food safety early warning system?

The responsibility for the food safety early warning system belongs to the Primary Health Care General Directorate of the Ministry of Health and the name of the responsible person will be mentioned in the future.

- 2.4 Is your country participating in the GEMS/Food contamination programme, and if not, which institution and/or individual will be responsible?

Studies on the subject related to the final decision are continuing. The name of the responsible individual and institution will be informed after a definite decision is made.

3. Activities related to objective 2

- 3.1 Did your country participate in the Brussels meeting?

Our country participated in the Brussels meeting assigning Professor Dr Muammer Kayahan, Deputy of Primary Health Care General Director and Mrs Sevim Kilicbay, Nutritional Studies Section Manager.

- 3.2 Are the recommendations of the Brussels meeting appropriate to the plans of your country and if not, what are your suggestions?

In our country policy studies to coordinate the responsible authorities on food control subjects are being carried on. Considering the main points of this project, in this year the study which will complete the national cooperation between the mentioned suggestions and the plans of our country.

3.3 Who will be the primary focal point in your country for manpower development of food safety personnel (key institution for training of food inspectors and technologists)?

The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forest and Village Affairs are carrying out the studies for the development of food safety personnel. The studies carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forest and Village Affairs are mainly focused on technological control, whereas the studies carried out by the Ministry of Health are mainly focused on a programme which is about food safety.

4. Activities related to objective 3

4.1 Which institution or individual will be nominated to be the focal point for information systems dealing primarily with the development of legislation in Europe and other relevant international activities?

The Under Secretary of the Prime Minister's National Planning Organization, European Community Directorate and European Community Sections of the other ministries are the responsible organizations to be the focal points for information systems dealing primarily with the development of legislation in Europe and other relevant international activities.

The Ministry of Health Department of the EEC will be responsible for changing information and similar international activities after signing this project.

5. Plans for implementation of future activities

5.1 It will be very important to analyse the provisional plan of activities indicated in the project document and to prepare comments and suggestions for their implementation. It is particularly important to indicate what will be the country's activities, and in this respect the country's specific commitments in kind. The basic guidelines for discussions can be found in the enclosed summary report of three relevant meetings (Rimini, Berlin (West) and Brussels) and additional proposals for the specific planned activities.

So as to minimize foodborne infections and intoxications in the future for the planning studies of our country, coordination of information change and evaluation of similar attitudes among infectious diseases, food safety and environmental health subjects should be realized.

For this purpose, on the subject of food safety:

- the limits that will be decided on the variations and quantities of additions, leftovers and contaminations should be according to scientific knowledge and it also should be apparent such that there will not be any hesitation or discussion;
- supporting the control mechanisms on these subjects to get sufficient service;
- providing ongoing education to the consumers to present the service to the whole population;

- the coordination of international legislation should be significant so as to get the food safety subject out of being a national problem to be an international one;
- to maximize the health protection of international populations, the international early warning systems should be evaluated;
- important critical control points on food safety shall be focused on additives, leftovers and all sorts of contaminants such as chemical, biological and physical radioactive such that the subject shall be fixed on health care.

In our country report we frequently mentioned that the project was not yet signed. In view of this, we held back information which should have been included in the report until such time as the project was signed. While reading the report we have been informed by Mr Kello that the project has been signed. We did not need to change the report during the meeting, but will submit a corrected version within the next weeks.

YUGOSLAVIA

Yugoslavia is very interested in food health safety and was therefore among the first countries to support the idea of the European project in this field. Activities have already started throughout the Socialist Autonomous Province Vojvodina, which has about 2 million inhabitants. Other regions of Yugoslavia will be included in the project gradually. A part of these activities is already being performed in the majority of the regions, and thus we believe there will be no difficulty in integrating them.

Because of a great number of smaller food manufacturers in Vojvodina, and the Act on Food Health Soundness presently in effect, the constant monitoring of safety of food on the market has been introduced. All groups of foodstuffs are controlled and the number of samples is 15 per 1000 inhabitants annually. Food is controlled microbiologically and chemically regarding the quality and all kinds of contamination. Hazard analysis critical control points will follow determination of kinds and degrees of contamination.

1. General implementation of the project

1.1 The project was signed in 1989 by the representative of the Government of Yugoslavia.

1.2 For the purpose of coordination of the programme activities within the project, the Project Council has been formed of representatives of health services, the Ministries of Agriculture and Water Management, Chamber of the Economy and the university.

1.3 The Project Council had a meeting at the very beginning of the work and concluded that these activities should be given full support. Effects of this project will be useful not only for health, but for the economy and tourism as well.

1.4 Professor Dr Miladin Mirilov has been nominated to be the Project Director and authorized to represent the project abroad, and to accept Novi Sad to be the seat of the Project, if it comes to that.

1.5 The Institute of Public Health in Novi Sad had been nominated to be the key focal point in Yugoslavia and authorized for all communications regarding the Project.

2. Activities related to objective 1

2.1 Dr Ristic of the Federal Institute of Public Health, Belgrade, attended the meeting in Berlin (West) and accepted all responsibilities for the European surveillance programme of foodborne diseases.

2.2 The Federal Institute of Public Health in Belgrade is included in the international programme of prevention of foodborne infections and intoxications.

2.3 The Ministry for Labour, Health and Social Policy of Yugoslavia has been nominated to be the focal point on the early warning system.

2.4 Yugoslavia has not yet been included in the GEMS/Food contamination programme.

3. Activities related to objective 2

3.1 Representatives of Yugoslavia attended the meeting in Brussels.

3.2 Recommendations given by the meeting in Brussels are in accordance with the plans of Yugoslavia.

3.3 Focal point for training of food safety personnel has not yet been nominated.

4. Activities related to objective 3

4.1 Institute of Public Health in Novi Sad and Professor Dr Miladin Mirilov are nominated to be the focal point for the information system dealing primarily with the development of legislation in Europe and other relevant international activities.

5. Plans for implementation of future activities

5.1 The Project document has been developed in Vojvodina with the intention to investigate the condition of food on the market through wide-range monitoring at first time. Thanks to the support from the UNDP and local government of Novi Sad, as well as from five regional institutes of public health, necessary equipment for laboratory analyses has been purchased and the staff has been trained to use it. Sanitary and veterinary inspections are also engaged.

5.2 Computers have been obtained for the establishment of the information system at the Institute of Public Health. The information system will be extended to cover the whole province and it will be linked with the systems in Yugoslavia and Europe.

5.3 In addition to hygiene, sanitary-chemical, microbiological and information services in Vojvodina, conditions have been created for the inclusion of the epidemiological, virus and health education services of the Province as well as the respective institutes of the university.

7. PLAN OF ACTION

7.1 Immediate Objective One

Development of a European self-sustaining surveillance and reporting system, early warning (alert) system, and emergency response system for foodborne infections and intoxications

7.1.1 Surveillance programme of foodborne diseases

7.1.1.1 Meeting of focal points of the surveillance programme

In order to improve the European surveillance and reporting system including the early warning (alert) system it is planned to convene a review meeting in Berlin (West), November 1990. It will be financed by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany (Federal Ministry for Youth, Family Affairs, Women and Health) and will be organized by the FAO/WHO Collaborating Centre on Research and Training in Food Hygiene and Zoonoses, the Robert von Ostertag Institute of the Federal Health Office in Berlin (West). This meeting is part of the project, but is not financed by UNDP.

The purpose of the meeting will be to evaluate the current epidemiological situation in Europe and to prepare specific recommendations for the improvement of programme. Meeting will also evaluate the proposal for the implementation of international sentinel study on foodborne diseases and programme on the European data processing of foodborne diseases (see points 7.1.2 and 7.1.3).

7.1.1.2 National programme implementation

The Steering Committee took note that all countries present will actively participate in the programme and based on the provided guidelines will send requested data to the lead sub-network institute (WHO collaborating centre, Berlin (West)).

Focal points of the participating countries (old and new) are requested to send to the Berlin (West) collaborating centre the following information for 1988 and 1989:

- Organization and structure of the existing foodborne diseases surveillance activities
- List of notifiable diseases which are or may be foodborne
- Data of notified cases of foodborne diseases and other diseases which are or may be considered as foodborne e.g. salmonellosis, diarrheal diseases, acute intestinal infections
- Data on epidemiologically investigated outbreaks of foodborne diseases (if possible). This information should contain:
 - a) number of ill persons
 - b) causative agent

- c) type of food involved
- d) place where food was consumed
- e) place where food was acquired
- f) factors contributing to the outbreak

- In addition focal points should prepare an evaluation of their national data and give an outlook into future action and development.

The Berlin (West) collaborating centre will provide the new focal points with relevant detailed background forms, etc. which preferably should be used by the focal points when preparing their national reports.

The Berlin (West) collaborating centre is prepared to accept any material in any form and shape in case a focal point is not yet in the position to provide all data as required above. It is of major importance for the preparation of the November meeting to receive all information as soon as possible but not later than 1 August 1990.

The Steering Committee agreed that a task force for the surveillance programme will be established with the purpose to coordinate the programme work, assist in the implementation of recommendations and help in establishing national programmes of new participating countries.

7.1.2 Sentinel study

The WHO Consultation on national and international systems for reporting early warning and surveillance of foodborne infections and intoxications, Berlin (West), October 1989, recommended inter alia that the WHO Regional Office for Europe should consider the development of an internationally coordinated study on foodborne diseases. It was considered to be important to improve information about real incidence of foodborne diseases, as well as to resolve other problems important for the comparability of reported data from different countries. It was furthermore stressed that such an activity should be carefully planned taking into account results of similar studies carried out recently in some of the countries. It is therefore proposed to prepare a draft core protocol for the sentinel study of foodborne diseases.

The draft core protocol will be presented to the national focal points for epidemiological studies during the Consultation on foodborne infections in Europe, Berlin (West) November 1990. The final core protocol will be used in the implementation of the internationally coordinated study on foodborne diseases.

Foodnote: sentinel

In order to develop the above-mentioned protocol the following activities are foreseen to be implemented:

Survey on similar studies carried out in the European countries which will focus on countries where such or similar studies were carried out. Attention will be given to the selected procedure for districts and modality for implementation.

A small consultation will be organized with some experts from countries having experience in sentinel studies to review the draft core protocol in relations to its feasibility for implementation in different cultural, social and public health situations. Invited experts will be selected based on their experience in carrying out their own studies.

The draft core protocol as reviewed will be distributed to all epidemiological focal points for comments prior to the consultation of the surveillance programme on foodborne infections and intoxications in Europe, Berlin (West), November 1990.

A review of the sentinel study programme will be on the agenda of the consultation of the surveillance programme on foodborne infections and intoxications in Europe to be held in Berlin (West), November 1990.

7.1.3 Data processing programme on foodborne diseases

To improve data processing on foodborne diseases within the surveillance programme action will be taken to implement the relevant recommendations outlined under objective three (7.3.).

7.1.4 European environmental monitoring programme on food contamination

Based on the recommendation of the Brussels meeting, November 1989 the Steering Committee recommended the development of the European Environmental Monitoring Programme on food contaminants as a component of the global programme and to be implemented as soon as possible in all IPF countries. All present countries which are not yet participating in the GEMS/Food programme expressed their interest to join the programme under the principles proposed at the Brussels meeting (Albania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Turkey, Yugoslavia).

It was agreed that the specific modality for the programme implementation will be worked out by the WHO Regional Office in close collaboration with the secretariat of the global programme (FOS/HQ, Geneva, Dr H. Golal-Gorchev) and other participating agencies, FAO and UNEP. The nomination of national focal points will take place upon receipt of the full documentation from the Regional Office and/or WHO/FOS, Geneva. The Steering Committee supports proposal for establishment of national programmes, prepare sub-network meetings and respond to the emergency requests.

7.2 Immediate Objective Two

Establishment of the most cost-effective food safety control system through implementation of the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point System (HACCP)

7.2.1 Promotion of HACCP system

The recommendations of the consultation on food safety in Europe in the 1990s: the hazard analysis critical control point system as the tool of choice for effective inspection, Brussels, November 1989 aimed to promote the HACCP system for IPF countries and for Europe in general have been fully endorsed by the Steering Committee.

7.2.2 HACCP in tourism

In accordance with the conclusions of the Brussels meeting, November 1989 and the UNDP Project Document, WHO/EURO was now preparing a training seminar for tourism later in 1990. This seminar would be aimed at trainers for managers of food service and other establishments in tourist centres.

Tourist centres having a direct interest in food safety should play a vital part in promoting HACCP and in supporting this activity for catering management at international as well as at national level.

A network of schools should be established based on the focal points identified by the participating countries both in relation to the organization of this seminar and implementing its recommendation.

A task force should be formed to examine the scope and purpose and to develop the programme of the seminar using as background material the recent WHO publication "Safe Food Handling", ICSMF publications on HACCP and other WHO publications on the subject.

This international seminar on HACCP in tourism should be considered as major event in the application of the HACCP system at the national level in tourism (activity 2.2.4).

7.2.3 HACCP in food processing

The action plan should follow the basic principles as agreed during the Brussels meeting, November 1989 emphasizing that training of industry and government food law enforcement personnel should be combined.

Possible training initiatives which could be undertaken by WHO in collaboration with ILSI should include among other matters:

1. The development of model HACCP training programmes for food processing and enforcement inspection personnel

2. The development of HACCP guidance for industry staff and inspectors drawing upon any Codex document produced on food manufacturing and process inspection

3. The identification of European training experts to train industry and food inspectors in HACCP procedures

4. The identification of a European training centre or centres where HACCP application could be demonstrated in "hands-on" situations

A prerequisite to any training programme was the establishment of a network of educational establishments essential for food safety inspection and small enterprises in IPF countries, able to promote HACCP and assist in the arrangements for national training. There was a need for the participating countries in the first instance, to investigate and identify such focal points and organizations. Emphasis in the development programme should be given to the food safety enforcement inspection and small enterprises.

It was felt that detailed considerations of the scope and purpose would require a task force. This would be a "first step" seminar in this area and it was likely that it would now be held in 1991.

Regarding the application of HACCP system at national level in the food processing sector, this activity would now follow the seminar planned for 1991.

7.3 Immediate Objective Three

To develop a European food safety information system on legislation, services, and international recommendations

The Steering Committee emphasized the importance of this objective in the light of new political developments in Europe and rapid increase of food trade between the countries. The Steering Committee appreciate the lack of appropriate funds for this important objective and concluded that the following activities should be carried out by the network secretariat, the WHO Regional Office or lead sub-network institutions.

7.3.1 The network secretariat should:

- establish contacts with international institutions and organizations concerned with food legislation and food safety information

- establish contacts with national focal points, national institutions, food safety services and other potential sources of food safety information

- disseminate information concerning focal points and on key persons and institutions from which data can be obtained.

7.3.2 The WHO Regional Office should:

- develop contacts between interested UN Agencies and the project Steering Committee
- develop contacts between international organizations and the project Steering Committee
- develop contacts with food industry associations and project Steering Committee

7.3.3 The sub-network lead centres for a) surveillance of foodborne diseases and b) monitoring of food contamination should develop computer data bases and appropriate softwares

7.3.3.1 European programme on data processing on foodborne diseases

In order to develop the above-mentioned programme in line with the Berlin (West) recommendations the following activities are planned to be implemented:

- To review the current situation in Europe a survey will be performed which will identify the computerized data processing programmes in countries. The information given during the Berlin (West) meeting will be used for initial contacts with experts in several countries. The survey will also identify the characteristics of programmes and collect the basic manuals.
- A small consultation will be organized by leading countries in the area of data processing to evaluate the developments in different countries and possibilities in standardization of data output format. Recommendations will also be prepared for a communication protocol for countries participating in this surveillance programme.
- Based on the prepared documentation all European countries will be approached to give their comments concerning the feasibility of the European programme and the proposal for establishment of national focal points in building up the European network. Based on the replies a final document will be prepared for the Consultation on foodborne infections in Europe.
- A review of the implementation programme will be on the agenda of the consultation on foodborne infections in Europe in Berlin (West), November 1990

7.3.3.2 European food contamination monitoring programme

Computerized information system on food contaminants in Europe should be developed in accordance with the established principles and procedures of the GEMS/Food global programme to ensure compatibility of data obtained from within Europe with that of other parts of the global programme.

8. DEFINITION OF NETWORK STRUCTURE AND ESTABLISHMENT OF NETWORK SECRETARIAT

The Steering Committee discussed the organization and function of each technical sub-network and member of the Steering Committee confirmed the assigned focal points for each technical sub-network. Since some of the programmes are not yet established in IPF countries, it was concluded that some of the indicated focal points will have provisional character. All members of the Steering Committee are confirmed focal points of the project network (Annex 4).

Based on the UNDP rules and practice the Steering Committee considered the proposal to establish the project network secretariat. The Steering Committee noted with appreciation the generous offer the Government of Yugoslavia to accept responsibility of hosting the network secretariat for the food safety project. The Steering Committee unanimously endorsed the designation of the Institute of Health Protection in Novi Sad and all participants assured the Institute of their full future collaboration. The project network secretariat will have a special role in the establishment of the food safety information system.

9. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Steering Committee reviewed the overall implementation of the project and based on a comprehensive analysis concluded that the project was well timed concerning the current political and economic situation in Europe and very well structured concerning the major problem areas. The Steering Committee therefore recommended that the project should continue based on the general strategy and prepared plan of work.
2. The Steering Committee welcomed the proposal of the intergovernmental UNDP review meeting and the decision of the WHO Regional Office to incorporate two additional project areas; a) research related to the sentinel study on foodborne diseases and b) development of the GEMS/Food European programme on food contaminants. Both activities were considered to be of great importance for countries and Steering Committee recommended their implementation as proposed in the plan of work.
3. The Steering Committee assessed the current situation in the IPF countries and based on the country reports concluded that most of the countries would need external support for the implementation of the project activities at the national level. It was therefore recommended that the UN Agencies involved should consider these needs and provide the necessary financial/expert assistance.
4. The Steering Committee evaluated proposal to nominate the network secretariat based on the needs for support of project network. The Steering Committee decided to nominate the Institute of Health Protection in Novi Sad as network secretariat. The Steering Committee recommended the preparation of a special plan of work for the network secretariat based on the overall report of the meeting with emphasis on support for the food safety information system.