

**NOTE FOR THE PRESS**

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## **FIRST PAN-EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY TO BE HELD IN BUDAPEST**

Rome/Budapest, ... February 2002 – For the first time more than 40 European countries will meet to discuss food safety and quality issues, and how to strengthen consumer confidence after recent food scares.

The “*Pan-European Conference on Food Safety and Quality*” will be held in Budapest, 25-28 February 2002. The meeting is jointly organised by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). It is co-sponsored by the European Community and some FAO/WHO member countries, according to a statement issued by the two UN agencies.

The incidence of food contaminations caused, for example, by Salmonella, Dioxin or pesticide residues in food and water, is still of concern in Europe. Recent scares, like the antibiotic Chloramphenicol in animal feed, have led to a disquiet among consumers.

To improve food safety and quality, the chain of food production needs to be transparent and reliable, from the farm and fisherboat to the consumer's table, throughout the European region. Eastern European countries should upgrade their surveillance system, control and legislation, FAO/WHO said.

Representatives of governments, industry and consumer organisations will discuss food safety and quality threats, food-borne diseases, the expansion of a Rapid Alert System outside the EU and better communication with the consumer.

The meeting will also make proposals on how to improve the different levels of food safety, regulations and control systems in eastern and western European countries. “Many of the food control systems in eastern and western European countries are difficult to compare. This creates uncertainty for food producers, traders and consumers,” according to FAO/WHO.

The government of Hungary will host the event at the Thermal Hotel Hélia in Budapest.

**A PRESS CONFERENCE WILL BE HELD ON MONDAY, 25 FEBRUARY, AT 10.15h AT HOTEL HÉLIA AND ON THURSDAY, 28 FEBRUARY, AT 16.00h.**

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<http://www.foodsafetyforum.org/paneuropean>