

**REPORT OF THE FOURTEENTH MEETING OF THE FLEP-FORUM
HELD IN SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELLA ON 14 AND 15 JUNE 1999**

1. Participants:

Organisations from the following nations (see list of participants):

Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom.

Observers: Czech Republic, Malta, Poland

Absent (with apologies): Belgium, Finland

2. Introduction

The Chairman Mr. Wolfs welcomed delegates and observers. He particular thanked Ms. Sagrario Perez Catellanos for hosting the meeting.

3. Inauguration by Mr. Jose Maria Hernandez Cochon, Conselleiro of Health and Social Services

Mr. Cochon welcomed the FLEP-Forum meeting in Santiago de Compostella. He emphasised that since 1978 Galicia had been receiving the transparency of powers from the Central Government. Although the power to adapt the EC Community Directives belongs to the Central Government, the Autonomous Autonomies should put them into force. With the exception of the trade with countries not Member of the European Union.

Mr. Cochon explained that a deep reorganisation had taken place, which had shaped a good condition to deal with the food safety problems. He noted that co-operation with the industry was also essential to reach this aim. Mr. Cochon was convinced that informal Forums like FLEP are of great importance by sharing experiences and learning from each other's errors. This will lead to a better management of the day-to-day problems and the calamities with which are confronted at this time. Mr. Cochon gave the best wishes for the work and to enjoy the stay in Santiago.

4. Minutes of the last meetings

The Reports on the FLEP-Forum Meeting in Dublin and the Steering Group in The Hague were adopted. The documents on "Supplements" and "GMO's" were sent to the European Commission. No reaction on these documents was received.

5. Election of the Steering Group.

Mr. Statham (UK) and Mr. Binneman (Germany) were elected as Members of the Steering Group.

6. General Information

Mr. Dahm informed the Forum that on 1 January 2000 the reorganisation of the Food Control would be completed. A central food control (including all veterinary control) with 11 regions will be established.

Mr. Race informed the Forum that Norway had adopted all Veterinary EU-legislation. For this reason all Veterinary controls on products entering the European Market in Norway will take place at the Border Inspection Posts in Norway. No further control between Norway and the European Union is needed.

Mr. Binneman informed the Forum about the integration of 14 laboratories into 4 interdisciplinary laboratories. A better collaboration between chemist, microbiologist and the Veterinarians is expected. This reorganisation will be completed on 1 January 2000.

Ms. Morris (UK) said that the Food Safety Act would pass the Parliament very soon. Scotland and Wales will have their region Agencies.

Mr. Ellard (Ireland) informed the Forum about the integration of the Irish and Northern Irish food control in the Food Safety Promotion Board. The task of this Board is the promotion of Food Safety. The Food Safety Authority is now focussed on Food control. This agency will have contracts with all organisations in Ireland responsible for Food Control before 1 July 1999.

Mr. Treboux (Switzerland) said that Switzerland has bilateral Agreements with the EU on transport, right of workers, trade and agricultural products. Before 1 January 2000 the Food law will be compatible with the EU food law. Concerning the legislation on GMO's Mr. Treboux informed the Forum that Switzerland had adopted a rule that 2% GMO in a product will be considered as an unavoidable residue and will be excepted.

7. European co-operation for Accreditation (Mr. Lars Ettarp)

Mr. Ettarp noted that European Accreditation (EA) had no differentiation between private labs, public labs or official food control labs. All labs are considered in the

same way. According to EU principles all Member States must nominate at least one accreditation body on a non-commercial basis.

However accreditation is not only a EU event, but is also established in other countries (Australia). According to the view of the European Commission the accreditation must be transparent, independent and a non-commercial activity. If this requirement is assured accreditation should be considered as the most favourable technical basis for assessment of the competence of technical actors.

EA covers accreditation in all fields of conformity assessment activities, i.e. calibration, testing, inspection, certification etc. At present the EA members represent nationally recognised accreditation bodies from 17 EU and EFTA countries, the Czech republic and the Slovak republic. EA had drawn up a number of documents, which are used to assess the conformity of the certification systems in the different member countries f.e. for the certification of laboratories.

The EU had signed or is in the process of negotiating agreements on mutual recognition of conformity assessment with a number of countries, among others with Australia and New Zealand. These agreements refer to EA's multilateral agreements between EA and the concerned countries accreditation bodies.

Mr. Ettarp noted that those labs are not certified on the basis of ISO-9000 (which states that a company has the capacity in quality terms), but that labs has to fulfil En 45001. The labs have to demonstrate his capacity for analysis for each method.

Although the inspection of food is not an issue in most countries Mr. Ettarp stated that in the future inspection organisation should be certified too. Because of the fact that certification is a voluntary requirement the variety of certification in different countries is very great. So in one country the labs are certified, while in other countries inspection organisations are certified. At the end Mr. Ettarp stated that EA would like to cooperate with the food sector (until now there is no active participation from the food sector) and invited anyone who would like to participate in the EA-organisation to notify to the secretariat.

8. Working Party "Co-ordinated Programme 2000"

Mr. Gabriele informed the Forum about the proposals for the Co-ordinated Programme in 2000. He explained that there had been a discussion in Working Group on Food Control of the European Commission. During this discussion one proposal of the FLEP-proposal 2000 was selected. A proposal already suggested by FLEP in 1999

was also selected. Mr. Gabriele invited the FLEP-Forum participants to inform the official participants in the Working Group on Food Control of the European Commission about the FLEP proposals. A next meeting of this Working Group will be on 25 June 1999.

Mr. Gabriele will chair the Working Party "Co-ordinated Programme 2001". The members of this group will be the same (Spain, the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, United Kingdom).

9. "HACCP-obligations by importers"

Mr. Gabriele explained that the present document was ready for discussion in the Working Party "Import". For this reason no further discussion had taken place. During the next meeting the document will be put forward to be adopted.

10. Symposium on "Future Challenges for Food Control"

Ms. Goodwin informed the Forum about the programme of the Symposium. A flyer was already sent to 3000 potentially interested people. The reaction was very positive and the organisation (FLEP/DG24/Ilsi) is trying to find a location in which about 500 participants can participate.

The symposium was very enthusiastic about the Symposium and wished the organisation success during the further organisation.

11. Dioxin in food originated from feeding stuff

Different members informed the Forum about their experiences in the dioxin-case originated from Belgium. Special the complexity) was a great concern for the members. In most countries a lot was organised by the government as well as by the private sector) to trace all the suspected products. It was agreed that a Working Party should be installed to evaluate the dioxin case, with the aim to learn how to handle in the same situations in the future.

12. Working Party "Proficiency testing schemes"

Mr. Arkesteijn informed the Forum about the activities of his Working Party. A questionnaire concerning the present situation and a questionnaire about opinions of the near future was sent to the contactpoints. He received from most of the delegates

the answers on the question. He presented the results of these questionnaires. Some conclusions were that:

- commercial schemes would be driven by commercial considerations, which affect the range of choices available
- providers of Proficiency Testing Schemes, public as well commercial, must be subject to a common minimum accreditation standard
- the international Harmonised protocol for Chemical testing procedures by Codex Alimentarius represents the most advanced thinking at present

During the next meeting an end report will be presented to be published in the next Bulletin.

13. Working Party “ Guides to hygienic practice”

Mr. Duval introduced the preliminary report of his Working Party. The aim of this Party was to give an overview of the present guides of hygienic practice or other codes in different Member States with special identifications of CCP's. Mr. Duval noted that the development in the Guides of hygienic practice was not a static situation, but it was changing in time. Special the way of producing the Codes in the different countries was varied enormous (Branch organisation in the Netherlands, National Standard Institute in Ireland, Government in UK, etc). The Working Party made conclusions and recommendations, which will be presented, in the final report to be discussed during the next FLEP-Forum meeting. One conclusion was to create a Working Party on knowledge and skills of audit to ensure enforcement practitioners competence. The Forum agreed to install this Working Party.

14. Working Party “E. Coli O157:87”

Mr. Dahm introduced the paper entitled “methods for detection of E. Coli O157. In this paper a number of different methods for detecting E. Coli O157 were compared. Two methods were recommended to be used in connection to the screening of samples in routine laboratories. Mr. Staham introduced the recommendation of his Working Party. It was agreed that:

- the paper entitled “methods for detection of E. Coli O157 will be published as an appendix to presented report during the last meeting in Dublin

- the questionnaire on enforcement activities in slaughter houses will be sent to the contact persons to ensure that the questionnaire is completed by the appropriate body
- during the next meeting a proposal concerning the disposal of abattoir waste/sewage sludge on land and its role in the spread of the disease will be considered
- terms of reference of the Working Party was extended to include other non - 157 E. Coli serotypes including sorbitol positive strains of E. Coli.

15. Working Party “Applying Home Authority”

Because of the absence of Mr. Gabriele on the second day it was agreed that this document would be discussed during the next meeting of the Steering Group.

16. Functional Food

Mr. Jeuring (NL) presented a paper about an impression of the position of functional foods in a few countries. The conclusion was that there are big differences between countries and that a further study was of importance. It was agreed that a new Working Party would be installed.

17. Working Party “Pesticides Residues”

Mr. Jeuring informed the Forum about the first meeting of the Working Group. Although the participation on this meeting was small, good progress was made. It was agreed that a questionnaire would be sent to representatives of all FLEP-Member States. Mr. Jeuring presented the questionnaire to the Forum. A number of small suggestions were made, which will be included in the questionnaire. Mr. Jeuring hoped to present a final report at the next meeting.

18. New Working Parties

Working Party: “Quality of Inspections”

Aim: To describe a quality system based on EN 45004, which includes all aspects to be dealt with in procedures or other documents.

Participants:

Austria
Spain
Denmark
Norway
United Kingdom
Switzerland
The Netherlands
Ireland
United Kingdom
Switzerland
The Netherlands
Ireland
Germany

Working Party: “Audit”

Aim: To look at the knowledge and skills in audit that food law enforcement practitioners need to ensure their competence and consider the training implications.

Participants:

Ireland
Denmark
Norway
Spain
United Kingdom
Czech Republic

Mr. Ellard (Chairman)
Mr. Aage Holst Petersen

Working Party: “Functional Foods”

Aim: To evaluate the differences in regulations between the Member States, the difficulties in enforcement and to consider a proposal for a FLEP-recommendation to the European Commission.

Participants:

United Kingdom
The Netherlands

(Chairman)

Finland

France (still to be asked)

Working Party: “Dioxin”

Aim: To evaluate aspects (the uncertainty about the distribution of the contaminated feeding stuffs, the different certificates, the interpretation of the EU-legislation, the enormous lot of foodstuffs, which were potentially contaminated, the analysis on PCB's instead of dioxin, etc.) of the dioxin case and to prepare conclusions about how to proceed in a future new case.

Participants:

Germany (Chairman)

Spain

The Netherlands

Italy

Belgium (to be asked)

France (to be asked)

Website: It was agreed that United Kingdom and Ireland would prepare a paper about the creation of a FLEP-Website. The paper should give information/suggestions about Costs, Access control, Responsibility, Editorial control. During the next Meeting a general discussion about this issue will take place.

A proposal for a Working Party on “the Control of animal feeding stuffs” was not supported. Dependent on the result of the Working Party on dioxin a further discussion may be held on the next Meeting.

19. Round table

Austria will study the possibility to host the next FLEP-Forum meeting. This meeting will be held on 27 and 28 March 2000.

20. Ms. Pilar Farjas Abadia

Ms Pilar Farjas Abadia informed the Forum about the structure of the official food control in Galicia.

21. Chairman's closing remarks

The Chairman thanked all participants for their positive contributions and especially Ms Sagrario for the Meeting's arrangements. Ms. Hakkenbrak and the translators were also thanked for their contributions.

25 June 1999

Jan van Kooij
FLEP Secretariat