

**Draft, 21 December 2000**

**REPORT OF THE SIXTEENTH MEETING OF THE FLEP FORUM  
HELD IN ROTTERDAM ON 20 AND 21 NOVEMBER 2000**

**1. Participants**

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

Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Slovakia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom.

Observer: Ms Elke Anklam (Joint research Centre European Commission, Ispra)

Speaker: Mr. Andrew McKenzie New Zealand

**2. Introduction**

The Chairman Mr. Wolfs welcomed delegates and observers. The Agenda was fixed according to the secretary's proposal.

**3. Inauguration by Mr. R. Bekker, Secretary-General, Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports.**

Mr. Bekker stated that food safety was a topic of major international significance, caused by the global sourcing of foodstuffs and their ingredients by the food industry. The production chains are becoming more complex and are not always controlled properly.

Developments in research and technology enlarge the knowledge about contamination, which were not known before and gave reasons for further consideration.

Consumer involvement in questions of food safety is a third main topic, which should be taken into account.

He stated that the Dutch government endorsed the foundation of the European Food Authority. This body has been set up to ensure that at a European level, the risks, which could affect food production, are properly assessed.

Mr. Bekker was glad that the supervisory bodies of the European Union and EEA countries had already realised ten years ago that co-operation of Food Control Bodies was established through FLEP. He stated that it was a great vision to include future EU member states.

At the end he informed the Forum that the Dutch cabinet had decided to establish a national Food Control Authority, which will co-ordinate all governmental activities in the field of Food Safety.

He wished the FLEP Forum an interesting and fruitful Sixteenth FLEP Meeting.

#### **4. Minutes of the last Meetings**

The reports of the FLEP Forum meeting in Prague and the meeting of the Steering Group in Stuttgart were (with a few textural changes) adopted.

#### **5. Introduction by Mr. McKenzie from the MAFF Food Assurance Authority in New Zealand.**

Mr. McKenzie informed the Forum about proposed arrangements on food policy and control in New Zealand. In these proposed new arrangements the basic role for the government is to set the standards, which should be met by the industry. The government should give accreditation to “independent” verifiers and laboratories and approve risk base management plans. Furthermore the government should set up a system of enforcement of non-compliance. The role of the “independent” verifiers is the verification that Risk Based Management plans are in place and being met by auditing performance against the plans. They are responsible for ensuring the compliance of the plans and to provide “authorisation” for Government “health certification” for products produced according with the plan.

Several Members of FLEP asked questions about the responsibility of the government, when “independent” verifiers paid by the industry audit the food premises. Mr. McKenzie explained that the government stays accountable for safe foods. Food operators are primarily responsible for safe foods. Accreditation/approval of the “independent” verifiers is the main task of the Regulators. In case of infringements the “independent” verifier must inform the Government, when a premise is not in compliance with the legislation. In the opinion of Mr. McKenzie this structure should give enough possibilities to fulfil the governmental responsibilities to ensure that food is safe.

#### **6. Working Party on “Measuring Compliance”**

Ms. Marcroft (UK) presented the results of the first discussions in the Working Party. They are starting in gathering information from the different Members. She informed the Forum about the Dutch project concerning the measurement of non-compliance in cafeterias.

In this project the methods of the so-called “table of eleven” was used as was explained during the last FLEP-Forum meeting in Prague.

Ireland had brought forward the free phone help line; they consider consumers as an inspector.

In France there is no specific system for measuring food compliance.

In the UK the methods of inspections had changed. Their inspections are based on risk analyses. Influences with effect on compliance are:

- The level of the sanctions
- The media
- Consumer complaints

Ms. Marcroft informed the Forum that the Working Party presented next action points for considering how to go on with the Working Party.

- a. To obtain information from other member States, and to assess how far thinking has developed. The FLEP-Forum members agreed this.
- b. To determine if there are any other aspects of a strategic nature (falling outside the mission statement) which could useful be looked at by the Working Party. The FLEP-Forum suggested sticking to the aim of the Working Party.
- c. To consider any differences in approach to the assessment of compliance between the public and the private sector. Are official controls as thorough as those carried out by private companies? The Forum had the opinion that this subject needed more consideration and should not be the task of this Working Party.
- d. To find more about the American system. The Forum agreed this.
- e. To research the types, range and severity of the sanctions. This research had already been reported by FLEP a couple of years ago and could be excluded from the task of the Working Party.
- f. To contact the FVO Dublin to get an appreciation of they’re thinking. Are member States broadly achieving the same outcome? The Forum preferred to discuss first the own results of the Working party. After an agreement in the Forum the FVO could be approached.
- g. Prosecution vs. advice – what works and what doesn’t? This could be an issue in the report.

- h.** To assess the impact of HACCP? - Has this led to a higher level of compliance? The Forum agreed that this issue should be kept out of the task of this Working Party.

It was agreed that the Working Party would present a report on the next meeting.

## **2. FLEP-Website**

The Forum was divided in different groups, each discussing a specific issue.

Question 1: *What are the targetgroups for the FLEP Website?*

The next Target Groups were recognised:

- FLEP Members and their affiliates
- European Commission (Dg Sanco, FVO, JRC Ispra, EFA (in future))
- European Parliament
- Ministries having task in Food regulation and Food control
- Consumer groups
- Food industry (as far as they are interested by themselves)
- Official laboratories; may be web links to official control laboratories are interesting.
- Food control organisation not dealing with official food enforcement

This sub group advised to look at other Website to take forward ideas. They further suggested to start small and to increase in size in a controlled way. The Forum adopted the suggestions of this sub-group.

Question 2: *What kind of information should be placed on the Web Site?*

The next subjects should be presented in the Web Site; however some information is open for everybody, while others are restricted for FLEP-Forum members only.

- Information about FLEP (Open)
- FLEP reports (Open)
- Minutes of the FLEP Forum meeting (Restricted)
- List of contact points
- Subjects of Working Parties
- Minutes of the Steering group (Restricted)
- Agenda of the FLEP-Forum meeting (Restricted)

It was agreed that information about the organisation of the Food control in the different EU countries is a responsibility for each country on own. The FLEP Website should link to the national food control Web Sites.

Question 3: *What kind of links should be made to other Web Sites?*

The next links were decided to be of primary importance>

- National food control organisations in the EU and EVA countries
- New EU candidates and other interested countries.
- Food control organisations of other part of the world (if possible)
- Industrial organisations as far as they are European organisations.
- Codex/FAO/WHO
- Consumer organisations as far they represents national European consumer organisations.

It was agreed to start the focus of the Website on these issues.

Question 4: *Should there be an opportunity to respond on the information and expressing opinions?*

It was agreed that no general communication should be foreseen on the Web site. Expressing opinions may be one of the subjects, but are not a primary focus for the first period.

Mr. Ellard (Ireland) noted that Ireland was willing to build the Website and, in co-operation with the secretariat, a proposal for the different issues to be put on the Website will be discussed in the next Steering group. At the end the FLEP Forum will be responsible for the contents of the Website.

#### **10. Working Party “Quality of inspections”**

Mr. Jenewein (Austria) informed the Forum about the discussion in the Working Party. At the end it was decided to focus, in first instance, the task of the Working Party on the inspection. The Forum agreed to restrict the report to the inspection. From the other side, sampling could be a specific issue for a new Working Party. It is an essential task to take representative samples. A European study about how countries take their samples will be of interest.

Mr. Jenewein informed the Forum the next issues would be part of the report:

- Good inspection practice
- How to validate inspections
- The role of accreditation

It was agreed that a draft report would be presented at the next Forum meeting.

### **11. Working Party “Co-ordinated Programme”**

Mr. Gabriele (France) Chairman of this Working Party moved over to another job. The Forum regretted that he was not present anymore, also because he was Member of FLEP from the beginning and an enthusiastic Member of the Steering Group. Ms. Lecourt will replace Mr. Gabriele. She asked the Forum if there is still a wish of the Forum to continue the task of this Working Party. The Commission is not taking any actions at this moment, and as far as the Forum could foresee the Commission will take no actions in the near future. For this reason the Forum decided to stop this Working Party for the moment, and to wait for new actions of the EU-Commission. Suggestions to make an own FLEP co-ordinated programme gave some discussions. The Steering group will discuss this issue further during the next meeting.

### **12. Working Party “Procedures for managing crises”**

Ms. Lecourt informed the Forum that a French expert is willing to chair this Working Party. The UK said to be interested in participating this Working party, which was agreed. A first report will be presented during the next meeting.

### **13. Working Party “Mycotoxins”**

Mr. Jeuring presented the questionnaire, which was prepared to be sent to the Forum Members.

Mr. Binneman asked about what was meant with “enforcement policy”? Mr. Jeuring explained that the question should be read as: “How does enforcement bodies react when infringements are observed?”

Mr. Jenewein agreed that analytical uncertainty should be a key subject of the report. Mr. Baudies stated again the importance of the subject. Regularly big lots of figs, pistachio nuts are not allowed to be put on the market because of high aflatoxin contents.

It was agreed that the presented questionnaire should be sent to the contact points of the Forum Members. A report will be presented at the next meeting.

### **14. Working Party “Audit”**

Mr. Ellard (Ireland) informed that he could not find dates to hold a meeting with the Working Party. For this reason he will try to organise a meeting in the coming period. A report will be presented during the next meeting.

Mr. Ellard informed the Forum about a course in Food Safety Auditing. This Course was meant for Food inspectors who had already experience in Food Control. Essential objectives

of the course are to know and when to apply food safety auditing techniques, such as, observation, listening, questioning and recording. Furthermore participants should know how to apply the skills and techniques to a working environment. The total time for the course is 8 days and divided in four modules. This course is also open for inspectors from other countries.

#### **15. Working Party “Functional Foods”**

Ms. Marcroft (UK) informed the Forum about the first results from the questionnaire sent out. 10 Countries gave a response to these questions. The selling of functional food through Internet will not be part of a new Working party on “Internet”. The document will be discussed in the Working Party and a report will be presented at the next meeting.

#### **16. Working Party “Operational criteria for Food Inspections”**

Mr. Verburg (NL) presented the results of the first discussion in the Working party. Issues to be dealt with in the report are:

- Scope of food inspection
- Responsibilities
- Legislation
- Supervision and enforcement
- General criteria for services
- Miscellaneous issues

Mr. Dahm noted that the report should state a clear reason why identical enforcement procedures and structures in all Member States are not effective. Mr. Verburg insisted in getting reactions from the Forum members. During the next Meeting the draft report will be presented.

#### **17. Any other business**

Mr. Binnemann informed the Forum about problems with nandralon in food supplements (speed creatin). Football players of a German Football club were tested positively when they were tested during a dope control. The nandralon was an ingredient in a creatin food supplement. The amount was about 0,13mg/kg, which is not enough for an anabolic effect. This case was notified through the Rapid Alert system.

Another problem was related to organic tin compounds. Tributyltin was used as antifouling substance in paintings. In fishes and mussels from sea, lakes and lakes levels up to 3000ppb were found, while the average level in Germany was 12ppb and in Japan 72 ppb. Because of the fact that TBT influences the immune system and hormone effects, Germany had asked the Commission to evaluate the health effects and setting limits.

Mr. Jeuring proposed to create a Working Party, discussing the problems with Internet sale.

Mr. Van Havere remembered the Forum about a position paper prepared in 1997 by Belgium.

In general the proposal to create a Working party was adopted.

Mr. Van Havere suggested contacting the FVO in Dublin. It was agreed that Mr. Van Kooij would seek contact with FVO (Mr. Furth)

#### **18. Funding research for E. Coli.**

Mr. Statham introduced a proposal to fund a project on E. Coli by DG Research from the European Commission. It will be the first time that FLEP take action in this way. If the proposal is accepted, this will give a positive input to other work. A specific point of attention is guaranteeing the financial risks. It will be discussed in the coming month with the laboratories that want to participate. Furthermore Mr. Statham will not be the leader of the project, because he changed his job. He would also appreciate if Spain could participate in the work. Another leader should be found. During the next meeting a final decision will be taken.

#### **19. Emerging Pathogens**

Mr. Statham presented his document about emerging pathogens. This document gave a good overview about the state of the art of the present knowledge about pathogens. In the opinion of Mr. Statham there could be a role of a new Working Party dealing with:

- Better control systems
- Comparable isolation methods
- Targeting controls
- Advises for producers
- Targeting actions.

It was agreed that a Working party would be established.

## **20. Working Party “QUID”**

Mr. Braxton Reynolds introduced a report about QUID prepared by Mr. Harrison. In this report it is stated that a proper enforcement of QUID declarations should be based on 2 requirements, which are:

- Reliable and equivalent quantitative chemical analysis
- Consistent and reliable interpretation of scientific experts.

The Laboratory of the Governmental Chemist, which is leading a European project on this issue, addressed the first requirement. The second requirement should be done by the QUID Working Party. Within FLEP some confusion between these 2 different groups existed, but Mr. Braxton Reynolds could clarify this.

It was agreed that the Working Party should start his work. Members of the Working Party (Austria, Denmark, France and Germany were kindly asked to address the name of the participant to the Chairman (Mr. Braxton Reynolds). Also Hungary will nominate a participant. Switzerland had already nominated a participant.

## **21. Ms. Elke Anklam (JRC Ispra)**

### **Activities of the JRC with a special view to the Official Control of Foodstuffs**

JCR is Part of the DG Joint Research Centres and is a service of the European Commission. The aim of these institutes is to provide scientific and technical support for the conception, implementation and monitoring EU policies.

There are 5 centres (Geel-Belgium, Petten-Holland, Karlsruhe-Germany, Sevilla-Spain, Ispra-Italy) each, which have specific mandates for certain, subjects. The objectives of JRC-Ispra are:

- + To harmonise analytical procedures
- + To monitor substances at a European level
- + To establish and maintain data bases
- + To act as a “help desk” in urgent cases.

The working fields are food, animal feed, food in contact with materials, childcare articles and GMO's.

The JRC Ispra is dealing specifically with:

- Mycotoxins (methods of analysis)
- Pesticides (Evaluating the EU monitoring)

- PCB's
- Animal meal in animal feed
- Materials coming into contact with food
  - + Phtalates
  - + Badge
- Origin of wines (Isotopic method)
- Chocolate
- GMO (Co-ordinating a European network of GMO-laboratories)

In relation to GMO the activities are:

- Co-ordinating the European network of GMO laboratories
- Validation of analytical methods for the detection, identification and quantification of GMO's in food and food products
- Production of reference materials (in Cupertino with the JRC-Geel-Belgium)
- Organisation of training courses together with WHO for detection methods

Ms. Anklam asked for FLEP participation in the GMO-network. Mr. Binnemann suggested that the laboratory of Freiburg could be the liaison between FLEP and this network, which was agreed.

Another important network, which is going to be set up, is a network of national public research centres and laboratories. Ms Anklam urgently asked to nominate the official control laboratories as Member of this network. At this moment only research were involved.

Ms Anklam promised to send the report concerning the nominated official control laboratories from each Member States, which was inventoried by JRC Ispra. It was concluded that co-operation between FLEP and JRC-Ispra could have a lot of benefit for both organisations. Ms. Anklam will be invited for the next FLEP meeting as an observer.

## **22. Working Party "National Food Authorities"**

Mr. Curtis said that he had not yet organised a meeting of the Working Party, because of the fact that the UK Agency in the UK had started in April and that it took some time to see how the UK Agency developed. He said that he would organise a meeting of the Working Party within the next few months. Issues to be discussed are:

- To describe the structure and responsibilities of the National Food Authorities in the Member States
- Studies of the FVO inspections in the Member States.

- How local food control authorities are audited by the National Authorities
- Views about the role of EFA.

Furthermore the Steering Group had asked the Working Party to update the food control organisations in all Member States, the use of private control organisations in the different Member States and to obtain a document to be used for the FLEP-Website.

It was agreed that a next meeting would be held. Ms. Anklam (JRC) will be invited as observer. Also Slovakia would like to participate in the Working Party.

A first report will be presented during the next FLEP-Forum meeting.

### **23. General information**

Mr. Verburg informed the Forum that the Dutch cabinet had decided to create a national food authority in the Netherlands. This Authority should include Science, control and communication. A Steering Group is going to be created, which will develop proposals for the new organisation.

Mr. Briedis (Lithuania) informed the Forum that a Food and Veterinary service was created in Lithuania. This service falls directly under the responsibility of the Lithuanians parliament.

### **24. New subjects**

The next Working Parties were created:

#### **Working Party “E-commerce”**

Aim: to look at the various effects of e-commerce on food control issues, with a special attention to food safety aspects and the juridical consequences.

Members:

The Netherlands

Chairman

United Kingdom

Austria

France

Belgium

Estonia

Norway (interested)

## **Working Party “Emerging pathogens”**

The aim: to study the next issues and to report to the Forum

- Comparable isolation methods
- Targeting controls
- Advices for producers
- Targeting actions.

Members:

United Kingdom

Chairman

Norway

Denmark

The Netherlands

Austria (if someone could be found)

France (if someone could be found)

Finland (will be asked)

### **25. Closing remarks**

Mr. Van Kooij presented new copies of FLEP reports. The Forum endorsed this new way of publishing of the FLEP reports and agreed that FLEP-Bulletins should therefor not be published anymore. The Steering Group will discuss how these reports will be distributed to all FLEP members. In between all contactpoints will receive five copies from each report.

The Chairman informed the Forum that the next FLEP Forum meeting will be held in London, probably on 18 and 19 June 2001 or 25 and 26 June 2001. (The definite date will be announced as soon as possible). **However the date will be: 11 and 12 June 2001!!**

Mr. Treboux (Switzerland) will confirm before March 2001 if the March 2002 meeting could be held in Switzerland. Ireland announced that they are willing to organise also a meeting in 2002. Dependent on the possibilities in Switzerland the meeting in Ireland will be held in March 2002 or November 2002.

The Forum agreed that Ms. Lecourt should replace Mr. Gabrie in the FLEP Steering Group. The Chairman thanked all participants for their positive contributions and especially Ms. Hakkenbrak for the perfect arrangements. Furthermore the translators were thanked for their excellent contributions.

10 December 2000

Jan van Kooij