



The International Food Safety Authorities (INFOSAN) Users Guide

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**World Health
Organization**

In cooperation with the
Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

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1. How to use the guide

This guide outlines the information needed for members of the International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN) to carry out their activities related to the network. The guide is designed to be used in electronic format with hyperlinks between sections. It is recommended that INFOSAN Focal Points start by becoming acquainted with their roles and responsibilities described in [Section 4](#). INFOSAN Emergency Contact Points have additional duties and therefore need to be familiar with the roles and responsibilities of the both the Focal Points and those of the Emergency Contact Points outlined in [Section 6](#). It is also important for the Emergency Contact Points to understand the function of INFOSAN Emergency discussed in [Section 5](#). All members of the INFOSAN Network should understand how the activities of INFOSAN relate to National Food Control Systems described in [Section 7](#). Other information in the guide provides context for the INFOSAN network within the international and national food control systems.

2. Introduction

The rapid globalization of food production and trade has increased the potential for international public health incidents involving food contaminated with pathogens or chemicals. In recent years, animal diseases, natural disasters, political unrest and intentional and unintentional contamination of food have all caused food safety incidents of international concern.

While effective prevention strategies throughout the entire farm-to-table continuum are the most efficient way to produce safe food, it is not possible to completely eliminate food contamination events. Dealing with these events requires the rapid access and exchange of food safety information at both the national and international level. Clear, reliable and authoritative information on food safety is essential not only for prevention and response measures but also for maintaining international food trade and consumer confidence in the food supply.

3. Purpose, mandate and background of the International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN)

In response to recommendations from several [international conferences](#), resolutions from the [World Health Assembly](#) and guidelines from the [Codex Alimentarius Commission](#) (Codex), the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#), in collaboration with the [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations \(FAO\)](#) developed INFOSAN to promote the exchange of food safety information and to improve collaboration among food safety authorities at the national and international level. The INFOSAN network provides a mechanism for the exchange of information on both routine and emerging food safety issues. INFOSAN Emergency is designed to provide rapid access to information during food safety emergencies.

As of October 2006, 151 countries are members of the INFOSAN network. Each member country has designated one or several INFOSAN Focal Points. While it may be desirable to have a single INFOSAN Focal Point, several focal points have been identified in countries where food safety authorities are located in several agencies. In this context, food safety authorities are broadly defined and include authorities involved in food legislation, risk assessment, food control

and management, food inspection services, laboratory services for monitoring and surveillance, food safety information, trade officials, veterinary services and education and communication, across the entire farm-to-table continuum. Currently, INFOSAN Focal Points are located in several ministries, including ministries of health, food, agriculture and trade.¹

4. The Role and Responsibilities of INFOSAN Focal Points

The role of the INFOSAN focal points is outlined in the [terms of reference \(Table 1\)](#). The INFOSAN Focal Points receive INFOSAN notes and messages², WHO guidelines and other important food safety information from INFOSAN and disseminate these documents to their counterparts. The INFOSAN Focal Point should make a list of their counterparts that would be interested in receiving INFOSAN documents. This list should include 1) other government officials in the food, health and veterinary sectors, 2) members of the food industry and non-governmental organizations across the entire farm-to-table continuum and 3) healthcare practitioners and academics. The INFOSAN Focal Point may also coordinate with the national Codex Contact Point to ensure all interested parties are represented (for more information on the role of Codex Alimentarius Commission see [Annex 2](#)).

Upon receiving information from INFOSAN, the INFOSAN Focal Points should disseminate the material to their counterpart contact list. The INFOSAN Focal Points are expected to have a good working knowledge of the role of their counterparts and be able to direct documents to the appropriate counterpart. The INFOSAN Focal Point needs to be in a position to consolidate comments from counterparts and return to INFOSAN a single response reflecting the collective view. When possible, the INFOSAN Focal Point should oversee the adaptation of the INFOSAN Information Notes for dissemination to the wider food safety community, including consumers, industry representatives and teachers. The full text of all listed INFOSAN Notes is available at: http://www.who.int/foodsafety/fs_management/infosan_archives/en/.

Where there is more than one focal point in a country, coordination between the focal points is important to ensure that the roles are undertaken effectively.

The INFOSAN Focal Points are expected to contact the INFOSAN secretariat on behalf of their counterparts. All requests for information from INFOSAN should be directed through an INFOSAN Focal Point, including requests for:

- 1) the development of an INFOSAN Information Note on a specific topic,
- 2) the dissemination of documents to the network, or
- 3) information on a particular food safety issue.

When INFOSAN receives a request from an individual outside the network, the INFOSAN Focal Points will be notified.

Through the INFOSAN network requests for information can be answered directly or routed to the appropriate national Focal Point. In many circumstances, the INFOSAN Focal Points can communicate directly with other members of the network. INFOSAN also provides a forum for developing countries to quickly learn about and more efficiently create food control systems.

This crucial information sharing process ultimately benefits the entire international community by preventing and containing foodborne disease.

In the event of a food safety emergency, the INFOSAN secretariat will contact the INFOSAN Focal Points, when the INFOSAN Emergency Contact Point is not available. Because of the critical role of the INFOSAN Focal Point, it is important that any change in contact details be communicated to the INFOSAN Secretariat. Furthermore, coverage of the role should be planned in the event of prolonged absence.

Table 1: The Terms of Reference for INFOSAN Focal Points

INFOSAN Focal Points are officials appointed by their government to serve as a liaison between their counterparts and the INFOSAN global network.

In fulfilling this role, INFOSAN Focal Points:

1. Receive and review information from INFOSAN including
 - a. INFOSAN Information Notes & Messages
 - b. Food Safety Surveys and Questionnaires
 - c. Food Safety Information requiring international distribution.
2. Distribute INFOSAN information to their counterparts throughout the farm-to-table continuum.
3. Provide comments (on WHO guidelines, surveys and questionnaire) that reflect scientific opinion and national perspectives.
4. Contact the INFOSAN Secretariat for assistance in:
 - a. Dealing with ongoing food contamination and foodborne disease problems
 - b. Creating of an INFOSAN Information Note on a particular subject
 - c. Disseminating material for comment by part of or all of the international community
 - d. Obtaining more information on a particular food safety issue.
5. Communicate directly with other INFOSAN Focal Points
 - a. To effectively deal with regional food safety issues
 - b. To share national experiences related to managing food safety problems with other members of the network, especially those in developing countries.

Additional recommended duties to improve the implementation of INFOSAN include:

1. Developing a list of counterparts who are interested in receiving INFOSAN documents.
2. Developing a coordination system between the national INFOSAN Focal Points.
3. Ensuring coverage in the event of prolonged absence.
4. Informing INFOSAN of any change in contact details.

To contact the INFOSAN secretariat, e-mail infosan@who.int

5. The Role and Responsibilities of INFOSAN Emergency Contact Points

INFOSAN Emergency is designed for the exchange of information in a food safety emergency (as described by the [Codex Alimentarius Commission](#)) and operates under the general public health umbrella of WHO's [International Health Regulations](#) (IHR). Each country participating in INFOSAN has one INFOSAN Emergency Contact Point who is expected to notify INFOSAN of international food safety problems and facilitate the communication of urgent messages during food safety emergencies. The [terms of reference for the INFOSAN Emergency Contact Points are provided in Table 2](#). During a food safety emergency, the INFOSAN Emergency Contact Point is the authoritative source for information disseminated within the INFOSAN system. INFOSAN Emergency generally responds to information about food contamination incidents by sending INFOSAN ALERT messages to the INFOSAN Emergency Contact points in the affected countries. INFOSAN Emergency ALERTs include 1) microbiological, chemical, physical or other food contamination or 2) health events associated with the consumption of contaminated food. Some international emergencies caused by contaminated food will fall within the scope the [IHR](#), therefore the INFOSAN Emergency Contact Point needs to establish a link with their national IHR focal point

Table 2: Terms of Reference for INFOSAN Emergency Contact Point

Each member country in the INFOSAN Network must designate one INFOSAN Emergency Contact Point. The INFOSAN Emergency Contact Point retains all of the [responsibilities](#) of and access to information as an INFOSAN Focal Point, but additionally must be able to identify a food safety emergency and respond by acting as the authoritative liaison between their national government and INFOSAN.

In fulfilling this role, INFOSAN Emergency Contact Points shall

1. Notify INFOSAN Emergency of food safety emergencies as soon as the event occurs, even when action by INFOSAN is not required.
2. Provide INFOSAN Emergency with the information needed to determine whether or not a food safety emergency of international significance has arisen including information on
 - a. International distribution, b. Public health significance and c. Societal impact
3. Approve INFOSAN Emergency ALERT messages for distribution.
4. Act as the liaison between the national authority and the INFOSAN Secretariat during food safety emergencies of international significance.
5. Coordinate with INFOSAN if international expert support is required.
6. Provide INFOSAN with details of actions taken as a consequence of receiving an INFOSAN Emergency ALERT message.

Additional duties required to implement INFOSAN at the national level:

1. Developing a coordination system among relevant national authorities including those involved in emergency response.
2. Ensuring coverage in the event of absence.
3. Informing INFOSAN of any change in contact details.

To contact the INFOSAN secretariat, e-mail infosan@who.int

6. INFOSAN Emergency

Surveillance information on zoonotic diseases and food contamination problems is received by the WHO from a variety of sources, including WHO’s surveillance networks, WHO’s regional or country representatives, and members of the INFOSAN network. **It is important that the INFOSAN Focal Points and the INFOSAN Emergency Contact Points notify the INFOSAN Secretariat of food safety emergencies, even if they do not require follow up action by INFOSAN so that INFOSAN does not expend resources on these events.**

The copious amount of surveillance information received daily is reviewed to determine the priority with which each reported situation must be addressed. The INFOSAN Emergency network is activated only for food safety emergencies of international significance, i.e., are serious and involve international trade. The algorithm for deciding whether or not additional action is needed is described in [Table 3](#).

Table 3: Information Patterns Used to Classify INFOSAN Emergencies	
Information Pattern	Further Action Required
<i>Distribution</i>	
Export is indicated or clearly stated	Yes (if public health impact criteria is met)
No information on export but the type of product is likely to be internationally distributed	Yes (if public health impact criteria is met)
Local distribution only	Generally No, unless societal impact criteria is met. WHO may provide support to the country.
“No export” clearly stated	Generally No, unless societal impact criteria is met. WHO may provide support to the country.
<i>Public Health Impact</i>	
Information suggests a serious acute illness, serious harm or death caused by the contaminated food item	Yes (if distribution criteria is met)
No information on public health impact of the contaminated food item but the type of contamination is known to be associated with serious illness or death	Yes (if distribution criteria is met)
No information on public health impact of the contaminated food item and the type of contamination is insufficiently specified or the association with serious illness is uncertain	Maybe - dependent upon distribution and societal Impact
The type of contamination is known not to be associated with serious illness or death	Generally No
<i>Societal Impact</i>	
Surveillance information indicates that inappropriate or wide spread product embargos or mass panic, which could destabilize the country or the economy, could occur due to the presence of contaminated food items in the international marketplace	Yes

Once it is determined that further action may be required, INFOSAN requests additional information by communicating directly with the INFOSAN Emergency Contact Point in the country of origin. The first message sent from INFOSAN Emergency will generally be an INFOSAN Emergency verification request, seeking more information on the event from the national INFOSAN Emergency Contact Point. An example of this type of message is as follows:

From: infosan
Sent: *<date:time>*
To: *<name of>* INFOSAN Emergency Contact Point of Country
Cc: National INFOSAN Focal Points
Subject: INFOSAN initial verification request - *<type of contaminated food or disease>*

Dear *<name of>* INFOSAN Emergency Contact Point *<of Country>*

Through our surveillance systems, WHO has learned of an *<description of disease>* related to the consumption of *<description of contaminated food product>* from *<name of the food company>* in *<locality>*.

Specifically, we would like to know if the contaminated products have been exported to countries outside of *<name of Country>*. If the products have entered international trade, have the regulatory authorities in the recipient countries been notified? If not, please advise us if you would like the INFOSAN network to provide this notification. This notification would be directed only to the INFOSAN Emergency Contact Points in countries you would like notified and would be approved by you prior to sending.

Regards,

Jørgen Schlundt
Director
Department of Food Safety, Zoonoses and Foodborne Diseases (FOS)
World Health Organization
20, Avenue Appia, CH-1211 Geneva 27
Switzerland

If the INFOSAN Emergency Contact Point indicates that further involvement of INFOSAN is unnecessary, the event is closed.

However, after verifying the extent of the problem and confirming the export of the contaminated food item, the INFOSAN Emergency Contact Point in the country of origin may request further assistance by INFOSAN. INFOSAN offers assistance by 1) providing the contact details for the INFOSAN Emergency Contact Points in the affected countries, 2) sending an INFOSAN ALERT message to affected countries (note these messages are only sent after approval by the INFOSAN Contact Point in the country of origin), 3) providing food safety advice, and/or 4) notifying the entire INFOSAN Network. When the international significance of the food safety event has been confirmed and the INFOSAN message has been approved, INFOSAN Emergency alerts the

appropriate INFOSAN Emergency Contact Points of the issue. This type of message which is known as an INFOSAN Emergency ALERT will generally contain the following information:

From: infosan
Sent: *<date:time>*
To: *<name of>* INFOSAN Emergency Contact Point of Country
Cc: National INFOSAN Focal Points
Subject: INFOSAN Emergency Alert - *<food contamination event>*

Dear *<name of>* INFOSAN Emergency contact point of Country A

The INFOSAN Network has received information about *<food contamination event>* associated with *<food product>*, which occurred in *<name of Country on date>*.

*<Describe how event occurred if known and other pertinent information about the event including
Product name: Food company of Country of origin.*

Lot code (Production Date) and Export amount:

Use by: date, quantity produced>

Further information can be obtained from the INFOSAN Emergency Contact Point of Country *<contact details>*.

We would appreciate it if you could inform INFOSAN Emergency of any actions undertaken as a result of this alert.

Regards,

Jørgen Schlundt
Director
Department of Food Safety, Zoonoses and Foodborne Diseases (FOS)
World Health Organization
20, Avenue Appia, CH-1211 Geneva 27
Switzerland

In some instances the international distribution may not be known and INFOSAN Emergency may alert all members to the food safety event, so that each country can determine if they received the product of concern. Affected countries are asked to provide details of any action taken as a result of receiving the alert from INFOSAN Emergency. Because of the critical role of the INFOSAN Emergency Contact Point, it is important that coverage be provided during their absence from the office. Also, any change in the contact details should be sent to the INFOSAN Secretariat.

7. Linking INFOSAN to National Food Control Systems

INFOSAN is designed to complement national food control systems. While the government structures and agencies that deal with food safety differ from one country to another, a modern

national food control system must ensure the production and distribution of safe food. The term “Food Control System” refers to the essential integration of all parties involved in the production and distribution of safe food.

The FAO/WHO document, “Assuring Food Safety and Quality: Guidelines for strengthening national food control systems,” provides a detailed description of the elements of a national food control system and guidance on how to build the system³. The guidelines outline the building blocks of a food control system as 1) food laws and regulations, 2) food control management, 3) inspection service, 4) laboratory services and 5) information, education, communication, and training.

The modern food control system shifts the focus of food safety strategies from response and recovery, following a contaminated food product reaching consumer markets, to strategies of prevention. Effective prevention strategies require the involvement of all stakeholders and the integration of scientifically-based risk-assessments at all levels of the food production continuum. The primary responsibility for implementing and monitoring prevention strategies falls to industry. Primary preventive programmes, such as Good Hygiene Practice and Hazard Analysis and Critical Point Control (HACCP) Systems, aimed at preventing the initial contamination of food, not only improve consumer protection but are cost effective. Government regulators are responsible for developing national policies and standards that support the implementation of risk-based production control programmes, monitoring and surveillance of these programmes and enforcement of legal standards. Similarly, industry is assigned a major role in secondary prevention by developing methods that are capable of rapidly detecting contaminated food products and preventing them from reaching consumer markets. Food recall plans, developed by industry and monitored by government, are an example of a secondary prevention strategy. It is essential that these recall plans include both national and international distribution. INFOSAN Emergency, through its Emergency Contact Points, can help industry and governments recall contaminated foods that have been distributed internationally.

When both primary and secondary prevention strategies fail to prevent consumer exposure to contaminated food, tertiary prevention plans (i.e. those that contain the contaminated food and thereby minimize the impact on the public health) are needed. Access to timely and accurate information about the type of contamination, distribution of the product, and number of persons affected is critical for mounting a quick and appropriate emergency response that prevents the further spread of the product and disease. Integration of all stakeholders within the farm-to-table continuum allows government to access the information needed to rapidly detect potential or emerging food safety incidents, identify the affected food, and effectively remove the food from consumer access. INFOSAN Emergency is an essential component of tertiary prevention programmes for situations where a contaminated food product has entered international commerce. INFOSAN Emergency can help countries identify and contain contaminated food with international distribution; therefore notification of INFOSAN should occur early in the recall process. Member States are encouraged to strengthen their National Food Control System as a basic means of preventing and controlling food safety emergencies.

Annex 1: The International Food Control System

A. The role of the World Health Organization (WHO) including International Health Regulations

The WHO is the United Nations agency for health. WHO's main goal is that all people attain the highest level of health possible, with health being defined as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.⁴ To meet this goal, WHO strives to reduce the serious negative impact of foodborne diseases. Despite improvements over the last few decades, far too many people still suffer from poor health as a direct result of contaminated food. In both developing and developed countries, diseases linked to food production, including diseases caused by chemical or microbiological contamination and zoonotic diseases, represent a significant health problem with serious social, economic and political implications. WHO supports the use of science and technology to develop safer food production systems throughout the world. WHO works closely with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to improve food safety through scientific assessments of food related risks including the assessment of food additives, chemical and microbiological contaminants, naturally occurring toxicants, residues of veterinary drugs and foods derived from modern biotechnology. These assessments enable a science-based foundation for risk reduction as well as public health based international food standards, thereby benefiting both public health and economic development. WHO also supports, in collaboration with FAO and other relevant international organizations, the development of efficient food safety systems enabling science-based preventative efforts throughout the food-chain to lower the burden of zoonotic and foodborne diseases.

In 1969, the Member States of WHO adopted International Health Regulations (IHR) in agreement with the international community. These regulations represent the only regulatory framework for global public health. The IHR help prevent the international spread of infectious diseases by requiring national public health measures that are applicable to travellers and products at the point of entry. The current IHR require Member States to notify WHO of only three diseases, cholera, plague, and yellow fever. However, the revised IHR (2005), which will go into effect in June 2007, will require that all WHO Member States notify the WHO of any public health threat constituting a significant risk to other States through the global spread of disease⁵. In the event of such a threat, the IHR enable a coordinated international response as well as specific assistance to the affected countries. The IHR (2005) set out the basic public health capacities that a Member State must develop, strengthen and maintain in order to detect, assess, notify and respond to events that may constitute a public health emergency of international concern. International emergencies caused by contaminated food will fall within the scope of these regulations.

B. The role of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

The core of FAO's activities is to achieve food security for all by ensuring that people have regular access to enough high-quality safe food to lead active and healthy lives. FAO takes a multifaceted approach towards this goal and in this regard, its mandate is to raise levels of nutrition, improve agricultural productivity, better the lives of rural populations and contribute to

the growth of the world economy. As an important part of this, FAO provides technical advice and assistance in capacity building for food control systems and regulators at national and local levels, ensuring food quality and safety throughout the food-chain. As part of this activity FAO develops a range of tools to facilitate the development of national food control systems, and to apply a risk based approach to improving food safety. FAO promotes, in collaboration with WHO, the establishment and operation of national regulatory frameworks that are compatible with international requirements, in particular with the recommendations of the FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex).

C. Mandate for the development of INFOSAN

With globalization of food production and trade, there is an increase international interest and concern that a food safety problem in one country will become a global problem. Food safety authorities all over the world have acknowledged that ensuring food safety must not only be tackled at the national level but also through closer linkages among food safety authorities internationally. While food safety authorities in some countries are easy to identify and access, this is certainly not the case for all countries.

A number of international conferences and resolutions have called for a coordinated approach for the effective management of public health emergencies, including those caused by contaminated food. International conferences including the Second FAO/WHO Global Forum for Food Safety Regulators and the FAO/WHO Pan-European Conference on Food Safety and Quality referred specifically to the need for effective sharing of food safety emergency information, with emphasis on developing countries^{6,7}. The World Health Assembly (WHA) has adopted a number of resolutions calling for improved communication among WHO and its Member States on matters of food safety. In particular, in May 2002, the WHA, in expressing serious concern about health emergencies posed by natural, accidental and intentional contamination of food, requested that WHO provide tools and support to Member States to increase their capacity to respond to such emergencies (WHA55.16)⁸. In January 2003, WHO published a report on the terrorist threats to food and guidance for establishing and strengthening prevention and response systems⁹. The report identified a food safety emergency network as one of the basic preparedness measures needed at the international level.

In July 2004, the Codex revised a text entitled *Principles and Guidelines for the Exchange of Information in Food Control Emergency Situations*¹⁰. The document specifies that each country should designate a primary official contact point for food safety emergency situations, to act as the national contact point for information exchange in these situations. The Codex text also states that communication during a food safety emergency is essential to minimize the potential adverse public health effects and to avoid unwarranted action with respect to trade¹⁰. In the document, WHO is identified as being responsible for maintaining the list of primary official contact points for the exchange of information in food safety emergency situations.

Annex 2: The Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex) and International Food Safety Standards

The Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex) was established by WHO and FAO to develop international food standards, guidelines and recommendations to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in food trade¹¹. The Codex has been most successful in achieving international harmonization of requirements for food quality and safety. It has formulated international standards for a wide range of food products and specific requirements covering pesticide residues, food additives, veterinary drug residues, hygiene, food contaminants, and labelling and certification systems. Following a recent evaluation of the Codex system, more emphasis is being placed on health. One important area of work now being strengthened is food microbiology. Codex is striving to decrease the microbiological contamination of food and thereby decrease the burden of foodborne disease. Codex work has created worldwide awareness of food safety, quality and consumer protection issues, and has achieved international consensus on how to deal with them scientifically through a risk-based approach. As a result, there has been a continuous appraisal of the principles of food safety and quality at the international level. The Codex food standards and related text are the global reference point for consumers, food producers and processors, national food control agencies and international food trade and are recognised as international benchmarks in the WTO multilateral trade agreements.

More information on Codex is available on the Codex Alimentarius Commission web site: http://www.codexalimentarius.net/web/index_en.jsp. The Codex Contact Points are also available at: http://www.codexalimentarius.net/web/members_area.jsp?lang=EN

Annex 3: The Relationship between INFOSAN and International Food Trade

Ensuring that internationally-traded food is safe is an essential element of the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement of the World Trade Organization (WTO). The SPS Agreement is a multilateral trade agreement which was agreed to as part of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations. The SPS Agreement entered into force on 1 January 1995 (although Least Developed Countries were given a five year transition period). A sister agreement to the SPS Agreement, the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), covers technical regulations, standards and conformity assessment procedures which aim to protect human health, prevent deceptive practices or protect the environment.

The SPS Agreement is most relevant for INFOSAN given that the SPS Agreement covers measures taken “to protect human or animal life or health within the territory of the Member from risks arising from additives, contaminants, toxins or disease-causing organisms in foods, beverages or feedstuffs.” Importantly, the SPS Agreement recognizes the right of WTO Members to apply measures to protect against foodborne diseases. The Agreement covers all types of SPS measures from relevant laws, decrees, regulations; testing, inspection, certification and approval procedures through to and packaging and labelling requirements if they are directly related to food safety.

The SPS Agreement sets out a legal framework which recognizes the rights of Members to take measures, but seeks to ensure that Members do not go beyond what is necessary for health

protection and establish unjustified barriers to trade. The Agreement seeks to facilitate trade and protect health by encouraging the use of international standards, guidelines or recommendations. It identifies the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex) and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) as standard-setting organizations in the area of foodborne and animal-borne diseases. While it is not compulsory for Members to apply Codex or OIE standards, Members should be able to justify the use of more stringent measures - normally on the basis of a risk assessment.

The SPS Agreement requires notification of new or amended SPS measures when:

- 1) an international standard guideline or recommendation does not exist,
- 2) the content of the proposed SPS regulation is not the same as the international standard,
and
- 3) the regulation may have a significant effect on trade of other countries.

In practice, a number of WTO Members are notifying all new or amended measures for transparency purposes.

In emergency situations, i.e. “where urgent problems of health protection arise or threaten to arise”, a country can introduce an emergency measure and notify either before or immediately after it comes into effect. However, the Member should still be in a position to take into account any comments made by trading partners. Importantly, members should also notify WTO when emergency measures are lifted - with an addendum to the original notification. One important point to note in this regard is that measures left in place after an emergency event has been declared closed could be challenged if there is no longer any scientific justification for their maintenance.

8. References

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