



COUNCIL

Council

PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF WORK ON FOOD SAFETY 2001-2002

(Note by the Secretary-General)

This Addendum on the Ad Hoc Meeting of OECD Food Safety Regulators has been prepared in the light of the proposal made by the Permanent Representative of Italy at Council on 12 April 2001, and as revised on the basis of the 18 April discussion at the Executive Committee.

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Proposed Ad Hoc Meeting of OECD Food Safety Regulators

1. An international conference on *New Biotechnology Food and Crop Safety*, funded by the UK Government, is proposed to be held in Bangkok 10-12 July 2001. An ad hoc meeting of OECD regulators, in the margins of the Bangkok Conference to address in an open dialogue the wider issues of food safety, is also proposed. Council asked the Secretariat to provide additional information on the possible content and modalities of such a meeting.

i) Purpose

2. The ad hoc meeting would enable OECD regulators to address in an open dialogue the wider issues of food safety. By identifying areas of agreement, divergence of opinion and areas of uncertainty among Member countries, the meeting could contribute to the basis of discussions and negotiations in other international fora.

3. Assuming Council agrees to the proposed programme of work on food safety, the meeting would also provide the opportunity for the OECD to directly inform food safety regulators about the planned analytical activities.

ii) Logistics

4. The OECD Directorate for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries would be responsible to organise the meeting. Representatives of OECD countries would be invited to attend along with officials from other international organisations involved in food safety (FAO, WHO, Codex, UNEP).

5. It is expected that all participants to the ad hoc meeting would be attending the Bangkok conference. Holding the meeting back-to-back with the Bangkok conference allows OECD food safety regulators to meet with a minimum additional burden on officials.

iii) Content

6. To date there has been no discussion of content and no decisions have been taken. The final agenda would have to be carefully developed through discussion with Member countries and other international organisations (IGOs). It would be necessary to provide some framework for the discussion.

7. One option could be a round table format in which countries and IGOs provide an update to the report of the OECD Ad Hoc Group on Food Safety on what is being done at the national and international levels to address current and emerging food safety issues.

8. Another option could be to identify themes for discussion such as “cross-cutting” issues (e.g. trade and economic impacts, consumer confidence, modern biotechnology), “new policy approaches” (e.g. labelling, traceability, identity preservation) and “process” issues (e.g. public consultation, regulatory enforcement and compliance).

iv) Output

9. The Chair or Secretariat would prepare a written summary of the discussion, which would be made available to all participants. No binding decisions would be taken.

Conclusion

10. Taking into account the above, the Secretary-General proposes that Council adopt the following amended draft conclusions:

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- a) endorsed the specific activities proposed in C(2000)200/REV4 and Corr1 and requested the Committee for Agriculture, and its subsidiary bodies, to define the terms of reference for each activity and implement the overall programme of work;
- b) requested the Secretariat to organise, in the margins of the Bangkok Conference, an ad hoc meeting of OECD regulators to address in an open dialogue the wider issues of food safety (as described in ADD3);
- c) requested the Secretariat to provide progress reports to Executive Committee and/or Council to enable these bodies to monitor progress.