



COUNCIL

Council

PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF WORK ON FOOD SAFETY 2001-2002

(Note by the Secretary-General)

This Corrigendum related to specific activities 3 & 5 has been prepared in the light of the discussions within the Executive Committee held on 5 March 2001.

JT00103817

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As requested by Council, Executive Committee returned to the outstanding reservations regarding the specific activities to be undertaken in the Proposed Programme of Work on Food Safety [C(2000)200/REV4] at its meeting on 5 March. The overall programme of work was described as well-balanced and continues to receive broad support, although substantive concerns were raised with respect to activity 5. It was agreed that the Secretariat would reflect on the comments by delegations and submit a revised text for consideration by Council.

Paragraph 12

Redraft the proposal for implementation of *Activity 3* to:

Proposal: Two complementary studies are proposed to flesh out the information contained in the National Compendium on national approaches to addressing socio-economic concerns and to consultation and communication with the public. The objective would be to increase transparency as to why and how Member countries address these issues within the context of a science-based, rules-based approach to food safety as required under the SPS Agreement and as established under Codex procedures. Close consultation with Codex is envisaged to avoid duplication and promote synergies with its work on the extent to which economic and other legitimate factors are taken into account in relation to risk analysis.

Paragraph 14

Redraft description and proposal for *Activity 5* to:

14. **Activity 5: Costs and benefits of new approaches to food safety regulation** -- The Ad Hoc Group report recognised the need to address consumer concerns by establishing controls that are transparent and that ensure the safety of the food supply, while not unduly restricting technological development and trade. In this context, many member countries are examining the feasibility of various approaches to risk management and product differentiation such as labelling, traceability and identity preservation. Much work is underway on the technical issues, or the “how” aspects (e.g. Codex is currently developing standards for GM labelling, the OECD Scheme for Seed Certification is working on standards for adventitious transgenic material in seed) but there is relatively little analysis of the broader economic and trade implications of emerging national and industry initiatives. The *Compendium of National Food Safety Systems and Activities* noted that the assessments of food safety regulations increasingly consider wider issues such as the impact of regulations on food availability, cost and quality, consumer choice and other social costs. Cost-benefit analysis might be able to play a broader role in assessing these wider issues and in distinguishing legitimate regulatory measures from measures described as addressing these issues but which erect non-tariff trade barriers and protect local interest groups. Work of a conceptual nature has already been carried out in the Agriculture Directorate.

Proposal: It is proposed to build on the conceptual work of the Agriculture Directorate by examining in more detail various cost-benefit methodologies as a tool in the assessment of food safety regulations to consider wider issues such as the impact of food safety regulations on food availability, cost and quality, consumer choice and other social costs, and to examine the trade implications of regulatory measures. Drawing on this work, it is also proposed to examine, using case studies, the costs and benefits of emerging approaches to food safety regulations in such areas as labelling, traceability and identity preservation systems.