

Performance, Vision and Strategy (PVS) *for*



Tecnical
Capability



Human and
Financial
Capital



Interaction
with the
Private
Sector



Access to
Markets and
Safeguarding
Public Health

National Food Safety Services

Introduction

The availability of safe food constitutes a basic human right that contributes to good health and productivity, as well as providing an effective base for progress and alleviation of poverty. Food-borne illnesses, on the other hand, cause negative social and economic impacts. In many countries, there have been significant increases in the incidence of illnesses caused by microorganisms propagated primarily by food, such as *Salmonella* spp. and *Campylobacter* spp. New and serious dangers have arisen in the agri food chain, like *Escherichia coli* O157:H7, bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) and highly pathogenic avian influenza (H5N1). These have been added to the list of events that in recent years have affected consumer confidence in trade, in the private sector and, above all, in country's official services responsible in large part, for safeguarding public health, and the sanitary and phytosanitary state of the agri-food sector. Similarly, chemical contaminants continue to be a significant cause of foodborne illnesses, including natural toxins, such as mycotoxins, marine toxins and environmental contaminants, such as mercury and lead. Further, micronutrients, pesticides and veterinary medicines are being used in the food additive chain, which, when incorrectly used can cause disease.

“To respond to the challenges of the current climate, as well as growing global demands for food, food safety programs must reflect an expanded mandate and a broader vision, transcend the traditional topics and include the whole of the agri-food chain, from material for production to the final product.”

To respond to the challenges of the current climate, as well as growing global demands for food, food safety programs must reflect an expanded mandate and a broader vision, transcend the traditional topics and include the whole of the agri-food chain, from material for production to the final product.

In order to build these capabilities in food safety, it is essential to promote and support the development of a national food safety service, with a strong foundation in science. This will result in the strengthening of capabilities in countries to formulate sanitary measures, to prevent unacceptable levels of exposure to microbiological agents and chemical products in food, and to use risk analysis in the management of their programs.

It can be very useful for countries to have an instrument to characterize the institutional and operational capabilities of the national food safety services, to measure advancement and define strategic actions in technical cooperation.

To assist in this effort, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and the PAHO/WHO have joined forces to develop the Performance, Vision and Strategy (PVS) instrument. The PVS instrument can assist national food safety services to establish their current level of performance, form a shared vision with the private sector, establish priorities and facilitate strategic planning in order to take full advantage of the new opportunities.

"This will entail stronger alliances and closer cooperation with its users, other countries and their national food safety service counter parts."

This instrument complements the initiatives of the FAO/WHO in its guidelines for strengthening national food control systems (publication 76 of the FAO on food and nutrition, 2003) and the

PAHO/WHO instrument for self-evaluation of food safety systems. (<http://www.panalimentos.org/evaluacion/evaluacion.sia.espaniol/index.html>)

The goal of the World Health Organization's global strategy, and therefore the strategy of its regional office for the Americas (PAHO), is to reduce the social and health impact of foodborne illnesses. This goal shall be achieved through three primary lines of action: promoting and supporting the development of sustainable and integrated food safety systems based on risks; formulating measures based on science throughout the entire agri-food production chain to prevent exposure to unacceptable levels of microbiological agents and chemical products in food; and communicating information in cooperation with other sectors and partners. Similarly, IICA assists countries in strengthening their national food safety services with the goal of becoming more efficient and to successfully compete in national and international markets, and to contribute to the protection of consumer health. Both organizations share a mutual interest to help

"scientific principles – the fundamental basis of operation to ensure that international trade is free of discrimination and scientifically unjustified restrictions."

countries comply with the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the standards, guidelines and recommendations of the Codex Alimentarius, the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC).

Experience has shown that those countries whose national food safety services are more developed and credible in the eyes of its users, trading partners and other countries are based on four fundamental components: 1) the *technical capability* to address current and new issues based on scientific principles; 2) the *human and financial capital* to attract resources and retain professionals with technical and leadership skills; 3) the *interaction with the private sector* in order to stay on course and carry out relevant joint programs and services; and 4) the ability to *access markets* and safeguarding public health through the compliance with existing standards and the implementation of new disciplines such as harmonization of standards and equivalence. These four components provide the basic structure of the PVS instrument.

Applying the PVS Instrument

To establish the current level of performance, form a shared vision, establish priorities and facilitate strategic planning, a series of six to eight variables have been developed for each of the four fundamental components. For each variable, qualitative levels of advancement are described. To help visualize the potential or cumulative level of advancement within each variable, a pie chart is shown next to the written explanation for each level. A higher level of advancement assumes that the national food safety service is complying with the preceding (and non-zero) levels.

In addition to the qualitative levels, additional space has been provided after each variable to expand upon or clarify responses, if so desired. The following hypothetical example illustrates the level of advancement determined along with an explanation for the variable *harmonization*, one of the twenty-eight variables in the PVS instrument.

Harmonization

The capability and authority of the national food safety service to establish national regulatory norms under its mandate that conform to international norms, guidelines and recommendations:

Levels of advancement:

- The national food safety service has no established procedure to harmonize national regulatory norms with international norms, guidelines and recommendations.
- The national food safety service has *identified* those national regulatory norms that are not in line with international norms, guidelines and recommendations.
- The national food safety service is *reviewing* national regulatory norms and *harmonizing* them with international norms, guidelines and recommendations.
- The national food safety service *monitors new* international norms, guidelines and recommendations in order to *harmonize* them with national regulatory norms.
- The national food safety service *participates at the international level* in the formulation of international norms, guidelines and recommendations.

The national food safety service has reviewed and harmonized all regulatory norms in the beef sector, and is currently reviewing the regulatory norms relevant to the dairy sector.

Using the results

The PVS instrument is flexible to apply and use, focusing on the functions and results of the national food safety service. The instrument can be used to facilitate the dialogue with different users in the public and private sectors that share a common interest in improving the vision and performance of the official services. For example, the director of the national food safety service might use the instrument to monitor advances in each one of the four components. Furthermore, the different users can participate in the analysis and discussion of the results to assist in defining common policies, identifying priorities and proposing actions to be taken.

The results of the PVS instrument can help to: 1) indicate the overall performance of each one of the four components; 2) rate the relative performance within each one of the variables; 3) compare the performance of the national food safety service with that of other food safety services in the region or globally, in order to explore areas for cooperation or negotiation; 4) identify the differences in the responses of the different users in order to arrive at common points of view; 5) foster common understanding in order to achieve greater levels of advancement; 6) help determine the benefits and costs of investing in national food safety services and obtaining assistance from financial and technical cooperation agencies; and 7) provide a basis for establishing a routine monitoring and follow up mechanism on the overall level of performance of the national food safety service over time.

Fundamental Components

I. Technical Capability

II. Human and Financial Capital

III. Interaction with the Private Sector

IV. Access to Markets and
Safeguarding Public Health

I. TECHNICAL CAPABILITY



The capability of the national food safety service to apply sanitary measures and science-based procedures.

Variables:

1. Diagnostic capability
2. Emergency response capability
3. Inspection services
4. Surveillance
5. Emerging issues
6. Risk analysis
7. Technical innovation

1. Diagnostic capability

The capability and authority of the national food safety service to identify and record those biological, physical and chemical agents that can adversely affect public health and food safety.

Levels of advancement:

- For foodborne illnesses, the national food safety service can carry out the clinical diagnosis, but not laboratory confirmation.
- For the *most prevalent* foodborne illnesses and/or food contaminants, the national food safety service can collect samples from anywhere in the country and immediately ship them to the laboratory for diagnosis and confirmation.
- The national food safety service has nationwide networks and actively participates in the international networks of clinical and bromatological laboratories that assist in early detection of diseases that enter through trade, and has established procedures sampling and immediate shipment to the laboratory for immediate diagnosis and confirmation.
- In the case of *new and emerging diseases*, the national food safety service has access to a network of national or international reference laboratories and can collect and ship samples to the most qualified laboratory for diagnosis and confirmation.
- Nacional laboratorios... programs and the national food safety service promotes the accreditation of its laboratories. It also, audits the quality... samples procedures.
- The national food safety service has accredited laboratories throughout the country, and carries out quality audits of their diagnostic procedures. The service provides reliable and up-to-date information regarding the incidence of foodborne illnesses to the surveillance system.

2. Emergency Response* Capability≈

The capability and authority of the national food safety service to rapidly respond to situations that pose a risk to public health.

Levels of advancement:

- The national food safety service cannot determine whether or not a sanitary emergency exists, or if it can, it does not have the authority to declare such an emergency and take action.
- The national food safety service has the necessary legal and financial support** and takes action in response to outbreaks of *existing* foodborne illnesses in the country.
- The national food safety service has the necessary legal and financial support and takes action in response to outbreaks of *other* foodborne illnesses previously undetected.
- The national food safety service can take action in response to outbreaks of foodborne illnesses based on previously established procedures and handles information systematically.
- The national food safety service has institutional guidelines in place that enable it to coordinate, with other relevant institutions and users to respond to outbreaks of foodborne illnesses.

* *Emergency response* includes early detection and notification.
** The phrase, *legal and financial support*, refers to the national food safety service already having in place the legal framework and financial resources in order to take immediate actions.

3. Inspection* Services

The capability and authority of the national food safety service to prevent the contamination of food products throughout the agri-food chain**.

Levels of advancement:

- The national food safety service does not have an established inspection service or carry out a system of pay-for-service that is not fully functioning.
 - The national food safety service maintains an inspection service that has record keeping*** or carries out a reactive inspection service that focuses on problems.
 - The national food safety service has an inspection service capable of inspections, sampling and certification of products for local consumption, importation and exportation, guaranteed to comply with existing standards and provides information for surveillance.
 - The national food safety service has an inspection service that strengthens the voluntary observance regarding the application of procedures and food safety assurance systems in businesses (implementation of self regulation).
 - The national food safety service has an inspection service capable of administering and applying the sanitary regulations in a way that is effective and integrated throughout the agri-food chain.
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* Inspection: Has as its principle objective to insure that food products comply with their respective sanitary standards throughout the agri-food chain.

** Includes all related activities to production, processing, transporting, distribution and commercialization of food products.

*** Record keeping: Archive of the files that contain all the information relative to a business and the products that it produces, as well as previous inspection reports.

4. Surveillance

The capability and authority of the national food safety service to lead a continual and systematic process of collection, analysis and interpretation of data related to food production, as well as potential problems for human health, that facilitate the establishment of adequate policies for the control of food products* base on risk.

Levels of advancement:

- The national food safety service has no established program in place for surveillance or monitoring.**; never the less, it carries out some surveillance actions not associated with a program.
 - The national food safety service conducts a surveillance program based on existing information or suspected cases, where samples are collected and sent to the laboratories.
 - The national food safety service conducts monitoring programs and active surveillance of food contaminants*** *defined by their level of risk.*
 - The national food safety service executes a surveillance program throughout the entire agri-food chain.
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* *Control of Food Products:* Combination of activities that start with the establishment of mandatory standards, the verification that they are complied with so as to guarantee that the food products are healthy, safe and fit for human consumption.

** The *monitoring of food contaminants* refers to the performance and analysis of routine sampling designed to detect changes in the environment or in the state of the food products.

*** A food contaminant is all biological or chemical agents, foreign material or deliberately incorporated substances and that can put in danger ones health or fitness.

5. Emerging Issues*

The capability and authority of the national food safety service to identify in advance, those sanitary problems covered under its mandate which may either put at risk or benefit the public health and commerce of food products.

Levels of advancement:

- The national food safety service does not *identify in advance* emerging issues that could put at risk or benefit the public health or the commerce of food products.
 - The national food safety service *gathers and summarizes developments* at the national or international level that could affect positively or negatively the public health or the commerce of food products
 - The national food safety service *assesses the risks, costs or opportunities* of the emerging issues previously identified
 - The national food safety service implements, with other relevant State institutions or its users, prevention or control actions due to an adverse emerging issue, or alternatively, actions that produce benefits because of an emerging issue.
 - The national food safety service coordinates and implements actions with other countries in order to anticipate emerging issues, including audits of the exporting countries services and participation in international emergency networks.
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* The phrase, *emerging issues*, refers to the emergence of new situations associated with competitiveness, market access, protection of public health, agricultural health and the environment. Depending on its nature, emerging issues can present threats but may also provide opportunities. The appearance of an emerging pathogen, changes in standards and the biotechnology are examples of possible emerging issues.

6. Risk* Analysis

The capability of the national food safety service to make decisions and carry out actions based on scientific principles, including the assessment, communication and management of risk.

Levels of advancement:

- The national food safety service does not compile data or other kinds of information that could be used to analyze risks.
 - Compiles and maintains sources of information or can access the information necessary in order to assess risks.
 - The national food safety service has included strategies for the characterization of risk in its surveillance systems.
 - The national food safety service analyzes information and identifies the potential choices for decision makers, based on risk evaluation and the incorporation of scientific principles.
 - The national food safety service evaluates the potential choices stemming of risk evaluation in order to develop food safety policies that are consistent with scientific decisions and then communicates them with the WTO/SPS, trading partners and users.
 - The national food safety service is consistent in managing and communicating the risks in conformance with the norms and standards prescribed in Codex, OIE, IPPC and the WTO/SPS agreement.
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* The term, *risk*, refers to the likelihood of manifestation and the probable magnitude of the consequences of a prejudicial health incident in the importing country during a specified time period. *Risk analysis*, refers to the assessment, management and communication of risk, not only for imports but for domestic issues which may also arise.

7. Technical Innovation

The capability of the national food safety service to update its overall service, in accordance with the latest scientific advances and based on the sanitary norms and measures of the OIE, Codex Alimentarius and the WTO/SPS agreement.


Levels of advancement:

- The national food safety service has only *informal access* to technical innovations through personal contacts or external media sources.*
- The national food safety service maintains an information base on technical innovations and international norms through subscriptions to scientific journals and electronic media**.
- The national food safety service carries out a specific program that identifies technical innovations which can improve its operation and procedures.
- The national food safety service incorporates technical innovations into selected functions and procedures, with specific resources and the collaboration or contributions of its users.
- The national food safety service has a dedicated budget plus the collaboration and contributions of its users, to continually implement technical innovations throughout the national service. In addition, can rely on its capacity to channel outside cooperation and technical assistance funds for innovation improvements.

* External media are those sources of information that may not be available or subscribed to by the national food safety service such as scientific publications and magazines.

** This includes consulting publications and news in the web pages of the international reference organizations (Codex, OIE, IPPC), WTO, as well as the regular participation in international forums, national codex contact points, INFOSAN.

II. HUMAN AND FINANCIAL CAPITAL



Institutional and financial sustainability as evidenced by the level of professional talent and financial resources available.

Variables:

1. Human talent
2. Training
3. Funding sources
4. Stability of policies and programs
5. Contingency funds
6. Technical independence
7. Capability to invest and grow
8. Management capacity

1. Human Talent

The capability of the national food safety service to efficiently carry out the professional and technical functions; measured on the basis of the qualifications of its professional*.

Levels of advancement:

- Within the national food safety service, it is estimated that less than 10 percent of the personnel are qualified and trained to carry out the functions of their position.
- Within the national food safety service, it is estimated that more than 10 percent but less than a quarter of the personnel are qualified and trained to carry out the functions of their position.
- Within the national food safety service, it is estimated that a quarter but less half of the personnel are qualified and trained to carry out the functions of their position.
- Within the national food safety service, it is estimated that half but less than three-quarters of the personnel are qualified and trained to carry out the functions of their position.
- Within the national food safety service, it is estimated that three-quarters or more of the personnel are qualified and trained to carry out the functions of their position.

* Not all services have the sufficient human resources to carry out the required functions, never the less, the percentage of qualified and trained professionals an indicator of the professional excellence within the national service.

2. Training

The capability of the national food safety service to keep its personnel up-to-date in terms of relevant information and knowledge; measured in terms of the implementation of an annual training plan.

Levels of advancement:

- The national food safety service provides training only when resources become available.
- The national food safety service implements an annual training plan based on its needs that covers approximately one-fourth of the personnel.
- The national food safety service implements an annual training plan based on its needs that covers approximately one-half of the personnel.
- The national food safety service implements an annual training plan based on its needs that covers approximately three-fourths of the personnel.
- The national food safety service implements an annual training plan based on its needs that covers practically all of the personnel.

3. Funding Sources

The ability of the national food safety service to access financial resources for its continued operation and sustainability, independent of any type of political pressure and/or from its users.

Levels of advancement:

- Funding for the national food safety service is neither stable nor clearly defined. The budget for the national food safety service competes with other State institutions and depends exclusively on resources allocated from the general treasury.
- The national food safety service is funded from a specific line item prescribed within the national budget.
- The national food safety service is funded from a specific line item prescribed within the national budget and with user fees generated by providing specific services (ex. inspection services, registration, certification).
- In addition to the previous levels, the national food safety service also receives additional sources from its users to execute specific programs; adequate management and administration of cooperation funds.

6. Technical Independence

The capability of the national food safety service to carry out its duties with autonomy and free from political interference that may affect technical and scientific decisions; measured in two ways: political appointments* and technical support for decisions.

A. Levels of advancement (political positions):

- The Directors positions of the entire national food safety service and the technical positions are political appointees.
- The Directors positions of the entire national food safety service are the only political appointees.
- There are no political appointees in the national food safety service.

B. Levels of advancement (technical support for decisions):

- The technical decisions made by the national food safety service are almost always based on political considerations.
 - The technical decisions incorporate scientific principles, but are modified to conform to political considerations.
 - The technical decisions are based on scientific principles but are subject to review and possible modification based on political considerations.
 - The technical decisions are based only on scientific principles and are not changed to meet any political considerations.
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* The phrase, *political appointments*, refers to appointments made by the political party in office, serving at the pleasure of the president and subject to immediate removal.

7. Capability to Invest and Growth

The capability of the national food safety service to secure additional investments over time that leads to a sustained improvement in the entire service. The utilization of such resources is not subject to any type of political pressure from its users.

Levels of advancement:

- There are no sustained actions to invest in the overall structure of the national food safety service.
- The national food safety service elaborates and presents proposals and secures investment resources for improvements and infrastructure from cooperation or donor agencies.
- The national food safety service shows and justifies their necessities and secures over time, significant growing resources, through extraordinary allocations from the general treasury or special line items.
- In addition to the previous levels, the private sector provides investment resources to the national food safety service for improvements and previous concert programs.

8. Management Capability

The capability to implement effective food safety programs, which requires a national police and operative coordination in both national and local levels. Measured by the management capability existing in both, official and private parts and by the capability to administrate programs.

A. Levels of advancement: (management capability, coordinated actions between public and private sectors)

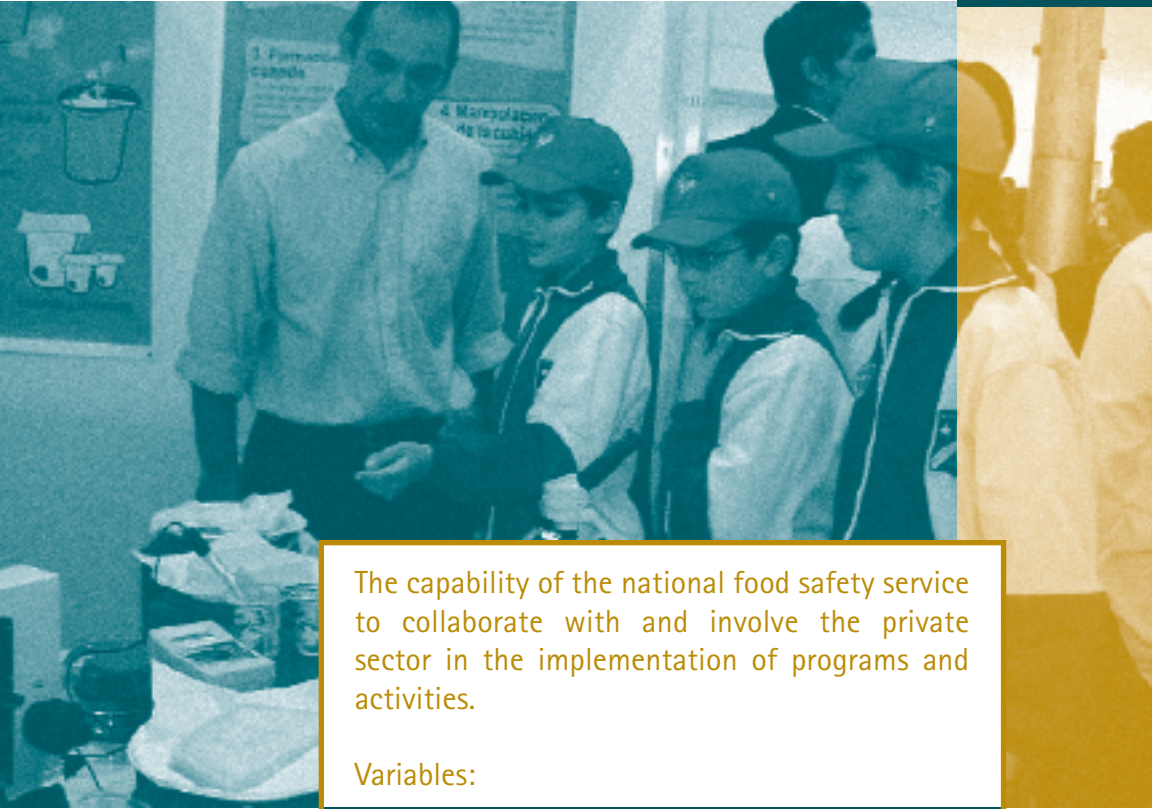
- The national food safety regulations don't define clearly the obligations and competitions of all the organisms that conforms the food safety service.
- There is a regulation that defines obligations and competitions of the official sector institutions at national and local levels.
- There are some coordinated inter and intra institutional activities in the official sector at least at the national level.
- There are some coordinated inter and intra institutional activities in the official sector at both, national and local levels.
- There are coordinated and articulated activities at different levels in both official and private sectors.

B. Levels of advancement: (programs administration)

- The national food safety service doesn't count with an annual operative program.
- The national food safety service counts with a strategic planning for the medium term*.
- The national food safety service implements a medium term strategic planning, previously coordinated by the official sector and users.
- The national food safety service has an evaluating system that feeds back the strategic planning.

* Medium term, period of 4 or 5 years in which the national food safety service has established its strategic plan.

III. INTERACTION WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR



The capability of the national food safety service to collaborate with and involve the private sector in the implementation of programs and activities.

Variables:

1. Information
2. Communication
3. Official representation
4. Accreditation
5. Capability to respond
6. Food Safety Awareness

2. Communication

The capability of the national food safety service to maintain fluid channels of communication with the public and private sectors.





Levels of advancement:

- The national food safety service has no communication mechanisms in place to facilitate the dialogue between the relevant State institutions and the private sector.
- The national food safety service maintains *informal* channels of communication with the relevant State institutions and the private sector.
- The national food safety service establishes and promotes official dialogue with the different users on its *proposed and current regulations*.
- The national food safety service holds forums and meetings with the different users in order to establish or improve its *programs and services*.
- The national food safety service actively promotes dialogue with and solicits feedback from the different users regarding official representation at the WTO/SPS, Codex Alimentarius, OIE and IPPC.

3. Official Representation

The capability of the national food safety service to regularly and actively participate, coordinate and provide follow up to the meetings of international organizations such as the WTO/SPS, Codex Alimentarius (by their national codex alimentarius committee) OIE and IPPC.

Levels of advancement:

-  The national food safety service does not participate in or follow up on the meetings of the WTO/SPS, Codex Alimentarius, OIE and IPPC.
-  The national food safety service participates sporadically or passively* in the meetings of the WTO/SPS, Codex Alimentarius, OIE and IPPC.
-  The national food safety service takes into consideration the opinions of its users and participates regularly and actively** in the meetings of the WTO/SPS, Codex Alimentarius, OIE and IPPC.
-  The national food safety service, in consultation with its different users, identifies strategic topics, provides leadership and coordinates between the national delegations these topics over time as part of the agenda in the meetings of the WTO/SPS, Codex Alimentarius, OIE and IPPC.

* *Passive participation*, refers to being present at, but contributing little, to the meetings in question.

** *Active participation*, refers to preparation in advance of, and contributing during the meetings in question, including exploring common solutions and generating proposals for possible adoption.


5. Capability to Respond

The capability of the national food safety service to collaborate with its users to develop new programs and services in response to changing priorities and opportunities.

Levels of advancement:

- The national food safety service does not engage its users to discuss programs and future services to be developed.
- The national food safety service has *informal dialogue* with its users regarding possible programs and future services.
- The national food safety service *holds meetings and forums* with its users to identify changing priorities and opportunities.
- The national food safety service and its users, collaboratively identify resources, roles and responsibilities of potential programs and services in response to changing priorities and opportunities.
- The national food safety service, with the active participation and contribution of its users, periodically implements new programs and services.

IV. ACCESS TO MARKETS AND SAFEGUARDING PUBLIC HEALTH



The capability and authority of the national food safety service to protect the public health and to provide support in order to access and retain markets.

Variables:

1. Compliance with regulatory norms
2. Formulation of regulatory norms
3. Harmonization
4. Certification and registration programs
5. Equivalency agreements
6. Traceability
7. Transparency

1. Compliance with Regulatory Norms

The capability and authority of the national food safety service to ensure that users are in compliance with the regulatory norms* covered under its mandate.

Levels of advancement:

- The national food safety service has no inspection or verification compliance program to ensure user compliance with regulatory norms.
 - The national food safety service implements an inspection or verification compliance program of regulatory norms for *selected* products and/or processes, but *only reports* instances of noncompliance.
 - The national food safety service implements a compliance program consisting of inspection and verification of regulatory norms for selected products and processes, and, if necessary, *imposes sanctions* in instances of non-compliance.
 - The national food safety service implements a compliance program consisting of inspection and verification of regulatory norms for *all* products and processes covered under its mandate, and, if necessary, *imposes sanctions* in instances of non-compliance.
 - The national food safety service carries out audits of its inspection and verification compliance programs.
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* *Regulatory norms* are sanitary measures that include all pertinent laws, decrees, regulations, prescriptions and procedures.

3. Harmonization

The capability and authority of the national food safety service to ensure that the national regulatory norms covered under its mandate are in line with international norms, guidelines and recommendations.

Levels of advancement:

- The national food safety service has no established procedure to harmonize national regulatory norms with international norms, guidelines and recommendations.
- The national food safety service has *identified* those national regulatory norms that are not in line with international norms, guidelines and recommendations.
- The national food safety service is *reviewing* national regulatory norms and harmonizing them with international norms, guidelines and recommendations.
- The national food safety service *monitors new* international norms, guidelines and recommendations in order to *harmonize* them with national regulatory norms.
- The national food safety service *participates at the international level* in the formulation of international norms, guidelines and recommendations in order to ensure that they will be in line with national regulatory norms.

4. Certification and Registration Programs*

The capability and authority of the national food safety service to certify products, services and processes covered under its mandate and in accordance with the national regulatory norms and international norms, guidelines and recommendations.

Levels of advancement:

- The national food safety service has neither the capability nor the authority to certify and register products, services or processes.
- The national food safety service has the authority to certify and register *selected* products, services or processes.
- The national food safety service has the authority and *carries out* certification and registration programs for *selected* products, services or processes.
- The national food safety service can develop and carry out certification and registration programs for *new* products, services or processes.
- The national food safety service carries out audits of its certification and registration programs in order to maintain the trust of its users and trading partners.

* In carrying out certification and registration programs, the national food safety service must always operate free of political interference from the private sector.

5. Equivalency Agreements*

The capability and authority of the national food safety service to negotiate, implement and maintain equivalency agreements with other countries on norms and processes under its mandate.

Levels of advancement:

- The national food safety service has neither the authority or the capability to negotiate equivalency agreements with other countries in norms and processes under its mandate.
- The national food safety service has the authority to *negotiate and approve* equivalency agreements with other countries.
- The national food safety service *implements* equivalency agreements with other countries on selected products and processes.
- The national food safety service operates a *specific program* that develops equivalency agreements with other countries on *new* products and processes.
- The national food safety service has a program that includes the feedback of its users along with advances in international norms, guidelines and recommendations, and then pursues specific equivalency agreements with other countries.

* The term, *equivalency*, refers to alternative sanitary measures proposed by the exporting country to the importing country which offer the same level of protection as those in use within the importing country.

6. Traceability

The capability and authority of the national food safety service to ensure across the agri- food chain they can track the history, location and distribution of any food product covered under its mandate.

Levels of advancement:

- The national food safety service has no track program for food products.
- The national food safety service can inspect and document the sanitary status of food products at *specific points* across the agri-food chain.
- The national food safety service has establish procedures in place and can track *selected food products* across that *portion* of the corresponding agri-food chain covered under its mandate.
- The national food safety service, along with the other relevant State institutions and its users, has coordinated procedures in place that can track food products across the *entire* agri-food chain for all foods.
- The national food safety service, in cooperation with the other relevant State institutions and its users, carries out audits of its traceability procedures.

7. Transparency

The capability and authority of the national food safety service to notify the WTO/SPS and the regional integration organisms of its national regulations, in accordance with the procedures established by these organizations.

Levels of advancement:

- The national food safety service does not notify the WTO/SPS of its regulatory norms.
- The national food safety service *partially* notifies the WTO/SPS.
- The national food safety service notifies the WTO/SPS of its regulatory norms, in full compliance with the criteria established by these organizations.
- The national food safety service informs users of changes in its regulatory norms, changes in the regulatory norms, and raises awareness with its users of the importance of being transparent.
- The national food safety service, along with the other relevant State institutions, carries out audits of its transparency procedures.

Glossary of Selected Terms

Audits: A systematic and functionally independent examination, the objective of which is to determine if an activity or process and subsequent results meet the prescribed objectives.

Codex Alimentarius: Established to facilitate world trade in foods by developing internationally acceptable standards, which met the objectives of freer trade and protection of consumer's health.

Consumer: Any person that buys and ingests food.

Food Safety Service: Involves all the public institutions that interact in food control, vigilance and monitoring across the agri-food chain, also includes official accredited private professionals or institutions

International norms, guidelines and recommendations: As regards food safety, those established by the Codex Alimentarius; as regards to animal health and zoonoses, those established by the OIE.

Laboratory: A properly equipped facility endowed with competent technical personnel to carry out different food analysis and clinic diagnostic methods and tests. At the country level, the laboratory is authorized by the national food safety service, working under its control or supervision.

Users of national food safety services: This includes the private sector, academic institutions, public-private associations, and consumers associations.

WTO/SPS: The sanitary and phytosanitary committee of the World Trade Organization made up of member countries and oversees the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures.

Check List

- I. Technical Capability
 - Diagnostic capability
 - Emergency response capability
 - Inspection services
 - Surveillance
 - Emerging issues
 - Risk analysis
 - Technical innovation
- II. Human and Financial Capital
 - Human talent
 - Training
 - Funding sources
 - Stability of policies and programs
 - Contingency funds
 - Technical independence
 - Capability to invest and grow
 - Management capacity
- III. Interaction with the Private Sector
 - Information
 - Communication
 - Official representation
 - Accreditation
 - Capability to respond
 - Food safety awareness
- IV. Access to Markets and Public Health
 - Compliance with regulatory norms
 - Formulation of regulatory norms
 - Harmonization
 - Certification and registration programs
 - Equivalency agreements
 - Traceability
 - Transparency



Agricultural Health and Food Safety

Telephone: (506) 216-0184 / Fax: (506) 216-0173

P.O. Box 55-2200 Coronado, Costa Rica

e-mail: sanagro@iica.ac.cr • www.infoagro.net/salud

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