



INTERVIEW



Isabelle Rollier manages the European Commission Directorate-General for Health and Consumers' (DG SANCO) capacity building activities for non-EU countries. In this capacity she is involved in the management of many of the BTSF training activities held outside of the EU. In the following interview, she explains the aims of this type of training, the subjects covered and the unique aspects of this kind of training.

BTSF: Why does DG SANCO organise BTSF training for non-EU countries?

Isabelle Rollier: Training for non-EU country participants has a range of positive effects, not least amongst which is the contribution it makes to ensuring the safety of the EU's food imports. Given that the Union is the world's biggest food importer (in 2010 a total volume of food and drink worth €78.3 billion was imported), the importance of this cannot be understated. Safe products mean fewer problems during border controls and reduced burdens on both importers and exporters, which saves both time and money. Moreover, by promoting the EU regulatory model and international standards primarily to our developing country trading partners, we are helping them to comply with the relevant standards and thus to access the EU and global food markets alike. This has knock-on effects on local economic development and also drives up safety standards on developing countries' domestic markets. Moreover, BTSF also trains local experts to allow them to transmit this knowledge to their peers and to adapt optimally to local production conditions, thereby creating ownership and absorptive capacity. In addition, the high level of technical expertise together with feedback on gaps identified during inspection missions allows DG SANCO to match its training to actual needs. Hence very close coordination takes place with others, both inside the Commission but also beyond (multilaterally and bilaterally) to optimise this type of capacity building and maximise synergies.

BTSF: Is the type of training provided to non-EU countries the same as that for EU Member States?

Isabelle Rollier: Not exactly. A key aspect of EU-based training is harmonisation of controls, whereas for non-EU countries the primary goal is to explain EU sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) requirements, thus making the training very results-oriented (i.e. in terms of market access). Our training thus complements assistance for developing countries

This newsletter provides information on activities organised within the Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) initiative. You'll find the latest news and views about BTSF training and issues related to the initiative as well as upcoming dates for your diary.

provided by other Commission services such as the Directorate-General for Development and Cooperation. Non-EU participants can also attend the EU-based training courses to enhance exchange and networking. Secondly, this training activity also provides more opportunities for private sector representatives to participate in BTSF training, albeit at their own expense. This is due to the vital role played by some areas of the private sector in official controls in some developing countries. Thirdly, while the EU-based training is very much workshop-oriented, sustained missions are an important component of the non-EU country activity. This entails secondment of individual experts to beneficiary countries to liaise with the competent authorities, provide training and share expertise. These missions are launched on the basis of reports from the European Commission's Food and Veterinary Office – the Commission's inspection service – identifying deficiencies which the missions subsequently aim to help rectify, but also on the basis of alert notifications, specific requests during agreement negotiations or bilateral dealings, etc. Nonetheless, workshops remain an essential part of these trainings and one of their key aims is to promote networking among colleagues from different countries within a given region. For this reason, each BTSF non-EU country workshop is intended for a specific region of the world. All of these features give the training a tailor-made quality which ensures its uniqueness. On top of that, a high level of flexibility to adapt to urgent needs certainly demonstrates good practice. However we recognise that much more still needs to be done to sustain impact and to better integrate SPS capacity building with other areas of development cooperation.

BTSF: Can you give some examples of the different types of BTSF activity held in non-EU countries?

Isabelle Rollier: The training on offer is very diverse and deliberately so. It has covered subjects such as EU food standards, control of highly pathogenic avian influenza and other animal diseases, food testing, the EU's Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed, the traceability system in place in the EU: TRACES and the analysis of genetically modified organisms. These programmes have included workshops, sustained training and, in the case of the food testing and animal health programme, two-week diagnostic training sessions for non-EU country participants in EU laboratories. The EU food standards programme is in itself highly varied, comprising as it does workshops on a range of subjects such as fruit and vegetables, fish, meat, residues and contaminants, plant protection products and food contact materials. Roundtable events with the US and Canadian authorities have also taken place within this programme to exchange best practices and seek regulatory convergence. Training has been organised across the globe including workshops and missions in Latin America, South-east Asia, the Middle East and Africa. The BTSF Africa programme was another important part of this activity. It ran during 2009-11 and provided technical expertise and policy advice for African countries on animal health and welfare, plant health and food safety and quality. A key outcome of this programme was the publication of a referential document to help countries to implement international SPS standards. The offer for non-EU countries is set to expand further as of 2012 with the launch of training on EU feed rules and feed import requirements and a programme on international standard-setting bodies aimed at further facilitating international trade in safe food.

BTSF-EAHC: Some thoughts of the National Contact Point of The Netherlands at the end of 2011



I am privileged to have been invited to contribute, as the National Contact Point of the Netherlands, in this last issue of the Better Training for Safer Food Newsletter of 2011.

This EU-training Programme for Officials of the National Authorities in the EU-Member States, as well as in Third Countries, really contributes to a better understanding of EU-legislation and therefore a better awareness of the backgrounds and reasons why these controls

are so important to safeguard Public and Animal Health and Animal Welfare.

As the Netherlands Food and Consumer Products Safety Authority has a broad variety of internal teachers, who train our Inspectors on specific subjects, the BTSF-programme enables these teachers to participate as 'train the trainers' in BTSF-trainings in their field of expertise: dissemination of their new knowledge and experiences during the BTSF-trainings is therefore (for most of our participants) 'part of their job'!

By using qualified teachers and tutors the BTSF-trainings make it possible to learn about the EU-'State of the Art' in a particular field. Participants also meet colleagues from other Member States, who work in the same field: in many cases I have heard of, this networking continues after the training has ended. These two aspects are very important for harmonizing the official controls within the EU: that is why officials in my country are really eager to participate in the trainings.

2012 will be challenging. The aim is to introduce a number of e-learning training facilities for some of the more basic BTSF-programmes. This will enable a much broader participation and dissemination amongst inspectors in the EU Member States and Third Countries. It will also enable participants of the more advanced courses to obtain the same basic level at the start of these trainings! A very good reason to thank and to congratulate DG Sanco, EAHC and the Better Training for Safer Food Team for their inspirational efforts this year and the oncoming years!

Upcoming Courses

Border Inspection Points (Airports, seaports and roads/rails)
28 February - 02 March 2012, Heathrow, UK - Airport

Animal Welfare
13 - 16 March 2012, Italy - Farming and laying hens and broiler chickens

Feed Law
30 January - 03 February 2012, Budapest, Hungary - Workshop 6 on Feed Law
26 - 30 March 2012, Rome, Italy - Workshop 7 on Feed Law

BTSF has a new colleague

We are happy to announce that Udo Juterschnig joined the BTSF team in September 2011. Udo is from Vienna, Austria. Before coming to Luxembourg, he has been developing quality management systems and performing audits, in particular in food producing companies. He was also active in managing European projects for the European Commission in the Joint Research Centre in Ispra, Italy. With his background of food technology and biotechnology, his native German language and his already wide experience gained in the food business sector and in a European Institution, he is a perfect addition to the BTSF team.



Welcome Udo

Best Practices on Increased Level of Official Controls on Certain Feed and Food of Non-Animal Origin

06 - 08 March 2012, Valencia, Spain - Workshop 6 on FNAO

BSE/TSE

31 January - 03 February 2012, Brussels, Belgium - Workshop 5 on TSE

26 - 30 March 2012, Cyprus - Workshop 6 on TSE

Quality Schemes

10 - 13 January 2012, Rome, Italy - Organic Farming

14 - 17 February 2012, Rome, Italy - Protected Designation Schemes

28 February - 02 March 2012, Paris, France - Organic Farming

17 - 20 April 2012, Warsaw, Poland - Protected Designation Schemes

24 - 27 April 2012, Warsaw, Poland - Organic Farming

Audit

07 - 10 February 2012, Lisboa, Portugal - Implement an audit

06 - 09 March 2012, Bilbao, Spain - Conduct an audit

17 - 20 April 2012, Delft, The Netherlands - Implement an audit

EU Food Standards

20 - 24 February 2012, Cameroon - Food Hygiene

12 - 16 March 2012, Ethiopia - Food Hygiene

17 - 19 April 2012, Nicaragua - Fishery and aquaculture products

Microbiological criteria and control of zoonoses

20 - 23 March 2012, Lisbon, Portugal - Workshop 3 on Zoonoses

27 - 30 March 2012, Lisbon, Portugal - Workshop 3 on Microbiological criteria

24 - 27 April 2012, Dublin, Ireland - Workshop 4 on Microbiological criteria

TRACES in the Member States

April 2012, Slovenia - Course 1 - TRACES at import