

Better Training for Safer Food



BTSF Newsletter is prepared by the Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency (Chafea) and issued six times a year. If you wish to receive the newsletter, please register [here](#).

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BTSF: How do you see your role in the BTSF programme?

Bruno Debois: As with other BTSF NCPs, my role is principally to interface with Chafea and my national authority in order to coordinate aspects of BTSF which are relevant to Belgium. I channel information between the two sides, much of which is related to places on training courses allocated to Belgium and selection of the right participants to take up these places. Once participants have attended training, any feedback they provide will normally go through me and so I'm in regular contact with Chafea on that as well. In addition, there are the regular meetings of NCPs with Chafea and DG SANCO to discuss all aspects of BTSF which normally take place twice a year.

BTSF: What are the main challenges faced by a BTSF NCP?

Bruno Debois: The main challenge relates to the most important part of our job, namely selection of participants. We have to strike a balance between the need of the training programmes to have the most appropriate participants available and the needs of potential participants, as well as their availability, which often depends on their workload. Also, we need enough time in advance of training activities to identify the best people to attend. This was a problem in the early years of BTSF as we were sometimes asked to find participants at short notice, but things have greatly improved since.

BTSF: Would you say that there any challenges that are specific to Belgium?

Bruno Debois: Being a federal state often means that extra coordination is required between the different regional administrations and the federal administration when you are trying to identify participants. You have an extra level of administration with which to coordinate as compared with other countries. Also, while all regions should be taken into account equally, their training needs may differ at times due to such aspects as locations, and types of

business or control point situated in the region. Additionally, in Belgium we have three official languages which can present its own challenges.

BTSF: Do you find any obstacles to carrying out your tasks as an NCP?

Bruno Debois: BTSF is now well established and things such as selection of participants run much more smoothly than they used to. However, the expansion that has taken place over the last few years brings new obstacles and demands. The number of programmes and the scope of the subjects covered has increased considerably, from seven when BTSF started to over 35 today, and of course more programmes means more events for which I have to find participants. In an average year this can mean anything up to 160 workshops and to select the best participants for that number of activities implies a considerable workload which I have to balance with my day-to-day work on other issues.

BTSF: How is your working relationship with the contractors responsible for running BTSF activities?

Bruno Debois: Very good. As I said, in the early years we were often asked to name participants at short notice, but things are much better now. The other issue is harmonisation between contractors of things like application and feedback forms. These used to vary considerably from contractor to contractor, and while there are still differences, it is clear that Chafea has done a lot of work to ensure greater consistency in this area.

BTSF: So overall, do you consider working on BTSF to be a positive experience?

Bruno Debois: Definitely. It's very rewarding to think that you are helping colleagues to take part in activities that will help their professional development and allow them to build new relationships with colleagues from other countries, and that will also be beneficial to the work of their services as a whole. The feedback I get from people who have attended BTSF training is almost always very positive. Demand for places on BTSF courses is growing all the time and I am sure that BTSF will continue to go from strength to strength in the years to come.



NUTRIRE IL PIANETA
ENERGIA PER LA VITA
NOURRIR LA PLANETE
ENERGIE POUR LA VIE
FEEDING THE PLANET
ENERGY FOR LIFE

Five BTSF events to take place during Milan Expo

The 2015 Universal Exposition began in Milan on 1 May 2015 and runs until 31 October under the theme 'Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life'. It also has five sub-themes, all linked to food: the history of mankind in connection with food; the future of food; children and food; the link between food and the environment; and the connection between food and art. The theme is highly appropriate given that the challenge of ensuring food security while managing climate change and cutting fossil fuel use is one of the major issues facing humanity in the 21st century.

The focus on food provides an excellent opportunity to showcase the work done by Chafea and the European Commission to improve food safety and quality, particularly through BTSF. It is vital to make the most of this by demonstrating the actions carried out within BTSF and the improvements they have brought about, as well as explaining the legislation governing the areas covered by the programme.



Five three-day conferences on BTSF-related issues are planned. They follow a similar format, with two days spent on technical aspects of food law, animal health, animal welfare, plant health or controls and enforcement at the Joint Research Centre in Ispra and a one-day visit to the Expo. For certain events, it may be possible to visit the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in Parma.

Presentations are given by Chafea and European Commission officials working on BTSF or in related areas. Participants come from EU Candidate, potential candidate and European Neighbourhood Policy countries, with 40-45 people attending each conference.

The first event takes place on 27-29 May and looks at horizontal issues including the farm to fork approach,

principles of BTSF and what it does, and the roles of EFSA, the Food and Veterinary Office and various other actors. Import control regimes, crisis management, the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) and the TRACES system are also covered.

The second conference, scheduled for 10-12 June, is on animal health, and is followed by an animal welfare event on 1-3 July. The final two conferences take place on 23-25 September and 14-16 October and cover food safety, including food hygiene and microbiological and chemical risks, and plant protection, including plant health issues and plant protection product use, respectively.

Coherence with the EU Pavilion

The BTSF events fit in well with the EU Expo Pavilion theme of 'Growing Europe's Future Together for a Better World'. On this theme, the EU explains how areas with which BTSF is concerned, such as a well-functioning internal market and multilateral trade system and sanitary standards for food, are essential for feeding the planet.



The EU Pavilion is in a prime spot, opposite the Italian Pavilion with which it is thematically harmonised each month. It also ties its themes in with the UN Environment, Humanitarian and Food Days, the EU Development Days and the 30th anniversary of the Milan Council which paved the way for the Single European Act.

The Pavilion contains an interactive exhibition which shows how the EU food supply chain works, using wheat and bread as an example, and integrates key messages of the Commission Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE). It outlines the achievements of the past 50 years and the main EU and global food challenges which lie ahead. The Pavilion also contains conference facilities and a terrace with a lake view.

The size of the Expo, with over 130 participants including countries, international organisations, civil society bodies and corporate representatives, as well as some 20 million visitors, makes it an ideal platform on which to highlight BTSF's efforts to make food safer worldwide.

Milan Expo to host BTSF 10th anniversary celebrations

It is 10 years since the launch, in 2005, of the calls for tender aimed at identifying contractors to run BTSF activities during its first year of training. Given the prominent place of food at the Milan Expo, it would be difficult to think of a more fitting setting in which to mark the programme's 10th anniversary.

Accordingly, a celebration of this milestone takes place following a conference on food hygiene and flexibility in the EU pavilion on 12 June 2015. It will feature speeches from the main actors involved in BTSF from both Chafea and DG SANTE, while a speech from the Italian Director of Public Health on behalf of the EU Member States is also planned.



There will be a screening of the 'Recipe for Safer Food' video which was produced in 2014 and which explains the principles, aims, benefits and functioning of BTSF. A compendium of information material on BTSF will also be distributed.

Following the celebration, a dinner will be held on the terrace of the EU pavilion. Around 80 people are expected to attend the celebration and dinner, including Chafea and European Commission officials involved in BTSF and the BTSF National Contact Points.

BTSF National Contact Point meeting held in Brussels

The latest expert group meeting of BTSF National Contact Points (NCPs) took place in Brussels on 7 May 2015. Discussion covered BTSF strategies, the 2015 activities and the programme for 2016-17.

The meeting began with details of the e-learning project, including the six modules now running (food contact materials, animal welfare, RASFF, feed law, health of aquaculture animals and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point principles) and procedures for participating. At the time of the meeting, 4242 people had followed the modules.



Results were given of participant feedback on the food contact materials and animal welfare modules as regards satisfaction, advantages of e-learning, contents, interest in future e-learning courses, e-learning as a knowledge transfer method and scope to apply the skills acquired from the modules at work. For all aspects, satisfaction levels were 82% or higher and in most cases were in the mid-90s. Next steps were outlined in terms of new subjects and language versions and management decisions based on evaluation of the existing modules.

Cost-effectiveness study

Also concerning strategy, NCPs were told about a cost-effectiveness study due to be launched in mid-2015 and to run over 12 months. It will gauge current cost-effectiveness and analyse strategies to see which model best suits BTSF.

A new planning cycle which simplifies execution of activity phases and is better adapted to the principle of annual budgets is also planned. Main changes relate to the timing of the various phases, including launch of consultations, setting down of priorities, adoption of work programmes and financing decisions, and launch of public procurement and training.

An overview was given of events completed and participation in the 2015 training programmes, while in-depth information was provided on the 2015-16 programmes on plant health controls, pesticide application equipment, plastic recycling processes and zoonoses and antimicrobial resistance. For 2016 onwards, continuing and new programmes and programmes for which a second two-year phase may be launched were listed.

Chafea updated NCPs on kick-off meetings with and distribution of information to contractors, standardisation of invitation letters from contractors and application forms for participants, and preparation of information sheets with course specifications. The electronic training evaluation system is now fully operational and Chafea is developing a tool to give NCPs monthly feedback on participation from their country and a platform to host the e-learning campus, the dissemination database, alumni details and training schedules.

Positive response from NCPs

The meeting garnered a positive response from NCPs. Finnish NCP Henrika Aapro said, 'I am extremely happy about the development actions taken, especially about the monthly reporting IT tool which is going to make the work of us NCPs much easier to follow and report.'

She stressed the importance of effective dissemination of the knowledge BTSF offers and the role of dissemination in improving national-level cooperation and networking. Ms Aapro added that the Finnish authorities are analysing and developing new ways of dissemination and plan to start BTSF dissemination workshops, which could lead to identification of best practices to help other NCPs.

Karin Wennås Gunnarsson described her first meeting as Swedish NCP as 'informative and important', adding that, 'the realisation that we are quite a large group working together in our different countries for the same project made a very positive impact on me'. She is sure that upcoming developments within BTSF will make the work of NCPs easier.

Ms Wennås Gunnarsson explained that BTSF courses are well regarded in Sweden, particularly as concerns the organisation and opportunities to interact, build networks and share experience with participants from other countries. She said that the Swedish authorities were particularly appreciative of courses in areas such as border controls, food contact materials, food hygiene and controls and food hygiene of plants at primary production and would like to see more of these. She also suggested other training subjects including control of traceability of animal, non-animal and composite foodstuffs, legal requirements for and management of food and feed control authorities, bivalve molluscs and e-learning on TRACES.

Furthermore, Ms Wennås Gunnarsson provided constructive feedback from Swedish participants on a range of training-related issues including communication, course schedules, study visits during workshops and the amount of information conveyed on courses.

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Where is it?

Send your answer with the reference
"May/June 2015 newsletter" to
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Where was that?

Answer from the previous edition

Pont des Arts in Paris

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