

Better Training for Safer Food

One year at the helm, Head of Unit Peter Bokor shares his views on the BTSF initiative

Peter Bokor is Head of Unit for the European Commission's Directorate General for Health and Food Safety's unit D1, Food chain science and stakeholder relations, and specifically is responsible for the Better Training for Safer Food initiative. He took over as Head of Unit just last September, after ten years as a Head of Unit in the Directorate General for Agriculture (DG AGRI), and before that, he was working for the Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture. He studied business and economics in Hungary before beginning his professional career.

What in your background has helped prepare you for your work with BTSF?

Having a good understanding of economics has helped me in the fields of agriculture and rural development, and it's helped me to understand the agriculture business as a whole.

The concept of fieldwork, too, is very familiar to me from DG AGRI - going out on inspections and holding trainings in various locations - this is also done in other policy areas. It's all the details specific to BTFS that I am now finding interesting and exciting to learn about.

What were your first impressions of the BTSF team?

When I arrived in September 2017 - unfortunately just after the BTSF World Conference that would have been exciting to have taken part in - I found a very good team here. They are very dedicated and work well together as a team and as well as with training providers and others outside the team at the Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency (Chafea). BTSF is an unqualified success: it's very much appreciated by training participants, by Member States, and 3rd countries and there is a continual demand for more training courses. My approach has been 'don't fix what isn't broken'.

So you're happy with the way things are now, but what do you see for the future?

What is on the table and being looked at for the future is e-learning. We had a trial project with the BTSF Academy, which now makes it possible to follow some training courses online. The questions are to what degree will we go digital and what are the best tools and methods? Most trainers and trainees will tell you that there is added value in meeting face-to-face. Not only related to covering the contents of the course and making sure everyone has understood everything, but also because of the opportunities to learn from each other, to exchange experiences and form professional relationships. So we don't see e-learning as replacing on-site trainings entirely, but as providing the opportunity for even more people to receive valuable training who might otherwise be unable to, and to do so in an economical way.

E-learning is a huge field in and of itself, and we need to really explore the tools and pick the best options. 'Serious gaming' for example, uses virtual reality to create lifelike scenarios where trainees get to test their skills and knowledge and actually feel like they are putting those skills to use. We need to gain expertise in the field of e-learning and make sure that BTSF continues to do what it has been doing so well - meeting people's needs by providing the best training possible and by doing so, protecting business interests and keeping consumers safe.

Commission Implementing Decision of 17 May 2018 sets 2018 BTSF budget for work programme

17 500 000 Euros will be managed and implemented in 2018 by the Consumer, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency in order to develop, organise and manage BTSF training programmes, like those in the new calls for tender listed below.

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Call for Tender: Food hygiene at primary production

Chafea/2018/BTSF/01: Organisation and implementation of training activities on food hygiene at primary production under the "Better Training for Safer Food" initiative.

Deadline: 3 October 2018

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Call for Tender: Audit of authorised recycling processes for plastic food contact materials

Chafea/2018/BTSF/02: Organisation and implementation of training activities on the audit of authorised recycling processes for plastic food contact materials in the scope of Regulation (EU) No 282/2008 under the "Better Training for Safer Food" initiative.

Deadline: 3 October 2018

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Call for Tender: Inspection and calibration of plant protection product application equipment

Chafea/2018/BTSF/03: Organisation and implementation of training activities on inspection and calibration of plant protection product application equipment in compliance with the provisions of Directive 2009/128/EC under the "Better Training for Safer Food" initiative.

Deadline: 3 October 2018

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Call for Tender: Sampling and analysis methods used in the context of official food and feed controls

Chafea/2018/BTSF/04: Organisation and implementation of training activities on sampling and analysis methods used in the context of official food and feed controls under the "Better Training for Safer Food" initiative.

Deadline: 3 October 2018

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An Info Day for interested tenderers to be held in Luxemburg mid-September 2018

The exact date will be announced here during the course of August.

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BTSF Annual Report 2016 now available online

Read about BTSF priorities and challenges, training activities both in and outside the EU and future plans, including the further development of e-learning possibilities.

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