

Better Training for Safer Food

In this edition

- ▶ [Animal welfare: a BTSF success story](#)
- ▶ [Preparation of BTSF World training continues](#)
- ▶ [BTSF pleased to welcome Jose Luis aboard](#)
- ▶ [And it's goodbye from Daniella](#)
- ▶ [Do you know where this is?](#)

Previous Newsletters

August 2013
May 2013
February 2012
December 2012
October 2012
August 2012
May 2012

Animal welfare: a BTSF success story

In this edition of the BTSF newsletter, we look at a programme which has been a great success story over the years: animal welfare. The EU recognises animals as sentient beings and EU law aims to respect their physiological needs on the farm and during transport and minimise suffering by using approved stunning methods at slaughter.

Food and Veterinary Office reports show deficiencies in application of welfare standards. The 2012-15 EU Strategy for Protection and Welfare of Animals prioritises enforcement of welfare requirements and stresses the importance of training in ensuring compliance with EU and international standards.

As one of the five main BTSF fields - along with food and feed safety and animal and plant health - animal welfare has always been an essential element within BTSF. This is reflected in the fact that welfare at slaughter and killing for disease control was one of the original seven programmes when BTSF began in 2006. Animal welfare is, in fact, one of only three programmes on which BTSF has provided training in every year since its inception.

The importance of animal welfare to BTSF is underlined by the fact that welfare at slaughter and killing for disease control was the subject of one of the first five BTSF e-learning modules, while welfare of poultry at slaughter and killing was included in the second batch of five. A video has also been made outlining work done in and benefits of BTSF animal welfare workshops.



The range of types of welfare workshop has expanded significantly over time to include welfare during transport and of pigs and poultry.

By the end of 2013, a total of 22 workshops will have taken place on the various topics, with a further nine scheduled for 2014. These workshops have trained in excess of 1200 participants and around 600 more are expected to attend in 2014.

Workshops have taken place in seven EU Member States (Spain, Croatia, Italy, Hungary, Slovenia, Sweden and the UK), and one Candidate Country (Turkey). By the end of 2014, events will also have been held in Denmark and Poland. The geographical coverage is even more impressive when one considers the origins of participants, who have come from all EU Member States, Candidate and European Free Trade Association countries, and over 40 other countries worldwide.

Of course, these figures refer only to people attending training. The true impact is much wider if one factors in implementation of the 'train the trainer' principle. This is done through such aspects as a selection process aimed at identifying participants who can train colleagues following their attendance and elaboration of learning tools to support dissemination.

Long-standing relationship

An important element in the success of the programme has been the long-standing relationship between EAHC and the 'Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale dell'Abruzzo e del Molise âG. Caporaleâ' (IZSAM) consortium, which has implemented the training since 2007. The standard has been highly appreciated by participants, with feedback forms consistently showing that over 95% rate the training as very good or excellent.

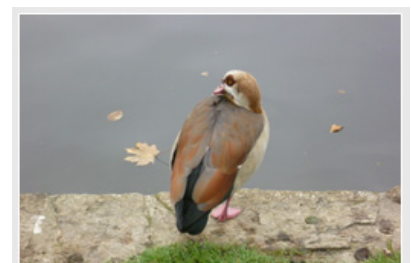
The workshops organised by IZSAM on behalf of EAHC comprise a range of activities. These include plenary sessions with presentations, group activities involving case-study work and discussion. The learning methods IZSAM uses stress the importance of involving participants in the training process during the preparatory phase. They are given an active role in selecting topics to be dealt with, issues to be discussed and experience to be shared. Appropriate tools have been designed to achieve this goal.

Depending on the type of workshop, participants visit slaughterhouses, pig or poultry establishments, transport companies or control posts to apply their knowledge and expertise in simulation exercises. In terms of topics, all workshops deal with relevant EU legislation and international standards and explore the scientific basis for proper housing, handling and transport of poultry or pigs, or for transport, stunning and killing of animals.

Poultry and pig welfare workshops look at assessment of farming systems, farm inspections and data collection. Topics at slaughter workshops include standard operating and monitoring procedures, lairage facilities, the role of welfare officers, stunning and killing techniques used in Europe and experience from disease epidemics. Transport workshops cover transport conditions, record checking, handling and care during transport, vehicle design, use of navigation systems to aid enforcement of welfare requirements and experience from animal transport.

Over the last seven years, IZSAM has gathered a large number of national authority delegates into a scientific community providing mutual support. In 2012, IZSAM conducted a survey on dissemination initiatives among official veterinarians from Member States, Candidate and third countries who had been trained under BTSF. The findings were very positive: 65% of 165 interviewees had organised cascade training at central or local level following participation and 58% of them evaluated the results of these actions as good.

As another fruitful year's training draws to a close, EAHC and IZSAM are looking to build on the last few years' achievements in order to ensure another successful round of workshops in 2014.





In our December 2012 edition, we reported on the launch of BTSF World, which promotes food security through training for developing countries on good practice on all sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) issues. Since then, preparations have continued apace.

BTSF World is funded by the Food Security Thematic Programme (FSTP) of the European Commission (EC) Development Cooperation Instrument. FSTP supports EU development policy by actions to improve food security for the poorest and most vulnerable.

Food safety, livestock and plant health management are integral parts of food security and trade, which in turn create employment and development. BTSF World aims to reinforce SPS frameworks so as to increase availability of safe food and reduce poverty through improved market access.

EU agro-food imports must comply with EU law. This may place constraints on developing countries' exports due to their lack of control resources. By promoting the EU regulatory model, and based on international SPS standards, BTSF World will increase trading partners' capacity to meet EU requirements.

EAHC launched a call for tender in May 2013 to designate contractors to implement BTSF World activities. It comprised six lots. Three were on food safety and plant health and covered Africa and European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) countries, Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia and the Pacific. Three were on animal health and welfare covering the same regions.

On 4 June, EAHC held an Info day in Luxembourg to give potential contractors information on the calls related to BTSF World and other international BTSF activities. Question and answer and discussion sessions took place to facilitate exchange of views and promotion of synergy.

The deadline for submission of tenders passed on 26 June and the tenders have since been evaluated by EAHC and EC experts. Details of contractors will be made public in due course and information on initial activities will follow.

A range of themes

Activities take place in 2013-mid-2016 and include regional workshops and sustained training missions (STM). Countries and themes will be selected on the basis of trade and development agreements or specific bilateral relations issues. Possible themes include training for farmers on reducing crop losses or caring for working animals, health of bees and training for authorities on checking compliance with legal provisions. Food and Veterinary Office reports will be used to evaluate needs and progress.

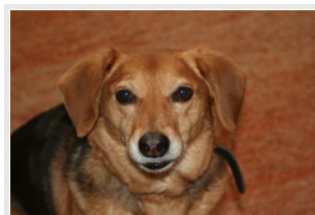
A total of 35 four-day regional workshops, each for around 60 competent authority staff and private sector stakeholders, are planned on topics of interest to a number of countries in a given region. Of these, 20 are on food safety and plant health, of which six are for Africa and ENP countries, and seven each are for Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia and the Pacific. Fifteen are on animal health and welfare, of which three are for ENP countries, and six each are for the other two regions.

Workshops outline and explain EU SPS standards in specific areas, particularly as regards recent developments. They may also assist in setting up regional SPS bodies and establishing regional SPS action plans, provide laboratory training on diagnostic techniques and complement STM.

For STM, 175 missions are planned in some 30 countries. On food safety and plant health, 230 working days may be spent in Africa and ENP countries, 270 in each of Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia and the Pacific. On animal health and welfare, expected durations are 220, 85 and 120 days respectively.

STM consist of visits of experts to countries with SPS shortcomings to support authorities and private stakeholders in their efforts to improve matters and prevent closure of markets. They may include hands-on training, drafting of manuals and procedures to set up regional verification mechanisms and development of action plans. In some cases five or six STM will take place to a given country, with intervals to allow progress to be made. In others, they will be one-off events.

BTSF World will pay regard to cross-cutting issues such as gender equality and climate change and strengthen governance at various levels, while ensuring close collaboration with other international donors and coherence with EU policy. It adheres to the Busan aid effectiveness principles of ownership of development priorities by developing countries, focus on results, inclusive development partnerships and transparency and accountability. It also takes account of previous interventions, including BTSF activities. In this way, BTSF has expanded its scope and formulated its response to the ever-growing demand for expert advice in the SPS arena.



BTSF pleased to welcome Jose Luis aboard



The European Commission Directorate-General for Health Consumers (DG SANCO) Section responsible for BTSF has recently been strengthened with the arrival of Jose Luis de Felipe Gardán. Jose Luis has many years of experience within the European Commission and particularly with DG SANCO. He has transferred from the SANCO Unit for Innovation and Sustainability, where he spent two and a half years working on issues related to animal cloning.

While Jose Luis is, in many ways, a new recruit to the BTSF Sector, in other respects, his relationship with the initiative is a very long-standing one. Prior to joining the Innovation and Sustainability Unit, he worked for several years as Head of the Sector responsible for operation of the EU Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF).

The RASFF Sector forms part of the same Unit within DG SANCO as that responsible for BTSF. Moreover, given the use made by BTSF of notifications transmitted through the RASFF in identifying training needs, the working relationship between the two sectors is very close.

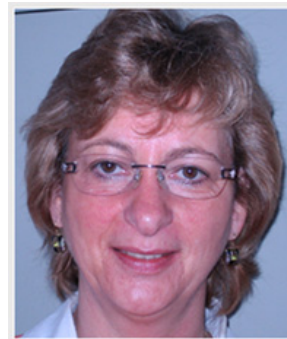
This familiarity with BTSF is helping to ensure that Jose Luis feels right at home in his new surroundings and to make his transition a smooth one. For his part, Jose Luis is very pleased to be joining the BTSF Sector and greatly looking forward to getting down to work and tackling the challenges ahead.

Everyone involved with BTSF within EAHC and DG SANCO is delighted to welcome him aboard and wishes him all the best, safe in the knowledge that, with his wealth of experience, he will prove to be an extremely valuable asset to the initiative in the years to come.

And it's goodbye from Daniella

While the DG SANCO BTSF Sector has been strengthened by the arrival of Jose Luis de Felipe, it is also losing its longest-serving colleague, as Daniella Heyninck-Van Calster heads off into a well-deserved retirement. Daniella has given the European Commission over three decades of sterling service and has been an integral part of BTSF since joining the Sector in 2006, during the first year of concrete training activity. She has thus been a permanent fixture within BTSF throughout almost its entire history and the idea of BTSF without her will take some getting used to for all concerned.

For the most part, Daniella's role has been very much behind the scenes, as she has ensured the smooth day-to-day running of a range of administrative aspects of BTSF from her office in the DG SANCO premises in Brussels. She has also served as the first point of contact for numerous BTSF stakeholders, including national contact points and contractors, and so her presence will be sorely missed by a large number of people both within and outside the European Commission.



At the same time, Daniella has on occasion stepped out into the limelight, having been present at several BTSF workshops around the world to give presentations on the overall orientations of the initiative and to help oversee the smooth functioning of the events.

The entire BTSF team at EAHC and at DG SANCO thanks Daniella for the vital contribution she has made over the years to making BTSF what it is today. Without her, none of the successes the initiative has enjoyed would have been possible.

Additionally, while the whole team is sorry to see her go, all of her colleagues are very happy for Daniella, as she will now have much more time to spend on herself and her family and the chance to take a well-earned rest. However, those who know her have some doubts as to how restful her retirement will prove, as it will probably not be long before she is setting out with her husband on another of their globe-trotting geological trips in search of rare minerals.

Do you know where this is?



Send your answer with the reference " August newsletter" to the EAHC-BTSF-PROJECTS@ec.europa.eu and participate to win BTSF USB key card.

BTSF Newsletter is prepared by the Executive Agency for Health and Consumers (EAHC) and issued six times a year.

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