

## 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](#).

### “Our policy work is very extensive”

Koen Van Dyck is Head of the European Commission Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) Food, Alert System and Training Unit which sets policy for BTSF. Here, he outlines his views on policy, future plans and changes to BTSF.



### BTSF events at Milan Expo a great success

The five BTSF events at the 2015 Universal Exposition in Milan have now finished and proved to be very successful.



### BTSF financing decision paves way for new calls for tender



### 'The BTSF expert group provides a valuable cooperation platform'

Anita Papp from the Department for Food Chain Control of the Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture is Hungary's National Contact Point (NCP) for BTSF. She gave us her reflections on the programme and her role as NCP



#### INVITATION

*Tuesday  
15 December  
2015*

#### 2015 BETTER TRAINING FOR SAFER FOOD INFORMATION-DAY

The Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency is pleased to invite you to the 2015 Better Training for Safer Food Information-day on the NEW OPEN CALLS for the BTSF Initiative trainings.

## “Our policy work is very extensive”



*Koen Van Dyck is Head of the European Commission Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) Food, Alert System and Training Unit which sets policy for BTSF. Here, he outlines his views on policy, future plans and changes to BTSF.*

#### BTSF: As regards policy, what has been done so far to plot the future course for BTSF?

**Koen Van Dyck:** Our policy work is very extensive and goes back a long way. It started in earnest with the first general BTSF evaluation in 2008-09 which covered the 2006-07 training. This analysed quality and impact on participants' work so as to identify challenges. Based on this, we drew up a Staff Working Document in 2010 setting out strategies to overcome these challenges. In the same year, a high-level conference was held to discuss the Document and draw conclusions for future needs. A second general evaluation took place during 2011-13 with the aim of further verifying quality, impact and dissemination. Ex-post evaluation studies are essential for DG SANTE to justify maintaining and continuously improve the BTSF initiative, and this is why a new cost-effectiveness study will be launched this year.

### **BTSF: What are the main challenges facing BTSF and what was envisaged in order to overcome them?**

**Koen Van Dyck:** The principal challenges identified by the first evaluation included the need to meet a high demand for training, clearer identification of priorities and greater participant homogeneity. There was also a need to improve training quality, to increase dissemination by participants of the expertise acquired in training and to enhance possibilities for networking between participants. To achieve this, the Staff Working Document proposed, on the one hand, different short term solutions: providing e-learning, developing closer cooperation with stakeholders, defining more accurately the training objectives of each course, proposing basic and advanced courses, diversifying learning tools, taking account of dissemination ability when selecting participants and performing regular general evaluations. On the other hand, and in the longer-term, it was suggested to consider organising co-financed training activities with relevant competent authorities or organisations, establishing a tutor summer school, creating a post-graduate training centre and developing a platform for an alumni network.

### **BTSF: What recommendations arose from the second evaluation in 2013?**

**Koen Van Dyck:** The evaluation confirms the success of BTSF and stresses its contribution to building individual and institutional control capacity, and its efficiency, effectiveness and EU added value. The demand for the type of training supplied by BTSF remains high and must be met, while keeping resources at current levels. There is thus a need to expand the reach of the programme by adopting a mixed model of learning, taking a more structured approach to dissemination, organising trainings targeted more specifically to staff in senior management or training positions and developing more precise indicators for measuring outcomes and impact.



### **BTSF: In terms of expanding the reach of BTSF, what is being done?**

**Koen Van Dyck:** Work on this basically covers three aspects: better response to demand; better identification of priorities and improvements in quality. While accurate estimation of the size of demand is difficult, there is a clear need for an increased supply of training. We are moving towards a blended learning approach comprising e-learning modules, training missions and workshops. E-learning is provided for basic level training, with up to 10 modules being operational in 2016. We also introduced intermediate- and advanced-level workshops for certain programmes and may expand this to others in due course. Tools such as videos and webinars are also considered. Finally, the online platform hosting the modules will in time allow for greater knowledge sharing, professional exchange and use of BTSF training material.

### **BTSF: And identification of priorities and improvements to quality?**

**Koen Van Dyck:** We are implementing annual needs assessments and using criteria to define priorities. Steps have also been taken to ensure that feedback from Commission colleagues attending training events and from stakeholders such as national authorities and contractors is provided more systematically to ascertain better the training needs. In terms of identification of priorities the online platform should make it easier to communicate with Member States on their own training plans and priorities. As regards quality, pre-course questionnaires and pedagogical reviews have been introduced to gauge participant expectations and ensure appropriate training formats. Participation of tutors of running courses in training focusing on Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) overview reports and the potential establishment of a tutor summer school should help in an increased availability of highly-

qualified tutors. Knowledge sharing via the online platform and possible creation of an alumni network also have a role to play in the future.

**BTSF: What is being done to improve dissemination?**

**Koen Van Dyck:** We are working to embed the 'train-the-trainer' principle into all of our activities. Actions have already been undertaken through the provision of clearer and simpler learning tools, formal dissemination commitments by participants of all BTSF activities and integration of questions on dissemination into FVO missions. From 2016, a specific questionnaire will be sent to each participant some months after a course to better ascertain the means used for disseminating, the target population and multiplying effect. An amendment to the BTSF legal basis requiring national authorities to include BTSF training contents in their national-level training is also being discussed at European Parliament and Council levels.



**BTSF: How are you ensuring greater participant homogeneity?**

**Koen Van Dyck:** Participant profiles and knowledge levels for all of our programmes are now well defined and pre-course questionnaires allow us to ascertain candidates' skills. E-learning and intermediate- and advanced-level courses are also important. We stick to the principle of regional training for non-EU programmes and regularly hold training back-to-back with important international events.

**BTSF: In terms of outcomes and impacts, how is performance measured?**

**Koen Van Dyck:** Thus far we have mainly used quantitative benchmarks such as participant numbers, subjects covered and sessions organised. We are now working to develop further qualitative benchmarks to assess impact on control practices and better specify the information already available from the existing participants' satisfaction scoring of training adequacy and relevance. From 2016, tests to evaluate the knowledge of participants before and after a specific course will be included in all BTSF activities. Such tests will allow the Commission to assess better if learners learn the course content effectively. This will also be one of the objectives of the study to be launched in the course of this month which will look into the development of a robust model to measure the cost effectiveness of the training model and its impact, including key performance indicators, and a more in depth analysis of the longer term strategies detailed in the Staff Working Document.

**BTSF: Have there been any organisational changes at DG SANTE to facilitate these policy developments?**

**Koen Van Dyck:** The main change has been to bring colleagues responsible for BTSF training and those dealing with other non-EU capacity building activities into a single Sector within my Unit. This should support extension of the reach of BTSF by increasing opportunities for synergy with capacity-building actions of other Commission departments and provision of BTSF training for departments involved in food and feed. This has already been done with the BTSF World and International Standard-Setting Bodies programmes funded by DGs Development and Cooperation, and Trade, respectively. Finally, this consolidation gives our Chafea colleagues a single point of contact within DG SANTE which makes communication easier.

## 'The BTSF expert group provides a valuable cooperation platform'

*Anita Papp from the Department for Food Chain Control of the Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture is Hungary's National Contact Point (NCP) for BTSF. She gave us her reflections on the programme and her role as NCP.*





**As NCP for Hungary, what are the main issues you have to deal with?**

The main issue is participant selection; finding the right people for the right courses. Hungary is a relatively small and centralised country and so this perhaps makes things easier than they might be in more federalised countries. A certain amount of coordination with different departments and services, as well as with regional levels of administration, is nonetheless indispensable. It is also essential that I know about dates, locations and subjects of workshops and other events well in advance so that I have time to identify appropriate participants. In the case of the first sessions of the training courses, unfortunately, it often occurs that NCPs receive the information package from the contractor late and we then have limited time to find the right candidate. I hope that Chafea's new planning cycle will help in this matter.

**Do you ever come up against a language barrier?**

It does happen. Obviously, the people we want to attend BTSF training are specialists in their fields, but they are not necessarily linguists. Hungarian is not a widely spoken language and so providing EU-level training in our language is not really practical or possible. There is therefore always a need to balance the relevance of the training to someone's work with that person's ability to understand what is being conveyed at the workshop in a language other than their mother tongue. Striking that balance and finding the right participants can at times be a challenge.

**Chafea has recently introduced a new application system for BTSF participants. Has this helped you in your work?**

Certainly. It has made communication between training contractors and myself much more systematic. Contractors' letters inviting participants to training events have been standardised, as have the application forms which prospective participants have to fill in. The sheets detailing the specifications for each course also help to make everything clearer and provide an important basis on which to choose participants. Previously, different contractors worked in different ways and, given the number of contractors responsible for BTSF activities, this could make things difficult so I would say that the new system will be a big improvement. Considering that the new unified application form only came into effect on 15 September, not everything runs smoothly yet, but I hope that the next expert group meeting will help to clarify all of the details.

**What is your opinion of the training subjects on offer?**

I think that the training offer is very broad with a lot of very interesting subjects. Obviously, it is up to the European Commission to decide in which areas EU-level training can add value to official controls at national level. I think that the Commission looks into the issues very thoroughly and chooses the subjects well, particularly given that there are now 28 EU Member States and the subjects should remain relevant to all of them to some degree. In relation to this field, I think that we are now in a position to make progress in the subjects on which training has been organised for several years, and in some cases, such as border inspection posts, since the beginning of BTSF. As Hungary is a small country, we are not able to send participants to these training programmes year after year. Also, taking into consideration the language barrier, there are subjects for which all of our experts who have the required language knowledge have already participated in training and so we are no longer able to use the allocated places. Provided that the legislation on these subjects has not changed much in recent years, there is no need to send these experts to further sessions. In such cases, it would maybe be useful to give small countries the opportunity to use these places for courses on other subjects. Nonetheless, the subjects are all very useful, and although everyone has their own ideas about new subjects that could be introduced, it is never going to be possible to cover everything.



**How does the BTSF expert group support you in your role as Hungarian NCP?**

The BTSF expert group provides a valuable cooperation platform. It allows us to discuss all of the elements of our work, such as problems in identifying participants, language issues, new developments, e-learning or participant feedback. It is good to stay in contact with the European Commission and Chafea, as well as with other NCPs through the expert group as the support which the group provides is very useful in helping us to do our job effectively. The biannual meetings are particularly important as they enable us to get a clear view of the work which is being done at EU level, the strategies governing the direction of BTSF and the planned future

developments.

**In addition to your work on BTSF, what does your role in the Department for Food Chain Control involve?**

I work in the Animal Health and Coordination Unit of my Department and the largest part of my work is related to coordination. This coordination involves staying in contact with the Food and Veterinary Office concerning audits in Hungary and with the Commission's sanitary and phytosanitary team concerning third country issues, as well as organisational tasks in our department and our food chain control authority.

**When did you join the Department, and what was your professional and academic background previously?**

I started work at the Department in 2010 and it was my first full-time job after university. I studied international relations, so working with BTSF and with the EU institutions, and ensuring that coordination between authorities and countries is effective is the best working environment for me.



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

## **BTSF events at Milan Expo a great success**

The five BTSF events at the 2015 Universal Exposition in Milan have now finished and proved to be very successful. Each event took place at the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) in Ispra and included a one-day visit to the EU pavilion at the Expo. They comprised presentations followed by question and answer sessions, and in some cases practical activities, working group sessions and moderated group discussion.

A total of 163 participants from EU candidate and potential candidate, European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and central Asian countries attended. They were mainly from competent authorities in fields including agriculture, food safety, public health, veterinary issues, fisheries and plant protection.

Presentations were provided by 50 speakers, a large number of whom came from the European Commission Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety. Speakers also came from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), international organisations, national authorities and other bodies from EU Member States.

The presentations were very interesting and greatly appreciated by participants. Thanks from the European Commission and Chafea go to all of the speakers, including the experts from Member States, who played such an invaluable role in the success of the events.



### **Five events on a range of issues**

The theme of the first event, which took place on 27-29 May, was the EU sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) system. Presentations looked at the EU 'farm to fork' approach, international standards and SPS measures, roles of EFSA and the FVO, organisation and performance of official controls, import regimes for plants, food of animal and non-animal origin and animals, official certification and crisis management. The Trade Control and Expert System (TRACES), the EU Notification System for Plant Health Interceptions, the Rapid Alert System for Feed and Food and bilateral relations were also covered.

Following this, an event on the EU food safety system was held on 10-12 June. Topics included risk assessment, organisation of official controls, food hygiene at and beyond primary production, undesirable substances in feed, contaminants in food, Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) and microbiological criteria. Further subjects were hygiene in the meat and fishery sectors, zoonoses, veterinary drug residues in food, antimicrobial resistance, food contact materials and food improvement agents.

The animal welfare event, on 1-3 July, covered the EU approach to animal welfare, risk assessment, the role of the FVO, EU legislation and international standards on animal transport and welfare at slaughter as well as related scientific assessment and international relations in SPS areas. Further presentations dealt with global capacity building, training and technical collaboration tools. Participants took part in practical activities using the BTSF

animal welfare e-learning module, while national perspectives were given on animal transport by land and sea.

On 23-25 September, the event on the EU animal health system took place. Presentations looked at the EU animal health strategy in recent years and future developments, disease notification and data sharing, certification, control of rabies, African swine fever and bluetongue, disease prevention, biosecurity and contingency planning. They also covered international standards, organisations and cooperation. Practical sessions were held on risk assessment for ensuring biosecurity during disease outbreaks and TRACES.

Finally, the EU plant protection system event was held on 7-9 October. Topics included the EU plant health regime, import and internal controls, the FVO's role, the EU response to plant health risks at import, risk assessment and controls on pesticides in Member States, bilateral relations and common problems in third countries.

---

## **BTSF financing decision paves way for new calls for tender**

The financing decision for the new BTSF work programme was published in June 2015. It sets out the subjects of EU-based training to be launched from late-2015. The 15 programmes covered by the decision have a total budget of EUR 15.5 million.

Of these programmes, nine enter a second two-year phase of an existing contract. These are the programmes on: HACCP, health of bees and exotic animals, animal identification and traceability, food additives, contingency planning and animal disease control, transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, food hygiene and flexibility, food chain investigation and internal auditing of official control systems.



A new programme on analysis of genetically modified organisms is also to be launched. This is the subject of an administrative arrangement with JRC Ispra.

Chafea plans to launch calls for tender for four subjects from early-November. These are, organic farming, protected food names, plant health surveys and support for enforcement in SPS fields. Workshops in these programmes are of three days' duration and for 30 participants each, with the exception of those on plant health surveys, which cater for 25 participants.

An info day at which potential contractors will be able to find out more about these calls is scheduled for 15 December in Brussels.

---

### **Where is it?**

Send your answer with the reference  
"November 2015 newsletter" to  
[CHAFEA-BTSF-PROJECTS@ec.europa.eu](mailto:CHAFEA-BTSF-PROJECTS@ec.europa.eu)

### **Where was that?**

Answer from the previous edition

and participate to win a BTSF USB key.



**Oldest wine tree in the world  
Maribor - Slovenia**

*Click on the picture to enlarge*



## PREVIOUS EDITIONS

<b>March/June</b> 2015	<b>February</b> 2015	<b>December</b> 2014	<b>August</b> 2014	<b>May</b> 2014	<b>November</b> 2013
<b>August</b> 2013	<b>May</b> 2013	<b>February</b> 2012	<b>December</b> 2012	<b>October</b> 2012	<b>August</b> 2012
<b>May</b> 2012	<b>February</b> 2012				