



INTERVIEW



Koen Van Dyck is Head of European Commission Directorate-General for Health and Consumers Unit G4. One of his Unit's main responsibilities is setting out policy for the Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) programme. We spoke to him in order to get his views on the background to and organisation of BTSF, as well as the Commission's plans for the future of the programme.

BTSF: Why was BTSF launched?

Koen Van Dyck: Partly due to growing food safety concerns among consumers because of factors such as food emergencies and partly on account of the need to update national-level control staff on EU food law. This had been radically overhauled to support development of the Internal Market.

BTSF: What benefits does the training bring?

Koen Van Dyck: It increases officials' awareness of EU law and helps them to better understand checks they need to carry out. This should make controls more efficient so as to protect public, animal and plant health. It should also ensure harmonisation of these controls thus allowing businesses across the EU and beyond to compete on a level playing field. By raising awareness of EU and international standards in developing countries, BTSF helps such countries to comply with these standards and access the EU market.

BTSF: How is BTSF structured?

Koen Van Dyck: It comprises individual programmes on subjects related to its areas of focus, namely food and feed law, animal health and welfare rules and plant health rules. Some programmes are EU-based and mainly for European participants with a certain number of places open to people from developing countries. Others take place in third countries and are intended specifically for people from the region in which they are held. The number of programmes has increased from seven in 2006 to 22 in 2011.

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.

BTSF: Isn't this kind of training provided at national level?

Koen Van Dyck: Yes, but BTSF complements national training by promoting an EU-level understanding. All workshops have an international selection of participants and tutors. This encourages extensive networking between colleagues from different countries, something which couldn't be replicated at national level. BTSF also aims to spread expertise as widely as possible amongst its target audience. For this reason, the events are intended primarily for people who can pass on knowledge to their colleagues.

BTSF: How are subjects identified?

Koen Van Dyck: They are identified following extensive consultation both within the Commission and with national authorities through our national contact points. We also look at sources such as the EU Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed and outcomes of inspections by the EU's Food and Veterinary Office.

BTSF: What are the main challenges for the future?

Koen Van Dyck: BTSF faces a number of challenges. Firstly, we need to respond to the huge demand which exists for this kind of training and identify training priorities and target audiences more clearly. We also have to continue to improve quality and increase dissemination.

BTSF: What is the Commission doing to overcome these challenges?

Koen Van Dyck: The Commission produced a Staff Working Document in 2010 in which identified a range of actions to overcome these challenges. We are currently developing an e-learning tool for basic-level training and have launched a study to identify good training practices. We are also looking at increasing training output by cooperating more closely with all stakeholders. In the longer term, we are exploring various options. These include establishment of a summer school for tutors, creation of a post-graduate training centre and alumni network and setting up exchange programmes for national officials.

BTSF: What do you see as a key factor in the future success of BTSF?

Koen Van Dyck: Effective dissemination is vital. We have identified actions to support this such as developing the train-the-trainer concept further, clearer learning tools and use of e-learning. Increased coordination with EU Member States through our National Contact Points is also essential. The contact points transmit information to national authorities on aspects such as nomination of participants, feedback on training and suggestions for new subjects. The Commission meets them regularly to discuss all matters related to BTSF.

BTSF - EAHC : Point de vue du Point de Contact National (PCN) du Luxembourg

The Luxembourg NCP has the pleasure to congratulate and encourage the European official training programme BTSF which is developing to result more and more complete, interesting and above all strategic for the guaranty of the whole feed and food chain safety in Europe and in Third Countries. Complete specified series of practical and theoretical training are elaborated by committed and competent officials of the BTSF sector and the EAHC; they are backed and advised by NCPs of the Member States. Luxembourg NCP is playing its role in this network which delivers not only intensive daily follow up for the implementation of this high level training but intends to initiate soon the first E-Learning courses too. Luxembourg stresses the importance of a NCP to coordinate the registration of national experts by regular contact and meetings. The NCP distributes EAHC supports, collects proposals and feedbacks of BTSF trainings to channel them to the Commission; thus to guarantee a larger added value and a more effective follow up of the trainings. The strategic development of the BTSF programme realized by the implementation and the management of EAHC is one of the inescapable pillars necessary for the harmonization of official controls in the complete feed and food chain in Europe and indeed in Third Countries.



Upcoming Courses

Animal Welfare

08 - 11 November 2011, Barcelona, Spain Slaughterhouses

Feed Law

21 - 25 November 2011, Rome, Italy Workshop 5 on Feed Law

Plant Protection Products

28 November - 01 December 2011, Vienna, Austria Evaluation and registration

05 - 07 December 2011, Vienna, Austria, Control on use and Marketing

12 - 15 December 2011, Tallinn, Tallinn Evaluation and registration

Plant Health Controls

11 - 15 November 2011, Dublin, Ireland, Plant Health – Emergency Decisions for Harmful Organisms Typical for Non-Forestry Areas 4

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

08 - 10 November 2011, Naples, Italy, Workshop 5 on FNAO

BSE/TSE

15 - 18 November 2011, Brussels, Belgium, Workshop 3 on TSE

13 - 16 December 2011, United Kingdom, Workshop 4 on TSE

Animals By-products

15 - 17 November 2011, Lisbon, Portugal - Workshop 8 on Animal By-Products

Quality Schemes

07 - 10 November 2011, Paris, France - Organic Farming

28 November - 01 December 2011, Rome, Italy - Protected Designation Schemes

13 - 16 December 2011, Paris, France Protected Designation Schemes

Audit

07 - 10 November 2011, Bordeaux, France - Course A

29 November - 02 December 2011, Bilbao, Spain, Course A

Support to Union Controls (FVO)

07 - 10 November 2011, Grange, Ireland - Residues and VMPs

06 - 08 December 2011, Grange, Ireland - Plant Health

EU Food Standards

16 - 18 November 2011, Malta - EU-Mediterranean Forum on Plant Health and Plant Protection

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza

08 - 10 November 2011, Padova, Italy - Workshop on Rabies

14 - 18 November 2011, Minsk, Belarus - STM on African Swine Fever (ASF)

21 - 25 November 2011, Poltava, Ukraine - STM on African Swine Fever (ASF)

28 November - 02 December 2011, Chisinau, Moldova STM on African Swine Fever (ASF)

12 - 14 December 2011, Vilnius, Lithuania - Workshop on African Swine Fever (ASF)

Microbiological criteria and control of zoonoses

14 - 18 November 2011, Copenhagen, Denmark -

Microbiological criteria

21 - 25 November 2011, Copenhagen, Denmark - Control of zoonoses (Salmonella)

TRACES in the Member States

22 - 24 November 2011, Vienna, Austria - Traces use at import

06 - 08 December 2011, Athens, Greece - Traces use at intra-EU trade

RASFF/Traces

22 - 24 November 2011, Cape Town, South Africa - Workshop on TRACES

28 November - 02 December 2011, Namibia - STM on TRACES

December 2011, Lao - STM on RASFF