

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: You have been involved in BTSF since the very beginning in 2005. How do you view its evolution over the last 10 years?

Salvatore Magazzù: Very positively. BTSF is a real EU success story and I am very pleased to have been able to play my part in that, firstly within the European Commission, and subsequently with Chafea. We began in

2005 with one underlying aim: to provide high-quality training for national control officials across the EU and beyond working on food, feed, animal health and welfare and plant health rules. Ten years on, BTSF has become a key element in the Commission's food safety strategy and a well-known brand promoting European standards in Europe and worldwide. It is perceived by national officials as a vital tool for gaining knowledge of relevant policy, legislation and enforcement measures. Moreover, we cooperate with a range of international organisations and the EU's major global trade partners, all of which demonstrates that we have succeeded in our aim.

BTSF: Does this success bring additional benefits?

Salvatore Magazzù: Definitely. By providing the highest possible quality of training we give control officials a better understanding of relevant EU requirements. This leads to more efficient and harmonised controls across the EU and in non-EU beneficiary countries. As a result, we contribute to raising standards of controls and increasing levels of trade in safe food and feed. Also, the international nature of our activities provides scope for extensive networking, thereby fostering exchange of knowledge and experience between control staff both within and outside of the EU.

BTSF: In concrete terms, how has BTSF expanded over the years?

Salvatore Magazzù: In 2005, we launched calls for tender for seven programmes to run in 2006. These trained 1400 people for a budget of EUR 3.5 million. The respective figures grew to 2900 participants and EUR 7 million in 2007 and 3300 participants and EUR 9.1 million in 2008. Following the outsourcing of responsibility for execution of BTSF to Chafea in 2009, the budget and participation levels increased sharply, to an annual average of EUR 15 million and 6000 participants respectively. The size of the increase is underlined by the fact that these averages now only account for EU-based training. For training further afield, we have an additional budget of EUR 8.5 million to cover our BTSF World and International Standard-Setting Bodies programmes. We now cover around 40 different subjects and have trained some 42 000 officials from the majority of countries across the globe. One thing which has remained relatively stable is our participant satisfaction levels. These have been high from the outset and consistently average over 85%.

BTSF: Given the increase in activity following the outsourcing to Chafea, do you consider this as a turning point in the development of BTSF?

Salvatore Magazzù: Things developed very positively during the first three years of BTSF's lifetime, and this continued following the outsourcing, so rather than a turning point, I would define it as a pivotal moment in that it marked the transition from a rather ad-hoc set up to a more structured system. Given the growth of the programme, this was fundamental to ensuring continued success, although it did bring challenges.

BTSF: Such as?

Salvatore Magazzù: The main thing was to put into place processes to enable us to adapt to the growth of the programme. The degree of expansion increased the workload. We don't have infinite resources so we had to make procedures more efficient. This applied to all aspects, from procurement strategies and management of training programmes to reporting and accounting. Our team has worked hard to overcome these challenges and we have simplified procedures, increased efficiency where possible and ensured sound financial management of BTSF as a whole and of its constituent training programmes.

BTSF: What are the key changes that have been made in this respect?

Salvatore Magazzù: The major changes have been related to preparation of public procurement processes and execution of contracts, particularly as regards such aspects as reporting and accounting. The launch of calls for tender is a fundamental part of our work and as a rule, the more subjects you cover, the more calls you need to launch. In order to achieve economies of scale and reduce the number of calls, we grouped related subjects within single calls and introduced a new type of contract which runs over two phases of two years each. In terms of streamlining reporting and accounting processes, we have cut the number of reports which contractors have to submit and which we have to assess and linked them more closely with payments. In addition, we have established a single unit price per trained participant so as to avoid having to calculate so-called 'reimbursable' costs. All of this enables our team to do more with the same resources and cuts administrative burden on training contractors, allowing them to focus on training.

BTSF: Are there any other important aspects of Chafea's BTSF work?

Salvatore Magazzù: Dissemination of information has always been an important part of our responsibilities. This has involved a variety of tasks covering BTSF as a whole and specific programmes. The former include drafting and publication of annual reports, development of the newsletter, which we publish on a regular basis, production of videos explaining the principles, aims, benefits and functioning of BTSF and organisation of info days for stakeholders. Among the latter are publication of booklets to serve as a starting point for potential participants and production of videos giving an overview of the content and functioning of specific programmes. We try to ensure that these materials are easily accessible for our target audience.

BTSF: On a practical level, how is BTSF organised?

Salvatore Magazzù: Within Chafea we have three staff members including two project officers and one programme coordinator, with legal and financial support from the Administration Unit. This team manages the full cycle of the contracts, including preparation and launch of calls for tender, evaluation of proposals, signature of contracts, monitoring of implementation and final payments. We carry out regular assessment of contractors' performance, analyse reports and check payment requests against deliverables. We also provide for tasks such as audit visits to training events, guidance for contractors throughout the lifetime of contracts, a help desk on call procedures and contract implementation and a Q&A service for stakeholders.

BTSF: Finally, what is the nature of the working relationship with DG Health and Food Safety (DG Santé)?

Salvatore Magazzù: DG Santé retains the guiding policy role for BTSF and sets the direction in terms of strategy and identification of training needs. Based on the needs which they identify, we launch calls for tender and, where necessary, adapt call provisions to those needs. We also report to the Training Sector within DG Santé Unit G4 on contract implementation. This Unit is our single point of contact within the DG and our collaboration with them is both intensive and systematic, being based on standard operating procedures. Our relationship has always been proactive and based on trust and mutual respect. This has been an essential ingredient in the success of BTSF and long may that continue.



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BTSF: You were recently named as the new Estonian NCP. What are your impressions of BTSF so far?

Karin Veski: BTSF was already well known within our service before I became NCP and the image of it was very positive. I am happy to say that my experience so far in my role as NCP has confirmed this view and given me a good first impression of BTSF. There is considerable interest among Estonian control officials working in relevant areas in taking part in BTSF activities, as it is a programme which

conveys very important information for strengthening controls. The types of activity on offer are attractive to our staff as they give them the chance to meet and talk with colleagues from other countries about how to improve the way in which controls are performed. The fact that the workshops, in most cases, enable our people to visit different Member States also gives them insight into how EU control requirements are met in different parts of the Union, particularly through the practical sessions which form part of most workshops.

BTSF: Has your new function as NCP had a significant impact on your day-to-day work?

Karin Veski: Yes, some periods are very busy. BTSF now covers a large number of different subjects and is getting bigger all the time. There are also new subjects which I am not well aware of yet and this makes it difficult to identify the most appropriate people for each activity.

The work entails a considerable amount of coordination, on the one hand with the training contractors and on the other with our own national authorities. But Estonia is a rather small country and we have good working practices for finding appropriate candidates for training programmes. The most important impact of becoming an NCP is that it has given me valuable contacts and a wider view of the sector.

BTSF: What is your view of the work done by the Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency (Chafea) and the European Commission in support of BTSF?

Karin Veski: As an NCP, Chafea is a very important partner and point of contact for me on BTSF as regards such aspects as places on training programmes for Estonian participants. Chafea's management of contracts is very effective and one area where I see this is in the gradual harmonisation of procedures among contractors for things such as participant application and feedback forms. The numbers of programmes running and the positive feedback which I receive on the training shows that Chafea works very effectively in launching calls for tender and executing contracts. I believe that a lot of work has also been done on the development of e-learning modules which are very important tools for disseminating the necessary knowledge and which provide an opportunity to increase the practical parts of the training sessions in the future. Moreover, Chafea are very responsive to any requests for assistance and guidance in our role as NCPs. We meet with officials from both Chafea and the European Commission working on BTSF at least once a year at NCP meetings and they are always ready to take our feedback on board. The NCP meetings are very valuable because of the information which is shared and the active discussions on how to make things more efficient. As regards the European Commission, I don't work with them as closely as with Chafea, but the training areas which they identify are very relevant to our control officials and so I have a very positive view of their work.



BTSF: So overall, how would you sum up your work as a BTSF NCP?

Karin Veski: I would say that it is challenging but also very rewarding. Challenging because of the workload it entails due to the number of programmes BTSF now runs. Rewarding because what I do helps to open up new opportunities for Estonian control officials. By taking part in BTSF activities they are able to learn new things, develop professionally and meet and build relationships with colleagues from across the EU and even beyond. They are also able to pass on the knowledge they acquire from BTSF to their colleagues at home which strengthens their services as a whole. To know that I've played a part in that is a great feeling.

BTSF: Turning to yourself now, how long have you been working within the Estonian national authority?

Karin Veski: I have been working at the Estonian Agricultural Board for seven years. My main task is to coordinate employee training and development. I am also a board member of the Estonian Public Sector Training Managers Union. This Union's main aim is to share best practises and experience on civil service training matters. We also organise study visits to foreign countries in order to promote experience exchange on best practices. So, the experience I get from BTSF programmes and from the management of these programmes is also very useful for my day-to-day work.

BTSF: And what was your professional and academic background prior to entering the public service?

Karin Veski: I have a bachelor's degree in mathematics but I have always been interested in public administration and making things more efficient. So before I started working in the civil service I obtained my master's degree in public management.

Progress made on preparing training from 2014 calls for tender

Extensive work has been done on the preparation of programmes arising from three calls for tender launched by Chafea in 2014. These cover training on plant health controls, food testing and inspection and calibration of pesticide application equipment (PAE).

The first two programmes have been organised within BTSF for several years, although their precise content has varied over time. The new plant health controls programme includes two courses on the EU plant quarantine regimes for imports and wood packaging material (WPM). Four three-day courses on imports and two four-day courses on WPM are planned.

The programme also includes a course on plant health surveillance and harmful organism outbreak control. This is divided into two sub-fields covering agriculture and horticulture, and forestry and the general environment including urban areas, with four five-day courses to take place on each sub-field.

Each workshop is for 25-30 officials or inspectors from authorities or official bodies in charge of harmful organism outbreak control and surveys of harmful organisms in EU Member States, Candidate Countries and Switzerland.

The food testing programme also comprises three course types with two two-week sessions on mycotoxins, particularly aflatoxins and ochratoxin A, and a further two-week session on microbiology. The course on residues is split into two modules on veterinary drugs and pesticides, with two two-week sessions on each.

Each training session takes place in an EU-accredited laboratory and can accommodate around 15 technicians from non-EU countries. Regions covered by the training are European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and Mediterranean Basin countries, Africa, Central and South America and Asia.

A new BTSF programme



In contrast to the plant health and food testing programmes, the programme on inspection and calibration of PAE is new to BTSF, although it does build to some extent on the plant protection products training which has taken place in past years.

The activity is aimed at keeping national control staff of EU Member States, and Candidate, potential candidate, European Free Trade Association and certain ENP countries up to date with relevant EU rules. This should help to ensure harmonised, effective and objective inspection processes within the EU and increase knowledge of EU requirements among some of the Union's main trading partners.

Around 20 people should attend each of the six three-day workshops. The training will comprise presentations, laboratory work, field visits, working group and case study activities and round table discussions, with interactive tools featuring widely. It is to be provided by a team of highly-qualified and experienced experts and tutors from six different EU Member States.

Specific subjects to be covered include application of ISO standards for PAE inspections, Member State inspection methodologies, calibration, maintenance, preparation and operation of PAE, hand-held PAE and knapsack sprayers. Other subjects are risk assessment, personal protective equipment, national-level training for inspectors, classification of PAE based on environmental contamination and spraying techniques.

Two workshops each are to take place in Barcelona, Turin and Braunschweig. Those in Barcelona are planned for June or July 2015 and October 2016, the Turin workshops are due to be held in July 2015 and February 2016, while the Braunschweig events are scheduled for November 2015 and June 2016.

DG SANTE to take part in Expo 2015 in Milan



MILANO 2015

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

The 2015 Universal Exposition, to be held in Milan from 1 May to 31 October, is one of the most important international events taking place during the year ahead and is set to be visited by over 20 million people. The theme of Expo 2015 is "Feeding the planet, energy for life" and given this focus on food, it is fitting that the European Commission Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) will be at the forefront of the EU pavilion at the Expo.

The theme of the EU pavilion is "Growing Europe's future together for a better world" and it is to contain an interactive exhibition on the EU food supply chain, food-related achievements of the past 50 years and the challenges which lie

ahead. DG SANTE's messages will be incorporated into this and over 20 SANTE events are set to take place at the pavilion during the Expo on such issues as genetically modified organisms, auditing and inspection, animal welfare, plant health and food fraud.

Of particular relevance to BTSF are a series of five events on the programme to be held at the Expo. The precise themes of these events are in the process of being defined but one of them should incorporate the celebrations planned to mark the tenth anniversary of the launch of BTSF in 2005.

Big changes at Chafea and the European Commission



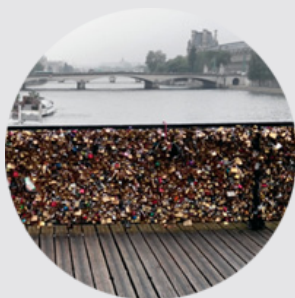
The beginning of 2015 has seen important changes at both Chafea and the European Commission. Chafea has seen the scope of its activity expanded to include agriculture. As a result the Agency's name has been changed from the Consumers, Health and Food Executive Agency to the Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency.

This is further proof of the trust which the European Commission places in Chafea as a result of the effective and efficient way in which the Agency carries out the tasks for which it is responsible.

Within the Commission, Chafea's parent DG has undergone even bigger changes, and has been transformed from the Directorate-General for Health and Consumers (DG SANCO) to the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE). Responsibility for consumer policy has now passed to the Directorate-General for Justice which has become the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, with the welcome result that food safety has gained even greater prominence in the work and mandate of DG SANTE.

Where is it?

Send your answer with the reference
"January 2015 newsletter" to
CHAFFEA-BTSF-PROJECTS@ec.europa.eu
and participate to win a BTSF USB key.



Where was that?

Answer from the previous edition

Gare de Luxembourg



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