



*In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful*

**Message from**

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**REGIONAL DIRECTOR**

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**to the**

**GLOBAL SALM SURV LEVEL 2 TRAINING COURSE**

**Jordan University of Science and Technology, Irbid, Jordan, 23–27 June 2002**

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Dear Colleagues,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you here at the Jordan University of Science and Technology, to the level 2 training course on surveillance of food borne diseases and antimicrobial resistance in foodborne pathogens, also known as ‘the level 2 Global Salm Surv training course’. I would like to extend a special welcome to Their Excellencies the Minister of Agriculture, Dr Mahmoud Duweiri, and the Minister of Health, Dr Faleh Elnasser, for both agreeing to attend this opening session. This confirms the importance of strong collaboration between the health and agricultural sectors in food safety. I would also like to extend a special word of gratitude to Dr Sa’ad Hijazi, the President of the Jordan University of Science and Technology, and his excellent team, our gracious hosts for the coming five working days.

At this stage I would also like to acknowledge the financial and technical support from WHO headquarters, CDC, Atlanta and the Danish Veterinary Institute, not only for this training course, but also for strengthening food-borne disease surveillance in the Eastern Mediterranean Region in general. CDC and the Danish Veterinary Institute will be responsible, this week, for the epidemiological and Salmonella subjects. And I also extend a warm welcome to our colleagues from the Dutch State Institute for Animal Science and Health, who will introduce the subjects related to Campylobacter.

You, the participants, have been nominated by your Ministers of Health and Agriculture, and represent here the reference laboratories of both these Ministries in your respective countries. We also have a number of observers from Jordan. I am sure that your presence will be of benefit to this training course as well as the area of food safety in general in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, and am very happy to welcome you all in this wonderful facility.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The estimated annual mortality of foodborne and waterborne infectious diseases in developing countries amounts to 2.1 million deaths, mainly of infants and children. In industrial countries microbiological food-borne illnesses may cause up to 35 percent of the total number of diarrhoea cases. The exact figure for our part of the world is regrettably also not known, but it can reasonably be expected to be much higher than this. The Regional Office has started efforts in establishing these figures for our Region, through the development of a number of studies into the burden of foodborne diseases. A requirement for the proper implementation of these studies is having reliable laboratory results. One of the aspects of this training course is therefore assuring the quality and availability of reliable and comparable surveillance data.

Globally, there are a number of examples of increased contamination problems over recent decades. The increase in the incidence of *Salmonella enteritidis* infections in humans between 1980 and 2000 amounts to a factor of 20 for many of the countries in Europe and North America. Another emerging problem globally is antimicrobial

resistance. Data from the United States of America show that the percentage of multi-drug resistant *Salmonella typhimurium*, type (DT) 104 in cattle has risen from a mere 2 percent in 1982 to 43 percent in 1996, while at the same time the percentage in humans rose from 0 percent to 35 percent. When plotting the curves of both human and cattle percentages graphically, they are almost similar, time-wise, suggesting transmission from cattle to humans through food.

Some examples of the economic impact of infectious foodborne disease outbreaks show that the consequences can be grave. The outbreak of cholera in Peru in 1991 cost 770 million US dollars; a similar outbreak in Tanzania in 1998 cost 36 million US dollars. Declining tourist revenues and declining exports of food commodities are responsible for these costs, or rather losses. Simple preventive measures and an effective surveillance system at a fraction of these costs might not, perhaps, have prevented these outbreaks, but would have definitely have reduced the impact of them.

WHO, through a number of activities, has been contributing to food safety on a global and regional level for a number of years. Much has been achieved in the areas of disease surveillance and response, risk assessment and surveillance of chemicals and chemical contamination, capacity strengthening, and standard setting. Recent microbiological developments include the ongoing risk assessment into microbiological contamination by *Salmonella* in eggs and broiler chickens, *Campylobacter* in broiler chickens, *Listeria* in ready-to-eat foods, as well as *Vibrio* in seafood.

In the Eastern Mediterranean Region, the Regional Committee in 1999 adopted the Regional Action Plan to Address Food Safety in the 21st Century. In this regional action plan, it is recommended that governments should improve coordination between the various ministries involved in food safety. Furthermore, one specific recommendation is that the food control laboratory personnel should be trained in principles of laboratory management in order to comply with ISO/IEC Guide 25, as well as in microbiological, chemical and physical analyses of foods. As part of the national food safety programme, governments should develop mechanisms to collect and evaluate information on foodborne disease and hazards associated with the food chain. The Regional Committee

also stressed the importance of linking foodborne disease surveillance with the overall national disease surveillance system.

The global surveillance of salmonella infections, a joint project of WHO, CDC and the Danish Veterinary Institute, surveys salmonella infections in animals and humans. This is a global programme, in which a network of laboratories has been set up to monitor the global incidence of such infections. The programme is also active in expanding the network through technical assistance to laboratories in sero-typing analysis and quality assurance. Recently, further expansion into the surveillance of *Campylobacter* has been achieved, and the Dutch State Institute for Animal Science and Health has joined our efforts.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the next five days, you will, through lectures, working group sessions and practical laboratory sessions, be trained in laboratory analysis in the typing of *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* strains, as well as in epidemiological techniques. We hope that the global network, as well as the regional food safety network, will be further strengthened through your collaboration. Most of you have attended the level 1 training course in Crete, Greece, in July 2000, and know each other. That course focused on training in standardized laboratory methods for the isolation, identification and antimicrobial susceptibility testing of foodborne *Salmonella*, the interpretation of results and their utilization for the surveillance of foodborne disease and antimicrobial resistance. This course is the logical next step. Then, as now, we strongly advocate, throughout this training course but indeed all our food safety work, collaboration among all professionals in national institutions, working in the area of food control and food safety. In WHO too, we work together closely, and this training course is a direct result of collaboration between two WHO offices, and within each of these between two different technical units belonging to different divisions. In addition we work with three partner organizations, and two Jordanian Ministries and one University. Optimal collaboration, implemented with the objective to provide an optimal working atmosphere indeed.

I would once again like to thank everyone who has been active in the preparation of this meeting, the officials from the Ministry of Health, staff from the Jordan University of Science and Technology, as well as our international support team.

The development of sustainable foodborne disease surveillance systems, within the existing structures of food control and disease surveillance, for countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region, incorporating multisectoral involvement in food safety, is one of the goals of the regional food safety efforts. Much has been achieved in the area of intersectoral collaboration, and I sincerely hope that through jointly attending this training course with your colleagues from health and agriculture, a good basis is being prepared for collaboration upon return to your home countries.

Once again, I wish you all success in this training course and in your future endeavours.