

Summary report on the

WHO-EM/CEH/163/E

# Intercountry meeting of food safety focal points on operationalizing the regional plan of action for food safety 2017–2022

Amman, Jordan  
25–27 September 2017



**World Health  
Organization**

Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean

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## **1. Introduction**

The World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Centre for Environmental Health Action (CEHA) held an intercountry meeting for food safety focal points in Amman, Jordan from 25 to 27 September 2017. Representatives from 15 countries of the Region attended the meeting alongside international and regional experts, including officers from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and WHO.

The objectives of the meeting were to support Member States in prioritizing national level food safety initiatives and activities; prepare draft national work plans in line with the regional plan of action for food safety in the Eastern Mediterranean Region 2017–2022 and based on national priorities and available capacity; and support information exchange and sustain the regional network of national food safety focal points regarding technical data sharing in the field of food safety.

In his opening message, Dr Mahmoud Fikri, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, noted that the meeting was expected to lead to the development of national work plans in line with the regional plan of action for food safety while specifically targeting key national priorities. In his message, Dr Fikri encouraged participants to produce focused and realistic work plans which would assist and guide countries in improving national food safety through carefully planned, focused and coordinated effective interventions.

Representatives from Afghanistan, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic and United Arab Emirates attended the meeting.

## **2. Summary of discussions**

Countries presented an overview of their national food safety system, including challenges, gaps and plans to address these challenges and gaps.

In addition, presentations were made on the regional plan of action for food safety; WHO planning; the use of total diet studies in risk assessment; the role of laboratories in the monitoring and surveillance of food-borne disease; the “One Health” concept for intersectoral collaboration on food safety; the national food safety planning process; and the role of WHO country offices in supporting national activities.

The regional plan of action for food safety was presented, and mission reports from country profile development missions in 2015 and 2016 were distributed together with the regional plan of action for food safety as key inputs for the development of targeted national work plans.

Selected technical presentations targeting some of the cross-cutting food safety needs of the countries of the Region were given in the meeting, and were intended to inspire participants to consider these subjects in their work plan development. In addition, presentations were given to inform participants about how best to take advantage of the resources available at WHO and other United Nations agencies in support of their work plans.

A major part of the meeting was dedicated to country presentations and discussions in plenary sessions and in groups, and the meeting facilitated the development of individual country work plans for food safety using the resources of invited experts and secretariat staff.

During group discussions, the countries were divided into three groups organized according to the level of advancement of their national food safety systems. The three levels (limited, intermediate and advanced) corresponded to the groupings outlined in the regional plan of action for food safety, and each group presented a group consensus on common needs and priority actions based on their discussions before proceeding to develop individual national work plans. All 15 countries developed draft work plans during the meeting.

### **3. Recommendations**

#### *To Member States*

1. Finalize national work plans for food safety through an appropriate national process of stakeholder identification, consensus building and obtaining required government approvals.
2. Share final national work plans with WHO.

#### *To WHO*

3. Focus the regional WHO food safety programme activities to address cross-cutting priority issues in national work plans.
4. Provide technical support to Member States in the implementation of the national work plans, and monitor and evaluate the activities of the national work plans for the duration of the regional plan of action for food safety.

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