



European  
Commission

# On the frontline of food safety

TEN YEARS OF THE BETTER TRAINING  
FOR SAFER FOOD PROGRAMME

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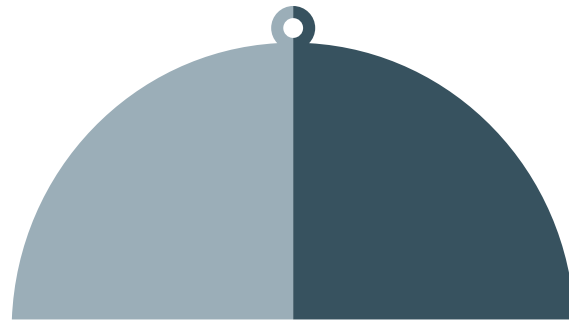
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## FOREWORD

# A milestone that offers food for thought

The Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) programme at 10 years old has a great deal to be proud of. The programme set up in 2005 by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) has become essential to the implementation of EU safety rules, and was recognised in autumn 2014 by the incoming College of Commissioners as a well-developed system of major importance to the European consumer and to the economy.

From modest beginnings, BTSF has now trained some 48 000 official food and feed inspectors from across the world on around 40 often highly technical subjects, including food safety, and the health of aquatic animals reared for food.

Although funding levels have remained stable over the last few years, the initiative has been growing in response to increasing demand. Our small team working on BTSF within DG SANTE has a first-rate working relationship with the Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency (Chafea), the Luxembourg-based agency that since 2009 has been responsible for the administrative and financial management of BTSF contracts.

At DG SANTE, we concentrate on policy development and relations with Member States. Our BTSF team draws on the technical expertise of the veterinarians and other professionals working on sanitary and phytosanitary issues in DG SANTE to ensure that the training content and messages passed on during the courses are correct, appropriate and reflect our expectations. Our collaboration with the National Contact Points in each EU country and the contractors who carry out the training in EU countries and around the world is also essential to the success of BTSF. This results in a smooth operation from start to finish.

Our final target is safer food and feed for healthier animals and plants across the world. To reach this goal, BTSF enters its second decade faced with a number of challenges that must be met while keeping a tight rein on costs. We aim to constantly improve the quality of training, participation and dissemination, and with this in mind we are about to launch a cost-effectiveness study to assess our long-term strategies.

So far we have worked with Chafea to develop new tools such as e-learning that will allow us to reach more people more effectively. Together we are developing an online platform and website that could, in the long term, enable control staff to clarify EU rules quickly and directly online.

BTSF has developed a sophisticated and well-organised training approach in the food safety control sector. This approach could benefit other sectors at EU level such as sustainable development or other specific topics in the agricultural or marine sectors. To this end, we will be looking to work more closely with other departments of the European Commission to share the know-how we have acquired by implementing BTSF.

I would like to thank everyone who has helped BTSF reach its current level of excellence, and I am certain that what has been achieved so far will provide a solid foundation on which to build in the future.



**LADISLAV MIKO**

*European Commission Acting Director-General  
for Health and Food Safety*



## INTRODUCTION

# The growth and growth of BTSF training

In its 10-year life, BTSF has become an essential element in the European Commission's food safety strategy. It is recognised in the European Union and around the world for its efficient promotion of European food safety standards.

Created to increase food safety by training inspectors who check compliance with food, animal feed, health and welfare, and plant health regulations, BTSF promotes European sanitary and phytosanitary standards — not only in the EU but in countries that export to the EU or wish to do so.

BTSF's high-level training ensures that food safety checks are more efficient and better harmonised than before, and that in turn increases the volume of trade in safe food and animal feed. The international nature of BTSF activities has another invaluable side-effect: the exchanges of knowhow between control staff in the EU and beyond, and thus the establishment of a social network for all those involved in food chain control.

The European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE, formerly SANCO) published the first calls for tender in 2005, and the first edition of BTSF took place the following year, training 1 400 control officials with seven programmes and a budget of €3.5 million. By 2008, 3 300 men and women had received training for 10 programmes in the EU, and another five in third countries, by which time the budget had risen to €9.1 million.

Our agency — the Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency (Chafea) — has been responsible for BTSF execution since 2009, when it was felt that BTSF's execution

work would best be done by an outside agency and allow DG SANTE to concentrate on policy, strategy, technical expertise and relations with Member States. This outsourcing to our agency saw an increase in the budget and in participation levels, and has won consistently high approval ratings from participants. The annual average is now 6 000 participants with a budget of €15 million, with an additional €8.5 million going to the BTSF World programme and to the International Standard-Setting Bodies. BTSF now covers a total of some 40 programmes.

Chafea has itself been busy improving procedures. The public procurement processes and the execution of contracts have been streamlined, making working conditions easier for all concerned, and also simplifying reporting and accounting. Our team working on BTSF is relatively small, and as a result they have developed methods for concentrating on the training itself rather than on time-consuming administrative tasks.

The relationship between Chafea and DG SANTE has become mutually beneficial, with DG SANTE shaping the programmes, and Chafea offering feedback and ideas on their execution. Chafea is actively involved in the dissemination of BTSF activities, as an essential building-block for the future. Food safety control officials in the EU and beyond are also able to easily access our newsletter, annual reports, videos, booklets and information days. We believe the way to safer food and feed is through knowledge and sharing.



**LUC BRIOL**

*European Commission  
Director of the Consumers, Health,  
Agriculture and Food Executive Agency*





# BTSF: a key player in the safety of the food chain

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TEN YEARS SPENT TRAINING CONTROL STAFF

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**ON** the eve of its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the European Commission initiative known as Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) can pride itself on being a runaway success. When launched in 2005, BTSF had a simple remit: contributing to the training of national control officials. Ten years on, the programme has become a key part of the Commission's food safety strategy and a recognised mega-brand not just in the European Union (EU) but across the world. By contributing to making Europe's citizens safer, healthier and more confident in the food they eat, BTSF is at the very heart of the mission of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE). National officials use it as a vital tool for deepening their knowledge of EU policy, legislation and enforcement measures. Its cooperation network now includes leading international organisations and global trade partners.





BTSF: a key player in the safety of the food chain

*BTSF is a complement to national training and focuses on issues of EU interest.*

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### A EUROPEAN DIMENSION TO TRAINING: WHY AND HOW?

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Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) was the most dramatic in a succession of food crises that hit the EU in the 1990s and sent shockwaves through the health control community. These food scares led the Commission to conduct an in-depth rethink of its food security policy. In 2000, the White Paper on Food Safety proposed a radical new approach that involved the setting up of an independent European Food Safety Authority accompanied by wide-ranging measures to improve the EU legislative and control systems on every aspect of food from 'farm to fork'. In order to ensure the effective enforcement of this new body of law, the Commission has identified training as a key driver and was given the task of providing such training, paving the way for the launch of BTSF.

BTSF is a training initiative covering food and feed law, animal health and welfare and plant health rules. The participants in its training programmes are EU and non-EU country public officials specialised in these fields and, more particularly, in charge of controlling every step of the food chain.

Training programmes run on a range of subjects related to these fields. Some take place in Europe for participants from EU and associated countries as well as invited non-EU countries. Others run in non-EU countries and are specifically aimed at participants from developing countries. BTSF is one of the Commission programmes for training control staff in developing



countries on issues related to EU food safety legislation, and complements wider cooperation programmes in the field.

Among other things, inspectors need to ensure that animals are safely fed and well treated, including at slaughter, that vegetables are contaminant free and that imported fruit is checked for pests. Training is an essential requirement for staff of national authorities to perform their control duties in an effective manner and is the responsibility of national authorities, which the BTSF programme in no way replaces. BTSF is a complement to national training and focuses on issues of EU interest. By putting together tutors and participants from different EU countries, it ensures that the training sessions convey the EU message, while also creating networking opportunities. This is one of the sideline benefits of the programme as most of those officials who take part in BTSF training greatly appreciate its





**In-built flexibility**

*“The EU has always had a food hygiene policy, naturally, but its rules used to be much more detailed and prescriptive. In 2004 we adopted a simplified set of rules. The Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) programme was set up in its wake to explain the new legislation and to make sure the relevant authorities in every Member State understood it.*

*Our training in no way replaces the compulsory training of control officials in each Member State. We focus particularly on the cross-border aspect of food hygiene. The people who have been on one of our training courses — they come from ministries of health or agriculture and other agencies — become trainers themselves in their own country.*

*I see two huge benefits in the BTSF training scheme — the first is that it offers participants excellent networking opportunities. The other is that we have an in-built flexibility that allows us to react fast, with the help of Chafea, our agency in Luxembourg. If a colleague, for instance, finds some huge problem in a country’s fisheries — either in the EU or outside — the BTSF programme allows us to quickly send out one of our experts through a contractor, without involving time-wasting administrative formalities.”*



**KOEN VAN DYCK**

*Head of Unit for Food and Feed Hygiene, Crisis Management and Training, DG SANTE, European Commission.*

networking opportunities, which ease subsequent contact with colleagues. Finally, an essential component of the BTSF training programme is that the trainees pass on their newly acquired knowledge to their colleagues in their home countries, ensuring wide dissemination of the expertise gained through a ‘train the trainer’ approach.

**TOWARDS GREATER AWARENESS AND HARMONISATION**

It is well known that food can spread diseases, and when contaminated with toxins or chemicals a simple meal can result in long-term health problems. Not only is our food supply chain increasingly complex, but globalisation makes food safety ever-harder to ensure. The task of minimising the risks on our plates rests with a variety of players. They include health control officials at agencies and ministries of health, agriculture and trade, as well as the food and feed industry, farmers and academics. The greater the knowledge — in the EU and beyond — the more efficient the controls and the safer our food and feed will be.

The BTSF programme plays an important role in spreading knowledge and awareness

of EU legislation and in ensuring harmonisation and uniformity of controls across the EU. Efficient and uniform controls are not only essential to maintaining high levels of consumer protection, animal health and welfare and plant health, but they also provide a level playing field for food businesses. Indeed, harmonisation of controls means that businesses are more likely to get equal treatment wherever controls are carried out, which in turn facilitates fair trade. The even enforcement of legislation is also essential if the EU’s internal market is to function properly.

Much of our food comes from countries outside the EU, and particularly from developing countries. BTSF’s targeted training improves the ability to detect fraud and non-compliance on the EU market but also at its borders, meaning even greater protection for human, animal and plant health. This contributes towards guaranteeing that imports respect EU law and that EU businesses are in the same competitive position as their non-EU counterparts.

On the other hand, rejections of food consignments at EU borders is a clear indication that the EU’s trading partners need to be better informed about EU rules so as to carry out checks themselves before food, plants or feedstuffs become cargo. For





## BTSF: a key player in the safety of the food chain



### TESTIMONIAL

#### Training is key to EU-wide food safety

*“At the beginning the European Commission dealt with all aspects of the BTSF programme: policy, administration and financing. In 2008, it extended the mandate of the Public Health Executive Agency (PHEA) for it to run the management of BTSF. The mandate was extended further under the newly named Consumer, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency (Chafea).”*

*“BTSF has increased contact between food safety officials considerably, while also launching an ongoing dialogue with partners both inside and outside the EU. Our agency has greatly contributed to the initiative’s success, freeing up the Commission to focus on policy, while we ensure that BTSF provides*

*national control officials with high-quality EU-level training.*

*“The agency launches the public procurement processes aimed at identifying contractors to manage the training programmes. It also makes sure the results of the programmes are known to all. We don’t do policy but we do provide DG SANTE with a lot of information and data that helps them make policy decisions.*

*“Demand for training within the EU and in Third World countries has been growing so fast that we’ve had to develop new strategies, such as e-learning courses. One of our specific aims is to help the poorer countries understand the EU’s export standards for safe food and feed so they can benefit from the trade.”*



**SALVATORE MAGAZZÙ**

*Head of the Consumers and Food Safety Unit, Chafea, was there at the inception of the Better Training for Safer Food programme.*

this purpose, BTSF organises specific training for participants in those countries so they can familiarise themselves with EU requirements and thus ease the access of food and feed from those markets into the EU.

The benefits of improving standards are not only economic. As with EU countries, BTSF training for non-EU countries seeks to make a concrete contribution to increasing health, safety and worldwide consumer confidence. It also strives to ensure that consumers in third countries and in the EU can benefit from access to a wide range of safe foods.

Last but not least, the involvement of non-EU countries in BTSF training programmes plays an important role in building trust in the EU’s regulatory model with the competent authorities of other international trade partners. It also paves the way for new food market opportunities and increased competitiveness for EU operators.

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### BTSF: A CONTINUING SUCCESS STORY

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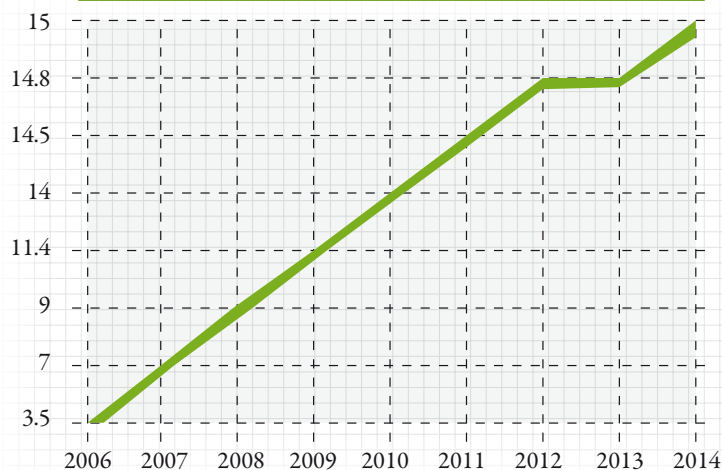
The figures point to the success of BTSF. During its first operation year, 2006, seven training programmes were attended by some 1 400 participants. This increased to 12 programmes for 3 000 participants in 2007 and 14 programmes in 2008 for more than 4 000 participants. Over its first 10 years, BTSF has organised some 1 100 events with over 48 000 participants from across the globe. Innumerable members of control staff benefit



indirectly through the dissemination of the expertise acquired by colleagues during the training sessions, and ultimately through the application of this expertise to the benefit of consumers.

Roughly two thirds of training activities have taken place in the EU and one third in non-EU countries. The workshops cover a wide range of topics, from the movement of dogs and cats to the supervision of semen, ova and embryos, from food additives, flavourings and enzymes to transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSE), also known as prion diseases. In 2015, BTSF will cover more than 40 technical subjects. It is thus no surprise that the programme continues to attract large numbers of participants from within and outside the EU.

**BTSF BUDGET IN MILLIONS OF EURO, 2006-2014**



Sources: DG Health and Food Safety, European Commission

The Commission’s budget for the 2015 BTSF training programme stands at €15.5 million — up from a starting budget of €3.5 million in 2006.

### THE MEN AND WOMEN BEHIND BTSF

In the early days, DG SANTE dealt with all aspects of BTSF. In 2009–2010, financial and administrative tasks were transferred to the Luxembourg-based agency the Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency (Chafea), leaving the Commission in charge of BTSF’s guiding policy, in particular development strategies, setting training programmes and securing budgets.

The Commission identifies training priorities after extensive internal consultation with Commission services, and beyond the Commission mainly with competent authorities in EU countries. Other sources are also used to assess training needs — they include the notifications received by the EU Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed and the outcomes of audits by the Commission’s Food and Veterinary Office.

The individual programmes are implemented by outside contractors selected following public procurement procedures. These procedures are managed by Chafea on the basis of the training specifications developed by the Commission. Chafea then manages the contracts on a daily basis and is the main point of contact for the contractors throughout the

### The language hurdle

*“BTSF offers an excellent tool for experts in Member States to increase their knowledge and get to know and understand the legal requirements of EU food law. It also offers them an opportunity to share experiences and best practices with experts from other countries.*

*“I’ve been working as the contact point person for Hungary for four years, since 2011. My main task is to find the right candidates for training, experts with the right level of knowledge but who also speak English, as training is mostly in English. We have good experts in Hungary, but many of them don’t speak English. The Commission is trying to solve this problem, notably through e-learning in EU languages.*

*“My work also involves answering telephone calls from local experts in Hungary with questions about BTSF, and they often bring up the language issue. We are working with colleagues here in Budapest to include BTSF training into the national training programme, and we’re using the training materials in Hungarian for dissemination.”*



**ANITA PAPP**

Department for Food Chain Control,  
Ministry of Agriculture, Budapest, Hungary





## BTSF: a key player in the safety of the food chain



### TESTIMONIAL

#### Making it real

*“We are proud to work on this programme that provides inspectors with hands-on training as well as networking possibilities.”*

*“Our role as contractor is to be the intermediary that makes a BTSF programme real. We define the training, choose the locations and find the experts, always subject to the approval of Chafea and DG SANTE.”*

*“You have contracts where some things are easy, others challenging, and it’s different on each contract.”*

*“The experts must be from at least three countries and each of them has to have pedagogical skills, field experience and a very good level of English. The expert in charge of chairing the training session must have at least seven years’ experience.”*



**EMILIE LOWARD**

*is project manager for the contractor Euro Consultants, based in Belgium, which has been working with BTSF since 2009 on seven contracts so far, all in the EU, for a total of 4 000 participants. Some ran for three days and the longest — on food testing — for two weeks.*

*“One of our key tasks is to understand the needs of inspectors and competent authorities for each training course. Then we draw up a training plan in line with Chafea’s contractual requirements and technical directions from DG SANTE. That means matching different criteria and needs, geographical balance and an understanding of scientific and technical possibilities.”*

*“Once we have the contract, we get in touch with the contact points and they nominate participants. Depending on the contract, we’ll invite participants from third countries, including candidate countries and beyond, as in the case of the programme on food testing.”*

*“Then we have to support the participants all the way through, from getting their visas — which can be complex — to flights, hotels and social activities during the training session. This is an essential aspect of the event because it encourages networking.”*

lifespan of each programme. Chafea manages the contracts based on the technical direction drawn up by DG SANTE. Their feedback to the Commission contributes to policy design and has created a strong and productive working relationship between the two bodies.

Other movers and shakers behind BTSF, besides the contractors, are the national contact points. Every EU country has a national contact point, usually no more than one or two people. They centralise information on BTSF, make it available to the relevant authorities in their country, and ensure smooth coordination. They select their country’s programme participants and provide regular feedback to DG SANTE.

As mentioned before, BTSF training itself is carried out by the companies that have bid successfully for the contracts. They are responsible for selecting the technical experts who will teach the courses. They also organise the sessions and deal with all practical arrangements, all this subject to Commission approval.



# The fine art of control procedures

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## BTSF — APPLICATION OF HACCP SYSTEMS

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When scientists at NASA were preparing the first missions into space, they came up with a way of testing the astronauts' future diet in orbit that was better and faster than traditional laboratory testing. They devised a science-based tool now widely used by the food industry across the world and known under the acronym HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points). HACCP has since become critical in improving efficient and rapid food safety while also reducing costs.

The HACCP system identifies, assesses and controls all hazards that compromise food safety, placing the emphasis on prevention rather than on testing the final product. The system can be applied at all stages of the food chain, from the raw product and materials to the food that is ready to be consumed, and it evolves with developments in equipment, procedures and technology. As well as enhancing food safety, the application of an HACCP plan simplifies the work of food inspectors, while also promoting international trade by increasing consumers' confidence in what they eat.



*The HACCP system identifies, assesses and controls all hazards that compromise food safety, placing the emphasis on prevention.*

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### HOW DOES IT WORK?

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Before anyone eats a factory-made biscuit, it has been checked several times along its production chain. HACCP is the tool that will have established the control procedures that prevent any potential health hazards to the consumer, eliminate them or reduce their impact or occurrence to acceptable levels.

The food industry's HACCP systems are based on seven principles. These were codified by the 1961 Codex Alimentarius commission that implements a joint food standards programme that's now applied in more than 180 countries. They are:

- Identifying hazards that must be prevented, eliminated or reduced to acceptable levels;
- Identifying critical control points (CCPs) at stages where a control can be applied and is essential to preventing or eliminating a hazard or reducing it to acceptable levels;
- Establishing critical limits at CCPs that separate what is acceptable from what is not for the prevention, elimination or reduction of identified hazards, sometimes by something as simple as observing when a food changes colour;
- Establishing and implementing effective monitoring procedures at CCPs, for instance by using a computer system to monitor the lowest temperature required to cook chicken;
- Establishing corrective actions when monitoring indicates that a CCP is not under control, such as sounding an alarm if the chicken isn't cooked enough, then destroying the batch;
- Establishing procedures to check that the measures outlined above are working effectively;



- Establishing documents and records to demonstrate that the measures above are applied effectively.

The HACCP tool identifies risk points for hazards or at which stage in a food's production process it is at risk of biological, chemical or physical hazards, and by doing so it reduces the possibility of accidents or incidents like food poisoning or a larger-scale food crisis. For roast chicken, for instance, the critical control point will be the temperature at which it is cooked. Rather than waiting for contamination or infection to happen, the system stops any food or animal feed safety problems at source.



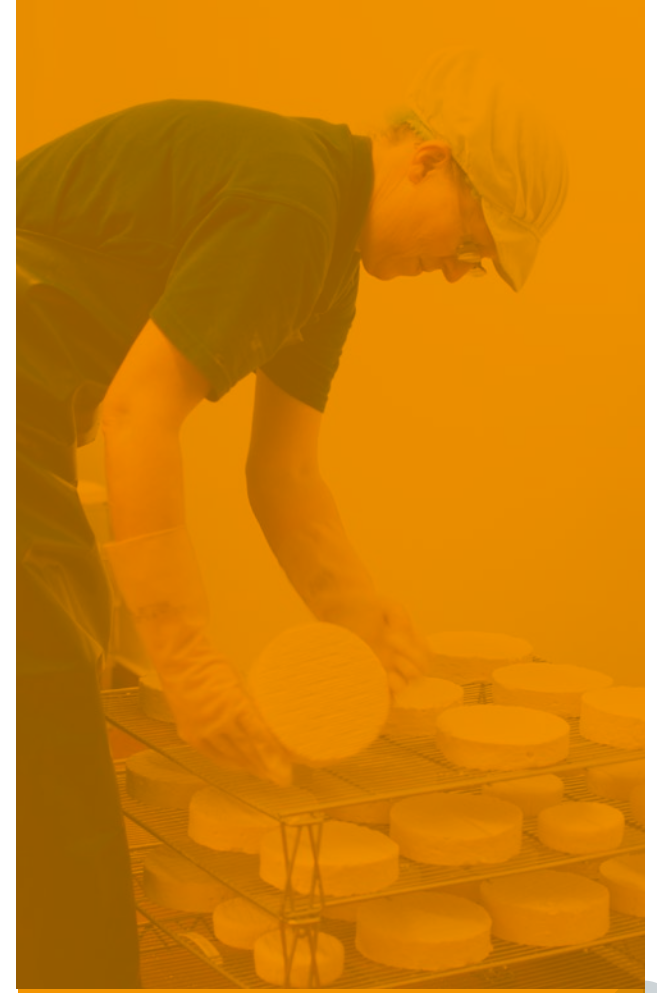
Businesses such as restaurants and factories are responsible for identifying, evaluating and controlling health risks at every stage of their operation. But before the effective application of HACCP to any sector in the food chain, that sector must have implemented 'prerequisite' hygiene requirements provided by the EU legislation on food and feed hygiene and the good hygiene practices outlined in various international food safety standards. Food hygiene depends on food businesses implementing the prerequisite requirements and procedures based on the HACCP principles. These prerequisites, including training, are designed to control hazards in a general way. They provide the foundation for HACCP and are indispensable if the HACCP system is to be properly applied and implemented.

The field inspectors tasked with auditing these food businesses check that the HACCP procedures have been respected, which means that they don't have to start their work from scratch at each visit. Their controls focus on the critical controls points, and they adapt their work according to ingredients, food manufacturing practices, end-use of the product, and epidemiological evidence related to this particular food or feed and its safety.

HACCP principles are to be implemented with the flexibility suited to different circumstances; the need for such flexibility is acknowledged in the EU legislation. The core reference guidance document produced by the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) and Member States takes this into consideration, and facilitates implementation in smaller businesses. The concept of flexibility varies from one country to another however, sometimes making it difficult to harmonise how the HACCP system is applied by smaller businesses across the EU.

But whatever a business's particular constraints, the seven principles of HACCP must be applied, with possible assistance from trade and industry associations, independent experts and regulatory authorities. HACCP guides can also be valuable, such as the Commission document providing guidance on implementing procedures based on HACCP principles in particular businesses, including small businesses.

The effectiveness of any HACCP plan depends on the managers and employees of a particular business being thoroughly familiar with its principles and applications. This makes ongoing training a valuable if not indispensable resource.



**TESTIMONIAL**

*"I think it's an extremely good idea for the manufacturing companies to support the training of new inspectors. It helps them to understand the processes within the food and manufacturing operations."*

**LINDA HAWKINS**

Walkers food manufacturer, UK



*HACCP  
procedures are now  
mandatory for all  
food businesses.*



#### **WHY HAS THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION BECOME INVOLVED?**

In the White Paper on Food Safety published in 2000, the European Commission outlined a radical revision of EU food safety hygiene rules, making food operators right through the food chain responsible for food safety. The new regulations outline a single hygiene policy applicable to all food and all food operators 'from the farm to the fork'.

HACCP procedures are now mandatory for all food businesses, from the goat cheese farmer working on his own to large factories making pizzas or deep-fried prawns and employing 5 000 people. These are applicable at virtually every stage of production, with good hygiene practices fundamental to its implementation. Only primary producers — those cultivating

and harvesting food or feed, rearing or growing farmed animals for slaughter, milking, hunting or fishing — are exempt from its application.

As a result, official control staff need to be completely familiar with the HACCP system if they are to audit it effectively in food and feed establishments. In some countries, the training of inspectors is not yet up to optimum speed, and awareness of the EU context can be helpful. Furthermore, assessment of what constitutes hygiene tends to vary considerably, and inspectors — and the food operators themselves — may sometimes focus on less critical issues than those that have a direct impact on food safety and consumer health.

#### **BTSF IN THE EQUATION**

BTSF training workshops have taken place every year since 2006. So far, some 70 courses have welcomed more than 3 200 participants mostly from EU countries, although a few places are always made available for participants from candidate countries, EFTA, ENP and other non-EU countries. Most participants in the training courses are inspectors from competent national authorities involved in planning and control, or field inspectors who visit restaurants, factories, farms and fisheries.

In the first year of BTSF, 2006, training in the UK, Hungary and Poland was divided into two groups — one for inspectors with a good understanding of BTSF rules, another for those with only basic training. The vast majority of the 316 participants were





inspectors working in EU countries, as is still the case today. By 2013, a total of 418 participants had met in the UK, Hungary, Malta, Portugal, France and Germany, and their familiarity with the HACCP system had greatly increased overall.

As mentioned earlier, the ultimate responsibility for food safety lies with food business operators, but responsibility for inspection rests in EU countries with the competent inspection authorities. BTSF training develops participants' ability to conduct audits, which means that they need a solid amount of theory, starting with the key role played by prerequisite food hygiene requirements as the very backbone of the HACCP system. It also encourages the dissemination of good practices for HACCP implementation and enforcement identified from one EU country to another.

Class work in a BTSF training course includes revising participants' background knowledge of HACCP, including national and international standards and certification schemes, and the seven principles and their application. They are reminded about how to interpret the legislation, how to apply it and with what tools and methods. Topics are discussed in detail in order to emphasise HACCP principles and for participants to fully understand risk assessment.

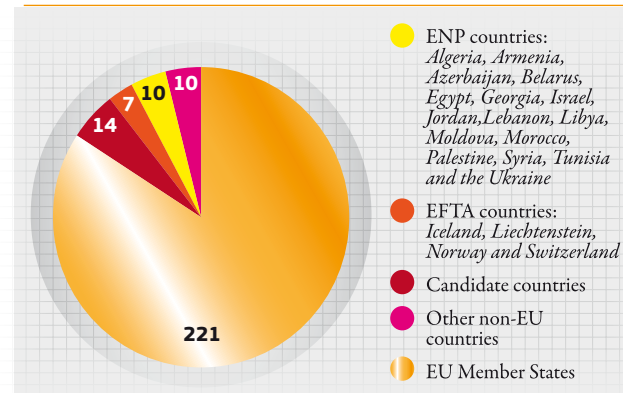
The second part of BTSF training involves practical activities, including exercises in which the theory is applied, as well as visits to food and feed businesses — meat cutting plants, breweries, ketchup manufacturers, biscuit-makers and so on

— for hands-on auditing conducted in small groups, followed by debriefing sessions.

The background to BTSF training is obviously efficient food safety management, which also implies the need for a flexible application of HACCP because one size does not fit all companies. Different countries interpret HACCP in different ways, and by bringing together food inspectors from across the EU and beyond, these training sessions contribute to promoting a consistent and harmonised approach.

The course encourages work in small groups, and favours further sharing of experiences over coffee, meals and leisure activities. The style is informal so as to encourage interaction, which participants see as a major benefit of BTSF. Participants consider it invaluable to get to know colleagues from other

#### PARTICIPANTS IN HACCP PROGRAMMES BY ORIGIN, 2014



Source: Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency





## The fine art of control procedures

countries, discuss challenges and exchange best practices. Meeting colleagues face to face also makes it easier to later pick up the phone to discuss particular problems.

A longer-term benefit of BTSF is the 'train the trainer scheme', whereby participants teach their peers what they have learned. National authorities are encouraged to use participants' newly

acquired knowledge once they've returned to their countries. This is an effective way of spreading the benefits of the course to all national inspectors, which is why the National Contact Points — those in charge of selecting participants for the BTSF training courses — attempt to choose participants with good communication skills.



### TESTIMONIAL

*"I've worked on a number of HACCP programmes, and I find that participants are always extremely committed, and also pleased to meet colleagues from other countries."*

*"One of the course's main goals is to help participants implement HACCP-based procedures in an open-minded way. We achieve this objective thanks to the tutors' excellent work. Participants exchange their experiences and problems and the tutors' subsequent guidance helps them achieve a harmonised approach."*

**PLINIO SIMON SORIANO**

HACCP training coordinator at  
Euro Consultants

*“By bringing together food inspectors from across the EU and beyond, these training sessions contribute to promoting a consistent and harmonised approach.”*





# A growing ethical concern: animal welfare

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## HOW BTSF SPREADS BEST PRACTICES

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**T**he figures are impressive — every day across the European Union (EU) some 10 million chickens are slaughtered for food, as are one million sheep, horses, cattle and pigs. Four million cattle are transported every year on journeys lasting more than eight hours, as are 28 million pigs, four million sheep, 243 million poultry and 150 000 horses. European consumers eat an average of 80 kilos of meat a year. Animal welfare is a rising concern for European consumers; a 2007 Eurobarometer survey showed that 64 % of EU citizens care about the well-being of the animals they eat — from laying hens to calves raised for veal.





## A growing ethical concern: animal welfare

*64 % of EU citizens  
care about the  
well-being of the  
animals they eat.*



The EU has over the last 40 years established detailed legislative provisions for the welfare of farm animals, protecting the ways they are housed, fed, transported and slaughtered along the food chains that lead from farm to plate. The Lisbon Treaty recognises animals as sentient beings whose welfare must be respected and protected across a number of policy areas — agriculture, fisheries, transport, the internal market, research, technological development and even space. As a result, the EU can arguably boast the world's

highest animal welfare standards. Aside from the ethical aspect, animal welfare means healthier animals and safer food for the consumer.

EU animal welfare legislation defines the basic physiological needs of animals on the farm and during transport and how to minimise their suffering at slaughter. Before slaughter, animals must be stunned using approved methods, except in the case of specific slaughter methods prescribed by religious rites. In its EU Strategy for the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2012-2015, the European Commission considers enforcement of animal welfare rules as a priority and training as its prerequisite, and pushes for ways to simplify and harmonise these rules across the Union.

Britain's Farm Animal Welfare Council adopted the so-called 'five freedoms', which are used as guiding principles in the EU legislation.

- Freedom from hunger and thirst.
- Freedom from discomfort. Do the animals have shelter and a comfortable resting area?
- Freedom from pain, injury and disease. This means prevention and action when something goes wrong.
- Freedom to behave normally. This means making sure that the animals have enough space and the company of animals of their own kind.
- Freedom from fear and distress. Their treatment must avoid mental suffering.

*“Animal welfare means healthier animals and safer food for the consumer.”*

## IMPLEMENTATION CAN BE A PROBLEM

Animal welfare legislation has had a positive impact, but reports from the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO), the audit service of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE), show that too frequently farmers, veterinarians, transporters and workers in slaughterhouses do not enforce it adequately. There has nonetheless been considerable progress. Since 2009, animals can no longer be used for testing cosmetics, and the quality of animal transport has consistently improved with far fewer animals suffering from injury or exhaustion. Slaughterhouses above a certain level of production are now obliged to employ an animal welfare officer whose task it is to make sure that all operations meet animal welfare requirements.

## HOW IS THE EU INVOLVED?

The 2012-2015 Strategy for the Protection and Welfare of Animals stresses the importance of training and the need for those involved to comply with EU legislation. In addition, the strategy stresses the need for international cooperation and capacity-building on animal welfare, as well as the application of international animal welfare standards. This cooperation involves the main international bodies also involved in animal welfare, including the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) that specifically develops international animal welfare standards, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), which also support the implementation of standards worldwide.

Requirements for farmed animals include daily inspections to check their health and comfort, and the construction of safe, well-ventilated shelters. It is no longer legal to tether or muzzle calves, and their feed must contain iron; laying hens can no longer be kept in battery cages, sows cannot be kept apart from other sows during most of their pregnancy, and pigs' teeth cannot be routinely clipped or filed.

EU legislation on animal transport identifies a transport chain and defines 'who is responsible for what'. It stresses the need for efficient enforcement tools such as journey logs and checks on vehicles via the compulsory use of navigation systems on journeys that last for more than eight hours. Training is also



### TESTIMONIAL

*“Both slaughterhouse regulations and transport regulations are common to the whole of the EU, so it's very interesting to see how the other countries are implementing them.”*

**HANNA MAARIT LOUNELA**

*Participant from Finland*



*The Strategy for  
the Protection  
and Welfare  
of Animals  
stresses  
the importance  
of training.*

of paramount importance to ensure that operators enforce the rules correctly.

Animal welfare at the time of slaughter means harmonising a high level of protection across the EU with the primary aim of reducing pain and suffering through proper handling, the use of authorised stunning methods and regular monitoring of the animals' welfare through standard operating procedures. The legislation

also includes specific requirements for culling when it is needed for public or animal health reasons. Slaughterhouse staff involved at all levels must have a certificate of competence.

#### **WHAT DOES BTSF OFFER?**

Animal welfare is one of the five main BTSF fields — along with food and feed safety and animal and plant health. Of the seven programmes when BTSF began in 2006, one was on animal welfare at slaughter and killing for disease control. Animal welfare is in fact one of only three programmes for which BTSF has provided training every single year since then, and in which it can point to a number of successes.



Among these is the fact that they are the first training programmes on animal welfare aimed at veterinarians, a subject that only began being taught in veterinary schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A positive outcome of this training is that when conducting controls, officials can now speak directly with those in the industry about the issues concerned. BTSF also happens to be the only official EU activity that

takes issues of animal welfare outside EU borders, without the obligation to comply with World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules.

Inspectors in the field of animal welfare need high levels of competence and technological skills to carry out their work in a humane and reactive manner. They can be presented with difficult situations, like the malfunction of a stun gun at slaughter, a situation that requires rapid reaction. The EU can boast particularly well trained academics in the animal welfare field who also have the practical knowledge needed to ensure high-level training. Many of these people teach at the BTSF training courses.



Close to 1 500 participants have taken part in BTSF training on animal welfare over the last 10 years via some 30 workshops, but attendance figures alone do not reflect the wider impact of the training sessions — the ‘train the trainer’ approach ensures that participants disseminate their newly acquired knowledge among control inspectors in their own country. The selection of participants is the task of national contact points, and they try to choose people with the skills to train colleagues when they get home. Dissemination is further ensured by the e-learning tools BTSF is developing.

The first BTSF Workshop for non-EU countries was held in Canada in 2010, and since then training has been extended to non-EU countries within the BTSF World programme, reflecting a growing interest from these countries to apply higher animal welfare standards so as to access high-value international markets. Latin American countries wishing to export to the EU are investing significantly in technology, from vehicles to farm watering systems, and in training their staff.

Although not all EU welfare standards apply outside the EU, some do, for example equivalence of animal welfare requirements at slaughter is mandatory for the export of meat to the EU. The health certificate for meat imports must be accompanied by an attestation certifying that animals were slaughtered according to requirements that are at least equivalent to the European ones.

Implementing animal welfare standards in non-EU countries also increases local consumers’ awareness of good practices and provides new local marketing opportunities. A benefit to trade, it offers an opportunity to improve local livestock production and sustainable farming, as well as the variety on EU consumers’ plates everywhere.

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### WHAT DOES BTSF ACTUALLY TEACH PARTICIPANTS?

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An important element in the programme’s success is the relationship between the Luxembourg-based Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency (Chafea, formerly EAHC) and the Italian consortium Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale dell’Abruzzo e del Molise (IZSAM) who have been working together since 2007. Participants appreciate the training, as feedback forms consistently show a more than 95% satisfaction rate.

The workshops comprise the usual range of BTSF activities from presentations and case-study work to discussions and onsite visits. Depending on the type of workshop, participants will visit slaughterhouses, pig or poultry farms, transport companies or control posts. All workshops deal with EU legislation and international standards and explore the scientific basis for ensuring the right quality of housing, handling and transport of poultry and pigs, as well as their humane slaughter.



#### TESTIMONIAL

*“The formal training is the basis for the proper implementation of EU legislation on animal welfare. The course offers a possibility to harmonise the work of people in Member States and to raise awareness among third countries that want to join the system.”*

**PAOLO DALLA VILLA**

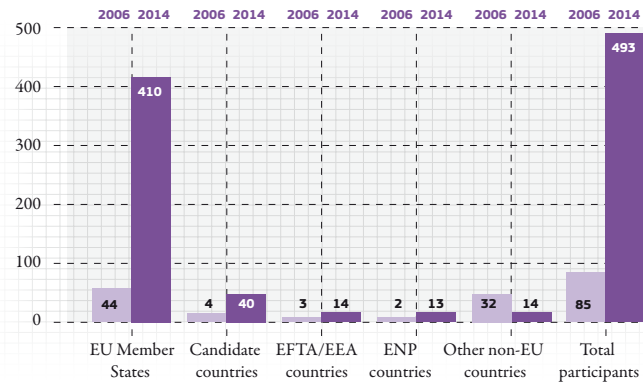
*Trainer, Italy*



A growing ethical concern:  
animal welfare

“The EU can boast particularly well trained academics in the animal welfare field who also have the practical knowledge needed to ensure high-level training.”

PARTICIPANTS IN ANIMAL WELFARE TRAINING PROGRAMMES BY ORIGIN, 2006 AND 2014



*EFTA countries: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.  
ENP countries: Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia and the Ukraine.*

*Source: Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency*

Poultry and pig welfare workshops look at how to assess farming systems, how to carry out farm inspections and how to collect data. Transport workshops cover transport conditions, record checking for traceability, handling and care during transport, and even vehicle design and navigation systems in as much as they can be used to increase the animals' comfort. Topics at slaughter workshops include standard operating and monitoring procedures, holding-pens, the role of welfare officers in slaughterhouses, stunning and killing techniques and experience gained in terms of slaughter resulting from culling for disease control.

Some veterinarians are surprised to suddenly see inspections from another viewpoint — that of welfare rather than health, which is the way they are used to looking at animals. If a pathology does not affect the food, they might in the past have ignored it — and that's where animal welfare steps in. As with all BTSF workshops, lunch breaks and leisure activities allow participants to discuss and share experiences, which is an informal first step towards the harmonisation of animal welfare standards across the EU. The benefit of meeting veterinarians from other countries is enormous — making it much easier to later pick up the phone to discuss a particular problem.







# Random checks at borders ensure food safety

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## BTSF TRAINS BORDER INSPECTION POST INSPECTORS

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**AS**

the world's largest food importer, the European Union (EU) has the complicated task of ensuring that everything it imports — live animals, meat, fish, animal feed, honey — carries no risk of introducing disease into the EU. The men and women whose job it is to control consignments at border inspection posts, or BIPs, are looking for contaminated products, and also for illegal imports and fraud. These BIPs are the strongholds that protect the health of EU consumers — and animals in the EU — from the hazards that can affect food or feed imports.





Random checks at borders  
ensure food safety

*BIPs are the strongholds that protect the health of EU consumers —and animals in the EU— from the hazards that can affect food or feed imports.*



Compulsory import controls on animals and products of animal origin can minimise many potential health problems. Improperly controlled animal feed, for instance, can transmit such diseases as Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies, Classical Swine Fever and Foot and Mouth Disease. Samplings of speciality meats from Indo-China have been found to contain the Listeria bacteria, traces of antibiotics detected in agricultural products can result in foodborne bacteria becoming resistant to antibiotics, and the discovery of bone-in ham containing rusty nails clearly posed a health risk to consumers.

The EU has some 300 BIPs, less than half of them at ports. The others are at rail, road and air frontiers, where veterinarians conduct a range

of compulsory checks (including random or targeted laboratory tests) on all imports of animals or products of animal origin — these range from meat, milk and eggs to composite food like beef lasagne or animal by-products not intended for human consumption. Half of the port BIPs handle up to 60 000 consignments a year. BIPs are all approved by the European Commission and are visited regularly by the Commission's Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) for audits of facilities, equipment, documentation, registration, IT systems, work procedures and training of personnel.

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### THE MANY WAYS TO EXERCISE CONTROLS

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Controllers at these border inspection posts need to work closely with customs officials if they are to reduce fraud and the evasion of checks. The border inspection posts can be small with just one inspector, or huge with 20 or more inspectors who check every consignment's papers to make sure health certificates are in accordance with the models requested by EU legislation. They check seals on containers and make sure that the information in the health certificates tallies with that on the food or feed label. They conduct physical checks according to the product, the non-EU country of origin and the nature of the risk. These physical checks may involve sensory examination — smell, colour, consistency, taste — and may also require cutting, thawing and cooking, and checking temperatures. Inspectors may decide to take laboratory samples to analyse a product for residues, pathogens or contaminants. If all is well, they will release the consignment on its way. If not, they will send it to be destroyed or redispached to its place of origin.



Honey is an example of the cargoes being scrutinised. Despite producing much of its own honey, the EU also imports from Argentina, China, Mexico, New Zealand, Uruguay and Brazil at a yearly average of some 6 200 batches, of which 1% may be rejected — because the health certificates are non-compliant, the barrels are broken, the inspectors have detected drug residues in the honey or it has been contaminated with pesticides. In one case, honey was found to contain bits of metal.

When rejected cargo is neither destroyed nor sent back to where it came from, it is treated at the importer's expense to ensure that it conforms with EU hygiene regulations. This decision is in the hands of the importers and of Member States. The European Commission steps in when a company has seriously or repeatedly infringed EU legislation. EU legislation then requires that the next 10 imports from the same source be submitted to reinforced laboratory checks. If, for instance, histamine is detected in a fishery product, the next 10 consignments from the same establishment will be checked for histamine wherever they enter the EU. The TRACES monitoring system will keep tabs on these checks and ensure that the reinforced measures are applied in the same way at whichever border inspection post the next consignment is presented.

The legislation developed by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE, formerly SANCO) is aimed at making sure food and feed safety is respected uniformly and at the same compliance level as that requested for animals and products originating from other EU

countries. The EU's 28 Member States have to apply harmonised controls that respect all relevant regulations. This means close cooperation between the various authorities and the harmonisation of legislative implementation and procedures. As well as ensuring consumer safety, this also contributes to creating a level playing field for businesses.

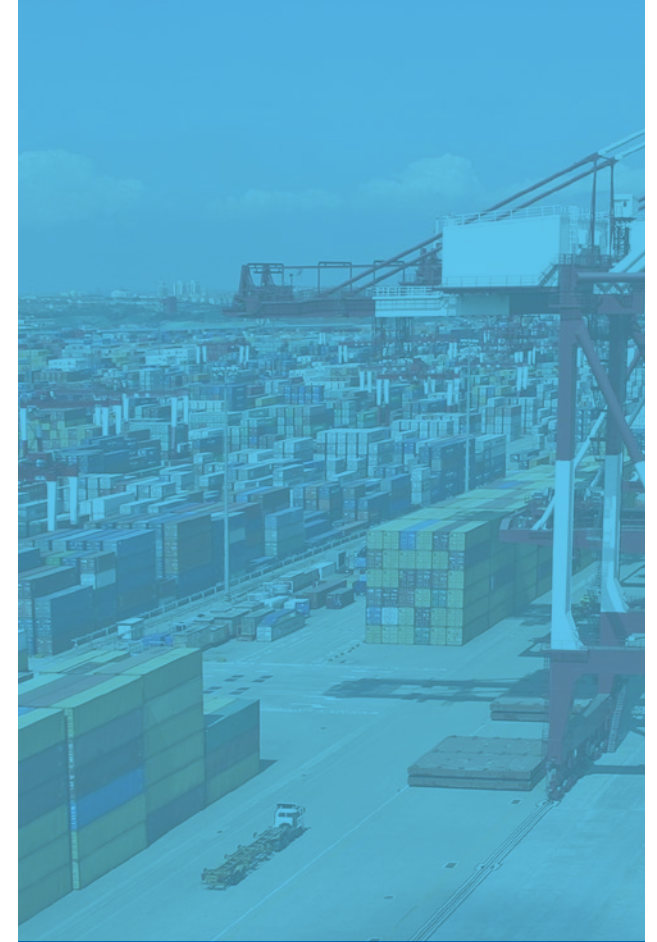
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## THE FOOD AND FEED SAFETY TOOLS

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The EU has three tools at the service of BIP control officials, among the other officials working on food security:

- The Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF), a system for reporting food and feed issues. Border officials can check and adapt the level of inspections according to information in the RASFF system.
- The Commission's FVO, whose auditors visit BIPs to check that import and transit controls are harmonised and that they comply with EU legislation. They also check that transshipments are done according to the rules, and the same for the disposal of kitchen waste produced on international flights and ship journeys.
- The trade control and expert system known as TRACES, a trans-European network that ensures the traceability of all animals and their products entering the EU, with details and results of any check. In 2012, the Commission's DG SANTE introduced a reinforced check module that makes it easier to follow problems linked to non-EU country establishments.



### TESTIMONIAL

*Different BIPs have different kinds of imports, so not all of us are experienced in the same kinds of animal or food stuffs. That's why it's very important to learn from each other, to get ideas and find solutions, to see how other colleagues do things and discuss together*

**UTE GRAMM**

Tutor





Random checks at borders  
ensure food safety

*“The more smoothly official control staff can implement provisions contained in various regulations, the more effective and uniform the system will be.”*

### WHY IS BTSF INVOLVED?

Reports by the FVO have pointed at inadequately trained border inspection post inspectors who are not always up to date on current legislation. With standard harmonisation at a premium on the EU agenda, the more smoothly official control staff can implement provisions contained in various regulations, the more effective and uniform the system will be. Aside from theoretical and practical training, BTSF offers participants an ideal opportunity to talk to each

other and exchange information and best practices. They are also expected to return to their home countries with the mission of training other colleagues, as this is the only way to ensure high standards of control across the EU, although it is up to Member States to put this into effect.

Training sessions cover sea borders, as well as rail, road and airport BIPs, concentrating on import controls on live animals and animal products, with an emphasis on:

- EU legislation, particularly when a regulation is open to interpretation, and the practical implementation of import procedures, i.e. how to carry out documentary, identity and physical checks
- How best to collaborate with customs and other authorities working at EU points of entry — exchanging information, gathering intelligence and assessing risks
- How to monitor the destruction of kitchen waste from international means of transport



- How to carry out reinforced checks properly
- How to monitor transit movements
- How to use TRACES in everyday work
- How to deal with such specific cases as trade samples or personal imports in travellers' luggage
- How to sample consignments and interpret laboratory results.

## WHAT DOES A BTSF COURSE

### LOOK LIKE?

The BTSF training programme on BIPs has been there since the start of the programme in 2006. Training is divided between airports on the one hand, seaports on the other, plus road and rail in a third session. Composite products were added to the topics when the specific composite regulation was introduced in 2012. So far, close to 40 training courses have reached over 1 500 participants.

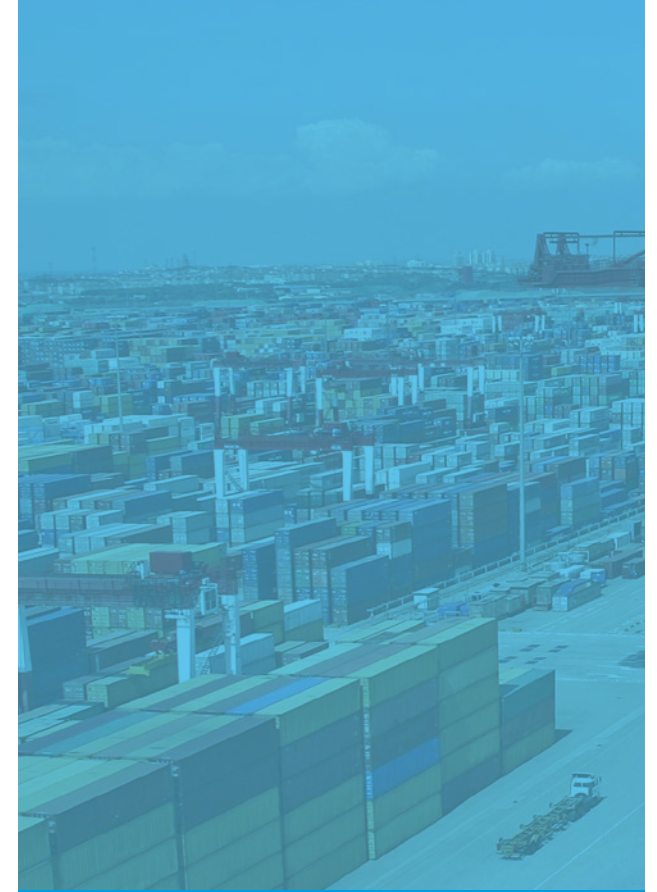
*“Training concentrates on making sure border control officials ensure consistently high implementation standards across the EU.”*

#### TESTIMONIAL

*“I found the event very useful and interesting. It’s important to share experiences of what can happen at border inspection posts and advice on how to make decisions and based on what legislation. These were three busy days, and I now have a better overall picture. I learned a lot and in a very approachable way.”*

#### PARTICIPANT

at the BIP on airports,  
Munich, November 2013



## Random checks at borders ensure food safety



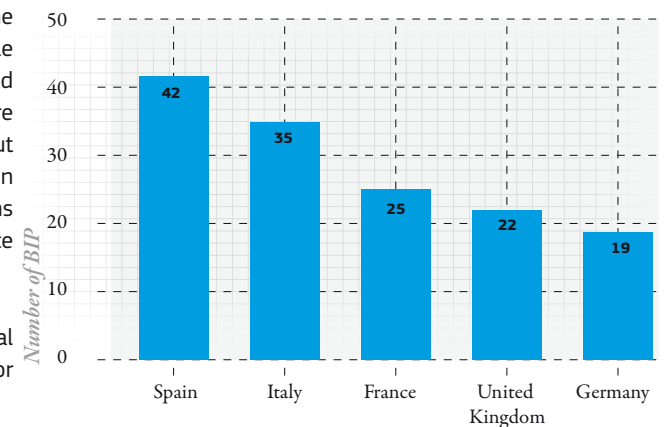
Training concentrates on making sure border control officials ensure consistently high implementation standards across the EU. As with all BTSF training courses, a few places are available for officials from outside the EU, including candidate, EEA and other non-EU countries. Tunisia and Morocco, for instance, are big exporters of fish to the EU, and benefit from learning about import rules and how health certificates should be filled in properly. The tutors — 12-13 every year — are veterinarians from six or seven EU countries and have solid experience working at BIPs.

The airport and road and rail workshops cover additional controls on live animals, and checks on parcels sent by post or

courier. Road and rail workshops also examine the control of re-imported consignments, and they look at exit checks for cargo in transit. As with all BTSF training programmes, the courses mix the theoretical and the practical, with hands-on exercises onsite.

Whether participants work at small or large border inspection posts, they need to exchange information as they share the same problems. It is important to facilitate the ease with which they can contact border inspection post colleagues in other EU countries, with hierarchical questions sometimes posing problems for some staff. Exchanging experiences can be very liberating, as these jobs are often high-pressure, with importers sometimes flexing their muscles in intimidating ways.

### TOP FIVE EU COUNTRIES WITH THE MOST BORDER INSPECTION POSTS (BIPs), 2009



Source: European Commission





# Dwindling honeybee colonies?

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## BTSF BEES: A COMPLICATED CHALLENGE

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**T**he media has devoted a great deal of attention of late to the apparent dwindling of honeybee colonies in the northern hemisphere. This is a potentially huge problem as honeybees (*Apis mellifera*) play an essential role in the pollination of plants, such as fruit trees, vegetables and other crops, not to mention the production of honey and such apicultural offshoots as pollen, wax, propolis and royal jelly.

Honeybees' health — and that of other pollinators like wild bees, bumblebees, butterflies, bats, insects and even certain types of birds — is vital to our biodiversity, to sustainable agriculture and to the environment. If bees die in droves, the pollination of a wide range of crops could suffer, and if crops are adversely affected, the consumer will be too. Among pollinators, only honeybees and some species of bumblebee are managed and traded as livestock. This is why the EU has established some harmonised rules to protect and maintain bee health and trade.



*Honeybees' health is vital to our biodiversity, to sustainable agriculture and to the environment.*



Beekeeping takes place in every country of the EU, from Sweden to Greece, and although most beekeepers practise this age-old activity as a hobby or as a sideline to farming, near lavender fields for instance, there are also larger producers with 150 hives or more, mainly in Spain, Europe's largest honey producer. Of the EU's 700 000 or so beekeepers, some 97 % are amateurs, accounting for 67 % of hives, and they can be said to contribute to something intangible, which is the preservation of a rural way of life. EU-wide honey production is estimated at close to 200 000 tons.

Beekeeping and its related activities are mostly the responsibility of individual EU countries, with the beekeepers themselves

running their own associations that ensure good practices and issue guidelines. Because of its particular nature, apiculture is difficult to regulate, and were it not for the dying colonies that some see as an apocalyptic blight, the EU would only be marginally involved.

Who deals with bee health? As a rule, it is the concern not of veterinarians but of biologists, entomologists and ecotoxicologists. Caring for bee health is radically different to dealing with livestock health, and furthermore the focus is not on the health of individual honeybees, but on the health of entire colonies. The sector engenders its own very specific needs, approaches, views and practices. The fact that for so many beekeeping is a hobby adds to the complexity, as do geographical dispersion and environmental diversity.

#### **WHAT EXACTLY IS HAPPENING?**

The problem of loss of bee colonies varies greatly in the EU and beyond, as does the reporting on its extent. Panic started in the US when in 2006-2007 losses were so high that scientists talked of 'colony collapse disorder' and were at a loss to explain its causes. In 2009 the European Food Safety Authority said that the national surveillance systems of EU Member States were not up to the task of delivering reliable information on the extent of their losses, and even less on their causes. An EU-wide and EU co-financed epidemiological study on honeybees — the EPILOBEE study — published by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (now DG SANTE)





in 2014 finally brought reliable and official data. It concluded that the situation was less dramatic than previously imagined, although some countries did show markedly higher mortality rates than usual with significant regional differences.

At play could be a variety of factors, including spells of cold or rainy weather, a decrease in flower numbers due to different land usage, but also mites, bugs, pathogens, various invasive species, pesticides and malnutrition, genetic factors, changes in habitat and in beekeeping practices, environmental imbalances, or a lack of available treatments. Many scientists agree that a combination of these reasons is the most likely explanation.

Beekeepers themselves are at the frontlines of the battle to protect bees' health — they have the expertise and the dedication — but it's very hard to centralise these small-holding practitioners. In some countries beekeepers need permits to run hives, but in others they can have special derogations if their income from the activity is low enough or if they only have a few hives. Nevertheless, if they were to create stronger, more competent and maybe even EU-wide organisations to implement common strategies this could be among the best forms of protection, with the sharing of data and good practices.

The precise magnitude of the losses is still unclear, which is why the European Commission stresses the need to design solid data gathering and monitoring programmes within Member States and has already emphasised the importance of training in its 2010 Communication on honeybee health. The evidence

is apparently highly variable even from one beekeeper to the next, with some losing most of their hives, while others are unaffected. As scientific studies have failed to determine the causes and effects of colony losses, in 2010 the Commission set up an EU bee reference lab (EURL) — the Sophia Antipolis lab in France — and tasked it with a diagnostics programme, the provision of technical and scientific assistance, and with the design and coordination of bee health surveillance.

An issue that concerns all Member States, but also touches on countries outside the EU, is the import of queen bees. These queen bees need to be expertly packaged for transport and checked both before they are sent and on arrival to avoid the introduction of exotic parasites into the EU.

*“The precise magnitude of the losses is still unclear.”*



**TESTIMONIAL**

*“On our visit to Prague we saw the way they actually work there, the way they make diagnoses and carry out experiments. I was particularly interested in the artificial insemination.”*

**YOLANDA SANTOS LAMATA**

*Spanish participant, health of bees, Prague 2010*



**TESTIMONIAL**

*“It's very interesting training. It allows us to improve our knowledge and management of bee diseases at the European level. It also helps improve the way we handle it and, on top of that, it brings EU's veterinarians closer together.”*

**FRANÇOIS DIAZ**

*Representative from the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), health of bees, Prague 2010*



*The EU now has a solid network made up of hundreds of official veterinarians who understand bee diseases.*



On a wider scale, the Commission has undertaken actions across several policy areas that will help gain a better understanding of the problems, while also providing a thorough assessment of risks to animal and human health, and to the environment. The EU has increased funds to replace lost colonies, stimulate the development of new bee medicines and make sure that existing ones are available and affordable. New pesticides are being developed with bee health in mind, and veterinarians are trained to know more about bee health and to collect, analyse and distribute information.

#### ADDING UP THE COSTS

The EU's contribution to the financing of apiculture programmes in Member States for 2011-2013 increased by almost 25 % compared to the previous period (2008-2010), from €26 million to €32 million a year, and up to €33.1 million in the 2014-2016 period with the accession of Croatia. The biggest recipients are Spain, Romania, Poland, Hungary, Italy and Greece. The measures funded by these programmes include technical assistance to beekeepers, control of the parasitic mite *varroasis*, rationalisation of transhumance, honey analysis, restocking hives, and applied research. The EU budget over the last 10 years dedicated to research on honeybees and other pollinators was close to €16 million.



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## BTSF ON BEE HEALTH

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It was in this difficult context that DG SANTE launched its BTSF Bee health training programme in 2010, with participants from all EU countries and a number of non-EU countries, including Turkey, Switzerland, Norway and Liechtenstein. The approach is naturally scientific and cool-headed rather than emotion-driven, and participants — inspectors working for national veterinary authorities in most countries, for the plant health service in others — are expected to share their newly acquired knowledge in their own countries with authorities and beekeeping associations.

As a result of the training courses, the EU has significantly improved the capacity of national veterinary services to deal with any current or potential bee health issues and official controls on these matters. These may include import and trade checks, inspection of apiaries to investigate bee losses, verifying claims of alleged losses, establishing the presence or absence of pathogens in beehives, giving beekeepers advice or even organising local beekeepers and other stakeholders to deal jointly with particular challenges. The EU now has a solid network made up of hundreds of official veterinarians who understand bee diseases and can work together and exchange information.

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## DOWN TO THE NITTY-GRITTY

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Over three series of seminars and six years of activity, BTSF has organised eight workshops in Prague, Czech Republic, and two in

Maribor, Slovenia, with a total of some 424 participants for a budget of approximately €600 000. Two additional workshops are planned in 2015.

These training sessions have a wide scope and are comprehensive in their investigation of current threats to honeybee health. They go well beyond simply explaining EU rules, and cover the application of EU provisions for the control of regulated bee diseases and pests, such as how to identify the small hive beetle and the Tropilaelaps mite, both exotic to the EU and potentially devastating to EU apiaries. Participants are trained to conduct specific checks on imported consignments of queen bees, and how to detect parasites in apiaries as soon as possible should they enter the EU via other routes. These measures contribute to the long-term sustainability of the sector. Training also covers other potential problems like the small microbe *Nosema* that lives inside bees' guts. This is not regulated but could play a part in colony losses.

Courses also offer in-depth coverage of all other EU legislation relevant to honey and bumble bees, including rules for the intra-EU trade of colonies, inspection rules before departure and on arrival, traceability and follow-up checks, some pesticide rules (e.g. restrictions on those that are harmful to bees) and use of veterinary medicines in apiaries. Examples such as what to do if there is no authorised veterinary medicine in a given Member State or the best practical method of application are extensively discussed, along with international standards set



TESTIMONIAL

*“This was one of the best organised training sessions I’ve been on. Everything I saw at the Bee Dol research Institute (in the Czech Republic) will be useful for my job! It’s also good to know how beekeeping looks in different countries.”*

**KATARZYNA PIKOR-BOJARCZUK**

*Poland, health of bees, Prague 2014*

TESTIMONIAL

*“I feel this is a very interesting and exciting programme because it gives the participants an opportunity to discuss the practical application of EU provisions relating to the control of bee diseases and pests, with a special focus on the small hive beetle (*Aetina tumida*) and the *Tropilaelaps* mites. Small hive beetle control is particularly topical at the moment.”*

**FABIANA QUADU**

*From contractors JVL Consulting*



## Dwindling honeybee colonies?

*Training sessions go well beyond simply explaining EU rules.*

*“The course was very well organised and although I am an expert on honeybee diseases, I was never bored and I enjoyed the discussions with colleagues from other Member States.”*

**MARC SHÄFER**

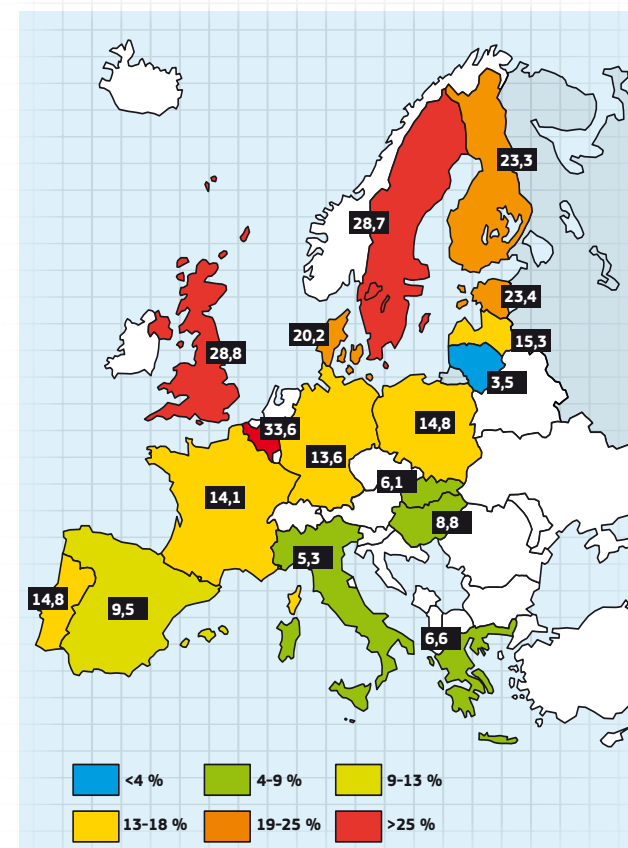
Participant in the BTSF programme  
Germany, health of bees in Prague 2014

by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). The wider picture included familiarising participants with how to control hygienic and environmental hazards, how to detect and fight the invasive alien bee predator species *Vespa velutina*, along with management techniques for apiary disinfection, the artificial insemination of bees, queen breeding and investigating possible pesticide poisoning.

On top of the more theoretical presentations during the workshops, participants also work in smaller groups to follow up the presentations, explore details and harmonise their application of the legislation. All this is to ensure their full and conceptual understanding of all relevant factors from several angles, and across borders. They also conduct field visits to apiaries with working beehives to see different ways of inspecting and sampling, and they are even taught how to harvest semen from drones and how to inseminate queens. As with all BTSF training programmes, they are given plenty of valuable opportunities to talk and socialise with experts from other countries.

Over these six years, training material has been regularly updated in line with developments in the policy areas, such as the restrictions the EU introduced on pesticides dangerous for bees. The EPILOBEE project referred to earlier is also a source of updated information. The project's surveillance theory and practice was immediately taught to participants after its validation by the EURL for bee health.

WINTER MORTALITY RATES FOR HONEYBEES  
IN 17 EU COUNTRIES 2012-2013 (%)



Source: EPILOBEE study on honey bee mortality





# Helping exporters from outside the EU

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## BTSF WORLD: BOOSTING FOOD SECURITY AND TRADE

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**W**hen the BTSF programme was launched in 2006, it was above all intended for the training of food and feed control authorities in EU countries, but was immediately felt to be of vital importance for non-EU countries too. The EU is the world's biggest importer of food products, hence non-EU countries need to meet the EU's body of sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) legislation. Safe products mean fewer problems during border controls, and savings in time and money for both importers and exporters.



*Safe products mean fewer problems during border controls, and savings in time and money for both importers and exporters.*



Inspectors from the Ireland-based Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) — the Commission's inspection service that audits EU Member States and non-EU countries exporting or wishing to export to the EU — had long been reporting the need for training programmes. The idea of the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (now DG SANTE) was to create a tool that could anticipate and address some of the problems faced by exporting countries wanting to comply with EU SPS standards. The idea was also to use this tool when negotiating trade agreements and for encouraging dialogue among international experts. BTSF complements wider EU cooperation programmes but its training is different in both format and objective.

International trade in food products is serious business — the Geneva-based World Trade Organisation (WTO) estimates that it represents four fifths of global agricultural exports. Global trade has an estimated turnover of more than €4 000 billion a year. Eurostat reported that although the EU is by far the largest

exporter of food, its imports are also very substantial and growing: in 2010 food imports into the EU-27 were estimated to be worth €75 billion, with €73 billion of exports, leaving a small trade deficit. The main categories were fish and shellfish worth €17 billion, fruit and vegetable €20 billion and coffee, tea and cocoa €13 billion. Among the top exporters to the EU were Brazil and Argentina. For 2013, the Commission (not Eurostat as such) reported that despite the general slowdown in world trade, imports had risen to €101 billion, and exports had leapt ahead to €130 billion.

### THE CREATION OF BTSF WORLD

In 2006, BTSF was offering a modest programme on EU food standards and avian influenza to non-EU countries, which has gradually expanded over the years. This programme already included the two flagship training activities still used today: regional workshops and sustained training missions (STMs). The workshops bring together expert staff from within a specific region to be trained over a few days on topics relevant to the whole region. The STMs are expert assistance missions tailor-made for the beneficiary to address a specific problem in a specific country where this problem hinders trade with the EU. These STMs are highly valued because they provide first-hand expert information rapidly and in a flexible way. In this they are quite different from other assistance programmes. STMs often mean the difference between life and death for a food sector.

As well as the EU Food Standard programme, other programmes directed at non-EU countries have also been progressively



implemented: the RASFF/TRACES programme, the animal health programme, the GMO analysis programme and the Food Testing programme. In addition, between 2010 and 2012, a specific programme targeting Africa (BTSF Africa) involved consecutive regional workshops on animal health and welfare, plant health and food safety and quality. Their cumulated content was brought together in a reference document on how to implement the international guidelines on food hygiene as developed in the Codex Alimentarius.

Since 2013, two new programmes have replaced most of the training activities in non-EU countries.

- BTSF-International Standard-Setting Bodies (ISSB) was set up to further extend efforts by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Trade to develop international standardisation processes. International SPS standards were developed by the three standard-setting bodies (Codex Alimentarius Commission, World Health Organisation for Animal Health and International Plant Protection Convention), and have since acquired legal relevance as governments are encouraged to base their own corpus of law on them. These standards are now used as references in cases of trade dispute between World Trade Organisation members. BTSF-ISSB is aimed at increasing participants' awareness of ISSB procedures and improving their ability to participate effectively and efficiently in meetings held by these organisations. Thanks to a balance between theoretical and practical work, workshop participants are guided through the details of ISSB, and taught how best to explain their own country's position.

- BTSF World is mostly devoted to strengthening SPS measures in non-EU countries anywhere in the world. Trade at the local, regional and international levels is a major catalyst for the development of a country's businesses, including smallholder farmers. Through the provision of technical training to both authorities and the private sector, BTSF World works towards improving food safety and hence food security. Its present phase is scheduled to end in mid-2016. In 2014, 15 workshops were held on subjects ranging from animal disease control in Vietnam to fishery products and bivalve molluscs in Jamaica. In the animal health area, Paraguay and Botswana hosted workshops on Foot and Mouth Disease, Ukraine on African Swine Fever, while Vietnam, Thailand and Brazil had seminars on animal health and animal welfare. Plant protection workshops were held in Kenya, India, Morocco, Vietnam, Thailand and the Dominican Republic. China and Brazil hosted workshops on risk analysis.

## IS IT JUST TRAINING, OR IS IT A TRADE DIALOGUE?

Non-EU countries have been involved in BTSF training since the programme's start, learning the ins and outs of EU legislation and enforcement measures on feed and feed law, animal health and welfare and plant health. The more recent launch of BTSF World has formalised what was already a fruitful and long-standing relationship, and has reinforced the initiative's trade angle. Trade relations represent a process of multilateral and bilateral negotiation agreements that is an ever-changing area needing constant updates.

### TESTIMONIAL

*"We're a consulting company and one of the first contractors to have worked on BTSF. That was in 2006 and our first programme was EU Food Standards in Third Countries, which is now part of the BTSF World programme."*

*"We organised our first regional workshop in Indonesia in April 2006. It was about EU fisheries and aquaculture standards and was aimed at ASEAN countries. It was very well perceived by the authorities because they needed this information so as to limit rejection at EU border controls."*

*"In 2008, BTSF introduced sustained training missions bringing targeted support to non-EU countries, in addition to the regional workshops. We find it tremendously stimulating to provide direct support in answer to specific issues. The impact is immediately measurable."*

### FABRICE CLAVERIE

Director Economic Development, Quality and Safety  
Department at the consulting company Aets, Lons,  
France located near the French Pyrenees.



*In non-EU countries the main goal is to explain EU sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) requirements, including animal welfare rules.*

The EU has to guarantee the safety of its imports and ensure that European standards are scrupulously respected on meat, fish, shellfish, fruit and vegetables, and also on live animals and plants, sometimes by countries where national or regional controls may be less strict or non-existent. If farmers and small-scale producers in poorer countries are better informed about SPS regulations — what they mean and how to implement them in the management of livestock and plants — the trade benefits follow naturally for them, while domestic health and food security is also improved. Increased trade in turn creates employment and development in the countries of origin. Ensuring that hygiene and health rules are respected can be a way out of poverty for many smallholders and agricultural workers in developing countries.

The respective strengths of various food safety standards are open to discussion, but the EU's are indisputably the most wide-reaching. As a result, increasing numbers of non-EU countries now require that their importers comply with EU SPS requirements for their imports.

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#### **TRAINING AND SYNERGIES**

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BTSF World workshops take place in Africa and European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) countries, South and Central America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. Unlike BTSF training in EU countries where the focus is very much on the harmonisation of controls, in non-EU countries the main goal is to explain EU sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) requirements, including animal welfare rules.

The EU's food standards programme covers a range of subjects, from fruit and vegetable to residues and contaminants. The training itself may look at developments in EU standards on fishery and aquaculture, phytosanitary standards, food contact material, the control and monitoring of residue and contaminant, traceability and food labelling, animal health and welfare, risk assessment, ISSB work and the World Trade Organisation's sanitary and phytosanitary standards.

By increasing market access, BTSF training complements assistance programmes in place in developing countries. This has meant fruitful synergies between DG SANTE and other European Commission departments, including the Directorate-General for Trade and the Directorate-General for Development and Cooperation.

For participants, the most popular activities are the regional workshops focussed on subjects of concern to several countries in the region. On top of a theoretical and hands-on approach to EU regulations, they also provide excellent opportunities for networking with colleagues from neighbouring countries.

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#### **GETTING TO A CRISIS AREA QUICKLY**

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BTSF World's Sustained Training Missions (STMs) were a groundbreaking addition to the non-EU BTSF programme thanks to a rapid response mechanism that cuts through the kind of administrative delays that can sometimes leave an urgent problem unsolved for several years. If a product carries health risks, imports can theoretically be interrupted with dramatic







consequences for the exporting country, including a halt to trade. Although this happens extremely rarely, the new mechanism can, within weeks, organise training in that country that will deal with the issue and allow the borders to be reopened.

As mentioned earlier, STMs have two considerable strengths: they are tailor-made to each situation and they are unusually flexible, including in the topics handled. Carried out using information provided, among others, by the inspectors from the Commission's inspection service FVO, they are aimed at resolving problems that may occur after an FVO audit, a natural disaster or a number of other events. Through a country's relevant authorities and private sector, FVO inspectors may hear that shrimp mortality is increasing rapidly, meaning an interruption in exports. Within a few weeks, BTSF experts can set up a training roadmap, make regular visits to the country to help those concerned with fixing the crisis and ensure that their solutions meet the EU's food safety import requirements. STMs are also extremely valuable because

they can bridge gaps between larger assistance programmes, and they make it possible to work jointly and complementarily with UN organisations on very specific issues. They also act as pilots for future work, and allow for harmonised approaches, as some regions may learn from what others have learned.

Such missions have included one to Mozambique aimed at strengthening control systems of veterinary medicinal products' residue in the country's aquaculture sector, and training sessions about the EU's traceability system TRACES in Cuba, Indonesia, the Philippines and Tanzania. Interventions can be extremely varied, from data collection on dietary exposure in Laos to assisting the 'seeds for sprouting' sector in Myanmar or supporting the traditional fishing sector in the Caribbean. Missions to Myanmar covered prawn production, including how to optimise procedures for hatching, Artemia production and solar salt production, as well as preparation for future assistance projects. Other missions concerned prawns in Cambodia, the setting up of animal welfare standards in Thailand and Brazil, and foot and mouth disease in Botswana and Paraguay.

In 2014, BTSF World organised 17 STMs on food safety and plant health (Cuba, Tanzania, the Philippines, Laos, Indonesia, Myanmar and Mozambique) and on animal health or welfare (Paraguay, Myanmar, Vietnam, Thailand, Botswana, Ukraine, Brazil and Cambodia).



#### TESTIMONIAL

*"I am the national contact point for BTSF in Morocco, representing the National Office of Food Safety, and BTSF is one of our foremost programmes for reinforcing the capacities of our administration's staff. Every year, roughly 30 of our officials go on training abroad within this programme on EU food health and safety legislation so that we can meet the EU's import requirements."*

*"Participants are generally very pleased with the training. We have also hosted several BTSF activities in Morocco, including regional workshops and sustained training missions, which has allowed even more Moroccan participants to take part."*

**ZEINEB EL BOUCHIKHI**

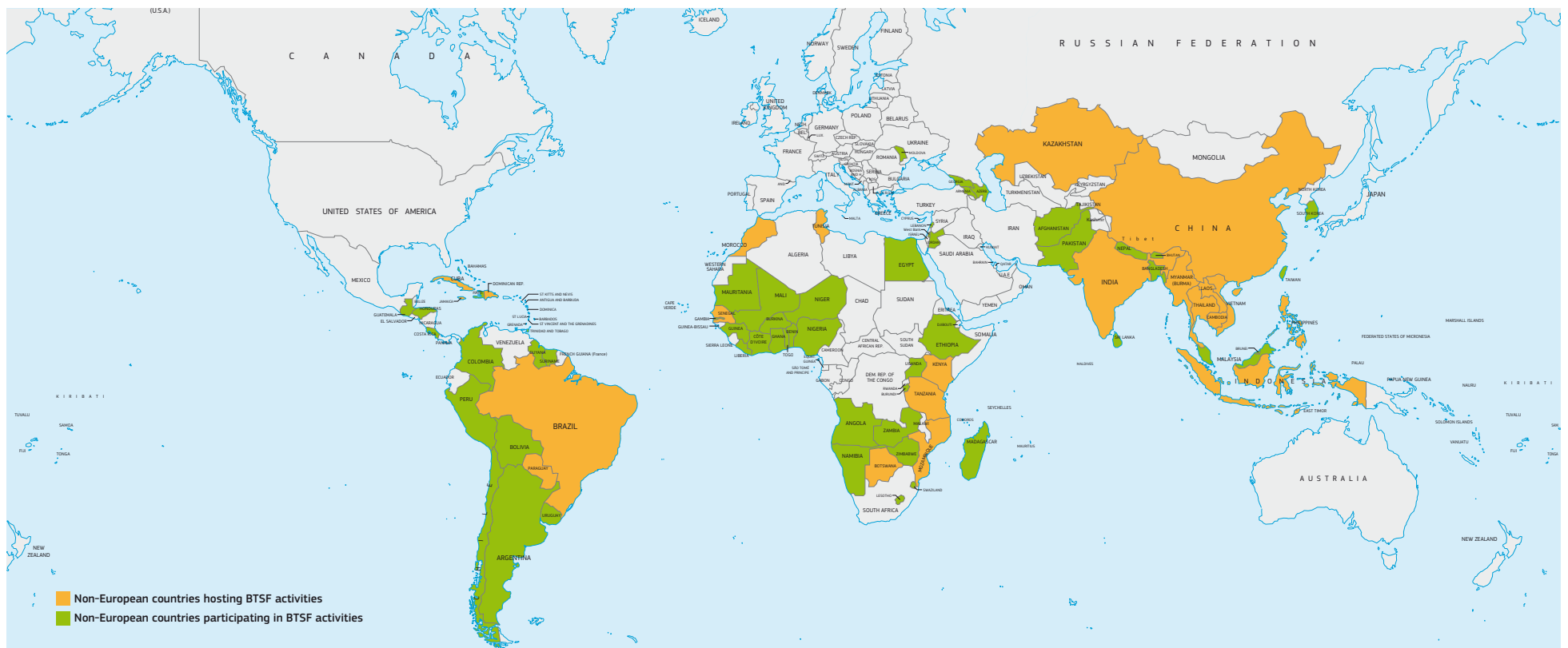
Head of international cooperation at the National Office of Food Safety, Morocco.





## Helping exporters from outside the EU

### NON-EUROPEAN COUNTRIES PARTICIPATING IN OR HOSTING BTSF ACTIVITIES IN 2014



Source: Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency





# Challenges in a complex world

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## THE NEXT TEN YEARS: EXPANDING TRAINING FOR FOOD SAFETY INSPECTORS

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**T**he BTSF training initiative is ten years old, and the European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) has used the initiative to raise the Commission's profile on sanitary and phytosanitary issues in the EU and beyond. From its launch in 2005 until 2014, BTSF welcomed more than 48 000 participants from most of the countries around the globe. Now that attendance figures and demand for more courses are soaring, the time has come to take a realistic look at how BTSF can further develop its scope and potential without raising its budgetary requirements.



*BTSF's success can be ascribed in part to an open-minded approach that has led its instigator — DG SANTE — to regularly rethink priorities so as to extend its reach beyond the EU.*

BTSF's success can be ascribed in part to an open-minded approach that has led its instigator — DG SANTE — to regularly rethink priorities so as to extend its reach beyond the EU, thanks also to such activities as sustained training and technical assistance missions. DG SANTE is extremely attentive to feedback questionnaires and comments from Commission staff who have participated in the workshops, and those from Member States. At this point, roughly two thirds of the training takes place in the EU, and one third in non-EU countries, mostly in the developing world. The feedback is extremely positive and proof that veterinarians and other official food inspection staff want this kind of high-level training, and that they appreciate it when they have access to it.

At this stage in its development BTSF requires a very structured organisational approach if it is to build on its achievements. At the same time, it must maintain the flexibility that has been among its strengths, as well as its capacity to respond to urgent worldwide training needs in EU sanitary and phytosanitary standards. These two qualities are among BTSF's top assets.

In the current climate of budgetary restrictions, the Commission's DG SANTE has been creating fruitful synergies with other organisations and Commission departments, including DG Development and Cooperation for the launch of BTSF World and DG Trade for the programmes on international standard-setting bodies.

Among the growing challenges identified in a European Commission Staff Working Document adopted in 2010 were the

increasing requests for high-quality training, a more demand-driven approach, clearer identification of priorities, extending and better defining target audiences and improving dissemination and evaluation methods. The goal is to increase the size and quality of BTSF, while also developing its impact and productivity. As this is very much a four-pronged approach, the better contractors and national institutions communicate with DG SANTE and the Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency (Chafea) the more efficient the food safety training will be.

The Staff Working Document suggested several strategies to put in place by the end of 2013 involving no staff or budget increases, including: an e-learning pilot project for more basic-level training; an effort to develop training and co-financing through closer cooperation with other Commission services, EU and non-EU country authorities, international organisations and the private sector; and strengthening the invaluable train-the-trainer approach. These objectives have all been met, along with the launch of a study on best training practices. It was felt that an impact evaluation tool — a questionnaire or checklist, or both — would help obtain a more accurate idea of the training's impact on the ground.

DG SANTE is evaluating the cost effectiveness of BTSF activities before deciding how best to structure BTSF in the future. This evaluation will include the development of a model to measure the impact of training courses, as well as the identification of future needs and an assessment of BTSF's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges.





TESTIMONIAL

## DIVERSIFYING TRAINING ACTIVITIES

The expertise in particular training areas among the official veterinarians and other official inspectors who take part in the training sessions can vary, which can raise audience homogeneity issues. Furthermore, many of the tutors, who are mostly from public administrations and the academic world, are not always free to lead or participate in a particular training event. DG SANTE is looking at ways to counter this obstacle.

- The pilot project on e-learning has shown encouraging initial results for basic-level training, and the plan is to engage further and at a larger scale in this direction to cover most of the running face-to-face training. Along the same lines, an interactive e-learning forum is envisaged with developing countries for both basic and more advanced courses. Interactive discussion about EU sanitary and phytosanitary measures can only raise awareness all around, and make everyone safer from food scares and scams. It would also encourage the creation of networks bringing together EU officials with services in the EU and beyond.
- Co-financing by EU and national budgets would reinforce the scope of BTSF, and demonstrate how national governments can only gain from understanding the EU angle on food safety issues, and vice versa. The training of inspection staff is the responsibility of Member States, but additional EU training contributes to harmonising the way they work, which is fundamental to food safety for the EU consumer. Bringing in the private sector for jointly organised and funded training sessions would also be a way of answering specific demands from industry.

### High demand to be met by even smoother operations

*Since 2009, when Chafea took over BTSF's execution from the Commission's DG SANTE, the number of training events has almost doubled; we now handle some 30 topics a year, instead of the small handful in 2006. We train some 6 000 people every year and demand is steadily increasing. People are asking the Commission to cover more and more topics.*

*The question is how to meet this demand while staying flexible, innovative and efficient. One solution is new technologies, such as the new e-learning scheme we've been managing in pilot form. It's a powerful tool for knowledge sharing that will give officials across the EU direct access to the latest information on food safety legislation. The challenge will be to smoothly integrate these new tools and operations into a system that until now has been highly effective and that we don't want to change radically.*

*While e-learning is one way of spreading BTSF training around the EU, we're looking at other ways too. We are planning a BTSF platform that should offer many benefits for the dissemination of BTSF training*

*material, and that would also stimulate networking among EU countries' officials and allow for best practice exchanges.*

*Lastly, we have been working hard at streamlining tendering procedures and cutting administrative tasks at both ends. Submitting a proposal can be difficult and even confusing for potential clients, and our agency has been simplifying procedures and promoting online tendering processes, which means less time and effort for all concerned.*

*Our longer-term ambition is to offer a single online application process by merging the various databases we have a present, and by requesting fewer details from applicants. By storing details online, applicants will not have to start the process from scratch when they want to use BTSF on another occasion. So the watchword is to move with the times without losing our commitment to delivering top-quality services to our partners and stakeholders.*

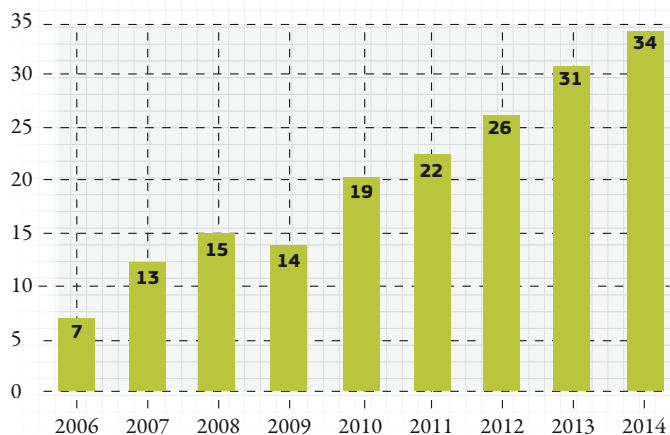


**LUC BRIOL**

Director, Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency (Chafea).

## Challenges in a complex world

NUMBER OF BTSF TRAINING PROGRAMMES  
BY YEAR, 2006-2014



Source: Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency

### WHICH AUDIENCES SHOULD BTSF BE TARGETING?

Another way of making the courses more effective is to target them more precisely, for instance by aiming the training at different levels, and perhaps extending it to other sectors concerned with food safety — customs, legal enforcement authorities and the judicial sector.

Very soon after its inception it was felt that BTSF should develop two course levels — basic and advanced — to reflect participants' expertise. This is likely to be extended to all programmes. If budgets allow, BTSF will open up to languages other than English, French and German, the languages it uses most frequently. In some instances working with interpreters would greatly ease communication.

One basic principle of BTSF training is that it contributes to harmonising the manner in which regulations are understood and applied across the EU and in non-EU countries wanting to export to the EU. Another is the 'train-the-trainers' approach — whereby participants return to their home countries and train other inspectors. The more efficiently this happens the better BTSF programmes are disseminated across the EU and to other countries, particularly developing countries that want to export to the EU. Close coordination with international bodies would avoid any unnecessary duplication of work.

### HOW COULD THE QUALITY OF TRAINING BE IMPROVED?

Although the EU has some excellent trainers in various aspects of food safety, they are not always available, nor is BTSF necessarily aware of them, or them of BTSF training. Summer schools might be a way of bringing together high-level tutors and trainees while at the same time creating a community of good practice. Exchange programmes too could enhance training — EU inspection officials could work for a time in another country, and vice versa, and both parties would be enriched by the experience.

The EU's official inspectors are vital to the health of EU citizens. Among other suggestions, DG SANTE believes that the establishment of a post-graduate training centre with certification would raise skill levels among these inspectors. Such a centre would be established in close coordination with EU countries and would encourage collaboration with international organisations and non-EU countries, including developing countries. The idea of an alumni network has been mooted.

The balance between theory and practice is not always easy to achieve, but it is indispensable if the objective is that of well-rounded expertise. For this reason, DG SANTE is promoting the idea of a database centralising a network of key international experts who could be called upon to train for BTSF, and also to go on missions with the Commission's Food and Veterinary Office. These experts would include academics, official control staff, experts from the private sector and consultants.





TESTIMONIAL

## MAKING DISSEMINATION A PRIORITY

Dissemination of EU legislation, rules and standards has been one of DG SANTE's key concerns from the start, and although this has been carried out effectively, the system could be reinforced with the provision of simple and clear learning tools and documentation to all participants, the creation of e-learning platforms, and a formal commitment to actively promote the distribution of information by Member States, with plans designed by national authorities and other stakeholders. The more EU country officials know what their peers are doing in other parts of the EU and around the world, the greater the chance will be that they are all working in the same direction. Greater coordination means safer food.

### BTSF deserves to grow

*BTSF is such a successful tool that we'd like to spread its use to topics that are not necessarily within the remit of DG SANTE, such as sustainable food production and food security. BTSF training could also involve the environmental impact of food production, and how to assess and control this impact.*

*Member States have asked us about these topics, and the BTSF tool would be a good way of spreading and harmonising information across the EU. So far, overwhelmingly positive feedback has come from participants and Member State authorities, but now we are also going to assess BTSF's impact in the field via the development of objective assessment methods.*

*Beyond budgetary limitations, we have one main constraint and that is the availability of both trainers and participants, which means that we must look for ways to reach more people outside the training sessions.*

*One new training approach is via e-learning. Although still in its pilot phase, we have developed 10 modules covering 10 topics — we could use these modules for basic training, and reserve tutors and workshops for more advanced training. In addition, we are exploring*

*in the longer term the feasibility of summer schools and training centres in EU countries, as well as targeting new audiences in the private sector and among other stakeholders.*

*Language is another challenge — just English isn't enough. That's not a problem with e-learning modules, except for translation costs, and to keep those down we might have to choose a handful of languages rather than all the EU's official languages. As for workshops, we are considering giving regional workshops in the language common to most people in that geographical area.*

*Our other big challenge is dissemination, as obviously the training sessions are not aimed at training every single official across the EU. For this, we intend to reinforce the "train the trainer" approach, whereby the trainee becomes a tutor back home. We increasingly encourage EU countries to select participants for BTSF training sessions for their pedagogical and communication skills. FVO, the Food and Veterinary Office, will provide feedback on compliance with our dissemination goals. We are too useful not to expand our scope.*



**BERNARD VAN GOETHEM**

Director, Veterinary and International Affairs, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety.



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## Abbreviations

**BIP:** Border inspection post  
**BSE:** Bovine spongiform encephalopathy  
**BTSF:** Better Training for Safer Food  
**CCPs:** Critical control points  
**Chafea:** Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency  
**DG SANTE:** Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety  
**EFSA:** European Food Safety Authority  
**ENP:** European Neighbourhood Policy  
**FAO:** Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations  
**FVO:** Food and Veterinary Office  
**GMO:** Genetically modified organism  
**HACCP:** Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point  
**ISSB:** International standard-setting body  
**NCP:** National contact point  
**OIE:** World Organisation for Animal Health  
**RASFF:** Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed  
**SPS:** Sanitary and phytosanitary  
**STM:** Sustained training mission  
**TRACES:** Trade Control and Expert System  
**TSE:** Transmissible spongiform encephalopathy  
**UN:** United Nations  
**WTO:** World Trade Organization

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