

Food Safety Commission of Japan Annual Work Program for Fiscal Year 2012 (Excerpt)

Food Safety Commission of Japan (FSCJ) has compiled its annual work program of fiscal year 2012.

The program focuses on, among others, the following five objectives:

1. Effective implementation of risk assessments;
2. Promoting risk communication with stakeholders;
3. Encouraging survey and research programmes;
4. Improving efficiency of information and data collection; and
5. Strengthening capacity for emergency response

Below is an excerpt from the original full text of the program which is written only in Japanese available at <http://www.fsc.go.jp/iinkai/uneikeikaku24.pdf>.

1. Effective implementation of risk assessments

1-1 Time management of risk assessments (Ongoing)

Risk assessments, upon requests made by risk management organizations¹, should be conducted in an intensive and timely manner as they are required for setting risk control measures.

Risk assessments, upon applications submitted from industries through risk management organizations, should be carried out in a fixed time of period (generally it is one year) after receiving dossiers, excluding time required for collection of further data and documents as requested by relevant expert committees.

1-2 Development of risk assessment guidelines (Ongoing)

To facilitate FSCJ's risk assessment process and ensure its transparency, FSCJ should develop hazard-specific risk assessment guidelines on priority basis. For FY 2012, a paper on risk assessment of metabolites and/or degradation of pesticide will be developed.

1-3 FSCJ's self-tasking risk assessments (Ongoing)

FSCJ should continue to plan and implement self-tasking risk assessments², taking into account public opinions and experts' views on food safety. It also continue to do periodical reviews of

¹ Consumer Affairs Agency (CAA), Ministry of Health Labour and Welfare (MHLW), Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), and Ministry of Environment (MOE)

² FSCJ's self-tasking risk assessment is defined as a comprehensive process comprising the following steps: i) identification and selection of hazard-items in priority; ii) generation and collection of relevant data and information; iii) elaboration of a risk profile to each hazard-item selected; and iv) assessment of risks to the selected hazards and publication of outcomes. However FSCJ does not necessarily go through the entire process for all the hazard-items selected.

the hazard-items in the short list selected so far, so as to adequately meet demands for protection of public health.

Outcome of self-tasking risk assessments, when they become available, should be disseminated to public in appropriate manners, e.g. convening public meetings and/or issuance of formal publications.

In selecting hazard-items for FSCJ's self-tasking risk assessments, FSCJ will follow the schedule below:

- In July, call for public opinions and experts' views and requests on food safety hazards for FSCJ's self-tasking risk assessments, then compile their opinions and requests;
- In August, preparation of a draft short list of hazard-items for self-tasking risk assessments by FSCJ Secretariat;
- From September to February, provisional selection of hazard items in priority from the short list above; and
- In March 2013, finalizing the list of hazard-items for self-tasking risk assessments in FY 2013

For the hazard-items already selected so far for the self-tasking risk assessments, the following actions be made:

- For the eight microbiological hazard-items selected and risk-profiled (e.g. viruses in shellfish), FSCJ will not proceed with their self-tasking risk assessments, noting that two of them i.e. *E.coli* in beef and *Listeria monocytogenes* in Ready-To-Eat foods are subject to risk assessments upon requests from MHLW.
- FSCJ continues discussion at relevant expert committees on: lead in foods; apparatus and food containers/packaging materials; BSE potential risks in beef and beef offal imported from countries with no BSE case reported; and ochratoxin A.
- FSCJ continues to collect data and information on aluminum, acrylamide, cadmium and arsenic (both inorganic and organic) for future discussion at relevant expert committees in FY 2012.

Where necessary and appropriate, FSCJ prepares "Fact-sheets" and/or FAQs (frequently asked questions) on the hazard-items, which have not been selected finally for self-tasking risk assessments, to be placed on FSCJ's website.

2. Promoting risk communication with stakeholders

2-1 Convening public meetings to provide risk assessment outcomes (Ongoing)

FSCJ should hold public meetings to exchange views and information on risk assessment outcomes with stakeholders. To address issues of great public concern and interest, such meetings be arranged to be suitable for learning details of the outcomes and their scientific basis.

2-2 Full use of effective tools to effectively disseminate information (Ongoing)

FSCJ should make full use of various tools (e.g. FSCJ's website, free subscription of weekly e-mail newsletters, quarterly journals and brochures) to effectively provide food safety related information on matters of great public concern.

“Food Safety Hotline” is another tool, which has been operated to receive calls from consumers and directly answer their questions. Communication made on this Hotline is shared among relevant ministries (i.e. MHLW, MAFF and CAA) and summarized to be placed on FSCJ's website as well as to be reported to the Commission meetings.

FSCJ should continue to organize study sessions and/or round table conferences with participation of stakeholders including media and consumer groups and facilitate exchange of view and information on risk assessments responsive to issues of great public concern. For better education on food safety, FSCJ provides expertise to educational seminars arranged by local governments and/or institutes. Educational materials e.g. DVDs are used to help increase public awareness on food safety risk assessments.

3. Encouraging survey and research programmes

3-1 Explore risk assessment methodologies (Ongoing)

FSCJ should continue to promote research programmes which would produce useful results for FSCJ's risk assessments. The programmes should also contribute to improve risk assessment methodologies. The Committee on Planning and Coordination of research/survey programmes is responsible for better identification of subjects and matters fit for the purpose above.

3-2 Prioritizing areas of survey and research programmes (Ongoing)

Selecting new survey and research programmes should be based on the FSCJ's five year plan as directed for precise identification of areas and subjects. The programmes should be selected on priority basis to ensure their outcomes meet demands of food safety and public health. Call for research proposals should consider open recruitment that ensures applicants from a large number of research institutes including universities. The selection process should be transparent to ensure that the selected programmes are qualified.

4. Improving efficiency of information and data collection

4-1 Use of structured network (Ongoing)

FSCJ should continue to collect, on a daily basis, the latest technical and scientific information on food safety available at domestic or international level. In doing so, FSCJ, using structured networks, should closely communicate with relevant experts and with concerned organizations, i.e. MHLW, MAFF, CAA, MOE as well as with international organizations. The collected information is analyzed and accumulated in a web-based database called the "Comprehensive Information System for Food Safety". The information is shared among stakeholders by compiling in a "Hazard sheet" to be available in a public domain.

5. Strengthening capacity for emergency response

5-1 Preparedness and response to emergency situations (Ongoing)

FSCJ should be prepared for any emergency situation to occur at any time. FSCJ should maintain or improve the networks mentioned above 4-1 for quick collection of ready-availability-information. FSCJ should also organize a food safety emergency drill annually. The Steering and Planning Committee is responsible for reviewing and updating

preparedness and emergency procedures of FSCJ. In 2012, periodical training programmes should be provided to the Secretariat's staff-members in consecutive months between April to October. In addition, the annual drill on food safety emergency response should be held in November, to be followed by a wrap-up to review FSCJ's capacity to effective response to future events.

5-2 Quick review of scientific data as part of risk assessments (when emergency situation arises)

In a food safety emergency event e.g. a fatal food poisoning case, FSCJ should closely work with relevant ministries and organizations so as to promptly provide public with relevant scientific and toxicological information. This information may be compiled in a comprehensive quick review and a risk assessment required for emergency response.

6. Others

The FSCJ should continue its effort to enhance international cooperation through the following activities:

- convening regular meetings with food safety risk assessment bodies abroad, i.e. European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and Food Safety Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), based on the Memoranda of Cooperation as exchanged so far;
- holding discussion with other organizations and exchange information and view on matters of interest, where necessary and appropriate;
- timely providing up-to-date information on its activities including risk assessment reports, survey and research results in both English and Japanese mediums; and
- organizing an annual seminar or workshop on food safety inviting researchers and experts from abroad, with a view to learning the latest scientific knowledge as required for appropriate implementation of risk assessments.