



Concept Note: Pre-Event Session of the Geneva International Forum on Food Safety and Trade

Title: “Estimation of national burden of foodborne diseases – an investment for a better food safety system”

Tuesday, 23 April 2019; 10.00-11:30 hours

I. Background

Foodborne disease is one of the most prevalent, yet under reported classes of illnesses in the world. Annually around 1 in 10 people around the world suffer from foodborne disease, with diarrheal diseases being the most common. Although most foodborne diarrheal diseases are self-resolving, it is often overlooked that significant numbers of diarrheal cases can develop more severe forms of illness. These include reactive arthritis, Guillain Barre syndrome, septicemia, and mortality.

The global burden of foodborne disease report conducted by WHO in 2015 was the first initiative on such an expansive global scale. The results generated estimated up to 33 million healthy life years lost per year, highlighting the magnitude of this category of still largely un-addressed and under-reported disease. At least 420,000 deaths can be attributed to foodborne diseases annually, with children under the age of five accounting for a third of this number. The study has not only highlighted the impact of foodborne disease but also the need for action in order to address the issue.

Foodborne diseases are preventable and everyone from policy makers to consumers have an important role to play. In addition, food safety is an important facet of trade, especially given how globalized the food chain is. Ensuring the safety of both domestic and imported / exported food can facilitate economic growth and healthier populations. The World Bank calculated the domestic costs of unsafe food to be at least US\$110 billion in the low-middle income countries alone. It is of utmost importance for countries to address the burden of foodborne disease internally in order to take necessary steps in formulating robust policies to ensure food safety, healthier populations and sustainable development.

II. Scope and objective

The main aim of this session is to increase awareness and further emphasize the importance for intervention at government, policy and regulatory levels to address the need for safe food and allocate resources to the improvement of food safety systems. The burden of foodborne disease and the contributing factors vary throughout regions and countries. Hence, there is a need to identify these factors through which the resulting burden can be estimated for individual countries. The process of burden estimation itself is already a step in the right direction - toward strengthening the countries food safety system. The initial situation analysis is a multi-sector approach which will be useful in identifying both strong points and gaps in the system. Data collection and subsequent burden estimations strengthened by economic burden estimations of foodborne disease can be used as a tool to convey the priority issues to policy makers. This session hopes to recapitulate the significance of foodborne disease and advocate countries to commit to improving national food safety systems.

Objectives:

- Recapitulate the global foodborne disease burden and economic costs of foodborne diseases
- Stress the benefits of assessing the foodborne disease burden and cost in your country
- Share experiences, challenges and solutions

III. Panel Themes

The burden of foodborne disease and estimating its impact – a global and national perspective

The burden of foodborne diseases study published by WHO in 2015, provided results at global and regional levels. Although the estimates were conservative and did not address some foodborne hazards, the burden was considerable, and mostly borne by children under 5 years of age. Regionally the burden per population was greatest in Africa followed by South East Asian and Eastern Mediterranean regions. Within regions there will also be national variation and the global study fostered national burden estimates through pilot studies in four countries. The value of conducting a national foodborne disease study for a country lies in capacity building, situation analysis, identification of data gaps and strengthening of national food safety systems.

Addressing the economic burden of foodborne disease

The impact of foodborne disease extends from health consequences and food security issues to an economic burden as clearly illustrated in the safe food imperative report published by the World Bank earlier this year. The economic burden resulting from food borne diseases take a plethora of forms from the public health cost to a cost measurable in loss of productivity as well as its impact on food trade and businesses. The public health cost estimate of food borne diseases in LIMCs alone is estimated to a staggering 15.1 billion USD in 2010. The cost effect totality of foodborne disease on the economy of a country is a clear indication of a need for more investment on food safety systems and governance policies surrounding it.

Disease burden estimation in practice – A country perspective

Given the array of diverse microbes, parasites, toxins and chemicals capable of causing foodborne illness, it is important for countries to determine the causative agents of importance with respect to the situation. The report on estimating foodborne disease published by WHO recommends an initial situational analysis which was carried out in the pilot studies carried out in the project as well. The steps of estimating foodborne disease can be customized on a situational basis and according to country requirements. An outlook on the challenges and collaborative information sharing between countries is an opportunity for developing effective solutions.

TENTATIVE PROGRAMME		
Estimation of national burden of foodborne diseases – an investment for a better food safety system		
Tuesday, 23 April 2019		
10.00-11.30		
WTO Headquarters, Geneva		
10:00-10:10	<i>Welcome and Introduction</i>	Kazuaki Miyagishima (Moderator) Director, Food Safety and Zoonoses and Foodborne Diseases, WHO
10:10-10:20	<i>Keynote</i>	Barbara Kowalczyk Assistant Professor, Department of Food Science and Technology, Ohio State University
11:20-10:50	Panel Themes	
	The burden of foodborne disease and estimating its impact – a global and national perspective	Rob Lake Manager, Risk Assessment and Social Systems, Institute of Environmental Science and Research Limited
	Addressing the economic burden of foodborne disease	Delia Grace Co-Leader, Animal and Human Health, International Livestock Research Institute
	Disease burden estimation in practice – A country perspective	Lindita Molla Head, Food Safety & Nutrition, Health & Environmental Department, Institute of Public Health Albania
10:50-11:20	<i>Questions and Answers</i>	
11:20-13:00	<i>Conclusion / Closing Remarks</i>	Naoko Yamamoto ADG Healthier Populations, WHO Kazuaki Miyagishima (Moderator)