

Purpose of the project

Food Hygiene and Food Safety in the Baltic region – Focus on Food is a joint EU project between German, Polish and Swedish control authorities in the food sector. The project's idea is to harmonize the way in which we interpret our common food legislation. We also want to raise competence among control staff and increase interest in food hygiene and food related issues among food businesses and consumers.

The project has been running for a year and all the 14 partners have so far been participating in two conferences: one kick off conference in Malmö, Sweden in October 2011 and a reconciliation meeting in Szczecin, Poland in May 2012. The project is part financed by the European Union (European Regional Development Fund).

Activities

1. We have created a similar checklist which contains similar control points for auditing food producers. During this summer we will use this checklist for auditing food business in the partaking countries. This will help the control authority to focus on the same risks in the food businesses. It also ensures that the food producer will have an equivalent assessment of their food businesses throughout the whole region.

2. Small-scale fish smokeries are common in our region and we want to harmonize the way in which we audit fish smokeries. A guideline will help the food inspectors and an information leaflet will help businesses involved in fish smoking.

3. We want to create a question bank which could be used to carry out an inventory of fields in which there is a need for raise of competence among control staff. The purpose is to create an essential guide book for inspectors of official food control. During the period between the conferences in Malmö in October 2011 and in Szczecin, May 2012, all participants of this working group completed tasks for the guide book over food safety, for example GMO, RASFF, HACCP, food poisonings and microbiological threats. Following year we will continue with for example: food contamination, additives, aromatic substances/enzymes and labeling, as well as general requirements concerning safety of producing and marketing of food.

4. We will carry out a work exchange between inspectors in participating countries in order to raise competence and experience. The first two work exchanges between Poland and Germany has been taken place, first in Poland in Mars and now in the beginning of June in Germany. The participants found it very interesting and it went very well. This fall Germans will come to Sweden.

5. Four conferences will be arranged during the whole project. Half of them are already done. All activities will take place mainly during the conferences which also will include external lecturers in order to increase the competence among control staff.

6. In order to raise interest and knowledge about food legislation and food hygiene, we have plotted different award systems within the Baltic Sea Region which aims to make knowledge about hygiene at producer level available to consumers. We will continue gathering negative and positive aspects and experiences with the award systems and gather addresses to presumptive interest groups.

7. The work with the website focus-on-food.eu has progressed very well and the Joint Technical Secretariat commented it in Project Progress Report I as “very nicely designed, user-friendly and updated”.

8. We want to create an information leaflet for crossborder traders with information regarding legislation. During this summer and all festivals we can audit the traders with our checklist and then evaluate in the activity group.

Target groups and aims

The groups that will take part of the outcome from the project are food businesses and consumers in the partnership area. Within the working field, control staff colleagues and food business organizations are the target groups. The expected results is a better understanding and interpretation of our common food legislation. We will get a higher degree of competence and experience among control staff and raise the interest in questions related to food safety and food hygiene both among food businesses and consumers. Since there is a free movement of goods and services within the EU this project will contribute to the decrease of obstacles for food businesses when they want to establish in different parts of the Baltic Sea Region.

- *I am really impressed of what have happened so far in the project and by all hard work with preparations, says the new project leader Caroline. It is now when the fun part starts and we can use the checklist and all the other information that we have compiled and start seeing the results of our hard work.*

Caroline Nilsson, project leader, Malmö



Participants of Reconciliation meeting in Szczecin, May 2012