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|  | **EUROPEAN COMMISSION****CONSUMERS HEALTH AND FOOD EXECUTIVE AGENCY****Contract 2013 96 10**Organisation and implementation of training activities on strengthening Member States' response to Union audits under the Better Training for Safer Food initiative |

Invitation to attend BTSF training Workshop

OFFICIAL CONTROLS OVER MICROBIOLOGICAL CRITERIA

To be held at FVO, Grange, Ireland on 26 – 28 MAY 2015

Dear Applicant

Member States have previously been informed of the European Commission's intention to discuss overview reports of FVO audit series in the context of a BTSF programme "Organisation and implementation of training activities on strengthening Member States' response to Union audits under the Better Training for Safer Food initiative"

The FVO carried out 12 audits between 2011 and 2013 in the Member States in order to evaluate the official controls over microbiological criteria. Besides the individual audit reports, an overview report [report DG(SANCO)2013-7244] was published in 2014. The FVO audits revealed several shortcomings in relation to the organisation of official controls on microbiological criteria. The shortcomings were partly attributed to the lack of specific training on the topic. Furthermore it was noted that training provided in relation to the official controls had been inadequate or had been organised only recently.

It is proposed to present and discuss the overview report at a training workshop to be held under contract 2013 96 10 of the BTSF initiative. The workshop is being organised by Food Safety Training Solutions (FSTS) Consortium.

If you are interested in participating in this event, please complete the application form at the end of this document and send to your National Contact Point by **Wednesday 6 May** if possible.

**Overall objective**

The overall objective of BTSF training under this contract is to strengthen Member States’ response to FVO audits.

Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council concerns official controls performed to ensure the verification of compliance with feed and food law, animal health and animal welfare rules. Article 45 of the Regulation requires that Commission experts carry out general and specific audits in Member States. The main purpose is to verify that official controls take place in Member States in accordance with multi-annual national control plans and in compliance with Community law.

Audits are carried out by the Food and Veterinary Office of the European Commission Directorate General for Health and Consumers (DG SANCO).

The **goals** of the BTSF training are that participants and their respective Member States/EFTA countries:

1. take ownership of the findings and conclusions of audit overview reports and use them to improve their official control activities;
2. gain an understanding of good practices in the EU and how they might be adopted in their own situation, possibly with modification to the specific structures and organisation of controls;
3. discuss weaknesses and recurring problems with a view to identifying possible root causes and solutions to remedy or alleviate the problems.

The participants should have sufficient professional experience and responsibility to be in a position to pass on their training to others following the course.

**Specific objectives of the workshop**

The objective of the workshop is to present the overview report on the audits carried out on this topic [report DG (SANCO) 2013-7244], to have an expert review of the overview report with a view to increasing and deepening the knowledge of the competent authorities of the Member States and EFTA countries on microbiological criteria and to discuss common problems, best practices and methods of control related to microbiological criteria.

The training is targeted at competent authorities at central/regional level who are involved in policy making, planning of controls and staff training. The discussion will follow a workshop format. A number of examples of good practice are included in the overview report and it is planned to build discussions around presentations by selected Member State experts of these examples.

In addition to participation from the EU Member States; Iceland, Norway and Switzerland are invited to nominate participants.

A copy of the course programme is presented on pages 4-5 below.

**Pre-conditions for high impact of the training**

1. The workshop is aimed at participants from Member States, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland. The target audience is persons in each Member State/EFTA country who have a relevant policy role. The workshop is not aimed at trainers or inspectors.
2. The workshop will involve presentation of the findings of the FVO Overview Report and discussion about the practical steps to be taken to best implement the recommendations.
3. Pre-selected Member State experts will present specific examples of good practice.
4. Participants should agree to disseminate the findings from the workshop on return to their Member States. Dissemination methods will be addressed in group discussions and follow-up support will be provided, including the use of web tools.
5. Information packages will be provided to participants.
6. The format of the workshop is designed to encourage participation, peer group discussions and sharing of ideas. Participants will have an opportunity to share their experiences in the workshop and plenary sessions.
7. Please note that the workshop will be conducted in English and interpretation will not be available.

The workshop is being organised by the Food Safety Training Solutions (FSTS) Consortium who will act as facilitators and provide pedagogical support. This will include specific web-based services during and after the event.

**Timing**

The course sessions will start on Tuesday afternoon, 26 May 2015 and end at lunchtime on Thursday 28 May 2015.

Depending on flight schedules to Dublin airport it is expected that most participants will travel to FVO, Grange, Ireland on the morning of Tuesday 26 May 2015 and return home on Thursday afternoon, 28 May 2015. Participants for whom it is not possible to arrange suitable flight connections will arrive on Monday 25 May 2015 and/or depart on Friday 29 May 2015.

Please see the agenda for the training workshop on the following page:

**TRAINING WORKSHOP AGENDA**

**Tuesday 26 May 2015**

***Afternoon session***

14:15-14:30 Registration

14:30-15:00 Welcome by Mr Michael Scannell, Director FVO or Mr Ken Elliott, Head of Unit F2 (to be confirmed), presentation of the tutors and contributors.

15:00-15:45 Legal Framework on controls over microbiological criteria (Rosa PERAN, G4, DG SANTE, Brussels) and possible future developments

15:45-16:15 Coffee break

16:15-18:00 Working in groups dealing with different topics. The groups will have 5-7 participants (in total 5-7 groups). The potential topics to be discussed in the groups will be chosen from the following list (additional relevant topics might come up if suggested by contributors/participants).

* HACCP verification and validation using microbiological criteria
* Controls over Food Safety Criteria (*Listeria*/ready-to-eat foods, *Salmonella* etc.)
* Controls over Process Hygiene Criteria
* Controls over environmental sampling – EU guidelines on environmental sampling for *Listeria*
* Controls over alternative sampling and testing procedures (including rapid methods)
* Controls over shelf-life and analysis of trends
* Controls over challenge studies and mathematical modelling
* Controls over own control laboratories
* Microbiological testing of sprouts
* Carcass sampling
* Flexibility rules and exemptions
* Training on microbiological controls
* Best practices

The results of the group work will be presented to all participants in a plenary session. The group members are expected to work together and discuss the legislative requirements and what is the current line taken and best practices in the different Member States/EFTA countries. Participants are in addition expected to discuss what are the minimum (common) requirements and how much flexibility regulation allows.

Evening Welcome drinks with Commission and FSTS staff at Trim Castle Hotel

**Wednesday 27 May 2015**

***Morning session***

09:00-10:00 Overview report on the audits on microbiological controls in the Member States Contributor: Liisa Rantamäki (or other F2 auditor). Presentation of the main findings and discussion.

10:00-11:00 Microbiological controls of food in the framework of official controls in a Member State – the system applied in Denmark. Contributor Annette Perge, Denmark. Listeria epidemic in 2014 and its effect on microbiological controls. Discussion

10:30-11:00 Coffee break

11:00-12:30 Presentation of the results of first group discussions. Group work continues.

12:30-13:30 Lunch break

***Afternoon session***

13:30-14:30 Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005 and risk assessment, application of flexibility rules. Contributor: Mary Howell, UK. Discussion

14:30-15:30 Tasks of official and own-control laboratories in the controls over microbiological criteria. (Sampling, methods, reporting, diagnostic challenges, etc. Planned contributor: Denmark or Ireland

15:40-16:00 Coffee break

16:00-17:30 Presentation of the results of group work. Group work continues

**Thursday 28 May 2015**

***Morning session***

09:00-09:30 Presentation of results of group work

09:30-10:30 Microbiological controls of food in the framework of Official Controls in a Member State – the system applied in Ireland – best practices. Contributor: Lisa O’Connor Food Safety Authority, Ireland

10:30-11:00 Coffee break

11:00-12:30 Summary results of the working groups, final discussion, concluding remarks

**12.30 End of workshop, lunch and depart**

Further information and course material will be made available to participants on a dedicated website.

Please see further information on the workshop on the following page:

**Social events**

A welcome cocktail party will be held at the hotel on the first evening. FVO staff and course tutors will be invited. This will be followed by dinner for participants.

A three course dinner will be held on the second evening followed by a show of Irish music.

**Logistical arrangements**

The Food Safety Training Solutions Consortium (FSTS) led by Agri-Livestock Consultants Ltd (ALC) has been appointed to organise the event and make logistical arrangements. The FSTS contact address is alc.btsf@gmail.com. Participant arrangements will be made by Anne Martin, who can be contacted at this address.

The following participant costs will be paid by the European Commission:

1. Economy class (or equivalent) flights from the nearest convenient airport to Dublin or first-class train or bus travel as appropriate; transfer from and to Dublin airport to the hotel; transfers from the hotel to FVO offices and any visit locations.
2. Travel costs from the participant’s home to the nearest airport/bus station/train station will be covered if requested together with an estimate of the costs. You are expected to travel by public transport wherever possible.
3. Full board accommodation including room, breakfast, lunch and dinner.
4. Refreshments during morning and afternoon coffee breaks.

**Travel**

It is anticipated that most participants will arrive at FVO, Grange on Tuesday morning 26 May 2015. Some participants will need to arrive on Monday 25 May if it is not possible to arrange flights on Tuesday morning.

**Hotel**

Accommodation will be provided at Trim Castle Hotel, a short journey from the FVO offices at Grange:

Trim Castle Hotel, Castle Street, Trim, Co. Meath, Ireland
Telephone: +353 (0)46 948 3000

Fax: +353 (0)46 948 3077
Email: info@trimcastlehotel.com

Web: <http://www.trimcastlehotel.com/>

**Acceptance of invitation and logistical arrangements**

Please complete the attached application form indicating whether you are able to attend and providing logistical details.

Please send the completed application form to your national contact point (NCP) for BTSF training.

A list of NCPs is provided as a separate document and is also available from the website <http://ec.europa.eu/food/training_strategy/participants/ms_contact_points_en.htm>

We apologise for the very short response time but please make every effort to reply to your National Contact Point (NCP) with a copy to alc.btsf@gmail.com by **Wednesday 6 May 2015** or as soon as possible.

**Application to attend BTSF training**

Official Controls over Microbiological Criteria

**To be held at FVO, Grange, Ireland on 26 – 28 May 2015**

**Please complete the following application details:**

I wish to apply to attend the above training workshop on 26 – 28 May 2015. I confirm my availability and that non-refundable tickets may be booked immediately if my application is accepted.

I agree to participate in follow up activities to disseminate the knowledge gained on return to my home country.

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|  | Title (Mr, Ms, Dr. Prof., etc.) |  |
| i | First name **as in passport** |  |
| ii | Family name **as in passport** |  |
| iii | Position |  |
| iv | Organisation / department |  |
| v | Address |  |
| vi | City |  |
| vii | Country |  |
| viii | Email address |  |
| ix | Contact telephone |  |
| x | Preferred airport of departure |  |
| xi | Do you have adequate English language skills to attend the above course as no interpretation or translation facilities will be available? | Yes / No |
| xii | Please indicate any special physical or dietary needs that need to be considered? |  |
| xiii | Have you already been contacted by the FVO concerning your participation at this event? | Yes / No |
| xiv | Will you require reimbursement of your travel costs between your home and the airport. Please indicate the type of transport and the expected cost to and from the airport. Provide additional information on a separate sheet of paper if necessary. | Yes / No |

Do you have any queries or comments concerning the training course?

If so, please explain in the box below:

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Please complete the application and submit to your National Contact Point (NCP) with a copy to alc.btsf@gmail.com by **Wednesday 6 May** or as soon as possible. The NCP will advise their nominated participant to FSTS. A small number of places may be available for a second participant from some countries and NCPs may therefore submit reserve participants in case additional places are available.

Anne Martin

Deputy Event Manager

FSTS Consortium

alc.btsf@gmail.com