

Mycotoxins Initiative for Food Safety and Trade

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Mycotoxin contamination of agricultural commodities and the subsequent deleterious impact on human and animal health and on national and international trade is increasingly recognized by national authorities in both advanced and developing countries. There are few regulatory guidelines for approved levels of mycotoxin contamination in food and seldom are there economic incentives for high quality products without such contamination. To assist national food control authorities to analyze food and agricultural commodities for food contaminants (mycotoxin and microbiological contaminants, pesticide and veterinary drug residues, radionuclides), an FAO/IAEA Training and Reference Centre for Food and Pesticide Control (TRC) was established at FAO/IAEA Agriculture and Biotechnology Laboratories, Seibersdorf, Austria in 1998. The major objective of the TRC is “to assist Member States and their institutions to fulfil requirements to support the implementation of international standards/agreements relevant to food safety and control, the safe use of pesticides and sanitary and phytosanitary measures”. Together with research data being generated through a Co-ordinated Research Project (CRP) on Evaluation of Methods for Mycotoxin Analysis in Food and Feed, funded by the Joint FAO/IAEA Division of Nuclear Techniques in Food and Agriculture, the TRC will provide an effective assistance to food control laboratories in developing countries on cost-effective and validated methods for mycotoxin analysis in food and feed. The following activities with regard to mycotoxin control in food have been implemented in recent years:

1997: Organization of the FAO/IAEA Consultants Meeting on Analytical Methods for Determining Mycotoxin Contamination of Food/Feed in Trade; Vienna, Austria.

1998: The implementation of a five-year FAO/IAEA CRP on *Evaluation of Methods of Analysis for Determining Mycotoxin Contamination of Food and Feed* (under technical/research contracts and research agreements covering areas ranging from the improvement of mycotoxin clean-up techniques, analytical methodologies, to the use of radiolabelled compounds to assess mycotoxin distribution in processed foods), and laboratory proficiency testing programme, involving laboratories/research centre from developed and developing countries.

1999:

- Regional Training Workshop for Asia and the Pacific on Development of Quality Assurance for Mycotoxin Analysis of Food and Feed, Manila, Philippines.
- First Research Coordination Meeting (RCM) of the FAO/IAEA CRP on Evaluation of Methods of Analysis for Determining Mycotoxin Contamination of Food and Feed; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

2000:

- Second RCM of the FAO/IAEA CRP on Evaluation of Methods of Analysis for Determining Mycotoxin Contamination of Food and Feed; IAEA, Vienna, Austria.
- Regional Training Workshop for Latin America on Development of Quality Assurance for Mycotoxin Analysis of Food and Feed for Eastern European Countries; IAEA, Vienna, Austria.
- Regional Training Workshop on Development of Quality Assurance for Mycotoxin Analysis of Food and Feed; Instituto Adolfo Lutz, San Pablo, Brazil.

2001: The implementation of a two-year mycotoxin project with the National Agency of Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) Nigeria under the IAEA Technical Co-operation Project NIR5030 (*Regulatory Control and Monitoring of Contaminants and Residues in Fresh Produce*): to improve the safety and quality of foods, and to provide up-to-date information on methods of regulatory control in order to implement capacities and procedures for mycotoxin control to comply with international standards.