

FOOD SAFETY POLICY: THE JAMAICAN EXPERIENCE



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Introduction



- Jamaica's food safety regulatory programme is currently administered by six main entities/agencies distributed across the
 - Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MOAF)
 - Ministry of Health (MOH) and
 - Ministry of Industry, Investment and Commerce (MIIC).

Coordination among these food safety agencies is important to prevent overlapping/duplication of functions.

Introduction Cont'd



- For there to be vertical traceability, all the regulatory bodies would have to function in a coordinated manner. Ideally this would be best achieved if there were a single food safety agency that has responsibility for regulating food production, storage, processing, marketing, shipping/transporting, wholesaling, retailing, etc. spanning “farm to table.” **However, each stage of the food chain is quite specialized and requires specialist regulatory regime.**

The Process



- In October 2001 Cabinet approved a National Quality Policy which recommended that a single national food safety agency be established.
- Between 2001 and 2010 the Ministry of Agriculture executed the Agricultural Support Services Project (ASSP) of which food safety was a component.
- A consultancy which arose out of the ASSP recommended the establishment of the National Agricultural Health and Food Safety Coordinating Committee (NAHFSCC).

The Process



- Since its establishment in 2001, the NAHFSCC has been performing a commendable role in the coordination of relevant regulatory activities of the food safety agencies, but the Committee has no legal status.
- In October 2004 a draft Food Safety Policy was developed.

National Agricultural Health Food Safety Coordinating Committee (NAHFSCC)



- **Objective:**
 - Is to establish and maintain a rational, integral farm-to-table agricultural health and food system in Jamaica that harmonizes inter-agency effort, minimizes inter-agency conflict and overlap and ensure that protection of public health in a manner consistent with World Trade Organization (WTO) and other International Standards.

NAHFSCC

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- **Membership:**
 - All the regulatory agencies
 - ASSP Project Implementation Unit
 - National Public Health Laboratory
 - Rural Agricultural Development Authority
 - Scientific Research Council
 - Private Sector (PSOJ, JMA, JCC, Independent Expert or Academia)
 - Consumer Organization

Memorandum of Understanding

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- MOU addresses the issues relating to the overlaps and gaps in the Food Safety System.
- An output of the ASSP, NAHFSCC and Legislation and Regulations Unit of the Cabinet Office.
- Signed May 25, 2005 by the three Ministers
- Work Plan was developed based on the MOU and is still being implemented

The Process



- In 2006 Cabinet approved the establishment of an Interim Governing Body to oversee the implementation of the Policy particularly as it relates to the umbrella legislation and the establishment of a Food Safety Secretariat which would transition into a single national food safety agency.

Rationale for the Food Safety Policy



- Currently, no single agency is responsible for coordinating Jamaica's food safety programme.
- There are a number of areas in which duplication of effort by various government entities and facilities involved as a result of the legislation under which they operate.
- In order to improve food safety practices in the food trade, it will require interventions and changes in both the operations and relationship between public and private sectors, and support from academia and research institutions.

The Policy Vision



- To advance the national food safety and food security systems based on national and international standards aimed at safeguarding human, animal, plant and environmental health and the facilitation of trade through the application of science based principles, enabled by an integrated institutional framework, effective inter-agency collaboration and appropriate legislation, as well as a strengthened public/private sector partnership

The Policy Goals



The goals of the policy are to:

- Establish one food safety system;
- Ensure that food consumed is safe, sound and wholesome;
- Implement a system of traceability for food from production to consumption;
- Institute a formal risk analysis system to enhance food safety;
- Integrate institutional arrangements and capabilities for the efficient and effective management of the food safety system;
- Promulgate appropriate legislation to support food safety; and
- Effect behavioural change through heightened public awareness about food safety issues.

Some Policy Issues Identified



- **Legislative Gaps and Overlaps**
 - The current food safety legislation is administered by various Government regulatory Agencies.

The Government is moving towards rationalizing existing legislation & promulgating modern food safety legislation in keeping with international standards/best practice. They will also review and institute harsher penalties for non-compliance to legislation.

- **The coordination of food safety function**
 - The fragmented nature of the function has posed difficulties for coordinating and streamlining activities and has resulted in overlaps and gaps in the country's food safety system.

Policy Issues Identified



- It is being recommended that a three-tier arrangement be implemented:
 - Inter-Ministerial Food Safety Committee (IFSC)
 - National Food Safety Council
 - Secretariat
- **Trade and Traceability**
 - There is currently inadequate capacity to respond effectively to the globalization of food trade.

It is being recommended that existing systems in the domestic trade of food and food products and also to meet the requirements of Jamaica's international trading partners, be developed and or strengthened.

Policy Issues Identified



The current traceability systems to guarantee origin, effect recalls, condemnation and removal from distribution systems of unsafe or questionable food are informal and inadequate, and do not meet all national, regional and international standards.

- It is being recommended that (i) systems be established to ensure traceability from farm to fork (ii) adequate procedures to facilitate the traceability of feed and food be implemented (iii) The traceability activities will include the obligations of producers, as well as the regulatory agencies and (iv) strengthen traceability activities to include movement of animals from all holdings to regulated slaughtering facilities.

Policy Issues Identified



- **Lack of locally accredited laboratories for food safety analysis**
 - It is both a national and international requirement that laboratories used for food safety analysis and testing be accredited by an approved body. Currently, there are a number of testing laboratories which are in the process of seeking accreditation.

It is being recommended that relevant regulatory laboratories be upgraded to meet standards for accreditation.

- **Ensuring that imported food is safe for consumption**
 - The current national food control system (inclusive of inspection, monitoring and testing of imported foods) needs to be strengthened to verify safety and quality.

Policy Issues Identified



It is being recommended that the legislative framework and capacity to ensure compliance to existing standards, stipulated requirements, wholesomeness and disease prevention for all foods, be strengthened and systems to ensure that importers of food take responsibility for the safety of food brought into the island for consumption, be established.

- **Public awareness and education**

- Currently, there is no structured public awareness and education programme dealing with food safety issues.

It is recommended that the government develop and implement public awareness and education programmes on food safety and infuse the subject of food safety into the curriculum of primary and secondary educational institutions.

Institutional Framework for Food Safety Programmes and Services



Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries	Ministry of Health	Ministry of Industry, Investment & Commerce	Other Institutions	Private Company
Veterinary Services Division	Veterinary Public Health	Food Storage & Prevention of Infestation Division	Department of Local Government – Local Board of Health	Technological Solutions Ltd.
Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory	Regional Health Authorities	Consumer Affairs Commission	Central Board of Health	Food Hygiene Bureau Limited
Molecular Biology (PCR) Laboratory	Environmental Health Unit	Scientific Research Council	Caribbean Food & Nutrition Institute	

Institutional Framework for Food Safety Programmes and Services Cont'd



Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries	Ministry of Health	Ministry of Industry, Investment & Commerce	Other Institutions	Private Company
Residue and Biochemical Analytic Laboratory	Local Public Health Departments	Bureau of Standards of Jamaica	International Centre for Environmental and Nuclear Sciences	
Veterinary Epidemiology, Public Health and Food Safety Unit	National Public Health Laboratory		University of the West Indies	
Plant Quarantine/Produce Inspection Branch	Pest Control Authority			
Rural Agricultural Development Authority				

Legislative Framework

Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries	Ministry of Health	Ministry of Industry, Investment & Commerce	Office of the Prime Minister (Department of Local Government)
Aquaculture, Inland and Marine Products and By-Products (Inspection, Licensing and Export) Act 1999	The Pesticides Control Act 1987	The Processed Food Act 1959	The Pound Act, 1897
The Meat and Meat Products and By Products (Inspection, Licensing and Export) Act 1999	The Public Health Act 1985	The Food Storage and Prevention of Infestation Act 1958	The Keeping of Animals Act, 1981
The Conch Levy Act	The Food and Drugs Act 1975	Scientific Research Council Act 1960	
The Animals (Diseases and Importation) Act 1948	The Public Health (Food Handling) Regulations 2000	The Standards Act 1968	

Legislative Framework



Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries	Ministry of Health	Ministry of Industry, Investment & Commerce	Office of the Prime Minister (Department of Local Government)
The Plants (Quarantine) Act 1994	The Public Health (Tourist Establishments) Regulations 2000		
The Agricultural Produce Act 1926	The Public Health (Meat Inspection) Regulations 1989		
The Bees Control Act 1918	The Public Health (Butchers) Regulation 1989		
The Fertilizers and Feeding Stuffs Act 1942	The Public Health (Nuisance) Regulations 2001		
The Fishing Industry Act 1976			

Summary



- Improved coordination - three-tiered arrangement:
 - Inter-Ministerial Food Safety Committee (IFSC)
 - National Food Safety Council – Heads of food safety agencies and other key experts
 - Secretariat – Administrative body
- Modernization of food-related legislation
- Modernization and accreditation of labs
- Development of harmonized administrative systems including budgets and work plans among the food safety agencies.

THANKS FOR YOUR
ATTENTION

