

Modernizing food safety management and traceability systems

Food-borne disease outbreaks and questions about genetically engineered foods have heightened consumer demand for safe food production processes and practices. To ensure the safety of food supplies, governments have also tightened regulations and standards. Food safety management systems (FSMS) and food traceability systems (FTS) are therefore now critical for the food industry and consuming public.

The FSMS and FTS in many developing Asian countries are still evolving, while those in developed Asian countries like Japan have reached world standards. The APO thus held a multicountry observational study mission to disseminate how Japan had developed its FSMS and FTS, 7–14 December 2010. Co-sponsored by the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries through a special cash grant, the mission was implemented by the Japan Association for International Collaboration of Agriculture and Forestry. Eighteen participants representing governments, the private sector, and NPOs of 15 member economies attended, along with four experts.

Managing Director Yong Kok Seng, QMC Resource Centre Sdn. Bhd., Malaysia, spoke on the current status of FSMS in developing APO member economies; Head Goichiro Yukawa, Department of Technical Service, Japan Food Research Laboratories, summarized food safety policy in Japan; Kyoto University Professor Yoko Niiyama discussed general principles of traceability and risk analysis along the food chain and their applications in Japan; and Director Seiji Tanaka, Organization of Food Marketing Structure Improvement, introduced the SEIKA-net, a free e-portal for communication between consumers and agricultural producers on food safety.

For firsthand observation of FSMS and FTS in Japan, the participants visited the National Food Research Institute in Ibaraki prefecture; Daito Shokken Co., Ltd. in Saitama prefecture,



Participants are joined by APO Secretary-General Yamazaki in the site visit to Meiji Milk Plant. Photo M. Saeed/APO

an ISO22000:2005-certified producer of soups, noodles, and dressings; Sanwa Shokuhin in Gunma prefecture, an ISO22000:2005-certified food processor specializing in pre-cut salad kits; the fully automated, hazard analysis and critical control point (HACCP)- and ISO14001-certified Nippon Meat Packers, Inc. Ham Plant in Ibaraki prefecture; and Meiji Milk Plant in Ibaraki prefecture, an HACCP-certified facility of the giant Meiji Dairies Corporation which produces dairy items, infant formula, soft drinks, and functional foods.

After the site visits, a one-day workshop discussed the lessons learned and their applications in participants' countries. It was generally agreed that greater economic incentives were needed to modernize the FSMS and FTS in developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region so that they could take advantage of fast-growing international markets for fresh and processed food. 