

Food safety and quality standards for greater market opportunities

Food safety and quality (FSQ) are global concerns for the food industry as they are important for public health and impact international trade. Consumers are increasingly concerned about the quality and safety of the food they buy. Globalization of food trade makes food supply chains (FSCs) longer and more complex and increases the risk of food safety incidents. In response, governments are strengthening food control systems, while the food industry has put in place stringent FSQ standards.

FSQ standards, both public and private, are fundamentally about establishing control, conformance, and compliance in the production, processing, and distribution of food. Private food standards (PFS) are becoming basic requirements in the context of global trade in food and agricultural products. International PFS are aimed at ensuring safety. Some focus on the quality aspects of products in terms of production and processing methods. There is no legal obligation for exporters to obtain certification under PFS, but business partners in the FSC often require suppliers to be certified by third parties.

The certification entails costs, and the proliferation of PFS is becoming an obstacle for exporters in the agricultural and food sectors in developing countries of Asia and the Pacific. There is a need to promote a harmonized approach to managing FSQ across the industry. Producers and exporters of food products in APO member countries

need to know and understand the requirements of FSQ standards and certification.

To enhance participants' understanding of the structures, effectiveness, and requirements of public and private FSQ standards prevailing in world food and agricultural markets, the APO in partnership with the NPO of Pakistan organized a training course on Food Safety and Quality Standards for Market Access, 12–17 January, in Islamabad. Twenty-one participants from 11 member countries attended, and two trainers from Hong Kong and the Netherlands conducted the course.



At Metro Cash & Carry, participants admiring cold storage of fish in neat rows to maintain quality and safety.

The course consisted of an overview of food safety management systems, EU and USA legal requirements, risk analysis and assessment, hazard analysis and critical control point, management of nonconformity, private voluntary standards, the British Retail Consortium, and International Featured Standard food. To observe good FSQ practices, participants visited the Metro Cash & Carry, Islamabad, a wholesale and retail center. 🌐