News from the World Of Spices

February 2020

Greetings from World Spice Organisation!!!

The past few months have been truly action-packed for WSO. It witnessed a great deal of activities ranging from the launch of the prestigious "National Sustainable Spice Programme (NSSP)" to conducting training programmes for our members besides taking up issues detrimental to the spice trade with the government authorities.

National Sustainable Spice Programme (NSSP)

This programme has been jointly undertaken by the WSO, Spices Board of India, IDH (The sustainable trade initiative) and GIZ Global Project (Private business action for biodiversity) to address the human, social, economic and environmental issues faced by the industry.

The primary objective of the initiative is to focus on Food safety and Sustainability in the major spice growing areas of the country, the major focus being on the domestic markets and supply chains which constitute about 85 % of the spices produced in India. The programme puts forward "VISION 25:25" to make 25% of the spices grown in India sustainable by 2025.It aims to address the major challenges faced by the industry such as chemical and biological contaminants, disease outbreaks and environmental issues and also to create a value chain with a network of stakeholders from all related fields.

The pre- launch meeting of NSSP was held in Mumbai and later the project was launched in Guntur and Hyderabad for Chilli and Turmeric in November 2019; in Gujarat for Seed Spices in December 2019 and in Madikeri for Pepper in February 2020. A similar meeting is scheduled to be held for Cardamom towards the end of February thus ensuring a pan – India coverage for this Programme. Each of these meetings were characterised with remarkable participation from all stakeholders, viz., farmers, exporters, traders and government officials. Meaningful discussions and deliberations were held in each of these meetings and farmers were prompted to join the programme.

We will now be embarking on the next phase of the programme which will entail intensive training of farmers and other stakeholders.

Training Programmes

i)   Backward Integration Programme in Chillies, Guntur
Workshop on Backward Integration in chillies was held at Hotel Capital, Guntur on 10 Dec 2019, 9.30 am to 5.30 pm. The workshop was conducted by Dr Venugopal K J , Advisor WSO and was attended by 38 officers

from 17 organizations. The major aspects covered during the workshop were IPM, GAP, Sustainable agriculture, Agro ecosystem analysis, Economic Threshold level, Post harvest supply chain etc. At the end of the workshop, the participants were organized into three groups and were given the task of preparing an IPM programme for chilli. The groups presented their plans, which were discussed by all. The participants actively took part in the discussions and the sessions were well received by them.

ii)   Integrated Pest Management Programme in Cumin, Rajasthan

A Training of Trainers Programme on 'Integrated Pest management: Strategies and Techniques for Cumin' was conducted at the Hotel Kailash International, Barmer, Rajasthan on 23 January 2020 for the agricultural extension officers and executives of the WSO members. This one-day training program was conducted by Dr. KJ Venugopal, Technical advisor to WSO.

The training session started with an introduction to Pesticides, GAP and IPM, and was subsequently followed by various IPM methods, IPM practices, management of IPM project, sustainability parameters and relationship between Sustainability and IPM. Detailed elaborations on MRLs, dosage, PHI, risk based spray schedules, alternate chemicals, bio pesticides and bio control agents were also done.

Other Interventions

i)   Maximum Residue Limits proposed by FSSAI

WSO had actively taken up the case of stringent and in some cases unrealistic maximum residue limits fixed by FSSAI for a number of pesticides and had sent many representations regarding this issue. WSO had an interaction with Dr. Debabrata Kanungo- Chairperson, Panel for Pesticides and Antibiotic Residues and briefed him on the concerns of the spice industry. Dr. Kanungo assured that due consideration will be given to the apprehensions of the industry. A special session chaired by Dr. Kanungo and Dr. S K Malhotra (Agriculture Commissioner, CIB-RC) has been scheduled to be held at the International Spice Conference 2020 to discuss the issues of MRLs in spices.

ii)   Non renewal of approval of Chlorpyrifos in EU

European Union had decided not to renew the approval of the pesticides Chlorpyrifos and Chlorpyrifos methyl and proposed a reduction of the Maximum Residue Limits to the Lower Limit of detection. This could undoubtedly lead to issues in spice exports to the EU as both these chemicals are widely used in spice cultivation. WSO initiated a dialogue with Spices Board requesting them to petition the EU to extend the approval of these pesticides. Consequently, Spices Board has sent a letter to the European Union requesting for a more lenient transition period to be adapted.

iii)   Meeting at NRCSS, Ajmer

WSO Chairman participated in the 20th Foundation Day celebrations of the National Research Centre for Seed Spices at Ajmer as a Guest of Honour. NRCSS had also organised an interaction between various stakeholders in the Spice industry which was chaired by the Deputy Director General of ICAR Dr A.K. Singh. The interaction was extremely useful since we were able to discuss and sort out a number of issues affecting seed spice exports.

How do we increase food integrity?

There is a broad spectrum of definitions for food integrity, including one from the Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) that defines it as: "The state of being whole, entire, or undiminished or in perfect condition". Providing assurance to consumers and other stakeholders about the safety, authenticity and quality of European food (integrity) is of prime importance in adding value to the European agri-food economy.

Integrity is about trust, and one important way to engender trust with consumers is to support robust regulation and demonstrate adherence to it.

In many countries – including the UK, USA and Australia – there are already regulations in place that prohibit the misrepresentation of food. The difficulty is that with the ever-improving testing and detection methods leading to diminishing limits of detection along with global food supply chains and e-commerce, defining food authenticity is complex and likely to become even more challenging.

That is why industry has a crucial role to play in shaping a regulatory environment that both protects consumers interests and is affordable and sustainable. One part of this involves open sharing of food safety knowledge and working together to identify risks and solutions to the long-term food safety issues impacting the global food supply chain.

[Read more](#)

Europe aims to make its food a global green standard, despite trade concerns

The European Commission is not only intent on protecting the value of the European food system it also wants to promote it on the global stage, said a member of cabinet for Commission vice-president Frans Timmermans, in charge of overseeing the EU Green Deal.

The aim is to make Europe's food the global standard for sustainability, said Commission official Lukas Visek, who spoke at a EURACTIV event on sustainable food last week.

Also embedded in the EU Green Deal, it will be the first EU strategy to encompass the entirety of the food system, from the seeds that go into the ground to the production line to the grocery store to the plate to the waste bin.

Given that food chain accounts for a large amount of EU carbon emissions, the F2F might give a crucial contribution in getting the EU to its target of reaching net-zero emissions by 2050, but it will also address questions of diet and health, as concerns rise over increasing obesity in Europe.

But already, even before the report has emerged, some have warned that an ambitious strategy could be counteracted by the EU's trade policy. There are concerns that the EU is preparing to lower its food standards and put European farmers in a precarious position, as a result of free trade deals with Canada and Japan and those being considered with Brazil and the United States.

[Read More](#)

Labelling Regulations: FSSAI goes for nutrient Threshold Study

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), which is in the process of overhauling the labelling regulations for packaged food products, has begun a nutrient threshold study to assess the current market scenario.

The draft regulations propose colour-coded labelling to enable consumers to identify products that are high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) products.

The draft regulations had proposed certain thresholds and packaged products display red-color coding if levels of saturated fat, salt and sugar are higher than the prescribed threshold levels. However, industry had called these nutrient thresholds "impractical", and had raised concerns that if implemented in the current form, would require majority of products to display red-colour coding on their labels.

The industry associations in their submission said that stringent thresholds will have an adverse impact on product quality and may lead to loss of consumer preference. Minister for State for Health and Family Welfare Ashwani Kumar Choubey informed the Lok Sabha in a written reply on Friday, "The FSSAI has notified draft Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations, 2019, on June 25, 2019 for inviting public comments. Around 900 comments were received."

[Read More](#)

Is supply chain collaboration the way to reduce food recalls?

Product recalls in the food industry can have severe impacts on business, particularly with reputational damage. According to the report 'UK Food Trends: A Snapshot in Time', one in five UK consumers have actively changed the brands that they purchase from, as a result of a food safety incident or product recall.

Stuart Kelly continued: "Our research illustrates the exceptionally high demands that UK consumers place on their food retailers. Supermarkets and other vendors are expected to do more to provide assurance that food is what it says on the tin and maintain brand loyalty. However, it is time for the industry to work together and for the entire supply chain to provide transparency."

The report also found that one in three shoppers are more concerned about food safety than they were a year ago. 57.1% of UK consumers are concerned with food contamination, such as listeria or salmonella, which is likely to be influenced by the food safety scares that have repeatedly made headlines, over the last decade.

[Read More](#)

Why We Should Consider Our Food Packaging and Not Just Our Food

Take a look in your shopping basket next time you are waiting at the check-out, what are your foods wrapped in? Sure, you don't eat the packaging, but that doesn't mean that chemicals in that packaging aren't transferred to the products that you are eating. Think of that nasty plastic taste you get from some water bottles, or the cardboardy taste from some fast-food containers. Equally, your products may be losing some of their own chemicals into and out through the packaging. If you've ever stuck your groceries in a cupboard next to a cardboard box of washing powder, or shared a car with even the best wrapped piece of smoked fish or smelly cheese you'll know what I'm talking about.

Whilst we can detect some contaminants by their taste or aroma, not all contaminants can be detected by our senses. One such group are the mineral oil-based chemicals, MOSH and MOAH, that are attracting growing interest in the food analysis fields. They have been linked to potentially carcinogenic substances and consequently, it is important that analysts can identify and quantify these substances in food and packaging to enable effective preventative strategies to be developed.

Food contact materials start to play an important role due to the possible interactions with the packed goods. Food contact materials based on polymers or on paper-based materials are by far the largest groups. Due to their chemistry, both material groups have only limited barrier properties. That means there are interactions possible.

[Read More](#)

Why enhancing food safety and quality in Africa is critical

Sustaining life and promoting good health requires access not only to adequate but also to safe and nutritious food.

Food can be unsafe due to a number of factors. Harmful bacteria, viruses, natural toxins or chemical substances can make food unsafe and cause disease risks ranging from acute diarrhoea to lifelong conditions, including some cancers.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that more than 600 million people fall ill and 420 000 die every year from eating food contaminated with bacteria, viruses, parasites, toxins or chemicals.

The situation is more prevalent in Africa, where it is estimated that an annual average of 91 million people consume contaminated food that renders them ill, and around 137,000 people die as a result of consuming contaminated food.

This reveals the need for more aggressive and strategic interventions to address the problem. According to the World Bank, the economic impact of contaminated food is greater in low-and-middle-income countries, which lose an estimated US$ 95 billion in productivity annually.

Food safety in Africa can be assured through development and implementation of appropriate national and regional food safety regulatory frameworks (guidelines, standards, and laws) as well as enhancement of consumers' awareness on food safety and quality standards. [Read More](#)

Reducing the Risk of Fraud in the Spice Industry

In the wake of several global incidents involving the adulteration of food, concerns over the adulteration of spices and many other food products have significantly increased. Recent regulatory and certification requirements have mandated addressing food fraud through vulnerability assessments and application of mitigating actions, but in many cases, companies struggle with knowing how to get started and whether they've done enough to be effective at addressing a vulnerability. Food fraud is not new. It has been recorded over thousands of years. For a complex supply chain like spices, the historical risk of food fraud and adulteration is high, which is why it is important to understand how your spice supplier manages food fraud vulnerabilities and what controls they have in place.

The spice supply chain is a prime example of a complex global supply chain. Spices are grown all over the world, in both developed and underdeveloped regions. Spices can pass through multiple touch points, which can increase the potential introduction of a food fraud act. A traditional supply chain for spices starts with a grower and passes through collectors, processors, and brokers before it reaches the final consumer. A spice supplier must ensure they understand their total supply chain to determine where increased vulnerabilities exist. Spice suppliers must work to engage further upstream with their growers, processors, and agents to build in assurances and practices that will help reduce their vulnerability to food fraud. Read more

Produce suppliers face new food safety requirements in Canada

By Jan. 15, most fresh produce companies supplying the Canadian market will be subject to new requirements under the Safe Food for Canadians regulations.

The Fruit and Vegetable Dispute Resolution Corporation said in an update that the requirements that will come into force at that date include preventive controls, and preventive control plans and traceability. Those requirements will include lot code labeling of consumer-prepackaged fresh fruits or vegetables, according to the DRC update. However, growers and harvesters will have until Jan. 15, 2021 to use up existing packaging, the DRC update said.

The DRC noted that guidance documents about the new requirements are found on Canadian Food Inspection Agency website.

A document that spells out the food safety requirements for importers is located here, while import requirements for leafy green vegetables from California and Arizona are found here.

In related news, the DRC said importers who require a Safe Food for Canadians license, and who do not hold a valid food license or a valid DRC membership by Jan. 15, may experience delays or refusal of entry of their shipment at the border, in addition to possible other enforcement actions. Read More

Salmonella the most common cause of foodborne outbreaks in the European Union

Nearly one in three foodborne outbreaks in the EU in 2018 were caused by *Salmonella*. This is one of the main findings of the annual report on trends and sources of zoonoses published today by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC).

In 2018, EU Member States reported 5,146 foodborne outbreaks affecting 48,365 people. A foodborne disease outbreak is an incident during which at least two people contract the same illness from the same contaminated food or drink.

Slovakia, Spain and Poland accounted for 67% of the 1,581 *Salmonella* outbreaks. These outbreaks were mainly linked to eggs.

"Findings from our latest Eurobarometer show that less than one third of European citizens rank food poisoning from bacteria among their top five concerns when it comes to food safety. The number of reported outbreaks suggests that there's room for raising awareness among consumers as many foodborne illnesses are preventable by improving hygiene measures when handling and preparing food" said EFSA's chief scientist Marta Hugas.

Salmonellosis was the second most commonly reported gastrointestinal infection in humans in the EU (91,857 cases reported), after campylobacteriosis (246,571).

[Read More](#)

Rising to the challenges in the food industry

Managing stock, shelf life, food safety and product quality are just some of the hurdles that food companies must overcome. That's why an industry-specific enterprise system is key to the success of any business operating within the food industry. It ensures processes and controls are in place to guarantee produce is up to standard, but it can do even more.

ERP functionality should help solve the challenges that many different types of food businesses face. It must ensure high quality, resource-efficient production and distribution, providing product innovation that has profitability potential while helping a business stay up to date with the latest customer demands. This is how food companies can meet food safety regulations, reduce waste and gain flexibility in terms of the ingredients and raw materials they source.

It is essential for food companies to understand and ensure that all operational processes meet the relevant legal standards. They also must establish that the appropriate documentation and controls are in place to address food safety, food hygiene, food inspection and, in the worst-case scenario, be reactive to any incidents.

[Read More](#)

Is supply chain collaboration the way to reduce food recalls?

Product recalls in the food industry can have severe impacts on business, particularly with reputational damage. According to the report 'UK Food Trends: A Snapshot in Time', one in five UK consumers have actively changed the brands that they purchase from, as a result of a food safety incident or product recall.

Stuart Kelly continued: "Our research illustrates the exceptionally high demands that UK consumers place on their food retailers. Supermarkets and other vendors are expected to do more to provide assurance that food is what it says on the tin and maintain brand loyalty. However, it is time for the industry to work together and for the entire supply chain to provide transparency."

The report also found that one in three shoppers are more concerned about food safety than they were a year ago. 57.1% of UK consumers are concerned with food contamination, such as listeria or salmonella, which is likely to be influenced by the food safety scares that have repeatedly made headlines, over the last decade.

Read More

Rising to the challenges in the food industry

Managing stock, shelf life, food safety and product quality are just some of the hurdles that food companies must overcome. That's why an industry-specific enterprise system is key to the success of any business operating within the food industry. It ensures processes and controls are in place to guarantee produce is up to standard, but it can do even more.

ERP functionality should help solve the challenges that many different types of food businesses face. It must ensure high quality, resource-efficient production and distribution, providing product innovation that has profitability potential while helping a business stay up to date with the latest customer demands. This is how food companies can meet food safety regulations, reduce waste and gain flexibility in terms of the ingredients and raw materials they source.

It is essential for food companies to understand and ensure that all operational processes meet the relevant legal standards. They also must establish that the appropriate documentation and controls are in place to address food safety, food hygiene, food inspection and, in the worst-case scenario, be reactive to any incidents.

Read More

A 3-point agenda for making farm-to-fork a viable model

In terms of total farm output, India is the second largest in the world with high rankings in the production of fruits, vegetables, milk and pulses. The agri-sector also employees a total of 600 million people in the country. However, at 14 percent, the sector's contribution to the national GDP continues to be lower than other industries owing to the gaps in our supply chain between farm to fork.

Today, almost 40 per cent of India's total agricultural produce gets lost in India due to its inefficient supply chain management which includes lack of infrastructure, aggregating demand, not producing based on demand requirements etc. It is important to understand that progress and upliftment in the agri-sector can only be derived out of a functional relationship and close cooperation between the government, industry and producers.

Bearing this in mind, India needs to build a 3-point agenda where the key pillars — government, industry and producers with due focus on environmental sustainability — work together to build a strong foundation for India's food security and revolutionise the scope of dividends for farmers.

Read More

World map rates sustainable food systems

Scientists have created a new global map of food system sustainability that rates each country on a sweeping series of metrics ranging from environmental impacts, health and food security to social equity and income distribution.

The map is designed to provide a benchmark for countries to help them improve and monitor the sustainability of their food systems and related policies or interventions, making it much like agriculture's answer to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Current food systems, which include the way food is produced, transformed, distributed and consumed, are failing us, says lead author Christopher Béné from the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture in Colombia.

It's critical to address their sustainability, he and colleagues write in the journal *Nature Scientific Data,* "as the world is bracing for hard-choice challenges and potentially massive trade-offs around issues related to food quality and food security in the coming decades".

The global food system's escalating environmental toll is well-established, through deforestation, pollution, soil degradation, biodiversity erosion, diminishing freshwater resources and greenhouse gas emissions.

As the world's biggest employer, it also contributes to social and economic inequalities, which can't be ignored, says Béné. Yet this has not been adequately or clearly considered in the bigger picture. Read More

10 States In India Unfit To Ensure Food Safety: FSSAI

The Food Safety Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) stated on Monday, November 25, that around 10 states in the country are not fit to ensure food safety, due to a scarcity of staff and food testing laboratories.

It is the first time that such data has been released which points at unsafe, sub-standard and labeling defects respectively.

The states that come under this ambit are Chattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Assam, Telangana, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, Odisha, and Rajasthan. The food safety authority stated that these states have not been able to place full-time officers and do not have the proper infrastructure to examine food safety.

A total of 1,06,459 samples were analyzed, and it was found that 15.8% of the samples were sub-standard, 3.7% unsafe and 9% mislabelled in the year 2018-19. There was also a 36% increase in the civil cases launched and around 67% increase in the penalties imposed, which is 23% more than the previous years.

Read More

Microbes 'set to be an integral part of agriculture over the next 20-30 years': Joyn Bio

The acceptance of the trendy microbiome diet among consumers has put wind in the sails of ag-biotech start up Joyn Bio, which is engineering microbes for more sustainable agriculture.
Read More

The new Agricultural Revolution needs you: Good Food Institute

In the 1960s and '70s, a series of papers and books like Paul Ehrlich's The Population Bomb promised that before the turn of the millennium, humanity would be devastated by cataclysmic famines, deadly food riots, and disastrous resource wars.
Read More

Danone, Microsoft join forces for AI accelerator: 'The success of the food revolution will depend on data'

Danone and Microsoft have joined forces to launch the AI Factory for AgriFood, an accelerator programme to support start-ups developing sustainable food and regenerative agriculture solutions.

Read More

DNA testing reveals 'widespread adulteration' of herbal products

Fresh research utilising DNA testing technology has highlighted 'widespread' global adulteration in herbal products, with almost one-third of items tested found to be fake.
Read More