**BACKGROUNDER: Global Food Safety Curricula Initiative**



**The Big Picture - Responding to Global Food Safety Concerns**

Improved food safety standards, market integration and improved international trade are all required to address critical issues arising from the globalization of the food supply. In the area of food safety capacity building, this resulted in the establishment of the multi-stakeholder Global Food Safety Partnership (GFSP), facilitated by the World Bank.

As countries increase their demand for food ingredients and raw materials globally, the need to safeguard public health while promoting food security, international trade, and economic development throughout the entire value chain must be met. In this regard, the GFSP will respond to operational and country demands while building on the extensive work undertaken within the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum and other organizations.

**Global Food Safety Curricula Initiative (GFSCI) and IUFoST**

Consistent with the GFSP’s goal of capacity building, the International Union of Food Science and Technology (IUFoST) was commissioned to lead an initiative to identify gaps in food safety curricula and to establish and harmonize core competencies at the undergraduate and graduate levels in order to improve food safety and security worldwide. Identification of the gaps in food safety standards and establishing/revising existing standards will ensure long-term food safety benefits for everyone, from the farm to the table.

**Why IUFoST? Reputation, Reach, Expertise and Experience**

IUFoST is uniquely positioned to direct this initiative because it represents global competency and expertise in undertaking and delivering on multi-disciplinary, collaborative projects in research and education and curricula development in food science and technology:

* IUFoST’s mission is ‘Strengthening Global Food Science and Technology for Humanity’. Its three main tenets are Food Security, Education and Food Safety.
* It isthe only representative of food science and technology to be elected to membership in the prestigious International Council for Science (ICSU).
* IUFoST works through a multi-disciplinary approach with 170 national governments and a further 30 Unions in ICSU. Additionally, IUFoST collaborates with many other respected international organizations, including the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), World Health Organization (WHO), CGIAR (Consultative Group on International Agriculture Research), and IFPRI (International Food Policy Research Institute).
* IUFoST represents more than 300,000 food scientists and technologists from over 70 countries and five regional groupings: Europe (EFFoST), Latin America and the Caribbean (ALACCTA), South East Asia (FIFSTA) and Western Africa (WAAFoST) and the Middle East and North Africa (MENAFoST).
* It has expertise fostering productive collaborative relationships between industry, academia and government officials to address food safety issues and initiatives.
* IUFoST has authored a widely-used textbook on food science and technology and many related publications, in addition to providing education programs, including distance education. IUFoST has a number of programs underway to improve the safety and sufficiency of foods in Africa, the Middle East and Asia.
* IUFoST is experienced in responding to requests for assistance in the food safety area, and specifically in relation to curriculum. As a result, IUFoST also has already established an approval process for food science and technology curricula at the request of our regional group in the ASEAN region. The baselines and methodology are in place.

**What is the Goal?**

This initiative will result in a future work force across nations and regions throughout the world that will have the skills necessary to handle food safety issues and reduce risk management. We will all benefit from a safer, more economical and efficiently distributed food supply through their positions in government, industry and academia.

**How will this be Accomplished?**

A multi-layered and cross-disciplinary approach is necessary to fulfill these goals. The IUFoST-led initiative will provide a baseline analysis of the current status of global food safety programming through global surveys, assess and determine what constitutes an international standard for core food safety curricula, implement a recognition program for existing programs which meet those standards, and identify any remaining gaps in food safety programming.

**The Surveys**

Two surveys will address the current status of food safety education from masters level to primary schools around the world. Survey 1 will provide preliminary information on food safety programs and providers and determine the participants for Survey 2, which will result in detailed information on curricula and other aspects of programs at each institution.

These surveys will be directed to academic institutions, research institutes and all those engaged in educational activities identified through national and regional networks, including IUFoST national members and other organizations, e.g., FAO/ILSI/IAFP/WHO. Resources in industry and other international organizations also will be contacted to ensure the survey reaches the widest possible audience, receives due consideration, is completed and returned.

Status: Survey 1 has been distributed. Survey 2 will be begin to be distributed within the first quarter of 2014.

**Determination of Core Competencies**

Experts in the IUFoST-led group will set the core competencies of food safety undergraduate and graduate programming. Recognition and any development of programs adhering to the established global standard will begin according to the mechanisms set up by this group.

Currently, scientists and industry experts from many fields are examining and considering the core competencies needed at each level with partners across academia, industry and government at the national, regional and international levels which may include:

* + 1. Training certification from ongoing GFSP training as part of all programming.
		2. Exposure to national and CODEX standards as part of all programming.
		3. Development of communication skills.
		4. Promotion of food safety in the community (through activities with schools from the primary level forward).
		5. Industry connections and involvement at all levels.
		6. Additional focus on small and medium sized enterprises.
* **Endorsement of Curricula**

The Core Competencies and related curricula developed will be developed and endorsed by all stakeholders and world bodies involved.

* **Establishment and Implementation of a Recognition Process**

Led by IUFoST, an approval/certification process of existing and future food safety programs will be developed and applied on a country-by-country basis. This will be accompanied by ongoing identification of gaps to determine where needs exist that are not being met, to be addressed through the GFSP. Continued development of delivery processes will ensure sustainability. Internship programs established with industry and governmental agencies will help to foster the connections.

* **Development of a Masters Level Curricula and a Related Delivery Process.**

**How Long will It Take?**

The Global Food Safety Initiative has an ambitious timeline, yet will continue to evolve over many years. The start-up phase for the IUFoST-led initiative is underway, with the working group considering core competency requirements. Survey 1 will be distributed, with initial analysis and reporting beginning by the end of 2013, as will the initial determination of core competencies for programming at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Survey 2 will be distributed in first quarter 2014. By September 2014, the aim is for the core competencies at undergraduate and graduate programming (except for the Leadership programme) to be finalized. The process for recognition of existing programmes adhering to new standard will be refined, with the goal of having at least one programme acknowledged officially through the IUFoST initiative as operating at the international standard by end 2014. During this time period, work also will begin with all partners on the new IUFoST branded International Food Safety Leadership Masters curricula, country and regionally specific, to address requirements of GFSP.