

In addition, the delegation discussed in detail the interrelationship of the integral phases in development of policy options and decision-making. The interface between science (or technology), politics and horizontal government priorities and the public, including socio-economic dimensions, is critical.

The vertical policy test (or challenge) is constructed based purely on science. While the horizontal policy test is based on the public policy interface and provides the integral horizontal link between science and politics. Without the “horizontal test”, the communications gap between science and politics is likely to widen. This disconnection can result in serious failure in managing risk.

In Brunei Darussalam, the theory is put into practice by the Department of Information which was established in response to the primacy of communicative interaction between the government and the people.

Representative from China discussed the food safety system in their country and explained the responsibilities of various agencies responsible for ensuring the safety of food supply. He also enumerated the challenges facing them in getting the message across to the target audiences. These include: lack of resources and information, authoritative assessment, participation, related activities, and present division of resources and sharing of information, among others.

In order to address these deficiencies, the delegation of China recommended that there is a need to establish a unified and harmonious food safety risk communication management system and strengthening national and international collaboration and exchanges of information. The Chinese delegation further enumerated several proposals during a crisis and non-crisis situations, respectively.

Risk communication strategies executed in Chinese Taipei were introduced by a representative from the Department of Health. He informed that in Chinese Taipei, they have instituted food safety signals known as “Food Consumption Traffic Lights”. The figure below demonstrates how this is carried out. The case of pesticide contamination of coconut was also discussed and the news releases issued to manage the crisis.

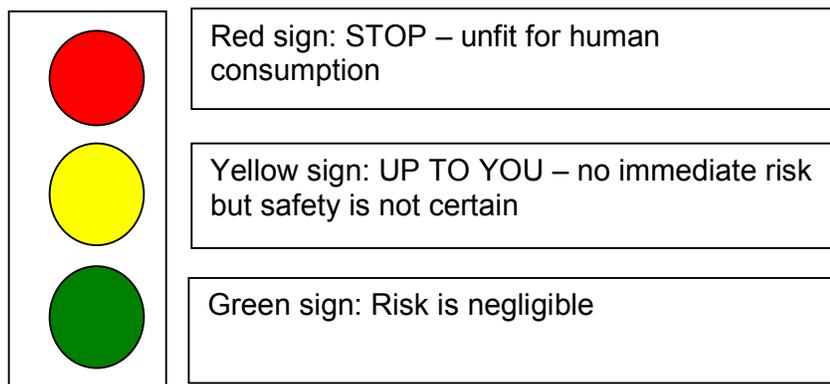


Figure 14. Chinese Taipei food consumption traffic lights

In Indonesia, activities follow the food standardization system established and enforced. However, they are still faced with several challenges that needed to be overcome. The significant of which include establishing an effective way of making people aware about the availability of standards, setting up of appropriate mechanisms of delivery, thinking of message content in terms of appropriate wordings and identifying priority audiences.

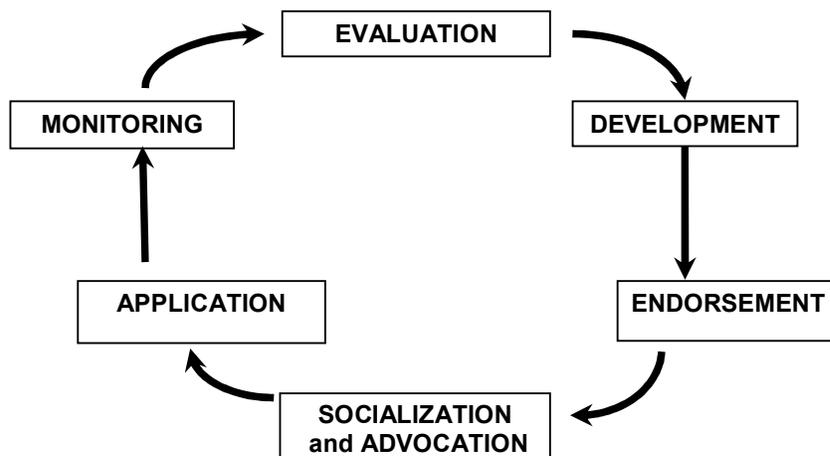


Figure 15. Food standardization system in Indonesia

Participants from Korea shared the risk communication strategies they had implemented during the crisis situation of heavy metal contamination of kimchi. Considering that kimchi is a foodstuff widely consumed in Korea, there was a heightened consumer concern. During that situation, the risk communication strategy was more of the responsive rather than educative or proactive type. However, they were faced with several barriers to include the too strong audience interest that made it difficult to get the message across to them.

The case of food poisoning among school children from the period of 2007-2008 was presented by delegates from Malaysia. For this specific issue, Ministry of Health of Malaysia had developed packaged information and strategies in order to ensure effective communication at all levels during food poisoning and to contribute to its effective management. In Malaysia, the authorities have established a grading system for inspection of food establishments to regulate ready-to-eat foodstuff.

Inspection Points	Grade	Action Taken by Ministry of Health
>90%	A	Inspection every 6 months
80-90%	B	Inspection every 4 months
70-79%	C	Inspection every 2 months
<70%	D	Premise closure under Malaysian Food Act 1983 and Food Regulations 1985, repeat inspection within 14days

Table 2. Grading system for food establishments in Malaysia

The Ministry of Health of Malaysia also printed out information materials targeting different groups such as the media, public schools, other specific targets and politicians. For food handlers, MOH-Malaysia enforced *Kendiri* Program that gives self-inspection guidelines for food premise owners.

Delegates from Mexico shared with the participants how their government controlled the spread of fruit fly especially in the non-affected area growing Mexican exportable commodities. For the period of this crisis, there were several areas put under quarantine. The delegation believed that the implementation of the plan reduced the risk of a plague in the production of fruit, and eliminates the impact that would bring to the economy of the producers of fruit.

Two case studies were presented by the representatives from Papua New Guinea. These were the general overview of their food safety system and emergency risk communication approaches on avian influenza. For effective dissemination of information, two provinces were identified as the focus of the risk communication activities and several information dissemination methodologies were employed.

Considering that Papua New Guinea consists of several cultural groups and has several hundred of dialects, the task for getting the message across the target audience in the rural area proved to be a little challenging. Thus, different modes of transportation and at least two common languages were used. The delegates, however, informed the Member economies that they were successful in their campaign because the locals reported cases of dead birds suspect of avian influenza.

The Filipino delegates conveyed to other Member economies how food safety is ensured in the Philippines. Due to the fragmented structure of the Department of Agriculture, the delegates recommended for a consolidation of food safety efforts of the different agencies. They identified the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Product Standards to undertake the endeavor. Correspondingly, a collaborative effort was suggested in carrying out risk assessment and risk management approaches. Lastly, the Philippine Information Agency was tapped to be the lead office to undertake risk communication and prepare print and ad campaigns.

The Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) in Singapore is the lead agency that ensures a resilient supply of safe food to safeguard the health of animals and plants and facilitate agri-trade. AVA focuses its communication efforts on food safety public education, product recalls and crisis communication.

The delegates identified areas for improvement and expansion with regards to their risk communication program. Increased efforts on risk communication are recommended to be undertaken. Likewise, a more structured approach for identification of food safety risks to be communicated to consumers is required. Another area for improvement is the conduct of regular media Training sessions particularly for officers identified to be spokespersons for

AVA. Lastly, the looking into tapping new media such as blogs, podcasts and SMS⁶ to enhance communication efforts is proposed.

Strategies to improve the risk communication program of Thailand were presented in a case study. The delegates from the Member Economy identified five approaches. First is the involvement of farm, industries and consumers. This approach includes formulation of a national communication plan and an emergency plan for crises situations. Second is the understanding of consumer perception. Under this activity, a spokesperson shall be identified to convey key messages to the public. Training modules shall also be developed for vital food safety programs

The third action focuses on product labeling. The media shall be instructed on safe cooking methods. Newsletters, cartoon series and other educational materials shall also be disseminated for such purpose. Fourth is regular monitoring by the government. Farms shall be inspected and compliance monitored. Markets, supermarkets and retailers shall also be checked as to compliance with labeling provisions.

National surveillance systems would include field and hospital surveillance. Partnership with reference laboratory networks and the WHO shall be strengthened. Enhancing consumer awareness completes the five approaches. Conduct of a national public awareness campaign shall be in one of the major activities under this approach.

For the case study by the delegates from Viet Nam, six strategies were enumerated. A classification and identification of the target audience shall be done in order to develop suitable messages and communication approaches. The different communication channels shall also be mobilized. In addition, an increased number of mobile teams shall be deployed. The delegates also recommended that a study and understanding of the perceived public risk shall be undertaken to improve its communication strategies. Following Codex guidelines, the risk analysis program is envisioned to be implemented. Finally, strengthening of the Month of Action for Food Safety and Quality program shall be continued.

Closing Ceremonies

Before the official closing ceremonies, Mr Israel dela Cruz gave the post evaluation exam, APEC evaluation questionnaires and reminded all APEC-sponsored participants what to do when they returned to their home economy.

Dr Sonia De Leon along with the other Philippine delegates gave their thanks to the delegates for coming to the Philippines. Dr de Leon gave the closing remarks by pointing out the importance of cooperation, networking and reaching for our dreams. She also expressed her gratitude to the resource speakers and delegates.

⁶ SMS or Short Message Service (SMS) is a communications protocol allowing the interchange of short text messages between mobile telephone devices. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Short_message_service, accessed 27 June 2008)