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STRENGTHENING FOOD SAFETY AND ANIMAL HEALTH CAPACITIES IN RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT

April 2022

SDGs:



Country:

Armenia

Project Code:

TCP/ARM/3702

FAO Contribution:

USD 315 000

Duration:

1 May 2019 – 31 December 2021

Contact Info:

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Implementing Partners

Food Safety Inspectorate Body (FSIB) of the Republic of Armenia (formerly State Service for Food Safety [SSFS]) of the Ministry of Agriculture); Ministry of Economy.

Beneficiaries

Government institutions and competent authorities, research institutions and academia.

Country Programming Framework (CPF) Outputs

Strategic Objective (SO)/Organizational Outcome: SO4: Enable more inclusive and efficient agriculture and food systems.

Outcome 4.2: Agribusiness and agrifood chains that are more inclusive and efficient are developed and implemented by the public and private sectors.

Output 4.2.1: Public sector organizations' capacities strengthened to design and implement national policies, strategies, regulatory frameworks and investments plans supportive of inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems development.

CPF 2016 to 2020: Government Priority 2: Animal health, plant protection, and food safety and quality.

Country Outcome 2.2: Policy framework enhanced to ensure food safety and quality.



BACKGROUND

Accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO [2003]) and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU [2015]) has enabled Armenia to expand trade relations with many countries. However, meeting different trading partners' requirements calls for adaptability on the part of food businesses and exporters, and the implementation of robust official controls to assure the safety of foods, and to prevent risks from animal diseases, including zoonotic diseases. In this context, Armenian livestock sector and trade faces problems resulting from traditional husbandry systems, which cause difficulties for the control of animal diseases. There are good data sources available on animal health, but the biggest gaps are the absence of an animal identification system and the lack of detailed information on animal movements within the country.

The Food Safety Inspectorate Body (FSIB – formerly the State Service for Food Safety [SSFS]), the leading institution for official food safety controls, animal and plant health, emphasized the need to introduce a risk assessment methodology in the fields of food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary services. Improved capacity in risk assessment is important for assuring adequate food safety and animal health controls within Armenia, and will equip authorities to better respond to both WTO and EAEU requirements when trading.

Against this background, the project aimed to support improved safety and quality of the food produced and consumed in Armenia, and increased competitiveness in international trade.

IMPACT

It is expected that the enhanced technical and institutional capacities of the relevant authorities on risk management and assessment in food safety, animal and plant health will improve the safety and quality of the food produced and consumed in Armenia and increase competitiveness in international trade. This will lead to better health and food and nutrition security, as well as enhanced livelihoods, economic development and trade.

ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS

The project was timely and effective for the country, as the Government of Armenia was undergoing a series of institutional reforms that also encompassed food control and animal health. Guidance provided during these reforms enabled the government counterparts to consider risk and evidence-based approaches for establishing a sustainable and efficient food control system. The project improved the technical and institutional capacities of the relevant authorities on risk management and assessment in food safety, animal and plant health, through the provision of thematic technical training courses, direct expert advice on the institutional framework; and the preparation of guidance materials on risk analysis, which were developed in collaboration with the authorities. Further details on key activities carried out and results achieved are outlined below.

Risk assessment capacity for animal health, food safety and plant health was enhanced through the provision of training courses for technical staff, experts and policy-makers from relevant ministries and institutions. The training proved particularly useful for policy-makers and technical experts to comprehend the importance of risk-based and evidence-based approaches in decision-making on food policy and food control.

Building on the general training provided, a series of technical training sessions was organized on Food Safety Microbiological Risk Assessment (MRA) and chemical risk assessment and toxicology. Participants found the hands-on exercises on risk ranking and rapid risk assessment practices very useful.

Technical training was also provided on risk management and assessment of animal health for competent authorities whose work was relevant to food safety and animal health in the country. Workshop activities clarified national and international requirements for risk assessment, and resulted in improved understanding of risk analysis principles in animal health.

In order to strengthen risk management and risk communication for food safety, animal health and plant health, international and national experts on risk management and risk assessment assessed the work processes of risk management in these areas by relevant government bodies. Consultation meetings, technical training sessions, and direct advice to specific departments improved the capacities of technical staff on overall food safety and animal health risk management, the use of risk assessment and scientific data and evidence for management decision-making, as well as policy-making for the prevention, reduction and elimination of disease outbreaks.

Risk-based food inspection was enhanced as a result of a detailed analysis of the current status of registration of food businesses, the risk-based food inspection system, and the level of implementation of Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP)-based food safety management systems in Armenia, and improved inspector capacities on using risk-based approaches through targeted training.

In addition, training was provided for FSIB inspectors, paraprofessionals, epidemiologists and slaughterhouse workers, enhancing their capacities on the relationship between animal health and public health; the background to meat inspection; and hygiene practices.

Finally, a Generic Manual for Implementing Risk Analysis Capability for Food Safety, Animal Health and Plant Health in Armenia was developed, providing guidance on decision-making on risk-based food control procedures, and potential solutions for improving risk-communication conditions in the Armenian context, among other things.

IMPLEMENTATION OF WORK PLAN AND BUDGET

During the project, the project team took into account important institutional changes, engaged with the new management, and adjusted the project work plan accordingly. In addition, the Government and the project beneficiary relevant authorities were affected by the global COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020 onwards. Missions and in-person training were not possible due to international travel restrictions, and training activities and expert meetings switched to online format in 2020-2021; as a result, there were unspent funds under travel and training activities. During this same period, political and economic unrest occurred in the country. Although these events impacted the pace of project delivery, the key outputs of the project were implemented; and the project team managed to have smooth communication with the project counterparts in the form of virtual and hybrid meetings.

FOLLOW-UP FOR GOVERNMENT ATTENTION

The Government of Armenia is finalizing the National Food Safety Strategy. It is recommended that an action plan to implement the strategy be developed, based on the risk and evidence-based approaches, for which technical capacities were improved through this project. It is advised that the Generic Manual for Implementing Risk Analysis Capability for Food Safety, Animal Health and Plant Health in Armenia, developed in collaboration with the FSIB (formerly the SSFS), be applied, to ensure that food safety, plant health and animal health risk management decisions are taken based on scientific advice, provided by the relevant risk assessments.

SUSTAINABILITY

1. Capacity development

As mentioned above, the Government is currently working on a National Food Safety Strategy, to which the project indirectly contributed by improving technical capacity.

FAO and the Government of Armenia have a longstanding collaboration on food control. The products of the project and capacity improvement were well-received by the counterpart, and the intake of technical information was successful. Within the new structure of food control management in the country, the counterparts utilized the capacities and risk-based approaches.

All the technical materials produced were translated into Armenian and provided to the counterparts, with the FAO project team remaining available for any questions that may arise in the future.

2. Gender equality

The project did not have a specific indicator on gender, but a gender-sensitive approach was taken during the implementation of the activities. Both men and women benefited from the capacity improvement on food safety and animal health in Armenia.

3. Environmental sustainability

Improving food safety, food control, and animal health protection practices with a risk-based approach makes it possible to reduce the impact on environment, in terms of food loss and waste, waste management, and human, animal and plant disease outbreaks.

4. Human Rights-based Approach (HRBA) – in particular Right to Food and Decent Work

Improving food safety control capacities at national level directly contributes to the “Right to Food”, as food safety is an essential part of food security and is needed for availability, affordability and accessibility of food.

5. Technological sustainability

Risk assessment of a food or ingredient includes hazard identification and characterization, exposure assessment and risk characterization. This leads to a decision on whether any legal measures should be taken in order to prevent harm from this food or ingredient. Sector-specific risk assessment guidelines developed during the project will enable the counterparts to use a science-based, systematic approach that is applicable to any food product.

Knowledge gained from the project activities is already being used by the project beneficiaries in the continuing institutional reforms, development of the food safety strategy, and advocacy for the appointment of the risk assessment centres.

6. Economic sustainability

Technical materials developed during the project involve no additional costs for the beneficiaries.



DOCUMENTS AND OUTREACH PRODUCTS

Documents

- ❑ **Sabirovic, M. & Pipoyan, D.** January 2020. *Situation analysis report on food safety and animal health capacities in risk assessment and management in Armenia.* 19 pp.
- ❑ **FAO.** February 2020. *Memorandum on the observations and assessment by FAO on the capability, gaps and opportunities of the two Risk Assessment Centers.* 3 pp.
- ❑ **Gorris, L.** August 2020. *Addressing Microbiological Risk Assessment Capability Building Needs in Armenia.* 23 pp.
- ❑ **Wunsch, A. & Beglaryan, M.** November 2020. *Summary Report on the Current Status of Registration of Food Businesses, the Risk-Based Food Inspection System and the Level of Implementation of HACCP-based Food Safety Management Systems in the Republic of Armenia.* 35 pp.
- ❑ **Gauldie, A.** July 2021. *Meat Hygiene Practices and Inspection Guidelines.* 53 pp.
- ❑ **Sabirovic, M., Gorris, L., Beglaryan, M. & Pipoyan, D.** December 2021. *Generic Manual for Implementing Risk Analysis Capability for Food Safety, Animal Health and Plant Health in Armenia.* 33 pp.
- ❑ **Gorris, L.** December 2021. *Operational guideline on Microbiological Risk Assessment in the context of food safety.* 47 pp.



Outreach Products

**Inception Technical Workshop –Food Safety,
4-6 June 2019**

- ❑ <http://un.am/en/news/874>.
- ❑ <https://a1plus.am/hy/article/341611>.
- ❑ <http://araratnews.am/snndamtherkhi-anvtanguthyuneh-geraka-harc-hayastanum>.
- ❑ <https://shamshyan.com/hy/article/2019/06/06/1126747/>.
- ❑ [https://www.facebook.com/backmecknews/posts/444450056345533?_xts__\[0\]=68.ARChUtdrSCYJXUN_oFM-aheKaOM2Xiq3FwxPlacuBBv0UJI8cFbdjyRc_IX_G3wRv57LmO2Ck_rw0QQQfAkYEiyFvkCtyyzt_gxQhbes3QFgl2TemY9i3PhBRw4IqMumK_bxBHIEapFwo4KLYpM5VMdHLCsBbJ9bfBkOYBxnmo3-0v99o1uVGVlc8ehoFCtdECeDKt3P8kFvw4NyM5IMX2uD3knw3u2T9ASwbzvpDpuKSVFY-sXBZpHP2naWqkHpQq-jOXFkn0fCVP6c29Wuo9plKhMJ_5WwFbkBHjN5GZjnexUzY45joz62LdfyitlMnyRNKjMchBA7iWm_IRL3vg&_tn__=-R](https://www.facebook.com/backmecknews/posts/444450056345533?_xts__[0]=68.ARChUtdrSCYJXUN_oFM-aheKaOM2Xiq3FwxPlacuBBv0UJI8cFbdjyRc_IX_G3wRv57LmO2Ck_rw0QQQfAkYEiyFvkCtyyzt_gxQhbes3QFgl2TemY9i3PhBRw4IqMumK_bxBHIEapFwo4KLYpM5VMdHLCsBbJ9bfBkOYBxnmo3-0v99o1uVGVlc8ehoFCtdECeDKt3P8kFvw4NyM5IMX2uD3knw3u2T9ASwbzvpDpuKSVFY-sXBZpHP2naWqkHpQq-jOXFkn0fCVP6c29Wuo9plKhMJ_5WwFbkBHjN5GZjnexUzY45joz62LdfyitlMnyRNKjMchBA7iWm_IRL3vg&_tn__=-R).
- ❑ [https://www.facebook.com/Aroxjutyun/posts/2535297353168696?_xts__\[0\]=68.ARAuHClQitPQXkFQmbmq5oG2Yij_kL6UH8k03B4fQ7JUAqiW19HdomdpvRULO1fEWgASpTB8DFm6ts2Hi0nzlWKUTmxX1jleXo8NV_5_aIdIKQIMLYq3-3Y1vz9yhMuMiz5anBp1DJOBXvoiaSLpEo_J6x5LLHRPPRE9x1XJAjsOLKqoe90oax_T_d1iyoKQodLeRLwZmMe9UyzsUkfyTZnNt72Tt-LczRMEVwJ4v1wWmL6WqBp0h6YtdXsvVDMpq39XE5eLFDgWoCDkp4aY6vDOYLgn_s02IOBvEE59X3mU5L33NrYXhnO9gefy-Xef_Odu2_UHweTyz-lfdUew&_tn__=H-R](https://www.facebook.com/Aroxjutyun/posts/2535297353168696?_xts__[0]=68.ARAuHClQitPQXkFQmbmq5oG2Yij_kL6UH8k03B4fQ7JUAqiW19HdomdpvRULO1fEWgASpTB8DFm6ts2Hi0nzlWKUTmxX1jleXo8NV_5_aIdIKQIMLYq3-3Y1vz9yhMuMiz5anBp1DJOBXvoiaSLpEo_J6x5LLHRPPRE9x1XJAjsOLKqoe90oax_T_d1iyoKQodLeRLwZmMe9UyzsUkfyTZnNt72Tt-LczRMEVwJ4v1wWmL6WqBp0h6YtdXsvVDMpq39XE5eLFDgWoCDkp4aY6vDOYLgn_s02IOBvEE59X3mU5L33NrYXhnO9gefy-Xef_Odu2_UHweTyz-lfdUew&_tn__=H-R).

Celebration of World Food Safety Day video, 7 June 2020

- ❑ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=55xVMV7ROs>.

International Year of Plant Health (IYPH) products

- ❑ IYPH Activity book in Armenian:
<http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca9327en>.
- ❑ IYPH Brochure in Armenian:
<http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca6992en>.
Short versions with English and Russian subtitles:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=daEZXR0G5RA> and
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TJL5iITjco>.

**Tenth meeting of the Coordinating Council on Plant
Quarantine of the CIS Member States**

- ❑ <https://freenews.am/post/e683d5129e79bdd2046cef1078269fff>.
- ❑ <https://www.aravot.am/2021/10/28/1225481/>.
- ❑ <https://www.armdaily.am/?p=156334&l=am>.
- ❑ <https://news.am/arm/news/669684.html>.
- ❑ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5T-VoVMdg-k-freenews.am>.
- ❑ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sjyf7nh6Rug-KentronTV>.
- ❑ <http://am.mir24.tv/news/115607?fbclid=IwAR01Lo-LpsoPymkx-hkZyLu19rwV6s1hwdG5lwgJ835N82dzvWbUkAv3JU-MirTV>.
- ❑ <https://www.shantnews.am/news/view/1010840.html>.
- ❑ <https://vesti.am/post/298032/am>.
- ❑ <https://politik.am/am/hayastanum-meknarkel-e-aph-erkneri-buyseri-karantini-hamakargox-khorhrdi-10-rd-nisty>.
- ❑ <https://newshub.am/read-news/1929404/>.
- ❑ <https://ankakh.com/hy/article/72801>.

Meat Hygiene Practices and Inspection - Online Training

- ❑ [*Սննդամթերքի անվտանգության պետական ծառայություն - Մսի հիգիենան ու դրա վերահսկողությունը առաջնահերթություն \(snund.am\)*](#).
- ❑ <https://nt.am/am/news/303408/>.

ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS - LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Expected Impact	Improved safety and quality of the food produced and consumed in Armenia and increased competitiveness in international trade		
Outcome	Effective risk assessment systems on food safety, animal health and plant health are in place; links between risk assessment, management and communication are effective. Foundations for the food business operators rating system is well established		
	Indicator	Institutional risk assessment capacities for food safety and animal health are reviewed and strengthened (please see Outputs below for other Indicators).	
	Baseline	Roles and responsibilities for risk assessment of food safety hazards and animal diseases are not defined. There are no generic Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on risk assessment for any specific food safety, animal or plant health issues.	
	End Target	Joint Technical Task Force on risk assessment is established; generic SOPs outlining the risk assessment principles and processes, which can be tailored for specific issues (e.g. zoonoses, pesticide residues, AMR) are produced.	
Comments and follow-up action to be taken	The project improved the technical and institutional capacities of the relevant authorities on risk management and assessment in food safety, animal and plant health, through the provision of thematic technical training courses, direct expert advice on the institutional framework, and the preparation of guidance materials on risk analysis, which were developed in collaboration with the authorities.		
Output 1			
	Strengthened institutional framework for the provision of risk assessment and scientific advice to prevent and control animal health risks and food safety risks		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Capacity of the risk assessors in food safety, animal and plant health are improved.	Methodological and practical trainings with a focus on risk assessments for food safety, animal and plant health risk assessors are conducted.	Yes
Baseline	Knowledge of the competent authorities on risk assessment is very limited.		
Comments	Achieved.		
Activity 1.1	Establish a joint technical Task Force comprised of animal, food safety and plant health risk assessment teams' representatives		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	The Joint Technical Task Force (JTTF) was officially established in September 2019 to support and act as the sounding board for the project activities on institutional reform and risk assessment capability, management and communication. It consisted of representatives from the Food Safety Risk Assessment and Analysis Scientific Center (FSRAASC SNCO), the Information-Analytical Centre for Risk Assessment of Food Chain (CENS); the Ministry of Health, the National Center for Disease Control and Prevention SNCO (NCDC); Inspection Bodies' Coordination Bureau, Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia; the Ministry of Economy. The JTTF conducted several meetings throughout the project (with FAO and among themselves), to advise the project team on the progress of the project, and provided feedback on the materials developed.	
Activity 1.2	A 3-day workshop meeting to kick-off the project		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	The project was kicked off with the inception workshop on "Risk Analysis Approaches for Food Safety, Animal Health and Plant Health" from 4 to 6 June 2019. It aimed to have a common understanding of the project objective, work plan, roles and responsibilities; strengthening risk analysis capacities through the application of risk-based practices for disease prevention and control; and proactive regional and international collaboration. Thirty-five representatives from the relevant departments of the FSIB, Ministry of Economy (former Ministry of Agriculture), the NCDC of the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Environment, FSRAASC SNCO, CENS, and Armenian National Agrarian University participated in the workshop.	

Activity 1.3	Determine current capacities, and consider and clarify existing legal powers for risk assessment and baseline data		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	<p>Baseline information was collected under the technical guidance of the international consultant, with desk work and interviews carried out by national consultants, inputs collected during the inception workshop, and one-to-one meetings with the relevant authorities. The findings outlined the capacity of institutions to assess risks, and highlighted the need for cross-sectoral cooperation in risk analysis and data gathering and sharing, and for clarification of the roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>The Government recognized that risk assessment must be separated from risk management, by law, and that there was a need for the nomination of a scientific centre(s) responsible for risk assessment for food safety and animal health in the country. The FSIB proposed that the Government consider two centres, CENS and FSRAASC SNCO, and requested that FAO provide a memorandum outlining a short description and assessment on the capability, gaps and opportunities of the two centres. FAO provided the memorandum to the FSIB, with its technical opinion on the potential and the improvements needed in the two centres to be fully able to act as the risk assessment centres. While informal discussions were held in 2020 and 2021, the nomination of a risk assessment centre was put on hold, and the Government decision is still pending.</p>	
Activity 1.4	Gather information on existing information and data and ongoing activities to assess animal health diseases, and food safety risks		
	Achieved	Partially	
	Comments	<p>The information was collected as a part of the baseline information collection (Activity 1.3), and gaps in data and evidence sharing, coordination and communication were outlined. Recommendations on practical steps for strengthening the existing sectoral data were shared with the counterparts, including through a database that is accessible by all relevant government departments. The importance of compliance with international standards and broader engagement with stakeholders with a One Health approach, to facilitate risk analysis, was highlighted.</p>	
Activity 1.5	Make any recommendations for improvement in institutional framework for risk assessment or governance		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	<p>Recommendations were shared with the Ministry of Economy, the FSIB, the Inspection Bodies' Coordination Bureau, and other relevant counterparts in analysis reports, during one-to-one meetings, as well as training sessions and consultation meetings. The final draft document, Generic Manual for Implementing Risk Analysis Capability for Food Safety, Animal Health and Plant Health in Armenia, outlined the recommendations in detail.</p>	
Output 2	Enhanced risk assessment capacity for animal health, food safety and plant health		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Capacity of the risk assessors in food safety, animal and plant health are improved.	Methodological and practical trainings with a focus on risk assessments for food safety, animal and plant health risk assessors.	Yes
Baseline	Knowledge of the competent authorities on risk assessment is very limited.		
Comments	Achieved.		
Activity 2.1	Training courses implemented to enhance skills and capacities of risk assessors and specialists in food safety		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	<p>Two in-person and four online training sessions were delivered, whose main beneficiaries were the technical staff of the FSIB, policy-makers at the Ministry of Economy, technical experts working for the risk assessment service providers (CENS and FSRAASC), and the technical staff of the NCDC of the Ministry of Health. The training sessions addressed food safety risk analysis within the Armenian context, in line with globally accepted best practices and principles. Concepts of risk assessment, risk management and risk communication were introduced and discussed.</p> <p>Building on the general training provided, a series of technical training sessions was organized. The first series on Food Safety MRA introduced the principles and methodologies to conduct MRA, the use of outcomes of MRA for risk management decisions, and international best practices and data sources; and provided hands-on experience through two case studies based on Armenian data. The second series followed up on the previously built capacities on chemical risk assessment and toxicology.</p>	

Activity 2.2	Training courses implemented to enhance skills and capacities of risk assessors and specialists in animal and plant health	
	Achieved	Yes
Activity 2.2	Comments	<p>A series of technical training sessions was conducted on risk management and assessment of animal health. In total, three in-person and two online training sessions took place, whose main beneficiaries were the competent authorities whose work is relevant to food safety and animal health in the country, particularly the technical staff of the FSIB, the Republican Veterinary-Sanitary and Phytosanitary Laboratory Services Center Non-Commercial Organization (RVSPCLS SNCO), policy-makers working at the Ministry of Economy, technical experts working for the risk assessment service providers (CENS and FSRAASC SNCO), and the technical staff of the National Centre for Disease Control of the Ministry of Health.</p> <p>The workshop activities clarified national and international requirements for risk assessment and resulted in improved understanding of risk analysis principles in animal health. Participants developed a number of outputs, including draft criteria for disease prioritization and categorization, a basic template for dairy value chain, a template for rapid alert risk assessment related to international disease monitoring, and checklists for risk assessment in animal health. These documents were further developed and integrated into the technical guidelines on animal health of the Manual (activities 2.3 and 2.4).</p> <p>Staff responsible for the protection of plant intended for food were trained during the food safety risk assessment capacity-improvement activities. In addition, FAO provided technical and logistical support for the implementation of the Tenth meeting of the Coordinating Council on Plant Quarantine of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) member states.</p> <p>For IYPH 2020, FAO contributed to national-level awareness-raising activities by translating into Armenian and disseminating two documents, namely a children’s activity book “Healthy plants, healthy planet” and the IYPH 2020 brochure.</p> <p>A video on the activities of the FSIB on plant protection and its vision for the future was also prepared, with the support of FAO, in Armenian with English and Russian subtitles.</p>
	Activity 2.3	Develop a generic risk assessment standard operating procedure (G/SOPs)
Achieved		Yes
Activity 2.3	Comments	<p>Technical advice was provided to the Ministry of Economy and the FSIB during the ongoing reforms in the country regarding the institutional framework and food control governance. A series of consultation meetings took place to discuss the development and collect the feedback of the authorities on the Manual, with generic and sector-specific technical guidelines. The draft Manual was finalized and submitted to the FSIB and the Ministry of Economy, which would guide them on their decision-making on risk-based food control procedures.</p>
	Activity 2.4	Develop specific technical Annexes to the Generic Standard Operating Procedures (G/SOPs) as sector specific standard operating procedures (S-SOPs)
Achieved		Yes
Activity 2.4	Comments	<p>Technical Guidelines on Animal Health Risk Assessment, and on Microbiological Food Safety Risk Assessment were finalized and provided to the project counterparts as the annexes in the Manual.</p>
	Activity 2.5	Agree on the key activities and products for risk assessment in food safety and animal health fields
Achieved		Yes
Activity 2.5	Comments	<p>Key activities and products needed for an effective risk assessment system in chemical and microbiological food safety and animal health were discussed and advised to the public authorities. The Manual and its technical guidelines provide the specific activities needed for data generation, collection, and management; for conducting rapid risk assessment in times of incidents and emergencies.</p>

Output 3	Strengthened risk management and risk communication for food safety, animal health and plant health		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Risk management and risk communication capacities for food safety and animal health and plant health are improved.	New working procedures for communication and co-working between risk assessors and risk managers are agreed. Understanding of risk management and risk communication by the relevant authorities are improved.	Yes
Baseline	No comprehensive review of the current risk management practices exists, and level of interaction with risk assessors. Knowledge of stakeholders on the risk management and risk communication is limited.		
Comments	Achieved.		
Activity 3.1	Improved risk management decisions using risk assessment products		
	Achieved	Partially	
	Comments	The project technical team, consisting of international and national experts on risk management and risk assessment, assessed the work processes of risk management in the animal health, plant health, and food safety areas by the FSIB, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Health and the Inspection Bodies' Coordination Bureau. Consultation meetings, technical training sessions (online) and direct advice through one-to-one meetings with specific departments improved the capacities of technical staff on overall food safety and animal health risk management, the use of risk assessment and scientific data and evidence for management decision-making, as well as policy-making for prevention, reduction and elimination of disease outbreaks. The newly established Department of Risk Management of the FSIB particularly benefited from the technical capacity improvement training sessions. The initial planned part on the compilation of the annual inspection plans of three sectors was not realized.	
Activity 3.2	A workshop to improve understanding of risk assessment by relevant stakeholders		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	Two online workshops were conducted with identified stakeholders in two groups. The first one addressed the general audience, including policy-makers and department managers, which improved their understanding of the benefits of using risk-based approaches in food safety and the importance of risk assessment. The second workshop addressed risk assessors and risk managers with more technical presentations and discussions, supported with case studies. The Manual Technical Guidelines on Food Safety and Animal Health were also discussed and improved with the feedback provided by the participants.	
Activity 3.3	Direct advice on improving risk communication		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	Risk communication capacities of the relevant public authorities were improved, as a result of direct advice provided through online discussions, and also as a part of the technical training sessions. Communication, particularly between the RVSPCLS SNCO and their relevant departments, and communicating incidents with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Economy were discussed. Potential solutions for improving risk communication conditions in the Armenian context were provided in the Manual.	

Output 4	Strengthened risk-based food inspection, including food business operator (FBO) registration		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Foundations for the rating system for food businesses are well established.	A working group consisting of staff from SSFS, with input from the private sector is established. System to register food businesses is strengthened. Inspectors are trained on modern risk based inspection methods.	Partially
Baseline	There is no food business rating system. Online registration system of the food business operators is insufficient. Knowledge of the relevant competent authorities on food risk categorization, modern methods and risk based inspections are limited.		
Comments	The activities under Output 4 were reconsidered at the request of the project counterparts, and the focus of some of them were revised. In addition, the delivery was affected by the challenges encountered in 2020-2021. However, the key activities were delivered, particularly on technical advice on FBO registration and capacity improvement of the public authority inspectors for food safety and animal health.		
Activity 4.1	Establish an informal working group and develop a 2-year workplan to build the pillars for a rating system		
	Achieved	No	
	Comments	The working group initiation was agreed with FSIB in February 2020, but could not be formed due to the challenges encountered in 2020-2021.	
Activity 4.2	Strengthen the online register (census) for FBOs, including gathering the information to update the register		
	Achieved		
	Comments	A detailed analysis of the current status of registration of food businesses, the risk-based food inspection system, and the level of implementation of HACCP-based food safety management systems in Armenia was prepared by the National Consultant on Food Inspection and HACCP, and the International Consultant on Veterinary Public Health and Food Safety. The report was shared and findings were presented to the competent authorities for validation during an online technical consultation meeting. Key findings in the report regarding online registry were the lack of a registration number, and few details concerning the information required for registration, which limited the risk-based categorization of the businesses. Recommendations to improve conditions were provided via the report, as well as during the online consultation meeting and the technical training.	
Activity 4.3	Food risk categorisation		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	Training sessions were provided online, owing to COVID-19 pandemic-related restrictions.	
Activity 4.4	Support the strengthening of the official SSFS inspection system		
	Achieved	Partially	
	Comments	The initial idea of establishing a task force to determine improved working procedures and templates needed to enhance risk-based food inspection was not carried out; but the FSIB was provided with examples of risk categorization and inspection checklists.	
Activity 4.5	Improve inspectors capacity		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	The project counterparts prioritized two areas of work to improve technical capacities, namely: i) the use of risk-based approaches in inspection; and ii) inspection and hygiene practices in slaughterhouses, and disease diagnoses in animals intended for food production. FAO responded to the request with technical training sessions and direct expert guidance. Inspector capacities on using risk-based approaches were improved through training focusing on the risk-based elements within a modern food control system, registration and risk categorization of food establishments, and risk-based inspections.	
Activity 4.6	Support FBOs to comply and improve food safety management systems		
	Achieved	Partially	
	Comments	The key findings of the analysis (Activity 4.2) revealed that while the Law on Food Safety defines the concept of HACCP and obliges its introduction in food-producing entities, its implementation is not in place, and the competent authority does not conduct strict inspection on compliance. The inspection capacities on guiding food businesses on the implementation of HACCP were improved through the provision of training and technical advice. The initial plan to deliver training to the FBOs was not actualized.	

Support to food grading for bovine meat and eggs					
Activity 4.7	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="background-color: #e6f2ff; width: 15%;">Achieved</td> <td>Partially</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #e6f2ff;">Comments</td> <td> <p>Analysis of the status showed that in order to prepare the current system in place for the framework proposed under the FBO rating and food grading project, capacity improvements were needed. Therefore, this activity focused on improving technical capacities in hygiene practice in the meat sector, with a One Health approach. A series of training sessions was provided for FSIB inspectors, paraprofessionals, epidemiologists and slaughterhouse workers. Capacities were improved on the relationship between animal health and public health; the background to meat inspection; and hygiene practices, from the selection of animals to post-mortem inspections and the clinical diagnosis and epidemiology of priority animal diseases for Armenia (brucellosis, tuberculosis, blackleg, glanders, foot-and-mouth disease and anthrax). The experts provided the participants with guidelines on slaughterhouse hygiene practices and a disease diagnosis card, which were translated into Armenian.</p> </td> </tr> </table>	Achieved	Partially	Comments	<p>Analysis of the status showed that in order to prepare the current system in place for the framework proposed under the FBO rating and food grading project, capacity improvements were needed. Therefore, this activity focused on improving technical capacities in hygiene practice in the meat sector, with a One Health approach. A series of training sessions was provided for FSIB inspectors, paraprofessionals, epidemiologists and slaughterhouse workers. Capacities were improved on the relationship between animal health and public health; the background to meat inspection; and hygiene practices, from the selection of animals to post-mortem inspections and the clinical diagnosis and epidemiology of priority animal diseases for Armenia (brucellosis, tuberculosis, blackleg, glanders, foot-and-mouth disease and anthrax). The experts provided the participants with guidelines on slaughterhouse hygiene practices and a disease diagnosis card, which were translated into Armenian.</p>
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Partnerships and Outreach

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