



MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE
OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Food Safety and Nutrition Strategy

for 2010 – 2013

2010

Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic
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A large, solid orange graphic that resembles a leaf or a fan, positioned on the right side of the page. It has a curved top and bottom edge and a pointed left edge.

**Food Safety and Nutrition
Strategy for 2010 – 2013**



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Resolution of the Government of the CR

GOVERNMENT OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC



RESOLUTION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

No 61 of 18 January 2010

concerning the Food Safety and Nutrition Strategy for 2010 - 2013

The Government

I. takes note of the Food Safety and Nutrition Strategy for 2010 - 2013, included in Section III of Document Ref. No 14/10 (hereinafter referred to as the "Strategy") bearing in mind that food safety and nutrition related matters constitute one of the priorities of the Government;

II. imposes

1. upon the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Health
 - a) to ensure implementation of food safety and nutrition policy in compliance with the Strategy,
 - b) to ensure the accomplishment of tasks laid down in the Strategy,
 - c) to submit to the Government
 - ca) before 31 December 2011 the information comprising ongoing evaluation of tasks laid down in the Strategy,
 - cb) before 31 December 2013 a follow-up strategic document,
2. upon the Deputy Prime Minister of the Government and the Minister of Defence, the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports and the Ministers of Industry and Trade, Environment, Interior, Finance and the Chairperson of the State Office for Nuclear Safety to cooperate with the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Health in the coordination of food safety and nutrition related matters, to provide necessary information and synergy in the fulfillment of tasks ensuing from the Strategy, in particular.

To be implemented by:

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence,
Ministers of Environment, Agriculture, Interior, Finance, Industry and Trade,
Minister of Health, Education, Youth and Sports,
Chairperson of the State Office for Nuclear Safety

Prime Minister
Ing. Jan Fischer, CSc., m.p.

Introduction by the Director General of the Food Authority

We would like to present to you the new Food Safety and Nutrition Strategy for 2010 – 2013. It constitutes a key document of the Czech Republic, following from the preceding strategic documents of 2001, 2004 and 2007, and now also covering nutrition related matters. It has been developed in close cooperation between the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Health and with contribution of other entities involved in the food safety system in the Czech Republic. The food safety has for a long time ranked among the priorities of the Czech Republic and the nutrition is crucial in terms of a long-term improvement of health status of the population and has an impact on the production of agricultural raw materials as well as food processing.

In a long-term perspective the Food Safety and Nutrition Strategy seeks to strengthen the protection and promotion of health as well as the legitimate consumers' interests. In connection with that it aims to boost the public confidence in the system ensuring safe food, in its quality and nutritional values. The document defines the key areas of development for 2010 – 2013 and lays down the medium-term tasks for entities active in the field of food safety and nutrition.

As crucial areas of interest the Strategy recognizes further strengthening of collaboration with the European Food Safety Authority, communication and education of consumers as well as state administration staff, and newly also nutrition of population which has so far been addressed separately and has not been incorporated in the previous food safety strategies.

Prague, January 2010

František Sládek
Director General, Food Authority
Ministry of Agriculture

I. Ensuring Food Safety in the CR – The Current Status

The foundations of the food safety system in the Czech Republic were laid as early as in 2001 when by the Resolution of the Government of the CR No 1320 the very first strategic food safety document was adopted (Strategy to Assure Food Safety in the Czech Republic). The food safety policy is based on the principle of the so called risk analysis comprising three basic interconnected elements: risk assessment, risk management and risk communication.

In the Czech Republic the food safety system is coordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Health, in cooperation with other ministries and other state administration institutions. The risk assessment is conducted by independent state as well as non-governmental research institutes together with colleges and universities. An important role in the process of risk communication is played by non-governmental organisations, professional and consumer associations.

The first part of this document presents the role of individual entities and their part in the food safety and nutrition system in the Czech Republic broken down, in line with risk analysis, by risk assessment, management and communication, with a special focus on the cooperation between the CR and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and relevant international organisations (Codex Alimentarius).

I.1. Scientifically based Health Risk Assessment

Risk assessment means a science-based process the aim of which is to provide a detailed description of the risk in order to be able to efficiently influence it. The process consists of four steps: hazard identification, hazard characterisation, exposure assessment and risk characterisation.

At the European Union (EU) level for the purposes of risk assessment the European Food Safety Authority was established which provides the European Commission (EC) and other EU institutions and bodies with scientifically based information necessary for their activities and decision-making. In the CR the risk assessment has for a long time been carried out by state and non-governmental research institutes, colleges and universities. To support the risk assessment in food supply chain the so called scientific committees have been established.

The assessment of health risks ensuing from the exposure to hazardous agents in food falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health. Risk assessment is performed based on the data obtained by regular long-term monitoring (e.g. the monitoring programmes of the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Environment), in special cases at research

institutes, but provided certain conditions are met, also in the framework of routine controls throughout the chain, from primary production to food consumption. Exceptionally important is obtaining the data directly from the groups of consumers, namely through epidemiological studies. Such primary data is collected with the assistance of expert institutions from across the Czech Republic as well as competent authorities performing official control, colleges and universities. A large number of data providers on the other hand results in a variety of different formats of data storage making its comparisons pretty difficult. An important task is to harmonise such data and ensure their relevance. The data is used not only for the purposes of health risk assessment in the CR, but it can also be forwarded to the EFSA for risk assessment at the European level.

Monitoring

Monitoring means scheduled long-term series of observations or measurements with the aim to obtain information on the current level and development of contamination of food, feed, raw materials and environmental components. In the CR a hierarchical monitoring system guaranteed by individual ministries has been put in place.

The Ministry of Agriculture is responsible for monitoring the content of contaminants in food chain, for monitoring the contamination of environmental components (soil, surface water), and also the inputs therein. For the purpose of evaluation of data obtained by the Ministry of Agriculture a project of the so called data warehouse is under development, which is a ministerial repository of electronic data from the monitoring facilitating its statistic processing.

The Ministry of Health focuses on monitoring the health status of population of the CR in relation to the environment, including the monitoring of dietary exposure of population.

The Ministry of Environment is in charge of national monitoring of environment in the Czech Republic.

Scientific committees in the CR

In response to the establishment of EFSA, expert panels – scientific committees made up of prominent experts have been set up in the CR that shall develop objective and independent opinions, including proposals for the adoption of measures to ensure wholesomeness throughout the food production chain.

Since 2002 the Scientific Committee on Phytosanitary and Environment, the Veterinary Scientific Committee and the Scientific Committee on Animal Nutrition, established by the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Scientific Committee on Food, established by the Ministry of Health, have been active in the CR. In 2006 the Ministry of Agriculture set up the Scientific Committee on GM Food and Feed.

During the time of their existence these scientific committees have already elaborated several hundreds of scientific studies and opinions. The outputs from their activities, studies and opinions, just like the data on scientific committees themselves, are available to the general public on their respective websites.

1.2. Risk Management

Food safety coordination

To ensure the protection of health and support to consumer interests through safe food requires high level of collaboration and coordination of activities of all the stakeholders from among governmental as well as non-governmental institutions in line with the defined competences.

Therefore, in 2002 in accordance with Resolution of the Government of the CR No 1320 of 10 December 2001 concerning the Strategy to Assure Food Safety in the Czech Republic the interministerial Food Safety Co-ordination Unit (hereinafter referred to as the "Co-ordination Unit") was established. It was composed of representatives of central state administration authorities, competent authorities performing official control, consumer and trade organisations. To support the activities of the Co-ordination Unit, working groups addressing individual matters are set up where necessary. The Food Safety Department of the Ministry of Agriculture has been designated to act as the Secretariat of the Co-ordination Unit.

The Co-ordination Unit has been assigned the task of coordinating the activities of individual ministries and setting priorities in the field of food safety, ensuring the cooperation at the national level, and strengthening the collaboration with national food safety institutions of the individual EU Member States and with EFSA.

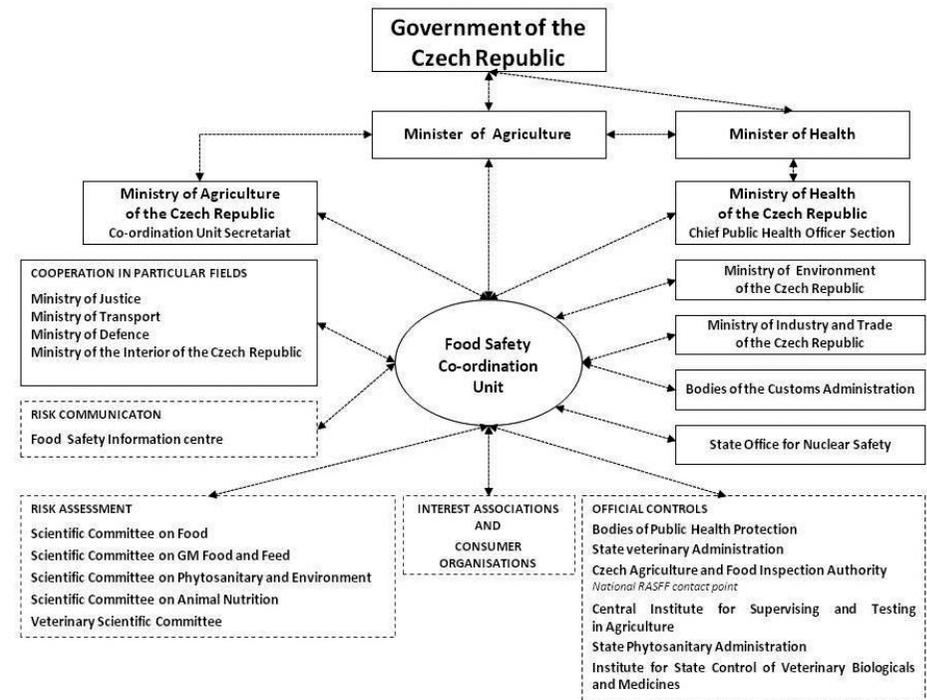
The Co-ordination Unit allows for the involvement of interest associations (Federation of the Food and Drink Industries, Agrarian Chamber, Czech Confederation of Commerce and Tourism) and non-governmental organisations (consumer associations) in the food safety system. These associations and organisations represent an important voice of food and feed producers and consumers.

The responsibilities born by the individual ministries in the field of food safety are the following:

Ministry of Agriculture is responsible particularly for veterinary and phytosanitary matters, animal nutrition and welfare and processes related to food and feed production and labelling, matters concerning the placing on the market of genetically modified food and feed. It also addresses the safety issues related to inputs in food and feed production, storage, distribution and use. Moreover, it is in charge of animal protection which also covers handling the animals, namely as concerns their treatment, feeding and watering, hygiene of the environment,

stirpiculture, breeding and reproduction, use, transport, veterinary treatment, control of epizootic diseases and animal killing. Through the appropriate competent authorities performing official control it conducts official controls of the market in the above referred areas.

Figure 1. Food safety system in the CR diagram



Ministry of Health is responsible for the area of public catering and articles and materials in contact with food. Moreover, in relation to food production and consumption it is in charge of setting the microbiological criteria for food, food and feed additives, processing aids and flavourings, contaminants, residues of pesticides and veterinary drugs in food and conditions for food irradiation. It identifies the causes of risks or damages to human health, namely in the field of food production and its placing on the market. It is in charge of marketing the novel food, too. Through the appropriate competent authorities performing official control it performs the supervision over the market and services in the above referred areas.

Ministry of Environment is responsible for managing the uniform information system on the environment, including national monitoring of environment in the territory of the Czech Republic, drafting and amending legislation concerning hazardous chemical substances and mixtures and management related to handling genetically modified organisms.

Ministry of Industry and Trade develops and operates the system for the protection of consumers' interests.

State Office for Nuclear Safety is responsible for fixing the maximum permitted levels of radioactive contamination of foodstuffs and manages the monitoring and evaluation of radioactive contamination of foodstuffs in the framework of the national radiation monitoring network activities, it provides expert guidance for the other monitoring and evaluation of radioactive contamination of foodstuffs.

Bodies of the Customs Administration authorised to conduct customs checks, carry out controls of imports of selected food and feed products together with the competent authorities performing official control.

Food law

The basic legislation in the field of food law is Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety. In compliance with this framework legislation governing the entire food chain, legislation governing specific areas of food law is adopted.

Since its accession to the EU, the Czech Republic has been participating in drafting, harmonising and opposing the Community legislation. Through its active involvement in the drafting of legislation the CR has an opportunity to influence its final shape with respect to the Czech national interests.

Food and feed safety legislation is within the remit of several central state administration authorities; therefore it is essential to continue building more intensive interministerial cooperation and collaboration with professional as well as consumer public.

Conduct of official controls

The basic legislation in the field of performance of official controls in the CR is Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on official controls performed to ensure the verification of compliance with feed and food law, animal health and animal welfare rules, which apart from other things imposes upon the Member States the obligation to create adequate conditions for the ensurance of official controls, elaboration of national food and feed control plans, development of contingency plans, it specifies the content of training and education of employees, the conduct of internal audits and a number of other obligations. The compliance with requirements laid down in this regulation is regularly verified by control missions of EU bodies.

Official controls in the entire food and feed chain from primary production up to sale to a consumer are performed by the competent authorities performing official control of the Ministry of Agriculture (State Veterinary Administration of the CR, Czech Agriculture and Food Inspection Authority, State Phytosanitary Administration, Central Institute for Supervising and Testing in Agriculture and Institute for State Control of Veterinary Biologicals and Medicines) and the Ministry of Health (regional public health authorities). In justified cases also the State Office for Nuclear Safety and bodies of the Customs Administration of the CR participate in official controls.

The competence of all these authorities and their responsibilities are laid down in the relevant laws:

Czech Agriculture and Food Inspection Authority performs state supervision of the production of food and its placing on the market, where it is not conducted by veterinary administration bodies, of reporting stocks, at the point of entry of food and raw materials of plant origin from third countries in the CR.

State Veterinary Administration of the CR (veterinary administration bodies) performs state supervision of the production, storage, transport, import and export of raw materials and food of animal origin, when raw materials and food of animal origin are offered for sale in market halls and market places, when food of animal origin is offered for sale in stores and shop-in-shops where meat, milk, fish, poultry and eggs are treated or game meat is offered for sale, and in food stores, in the event they are the place of destination for the raw materials or food of animal origin coming from an EU Member State.

Regional Public Health Authorities perform state supervision of the provision of catering services and in order to identify the causes of damages or risks to health and to prevent food borne diseases and other food borne incidents. They are also responsible for the control of materials and articles intended to come into contact with food.

Central Institute for Supervising and Testing in Agriculture performs state supervision of carcass classification.

State Phytosanitary Administration performs all controls concerning plants and plant products which are food or raw materials for its production and are also subject to controls pursuant to Directive 2000/29/EC.

Institute of State Control of Veterinary Biologicals and Medicines performs controls of the use of medicinal products in veterinary care, including related areas, of the use of prohibited substances and of rules for the production of medicated feed and its placing on the market.

The above referred to surveillance authorities within their remit also perform supervision of compliance with obligations of food business operators stipulated in the directly applicable EC legislation.

Multi-annual control plans

Multi-annual National Control Plan of the CR (hereinafter referred to as the “multi-annual control plan”) has been compiled in close cooperation between the Food Authority of the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health and competent authorities performing official control and defines the responsibilities of these organisations in the field of official controls. The Multi-annual Control Plan reflects the requirements stipulated in Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Commission Decision (EC) No 2007/363. The national strategic objective is to assure high level of protection of human health and consumers’ interests, animal health and welfare and plant health. The national strategic objective builds on the food policy priority – the assurance of high level hygiene of production and food and feed safety (including quality) and on the food and feed law intent to reduce or eliminate a health risk or prevent it. Currently, the Multi-annual Control Plan for 2010 – 2012 is in the pipeline.

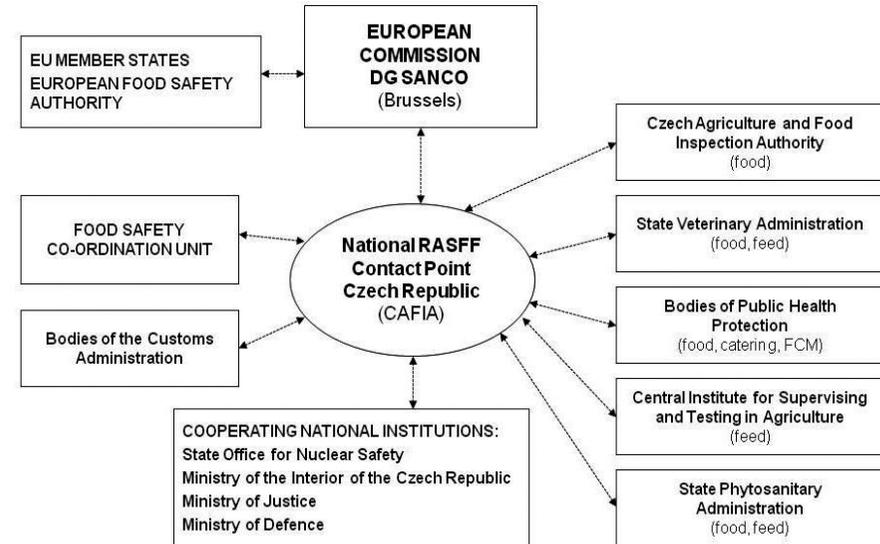
Multi-annual Control Plan for Pesticide Residues has been elaborated and approved by the relevant interministerial working group for 2009 – 2011 based on Regulation (EC) No 396/2005 of the European Parliament and of the Council on maximum residue levels of pesticides (MRL) in or on food and feed of plant and animal origin, which introduces new fully harmonised rules for pesticide residues. The National Control Plan for Pesticide Residues is forwarded to the European Commission (DG SANCO) as well as all the Member States and is also made available to the public.

Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed

The Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) is managed by the European Commission for the purpose of rapid exchange of information between its members (EC, EFSA and EU Member States) on food, feed, materials and articles intended to come into contact with food occurring on the EU common market and presenting a risk to human health. On the date of its accession to the EU the Czech Republic joined the system and is obliged on one hand to provide the system with such information and on the other hand to respond to information obtained from the system. The RASFF activities in the CR are annually summed up in the Final Report which is available on websites of organisations involved in the System. This report follows from the Annual Report published by the European Commission.

The National Contact Point ensuring on behalf of the Czech Republic the exchange of information with the European Commission and members of RASFF network in the CR has been established at the Czech Agriculture and Food Inspection Authority. The RASFF network in the CR consists of other competent state administration authorities and competent authorities performing official control of food and feed, the General Customs Directorate and the State Office for Nuclear Safety.

Figure 2. Involvement of organisations in RASFF system



1.3. Development of Communication and Education

The risk communication is a mutual exchange of information (including results of risk assessment and the basis for decision-making within risk management), namely among risk assessors, risk managers, consumers, food and feed businesses, academia and other stakeholders. Risk communication is an important and responsible task of all the partners involved in food safety.

All the organisations active in the food safety system inform the public on results of their activities through press releases posted on their respective websites and made available to mass media, and usually also through annual reports on their activities. Where necessary, press conferences are held.

Food Safety Information Centre

Since 2002 communication with consumers has been provided by the Food Safety Information Centre (hereinafter referred to as the FSIC) operated by the Food Authority of the Ministry of Agriculture. Its main task is to provide access to verified topical information and news, but also scientifically verified and science-based information and news on activities of all relevant organisations, state administration authorities and scientific committees for both professional and general public. The FSIC closely collaborates with the Ministry of Health.

The FSIC is primarily tasked to transmit information from the RASFF system to the public. The FSIC plays the role of a “communication centre” which in its weekly overviews updates the consumer public on issues addressed at the EU level. The FSIC has proven its worth as a quality source of information for both the general and professional public.

FSIC website provides comprehensive information in the form of its own articles and articles from other sources as well as information obtained from foreign sources:

www.bezpecnostpotravin.cz – it also consists of various applications and the so called “e-mail list” service which, following the registration, generates advices on new information on the web.

www.foodsafety.cz – it is designed for the English speaking foreigners. It provides basic information on the food safety system in the Czech Republic.

www.viscojis.cz – it is run by the Ministry of Health in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture. This website shall improve the awareness of consumers with respect to healthy nutrition, diet and food safety.

www.bezpecna-krmiva.cz – it aims to provide free of charge the necessary supporting documents and information on valid legislation to all the feed business operators, i.e. primary producers, feed producers and those placing the feed on the market, including importers.

Publicity and education events represent a tool for direct communication with the consumer. The FSIC, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and local authorities in the regions, organises publicity events, lectures and educational programmes for the general public of various age groups. The aim of such events is to keep improving the awareness of consumers.

Raising the awareness of all interest groups of the public

Raising the awareness of interest groups of the public in the field of food safety and nutrition in particular constitutes an essential part of activities performed by all the participating ministries and partners from among non-governmental organisations.

The objective of such education is to increase the awareness of all interest groups of both the professional and general public, and to deepen their knowledge in the field of risk assessment and management. The education is delivered in traditional forms such as seminars, conferences and websites, but also through new approaches such as interactive educational programmes for the public, e-learning courses, etc.

Systematically supported are activities raising the awareness of the general public of healthy diet as an integral part of healthy life style and prevention of non-communicable diseases which are the most frequent cause of death in the CR (health promotion projects, publishing information leaflets, lectures for general public, articles in press, etc.).

Training of inspectors of competent authorities performing official control

One of the obligations ensuing from Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council is the obligation of the competent authorities performing official control of the Member States to ensure that all their staff performing official controls receive appropriate training enabling them to undertake their duties competently and to carry out official controls in a consistent manner. Apart from training courses delivered by individual competent authority, ever since 2007 the Ministry of Agriculture has been holding consistent training courses for inspectors from all of its competent authorities performing official control.

Specialised courses designed for the staff of public health authorities are regularly held by training centres in Brno and Prague with the aim to provide relevant public health professionals with the broadest possible scope of knowledge necessary for the performance of public health supervision. Apart from theory-oriented courses, there are also trainings held targeted specifically at the performance of supervision and the enforcement of legislation in practice. The topics on the agenda of training events are selected pursuant to the current needs identified during the performance of state supervision.

Communication in the event of emergencies and crises

In responding to an emergency or a crisis the point is not only its actual management (which is the responsibility of the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health of the European Commission), but also rapid transmission of information, ensurance of scientific opinions and communication with the public. To this end the Ministry of Agriculture has elaborated a document called “Information support in responding to food/feed safety emergencies and crises”.

The document follows from Commission Decision 2004/478/EC of 29 April 2004 concerning the adoption of a general plan for food/feed crisis management and is the outcome of interministerial discussions. In keeping with the above mentioned EC Decision, a crisis coordinator of the CR for food safety has been designated, namely the Director General of the Food Authority of the Ministry of Agriculture. He is a member of the European network of coordinators operating in the area of food and feed safety and a crisis unit of the European Commission.

In support of activities of the crisis coordinator the “Group for information support in responding to food/feed safety emergencies or crises” has been set up, the main task of which is, where necessary, to collect and evaluate all available relevant information for the sake of risk identification and recommendation of the most effective way of its elimination.

The document highlights the necessity of interministerial cooperation and communication, namely not only among the involved institutions and units, but also with foreign partners, EU bodies and the public in particular.

1.4. Cooperation with the European Food Safety Authority

The European Food Safety Authority shall provide the EU bodies with independent scientific advice, scientific and technical support for legislation and policies in all fields which have a direct or indirect impact on food and feed safety. This activity shall help improve consumer confidence, smooth functioning of internal market and high level of protection of human health, animal health and welfare, plant health and environmental protection.

Another task of EFSA is to promote networking of the Member States' organisations operating in the fields within the EFSA mission and to enable sharing information on individual authorities of the Member States, their focus and performed activities.

The Czech Republic has pursued intensive cooperation with EFSA since its establishment. The contact point for EFSA is the Food Safety Department of the Ministry of Agriculture which also delegates Czech representatives to EFSA working bodies. Apart from that EFSA directly cooperates with a number of Czech institutions (e.g. through participation in research projects), and also scientists and researchers (through participation in technical working groups, colloquia and seminars).

Focal Point

Cooperation between EFSA and Member States has become far more intensive in the recent years. With the view to simplify communication with national food safety authorities and other competent organisations, the Focal Points were established in all Member States. In the CR the activities of the Focal Point are performed by the Food Safety Department of the Ministry of Agriculture pursuant to the agreement concluded between the Food Authority of the Ministry of Agriculture and EFSA.

The pivotal task of the Focal Point is to support the representative in EFSA Advisory Forum, to ensure the exchange of scientific information between EFSA and the CR, to promote the involvement of participating organisations in cooperation with EFSA. It shall also assist in raising EFSA visibility in the CR and in involvement of our experts in the EFSA Expert Database.

An important tool of the Focal Point for the development of cooperation has become the Information Exchange Platform (IEP), which is an electronic tool for collecting data and documents from individual Member States. Such data is available not only to EFSA, but also to other Member States.

The Representatives of Focal Points meet regularly in order to exchange information and to improve the coordination and, when necessary, they also communicate by e-mails and website.

Networking of organisations operating within the fields of EFSA mission

One of the EFSA crucial activities, in line with Article 36 of Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety, is the networking of organisations operating within the fields of EFSA mission. The aim of such networking is, in particular, to facilitate a scientific cooperation framework by the coordination of activities, the exchange of information, the development and implementation of joint projects, the exchange of expertise and best practices.

For organisations cooperating with EFSA pursuant to Article 36 EFSA publishes invitations to submit proposals for investigation of projects in the field of risk assessment. Only these organisations may participate in the investigation of such projects. In 2009 a total of 357 organisations, of which 19 from the CR, were approved for cooperation with EFSA pursuant to Article 36. The possibility of cooperation is open also to other institutions and the list of included organisations shall be updated approximately once a year.

Expert Database

Due to the ever increasing EFSA workload there has been a growing demand for staff to ensure the performance of all the activities. That is why EFSA has decided to set up a database of experts who are interested in cooperating with the Authority. To be included in this database means to get an opportunity to participate in projects investigated in the EU, to cooperate with leading institutions abroad and also to promote the results of one's own work. The Czech Republic encourages the involvement of Czech experts in EFSA activities. Invitations for the inclusion in the database are published in professional periodicals.

1.5. Nutrition

Nutrition and healthy diet are the integral parts of agricultural and food production related policies as well as public health policies. Issues concerning nutrition are closely connected with food safety issues, but also with food security i.e. production, processing and availability of quality foodstuffs in the domestic market. As such nutrition and healthy diet are strategic objective of utmost importance which are generally reflected in WHO and EFSA priorities.

Dietary Guidelines

Good nutrition is essential for maintaining good health and preventing the development of diseases arising from inadequate nutrition behaviour of individuals in the population. At present, the overweight and obesity and in part of the population also the malnutrition and non-communicable diseases are the most serious diseases. This group includes inter alia cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes mellitus, hypertension, eating disorders in teenagers, tooth decay, osteoporosis or cancer. Together these diseases represent the most frequent cause of morbidity and mortality in the CR (just like throughout Europe). As such they constitute even a more serious social and especially economic issue than the food safety matters.

Therefore, it is in the national interest to provide the population, producers as well as food processors with scientific information in order to safeguard nutrition and healthy diet both in terms of quantity and quality, while taking into account cultural and historical traditions, social as well as environmental and undoubtedly also economic aspects (food production sustainability). Such information is usually disseminated in the form of dietary guidelines based on theoretical knowledge as well as results of epidemiological studies.

Dietary guidelines cover a broad area with a multitude of aspects. They are defined along three levels of scientific complexity and practical applicability. The basic numerical recommendations for individual nutrients, general recommendations including summary information intended for the general public, and finally the practical food based dietary guidelines intended for individuals (e.g. in the form of the so called food pyramid).

The adoption of optimal dietary guidelines requires the insight in nutrition status and behaviour of population. An absolutely necessary instrument in this respect is also the tables of food nutritional values which help evaluate and plan a healthy diet. They shall be available not only to experts but also to the general public, thus facilitating the self-control on the part of an individual.

Food consumption monitoring

In the CR the foundations for systematic monitoring of food consumption have already been laid (see the national survey of individual food consumption – SISP 2004, funded by the Ministry of Health, in line with Resolution of the Government of the CR No 1320 of 10 December 2001 concerning the Strategy to Assure Food Safety in the Czech Republic). However, reliable data for the vulnerable population groups (small children, pregnant and lactating women, elderly) is still missing, up-to-date nutrition tables are non-existent. The absence of such data and instruments not only narrows the possibility of targeted communication on nutrition with the general public, but also renders impossible effective work in certain segments of food safety.

Just like in other EU Member States similar “gaps” in the system have to be closed. Directed at the attainment of this aim are the priorities set in the EFSA strategic programme documents which also reckon with an appropriate cooperation on the part of the Member States.

2. Key Tasks for 2010 – 2013

The main task for the upcoming period shall be to review the existing system of ensuring food safety, primarily in the light of effectiveness of its functioning. Against this background it is necessary to carry out a consistent evaluation of the interministerial cooperation standard which the system is built on.

Attention shall be paid to the assurance of risk assessment, cooperation with the European Food Safety Authority and nutrition.

Partial tasks can be defined as follows:

2.1. Food Safety

Science based health risk assessment

- To promote activities of institutions involved by law in health risk assessment on a everyday basis (responsibility of the MoA, MoH);
- To encourage qualified activities of scientific committees as independent groups of experts performing the risk assessment within their remit (responsibility of the MoA, MoH);
- To strengthen the cooperation between scientific committees and relevant EFSA scientific panels and other relevant international organisations and academia (responsibility of the MoA, MoH);
- To support the creation and operation of shared storage of data with protected access (DATEX) that can be used in assessing health risks at the national level. This data is provided by all the institutions performing food (and feed) controls. The data storage serves as the starting point for assessing the exposure and health risk characterisation assisting in the everyday management and communication in the field of food safety and nutrition at the national level and in cooperation with EFSA (responsibility of the MoH, MoA);
- To harmonise the format of data from multiple sources exploitable for assessing foodborne health risks (responsibility of the MoA, MoH);
- To improve the analytic and synthetic processing of the above referred to data collected in the shared storage, to improve and harmonise the system in relation to the national as well as relevant international organisations (responsibility of the MoH, MoA);
- To complete the entering of data in the so called data warehouse and to start using the integrated outputs for optimisation of monitoring programmes of the individual ministries (responsibility of the MoA).

Risk management

- To further enhance effectiveness of activities performed by the Food Safety Co-ordination Unit to secure the exchange of accurate and reliable information between the ministries/national institutions (responsibility of the CUFS);

- To cooperate also with other state authorities and non-governmental organisations, including registered civic associations as well as social partners in the areas related to the performance of state administration in the field of public health protection with respect to food safety (responsibility of the MoH);
- To get involved in reflections on Community legislation in the field of food law and to assist in its enforcement (responsibility of the MoA, MoH);
- To undertake preparations for the control missions of the European Commission, the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) and to act upon their recommendations (responsibility of all the institutions involved);
- To finalise and implement the Multi-annual control plan for the next period (responsibility of all the participating organisations);
- To update and implement the Multi-annual control plan for pesticide residues (responsibility of the MoH and competent authorities performing official control);
- To further improve direct cooperation between competent authorities performing official control over the food market, namely at all levels (responsibility of the MoA and MoH, in cooperation with the competent authorities performing official control);
- To provide regular training courses for competent authorities performing official control (responsibility of the MoA and MoH in collaboration with the competent authorities performing official control);
- To reinforce the cooperation with producers and distributors of articles and materials intended to come into contact with food (responsibility of MoH);
- To safeguard rapid exchange of primary data necessary for health risk assessment between the competent authorities performing official control and institutions responsible for the actual performance of health risk assessment (responsibility of the MoH, MoA, MoE and competent authorities performing official control);
- To enhance cooperation within the Czech Technology Platform on Food (responsibility of the CUFS);
- To make the Information System for Surveillance Authorities functional in the scope defined by Act No 110/1997, on foodstuffs and tobacco products, as amended (responsibility of all the participating institutions).

Development of communication and education

- To further improve cooperation between ministries in relation to the functioning of the Food Safety Information Centre and sharing information with consumers (responsibility of the ministries in line with their competencies);
- To revitalise and further develop the websites ***www.bezpecnostpotravin.cz***, ***www.foodsafety.cz***, ***www.viscojis.cz***, ***www.bezpecna-krmiva.cz*** as the basic communication tool of FSIC (responsibility of the MoA);

- To promote activities of FSIC focused on health and food safety in the regions of the CR performed in synergy with the regional health promotion units of the National Institute of Public Health (responsibility of the MoA, MoH);
- In cooperation with the MEYS to develop and introduce to schools an educational programme for students on healthy diet and food safety (responsibility of the MEYS, MoH, MoA);
- In line with the European Commission procedure to make available the information from RASFF (responsibility of the MoA);
- To improve the sharing of accurate and reliable information between the state institutions as well as provision of such information to consumers and to raise the confidence of citizens in the state administration system (responsibility of the CUFS);
- To foster the involvement of non-governmental organisations in the process of communication on food safety in identification of unsafe food (responsibility of the CUFS);
- To promote the development of vocational education and training of staff of all the organisations involved in food safety system (responsibility of ministries in line with their competences);
- To develop an e-learning course in order to ensure consistent training of inspectors in the sector of agriculture pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council (responsibility of the MoA);
- To intensify mutual collaboration in the field of health protection and promotion (responsibility of ministries in line with their competences).

2.2. Cooperation with the European Food Safety Authority

- To support the activities of the Focal Point for Scientific Cooperation (responsibility of the MoA);
- To take an active participation in the development and exploitation of the platform for the exchange of information through sharing the results of risk assessment in the CR (responsibility of the MoA);
- To encourage the involvement of national experts and institutions performing risk assessment in the cooperation with EFSA (e.g. through the inclusion in the Expert Database, participation in working meetings, cooperation pursuant to Article 36, etc.), (responsibility of the MoA);
- To cooperate in the development of food consumption monitoring methods, collection of laboratory data and evaluation of dietary exposure as a contribution to the developing pan-European health risk assessment (responsibility of the MoA, MoH).

2.3. Nutrition

Science-based health risk assessment

- To support the system of collection of data on food consumption in the Czech population and to ensure its long-term functioning (responsibility of the MoH);
- To ensure the compilation and updates of publicly accessible food composition tables necessary for consistent evaluation of epidemiological data on food consumption and their use by other groups of population, including food producers and consumers (responsibility of the MoA);
- To ensure the system of monitoring the prevalence of overweight and obesity, including the national anthropological surveys generating growth curves essential for monitoring the individual growth of children and adolescents (responsibility of the MoH);
- To define / identify / harmonise the Dietary Reference Values (DRV) to be used in the CR, (responsibility of the MoH);
- To ensure the implementation of dietary exposure monitoring and biological monitoring (of biomarkers) as a necessary indicator for intake of selected nutrients and xenobiotics from food and environment as the basis for scientific risk management and follow-up measures and recommendations for the protection of public health of the population (responsibility of the MoH).

Risk management

- To regularly update the Food Based Dietary Guidelines (FBDG) for the whole population of the CR, and where necessary, also for specific population sub-groups (elderly, children, pregnant and lactating women), (responsibility of the MoH);
- To control the fulfilment of dietary guidelines in school meal system (of dietary standards for school meals), (responsibility of the MEYS, MoH).

Communication and education

- To promote healthy eating in consumers/population of the CR (responsible dietary habits, increasing the awareness of population of the improvement of dietary habits with the aim to reduce the overweight and obesity and associated non-communicable diseases), (responsibility of the MoH, MEYS, FSIC);
- To encourage the development of a suitable format and application of Dietary Reference Values and Food Based Dietary Guidelines for consumers (responsibility of the MoH, MoA);
- To cooperate with food producers and mass caterers in education and training and sharing nutrition related information with consumers (responsibility of the MoA, MoH);
- To cooperate with producers and consumers in the search for appropriate/effective communication style (e.g. in food labelling), (responsibility of the MoA, MoH);

- To cooperate with producers and retailers, including mass caterers, in the development of new technologies and food formulations/meal recipes so that they better meet the current requirements for healthy diet (responsibility of the MoH, MoA);
- To support the development of vocational education and training of staff of all the organisations involved in public health protection and promotion in the field of nutrition and prevention of overweight and associated diseases (responsibility of the MoH, MEYS);
- To engage the consumer organisations in the process of generation and dissemination of information in the field of dietary guidelines (responsibility of the CUFS).

3. Annexes

Annex 1: Abbreviations

| | |
|-------|--|
| DATEX | Data Collection and Exposure - project for collection of primary data for health risk assessment |
| DRV | Dietary Reference Values |
| EFSA | European Food Safety Authority |
| EC | European Commission |
| EEC | European Economic Community |
| EC | European Community |
| EU | European Union |
| FBDG | Food Based Dietary Guidelines |
| FVO | Food and Veterinary Office |
| GM | Genetically modified |
| FSIC | Food Safety Information Centre |
| IEP | Information Exchange Platform |
| ISSA | Information System for Surveillance Authorities |
| CUFS | Co-ordination Unit for Food Safety |
| MEYS | Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports |
| MoH | Ministry of Health |
| MoA | Ministry of Agriculture |
| MoE | Ministry of Environment |
| RASFF | Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed |
| NIPH | National Institute of Public Health |
| WHO | World Health Organisation |

Annex 2: Websites of participating organisations

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| European Union institutions and bodies | www.europa.eu.int/index_cs.htm |
| Health and consumer protection | www.europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/health_consumer/index_en.htm |
| European Food Safety Authority | www.efsa.europa.eu |
| Codex Alimentarius | www.codexalimentarius.net |
| World Health Organisation (WHO) | www.who.int |
| Government of the Czech Republic | www.vlada.cz |
| Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic | www.mze.cz |
| Ministry of Health | www.mzcr.cz |
| Ministry of Environment | www.mzp.cz |
| Ministry of the Interior | www.mvcr.cz |
| Ministry of Defence | www.army.cz |
| Ministry of Justice | www.justice.cz |
| Ministry of Transport | www.mdcz.cz |
| Ministry for Regional Development | www.mmr.cz |
| Ministry of Industry and Trade | www.mpo.cz |
| Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports | www.msmt.cz |
| General Customs Directorate | www.cs.mfcr.cz |
| State Office for Nuclear Safety | www.sujb.cz |
| State Veterinary Administration of the CR | www.svscr.cz |
| State Phytosanitary Administration | www.srs.cz |
| Czech Agriculture and Food Inspection Authority | www.szpi.gov.cz |
| National Institute of Public Health | www.szu.cz |
| Public Health Authorities | www.mzcr.cz |
| Institute for State Control of Veterinary Biologicals and Medicines | www.uskvbl.cz |
| Central Institute for Supervising and Testing in Agriculture | www.ukzuz.cz |
| Veterinary Scientific Committee | www.vri.cz |
| Scientific Committee on Phytosanitary and Environment | www.phytosanitary.org |
| Scientific Committee on Animal Nutrition | www.vuzv.cz |
| Scientific Committee on Food | www.chpr.szu.cz |

Scientific Committee on GM Food and Feed
 Institute of Agricultural Economics and Information
 Food Safety Information Centre

www.scgmff.cz
www.uzei.cz

www.bezpecnostpotravin.cz
www.foodsafety.cz
www.viscojis.cz
www.bezpecna-krmiva.cz

Federation of the Food and Drink Industries of the CR
 Agrarian Chamber of the Czech Republic
 Czech Confederation of Commerce and Tourism

www.foodnet.cz
www.agrocr.cz
www.socr.cz

Annex 3: Underlying strategic documents and framework legislation

a) Strategic documents

Strategy to Assure Food Safety in the Czech Republic adopted by Resolution of the Government of the CR No 1320/2001;

The Strategy to Assure Food Safety in the Czech Republic after Accession to the European Union, adopted by Resolution of the Government of the CR No 1477/2004;

Evaluation of fulfilment of the The Strategy to Assure Food Safety in the Czech Republic after Accession to the European Union for the period from January 2005 to September 2006 adopted by Resolution of the Government of the CR No 3/2007;

Environment and Health Action Plan adopted by Resolution of the Government of the CR No 810/1998;

Health for All in the 21st Century Programme adopted by Resolution of the Government of the CR No 1046/2002;

Sustainable Development Strategy of the Czech Republic;

Food Policy of CR for the Period Following the Accession of the CR to the EU (2004 – 2013) adopted by Resolution of the Government of the CR No 986/2004;

Multi-annual National Control Plan of the CR 2007 – 2009;

EFSA Strategic Plan for 2009 – 2013;

Codex Alimentarius Commission Strategic Plan 2008 – 2013.

b) Framework legislation

Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety;

Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs;

Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on official controls performed to ensure the verification of compliance with feed and food law, animal health and animal welfare rules;

Regulation (EC) No 183/2005 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down requirements for food hygiene;

Regulation (EC) No 1935/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 October 2004 on materials and articles intended to come into contact with food and repealing Directives 80/590/EEC and 89/109/EEC;

Act No 110/1997 Coll., on foodstuffs and tobacco products and on amendments to some related acts, as amended and its implementing regulation;

Act No 258/2000 Coll., on the protection of public health and on amendments to some related acts, as amended.