



الجمعية المغربية للسلامة الصحية للأغذية
Association Maghrébine de Sécurité Sanitaire des Aliments

Symposium “Current Challenges of Biological Risks and Health Security “
Gammarth, Tunisia, 22th -23rd September 2016.

“AMSSA’s Experience on training and communication about Food Safety as Emerging Health concern¹”

Author: Thouraya ANNABI ATTIA

Background:

AMSSA (Maghreb Association for foods Safety) is a scientific association whose primary objective is the promotion of Food Safety (FS) culture.

Approach:

To achieve this goal, AMSSA is developing a communication strategy targeting the general population (food consumers) and other training programs open to various FS professional profiles (e.g. agro-alimentary engineers, technicians, vets, physicians, nutritionists, etc.) from all concerned stakeholders (industry, trade, control, health, etc.) in order to ensure and maintain a high level of consumer protection together with safe food trading enhancement. This come throughout a common and effective comprehension and use of key principles as preventive tools for the emergence of new diseases/health impacts related to food.

In fact such emerging diseases (mad-cow, Listeria, E. Coli STEC, GMOs, etc.) revolutionized the organization and approaches in production and commerce of food at companies and countries levels and at the international one too (United Nations organization). The introduction of concepts/tools as risk analysis and risk management, in addition to transparency and communication strategies, in the field of FS, is related to these new pathologies. Since the late 90s a restructuring health strategies based on the health risk has grown steadily, albeit driven initially by the fallout from the impact of the environment on people's health, but in which food has carved a special place.

Development:

The birth of the AMSSA in 2010 is related to the movement of FS, trying to update the Maghreb and African landscape of food control; starting with the exchange of data on foodborne diseases between neighbors. The extension to a project of community-building among food impact and its roots (industry, commerce, innovation, population surveillance, awareness, etc.) followed naturally.

The Tunisian branch was the first one (2012) followed by Morocco. Programs were built and implemented. We summarized the activities by types, targeted audience and evaluation results in the following table.

Type / subject	Intervenient(s) / Organization	Audience	Evaluation
----------------	--------------------------------	----------	------------

¹ www.amssa-tunisie.org

5 training sessions :		Direct organization by AMSSA (1 exception).	Enterprises (food industry & labs) – food inspectors – teachers – students	
-	Expiry date estimation	Members of AMSSA / private company	20 participants	More than 90% satisfaction
-	Food legislation (2)	Members of AMSSA	30 x 2 participants	(1) Average-note ² 72/100 (2) From 2.5/10 to 5.2/10 ³
-	Predictive microbiology	Members of AMSSA	20 participants	Average-note 78/100
-	Quantitative risk assessment	ANSES (France) expert	30 participants	Average-note 78.8/100
4 seminars :		Direct organization by AMSSA or in collaboration with	-	
-	TIA2 FS Maghreb congress	Intervenient from Maghreb and France	- 250 participants	80.6% between satisfied and very satisfied
-	AMSSA strategy (PIPO)	AMSSA members and guests from NGOs and authorities/sponsor	- 23 participants	Production of strategy document
-	Water hygiene in buildings	Tunisia and France experts / collaboration with French association CAPRIS	- More than 150 (Hotel and hospital hygienists, maintenance technicians)	No formal evaluation but satisfaction widely expressed
-	Antimicrobial resistance	Panel of all stakeholders experts / INC ⁴ main organizer	- More than 200 (stakeholders in FS)	No formal evaluation but satisfaction widely expressed
10 sessions of communication/health education:				
-	6 public debates (Les Rencontres de l'AMSSA ⁵)--- pesticide residues, ATB, GMO, labs, food law	AMSSA direct organization	Around 50 participants each time	Qualitative evaluation : very positive
-	School education and other	With the help of INC		
-	Management of public website and a Face Book page (scientific and epidemiologic information)	AMSSA	More than 1400 regular followers	Around 3000 views per day (summer 2016)

The review of training activities demonstrates the good impact on stakeholders, even if the need of capacity building wasn't formally measured. Lessons learned from these activities show the necessity to go forward and build more on digital-learning tools than on classroom courses.

² The session is noted by trained according to 10 criteria including methods and knowledge-gain

³ Evaluation of acquired knowledge by record before and after training session

⁴ Institut National de la Consommation

⁵ Concept for public information: a lecture on the targeted subject followed by debate open to everybody and closed by a welcome cocktail. This always happens at "Maison de la culture Ibn Rachiq" at Tunis, Paris Avenue.

The review of communication activities is less easy to be assessed. The satisfaction expressed, the number of web-followers, their comments, are indicators to encourage us to continue in this way.

Conclusion:

Training in FS matters is a mean to promote production of healthy/safe food, to create an equal level playing field for all food businesses, to upgrade the administration (especially food controllers) and the health system (prevention, promotion) in general. The activities undertaken by the association have demonstrated that we have a role to play in the general landscape of FS, even if our programs need to be strengthened.

Communication is an effective mean to impact on population behavior, even if such impact is difficult to measure. The importance of the communication is agreed upon in the sense of inducing capacity for people to manage themselves (empowerment).

