

BUREAU BRUSSELS

**Improving Ukrainian Food Safety Practices
and Compliance Monitoring Systems**

ORANGE HOUSE
PARTNERSHIP vzw

March 2014

Decisiveness in turbulent times

On 11 March 2014, the European Commission adopted a proposal for temporarily removing customs duties on Ukrainian exports to the EU by means of autonomous trade preferences. It thereby advances the tariff section of the Association Agreement's provisions on a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA). The DCFTA should result in closer economic cooperation between the EU and Ukraine and be a powerful stimulant to Ukraine's economic growth. Higher quality standards of products, better services to citizens, and above all, Ukraine's readiness to compete effectively in international markets would be the result of this agreement. The Commission expects that the DCFTA will be signed and provisionally apply before 1 November 2014. Until then, the autonomous trade preferences will apply.

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The sector in which the adherence to international and EU legislation, norms and standards has the highest potential to be a powerful stimulant for Ukraine's economic growth is the agriculture and food and feed industry. Ukraine has great potential to become a large exporter of dairy, meat, fruits and vegetables, but current exports remain limited, primarily because of food safety concerns. Compliance with food and feed standards as adopted by international organizations, including FAO and the Codex Alimentarius and the EU, would level this trade barrier and strongly improve Ukraine's export potential and competitiveness in the agriculture and food sector.

'OHP strongly believes that in light of the proposed autonomous trade preferences and the DCFTA that is about to be signed by Ukraine, improving food safety legislation, norms and standards in Ukraine should be given high priority'

Challenges and opportunities

Orange House Partnership (OHP), which is a fully independent organization of senior scientific experts from 32 countries around the globe, provides unbiased assistance, advice and training with the objective to contribute to globally sustainable human and environmental food and chemical safety. OHP's experts include, among many others, the former Executive Director of the British Food Standards Agency (FSA), the former Scientific Director of the EU Food Safety Authority (EFSA), the former Chief Scientific Officer and Director of the Dutch Food Safety Authority and the former Director of the FAO Nutrition and Consumer Protection Division. OHP strongly believes that in light



Dr De Wit, Senior Expert at OHP (in the center at the back) making notes on reported national regulations from the respective countries

of the proposed autonomous trade preferences and the DCFTA that is about to be signed by the Ukraine, improving food safety legislation, norms and standards in Ukraine should be given high priority.

The EU has already carried out several projects and programs that focus specifically on improving food safety in Ukraine. For example between 2009 and 2011, a so-called twinning project¹ was implemented, the aim of which was to support the economic development of Ukraine through improving food safety and veterinary control, meeting the EU veterinary standards, enhancing consumer protection, and thus increasing the competitiveness of food products of animal origin

¹ The concept of twinning foresees close co-operation between a Member State Partner and a beneficiary to raise the standards in different fields of administration and approximate domestic legislation and its execution to EU standards.

on international markets. Furthermore, recently a so-called Comprehensive Institution Building (CIB) programme² was initiated the aim of which is to contribute to the improvement of food safety in Ukraine "from farm to fork" by aligning Ukrainian legislation, institutional infrastructure, and the State system of controls with the regulatory and administrative policies and practices of the EU.

Also other organizations, such as the FAO, have initiated projects focusing specifically upon improving food safety in Ukraine. In March 2010, at the request of the FAO, OHP organized a workshop, co-sponsored by the National University of Live and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine, on food risk analysis for approximately 30-35 government representatives from Ukraine and other Russian speaking eastern European countries. The objective of the workshop was to assist these countries with the development of food and feed risk management tools. By organizing this workshop, OHP has made valuable connections in Ukraine in the field of food safety

A pragmatic and output oriented approach

OHP proposes to use its experience from organizing the aforementioned workshop in Ukraine and from assisting and training public authorities and/or the private sector in good food management practices in China and several other countries, to develop and execute a tailor-made program. In the program proposed by OHP (see Annex), Ukrainian public authorities as well as private sector parties in the agriculture and food processing industry who would like to export to the EU and beyond, will receive guidance, assistance and training on how to set up or improve food safety practices and compliance monitoring systems in order to be on par with competitors in the international food and feed markets.

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OHP is convinced that its suggested program would complement and widen EU efforts that are largely focused at compliance with EU legislation and on providing assistance and training exclusively to government authorities. OHP will provide a wider view than an approach solely directed towards the EU and includes international approaches as led by the FAO, OECD, WHO and the WTO. Furthermore, the OHP program would already in the short term be more fruitful than other approaches as the lessons learnt can directly be implemented in the daily business practices of Ukrainian companies, which is ultimately where the real work should be done to improve food safety. It can be expected that Ukrainian companies are more determined to change their practices and sustain these changes after the program ends when they are well trained and informed and, importantly, when government authorities are equally equipped with well-functioning compliance monitoring approaches. Only when all parties are aware that the way to success is through cooperation between the public and private sector, food safety practices will be sustainable, leading to long-term improvements in Ukraine's competitiveness.

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² The CIB is an Eastern Partnership initiative to help partner countries strengthen the capacities of key institutions involved in preparing, negotiating and implementing the new AAs with the EU, the creation of free trade areas and the management of enhanced mobility opportunities in a secure environment. The main goal of the CIB is to "fast track" institution building and reform in a limited number of key areas linked to the new agreements. It complements technical assistance and capacity development associated to support for sector reforms and regulatory approximation.

Annex:

Food safety training program for Ukrainian agri-food producers and public authorities

OHP proposes to develop a tailor-made training program for key producers in different agri-food sectors that have an interest in improving their food safety practices and for Ukrainian public authorities that are involved in the monitoring of compliance with food safety legislation. The aim of this program is to improve understanding and build capacity among the public and private sector about international food and feed safety and management standards and legislation. As a consequence, the business practices in exporting agri-food products will become better aligned with Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)³ and the monitoring of compliance with these practices by public authorities will become better targeted.

The training program will be developed, tailored and executed for specific agri-food sectors, targeting both the key producers in this particular sector as well as the public authorities involved. Examples include the grain sector, the consumer (packaged) food sector and the meat sector.

Each training program consists of the following stages:

1. **Scoping mission:** On the spot in Ukraine, two OHP experts will make an analysis of the current situation with respect to the methodologies and the regulatory compliance of the particular sector. The mission includes identification of and meetings with the relevant authorities and key representatives of the selected sector. The purpose of the mission is to determine what the specific needs and possibilities are in a particular agri-food sector with regards to food safety and compliance monitoring and to enable the tailoring of the education and training specifically to these needs.
2. **Education and training:** The participants will receive an intensive training of 3-4 days with work assignments based on real and/or theoretically realistic cases. This training will be given by three senior OHP experts, each with over 25 years of experience. All participants will be provided with a package of background information, relevant works of reference and a training syllabus.
3. **Follow-up:** Six months after the training, the OHP experts will return to Ukraine for two or three days to evaluate the progress that has been made since the training and to determine, based on questions and issues raised by the trainees, what additional needs there are or which issues need further clarification. On an as needed basis, a second follow-up session will be arranged after another period of 6 months.

³ Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) are "practices that address environmental, economic and social sustainability for on-farm processes, and result in safe and quality food and non-food agricultural products" (FAO COAG 2003 GAP paper)