

FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY

Ensuring that beneficiaries have access to safe, high quality and nutritious foods

In 2018, WFP delivered 3.9 million mt of food to 87 million people in more than 80 countries. As WFP moves to procure larger quantities of food than ever before to meet the growing needs of beneficiaries, while extending the food basket to include more complex food commodities, it is vital that WFP has a unit dedicated to ensuring the overall safety and quality of WFP's food assistance. This is especially important when providing assistance to people living in remote areas, where food commodities are handled multiple times during transport and can be exposed to varying temperatures, all factors that can impact the quality of the food.



WFP/Ranak Martin

Recognizing these challenges, WFP started employing food technologists in the early 2000s who could assess suppliers and provide guidance on food commodities. This morphed into the development of a dedicated unit known as Food Safety and Quality Assurance based in WFP headquarters in Rome, but with a strong presence at regional bureaux and country offices. The mandate of the unit is to effectively assess and address food safety and quality risks whether actual, potential or perceived. Working closely with other Supply Chain units, particularly Food Procurement, the Food Safety and Quality Assurance Unit develops the specifications for food commodities and also conducts evaluations of both potential and current vendors.

Evaluates vendors and provides assistance in managing inspection contracts



Conducts research to improve WFP food baskets



Works on product and packaging specifications



Enhances suppliers' capacity to prevent food safety and quality issues



Collaborates with other actors on standard setting for food safety and quality



The activities carried out by the technical team are manifold and are implemented under the principles of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP), as well as international food safety and quality standards.

The unit works closely with WFP's school feeding and nutrition programmes to provide guidance and build capacity as required and has also in recent years worked with a packaging specialist who ensures that no deterioration of the quality of the food occurs during the long journey and storage times.

KEY ACTIVITIES – 2019

- Global Food Incident Management programme rolled out
- Strong food compliance testing program (over 200 products surveyed and 700 samples tested)
- HQ support to the field: missions, guidance notes, training and technical advice
- Shelf life studies for fortified rice, oil and high energy biscuits (HEB)
- Strong technical partnerships with private sector and other United Nations agencies to develop food safety and quality systems and manage risks



60

supplier audits performed to date



22

potential new commodities reviewed for inclusion in WFP's food basket

The Food Safety and Quality Assurance Unit has put in place reporting structures and mechanisms to ensure that any quality and safety issue is quickly escalated and addressed in a timely and comprehensive manner. This includes the establishment of Food Incident Management (FIM) committees at all levels of the organization.

The unit works closely with other United Nations agencies on knowledge sharing and establishment of standards. Strong partnerships with the private sector also enable the unit, and hence WFP, to access and incorporate the most recent knowledge and best practices into its food assistance operations.

LOOKING TOWARDS 2020

- Key focus on traceability improvement throughout WFP's supply chain and development of new IT tools to enhance food safety and quality assurance
- Development of a food quality manual
- Enhanced expansion of the unit to regional bureaux and country offices
- Creation of an IT system to strengthen the data collection and information management for food safety and quality-related data.