



Final Report

SELAMAT

Safety enhancement of **E**dible products,
Legislation, **A**nalysis and **M**anagement, with **A**SEM
countries, by mutual **T**raining & research

Specific Support Action

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Summary

SELAMAT, meaning *SAFETY* in Malay, is a network of research organization and institutions dealing with food safety coming from 11 ASEM countries and EU. This network aims to create a platform for exchanging ideas and information in the field of food safety by organizing workshops and training courses and initiating collaborative research activities. All objectives set for SELAMAT have been achieved and the network will continue as a sustainable network in the future.

Achievements of SELAMAT over 4 years period

Background

The large number of food safety incidents such as melamine, BSE, dioxin, nitrofurans, and outbreaks of microbial food borne diseases has brought to light the vulnerability of the modern food production systems.

Some of the food safety and quality problems in recent years have endangered consumer's health resulting in a decrease in consumer confidence in the food supply, with a negative economical impact of food production and sale. The increasing complexity of food chain production systems, increased globalisation of trade, market introduction of (genetically modified) new foods and application of new food processing technologies may lead to new and unforeseen risks, which may have a negative impact on human health, environment and economy. Moreover, known risks may re-occur and increase in frequency, due to altered human activities or changes in conditions and methods of food production.

It is therefore evident that food safety risks are not limited to certain countries and/ or geographical areas. Hence, to deal with these problems, adequate international cooperation is essential, in particular among important trade regions such as EU and Asia.

Subjects of mutual interest in relation to research, development, training and trade in this area have been identified at the ASEM workshop in June 2002 in Malaysia and were divided into three domains:

- Certification and Normalisation (i.e. open exchange of methods, where appropriate harmonisation & standardisation, new detection methods, risk assessment)
- Sustainable Production Systems for Food Safety (unintended effects, public perception transparency)
- Trade issues (i.e. market stability, traceability along the whole food chain [GM and organic])

It was against this background that the EU 6th Framework Programme SELAMAT was initiated. SELAMAT, meaning *SAFETY* in the Malay language or *SAFE* in Indonesian language, aims at creating **a permanent network** for international cooperation on food safety issues between Europe and ASEM. The project started in July 2004 and received funding from the European Commission for 4 years.

The overall aim of SELAMAT is:

- To create a permanent network for international cooperation on food safety issues between Europe and ASEM.

This Network aims to:

- Promote European and Asian collaboration on food safety issues
- Contribute opening up the European Research Area
- Mobilise the European and Asian Research Communities to support Communities and Asian foreign and development policies
- Develop a common research agenda and initiate joint initiatives

Work performed

Training courses/ capacity building

The SELAMAT project commenced in August 2004 with a kick off meeting in Wageningen, the Netherlands. On this meeting, that was attended by the core group (RIKILT (NL) , CSL (UK) , IBET (PT), IPP (China) and Ministry of Health (Malaysia)), a strategy to build a EU-ASEM food safety network was established. Following this initial meeting, the SELAMAT network has grown from 4 partners to 21 representing 14 countries (*Netherlands, United Kingdom, Portugal, China, Malaysia, Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, Republic of Korea and India*). The members (indicated in SELAMAT as “gatekeepers”) are experts in food safety working at ministries, academia or food authorities and have excellent knowledge about food safety in their country/ region .

To achieve the goals, SELAMAT has carried out the following activities:

1. organised with its members one workshop and training course on food safety per year,
2. evaluated the food safety research agenda in an international perspective
3. developed a web based information / help desk for food standards/ MRLs
4. shared information of national food monitoring and surveillance data



Figure 1. SELAMAT training course in Vietnam, May 2008

SELAMAT has organised the following training courses which are also available on the SELAMAT website (www.selamat.net) :

- 1) Quantitative risk assessment; 17-18 November 2005, Bangkok, Thailand
- 2) Pesticide residue analysis; 5-7 July 2006, Bangkok, Thailand
- 3) Fusarium toxins-Fumoninsins, Don, T-2 toxin and Zeralenone; 11-13 December 2006, Beijing, China
- 4) Traceability; 12-13 May 2008, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

A very successful format was developed which consisted of a one day Seminar for a large audience (120-180 persons) with introductory lectures preceding a hands-on training course for approximately 15-30 students. The trainees invited to the course were nominated by the gatekeeper of their country. In total, approximately 320 persons have attended the seminars and approximately 130 students participated in the hands-on training course. Feed back received from the students via evaluation forms shows the appreciation for this format and the organization and the high quality of the courses given.



Workshops

In addition to the training courses SELAMAT also organized workshops with SELAMAT members and invited experts, discussing key issues on food safety and regulatory framework in EU and ASEM.

Striking finding was the fact that food safety issues being faced are common to countries in the ASEM region and have many identical elements to issues faced in the EU. Issues raised were related to infrastructure (among others reconstruction of food safety management system, modernising lab services, development of reference laboratory, training for inspectors), communication (among others food safety campaign, national centre for food safety alert and response) partnerships, import/export (among others complying with importing country requirements, changing food regulations, traceability). Also consumer perception, communication and education of the general public and other stakeholders were identified as an important condition to improve the food safety standard in any country. A common research agenda has been proposed and published in Food Science and Technology (volume 21, issue 2, June 2007, page 27-29).

In the course of the 4 year, SELAMAT organised the following workshops, which have been attended by 300-500 persons in total:

1. EU-ASIA cooperation on Food Safety: a strategy forward, 11-12 April Lisbon, Portugal
2. Foresight on Food Safety collaboration between EU and ASEM countries; 24-26 April 2006, Seoul, Republic of Korea
3. Consumer Expectation through food safety (slot S15 in the 10th ASEAN Food Conference 2007); 23-25 August 2007, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
4. Managing Aflatoxin from Farm-to-Table; 25-27 June 2008, Bogor & Jakarta, Indonesia

MRL / legislation database

The SELAMAT network members concluded that information on legislation on food safety standards and MRLs (and upcoming changes) in EU and ASEM countries is difficult to find and proposed to develop a web based transfer point compiling the available information and thereby helping the search for relevant information. In the framework of SELAMAT a joint project was started to develop such transfer point. The first version of the web base transfer point / help desk for food standards/ MRLs has been created and is available via the SELAMAT site. Initially, the focus was on collecting information on pesticide legislation and information of more than 100 websites from 40 countries is now disclosed via this transfer point. Work continues to collect information on residues and to improve the database and its functionalities.

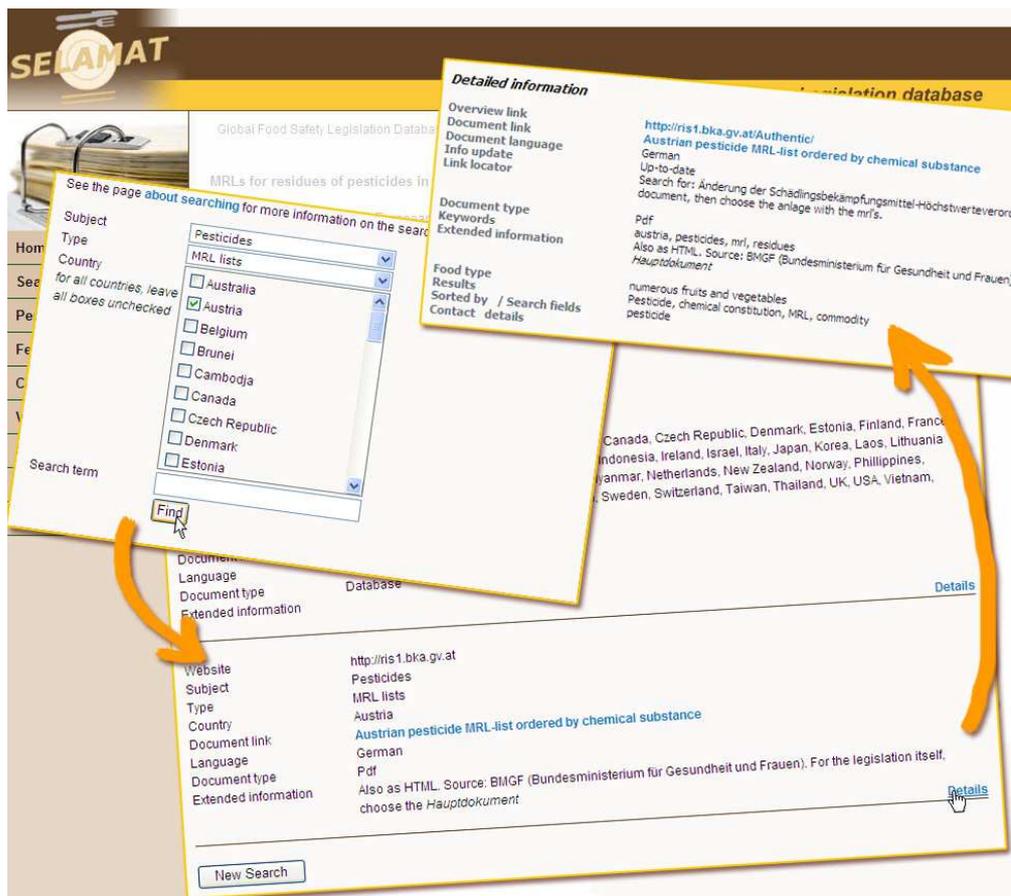


Figure 2. The MRL and legislation database

Impact of SELAMAT and future prospective

Large network

Initially the SELAMAT network started four years ago with three members from EU and two Asian countries (China and Malaysia). In the first years of existence, the network rapidly extended to reach 11 Asian countries (China, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, Taiwan, Japan, Republic of Korea, Singapore, India, Indonesia and Vietnam) offering its members and outstanding platform to exchange ideas and information on food safety and food quality issues. All objectives set at the start of the project have been achieved satisfactory. A large network of organizations and institutions throughout ASEM has been established bringing stakeholders from different countries and backgrounds together which never would have occurred without this SELAMAT project. SELAMAT has been very visible in Asia (high media exposure, effective website) such that members noticed that SELAMAT more or less has become a trade mark. It should be noted that most of the seminars or training courses were opened by high ranking officials showing the relevance and of the subjects selected. The established EU-ASEM Food Safety Network (SELAMAT) has shown its members to give the following benefits:

1. Direct access to top experts on many expertise fields in EU and Asia
2. Influence in research agenda setting in both regions
3. Easy access to outcomes of EU Framework Programmes and ASEM counterpart
4. Means to extend existing network and to initiate collaborative research/ training courses/ activities
5. Discuss "sensitive information" informally

Extra funds

The main SELAMAT products (seminars and training courses) were highly appreciated by participants of these events but also by the SELAMAT members. In fact, SELAMAT platform members often subsidized from own resources persons to attend SELAMAT events. In addition, SELAMAT events were further supported by the local hosts who always offered their support without any charge of money. Without this extra support the SELAMAT project could never have achieved as much. Extra Dutch grants (from Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV) and RIKILT) have been obtained by SELAMAT enabling the organization of additional activities (extra meetings, extension of the MRL database, more exposure).

Research agenda and collaborations

In a dedicated SELAMAT meeting (held in Republic of Korea, 24-26 April 2006) topics for joint research were identified and published in an international journal. Issues identified include among others:

- The need to collaborate in early warning/ rapid alert both in ASEM and between ASEM-EU.
- Networking between stakeholders (laboratories, research, government, industries NGOs) in ASEM-EU; ASEM-EU-USA; sharing information, methods, materials (extend SELAMAT, GO-GLOBAL, activities). Possible interested parties and/ or way to finance: SELAMAT, private sources, memberships.
- Develop collection of data in relation to exposure assessment of specific food contaminants, residues and sharing this data within ASEM. Potentially overdose of nutrients.
- Traceability systems (forward and backward), being involved in development of new ones and exchange of knowledge and labeling. Collaboration with EU.
- Mycotoxins, new emerging and existing (method development).
- Information exchange on the following topics: i) Analytical methods, ii) MRLs and contaminant limits, iii) Dietary supplement database.
- Research projects of interest: i) Aquaculture – risks in tropical regions, ii) Use of chlorine – residues, iii) Quantitative microbiological risk assessment for pathogens.

SELAMAT also initiated the preparation of the EU 6th FP project GO-GLOBAL. This project on emerging food safety risks was successfully evaluated and commenced on 1 December 2006. This global network on emerging food/ feed safety risks was inspired by the success of SELAMAT extending its format to a global level. More information about GO-GLOBAL can be obtained from its website (www.goglobalnetwork.eu). In addition, SELAMAT partners (Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia) were involved in a recent bid in the EU FP7. This research proposal (CLImpactFOOD) aims to study the effect of climate change on food safety and trade in Europe and important trade regions of EU. Besides these examples also bilateral cooperation's were initiated but these were not monitored by the SELAMAT management.

Sustainable network

It the course of the project period SELAMAT partners expressed their wish to investigate possibilities to continue after the project duration. To this end a questionnaire was developed to collect the visions and requirements of the SELAMAT members and several management meetings were used to develop a business plan and to discuss the legal constitution. An agreement was reached, including a programme and membership fee. SELAMAT network will continue with partners from the following countries:

From EU: the Netherlands, United Kingdom and Portugal

From ASEM: Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and China.

It is envisaged that the network will grow in time that additional funds will be raised via specific sponsorships.

Conclusions

It may be fair to conclude that SELAMAT is more than creating a permanent network for international cooperation on food safety issues. It represents a new way of working together between Europe and ASEM. SELAMAT provides international framework for food safety- it transcends governments, academia, industry and consumers and enables them to work together to maximise resources, integrate programmes and improve food safety in the regions.

SELAMAT contract partners

Organization

RIKILT – Institute of Food Safety
Central Science Laboratory (CSL)
Institute of Experimental and Technological Biology (IBET)
Institute of Plant Protection (IPP)

Country

Netherlands
United Kingdom
Portugal
China

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All information of SELAMAT can be found on its website: www.selamat.net



Figure 3: SELAMAT logo



Figure 4: SELAMAT Public Web site: www.selamat.net