

Shaping Bangladesh Food Safety Authority

Bangladesh, with the status of a developing country, has a population estimated to be over 164 million, majority of them belonging to the lower-middle income group with the history of poor educational background lacking awareness about basic health and safety standards. It is obviously a challenge to ensure sound public health for the country like Bangladesh where mass population are unaware about the importance of health and safety, ineffective implementation of the rules and regulations and the immature authorities related to the food safety. Fortunately, the government of Bangladesh realises the consequence of health and safety issues and establishes the Bangladesh Food Safety Authority (BFSA) in 2015. When BFSA is at a developing stage, most of the countries with developed economy enjoying the benefit of having well established food safety authority that are operating their activities in an effective and efficient manner. Apparently, to be successful in its aim, BFSA has to design the operational structure taking into account all the factors associated with food production, processing, import, stockpiling, supplying, marketing and sales as well as to ensure people's right to access to safe food through appropriate application of science and technology.

Food safety activities involve the toxicological, nutritional-physiological or nutritional-medical assessment of foods. Bangladesh Food Safety Authority should work under the principle of "Identify risks - Protect health" in the field of consumer health protection. In this context, the Institute would be able to play an important role in improving consumer protection and food safety. Its tasks should focus on the assessment of existing and the identification of new health risks, drawing up recommendations on risk reduction, and the communication of this process. The results of its work would serve as the basis for scientific advice to the relevant ministries and other agencies, for instance the Ministry of Food, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Ministry of Industries, Ministry of Commerce and other ministries and agencies who are working on the basis of cooperation and coordination within the network. In its assessments and recommendations BFSA should not be

influenced by any economic, political or social interests. Literally, it should present them in such a way that they can be easily understood by the general public.

Being a newly formed institution, Bangladesh Food Safety Authority may face challenges to conduct the risk assessment due to lack of proper infrastructure and skill human resource. It's really a matter of concern, how the authority will be able to initiate its function in short time! As it is not feasible to develop the structured labs due to limited resources and time, utilising the reference lab could be the most realistic solution. Initially Bangladesh Food Safety Authority could target the Higher Educational Institutions to source

the potential reference lab. Drawing a guideline to select possible partners within its scope and working on the basis of mutual cooperation could offer fruitful outcomes which would assist to achieve its objectives. In addition, BFSA may engage in scientific cooperation with international institutions and organisations and with the institutions of other countries involved in consumer health protection and food safety, for instance, The Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) in Germany which has well established organisational structure and policies to ensure food safety and human health. Having mutual cooperation and agreement with foreign institutions would assist to gain experience, eventually make them self-reliant. At the national level, there are few Higher Educational Institutions in Bangladesh that have mutual cooperation agreement with foreign institutions, for example, German University Bangladesh has an mutual cooperation agreement with Institute of Food Science and Technology (DIL) in Berlin. Bangladesh Food Safety Authority may include such institutions within its network so that, alongside the government authority, private organisations can have an opportunity to contribute to improving the standard of food safety and public health of this country.



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