



Organization of
American States



Regional Workshop

on

Consumer Product Safety and Risk Assessment

Paramaribo, Suriname
3rd to 5th December 2014



CONSUMER SAFETY
AND HEALTH NETWORK

The Workshop is made possible by contributions to the Caribbean Community Secretariat from:



European Union

The Workshop is made possible by contributions to the OAS General Secretariat from:



Canadian International
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Background

Consumer product safety is a fundamental aspect of consumer protection, as it is stated in the United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection, and its protection is essential to safeguarding everyone's right to a healthy life. Strong systems of consumer product safety enforcement contribute to the promotion and strengthening of fair competition as they aim to level the field for reputable businesses whose products cannot compete head-to-head with cheaper unsafe products in the market.

In the context of globalized and dynamic markets, where asymmetries of information and market power exist between consumers and providers, people are exposed to unsafe products that can cause serious health problems and pose a risk to their own lives and wellbeing. As more developed markets strengthen their consumer product safety surveillance capacity and cooperation with other markets to avoid the entrance of unsafe products into their territories, the probabilities that unsafe products are detoured into markets with lower protection levels and less inter-institutional coordination increase.

In order to face the challenges raised by unsafe products, several countries have undertaken actions at the national level to enhance their capacities for market surveillance on consumer product safety; and at the regional and global levels in order to promote further cooperation and exchange of information on the subject.

In this sense, the strategy to guarantee consumer product safety is, on the one hand, an *inter-institutional* challenge, given that it exceeds the scope of the responsibilities assigned to consumer protection agencies and must be focused on a systemic and interdisciplinary perspective that involves all the national institutions with commitments related to product safety, including sanitary surveillance authorities, health ministries, metrology and normalization institutes, customs administrations, among others. On the other hand, it is an *international* challenge that individual countries cannot face in isolation, but for which they rather seek sub regional, hemispheric and global cooperation.

At the Inter-American level, the member states of the Organization of American States (OAS) have created the Consumer Safety and Health Network (CSHN), as the Inter-American interdisciplinary mechanism, specialized in promoting -at a national and hemispheric level- consumer health and safety policies and programs, and the impact they can have on consumers' health and wellbeing. The Network has promoted and supported the creation and/or the

strengthening of consumer product safety national market surveillance systems of different Member States and it has trained hundreds of experts and authorities since its launch in 2010; ultimately contributing to the creation of a "common language" on market surveillance for product safety in the region.

In the framework of the CSHN, the OAS Member States have developed an Inter-American Rapid Alerts System for consumer product safety (SIAR for its Spanish acronym), which is the first hemispheric integrated system for the generation, management and rapid and safe exchange of information on consumer safety alerts, based on shared criteria about principles, general concepts and relevant terminology for the regional alerts. The SIAR is supported by an advanced IT platform with several public and restricted features at the service of government agencies and the general public.

The SIAR has two fundamental characteristics. On one hand, it is an integrated system for the creation, management and rapid exchange of and management of alerts, with public, private and secure components; and constitutes a link between the hemispheric database and the *GlobalRecalls* portal managed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). On the other hand, it constitutes a frame of action from which the countries of the Americas can identify the criteria for the creation of hemispheric alerts on consumer product safety, which ultimately allows them to take the necessary measures to prevent or stop a product from being sold.

At the sub-regional level, the Caribbean countries, led by the CARICOM Secretariat, are also quickly moving towards a sub-regional system of consumer product safety which will include a sophisticated Rapid Alert System for Exchange of Information on Dangerous (Non-Food) Goods (CARREX), in the framework of the comprehensive work the Secretariat has carried out with CARICOM's member states to promote all the areas of consumer protection in general.

The Caribbean sub-regional rapid alert system will constitute another engine for the promotion of the inclusion of the topic of consumer product safety in the public policy agenda at the national and regional levels; and will enhance the impact of the Inter-American effort in our countries and in our relationship with markets from other regions and the global initiatives.

While these systems are relevant in order to strengthen consumer product safety, experience has proven that collaborative actions and mutual support between stakeholders at all levels are key components to optimize hazardous products surveillance, in a world where commercial borders are porous. Cooperation is therefore one of the main pillars in product consumer safety, and is

based on sharing information among actors. To this extent, countries need to create information about unsafe products by developing risk assessment processes for consumer product safety within their borders. Risk assessment appears central to the effectiveness of such market surveillance systems, enabling the rapid detection and the adoption of proactive and coordinated measures to prevent such risk from materializing and damaging consumers' rights; relying on national inter-agency commitment and capacity.

In recent years, the OAS and the CARICOM have maintained a close relationship of cooperation and exchange, mainly in the context of the CSHN, and it is acknowledged that this common work is conducive and helpful to enhance both organizations' efforts. In this context, the need to continue developing collaboration between both CARREX and SIAR appears to be essential to strengthen consumer product safety in the Americas, by promoting actions aiming at supporting and integrating them to each other, thus ensuring optimal market surveillance through efficient risk assessment systems.

Objective of the Workshop

This workshop will provide the relevant CARICOM consumer product safety stakeholders with training aiming at strengthening their capacities to detect and to assess unsafe products, and to take effective and timely measures to tackle the circulation of those products between the different markets in the Americas.

The workshop will focus on the study of risk assessment issues, concepts and methods in order to enhance national inter-agency network in the creation and sharing of information regarding unsafe consumer products that will ultimately be communicated by the CARREX and the SIAR.

Date and venue

Workshop activities will take place **from December 3rd to 5th, 2014**, in Paramaribo, Suriname. The event will take place at the Wyndham Garden Hotel in (Domineestraat 7-9, Paramaribo, Suriname).

Target audience

The workshop is targeted at government officials with decision-making and/or direct responsibility on consumer product safety from state agencies with responsibilities on the subject.

Language

The workshop will be held in English.

Registration

Registration from each participating agency must be submitted on or before **November 17th, 2014**. Please, send the completed registration form to the following email addresses: hilda.kelshall@caricom.org or carolann.marshall@caricom.org (CARICOM Secretariat) macle@oas.org, and kspinomitchell@oas.org (OAS Secretariat).

Cost

The workshop is free of charge. The CARICOM Secretariat will meet the cost of airfares and per diem for one government official (CARREX National Contact Point or the alternate) from each CARICOM Member State. However, participants are expected to make their travel arrangements and purchase their airline tickets in advance, being reimbursed upon presentation of their boarding passes to and from Suriname.

Agenda

Please find below the workshop agenda.

WORKSHOP ON CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY AND RISK ASSESSMENT

Paramaribo, Suriname – December 3rd to 5th

Draft Agenda

Time	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:30 - 9:00	Registration	Review and debate concepts learned the previous day	Review and debate concepts learned the previous day
9:00 - 10:00	Opening Ceremony	OAS CSHN and Caricom CARREX system	Review and debate concepts learned the previous day
10:00 - 11:00	Course objective and roadmap discussion		Risk Assessment
	Coffee Break		
11:00 - 12:00	What are we talking about and the world situation in consumer product safety	Risk assessment, when to recall a product and why	How should neighboring countries address consumer product safety issues?
12:00 - 12:30	Specific concepts on product safety 1		Case-Based Exercises
12:30 - 13:30	Lunch		
13:30 - 14:00	Specific concepts on product safety 2	Consumer, firms, the market, and the product safety authorities	Risk assessment of products purchased by participants
14:00 - 15:00			
	Coffee Break		
15:00 - 16:00	Models: USA - UE- Latin America (Brazil)	Databases and cooperation with market surveillance	Conclusions and Next Steps
16:00 - 17:00		Recalls	CARICOM Technical Meeting (TBC)