



WHO/OMS

Senior Regional Food Safety Authority
Response Coordination Roundtable, November
7-8, 2007, Cairo, Egypt

Information Sharing Between National and International Authorities

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INFOSAN

International Food Safety Authorities Network



World Health
Organization

What is INFOSAN?



A global network of 163 national food safety authorities that...

- Promotes the exchange of important food safety information globally
- Responds to international food safety events
- Helps countries strengthen their capacity to manage food safety risks

with a goal of preventing foodborne disease



Food Safety - An international concern

Developing countries (WHO, 2004)

- 4-6 billions cases of foodborne diarrhoea world-wide
- 1.8 million deaths per year

Industrialized countries

- up to 30% of the population gets diseased yearly
- up to 20 per million inhabitants die yearly



Globalisation of Trade : “The World on your Plate”



Chicken Kiev

Herb Butter	Salted butter - Ireland Garlic puree - China, USA, Spain Garlic salt - China, USA, Spain Lemon - USA Parsley - France, UK Pepper - Indonesia Water - Ireland
Chicken Breast:	Chicken - Ireland, Belgium UK, France etc.
Batter:	Flour - Belgium, France Water - Ireland
Bread Crumb:	Bread crumb - Ireland, UK Rape-seed oil - EU, Australia Eastern Europe

Courtesy A. Reilly, FSAI, Ireland



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Mandate for INFOSAN

World Health Assembly (WHA) Resolutions

International food conferences identify the need for sharing food safety information globally

Codex Guidelines

Principles and Guidelines for the Exchange of Information in Food Control Emergency Situations (CAC/GL 19-1995 Rev. 1-2004)



WHA Resolutions

53.15: Improved communication among WHO and its Member States on matters of food safety.

"to put in place a global strategy for the **surveillance** of foodborne diseases and for the efficient **gathering and exchange of information in and between countries and regions**, taking into account the current revision of the International Health Regulations;"

55.16 WHO to provide tools and support to Member States to increase their capacity to respond emergencies

"to continue, in consultation with relevant intergovernmental agencies and other international organizations, to **strengthen global surveillance** of infectious diseases, water quality, and **food safety**, and related activities such as revision of the International Health Regulations and development of WHO's food safety strategy, by **coordinating information gathering on potential health risks and disease outbreaks, data verification, analysis and dissemination, by providing support to laboratory networks, and by making a strong contribution to any international humanitarian response**, as required;"



CODEX Guidelines

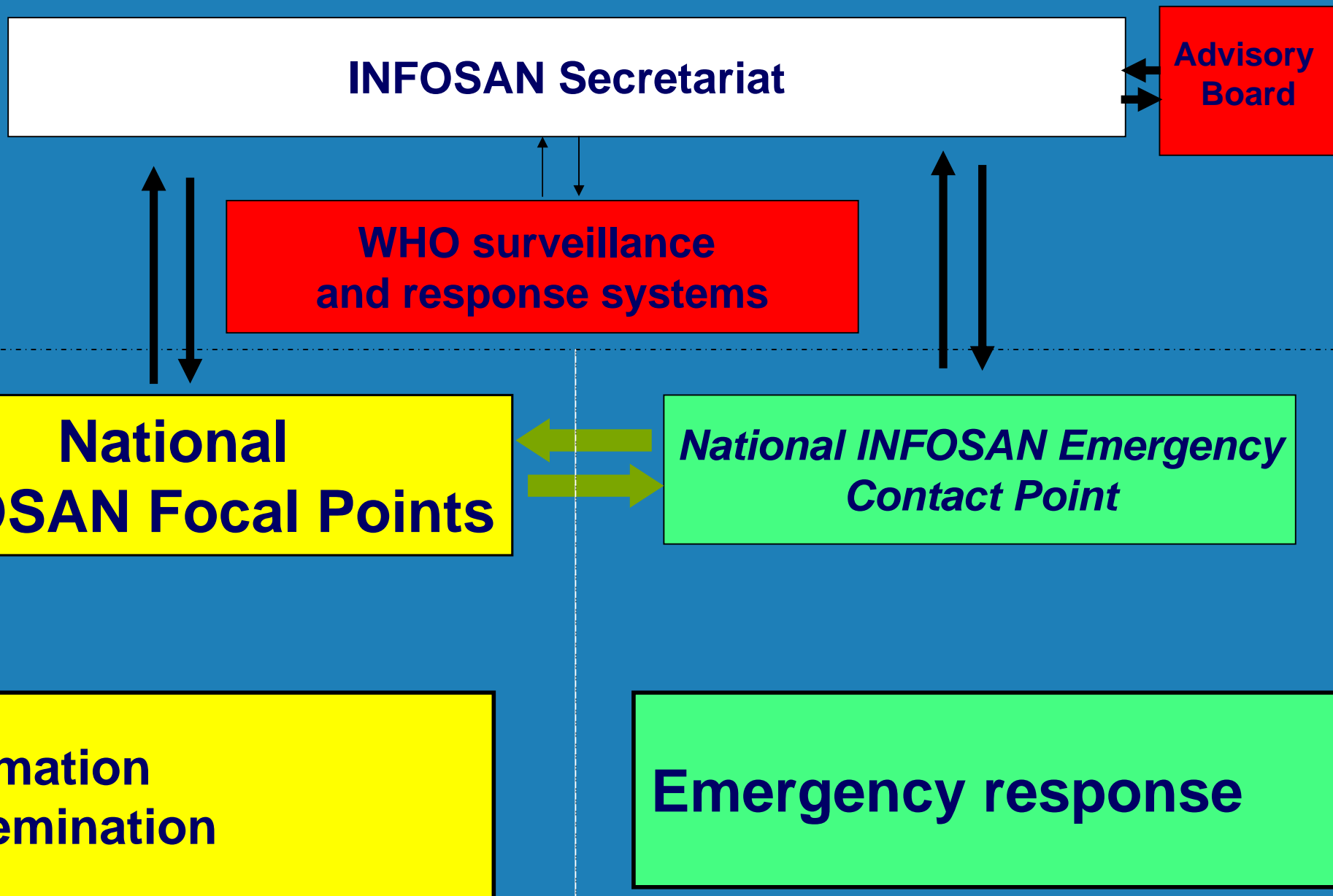
Principles and Guidelines for the Exchange of Information in Food Control Emergency Situations (CAC/GL 19-1995 Rev. 1-2004)

Communication during a food safety emergency is essential to minimize the potential adverse public health effects.

- Each country should designate a primary official contact point for food safety emergency situations to act as the national focal point for information exchange.
- A list of these official contact points is maintained by WHO and periodically distributed to governments.
- All countries should ensure that they regularly provide updated information on their country primary official contact points to the WHO.



Structure of the INFOSAN Network



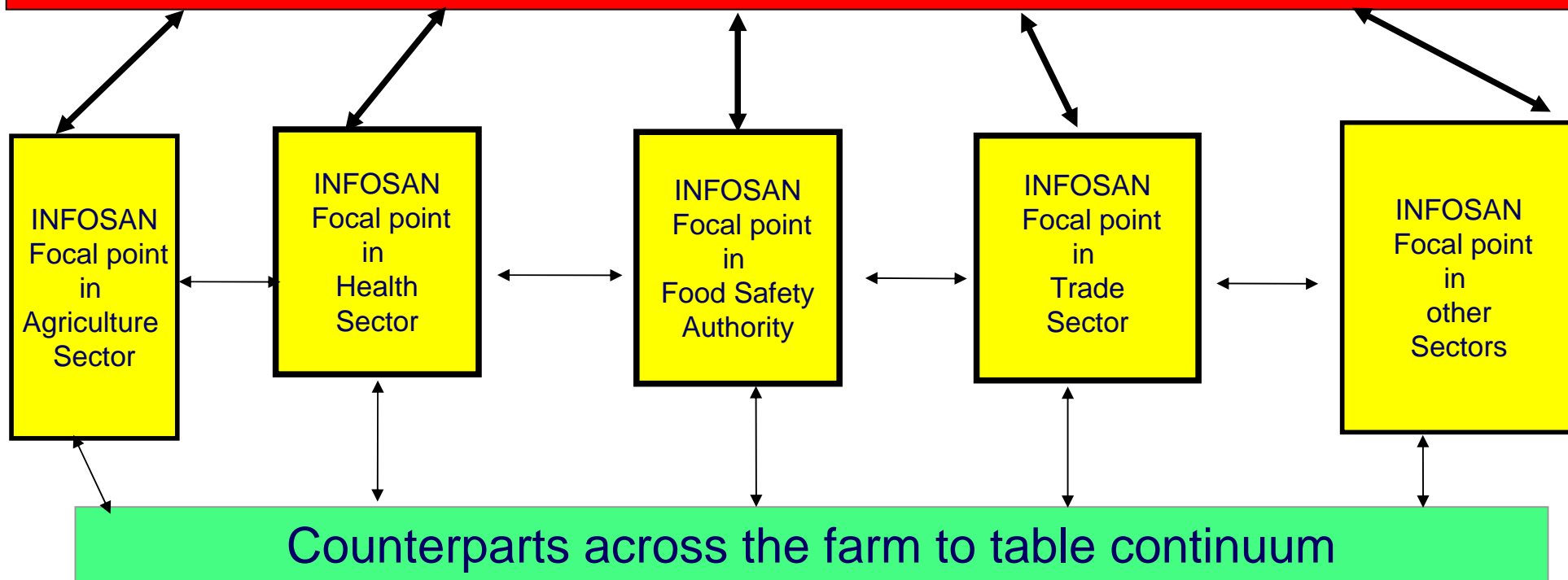
INFOSAN Focal Points

- Receive, Review and Disseminate documents
 - INFOSAN Information Notes and messages on important food safety topics
 - Surveys and guidance documents
- Provide comments to the INFOSAN Secretariat
- Contact INFOSAN
 - Development of an information note
 - Dissemination of documents
 - Food safety advice
- Communicate with other network members to share experiences in managing food safety issues



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World Health Organization

INFOSAN Information Notes

- Practical and Accurate Information on Current and Emerging Food Safety Issues
- Designed for Capacity Building and Action by INFOSAN Members
- Examples
 - The identification, assessment and management of food safety events under the International Health Regulations (2005)
 - Highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza outbreaks in poultry and in humans: Food safety implications
 - Food allergies
 - Total Diet Studies – A recipe for safer food



INFOSAN Emergency

- Links an officially designated national contact point with the network to address
 - Foodborne disease outbreaks and food contamination events of international significance
- Provides rapid and confidential exchange of information
- Is supported by WHO's surveillance and response systems and is integrated within the IHR(2005).

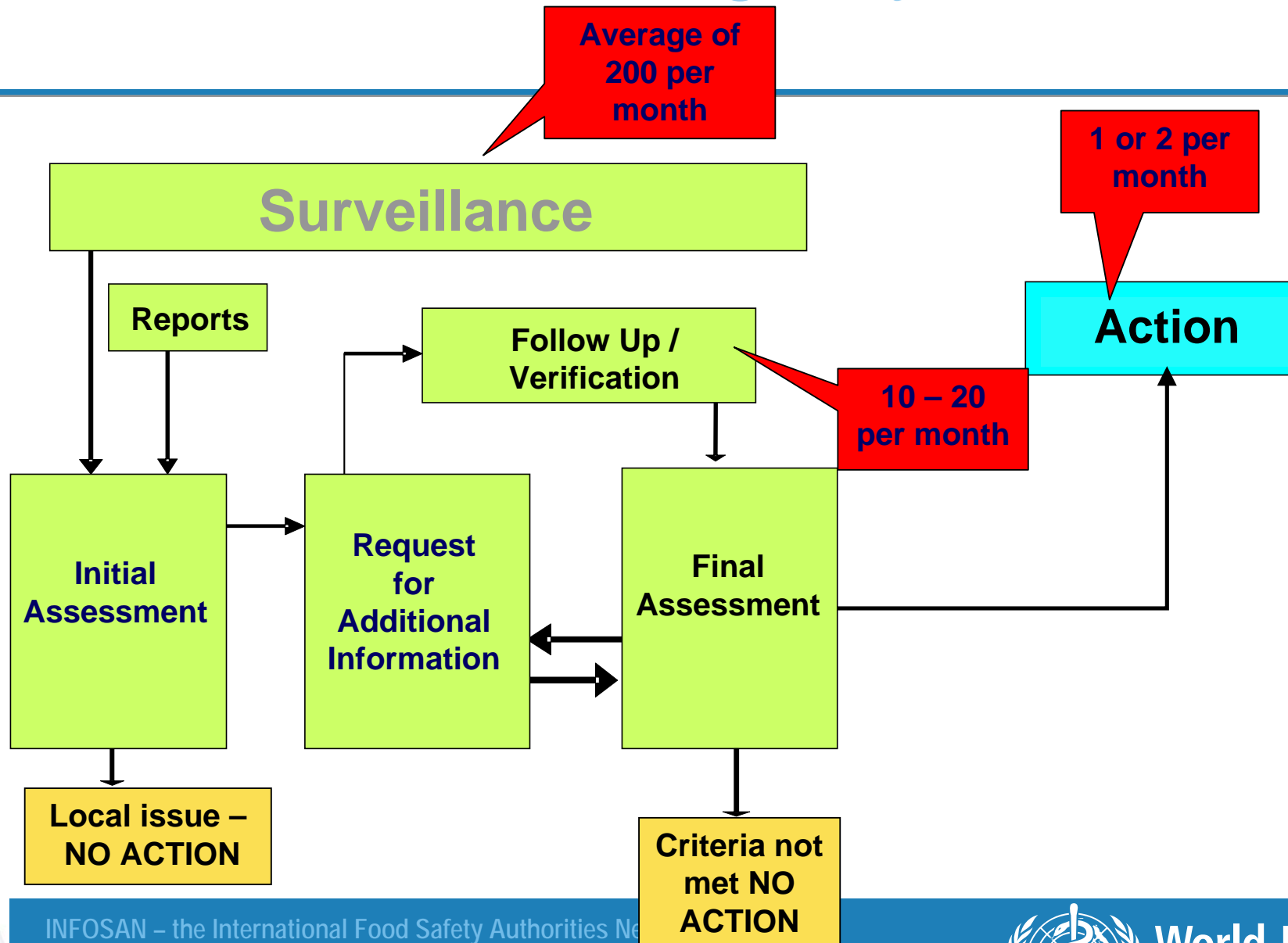


How Does INFOSAN Emergency Work?

- **Surveillance** information
- **Decision** to proceed with action
 - Distribution, impact on public health, economic impact
- **INFOSAN** verification establishes
 - Export and the need for further INFOSAN action
- **Actions of INFOSAN**
 - Providing contact points
 - Sending INFOSAN ALERT messages to affected countries
 - Advice and assistance
 - Alerting the entire network



INFOSAN Emergency Actions



INFOSAN Emergency Contact Points

- **Act** as liaison between the National authority and INFOSAN
- **Notify** INFOSAN of food safety emergencies giving information on distribution, public health significance and societal impact
- **Approve** INFOSAN Emergency messages to be sent through the network
- **Respond** to INFOSAN Emergency messages
- **Coordinate** with INFOSAN for international response actions
- **Provide** INFOSAN with details of follow up activity



Examples of INFOSAN Emergency ALERTS

- **July 2005 *Salmonella* in Powdered infant formula from France to 13 countries**
 - Most countries reported that they received official info from INFOSAN only
- **November 2006 Glass found in oatcakes exported to 3 countries**
 - All affected countries informed
- **September 2006 *E.coli* 0157:H7 in spinach to all members of INFOSAN**
 - Provided contact information for some countries receiving primary distribution.
 - Because of possible secondary and tertiary distribution, all INFOSAN member countries were notified.
- **September 2007 *Shigella sonnei* contamination of baby corn exported to five countries**
 - The entire network was utilised to identify associated cases
 - Importing countries who were unaware of the contamination were notified



Country Responses to INFOSAN Emergency Alerts

- Food Import Systems
- Customs and Border Control
- Food Recall
 - Food Processors
 - Food Distributors
 - Food Retailers
- Consumers
 - Recall notifications
 - Press conferences
 - Media Alerts



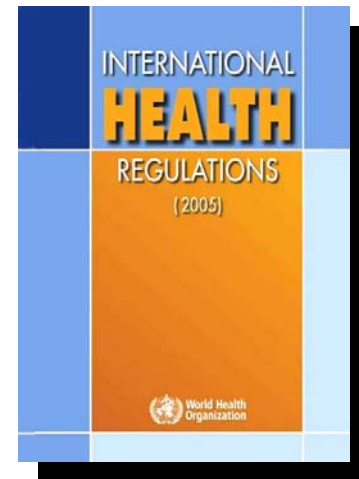
Lessons Learned

- Surveillance and recall messages rarely contain enough information to determine international significance
 - Information on international distribution is generally lacking
- Primary distribution can be traced and allow for targeted ALERT Messages
 - INFOSAN ALERT messages can be rapidly sent to specific affected countries
- Secondary, tertiary, and internet distribution is difficult to track to specific countries
 - INFOSAN alerts the entire network
- Countries not in the Network are still receiving contaminated food products
 - All countries need to join the network



International Health Regulations (IHR)

- Old IHR (1969) only covered Yellow Fever, Cholera and Plague
- New IHR (2005) include all public health emergencies of international concern - including those caused by food
- IHR (2005) entered into force on 15 June 2007
- All WHO Member States are obliged to declare all public health emergencies of international concern to WHO



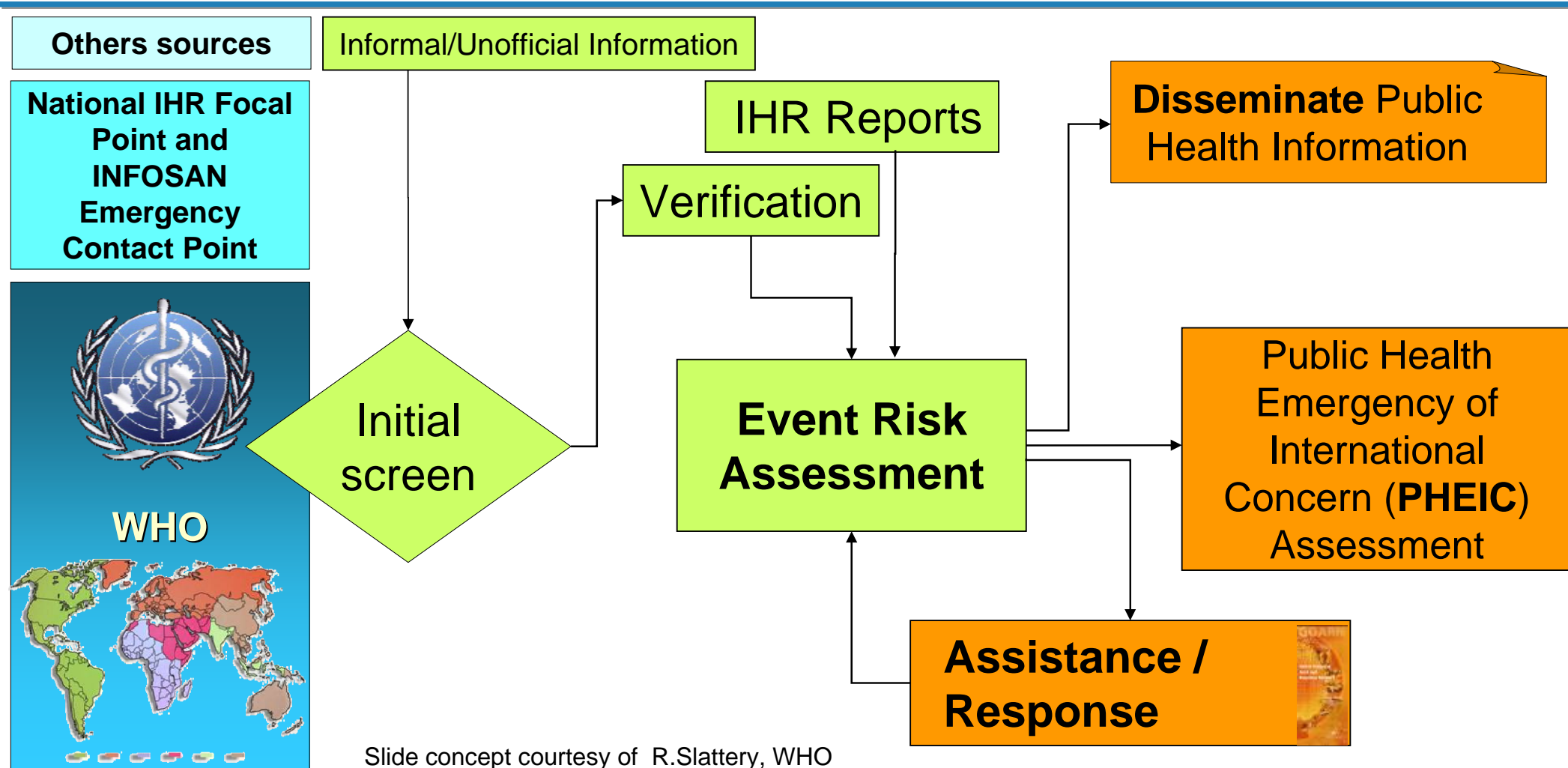
Notification / Decision Instrument

In practice, what generally must be notified?

- All cases: new subtype human influenza, wild-type polio, SARS, smallpox
- All events involving at least 2 of 4 criteria:
 1. Potentially severe public health impact
 2. Unusual or unexpected nature
 3. Significant risk of international spread
 4. Significant risk of restrictions on international travel or trade (including an imported/exported food product)
- Any health measures implemented in response to the event
- Follow with specific, detailed public health information to WHO
- To assist assessment, DI also has 11 “questions” & 16 non-binding “examples”
- Events involving certain other diseases are specifically required to be assessed



The International Health Regulations and INFOSAN



Moving Forward

- Enrol all countries in the Network
- Encourage use of Codex Guidelines for recall notifications
- Provide training on INFOSAN and responding to food contamination events
- Support national collaboration between IHR Focal Points and INFOSAN Emergency Contact Points
- Development of Food Safety Emergency Response Guidelines
- Establishment of a secure web site for members



Please see

http://www.who.int/foodsafety/fs_management/infosan/en/index.html

Or e-mail –

infosan@who.int

INFOSAN is supported by voluntary contributions from member states

Thank you

