INTERNATIONAL STANDARDISATION OF IDF-ISO ANALYSIS METHODS - EVOLUTION IN PROCESS AT IDF LEVEL -

(This article draws upon the principal items of the strategic plan prepared by the IDF MSSG and presented at the opening of the 2009 IDF-ISO analytical week, which took place in Sochi in Russia from 18 to 22 May 2009).

CONTEXT

IDF and ISO have been in close collaboration since 2001 for the elaboration and publication of joint standards concerning milk and dairy product analysis methods. They are the backbone in the elaboration of method standards, which are recovered by the international organisations in charge of the publication of recommendations in their respective frameworks. It is notably the case of Codex Alimentarius for exchanges concerning foodstuffs, CEN for the elaboration of European Union community directives, ICAR for the harmonization of methods in the field of production and dairy genetics.

The activity of analysis method standardisation is carried out by groups of experts under the guidance of the Method Standard Steering Group or MSSG, which is under the responsibility of the IDF Science and Programme Coordination Committee or SPCC. The SPCC is linked directly to the IDF Board of Directors. The groups are constituted of experts nominated by the IDF national committees and ISO experts, members of sub-committee 5 (physico-chemical methods) and sub-committee 9 (microbiological methods) of the ISO Technical Commission 34.

The IDF-ISO analytical week, which took place in Suchi in Russia from 17 to 22 May 2009, was marked by the proposition of a new organisation of the committees and work groups that are the living force of the international standardisation of analysis methods in the dairy sector.

DIFFICULTIES TO RESOLVE

As a decrease in the number of experts was observed, linked to the retirement of the senior workers who are not replaced by new analysts, discussions were engaged 18 months earlier within the Method Standard Steering Group (MSSG).

Indeed, it was observed that a large number of projects relied increasingly on the same experts, generally the eldest, who moreover ensure the posts of coordinators, and that it is increasingly difficult for the experts to carry out a regular standardisation activity due to a lack of time.

In the current conditions, the annual IDF-ISO analytical week is an important moment for the analytical standardisation activity, and it was noted that the work of the experts is concentrated over the 3 or 4 months before this event. The time necessary for discussion and exchanges between experts is thus short, which can generate inadequate decision-making and delays in the programs.

The IDF MSSG members thus came to the conclusion that a new dynamism needed to be injected in its standardisation activity and desired a new set up based on the reorganisation of the groups of experts and a new working method.

A 2009-2010 Strategic Plan to « Strengthen the productivity in the IDF and ISO analysis methods and sampling sector » was then presented at the beginning of the last Analytical Week.

ELABORATION OF A STRATEGIC PLAN BY THE IDF MSSG

During the preliminary work, the MSSG members clearly re-stated the role of each authority and expert analyst in the following terms:

« The IDF analysis methods sector contributes to the efficient functioning of the dairy field thanks its development, publication and review of the analysis and sampling methods and other guidelines, and provides pertinent information. These activities are governed by the IDF National Committees and carried out in close collaboration with ISO. »

The main stakeholders were identified in order of importance:

a) milk producers, dairy transformers (industry), consumers (consumer associations): « The dairy chain »,

b) regulatory organisations (national authorities), EU, Codex, inter-governmental organisations,

c) control laboratories and organisations,

d) regional standardisation organisations through ISO (CEN/TC302 and national institutions),

e) international associations (International Committee for Animal Recording (ICAR), European Dairy Association (EDA), National Mastitis Council (NMC),

f) universities and research organisations.

The main objectives were then re-stated and listed in order of importance:

a) to develop, publish and review the international analytical standards in conjunction with ISO,

b) to supply the Codex with the necessary reports (CCMAS, CCMMP, etc) linked to the harmonised procedure (through the MSSG),

c) to diffuse the pertinent scientific and technical information (publications, workshops, symposia, etc), and advise on the application of standards, guidelines or procedures,

d) to closely follow and give an account of the work of the other groups and organisations concerned by the subject linked to analytical and sampling methodologies (regulation agencies, standardisation organisations, commercial organisations, and other associations of interest),

e) to anticipate future needs and propose possible solutions.

The strong and weak points, the opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis) were identified in February 2008 by the MSSG in order to establish the necessary recommendations (see table). A calendar for the set up of the new organisation was then established.

The most significant recommendation concerns the reorganisation of various IDF-ISO groups associated with the analytical standardisation groups. Indeed, the IDF analytical sector Standing Committees currently only provide limited technical information for the projects or specific work programs. Moreover, a large number of the work groups (Joint Action Teams or JATs) cover themes that are too broad and deal with (too) many projects simultaneously.
The first recommendation was then to withdraw the Joint Action Teams (JATs) to retain only the most specific work groups (Work Group or Project Group). Such work groups will be created when a new project is approved and a manager nominated. The group is dissolved once the work has been accomplished

THE IDF-ISO WORK GROUPS

These work groups have to develop analytical standards and also participate in other important activities, such as the publication of standard implementation guides or the participation in activities in collaboration with other major organisations (CODEX, ICAR, OIE, WHO, etc). If necessary, the work groups can get together to deal with important current affairs in the dairy sector, help in the management of crises, evaluate new technologies or equipment.
In parallel, a small number of standing work groups will be necessary, such as, for example, a group of statistical experts to review the experimental plans and the results of various interlaboratory studies.

THE STANDING COMMITTEES

In the proposition of the new organisation, the IDF-ISO work groups will report their activities to a committee, which will supervise, follow the progress of the projects and offer advice. These committees named IDF-ISO Coordinating Committees or CC will ensure the animation of 6 corresponding Standing Committees or SC, which will replace the 5 Standing Committees from the previous organisation (see table).

RESULTS OF THE SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths	Weaknesses / *Potential Solutions*
• know-how and knowledge of the experts • Diversity of the experts, complementarity of competences • Very good cooperation with ISO TC34/SC5 • dairy sector and regions throughout the world are widely covered • Good reputation with the other organisations (i.e. Codex), recognised legitimacy • Recognition of the sampling and analysis methods as an IDF « area of priority », increased support from the IDF head office	• lack of time for the IDF-ISO work, voluntary aspect of the work, no frequent meetings ➢ *to plan a second meeting by TV/video conference* ➢ *to encourage meetings for specific projects* • Deadlines not always met, comments not presented on time (MSSG admits it is due to the pressure and the workload linked to the duties of the members in their day to day work, and not due to a lack of effort or interest) • Current structure not ideal ➢ *restructure* • need time for this, workload not understood ➢ *communicate with the stakeholders* • Meetings that only focus on the subject in progress ➢ *to permit other discussions on important subjects, additional agenda* • Difficulty in finding collaborators for interlaboratory tests, cost of tests * unequal work distribution (only certain « key » experts are relied on to ensure a heavy workload)

Opportunities	Threats / *Potential solutions*
• Increased use of new technology (electronic communication, Web meetings, multimedia, etc) • Using the work group to provide help in the implementation of the standards • Increased cooperation with other organisations • Increased cooperation with the material manufacturers to guarantee that problems of approval, manufacturer technologies, etc, are taken into account • Providing help in accreditation and equivalence	• Retirement, lack of young participants ➢ *To make sure that the members eligible for retirement nominate and train their substitutes* • Extra work for the « key » experts (unequal work distribution) • Lack of support from employers, lack of respect for the importance of the work, under-estimation of the workload ➢ *to promote the activities and ensure that the employers know the importance of the work and the time necessary* ➢ *to give a quicker answer to the development in process* ➢ *to ensure a better anticipation of future needs in order to encourage exchanges and discussions* • Lack of comprehension of the importance of the work ➢ *To promote the activities and the applications* • Probable loss or reduction in ISO support (retirement in 2010) ➢ *Contact ISO*

Organisation before June 2009: 5 Standing Committees

1. Standing Committee « Main components of milk » or SC MCM
   JAT Fat / JAT Nitrogen compounds / JAT Carbohydrates / JAT Water

2. Standing Committee « Analysis methods for additives and contaminants » or SC AMAC
   JAT Organic contaminants and veterinary residues / JAT Food additives and vitamins

3. Standing Committee « Minor components and characterisation of physical proprieties » or SC MCCPP
   JAT Heat treatment / JAT Enzymes in cheese process

4. Standing Committee « Quality assurance, statistics and sampling » or SC QASADS
   JAT Statistics and sampling / JAT Automated methods

5. Standing Committee « Microbiological methods of analysis » or SC MMA
   JAT Harmonisation / JAT Lactic bacteria and ferments / JAT Security and functionality of the beneficial microorganisms in dairy products

Organisation after June 2009: 6 Standing Committees (provisional names)

1. Standing Committee « Composition » or SC C:
Project groups formerly Fat, Nitrogen compounds, Carbohydrates, Water and minor components JATs

2. Standing Committee « Analysis methods for additives and contaminants » or SC AMAC:
Project groups formerly organic contaminants and veterinary residues, and Food additives and vitamins JATs

3. Standing Committee « Process Aids and indicators » or SC PAI:
Project groups formerly Heat treatment and Enzymes in cheese process JATs

4. Standing Committee « Statistics and automation » or SC SA:
Project groups formerly Statistics and sampling and Automated methods JATs

5. Standing Committee « Harmonisation of the microbiological methods » or SC HMM:
Project groups formerly Harmonisation JAT

6. Standing Committee « Dairy microorganisms » or SC DM:
Project groups formerly Lactic bacteria and ferments, and Security and functionality of beneficial microorganisms in dairy products JATs

METHOD STANDARD STEERING GROUP (MSSG)

The role and function of the MSSG will remain the same under the new organisation scheme, its composition will be:

- Six Standing Committee presidents,
- An ISO representative (President and/or Secretary),
- A President member of the Scientific Program Coordinating Committee (SPCC) elected by the national committees.

PROGRESS OF THE WORK

Each of the 6 Coordinating Committee members will be assigned to one or several specific work groups and will be in charge of closely following the work in progress in collaboration with ISO/TC34/SC5 committee.

With the current system, a large part of the work is carried out and finalised around and during the IDF-ISO analytical week. With the new organisation, the work groups will be encouraged to carry out their work throughout the year and the Coordinating Committees to regularly monitor the progress. Moreover, the Coordinating Committees will have to meet twice a year, physically during the annual analytical week, with a supplementary phone or web conference meeting. The president of each Coordinating Committee will draw up and forward activity reports to the MSSG, to ensure that the work is progressing on schedule and according to IDF-ISO procedures.

The annual analytical week will be modified to take into account the new structure. More time will be devoted to work group meetings to deal with their respective subjects. Each group manager will send a report to the Standing Committee.

SET UP OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The new general scheme was approved by the IDF Scientific Program Coordinating Committee and the set up began at the 2009 IDF-ISO analytical week, which took place for the last time according to the old format.
The national committees and the IDF experts concerned will receive an explanatory document concerning the proposed changes and will be invited to nominate (or confirm) the work group experts assigned to the 6 new Standing Committees. Joint Action Teams will then be dissolved.

This new structure will take effect over the next few weeks as soon as the new organisation is set up. The next analytical week, which will be held in Montreal in 2010, will be the first meeting between the work groups and the Standing Committees.

Olivier LERAY