

Joint Statement from Pete Unger and Randy Dougherty,

ILAC and IAF Chairs - World Accreditation Day 2012

**Accreditation: Supporting safe food and clean drinking water**

We are delighted to announce that World Accreditation Day will take place on June 9th 2012. This year’s theme is focused on how accreditation supports the availability of safe food and clean drinking water.

We all need access to sufficient food and water to live, which as a minimum, must be affordable, nutritionally adequate, and safe.

Food and water supply chains are changing rapidly due to factors such as greater urbanisation, technological advances in processing and treatment techniques, changes in consumer demand and tastes, and evermore globalisation of supply chains.

Further to this, consumers in the developed world are taking an interest in the origin of the food they eat or the source or mineral content of a bottle of water. They may also have concerns about the environmental impact or the trading ethics of the products they consume.

Given these factors, it is critical that consumers have confidence in the safety, security, and authenticity of the food and water they consume. This confidence is gained through the application of common food safety management systems, supported by credible testing and inspection regimes, both within the national economy but also across international borders from ‘source to consumption’.

There are a growing number of organisations that check compliance with these standards by providing services such as laboratory testing, calibration, inspection services, and certification services. However, it is accreditation that declares that these organisations are impartial and competent to provide these services.

Accreditation covers multiple disciplines throughout the supply chain to ensure that those who check the operators in the food and water industry can demonstrate that they are working to the appropriate standards.

Accredited testing laboratories are used to analyse for contaminants or to declare that produce is authentic. On-going surveillance and sampling is required to check that products leaving the factory meet the claims on the label week-in, week-out.

Food safety management systems are used by organisations involved in all aspects of the food and water supply chain, to demonstrate its ability to control safety hazards until the point of consumption. Routine hygiene audits are carried out by accredited inspection bodies.

There are also an increasing number of accredited schemes that relate to fair trade, organic food, the treatment of animals, and impact on the environment.

Accreditation bodies that are evaluated as competent, sign arrangements that support the acceptance of accredited results and certificates across national borders. These arrangements, which are managed by the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC), remove the need for additional tests, checks or certification at each country of entry. They also provide Regulators with an internationally recognised stamp of approval to demonstrate that a supplier is complying with agreed standards.

Major events, press campaigns, workshops and seminars will take place in conjunction with the celebration of World Accreditation Day in over 90 countries to raise awareness of the value that accreditation plays in the supply of safe food and clean drinking water. For further details, contact your local accreditation body.

A promotional brochure to celebrate the day is available for download from the ILAC and IAF websites, and a short promotional film is also available for download on the IAF and ILAC Youtube channel <http://www.youtube.com/user/IAFandILAC>.