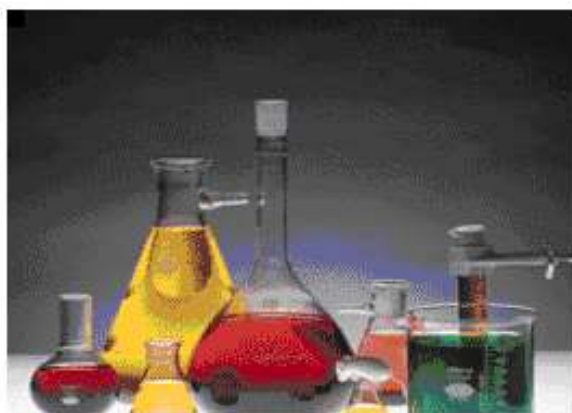




MINISTRY OF HEALTH

Abridged Version of the Annual Report of the State General Laboratory

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Mailing Address:

44, Kimonos Street
Acropolis
1451 Nicosia
CYPRUS

Tel. 00357-22-809115

Fax. 00357-22-316434

Web page: www.sgl.moh.gov.cy

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State General Laboratory

1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 Responsibilities

The State General Laboratory (SGL) is the official Government Laboratory fulfilling the requirements embodied in the laws, while also implementing applied research in the following areas: the analysis of foodstuffs, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, food supplements, water, environmental samples, police exhibits, narcotics, biological samples from poisoning cases and unnatural deaths, goods purchased by the Government Stores and industrial products through customs for tariff classification, children's toys, articles in contact with food as well as agricultural products for export.

Within the framework of its responsibilities it co-operates with all Ministries, Municipalities, Governmental and other Organisations. Its staff serve on many Boards (Food, Pharmaceuticals, Cosmetics, Agricultural Medicines, Organisation of Milk Industry, Food Safety) and also in National Committees (e.g. National Centre of Information on Narcotics, National Committee on Environment and Children's Health).

1.1.2 General Scope and Objectives of the SGL

The following objectives can be highlighted:

- (a) Developing and integrating scientific knowledge and laboratory data into strategic planning and policy making in the areas of quality and safety, of food and water, while safeguarding consumer health and interests based on EU requirements.
- (b) Conducting Risk Assessment studies on chemical and microbiological parameters present in food and water.
- (c) Contributing and securing the long term safety, sustainability of the environment and multifunctionality of the island's water resources through planning and governmental policy making.
- (d) Effectively assisting the Police in crime investigation and combating drug trafficking/use as well as the judicial process by providing expert witnessing in court.

- (e) Maintaining and expanding SGL's Accreditation scope based on the ISO/IEC 17025: 2005 standard and transferring experience and knowledge to other Government Departments as well as the private sector, on Q.A. and Metrology issues.

1.2 Means of reaching objectives

To fulfil the above objectives the SGL has focused on:

1.2.1 Quality Assurance Programme

The auditing that the SGL has undergone over the four years up to and including 2006, by the Greek Accreditation Body ESYD has proved to be successful. In 2006 the SGL has expanded its scope of Accreditation by the standard ISO 17025:2005.

During 2006, the laboratories participated in a total of 80 proficiency tests covering a total of 259 parameters. The results from these tests verified the high standard of quality of work carried out in the laboratory.

1.2.2 Accreditation

During 2006, apart from the already accredited 14 laboratories, two more achieved accreditation namely the SNIF-NMR Laboratory and the Laboratory for Genetically Modified Organisms.

Details on the accredited methods covered by each laboratory as well the scope can be found on the webpage of the SGL: www.sgl.moh.gov.cy.

The Q.A. programme called "DIAMETROS" launched 2 years ago by the SGL was continued, in this second phase, in order to cover the coaching and training of the staff of clinical laboratories of the Nicosia General Hospital, on the development of all necessary documents based on ISO/IEC 17025:2005 and EN/ISO 15189.

1.2.3 Planning and implementing Monitoring/Surveillance programmes

To achieve cost effectiveness and obtain the best possible outcome from all its activities the SGL plans and implements official monitoring/surveillance programmes based on three pillars:

- (a) confirming that products comply with national laws and regulations
- (b) providing preventive measures to existing local problems through target oriented and applied research and
- (c) responding to evolving problems that arise through official channels, such as the Rapid Alert System (RASFF) for foods and RAPEX for non food products.

During 2006 the development of new methods was completed and a pilot National programme was implemented within the framework of EU regulation for the determination of allergens in food. A new monitoring programme was also launched in the area of Polyaromatic hydrocarbons in food and specifically in barbecues, kebabs and smoked foods as well as dioxins. The monitoring programme will be intensified in 2007.

The SGL during 2006 managed to analyse the following number of samples/exhibits:

In the field of foodstuffs 8,292, environment 12,062, police exhibits 4,220, pharmaceuticals/cosmetics 333 and industrial products 175.

1.2.4 Advancing the technological infrastructure enhancing educational programmes and establishing new laboratories

The SGL uses the state - of - the - art equipment as required by current criteria of quality control (e.g. sensitivity, selectivity and specificity of methods, increase of productivity).

The "Learning Unit" continued to organise lectures for the staff and provide training programmes on management and IT as well as other programmes related to the EU functions through the Cyprus Academy of Public Administration. It also co-ordinated all education programmes locally and internationally.

1.2.5 European/International co-operation and research projects

The SGL incorporates, where possible, part of its work within EU research projects thus utilizing all possibilities offered for the advancement and mobility of the employees.

During 2006, within the 6th EU framework programme two research programmes were further carried out and three other research programmes, financed by the Cyprus Research Foundation, were implemented.

In addition to the above, the EU programme ES BIO (on Biomonitoring) and AIRMEX (control of indoor air in children's playgrounds and public places) were carried out.

The EU BUMA project was also launched which covers the monitoring of indoor pollutants from construction and related materials.

Within the Transitional Facilities funds of the EU, the SGL succeeded in obtaining 1,2 million Euros from the EU for the implementation of a project based on "Food Safety - Risk Assessment". A similar project with the co-operation of the Water Development Department was launched with 1,8 million Euros support from the EU.

The SGL continued its vivid participation and produced scientific presentations in EU activities on COST and other Networks. Another area of achievement was the scientific collaboration protocol signed by the SGL with the Polytechnic Department of the University of Cyprus and the Federal Agency of the Environment in Austria.

1.2.6 Updating and Drafting Laws and Regulations

The SGL has contributed substantially towards the updating of Laws relevant to its responsibilities as well to the preparation of new Regulations harmonized with the European Acquis.

1.2.7 Research

The SGL implements applied research in the areas of its activities. A number of such research results have been published in international journals as well as presented in international conferences.

1.2.8 Awareness

The SGL during 2006 has launched intensive activities to enhance consumer awareness and provide information to the public at large. Within these activities the SGL publishes booklets, leaflets informing the public on issues like food safety, water, child protection from toxic substances etc.

A bilingual DVD (English and Greek) was prepared highlighting the various activities as well as the vision of the SGL.

The website of the SGL, www.sgl.moh.gov.cy is another source of valuable information to the public.

1.2.9 Organisation of International workshops, seminars, conferences

The SGL has organised with the cooperation of European scientific bodies a number international workshops/conferences such as the European Directorate for Quality of Medicines (200 participants), the Association of Official Analytic Chemists (Europe) (100 participants).

1.3 Organisational Structure

The SGL's wide range of analytical work is covered by 21 Laboratories under six sections, together with the support of a registry, stores, library, IT and QA Unit, secretariat, accounts and electromechanical services.

During 2006, the staff comprised 40 chemists and microbiologists, excluding the post of the Director, 42 Chemists in senior technicians and technicians post, 4 clerks and 21 support staff. In addition to these a total of 25 Chemists and Microbiologists were also employed on contract as well 8 clerks. For the completion of research projects on additional 10 Chemists/Microbiologists/Biologists were employed on contract.

1.4 Financial Resources/Budget

Expenditures incurred by the SGL in 2006 amounted to £4,372.574 (compared to £4,036.430 in 2005) as provided by the Ordinary and Development Budget. Revenue amounted to £53,059 an amount that reflects the financial support through EU research programmes and Transitional Facilities Fund. A further £28,120 was granted from projects funded through the Cyprus Research Foundation.