



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

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MATTERS ARISING FROM FAO AND WHO

Prepared by FAO and WHO

1. Introduction

1.1 This paper presents information on activities of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) that could be of interest or relevant to the work of CCEXEC.

2. Matters arising jointly from FAO and WHO:

2.1 COVID-19

2.1.1 As the global COVID-19 pandemic evolves, FAO and WHO have aimed to keep Member States informed about matters relating to COVID-19 and food safety.

2.1.2 The FAO/WHO INFOSAN Secretariat has developed guidance for food businesses¹ and for competent authorities responsible for national food safety control systems² with regards to COVID-19 and food safety. This guidance has also been disseminated through the WHO Epidemic Information Network (EPI-WIN) and presented during several webinars targeted at food industry and food regulatory professionals. In addition, the FAO/WHO INFOSAN Secretariat collected questions from members about COVID-19 and food safety and posted the answers on the FAO/WHO INFOSAN Community Website as well as publicly.^{3,4}

2.1.3 FAO and WHO have jointly and individually published numerous policy and guidance documents to aid their members in managing the current global crisis and minimizing the impact the pandemic has. All documents are available here:

- FAO's Food Safety and Food Systems Division has made the collection of food safety specific policies, guidance and information materials available here: <http://www.fao.org/food-safety/covid-19-materials/en/>
- WHO: WHO's Department of Nutrition and Food Safety (NFS) has set up webpage to consolidate all documents related to COVID-19 and Nutrition and Food Safety: <https://www.who.int/teams/nutrition-and-food-safety/covid-19>. Questions and answers (Q&A) on nutrition and food safety related to the COVID-19 pandemic have been published (<https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-food-safety-and-nutrition>).

2.2 World Food Safety Day

2.2.1 On December 2018, the UN General Assembly adopted a Resolution proclaiming a World Food Safety Day (WFSD) on 7 June and designated FAO and WHO to lead alternatively the celebrations. WHO led the event in close coordination and collaboration with FAO in 2020 with a core focus on building and

¹ <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance-publications>

² https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/331842/WHO-2019-nCoV-Food_Safety_authorities-2020.1-eng.pdf
(also available in other UN languages)

³ <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/questions-relating-to-food-businesses>

⁴ <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/questions-relating-to-food-safety-authorities>

maintaining safe food in market places to ensure that people can access safe food throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Both FAO and WHO DGs highlighted that food safety should be everyone's business in every day. In late September, a FAO/WHO joint report on WFS2020 was published and this report gave an overview of the multi-stakeholder's engagement and virtual celebrations across the globe, which marked the great success for the WFS2020. The report is available in 6 UN languages⁵.

2.2.2. For the WFS2021, FAO will lead the celebration together with WHO. To advance on the preparation, FAO and WHO have drafted the concept note and agreed on the slogan, theme, and calls to actions. FAO and WHO will continue the preparation of the event. The visual identity and advocacy materials will be available by early 2021.

3. Matters arising from FAO

3.1 COVID-19

3.1.1 FAO has implemented an array of tools to support policy analyses and assess the impact of COVID-19 on food and agriculture, value chains, food prices, food security across the globe. Information tailored for various sectors, regions, actors and stakeholders are available here: <http://www.fao.org/2019-ncov/en/>.

3.1.2 Strengthening food production and distribution systems is key to fighting hunger and entails helping tackle diseases wherever they emerge in humans, animals, plants or the environment. The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a global health crisis with dramatic implications for economies, and FAO is playing a role in assessing and responding to its potential impacts on people's life and livelihoods, global food trade, markets, food supply chains and livestock.

3.1.3 The need to reduce inter-personal contacts and movement under the COVID-19 pandemic while keeping open food production units raised the need to consider the use of technologies allowing remote food inspection and audit, where possible and appropriate. In this time of crisis, and with many restrictions on resources, it is also important to focus on regulatory action, such as inspection, where risks are higher (food business or sectors): instruments such as a risk categorization framework are very useful towards that end. FAO is currently finalizing a draft guidance on risk categorization to help competent authorities building their own national risk categorization framework.

3.1.4 FAO has mobilized the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme with prioritized trade and food safety standards for facilitating and accelerating food and agricultural trade during COVID-19 and beyond. The programme will address non-tariff barriers and administrative procedures, and foster regulatory cooperation with focus on intraregional trade (<http://www.fao.org/3/cb0299en/CB0299EN.pdf>).

3.1.5 FAO believes this will allow countries to anticipate and mitigate possible disruptions the pandemic may trigger for people's food security and livelihoods, avoiding panic-driven reactions that can aggravate disruptions and deteriorate the food and nutrition security of the most vulnerable.

3.2 Organizational updates

3.2.1 FAO has re-organized its internal structure and a new organigram is available.⁶ Of particular interest to Codex members may be:

- The Codex Secretariat is now located within the Joint FAO/WHO Centre (Codex Food Standards and Zoonotic Diseases), CJW; this centre also hosts the lead unit for AMR
- The scientific advice programme (JEMRA, JECFA and most ad-hoc expert committees) and food safety capacity building is now located within the new Food Systems and Food Safety Division, ESF
- The FAO secretariat for JEMNU remains with the Food and Nutrition Division, ESN
- The FAO secretariat for JMPR is now located within the Plant Production and Protection division, NSP.

⁵ <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/world-food-safety-day-2020-overview-of-an-inspiring-virtual-celebration-7-june-2020>

⁶ <http://www.fao.org/about/org-chart/en/>

3.3 *FAO Council*

3.3.1 The 27th Committee on Agriculture of FAO has, inter-alia, (full report is available⁷):

- welcomed the fact that resources and independence of the Secretariat of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, and of the Food Safety and Quality Unit in the new Food Systems and Food Safety division would be maintained within the new organisational structure, stressing the need for sustainable funding for the FAO/WHO food safety scientific advice programme and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC);
- Endorsed a new 5-year action plan of FAO on AMR⁸
- Endorsed the development of a FAO food safety strategy.

3.4 *Publications*

3.4.1 FAO issued the publication “Understanding international harmonization of pesticide maximum residue limits with Codex standards: A case study on rice” which offers insights for decision-makers involved in setting of standards and design of food policy at national and international level on the significance of harmonization of pesticide MRLs⁹. A virtual session and discussion on the subject were held at a side event (on November 5th) of the WTO SPS Committee.

3.4.2 Aiming to increase the notification of food safety incidents in international food trade through INFOSAN and to facilitate related risk communication between the involved countries and regions, the INFOSAN Member’s Guide¹⁰ has been published.

4. **Matters arising from WHO**

4.1 *COVID-19*

4.1.1 A Healthy@Home Healthy Diet¹¹ webpage has been published including food safety tips and a video on the “5 keys to safer food”. A Healthy Diet information brief “Healthy diets to maintain nutritional well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic” is soon to be published bringing together main content and messages on healthy diets based on existing WHO guidelines and other WHO documents.

4.1.2 WHO is assessing health service disruption due to COVID-19 including immunization, NCDs, mental health and essential health services (EHS) and these pulse surveys are happening on a quarterly basis. For the January 2021 round, a Sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health (SRMNCAH) and nutrition questionnaire module is under development.

4.1.3 In the next update to the WHO interim guidance on Clinical management of COVID-19¹², there will be a new chapter added on micronutrients to look at the effect of vitamins C, D and Zinc in the treatment of COVID-19. Systematic reviews are currently underway, a guideline development group is expected to meet this month and the updated guidance out in the 2nd week of December 2020.

⁷ <http://www.fao.org/3/ne021en/ne021en.pdf>

⁸ <http://www.fao.org/3/nd393en/nd393en.pdf>

⁹ FAO. 2020. *Understanding international harmonization of pesticide maximum residue limits with Codex standards: A case study on rice*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb0463en>

¹⁰ <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca8588en>

¹¹ <https://www.who.int/campaigns/connecting-the-world-to-combat-coronavirus/healthyathome/healthyathome---healthy-diet>

¹² <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/clinical-management-of-covid-19>