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Matters arising from FAO and WHO: Policy and Related Matters¹
(Prepared by FAO and WHO)

1. Introduction

1. This document highlights evolving policies and related matters of FAO and WHO.

2. Matters arising jointly from FAO and WHO: The UN Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016-2025

2. On 1 April 2016, the United Nations General Assembly, through its Resolution 70/259², endorsed the Rome Declaration on Nutrition and its Framework for Action of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2; Rome 19–21 November 2014) and proclaimed 2016–2025 the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (Nutrition Decade).

3. The aim of the Nutrition Decade is to accelerate implementation of the ICN2 commitments, achieve the Global Nutrition and diet-related NCD targets by 2025 and contribute to the realisation of the SDGs by 2030.

4. The Nutrition Decade:

- Provides a clearly-defined time-bound cohesive framework that works within existing structures and available resources;
- Catalyses and facilitates alignment of on-going efforts of multiple actors from all sectors including new actors, to foster a global movement to end all forms of malnutrition and leaving no one behind;
- Stimulates the effective translation of the ICN2 commitments and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into concrete, nationally-determined policies and programmes;
- Promotes coherence of national, regional and international policies focusing on evidence and results across multiple sectors to combat all forms of malnutrition, including through improved monitoring and reporting of relevant policy impact at national, regional and global levels;
- Advocates for mobilization of additional policy and financial commitments; and
- Establishes, under Member States' oversight, a global accountability framework across sectors and constituencies building upon existing mechanisms, processes and tools.

5. Action during the Nutrition Decade is centred on the following six cross-cutting, integrative areas for impact, derived from the ICN2 Framework for Action recommendations and relevant to related SDGs. While each of these thematic areas inform and frame action, they should not be seen as silos; in practice, policies and programmes should normally be linked to several areas at the same time.

- a. Sustainable, resilient food systems for healthy diets;
- b. Aligned health systems providing universal coverage of essential nutrition actions;

¹ This document has been also included in the agenda of EXEC73 as document CX/EXEC 17/73/11.

² http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/259

- c. Social protection and nutrition education;
 - d. Trade and investment for improved nutrition;
 - e. Safe and supportive environments for nutrition at all ages; and
 - f. Strengthened governance and accountability for nutrition.
6. The Work Programme for the Nutrition Decade³ has been developed jointly by WHO and FAO, in accordance with the mandate given by the UN General Assembly in Resolution 70/259 and taking into account WHA Resolution 69/8⁴. The Work Programme identifies mechanisms through which Member States and other committed stakeholders should collaborate to achieve the aims of the Nutrition Decade. An example of these mechanisms is the establishment of action networks, which are informal coalitions of countries aimed at accelerating and aligning efforts around specific topics linked to one or more action areas of the Nutrition Decade.

3. Matters arising from FAO

3.1. Issues Arising from Recent FAO Governing Bodies

This Section identifies a number of decisions/ statements made by FAO Governing Bodies since the 39th Session of the CAC that may be of interest to the Commission.

The 155th Session of the FAO Council⁵ (5-9 December 2016) approved the establishment of a new Department - "Climate, Biodiversity, Land and Water"- in recognition of the need to raise the profile and strengthen FAO's work on climate change. The new department is headed by an Assistant Director-General which reports to the Deputy Director-General for Climate and Natural Resources.

The 32nd Session of the **Committee on Fisheries**⁶(COFI) (11-15 July 2016):

- expressed support for the collaboration of FAO with other international organizations and arrangements, including the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) and the WTO.

The 25th Session of the **Committee on Agriculture (COAG)** (26-30 September 2016)⁷, addressed several important issues, including:

- the creation of an informal ***open-ended working group to consider options for adequate and sustainable funding for the FAO/WHO Programme for Scientific Food-Safety Advice***⁸. This Working Group held its first meeting in February and will be holding another meeting before reporting to FAO Council in December 2017.

The 71st Session of the Committee on Commodity Problems (4-6 October 2016)⁹, addressed a number of issues affecting trade. In particular, the Committee:

- encouraged FAO's support to countries in their effective participation in trade negotiations, and formulation of trade policies through the provision of the evidence-base, capacity development, and facilitation of fora for dialogue;
- encouraged FAO to continue collaboration with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other relevant organizations to address the knowledge gaps and the need for more evidence-based and quantitative impact assessments of climate change on commodity trade at country level.

³ <http://www.who.int/nutrition/decade-of-action/workprogramme-doa2016to2025-en.pdf?ua=1>

⁴ http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA69/A69_R8-en.pdf

⁵ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-ms339e.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/cofi/en/>

⁷ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mr949e.pdf>

⁸ <http://www.fao.org/coag/oewg/en/>

⁹ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mr950e.pdf>

3.2 Other FAO Policy and Programmatic Issues of relevance to Codex

This Section briefly outlines selected initiatives/ programmes of relevance to the work of Codex. In light of issues proposed for discussion in relation to the SDGs in CX/EXEC 17/73/8, some emphasis has been placed on FAO's work on sustainable use of natural resources.

3.2.1 Sustainable food systems

Since 2011, FAO has worked on sustainable food systems in collaboration with UNEP. The Sustainable Food Systems (SFS) Programme was established in 2015, as an outcome of this collaboration. It is one of six multi-stakeholder programmes of the United Nations 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP)¹⁰, which was adopted at the Rio+20 Conference in 2012. The programme has a strong focus on the ways to link sustainable consumption and sustainable production; among which figure prominently a range of issues related to the information of the consumer on the sustainability of production and transformation processes, including through product labelling. Another major topic of interest is food losses and waste, including how improving best by labelling could reduce food waste.

3.2.2 Climate change and water scarcity

Climate change threatens our ability to achieve global food security, eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development through a number of direct and indirect impacts on food and agriculture. Addressing climate change is a priority for FAO as an integral part of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs and the scope of FAO's work covers both mitigation and adaptation to climate change. The Food Safety and Quality Unit of FAO is working with the Climate Change Unit to promote that food safety considerations linked to climate change are integrated into FAO's programmes.

Among the various challenges related to climate change, water scarcity is one of the most pressing ones. Agriculture is both a cause and a casualty of water scarcity, but it also has the greatest potential to contribute to the more efficient and sustainable management of water resources. Food safety is intimately linked to water throughout the entire food chain from the quality of water used for irrigation in production, through steps like food processing, washing, and preparation. During the FAO's celebrations of the World Water Day (22 March 2017), attention was drawn to the importance of reducing and re-using wastewater. The event included a focus on food safety and noted the on-going work in Codex (CCFH) on water quality. The commitment for inter-sectoral data sharing and collaboration on the water quality – food safety nexus was re-affirmed.

In this context, FAO would like to flag that through the Green Climate Fund (GCF), broad stakeholder engagement is being facilitated to develop National Action Plans to reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions and promote resilience through effective adaptation strategies. FAO is accredited with the GCF as a grant-implementing entity for medium-sized projects (USD 50-250 million). It is important that the food safety community be aware of these national processes and engage in them to promote national action to address the food safety implications of climate change.

3.2.3 Sustainable Fisheries: Blue Growth

The FAO **Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF)**¹¹ has played a fundamental role in the governance of Fisheries since its adoption in 1995. The CCRF covers all aspects of management and development of fisheries, including capturing, processing and trade of fishery products, fishing operations, aquaculture, fisheries research and the integration of fisheries into integrated coastal area management (ICAM). FAO's role is to promote implementation of the Code by providing scientific advice and facilitate negotiation of new global instruments as needed, to provide technical assistance to countries and to monitor such implementation. The following may be of interest to Codex members:

- the Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA)¹², adopted by FAO in 2009, entered into force on 5 June 2016. The PSM is an important tool to combat Illegal Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing which is a global threat to sustainable fisheries. The PSM and the Voluntary Guidelines on catch documentation schemes¹³ (the 40th Session FAO Conference in July 2017 will decide on the adoption of these Guidelines) are highly relevant to the work of the CAC on traceability and to the issue of food fraud.

¹⁰ https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1444HLPF_10YFP2.pdf

¹¹ <http://www.fao.org/docrep/005/v9878e/v9878e00.htm>

¹² <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5469t.pdf>

¹³ <http://www.fao.org/fi/static-media/MeetingDocuments/CDS/TC2016/wpAnnex.pdf>.

- FAO plays an important role in the preservation of endangered species. To this end it works with governments to enhance fisheries management and is mandated to provide expert advice to CITES on fish species meeting criteria to be considered as endangered species. The CITES classification of endangered species, has important implications on the movement of fish in international trade.

3.2.4 Sustainable intensification of livestock and other foods of animal origin

The growing demand for foods of animal origin has to be framed in a dynamic context, taking into account the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs), where the need for increased sustainability in food production, challenges posed by climate changes, implications for food security and food safety, impacts on trade, etc. also need to be considered and addressed. FAO has a leading voice globally on issues affecting the livestock sector, and would like to flag the following selected activities:

- Through its various technical networks, FAO continues to proactively look at emerging food safety issues in foods from animal origin (both terrestrial and aquatic), by considering different factors including the need for sustainable use of resources in a circular economy while ensuring the safety of the food supply.
- At its last session, COAG called on FAO to play a greater role in Global Agenda for Sustainable Livestock¹⁴, a multi-stakeholder platform that aims to improve the sector's use of natural resources whilst ensuring its contribution to food security and livelihoods. In this context, the proposal on the creation of a subcommittee on livestock was noted by COAG, which requested that a background document be developed and presented at its next session.

3.2.5 Sustainable crop production intensification

Since 2011, FAO has promoted the "Save and Grow"¹⁵ approach to sustainable crop production intensification, builds on ecosystem services while protecting and enhancing the underlying natural resources. Healthy ecosystems produce more, prevent or maintain pests and diseases at acceptable levels and are more resilient to the uncertainties of climate change. The provision of guidance for the safe and sustainable use of agro-chemical inputs in agriculture, in particular pesticides, has long been an important activity of the FAO's programme on plant production and protection. This work is of fundamental relevance to the development of various Codex Codes of Practice and pesticide MRLs and to the ability of countries to apply these Codex standards.

The FAO International Code of Conduct on Pesticide Management¹⁶ is the framework for FAOs work on the management of pesticides throughout their life-cycle. It provides voluntary standards of conduct for all entities engaged in or associated with pesticide management from production to disposal. The Code of Conduct helps countries achieve significant reductions of the risks to health and the environment from pesticides, while improving the productivity, sustainability and livelihoods of farmers. FAO supports countries to apply this code through a range of capacity development programmes covering such issues as:

- Improving pesticide legislation, registration and management
- Enhancing national capacity in pesticide risk reduction
- Promoting the use of Integrated Pest Management¹⁷.

FAO is considering the development of guidance for the safe and sustainable use of fertilizers in agri-food production.

3.2.6 Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)

In line with the Resolution 4/2015 of the 39th Session of the FAO Conference on AMR, FAO, in 2016, published its accompanying action plan¹⁸ aimed at supporting the food and agriculture sector in implementing the Global Action Plan on AMR to minimize the impact of AMR. This plan was endorsed by COAG and FAO is expected to report on progress at each future session of the COAG. FAOs AMR work programme is built around 4 pillars of creating awareness, increasing knowledge and evidence, improving governance and changing practices.

¹⁴ <http://www.livestockdialogue.org/>

¹⁵ <http://www.fao.org/ag/save-and-grow/>

¹⁶ <http://www.fao.org/agriculture/crops/thematic-sitemap/theme/pests/code/en>

¹⁷ <http://www.fao.org/agriculture/crops/core-themes/theme/pests/ipm/en/>

¹⁸ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5996e.pdf>

Details on some ongoing specific activities have been described in CX/CAC 17/40/14 Add. 1, with respect to Scientific advice and CX/CAC 17/40/15 with respect to capacity development. Two new FAO professional positions have been approved to support FAO's programme of work on AMR. FAO has been fully engaged in the high level work of the UNGA on AMR and is represented on the Inter Agency Coordination Group by the Deputy Director General. FAO collaborates closely with the other members of the Tripartite in conducting this work and has designated a staff to serve as part of the secretariat to the IACG.

3.2.7 Trade

An FAO/WTO publication on Food Standards and Trade is being launched at the Aid for Trade Global Review 2017¹⁹. The publication highlights the role of the Codex Alimentarius and the WTO SPS and TBT Agreement in providing a stable framework within which food trade occurs and makes a strong case for countries to effectively participate in these mechanisms and to invest adequately in national food control systems.

Within FAO's Strategic Programme 4 "Efficient and Inclusive markets" there is increasing collaboration between the Trade and Markets Division, other technical Divisions working on food chain issues and the Food Safety and Quality Unit on matters such as policy briefs, value chain development, strengthening capacities for negotiation in trade-related bodies and support to Regional Economic Communities on trade-related issues.

4. **Matters arising from WHO**

4.1 **Changes in the organigram and in the Programme Budget**

7. In July 2016, WHO launched a new Health Emergencies Programme, refining WHO's role in emergency responses, adding stronger operational capabilities to WHO's traditional technical and standard setting roles. Due to this change, the Department of Food Safety and Zoonoses was transferred from the Outbreaks and Health Emergencies (OHE) cluster to the Cluster for Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health (NMH), the same Cluster with nutrition.
8. WHO's activities in food safety has been carried out under the Programme Area 5.4 under Category 5 (Health Security). Due to the creation of the Emergency Programme and the abolition of Category 5, food safety will be transferred to Category 2 (Non Communicable Diseases) as new Programme Area 2.6, effective from 1 January 2018.
9. WHO's Twelfth General Programme of Work 2014-2019 will expire at the end of the biennium 2018-2019. Preparations of the next General Programme of Work is expected to start soon.

4.2 **Antimicrobial Resistance**

10. At the 68th World Health Assembly in May 2015, the global action plan on antimicrobial resistance²⁰ was adopted (WHA68.7²¹) to tackle the issue by taking a whole-of-society engagement including a "One Health" approach.
11. In September 2016, during the 71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly, Member States adopted the Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting on Antimicrobial Resistance contained in Resolution A/RES/71/3.²² In accordance with the Political Declaration, an ad hoc Interagency Coordination Group on Antimicrobial Resistance (IACG) was established.²³ The Group is co-chaired by the UN Deputy Secretary-General and the WHO Director General, and comprises high level representatives of relevant UN agencies, other international organizations, and individual experts across different sectors. First meeting of the IACG was held in May 2017 in New York, USA and the final report will be presented to the UN Secretary-General during the 73rd Session of the UN General Assembly in September 2017.
12. In February 2017, the 23rd FAO/OIE/WHO Tripartite Annual Executive Coordination Meeting was held in Geneva, Switzerland. Agenda items included discussions on a tripartite collaboration in the area of antimicrobial resistance, and future actions were agreed.

¹⁹ https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/devel_e/a4t_e/gr17_e/gr17_e.htm

²⁰ http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/193736/1/9789241509763_eng.pdf?ua=1

²¹ http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA68/A68_R7-en.pdf?ua=1

²² http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/71/3

²³ <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/personnel-appointments/2017-03-17/interagency-coordination-group-antimicrobial-resistance>

13. In May 2017, a report was provided²⁴ to the 70th World Health Assembly providing an update on implementation of resolution WHA68.7 (2015) as well as United Nations General Assembly resolution 71/3.

4.3 WHO Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors (FENSA)

14. The Sixty-ninth session of the World Health Assembly has adopted the WHO Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors (FENSA).²⁵ The Framework endeavours to strengthen WHO engagement with non-State actors (NGOs, private sector entities, philanthropic foundations, and academic institutions) while protecting its work from potential risks such as conflict of interest, reputational risks, and undue influence.

15. Codex is mentioned in FENSA in the context of WHO's engagement with global health partnerships and hosting arrangement.

Paragraph 49 (a)(ii) WHO's involvement in external partnerships is regulated by the policy on WHO's engagement with global health partnerships and hosting arrangements. The Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors also applies to WHO's engagement in these partnerships.*

*Footnotes:

The Codex Alimentarius Commission is an intergovernmental body which is the principal organ of the joint FAO/WHO food standards programme for which the administration is not solely provided by WHO. The Commission is supported by subsidiary bodies including Codex committees, regional coordinating committees and task forces. Meetings of the Commission, Committees, including independent expert committees, and Task Forces are regulated by the Rules of Procedure and other decisions adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

16. WHO's relations with non-State Actors are governed by FENSA.

4.4 WHO Nutrition Strategy: "Ambition and Action in Nutrition 2016 – 2025"²⁶

17. In the context of a renewed global momentum for improving nutrition and a resultant increased complexity of the nutrition landscape, WHO developed a new, fit-for-purpose and coherent nutrition strategy, *WHO's Ambition and Action in Nutrition 2016-2025*. The strategy was developed in the context of the internal WHO reform and is anchored in the six global targets for improving maternal, infant and young child nutrition and the global diet-related NCD targets. Furthermore, in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly SDG2 and SDG3, and in concert with the 2016-2025 UN Decade of Action on Nutrition, WHO's Ambition and Action in Nutrition 2016-2025 aims for "A world free from all forms of malnutrition where all people achieve health and well-being". It defines the unique value of WHO for advancing nutrition: the provision of **leadership, guidance and monitoring** and proposes a theory of change. Finally, following a set of guiding principles, it proposes priority actions for WHO, the delivery model and a clear allocation of roles across the Organization.

4.5 2nd Global Nutrition Policy Review (2016 – 2017)

18. Following the first Global Nutrition Policy Review²⁷ (GNPR1) which was undertaken during 2009-2010, WHO undertook the second Global Nutrition Policy Review (GNPR2) in 2016–2017. The outcomes of the GNPR2 will help taking stock on the progress towards achieving the commitments of the ICN2 Rome Declaration and also serve as a baseline for monitoring country actions to achieve the aims of the Decade of Action for Nutrition (2016 – 2025). Preliminary outcomes of GNPR2 were presented at the International Symposium for Healthy Diet and Improved Nutrition held in Rome, Italy on 1–2 December 2016 as well as at the special event on "Meeting the challenge of a new era for achieving healthy diets and nutrition: Outcomes of the 2nd Global Nutrition Policy Review" which was organized by WHO at the International Symposium. Currently a final report of GNPR2 is being prepared.

²⁴ http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA70/A70_12-en.pdf

²⁵ http://www.who.int/about/collaborations/non-state-actors/A69_R10-FENSA-en.pdf?ua=1

²⁶ <http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/255485/1/9789241512435-eng.pdf?ua=1>

²⁷ WHO 2013. Global Nutrition Policy Review: What does it take to scale up nutrition action? Geneva: World Health Organization (http://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/policies/global_nut_policyreview/en/).

4.6 WHO Nutrition Guidance Expert Advisory Group (NUGAG) Subgroup on Diet and Health

19. During the course of 2016, there were two meetings of the NUGAG Subgroup on Diet and Health, i.e. the 9th meeting held in Geneva in March 2016 and the 10th meeting held in Lisbon in November 2016.
20. At the 9th meeting, the NUGAG Subgroup on Diet and Health reviewed the status and progress of on-going reviews on carbohydrates (CHO) with a view to evaluate the applicability of the work for required systematic review, and reviewed and discussed the scope, PICO questions, priority health outcomes and other issues related to: 1) the consumption of non-sugar sweeteners, 2) the consumption of polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFA), and 3) different dietary patterns, following the processes established in the WHO Handbook for Guideline Development (2014). A public consultation was then held from 18 October to 8 November 2016 on the scoping of the reviews, PICO questions and priority health outcomes to be considered for developing the recommendations on CHO, non-sugar sweeteners and PUFA. The outcomes of the comments received from public consultation were reviewed and presented to the NUGAG Subgroup at its 10th meeting, for review and consideration.
21. At the 10th meeting, the NUGAG Subgroup reviewed and discussed preliminary results of the systematic reviews of the evidence related to the intake of CHO (in particular, fibre and starch), non-sugar sweeteners and PUFA (including EPA and DHA). The NUGAG Subgroup also identified and agreed on further actions and required subgroup analyses for each of the topics which will be taken into consideration when further developing and finalizing respective systematic reviews. Regarding dietary patterns, the NUGAG Subgroup reviewed the further scoping undertaken, taking into consideration the definition and characteristics determined at the 9th meeting and reviewed key PICO questions in order to guide the planned systematic reviews.

4.7 WHO Nutrition Guidance Expert Advisory Group (NUGAG) Subgroup on Policy Actions

22. In accordance with the Organization-wide transformation in strengthening WHO's role in developing evidence-informed public health guidance, the WHO has been strengthening its role and leadership in providing evidence-informed policy and programme guidance to Member States for promoting healthy diets and nutrition throughout the life course, in partnership with relevant internal departments and other concerned partners, as appropriate. This normative mandate was reaffirmed through a request from the 63rd World Health Assembly (May 2010) "to strengthen the evidence base on effective and safe nutrition actions to counteract the public health effects of the double burden of malnutrition, and to describe good practices for successful implementation". To help implement the development of evidence-informed policy guidance and measures to support Member States in developing enabling food environments to promote healthy diet and nutrition, WHO is establishing *the WHO Nutrition Guidance Expert Advisory Group (NUGAG) Subgroup on Policy Actions*, which will work alongside the NUGAG Subgroup on Diet and Health, and had issued call for experts during April – May 2017 to identify experts to serve as members.

4.8 Development of nutrient profile models for regulating marketing of food and non-alcoholic beverages to children

23. Nutrient profile models are tools that can be used to implement public health strategies and interventions to promote healthy diets, such as marketing of food and non-alcoholic beverages to children, procurement of foods in public institutions (e.g. schools), nutrition labelling (i.e. front-of-package labelling), health claims and fiscal policies (i.e. taxation, subsidies). Ad hoc development of various nutrient profile models and their applications by different stakeholders resulted in inconsistencies and created confusion for target audiences and consumers with respect to various public health measures. Therefore, WHO was requested by Member States to take the lead in formulating a coordinated approach for developing/adapting nutrient profile models which could be used for different public health interventions in order to facilitate the implementation of coherent public health strategies. As the first step, WHO developed a Guiding Principles and Framework Manual, following a similar manual developed by WHO which provided step by step process for developing FBDGs. This manual was then field-tested in 6 countries (i.e. Canada, Norway, Slovenia, South Africa, Thailand and United Arab Emirates) during 2011 - 2013. Simultaneously, several WHO Regional Offices have taken actions to develop regional nutrient profile models for regulating the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children – European Region (2013-2015), Eastern Mediterranean Region (2014 – 2015), American Region (2015 – 2016), Western Pacific

Region (2015 – 2016) and South-East Asia Region (2016). Bringing together the principles and evidence base used to develop regional models, WHO is now in a process of developing an unified global nutrient profile model for regulating marketing. It is also planned to assess possibility and feasibility of adapting the marketing model for other applications, such as regulating the promotion and sale of foods and beverages in (and possibly around) schools, implementing fiscal policies, in particular taxation of food and beverages high in sugars, fat and sodium, as well as for front-of-pack labelling.

4.9 Alcohol

24. Harmful use of alcohol is one of the leading health risks globally. Alcohol impacts people and societies in many ways, and it is determined by the volume of the alcohol consumed, the pattern of drinking and, on some occasions, the quality of alcohol consumed. The WHO Global strategy to reduce harmful use of alcohol, endorsed by the 63rd World Health Assembly,²⁸ represents a collective commitment by WHO Member States to reduce the health and social burden caused by harmful use of alcohol. The inclusion of a target to strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including the harmful use of alcohol, under the health goal in the UN 2030 agenda for sustainable development illustrates clear recognition of harmful use of alcohol as a development issue globally.

25. Alcohol consumption is deeply embedded in many societies, and alcoholic beverages are produced, distributed and consumed in most parts of the world. Alcohol, when consumed in alcoholic beverages, has a potential to cause a range of disorders and health conditions associated with significant health and social burden. One of the primary objectives of the Codex standards is protection of health. Protection of populations at high risk of alcohol-attributable harm and those exposed to the effects of harmful drinking by others could thus be seen as an integral part of any Codex standard setting work related to alcoholic beverages. Worldwide close to 2 billion people aged 15+ years consumed alcohol during the past 12 months. Consumers of alcoholic beverages have the right to know the different ingredients in the beverage, its alcoholic strength and content, how many calories they are consuming as well as to be informed about the health risks associated with the product consumption.

26. WHO has a mandate to address the harmful use of alcohol through the implementation of the Global strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol. Providing consumer information and labelling of alcoholic beverages to indicate the harm related to alcohol is one of the policy options proposed to Member States by the Global Strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol. More recently this policy option was included in the list of strategies and interventions in the updated Appendix 3 to the global action plan for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases 2013–2020 endorsed by the 70th World Health Assembly in May 2017²⁹.

5. Recommendations

27. The Committee/Commission is invited to note the information given in this document and take necessary actions to best take into consideration of the policies of the parent organizations.

²⁸ http://www.who.int/substance_abuse/activities/gsrhua/en/

²⁹ http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA70/A70_R11-en.pdf