

Remarks of the Chairperson

Ms Fran Freeman

Opening of the 24th Session of the

Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS)

22 October 2018, Brisbane, Australia

Vice Chairs of the Codex Alimentarius Commission,

Representatives of FAO and WHO,

Distinguished Delegates,

Codex Secretariat,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the privilege to welcome you to the twenty-fourth (24th) session of the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS).

It is once again a great honour for Australia to host the CCFICS meeting and to welcome you all to our shores.

Many of you have travelled very long distances to be with us this week. We appreciate your participation and dedication to the Codex cause.

For those of you making your first trip to Brisbane, welcome. Brisbane is a thriving city, with much to see and do, and we are sure you will enjoy your time here. For those of you making a return visit, welcome back.

It is also a great honour for me personally to welcome you all to this session, my first as Chairperson of this very important Codex committee.

While I am very much looking forward to the opportunity of working with you all, I know I have some big shoes to fill.

I would like to acknowledge the considerable contribution my predecessor, Mr Greg Read, made to the operation of this committee, over a significant period of time.

While this Committee has done important work since the early 1990s we have the opportunity to ensure that CCFICS continues to deliver important outcomes for consumers, food traders and governments alike.

We are all members of a vibrant, interconnected, ever evolving global trading community.

As a member of that community, Australia is fortunate to be both a supplier and importer of various agricultural and food commodities. Indeed Australia's multicultural society, has driven an explosion of divergent, but delicious, food choices which rely on ingredients from here and all over the world.

For other countries however, the trade in agricultural and food commodities is integral to ensuring food security for their people. The important work of this committee helps to facilitate that trade by creating the framework and guidance for efficient and transparent inspection and certification systems. As a trading nation, it is for these reasons that Australia places so much importance on the work and outputs of this committee.

As a global community we have a large, complex and growing food task before us. It is therefore imperative that we work together to ensure that inspection and certification requirements do not impede international trade in food.

The trading environment is changing at pace with the emergence of new technologies and changing consumer expectations, so it is vital that inspection and certification systems are able to adapt to and keep up with that change.

This is why the current issues before the committee are so important. At this session we will focus on concepts such as system equivalence, paperless use of electronic certificates, the use of voluntary third party assurance programmes, and the difficult questions posed around food authenticity and food fraud. All topics have assuring

food safety at their core but they are also highly relevant in terms of ensuring fair practises in the changing trading environment I previously mentioned.

I would like to emphasize the importance that Australia places on the role of the Codex Alimentarius Commission - and it's sub groups like CCFICS – to provide food standards, guidelines and codes of practice for the use of everyone, everywhere. The Commission is an inclusive and transparent organisation that has been working hard to ensure consumers have access to safe food for many decades now.

It is therefore very exciting that the United Nations will be considering the adoption of a World Food Safety Day. This initiative is not before time and Australia is very pleased to support the proposal of our friends from Costa Rica. We look forward to working with you all to secure, and then mark, this important day each year. Once the day is secured we must also use it to drive further change and continue to improve food safety globally.

We have much to do this week. It is important work that will help ensure safe food for consumers and fair practises in the food trade. I look forward to working with you all to build consensus on the interesting and challenging matters on our agenda this week.

While we will all be working hard, I do hope you also find a little time to explore Brisbane and it surrounds. I wish you a very pleasant stay.

It is now my great pleasure to declare the twenty-fourth session of CCFICS open.

Thank you.