

**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME****CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION****38th Session, CICG****Geneva, Switzerland, 6-11 July 2015****REVITALISATION OF FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEES****Background**

1. The FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees (RCCs) support exchange of information and dialogue (see TOR in Appendix 1). Every two years the RCCs provide the opportunity for professionals with a common interest to come together to address food safety and food trade issues relevant to their region. Within the Codex structure, the RCCs provide the link between the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) and technical committees and the regions to ensure that Codex leads global policy on food safety and quality and is also responsive to country and regional needs.
2. RCCs, besides presenting unique opportunities for the region, are also a useful forum for FAO and WHO to engage with countries, and discuss priority needs and challenges which subsequently inform the planning and monitoring of their food quality and safety activities in the regions. In the past (until 2005) FAO and WHO conducted a series of regional food safety and quality conferences. Since their discontinuation RCCs provide a regular forum for FAO and WHO and countries to address food safety issues.
3. While presenting many opportunities for exchanges and regional work, it has also been recognized that there is room for further improvement. RCCs have not remained static, changes and improvements have occurred, however sometimes different RCCs have taken different directions and approaches.
4. To address these topics, the Codex Secretariat, FAO and WHO presented a paper to each RCC to examine how they can best adapt to current challenges and opportunities while ensuring that the considerable resources and time invested required to maintain the RCCs are optimised. The paper¹ aimed to stimulate a discussion on the future of RCCs and to agree on concrete next steps, namely: (i) RCCs as improved food safety and quality fora: aligning the agendas of RCCs; (ii) Platform for information sharing on food control systems and roles and responsibilities in food safety; (iii) Identification of needs and priorities in regions (persistent and emerging food safety/quality issues); and (iv) Regional Strategic planning.
5. At the time of writing (May 2015) the paper has been presented at five of the six FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees (listed below)², namely:
 - 13th Session of FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for North America and South West Pacific (Kokopo, Papua New Guinea, 23-26 September 2014);
 - 29th Session of FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Europe (The Hague, The Netherlands, 30 September – 3 October 2014); 19th Session of FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Asia (Tokyo, Japan, 3-7 November 2014);
 - 19th Session of FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (San José, Costa Rica, 10-14 November 2014);
 - 21st Session of FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Africa (Yaoundé, Cameroon 27-30 January 2015).
6. This paper presents and analyses the outcomes of the discussion of RCCs and presents a set of recommendations on the next steps for the revitalisation of the RCCs.

¹ "Revitalisation of FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees proposals on strengthening the role and platform of RCCs" was included Item 4 in the Agenda of all the six RCCs.

² The meeting of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Near East, initially scheduled in February 2019, was postponed to the 1 -5 June 2015 . For the outcome of the discussion at CCNEA, please refer to REP15/NEA that will be issued shortly after the meeting.

Analysis of the discussion at the RCCs

7. The following is an analysis of the RCCs discussion (the relevant excerpts from the reports of the five RCCs are contained in Appendix 2).

General Discussion

8. Three committees (CCNASWP, CCASIA and CCLAC) had a general discussion on the paper, which was welcomed as a way to strengthen the effectiveness of RCCs to support the goals of Codex, FAO and WHO and country to improve food safety and quality systems.

I. RCCs as improved food safety and quality fora: aligning the agendas of RCCs

9. The proposal aims at keeping the agendas of RCCs aligned to each other where possible and focussed on priority issues for Codex and the region. The proposal was to include the following standing items: (a) Food safety and quality situations in the countries of the region; (b) Key note address and discussion on regional issues of priority and common challenges; (c) Monitoring the Codex Strategic Plan; (d) Food standards in the region. The discussion on (b) would also serve to create broader understanding of food safety issues and create more political buy-in.

10. All five RCCs generally supported the alignment of the RCCs agenda but noted that such alignment should be flexible and not prevent RCCs from dealing with issues of interest to the region.

11. A number of additional items were suggested, including: food security; information on new products, and activities relevant to the region. CCLAC expressed interest in maintaining the Committee's ability to adopt regional positions.

II. Platform for information sharing on food control systems and roles and responsibilities in food safety

12. This proposal aims at improving regional information sharing by replacing the present RCC Circular Letters with an on-line data and information collection system (integrated into the Codex website) providing the possibility for countries to enter data and information on an ongoing basis, thus increasing flexibility for data submission by national Contact Points.

13. RCCs supported the development of an online system which would allow a more systematic information collection and sharing between countries. It was noted that the platform should be developed taking into account existing mechanisms and experience gained on similar exercises.

14. FAO and WHO presented a proposal to collect information on official government control for food safety and quality³ that was not discussed in detail. No final conclusion was reached amongst RCCs as to the information to be collected, however it was noted that the type of information requested should build on the questions of the Circular Letter and the sustainability and accessibility of the online system. The feasibility for the Codex Secretariat, FAO and WHO to analyse the information should also be considered.

III. Identification of needs and priorities in regions (persistent and emerging food safety/quality issues)

15. This proposal aims at improving regional priority setting by developing a mechanism to better identify and understand the needs and priorities at regional and country level to feed into the global Codex process. This includes identification of emerging issues and early analysis of needs in the context of Codex. This proposal is linked to proposal II as both rely on the development of a more efficient and sustainable mechanism to collect, share and analyse data and information.

16. This proposal was considered separately in detail by CCNASWP and CCASIA while other RCCs combined the discussion with proposal II. Support was expressed for developing an online platform to collect this information. It was noted that the information on countries' needs and priorities could also include food trade issues (CCASIA) and that the use of the Circular Letter could be suspended until a replacement mechanism can be found (CCNASWP).

IV. Regional Strategic planning

17. This proposal aims at RCCs focusing on the implementation of the global Codex Strategic Plan rather than having their own Regional Strategic Planning, acknowledging that RCCs were consulted when the global Codex Strategic Plan was drawn up and regional issues were considered. Where regional strategic

³ CCNASWP13 /CRD6 (Draft template to collect information on official Government control for food safety and quality).

plans exist⁴, they need to be consistent, complementary and with the same timeframe as the global Codex Strategic Plan.

18. RCCs agreed that regional strategic plans should be consistent and complementary with the Codex global Strategic Plan. Most RCCs consider regional strategic plans useful for countries of the region to plan and support activities, including resource mobilization, at country and regional level. CCLAC noted that regional Strategic Plans might include specific regional issues which have no correspondence to the global Strategic Plan. CCASIA considered that a regional Strategic Plan might not be necessary as RCCs support and contribute to the implementation of the global Strategic Plan.

Conclusion

19. The proposals for revitalising the RCCs were welcomed and supported in general. RCCs agreed to keep the agendas of RCCs aligned noting that more discussion and experience is needed to better define the scope and purpose of the proposed standing items.

20. RCCs also agreed to use an online platform instead of circular letters to collect and share information among countries. Questions were raised as to: which information and data should be collected and shared (e.g. data on food safety and quality; use of Codex standards; consumer participation in food standard work; issue relevant to the region); the purpose and use of the information collected; how the information is going to be analysed; and the sustainability of the system. Appendix 3 presents a revised draft template to collect information on official government control for food safety and quality.

21. Finally RCCs agreed that regional strategic plans should be consistent with and complementary to the global Strategic Plan. It emerged that an earlier involvement of RCCs in the preparation of the global Strategic Plan could ensure that issues and specificities of the regions can be addressed in the global Strategic Plan. This would make work on regional strategic plans unnecessary as RCCs could directly contribute to the implementation and monitoring of the global Strategic Plan while still addressing regional issues.

Recommendation

22. It is recommended that the Commission:

I. RCCs as improved food safety and quality fora: aligning the agendas of RCCs

- Endorse the generic agenda (Appendix 4), which will be used as a basis for the agendas on the next round (2016-2017) of the RCCs meetings;
- Request Regional Coordinators to make recommendations on topics for the keynote address on regional issues of priority;

II. Platform for information sharing on food control systems and roles and responsibilities in food safety

- Request FAO and WHO, in collaboration with the Codex Secretariat, to:
 - o prepare a prototype of the platform for information sharing;
 - o develop a set of questions on food control systems and roles and responsibilities in food safety for testing at the next round (2016-2017) of the RCCs sessions;
 - o prepare an analysis of the information collected for presentation at the next round of the RCCs sessions.

III. Identification of needs and priorities in regions (persistent and emerging food safety/quality issues)

- Request FAO and WHO, in collaboration with the Codex Secretariat and the Regional Coordinators, to:
 - o develop a set of questions on needs and priorities in the regions;
 - o prepare an analysis of the information collected for presentation at the next round of the RCCs sessions.

IV. Regional Strategic planning

- Request RCCs to provide initial inputs for the next Codex strategic planning exercise.

⁴ Currently CCAFRICA, CCASIA, CCEURO, CCLAC and CCNASWP have/are developing regional strategic plans.

Appendix 1**Terms of Reference of RCC (Codex Procedural Manual)**

- (a) Defines the problems and needs of the region concerning food standards and food control;
- (b) Promotes within the Committee contacts for the mutual exchange of information on proposed regulatory initiatives and problems arising from food control and stimulates the strengthening of food control infrastructures;
- (c) Recommends to the Commission the development of worldwide standards for products of interest to the region, including products considered by the Committee to have an international market potential in the future;
- (d) Develops regional standards for food products moving exclusively or almost exclusively in intra regional trade;
- (e) Draws the attention of the Commission to any aspects of the Commission's work of particular significance to the region;
- (f) Promotes coordination of all regional food standards work undertaken by international governmental and non-governmental organizations within the region;
- (g) Exercises a general coordinating role for the region and such other functions as may be entrusted to it by the Commission;
- (h) Promotes the use of Codex standards and related texts by members.

Appendix 2

Excerpts of discussion and decision taken by the five RCCs⁵**General Discussion****CCNASWP13**

Delegations were in support of the revitalisation of RCCs to enhance countries' engagement; maximize the use of resources; debate issues of relevance to the region and use of Codex standards. Delegations noted that the document prepared was timely, offered a good opportunity to analyse the RCCs work and discuss future opportunities. It was also noted that the discussion in RCCs should not lose track of the specificity of CCNASWP, not be over ambitious and that working modalities of RCCs should take advantage of advancements in technologies.

Conclusion

Agreed on the need for revitalisation of RCCs to improve their effectiveness in achieving both regional and global goals of Codex, FAO, WHO and countries concerning food safety systems, food trade, consumer information, and food and nutrition.

CCASIA19

Delegations were in support of the revitalisation of RCCs. Delegations noted that it was the right time to address the issue and to find ways for RCCs to work more effectively to serve their main purpose to ensure that the work of Codex is responsive to the need of the region and to bring together professionals from the region to discuss food quality and safety issues. Delegations highlighted the need for RCCs to identify and put in place mechanisms to facilitate the exchange of information and the generation, collection and submission of scientific data, and to discuss issues of importance to the region.

Conclusion

Agreed on the need for revitalisation of RCCs to improve their effectiveness in achieving both regional and global goals of Codex, FAO, WHO and countries concerning food safety and food trade and to share information on food safety and quality and scientific data in support of Codex work.

CCLAC19

There was general support for the proposals. However several delegations expressed concerns that the wording of the text regarding regional positions could limit the freedom of the RCCs to develop such positions, a right which had been confirmed by the Committee on General Principles (CCGP). They stressed that it was not the intention to obstruct discussions in global committees and the Commission but to facilitate bringing the opinion of all members of the region to these fora.

Conclusion

Supported the general idea of the FAO and WHO proposal for the revitalisation of the coordinating committees.

CCAFRICA21

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I. RCCs as improved food safety and quality for a: aligning RCCs

(a) Food safety and quality situations in the countries of the region; (b) Key note address and discussion on regional issue of priority and common challenge; (c) Monitoring the Codex Strategic Plan; (d) Food standards in the region.

CCNASWP19

Delegations supported the proposal of aligning the agenda of the six RCCs, as this would allow a comparison of their discussion and activities. However, delegations highlighted the need that RCCs agendas should allow addressing specific regional issues.

One Observer organization was of the view that the agenda and work of RCCs should allow for dialogue between Codex members and observers.

⁵ REP15/NASWP paras 16-27; REP15/EURO paras 15-30; REP15/ASIA paras 22-35; REP15/LAC paras 27-44; REP15/AFRICA paras 26-37.

Delegations supported the identified common agenda items but expressed caution on the mechanisms for collecting information, which should not result in an additional burden to countries. It was also mentioned that data should be collected in a timely manner to allow for their analysis, which would contribute to a more informed discussion at RCCs.

Conclusion

The Committee supported the proposal for the alignment of the agenda across the six RCCs and agreed that the common items identified were acceptable, but noted that the specificities of CCNASWP should not be lost in the process.

CCEURO29

The Committee agreed that the inclusion of common items would allow to collect and analyze information from RCCs in a systematic and comparable way which would be useful for Codex, FAO and WHO in developing their strategies concerning needs for food standards-setting and capacity development on food quality and safety.

The Committee noted that proposals 3.1.1⁶ (Food safety and quality situations in countries of the Region); 3.1.3 (Monitoring of the Codex Strategic Plan); and 3.1.4 (Food standards in the Region) were already standing items on the agenda of RCCs. The Committee further noted that proposal 3.1.2 (Key note address and discussion on regional issue of priority and common challenge) was a novel item for consideration on the agendas of RCCs.

Conclusion

The Committee agreed with the alignment of RCCs provisional agendas while noting that this would not preclude the inclusion of specific items of interest to the Region when appropriate.

The Committee supported proposals 3.1.1 through 3.1.4 as standing items on the agenda of RCCs. The Committee noted that how they would be approached, in particular proposals 3.1.1 and 3.1.4 could be further examined or improved as being discussed in upcoming meetings of RCCs.

CCASIA19

Delegations supported the proposal of aligning the agenda of the six RCCs as this would contribute to strengthen the RCCs. Delegations noted that the RCCs agenda should not be limited to topics related to food safety and trade facilitation but also include others, such as impact of international trade and food safety on food security and the importance of food safety as an integral part of health security, information on new products being developed, food quality requirements. Noting the dimension (hosting the 60% of the world population) and the diversity of the Asia region, delegations highlighted the need for some flexibility in the agenda items to allow RCCs to address specific regional issues. It was also noted that the subject of the keynote speech should be on specific issues identified by the region, and the need for RCCs to consider Codex work relevant to the region.

Conclusion

Supported the proposal for the alignment of the agenda across the six RCCs while noting the need for some flexibility in deciding on agenda items; highlighted the need for having agenda items with clear scope and purpose; highlighted the need for RCCs to consider issues specific to the region; and suggested to broaden RCCs scope to include topics such as food security, information on new products.

CCLAC19

They were of the opinion that a relevant standing agenda item should be added to the CCLAC agenda.

One delegation noted that the proposal did not recognise the need to discuss items that went beyond food safety and quality standards such as items of a general or procedural nature and that this freedom was important as it allowed CCLAC to discuss items of specific interest and to accept them or not.

On the introduction of the keynote speaker, one delegation questioned how such a speaker might be selected and what the role of the regional coordinator would be.

Conclusion

The Committee:

- expressed interest in retaining matters of interest to the region on its agenda as well as maintaining the Committee's ability to adopt regional positions.

⁶ *Note of the Secretariat*: "proposals 3.1.1 – 3.1.4" in this Appendix correspond to "proposals I(a)-(d)" in para. 4.

- agreed that an item shall be added to the agenda entitled “relevant Codex activities for the region”.

AFRICA21

The Committee agreed with the proposed standing agenda items presented under proposal 3.1.

II. Platform for information sharing on food control systems and roles and responsibilities in food safety

(a) Online platform to collect and distribute country relevant data

CCNASWP19

Delegations agreed on the importance and value of continuing to exchange information on food control systems, in particular to support countries' continuing efforts to strengthen their systems. When considering CRD6, delegations agreed that more time was needed to consider the type of information to be exchanged. In doing so, consideration needs to be given to how this information would be used and analysed. Delegations were of the view that it was premature to determine a mechanism for collecting information and that this would be informed as the discussion evolves.

The Committee agreed that continued discussion on the type of information to share on food control systems/food safety and quality issues should take into account the ongoing work at the CCFICS on the burden of multiple questionnaires directed at exporting countries.

Conclusion

Expressed support for exchange of information on food control systems, but considered that further reflection was needed on the type of information that should be collected, the purpose, and the mechanism for collection.

CCEURO29

Delegations recognized the importance of collecting and exchanging information on food legislation and food control systems to identify the needs and define problems concerning food standards-setting and capacity development on food quality and safety; noted that the process for updating of such information should be clear, e.g. as new information became available or with specified deadlines, so that users knew the status of the information at the time of downloading; noted that any system that may be selected should build on experience gained from similar exercises done at regional or country level and information already available; noted that performance of food control systems was useful information but may be a difficult exercise in practice and if measured, it should take into account existing guidelines and principles for food control systems including other relevant ongoing work or work done within the Region (e.g. EU), Codex (e.g. CCFICS6), FAO and WHO; and noted that it was important to identify the kind of data / information that was relevant / useful for analysis, assessment, prioritization, benchmarking, etc.

Conclusion

The Committee supported the replacement of the circular letter with more modern mechanisms, e.g. an on-line platform for information sharing while noting that some of the analysis envisaged, e.g. performance of food control systems, might not be easy to carry out. The new system should build on existing mechanisms; experience gained on similar exercises; information already available; and should make sure to indicate the process of updating, summarizing and reporting of the information. The type of information or data to be collected and analyzed, including benchmarking, prioritization, etc., required further consideration and should build on the questions laid down in the CL.

CCASIA19

Delegations generally supported the proposal to develop a platform for more effective information sharing on food control systems and responsibilities in food safety to replace the current Circular Letter and highlighted the need to better define the type and purpose of collecting and sharing the information before developing the platform. However, Delegations noted: that it was important to give consideration to some important aspects prior to taking decision namely; type of information; the analysis of the information shared; would be a critical factor to allow for a more informed discussion in RCCs; the operational (e.g. who will manage, who will access) and technical (e.g. type and quality of information and data) sustainability of the platform; purpose of the information; accessibility of network (namely is it open to all, the governments or only to FAO/WHO); opportunity to get inputs from organizations other than member countries; and if countries were ready to share data; consideration should be given to the role and responsibility of the Regional Coordinator in collecting information; mechanisms should be developed for updating and monitoring the information; a uniform template for submission of information would facilitate the submission and analysis of the information.

One Observer organization noted that the present mechanism to collect information was designed to gather information from Member Governments and that it might be beneficial to RCCs to have a mechanism whereby both Members and Observers can inform relevant information.

Conclusion

Expressed support for developing a uniform platform, which would assist to collect and share information on food control systems more effectively. However, it noted that further reflection was needed on the intended purpose of the platform, the type of information and data to be collected and shared, its sustainability and who would provide information and have access to the platform.

CCLAC19

Regarding data collection, some delegations noted, whilst favouring efficiency and modernisation, that there would have to be a broader discussion if the Committee were to replace the current system, and requested the Codex Secretariat to provide more details on the proposed online platform to collect data.

With respect to the replacement of the CL with an on-line database, she clarified that further details needed to be elaborated, but the current thinking was to develop an on-line database that allowed countries to update information on the status of food safety systems continuously, e.g. through the national CCP. Prior to the RCC a CL could be issued with a time-line for update, the Codex Secretariat could then prepare a summary of information for discussion at the meeting

Conclusion

Supported replacement of CLs with the new platform.

CCAFRICA21

Conclusion

The Committee supported the development of the online platform which should be user friendly, accessible and allow easy and ongoing upload of data by the Contact Points to enable the Secretariat to make a summary of available data. One delegation noted the challenge of regular updating of data by members and proposed to explore how to motivate members to undertake this activity, and proposed that this element might be considered by the Codex Trust Fund as a pre-condition for granting support to countries.

III. Identification of needs and priorities in regions (persistent and emerging food safety/quality issues)

CCNASWP19

Delegations agreed that this is an important task of RCCs and raised the need to reflect on the mechanisms to be put in place and the ability to identify needs and priorities. It was noted that opportunities exist through enhanced information exchange and linkages with other regional organizations and fora. Delegations also asked if mechanisms other than Circular Letters would better serve the purpose and highlighted the need to have in place a clear process to identify issues for discussion. In this regard, delegations noted the proposed process to identify priority areas for new work on matters of interest to the region in CX/NASWP 14/13/9.

Conclusion

Acknowledged that the current mechanism of the Circular Letter to collect information on national food control systems, consumer participation in standards-setting and Codex at national level could be improved. The Coordinating Committee agreed to suspend the use of this Circular Letter until a replacement mechanism was found.

CCEURO29

An observer country noted that the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for North America and South West Pacific (CCNASWP) had recommended retaining the CL as a mechanism to identify needs and priorities in regions. A member country noted that identification of needs and priorities for new work in particular emerging food safety issues should address both risk assessment and risk management.

Conclusion

The Committee agreed that considerations given under proposal 3.2, were also pertinent to proposal 3.3.

CCASIA19

Delegations agreed that it was important for RCCs to collect information on needs and priorities of countries. It was noted the document prepared by the Regional Coordinator on Codex issues relevant to the Region (Item 10) provided information on needs and priorities related to Codex that were exchanged only every two years while an online platform would allow to exchange these as well as other information in real time.

Delegations noted that needs and priorities might also relate to trade issue, such as compliance and import requirements; that needs and priorities were also being collected through Regional events such as workshops, consultations and meetings organised by FAO and WHO which would continue to be an important mechanism for collecting these information.

Conclusion

Agreed on the importance to collect and exchange information on countries needs and priorities, which could also include food trade issues. It noted that an online platform could be useful to exchange information in real time.

CCLAC19

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CCAFRICA21

Conclusion

The Committee agreed with the proposals as set out in the document.

IV. Regional strategic planning

CCNASWP19

Delegations supported work on the regional Strategic Plan noting that it was used by some countries for developing their national strategies for Codex, identifying capacity development needs; planning for capacity development activities; and soliciting funding for Codex programmes.

Delegations supported aligning the timeframe of the regional Strategic Plan and the global Codex Strategic Plan; however, it was noted that some flexibility was needed to take into account the different schedules of RCCs and the Commission.

Conclusion

Expressed general support for maintaining regional Strategic Plans that serve in support of development of national strategies for Codex and for the planning of capacity development activities and resource mobilisation.

The Committee agreed that regional strategic plans should be consistent with and complementary to the Codex Strategic Plan and when possible have the same time frame as the Codex Strategic Plan.

CCEURO29

The Committee agreed that regional strategic plans should be consistent with and complementary to the Codex Strategic Plan and when possible have the same time frame as the Codex Strategic Plan.

CCASIA19

Delegations noting that the global Codex Strategic Plan 2014-2019 was very comprehensive, considered that the regional Strategic Plan for CCASIA would no longer be necessary and that CCASIA could contribute to the goals and activities of the global Strategic Plan. Delegations noted that it would be useful to have only one Strategic Plan as this would avoid duplication and save considerable resources and time; that specific activities of the draft regional Strategic Plan not addressed in the global Strategic Plan could be documented as a list of priority activities or Action Plan without the burden of developing, implementing and monitoring a regional Strategic Plan.

Conclusion

Was of the opinion that regional Strategic Plans might not be necessary as RCCs have a role to provide feedback and support to the global Codex Strategic Plan. It noted that a list of priority activities/ Action Plan for CCASIA could be adequate and replace the regional Strategic Plan for CCASIA.

CCLAC19

On the consistency between regional and global strategic plans, one delegation, whilst expressing their agreement, argued that the inclusion of specific regional issues in the regional plan should remain possible and should not be seen as incompatible with the global strategic plan.

Conclusion

Supported the idea that the regional strategic plan should be in line with the global strategic plan, while recognising the need to include specific regional issues which may not have a correspondence to the global strategic plan;

CCAFRICA21

The Committee agreed to continue developing a regional strategic plan as it would take into account regional needs.

The Committee also agreed that the regional strategic plan should be aligned with the global strategic plan in terms of content and timelines in order to ensure complementarity.

Appendix 3

DRAFT TEMPLATE TO COLLECT INFORMATION ON OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT CONTROL FOR FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY

This draft template focuses on regulatory and official government functions to assure the safety and acceptable quality of food. The template would be the basis for an online system to collect and make information available in a structured manner. Countries would be able to update their “profile” during the year, as systems evolve. Investment in this system would allow countries to access comparable information on food control systems. Possible benefits may include improved information on responsible parties and key activities, cross sharing of how to strengthen systems, baseline information on the status of development of systems.

1. Main laws and regulations relevant to food safety and quality [*Title, year, brief description, link/upload legislation*]
 - a. Standards – advise on use of Codex standards as a basis for national standards
2. Information on any policy or strategy documents for food safety or quality (year, duration)
3. National governance – Institutional framework
 - a. List main agencies and ministries responsible for food safety risk management (briefly describe main mandate, scope responsibility, it should include animal feed)
 - b. List main agencies and ministries responsible for food quality
 - c. List main agencies and ministries responsible for food inspection (could be described according to food group (e.g. meat, fish, milk), parts of the food chain (e.g. primary production, retail, restaurants, imported food, etc)
 - d. Identify the responsible agency/body for scientific advice and risk assessment (briefly describe scope of competence if more than one agency/body)
 - e. How is effective risk communication assured (e.g. between risk managers and assessors, from risk managers to stakeholders, etc.)?
 - f. Is/are there functional mechanism(s) in place for multi-sectoral collaboration (e.g. between health, agriculture and trade ministries/agencies)?
4. How Codex work is managed
 - a. Location of CCP (and contact details) [link to the Codex list of CCPs]
 - b. Existence (and composition) of National Codex Committee or other bodies to discuss Codex related issues
 - c. Any process or mechanisms for involving non-governmental stakeholders (e.g. civil society, industry) in the consultative process
5. National reference laboratories for food safety and quality (*brief outline of structure*)
 - a. Name main laboratories (indicate type/scope of capacity and accreditation)
6. Surveillance and Monitoring
 - a. Type of data collected, by whom (epidemiological, contaminant, food consumption)
 - b. Name any national or regional monitoring programs (contaminants(pesticides, mycotoxins, veterinary drugs, heavy metals), microbiological analysis, region)
 - c. Any food-borne disease surveillance data
 - d. Is a list of priority food safety risks available?
 - e. Any relevant report – annual etc.

7. Addressing food safety incidents and emergencies
 - a. Is an emergency response plan or other mechanism being implemented
 - b. Is there timely exchange of information between food safety authorities and relevant sectors when food safety incidents/emergencies occur?
 - c. INFOSAN or other important contacts
 - d. Are procedures for food recalls established
 - e. Does your country participate in a rapid alert system for food safety emergencies /incidents /rejections.
8. Training of staff
 - a. Are there policies and programmes in place for training of staff carrying out official tasks
 - b. Are there policies and programmes in place to ensure food chain operators can access adequate and effective training
9. Documented procedures and audits
 - a. Documented procedures in existence– manuals, SOPs, protocols
 - b. Are there regular internal or external audits of official functions carried out

Notes:

- a. Countries should be encouraged to provide links to websites where available – for a key Ministry, a Codex Contact Point, etc.
- b. In order to avoid multiple collection of information, efforts will be made, where possible, to cross-link or use information in existing official databases – e.g. the Codex list of CCPs, the FAO on-line database on legislation FAOLEX

Appendix 4

Generic Provisional Agenda of RCCs

Item	Subject Matter
1	Adoption of the Agenda
2	Keynote address and discussion on regional issue of priority and common challenge
3	Matters Arising from the Codex Alimentarius Commission and other Codex Committees
4	Food safety and quality situation in the countries of the region
5	Monitoring of the implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan
6	Food Standards in the region
7	Items related to the development or revision of specific regional standards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proposed draft ... -
8	Nomination of the Coordinator
9	Future work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification and prioritization of the need of the regions. • Possible need of regional standards or the relevance of existing regional standards.
10	Other business
11	Date and Place of Next Session
12	Adoption of the Report