



**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR AFRICA**

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**NATIONAL FOOD CONTROL SYSTEMS, CONSUMER PARTICIPATION IN FOOD STANDARDS
SETTING AND THE USE OF CODEX STANDARDS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL**

(Replies to CL 2010/45-AFRICA received from Benin, Mali, Mauritania, Seychelles and Zambia)

1. STATUS OF NATIONAL FOOD CONTROL SYSTEMS

(i) Have there been any changes to the structure and organization of official services responsible for food control since the 18th session

BENIN

No, but there is reform under way in the agricultural sector with the Strategic Plan for the Agricultural Sector. This plan includes the building and equipping of a major food testing laboratory and the recruitment of staff. The plan also envisages the creation of the Beninese Food Safety Agency which will be responsible for food control. The responsibilities of the current food control structures will be transferred to this agency.

MALI

No

MAURITANIA

No

SEYCHELLES

No, the Public Health department of the Ministry of Health is still responsible for food control. The SBS also assist in food safety in terms of its food testing laboratories and fish inspection services.

ZAMBIA

Improved coordination of activities among the authorities.

(ii) Have there been any changes to legislation and regulations on food safety and quality – including import/export matters since the 18th session

BENIN

No, but reforms are under way.

MALI

No

MAURITANIA

Yes, the country has just adopted a code of hygiene to regulate food quality and safety.

SEYCHELLES

Yes, since Seychelles is in the process of accession to WTO, various legislation relating to food safety and quality are under review in order to be in line with the WTO SPS measures. A legal reform is currently being done to the Public Health Act, Food Act, Pesticide Act, SBS Act, Fish and Fishery Product Act and various regulations made there under.

ZAMBIA

Revision is underway for the Public Health Act and Food and Drugs Act. The Standards Act is scheduled for revision.

(iii) Have any equivalence or other trade facilitation agreements with other governments been established since the 18th session

BENIN

No

MALI

No

SEYCHELLES

Yes, Seychelles as a country in the Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) has signed the interim Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the EU in August 2009. Seychelles started free trade agreement talks with Turkey in November 2009.

(iv) Do you have activities to increase awareness on food safety and quality among consumers and other specified groups

BENIN

Yes, but this is not coordinated at national level. If a structure has financing, it organizes awareness activities.

MALI

- As part of the overall plan to raise food safety awareness among all stakeholders, the Codex Central Liaison Unit for Mali has organized the 4th Edition of Food Safety and the 2nd Edition of the National Food Safety Prize;
- Support for the organization of food safety awareness campaigns of the Food Hygiene Brigades of the Mali Network of Consumer Associations (MASSA Network);
- Country-wide organization of seminars and workshops on national food safety policy;
- Raising of food safety awareness of policy makers, economic operators and consumers;
- Training session on GHP/GMP – HACCP for agrifood actors.

SEYCHELLES

Various activities in the form of seminars, meetings are being organized by the Department of Public Health. National media such as radio, newspapers and TV are used to create awareness.

ZAMBIA

Awareness programmes on food safety and quality under various authorities in collaboration with the private sector.

(vi) a) Do you have any positive experiences to share

MALI

- Networking of consumer associations working in the field of food safety;
- Organization of the National Food Safety Week;
- Organization of the National Food Safety Prize;

- Assistance to agrifood enterprises in mastering GHPs/GMPs.

(vi) b) Have any shortcomings been identified for the national food control systems, i.e. in the development or implementation of national legislation and/or regulation, structure and/or functioning of inspection, certification, laboratory services, accreditation bodies, etc.

BENIN

Many shortcomings have been identified in the national food control system, but these are in the process of being corrected with support from the European Union's Food and Veterinary Office and Belgian Technical Cooperation.

MALI

At the institutional level, Mali has an arsenal of juridical and regulatory texts on the standardization, inspection and certification of foodstuffs.

However, food safety standardization, inspection and certification activities for imports, exports and the domestic market are not properly executed because of the following deficiencies and constraints:

- The non-compliance of legislative and regulatory texts with the principles of the agreement on sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS);
- The mandatory legislative texts are incomplete and often lack implementing decrees or orders;
- Overlapping responsibilities of official inspection and certification services;
- Absence of documentation providing consumers with food safety information;
- Absence of accredited food control laboratories;
- Shortage of human, material and financial resources for the inspection and certification services;
- Insufficient training of inspectors on risk assessment and the new approach to food control;
- Insufficient awareness of and support to the industrial sector for the application of legislative and regulatory texts.

MAURITANIA

Yes, following the adoption of the Law on the Code of Hygienic Practice and the consequent compliance actions required of the food testing laboratories.

SEYCHELLES

Need:

- to review legislation for Public Health Act, Food Act, SBS Act, Fishery Export Act and the regulations made there under.
- to establish an effective food control system as well as a programme to deal with emergency situation (food alert, foodborne pathogens, etc.).
- to seek accreditation of food testing laboratories
- for additional competent personnel
- for additional equipment for laboratories
- to upgrade the certain laboratory infrastructure
- for assistance to establish a formal National Codex Committee.

ZAMBIA

The challenge is to get food testing labs accredited. However, the process has started in various national labs.

(vii) Do you have any capacity building and training needs to strengthen the national food control system based on the shortcomings identified

BENIN

Yes, the European Union and Belgium are currently supporting Benin in the field of food safety. Other sources of support are being sought.

MALI

- Reviewing the legislative and regulatory texts to comply with the principles of the agreement on sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS);
- Drafting the implementing decrees and/or orders of the mandatory legislative texts;
- Reviewing the texts on food safety control in accordance with Regulation 07/2007/CM/UEMOA ;
- Drafting documentation with food safety information for consumers;
- Supporting the accreditation of food control laboratories;
- Building capacity of the inspection and certification services;
- Ensuring awareness of and support to the industrial sector for the implementation of legislative and regulatory texts.

MAURITANIA

The implementing decrees of the Law on the Code of Hygienic Practice require support for the functioning and upgrading of food chemistry and microbiology laboratories to meet demand determined by current regulations. The laboratory technicians therefore need to be trained and on-the-job technical assistance needs to be provided by experienced personnel.

SEYCHELLES

The Department of Trade of the Ministry of Finance is seeking TA from WTO and other donor agencies (TradeCom, EU etc.) in order to strengthen the national food control system in terms of equipment and training. Currently there is a project being implemented under the ACP MTS Programme: the purpose of which is to align the domestic laws and regulation on SPS in conformity with the WTO Agreement on SPS and to strengthen the local regulatory bodies in order to accelerate Seychelles Accession to the WTO. This programme will assist all the national agencies involved with food safety such as the Public Health, Food Control Unit, Fish Inspection and Quality Control Unit, the Food testing laboratories of the Seychelles Bureau of Standards.

The Fish Inspection and Quality Control Unit which is the competent authority for the exportation of fish has benefited from several consultancies under the Strengthening of Fishery Products (SFP) Project. This include consultancies on the ISO 17020 to assist the unit with its accreditation process, formulation of legislation covering production of bio-product s such as fish meal and fish oil as well as consultancy on laboratory support for accreditation.

The Seychelles Bureau of Standards which is the official testing laboratories for fish and fishery products exported to the EU is in the process of seeking accreditation to ISO 17025. Initial Assessment has been carried out. The bureau has received a new Atomic Absorption Spectrophotometer (AAS) and HPLC under the SFP Project. Technical assistance has also been obtained under the EU Fishery Partnership Agreement.

ZAMBIA

- Food safety / food hygiene training for SMEs;
- Capacity building in food safety/food hygiene for the inspectorate to ensure effective implementation of the laws and regulations;
- Inadequate resources to conduct training / awareness for SMEs.

2. CONSUMER PARTICIPATION

(i) Do consumer groups participate in standards-setting at national and international level (update of information since 18th CCAFRICA)

BENIN

Consumer groups participate in the meetings of the National Codex Alimentarius Committee.

MALI

Consumer associations are represented on all bodies within the national food safety system:

- National Food Safety Council;
- National Codex Committee and Sub-Committees;
- National Council on Standards and Quality Control and Technical Committees on Standards;
- Executive Board of the National Food Safety Agency (ANSSA);
- National Commission for Marketing Authorization of Foodstuffs, Animal Feed and Food Additives.

They help the National Council of Standards and Quality Control and Technical Committees on Standards to draft the national standards.

They help the National Codex Committee and Sub-Committees draw up national positions for Codex Committee sessions.

MAURITANIA

This is an area that Mauritania will be able to develop by drawing on the experience of other countries.

SEYCHELLES

Yes, representatives from the Consumer Forum (NGO) and Consumer Protection Unit (Government) are members of the SBS technical committee for food standards.

ZAMBIA

At national level they are always invited to participate in the process of standards development

(ii) What activities aimed at increasing consumer participation in food standards setting have been implemented since the 18th CCAFRICA

BENIN

No activity.

MALI

- Support to implementation of the food safety activities of the Mali Network of Consumer Associations (MASSA Network) ;
- Provision of a computer with Internet connection to the consumer associations of the MASSA Network through the Central Liaison Unit;
- Support to a project for the capacity building of consumer associations.

MAURITANIA

None

SEYCHELLES

Members from the two consumer organisations participated in a half day seminar on the 25th May 2010 that was conducted by a consultant, Mr. Folke Hermansson Snickars (standardisation expert) under the SADC/EU Project. The aim of this seminar was to create the awareness on the new approach to standardisation for SBS and of the need for involvement of stakeholders from the consumer organisation to participate actively in the national standards setting.

ZAMBIA

They are involved in World Standards Day celebrations where experts that participate in standards development are acknowledged for their contribution in standards development. They are also requested to make presentations or to be part of discussion fora.

(iii) Have any shortcomings been identified for consumer participation in food standards setting and Codex related activities

BENIN

Yes

MALI

Insufficient human, material and financial resources of the consumer associations.

MAURITANIA

Consumer associations need training on their role in the formation of standards, as do the departments concerned.

SEYCHELLES

None

ZAMBIA

There are very few experts to participate in standards setting.

(iv) Specific capacity building and/or training needs identified to strengthen consumer participation in food standards setting at national/regional and international level

BENIN

Yes, consumers need to be informed and made more aware.

MALI

- Training consumer associations on food safety and the Codex;
- Equipping consumer associations with computer tools;
- Supporting the participation of consumer associations in Codex activities.

MAURITANIA

Training, assistance and ongoing support are essential for determining food standards at national level.

ZAMBIA

Awareness meetings with stakeholders are in place.

3. USE OF CODEX STANDARDS AND RELATED TEXTS AT NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL

(i) Are Codex standards and related texts used at the national and regional level

BENIN

Yes, the Codex guidelines, codes of practice and standards are used. Benin's regulations stipulate that Codex standards apply when national standards are lacking.

MALI

Codex standards and related texts are the food reference standards in Mali. The Codex Central Liaison Unit for Mali provides technical support to the Secretariat of the National Council on Standards, Certification and Promotion of Quality and the other food safety services in drawing up and/or revising food standards and legislative texts in the light of the Codex standards. The Codex standards and related texts are the reference standards for the control services and certain laboratories.

Activities are underway at subregional level for the harmonization of collective standards with Codex standards.

However, difficulties continue to exist in applying standards at national and subregional level.

MAURITANIA

The Codex standards remain the sole point of reference for technicians and legislators but are still poorly applied.

SEYCHELLES

Yes, use of Codex standards is mentioned in the Food Act and regulations. It is also being referenced in Export of Fishery Products regulations. The Seychelles Bureau of Standards has adopted various Codex standards as national standards.

ZAMBIA

Codex standards are adopted both in totality and partially. They are referenced in national standards and they are also used for training purposes, e.g. Code of hygiene.

(iii) What are the difficulties encountered in the use or application of Codex standards and related texts at the national and regional level

MALI

- Organizational:
 - Poor organization of the agrifood production process;
 - Poor organization of enterprises;
 - Multiplicity of small producers;
 - Poor organization of consumer associations;
 - Poor organization of technical services responsible for standards and risk management;
 - Insufficient resources for the functioning of the Contact Point.
- Technical:
 - Poor capacity of analytical and testing laboratories;
 - Poor capacity of standards and inspection agencies;
 - Lack of technical skills in standard setting, legislation, inspection, audit and evaluation, risk assessment, risk communication, certification and accreditation.

MAURITANIA

- There are still insufficient resources for these to be applied properly;
- The non-functioning of the National Codex Committee;
- The poor functioning of the National Codex Contact Point;
- The absence of effective committees of experts.

SEYCHELLES

The main difficulty encountered is the lack of certain resources to text compliance to Codex standards.

ZAMBIA

Certain requirements may not be achieved especially by the SMEs.

(iv) Relevance of Codex standards and related texts as a basis for harmonization of legislation and regulations, including in the perspective of economic integration

MALI

The Codex standards and related texts are the food-related references of the WAEMU. They help harmonize national, regional and international legislation and regulations, thereby enhancing the protection of consumer health and fostering international trade of food commodities.

MAURITANIA

They are today the only reference for foodstuffs.

SEYCHELLES

Adoption and use of Codex standards as the basis for legislation will facilitate trade within the region and the protection of consumers.

ZAMBIA

Codex standards are relevant for economic integration hence, they are used as a basis for both national and regional standards harmonization programs.

(v) Any other health and/or trade problems related to standardization at the national or regional level

MALI

- Multiplicity and divergence of national standards of the Codex Alimentarius member countries;
- Constraints related to certification and the renewal of private standards;
- Shipment to developing countries of foodstuffs not meeting the sanitary requirements of producer countries.

SEYCHELLES

Private food standards – requirements are more stringent than those specified by Codex.

(vii) Have ways been identified to strengthen use of Codex standards and related texts at national, regional and/or international level

MAURITANIA

We aim to draw inspiration from the experience of other countries.

SEYCHELLES

The agencies concerned with food safety are building capacity in order to test food products for compliance to Codex standards.

ZAMBIA

Better Training for Safer Food, a programme under DG SANCO has assisted SMEs in more awareness to compliance to Codex standards.