



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

20th session

Yaoundé, Cameroon, 29 January – 1 February 2013

**NATIONAL FOOD CONTROL SYSTEMS, USE OF CODEX STANDARDS AND PARTICIPATION
IN CODEX AND IN FAO/WHO ACTIVITIES ON SCIENTIFIC ADVICE**

**Comments received in reply to CL 2012/26-AFRICA: Central African Republic, Mauritius and
Zimbabwe**

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Question 1: Strengthening national food control systems

1. Please describe any significant development/actions taken in your country to improve national food control systems since the 19th Session of the Committee.

The National Codex Committee was officially created by Interministerial Decree in May 2011.

Many measures have been taken to boost the inspection and monitoring of food, both imported and locally produced.

A bill dealing with standardization and certification is in process of being passed by the National Assembly. It contains rigorous procedures for the systematic quality control of imported and locally produced food.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry works in close collaboration with laboratories analysing water and food as part of quality control.

This ministry, which is also responsible for standardization, is currently working on a project to establish a quality control laboratory for agricultural and food products.

This project is directly in line with activities anticipated under the Action Plan for the Development of Standardization approved in July 2012 as part of a project entitled Evaluation and Revision of the Legal and Institutional Framework for Standardization in the Central African Republic, financed by the European Union.

Information on Codex activities is distributed by the National Codex Committee.

2. Please describe recently established mechanisms/structures for inter-sectoral/multi-disciplinary collaboration for risk assessment, risk management and/or risk communication purposes at national level as well as the effectiveness of these mechanisms/structures

The National Codex Committee is still the only comprehensive, multidisciplinary structure acting as an early warning unit for the Government with regard to food-borne diseases.

3. Please provide information on initiatives since the 19th Session of the Committee at national and regional level to promote coordination of work on food standards with other international and regional organizations

Measures undertaken in recent years to integrate the Central African Republic into the global movement toward standardization have enabled the country to gain membership of several global standardization organizations, including ISO.

Question 2: Strengthening Codex structures at the national level

1. Please describe any significant actions that your country has taken since the 19th Session of the Committee to strengthen Codex structures at the national level and to promote more effective participation in the Codex

The Central African Republic has this year (2012) undertaken to negotiate a Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) with FAO alongside such countries as Gabon and Cameroon. This TCP is intended to boost the country's participation in Codex activities and support national policy with regard to food safety.

The Central African Republic is also negotiating a TCP with the European Union's European Advisory Services to strengthen its food legislation.

At the national level, recommendations are being followed up to boost participation in Codex activities.

2. Please describe the mechanism by which Codex work is coordinated nationally. If a specific structure or body has been established (e.g. a national Codex Committee or other structure), describe its structure, composition and operation or plans for establishment of such a coordination mechanism or body. Please also describe participation of stakeholders other than the public sector in such coordination structure.

The National Codex Committee of the Central African Republic was created by Interministerial Decree on 18 May 2011. The committee office has a Chairperson (the Minister of Agriculture) and a Vice-Chairperson (the Minister of Health), while the Minister of Trade and Industry is responsible for coordination.

All the spheres concerned with food safety are represented on the committee, which thus encompasses the public sector (Ministries of Health, Trade and Industry, Agriculture, Fisheries etc.), the private sector (employers' union etc.) and civil society (consumers' associations).

The National Committee is responsible mainly for supporting implementation of the national food safety policy, always in accordance with the expectations of the Codex.

3. Please describe:

a. Specific actions taken since the 19th Session of the Committee aimed at strengthening the Codex Contact Point and/or the national Codex coordination mechanism/structure (i.e. inter-sectoral consultative processes on Codex matters, including promoting increased involvement and participation of consumers and other stakeholders)

A number of initiatives have been taken to strengthen the Codex contact point and the National Codex Committee secretariat, but these initiatives have produced no results to date. Reference is made here to projects to strengthen the National Committee secretariat and the national contact point, which have so far remained dead letters.

b. Current shortcomings identified for the Codex Contact Point and/or national Codex coordination (e.g. National Codex Committee or similar structure)

Material and logistical difficulties are the main factors hampering the effective operation of the National Codex Committee. The national contact point is not provided with adequate working resources and uses its own computer equipment to carry out its task.

These difficulties have a negative impact on the efficiency of the newly created National Codex Committee.

c. Identified needs for capacity development to strengthen the Codex Contact Point and/or national Codex coordination (e.g. National Codex Committee or other structure)

The National Codex Committee planned training for members of the National Committee as part of its 2012 annual programme of activities, but this activity has not been carried out for lack of financial resources.

Our National Committee is today expressing the need for capacity-building for members of the National Committee and the national Codex contact point.

If it is to carry out its mission effectively, the Codex contact point should undertake an exchange mission with better equipped national committees in Africa in order to share their experience.

Question 3: Scientific activities (risk-based approach) and data collection activities

1. Please describe developments since the 19th Session of the Committee regarding:

a. Areas of risk-based approach application (e.g. monitoring programmes, sampling programmes, inspection, scientific basis of food safety decisions)

No such activity has been undertaken at the national level since the 19th CCAFRICA.

b. Key data collection activities ongoing to identify or monitor relevant food safety hazards and contaminants in the food supply and to identify or monitor food-borne disease and outbreaks

The National Codex Committee acts as the Government's early warning unit to protect the country against the introduction and spread of food-borne diseases. The various bodies dealing with food safety issues are represented on the National Codex Committee, so that the committee has information about any possible threats.

c. Use of data collected through inspection and control or monitoring by institutions/agencies involved in food safety risk assessment and/or management

Monitoring and inspection activities have been stepped up at the national level, thus providing the institutions concerned with data for evaluation of risks relating to food safety.

d. Mechanisms for identifying national food consumption data in relation to consumer exposure assessment for food safety hazards

Government services responsible for the monitoring and inspection of imports and the Bureau of Inspection, Valuation, Assessment and Control (a pre-shipment inspection agency) share national data on food consumption and keep watch for dangers to which consumers may be exposed. All these parties are represented on the National Codex Committee.

Question 4: Priority areas for capacity-building in food safety

1. Please describe:

a. Current priority food safety issues to be addressed nationally and regionally

Questions relating to food hygiene (although the issue is part of national priorities, the Central African Republic does not participate in the CCFH because of visa difficulties), pesticide residues in foods, the system of certification and inspection of imports and exports, the labelling of foods (difficulties in obtaining visas prevent us from participating in the CCFL and the CCFICS), and the analysis and sampling of foods.

b. Current priority areas for capacity-building (ongoing and for the future). Describe whether these can be addressed through national or regional resources or programmes.

We request capacity-building for the National Committee in order to create technical groups to deal with technical issues considered to be priorities for our national food safety policy, and training with regard to their mission for actors involved in these spheres so as to ensure their efficiency.

We depend on regional or international programmes to implement such capacity-building activities. We would point out that national resources do not currently allow us to implement these activities.

Use of Codex standards and related texts at national and regional level

Question 5: Codex standards: national priorities, interests and implementation

Describe which specific Codex standards and related texts (currently under development or already existent) are currently of most importance and interest to your country.

Standards on analysis and sampling, food hygiene, labelling, the certification and inspection of exports and imports, and pesticide residues, and also standards specific to certain products (milk, sugar, wheat flour, vegetable oil etc.).

What are the current priority areas for setting national standards and whether there is a need for further or new work in this regard by Codex.

The National Standardization Agency, authorized to organize the development of national standards, is in the process of being established. The country does not have its own national standard, and Codex standards are adopted and applied directly by establishing regulations. These standards are also used in developing certain technical rules and regulations.

Status of inclusion of Codex standards in national regulations and their implementation.

Codex standards are sometimes used as the basis for national regulations (for example, the Trade Code currently in course of adoption takes account of many Codex provisions regarding labelling). These activities are not fully implemented at all levels of all ministerial departments and need to be stepped up by boosting the activities of the National Codex Committee.

Difficulties in the inclusion of Codex standards in national regulations and their implementation (e.g. difficulties in the interpretation of Codex standards, shortcomings in the food control system, etc.)

Certain government departments do not yet realize the importance of incorporating Codex standards into national regulations. In particular, the ministerial departments responsible for food safety issues (health, trade, agriculture, fisheries etc.) have not yet fully grasped their role in incorporating Codex standards into the various regulations they draw up.

Ways forward to strengthen the inclusion of Codex standards in national legislation and their enforcement – possible needs for capacity building in this regard.

Basic work needs to be undertaken with the ministries responsible for food safety to build up their capacity with regard to including Codex standards in national regulations. This work should be carried out through seminars or workshops. The involvement of partners in this sector (FAO and WHO) is thus requested.

Question 6: Participation in the Codex Alimentarius Commission and its subsidiary bodies

Describe priority committee for your country and the rationale

The Codex committees deemed priorities for the Central African Republic are the CCFH, the CCFICS, the CCPR, the CCMAS and the CCFL, followed by the CAC and the CCGP.

These committees are deemed priorities in terms of their subject matter and the actual situation in the country. The Central African Republic is dependent on food imports, so that it is necessary not only to develop market monitoring, which in turn necessarily entails the quality control of food imports, but also to ensure food hygiene, while monitoring the quality of agricultural production.

In addition, out of concern to deal with outstanding issues at the level of the Codex Commission and also to absorb the general principles of the Codex, the CAC and the CCGP are listed among our priorities inasmuch as our young National Committee should develop in line with the expectations of the Codex.

Difficulties encountered in participating in Codex meetings (e.g. lack of financial resources, human resources, etc.)

The main difficulties are financial. Until now, our participation in various Codex meetings has been possible thanks to Codex trust funds. The financial difficulties facing the country prevent it from assuming responsibility for the participation of the National Committee in Codex meetings, despite the Government's commitment to the activities of the Codex and the National Committee.

There is also a regrettable lack of financial support for Codex activities from the private sector. Other difficulties are related to obtaining visas. Although among our priorities, our participation in the CCFL, the CCFICS and the CCFH is almost impossible because of the complexity of the process of obtaining a visa. In spite of several attempts, efforts in this direction have always proved unsuccessful.

Identified needs for capacity building to strengthen participation in Codex work in addition to the Codex Trust Fund

The task of raising the awareness of decision-makers (the Government) and Parliament (Deputies). Information and awareness-raising seminars for members of the Government and Parliament could be organized with support from FAO and WHO. Similar awareness-raising activities must be undertaken for private-sector actors, who can provide financial support for national participation in Codex work.

Question 7: Participation in FAO/WHO activities on scientific advice

Participation of national experts in, and submission of national data to, FAO/WHO meetings providing scientific advice (e.g. JECFA, JMPR, JEMRA, ad hoc expert consultations, etc.)

Our National Committee does not participate in these expert meetings because of financial difficulties (payment of transport costs, etc.). However, the country does have experienced scientists capable of taking part in such activities. The lack of financial and logistical resources also prevents the National Committee from obtaining the necessary information on these meetings and from meeting regularly to discuss these questions.

Difficulties encountered in participation of experts and generation and submission of data

There is a need to boost the capacity of national experts regarding these FAO/WHO meetings and create technical groups to allow effective participation in providing scientific views. There is also a need to provide information on the identification of possible sources of financial support that would enable the country to participate in these FAO/WHO meetings.

MAURITIUS

Question 1: Strengthening National Food Control Systems

1. Please describe any significant development/actions taken in your country to improve national food control systems since the 19th Session of the Committee.

a) National food law and regulations

National food law and regulations- review of the current Food Act and Food Regulations is in terminal phase where approval from the parent Ministry is awaited. Proposals have already been forwarded to the Government authority for the setting of a committee with members of different organization both public and private sector.

b) Food safety policy/strategy (e.g. risk analysis)

Food safety policy/strategy(e.g. risk analysis- proposals are being worked out to establish an integrated food safety database for a better analysis to determine the priorities of action to be taken;

c) Food control management (e.g. food control administration structures)

Food control management – no change has been operated in this field;

d) Inspection services

Inspection services- no change has been operated in this field;

e) Laboratory infrastructure and activities

Laboratory infrastructure and activities- new equipment has been introduced to facilitate testing within delay;

f) Trade facilitation agreements

Not applicable.

g) Information dissemination

Information dissemination - no change operated;

h) Training/capacity building

Training/ capacity building- special courses are being mounted for the inspectors.

Question 3: Scientific activities (risk-based approach) and data collection activities

a) Areas of risk-based approach application (e.g. monitoring programmes, sampling programmes, inspection scientific basis of food safety decisions)

Sampling of various foods are taken for analysis and results are used to set priorities of action. Monitoring programmes are carried out to assess the safety of food. Rapid testing techniques of food in the field of microbiological analysis have been introduced on a pilot basis. This has shown its reliability. This has been carried out to monitor safety of ready-to- eat food as well as high risk food.

b) Key data collection activities ongoing to identify or monitor relevant food safety hazards and contaminants in the food supply and to identify or monitor food-borne disease and outbreaks

Collection of data is an on-going process;

c) Use of data collected through inspection and control or monitoring by institutions/agencies involved in food safety risk assessment and/or management

The analysis of these data helps to take action accordingly;

d) Mechanisms for identifying national food consumption data in relation to consumer exposure assessment for food safety hazards

Not Available

e) Ongoing activities or interests in relevant scientific advice on risk assessment, such as risk/benefit analysis (e.g. food safety risk vs nutritional benefit)

Not Available

Question 4: Priority areas for capacity building in food safety

a) Current priority food safety issues to be addressed nationally and regionally

The current priority of food safety issues are street food and traceability system in case of outbreaks of food-borne diseases.

b) Current priority areas for capacity building (ongoing and for future). Describe whether these can be addressed through national or regional resources or programmes.

Training of staff.

ZIMBABWE

Question 1: Strengthening National Food Control Systems

a. Food laws and regulations

The Food Standards Advisory Board (FSAB) that is also the NCC has crafted three new and revised one existing regulations. These have now been forwarded to the deputy Attorney General (Legal Drafting) for re-drafting in legal language and format. Work is under progress on other regulations.

b. Food Safety Policy

The FSAB has assisted in the crafting of the Food and Nutrition Security Policy. The Policy has among other pillars, the Food Safe, the Food Safety and Quality pillar. The stand alone Food Safety Policy is yet to be crafted.

c. Food Control Management

Food Control management remains a multi-agency responsibility. The FSAB (NCC) crafts food laws and regulations, registers new food products locally and foreign manufactured. It recommends risk management actions. The Environmental Health Department and Port Health Department as well as local authorities carry out inspections in food factories, ports of entries, supermarkets and food outlets. The Government Analyst laboratory carries out tests and analyses on food products submitted by enforcement agencies.

d. Inspection Activities

The NCC worked on draft Inspection and Certification Regulations as well as Import and Export draft regulations. These give procedures on what is done before a food product whether locally manufactured or imported, is to be certified and registered as suitable for sale in Zimbabwe.

These regulations imply that all food products in Zimbabwe may be subjected to tests and analyses as well as pre-shipment inspections while in detention unless this is done prior to sale.

e. Laboratory Infrastructure and Services

Due to economic challenges the Government of Zimbabwe has not been able to improve laboratory infrastructure. However cooperation now exists with other non-regulatory laboratories when tests and analyses are sub-contracted to these. The lab is now benefiting from a piece of equipment donated by the European Union through Southern African Development Community (SADC).

f. Trade Facilitation Agreement

The country is now a signatory to the SADC Trade protocol and the Tripartite Trade agreement between Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), ECSA and SADC. These treaties aim at facilitation of trade within member states. These treaties have Sanitary and Phytosanitary annexes that give guidelines on how to facilitate trade without SPS trade barriers. The annexes are still to be finalized.

g. Information Dissemination

The NCC works with the Consumer Council of Zimbabwe to disseminate food safety information to consumers. It has also initiated a website www.foodsafetyzim.com The website is still under development. It is intended to provide information on national food regulations, draft food regulations as well as food safety news.

h. Training and Capacity Building

The NCC managed to send laboratory analysts to train in use of instruments donated by EU. These were done in-country and were conducted by trainers who underwent training in Germany. Some analysts were also trained in quantitative GMO food detection. However the regulatory laboratory does not have the GMO detection equipment yet.

Describe recently established mechanisms/structures for inter-sectoral/multi-disciplinary collaboration for risk assessment, risk management and/or risk communication purposes at national level as well as the effectiveness of these mechanisms/structures.

The country has always had these structures in place. The NCC does the risk assessment as well as the management of risks for any food products in the country. The Consumer Council is the institution tasked with the risk communication responsibility.

Provide information on initiatives since the 19th Session of the Committee at national and regional level to promote coordination of work on food standards with other international and regional organization.

Zimbabwe formed and notified its enquiry points to the WTO. This was done to promote transparency in promulgation of national food regulations.

It also adopted the SADC Guidelines on Management of Food Safety and SPS. These guidelines meant to harmonise management of SPS among SADC countries, food safety included.

Question 2: Strengthening Codex structures at the national level

2.1 Describe any significant actions that your country has taken since the 19th Session of the Committee to strengthen Codex structures at the national level and to promote more effective participation in Codex.

Due to resource challenges, the NCC resolved to form a national technical committee (TC). It is made up of members of the NCC and other outside the TC with requisite technical expertise. This TC deliberates on issues from Codex sent through circular letters. The TC comes up with country positions whenever there is an issue of interest to the country. The position is given to whoever will attend the respective Codex meeting to speak on behalf of the country.

2.2 Describe the mechanism by which Codex work is coordinated nationally. If a specific structure or body has been established (e.g. a national Codex Committee or other structure), describe its structure, composition and operation or plans for establishment of such a coordination mechanism or body. Also describe participation of stakeholders other than the public section in such a coordination structure.

The Food Standards Advisory Board (FSAB) is a board that is constituted as provided by the Food and Food Standards Act Ch 15:04. Its mandate is to advise the Minister of Health and Child Welfare on all issues to do with food safety. This was made the de facto NCC to make sure national food Standards making is harmonized with Codex.

A. Food Standards Advisory Board (FSAB)

The Food and Food Standards Act Chapter 15:04 of 1996 Section 18 empowers the Minister of Health and Child Welfare to constitute a board called F.S.A.B.

The FSAB composition

The composition of the present board is as follows:

1. **Chairman:** a member of the law society of Zimbabwe
2. **Secretary:** any member of the civil service with thorough knowledge of food safety and quality.
3. **Other members:** Director – Government Analyst Laboratory.
4. Secretary of Health appointee
5. Secretary of Health appointee
6. Principal Director: Veterinary Services
7. Principal Director: Agricultural Research and Extension Services
8. Representative: Ministry of Industry & International Trade
9. Representative: Biosafety Authority of Zimbabwe

10. Representative: Farmers Organisations
11. Representative: Retailers Association of Zimbabwe
12. Representative: Consumer Council of Zimbabwe
13. Representative: Municipal Health Officers Association of Zimbabwe
14. Representative: Standards Association of Zimbabwe
15. Representative: Food Manufacturers, Zimbabwe
16. Representative: Food Manufacturers, Zimbabwe

2.3 Describe any specific actions taken since the 19th Session of the Committee aimed at strengthening the Codex Contact Point and/or the national Codex coordination mechanism/structure.

From the composition of the NCC most stakeholders are represented in the committee. Each member is expected to consult their constituency on any matters discussed in the NCC. They are also expected to report to their constituencies on any matters agreed upon at NCC meetings.

The NCC will require more financial resources so that it can form mirror sub-committees of Codex rather than to have one Technical Committee as is the case now.

In terms of capacity, the NCC will require that their members get training in risk assessment so that they can effectively discharge their risk assessment mandate. The office of the contact point will require equipment such as a broadband e-mail and internet other than the dial up it has now. The computers currently used have old software and as a result some Codex documents cannot be opened. The contact office will also require a vehicle so that the personnel are mobile.

Question 3: scientific activities (risk-based approach) and data collection activities

The risk based approach has been used in coming up with food safety decisions. This has been used when importers intend to register new products for the purpose of importation. The same is done when new locally produced products are to be registered.

The country does not currently have a stand-alone food-borne disease surveillance system, but collects data from the national disease surveillance system where some food-borne diseases such as anthrax are captured. This leads to detection of outbreaks.

Institutions conducting inspections provide data to the FSAB which compiles a report on factories that comply with minimum hygienic requirements for food premises.

There are no mechanisms for identifying food consumption patterns yet. The country is yet to carry out national food consumption data in order to come up with patterns. Efforts are underway to establish the mechanism.

Question 4: Priority areas for capacity building in food safety

Nationally there is a need to build capacity in:

1. Risk based sampling
2. Risk based inspection
3. Risk assessment
4. Risk based monitoring
5. Communication in the National Codex Office.

Question 5: Codex Standards: national priorities, interests and implementation

Which specific Codex Standards and related texts (currently under development or already existent) are currently of most importance and interest to your country)

The country places importance in all Codex Standards and texts currently in existence and under development. This is because we find that all kinds of food products are currently coming from all across the world. This results in the country having to use different standards when registering these products.

What are the current priority areas for setting national Standards and whether there is a need for further or new work in this regard by Codex

The priority area is currently on import, exports and certification Standards.

Status of inclusion of Codex Standards in national regulations and their implementation

All national food Standards and regulations are currently based on Codex standard where available.

Difficulties in the inclusion of Codex Standards in national regulations and their implementations (e.g. difficulties in the interpretation of Codex Standards, shortcoming in the food control system, etc.)

The shortcoming is that gazetting of national regulations is a slow process where as Codex food Standards are quickly changing.

Question 6: Participation in the Codex Alimentarius Commission and its subsidiary bodies.**PRIORITY CODEX MEETINGS ATTENDED AND SPONSORED BY ZIMBABWE IN 2012.**

NO.	Meeting.	Venue. Dates	Sponsor
1	CAC	Switzerland July 2012	Ministry of Health
2	CCPR	China April 2012	Ministry of Health
3	CCMAS	Hungary March 2012	Ministry of Health
4	CCNFSDU	Germany November 2012.	Ministry of Health

The country would also prioritise other meetings like CCFL, CCFICS, CCFFV, CCFH and CCPFV but there are no funds for that. Zimbabwe graduated from the Trust Fund two years ago. There is need to source funds so that there is wider in-country consultation before attendance of meetings.

Question 7: Participation in FAO/WHO Activities on Scientific Advice

So far Zimbabwe has not participated in the activities of these institutions. This is due to resource constraints.