



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

**FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR NORTH AMERICA AND THE SOUTH WEST
PACIFIC**

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19 – 22 September 2012

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

(replies to CL 2012/6-NASWP of New Zealand and Tonga)

Question 1: Strengthening National Food Control Systems

Please describe any significant developments/actions taken in your country to improve national food control systems. These may include actions relating to: National food law and regulations; food control management e.g. food administration structures, initiatives to improve multi-sectoral collaboration; inspection services; laboratory infrastructure and activities; information dissemination; training. Please also describe priority food safety issues to be addressed nationally and regionally.

NEW ZEALAND

Amalgamation of NZFSA and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

As previously reported, the NZ Food Safety Authority was re integrated into the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry as from 1 July 2010 as part of broader public sector restructuring and in keeping with the Government's decision to promote an integrated approach to biosecurity. The new ministry was renamed the Ministry for Primary Industries in April 2012 with the integration of the Ministry of Fisheries under the new structure.

The merger significantly enhances our ability to deliver high-quality services and support to the whole of the primary sector, producers through to processors and exporters. It also enables us to deliver more integrated strategic advice on long-term economic growth through the sustainable management of natural resources used by the primary sector.

Regulatory reform

The Food Bill

The Food Bill is a legislative priority for both the Minister for Food Safety and the Ministry for Primary Industries. It will modernize the current legislation and introduce a regulatory framework for improved food safety outcomes. This reflects the Government's regulatory reform programme to address, among other things, the regulatory burden faced by businesses.

The Food Bill applies to all food sold in New Zealand including imported food and food produced for export. The Bill establishes a risk based framework that will provide more flexibility for food businesses and ensures they take responsibility for producing safe food. The degree of control each Food Bill tool imposes will be commensurate with the risks posed by the food production activity.

The Food Bill supports a single New Zealand base standard that is the platform for exports. It also aims to improve the interface and consistency with other food legislation i.e. the Animal Products Act 1999, Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines Act 1997 and the Wine Act 2003.

The Food Bill was introduced in March 2010 and the Select Committee reported back to Parliament in December 2010. The Bill has been waiting to progress since then, but has been delayed due to other priorities for the Government. The Minister for Food Safety has asked the Ministry for Primary Industries to make some improvements to the drafting of the Bill to ensure the policy objectives agreed to by Cabinet are clearly reflected. These changes will be included in a supplementary order paper to be considered alongside the Bill when reintroduced into the House.

There has been some lobbying around the influence that Codex has on New Zealand's food security in relation to the Food Bill.

MPI's response has been that

- the Bill has been written by New Zealanders for New Zealanders and our own domestic food market.
- New Zealand contributes to the development of Codex standards in order to ensure that international standards, like New Zealand standards, are based on science and risk; and
- New Zealand has an excellent reputation for producing safe food for both consumers here and overseas. This reputation is underpinned by our highly robust domestic food laws, which are both risk-based and science-based.

TONGA

The national management of Food Safety in Tonga is still shared on a sector basis by the: Ministry of Health, Ministry Agriculture, Food, Forestry and Fisheries; Ministry Labor, Commerce and Industries; Ministry of Revenue & Services. In 2004, the government established a new Food portfolio in the Ministry of Agriculture. A National Codex committee was established to oversee the development of the national food safety control system. An Integrated National Food Control and Quality Assurance System with a plan of actions was established in 2005 after a national consultation with public, food producers, food traders, ngo's, etc.. In 2006, a new National Food Bill was submitted to cabinet for process to enactments. However, the enactment of the Bill has been delayed due to a variety unforeseen and unrelated reasons.

The National Food Bill provides for the establishment and operation of a National Food Authority as a single regulatory agency consolidating the responsibility for all food safety and food quality control functions in Tonga. A provision is made for the establishment of a National Food Council with advisory functions and oversight responsibility for the performance of the authority's functions.

The draft regulations on the other hand prescribe detailed rules and standards required to assist in the implementation of the Food Bill. The Food Bill and regulations take into account Codex standards and other related international texts applicable to food safety and food quality control, and are thus in consonance with international requirements, particularly those of the SPS and TBT Agreements.

The National Food Bill was processed in the 2011's Parliament sessions and was directed to be return to the Parliament's Law Review committee for further review, clarifications and amendments of some of the text, to be re-submitted in the 2012's session. The review is further delayed by the long Parliamentary session on a "Vote of no Confidence" issue since June 2012.

Therefore, to date, the Ministry of Health is still the legal Food Safety Authority in Tonga with it's amended Public Health Act in 2008.

Question 2: Strengthening Codex at the national level

Objective 3 of the Regional Strategic Plan aims to promote the development and enhancement of national capacities of Codex Contact Points and supporting infrastructures.

Please describe: i) any significant actions that your country has taken to strengthen Codex at the national level and to promote more effective participation in Codex; ii) any specific actions aimed at strengthening the Codex Contact Point, i.e. consultative structures and processes on Codex matters, including promoting increased involvement and participation of consumers and other stakeholders.

NEW ZEALAND

With the re integration of the NZFSA into the newly established Ministry for Primary Industries, the Codex related functions were relocated in the new Ministry. A new International Standards Organization group was established within the new ministry bringing together the functions of the Codex, OIE and the IPPC. The new structure was specifically designed to promote co location and closer communication at the national level on matters related to food safety, plant health and animal health.

Following the merger of NZFSA and MAF, the Codex team organized an internal workshop for national professionals across the various branches of MAF to promote understanding of Codex within the enlarged organization and support wider input and engagement on codex matters.

A similar workshop was held for the benefit of external stakeholders.

TONGA

The work of Codex at the national level is managed by the National Codex Alimentarius Committee within the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Forests and Fisheries. The ministry also host the Codex Contact Point. The National Codex committee has been really hampered by the long delay in the enactment of the National Food Bill. The long transition period has impacted on the both the Ministry of Food but also on all Food Safety related ministries and partners.

The coordination of national opinions, views and national position is getting harder and harder with the uncertainty of the long delay in the Food Bill. Since 2010, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food, Forests and Fisheries has undergone 3 ministers and also 3 CEO's and that has also affected Codex at national level but especially in the National Codex Committee.

Question 3: Regional Strategic Plan- priority areas for implementation and related training needs

Of the activities listed in the Regional Strategic plan please describe: i) the priority areas for your country; and ii) what additional support through training and development is required to ensure their effective implementation.

NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand has continued to support regional capacity building activities to the extent possible. New Zealand CCP assisted the FAO sub regional office in supporting in country training programmes in Kiribiti and Nauru in November 2010 and May 2012 respectively. These workshops were designed to improve understanding of Codex at the national level and help these countries strengthen national codex administrative structures and followed similar workshops implemented in other parts of the NASWP region over the years.

New Zealand also implemented an on the job training programme for Codex contact points from three Pacific Island countries (Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu). The training workshop was held in Wellington from 27 February to 2 March 2012 with the support of the Codex Trust Fund and was attended by six participants. The training workshop was directly in support of implementation of activity 3.4 of the NASWP Regional Strategic Plan for 2008-2013.

TONGA

The priority areas for Tonga in setting up the Integrated National Food Control and Quality Assurance system, with the exception of the new Food Bill, are: to establish food inspection and food testing systems. Therefore, Tonga is exploring cooperation and assistance to trained future trainers on: food inspection; and food analysis on some basic chemical analysis, physical analysis and micro-biological analysis.

Question 4: Codex Standards- national priorities and interests

Taking into account several CCNASWP Strategic Plan activities (2.5, 3.5, 4.4 and 6.2) please describe: i) which specific Codex standards and related texts (currently under development or already in existence) are of most importance and interest to your country; ii) what are the current priority areas for setting national standards; and iii) use and relevance of Codex standards at national level.

NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand continues to have a policy of ensuring that our standards and guidelines in relation to food are in line with international principles.

At the international level New Zealand is taking the lead in a number of areas including the development of guidelines for the control of zoonotic parasites in meat: *trichinella spiralis* and *cysticercus bovis* in the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene.

TONGA

Tonga's export trade on Cassava was affected by the adoption of the Codex Sweet Cassava standard. Therefore, Tonga participated actively in the all the Codex related process to the standard. With the financial support of the Trust Fund, Tonga was involved in the proposal of new Work on Bitter Cassava down to its final adoption in the 33rd Session of CAC in 2010.

Since 2008, Tonga was also involved in the development of the discussion paper for Kava and Nonu standards. Tonga also lead the electronic Working Group on both Kava and Nonu to review the two proposals for 12th Session of the CCNASWP in Papua New Guinea.

Question 5: Scientific activities and data collection activities

Related to Objective 4 in the Regional Strategic Plan, please describe: i) ongoing activities to determine food safety priorities and ensure the scientific basis of food safety decisions; ii) key data collection activities ongoing to determine key hazards and contaminants in the food supply; and iii) any significant activities related to food monitoring and collection of epidemiological data.

NEW ZEALAND**Pathogen reduction strategies for foodborne *Campylobacter*, *Salmonella* and *Listeria***

Four-and-a-half years into MPI's *Campylobacter* risk management strategy, a 50 per cent reduction in cases of human *Campylobacter* infection caused by food has been achieved over this period of time. However while the general trend has been downwards, MPI wish to see further improvement in this area, and have extensively reviewed the *Campylobacter* performance requirements during 2012, with the New Zealand poultry industry. It is MPI's intention to introduce further change to requirements for *Campylobacter* controls for broiler chicken early January 2013.

The *Salmonella* risk management strategy continues to rely on incoming data associated with the main food sources of this common foodborne pathogen and uses this data to best inform risk management actions where there is the greatest potential for reducing illness. Detailed knowledge of the status of *Salmonella* in New Zealand foods also continues to be an important goal in relation to maintaining market access.

The *Listeria* risk management strategy has focused on improvement to good hygienic practices, particularly for those food businesses that produce ready-to-eat foods. Dedicated workshops and consultation on proposed guidelines for *Listeria* management and control have been the primary focus for the last 18 months.

Iodine Fortification

Iodine is an essential component of the thyroid hormones which play a key role in the normal growth and development of the human body. Poor intakes of iodine can lead to detrimental health outcomes throughout all life stages and include impaired mental development, congenital abnormalities, hypothyroidism, cretinism and goitre (1, 2).

Studies indicating the prevalence of mild to moderate iodine deficiency in the New Zealand population led to the introduction of mandatory fortification of bread with iodine, through the replacement of salt with iodised salt, in New Zealand in September 2009. Organic and unleavened breads are exempt from mandatory fortification requirements.

Results of the post-fortification survey of 530 breads for sale in New Zealand during April 2010 found median iodine concentrations, of various bread types required to contain iodine, to be between 32 and 53µg/100g. As expected, organic breads and crumpets did not contain any iodine as these were excluded from mandatory fortification requirements.

Through the use of dietary modelling techniques estimated iodine intakes of children 5-14 years of age increased by 52µg between baseline and post-fortification. The percentage of children with estimated iodine intakes less than the estimated average requirement (EAR) reduced from 38% at baseline to 4% post-fortification when 1g iodised salt was added to the daily estimated iodine intake of children identified as consumers of discretionary iodised salt from the 2002 Children's Nutrition Survey. Results of this study indicate that in MAF's first year of monitoring, mandatory fortification of bread with iodine has been successful in achieving ideal iodine intakes in over 70% of school-aged children.

Following mandatory fortification of bread with iodine, bread is now the major contributor to dietary iodine intakes (up to 50%), followed by milk and dairy products (20%).

NZ MPI are in the process of conducting a further bread monitoring survey which will include a range of bread type products that are required to contain iodine such as hamburger buns, bread rolls and pita breads. This new data will be used to better estimate iodine intakes of New Zealand children 5-14 years of age.

TONGA

Tonga still targets the establishment of a food analysis laboratory. This will greatly assist in determining food safety priorities for Tonga and the assurance that food safety decisions are based on scientific evidence.

Question 6: Cooperation with relevant international regional organizations

Please provide information on initiatives at national and regional level to promote coordination of work on food standards with other international and regional organizations.

NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand continues to have a strong cooperative relationship with Australia in the area of food standards. Under the joint food standards setting system established within the framework of Australia New Zealand Closer Economic Relations Trade Agreement (ANZCERTA), Food Standards Australia New Zealand is responsible for the development of joint food standards for application in both countries.

TONGA

Tonga via the regional Codex networks of contacts points promotes coordination of work on food standards of interest to the members of the region. In addition are the Tonga's relation to FAO and WHO in participating in their regional activities in capacity building in food safety.

Question 7: Any other matters

NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand does not have any other comments.

TONGA

There are no other matters that Tonga has in response to CL 2012/6-NASWP.