

**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME****FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR NORTH AMERICA AND THE SOUTH WEST  
PACIFIC***12<sup>th</sup> Session, Madang, Papua New Guinea***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 Fiji and Solomon Islands)****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.*

**FIJI****1.1 National Food Laws and Regulations:****1.1.1 FOOD SAFETY ACT 2003 AND FOOD SAFETY REGULATIONS 2009.**

The Food Safety Act was enacted in June 2003 and the Food safety Regulations was enacted in 2009. Both the FSA 2003, and the FSR 2009 were gazette for enforcement on the 5th of June, 2009 as the commencement date. This modern, risk based legal framework are based on the principals on HACCP and harmonized with Codex Alimentarius but customized to suit the local situation in Fiji. This is now replacing the obsolete Pure Food Act which was enacted in 1926 which has now been repealed.

**1.1.2 Public Health Act Cap III:**

The provisions stipulated under the Public Health Act Cap III ensures that no Public Health related incidence related to Food Safety issues from occurring.

**1.1.3 Subdivision of Land Act Cap 140:**

The provisions stipulated under the Subdivision of Land Act Cap 139 ensures that no Food Establishment is situated or operated from an inconvenient environment that is not conducive to Food Safety operations.

**1.1.4 Town and Country Planning Act Cap 139:**

The provisions stipulated under the Town and Country Planning Act Cap 139 ensures that all infrastructures and other amenities including buildings, provision for safe water supply reticulation system, proper accessible roads, reliable electricity supply, telephone lines, optic cables are provided for to all Food Business Operators.

**1.1.5 Environment Management Act 2005.**

The provisions stipulated under the Environment Management Act 2005 ensures that all food sources like land, water, air and sea are pollution free.

## **1.2 Food Control Management:**

### ***1.2.1 Food Administration Structures:***

The Food Administration structures starts at the National Level where the Office of the Central Board of Health is located. The Central Board of Health is a legally constituted body under the Public Health Act Cap III and is the custodian of the Food Safety Act 2003 and the Food Safety Regulations 2009 of which the Permanent Secretary for Health is the Chairperson. The Central Board of Health is also the Competent Authority in Fiji.

The Ministry of Health Food Unit is also located at the National Head Quarters with its core staff which supervise, facilitate and assist in the coordination of food safety activities t from the National level in the sixteen Rural Local Authorities located in remote, rural and peri-urban areas around the country, 12 Town Councils and 2 City councils.

Each Rural and Urban Local Authorities do have their own Local Food Authority as provided for in the FSA and FSR.

We also have our Food Safety Border Control program manned by our Authorized Officers stationed at all our five Ports of Entry and our two International Airports throughout Fiji.

We have just initiated and now trying to establish our Legal Enforcement Unit to oversee all our Food Safety Legal cases proceedings around the country.

### ***1.2.2 Multisectoral Collaborations:***

The Ministry of Health Food Unit have fostered multisectoral collaboration with other Government Departments, Non Government Organizations, Private sectors, Faith based organizations, Consumer Councils though mutual understandings that Food Safety Issues are everybody's business and we all have a role to play in this.

### ***1.2.3 Inspection services:***

The Central Board of Health and all the twenty Local Food Authorities have and manage their own respective Food Inspection Services and the Central Board of Health plays just a supervisory role on this but have powers to verify and nullify any Food Inspection Service certifications if it sees deem fit.

### ***1.2.4 Laboratory Infrastructure.***

We have an Accredited Laboratory at the Institute of Applied Science at USP and a Food Science Laboratory with our Ministry of Agriculture where we normally sent all our Food Samples for testing.

The Ministry of Health has at the moment a small Water Laboratory which do water analysis only and we a trying to develop it so that we can also do Food Sample testing there too. For both Chemical Analysis and Bacteriological identification too.

### ***1.2.5 Information Dissemination:***

The Ministry of Health Food Unit is currently establishing a Food Safety Data Base at our Ministry of Health Head Quarters which when completed will be linked to all other Local Food Authorities around the Country.

The MOH Food Unit do publish and circulate a quarterly E-News letter beginning this year and have completed the first quarter and second quarter edition for 2012. The purpose is to inform our readers regarding our food safety policies, strategies and activities on a quarterly basis. And we also welcome the article contribution from all our stakeholders to be part of our quarterly publications.

### ***1.2.6 Training:***

In the MOH Food Unit we have a schedule for in house training of our own staff as part of our stall capacity building and succession plan for the Unit.

The MOH Food Unit also have a training section which carry out Food Safety Training for all Food Handlers, FBO Managers and Executives in Fiji upon request free of charge.

Our Authorized Officers do attend workshops and training locally and abroad on Food safety matters.

Currently there are 18 Authorized Officers perusing for their Post Graduate Certificate in Food Safety at the Fiji National University. This is first lot of Graduates to do this Food Safety Post Graduate Certificate program.

#### ***1.2.7 Priority Food Safety Issues:***

Our priority in Fiji now is to have our own Water and Food Laboratory to carry out our water and food sample tests.

### **SOLOMON ISLANDS**

#### **a) National Food Laws & Regulations:**

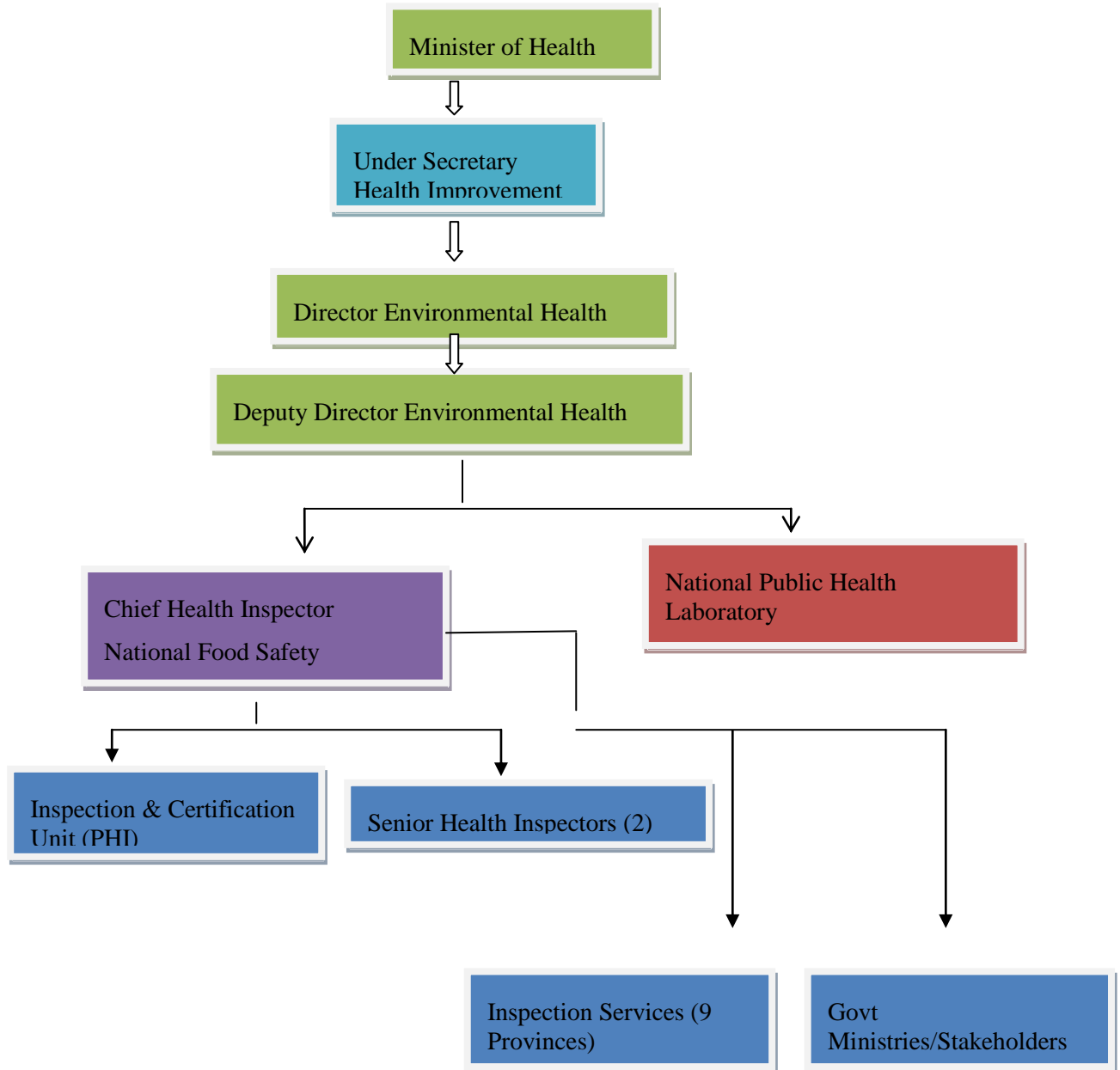
##### **Policy: The National Food Security, Food Safety & Nutrition Policy 2010.**

This is an integrated policy comprising of three stakeholder ministries. The Ministry of Agriculture & Livestock aspect takes on board the Food Security (Land Production) and Ministry of Fisheries & Marine Resources (Seafood), Ministry of Health takes on board the Food safety and nutrition aspect.

Solomon Islands had managed to have 2 pieces of legislations gazetted since 2005 under the auspices of the Pure Food Act 1996. However, with new issues affecting trade globally, there will be a need to review the act. The two regulations are:

- i) **Pure Food (Fish & Fishery Products) Regulations 2005.** This regulation is specifically for fish and fishery products export and thus made to meet the market access requirements of the EU. The intent was to slowly amend and make space for it to be in line with Codex standards. Although the regulation was seen as very stringent for use by the Industry and Competent Authority, it paved the way for the country to export to other markets with lesser stringent requirements.
- ii) **Pure Food (Food Control) Regulations 2010.** This Regulation was made in line with the Codex Standards. It takes on board not only food safety issues but adding value to health was seen as a step forward to combat the increasing NCDs within the country. Commodity standards were incorporated in to minimise the length of time it will take for legal processes to take place. Amendments to cater for emerging issues will be done as and when the need arises. It also allows for charging of fees for services that will be provided.

**b) Food Administration Structure**



The National Food Safety Unit looks after the overall management of food safety issues. The unit also has the responsibility of certifying fish and fishery products for export as the division (EHD) is the designated competent authority to oversee and make sure that the industry meets regulatory requirements as mandated by the importing countries especially EU.

Codex Contact Point is also housed here.

The unit has 4 officers and also have an overall responsibility of liaising with the nine provinces.

**c) Inspection Services**

With the setup of the sub- unit (Inspection & Cert Unit) the inspection of established fish factories and fishing vessels is done using a risk based system with a team of 5 Auditors.

On the other hand the other inspections on food processing factories and restaurants are done by the provincial health inspectors (Environmental Health Officers) who have other allocated tasks as well. The small and developing food sector that exists have big challenges as well in terms of compliance to the newly gazetted regulation. To counteract this, the government through the Australian Volunteers Abroad scheme will be engaging one towards the end of the year to train the Industry on GMP and HACCP for small

business operators. In addition to that as a regulatory requirement, they are required to have their food safety systems in place which will make the work of the inspectors easier.

Most of the inspectors have training in environmental health in general but not specific to food inspection. Its a big challenge when it comes to applying a risk based approach inspection system.

#### **d) Laboratory**

The National Public Health Laboratory is currently manned by 3 full time analyst with 2 Microbiologist and 1 chemist with the assistance of an Australian Volunteer. It is in the process of finalising its Quality Systems Manual to meet the ISO 17025 so that they can get accreditation.

With assistance from an Australian Aid programme (PHAMA), a consultant is currently working on the gaps and how best the programme can assist.

In terms of the Competent Authority meeting importing countries requirements, the analytical aspect is a big draw back as the cost of sending samples overseas is so enormous and also the strict airlines and quarantine requirements is really affecting small island nations as Solomon Islands.

It is anticipated that the Consultant will assist the Laboratory staff in coming up with a Business Plan so that the Lab can be sustainable in the long run.

#### **e) Training & Information Dissemination**

While acknowledging that training is vital to be carried amongst the vulnerable groups within the community, it must be also noted that the Inspectors need more specific trainings as well to take on board the challenges the global world is facing. It is an issue that must not be isolated. Bigger Island countries will have different training needs compared to the smaller islands and therefore for Solomon Islands it is an area that needs urgent assistance.

#### **f) Food Safety Priorities**

When it comes to prioritising, the following are issues that need to be addressed nationally:

- Food Safety Plan of Action based on the National Food Security, Food Safety and Nutrition Policy 2010 and also harmonising it with the Western Pacific Regional Food Safety Strategy 2011-2015.
- Food Safety Emergency Respond Plan
- Imported Food Guidelines.

At the regional level, if a training institution could be identified so that Food Inspectors receive specific training.

#### **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.*

#### **Fiji**

The National Codex Committee had convened a meeting calling all other local International Bodies contact point and had floated the idea that all these local international bodies focal points to have a mechanism in pooling their funding and resources together to co-fund projects and to strategize together on issues of mutual interest in order to have the widest possible impact to Fiji's Population as a whole. The negotiations are at its very infancy stage at the moment .

The Codex standards consultations in Fiji normally covers the widest possible audience as we possibly reach out to including consumers and faith based organizations.

**SOLOMON ISLANDS**

- i) Solomon Islands was fortunate to send in participants to the training in Samoa in 2011 and also in Wellington this year with two participants. One from Agriculture and the CCP.
- ii) The government had hooked up Codex office on the server and still have to inform the Codex Secretariat for the new generic email address. While regular physical meetings are not convened in country, a one-one stakeholder or government ministries consultations are done on arising issues. It is found to be working well as officers are available.

**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.*

**FIJI**

- 3.1 To Conduct a national / regional workshop on Codex for Codex Contact Point and the National Codex Committee members.
- 3.2 To promote regional consultations and sharing ideas and experiences amongst the regional country members on Codex issues.
- 3.3 On-the-job training for PIC CCPs through attachment to QUAD CCPS to observe the management of Codex work.
- 3.4 Develop a mentoring program between the developed and developing countries of the region to enhance the PIC knowledge and understanding of Codex issues, structure and processes and promote more effective participation in international standards development.

**SOLOMON ISLANDS**

- i) To come up with a Policy paper so that Government support can be lobbied and its importance is re-emphasised. In the policy paper the Terms of Reference for NCC members.

One of the priorities as well is the sustainability of participation to codex meetings. Although the government do allocate for attendance to the physical meetings which are in the region, the system of acquiring the funds on a timely manner is another in-country pushback.

- ii) There is a need to run in-country training for Codex Committee members than on the regional level as the number of participants will be limited.

Apart from being knowledgeable on Codex issues which is Food Safety, there is a great interest and need for PIC CCPs and members to be trained on other sister organisations such as OIE, IPPC & SPS as some issues may overlap at times and therefore Solomon Islands would like to propose to the QUAD members if there is a possibility of any such training opportunities could be made available.

**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.*

**FIJI**

Regional countries to have one voice and a united stance in all our submissions to the Codex Commission or to other Codex Sub committees.

**SOLOMON ISLANDS**

- i) The Kava and Nonu discussion papers is seen as important to the country. Although Kava production is small it is slowly picking up according to the Central Bank Annual Report.

Also food labelling issues. Its a big challenge on the smaller island nations and If a data base of approved competent authorities of exporting countries could be made available to the PICs so that inspections at the entry points are made easier.

ii) What are the current priority areas for setting national standards; and

The main exported products from the Solomon Islands include Fish & fishery Products, coconut oil, copra, palm oil, kava, coffee, honey and vanilla.

iii) Use and relevance of Codex standards at national level.

Codex standards are relevant to our situation. Our Pure Food Act 1996 stated that in the absence of any standards, the use of Codex standards is vital. Pure Food (Food Control) Regulations 2010 had incorporated Commodity standards from the Codex existing standards.

**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.*

**FIJI**

The MOH Food Unit had piloted the introduction of Microbiological Risk Assessment (MRA) in to the Food Industry in Fiji with the help of WHO and USP targeting histamine in fish and *Campylobacter jejuni* in RTE chicken.

The MOH Food Unit is in the process of developing it Food Safety Data base system to assist in policy development and risk analysis.

**SOLOMON ISLANDS**

**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;

Imported Food Guidelines is yet to be blessed after thorough consultation with Customs and Agriculture Quarantine

ii) Key data collection activities ongoing to determine key hazards and contaminants in the food supply; and

While there are no current activities to determine the above, Solomon Islands would like to propose to be part of any existing activities on *Campylobacter* in broiler chicken due to the fact that most Island nations do backyard slaughtering of poultry.

iii) Any significant activities related to food monitoring and collection of epidemiological data.

Due to the increasing cases of NCDs amongst many Pacific Islands, the Imported Food Guidelines would be the basis of any data at the port of entry. However due to the in-country analytical capacity, reliance on overseas exporting countries data would be the next option.

**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.*

**FIJI**

The Food Safety Act 2003 and the Food safety Regulations 2009 have adopted Codex standards as Fiji Standards if there is no provision provided for in this Legal Frame work.

**SOLOMON ISLANDS**

At the regional level the Food Secure Pacific with the Framework for Action on Food Security focuses on its endorsed seven themes of which Theme Two states “Regulatory frameworks, enforcement and compliance and public-private sector collaboration”.

**Question 7: Any other matters**