



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

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

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ISSUES RELEVANT TO THE REGION

(prepared by the CCNASWP Regional Coordinator)

Introduction

There are many issues that need to be addressed in the Region. Papua New Guinea believes that as the Regional Coordinator it is essential to comply with Codex Principles developed by the Codex Alimentarius Commission. Whilst there may be some similarities with pressing issues, the RC believes that issues may differ from PICs to QUAD countries. However, with the adoption and use of Codex food standards countries reached certain level of harmonization to ensure trade is facilitated and health of consumers are protected. In that regard some of the major issues includes;

1. Development of Regional Risk Analysis Framework

The region needs to have a risk analysis framework to address risk from farm to table in the food chain. The Risk components that need to be addressed include 1) Risk assessment, 2) Risk management, and 3) Risk communications. However, these risk components maybe well addressed in the QUAD countries but the Pacific Island Countries (PICs) needs to develop strategies in line with the Codex principles used in developed countries to ensure our food trade is well facilitated.

In order to address this issue at the Regional level the future work for PICs with the assistance from QUAD countries is to develop capacity to conduct Risk Analysis workshops on Food Additives and Contaminants; Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods; Pesticide Residues by Joint Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) and Joint Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR) or Australia New Zealand Food Authority (ANZFA), Canada Food Authority, USDA or other International body or Non-Governmental Organization to assist us to update the Food Consumption data to contribute to determine actual food intake to develop Regional Diets for the whole region rather than extrapolation method and predictions. PIC countries such as PNG requires to have National Dietary Exposure Assessment to contribute to regional food consumption data to assess in the development of ADIs and MRLs by JECFA.

Also, it will assist to do risk assessment of chemicals in foods and determine chemical concentration data on food we eat. PICs also need data on biochemical, toxicological and studies on metabolites to make observations on humans to conduct exposure and hazard assessment. In the process PICs would request the Commission to assist Risk Benefit Analysis of fish consumption in the whole North America and South West Pacific Region.

2. Feed for animal Consumption

It is of utmost importance to understand the feed that are given to animals. Human being relies on animals in the food chain. In this regard the feed given to animals must be safe when given to animals. The animal feed is a derivative of several food ingredients. The feed given to animals must not affect the growth and development of an animal in nature. The animals feed has to be good quality to prevent any form of diseases. Thus, feed consumed by food producing animals has to be taken into great consideration and is one of the issues that need to be addressed in the Region.

In the food chain concept the humans have to eat animal foods as protein sources. It is equally important for all of us in the Region to have common strategy in place to ensure that there is transparency and accountability in the work of codex in the region in terms of diet composition for animals such as cattle, chicken, fish, horses, etc. In this regard we need well-articulated information related to feed composition and as much as possible communicate the feed information to consumers especially in the least developed economies such as PICs.

In the developing countries such as the PICs the issues with respect to feed for animals are not well addressed. The PICs needs to learn from the QUAD countries with respect to feed production and processing to appreciate the food animals consume. The PICs needs to develop capacity in this area to adopt Codex standards and adopt them at national level.

With the increase of population in the countries there is pressure on the level of food production. Also, with the adoption of new veterinary drugs such as Ractopamine and other veterinary chemicals or drugs on the list, it is essential to create public awareness in the Region with respect to use of that new drugs to enhance animal production to increase the level of animal food trade in an attempt to address food security.

3. Kit Method

This Kit method needs to be developed and used in the Region to determine the quality of the food that is been traded. This method should be similar to the litmus paper test method in soil science to determine whether the soil is acidic, alkaline or neutral. In the same manner, the region should devise a simple kit method to determine food quality at any point of food production, consumption and trade. If the indicator shows green it will reflect that laboratory tests is not warranted but if it proves red then there is a need for laboratory test to determine the level of any form of contamination to ensure that food is safe for human consumption. This form of appropriate technology must be devised for PICs which have majority of our population are rural based.

4. Labelling of Food

All the food to be consumed must be well labelled. Proper food labelling is a very fundamental issue as it determines the nutrient composition of the food. In labelling it will reflect if food is a derivative of a genetically modified organism (GMO) product with the use of modern biotechnology. It will also reflect if the food was produced as a result of use of irradiation and/or organically grown without the use of any chemicals. The food imported and exported must be in an appropriate language (e.g. English) that can be easily understood by traders and consumers and not in other languages (e.g. Chinese) in the region. The local food importers and exporters have to be made aware of the issues on food labelling at hand to ensure transparency and accountability provisions of Codex Alimentarius Commissions is upheld.

5. Conclusion

It is important to identify common issues affecting the region and be able to develop strategies and incorporate within the Regional Strategic Plan and address it accordingly.