CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

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Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

World Health Organization

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Agenda Item 3 **CX/NASWP 14/13/3**

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

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

13th Session, Kokopo, Papua New Guinea

FAO/WHO ACTIVITIES RELEVANT TO THE REGION, IDENTIFYING PRIORITIES AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

(Prepared by FAO and WHO)

INTRODUCTION

1.   This paper describes FAO/WHO activities in the areas of capacity building and the provision of scientific advice implemented since the 12th Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for North America and the South West Pacific (CCNASWP), with particular attention to identifying priorities and capacity development needs.

A REVIEW OF TECHNICAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT IN THE REGION

2.   FAO and WHO are engaged in a range of food safety and quality capacity development activities at national, regional and global levels, under their respective mandates, goals and work programmes. These capacity development activities directly supported the Codex strategic plan 2008-2013, and its successor, the Codex strategic plan 2014-2019. Similarly, the capacity development activities also contribute to the regional strategic plan for the CCNASWP (2008 -2013), and the new Strategic Plan 2014-2018, which will be considered at the 13th session.

3.   FAO has developed a Multi-Country Programming Framework (CPF) for 14 of its Pacific Island Member Countries, which was adopted by the Ministers of Agriculture at their biennial meeting in Apia, Samoa in 2013. The CPF determines the programmatic focal areas including Food Safety for FAO assistance during the period 2013- 2017 in alignment with the UNDAF. It defines country-specific priorities and expected outcomes and outputs for FAO's cooperation and partnership with each member country. As such the CPF sets the framework for capacity development at national level. It is complemented by the programme of work related to regional public goods, which defines deliverables at regional level. Key issues identified and prioritized by countries during the consultative process are being addressed through the projects under the Technical Cooperation Programme. To assist the situation analysis to identify capacity building needs FAO uses the guidelines to assess capacity building needs for strengthening national food control systems, adapting the methodology to the Pacific Island context as required.

4.   Based on these strategic planning frameworks and tools, FAO and WHO are continuing to work with countries of the region to strengthen their capacity in the area of food safety, quality and related standards.

5.   A summary on capacity building activities and initiatives of global relevance was provided to the 37th Session of CAC and is available in CX/CAC 14/37/14-Add.1 (ftp://ftp.fao.org/codex/meetings/cac/cac37/cac37_14e_Add1.pdf) and CX/CAC 14/37/13 for FAO/WHO Codex capacity-building activities supported by the Codex Trust Fund (ftp://ftp.fao.org/codex/meetings/cac/cac37/cac37_13e.pdf). These papers provide information of relevance to all regions and describe the range of supporting materials (e.g. guidelines, manuals and online resources), key initiatives, international events and global projects which have been delivered or initiated since the last session. An updated review of activities focused on the NASWP region is provided in the following tables.

TABLE 1: TECHNICAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN NASWP REGION

REGIONAL EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES			
Activity	**Organizers**	**Dates**	**Venue**
Technical workshop on developments in Codex relevant to Pacific Island Countries	FAO/WHO/CTF	17-18 September 2012	Madang, Papua New Guinea

REGIONAL EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES			
Activity	**Organizers**	**Dates**	**Venue**
Regional guideline on operational aspects of risk-based inspection of imported food in the Pacific Island Countries	FAO/WHO	Ongoing	N/A
Developing a food security information system for the Pacific	WHO with FAO and SPC	Ongoing	N/A
Development of a practical guide on risk-based food inspection for the Pacific	WHO/FAO	Ongoing	N/A
Strengthening the food safety capacity of members of the Northern Pacific Environmental Health Officers Association (NPEHA)	WHO	Ongoing	Northern Pacific countries and areas
Development of Pacific salt reduction targets for integration into national policy and legal frameworks	WHO	2014	N/A

PROJECTS/DIRECT ASSISTANCE TO COUNTRIES			
Title	**FAO/WHO**	**Country**	**Status**
Strategic Plan for Codex in Fiji	FAO	Fiji	Completed
Strengthening of food control system in the Federated States of Micronesia	FAO	Federated States of Micronesia	Phase 1 completed Phase 2 approved
Assistance with processing and value adding of agricultural products for Niue	FAO	Niue	Ongoing
Development of a project to strengthen components of the national food control system	FAO	Solomon Islands	Under development
Development of a project to strengthen components of the national food control system	FAO	Tonga	Under development
Development of a project to strengthen components of the national food control system	FAO	Republic of Marshall Islands	Approved for implementation in August 2014
Development of project to strengthen food control including safe post-harvest handling, processing and marketing	FAO	Kiribati	Under development
Development of a project to strengthen capacity for implementation of the Food Safety legislation and supporting awareness and education program	FAO	Nauru	Under development
Development of food regulations and standards	WHO	Marshall Islands	Submitted for consideration by the government
Development of food regulations and standards	WHO	Kiribati	Submitted for consideration by the government
Risk-based food inspection training	WHO	Tonga	Completed
Risk-based food facility inspection training	WHO	Federated States of Micronesia	Completed

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<tr><td colspan="4" align="center">PROJECTS/DIRECT ASSISTANCE TO COUNTRIES</td></tr>
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Title	FAO/WHO	Country	Status
Food handler training and curriculum development	WHO	Nauru	Completed
Food safety management during emergencies and technical support to improve food security in Solomon Islands	WHO	Solomon Islands	Completed
Amendments to food labelling regulations	WHO	Fiji	Submitted to government for consideration
A study on trans fatty acids in the Fijian food supply	WHO	Fiji	Completed

FAO/WHO Review on Kava

6.   In response to the request from the 12th Session of CCNASWP, FAO and WHO have facilitated a review of available information and data on the safety of kava when mixed with water and consumed as a recreational beverage. The report will identify any data gaps that exist for conducting a safety assessment.

7.   The final report of the scientific review has been provided to the eWG established at the 12th Session of CCNASWP to revise the project document proposing a regional standard for kava. For further information, please contact Dirk Schulz, Food Safety and Nutrition Officer, FAO Sub-Regional Office for the Pacific (email: dirk.schulz@fao.org) and Peter Hoejskov, Technical Officer – Food Safety & NCD, WHO, Division of Pacific Technical Support, South Pacific Office (E-mail: hoejskovp@wpro.who.int).

Challenges identified during capacity development

8.   Most PICs now have updated or are in the process of updating their national food safety legislation utilising regional Codex-based guidance and regulatory templates.

9.   The concept of risk-based food inspection is being accepted in principle across the region but the transition in applying this concept to front line food inspection will require further capacity development and training of inspectors.

10.   Front line food inspection is often lacking standard operating procedures.

11.   Coordination of multiple agencies involved in the food control system continues to remain a challenge and national food policies or legislation that define the roles and responsibilities of each agency are required for improved coordination.

12.   Except for three of the larger countries food analysis capacity is currently still very limited. Only two laboratories in the PICs are internationally accredited, hampering acceptance of data by trading partners.

13.   Codex still has not reached the required level of recognition by high level decision makers in many countries and hence resource allocation is often insufficient. Likewise food safety is often allocated limited funding and as a result actions are often focused on short term issues, rather than being of a strategic nature addressing both health and trade adequately.

14.   Given that many countries have now graduated from the Codex Trust Fund, members ability to participate physically in Codex committees is constrained by lack of funds.

15.   National food control systems rarely embrace the entire food chain approach from farm to fork. This requires improved coordination and linkages of food safety and quality issues up and downstream across both health and agriculture (including fisheries) sectors, as well as enhancing partnerships between government and private sector.

16.   An evidence based policy development is constrained by lack of data on food consumption/exposure, foodborne disease prevalence, food contamination, etc.

17.   Small and medium size food enterprises (SMEs) struggle to meet international food safety requirements and certified HACCP systems are generally confined to a few larger processors operating in export-oriented markets.

18.   Street food is becoming a common feature and economic factor in many countries and dedicated food handler training and consumer education materials are required.

19.   Datemarking of food items continues to present problems for food control agencies.

20.   Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and Micronutrient Deficiencies (MNDs) remain key issues and there is a need to explore further how Codex and national food control systems can contribute towards the prevention and reduction of these.

21.   Integration of food safety issues into disaster risk management for health and climate change adaptation is weak and high risk of foodborne disease outbreaks during disasters is prevailing.

22.   Active participation in INFOSAN and other international networks is challenged by limited human resource capacity, unclear division of roles and responsibilities and IT limitations.

Identifying Priorities And Capacity Development Needs

23.   Key capacity development issues for government food control agencies include continued support for the development of Codex-based national food safety legislation, raising recognition of Codex among high level decision makers, improving coordination of multiple agencies involved in the food control system, promoting risk-based food inspection, establishing standard operating procedures for food inspection, promoting the food chain approach, strengthening food analysis capacity, strengthening evidence based policy development, and considering how Codex and national food control systems can contribute towards the prevention and control of NCDs and MNDs.

24.   Among the private sector, there is a need to build the capacity of small and medium size food enterprises to meet international food safety requirements, as well as guidance for food handlers and consumers.

25.   CCNASWP members are invited to consider the above issues and provide feedback on:

- How to improve ongoing FAO and WHO activities to strengthen food safety and quality in the region.

- Ranking the above identified issues in terms of priority needs at national and regional levels which require further support from FAO and WHO.