



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

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

13th Session, Kokopo, Papua New Guinea

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 2014/19-NASWP of Cook 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.

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Custom's Data System: An automatic data system was put in place at the Customs, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management for the pre processing of custom clearance prior to arrival of goods into the Cook Islands. All overseas supplier code are registered into the system whereby importers enter onto the templates before sending template back to Customs. Suspicious, unusual or new product that was not registered in the system will be flagged and Customs will seek more information from the importer. Products will be examined upon arrival by Customs and Bio-security officials before it is released to importers or agents. In the event products were damaged on arrival then this will be referred over to the Ministry of Health. Depending on the condition of the damaged product, MOH will condemn these at the cost of the importers or agent.

Food Regulation 2014 - The long waited "Food Regulation" is now endorsed. The regulations apply to food products (a) imported in the Cook Islands (b) sold or prepared for sale (c) exported from the Cook Islands. Also there are provisions that covers the general requirements on food and food ingredients, labeling, advertising, use by dates, food additives, food standards, food safety standards, food business proprietors, food handling, notification, food storage, food processing, packaging transportation, food disposal, health of food handlers, hygiene and miscellaneous provisions on food recall and penalties.

Egg Standards - A draft standard for the importation of eggs is in progress, waiting for feedback from stakeholders and the Ministry of Agriculture is the leading agency providing guidance for the importation of eggs in accordance with Biosecurity Act 2008.

Food Safety Emergency Response Plan is in progress and **Food and liquor annual registration and licensing** are now being implemented under the Ministry of Health.

Import levy on sugary drinks. Government has now introduced tax on fizzy drinks such as coke, etc.

FAO/WHO Video Production Team –Sue Price and Declan McCormack based in Rome arrived into the country during the month of August 2014 to develop two video productions on Nutrition and Food Security. The production was to be screened in the Small Island State Forum in Samoa in September this year as well.

Codex Trust Fund Support The Cook Islands acknowledged the financial assistance of country representation to three Codex Committee meetings for 2013/14 since been graduated from the program in 2009.

Ministry of Marine Resources (MMR) (Fisheries) recently engaged a Laboratory Technical advisor Mr. Shakir Kareem to strengthen Codex standards in terms of developing a good laboratory processes, policies and standard of operation procedures and also initiated discussions with the Ministry of Health in the area of improving food safety and training of public health inspectors on basic and advance training on HACCP and

ISO 9001 Management System. The long term objectives of the agency is to establish a competent authority for food by setting regulatory frame work in particular the area of export of fish and fish products to international market.

Question 2: Strengthening Codex at the national level

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.

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The adoption of the Food Regulation 2014 initiate the need for capacity developments as a priority in strengthening areas of emergency responses, adapting to climate changes and its effects on food safety, sustainability and mitigation of food borne diseases.

Question 3: Codex Standards national priorities and interests

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.

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The Cook Islands has been in recent years requested technical assistance through the FAO-SAPA office in Samoa for national food safety training for key stakeholders involved with all aspects of the food control system and to pursue such request again in the CCNASWP forum where possible assistance could be considered by other international partners in the work of codex.

The launch of the Food regulations 2014 draws wide interest of strengthening national food control system within the food industries and food labeling is considered important area of training on codex guidelines and standards for regulatory authorities, food industries and retailers, and consumers.