

CODEx ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy - Tel: (+39) 06 57051 - E-mail: codex@fao.org - www.codexalimentarius.org

CRD5

October 2016

E

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR EUROPE

*30th Session, 3 – 7 October 2016
Astana, Kazakhstan*

OPENING SPEECH OF THE AMBASSADOR OF THE NETHERLANDS

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to greet you today on behalf of the Coordinating Committee for Europe for Codex Alimentarius.

It is not by chance that I have this privilege to be part of the official opening of the 30th Official Session. There are two reasons for that. Number one – historically the Netherlands has been enjoying all the benefits international trade can bring to a nation. Number two are the Dutch refined, export oriented farming tradition and passion for efficiency.

Let me equip you with a few facts and figures to explain the commitment of the Netherlands to the continuous dialogue between countries on food safety and food security issues.

As I mentioned, traditionally the Netherlands has always had an open economy and the level of trade with other countries has always been very significant. Significant to the extent that in 2015, the value of our exports was more than 80% of the Netherlands' GDP. In this total exports agriculture is BIG. The total value of the Dutch agricultural exports was 82.4 billion euros in 2015. It makes us the world's second-largest exporter of agri-food products after the United States of America. Attaining these results on a land area that has the same population as Kazakhstan but is 65 times smaller, gives you an idea about the intensity of agricultural production and its high efficiency that gives us the highest yield per square kilometer in the world.

All this goes much further than trade alone. The Dutch agriculture sector has succeeded in maintaining its lead over international competitors through continual investment in innovation in agri-food value chains and excellent service. The Netherlands is a hotbed of R&D in the area of agri-food, due largely to the excellent knowledge infrastructure and close collaborations between knowledge institutes, government and the private sector, the so-called "golden triangle". Key R&D centres include Wageningen University and Research Centre, the Top Institute Food & Nutrition and the public-private innovation program Food and Nutrition Delta. Twelve out of the 40 largest Food & Beverage companies in the world have their R&D facilities located in the Netherlands.

It is no surprise therefore that we attach much importance to Codex and food safety standards and for this reason the Netherlands is coordinator of the European region of the Codex Alimentarius. The Netherlands attaches great importance to the discussion on and synchronization of positions to ensure a level playing field for companies that feed the world. Mutual exchange of information on proposed regulatory initiatives and evolving problems arising from food control are vital in strengthening food control infrastructures. The importance of being on the same page when it comes to the development of standards for food products cannot be overestimated.

As such, the Netherlands is strong believer in the instruments and resolution mechanism offered and covered by Codex Alimentarius. We are a massive contributor to the Codex Trust Fund. The Netherlands puts 2 million euro into the Fund for a 5 year period to ensure active participation of all countries – members of the Coordinating Committee for Europe, not only this week, but also during following sessions, and capacity building events during the next cycle of the Fund.

I am happy to see today such a high level of representation by all countries. It means that the next few days will be dedicated to the exchange of expert opinion and to constructive dialogue to shape new policy trends in food safety. I trust this session will advance providing safer food for the growing world population. I see that antimicrobial resistance is high on the agenda and hope that the participants can effectively find means to plan a remedy for humanity.

We are very keen on this discussion. The Netherlands has helped putting the issue high on the political agenda, including on the agenda of last weeks' UN General Assembly. The Netherlands is actively involved in the further implementation of the Global Action Plan of WHO and in the Codex Task Force on AMR that will be re-established.

In fact there is a third reason for my being here today. It is an honour to serve in this sunny, windy, vast, resourceful and young Republic of Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan is a reliable partner of the European Union with a global and strategic outlook, especially when it comes to food safety and food security. Kazakhstan Government, farsightedly, has launched a number of state programmes to become a net exporter of food staples in the region. Kazakhstan's recent adhesion to the WTO makes Codex an important guiding partner in this ambition. The Netherlands stands ready to cooperate with Kazakhstan in implementing WTO-obligations. Dutch companies stand ready to continue sharing their technologies and expertise to improve efficiency in the agrifood sector.

The Netherlands, as coordinator of the European Region expresses its gratitude to the Government of Kazakhstan, minister of National Economy Mr Kuandyk Bishimbayev, vice-minister of national economy Mr Timur Zhaksylykov, chairman of the Committee for the protection of consumers' rights Mr Aliakpar Matishev, Chief sanitary officer of Kazakhstan Mr Zhandarbek Bekshin for hosting the 30th official session of CCEURO in Astana. I would like to thank Kazakhstan's organizing committee for its efforts and resources to ensure impeccable logistics for this important event.

Dear participants,
150 years ago the German Ludwig Feuerbach said "we are what we eat" (Man ist was man isst). Nowadays to this should be added: "and we eat what Codex feeds us". In short: we are what Codex feeds us. People have to trust they are in your capable and caring hands. I wish you a constructive dialogue, fruitful meetings and successful discussion. Thank you.