



## JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

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

#### Fifteenth Session

Port Vila, Vanuatu, 16-20 September 2019

### THE FUTURE OF FOOD SAFETY: OUTCOME OF THE FIRST FAO/WHO/AU INTERNATIONAL FOOD SAFETY CONFERENCE AND THE INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON FOOD SAFETY AND TRADE – WHAT'S NEXT?

(Prepared by FAO and WHO)

#### International Food Safety Conference and the International Forum on Food Safety and Trade

1. Under the overall theme “The future of food safety – Transforming knowledge into action for people, economies and the environment”, FAO and WHO contributed, together with the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the African Union (AU) to The First International Food Safety Conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 12-13 February 2019, as well as the International Forum on Food Safety and Trade in Geneva, Switzerland on 23-24 April 2019.
2. The two international events brought together more than 1500 food safety leaders from over 140 national governments and agencies, academia, international organizations and the private sector. They highlighted the integral role of food safety in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as in supporting the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition.
3. In Addis Ababa, participants discussed how to align food safety strategies and approaches across sectors and borders to tackle future food safety challenges resulting from ongoing changes in climate as well as in global food production and supply systems. Amongst others, topics of discussion were the importance of increasing the investment in sustainable and safe food systems as well as the accessibility of scientific advances, innovation and digitalization, leaving no one behind. The conference also highlighted the need to empower the consumer through improved and evidence-based health and nutrition information and education. (Annex I)
4. In Geneva, participants further discussed the trade related issues of food safety. The Forum highlighted the continued relevance of the Codex Alimentarius as the international reference point for food standards, both in relation to public health and to trade, as well as the interlinkages between trade and food safety. Amongst others, participants discussed the challenges and opportunities arising from rapid technological change and digitalization, as well as the importance of partnerships and cross-sectoral, international approaches to keep food safe for everyone. (Annex II)
5. Other information are related to the two events is available at: <https://www.who.int/food-safety/international-food-safety-conference/>

#### Discussion

6. In order to support the development of sustainable food safety systems for the next decades at global, regional and national levels, further action could be taken building on the momentum created by the aforementioned international events.
7. The scope of this discussion is broader than the Critical and Emerging Issues discussed under *Agenda Item 3.1 Food safety and Quality Situation in Countries of the Region* and goes beyond the Codex mandate. The Committee is encouraged to identify the key areas that need actions for the next decade. Annexes I and II may contain such elements but do not necessarily cover all pertinent areas.
8. The Committee is invited to:
  - Identify action areas of food safety for the next decade
  - Identify roles and concrete actions which Member States (individually or regional grouping), FAO/WHO and/or other stakeholders can take initiatives in
  - Indicate expected timeline for each area

| Areas for actions are required   | Member States (individually or regional grouping) | FAO/WHO  | Other stakeholders                               | Timeline          |
|--|---|--|--|-------------------|
| <i>e.g. Raise public awareness and Food safety education</i>                   | <i>- drive education campaigns</i>                | <i>- provide educational tools</i>   | <i>- support national and community campaign</i> | <i>continuing</i> |
| <i>e.g. Identify areas of national food control system require improvement</i> | <i>- conduct national assessment workshop</i>     | <i>- provide tools for assessment of national food control system</i><br><i>- organize regional workshop</i> | <i>- participate by invitation</i>               | <i>by 2021</i>    |
| 1  |   |  |  |                   |
| 2  |   |  |  |                   |
| 3  |   |  |  |                   |
| 4  |   |  |  |                   |
| 5  |   |  |  |                   |

**THE FIRST FAO/WHO/AU INTERNATIONAL FOOD SAFETY CONFERENCE**  
**Addis Ababa, 12-13 February 2019**

**“Chairperson’s Summary”**

The First FAO/WHO/AU International Conference on Food Safety met in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 12 to 13 February 2019, with more than 500 participants representing over 110 governments, several international and regional intergovernmental organizations as well as civil society and the private sector.

Participants recalled the previous and ongoing efforts<sup>1</sup> made by governments and other stakeholders; highlighted the integral role of food safety in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2, 3 and 8; and recognized that foodborne diseases make 600 million people ill and cause 420,000 premature deaths annually<sup>2</sup> and that this translates into productivity losses of US\$95 billion a year in low- and middle-income countries alone<sup>3</sup>. Participants further noted the ongoing changes in climate and in global food production and supply systems<sup>4 5</sup> and the need to empower the consumer through improved and evidence-based health and nutrition information and education.

Participants emphasized, *inter alia*, the importance of:

1. Integrating food safety into national and regional policies as a means to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, by setting a firm political commitment and coherent actions across multiple sectors in order to promote safe and diversified healthy diets;
2. Enhancing the participation of all countries in the standard-setting work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and facilitating the implementation of Codex standards;
3. Strengthening cross-sectoral collaboration and applying multisectoral “One Health” approaches to address sustainability challenges in food production systems and ensure the availability of and access to safe, sufficient and nutritious foods;
4. Combatting and containing antimicrobial resistance in the food chain through prudent use of antimicrobials in animal and plant production;
5. Integrating food safety into national plans and commitments for climate change adaptation and mitigation;
6. Increasing investment in national food control systems, enhancing risk-based approaches and including building capacity for managing food safety emergencies, in order to ensure the safety of food supplies in informal and formal markets, with specific attention to vulnerable populations;
7. Ensuring adherence to adequate food safety management in the food sector, with special attention to small-scale operators, and leveraging private sector investment in building safe and resilient food and feed supply chains;
8. Enhancing partnership among public sector, private sector and academia/research, including South-South cooperation, which is essential for fostering innovation as a means of improving safety and resilience of food systems;
9. Taking actions to ensure that all countries can benefit from the developments in food sciences and technologies that are providing new tools for the assessment and management of food safety risks;
10. Enabling consumers and civil society to engage and contribute to food safety discussions, foster ownership of decisions, collaborative actions and public confidence in food systems, and drive enhanced food safety practices, sustainable food systems and related policies;
11. Raising public awareness, promoting food safety education and training in communities and schools, fostering dialogue and inspiring actions to enhance food safety, using the World Food Safety Day as a global reminder of the need to maintain a high level of public awareness;
12. Improving the evidence base for food safety decisions through systematic efforts on the monitoring of foodborne hazards and the surveillance of foodborne diseases, on estimating the public health and economic burden of foodborne diseases, and on the improvement of food safety risk assessment methodologies;
13. Contributing to global integrated data and sharing expertise, knowledge and information on existing and emerging food safety issues so as to inform forward-looking policies, regulations and programmes.

<sup>1</sup> FAO Conference Resolutions 3/2017, 4/2017, 9/2017, 3/2013, 2/97; World Health Assembly Resolutions WHA53.15, WHA55.16, and WHA63.3; the Rome Declaration on Nutrition and the Framework for Action adopted by the Second International Conference on Nutrition organized by FAO and WHO in 2014 as well as and the General Assembly resolution 70/259 proclaiming the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025); the Rome Declaration adopted by the First World Food Summit in 1996; UN General Assembly resolution 70/1 adopting universal and transformative Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

<sup>2</sup> WHO estimates of the global burden of foodborne diseases, WHO, 2015

<sup>3</sup> The Safe Food Imperative: Accelerating Progress in Low- and Middle-Income Countries, World Bank, 2018

<sup>4</sup> FAO, 2016. The State of Food and Agriculture: Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security. Rome, FAO

<sup>5</sup> FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2018. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2018.

Building climate resilience for food security and nutrition. Rome, FAO

**JOINT STATEMENT BY FAO, WHO AND WTO**  
**WTO International Forum on Food Safety and Trade**  
**23-24 April 2019, Geneva, Switzerland**

1. Foodborne diseases have a significant impact on public health, food security, productivity and poverty. Nearly 600 million people fall sick and 420 000 die each year because of foodborne diseases, resulting in the loss of 33 million healthy life years. Low- and middle-income countries are the most affected, with an annual estimated cost of USD 110 billion in productivity losses, trade-related losses and costs on the treatment of illnesses due to the consumption of unsafe food.

2. Under the umbrella theme "The Future of Food Safety – Transforming Knowledge into Action for People, Economies and the Environment", two events were held: the First FAO/WHO/AU International Conference on Food Safety, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 12-13 February 2019; and the International Forum on Food Safety and Trade, held at the WTO, in Geneva, Switzerland, on 23-24 April 2019, with the support of FAO and WHO. They highlighted the magnitude of the challenges and proposed knowledge-based actions to address food safety-related issues. They also underlined the crucial role that investment in effective food safety systems, including in knowledge, human resources, institutions and infrastructure, can play in achieving food safety goals. While effective food safety systems have costs, the associated economic benefits and savings in public health expenditures outweigh these costs.

3. Global trade in food products has expanded more than threefold over the last two decades, rising to USD 1.5 trillion in 2017. Developing countries are increasingly participating in global food trade, both as exporters and importers. At the same time, global agricultural value chains have become complex, and food products are often grown, processed and consumed in different countries. While these trends have contributed to increasing the quantity and diversity of foods available to consumers throughout the world, they have also raised concerns with regard to the safety of the traded food. Consumers have the right to expect that both locally produced and imported food are safe. In this context, the development of international food safety standards for application at domestic levels and in international trade has become more important than ever before.

4. Food safety and trade are key enablers to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Together, the framework of international food standards and trade rules established by FAO, WHO and WTO supports Members in their efforts to achieve the SDGs, namely SDG 1 on poverty; SDG 2 on hunger, food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture; SDG 3 on healthy lives and wellbeing; SDG 8 on economic growth, employment and work; SDG 12 on responsible consumption and production, and SDG 17 on global partnerships.

**Participants of the international Forum on Food Safety and Trade, held at the WTO with the support of FAO and WHO, particularly underscored the following:**

5. The continuous progression of science and technology presents opportunities and challenges for both food safety and trade. Technology, including the use of "big data", allows for better detection, investigation, monitoring and surveillance tools and methods for food safety risks assessment. It facilitates consumers' access to new foods, produced with different plant varieties and animal breeds and through more efficient processes. It allows food systems to respond to climate change and environmental challenges. It also accelerates trade procedures and facilitates transactions. Digital technologies present opportunities to improve transparency and traceability in food supply chains and, thus, can contribute to enhancing food safety and facilitating safe trade. However, there are concerns surrounding data privacy, compatibility with existing regulatory frameworks and growing disparities in access to technology. Addressing these concerns and bridging the technological divide will require awareness-raising, significant public and private investments, and capacity development efforts.

6. Global trade is evolving rapidly, and the WTO Agreements on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, on Technical Barriers to Trade and on Trade Facilitation contribute to economic development by removing unnecessary barriers to trade in food. Food safety measures that are based on scientific principles and on Codex Alimentarius standards ensure optimal health protection and facilitate safe trade. Each 1 percent saving in trade transaction costs is estimated to result in a global trade benefit of USD 43 billion. The benefits are especially great on the trade of perishable products, including fresh food. Tools such as e-certification can be used to achieve greater efficiency in the way goods move across borders – without compromising effectiveness of food safety controls – while developments such as e-commerce open up new avenues for trade.

7. As scientific knowledge, technology and food trade continue to evolve. Effective governance is required to respond properly to these changes. Food safety regulations need to adapt continuously to these new realities and to the changing consumer needs, preferences and perceptions. The FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius is the single most important international reference point for food safety standards that guide Members in protecting consumers' health and promoting fair practices in food trade. With the constant evolution of food systems and trade practices, the role of Codex is more crucial than ever and the importance of its work is increasing.

8. Coordination and partnerships at the national, regional and international levels are required to build the necessary capacity to benefit from the opportunities arising from scientific and technological advancements and to address the challenges that they create. Public and private sectors, operators representing all parts of the food chain, civil society organizations and academic and research institutions have a role to play. They are essential in developing sound, effective and credible systems of food safety management. Creating an enabling environment for public-private partnerships is key, given their important role in stimulating private investments and fostering a more efficient use of public resources.

9. FAO, WHO and the WTO should continue their coordinated work, together with the World Bank Group and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), at the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF). This global partnership supports governments, farmers, processors and traders in developing countries to meet international SPS standards, thus facilitating safe trade and promoting public health.

**FAO, WHO and WTO are committed to sustaining the global momentum created by the events on The Future of Food Safety held in Addis Ababa and Geneva and to supporting our Members in this regard. In particular:**

- In line with our respective mandates, we will continue to provide neutral multilateral fora for dialogue, enabling Members to share knowledge and experiences related to the use of new technologies and regulatory options. Our objective is to promote a better understanding among Members and contribute to reducing disparities in their ability to benefit from these technologies, paving the way for regulatory convergence and harmonization.
- We call for increased support for capacity development to enable disadvantaged and vulnerable populations to benefit from technological progress.
- We stress the importance of capacity development to enable all Members to benefit from international trade and to promote collaboration between customs and national SPS agencies, both within and across borders, to ensure effective and efficient controls and thereby facilitate safe trade of food.
- We emphasize the importance of harmonization of national food safety requirements with Codex standards and invite all Members to continue engaging in Codex work to keep these standards relevant and up-to-date.
- We remain committed to supporting the standard-setting work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, so it continues playing its critical role in protecting public health and facilitating fair trade and it remains relevant by properly responding to changes in technology and trade.
- We are committed to enhancing the capacity of developing countries to engage effectively in Codex work. We count on Members and donors to continue supporting the efforts of the FAO/WHO Codex Trust Fund.
- We reaffirm our commitment to continue, through our capacity-development activities, providing support to developing countries in building strong food safety control systems, implementing measures to facilitate safe trade of food, and engaging in the FAO/WHO/WTO framework of food safety standards and trade rules.
- We stress the importance of integrating food safety into national public health, food security, environmental, trade and development agendas, and supporting the multisectoral "One Health" approaches. This includes building networks and incorporating socio-economic and environmental aspects into national food safety efforts, as a means to achieving public health and economic development objectives.
- We remain committed to continuing our joint work, based on our respective mandates and applicable policies, including through the STDF partnership platform, and to exploiting further synergies between our organizations and other agencies working in the area of food safety and trade for the benefit of our Members.