



**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR THE NEAR EAST**

Ninth Session

FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy, 15-19 May 2017

**PRIORITIZATION OF THE NEEDS OF THE REGION AND POSSIBLE
APPROACHES TO ADDRESS THEM**

(Prepared by FAO and WHO)

Introduction and Background

1. This paper follows from the summary and analysis of critical and emerging food safety and quality issues in agenda item 3a, CX/NE 17/09/3 and is to promote discussion by the Committee in order to:
 - i. Explore the priority issues highlighted in the responses received to the questionnaire on critical and emerging food safety and quality issues, as well as solicit additional input from the members who did not respond to the questionnaire to enrich the discussion; and
 - ii. Consider and recommend relevant follow up actions at national, regional or international levels including the key appropriate stakeholders responsible for the recommended follow-up actions.

Priority critical and emerging food safety and quality issues

2. With reference to agenda item 3a, Figure 1, keeping in mind that responses were received from only six countries, the most frequently cited critical and emerging issues (identified as both critical and emerging) are:
 - a) Food Contamination
 - b) Weak national food control system
 - c) Climate change
3. Other critical issues raised were risk/assessment/risk management, the need for improved regional coordination and Antimicrobial resistance (AMR). A summary of the most frequently cited critical and emerging issues is provided below with some possible follow-up actions. Detailed explanations of the issues are also provided in the Annex of CX/NE 17/09/3.
 - *Food Contamination*
4. This issue covered a range of contaminants including chemical contaminants, micro-biological contaminants mycotoxins and marine-biotoxins, as well as micro-pollutants. The limited capacity and capability in countries to monitor and respond to food contamination and outbreaks was raised, including the increased risk due cross-border trade. There is a need to consider how to address a weakness in monitoring and surveillance, also with regards to strengthening links and information sharing at regional and international level, e.g. through INFOSAN. The issue of contaminants in the food supply chain is also closely related to the capacity of the national food control system, in particular the implementation of effective preventative approaches and food safety monitoring and surveillance.
 - *Weak national food control system*
5. A number of issues in relation to national food control systems have been highlighted and they include fragmented and/or overlapping and outdated legislation, as well as multiple ministries and agencies concerned. Improved coordination, cooperation and information sharing across sectors, as well as updated legislation are required to address these issues. The need to strengthen food safety monitoring and surveillance capacities was another area of concern.

FAO and WHO have developed a number of guidance documents that can assist countries to strengthen national food control systems (such as Assuring Food Safety and Quality: Guidelines to Strengthen National Food Control System¹; the FAO series on risk based inspection², and the latest manual on imported food control³). The Codex Alimentarius Principles and Guidelines for National Food Control Systems (CAC/GL 82-2013) also offers guidance to countries on how best to design their food control system and implement specific control measures. The new Food Control System Assessment tool, which has been field tested in several countries, can serve as a basis to analyse performance of national food control systems and define a shared vision among stakeholders of the priorities for progress. A number of tailored made capacity development approaches could then be formulated and prove useful to strengthen national food control systems, either on a national or a regional basis.

- *Climate change*

6. Climate change and variability can impact on the occurrence of foodborne pathogens and food safety hazards at various stages of the food chain. It also can have an impact on the agriculture and food systems through multiple pathways and there is a need for countries to develop contingency plans to prepare for the management of the potential consequences arising, supported by early warning and foresight systems.

- *Antimicrobial resistance*

7. The control and prevention of diseases caused by foodborne bacteria and their associated antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a global concern that requires cross-sectoral collaboration and action. Since the adoption of Resolutions on AMR in 2014 and 2015 in WHO and FAO respectively, and the adoption of the WHO Global Action Plan (GAP) on AMR in 2015, FAO, OIE and WHO have been working jointly as well as independently to follow up on the implementation of the Resolutions and the GAP in their respective areas. Tackling AMR requires multi-sectoral collaboration under a "One Health approach" and there is need to strengthen capacity building for surveillance for AMR including increased understanding of the contribution of the food chain to the overall AMR problem.

Discussion on critical and emerging issues

8. To support the discussion, the Committee is encouraged to reflect on the relevance of the issues to the region, and any relevant follow up action that might be needed (within or outside of Codex). In doing so, please consider:
- a) How does this process to identify critical and emerging issues contribute to strengthen a regional approach to address common food safety issues of concern in the region?
 - b) Any ongoing activity in your country or in the region relevant to the topic.
 - c) Is one or more issue(s) currently being addressed through an ongoing FAO, WHO or other bilateral capacity development project or programme?
 - d) Which of the critical and/or emerging issues does the Committee consider most important to address?
 - e) In addition, Member countries may like to consider:
 - f) Whether one or more issue(s) could benefit from any additional follow up action such as discussion or work within Codex;
 - g) Whether a direct activity could be carried out by your government;
 - h) Whether one or more issue(s) could be supported through ongoing or future capacity development support from FAO, WHO or bilateral organizations.

Conclusions

9. Based upon the above discussion, the Committee is asked to prioritize the emerging and critical issues for follow up action within CCNE and propose suitable approaches for follow up.
10. The outcome of the discussion will be documented in the Committee report, with a focus on issues and approaches for follow up action and solutions.

¹ <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/006/y8705e/y8705e00.pdf>

² <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/010/i0096e/i0096e00.pdf>; <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/011/i0468e/i0468e00.pdf>;

³ www.fao.org/3/a-i5381e.pdf