

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

Opening Remarks

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Fiftieth Session
Panama, 12 – 16 November 2018

Opening Remarks Sarah Cahill - Codex Secretariat

Distinguished Guests, Delegates, Ladies and Gentleman,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the 50th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene on behalf of Mr Tom Heilandt the Secretary of the Codex Alimentarius. Codex Alimentarius was established 55 years ago and to have had 50 sessions in that period is testament to the important work of this Committee and to the central role of food hygiene to the standards of the Codex Alimentarius and to achieving food safety.

Reaching such a landmark is only possible with the support and vision of many people – to ensure that the work is relevant, timely and meeting the food safety needs of its time. I first attended this Committee in 2000, the 33rd session – and have witnessed first-hand the commitment of you the Delegates, to the work of CCFH. From 9 member countries and a few observers at its first meeting in 1964 to an average of 60 to 70 member countries and numerous observers participating in recent years, you have grown and sustained CCFH over its last 50 sessions.

Codex work depends very much of its members but without some Members going the extra mile and hosting committees, the work simply would not get done. So I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate and thank the United States of America, Mary Francis Lowe and the US Codex team and all their predecessors for ensuring this this Committee was able to meet successfully for 50 sessions and develop standards which have laid the foundations for improving food hygiene globally.

For those of you who have been Delegates to this Committee for a number of years you will be well aware of its challenges and successes, the discussions that happen on the sidelines as well as in session and the participants and the chair persons that have enabled this Committee to succeed. In your meeting bags you will find a small booklet prepared by the Codex secretariat entitled Food Hygiene at 50. This captures just a few of the stories and successes of this Committee. But I hope it inspires you to recall many others in the course of this week and appreciate what CCFH has achieved – not only in terms of standards but also the networks, friendships and knowledge that participation in such a Committee provides.

You do not arrive at 50 sessions without some bumps on the road but the CCFH has always tried to be forward looking in resolving its challenges. In the early 2000's, when I started to attend this Committee in 2000, it was embarking on incorporating microbiological risk assessment as a corner stone to its work and had paved the way for the establishment of the new JEMRA. It was not easy but the committee persisted and has led the way in the application of a risk-based approach to standard setting as well as other areas such as approaches to planning and prioritizing its work and co-hosting with other countries. Thank you to Panama for co-hosting this important session.

The world is changing....with increasing food insecurity, a growing population, changes in climate, a move towards more sustainable food production systems, changing food sources, consumer demands, and food distribution systems and ever more competition for resources and capacity. Many of these bring new challenges to food hygiene....making it even more important that everyone from the farmer or fisher to the consumer are aware of food hygiene and play their role. We are just one step away from having June 7th designated as World Food Safety Day by the United Nations General assembly next month. This can provide one opportunity to remind everyone of their important role in food hygiene.

So while new challenges lie ahead, this Committee can be proud of its achievements to date...and use that experience as well as innovation, science, teamwork and its commitment to food safety to sustain itself over the next 50 sessions.

Wishing you all a very successful 50th meeting.