

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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Agenda Item 9

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD HYGIENE

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PROJECT DOCUMENT

Revision of the *General Principles of Food Hygiene (CAC/RCP 1-1969)* and its HACCP Annex

1. Purpose and Scope of the Standard

The *General Principles of Food Hygiene (CAC/RCP 1-1969)* and its Annex: Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) System and Guidelines for its Application provide food business operators worldwide with the basis for producing food that is safe and suitable for consumption. Since its inception in the early 1970s, HACCP has become the universal system for the control of food safety, on which most regulatory food control systems and international food safety standards (e.g. ISO 22000) are based. HACCP, or a similar approach of identifying hazards and establishing controls to prevent them, has also been used in guidance on the safety of feed and drinking water.

2. Relevance and Timeliness

The General Principles of Food Hygiene (GPFH) is the basis for all codes of hygienic practice developed by CCFH. This standard is widely used and referenced internationally. There are several initiatives ongoing to update, in particular, the concept of HACCP. However, because *Codex Alimentarius* standards are the basis for international acceptance, it is important for the Committee to ensure that the GPFH and the Annex on HACCP provide the best available guidance based on current scientific information.

At its 46th session, CCFH agreed to explore further if GPFH and its HACCP Annex needed to be revised. An eWG, co-chaired by Thailand and France, established a questionnaire in order to identify specific items that could benefit from improvement through the *Codex alimentarius* standardization process.

3. Main aspects to be covered

As GPFH and its HACCP Annex are currently recognized for providing a common ground for the control of food safety worldwide, the whole document deserves a regular update. The revision should consider the issues, identified by the electronic working group¹, and other aspects that might arise during the course of the work. Those potential improvements should be aimed at making the standard easier to understand, to implement across the food chain and to clarify any aspects, where necessary.

4. Assessment against the Criteria for the establishment of work priorities

4.1 The text needs to be revised in order to meet the General criterion: Consumer protection from the point of view of health, food safety, ensuring fair practices in the food trade and taking into account the identified needs of developing countries.

The proposed work is directed at revising the most central standard in food hygiene, in order to make it more logical and user-friendly and to better address emerging and new hazards. Furthermore, such a revision could lead to help implementation by small and/or less-developed food businesses in both developed and developing countries and to better encompass the whole food production sector.

4.2 Diversification of national legislations and apparent resultant or potential impediments to international trade

¹ CX/FH 15/47/9

Food safety legislation widely refers to the Codex HACCP principles, as do many international standards giving food businesses access to more lucrative markets, but as the application of the HACCP principles can differ among countries it can cause impediments to international trade. A document that fosters a more consistent approach can reduce impediments to international trade. Furthermore, a harmonized glossary could improve common understanding through the whole food chain and between all kinds of agro-food businesses.

4.3 Scope of work and establishment of priorities between the various sections of the work

The proposed work would consist on the revision of the different sections of the standard CAC/RCP 1-1969, e.g. its General Introduction, the GPFH part and the HACCP Annex. Indeed, it appears that the whole structure of the document needs to be rearranged, particularly because of concepts that seem to be common for the two sections. Several improvements have also been proposed for each part of the standard by participants of the eWG on the need to revise GPFH and its HACCP Annex.

The proposed schedule is as follows:

- a) Revision of the General Introduction to clarify concepts and terms that are useful in the frame of both GPFH and HACCP, and to avoid repetitions, and revision of the HACCP annex, as this section is the most critical for food businesses and needs urgent modification to encompass emerging issues;
- b) Revision of the GPFH, taking into account the improvements of HACCP; and
- c) Final verification of the soundness and consistency of the whole revised standard.

4.4 Work already undertaken by other international organizations in this field

In the ISO, work has recently started on a revision of its HACCP standard, ISO 22000. ISO 22004 is now the most updated available standard in this field.

4.5 Amenability of the subject of the proposal to standardization

This revision concerns the most central food hygiene standard of Codex.

4.6 Consideration of the global magnitude of the problem or issue

This standard is applied worldwide to practically all commercial food businesses. If a revision can make it more effective and user-friendly, results will include improved food safety, more efficient food control, and increased food trade. It can provide a sound common ground for all food hygiene sectorial standards and codes of hygienic practice.

5. Relevance to the Codex strategic objectives

The proposed work directly relates to the following Codex Strategic Goals from the 2014-2019 Strategic Plan.

Strategic goal 1: Establish international food standards that address current and emerging food issues

The revision of these texts is consistent with all three Objectives of this strategic goal. At the 45th and 46th Sessions of the CCFH, the revision of the GPFH and HACCP texts was indicated as a top priority in the Committee's forward work plan. Therefore, an eWG was settled to explore further that possibility, with massive involvement of Codex members and observer organizations. Various stakeholders have been actively involved in identifying issues of concern that could be addressed in a revision. The revised standard will provide important information for all countries and food businesses of all kinds in order to achieve a higher level of food safety and suitability.

Strategic goal 2: Ensure the application of risk analysis principles in the development of Codex standards

Risk analysis as it applies to food safety across the food chain is an internationally accepted discipline and forms an integral part of any well-designed food safety control system. Through an active involvement of scientific and technical experts from many Codex members and observers we aim for a revised standard addressing all recent developments in the field of food safety risk management. eWG members participation has already identified gaps in addressing hazards e.g. from allergens or mycotoxins.

Strategic goal 3: Facilitate the effective participation of all Codex Members

The revision of these universal texts should generate great interest and broad participation from all members. Through the revision process, it should be kept in mind that one of the main challenges is to produce a user-friendly document that could be used as widely as possible. Specific attention should be granted to small enterprises and to developing countries.

Strategic goal 4: Implement effective and efficient work management systems and practices

More expeditious and efficient work by Codex is necessary to provide members and international organizations with the standards, guidelines and recommendations that they need. During the revision, all working documents and electronic discussions will be distributed in a timely and transparent manner, using web-based technologies available freely to all.

This strategic goal is one of the core objectives of the revision of this standard, as it will provide a solid ground for all Codex work related to food hygiene.

6. Information on the relation between the proposal and other existing Codex documents

The General Principles of Food Hygiene (CAC/RCP 1-1969) and its Annex: Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) System and Guidelines for its Application are relevant to many Codex texts including Codes of Hygienic Practice.

The following documents could be considered for reference within the revised document: “*Principles and Guidelines for the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria Related to Foods (CAC/GL 21-1997)*”, “*Guidelines for the Validation of Food Safety Control Measures (CAC/GL 69-2008)*”, and the “*Code of practice for fish and fishery products (CAC/RCP 52-2003)*”.

7. Identification of any requirement for and availability of expert scientific advice

FAO/WHO expert scientific advice is necessary on water with respect to food safety and suitability throughout the food chain, and other aspects that might arise in the course of the work.

8. Identification of any need for technical input to the standard from external bodies so that this can be planned for

Technical input is expected from the International Commission of Microbiological Specifications for Foods (ICMSF), the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), and other international organizations. Such input is important as these organizations would be among the organizations that would be applying the revised information on the general principles for food safety control systems.

9. The proposed time-line for completion of the new work, including the start date, the proposed date for adoption at Step 5, and the proposed date for adoption by the Commission

Proposed time line:

- approval of new work: 2016,
- adoption at step 5: 2019,
- adoption at step 8: 2021