

## INTRODUCTION

1. The FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Asia held its Twenty-first Session (CCASIA21) in Goa, India, from 23 to 27 September 2019 at the kind invitation of the Government of India. Mr Sunil Bakshi, Head (Codex and Regulations), Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), chaired the session, which was attended by 15 Member countries, 3 Member countries one Member Organisation outside the Region, and 4 Observer organizations. The list of participants is contained in Appendix I.

## OPENING<sup>1</sup>

2. The Chairperson welcomed the delegates and opened the meeting.
3. Ms Rita Teatota, Chairperson, FSSAI delivered the inaugural address, recalling the diversity of the region, its position as the largest producer and market for food in the world and its robust trade relationships, underscoring the importance of solidarity and support with respect to capacity building among Member countries as well as the extensive harmonisation of national standards with Codex.
4. Mr Sridhar Dharmapuri, Senior Food Safety and Nutrition Officer, FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and Mr. Gyanendra Gongal, Scientist, WHO Regional Office for South East Asia, welcomed the attendees on behalf of FAO and WHO, respectively. The meeting was also addressed by Mr Guilherme Antonio da Costa Jr. Chairperson, Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) (through a prerecorded video), Mr Steve Wearne and Prof Purwiyatno Hariyadi, vice-Chairpersons, CAC and Ms Sarah Cahill, Senior Food Standards Officer, Codex Secretariat.
5. Mr Rajeev Kumar Jain, Executive Director, FSSAI expressed his appreciation for all the support in organizing this event and to all the delegates for their presence at the meeting.

## ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Agenda Item 1)<sup>2</sup>

6. CCASIA21 adopted the agenda and agreed to consider the following topics under Agenda Item 14 (Other Business) subject to the availability of time:
  - (i) Amendment of the *Standard for Canned Sardines and Sardine-type Products* (CXS 94-1981): inclusion of *Sardinella lemuru* (Bali Sardinella) in the list of sardinella species under Sec. 2.1.1. (proposal of the Philippines)<sup>3</sup>; and
  - (ii) Development of a Codex Standard for Traditional Dairy Based Sweets (Proposal of India)<sup>4</sup>.
7. CCASIA21 further agreed to establish an in-session Working Group (WG), open to all Members and observers, chaired by Indonesia and working in English only, to consider agenda item 7.2, taking into account written comments received and any other relevant information (e.g. Agenda Items 6 and 8); and to prepare a report with recommendations for consideration by the plenary.

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS ON THE ROLE OF CODEX IN STRENGTHENING NATIONAL FOOD CONTROL SYSTEMS IN THE ASIAN REGION – A WAY FORWARD (Agenda Item 2)<sup>5</sup>

8. The Representative of FAO, on behalf of FAO and WHO, after reminding the Committee of the ongoing process of revitalization being undertaken across all coordinating Committees (RCCs), explained that the purpose of the keynote address was to have an open debate on issues relevant to the region, raise political awareness, support improved participation in the work of Codex, and to guide the activities of FAO and WHO on food safety control along the food chain.
9. Prof. S. Ayyappan, Chancellor, Central Agricultural University, Mainpur, India, delivered the keynote address on food safety at primary production: issues and best practices for an evolving region.
10. The Representative of WHO facilitated the subsequent discussion. He emphasized the major challenges in the CCASIA region (e.g. food safety and food security issues, food waste, malnutrition) and the need for a One Health approach, as illustrated by the recent African swine fever outbreak in the region and it was proposed that delegations centre their discussion on whether any additional actions should be included and how to prioritize future action.

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<sup>1</sup> CRD1 (Opening speeches)

<sup>2</sup> CX/ASIA 19/21/1

<sup>3</sup> CRD5 (The Philippines)

<sup>4</sup> CRD8 (India); CRD17 (India)

<sup>5</sup> CX/ASIA 19/21/2

11. Members showed their appreciation for the keynote speaker for delivering such a comprehensive and informative speech and shared their own successful experiences in terms of implementation of Good Agriculture Practices (GAPs) at the primary production level.
12. During the discussions, the following observations were made:
  - (i) while in some circumstances, it was a challenge for small farmers to comply with food safety standards and best agriculture practices, the implementation of a cluster approach (i.e. small farmers working together) and precision farming might be workable and be cost effective. Another challenge in this regard was, for example, how to train over 650 million small farmers in India effectively;
  - (ii) recognition of the GAP schemes developed at regional level were considered important. Application of GAPs in primary production as well as incentives for obtaining certification and guidance on how to control the use of chemicals were highlighted as critical issues;
  - (iii) the awareness of risk management rather than crisis management should be enhanced. Establishment of effective coordination and clarification of responsibilities among different ministries also played a vital role;
  - (iv) the capacity for data analysis required improvement. Making high level government officials aware of the importance of generating robust and reliable data and analysis was crucial with a focus on allocating sufficient resources including funding for research;
  - (v) the importance between agencies involved at various stages of the food chain was emphasised;
  - (vi) primary food producers needed to understand potential food safety issues and their role in ensuring a safe food chain; and
  - (vii) the implications and benefits of the application of food traceability should be further disseminated.
13. The Representatives of FAO and WHO echoed some successful experiences from members (e.g. validation studies at primary production and farmer field schools). They explained that providing training courses, making voluntary standards accessible as well as use of ecology-friendly products would be welcomed by farmers as it would help them increase their incomes. They indicated that a training module on risk analysis of chemical contaminants in food was being developed and underlined the importance of developing training materials according to a country's context.

## **Conclusion**

14. CCASIA21:
  - (i) confirmed the importance of a whole food chain approach in delivering safe food in the region;
  - (ii) highlighted that small farmers are the backbone of food production in the region and that there is a critical need for Member Countries to invest in this group in terms of training, education and improving accessibility and applicability to food safety standards and good practices;
  - (iii) agreed that there is a need for member countries to apply an all of government approach involving the multiple agencies and ministries (e.g. agriculture, health, land, water, trade, economy, etc.) to facilitate a One Health approach in order to ensure food safety at primary production and across the food chain;
  - (iv) noted the critical role of data in identification, assessment and management of hazards, and the need to invest in data collation (from government, research, private sectors) and its analysis and use for prioritization and management of food safety risks, to increase awareness of food safety among high-level policy makers in order to secure political support and investment;
  - (v) agreed that Member Countries, FAO and WHO need to invest in the use of existing Codex standards and in adapting them to local contexts as applicable, and that CCASIA and national Codex Committees in the region should work to make these standards accessible to, and promote their use by, small farmers;
  - (vi) highlighted the challenge of developing innovative approaches to training and dissemination of information to millions of farmers across the region;
  - (vii) emphasized the need to make consumers aware of the importance of food safety at primary production and the efforts being made to improve food safety so that they can make informed choices about the food they consume.

## **EMERGING ISSUES IN FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY IN COUNTRIES IN THE REGION (Agenda Item 3.1)<sup>6</sup>**

15. The Representative of FAO, on behalf of FAO and WHO, introduced the item, noting the purpose of the survey was to identify current, recurring, new and emerging issues that impacted food safety in the region. The Representative further highlighted the importance of collecting such information to guide food safety actions in the context of efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to inform FAO and WHO technical activities and to identify potential areas of future standard setting work for Codex. The Representative noted that the replies fell into three broad categories i) those areas in which Codex standards already existed ii) capacity and regulatory issues and iii) issues resulting from changing contexts and environments and emphasized some of the recurring themes, which included chemical contaminants and residues, antimicrobial resistance (AMR), the need to strengthen technical capacities and the importance of adopting a One Health approach.
16. The Representative noted the response rate was only about 40% and encouraged members to provide their feedback on (i) value of the survey and the challenges for countries in responding; (ii) the key takeaways from the survey and (iii) perspectives on the way forward.
17. CCASIA21 noted the information provided and made the following general observations:
  - (i) this list builds on that developed for CCASIA20 and as this list continues to expand, prioritization of the issues and identification of actions to be taken to address these issues becomes critical e.g, sharing information on best practices to address a specific issue;
  - (ii) there was a need to better promote and demonstrate to countries the benefit of this survey and its value to food safety work at national level in order to encourage more countries to respond and others to continue to support the survey;
  - (iii) FAO and WHO have country level presence in almost all the Members of CCASIA; information from the survey helps to guide FAO and WHO's technical work and make important decisions on providing technical assistance to tackle existing (e.g. pesticide residues) or new or highly specialized issues
  - (iv) addressing complex issues such as antimicrobial resistance was dependent on multiple factors including having the necessary regulatory systems in place, good coordination between the relevant ministries and agencies, ongoing advocacy on the link between AMR and food safety, developing data collection capacities e.g. through the WHO TriCycle project on Extended-spectrum beta-lactamases (ESBLs) as well as participation in the ongoing work of the Ad hoc Codex Intergovernmental Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance (TFAMR); a proposal to establish a global system to avoid the misuse and abuse of antimicrobials was put forward;
  - (v) addressing food fraud requires approaches to identify vulnerable foods and food chains and then having an action plan to manage the risk of fraud. Members were reminded of the ongoing discussions in Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) and the related EWG on food fraud; and
  - (vi) the increase in food being sold over the internet and the challenge with having access to key information about such food was considered critical in the context of increasing international online food sales and members noted the new work to be undertaken by CCFL on this topic.
18. While there was general support to continue the survey, discussions on the low response rate indicated several challenges that need to be addressed including; survey fatigue; the need to engage multiple sectors within a country to respond to the survey and the time and commitment this required; the lack of clarity on how the survey information was used; and the need to more clearly demonstrate the benefits of participating to member countries. It was highlighted that the key issue was to maintain ongoing communication and exchange of information on emerging issues in the region and that the tools to facilitate this could always be improved and made more flexible and dynamic.

### **Conclusion**

19. CCASIA21:
  - (i) appreciated the paper summarising the survey on emerging issues prepared by FAO and WHO and also acknowledged the challenges faced by countries in responding to this survey;

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<sup>6</sup> CX/ASIA 19/21/3; CRD11 (India)

- (ii) highlighted the importance of maintaining open communication channels to share information on emerging issues among Members, FAO and WHO and proposed that innovative tools and approaches be considered to facilitate communication and information sharing on emerging issues;
- (iii) recommended that future surveys provide clear information on the purpose and use of the surveys in order to promote country replies; and
- (iv) requested that future papers on this item also reflect on the results of the previous survey and follow-up actions taken in order to further demonstrate the value and utility of these surveys.

**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 ? (Agenda Item 3.2)<sup>7</sup>**

20. The Representative of WHO introduced the agenda item on behalf of FAO and WHO, summarising the context and the outcome of the FAO/WHO/AU International Food Safety Conference held in February 2019 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and the International Forum on Food Safety and Trade held at the WTO in Geneva, Switzerland in April 2019 with the support of FAO and WHO.
21. The two events discussed a series of thematic issues around the food safety challenges faced by the world and developed evidence-based proposals and actions to tackle these. The value of Codex work and the adoption of its standards and guidelines was reiterated and the opportunities offered by new technologies were highlighted as positive elements for addressing the challenges faced by the food safety community.
22. The Representative further noted the current efforts underway by WHO, FAO and their partners to maintain the momentum and efforts to mobilise different stakeholders to work towards building on the outcome of these two conferences and develop global actions for food safety in the coming year. Recent global developments and on-going efforts that were highlighted included the UN adoption of a World Food Safety Day (WFSD) to be observed annually on June 7, and a letter requesting food safety to be included in the agenda of the next Session of the WHO Executive Board in February 2020 that had been sent to WHO.
23. The Representative of FAO also highlighted ongoing efforts in the region to maintain a high profile for food safety in the coming years noting that food safety had been on the agenda of the last FAO Asia Pacific Regional conference (APRC 2018) and efforts were underway to ensure it remained on the agenda of APRC 2020. The Representative further noted that the occasion of World Food Safety Day would be used to promote discussion and interaction among key stakeholders and that several case studies and tools, notably on the development of food safety indicators, were under development together with other international partners. A regional food safety conference for the Asia-Pacific region was being planned for 2020.
24. The Representatives of WHO also highlighted their regional activities including the development of a new framework for action on food safety for the WHO South East Asia region taking into consideration the outcomes of the two food safety conferences and the new Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025 and the existing framework for action on food safety for the WHO Western Pacific region. It was also highlighted that progress on the implementation of the framework for action on food safety for the WHO Western Pacific region would be reviewed by countries in the region during a meeting scheduled for early 2020. Other important focus areas included supporting the development and implementation of food safety strategies and policies and facilitating the process of policy dialogue in the countries.
25. Suggestions on how FAO and WHO could assist countries in maintaining the high profile of food safety as well as further strengthening national capacity included: the identification of periodic food safety themes by FAO and WHO to support countries to focus on a specific food safety issue or part of the food chain; continued work on food safety indicators which support communication on the food safety situation; support for the integration of international food safety initiatives into the region through their network of offices in the region; assistance in developing and strengthening food safety policies in countries; and capacity development support for data collection and analysis.
26. Members expressed their strong appreciation for the efforts of FAO and WHO on food safety and highlighted the importance of maintaining a high profile for food safety and continuing with advocacy efforts. There was strong support for the inclusion of food safety on the agenda of the upcoming WHA and regional governing body meetings and the recent consideration of food safety by FAO’s governing body meetings was also noted.
27. An Observer Member reiterated the importance of efforts to have food safety considered on the agenda of the WHA and encouraged Members of the region to work with their Representatives to WHO in supporting this. The importance of this discussion in the context of securing sustainable funding for the FAO/WHO scientific advice, which underpins Codex Standards was also highlighted.

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<sup>7</sup> CX/ASIA 19/21/4

**Conclusion**

## 28. CCASIA21:

- (i) expressed appreciation for the efforts of FAO and WHO in organizing the First FAO/WHO/AU International Food Safety Conference and the Joint FAO/WHO/WTO Statement of the WTO International Forum on Food Safety and Trade and noted the outcomes of these events;
- (ii) reaffirmed the need to raise awareness on food safety in order to gain high-level political support and investment in food safety and supported the ongoing efforts of FAO and WHO to maintain the high profile of food safety in the coming months; and
- (iii) welcomed the efforts being made to include food safety on the agenda of the upcoming WHO Executive Board and World Health Assembly and encouraged Members to build awareness in their ministries of health and representations in Geneva to WHO on the importance of supporting such efforts.

**FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY SITUATION IN THE COUNTRIES IN THE REGION: USE OF THE ONLINE PLATFORM FOR INFORMATION SHARING ON FOOD SAFETY CONTROL SYSTEMS; STATUS OF INFORMATION AND FUTURE PLANS/PROSPECTS (Agenda Item 3.3)<sup>8</sup>**

29. The Representative of WHO introduced the agenda item on behalf of FAO and WHO, highlighting the current status of information on the online platform from countries in the region, and expressing appreciation to the seven countries that had provided their information this year. The Representative recalled the purpose of the platform to promote sharing of information on national food control systems and relevant regulations and legislation.
30. There was general agreement that the platform was very useful and fit for purpose; however, Members considered that there was not enough communication to Members on the platform and where to find the information countries provided online. Challenges faced by some Members in providing information to the platform were noted such as the need to consult and coordinate with multiple ministries in the case of complex national food control systems.
31. Several suggestions were made on how the platform could be made more visible and useful including: the provision of more regular information and refresher user guidance on the platform from FAO and WHO; regular updating of online information by Members; the inclusion by Members of links to national websites to help ensure that the information remained current and the need for revisions was reduced; updating by Members of the national legislation component of the platform with their most recent Food Code; and the inclusion of additional information fields on regulatory compliance and emergency response mechanisms.
32. CCASIA21 was reminded that support was available from FAO, WHO and the Codex Secretariat in using the platform, that Members could upload their information at any time through the Codex Contact Points and that the organizations would continue to work with countries on increasing their contribution to the platform, considering the suggestions made in the discussions.

**Conclusion**

## 33. CCASIA 21:

- (i) confirmed the utility and value of the platform as a means of information sharing on food regulatory systems and food legislation within the region;
- (ii) noted the challenges faced by countries in providing information in a timely manner and appreciated the efforts of both Members and FAO and WHO to overcome these and to continue to improve the tool; and
- (iii) highlighted the importance of regular communication to Member countries on the platform, its value as a means of information sharing and regular training and / or guidance on providing information to the platform.

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<sup>8</sup> CX/ASIA 19/21/5; CRD6 (Republic of Korea); CRD11 (India)

**USE OF CODEX STANDARDS IN THE REGION (Agenda Item 4)<sup>9</sup>**

34. The Codex Secretariat introduced the item and noted that the online survey had focused on the use of the following Codex texts: Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) for veterinary drugs in foods, Guidelines for Risk Analysis of Foodborne Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), the Code of Practice to Minimize and Contain AMR; and Regional Code of Hygienic Practice for Street-Vended Foods in Asia. The aim of the survey was: to provide a better understanding of the extent of use and relevance of Codex Standards; an insight into the difficulties related to the use of Codex Standards; and to receive general feedback on the future implementation of the survey.
35. The Codex Secretariat drew the attention of CCASIA21 to the outcome of the survey as well as the comparison of the level of usage in the region with that of all Codex Members globally, inviting comments on the analysis and the way forward.

**Discussion**

36. CCASIA21 noted the results of the survey and the recent discussions at the Codex Committee on General Principles (CCGP) relating to monitoring the use of Codex standards. The following views were expressed:

The continuation of the survey

37. Members strongly supported the continuation of the survey noting that (i) Codex Standards were one of the most important reference texts in developing their national food safety standards; (ii) such surveys contributed to a gap analysis and facilitated the assessment of national food control systems with regard to the use of Codex standards; and (iii) the survey results were also linked to the Goal 3 of the Strategic Plan for the period 2020-2025.
38. One Member expressed the view that benefits of responding to the survey should be clarified in order to have more members participating in the survey.

The contents of the next survey

39. Members proposed that the following Codex texts be considered in the next survey:
- (i) the *General Standard for Food Additives* (CXS 192-1995) as the response rate to the survey conducted in the past was too low and there were emerging issues in the use of colours and other food additives;
  - (ii) the *General Guidelines on Claims* (CXG 1-1979);
  - (iii) the *Recommended Methods of Analysis and Sampling* (CXS 234-1999);
  - (iv) the standards developed by the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS);
  - (v) the *Working Principles for Risk Analysis for Food Safety for Application by Governments* (CXG 62-2007) and related texts; and
  - (vi) regional commodity standards of interest to CCASIA.
40. With regard to the scope of the survey, it was suggested that it should cover all Codex texts in order to get a more comprehensive overview of use as Members may not use all Codex texts and that it be available online and open for Members to review and update at any time. The Codex Secretariat clarified that a subset of Codex Standards was selected rather than all Codex standards in order to encourage Members to take part in the survey.
41. The broader definition of “use” in the survey was discussed since, for the current survey, this definition had also been expanded to use of Codex Standards for training or extension programmes and it was questioned whether this was in line with the Codex goal of promoting harmonization of food standards. It was explained that while harmonization remained the goal, some Members might directly apply Codex standards without incorporating them into their national legislation, but that this nonetheless supported use of Codex standards and contributed to harmonization and further explanation of these use options could be provided for future surveys.

Others


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<sup>9</sup> CX/ASIA 19/21/6; CRD11 (India)

42. In response to a question on the potential duplication of the survey with the FAO/WHO assessment through use of the FAO/WHO food control system assessment tool, it was clarified that the purpose of the FAO/WHO tool was to support an in-depth assessment of all aspects of national food control systems, while the Codex survey covered limited aspects on the use of Codex standards. Further, the Codex had a narrower focus on Codex structures within a country and did not explicitly address the use of Codex Standards.

### **Conclusion**

43. CCASIA21:
- (i) noted the outcome of the survey, generally recognized its usefulness and strongly supported its continuation;
  - (ii) highlighted the need for harmonization with Codex standards to improve their own national food control system; and
  - (iii) noted the comments made with respect to the survey and requested the Codex Secretariat to take these into account when implementing the next round of the survey.

### **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER CODEX COMMITTEES (Agenda Item 5)<sup>10</sup>**

44. CCASIA21 noted that some matters were for information only and that several other matters for consideration would be taken up under other relevant agenda items. It was also noted that the Regional Code of Hygienic Practice for Street-Vended Foods in Asia had been adopted by CAC40, which had been inadvertently left out of the document.
45. CCASIA21 took the following decisions:

#### **Matters from CAC40**

##### Regular Review of Codex Work Management: Electronic Working Groups

46. CCASIA21 noted the importance of an in-depth discussion on challenges and barriers to participation in electronic working groups (EWGs) and the need to identify potential solutions, and agreed to convene an informal meeting as input to a more expansive discussion under Agenda Item 7.1.

#### **Matters from CCEXEC73**

##### Overall work

47. With regard to effective management of new work proposals for regional standards, CCASIA21 considered whether guidance for prioritizing new work proposals should be developed.
48. The Codex Secretariat reminded CCASIA of the need to balance the agenda of the Coordinating Committees between horizontal issues on food safety and quality and standard setting and the possible heavy workload if multiple regional standards were to be considered.
49. The Committee noted the comments of Members on this issue including: the extensive amount of time needed to develop such a new guidance, based on the experience of CCFA; the reliance of other committees (e.g. CCFO) on the criteria provided in the Procedural Manual; and recalled the existing requirements in Procedural Manual that regional standards should be developed for commodities that were traded intra-regionally and not traded between or within other regions.
50. CCASIA21 confirmed that the criteria for the establishment of work priorities as laid down in the Procedural Manual were sufficient to prioritize its work and there was no need to develop additional guidance in this regard.

#### **Matters from CCMAS38**

##### Methods of analysis for laver products

51. The Republic of Korea introduced CRD2 which they had prepared to address the questions raised by CCMAS38 and also presented a proposal to re-type the method for moisture content.
52. Based on the information provided, CCASIA21 clarified that the method for acid value was for the extracted oil and agreed to forward the information contained in CRD2, in response to the CCMAS question regarding extraction method, for consideration by that Committee.
53. Regarding the proposal to re-type the testing method for moisture content, CCASIA21 agreed to provide the validation data on the method of analysis for moisture content for consideration by CCMAS (see CRD2).

<sup>10</sup> CX/ASIA 19/21/7; CX/ASIA 19/21/7 Add.1; CRD2 (Republic of Korea); CRD15 (India)

## Matters from CCFA50

### Guidance on the alignment of food additive provisions and alignment plan

54. CCASIA21 recalled that there were seven regional standards developed by CCASIA which needed aligning with the *General Standard for Food Additives* (CXS 192-1995).
55. Given the intense effort needed for the alignment work, CCASIA21 agreed to establish an EWG, chaired by China, working in English, to consider the alignment of food additive provisions in the regional standards developed by CCASIA.
56. The report of the EWG should be made available to the Codex Secretariat at least three months before CCASIA22.

### Consideration of the revocation of a number of food additive provisions

57. CCASIA21 agreed with the recommendations of CCFA50 i.e. to revoke the provisions for monosodium tartrate (INS 335(i)), monopotassium tartrate (INS 336(i)) and dipotassium tartrate (INS 336(ii)) in the *Regional Standards for Soybean Paste* (CXS 298R-2009) and *Chilli Sauce* (CXS 306R-2011) (Appendix II).

## Matters from CCEXEC77

### Committee on Processed Fruits and Vegetables (CCPFV) on cashew kernels

58. CCASIA21 noted the support for initiating the work on cashew kernels by CCPFV and the willingness of one Member to chair any future WG on this matter.

## CODEX WORK RELEVANT TO THE REGION (Agenda Item 6)<sup>11</sup>

59. The Coordinator presented this item and explained that the document had been divided into three parts i.e. (i) status of activities identified in CCASIA20; (ii) analysis of information received from Member countries in response to the questionnaire; and (iii) conclusions and recommendations for CCASIA.
60. Members congratulated and thanked the Coordinator for preparing the document and agreed with the Chairperson's proposals to consider the draft Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for CCASIA, explore ways to progress in areas of a cross-cutting nature, consider any general issues identified by the Members, explore possibilities for improving communications and sharing of relevant data/scientific expert advice (see para. 21 of CX/ASIA 19/21/8).

### **Draft Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for CCASIA**

61. In response to the question on the status and nature of the SOP, the Coordinator clarified that the document would be used internally by CCASIA in order to strengthen the regional coordination; and that it was not intended to be a formal Codex text or part of the Procedural Manual but a living document that could be refined whenever needed.
62. Members expressed their support for developing the SOP, considered the recommendations to publish it as an information document, and made the following suggestions:
  - (i) more detailed information on undertaking those activities included in the draft SOP would be required. The SOP should be made available on Codex website in order to facilitate Members collaboration on the implementation of the proposed activities;
  - (ii) some new procedures such as co-chairing of CCASIA were included in the document, which should be further reviewed to ensure their consistency with the requirements in the Procedural Manual;
  - (iii) taking into account the limited time to review the draft SOP in advance of CCASIA21, further discussion such as through an informal session facilitated by the Coordinator or the Codex Secretariat would be useful;
  - (iv) the lists of responsibilities needed to be carefully reviewed to ensure they were within the capacity of the Coordinator and Members (e.g. Section 3.iv); to avoid overlap within the list of responsibilities (e.g. Sections 3.vii and 3.x)). In addition, some editorial amendments were needed;
  - (v) rather than informal discussions, and in order to avoid missing the opportunity to submit comments, a formal means to solicit comments should be considered; and
  - (vi) given the nature of the SOP, CCASIA should have a standing item dedicated to further revision of SOP.

<sup>11</sup> CX/ASIA 19/21/8; CRD15 (India)



63. In response to a question on the experiences of other Coordinating Committees and specifically that of the Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (CCLAC) on development of SOPs, the Coordinator clarified that they had considered feedback received directly from the Regional Coordinator of CCLAC.
64. The Representatives of FAO and WHO, welcomed the useful proposals in the draft SOP, highlighted the potential value of more discussions and stronger working relations between the Coordinator and FAO and WHO between sessions, while avoiding duplication of work and questioned the expected funding source for the proposed activities. The Coordinator clarified that funding from FAO and WHO had been considered and could be further elaborated in the document.

### **Conclusion**

65. CCASIA21:
- (i) noted the usefulness of the document and strongly supported its further development; and
  - (ii) agreed to establish an EWG chaired by India, working in English, to prepare a revised SOP, based on comments received in this session as well as experience gained in using the document and any further comments received from Members, for consideration at CCASIA22 under the same agenda item.
66. The report of the EWG should be made available to the Codex Secretariat at least three months before CCASIA22.

### **Others**

67. The Chairperson explained that other recommendations could be addressed by the SOP.
68. The Coordinator highlighted that based on the information presented in the paper, areas for future development in the region could include: (i) regional collaboration/mutual support for generation of scientific data; (ii) sharing of information with respect to incidences of food fraud among Members through a common online platform; (iii) analysing and sharing information on the prevalence and the status of e-commerce activities among Members; and (iv) working together on the preparation and submission of joint new work proposals on areas of common interest.

### **Conclusions**

69. CCASIA21:
- (i) confirmed that the areas identified in the paper were the key priority areas for CCASIA;
  - (ii) encouraged Members to participate in the various EWGs, collaborate in the joint preparation and submission of new work proposals of common interest and explore mechanisms to share scientific information in a timely manner; and
  - (iii) recognized that the SOP provided a framework for actions to address a majority of issues listed in the recommendations and requested the Coordinator to consider making use of the SOP.

## **MONITORING OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL CODEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2014-2019 (Agenda Item 7.1)<sup>12</sup>**

70. The Codex Secretariat introduced the item, noting that the term of the Global Strategic Plan 2014-2019 was ending and that there were many valuable lessons to be learned from the monitoring and implementation of the plan that needed to be carried forward to the new strategic plan. CCASIA21 was informed that a final report on the implementation of the strategic plan (2014-2019) would be presented to CAC43, for which input was required from the region.
71. The Codex Secretariat reminded delegates of the important role that members play in both monitoring and implementation, noting that activities that cannot be measured and monitored can also not be managed and improved, and requested members to agree on a suitable mechanism through which they could regularly report to the Codex Secretariat on progress made. Reference was also made to the data presented in the background paper on participation in both physical meetings and electronic working groups which in some meetings was relatively low.

<sup>12</sup> CX/ASIA 19/21/9; CRD15 (India)

72. India as Coordinator presented information on the status of implementation of activities of the strategic plan in the region, noting that this represented feedback from 12 countries in the region in response to a questionnaire to all Members. The Coordinator noted how differences in terms of the capacity of countries to undertake the activities proposed in the strategic plan also impacts their ability to participate in Codex work. The Coordinator further noted the challenge in receiving information from countries and that further efforts were required in order to get input for all Members.
73. Members noted the progress and discussed the need to gain further understanding of the impediments to participation in Codex meetings, acknowledging the challenges in obtaining responses to questionnaires and surveys. Delegations further noted that existing meetings and communication mechanisms were valuable opportunities to gain insight.
74. As follow up to the regular review of Codex work management: Electronic working groups, the Codex Secretariat recalled the recommendation of CAC40 to work with Regional Coordinators and Coordinating Committees to examine barriers to active participation and identify possible solutions. Discussions highlighted the following broad categories of impediments to participation in electronic working groups:
- (i) how the Contact Point coordinates EWG work, including the capacity and organization of the national structure, the capacity and systems to organize the volume of work associated with the number of EWGs and the level of national coordination with relevant experts (training and resources);
  - (ii) time management both for countries leading EWGs and for participants in EWGs as well as for the Codex Secretariat in ensuring effective and timely communication and timely participation (EWG registration and meeting subsequent deadlines);
  - (iii) technical issues on how to use the EWG platform and ensuring documents remain reliable and accurate when exchanged electronically;
  - (iv) language issues such as the need and time required for translation into a national language to facilitate comments; and
  - (v) other factors limiting participation included the lack of data and/or comments to contribute to the discussions, a lack of confidence to participate and then a lack of feedback on comments when submitted, particularly when there was a perception they were not taken into consideration.
75. In discussing these impediments, Members highlighted the importance of using this information to begin addressing the challenges. It was noted that while EWGs are an effective tool, in order to enhance participation, countries:
- (i) need to be very organized and strategic when participating in EWGs;
  - (ii) have criteria to guide their selection of which EWGs to participate in;
  - (iii) coordinate to ensure access to the appropriate experts for the EWG; and
  - (iv) ensure a country was speaking with a unified voice when commenting.
76. Having mechanisms or projects in place to allow more experienced countries to share with less experienced countries was highlighted as a useful solution and the current Codex Trust Fund (CTF) group project in the region was proof of this.

### **Conclusion**

77. CCASIA21:
- (i) noted the achievements of the global strategic plan 2014-2019 and agreed to forward the information provided on activities in the region (CRD10) to the Codex Secretariat as an input to the final report on the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2014-2019;
  - (ii) recommended exploring options to enhance responses to surveys in the future;
  - (iii) acknowledged the ongoing challenges with participation in Codex meetings and in EWGs and agreed to use the existing mechanisms within Codex i.e. web tools; coordination meetings before and during meetings; and
  - (iv) encouraged FAO, WHO, the Codex Secretariat and Members to explore options and look for innovative solutions to address the barriers to participation in EWGs.

**CODEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2020 – 2025 – ROADMAP TO IMPLEMENTATION (Agenda Item 7.2)<sup>13</sup>**

78. The Chairperson recalled that the Committee had established an in-session working group to consider item 7.2 and develop activities to support implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025. Indonesia as chairperson of the in-session working group summarized the outcome of the working group discussions as presented in CRD16. The Chairperson noted that the WG: had prioritized activities under Goals 1, 2 and 3 for 2020-2021; had identified a series of activities that were intended to be actionable in this period; and proposed that the Committee closely review the activities table in order to ensure the proposed activities were aligned with the goals, and were practical and achievable within the next two years.

**Discussion**

79. Delegations expressed their appreciation for the work of the WG and indicated their general agreement with the prioritized goals. CCASIA21 reviewed the activities and related information as presented in CRD 16 and noted the need to be modest and pragmatic considering that these activities should be implemented in a period of two years. The Committee agreed that it was important to build on existing mechanisms and systems to the extent possible. With this in mind the Committee took the following decisions:
- (i) Agreed to combine activities 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 and revised the reporting mechanism to a survey questionnaire reflecting that a relevant survey was already carried out by FAO and WHO on emerging issues. In this regard, the Representative of FAO and some Delegations reminded the Committee of the importance of countries committing to responding to the relevant survey and recalled the discussions on survey response rate under Item 3.1.
  - (ii) Agreed to revise activity 1.2.1 to refer to relevant Codex Committees rather than specific ones, agreed that CCASIA as well as the Coordinator had a responsibility in implementing this activity and that progress on this item would be recorded through the report of the Coordinator on Codex work relevant to the region at CCASIA22.
  - (iii) Deleted activity 1.2.2 as it was considered a duplication of other activities under this goal.
  - (iv) Agreed that activities 2.1.1 would be reported upon through the FAO/WHO report on capacity development activities prepared annually for the CAC.
  - (v) Agreed that the expected output to activity 2.2.1 would be baseline information on countries responding to calls for data as reflected in contributions to GEMS/Foods<sup>14</sup> and reports from FAO and WHO.
  - (vi) Revised activity 2.2.2 to make it more specific with the objective of establishing an overview of the existing data in the region as well as capacity on data management and analysis. A proposed activity on developing robust systems to generate data in the region was considered useful but premature and proposed for inclusion in the next phase of the work plan by CCASIA22.
  - (vii) Activity 2.3.1 and the related information was clarified to specify that the discussions in CAC on sustainable funding for FAO/WHO scientific advice to Codex be brought to the attention of the Coordinating Committees in order to continue to raise awareness on this issue.
  - (viii) Activity 3.2.1 was revised to specify that the focus for the next two years was on data collection on the current use of Codex standards. The survey carried out every two years on the use of Codex standards was considered an appropriate mechanism of data collection.
  - (ix) The proposed activity 3.3.1 on the development of a regulatory impact assessment programme was considered very interesting to Members, but it was also recognized that this was a challenging task and the Committee did not have adequate time to elaborate on this activity at the WG. However, given the strong support for this suggestion, CCASIA21 requested the strategic planning sub-committee of the CCEXEC to consider this in the development of the overall work plan with the aim of developing such a tool from the global perspective.
  - (x) A new activity focussing on the development of success stories on the use of Codex standards replaced the original activity 3.3.1 as it was considered that this would be more feasible while still providing some insights on the value of Codex standards.
80. With these revisions the Committee agreed that the work plan was complete and could be submitted to the strategic planning subcommittee of the CCEXEC. CCASIA21 further noted that the regional communications work plan, adopted under agenda Item 8, would also contribute to the achievement of Goal 3.

<sup>13</sup> CX/ASIA 19/21/10; CRD3 (Korea and Thailand); CRD9 (Japan); CRD15 (India)

<sup>14</sup> Global Environment Monitoring System - Food Contamination Monitoring and Assessment Programme, which is commonly known as GEMS/Food

81. CCASIA21 also noted the information provided by the Chairperson of the CCEXEC subcommittee on strategic planning. The Chairperson expressed appreciation for the extensive work undertaken by CCASIA; indicated that the work plan developed by CCASIA21 would be incorporated into the overall work plan; that a Circular Letter would be issued in order to obtain any further input from Members on the overall work plan; and that after CCEXEC78 feedback on the workplan would be provided to all Members.

### **Conclusion**

82. CCASIA21:
- (i) agreed that CCASIA would focus on the implementation of activities aimed towards achieving Goals 1, 2 and 3 of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025;
  - (ii) agreed to submit a list of activities and related information that would be undertaken by the region over the next two years to the CCEXEC sub-committee on strategic planning for inclusion in the overarching work plan of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 (Appendix III); and
  - (iii) requested the CCEXEC sub-committee on strategic planning to consider the general comments provided in this session.

### **CODEx COMMUNICATIONS WORK PLAN (Agenda Item 8)<sup>15</sup>**

83. The Codex Secretariat introduced the item, recalling CCEXEC74 (Rome, 2017) support for “the need for members to contribute [to the] development and implementation” of the current Codex communications work plan and “the potential for greater engagement and impact through tailored collaboration with the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees”<sup>16</sup>.
84. The Codex Secretariat highlighted the opportunities that both social and traditional media offered for raising awareness of Codex issues whether at the highest political level or when reporting, for example, on technical and capacity building initiatives. The Secretariat reiterated the availability of the communications team in the Codex Secretariat to engage with members and the Regional Coordinator to deliver on the communications work plan to ensure that news of the work in the region reached relevant audiences.
85. In response to issues raised by Members, the Codex Secretariat clarified that:
- (i) it welcomed technical contributions from countries and would provide additional guidance through the Regional Coordinator on the style and structure of content suitable for Codex publications;
  - (ii) the proposal to identify a focal point for communications at the Regional Coordinator level was to facilitate communications in the region with the Codex Secretariat; and
  - (iii) it would add information on responsible parties to the draft communications work plan.
86. CCASIA21 noted the importance of communications in Codex as a whole and the need to underpin this through the proposed regional work plan.
87. CCASIA21 agreed to:
- (i) adopt the Regional work plan as amended (Appendix IV) and actively participate in its implementation; and
  - (ii) support submission of content for publication to the Codex Secretariat by Members including stories that depict the successful realization of the different aspects of the work of Codex in the region, noting that this could be through a regional communications focal point or by countries directly.

### **DISCUSSION PAPER/PROJECT DOCUMENT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A REGIONAL STANDARD FOR RICE-BASED LOW ALCOHOL BEVERAGES (CLOUDY TYPES) (Agenda Item 9)<sup>17</sup>**

88. The Republic of Korea, recalling the decision of CCASIA20, explained that due to the limited data available they had difficulty in including information on the requested food safety issues and impediments to trade in the discussion paper. Therefore, the Republic of Korea decided to discontinue work on the development of a proposal for a regional standard for rice-based low alcohol beverages (cloudy types).
89. CCASIA21 agreed to discontinue consideration of this agenda item.

<sup>15</sup> CX/ASIA 19/21/11; CRD15 (India)

<sup>16</sup> REP18/EXEC1 para 9

<sup>17</sup> CX/ASIA 19/21/12; CRD4 (Republic of Korea); CRD12 (Indonesia)

**DISCUSSION PAPER/PROJECT DOCUMENT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A REGIONAL STANDARD FOR SOYBEAN PRODUCTS FERMENTED WITH THE BACTERIUM *BACILLUS SUBTILIS* (Agenda Item 10)<sup>18</sup>**

90. Japan introduced this item and recalled that, since CCASIA20 had agreed to expand the scope of the new work proposal from the single commodity “Natto” to “soybean products fermented with the bacterium *Bacillus subtilis*” in order to develop a more overarching standard, Japan had established an informal EWG and had discussions among interested members so as to make the scope of the standard as broad as possible.

**Discussion**

91. CCASIA21 appreciated the efforts of Japan to ensure the inclusiveness of the standard.
92. CCASIA noted the concern on the use of the term *Bacillus* spp. as some species could be considered pathogenic and agreed to take this into consideration in the development of the standard.

The purposes and the scope of the standard

93. It was agreed to include a similar fermented soybean product known as “Thua nao sa” produced in Thailand in the scope of the standard.

The main aspects to be covered

94. In response to a proposal to include “weights and measures”, in order to be fully in line with the format for commodity standards laid down in the Procedural Manual, the Codex Secretariat clarified that while encouraging that the format be complied with, the Committee could take the decision on whether a particular provision included in the format was appropriate or not.
95. CCASIA agreed not to include “weights and measures” in the project document but would consider whether or not this provision was needed when drafting the standard.

Commodities information (Appendix II)

96. Along with the revised scope, CCASIA21 agreed to include “Thua nao sa” in the list of soybean products fermented with microorganism from the *Bacillus* spp. in Asia.

**Conclusion**

97. CCASIA21 agreed to:
- (i) forward the project document to CAC43 for approval as new work (Appendix V); and
  - (ii) establish an EWG chaired by Japan, working in English, subject to the approval of the new work, to prepare the proposed draft standard for circulation for comments at Step 3 and consideration at CCASIA22.
98. The report of the EWG should be made available to the Codex Secretariat at least three months before CCASIA22.

**DISCUSSION PAPER/PROJECT DOCUMENT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A REGIONAL STANDARD FOR QUICK FROZEN DUMPLING (JIAOZI) (Agenda Item 11)<sup>19</sup>**

99. China presented the item and explained that they had prepared a revised discussion paper/project document (CRD13) based on comments received at this session and proposed to use this document as the basis for discussion. China further highlighted that the main amendments related to the removal of Jiaozi from the product name and the extension of the product definition to include dough made from rice flour and the inclusion of seafood, nuts and etc. in the list of possible ingredients used as filling.

**Discussion**

100. Members, welcoming the revised project document, expressed their general support for the new work. One Member also emphasized the importance of ensuring the inclusivity of the standard.
101. CCASIA21 reviewed the project document contained in CRD13 section on section and made following amendments for flexibility and clarity under Section 2 Product definition:
- (i) to revert back to “dough” instead of “wrapper”;
  - (ii) to replace “50%” with “a certain percent”;
  - (iii) to delete “[After cooking]”; and

<sup>18</sup> CX/ASIA 19/21/13; CRD7 (Thailand)

<sup>19</sup> CX/ASIA 19/21/14; CRD6 (Republic of Korea); CRD7 (Thailand); CRD12 (Indonesia); CRD13 (China)

- (iv) to delete “Sikkim in India and Darjeeling” in the description of dumpling produced in Nepal, Bhutan and India in table 1.

### Conclusion

102. CCASIA21 agreed to:

- (i) forward the project document to CAC43 for approval as new work (Appendix VI); and
- (ii) establish an EWG chaired by China, working in English, subject to approval of the new work, to prepare the proposed draft standard for circulation for comments at Step 3 and consideration at CCASIA22.

103. The report of the EWG should be made available to the Codex Secretariat at least three months before CCASIA22.

### DISCUSSION PAPER/PROJECT DOCUMENT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A REGIONAL STANDARD/CODE OF PRACTICE FOR ZONGZI (Agenda Item 12)<sup>20</sup>

104. China presented the item and explained that they had prepared a revised discussion paper/project document (CRD14) based on comments received and after discussing with pertinent Members at this session and proposed to use this document as a basis for discussion. China further explained that: (i) the pictures and descriptions of similar products had been complemented with additional products and some modifications had been made in the product definition (e.g. inclusion of banana leaves for wrapping); (ii) the product name “Zongzi” was conventional and could be used temporarily until a more generic product name was identified and all suggestions in this regard were welcomed.

### Discussion

105. One Member expressed the view that Codex standards should be more inclusive and it would be difficult for CCEXEC to endorse a project document with a tentative name and narrow scope as well as text in brackets.

106. The Codex Secretariat provided further details on the requirement of ‘amenability’ of the commodity to standardisation in the Procedural Manual in response to a request of clarification in this regard.

107. In addition to editorial corrections, amendments for flexibility, clarity and consistency, CCASIA21 made the following comments and decisions:

#### Name of the product

108. Different proposals on the name of the products i.e. “steamed rice wrapped in plant leaves”, “rice dumplings” or “steamed sticky rice wrapped in plant leaves”, and “Cooked glutinous rice wrapped in plant leaves” were considered.

109. CCASIA21 noted that: (i) the method of preparation for the product was not limited to steaming and other methods e.g. boiling was also acceptable; and (ii) besides glutinous rice, the standard should also cover other types of rice.

110. CCASIA21 therefore agreed to rename the product as “cooked rice wrapped in plant leaves”.

#### Product definition

111. Members pointed out that (i) there could be alternatives to vacuum packaging and quick freezing as methods employed after cooking; (ii) the description “tied with cotton threads” after wrapping and molding was too limited and flexibility should be added to allow for other methods; (iii) “lotus leaves” should be added to the type of leaves used for wrapping and molding; (iv) for the product from the Philippines in table 1, the text “meat is usually used as the ingredients” should be replaced with “stuffed with other ingredients” in the description of products from the Philippines in table 1 to more accurately reflect the nature of the product; and (v) two products from Indonesia were proposed for addition in table 1.

### Conclusion

112. CCASIA21 agreed to:

- (i) forward the project document to CAC43 for approval as new work (Appendix VII); and
- (ii) establish an EWG chaired by China, working in English, subject to the approval of the new work, to prepare the proposed draft standard for circulation for comments at Step 3 and consideration at CCASIA22.

<sup>20</sup> CX/ASIA 19/21/15; CRD7 (Thailand); CRD12 (Indonesia); CRD14 (China)

The report of the EWG should be made available to the Codex Secretariat at least three months before CCASIA22.

### **NOMINATION OF THE COORDINATOR (Agenda Item 13)<sup>21</sup>**

113. CCASIA21 unanimously agreed to recommend to CAC43 that China be appointed as the next Coordinator for Asia.
114. China thanked all delegations for their support and expressed their strong commitment to fulfill the duties of the Coordinator.

### **Other Business (Agenda Item 14)**

Amendment of *Standard for Canned Sardines and Sardine-type products* (CXS STAN 94-1981): inclusion of *Sardinella lemuru* (Bali Sardinella) in the list of sardinella species under sec. 2.1.1<sup>22</sup>

115. The Philippines introduced the item for comments and consideration only as the matter was of relevance to several countries in the region, but was yet to be submitted for consideration by CCEXEC.
116. CCASIA21 noted the proposal.

### Development of a Codex Standard for Traditional Dairy Based Sweets<sup>23</sup>

117. India presented the item informing the session that a related project document was also available (CRD17).
118. Members noted that insufficient time had been provided to evaluate the proposal or to consult with national experts. It was suggested the proposal could be represented at CCASIA22 and a new draft could also consider similar products traded in the region to ensure inclusiveness.
119. CCASIA21 noted that the proposal could not be discussed due to lack of time and agreed India would re-submit a discussion paper at CCASIA22 taking into consideration comments regarding the need for the proposal to be inclusive.

### Raising awareness of FAO/WHO capacity building activities in the CCASIA region

120. The Representative of WHO noted that many countries reported they were unaware of FAO/WHO capacity building initiatives in the region. The Representative suggested CCASIA could be a forum for reporting on such initiatives and proposed to include the topic as a standing agenda item.
121. CCASIA21 noted the above proposal and agreed that consideration may be given to including such an item in future agendas.

### **DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT SESSION (Agenda Item 15)**

122. CCASIA21 was informed that its 22nd Session would be held in approximately two years' time and that more detailed arrangements would be communicated to members following the appointment of the Coordinator by CAC43 and subsequent discussions between the Coordinator and the Codex Secretariat.

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<sup>21</sup> CX/ASIA 19/21/16

<sup>22</sup> CRD5 (the Philippines)

<sup>23</sup> CRD8 (India); CRD17 (India)