

# CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

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Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



World Health  
Organization

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**CX/EURO 22/32/CRD11**

## JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR EUROPE

Thirty-second Session

Virtual, 16 – 20 May 2022

### Opening speech of Mr Markus Lipp on behalf of FAO

You are all very welcome and thanks to all who have contributed to arranging the meeting, and providing the background papers. As always, it is a real pleasure to work closely with WHO and the Codex Secretariat in supporting this CCEURO. It is excellent to have the opportunity to come together across the region, to share updates on food safety and quality, food standards and specific Codex work, both successes and challenges.

I am very pleased to see such a rich agenda and supporting documents which will be discussed at the 32nd Session.

To highlight a few points:

- Keynote address on Sustainable Food Systems and the role of Codex – really pleased to have our distinguished keynote speaker, well known to many of us – Marta Hugas, former Chief Scientist, EFSA.
- A number of agenda items will enable an exchange of information and updating each other on progress and priorities at country level – this includes emerging issues paper (Agenda item 4); updates on results of Codex work, including new agreed standards (Agenda item 6).
- We hope you will also appreciate a new agenda item for this year's session on FAO and WHO's work with a focus on the region (Agenda item 5).
- I also note the important discussion you will have on the regional strategic plan for Codex.

I would also like to take the opportunity to re-affirm FAO's support to global food standards setting and their implementation, including the provision of scientific advice to Codex work, thus providing benchmarks for food safety and quality of our food. This is essential as part of our common goal to ensure healthy diets and meeting the food security and nutritional needs for all. The Codex Alimentarius Commission, supported by Members and Observers is continually making a difference, and the Regional Coordinating Committees' meetings, including CCEURO provide a key opportunity for us to focus on food safety and quality issues across regions – today's and tomorrow's. FAO works at global, regional and country levels to improve food safety for consumer health protection, ensuring functioning of markets and supply of safe, nutritious foods. Supporting policy development, and supporting value chain operators, academicians, and consumer representatives, sometimes the work is narrowly focused on specific food safety regulations and parameters, and at other times it is linked to related areas of work on nutrition security, One Health, and embedded as part of achieving sustainable agrifood systems transformation that are more effective, inclusive, resilient and sustainable.

With a long history in providing science-based guidance for standards, starting with JECFA in 1956, FAO also recognizes the changing and evolving food production and supply system in which we operate. One where emerging risks and changes in food production and consumption need to be kept in our sights – for that reason FAO has developed Strategic Priorities for Food Safety within the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-2031, with the vision to provide "Safe food for all people at all times" and the mission "To support Members in continuing to improve food safety at all levels by providing scientific advice and strengthening their food safety capacities

essential for sustainable agrifood systems.” – Related information on this document is included in Agenda item 5 (CX/32/5). In brief, let me stress that the FAO strategic priorities for food safety are important to FAO and all our work on food systems transformation and contribute to the 2030 Agenda. During the development of the FAO Food Safety Priorities and the WHO Global Food Safety Strategy, FAO and WHO maintained a standing and rigorous information sharing and discussion mechanism. Both organizations have committed to plan the development of a joint framework for implementation, following the endorsement of the respective strategic directions in the coming weeks and months, respectively (end May WHA and end July COA28). We do hope that the longstanding, consistent and strategic collaboration of FAO and WHO at global and regional level will inspire a constructive and collaborative work of food and agriculture and health sectors in line with One Health approach where food safety is an integral part.

Let me close my welcoming address by wishing you an interesting and engaging CCEURO meeting, and wishing you an early Happy World Food Safety Day, for the 7<sup>th</sup> June, next month.

### **Opening speech of Mr Peter Hoejskov on behalf of WHO**

DR NAILYA KARSYBEKOVA, CHAIR OF THE FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR EUROPE,  
STEVE WEARNE, CHAIR OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION,  
DISTINGUISHED PARTICIPANTS, COLLEAGUES,  
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

On behalf of the World Health Organization (WHO), I would like to welcome you all to the 32nd Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Europe. It is a pleasure for me to address you and I look forward to working with you over the next five days. Unfortunately, we will not be able to meet in person this time, but instead we are meeting virtually from different corners of our region and across different time zones. Thank you to Kazakhstan for the chairmanship in planning and conducting the session. Your leadership and initiative have been of paramount importance in making this session a reality.

Since we last met in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in 2019, many things have happened globally and in our region which have affected our work. The COVID-19 pandemic has opened our eyes for how vulnerable we are to emerging health threats and how pandemics can change our routines and daily lives with very short notice.

COVID-19 is not a food safety issue, but unsafe food also has the potential to cause public health emergencies of international concern. Safe food is a primary determinant of human health. It is a basic human right to have access to safe and healthy food. In seeking to guarantee this right, governments must ensure that available food meets safety standards. This task is not easy as the world is now more interconnected, and food systems are changing faster than ever.

Food safety and quality are complex issues, and they must be seen in the context of sustainable food systems and addressed with a One Health approach. The One Health approach fosters a systemic understanding of the interdependencies between the health of humans, animals, plants, and the environment and how these can manifest as health threats. It enables better understanding of the root causes and drivers of disease emergence, spread and persistence as well as the impacts of biodiversity loss and environmental degradation.

Last year, the Pan-European Commission for Health and Sustainable Development, in its efforts to rethink health, called for operationalization of the concept of One Health in all settings where health and well-being policies are developed. This also includes food safety.

In response WHO, FAO, OIE and UNEP established the Regional One Health Coordination Mechanism in April 2021. The mechanism provides leadership by defining the strategic direction, convening stakeholders and partners, and coordinating interventions and support to Member States across the Region.

Codex Alimentarius also plays a critical role in fostering and strengthening collaboration across sectors, stakeholders, and national borders. Codex provides a platform for collaboration and exchange of information and CCEURO brings this platform to the regional level. Here, it provides a venue for Member States to coordinate food standards work, discuss food control measures and food safety and quality issues of common interest.

Over the past two years, the work of Codex has been challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic and CCEURO was postponed. Nevertheless, the work continues, and we are still aiming at achieving the five goals outlined in the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025. I am pleased that so many of you have contributed to this very important work and that so many are attending this online session of the 32nd session of CCEURO. I wish you all a fruitful and productive Session.

Thank you.

### **Opening speech of Mr Steve Wearne, Chair of the Codex Alimentarius Commission**

Distinguished Representatives of FAO and WHO, Madame Chairperson, Codex Secretariat colleagues, distinguished delegates – good morning and good afternoon to you all.

It is my great pleasure and honour to address you at the opening of the 32nd session of the FAO/WHO Co-ordinating Committee for Europe, my home region, which is the first in this round of co-ordinating committee meetings. Warmest wishes to you all from me and from Vice-Chairpersons Raj Rajasekar and Diego Varela, who also join us for the meeting this week, and from Vice-Chairperson Allan Azegele. We are keen to demonstrate our continuing commitment to work in the service of the Codex membership, ensuring we are close to members, to committees and committee chairs, so that we understand your issues and the debates and can help guide the Codex family through them.

Our work continues to be facilitated by our virtual working environment and our continuing adaptation to it. It has allowed greater levels of participation by members in our discussions, contributing to enhanced transparency and collaboration. We must retain these benefits, which are vital for a vibrant and inclusive Codex.

But as we look forward, we should also ensure that we nurture, renew and grow the personal and professional relationships, and the opportunities for informal discussion, that characterise the Codex family when working at its best. We will be discussing this topic at the Codex Executive Committee next month, before wider discussions with the Codex membership. I will be keen to hear your reflections on this session and on the prospect of holding some Codex meetings physically in the future.

As we turn now to the agenda for CCEURO32, we will today hear the keynote speech on the subject of sustainability of food systems and the role of Codex.

This is a timely discussion. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated how small our planet really is and how we are all connected. The “great reset” we are seeing in society is sharpening the focus on environmental sustainability and ethical trade in particular among a range of issues that can only be addressed collaboratively, through international action.

Last year’s UN Food Systems Summit stressed the extent to which healthier, more sustainable and more equitable food systems underpin progress across the Sustainable Development Goals, and challenged us to transform the way the world produces, consumes and thinks about food. The global challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, soil, water and air quality, require us to think about how we might make the international framework of rules on trade and standards fit for the future.

For people who say that Codex shouldn’t do sustainability, my answer is we already do. Look for example at the work in CCFH on safe use and re-use of water to mitigate water scarcity.

But the debate of sustainability in Codex is not mature. We do not have a systematic approach, or consistent and shared definitions and priorities in relation to sustainability. Thinking is developing at different rates and with varying priorities in different countries. My hope is that the work of the co-ordination hub in FAO which is taking forward the UNFSS agenda will help to raise the priority of sustainable food systems within each Codex Member country and allow a mature and productive debate.

I share the assessment made in the EU Council conclusions of February this year that there is the potential for Codex, OIE, IPPC and WTO to contribute to the global sustainability agenda through science- and evidence-based

international standards. We have already seen the alignment of action by the international standard-setting bodies to counter antimicrobial resistance, which is a global threat to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals, including the adoption of two landmark texts on antimicrobial resistance by the Codex Alimentarius Commission in November. I have already started discussions with the SPS and TBT Secretaries at the WTO on how we might ensure discussion and advancement of the global sustainability agenda across WTO and the three sisters can be co-ordinated and aligned. It would serve no-one if our collective response is fragmented and incoherent.

In the meantime, and as is stated in the paper supporting the keynote speech, adopting sustainable, holistic food systems to deliver healthy diets and improve food safety, security and nutrition, is already a priority in the European region. I look forward to listening to the keynote speech and engaging, as part of the UK delegation, in the other issues on our agenda this week.

Thank you, Madame Chairperson.