



## JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

### FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE OR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

#### Twenty-second Session

Virtual, 24 – 28 October 2022

### FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY IN THE REGION INCLUDING CURRENT AND EMERGING ISSUES – COUNTRY UPDATES

*(Prepared by FAO and WHO)*

#### 1. THEMATIC TIMELINE FOR THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (CCLAC)

1. A review of the reports from the CCLAC (sessions 1 to 21) was conducted to look at areas of food safety that were addressed, and to illustrate advances and/or challenges existing in the region. An overview of the topics of work within the Coordinating Committee identifies recurring challenges for the region: harmonization of food standards, training for food inspection services, Codex maximum residue limits (MRLs) for pesticides, mycotoxin control, food safety risk analysis, foodborne disease and emerging pathogens in the region, and elaboration of regional standards.
2. The prioritized topics were several and diverse with actions in line with the terms of reference for the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees<sup>1</sup>: *“to define the problems and needs of the region concerning food standards and food control; to promote mutual exchange of information on proposed regulatory initiatives and problems arising from food control and stimulate the strengthening of food control infrastructures; to recommend to the Commission the development of worldwide standards for products of interest to the region, develops regional standards for food products moving exclusively or almost exclusively in intraregional trade”*; among others.
3. The timeline (Figure 1) shows the evolution of the CCLAC meetings from 1976 to 2021. It is relevant to note some milestones within the work of the committee. CCLAC1 (1976) initiated its work through the harmonization of food legislation, an emphasis on food inspection services, and considered different types of contaminants. The concept of Safe Food (“inocuos”) and foodborne disease, the importance of addressing food safety within the challenges of urbanization and food handling were put forward during CCLAC3. An outcome of CCLAC6 (1989) were the proposed guidelines for setting-up a National Codex Committee (NCC). CCLAC8 (1993) supported the objectives of the SPS Agreement. CCLAC11 (1998) identified regional needs for Risk Analysis. The establishment of the FAO/WHO Codex Trust Fund was presented in CCLAC13 (2002). Private food safety standards were discussed in CCLAC17 (2010). The revitalization of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees was considered in CCLAC19 (2014). CCLAC21 (2019) was conducted in a hybrid mode, commencing physically in 2019 and completing the work of the session virtually in 2020.

---

<sup>1</sup> FAO and WHO. 2019. Codex Alimentarius Commission – Procedural Manual twenty-seventh edition. Rome. p.219. License: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

## CCLAC Timeline

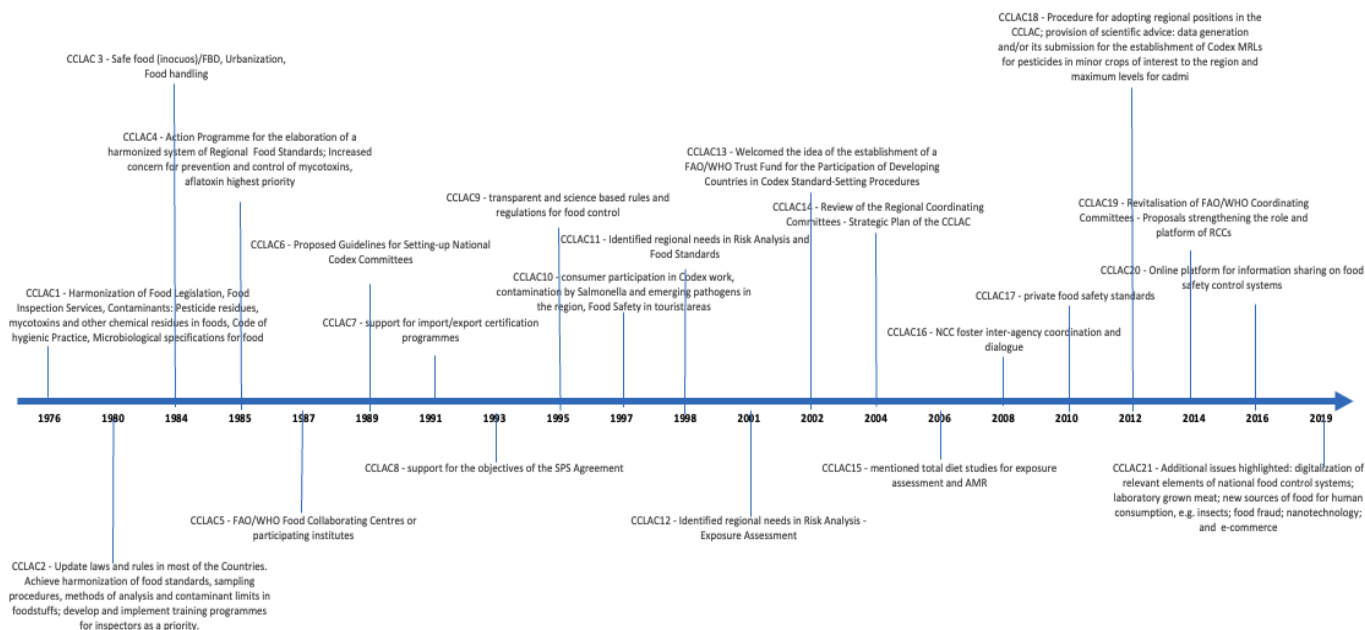


Figure 1. CCLAC timeline and food safety priorities from 1976-2021.

4. CCLAC food safety priorities show persistence over time regarding harmonization of food legislation, food control procedures and protocols, detection of chemical residues in food such as pesticide residues and mycotoxins. But the milestones identified also show the advancement of the Codex structure in the region, particularly in the process of setting up National Codex Committees to identifying regional needs and preparation of regional positions.
5. This succinct review of the CCLAC reports takes a snapshot of recurring relevant topics for the region, and at the same time shows how food safety priorities move forward as science evolves. For example, in CCLAC21, along with the topics mentioned in Section 2 below, new areas such as laboratory grown meat, new sources of food for human consumption, digitalization within national food control systems, open the door to new discussions/work with Member countries to harmonize legislation, improve/update food control protocols or management options to reflect trends/new issues in food safety, and exchange information, as reflected in the terms of reference for the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee.

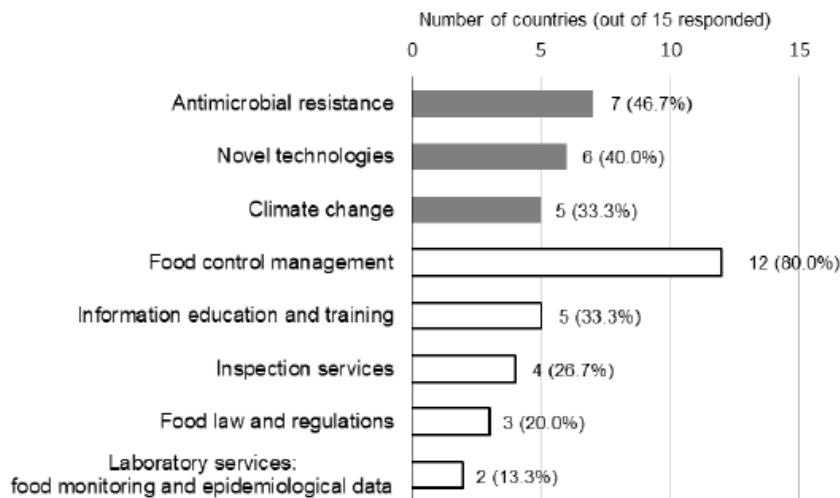
### 1.1. Current and emerging food safety and quality issues

6. In 2019, CCLAC21 considered the results of a survey<sup>2</sup> prepared by FAO and WHO, in collaboration with the Codex Secretariat and the Regional Coordinator, and which depicted the inputs from Codex Members from the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region. The objective of the survey was to support countries in identifying food safety and quality issues of significance that could have an impact in the region in the next five to ten years. Figure 2 presents the issues identified.
7. The issues were grouped into two major categories, the first category (grey bars) consisted of major trends: antimicrobial resistance (AMR), new technologies and climate change. These three topics were identified to be emerging issues in more than one third of the LAC countries.
8. The second category (white bars) included all other topics mentioned by countries and classified as belonging to one of the 5 different pillars of the National Food Control Systems (NFCS) according to FAO publications<sup>3</sup>. Most of the countries (12 out of 15) identified food control management as an emerging issue followed by information education and training, and inspection services. These issues were also identified as priorities in CCLAC1 and CCLAC2 (Figure 1), revealing recurring challenges in the region.

<sup>2</sup> CX/LAC 19/21/3

<sup>3</sup> FAO, 2006. "Strengthening national food control systems. Guidelines to assess capacity building needs" <https://www.fao.org/3/a0601e/a0601e.pdf> and "Strengthening national food control systems. A quick guide to assess capacity building." (<http://www.fao.org/3/a-a1142e.pdf>)

9. Additional emerging issues brought to the attention of the Members, at that time, included: digitalization of relevant elements of national food control systems; laboratory grown meat; new sources of food for human consumption, e.g. insects; food fraud; nanotechnology; and e-commerce.



**Figure 2.** Distribution of the emerging issues in food safety and quality for the responding LAC countries (CX/LAC 19/21/3)

## 2. A FOLLOW UP TO NEW ISSUES RELEVANT TO FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY IN THE LAC REGION

10. An important aspect of identifying emerging issues is to direct follow-up action at country and regional level. The following highlights the efforts of FAO and WHO since CCLAC21 in addressing the areas that were prioritized as emerging issues.

### 2.1 Antimicrobial resistance

11. The ad hoc Codex Intergovernmental Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance (TFAMR) concluded its work with a revision of the *Code of Practice to Minimize and Contain foodborne AMR* (CXC 61-2005) and developed the *Guidelines on Integrated Monitoring and Surveillance of Foodborne Antimicrobial Resistance* (AMR) (CXG 94-2001), and these were adopted by the 44<sup>th</sup> session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) in 2021. The *Guidelines for Risk Analysis of Foodborne AMR* (CXG 77-2011) were included with the former two documents in a compendium of Codex AMR texts published in February 2022 to provide decision makers with a framework to address foodborne AMR.<sup>4</sup>
12. FAO has updated its Action Plan on AMR (2021-2025)<sup>5</sup>.
13. At regional level, FAO has worked from 2017-2022 on the risks of AMR introduction and spread in the food animal production sector in six (6) animal production systems for ten (10) countries in Latin America, resulting in a baseline tool to collect necessary information on AMR risk factors.<sup>6</sup>
14. FAO, PAHO and WOAHA (former OIE) launched the Tripartite Alliance project funded by the European Union (EU) “Working together to combat antimicrobial resistance aiming to i) support development and evaluation of the implementation of One Health AMR national action plans; ii) strengthen surveillance and monitoring of AMR and consumption/use of human and veterinary antimicrobials in compliance with international standards; iii) stimulate the private sector to participate in AMR control; and iv) strengthen research and innovation on AMR and alternatives to antibiotics while fostering international cooperation. Project beneficiary countries are: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay)<sup>7</sup>.
15. As a national tripartite collaboration, an AMR Multi-partner Trust Fund (MPTF) project in Peru entitled “*Fighting Antimicrobial Resistance in Peru under the One Health approach*” will assist the country in laying the groundwork for integrated surveillance during 2022-2023.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/news-and-events/news-details/en/c/147264>

<sup>5</sup> FAO. 2021. *The FAO Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance 2021–2025*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb5545en>

<sup>6</sup> World Bank Group. 2021. *Landscape Analysis of Tools to Address Antimicrobial Resistance*. Washington D.C.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.paho.org/en/together-fight-antimicrobial-resistance>

16. An FAO project, funded by the Republic of Korea entitled “*Implementation of Codex standards to support containment and reduction of foodborne antimicrobial resistance (AMR)*” (ACT) was launched in February 2022, with the participation of two countries from the LAC region, Bolivia and Colombia.
17. Based on 2020-2021 Tripartite AMR country Self-Assessment Survey (TrACSS) data<sup>8</sup>, 21 out of 33 (63%) countries in the LAC region participated in TrACSS. Data are available for 21 countries regarding the AMR national action plan (NAP) status from the TrACSS questionnaire as presented in Figure 3.



**Figure 3.** Status of AMR National Action Plans in LAC. (n = 21 LAC countries)

18. Fourteen countries have a developed their NAP, of those 10 countries have started implementing their NAPs, and four have started implementation of their NAPs and are actively monitoring their implementation. Seven countries have NAPs under development.
19. Further information on FAO and WHO global activities on AMR are available on the respective webpages<sup>9</sup>.

### **2.2 Novel technologies**

20. A new FAO publication “Thinking about the future of food safety – A foresight report”<sup>10</sup>, was released in March 2022, summarizing how major global drivers and trends are currently shaping food safety (FAO, 2022).
21. A look at edible insects from a food safety perspective was published by FAO (FAO, 2021)<sup>11</sup>.

### **2.3 Climate change**

22. A publication on the effects of climate change on food safety was issued by FAO entitled “Climate change: unpacking the burden on food safety” (FAO, 2020)<sup>12</sup>.
23. Additionally, PAHO published a pocket book on climate change for health professionals that offers critical information to enable clinical health care providers to recognize medical conditions related to climate change including those related to contaminated food and water.<sup>13</sup>
24. Under the EU funded project “*Strengthening Resilient Health Systems in the Caribbean*”, PAHO together with CARPHA is supporting CARIFORUM countries to build climate resilient food safety systems strengthening early detection systems and providing risks management guidance to countries to identify and prevent food safety risks linked to climate change.

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/tripartite-amr-country-self-assessment-survey-\(tracss\)-2020-2021](https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/tripartite-amr-country-self-assessment-survey-(tracss)-2020-2021)

<sup>8</sup> FAO AMR (<https://www.fao.org/antimicrobial-resistance/en/>) and WHO AMR (<https://www.who.int/health-topics/antimicrobial-resistance>)

<sup>9</sup> FAO. 2022. *Thinking about the future of food safety - A foresight report*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb8667en>

<sup>10</sup> FAO. 2021. *Looking at edible insects from a food safety perspective. Challenges and opportunities for the sector*. Rome <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb4094en>

<sup>12</sup> FAO. 2020. *Climate change: Unpacking the burden on food safety*. Food safety and quality series No. 8. Rome.

<https://doi.org/10.4060/ca8185en>

<sup>12</sup> Climate Change for Health Professionals: A Pocket Book. Washington, D.C.: Pan American Health Organization; 2020. License: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO

### 3. IMPROVEMENT OF FOOD CONTROL SYSTEMS CAPACITY

25. Aside from emerging issues, countries in LAC identified different areas within the food control systems that need continuous support. FAO and WHO have further assisted countries to build these areas that are essential for a well-functioning food control system.

#### 3.1 FAO/WHO Food Control System Assessment tool

26. At the end of 2019, FAO and WHO launched the Food Control System Assessment Tool that evaluates the food control systems considering 4 dimensions: A) inputs and resources; B) control functions; C) Interaction with stakeholders; D) Science/Knowledge base and continuous improvement.<sup>14</sup>
27. During this last biennium FAO launched a regional technical workshop on the use of the tool in the Caribbean targeting Jamaica, Belize and Suriname. PAHO launched a seminar in Latin America to enhance understanding of the assessment tool and increase awareness on the benefits of assessing a national food control system. PAHO applied the tool in Panama delivering valuable recommendations to improve their national food control system.

#### 3.2 Food Safety Risk Analysis Capacity in the Region

##### 3.2.1 Risk Analysis

28. Under a Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) Project Proposal Grant “Development of a Proposal for a Food Safety Risk Analysis Capacity building program in Latin America based on South-South cooperation and an e-learning model”<sup>15</sup>. FAO, PAHO and the University of Minnesota conducted an online survey for Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Honduras and Uruguay to assess their capacity building needs and strengths in the implementation of a food safety risk analysis framework. Survey responses were used to build a general strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) matrix to guide FAO and WHO in their capacity building interventions.

- *Strengths:* Approximately 50% of the countries have monitoring and surveillance systems for chemical and microbiological hazards. Some risk assessment studies have been developed in some countries and food inspection systems were available in every country.
- *Weaknesses:* A paucity of reports on chemical residues in food, studies linking microbiological risks to foodborne diseases, knowledge and implementation of total diet studies was found in the participating countries. Although countries reported different types of foodborne diseases, subnotifications were addressed. Countries also show limited experience in risk analysis and risk-based inspection.
- *Opportunities:* The interest displayed by participating countries warrants the advances in the implementation of risk analysis within the region. It is an opportunity to establish baseline capacities at the national level for risk assessments.
- *Threats:* The survey identified weak national leadership, underreporting of microbiological/chemical risks and foodborne diseases, lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities among ministries, deficit of commitment and human resources for risk analysis and difficulty to disseminate information and risk assessments.

29. PAHO together with JIFSAN conducted a training on risk analysis for Bahamas and Guyana in 2022 aiming to strengthen their knowledge and experience in the area. Both countries are modernizing their risk-based food inspection systems and shared their experience in the implementation of a risk-based food inspection e-platform to improve efficiency.

##### 3.2.2 Risk-based food inspection

30. PAHO in consultation with countries in the LAC region created the manual on “Risk-based food inspection for food establishments” to be published this year. Based on the content of this manual, PAHO launched a regional virtual training in 2021 on “Fundamentals and Methodologies in Risk-Based Inspection” that was followed by approximately 500 participants from the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, French Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic and Uruguay. The training included basic concepts on how to implement a risk-based inspection system and had the participation of Costa Rica, Uruguay, Colombia and Brazil as speakers who shared how their systems operate.

---

<sup>14</sup> FAO and WHO. 2019. Food control system assessment tool: Introduction and glossary. Food safety and quality series No. 7/1. Rome.

<sup>15</sup> PPG Development of a Proposal for a Food Safety Risk Analysis Capacity building program in Latin America based on South-South cooperation and an e-learning model <https://standardsfacility.org/PPG-716>

31. Furthermore, PAHO continued its capacity building activities in risk-based food inspection in the Caribbean in 2020, delivering a virtual regional training on risk-based food inspection for a total of 150 participants from the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture of Barbuda, Bahamas, Belize, Bonaire, Jamaica, Guyana, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago. The content of the training was based in the manual published by PAHO on "Risk-based food inspection for the Caribbean"<sup>16</sup>.

### 3.2.3 Risk Communication

32. One of the relevant, and often overlooked, challenges within the food safety control systems is food safety risk communication. Aiming to build capacity in this area, PAHO conducted an online training on food safety risk communication in 2020 that had the participation of 64 representatives of the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture of Barbuda, Bahamas, Belize, Bonaire, Jamaica, Guyana, Suriname and Trinidad & Tobago. The training included the principles for food safety risk communication and crisis management.

## 4. CODEX TRUST FUND PROJECTS

33. Honduras, Bolivia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana and Cuba were awarded with Codex Trust Fund (CTF) projects. PAHO is guiding and supporting the implementation of CTF projects in Honduras, Bolivia, El Salvador, Guatemala and Guyana while FAO is supporting Cuba. Next year eligible countries are: Belize, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Suriname.
- **Honduras (CTF2 2018-2022)** has strengthened the administrative capacities, structures and management of the national Codex Alimentarius Contact Point through the development of the Codex Alimentarius strategic plan, communication strategy and procedures. The project has also supported Honduras to build capacity of different stakeholders on the Codex Alimentarius through the organization of twinning programs and development of a standardized program to raise awareness about Codex Alimentarius among decision makers and other sectors that have an impact, to promote food safety and Codex management.
  - **Bolivia (CTF2 2019-2023)** has been developing their legal framework to update the composition and functions of the Codex Contact Point and the national Codex committee (CNCA) to ensure programme sustainability. Bolivia has developed their Codex Alimentarius Strategic Plan and Communication Strategy to strengthen the operations of the CNCA and the active participation of Bolivia in Codex work. Bolivia is currently developing a country-wide communication plan to sensitize and trained about Codex Alimentarius all stakeholders involved in food safety (government, private sector, academia, and public interest groups).
  - **El Salvador/Guatemala (CTF 2021-2024)** have developed Codex Alimentarius Strategic Plans and aim at improving the technical capacity of different stakeholders at different national subcommittees in topics such as food hygiene, food labelling, sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS) measures and the WTO agreements. The countries are also increasing awareness on the importance of Codex Alimentarius among decision makers and other sectors and launched a high level event the 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of July in El Salvador and Guatemala, respectively on "Food safety and the Codex Alimentarius: Impact on the productivity and public health of the countries" that included the participation of the highest authorities of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, codex Secretary Mr. Tom Heilandt, Mr. Diego Varela, Chile and Vice-Chairperson of the CAC and Mr. Rommel Betancourt, Regional Coordinator, LAC.
  - **Guyana (CTF 2021-2024)** has developed a national strategic plan and Codex Alimentarius procedures to guide and conduct their work. The projects is supporting the country to build technical capacity of newly assigned Codex Alimentarius Contact Point and National Committee Members. This includes twinning programs and technical trainings in different topics of the subcommittees. The project is also supporting communication activities to increase awareness of Codex Alimentarius among decision makers and other sectors that intervene in food safety.
  - **Cuba (CTF2 2019-2023)** has advanced in the preparation and implementation of the Codex Procedural Manual for Cuba with the assistance of Codex experts and several workshops. This process was necessary for Codex Cuba to progress their activities and gain visibility, enhancing communication and awareness for food safety among the different stakeholders involved.

---

<sup>16</sup> PAHO. 2019. Risk-based food inspection in the Caribbean. <https://iris.paho.org/handle/10665.2/51775>



## 5. WHO AND FAO FOOD SAFETY STRATEGIES

34. Ongoing changes in food safety systems at global level due to emerging issues (i.e., new developments in science) and challenges (i.e., food safety management reactions because of the COVID-19 pandemic), have coincided with WHO and FAO presenting their respective food safety strategies.
35. During the 75<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly (WHA), the WHO governing body adopted the updated Global Strategy for Food Safety (GSFS)<sup>17</sup> including the document on "Reducing public health risks associated with the sale of live wild animals of mammalian species in traditional food markets -infection, prevention and control"<sup>18</sup>. The main goal of the Strategy is to add value to global health and Member States' efforts by providing an overall vision and strategic priorities for concerted global action in food safety. It underlines the critical role of this field in public health and the need for enhanced global cooperation across the whole food and feed chain to significantly reduce the burden of FBDs. The strategy encourages member states to strengthen their national food control systems; respond to food safety challenges resulting from global changes and food systems transformation; improve the use of food chain information; strength stakeholder engagement in risk communication and promote food safety as an essential component for food trade.<sup>19</sup>
36. Further to the World Health Assembly (WHA) resolution 73.5 to strengthen efforts on food safety<sup>20</sup>, FAO collaborated with the World Health Organization (WHO) to ensure that the respective food safety strategies are aligned and mutually supportive through a 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.<sup>21</sup>
37. The *FAO Strategic Priorities for Food Safety within the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31* encourage a more consistent integration of food safety in the development of sustainable and inclusive agri-food systems, food security and nutrition policies, and agriculture development strategies.<sup>22</sup>
38. At country level, food safety regulators and policy makers have had to address emerging issues and changing dynamics to rapidly adapt to challenges within national food safety systems. This may have exposed gaps in basic components of the food safety system that could be dealt with by strengthening the food safety system, identifying bottlenecks in food control management, creating synergies for strategic partnerships and working toward an effective food safety governance.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

39. It is important to have a discussion with Member countries on the current and emerging issues in the LAC region and set a roadmap for prioritization of issues in the short term. These results will help guide the work of FAO and WHO in food safety at regional and national level.
40. As science advances, the issues identified will change, requiring new initiatives that must be revisited as food safety challenges appear. However, understanding that recurring challenges remain to be addressed in the region with more specificity, such as differentiating between structural, capacity and resource issues and emerging issues within the food safety systems.
41. A mechanism for the participation of all Member countries in the identification of emerging issues is necessary. To date, roughly 50% of Member countries participated in earlier surveys. Nonetheless, the CCLAC reaction to these emerging issues requires the participation of all 33 Members for a coordinated regional response.
42. Countries in the LAC region require a better understanding of the food safety risk analysis framework and include it within the operations of their existing food control systems. This may entail defining the roles and competences of risk analysts and building the food safety risk analysis workforce in the region. Some countries in the region still face challenges in the implementation of a risk-based food inspection system and others have identified structural and financial constraints to conduct food safety risk assessments. Risk communication remains a challenge for the countries and further capacity building programs need to be developed.

---

<sup>17</sup> WHO Global Strategy for Food Safety. 2021. EB 150/25. [https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf\\_files/EB150/B150\\_26-en.pdf](https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EB150/B150_26-en.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> WHO Global Strategy for Food Safety. 2022. EB 150/26. Reducing public health risks associated with the sale of live wild animals of mammalian species in traditional food markets – infection prevention and control. 2022. [https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf\\_files/EB150/B150\\_26-en.pdf](https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EB150/B150_26-en.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> Draft WHO Global Strategy for Food Safety 2022-2030. <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/draft-who-global-strategy-for-food-safety-2022-2030>.

<sup>20</sup> World Health Organization (WHO). 2020. *Seventy-Third World Health Assembly: Geneva, 18-19 May (de minimis) and 9-14 November (resumed) 2020: resolutions and decisions, annexes*. <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/345951>

<sup>21</sup> COAG2022/6 The FAO Strategic Priorities for Food Safety within the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31.

<sup>22</sup> COAG2022/6 The FAO Strategic Priorities for Food Safety within the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31.

43. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of preventing risks along the human-animal-environment interphases. Food safety is a multifaceted discipline that involves the intervention of different sectors across the farm-to-fork continuum. The pandemic has only reinforced the need for sectors to work integrated and collaboratively to identify and prevent risks in a timely manner. Future improvements in food safety will depend on how well multiple sectors collaborate, coordinate, and share information.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

44. Members are encouraged to share information and updates on the following issues:

- Improvements in the exchange of information between countries on different aspects of food safety that guide regional work and any approaches to identify new emerging issues in the region.
- New developments and good practices in addressing these issues.

45. Members are also encouraged to suggest follow-up actions to address emerging issues and activities identified at regional and national level.