

# CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



World Health  
Organization

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## JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME CODEx COMMITTEE ON FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

20<sup>th</sup> Session

Kampala, Uganda, 2 – 6 October, 2017

### OPENING SPEECHES/REMARKS

#### MINISTER OF MINISTRY OF HEALTH– HON. DR. JANE RUTH ACENG

Protocol Observation;

The Ministry of Health welcomes you all to the Republic of Uganda.

Uganda became a member of Codex in 1964, just one year after the Codex Alimentarius or "Food Code" was established by the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization in 1963 to develop harmonized international food standards.

Cognizant of the importance of international food standards on consumer health and safety, Uganda further established a multi-stakeholder Committee known as the National Codex Committee (NCC) in 2000. Chaired by the Ministry of Health, the NCC has the Uganda National Bureau of Standards as its Secretariat. The objective of the NCC is to improve effectiveness of Uganda's participation in Codex work as a mechanism to promote the development and implementation of food standards and advise Government on matters of food safety. This NCC is fully constituted, functional, and has played a pivotal role in the preparations for the 20<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Committee of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables to ensure that the Session is successfully hosted by Uganda, and their efforts are acknowledged and appreciated.

Hosting such an important meeting in Uganda is an excellent opportunity to further improve our participation in Codex work, build capacity of our national systems and as well raising the profile of Codex and food safety at the national level. Suffices to note, this meeting comes at a time when the Government is in the process of streamlining the national food control system in order to respond to current and emerging food safety issues and there couldn't have been a better timing. To this effect, I would like to heartily thank the Government of Mexico and FAO/WHO for the opportunity provided to Uganda to host this very important Codex meeting.

Again I warmly welcome all of you esteemed delegates in the Codex family to Uganda, and I wish you fruitful deliberations.

#### FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY!

#### THE MINISTER OF MINISTRY OF TRADE, INDUSTRY AND COOPERATIVES – HON. AMELIA KYAMBADDE

Protocol Observation;

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Uganda I am pleased to welcome all of you to Uganda.

Uganda became a member of Codex in 1964, and just like many other countries and trading blocs, Uganda has harmonized her national legislations and standards with those elaborated by Codex. As of December 2016, Uganda had developed 837 standards in the area of food and agriculture of which 129 are directly adopted from Codex. The availability of food standards has enabled Uganda to develop its Standardization, Quality assurance, Metrology and Testing (SQMT) infrastructure. Subsequently the implementation and application of relevant codex standards, has helped Uganda's exports to penetrate key markets in the various food sectors; significantly fruits and vegetables, and fishery products.

Uganda is an agro based economy, and the fruits and vegetables subsector significantly contributes to the country's economy. The formal exports for fruits in 2015 were 7,957 tonnes excluding bananas and vegetables at 11,993 tonnes with a total value of USD 87,210,000 (UBOS, 2016). Uganda's fruits and vegetables are mainly exported to the European Union (United Kingdom, German, Belgium and Netherlands), the Middle East and within the East African Community. In order to sustainably participate in the international trade of fruits and vegetables, Uganda is required to comply with set standards as elaborated by the Codex Alimentarius. However as a growing economy and exporter of fresh fruits and vegetables, Uganda has in the past

experienced challenges penetrating and maintaining lucrative international markets due to non-compliance to international standards and related SPS measures.

Participation in the international standards setting processes to the level of hosting a codex session is a great opportunity for our nation that we don't take lightly. And on this note I would like to reiterate the statement by the Hon Minister of Health, to thank the Government of Mexico and FAO/WHO for the opportunity provided to Uganda to co-host this very important Codex meeting.

This meeting provides an opportunity for our technocrats and all Ugandans to not only further appreciate the international standards setting process, but also for the country to input in this process the national concerns and data.

The Government of Uganda continuously strives to provide a conducive policy environment, and to explore markets for her products (fresh fruits and vegetables), as ways of promoting trade. Hosting this Codex meeting on fresh fruits and vegetables in Kampala provides an avenue to open up new markets from the trading partners who are participating here today, and as Government, we commit to ensure that this meeting is successfully concluded.

Again I warmly welcome you the Codex family delegates to Uganda. I invite you to taste our fresh fruits and vegetables in the nearby markets but also for you to take time off your busy schedule while here, to enjoy the beautiful sceneries and rich culture of the pearl of Africa.

With those few words I declare this 20<sup>th</sup> Codex committee on fresh fruits and vegetables officially open.

**FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY!**

**THE WHO COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE IN UGANDA – Dr. Bodo Bongomin on behalf of the Acting WHO Representative to Uganda; Dr Bayo Fatumnbi Segun**

The Guest of Honor,

The Honorable Minister of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives,

The Honorable Minister of Health,

The Representatives of Foreign Governments,

Heads of UN Agencies and Heads of diplomatic missions,

Colleagues from WHO and FAO Uganda and Global Offices;

Participants from Uganda and the different countries represented here;

Colleagues;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

All protocol observed;

Good morning!

It is my pleasure to welcome you to Kampala, Uganda, to this 20th Session of the Joint WHO/FAO Codex Alimentarius (Latin words for "Food Code") Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables. This meeting that has brought together different experts, policy makers and representatives from different Governments provides us an avenue to review, discuss and reach agreement on standards that will govern international trade in fresh fruits and vegetables; ensuring quality and safety.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Codex Alimentarius was established in November 1961 by the **Food and Agriculture Organization** (FAO) of the United Nations, and later joined by the **World Health Organization** (WHO) in June 1962, with the main goals to **protect the health of consumers** and to ensure fair practices in the international food trade. The Codex Alimentarius remains as relevant as it was at its establishment in 1961; if not even more relevant than ever before, especially in this era of increased of global trade.

Colleagues, global food trade has increased exponentially over the years since the establishment of the Codex Alimentarius. Trade in Agricultural products (including food products) constitutes a considerable percentage of export by developing countries on global trade markets. It was estimated by the World Trade Organization that by 2016, global trade in agricultural commodities would constitute about 11% of all exports by developing countries on the global trade market. This therefore underscores the importance and impact that trade in food products has on the economies of developing countries.

On the health front, in the year 2015 in Africa alone, there were over 105 public health emergencies that were reportedly managed with or without external support in the different regions of Africa. Of these, about 78 were infectious diseases related; food related/transmitted infections such as food poisoning, typhoid, *E. coli* and

cholera infections forming a small but significant proportion. These statistics therefore equally underscore the importance that food standards to curb food related disease outbreaks, including those that occur with increasing frequency in developing countries.

The theme and focus of this meeting: “**standards for fresh fruits and vegetables**” is therefore not only timely, but also very relevant in the current global health security debate that centers on epidemic preparedness and control including epidemics that arise out of contaminated fruits and vegetables. Reports of disease outbreaks that are transmitted through the food chain world-wide reminds us that no country; whatever the level of development is immune to outbreaks of foodborne diseases, due not only to global trade, but also to the potential for contamination along the food chain if clear standards are not set and/or adhered to.

The *E.coli* infection outbreak in the UK in July 2016 that was traced to salads (vegetable) illustrates the importance of having clear standards for the safety of fresh fruits and vegetables especially those eaten uncooked.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have the opportunity in this meeting; through discussing and agreeing on standards for some of the fruits and vegetables to not only impact control of the spread of foodborne disease of epidemic potential especially in developing countries, but also to contribute to the economic development of countries. As stated earlier, the majority of developing countries rely heavily on exporting food products to sustain their economies. Sadly, many of the developing countries have difficulty in accessing lucrative markets in the North and West due to inability to meet set standards. Setting standards through the Codex especially in the areas of fruits and vegetables will therefore create a benchmark towards which countries will strive so that their produce can access traditional old markets in addition to new emerging markets.

We have the opportunity in our hands to not only control set standards that will help in the control of outbreaks of foodborne diseases that are of epidemic potential but also to promote global trade through setting standards. This is the key message that I would like the participants in this 20<sup>th</sup> CCFFV Session to bear in mind as they discuss the issues that will be presented during the five days of deliberations.

In line with the above, FAO and WHO have recently established the Codex Trust Fund; thanks to the generous support of the Dutch government. The aim of this Trust Fund is to support Countries to build strong and sustainable capacity to participate in Codex work. It is my sincere hope that the eligible Countries will take advantage of the current round of applications that closes on 15<sup>th</sup> October, 2017.

Ladies and gentlemen, the World Health Organization remains strongly committed to support the Codex Alimentarius Commission to achieve the goals and objectives for which it was established. As a Representative of the WHO Country Office in Uganda, I would like to reiterate our commitment to support the government of Uganda through its different Agencies such as the Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS), the National Drug Authority (NDA) and other regulatory authorities, the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives as well as the Ministry of Health and other related Ministries in the implementation of the Codex Alimentarius activities in the Country. Indeed in jointly establishing the Codex Alimentarius, WHO and FAO recognized the multi-sectoral requirement and effort that would be needed to develop and fully implement Codex standards. I am therefore looking forward to a strengthened collaboration with all actors in Uganda.

In closing my remarks, I would like to thank the Governments of Uganda and Mexico for accepting to co-host this 20<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables. Special thanks to FAO and WHO for the excellent collaboration and support that has kept the spirit in which the Codex Alimentarius was established alive. I hope this meeting will offer the opportunity to further strengthen the collaboration between countries and the sub-region.

To all participants, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks for the time taken out of your busy schedules to be with us here in Kampala and discuss this important issue regarding the standards that should govern trade in vegetables and fresh fruits.

I wish you successful deliberations and I look forward to the outputs of this meeting.

Thank you for your attention.