

PROGRAMME

Side Event on Food Safety and SPS Measures in Africa

Organised by the African Union with support of France & the European Commission
in the margins of the meeting of the Codex Committee on General Principles (CCGP32)
hosted by France (virtual session)

10 February 2021

12pm - 3pm | France (UTC+1)

Theme: Harmonisation of SPS measures in Africa for inclusive health, prosperity and sustainable socio-economic development: Priority to food safety.

CONTEXT

Agricultural production and trade in safe food contributes to good health, poverty reduction and it leads to socio-economic development. Efficient national food safety management systems including the effective implementation of national standards based on Codex food safety and quality standards ensure consumer health protection and fair practices in the food trade.

On 25th September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are integrated and indivisible and which balance the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) for people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership. Undoubtedly, food safety is a prerequisite for health, food security and nutrition, while trade in safe food leads to wealth creation. Therefore, food safety contributes towards the achievement of several SDGs, including SDG 1: No poverty; SDG 2: Zero hunger; SDG 3: Good health and well-being; SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth; SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production and SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals.

The Agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) was adopted by the African Union on 21st March 2018 and it entered into force on 30th May 2019. The AfCFTA brings together the Member States of the African Union covering a market of more than 1.2 billion people. It creates a single continental market for goods and services based on the free circulation of capital, products, services and persons, thus laying the foundation for the establishment of a continental Customs Union. The roadmap for the agriculture sector had already been set at the African Union Summit held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea in 2014, which set the objective to triple, intra-African trade in agricultural commodities and services by the year 2025. Without a doubt, one of the major challenges in meeting this objective will be complying with SPS requirements, and in particular food safety standards for traded food products.

In the first half of 2019, the International Conferences on Food Safety convened by WHO, FAO, WTO and the African Union (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and Geneva, Switzerland) identified key actions and strategies to address current and future challenges to food safety and food trade globally, and they emphasized that food safety is an essential precondition for food security.

It is in this context that in September 2019, the FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committee for Africa (CCAFRI-CA) identified the need for the development of harmonised regional food law guidelines for Africa. This proposal was adopted as New Work by the 43rd Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) in November 2020 and the CAC noted that this regional guidance would contribute to public health and trade. Indeed, guidelines on harmonised food laws will assist African countries in developing their national food laws and regulations governing food control, food safety and food trade in order to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade.

Among the significant global food safety-related events, it is important to note that in September 2021, the UN Secretary General will convene the UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) as part of the Decade of Action to achieve the SDGs by 2030. The UNFSS “will launch bold new actions to deliver progress on all 17 SDGs, each of which relies to some degree on healthier, more sustainable and equitable food systems.” The UNFSS has five Action Tracks, which are of utmost relevance to food safety.

These are:

- Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all;
- Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns;
- Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive production;
- Action Track 4: Advance equitable livelihoods and;
- Action Track 5: Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress.

The contribution of Codex standards towards resilient and sustainable food systems will be examined during the Side Event.

This inclusive Side Event will bring together health, agriculture and food safety experts as well as representatives of International Organisations to have a structured dialogue around important issues related to SPS matters, food safety, public health and food trade. It will be an opportunity to examine issues related to risk assessment and risk management and to share expertise and experiences, exchange ideas and learn from best practices in order to address the challenges faced by Africa in the SPS and food safety areas. Furthermore, the Side Event will provide an opportunity to consider practical options for continuing these exchanges.

OBJECTIVES

The objective of this Side Event is to highlight the work undertaken by CCAFRICA regarding the harmonisation of food laws and the SPS objectives of the African Union in the context of the AfCFTA, and to seek support for these important initiatives.

EXPECTED OUTPUTS

- Dialogue on the UN Food Systems Summit 2021 with a particular emphasis on the role of food safety and Codex standard-setting work;
- Communication on Codex and its importance for global food safety governance;
- Communication to Codex Members on the World Health Assembly Resolution on food safety, the scheduled workload and the expected consequences for Codex work;
- Mobilisation of support for the ongoing initiatives towards strengthening SPS policies in Africa and in particular CCAFRICA's initiative to develop Guidelines for supporting the development of harmonised food laws for CCAFRICA Members;
- Roadmap to strengthening partnerships on food safety matters.

SCHEDULE

12. pm Welcome address – *S.E. Agnes Kalibata, UN Special Envoy on the Food Systems Summit*
- 12.20 pm Setting the scene – *Awilo Ochieng-Pernet, Former Chairperson of the Codex Alimentarius Commission*
- 12.40 pm Round table

Intervention by the African Union (Dr Godfrey Bahigwa, Director DEFRA): State-of-play of ACFTA, Implementation of the AU Sanitary and Phytosanitary Policy Framework

Intervention from Kenya (Dr Kimutai Maritim, former Chairperson of CCAFRICA): The role of Codex and Development of guidelines for supporting the development of harmonised food laws for the CCAFRICA region

Intervention by FAO (Catherine Bessy, FAO HQ – Blaise Ouattara FAO regional office for Africa): Assessing and strengthening national food control systems in Africa: FAO's perspective

Intervention by EU/DG SANTE (Nathalie Chaze): The experience of the EU in harmonisation of food law

Intervention by another Codex member experience (USA - Mary-Frances Lowe) : Opportunities to leverage existing data and expertise, information sharing and regulatory collaboration based on Codex standards;

Intervention by the Chairperson of the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (Nicola Hinder): Presentation on the Principles and Guidelines for National Food Control Systems (CXG 82-2013)

WHO speaker (Francesco Branca): The adoption of a WHA resolution on food safety and beyond

- 2.30 pm Questions & Answers
- 2.30 pm Summary of the discussions: *Awilo Ochieng Pernet, Former Chairperson, FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission*
- 2.55 pm Concluding Remarks: *Sandrine Gaudin, Secrétaire générale, Secrétariat général des affaires européennes, France*
- 3.00 pm End of the Side Event