



**2 July 2013**

## **36<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission**

Mr Sanjay Dave, Chairperson of this Commission

My sister Margaret Chan, Director-General of the World Health Organization,

Excellencies,

Fifty years ago, right here in Rome, the Codex Alimentarius Commission officially came into being.

In July 1963, the Commission held its first session as the principal organ of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Program.

Since then, Codex has contributed to bringing about safer and more nutritious food around the world.

Codex began with 30 members. And has grown to include 185 Member governments, one Member organization and 220 observers.

The results that Codex delivers, its science based decision-making; its participatory nature and truly global membership contribute to Codex's credibility and high reputation as a standard-setting body.

Nowadays, it would be difficult to imagine what our food, our health, and even our economies would be like without Codex Alimentarius, and its international food standards, guidelines and codes of practice.

And yet, even today, many people are not aware of its vast influence on our everyday lives.

Whether you shop at a supermarket; produce organic vegetables; use vaccinations on livestock; or distribute seafood, your life is affected, or protected, in some way, by Codex. And these are just a few examples.



All of you are responsible for helping to make this happen, so I thank you.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Codex and standard setting are an important part of FAO's mandate, as recognized in our reviewed strategic framework and program of work.

Food safety is also important to FAO's global goal of eradicating hunger and malnutrition, since people cannot be food secure, if their food is not safe.

So FAO is proud to be part of the past, present and future of Codex.

And the Codex Alimentarius is as relevant today as when it was created.

Codex helps to improve access to healthy, nutritious food, and provides standards to guide people who depend directly on agriculture and the food system for their livelihoods.

Over the past 50 years, the Codex Alimentarius Commission has done much to strengthen national food safety systems and foster international food trade, which has grown from 22 billion dollars in 1963, to more than 1.3 trillion dollars.

Codex is an important reference for the work of the World Trade Organization.

The WTO refers to Codex as the ultimate standard setting body for food safety in its Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures.

The WTO agreement is designed to help countries protect their populations with food safety and health standards, while discouraging them from using those standards to block competitors unfairly.

Playing an active role in Codex has helped countries to compete in global food markets, while also improving food safety at home.

Much of the work done by Codex can translate directly into national legislation.

It includes thousands of safe-maximum levels for pesticide residues; veterinary drugs; contaminants, and food additives.

Also, Codex has helped to harmonize food labeling across the world; has helped to develop practices to help producers reduce and prevent contamination; and has helped to establish improved food hygiene through the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point system (HACCP).



Codex has also established and applied risk analysis for food safety decisions. Its food safety standards are firmly based on the solid scientific advice that FAO and WHO provide through independent expert bodies.

Where it has not directly set standards, Codex has given detailed advice to countries looking to set their own rules.

In sum, Codex has shown that without compromising its values and scientific approach, it can act quickly and set needed standards within a year.

This week, we can take a moment to celebrate the benefits of the work that we have done together – within countries and internationally. However, there is still a lot of work to be done.

New food borne diseases are emerging, or being identified, new food products emerge and new production methods. This means that we need new standards.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Codex must keep pace with a changing world in which transportation, communications and scientific developments move at a much faster pace than before with direct and significant implications for food safety.

We also have several funding challenges. We are having a hard time finding the needed funding for the scientific advice on which Codex is based. We need to find a sustainable solution.

The Codex Trust Fund was formed with generous voluntary contributions from its Members and has helped make the Codex Commission truly global. But as the fund comes to an end in 2015, we will need to consider how we can continue offering support to those who need it.

Another issue is that Codex has created important links at all levels of the food chain but it has remained a mostly invisible player in the background.

One of the questions we will need to consider in the coming years is how to ensure that Codex is recognized and embraced by more actors outside its immediate circle.

We need more interaction with consumer associations and more participation at country level.

Above all, it is important to act together, to strive for even greater collaboration, across different sectors, across national borders, and among different jurisdictions.



FAO, WHO, Codex, the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) are working closely on designing a framework of standards, guidelines and codes that can live up to this ideal.

This is in line with the “One Health” approach to working across many disciplines, for the health of people, animals and the environment.

Let me add that, as FAO, we are not only celebrating 50 years of Codex but also, one of the longest standing collaborations in the UN system.

I would like to personally thank my counterpart from WHO for ensuring the success of this joint effort.

I also thank everyone who has supported us in the effort to guarantee safe, good food for everyone, and a healthy, sustainable future for us all.

Thank you for your attention.