

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 FOOD HYGIENE

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Opening remarks

Mr Steve Wearne, CAC Chairperson

Distinguished representatives of FAO and WHO, Mr Chairperson, Codex secretariat colleagues, distinguished delegates – good morning to you all.

It is my great pleasure and honour to address you briefly this morning at the opening of this, the first Codex committee meeting of a new term, following our discussions at CAC45 just last week. Warmest wishes from me and from vice-chairpersons Allan Azegele, Diego Varela and Raj Rajasekar.

My apologies that I am not there with you physically, but after a busy and challenging couple of weeks in the Executive Committee and Commission, I'll be taking a break at home. If your meeting is anything like those two recent meetings, each held physically for the first time in almost three years, I'm sure there will have been a real buzz in the hall as everyone met and greeted each other again.

Our virtual working environment and our continuing adaptation to it has allowed greater levels of participation by members. But meeting physically provides an unparalleled opportunity to nurture, renew and grow the relationships, and the opportunities for informal discussion, that characterise the Codex family when working at its best.

As we turn now to the agenda for CCFH53, I hope that the working groups you have participated in over the past weekend will have prepared you for further productive discussion in plenary on the proposed draft guidelines on control of STEC and on safe use and reuse of water. I recognise the appetite there is across many delegations to advance these issues in the Codex step process, and even the tantalising possibility of these texts being recommended for advancement to Step 5/8.

The discussion of safe use and re-use of water in food production exemplifies our adaptation to the food safety challenges posed by changes in the world around us. As the proposed draft standard says, water is a dwindling resource worldwide and water in food production should be managed in such a way that the safety of food is ensured, while avoiding unnecessary consumption and waste.

More generally, this is an exciting time for this committee and its delegates, with the proposed identification of priorities for coming meetings. The areas proposed for further work – guidelines for control of pathogenic *Vibrio* species, on control of viruses in food, and on food hygiene controls in traditional markets – would each be impactful additions to the texts developed by this committee and each in its own way would support our shared mission of protecting everyone everywhere.

In closing, I would again like to acknowledge the skill, experience and good humour of your chair, Emilio Esteban, and recognise his outstanding service to the Codex family, not least his chairpersonship of each session of this committee since CCFH40 in 2008.

Again, my best wishes on behalf of the chairperson and vice-chairpersons of the commission for a productive meeting.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson