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 ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Forty-seventh Session

FAO AND WHO CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

(Prepared by FAO and WHO)

1. Introduction

1.1 This paper has been prepared by FAO and WHO to provide information on key activities supporting countries to build food safety and nutrition related capacities (implemented by respective headquarters or offices at regional and country level).

1.2 The paper is primarily for information purposes; however, feedback is welcome on food safety or nutrition issues, including member country needs, that should be considered by FAO and WHO when planning programmes of work.

1.3 This document focuses on main initiatives and activities implemented since the 46th Session of the CAC. In comparison to previous years, this document has been simplified for ease of reading; FAO and WHO would like to note that all country or region-specific capacity development projects will be reported through the FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committees.

1.4 FAO and WHO are the main specialised UN agencies with a mandate to address food safety and quality/nutrition issues. Through their complementary mandates, FAO and WHO cover a range of issues to support global food safety and protect consumer's health, typically with WHO having a particular competence and strong relationship with the public health sector and FAO being in a position to deploy a range of strategies to address issues related to food safety along the food chain. Certain activities are implemented jointly at country and regional levels or through global joint programmes (e.g. Scientific Advice, INFOSAN, Codex Trust Fund etc.), while both Organizations also implement work independently in partnerships with government authorities, food industry and primary producers, and other relevant national and international stakeholders.

1.5 FAO and WHO capacity development work supports and promotes the work of Codex by: i) working with countries to strengthen their national food control and feed safety systems; ii) providing support to developing capacities and technical skills to more effectively participate in Codex standard setting; iii) developing a range of guidance tools based on relevant Codex texts which effectively "elucidate" these texts and enable countries to better understand and use Codex texts in their context; iv) facilitating policy and technical dialogue between governmental authorities and private sector (farmers and agri-business); and v) supporting data generation and information-sharing activities which facilitate a greater pool of data from an increased number of countries as a basis for decision-making.

1.6 In order to achieve sustainable results at country level and ensure that efforts lead to lasting changes, experience has shown it is important that capacity development activities are tailor-made taking into account the wider national or regional context (e.g. priorities of the relevant stakeholders, including competent authorities, the policy environment, available technical and financial resources, etc.).

Communicating with us

More information on FAO and WHO publications, tools and project activities are available at:
FAO: https://www.fao.org/food/food-safety-quality/en/
WHO: https://www.who.int/teams/nutrition-and-food-safety

2. FAO/WHO Food Control System Assessment Tool

2.1 The FAO/WHO food control system assessment tool allows Member Countries to assess, in a structured and transparent way, the performance of their national food control systems (NFCS) throughout the entire food chain, identify priority areas for capacity development, and measure and evaluate progress over time.

2.2 This tool consists of five volumes has been published in English, French, Spanish, Russian and Arabic language. The tool is available at:

- FAO https://www.fao.org/food-safety/food-control-systems/assessment-tool/en/

- WHO https://www.who.int/activities/strengthening-national-food-control-systems

2.3 To facilitate widespread use of the FAO/WHO Assessment Tool, dissemination packages including global launch, and an introductory booklet (available at: https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb4964en/ and https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240028371) have been developed jointly by FAO and WHO. A video has also been developed and is available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_zdTup2yKY.

2.4 FAO and WHO are continuing to assist Member countries in utilizing the tool to assess their national food control systems (NFCS).

2.5 In the pilot phase, FAO and WHO jointly facilitated an assessment in Indonesia, and tested the support for a self-assessment in Iran (Islamic Republic of).

2.6 FAO successfully completed assessments in Malawi, Sudan and Tunisia in 2019, in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE) in 2021, and in the Bahamas and Guyana in 2022. In addition, under a European Union (EU) funded project, assessments were completed in Comoros, Eswatini, Kenya, Mauritius, Rwanda, the Seychelles, Uganda and Zimbabwe in 2023 and will be completed in Djibouti and Egypt in 2024. These assessments will feed into the "African Union (AU) SPS for Africa" programme, also funded by the EU, in support of the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and of the AU Commission SPS policy framework. Additional assessments in Africa will be initiated by FAO in Burkina Faso, Niger and Senegal under a project funded by the African Development Bank, and discussions are ongoing to involve other countries in Africa as well. In Eastern Europe and in Central Asia, FAO recently completed an assessment in Azerbaijan, currently facilitates assessments in Belarus and Georgia and will start a new assessment in Uzbekistan in September 2024. Assessments are ongoing in Chile and Barbados and will start in late 2024 in Belize. Regular updates are also posted on https://www.fao.org/food-safety/news/en/.

2.7 WHO also supported the assessments conducted in Panama, Cameroon and Timor-Leste. WHO is currently conducting the process in Tajikistan and Cabo Verde.

3. Support to countries and regional organisations to strengthen their food safety legislation

3.1 The Development Law Service of the FAO Legal Office (LEGN) provides assistance to countries to review and revise their food safety and quality legislation, in close collaboration with the food safety and quality colleagues in HQ and regional offices. In the past year, LEGN has supported the revision of food safety legislation in Sri Lanka and Mauritius. LEGN has also supported the development of the ACT-Tool to assess compliance of national legislation and food control systems with the Codex standards relevant to antimicrobial resistance (AMR), which has been piloted in Bolivia, Cambodia, Colombia, Mongolia, Nepal and Pakistan. In Kyrgyzstan, the Tool is being used to assess the level of implementation of the Codex Alimentarius texts on foodborne antimicrobial resistance with FAO support. Through LEGN, FAO has also partnered with UNEP, WHO and WOAH (the Quadripartite) and based on the FAO methodology to develop the Quadripartite One Health Legislative Assessment Tool (OHLAT) for the analysis of AMR-relevant legislation in the humans, animal, plant and environmental sectors, which contains a specific chapter on food safety, and has been piloted in four countries (Cambodia, Morocco, Peru and Zimbabwe). Finally, food safety legislation has been analysed in China, Indonesia, India, Korea, Japan and Vietnam in the context of a FAO, WHO and WOAH global project to improve AMR preparedness in the food sector in Asia.

3.2 The Council of Mayors in Uruguay submitted a request to FAO RLC to review the national food control system and determine food sanitary registration requirements for food enterprises in the country, using countries in the region as a reference. This small project ended in December 2023, with recommendations from FAO based on Codex texts and further food legislation review. The Council of Mayors will liaise with the competent authorities to advance work further in this area.

4. Work on Antimicrobial Resistance

4.1 Quadripartite (FAO/UNEP/WHO/WOAH) work on Antimicrobial Resistance

The Quadripartite Joint Secretariat (QJS) on AMR continues to implement its *Strategic Framework for Collaboration on AMR* signed in April 2022. This Framework reflects the joint work of the four organizations to advance a One Health response to AMR at the global, regional and country level. The framework is underpinned by a Theory of Change that broadly supports the implementation of the five pillars of the Global Action Plan on AMR, as well as strengthening global AMR governance. The Framework is operationalized through a biennial workplan, initially for 2022-23.

4.1.1 Integrated surveillance

The QJS on AMR has established the Quadripartite Technical Group on Antimicrobial Resistance and Use Integrated Surveillance (QTG-AIS). The QTG-AIS has developed and agreed on an action plan for 2022-2024 and developed a list of priority outputs to be included in the Quadripartite Guide on Integrated Surveillance. These include purpose-led definition of One Health integrated surveillance of AMR and AMU; Priority measures and indicators for One Health integrated surveillance of AMR and AMU; Resources and requirements for the different purposes One Health integrated surveillance of AMR and AMU; and Harmonized framework for the establishment of integrated surveillance systems. The document will be launched in November 2024.

4.1.2 Global Human and Veterinary Medicines Regulatory Authorities Summit and Forum

One the priorities of the QJS on the AMR workplan for 2022-2023 includes developing and updating standards and technical advice on global practices. This work comprises providing support to human and animal medicines regulatory authorities by convening a global regulatory summit and producing a workplan to support countries in using regulations, enforcement and smart solutions to preserve efficacy of antimicrobials. The 1st Global Joint Summit of Human and Veterinary Medicines Regulatory Authorities to Preserve Antimicrobials was held between 4 - 5 May 2023 in Geneva, Switzerland. The theme of the summit was “Phasing out over-the-counter sales of antibiotics”. The summit brought together heads of regulatory authorities for human and animal medicines or their designates, from all geographical regions, in order to emphasize the importance of regulation for AMR globally, engage human and animal regulatory authorities on the issues of AMR to optimise use of existing legislation and enforcement measures, and come up with novel, non-regulatory “Smart” solutions to address over-the-counter sale of antibiotics. This event attracted 253 participants from 100 countries, including human and veterinary medicines regulators, policymakers, scientists, UN agencies, other international organizations, and other stakeholders from around the world.

4.1.3 Economic case for AMR

To respond to recurrent inadequate financial support for implementing AMR national action plans, the Quadripartite prioritized building an investment case for AMR in their 2022-23 workplan. The main objective is determining the global cost of inaction, the global resource needs for the AMR response and the return on investment of a package of integrated interventions across different sectors. This will help to inform global, regional and country prioritization and resource mobilization. A model toolbox will be developed, including an integrated interventions prioritization guide, costing and impact estimation tools, and exemplars of country investment case and resource mobilization strategy and training module. This will help countries to plan and mobilize domestic and external resources. This work has been recommended by the G7 and the Global Leaders Group. To coordinate this work, the Quadripartite established an internal Core Group of experts and economists from the Quadripartite organizations and the World Bank. The group is supported externally by a group of 20 technical experts from across the relevant sectors (Quadripartite Technical Group on the Economics of AMR), as well as by additional modellers from KnowlEdge SA, Triangulate Health Ltd and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Considerable progress has been made in estimating the cost of business as usual, particularly in bringing a One Health lens to the economic challenges created by AMR. The One Health AMR Systems Map brings together the many known causative and flow factors affecting AMR emergence and spread and their economic consequences. The Quadripartite commitment is to finalize this work before the Member States’ negotiation process for the political declaration of the UNGA High-Level Meeting on AMR in 2024, to underpin requests for more specific commitments from countries and donors.

4.1.4 Global Leaders’ Group on AMR

The Global Leaders Group (GLG) on AMR was formed following the recommendation of the Interagency Coordination Group on AMR (IACG)[1]. Since September 2022, the GLG has published a Pocket Guide for Ministers Across Sectors with key advocacy messages, an information note on animal health and welfare, and an update to its action plan. The GLG held its first in-person meeting in Barbados in February 2023, hosted by

[1] https://www.amrleaders.org/#tab=tab_1

GLG Chair H.E. Prime Minister Mottley of Barbados. GLG Task Forces on Integrated Surveillance and on Financing were established to expedite these priority areas, particularly to address the antibiotic pipeline and access crisis. The GLG held high-level political side events at the European Congress for Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases, during the 76th World Health Assembly, and at the UN Food Systems Summit Stocktaking Moment. Other priority areas of ongoing work include advocating for inclusion of AMR in the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body instrument (WHO convention, agreement or other international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response), engagement with G7 and G20 and engaging with youth.

As a joint Quadripartite effort, the One Health Priority Research Agenda for AMR was launched on 28 June 2023. This research agenda identified research areas and questions on AMR at the interface of the One Health sectors (human, animal, plant and the environment) to better prevent, control, and respond to AMR, and it focuses on five pillars: 1) transmission; 2) integrated surveillance; 3) interventions; 4) behavioral insights and change; and 5) policy and economics[2]. The One Health Legislative Assessment Tool for AMR (OHLAT) is aimed to assist countries in the identification and analysis of their AMR-relevant legislation across all sectors relevant to AMR. Based on existing international standards and agreed good practices, the OHLAT is not an evaluation tool but an opportunity for countries to do a thorough review of their legislation and identify areas for further analysis[3].

The World Antimicrobial Awareness Week (WAAW) takes place annually from 18 - 24 November and was re-branded as World AMR Awareness Week after Quadripartite global consultations with stakeholders in May 2024.[4] The theme for the World AMR Awareness Week (WAAW) 2024 is “Educate. Advocate. Act now.” This theme was chosen based on feedback from an online survey among stakeholders from the human, animal, plant, and environmental health sectors, which collected nearly 200 responses globally.

The AMR-Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) is a strategic, inter-sectoral, multi-stakeholder initiative inviting partnership and financing to leverage the Quadripartite convening and coordinating power as well as mandates and technical expertise to mitigate the risk of AMR by supporting the implementation of One Health AMR NAPs. It is financially supported by Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the European Commission (DG Sante), has thus far mobilized USD 34 million and provided support to 14 low- and middle-income countries. It has the potential to gain more traction as a key mechanism for scaling up the implementation of AMR national multisectoral action plans, as reflected in the ongoing political declaration for the UNGA High-Level Meeting on AMR. The Fund currently supports projects in 11 countries (Cambodia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Indonesia, Kenya, Mongolia, Morocco, Peru, Senegal, Tajikistan and Zimbabwe) and six countries have been developing new proposals.

In addition, four global projects are being implemented with the financial support of the AMR MPTF:

- Global Quadripartite System on Integrated Surveillance of AMR and AMU
- Monitoring & Evaluation: Global-level monitoring and aggregation of indicator data at sectoral level
- Legal framework: Development of a One Health assessment tool for AMR-relevant legislation
- Environment: Strategic global-level governance advocacy initiatives on AMR in the environment

4.2 FAO work on AMR

The Tripartite collaborative project “Working together to combat antimicrobial resistance”, funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by FAO, PAHO and WOAH, commenced in 2019 and finalized activities in November 2023. The project aimed to: i) support development and evaluation of the implementation of One Health AMR national action plans; ii) strengthen surveillance and monitoring of AMR and the 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. The participating countries were Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay. Notable project outcomes included: i) the development and application of the methodology “Policy Benchmarks on AMR in Medicated Feed Manufacturing and Use-Guidance for Policy Makers and Managers”, and the determination of existing national capacities for each participating country to contain AMR through medicated feed policies and their governance, both at national and regional level; ii) the publication of national legal reports on “Legislation linked to AMU and AMR in terrestrial animal production”, and iii) the development of a methodology entitled “Alignment of the national AMR risk communication policy in line with the Global Action Plan on AMR and FAO and WOAH international policies from the agri-food sector”.

2 https://www.qjsamr.org/technical-work/one-health-priority-research-agenda-for-amr
3 https://www.qjsamr.org/technical-work/one-health-legislative-assessment-tool-on-amr
4 https://www.who.int/campaigns/world-amr-awareness-week/2024

4.2.1 **FAO Action Plan 2021-2025**

FAO is implementing its Action plan on AMR 2021-2025 that composes of five objectives, through various AMR projects that deliver different AMR activities at global, regional and country level including the Action to Support Implementation of Codex AMR Text (ACT) project, further developed bellow. The International FAO Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring (InFARM) system is an FAO flagship initiative, supporting countries in collecting, collating, analyzing, visualizing, and effectively utilizing their AMR monitoring and surveillance data primarily from livestock, fisheries, and aquaculture, along with their associated food products. InFARM empowers countries to generate reliable evidence to measure the extent of AMR in animals and food, at local, regional, and global scales, filling critical gaps in AMR data within agrifood systems. A *Manual for Implementation* for the inFARM system[5] was launched in 2024. The document introduces the InFARM system, provides the FAO's roadmap for implementation over the coming years, and serves as a guide for country officials, offering a step-by-step approach to support the implementation of InFARM. It provides specific steps and recommendations to guide national focal points in mobilizing country participation through the collection and sharing of available AMR data, along with information on the status of implementation of monitoring and surveillance activities. Through the InFARM system, FAO invites its Members to establish and strengthen operational national AMR surveillance systems.

In 2024, FAO launched a new flagship program to reduce the need for antimicrobials on the farm — RENOFARM[6]. This global initiative to supports countries develop policy, technical assistance, capacity building, and knowledge sharing to help reduce the need for antimicrobials in livestock production, prioritizing animal health and welfare, mitigating environmental impact, and enhancing food security and nutrition thus, helping to achieve the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals.

With funding from the Republic of Korea, progress continues on the “ACT” (Antimicrobial Codex Texts) project, a capacity building project in six countries (Bolivia, Cambodia, Colombia, Mongolia, Nepal and Pakistan). This project supports the beneficiary countries to comply with Codex texts related to antimicrobial use and resistance, through awareness raising, training in best practices and surveillance support. A new assessment tool for country-level capacity for analyzing and monitoring residues of veterinary drugs in food is being developed and piloted.

4.2.2 **Newly developed FAO tool for residue analysis and monitoring of residues of veterinary drugs in foods (RVDF)**

The growing global attention on AMR and food safety in the recent years has led to increased recognition of the significance of veterinary drug and antimicrobial residues in food, and the recognition made many governments to realize that only a handful number of countries in the world are currently having the sufficient resources and technical capacities for detecting and properly monitoring veterinary drug/antimicrobial residues in food. While the comprehensive monitoring mechanism with appropriate sectoral technical capacities to manage such residue issues is ideal, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) considers that such a holistic and integrated surveillance system cannot be built at once, and it is important for many countries to consider a stepwise improvement scheme to develop concrete and sustainable capacities.

The essential first step for such a scheme is to aim at achieving progressive improvement of laboratory capacities for residue monitoring, as it is also identified as a key activity under Focus Area 2 of the global FAO Action Plan on AMR. The Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Food (CCRVDF) emphasizes the needs for countries in quantifying and monitoring veterinary drug / antimicrobial residues in food, while clear objective-setting, planning for monitoring and selection criteria for priority veterinary drugs / antimicrobials can be challenging for many countries in terms of their technical capacities as well as resource availability.

While there are existing standardized assessment tools for AMR laboratories (FAO ATLASS tool) and for veterinary diagnostics laboratories (FAO Laboratory Mapping Tool, LMT), there is currently no global and standardized tools for residue testing laboratories. To fill the gap, the FAO RVDF tool was developed, supported by the ACT project, by aligning the approach and structure of the ATLASS tool. The pilot programme has been initiated in August 2024 and several countries have been benefitting from going through the pilot assessment. Other Codex Members who are interested in piloting the RVDF tool can contact FAO to discuss the way forward.

4.3 **WHO activities on AMR**

4.3.1 WHO published in February 2023 the WHO Medically Important Antimicrobial List (WHO MIA) to promote the responsible and prudent use of antimicrobials in all sectors. New approaches and categories

5 https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/19ea22ef-b621-4dbd-bf92-19209857700a

6 https://www.fao.org/newsroom/detail/fao-launches-global-10-year-initiative-to-reduce-the-need-for-antimicrobials-for-sustainable-agrifood-systems-transformation/en

have been established[7].

4.3.2 WHO developed and published the WHO Access. Watch. Reserve. (AWaRe) antibiotic book, which provides guidance on the choice of antibiotic, dose, route of administration, and duration of treatment for common infectious syndromes in alignment with the recommendations for antibiotics included in the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines and the WHO AWaRe classification of antibiotics.

5. Early warning/alert, preparedness and response to food safety incidents (INFOSAN)

5.1 The Secretariat of the Joint FAO/WHO International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN) continues to develop and strengthen the Network and develop capacity for preparedness and response to food safety incidents. During 2023, the INFOSAN Secretariat was involved in 192 international food safety incidents involving 156 Member States from all regions. The INFOSAN Secretariat maintained close engagement with INFOSAN Emergency Contact Points in concerned Member States by providing rapid information, thereby allowing a prompt response to such incidents.

5.2 In 2023 and 2024, activities to strengthen the Network and food safety emergency response capacity were carried out in several sub-regions. In 2023, the INFOSAN Secretariat organized and delivered three introductory workshops in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Congo, Egypt, Iraq and Peru. With the support of the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific, an INFOSAN Introductory Webinar for Pacific Island Countries was delivered to 11 Pacific countries aiming to raise awareness about how INFOSAN operates during food safety emergencies and promote cooperation among competent authorities in the sub-region of Central Asian countries and underscored the importance of enhanced participation in INFOSAN. Similar activities took place in 2024, and INFOSAN introductory webinars have been delivered to the European Region, the Easter Mediterranean Region, the Western Pacific and South East Asia Region.

5.3 In 2023, the INFOSAN Secretariat participated in a two-day workshop with countries in Central Asia, that was held in Kazakhstan. Representatives from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, including National International Health Regulations Focal Points and INFOSAN Emergency Contact Points, took part in the workshop. The event fostered discussions on strengthening information exchange during food safety emergencies and encouraged the use of INFOSAN for notifications and networking among sectors, countries, and the broader international community. INFOSAN also delivered six online workshops with Burkina Faso, Jordan, Liberia, Mali, Namibia and to Lesotho and Niger in 2024. During the workshops, national authorities with a stake in food safety emergency response had the opportunity to learn more about the Network and understand their roles and responsibilities as INFOSAN members during food safety emergencies. The INFOSAN Secretariat organized and delivered two Regional Meetings for members in the Region of the Americas and in the Asia-Pacific Regions (2023), that allowed INFOSAN members to identify gaps and areas for improvements when communicating during food safety emergencies. The Regional meetings were organized with the support of food safety officers of the FAO and WHO regional offices and of the host country, the Republic of Korea.

5.4 WHO organized and delivered a webinar to celebrate World Food Safety Day 2024 and 20 years of INFOSAN on June 11. The webinar was entitled “Are you ready for the unexpected? Keys for effective national and global communication on food incidents” and was attended by more than 200 participants. During the webinar, representatives from EFSA and the US FDA gave presentations on risk management and communication. Common challenges and ideas on how to address those topics were discussed by the panellists, using recent real-life food safety emergencies as a starting point for the analysis.

6. FAO Work on biotechnologies and FAO GM Foods Platform

6.1 FAO provides capacity development tools and trainings for countries to conduct science-based safety assessment of foods derived from modern biotechnology, including Genetically Modified (GM) foods. Through the international data-sharing mechanism of safety assessment results submitted by Members on the FAO GM Foods Platform (https://www.fao.org/gm-platform/), FAO maintains the community of practices with the officially nominated focal points of the Codex Members. Contact GM-Platform@fao.org for questions.

6.2 FAO regularly collaborates with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

7 https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/gcp/who-mia-list-2024-lv.pdf?sfvrsn=3320dd3d_2

and the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) to ensure the synergy of three relevant databases namely: FAO GM Foods Platform[8]; OECD BioTrack Product Database[9]; and the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH)[10] of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The three organizations regularly meet to discuss collaborative activities. The FAO GM Foods Platform employs the consistent OECD Unique Identifier systems, as other two databases maintain the same. Currently, the FAO GM Foods Platform does not include records on GM animals and microorganisms, as well as food derived from other types of biotechnologies such as gene editing. Given that both CBD and OECD have initiated the technical discussions on development of the Unique Identifier for GM animals with their members, and since the Codex *ad hoc* inter-governmental task force on food derived from biotechnology (TFFBT) has been dissolved in 2007, FAO wishes to receive Codex Members' inputs on whether or not the Platform should host safety assessment information of GM animals derived food products and gene-edited food products in the future.

7. FAO Work on Whole Genome Sequencing

7.1 FAO has several ongoing initiatives on the application of WGS for food safety management. Several technical documents have been developed for the provision of scientific advice, and some activities are ongoing for capacity development for countries, particularly for low- and middle-income countries. Given the momentum and familiarity of WGS gained by a wide range of stakeholders from the experience of the global pandemic, as well as the current progress and needs expressed by the countries, FAO will organize a global meeting on WGS, scoping to the topics of food safety and water safety within the One Health framework to bring together government officials, public health professionals, researchers, development partners and other stakeholders involved. The call for applications is now open (due 4 November 2024) for those who are interested in participating in the meeting.

7.2 For the global conference, some technical documents are being developed and one of them is a country case study from Malaysia. FAO collaborated with the University of Putra Malaysia (UPM) to develop a case study on the WGS analysis of *Streptococcus Agalactiae*, also referred to as Group B Streptococcus (GBS) in food (see FAO Risk Profile). The foodborne GBS, particularly of the Strain Type (ST) 283, was news in 2015 for various food safety authorities, when an outbreak was first reported in Singapore, a very close neighbour country of Malaysia (see Factsheet). Because only this specific strain (ST 283) causes severe foodborne diseases, it is important for the authorities to be equipped with WGS technical capacity and resources to detect and analyse the samples to investigate relevant cases and outbreaks. The project is being conducted between 2023 - 2024 and the final publication is planned in 2025.

7.3 FAO facilitates an informal technical network to share information, knowledge and experience in using whole genome sequencing technology for food safety management. Participating countries include Bangladesh, Bhutan, Botswana, China, Egypt, Ghana, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kenya, Mauritius, Mongolia, Mozambique, Namibia, Philippines, Sudan, Singapore, Thailand, United Republic of Tanzania, and Viet Nam. Contact WGS@fao.org to join the network.

7.4 FAO also supports non-profit technical initiatives working on WGS and food safety to ensure all countries, including low- and middle-income countries, will benefit from this potentially powerful technology that is applicable to food safety management. The latest information about food safety related activities with WGS can be found at https://www.fao.org/food-safety/scientific-advice/crosscutting-and-emerging-issues/wgs/.

8. FAO/WHO Work on Cell-based Food and Precision Fermentation

8.1 FAO and WHO launched a publication entitled "Food safety aspects of cell-based food"[11] in April 2023[12], followed by a publication of the 4-page factsheet "Nine things to know about food safety aspects of cell-based food"[13] which captured the terminology issues, current development status, the importance of food safety assurance, relevant considerations for sustainability, available resources and activities at the global level, as well as tips for the competent authorities to consider for regulatory preparedness and communication strategies. The topic has been extensively discussed at the side event of CCNE11 in September 2023[14], highlighting the importance of information exchange among Codex Members. FAO has continued to hold a stakeholder meeting on cell-based food and precision fermentation in Israel

8 https://www.fao.org/gm-platform/
9 https://biotrackproductdatabase.oecd.org/
10 https://bch.cbd.int/
11 https://doi.org/10.4060/cc4855en
12 https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cc9838en
13 https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cc6419en
14 https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/bbcb5ead-2303-47d4-bd25-542881d278cc

(2022)[15], China (2023)[16] and Canada (2024)[17] for developers and producers to present various production processes with specific consideration of food safety assurance.

8.2 FAO, in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), held a stakeholder roundtable meeting on cell-based food production and precision fermentation in Toronto, Canada, on 10 October 2024. The meeting report will be published in early 2025.

8.3 FAO facilitates the TWG for the government sector regulatory experts to exchange information in the area of food safety aspects of cell-based food production and precision fermentation. The TWG has expanded throughout the years and currently it includes the EU and 34 countries, namely Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China , Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Oman, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Spain, Sudan, Switzerland, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and Yemen. Should your country be interested in joining, contact your respective Codex Contact Point who can contact the FAO facilitator.

8.4 FAO collaborated with the Wageningen Food Safety Research (WFSR) to develop a literature synthesis on precision fermentation regarding 1) nomenclature and definitions; 2) overviews of the production processes and common input materials; and 3) global regulatory frameworks relevant to food safety. The FAO synthesis is planned to be published by the end of 2024.

9. FAO work on Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Food Safety

9.1 FAO is conducting a literature review to develop a global overview document for food safety competent authorities, particularly those who are in LMICs, on various applications of AI in the area of food safety. The publication is expected to be published in early 2025, and prior to it, there will be a global online seminar to be held in the 4th quarter of 2024, inviting global leading experts.

10. Activities with Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF)

10.1 FAO and WHO contribute technical expertise and policy advice to STDF. FAO and WHO review project proposals, information and inputs for coordinating SPS capacity development support among development agencies, discuss innovative practices on selected thematic topics that cut across SPS areas and trade, including public-private partnerships (PPPs), electronic SPS certification, use of evidence-based approaches to prioritize SPS investments (P-IMA) and good regulatory practices.

10.2 The STDF Policy Committee was held online on 12 June 2024. STDF partners, donors and experts from developing countries reviewed the STDF external programme evaluation's key findings and recommendations. Endorsing five out of six evaluation's recommendations, some of them subject to further discussion among STDF members, the Policy Committee affirmed the evaluator's proposal to harness key strategic opportunities to further strengthen the STDF's global partnership.

10.3 Members of the Policy Committee including FAO and WHO also reflected on what the evaluation's lessons and recommendations mean for the STDF's next strategy. The current Strategy will conclude at the end of 2024. Members of the STDF's global partnership met on 19 June to begin the process of creating a new Strategy for 2025 and beyond, followed by the STDF Working Group meeting on 20 and 21 June.

10.4 During the STDF Working Group meeting, WHO shared its recent activities for supporting the food safety capacity of countries. WHO also presented the new IFC/WHO Roadmap Development tool on the WHO Global Strategy for Food Safety to share information with partners. It has been developed by the IFC Global Food Safety Advisory, WHO Secretariat, and the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) on Food Safety for designing an assessment tool to assist countries in mapping their baseline status and developing their own roadmaps for fully implementing the WHO Global Strategy for Food Safety. The main objective of the tool is to propose a harmonized, objective, and consensual basis to support Member States in the implementation of the WHO Strategy.

11. FAO/WHO Global Individual Food consumption data Tool (FAO/WHO GIFT)

11.1 The FAO/WHO Global Individual Food consumption data Tool (FAO/WHO GIFT) is an open-access online platform, hosted by FAO and supported by WHO, that enables the dissemination of individual-level quantitative food consumption data, especially from low- and middle-income countries. This comprehensive database is a multipurpose tool that allows users to download available data for free in a format following a standardised data structure and codebook. In addition, the platform provides data

15 https://doi.org/10.4060/cc6967en
16 https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/cd0311en
17 https://www.fao.org/food-safety/news/news-details/en/c/1677721/

visualisations related to food consumption, nutrient intakes, dietary diversity, food safety, and the environmental impacts of diet. The platform uses a food classification and description system called FoodEx2 which allows for harmonisation of food names and food codes across diverse datasets. FoodEx2 has been developed by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and was enhanced for use at a global level by FAO. FAO/WHO GIFT is continually being populated with additional data. To date, the platform contains data from 59 surveys (20 national and 39 sub-national) from 36 countries. The platform also contains a global inventory map with detailed information on 351 surveys (181 are national and 170 are sub-national). The FAO/WHO GIFT platform is available at http://www.fao.org/gift-individual-food-consumption/en/.

11.2 The visualisation on food safety displays acute food consumption information - the percentage of consumers and portion size in grams and in grams per kilogram of body weight among consumers.

11.3 The data from the FAO/WHO GIFT platform are automatically transferred into the FAO/WHO Chronic Individual Food Consumption Database - summary statistics (CIFOCOss) and Global platform for food safety data and information (FOSCOLLAB), a WHO tool which integrates multiple sources of reliable data to support food safety professionals as well as the FAO/WHO risk assessment process, e.g. JECFA and JMPR. The CIFOCOss data is available at https://apps.who.int/foscollab/Download/DownloadConso.

11.4 Individual level quantitative dietary survey data are essential in the area of food safety and one of the key end-users of dietary data shared through the FAO/WHO GIFT platform are food safety specialists, who need this type of data to perform refined dietary exposure assessments. In particular, harmonized quantitative dietary data are needed to improve the consistency and reliability of dietary exposure assessments, a critical step in establishing suitably protective limits for microbiological or chemical agents in food. A session on the use of dietary survey data was delivered for the Training Course on Total Diet Studies organised by the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) which took place in October 2022. Additionally, a workshop was delivered as part of the "ASEAN Health Cluster 4 Workshop on ASEAN Food Consumption Data for Exposure Assessment" between 7-9 December 2021, organised by the Food Safety and Quality Division, Ministry of Health Malaysia, the lead of the ASEAN Health Cluster 4 (AHC4) work. A continuation of this workshop was held on 10-11 June 2024. The objective of these presentations and training activities was to present the possible use of quantitative dietary data using the FAO/WHO GIFT for food safety analysis; describe the risk assessment process and how quantitative dietary data supports dietary exposure assessment to chemical hazards; discuss the potential of quantitative dietary data and identify opportunities for countries and regions for food safety-based lessons learned using such data. The role of quantitative dietary data for food safety was highlighted in the publication *Safe food for everyone*[18] *- FAO's work on food safety: science, standards, and good practices.*

12. Nutrition related capacity development activities at global level

12.1 The Vision and Strategy for FAO's work in nutrition includes five action areas, one of which is building capacity to achieve healthy diets. A priority for FAO is to strengthen the capacity of actors across agrifood systems who can help achieve FAO's vision for nutrition of a world where all people are eating healthy diets and the realization of FAO's ambition for Better Nutrition as reflected in FAO's Strategic Framework 2022-31.

12.2 FAO provides training and tools to governments, consumers, farmers, the food industry, institutions, and international organizations to improve and build fit-for-purpose agrifood systems that enable healthy diets for all.

12.3 In 2022, FAO country offices reported that FAO provided policy and technical assistance for capacity strengthening to 106 governments to work on enabling healthy diets including support in developing, revising, or implementing national food-based dietary guideline[19] and implementing school food and nutrition programmes[20].

12.4 FAO also continued to support the provision of global public goods in support of capacity strengthening such as profiling and assessing SME's learning needs and designing mentoring and coaching programmes to support SMEs to integrate nutrition into their business plans and enhance capacities across a variety of skills needed to enable their contribution to nutritious food access[21]. Training included food safety and quality management; the impact of processing technology on nutrition; marketing and

18 https://www.fao.org/3/cc4347en/online/cc4347en.html
19 https://www.fao.org/nutrition/education/food-based-dietary-guidelines
20 https://www.fao.org/in-action/fsn-caucasus-asia/areas-of-work/school-food-and-nutrition/fr/
21 https://doi.org/10.4060/cd0675en

branding; nutrition labelling; reducing food loss and waste; and business planning. This was accompanied by the launch of a publicly available e-learning series targeting SME trainers, representatives and policy makers working on SME development, sustainable food systems and nutrition (see Course: Small and Medium Enterprises and Nutrition – making the business case | FAO elearning Academy[22] and Course: Small and medium enterprises and nutrition - upgrading business models | FAO elearning Academy[23]). Additionally, FAO launched a discussion paper on SMEs and nutrition for a deeper understanding of the opportunities for the SMEs to contribute to increase the availability of nutritious food[24].

12.5 Building on its expertise in developing normative guidance in a range of technical areas around school food and nutrition, in June 2022, following close consultation with sister UN agencies and other technical experts, FAO, in partnership with WFP and supported by the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture launched the school food global hub (Accessible at: https://www.fao.org/platforms/school-food/en). The school food global hub provides experts and professionals with technical resources and guidance from various UN agencies to support the design and implementation of school food and nutrition policies and interventions. Most importantly, the hub hosts country profiles with process-based information on the development and implementation of nutrition standards for school meals and on how they integrate food and nutrition contents into their school systems.

12.6 FAO has also utilized modern technologies for greater comfort, with online learning to advance capacity strengthening tools for concepts in nutrition and food systems. In collaboration with Agreenium (the French training and research alliance for agriculture, food, environment and global health), FAO developed a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) entitled *Nutrition and Food Systems: Pathways to sustainable and healthy diets*. The MOOC was offered twice, in both English and French, with 2,630 registrants on the first round and 4,651 on the second. FAO is supporting continued use of the MOOC for self-paced instruction at the FAO e-learning Academy and through various Universities of Sub-Saharan Africa to adapt and utilize materials in their specific contexts.

12.7 More information on capacity development can be found on the FAO Food and Nutrition Division website http://www.fao.org/nutrition/capacity-development/en/.

13. Strengthening regulatory and fiscal capacities to address unhealthy diets and physical inactivity

13.1 Since 2019 WHO has been providing support to build national capacity for the development and implementation of regulatory and fiscal measures to address the NCD risk factors of unhealthy diets and physical inactivity, as part of the Global RECAP Project, jointly implemented in collaboration with the International Development Law Organization (IDLO) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), with support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID). Global RECAP has focused on participating countries in the African and South East Asian regions (Bangladesh, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania), and focused on 5 policy domains: fiscal policies to promote healthy diets, including SSB tax; restrictions on marketing of unhealthy foods; strengthening nutrition labelling including alignment with relevant Codex standards and guidelines and implementing front-of-pack labelling (FOPL); product reformulation; and promotion of physical activity.

13.2 The project has 3 pillars, with WHO leading capacity-building activities, IDLO leading a social mobilisation and academic collaboration component and IDRC running a parallel program of research to support policy reforms. In each participating country, WHO has undertaken an assessment of relevant policy and regulatory frameworks, identified, interviewed and delivered capacity-building training to a network of key stakeholders across government, regulators, civil society and academia in multi-country and national workshops, developed a pool of experts to assist in capacity building and policy reform, developed technical products (including contribution to systematic reviews in the nutrition policy domains) and delivered substantial technical support to assist policy progress. Technical support has included the development and update of supportive policies, development of nutrient profile models to underpin measures to implement FOPL and marketing restrictions, input to legislative reviews, and support for policy processes and drafting of new and amended regulations, standards and legislation. The work in each country was undertaken through the Ministry of Health as the lead government agency, working in close collaboration with the Bureau of Standards and other concerned ministries and agencies, as well as other key country stakeholders including civil society organisations and academics working in nutrition, physical activity and NCD prevention.

22 https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=725
23 https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=816
24 https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/e7c76bc1-5363-46ce-bc47-5de1827102d0

13.3 A second phase of the Global RECAP project started in July 2022 following the successful completion of phase I. The project will continue until December 2026 with the same implementing partners, ongoing support from SDC and with the support of the European Union from January 2026, which has allowed expansion of the project to five additional focus countries in the African and South East Asian regions. WHO provides the same or similar capacity-building and technical support to countries outside the project and across all WHO regions, including by using and building on tools and materials developed under Global RECAP.

14. Regulatory capacity building work for eliminating industrially produced *trans*-fatty acids and reducing sodium intake

14.1 Over the past year, WHO has been undertaking a series of capacity-building workshops to strengthen countries' regulatory capacity for implementing and enforcing policy measures related to *trans*-fat elimination and sodium reduction. These included capacity-building workshops held in South Africa in December 2023 for countries in the African region and in Barbados in March 2024 for countries in the Caribbean. Technical support is provided to Nigeria and Viet Nam to set up national sodium targets for packaged foods.

14.2 Assessing and monitoring TFA content in the food supply is one of the key action areas for countries to eliminate TFA and has been identified as a challenge in several countries working towards TFA elimination. WHO has been providing technical advice to support countries' efforts in strengthening their laboratory capacity. WHO organized laboratory capacity-building workshops in China in October 2023 and Nigeria in August 2024. A virtual workshop is scheduled in September 2024 in the Americas region.

15. WHO Foodborne Disease Burden Estimates 2025 edition

15.1 Based on the WHO resolution (WHA 73.5)[25], WHO is actively updating the global burden of foodborne diseases estimates with the assistance of the WHO technical advisory group, Foodborne Disease Burden Epidemiology Reference Group (FERG) for 2021-2025[26]. Following WHO's policy for data publication and prior to the official release of the final estimates planned in the second half of 2025, the official country consultation with WHO Member States is planned in early 2025 by confidentially sharing the respective preliminary estimates with countries including incidence, mortality and burden in terms of disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) estimated based on more than 40 food hazards at national level.

15.2 The in-person national workshops on estimating the burden of foodborne diseases were conducted, respectively, in November 2023 in Tunis, Tunisia and in February 2024 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. WHO and FERG's Country Support Task Force are developing country support tools aimed to provide a guide for countries wanting to use burden of foodborne disease estimates to improve food safety. The tool will be primarily based on the WHO handbook "Estimating the burden of foodborne diseases: A practical handbook for countries"[27]. It is intended that the draft tool will be rolled out in several interested countries upon coordination with respective WHO Regional Offices.

15.3 On the occasion of the World Food Safety Day in 2024, two webinars were held in June 2024. The first webinar entitled "Raking food safety risks at the national level"[28] was held, with the participation of the Codex Secretariat and FAO, on 10 June 2024 with an aim to describe key components of risk analysis, focusing on risk ranking, and how health metrics such as estimated incidence, deaths and disease burden can be applied as a tool for national risk ranking exercises. The second webinar, "The neglected problem of foodborne Chagas disease - the importance of foodborne transmission of *Trypanosoma cruzi*", was held on 25 June 2024[29] in order to describe and promote awareness on foodborne Chagas disease.

16. New Codex E-Learning Courses

16.1 A series of eLearning courses[30] has been developed to improve the understanding of Codex Alimentarius and develop sustainable national capacities to engage in and benefit from Codex work. The course series consists of four courses comprising two to five lessons each. The first course introduces Codex, explains what it is and why it is important. It will be useful to anyone who wishes to gain a general understanding of Codex. The second course aims to provide a clear understanding of how to engage in Codex. The lessons guide the learner in making a national Codex programme function

25 https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA73/A73_R5-en.pdf
26 https://www.who.int/groups/foodborne-disease-burden-epidemiology-reference-group-(ferg)
27 https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/341634
28 https://www.who.int/news-room/events/detail/2024/06/10/default-calendar/webinar-ranking-food-safety-risks-at-the-national-level
29 https://www.who.int/news-room/events/detail/2024/06/25/default-calendar/webinar-the-neglected-problem-of-foodborne-chagas-disease-the-importance-of-foodborne-transmission-of-trypanosoma-cruzi
30 https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?name=codex-series

efficiently and explain how to engage effectively in Codex at international level. It will be particularly relevant to national Codex officials. Course 3 provides insight into the scientific basis and the application of risk analysis in Codex, and explains the provision of scientific advice by FAO and WHO to Codex work. The fourth course gives an overview of the FAO/WHO coordinating committees, explains their importance, the role of regional coordinators, and how to engage in Codex work at a regional level. Upon successful completion of a test at the end of each course, the learner receives a digital badge certificate from the FAO eLearning academy.

17. FAO's GHP and HACCP Toolbox for Food Safety

17.1 The GHP and HACCP Toolbox for food safety (accessible at https://www.fao.org/good-hygiene-practices-haccp-toolbox/en), launched on occasion of World Food Safety Day 2023, is now available in all six UN languages for the web-content, and the pdf-documents will be translated, starting with French, in 2025. The feedback from users is regular and demonstrates the interest to receive practical guidance on GHP and HACCP matters from FAO. In addition, FAO Members are contributing to enable practical application pilots in East and West-African countries. These pilot programmes will contribute to the development of training materials adapted to small and medium enterprises in low- and middle-income countries with an emphasis on specific value chains (meat and dairy).

18. JECFA Toolbox for Veterinary Drug Residues Risk Assessment

18.1 The process used by JECFA for assessing risks resulting from veterinary drug residues in food is based on sound scientific principles and procedures. In order for stakeholders and new JECFA experts to understand this process, FAO is developing a Toolbox for Veterinary Drug Residues Risk Assessment. The aim is to strengthen understanding of JECFA procedures by stakeholders interested in veterinary drug residues in food, such as regulatory agencies responsible for veterinary drug approval or food safety standards, the pharmaceutical industry, producers in animal agriculture and veterinary associations. The toolbox is designed for use by potential JECFA experts in order to broaden the pool of experts available for the JECFA roster and to ensure greater geographical representation, particularly from regions with previously low representation in FAO/WHO expert bodies. Additional sources of guidance listed in the Toolbox provide detailed information about the specific steps in the risk assessment process.

18.2 The Toolbox is currently being finalized and expected to be ready by the end of 2024; it will be publicly available on the FAO website with the guidance documents published in English, Spanish and French[31].

19. FAO's work on bivalve mollusc sanitation

19.1 FAO, in collaboration with its Reference Centre for Bivalve Mollusc Sanitation, the Centre for Environment, Fisheries, and Aquaculture Science (Cefas), delivered a number of capacity building activities for the provision of guidance on relevant laboratory protocols, accreditation and use of methods for bivalve mollusc testing. Further information about this collaboration can be found in the following link: https://www.cefas.co.uk/icoe/seafood-safety/designations/fao-reference-centre/).

19.2 The second edition of the Technical guidance for the development of the growing area aspects of Bivalve Mollusc Sanitation Programmes[32] served as the basis for developing an e-learning course on bivalve sanitation, focusing on policymakers, development practitioners and programme managers, sectoral specialists and researchers, bivalve farmers, trainers, and extension agents. The modules, Growing area monitoring[33] and Growing area classification and management[34] are now published and the material is complete.

19.3 The course is being translated into French and Spanish, and the French version's first module is already available[35]. These materials are also used as guidance materials for the implementation of a Project focused on the establishment of a bivalve sanitation programme in Senegal titled "Renforcement de la filière coquillage au Sénégal à travers la mise aux normes Sanitaires et Phytosanitaires (SPS) afin de promouvoir la sécurité sanitaire des coquillages et leur accès aux marchés régional et international".

20. Capacity building projects and activities in the aquatic sector

20.1 FAO is providing support to improve food safety control and management in the fisheries and aquaculture sector in a number of countries. In Georgia, support is provided through a TCP titled "Strengthening food safety in the context of aquaculture under ENPARD IV", which aims at enhancing food safety control and farm management for the aquaculture sector of Georgia. In Peru and Sri Lanka,

31 https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240035720
32 https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb5072en/
33 https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=990
34 https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=1055
35 https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?lang=en&id=481

the support is provided through a GCP titled “Smart and Sustainable Aquaculture through Effective Biosecurity and Digital Technology”, which aims at improving food safety management in the shrimp sector. Additionally, FAO is carrying out hands-on training workshops in collaboration with its FAO Reference Centre on Bivalve Mollusc Sanitation, Cefas. This year the training Workshops focused on sample collection and *E. coli* testing of bivalve molluscs for African countries (Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Senegal) and Bangladesh.

21. Codex Trust Fund projects

21.1 The Codex Trust Fund (CTF2) is a joint FAO/WHO programme providing support to developing and transition economy countries to build strong and sustainable capacity to engage in Codex work. Since 2016, the CTF2 calls for individual and group applications from low- and middle- income countries. To date, the CTF2 has funded 42 projects in 50 countries. Nine additional projects have been approved for funding and are awaiting implementation.

21.2 2023 was the eighth year of operation of the CTF2. There were no more public health restrictions reported by implementing countries that negatively affected project implementation and countries continued catching up on their implementation plans that were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021.

21.3 By end of 2024 the number of CTF2 beneficiary countries that have completed their projects is expected to reach 20. Post-implementation evaluations are ongoing and in preparation.

21.4 Building on the successful pilot training in the previous year, in December 2023 the CTF2 held another workshop on good Codex practices in collaboration with the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety (MFDS) of the Republic of Korea. Three participants each from five countries in three Codex regions took part in the training.

21.5 The CTF2 mid-term evaluation concluded in 2023. The evaluation confirmed the continued relevance of the CTF2 and produced recommendations to further enhance the effectiveness of the trust fund, which have been taken into consideration.

21.6 The CTF2 faces a decline in financial contributions and long-term commitments of financial support. While the CTF2 is working close to full operational capacity, budgetary restrictions reported by donor countries have led to an austere outlook of the remaining four years of the trust fund’s second phase. This challenge was also reflected at country level at the end of 2023 when activities had to be temporarily halted, and projects introduced phased implementation due to the delayed arrival of pending funds. The overall financial situation of the CTF2 reflects this development, as for the second year in a row, total expenditure exceeded total donor contributions received. With projected expenditures remaining high over the remaining four years of the CTF2, the current financial situation is unsustainable. Additional funding needs to be secured to ensure the continuation of CTF2 operations.

21.7 The 2023 call for application for Round 8 of CT2F support resulted in eight individual and one group application. Out of these applications, proposals submitted by Armenia, Bangladesh, Belize, Moldova, Namibia, Somalia, Togo and the joint application from Dominica, Grenada and Saint Lucia have received technical approval by the CTF Steering Committee. Approval for funding is pending availability of sufficient funding which needs to be secured to support new CTF2 projects.

21.8 Further details can be found in CX/CAC 24/47/INF3.

22. FAO’s support to the trade agenda

22.1 COMESA trade facilitation programme: From 2019 to 2024, FAO has supported the COMESA Trade Facilitation Programme (funded by the European Union) by providing technical assistance to its SPS component. More specifically, FAO has engaged with champion countries of the COMESA regional Economic Community in the following areas:

22.2 Support for risk-based food safety decision making (regulatory and non-regulatory measures), with a view to facilitate regional harmonization of food control measures, implemented through a regional trade flow analysis, identification of priority hazard/commodity pairs, regional training courses on chemical and microbiological risk assessment as a basis for food safety regulation making, and preparation of a policy note on regional harmonization. Champion countries for this are Kenya, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, although other countries (such as Eswatini, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda and Seychelles) also benefitted from the regional trainings. Champion countries were assisted in the identification of associated regulatory and non-regulatory food controls with regard to their priority hazard/commodity pairs in order to facilitate a regional consultation and the subsequent development of a framework for harmonization.

22.3 Support for the development of risk based imported food controls (with Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt,

Madagascar, Sudan and Tunisia as champion countries): Further to the elaboration of national country situation analysis, regional and national training courses were delivered on risk based imported food control, preparation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for import inspection and Good Importing Practices (GIPs) tailored to each country's specific situation. A draft regional document on information exchange among countries was developed as a support to trade flows within COMESA member countries (based on *Principles and guidelines for the exchange of information between importing and exporting countries to support the trade in food* (CXG 89-2016) and *Guidelines for the Exchange of Information between Countries on Rejections of Imported Foods* (CXG 25-1997)).

22.4 In support of the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area, and in the framework of the implementation of the African Union SPS policy framework, FAO currently supports a project (funded by the European Union) aiming at providing a baseline for national capacities in food control (using the FAO/WHO Food Control System Assessment Tool) and plant health (using the Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation tool of the IPPC). The project is implemented in Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Eswatini, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The assessments culminate in strategic plans, costed for further capacity development programmes and investment at regional level, leveraging on commonalities, and at national levels. These plans are currently discussed for follow up with different donors, including the African Union, in the framework of its "SPS for Africa programme" (funded by the European Union). The alignment of countries strategies and technical capacities is expected to contribute to the emergence of the common trade area supported by consistent SPS capacities for official controls by member states.

23. FAO's work on risk analysis for food safety

23.1 Risk ranking is part of risk analysis. It is an important tool with which risk managers can gather additional and more detailed scientific information on the public health impact to help inform their decisions, and is therefore typically described as being part of the preliminary risk management activities.

23.2 FAO delivered four capacity building workshops with hands-on experience to decision-makers on how to start ranking the public health risk posed by foodborne hazards and/or foods in Mongolia, United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam, and Uganda in June 2024. The workshop was designed to give practical, hands-on, experience performing risk ranking, as outlined in the FAO Guide to Ranking Food Safety Risk at the National Level[36]. The workshops are the first part of a series of capacity building activities for risk analysis in these four countries under the One Health and Food Safety project, which is supported by the Republic of Korea.

23.3 National and regional regulators from different food sectors and different ministries, researchers from academia, food business operators from food industries, and colleagues from other international organizations participated in the workshops. At the completion of the workshop, participants indicated greater knowledge and self-efficacy of using risk ranking approach for food safety, attributed an increase importance of incorporating One Health and risk analysis approaches to address food safety, and indicated higher likelihood to apply risk ranking tools in their professional work, compared to pre-participation.

23.4 A joint (FAO/WHO) three-day, One Health workshop was held to train individuals, piloting the recently developed handbook for the assessment of risk of antimicrobial resistant microorganisms in food. The outcomes of the meeting were presented at the 8th One Health World Congress[37] (Sept 19-23) in Cape Town, South Africa. The title of the presentation was "Building One Health Food Safety Capacity in South Africa".

24. Capacity building support by the Joint FAO/IAEA Centre of Nuclear Techniques in Food and Agriculture

24.1 The Joint Centre will host a training workshop on Integrated Nuclear and Complementary Approaches to Understanding the Nexus between Water and Nutrient Use Efficiency, Nutrition Security and Food Safety for Dryland Crops in a Changing Climate. The Centre is implementing a Peaceful Uses Initiative (PUI) Project "Ensuring Food Security and Safety by Future-Proofing Dryland Crops under Climate Change". Changing climate conditions are expected to adversely impact dryland crop yields, posing a threat to food security, but also diminish the nutritional quality of food and create environments conducive to mycotoxin-producing fungi and to increased uptake of heavy metals into plants, compromising food safety. The Joint Centre promotes R&D in this space to devise and deploy nuclear and complementary analytical methods to detect, monitor, and control key climate change-related contaminants, focussing on millet, cassava and groundnut, which are exemplary representatives of cereal, root and legume crops that are crucial for food security. Multi-analyte methods have been

36 https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/55e68d49-205e-42b0-9b30-26e82f77591b/content
37 https://globalohc.org/minisite/8WOHC/congress-schedule#mini-site-navbar

developed and validated for testing mycotoxins and heavy metals in these crops. A comprehensive literature review has been undertaken to identify critical research gaps. Preparations are underway to convene a consultancy meeting to bring together key stakeholders, discuss project findings, and identify key topics for future research. Additionally, the virtual training workshop will be used to disseminate the knowledge gained through this project and enhance the capacity of researchers and practitioners in the Member States to address the project's focal areas. The purpose of the food safety component of this training workshop is to raise awareness and enhance capabilities in the use of nuclear and complementary techniques in laboratory analysis for key climate change-related contaminants in food and enable Member States to effectively respond to relevant challenges by establishing effective monitoring and surveillance programmes, and to generate valid occurrence data for risk assessment and management.

24.2 The Joint Centre supported 84 technical cooperation projects in more than 30 countries around the world in the three areas of food hazard analysis and monitoring, food authenticity and determination of geographical origin as well as in the application of ionizing radiation. Nearly 420 scientists were trained.

25. Regional and national activities

For a detailed account of the capacity development activities undertaken at regional and national level, reference should be made to the document prepared by FAO and WHO for CCFICS27 (document CX/FICS/24/24/3.