

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Forty-second Session

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Opening speech

Bukar Tijani

Assistant Director-General, Agriculture and Consumer Protection department

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of WHO,

Dr. Guilherme Antonio da Costa Junior, Chairperson of the Codex Alimentarius Commission,

Excellencies,

Esteemed Participants,

Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Director-General of FAO, Mr. Jose Graziano da Silva, I am delighted to welcome you to the 42nd Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

This year, the Commission is back in Geneva, its alternate home, the home of our longstanding Codex Alimentarius and food safety partner – the World Health Organization (WHO). Together, we have been supporting global food safety, protecting consumer health and facilitating fair practices in food trade since 1963, when the Codex Alimentarius Commission, our joint programme, was established.

FAO and WHO have been working hard on various fronts to ensure that food safety is a priority on the global and political agenda.

When food is not safe, people cannot thrive. Only when all people in all countries have access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round that we will be able to achieve Zero Hunger.

This year, we convened the First FAO/WHO/African Union (AU) International Food Safety Conference in Addis Ababa and the International Forum on Food Safety and Trade held in Geneva at the World Trade Organization (WTO). Both events highlighted the need for urgent international action to bolster food safety, align food safety strategies and approaches across sectors and borders, and to reinforce efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and support the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition.

Just last month, on June 7, we celebrated the first World Food Safety Day, which the UN General Assembly adopted as one of its resolutions in December 2018.

We have been encouraged by the great efforts of many countries to raise the profile of food safety on this first observance of World Food Safety Day. A taste of these efforts can be found in the World Food Safety Exhibition stand in the foyer which we invite you all to visit. Many member countries did this without having great means at their disposal but, driven by the passion for raising awareness for food safety in their countries.

The FAO/WHO Codex Trust Fund is an efficient tool to assist countries in building their capacities to participate in Codex's work. This trust fund would not be possible without the contribution from donor countries and we thank you for your continuous generous contributions.

Food safety is key to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals and, in the words of FAO Director General, Mr. Jose Graziano da Silva, “there is no food security without food safety”.

Safe food boosts agricultural productivity and value chain development improves market access and enables people to prosper socially and economically. Recent estimates indicate that unsafe food costs low-and middle-income economies around US\$95 billion a year in losses.

An increasingly globalized world with annual food exports currently in excess of USD 1.6 trillion and complex food systems demands international cooperation across all sectors to ensure food is safe.

This calls for strengthened regulatory, scientific and technological capacities at all levels across the food chain, and for a shift towards more sustainable patterns of food production and consumption. The standards of the Codex Alimentarius are necessary to underpin these efforts.

Codex work addresses major issues on the global agenda. One excellent example is Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR). The just concluded 41st session of the FAO Conference adopted an important Resolution on AMR, and I encourage Codex Members to continue their efforts to develop timely and practical standards to support our global efforts to contain AMR.

I am delighted to see that at this session of the Commission, you will also consider the proposed Strategic Plan for Codex for 2020-2025 and that the plan highlights the need to look at the use and impact of your standards. At a time when we all need to do more with less, we must take time to assess the real value of our work and use that to guide us towards the continuous improvement of our products.

Ladies and gentlemen,

FAO is fully aware of the emphasis that this Commission has been putting on the importance of sustainable funding for scientific advice. We are working to ensure that this topic remains on the agenda of our governing body meetings. This was discussed at the 126th session of the FAO Programme Committee which met in March of this year and highlighted the importance of sustainable funding for FAO’s work on scientific advice and standard setting. It was also brought to the attention of Member Countries during the FAO conference because of its importance.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Before I conclude, I am also pleased to inform you that on 23rd June 2019, the 41st Session of the FAO Conference elected Dr Qu Dongyu of the People’s Republic of China as the new Director-General of FAO. Dr Qu will be fully assuming office on 1 August and will lead the organization over the next 4 years

The Director-General Elect has stressed that the 2030 Agenda requires us to establish an inclusive, efficient and responsible food and agriculture systems to integrate production, processing, consumption and trade, and to ensure the supply of adequate, healthy and nutritious food, while protecting the environment and fostering its close connection with rural development. In order to achieve these goals, FAO will strengthen digital agriculture and innovations.

Dr Qu has underlined the importance of the normative work of FAO, specifically Codex. FAO is committed to work with Member Countries to strengthen technical cooperation, capacity building and joint training, and to transform policies, norm setting and technologies into practical outputs, which drive agricultural development.

I wish to conclude by wishing you all fruitful discussions during this 42nd Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission this week. Codex standards should remain a corner stone of food safety in a changing and demanding world and should support the transition to more sustainable patterns of food production and consumption in order to end hunger and all forms of malnutrition by 2030. In the words of FAO Director-General Elect: I quote; “we will help make farmers happier, rural areas more attractive, and our world more beautiful.”

Thank you for your attention.