

# CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



World Health  
Organization

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**Compilation of speeches**

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## **JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME**

### **FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR NEAR EAST**

#### **Nineth Session**

**Rome, Italy, 15 – 19 May 2017**

#### **Speech Chairperson Codex Alimentarius Commission**

Distinguished CCNEA Regional Coordinator and Chairman of the CCNEA session, Mr Mohammad Hossein Shojaee,

Excellency Mrs Nayareh Sadat Pirouzbakht, Head of Delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran,

Distinguished Head of the FAO Food Safety and Quality Unit Dr Renata Clarke,

Distinguished WHO Regional Food Safety Officer Dr Soren Madsen,

Distinguished Colleagues from the Codex Secretariat,

Distinguished Codex Vice-Chairperson Dr Guilherme da Costa, Distinguished Delegates attending the 9th session of the CCNEA,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a great honour and indeed an immense privilege for me to attend this 9th session of the FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committee for the Near East in my capacity as Chairperson of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

I would like to thank the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the distinguished CCNEA Regional Coordinator and his team for their tireless efforts and hard work and for having ensured that the stage was set for a very successful 9th session of the Coordinating Committee for the Near East.

I am also extremely grateful to the Codex parent organisations, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) as well as the Codex Secretariat for all the support that they have provided in view of this session.

Distinguished Delegates, I extend a very warm welcome to all Members of the CCNEA Region who are attending this session. I also acknowledge the presence of Palestine who has a special observer status in the CCNEA Region.

Promoting inter-regional and intra-regional collaboration and cooperation has been very high on my Agenda as Chairperson of the CAC as I am convinced that all Codex Members and Regions have a lot more in common in spite of their perceived differences. Above all, through dialogue and exchange, all Codex Members can learn from each other and identify food safety and quality best practices together. It is thus with great satisfaction that I acknowledge the participation of the Delegations from the Netherlands (CCEURO Coordinator), Morocco, Italy, Turkey and the European Union.

I also extend a warm welcome to the Observer Organisations who are attending the CCNEA session this week.

Food safety is an issue of great concern to the entire world's consumers, as we all need to have access to safe and nutritious food every day. In most cases, consumers enjoy safe domestically-produced and imported food. Unfortunately however, foodborne diseases still occur all over the world in both developed and developing countries.

According to the WHO Estimates of the Global Burden of Foodborne Diseases (2015), every year, one in ten consumers in the world falls ill after consuming food which is contaminated with harmful bacteria, viruses, parasites, toxins or chemical substances and 420'000 people in the world die annually as a result of foodborne diseases. In addition to their serious health impact, foodborne diseases can present a major cost to economies and they are a serious impediment to social and economic growth. Distinguished Delegates, this is unacceptable because foodborne diseases are preventable. However, we need to take targeted action in order to prevent them.

Furthermore, in a globalised world, local foodborne incidents can quickly become international emergencies. Thereby, impacting health, international relations and trade. To address these risks, coordinated action needs to be taken at both global and regional levels.

Therefore, countries need to strengthen their national food control and food safety management systems and enhance regional and international collaboration. The Codex Alimentarius Commission plays a key role by providing an internationally harmonised food safety and quality framework on which countries can build to ensure food safety. Furthermore, the effective implementation of Codex food safety and quality standards not only ensures the protection of consumers' health, but it also enables access of national food products to regional and international markets.

Distinguished Delegates, there is an urgent need to raise the profile of food safety globally and this 9th session of the CCNEA is an excellent opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of food safety and to achieve high-level political commitment to food safety and quality in the region.

I would like to take this opportunity to invite CCNEA Members to highlight the importance of ensuring food safety in the WHO and FAO governing bodies. Please request your Delegations to stress the importance of ensuring food safety in their interventions at the 70th World Health Assembly which will take place in Geneva (Switzerland) from 22nd to 31st May 2017 as well as the 40th session of the FAO Conference which will take place in Rome from 3rd to 8th July 2017. In addition, seek the full support of both FAO and WHO governing bodies for the establishment of a World Food Safety Day in order to implement the decision of the 39th session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission which was taken in Rome in July 2016 to establish a World Food Safety Day on a permanent basis.

Distinguished Delegates, thank you very much for all that you are doing to ensure food safety, nutrition and food quality in your countries and in the Near East Region. I value your commitment to Codex work and I am grateful for all your efforts to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade.

I wish you a very successful CCNEA session.  
Thank you for your attention!

### **Opening remarks from WHO/EMRO**

On behalf of the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office, Centre for Environmental Health Actions, I would like to welcome the participants of the 9<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Codex Coordinating Committee for the Near East (CCNEA9).

WHO/EMRO is pleased that the Regional Coordinating Committee is committed to meeting as planned in spite of the extraordinary challenges we are facing in the region.

WHO recognizes that the work of Codex Alimentarius is of significant importance to the consumers and food sectors in our Member States in setting standards for our food and thereby contributing to the protection of public health as well as fair trade practices.

Since the Regional Codex Committee for the Near East last met in Rome June 2015; WHO/EMR has undertaken an exercise to assess the national food safety systems in 16 Member States.

This was done in order to provide the respective Governments with recommendations on how to strengthen their national food safety systems. On the request of the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Committee (Ministers of Health of the 22 Member States), these recommendations and National Food Safety System profiles were further developed into a 5 year Regional Plan of Action (PoA) for food safety (2017-2022), which was adopted by the Regional Committee in October 2016. I trust that this PoA will assist Member States in a very concrete and practical way in their endeavors to forward food safety initiatives in both a national and regional context.

I wish you a productive and dynamic meeting and trust that the committee will be able to forward the meeting agenda. WHO/EMRO, wishes to see the regional codex coordinating committee develop as a strong inter-sectoral platform upon which to rely, when food safety activities need to be maintained and strengthened in the Region.

### **Statement Islamic Republic of Iran**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At outset as the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on behalf of the Institute of Standards and Industrial Research of Iran (ISIRI), this is my pleasure and honor to host you and cordially welcome your participation at the 9th Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Near East (CCNE).

At present Codex Alimentarius Commission has an appropriate place among International organizations and has developed new essential awareness pertaining food quality and safety and protecting the consumers.

Due to the world population growth and the efforts of the international community to increase life expectancy, it is quite necessary to control the quality of food in order to maintain health and safety of consumers in all countries. So CODEX should be a guide and build awareness in this regard. Codex member states must be pioneer in production and distribution of Eco-friendly organic products, reducing the use of pesticides and preservatives and improving food processing techniques.

In past years environment pollution has caused great concerns for human being. A significant part of this pollution is caused by the negligence of some countries to the environment and developing of products incompatible with the environment and the structure of living organisms. The necessity of protecting the environment and developing eco-friendly products will definitely increase the responsibility of Codex member states.

It is strongly advised that Codex member states follow a common approach in production, import and export and take substantial steps in strengthening food control systems.

We believe that regional committees particularly CCNE has great potential for participating in food safety and health plans. We should reinforce and realize this capacity for development and implementation of standards relating to food safety.

Near East region with its ancient background, was one of the earliest areas for formation of urbanization, civilization and production of agricultural and food products. Due to distinct climate of this region, it is one of the major centers for production and consumption of food in the world. Coordination of the members of this committee in food production, supply and supervision can influence the global market.

During its tenure as the CCNE Chair, Islamic Republic of Iran has taken big steps forward and appreciates more extensive and effective collaboration of committee members in the world. During the period, we tried to investigate the critical and essential aspects of food safety in regional and international levels. Consequently we submitted our proposal to CCFICS regarding authenticity.

We have maintained close contacts with Codex Secretariat and Parent organizations to ensure well organization, widespread and maximum participation of the region's member states in this session. I avail myself of this opportunity to express our desire to continue our role as the coordinator for the next term.

Last but not the least; I would like to appreciate FAO experts and officials, Codex Secretariat and region's members for their sincere and kind cooperation in preparation and organization of this session.

Thank you!

### **Welcoming remarks from FAO representative**

A few years ago, FAO and WHO raised the issue of the importance of revitalizing the RCCs and encouraged reflection and discussion on this. The idea very quickly gained currency and we are already taking important

steps in that direction.

So what is that image that we are working towards for the RCCs? A place where there is high level and informed discussion of the challenges of food safety and quality in the region: both entrenched and emerging. It is an opportunity to learn from each other, it is an opportunity to identify critical capacity development needs it is an opportunity to reflect on whether there is a need for guidance Codex guidance. When we think of it, vibrant RCCs are an essential element to achieving many of the strategic goals that Codex has established for itself.

The agenda of this RCC is a reflection of our common desire to make these meetings more vital and more influential globally and regionally. .. and there is evidence that we are on the right track. One of the items for discussion at this meeting is “critical and emerging issues in the region”. We are already being contacted by Org/ institutions that recognize the value of these discussions across all of the RCCs asking us to be sure to keep this information in the public domain. The CCNE will also be discussing the implementation of Codex stds in member countries – we already have evidence that the new approach to collecting this information has facilitated a much better response. I have said on many occasions and I am saying again, that we have to learn from IPPC in terms of finding the right balance between developing stds and ensuring capacities to implement them globally. Enhanced discussion on this within the RCCs will enable us to improve that balance.

Revitalization is a process. There is no magic – just hard work. This hard work is necessary if Codex is to continue its global leadership in food safety governance. FAO will be investing in building capacities and encouraging greater attention to “foresight” so that we get increasing value regionally and globally from the discussions on critical and emerging food safety and quality issues. FAO’s ongoing work and that of the CTF on strengthening national capacities will also contribute to increasingly vital RCCs and an increasingly dynamic and responsive Codex system

I wish you interesting and productive discussions.