Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

World Health Organization

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS
INTERNATIONAL FOOD STANDARDS

TFAMR8 Q&A

Guidelines on Integrated Monitoring and Surveillance of Foodborne Antimicrobial Resistance

Q & A with **Rosa Peran, The Netherlands, Chairperson of the TFAMR electronic working group** on the development of Guidelines on Integrated Monitoring and Surveillance of Foodborne Antimicrobial Resistance. Below Rosa outlines how the work on the guidelines has progressed since TFAMR7 and her plans and expectations for the working group sessions which will take place virtually on 10, 11, 15 and 18 June, 2021.

1. What has happened since TFAMR7 met in 2019 to further develop the Guidelines?

The TFAMR7, requested the electronic working group (EWG) to review and revise the Guidelines focusing on those areas that were not considered at the physical working group (PWG) that was held on 8th December 2019 in Pyeongchang (Republic of Korea) and additionally agreed to not reopen discussion on the definitions which were already agreed upon. The EWG organized two rounds of comments to review the document and a webinar.

The first round of comments was launched in March 2020 and focused on the review of the sections discussed during the PWG in Pyeongchang (Sections 1-7), Sections 9-13 and general comments on Section 8. The second round of comments was launched in June 2020.

During this second round, the entire document was reviewed, including Section 8. Together with the co-Chairpersons we posed specific questions to the members of the EWG about the terminology and phrasing of monitoring and surveillance program(s), inclusion of a definition for antimicrobial use, Section 9 and whether the EWG would like to see examples of analytical methodologies for the analysis of integrated antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and antimicrobial use (AMU) data.

To ensure all comments were considered and to facilitate transparency we (myself and the Co-chairpersons) developed an excel table which documented each of the submitted comments and how the comments had been addressed in the revised version. A summary of the amendments was additionally provided.

Due to the pandemic, TFAMR8 was postponed from December 2020 to October 2021. Following the CCEXEC recommendations, a webinar was organized in January 2021 to share progress and facilitate the discussion towards finalization of the Guidelines. The webinar also allowed Members and Observers to provide comments on identified outstanding key issues where consensus was still pending. The identified outstanding key issues were:

a. antimicrobial use;
b. flexibility for the implementation of monitoring and/or surveillance program(s) according to national needs;
c. Principles 2, 9 and 10;
d. the level of detail needed in Sections 8 and 9, and
e. the retention of examples.

In total, 258 participants from 64 Members and 14 Observers participated in the webinar.

2.

What are the key changes that have been made to the Guidelines during this time?

Based on the input provided by the Members and Observers during the two rounds of comments of the EWG and the webinar, the Guidelines have been substantially shortened, the text has been simplified and screened for duplication. Edits to provide clarity were made throughout the document. Specific paragraphs of the document were re-ordered or broken into smaller paragraphs to enhance clarity and the readability of the text. The language has been amended to provide flexibility (e.g. options may be considered examples). Examples have been deleted where not relevant. The examples retained are either explanatory or for purposes of clarity. Based on EWG input received the term monitoring and surveillance program(s) has been described within the introduction and aligned throughout the document.

In general, Sections 8 to 11 were carefully reviewed. In these sections all examples were assessed based on their purpose and value to the document. Some examples of specific amendments in other sections include:

a. a description of AMU in Section 1;
b. the revision of Principles 2, 9 and 10 (which has been moved to the Introduction); and
c. the deletion of Section 12 (content was retained in section 10).

3.

What are the key issues to be discussed in the working group in June 2021 and how are you planning to approach the working group?

We would like to review the entire document, starting with the sections that have not been discussed during the previous Task Forces meetings; that is sections 8 and 9. While sections 8 and 9 have not yet been discussed in detail in plenary the webinars convened in January 2021 were a useful tool for us to listen to Members and Observers' detailed comments on areas where there are remaining divergent opinions and that have to be discussed during the working group in June.

We realize the challenge a virtual meeting poses, and that the time we have at our disposal is limited. We need to have very focused discussions, to reach agreement on the key issues, and avoid becoming distracted with editing or wordsmithing. We aim to progress on the document as much as possible, so that we will be in good shape for TFAMR8.

4.

How should delegates prepare for the working group?

Delegates should familiarize themselves with the version of the document in the Circular Letter, the past discussions, the changes made and areas where consensus had been reached. The document should move from Step 3 to Step 5/8. This is very challenging but is possible if delegates come with a solution oriented approach noting that TFAMR should finish its work this year. Comments on the Guidelines have now also been published on the TFAMR webpage so it would be good for delegates to familiarize themselves with the views of other Members with the aim of identifying areas of compromise. Delegates should also be familiar with the linkages with the Codex Code of Practice and the common provisions/concepts/approaches for the two documents, and with the Codex Guidelines for Risk Analysis of Foodborne AMR (CXG 77-2011).

5.

What do you want to achieve by the end of the working group?

We would like to discuss all the sections of the document, especially the sections that have not been discussed at plenary and reach agreement on the topics where we still have divergent opinions. For example we are aiming for consensus on the content and the level of detail in Sections 8 and 9, and in Sections 1, 4. 7 and 10.

We also wish to identify any other remaining issues that the delegates may highlight in order to aid the discussion and finalization of the Guidelines during the meeting of the Task Force in October 2021.

6.

What will happen after the working group?

The co-chairpersons and I will revise the document based on the working group discussions and an updated version will be shared for comments and then discussion at TFAMR8 in October.