



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

44th 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 HQs or offices at regional and national 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 43rd Session of the CAC and is structured as follows:

- **PART I:** FAO/WHO partnership and collaboration in building food safety capacities in member countries
- **PART II:** highlights of key initiatives since CAC43
- **PART III:** future focus
- **PART IV:** FAO and WHO publications and tools recently published

PART I: FAO/WHO partnership and collaboration in building food safety and quality capacities in member countries

2.1 FAO and WHO are the main specialised UN agencies with a mandate to address food safety and quality 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.

2.2 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 "translate" 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 iv) 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.

2.3 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.). Training is an important component of capacity development but one-off training events frequently do not result in "new learning" being fully and correctly integrated into the working practices of trainees.

Communicating with us

More information on FAO and WHO publications, tools and project activities are available at:

FAO: <http://www.fao.org/food-safety/en/>

WHO: <https://www.who.int/teams/nutrition-and-food-safety>

PART II: HIGHLIGHTS OF KEY INITIATIVES SINCE CAC43**3.1 FAO/WHO Food Control System Assessment Tool**

3.1.1 The FAO/WHO food control system assessment tool consisting of five volumes has been published in English, French, Spanish, Russian and Arabic language. The tool is available at:

- FAO <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca5334en/>
- WHO <http://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241515719>

3.1.2 This tool allows Member Countries to assess, in structured, transparent and measurable ways, the performance of their food control system throughout the entire food chain, identify priority areas for capacity development, and measure and evaluate progress over time.

3.1.3 FAO and WHO are continuing to assist Member countries in utilizing the tool to assess their national food control systems in a structured and measurable way. FAO has successfully concluded assessments in Malawi, Sudan and Tunisia in 2019, and further assessments have been initiated, in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi (UAE), and Belarus. FAO also plans to initiate assessments in the Bahamas, Guyana, the United Arab Emirates and Azerbaijan in the very near future.

3.1.4 To facilitate widespread use of the FAO/WHO Assessment Tool, dissemination packages are under elaboration jointly by FAO and WHO.

3.2 FAO guidance on risk-based inspection

3.2.1 FAO continues its update of existing and production of new guidance on risk-based inspection, as part of the Food Safety and Quality series. The most recent issue in the series is "Principles for risk-based meat inspection" which has recently been published in English and is available at <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5465en/ca5465en.pdf>. French and Arabic version have also been published and are available on the FAO website.

3.2.2 The publication: "Risk based Imported food control" has been translated into Arabic and has been published on the FAO website.

Moreover, drafting of new guidance is ongoing with regard to:

- Risk categorization of food businesses as the basis for improved inspection planning,
- Risk based fish inspection (update of an earlier publication)

3.3 Documenting some trade-offs between food safety and food security

3.3.1 Further to the publication of a guidance note highlighting policy considerations pertaining to food safety as part of a series on "Strengthening sector policies for better food security and nutrition results" (<http://www.fao.org/3/ca9476en/CA9476EN.pdf>), a number of issues were identified to be taken into account for improving policy coherence. In particular, a better understanding of trade-offs is deemed useful to allow policy makers to make informed choices. As a follow up work, a case study is currently being researched where specific contaminants/commodities combinations will be documented in the context of impaired food security.

3.4 Early warning/alert, preparedness and response to food safety incidents

3.4.1. 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. The INFOSAN Secretariat responds to more than 100 food safety incidents each year,

facilitating rapid communication among INFOSAN members across all regions. During such food safety incidents, the INFOSAN Secretariat relies on the swift action of national INFOSAN Emergency Contact Points to respond to information requests. Information shared through INFOSAN enables members around the world to implement appropriate risk management measures to prevent further distribution of affected food and related risk of foodborne illness.

3.4.2 In 2020, INFOSAN facilitated the exchange of information during 127 international food safety incidents, and so far, over 140 in 2021. This indicates an increased reliance on the Network by its Members and Member States. The INFOSAN Secretariat continues to publish quarterly summaries of network activities, including international food safety incidents and news from each quarter.

3.4.3 Membership to INFOSAN has continued to grow during the 2018/2019 biennium, increasing by eight percentage points with notable growth in the Eastern Mediterranean Region and in the African Region; 89% of all WHO Member States now have an active INFOSAN Emergency Contact Point.

3.4.4 Efforts to strengthen partnerships with regional authorities and networks have continued with PulseNet International, the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN), the European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA) Emerging Risks Exchange Network (EREN), the European Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF), the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), the Regional International Organization for Animal and Plant Health (OIRSA) and the Arab Food Safety Initiative for Trade Facilitation (Arab SAFE).

3.4.5 INFOSAN members' knowledge and capabilities to participate actively in the Network and respond effectively to food safety emergencies has been further developed through the delivery of several webinars, conducted by the INFOSAN Secretariat in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese as well as several national training workshops.

3.4.6 In 2021, online emergency simulation exercises were run in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese for countries in the Americas, Africa and Asia, targeting INFOSAN Emergency Contact Points and National IHR Focal Points. Participation in such exercises tests national and international coordination mechanisms and bolsters preparedness for food safety emergency response.

3.4.7 In 2020, activities to strengthen the network at the regional level were undertaken, such as the seventh meeting of INFOSAN members in the Americas, held virtually with the support of Argentinian authorities. Similarly, regional webinars were organized to raise awareness and strengthen engagement of INFOSAN Members in the regions of Africa, Asia and Europe. At the national level, in 2020 and 2021, a second-level simulation exercise was developed for INFOSAN Emergency Contact Points, INFOSAN Focal Points and National IHR Focal Points to test current response mechanisms and build capacity around the management of food safety emergencies.

3.4.8 In July 2021, the INFOSAN Secretariat launched the new INFOSAN community website with new and improved functionalities that will facilitate communication and information sharing during international food safety incidents. The new INFOSAN Community Website has more than 600 members from over 190 WHO Member States and their territories.

3.4.9 While a not foodborne disease, the COVID-19 pandemic triggered a high interest and demand for support to develop capacities in preparedness to respond to emergencies. Country level, regional and international workshops were held by the INFOSAN Secretariat from mid-2020 and continue to be held at regular intervals.

3.4.10 An initiative of holding INFOSAN working group sessions by topical thematic areas initiated in 2020 proved very successful and there is a request for continuation of this series of workshops in 2021. The four thematic areas discussed include (i) additional food safety measures during COVID-19 pandemic, (ii) management of allergens in international food trade; (iii) food recalls in the context of international trade; (iv) crisis communication.

3.4.11 The INFOSAN Activity Report 2018/2019 was published in September 2020¹. During the 2018/2019 biennium, the INFOSAN Secretariat responded to 162 international food safety incidents, facilitating communication and sharing important food safety information among Network members. National capacities

¹ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240006928>

for food safety emergency management were strengthened through a series of webinars and simulation exercises in multiple languages. INFOSAN featured on several high-profile occasions, including at the First FAO/WHO/AU International Food Safety Conference held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in February 2019 and at the WTO International Forum on Food Safety and Trade held in Geneva, Switzerland, in April 2019.

3.4.12 The INFOSAN Secretariat, in collaboration with the Abu Dhabi Agriculture and Food Safety Authority (ADAFSA), organized the Second Global INFOSAN Meeting from 9 to 11 December 2019 in the United Arab Emirates, with physical participation of more than 285 attendees from 135 countries. The objectives of the meeting were to bring members together to discuss recent network developments, strengthen relationships, exchange experiences and inspire INFOSAN's actions in the future. The meeting resulted in strengthening the trust in INFOSAN as a reliable and supportive community whereby to share information and collaborate during food safety emergencies. The report of the meeting is available on the INFOSAN website (<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240003934>).

3.4.13 The new INFOSAN Secretariat Strategic Plan 2020-2025 (<http://www.fao.org/3/ca6988en/ca6988en.pdf>) was published in autumn 2019 and presented during the Second Global Meeting of INFOSAN. The document describes the objectives and methodology of the strategic thinking process, provides an overview of the history, current status and contextual factors influencing INFOSAN operations, and concludes with a description of six strategic objectives by outlining the key challenges as well as actions to be taken by the INFOSAN Secretariat to achieve these objectives.

3.4.14 The new INFOSAN Members' Guide and its web annex (template for INFOSAN/IHR communication) were published in 2020 and are available online in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish. The document serves as a functional reference guide for the INFOSAN members, as it covers a general overview of the INFOSAN operational aspects around the communication of international food safety incidents. The document is available on the INFOSAN website. (<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240000230>)

3.4.15 The Joint FAO/IAEA Centre commenced the implementation of a project entitled "Enhancing Capacity in Member States for Rapid Response to Food Safety Incidents and Emergencies" in April 2019. The project, funded under the IAEA "Peaceful Uses Initiative (PUI)", will last for 3-4 years and aims to strengthen cooperation in food safety laboratory networks for rapid response to food safety incidents and emergencies affecting humans, animals and trade. The main components of the project include the development of rapid, cost-effective analytical methods for the detection and control of food contaminants, food authenticity and verification of origin and transfer of the methodology to Member Countries through training courses and publications. Two training courses, postponed and reformatted as virtual events because of COVID-19 restrictions, were held in December 2020 and June 2021 on the detection and control of organic contaminants in food (theoretical and laboratory components). Each course had 24 participants from 24 countries. Further virtual training courses are planned on the use of profiling/fingerprinting techniques to determine food origin and verify food authenticity, in August 2021, and on the use of stable isotope techniques to determine food origin and verify food authenticity, in October 2021.

3.5 Joint FAO-IAEA-IOC-WHO Inter-Agency Global Strategy on Ciguatera

3.5.1 The issue of Ciguatera poisoning (CP) was raised at CCCF11 (2017) and the Committee agreed to request scientific advice from FAO/WHO to enable the development of appropriate risk management options. Based on this request, FAO and WHO convened an expert meeting on 19-23 November 2018 in Rome. Although there were many gaps in the available information about CP, some needs required urgent attention regarding both risk management and research. The main needs for risk management were for the definition of clear protocols to avoid the risk of consuming toxic seafood, mainly by local people and tourists, but also consumers purchasing imported seafood from certain areas. This included a well-defined information and outreach programme, and a clear identification of the geographic distribution of fisheries resources and causative organisms, as well as CTXs presence and concentration in different tissues and anatomic parts of the affected fisheries resources. The main research needs referred to detection methods, both screening and analytical, and the need to have a stable supply programme of analytical standards. The FAO-WHO Report of the Expert Meeting on Ciguatera Poisoning is available in the FAO and WHO website.²

3.5.2 Building on the above-mentioned report, FAO in collaboration with IAEA and IOC-UNESCO developed an e-learning course on Monitoring and preventing ciguatera poisoning that is now available online: <https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=648>. This e-learning course targets food safety and fishery

² <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca8817en/>
<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/332640>

authorities, policy-makers, doctors and health managers. The course is also meant for trainers and students interested in ciguatera poisoning, and for fishing and fish processing workers.

3.6 FAO's work on bivalve mollusc sanitation

3.6.1 International trade has been the main driving factor for the rapid growth of the bivalve mollusc production industry during the last six decades, growing from nearly one million tonnes in 1950 to 17.3 million tonnes in 2018. According to FAO statistics, the export value of bivalve mollusc trade reached US\$ 4.26 billion in 2018. However, there are a very limited number of countries with effective monitoring programmes for bivalve mollusc.

3.6.2 The need for developing international guidance for implementation of bivalve mollusc sanitation programme within the framework of the Section 7 of the Codex Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products (CCFFP) was identified by the representatives of 15 major bivalve producing and trading countries participating in the 2nd International Workshop on Molluscan Shellfish Sanitation: Application of Sanitary Surveys, held 24–28 September, 2012, in Newport, USA. CCFFP33 and the FAO Committee on Fisheries Sub-Committee on International Trade supported the development of international guidance by FAO/WHO.

3.6.3 The Joint FAO-WHO Technical guidance for the development of the growing area aspects of Bivalve Mollusc Sanitation Programmes³ was developed by a team of international experts representing different geographical regions and different bivalve mollusc production practices and was piloted in a number of countries.

3.6.4 The guidance is serving as the basis for the development of a Joint FAO-Cefas e-learning Course on Bivalve Sanitation consisting of three modules. The first module titled Growing area risk profile (<https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=481>) and the second titled Growing area assessment and review (<https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=629>) are available online. The last module is under development. The target audience of the course are policy makers, development practitioners and programme managers, sectoral specialists and researchers, bivalve farmers, trainers and extension agents.

3.6.5 Over the last two years, FAO in collaboration with its Reference Centre for Bivalve Mollusc Sanitation, the Centre for Environment, Fisheries, and Aquaculture Science (Cefas),⁴ has 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.

3.6.6 During the different capacity building activities on bivalve sanitation provided over the last 2 years, the lack of guidance on biotoxins monitoring for the development of bivalve mollusc sanitation programmes has been highlighted. FAO considers that there is a value in complementing this effort and is developing guidance on biotoxins monitoring to support countries in the production of safe bivalve mollusc and promote trade of this important commodity.

3.7 FAO GM Foods Platform

3.7.1 The FAO GM Foods Platform (<http://www.fao.org/gm-platform>) is a simple online platform to share information on safety assessment of foods derived from recombinant-DNA plants authorized in accordance with the Codex "Guideline for the conduct of food safety assessment of foods derived from recombinant-DNA plants (CAC/GL 45-2003, annex III adopted in 2008)". This Platform also facilitates the effective utilization of food safety assessment in situations of Low Level Presence (LLP) of r-DNA plant materials in food.

3.7.2 The Platform currently hosts a total of 1,625 records of national data on GM food/feed safety assessment and participated by a total of 179 Codex Members. Among them, 25 Members, including the European Union, are actively and regularly sharing their data and information. All Codex Members are requested to nominate their Focal Points to share relevant data to address the needs highlighted in the above-mentioned Codex Guidelines. Contact GM-Platform@fao.org for questions and comments.

3.8 FAO/WHO Work on Whole Genome Sequencing

³ The Joint FAO-WHO Technical guidance for the development of the growing area aspects of Bivalve Mollusc Sanitation Programmes: <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/es/c/ca1213en/>

⁴ FAO Reference centre work programmes and annual reports: <https://www.cefas.co.uk/icoe/seafood-safety/designations/fao-reference-centre-for-bivalve-mollusc-sanitation/fao-reference-centre-work-programmes-and-annual-reports/>

3.8.1 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), Mauritius, Mongolia, Mozambique, Namibia, Philippines, Sudan, Singapore, Tanzania, Thailand, and Viet Nam. Contact WGS@fao.org to join the network.

3.8.2 FAO, together with its partner agencies such as WHO and OIE, supports non-profit technical initiatives working on WGS and food safety, such as Global Microbial Identifier (GMI) and PulseNet International. FAO is part of the steering committee of GMI to ensure all countries, including developing countries and transition countries, will benefit from this potentially powerful technology that is applicable to food safety management. PulseNet International is a global laboratory network dedicated to foodborne disease surveillance and outbreak detection. This international network envisions the standardised use of WGS to identify and subtype foodborne bacterial pathogens worldwide, replacing traditional methods.

3.8.3 WHO developed and plans to publish in 2021 a national guidance document, "Whole Genome Sequencing as a Tool to Strengthen Foodborne Disease Surveillance and Response" as a tool to further strengthen foodborne disease surveillance and response. This document works as an additional resource to the other existing publications, "strengthening surveillance of and response to foodborne diseases"⁵ published in 2017 and "whole genome sequencing for foodborne disease surveillance"⁶ published in 2018. These tools aim to provide countries information on the use of sequencing technology for national foodborne disease surveillance and guidance on how such technology can be adapted and implemented for countries to benefit and improve the existing surveillance system, based on the various capacity level of countries. WHO takes part in the activities of the Global Microbial Identifier as part of the steering committee, and supports initiatives on the use of sequencing technology to improve the food systems, foodborne disease surveillance and detection.

3.8.4 Through the International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN), FAO and WHO Member States have been encouraged to use Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS) as a tool for surveillance and investigation of international foodborne disease outbreaks. Member States have increasingly been sharing WGS details with each other during recent international foodborne disease outbreaks. Such exchange of real-time WGS data has allowed the identification of the source of several international foodborne disease outbreaks, preventing delays in the implementation of risk management measures and halting the international spread of contaminated food products. Through INFOSAN, countries have the opportunity to continue exchanging knowledge and proven solutions with the use of WGS to enhance the response to international food safety emergencies.

3.9. Guidance on food safety, nutrition and Covid-19

3.9.1 FAO and WHO have developed policy briefs and other relevant resources from the perspective of the specific mandate of each agency⁷ to support managing the related challenges. FAO and WHO in close collaboration with Codex Secretariat have developed a guidance on Covid-19 and food safety for national competent authorities. FAO has updated the guidance document on COVID-19 and food safety for food business operators.⁸

3.9.2 Furthermore, FAO and Codex Secretariat have produced three concise posters on 10 essential things related to Covid-19 and food safety that food business operators, national competent authorities and consumers should know, respectively⁹. Finally, FAO produced guidance documents on the impact of Covid-19 on food security and nutrition,¹⁰ on reducing food loss and waste,¹¹ and on healthy diets in the context of Covid-19.^{12,13}

⁵ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/strengthening-surveillance-of-and-response-to-foodborne-diseases>

⁶ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/whole-genome-sequencing-for-foodborne-disease-surveillance>

⁷ <http://www.fao.org/2019-ncov/en/>; <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

⁸ <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb6030en>

⁹ <http://www.fao.org/3/ca8947en/ca8947en.pdf>; <http://www.fao.org/3/ca8798en/ca8798en.pdf>;

<http://www.fao.org/3/ca8883en/ca8883en.pdf>

¹⁰ <http://www.fao.org/policy-support/tools-and-publications/resources-details/en/c/1287907/>

¹¹ <http://www.fao.org/3/ca9056en/ca9056en.pdf>

¹² <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca8380en>

¹³ <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca9512en>

3.9.3 A Healthy@Home Healthy Diet¹⁴ webpage has been published including food safety tips and a video on the “5 keys to safer food”. A Healthy Diet information brief “Healthy diets to maintain nutritional well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic” is soon to be published bringing together main content and messages on healthy diets based on existing WHO guidelines and other WHO documents. WHO is assessing health service disruption due to COVID-19 including immunization, NCDs, mental health and essential health services (EHS) and these pulse surveys are happening on a quarterly basis. The second round of the national pulse survey on Sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health (SRMNCAH) on continuity of essential health services during the COVID-19 pandemic (January-March 2021) has been published¹⁵. It contains information on the management of moderate and severe malnutrition as well as nutrition linked health services like antenatal care, postnatal care for women and newborns, WHO has published a country and regional dashboard for tracking continuity of essential health services during the COVID-19 pandemic¹⁶. A nutrition questionnaire module is under development for the third round of the national pulse survey.

Q&As for pregnancy and childbirth¹⁷, breastfeeding¹⁸, food safety for consumers¹⁹, food safety authorities²⁰, and food businesses²¹ have been developed. A frequently asked questions on COVID-19 vaccines and breastfeeding based on WHO SAGE interim recommendations is currently underway partnering with IFE Core Group, UNICEF and USAID.

WHO and FAO have published on Food Safety during the COVID-19 pandemic two guidance documents:

- COVID-19 and Food Safety: Guidance for competent authorities responsible for national food safety control systems²²
- COVID-19 and food safety: guidance for food businesses²³

WHO in collaboration with OIE and UNEP issued the following document:

- Reducing public health risks associated with the sale of live wild animals of mammalian species in traditional food markets²⁴

3.9.4 FAO in collaboration with the World Union of Wholesale Markets have held two online workshops on identifying challenges for food safety in wholesale markets in Latin America and Asia regions, in April and May 2021, respectively.

3.9.5 FAO and WHO regional offices in Europe and Central Asia are finalizing a joint publication of a paper that provides insights on the food safety control and food safety risk management in Europe and Central Asia during the COVID-19 pandemic from the perspectives of government, food industry and consumers.

3.9.6 WHO EURO has developed a regional guidance document on safe and healthy food in traditional food markets in the WHO European Region. The guidance takes a One Health approach to promote safe and healthy food in traditional markets and outlines a stepwise approach for implementation of initiatives to promote safe and healthy food.

3.9.7 PAHO developed a regional guide to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in traditional food markets, so that markets operate safely for workers, distributors and users, during the pandemic. This guide was intended

¹⁴ <https://www.who.int/campaigns/connecting-the-world-to-combat-coronavirus/healthyathome/healthyathome---healthy-diet>

¹⁵ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-EHS-continuity-survey-2021.1>

¹⁶ <https://www.who.int/teams/integrated-health-services/monitoring-health-services/national-pulse-survey-on-continuity-of-essential-health-services-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/dashboard>

¹⁷ <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-pregnancy-and-childbirth>

¹⁸ <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-breastfeeding>

¹⁹ <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-food-safety-for-consumers>

²⁰ <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-food-safety-authorities>

²¹ <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-food-businesses>

²² https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-Food_Safety_authorities-2020.1

²³ <http://www.fao.org/3/ca8660en/CA8660EN.pdf>

²⁴ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-Food-safety-traditional-markets-2021.1>

to contribute to the safe operation of food markets and fairs during the COVID-19 and draft recommendations to reduce the transmission of the SARS-Cov-2 virus.²⁵

3.9.8 PANAFTOSA-PAHO produced infographics in Spanish, English and Portuguese to reinforce good hygiene practices and social distancing along the food value chain to prevent the spread of SARS-Cov-2 virus. The infographics included messages for primary production workers, food business operators, food producers, transporters and general guidelines on how to respond to COVID-19 positive cases in the food industry.²⁶

3.9.9 PANAFTOSA-PAHO re-launched a Food Handlers e-learning course in Spanish and English that has contributed to build knowledge on good hygiene practices for food business operators (FBOs) in the Americas and beyond. The training was particularly useful during the pandemic and has been adopted by some countries in the Americas to certify their FBOs. Recently the e-learning course has been launched in Portuguese. The Dutch and French translators are in progress.²⁷

3.9.10 PANAFTOSA-PAHO produced infographics on dietary restrictions and food allergies in Spanish, English and Portuguese to increase awareness on both concepts that are misinterpreted by the general public²⁸.

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

3.10.1 FAO and WHO contributes technical expertise to STDF working group for reviewing project proposals and implementation, for coordinating capacity development support among development agencies, for discussing innovative practices and for cooperating with STDF Practitioners Groups, such as E-certification and Public-Private Partnerships, Good Regulatory Practices in SPS, Spill-over trade effects framework on domestic health, . Regional offices of FAO and WHO are actively involved in implementing various STDF projects in their regions.

3.10.2 In Mali, the project PG-611 (MTF/MLI/063/STF) was launched in July 2021 and will contribute to strengthening food safety in the smoked fish value chain. Smoked-dried fish was indeed identified as the main contributor to the populations dietary exposure to pesticide residues (chlorpyrifos) and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons through a previous STDF project PG-303 implemented by FAO with the technical support from WHO (MTF/RAF/487/STF). It is expected that national stakeholders will select and implement pertinent risk management options to significantly reduce risks and promote fair practices in the food trade. The new project is entitled "Promotion of Codex standards and codes of practice in the smoked fish sector and consequences on food safety in other sectors in Mali" and will be implemented until 2024.

3.10.3 With regard to the COVID-19 situation, WHO participated in a series of STDF webinars and provided new guidance on COVID-19 and food safety for food businesses and for competent authorities.

3.10.4. A joint Codex, IPPC, OIE and STDF virtual side – session “Promoting sustainable food systems: the role of international standards” has been held on 27 July 2021 within the UN Food Systems Pre-Summit.

3.10.5 Two STDF projects are being implemented in the Asia and Pacific region by FAO and both were heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. MTF/SOI/003/STF is enhancing the capacity of the National Public Health Laboratories in the Solomon Islands to provide analytical services in microbiology to support market access for fish exporters. While the original aim was to achieve ISO17025 accreditation, this ambition has been revised in the light of COVID-19 to place the laboratory on the path to ISO17025 accreditation while ensuring the provision of validated and reliable microbiological testing services on water and food products to local businesses and public institutions. MTF/INF/198/STF is being implemented across the spices value chain to tackle key food safety issues faced by the Indian varieties of spices such as microbial contamination, excess pesticide residues, mycotoxin contamination and lack of awareness about Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Hygienic Practices (GHP) at various stages of production, pre-processing and marketing.

3.10.6 In Kyrgyzstan, STDF/PG/569 project is supporting the fruit and vegetable industry to improve technical capacities of the food producers and processors, and guidance and auditing capability of the inspectors on food safety management systems in the sector. A standardized central training system with a four-level

²⁵ <https://iris.paho.org/handle/10665.2/53315>

²⁶ <https://www.paho.org/en/panaftosa>

²⁷ <https://www.campusvirtualsp.org/pt-br/curso/treinamento-virtual-para-manipuladores-de-alimentos-portugues-2020>

²⁸ <https://www.paho.org/en/panaftosa>

competency to train food safety management advisors is being developed within the project.

3.10.7 In Tajikistan, STDF/PG/447 project is providing technical assistance to the Committee on Food Security (CFS) to strengthen the official regulatory and control system for apricots and honey. The project is jointly implemented with ITC.

3.10.8 In Latin America, STDF/PPG/716 project proposal grant is contributing to set the pillars of a larger project to implement a “Food Safety Risk Analysis Capacity Building Programme in the Americas”. The PPG is jointly implemented by PANAFTOSA-PAHO and FAO.

3.11 FAO Regional training project to develop capacities on food safety risk assessment of residues of veterinary drugs in food

3.11.1 FAO is implementing a French funded project (GCP/RLA/228/FRA-F) that aims at developing capacities on food safety risk assessment of residues of veterinary drugs in food in Latin America and the Caribbean. The countries involved in the project are: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico, Guyana, and Barbados. The FAO Regional Office for Latin America and Caribbean and FAO HQ are working together on this project and during the last several month have organized a series of training webinars with participants from the above mentioned countries to:

- Gain knowledge and understanding of how residue of Vet drugs are assessed by the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA), how these assessments contribute to setting of the Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) in Codex and understand what critical data are required to be submitted for assessment by JECFA.
- Understand how to select the compounds that are important for their production systems that have reasonable chance to go through evaluation by JECFA.
- Identify suitable compounds for submission to JECFA for evaluation
- It is expected that the project will facilitate input by participating countries into the work of Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods (CCRVDF). If the pandemic and the related international situation (in terms of health, and travels) will allow a final “face to face” workshop will be organized in the region towards the end of 2022.

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

3.12.1 FAO/WHO GIFT is an innovative platform where Individual Quantitative Food Consumption (IQFC) data are disseminated in easy-to-understand age and sex-disaggregated infographics of food consumption and nutrition for non-expert users, and disseminates full microdata for more advanced users who wish to analyse the data themselves. The platform is accessible online at <http://www.fao.org/gift-individual-food-consumption/en/>

3.12.2 IQFC data are essential in the area of food safety and one of the key end-users of IQFC data shared through the FAO/WHO GIFT platform are food safety specialists, who need this type of data to perform refined exposure assessment to food chemicals present in foods. In particular, harmonized IQFC 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. Capacity building on the importance of the data to understand food safety is being undertaken in Lao PDR in 2021 and planned in Nigeria and Kenya. The objective of the training is to present the possible use of data in FAO/WHO GIFT for food safety analysis; describe the risk assessment process and how food consumption data support dietary exposure assessment to human health hazards; and discuss the potential of the food consumption data and identify opportunities for the countries and the region for food safety based on lessons learned from the pilot studies.

3.12.3 Nutrition related capacity development activities at global, regional and country levels

- In October 2020, the FAO “Capacity Development Roadmap: Promoting healthy diets from sustainable food systems” was published to support the implementation of [Vision and Strategy for FAO's Work in Nutrition](#). Country level roll-out and implementation is currently in progress.
- In October 2020, a three-day virtual training on nutrition and trade was organized by FAO in collaboration with relevant ministries from Small Island and Developing States (SIDS) in the Indian and Atlantic Oceans (Cabo Verde, Guinea Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe, Comoros, Mauritius, Seychelles and Madagascar), for over 100 participants, including trade division officials and customs staff, food regulatory bodies and food standards authorities, food and nutrition security and agro-food value chain officials, SMEs, consumer associations and parliamentarians. Topics covered include

Codex standards, with focus on harmonization of country and regional standards, food labelling and agro-processing for SMEs to support the provision of safe and nutritious foods, among others. The workshop is part of a Technical Cooperation Project (TCP) that aimed to mainstream nutrition in trade policies and food laws and regulations, and promote local food value chains for intra-SIDS trade. <http://www.fao.org/africa/news/detail-news/en/c/1370245/>

- In January and April 2021, the FAO subregional office for Eastern Africa (SFE) supported the organization of two country level workshops on nutrition sensitive agriculture in Eritrea and Somalia, respectively, which utilized a blended learning modality consisting of self-paced FAO e-learning courses and virtual participation.
- In June 2021, a new section on capacity development was launched on the FAO Food and Nutrition Division website <http://www.fao.org/nutrition/capacity-development/en/>

3.12.4 A Regional Nutrition Strategy for Europe and Central Asia is under development and will set out an integrated approach to reducing all forms of malnutrition in the ECA region. Based on the identified nutritional challenges in ECA, key entry points for all stakeholders to address more sustainable and healthier diets are provided. This FAO Regional Nutrition Strategy in Europe and Central Asia responds to the key aspects of the global agenda and targets for nutrition, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the World Health Assembly (WHA) Global Nutrition Targets 2025, the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025) and the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) Framework for Action. It is also aligned with the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), and reflects the importance of food systems in “promoting healthy diets and preventing all forms of malnutrition” (FAO’s biennial theme for 2020–2021).

3.13 Strengthening regulatory and fiscal capacities to address unhealthy diets and physical inactivity

3.13.1 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 a joint three year project, 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). Technical support was provided to focus countries (i.e. Bangladesh, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Uganda), including through the capacity building activities to review existing nutrition labelling policies for further strengthening and alignment with relevant Codex standards and guidelines with a view to also incorporating a provision on front-of-pack labelling (FOPL), and to develop nutrient profile models which underpin the development and implementation of FOPL and also marketing restrictions. The work in each country was undertaken in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health, including the Bureau of Standards and other concerned ministries, as well as other key country stakeholders.

3.14 Regulatory capacity building work for eliminating industrially produced *trans*-fatty acids

3.14.1 With the aim of achieving the 13th General Programme of Work²⁹ target of eliminating industrially produced *trans*-fatty acids (TFA), over the past year WHO has been undertaking a series of capacity-building workshops to strengthen countries’ regulatory capacities for implementing and enforcing policy measures. These included a capacity-building workshop in December 2020 for four countries in the WHO South-East Asia Region (i.e. Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka) and a legal workshop in March 2021 for all 22 countries in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region.

²⁹ The 13th General Programme of Work guides the work of WHO through to 2025. The 74th World Health Assembly held in May 2021 agreed to extend the end date of the 13th General Programme of Work, which was originally for 2019–2023, to 2025. (https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA74/A74_R3-en.pdf)

3.14.2 In addition, later in 2021 laboratory capacity-building workshops for measuring TFA in food samples are planned in countries in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean, European and South-East Asia Regions, using the video modules³⁰ developed to visualize the WHO global laboratory protocol for measuring TFA in foods, which was published in December 2020³¹.

PART III: FUTURE FOCUS (in addition to ongoing activities mentioned above)

4.1. FAO initiative on the global scale-up of the food safety indicators

4.1.1 Building on the regional initiative of food safety indicator development in Asia and the Pacific³², FAO is reviewing a concept of a possible scale-up of the initiative so that global food safety indicators in the food and agriculture dimension can be considered. Given the topic's significant relevance to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as the degree of potential sensitivity around measuring food safety, the initiative calls for a wide range of consultations with Members, stakeholders and partner agencies. The concept is expected to be formulated for a global pilot in 2022.

4.2. FAO support for the establishment of the Africa Food Safety Agency (AFSA) and establishment of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

4.2.1 As a follow-up on the outcomes of the 2019 International Food Safety Conference held in Addis Ababa and to the International Forum on Food Safety and Trade held Geneva, the FAO RAF has intensified interactions with the African Union Commission (AUC) and support toward the operationalization of the newly established Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). FAO supports implementation of the AfCFTA in the agricultural and food sector, notably by ensuring that the agreement contributes to food security and nutrition objectives. This includes strengthening of the capacities of member countries in trade policy analysis and participation in trade negotiation, strengthening market information and analysis to guide the implementation of appropriate trade and market policies and facilitating the work of standard setting bodies for food safety and plant health and harmonization of regulatory controls. The FAO support to AUC also contributed to the efforts toward the finalization of the AUC SPS Policy Framework, the development of the AUC food safety strategy, and establishment of the Africa Food safety Agency (AFSA) aiming at coordinating food safety at the continental level.

4.2.2. On 04 August 2021, the Joint FAO/IAEA Centre, in partnership with the National Metrology Institute of South Africa (NMISA), will hold a one-day African Food Safety virtual workshop to deliberate on current food safety technical matters related to consumer safety and trade. This will serve as a preamble for a physical Africa-wide food safety workshop planned for June/July 2022, a follow-up to a similar event held in June 2018. This biennial event could not be held in 2020 or 2021 due to COVID-19. The workshop will address the role of food safety laboratories in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and associated challenges, including standards and export rejections. It will also enhance networking among food safety stakeholders in Africa.

4.2.3. The Joint FAO/IAEA Centre participated in a continental consultative meeting, 8 – 11 June 2021, on the development of the Food Safety Strategy for Africa. The deliberations also addressed the AfCFTA and the AFSA.

4.2.4 The WHO and FAO also continues to contribute to the process of the elaboration of the AUC food safety strategy and establishment of the Africa Food Safety Agency.

4.3. FAO and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) assistance to Member Countries inF utilizing ionizing radiation as a treatment for food safety, quality and phytosanitary applications.

4.3.1 Hitherto, irradiated food is treated at stand-alone contract irradiation units, mainly in the Americas and Asia and Pacific Countries. A new FAO/IAEA five-year coordinated research initiative is developing a new paradigm using “soft” beams of electrons or x rays. Electrical devices that generate these low energy beams are relatively compact and do not need extensive shielding, so can operate safely on production lines inside

³⁰ <https://youtu.be/J4j9BzxtFFE>

³¹ https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240018044?search-result=true&query=partially+hydrogenated+oils&scope=&rpp=10&sort_by=score&order=desc

³² <http://www.fao.org/3/cb4111en/cb4111en.pdf>

food factories or packing houses. The extension of this “soft-beam technology” to food and phytosanitary applications is being investigated by research groups in 14 countries as a sustainable food engineering solution to ensure food safety and quality or phytosanitary security of fresh commodities, while achieving environmental objectives (e.g. low carbon dioxide emissions, more efficient energy consumption, less use of water, and reduction in chemicals usage). This project has been initiated and its first research coordination meeting will be held in September 2021 under the leadership of the Joint FAO/IAEA Centre of Nuclear Applications in Food and Agriculture.

4.4 Development of a new Codex E-Learning Course

4.4.1 Work is currently ongoing to develop a new version of the Codex E-Learning Course to replace the original Codex e-learning course, which was developed some 13 years ago. The Course will be modular, comprising 4 main Course Units containing two lessons each that can be completed in about an hour each. Topics covered include: What is codex and why it is important; Elements of a national Codex programme; How to engage in the work of Codex; the scientific basis for Codex work; and Collaboration at regional level. Modules will be published progressively online as they become available.

4.5. FAO support on appropriate food safety regulations in diverse food sectors

4.5.1 Responding to the request of the Member Countries in the Europe and Central Asia region, FAO is providing technical support to the governments in ensuring effective, enforceable and inclusive national food regulations that are considerate of the specificities of diverse food sectors, including small scale businesses while protecting consumer interests and health. A regional meeting in November 2019 discussed the root causes of the challenges for the food businesses, policy makers and food control authorities. As a follow up to the meeting, FAO is supporting Albania and Turkey to develop flexible hygiene regulations; and developing a regional guideline that outlines the challenges and provides considerations for the development and enforcement of appropriate food safety regulations with case studies.

4.6 Development of an e-learning course for risk-based food inspection

4.6.1 PANAFTOSA-PAHO has been improving risk-based food inspection capacity in the Americas through the organisation of customised seminars for the Caribbean and Latin America based on country needs. Under country's request, PANAFTOSA-PAHO is developing an e-learning course on risk-based food inspection considering basic and advanced modules for countries to build their technical skills. The training programme will be based on Codex principles and guides that were used for the manuals: “Risk-based food inspection for the Caribbean³³” and “Risk-based food inspection for establishments in Latin America”.

PART IV: FAO AND WHO PUBLICATIONS AND TOOLS PUBLISHED SINCE CAC43 (Virtual meeting, Sep-Nov2020)

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³³ <https://iris.paho.org/handle/10665.2/51775>

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FAO is developing support tools for the implementation of bivalve mollusc sanitation programmes

Based on the Technical guidance for the development of the growing area aspects of Bivalve Mollusc Sanitation Programmes, FAO, in collaboration with Cefas, its Reference Center for bivalve Sanitation, is developing an e-course. The course addresses the subject matter from a technical perspective. Individuals who would especially benefit from taking the course include: policy makers, development practitioners and programme managers, sectoral specialists and researchers, bivalve producers, trainers and extension agents. Module 1 of the E-Learning material was recently published. This module introduces the technical guidance framework for the development of growing areas for bivalve mollusc sanitation programmes. It describes the potential hazards present with live or raw consumption of bivalve molluscs and provides guidance on the completion of a Growing Area Risk Profile (GARP).

The first module is available at <https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=481> (FAO E-learning Center).

PART V: REGIONAL/NATIONAL PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

6.1 Various activities were held at regional or national level. The information is available at <http://www.fao.org/food/food-safety-quality/home-page/en/> (FAO) and <https://www.who.int/teams/nutrition-and-food-safety> (WHO) and Codex webpages.

6.2. Some projects focus directly on food safety and/or quality, while for others food safety is a component of a broader project.

6.3. Support to Technical Cooperation Projects (TCPs) is one of the Joint FAO/IAEA Centre's key activities with a focus on building capacities for food safety analysis and control systems, as well as transfer of knowhow and new technologies to counterparts in Member States. Currently, the Joint FAO/IAEA Centre is providing technical support to 60 IAEA TCPs in food safety and control, with 51 national, 8 regional and one inter-regional projects covering a range of contaminants, including veterinary drug and pesticide residues, mycotoxins, toxic

metals and radionuclides, and food authenticity. A full list of projects can be found at: <https://www.iaea.org/publications/14866/food-and-environmental-protection-newsletter-vol-24-no-1-january-2021>

6.4. Training on a Food Safety Regulatory Framework for African countries: under a regional food safety project for Africa, "Strengthening Food Contaminant Monitoring and Control Systems and Enhancing Competitiveness of Agricultural Exports using Nuclear and Isotopic Techniques", The Joint FAO/IAEA Centre organized a virtual training course to enhance the food safety regulatory framework, from 6 to 7 April 2021. This was attended by 50 participants from 25 countries in the African region, who are involved in different aspects of the safety control system. Topics covered included: the national food safety legal/regulatory framework; the international regulatory context of food safety from the perspective of the WTO/SPS/TBT, Codex; Importance of an efficient national food safety control system: Impact on public health, food security, trade and socio-economic development. Participants also discussed Codex standards as well as Codes of Practice and their importance to developing countries. Successes in commodities such as spices, fruits and vegetables, coffee, tea and animal products were used as examples. The linkages between the legal/regulatory frameworks and the national residue/hazard monitoring and control programmes, including the role of stakeholders in complementing policy makers and strengthening food safety, were also addressed.

6.5. Virtual Training to Support Veterinary Drug Residue Monitoring Programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean: The Joint FAO/IAEA Centre has continued to support Member Countries to establish or strengthen monitoring/surveillance programmes for chemical residues in food to safeguard consumers while meeting international trade requirements. Through a regional food safety project for Latin America and the Caribbean: "Improving Regional Testing Capabilities and Monitoring Programmes for Residues/Contaminants in Foods Using Nuclear/Isotopic and Complementary Techniques", a series of virtual training workshops were organized for several project counterparts and stakeholders in 18 countries, between 22 March and 23 June 2021. These covered a range of topics such as: developing a residues plan; food safety legislation (old and new); analytical requirements; matrix ranking of substances to establish risks; sampling procedures and investigating non-compliant test results of authorized and non-authorized substances, among others. At least 60 counterparts including laboratory personnel and regulators benefitted from this training.

6.6 The FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific is supporting Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Lao PDR, Kiribati, Mongolia, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Solomon Islands and Viet Nam to build their capacities in food safety. This includes interventions to revise or formulate food control legislation; deliver training in risk-based inspection and laboratory services; improve food safety, hygiene and biosecurity in fresh markets; implement safe and hygienic street food vending initiatives; incorporate Codex standards and recommended Codes of Practices across value chains and study food standards requirements as part of larger analysis on non-tariff trade measures. Scientific and technical capacity all Member States of the ASEAN regional grouping to contribute to Codex standards setting is being enhanced through a Japan-funded regional project. The same project is supporting the development of Codex e-learning courses including one on the Code of Practice on Hygiene. Fiji is being supported to revise its CTF Round 5 application, in collaboration with WHO.

6.7. In Europe and Central Asia region, FAO implements country level and regional projects to improve the institutional and technical capacities of national food control authorities and food businesses on risk-based approaches. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-21, the project implementation modality majorly shifted to the virtual format and trainings and meetings with member country institutions and other counterparts are taking place online. With the support of FAO, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Belarus are building capacities on risk-based inspection. In Belarus, technical assistance is also provided to enhance laboratory food testing capacities covering detection methods and quality assurance. Experts from the regions of Armenia were trained on meat inspection and slaughterhouse hygiene practices by using the newly published guidance on "Principles for risk-based meat inspection". Armenia is improving the institutional framework and scientific capacities on risk analysis principles; national experts were trained and were provided direct advice on conducting chemical and microbiological risk assessments and their using for risk management decisions. A regional FAO- Turkey Partnership Programme project is supporting Azerbaijan, Moldova, Turkey, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to strengthen official food controls and risk communication including the development and simulation of effective food safety emergency response systems. A project in Turkey is looking into the nutrition and food literacy of the population with consideration of food safety and healthy diets, which will lead to a policy document on providing reliable information to the consumers.

6.8. In Tajikistan, FAO and ITC are working with the national authorities to enable market access for Tajik honey and apricot products. Guidance and technical trainings are provided on risk-based approaches to the regulatory framework and practical use of agro-chemicals and veterinary medicines (e.g. inspections,

sampling, labelling). FAO also supported the development of a draft Food Safety Strategy in Tajikistan, and is concluding a separate project on GMO capacities, controls and detection methods. In Azerbaijan, FAO legal and technical experts worked together and provided guidance on the development of secondary technical regulations on a range of topics (on Labelling; food products of special categories; biologically active substances; food contact materials). FAO is providing technical support to Belarus on WTO accession, and food safety requirement guidelines were developed to facilitate market access of food products; guidance is given on the control of veterinary medicinal products and drug residues. Partnering with the European Commission, FAO is developing projects in Georgia and Ukraine on food safety control systems and SPS.

6.9. FAO is supporting Azerbaijan and North Macedonia in the implementation of CTF project to develop capacities of the recently established National Codex Committee. FAO and WHO regional offices jointly support the regional capacity development on Codex with activities including a virtual training delivered on effective use of the Codex diagnostic tool which will be followed by two more trainings on Codex in the pipeline this year. In North Macedonia, FAO is working with relevant authorities to develop a milk payment scheme linking quality to price. To support the improvement of food safety management systems in small food businesses, FAO is working with food safety authorities in Albania and Turkey on appropriate regulation, including understanding of the EU approach to “flexible rules”.

6.10. INFOSAN continues to play an important role in facilitating rapid exchange of information during food safety emergencies in the African region. In collaboration with the INFOSAN Secretariat, the FAO and WHO Regional Offices supported the strengthening of national capacities in Cameroon and Senegal by facilitating national, multi-sectoral workshops that focused on building functional links between national agencies involved in food safety to better address food safety emergency response. Building upon these efforts, the INFOSAN Secretariat in collaboration with the WHO regional office is supporting the implementation of roadmaps and the finalization of a protocol in Cameroon to enhance information sharing during food safety emergencies. Ghana was also supported in the elaboration and validation of their national food safety emergency response plans.

6.11. In the European/Central Asia region, FAO and WHO Regional Offices organized a regional webinar on INFOSAN. The webinar aimed to strengthen Member States’ familiarity and understanding of INFOSAN and how it can be used to facilitate rapid exchange of information in normal times and during food safety incidents and emergency situations.

6.12. Market improvement projects using the WHO “Healthy food market initiative” are being supported in Mali and Senegal by the WHO regional Office. The projects are aimed to promote the marketing and consumption of safe and healthy foods through upgrading of hygiene and sanitation standards in markets, food handling practices and the operational environment. Interventions target the market stakeholders including consumers and surrounding communities.

6.13. In the European region, WHO continues its work to support Member States to strengthen national food safety systems. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, most technical support was provided remotely through online meetings, webinars, training sessions and direct technical assistance. In cooperation with the Eurasian Economic Commission, a webinar on pesticide residues in food was organized with the aim to help countries align with international standards using the risk analysis principles. In Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova and Serbia, technical assistance is being provided to strengthen One Health coordination to address zoonotic diseases. This includes development of prioritized national action plans and roadmaps.

6.14. In the effort to support countries establish national integrated antimicrobial resistance surveillance systems, the WHO and its Advisory Group on Integrated Surveillance of Antimicrobial Resistance developed a protocol for integrated surveillance starting with the frequency rates of extended-spectrum beta-lactamase producing *Escherichia coli* (ESBL-Ec). The AMR information collected will enable monitoring of this indicator at the national, regional and global level. WHO is supporting Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Nigeria, Senegal and Zimbabwe in the implementation of projects on integrated surveillance of *ESBL-producing E. Coli*.

6.15. In Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay, Ecuador y Uruguay, the Tripartite (PAHO, FAO and OIE and PAHO) are implementing the project “Working together to combat antimicrobial resistance” that aims to i) improve awareness and understanding of antimicrobial resistance through effective communication, education and training; ii) strengthen knowledge and evidence through surveillance and research; iii) reduce the incidence of infection through effective sanitation, hygiene and infection prevention measures; iv) to optimise the use of antimicrobial medicines in human and animal health.

6.16. In the Caribbean, PAHO is leading the EU Project “Strengthen climate resilient health systems in the

Caribbean” that aims at reducing mortality and morbidity in the population from expected health consequences derives from climate change. The project uses a One Health approach and includes a small food safety component that will address the impact of climate change in the incidence of foodborne diseases.

6.17 The WHO Regional Office for South East Asia has been providing technical support to Member States as a part of implementing ‘Framework for Action on Food Safety in WHO South East Asia Region. A series of webinars, virtual meetings and workshops have been organized in collaboration with regional partners to disseminate Codex and food safety related updates. The COVID-19 pandemic has negative impact on food safety activities due to repurposing of staffs, lockdown and travel restriction. Guidance on handling food safety challenges during COVID-19 pandemic have been provided to food safety authorities and food business operators from time to time. Food safety country profiles have been developed and finalized with support of Member States in SEAR and posted in SEARO Food Safety website. Maldives has been strengthening public health laboratory under Maldives Food and Drug Authority for residue monitoring and quality management. WHO supported Food Safety and Standard Authority of India, Government of India to develop a white paper on aflatoxin M1 in dairy products. Sri Lanka has developed a food safety policy and India has finalized food safety emergency response plan.

6.18 WHO SEARO and WPRO provided technical support to organize online workshop on ASEAN Capacity Building on Rapid Response in Food Safety Issues and Crisis on the request of the Indonesian FDA which was attended by all ASEAN Member States and workshop was facilitated by FAO, INFOSAN Secretariat. Simulation exercise of a food safety event was part of ASEAN virtual workshop.

6.19 In the Western Pacific region, five virtual meetings with Member States named as *Virtual Roundtables: advancing implementation of the regional framework for action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific* were organized to strengthen national food safety systems. A total of 104 participants attended the meetings, including representatives from national governments of 19 Member States in the Western Pacific: Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, China, Cook Islands, Fiji, Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Niue, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Viet Nam.

6.20 For the celebration of the World Food Safety Day in 2021 in the Western Pacific and South East Asia, WHO worked with OIE, FAO, UNEP and WFP. The event focused on food safety under the One Health perspective. There were 789 participants from 69 countries from all the 6 WHO regions. The meeting was streamed by YouTube and had 600 views (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aDjkBxp9Woo>).

6.21 To support countries to assess and manage potential food safety risks related to novel foods, the workshop *Regulatory and Food Safety Aspects of Alternative Proteins for Conventional Animal Products* was organized in the Western Pacific region to discuss legal and food safety implications of foods produced using new technologies, such as plant based and cell-based meat. A total of 136 participants attended the workshop, including officials from food safety national authorities, International Food Safety Authorities Network or INFOSAN contact points and national Codex contact points from 14 Member States: Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Hong Kong SAR (China), Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Niue, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Viet Nam.

6.22 Activities with Codex Trust Fund

6.22.1 In the Codex Africa Region, FAO and WHO regional offices are supporting countries to implement their CTF projects resulting in the elaboration of codex procedural manuals (Benin, Gambia, Guinea, Nigeria, Mali, and Cote d'Ivoire) to guide the effective management of codex at the national level; inventory and gap analysis of national food standards and identification of challenges on effective use of standards (Burkina Faso and Guinea); work proposal for the elaboration of national food standards based on codex standards for four staples and the training of stakeholders on the effective use of standards (Burkina Faso); elaboration of capacity building project to address gaps on the effective use of codex standards (Senegal); sensitization of different stakeholders including policy makers to codex standards (Cote d'Ivoire); redefinition of priority committees, formulation of national positions, preparation for sessions as well as the use of online Codex tools (Madagascar).

6.22.2 In the Codex Europe region, WHO and FAO regional offices have been providing support to the implementation of CTF projects in Kyrgyzstan, North Macedonia, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, covering rounds 1-4 of CTF support. In terms of direct country support, WHO EURO with support from the Codex Trust Fund is supporting Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan to strengthen their national Codex programmes. Guidance and support to Uzbekistan to prepare an application to the Codex Trust Fund is also being provided. Support to the implementation of projects in Azerbaijan and North Macedonia is being provided by the FAO regional office.

6.22.3 In the Americas, PANAFTOSA-PAHO launched an online seminar to eligible countries on how to submit successful applications to the Codex Trust Fund. PANAFTOSA-PAHO is currently technically backstopping four Codex Trust Fund Projects in Guatemala/El Salvador, Honduras, Bolivia (Plurinational State of) and Guyana with the objective of strengthening their national Codex programmes. The FAO regional office is leading the support for the implementation of the CTF project in Cuba.

6.22.4 Bhutan, India and Nepal have been implementing Codex Trust Fund project since 2019 and WHO in coordination with Codex Secretariat and respective WHO Country Offices has facilitated various Codex capacity building activities at country level and intercountry collaboration has been promoted. Virtual review meeting was organized considering new normal situation. Maldives and Timor-Leste have been supported to submit a robust application to the Codex Trust Fund in round 5 and they were successful to get individual CTF project.

6.22.5 In CCNASWP, the FAO regional office is supporting the implementation of CTF projects in Samoa and Tonga (Round 4 of CTF support).

6.22.6 Information on the activities supported by the Codex Trust Fund can be found in CAC/44/INF/3.

6.23 Strengthening food analysis laboratories capacity

6.23.1 In Tajikistan, WHO EURO is providing training on the detection of botulinum neurotoxin in food samples and clinical specimens and conducting a review a laboratory capacity to monitor antimicrobial resistance in ESBL producing *E.Coli* in human health, environment and food sectors. In Ukraine, technical support in the area of food safety risk communication to prevent botulism outbreaks is being provided and mechanisms for coordination, risk communication and response to zoonotic disease outbreaks were tested through a simulation exercise.

6.23.2 PANAFTOSA-PAHO through the Interamerican Network of Food Analysis Laboratories (INFAL) is strengthening capacities of food analysis laboratories in the Americas through South-to-South cooperation. In the reporting period, the network commemorated the World Metrology and World Accreditation Day conducting regional technical seminars on related topics. The network conducted three proficiency testing schemes one in microbiology and two in chemistry - pre-requisite for laboratories to achieve ISO 17025:2017 accreditation. Finally, the network conducted regional technical webinars in³⁴:

- Verification of microbiological test methods as per the ISO/IEC 17025:2017.
- Reference materials and control materials for traceability and quality assurance in chemical measurements.
- Digital transformation of a quality management system.

³⁴ <https://www.rilaa.net/es/seminarios-virtuales>