



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

### **CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION**

#### **Forty-fifth 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 country level).

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

1.3 This document focuses on main initiatives and activities implemented since the 44<sup>th</sup> Session of the CAC. In comparison to previous years, this document has been simplified for ease of reading; FAO and WHO would like to note that all country or region specific capacity development projects will be reported through the Regional Coordinating Committees.

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

1.5 FAO and WHO capacity development work supports and promotes the work of Codex by: i) working with countries to strengthen their national food control and feed safety systems; ii) providing support to developing capacities and technical skills to more effectively participate in Codex standard setting; iii) developing a range of guidance tools based on relevant Codex texts which effectively "elucidate" these texts and enable countries to better understand and use Codex texts in their context; iv) facilitating policy and technical dialogue between governmental authorities and private sector (farmers and agri-business), and 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.

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

## 2. FAO/WHO Food Control System Assessment Tool

2.1 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/activities/strengthening-national-food-control-systems>

2.2 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.

2.3 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 in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi (UAE) in 2021, ensuring quality results as well as a meaningful and fair process. FAO currently facilitates assessments in the Bahamas, Guyana, Belarus and Azerbaijan; other assessments (funded by the European Union) should be initiated in October and November 2022 in Comoros, Egypt, Eswatini, Kenya, Mauritius, the Seychelles, and discussions are ongoing with other countries to confirm their interest for such assessments under this initiative. These assessments will feed into the African Union SPS investment programme. Other assessments will be facilitated by FAO in Burkina Faso, Niger and Senegal under a project funded by the African Development Bank, and discussions are ongoing to involve other countries in Africa as well. WHO has been supporting national assessments conducted in Panama and Cameroon in 2022.

2.4 To facilitate widespread use of the FAO/WHO Assessment Tool, dissemination packages including global launch, production of an introductory booklet (available at : <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb4964en/> and <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240028371> have been developed jointly by FAO and WHO. Codex also posted a global launch of the assessment tool on its website (<http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/news-and-events/news-details/en/c/1459115/>).

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

3.1 The Development Law Service of the FAO Legal Office provides assistance to countries to review and revise their food safety and quality legislation. This support is provided in close collaboration with the Food safety and quality team in HQ and the regional food safety and quality officers, and with the assistance of national legal experts. In the past year, FAOLEGN has supported the revision of food safety legislation in Nicaragua and provided comments to draft legislation covering food safety in Dominican Republic. LEGN has also supported the development of food safety regulations on honey production and prevention of bee poisoning in Tajikistan, and the development of regulations on food labelling, food contact materials, special categories of food products and biologically active food supplements for Azerbaijan. Also in 2022, the new food safety law of Azerbaijan, which was developed with FAO's support, has been approved and published and will enter into force on 1 January 2023.

## 4. Early warning/alert, preparedness and response to food safety incidents

4.1 Within the framework of the INFOSAN Strategic Plan 2020-2025, the Secretariat of the joint FAO/WHO International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN), continues assisting Member States to develop and strengthen capacity for food safety emergency preparedness and response. To this aim, the INFOSAN Secretariat, in close collaboration with FAO/WHO Regional Offices, organized various national and sub-regional workshops tailored to strengthen different core capacities on food safety emergency response, according to national and sub-regional needs. The workshops included in most of the cases simulation exercises and addressed topics such as food safety emergency response, risk communication during food safety emergency response, INFOSAN awareness, among others. Over the last year, 16 workshops have been delivered to Member States around all the globe in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese.

4.2 The INFOSAN Secretariat continues facilitating rapid communication during food safety emergencies among INFOSAN members across all regions. An increasing number of food safety emergencies communicated through INFOSAN has been observed through 2021 and 2022. During such food safety incidents, the INFOSAN Secretariat relies on the swift action of national INFOSAN Emergency Contact Points, and prompt coordination between INFOSAN Emergency Contact Points and INFOSAN Focal Points, to respond to information requests and report food safety emergencies of international concern. 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. In 2021, INFOSAN facilitated the exchange of information during 247 international food safety incidents, and so far,

over 108 in 2022. 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.

4.3 INFOSAN Regional Meetings were organized for Africa, the Americas and Asia (with the support of the Republic of Korea) in 2021. The meetings aimed to strengthen regional collaboration and exchange experiences and proven solutions during food safety emergencies. INFOSAN regional updates were provided to INFOSAN members in different regions, looking at trends and progress on active participation in the network. The regional meetings also provided a forum for INFOSAN members to identify and discuss barriers to continue strengthening participation in INFOSAN. In 2021, in the Western Balkans sub-region, WHO organised a Subregional workshop on the use of risk analysis in the response to food safety emergencies in the Western Balkans. The purpose of the workshop was to support Western Balkan countries/area to strengthen core capacities for food safety as defined under the IHR (2005) by operationally applying risk analysis principles and procedures in response to food safety emergencies using a One Health approach. In 2022, a sub-regional workshop on rapid exchange of information during food safety emergencies was also organized for the Western Balkans. INFOSAN played an important role and the workshop provided recommendations on how the Western Balkans can play an active role in INFOSAN.

4.4 Efforts to strengthen partnerships with regional authorities and networks have continued, for both emergency response and capacity building activities. Active collaborations persist 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 Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) Epidemic Intelligence Information System for Food- and Waterborne Diseases and Zoonoses, 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), the African Union and the Arab Food Safety Initiative for Trade Facilitation (Arab SAFE). Several of these partners have contributed and/or participated in the above-stated INFOSAN trainings and meetings over 2021 and 2022.

4.5 The INFOSAN Secretariat, in collaboration with the CFIA, organized an INFOSAN Train-the-trainer workshop. The workshop was held online over four sessions through October and November 2021. The aim of the program was to increase the human resources available to train INFOSAN members, online and in-person. 15 trainees were trained and engaged in discussions on all the operational and strategic aspects pertaining to the history, roles, responsibilities, processes and procedures of INFOSAN, along with the recently launched INFOSAN Community Website (ICW).

4.6 An INFOSAN Working Group session convened virtually in November 2021 discussed dietary/food supplements. The objectives of the meeting were to share best practices and national experiences on various aspects of food supplements, including regulation and distribution through e-commerce, as well as the different roles and responsibilities from the various stakeholders involved.

4.7 INFOSAN has been a platform to promote and encourage the celebration of World Food Safety Day in 2021 and 2022. Different activities and communication products have been prepared by the INFOSAN Secretariat to commemorate the date. Such activities included the dissemination of guidelines and materials, follow-up on national activities carried out to celebrate WFSD, the organisation of webinars (with the support of the Chilean authorities), the participation of the INFOSAN Secretariat in various national events and the organisation of a Health Talk to discuss how we can improve the international response to food safety emergencies.

4.8 The Joint FAO/IAEA Centre completed a project entitled "Enhancing Capacity in Member States for Rapid Response to Food Safety Incidents and Emergencies" in October 2022. The objective of the project, funded under the IAEA "Peaceful Uses Initiative (PUI)", was to strengthen cooperation and capabilities 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 included 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. Over the three-year duration of the project, 482 analysts were trained in 8 training courses. Training topics included the detection and control of organic contaminants in food, profiling/fingerprinting and stable isotope techniques to determine food origin and verify food authenticity. Extrabudgetary funding is being sought for a follow-up project.

## 5. FAO Work on biotechnologies and FAO GM Foods Platform

5.1 FAO to provide capacity development tools and trainings for countries to conduct science-based safety assessment of foods derived from modern biotechnology, including Genetically Modified (GM) foods. Through the international data-sharing mechanism of safety assessment results submitted by Members on the FAO GM Foods Platform (<https://www.fao.org/gm-platform/>), FAO maintains the community of practices with the officially nominated focal points of the Codex Members. The latest global community meeting (<https://www.fao.org/3/ca8945en/CA8945EN.pdf>) was held in 2019 to discuss the direction and the way forward as a collaborative community for technical capacity development.

## 6. FAO/WHO Work on Whole Genome Sequencing

6.1 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), Kenya, Mauritius, Mongolia, Mozambique, Namibia, Philippines, Sudan, Singapore, Tanzania, Thailand, and Viet Nam. Contact [WGS@fao.org](mailto:WGS@fao.org) to join the network. FAO also supports non-profit technical initiatives working on WGS and food safety to ensure all countries, including low- and middle-income countries, will benefit from this potentially powerful technology that is applicable to food safety management. FAO collaborates with various partner agencies and academic institutes to provide relevant hands-on trainings for both wet and dry (bioinformatics) laboratory practices.

6.2 WHO developed and plans to publish in 2022 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”<sup>1</sup> published in 2017 and “whole genome sequencing for foodborne disease surveillance: landscape paper”<sup>2</sup> 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.

6.3 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.

## 7. Activities with Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF)

7.1 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.

7.2 At the last STDF Working group meeting in June, 2022, WHO noted that some countries face obstacles in applying for STDF funding because applications are only accepted in English, French, and Spanish. It suggested, supported by Codex and FAO, that the STDF should explore the opportunity of receiving applications in Arabic and Russian to better target certain regions. The FAO highlighted the importance of making the rules for application better known and providing guidance to applicants on how to produce good applications.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/strengthening-surveillance-of-and-response-to-foodborne-diseases>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/whole-genome-sequencing-for-foodborne-disease-surveillance>

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

8.1 FAO/WHO GIFT is an innovative platform which shares Individual Quantitative Food Consumption (IQFC) data in easy-to-understand age and sex-disaggregated infographics. These infographics, focused on food consumption and nutrition, are tailored for non-expert users. The platform also 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/>.

8.2 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 dietary exposure assessments. 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 IQFC data to understand food safety was completed in Lao PDR in November 2021 and is planned in Nigeria and the Philippines in 2022. A specific training session on the use of IQFC data was delivered during the ASEAN Health Cluster 4 Workshop on ASEAN Food Consumption Data for Exposure Assessment in December 2021. A session on dietary surveys is also being prepared for the Training Course on Total Diet Studies organised by the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) which will take place in October 2022. The objective of these presentations and training activities is to present the possible use of IQFC data using the FAO/WHO GIFT for food safety analysis; describe the risk assessment process and how IQFC data support dietary exposure assessment to chemical hazards; discuss the potential of IQFC data and identify opportunities for countries and regions for food safety based lessons learned using such data.

8.3 Nutrition related capacity development activities at global level

- In 2021, FAO Members welcomed and FAO's "Capacity Development Roadmap: Promoting healthy diets from sustainable food systems." It was published to support the implementation of Country level roll-out and its implementation is currently in progress.
- In 2021, 112 FAO Country Offices contribute to build the technical and policy capacity needed to design, implement, and scale-up impactful policies and actions for healthy diets to host governments. More information can be found in the FAO country annual report analysis 2021<sup>3</sup>
- More information on capacity development can be found on the FAO Food and Nutrition Division website <http://www.fao.org/nutrition/capacity-development/en/>

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

9.1 WHO had 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 has been 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. The phase II of the project has started in July 2022 following the successful completion of the phase I of the project in June 2022, and possible additional focus countries currently being considered.

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<sup>3</sup> The Country Annual Report is the main reporting tool at country level in achieving country level results (Country Programming Framework outputs).

## 10. Regulatory capacity building work for eliminating industrially produced *trans*-fatty acids

10.1 With the aim of achieving the 13th General Programme of Work<sup>4</sup> 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 workshops in July 2022 for Nepal and in August 2022 for Indonesia.

10.2 The regulatory capacity-building workshops held in Nepal and Indonesia also included laboratory capacity-building for measuring TFA in food samples.

## 11. Strengthening national capacity to estimate foodborne diseases

11.1 The WHO initiative, established in 2007, to estimate the global and regional burden of foodborne diseases had four stated objectives, two of which involve actions at a national level as follows: 1) To strengthen the capacity of countries in conducting burden of foodborne disease assessments, and to increase the number of countries that have undertaken a burden of foodborne disease study; and 2) To encourage countries to use burden of foodborne disease estimates for cost-effective analyses of prevention, intervention and control measures. Four countries (Albania, Japan, Uganda, Thailand) participated in the country studies, and the results were published.<sup>5</sup>

11.2 Following the efforts above, WHO published the national guidance document in 2021, entitled "Estimating the burden of foodborne diseases: A practical handbook for countries",<sup>6</sup> and the dedicated webinar, "Burden of foodborne diseases - how can we estimate it, and why do we need it?" was organized in June 2021.<sup>7</sup> The handbook has been translated into French, Spanish and Russian languages, and the presentation modules have been translated into all six UN languages.

11.3 The country support task force was established as one of the seven sub-working groups under the new membership of the WHO Foodborne Disease Burden Epidemiology Reference Group (FERG) 2021-2024, with an aim to advise WHO to assist countries to strengthen the national capacity to collect data on foodborne diseases and to estimate the national burden of foodborne diseases. A new process and mechanism for supporting countries are being considered under the discussion with the FERG Country Support Task Force, and interested countries to receive technical supports will be identified through the WHO country and regional offices under the leadership of the headquarters. A manuscript for a peer review journal is also being prepared to highlight the importance of national estimation.

## 12. New Codex E-Learning Courses

12.1 The first course (Introduction to Codex) of the new Codex e-learning series, comprising 2 lessons of about 1h of self-paced learning, was published on the FAO e-learning academy in March 2022. Currently available in English, this course will also be published in Spanish and French soon. Development is also continuing on course 2 (Engaging in Codex at national and international levels), course 3 (The scientific basis for Codex work); and course 4 (Collaboration at regional level). All courses will be offered free of charge and a digital badge certificate is issued upon successful completion of a test at the end of each course.

## 13. FAO's work on bivalve mollusc sanitation

13.1 FAO continued building on previous efforts in the area of bivalve sanitation. The Joint FAO-WHO Technical guidance for the development of the growing area aspects of Bivalve Mollusc Sanitation Programmes was updated and the new version can be found online: <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/es/c/cb5072en/>. This new version was translated into Spanish and French. The Spanish version is available online in the following link: <https://www.fao.org/publications/card/es/c/CB5072ES>. The French version is available online here: <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/fr/c/CB5072FR>

13.2 FAO in collaboration with its Reference Centre for Bivalve Mollusc Sanitation, the Centre for Environment, Fisheries, and Aquaculture Science (Cefas), delivered a number of capacity building activities for the provision of guidance on relevant laboratory protocols, accreditation and use of methods for bivalve

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<sup>4</sup> 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](https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA74/A74_R3-en.pdf))

<sup>5</sup> <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0140319>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240012264>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.who.int/news-room/events/detail/2021/06/29/default-calendar/webinar-burden-of-foodborne-diseases-how-can-we-estimate-it-and-why-do-we-need-it>

mollusc testing. Further information about this collaboration can be found in the following link: [FAO Reference Centre for Bivalve Mollusc Sanitation - Cefas \(Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science\)](#).

#### **14. FAO Initiative on the global scale-up of the food safety indicators**

14.1 Building on the regional initiative of [national food safety indicator development](#) in Asia and the Pacific, FAO is scaling up 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 being formulated in 2022 for a global pilot to follow. Some Members have expressed their interests in piloting the initiative those who are interested can contact FAO for more information.

#### **15. Codex Trust Fund projects.**

15.1 The Codex Trust Fund (CTF2) is a joint FAO/WHO programme providing support to developing and transition economy countries to build strong and sustainable capacity to engage in Codex work. Since 2016, the CTF2 calls for individual and group applications from low- and middle- income countries. To date, the CTF2 has funded 35 projects in 44 countries.

15.2 2022 is the seventh year of operation of the Codex Trust Fun-2 (CTF). In 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to affect the implementation of CTF projects, but beneficiary countries have started to pick up activities again, both aided through the use of virtual tools that allowed for remote work and building on the loosening of public health restrictions in some countries.

15.3 All Round 1 countries (Ghana, Kyrgyzstan, Madagascar and Senegal) completed their projects and will move to the evaluation of results once the situation on the ground allows. Activities in Round 2 and 3 countries continued, albeit with some limitations caused by the pandemic and political instability in some of the countries. Most of Round 4 countries have begun implementing their projects. Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Maldives and Timor-Leste are beneficiaries of individual project proposals of CTF application Round 5, with implementation of project activities having started in 2022.

15.4 The 2021 call for application for Round 6 of CTF support resulted in 14 applications. Out of these applications, proposals submitted by Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Zambia and Zimbabwe have received approval for funding support, leaving another five applications from Rounds 5 and 6 that have received conditional approval with the final decision still pending in August 2022.

15.5 Further details can be found in CAC/45 INF/3.

#### **16. Mitigating public health risks in traditional food markets**

16.1 The WHO, OIE and UNEP published an interim guidance to reduce the public health risks associated with the sale of live wild animals for food in traditional food markets in the light of Covid-19 pandemic. Considering the importance of traditional food market in the Asia-Pacific region, the World Health Organization Regional Offices for South-East Asia (SEARO) and the Western Pacific (WPRO) conducted the first Bi-regional advocacy meeting on risk mitigation in traditional food markets in the Asia-Pacific region from 1–2 September 2021. The objectives of the 2021 meeting were to discuss strategies to mitigate risks and enhance risk perceptions; to reduce the risk of unsafe foods and spill over of zoonotic pathogens and to prevent public health emergencies in the context of Covid-19 pandemic; and to support national authorities to advocate for the improvement of traditional food markets with local regulators/local governments. A WHO publication 'Five Keys for Safer Traditional Food Markets: Risk Mitigation in Traditional Food Markets in the Asia Pacific Region' is ready for printing.

#### **17. Developing capacity in Latin American on food safety risk assessment of residues of veterinary drugs in food**

17.1 FAO is implementing a project (funded by France) to develop capacity among officials in some countries in Latin America and the Caribbean on food safety risk assessment of residues of veterinary drugs in food. Although countries from this region are key producers and exporters of meat, there are few proposals from the region tabled at the Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods (CCRVDF), and many of these proposals do not provide the comprehensive data package necessary for a full risk assessment by the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA). Codex Standards and JECFA assessments would benefit the countries for better access to international trade as well as for decision making at national level.

17.2 During the Covid-19 pandemic, over the last 18 months, a series of training webinars were carried out, covering an extensive technical programme divided in various modules to help participants gain knowledge and understanding of how residues of veterinary drugs are assessed by JECFA and how these assessments

contribute to setting of MRLs (maximum residue levels) for Codex standards and understand the critical data required to be submitted for assessment by JECFA. To conclude the project a final workshop (in English) is currently being planned for 15-17 November 2022, in Santiago, Chile.

## 18. FAO Evidence platform for agrifood systems and nutrition

18.1 Following the endorsement of the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition (VGFSyN) by the Committee on World Food Security in February 2021, FAO launched an evidence platform<sup>8</sup> in October 2021, which provides in one place easy access to a comprehensive set of supportive evidence and operational tools for each of the 105 VGFSyN recommendations. This platform was developed by FAO in collaboration with UN Nutrition member agencies, to facilitate the implementation of these recommendations for action aiming at achieving sustainable agrifood systems, including ensuring food safety across food production systems, protecting consumers from food safety risks in food supplies, enabling healthy diets and improving nutrition.

## 19. FAO support to COMESA Trade Facilitation programme

19.1 Since 2019, FAO has provided support to the ongoing COMESA Trade Facilitation Programme (funded by the European Union) by providing technical assistance to its SPS component. More specifically FAO has engaged with champion countries of the COMESA regional Economic Community in the following areas:

- Support to risk-based food safety decision making (regulatory and non-regulatory measures), with a view to facilitate regional harmonization of food control measures. This is implemented through a regional trade flow analysis, identification of priority hazard/commodity pairs, regional training courses on chemical and microbiological risk assessment, as a basis for food safety regulation making, and preparation of policy note on regional harmonization. Champion countries for this are Kenya, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, although other countries (such as Eswatini, Malawi, Mauritius Rwanda Seychelles) also benefitted from the regional trainings.
- Support to the development of risk based imported food controls (with Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Madagascar, Sudan and Tunisia as champion countries), through the elaboration of national country situation analysis, identification of gaps, delivery of regional training courses on risk based imported food control to ensure regional harmonization of approaches, preparation of national action plans, follow up with specific country requests (such as preparation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for import inspection and Good Importing Practices (GIPs) tailored to each country specific situation, proposal of a draft regional document on information exchange among countries as a support to trade flows within COMESA member countries (based on CXG 89-2016 "Principles and guidelines for the exchange of information between importing and exporting countries to support the trade in food" and CXG 25-1997 "Guidelines for the Exchange of Information between Countries on Rejections of Imported Foods"). To ensure sustainability national action plans were also prepared and validated by countries, as a means to guide further action and streamline Government and external partners' interventions.
- Strengthen national Plant Protection Organizations and creation of a networking platform for sharing information on risks to plant health (under the technical guidance of the International Plant Protection Convention).

19.2 The project has been extended until May 2024.

## 20. FAO and WHO publications and tools published since CAC44

FAO. 2022. 10 facts everyone should know about food safety and volcanic ashfall. Rome. <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb8505en/>

FAO, 2022. Joint FAO-WHO Technical guidance for the development of the growing area aspects of Bivalve Mollusc Sanitation Programmes. Rome. <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/es/c/cb5072en/>

FAO/WHO. Food control system assessment tool: introductory booklet. Geneva. <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb4964en/>

FAO. 2022. Technical guidance for the implementation of e-notification systems for food control. Food Safety and Quality Series No. 12. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0850en>

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<sup>8</sup> [FAO Evidence platform for agrifood systems and nutrition](#)