



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD HYGIENE

Fifty-fifth Session

Nashville, Tennessee, United States of America
15–19 December 2025

REPORT FROM THE PHYSICAL WORKING GROUP ON NEW WORKPLAN

(Prepared by the United States of America as the chair of the physical working group)

1. A physical working group (PWG) was held on 15 December 2025 in Nashville, Tennessee, USA on the first day of CCFH55, chaired by the United States of America, to discuss proposals for new work and the CCFH Forward Workplan.
2. The Chair briefly reminded the PWG on the status of paused and upcoming work. Specifically, the work to revise *Guidelines on the Application of the General Principles of Food Hygiene to the control of Pathogenic Vibrio Species in Seafood* (CXG 73-2010) was paused at Step 5. The Committee agreed to revisit this text as soon as Annex II on Fish and Fishery Products of the *Guidelines for the Safe Use and Reuse of Water in Food Production and Processing* (CXG 100-2023) was completed. If work on Annex II is completed at CCFH55, work can resume on *Vibrio* and the Committee would need to appoint a Chair/Co-chair(s) for the work.
3. Second, the Chair informed the committee of work from the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL) to revise *Guidelines on the use of precautionary allergen labelling (PAL): Annex to the General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-Packaged Foods* (CXS 1-1985). CCFL48 agreed to forward the Guidelines on the use of precautionary allergen labelling to CAC47 for adoption at Step 5 and inform CCFH of: a) the progress on the Guidelines on precautionary allergen labelling; and b) the request made to FAO/WHO to provide guidance on qualitative risk assessment. The chair invited the CCFH PWG to note that based on the completion of work on the allergen provisions in CXS 1-1985, the committee agreed to a Consequential Amendment during the morning plenary session to remove the list of allergens (and related text) in the *Code of Practice on Food Allergen Management for Food Business Operators* (CXC 80-2020) and replace it with a cross reference to updated CXS 1- 1985 (see CRD05). Additionally, CCFL48 agreed that once work on PAL is completed by CCFL, CCFL will request CCFH to consider in the CXC 80-2020 including information on conducting risk assessment in relation to PAL. The chair reminded the PWG that CCFL is expected to complete its work when it meets again in May 2026, therefore members of CCFH should consider developing a new work proposal to revise the *Code of Practice on Food Allergen Management for Food Business Operators* (CXC 80- 2020) for consideration at CCFH56.
4. The chair reviewed discussions from the 48th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC48) concerning the importance of timely scientific advice from the joint FAO/WHO scientific advisory bodies to ensure timely development and adoption of science-based standards in Codex, as well as adequate resourcing of all scientific advice bodies. Additionally, CAC48 requested information on priorities and related costs from committees (including CCFH) to support efforts to secure adequate resources. Further, CAC48 encouraged Members to promote engagement in the scientific advisory bodies to ensure availability of adequate data and expertise. CCFH is invited to consider scientific advice more fully in its forward workplan.

Summary of Discussion on two work proposals submitted in response to CL 2024/64.

New Work Proposal on the Code of Hygienic Practice for Manufacturing of Cell-Based Foods - CX/FH 25/55/10 – Appendix II

5. A proposal for new work was submitted by Singapore, China, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom on the development of a Code of hygienic practice for manufacturing of cell-based foods. Singapore introduced the proposal with a brief presentation and addressed several questions found in CCFH55 conference room documents (CRD) by various members. Members engaged in a robust discussion, with split views on the proposed work.

6. **Support:** Some members emphasized the practical benefits of developing harmonized international standards for cell-based foods. They highlighted that Codex guidelines would enhance international confidence, facilitate trade, and provide helpful regulatory frameworks for countries already working with these technologies. One Observer noted the significant industry development with 155 companies across over 30 countries, suggesting substantial momentum that warrants international coordination.
7. **Opposition/Concerns:** Those not in favor of the new work proposal highlighted several key concerns about the proposal's readiness and prioritization. Some members argued that fundamental prerequisites were missing, including agreed-upon terminology, understanding of processing steps, adequate data for risk assessment, and sufficient information about production quantities and international trade volumes. They emphasized that WHO lacks the necessary data to conduct proper risk assessments, questioning whether the work should proceed without this foundation.
8. The PWG did not achieve consensus on this new work proposal and due to time constraints, the chair suggested this be further discussed at the plenary.

Proposal for Revision of the *Code of Practice for the Preparation and Handling of Quick-Frozen Foods* (CXC 8-1976)

9. A proposal for new work submitted by Chile on the revision of the *Code of Practice for the Preparation and Handling of Quick-Frozen Foods* (CXC 8-1976). Chile proposed revising CXC 8-1976 to allow poultry and pork meat, offal, and byproducts to be frozen, stored, transported, and sold at a temperature equal to or below -15°C , instead of the current -18°C standard, provided that effective cold chain control is ensured. Chile introduced the proposal with a brief presentation, addressing several questions which had been written in CRDs by various members. Although members broadly supported the concept to revise the code of practice on freezing temperatures without a risk to food safety, they also raised questions regarding scope.
10. **Support:** Those in favor of the proposal viewed the temperature adjustment as a practical improvement that would benefit industry, while maintaining food safety standards. They emphasized the importance of establishing international standards before significant divergence occurs between countries, particularly as these products become more prevalent in international trade. Several supporters advocated for a parallel process that could expand the scope to include other meat species and food products beyond the initial proposal. They recognized that while quality considerations exist, the primary focus should remain on food safety aspects, with industry naturally addressing quality concerns once temperature standards are established.
11. **Concerns/Conditional Support:** Members expressing concerns generally supported the concept but questioned the scope, timing, and scientific basis. They emphasized the need for additional scientific guidance from JEMRA, particularly regarding quality aspects and the expansion to other food products, such as fish and fishery products. Some questioned whether CCFH was the appropriate committee to address quality issues versus food safety, suggesting that CCFH consult the Commission for guidance on the scope specifically regarding quality. There were calls for more specific scientific justification, including shelf-life studies and molecular-level freezing point analysis, before proceeding with temperature changes.
12. The chair summarized three options the committee may consider for moving this proposed new work forward. These three options could be done in parallel.
 - Option A: This could be an area to request scientific advice for safety from JEMRA.
 - Option B: Questions for scientific advice around quality issues could still be referred to FAO.
 - Option C: Refer this back to Chile and to work with possible interested Members to revise the scope and repropose at CCFH56.
13. Ultimately, the PWG recommended the committee request scientific advice. However, the PWG did not define a specific scope. Instead, the PWG encouraged interested parties to meet with JEMRA on Tuesday to discuss and develop a proposed scope for temperatures to be considered (perhaps including freezing and refrigeration). This request for scientific advice and its proposed scope will be discussed in plenary at CCFH55 under agenda item 10.

Ranking New Work Proposals and Forward Workplan

14. The PWG considered applying the current ranking system for the CCFH55 forward workplan in accordance with the “Process by which CCFH will undertake its work”, however, members found that the ranking criteria were challenging to apply on the two work proposals related to emerging issues where scientific data and trade opportunities are still being developed. Due to these challenges, the chair guided the PWG through the discussions and recommendations for each new work proposal above without providing specific ratings on the criteria or an overall score.

Other topics of Interest

15. The PWG briefly discussed additional requests for scientific advice. Requesting a risk assessment on *Clostridium botulinum* in powdered infant formula from JEMRA in part to respond to the on-going outbreak in the United States was suggested. Members spoke in support of requesting scientific advice, but encouraged expanding the scope beyond *Clostridia* to include nontyphoidal *Salmonella spp.* and *Cronobacter spp.* in powdered infant formula.
16. The JEMRA secretariat requested the committee to prioritize the requests for scientific advice from JEMRA to focus the resources of FAO and WHO. This prioritization may be further discussed at plenary.
17. Due to time limitations the PWG did not discuss the ongoing work regarding alignment of texts with the revised *General Principles of Food Hygiene* (GPFH) (CXC 1-1969).
18. The PWG also did not review its forward workplan, nor rank the projects for which there is information for an update.

Summary of PWG Recommendations for the Plenary

19. The PWG provided several recommendations for discussion in plenary.
20. **Items which may lead to new work:**
- If work on Annex II is completed at CCFH55, work can resume on *Vibrio* and the Committee would need a Chair/Co-chair(s) for the work.
 - With CCFL expected to complete its work on precautionary allergen labeling at their next meeting, members should consider developing a new work proposal to revise the *Code of Practice on Food Allergen Management for Food Business Operators* (CXC 80- 2020) for consideration at CCFH56.
21. **Items which may result in new work, requests for scientific advice, or be delayed:**
- The PWG did not achieve consensus on the new work proposal related to developing a code of hygienic practice for cell-based foods. The committee may consider:
 - i. approving the new work;
 - ii. requesting scientific advice on hygiene/safety aspects of cell based foods to inform CCFH work if needed; or
 - iii. waiting to take action allowing time for further development of this emerging product, process and trade opportunity.
22. **Potential requests for scientific advice:**
- The PWG recommended requesting scientific advice on the proposal to change freezing temperatures in certain products. However, the plenary will need to discuss specific products and temperature conditions which should be included in the scope of the request.
 - The plenary will need further discussion on additional requests for scientific advice from JEMRA, including their prioritization requests.