



**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME FAO/WHO  
COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR EUROPE**

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**KEYNOTE ADDRESS: ONE HEALTH APPROACH AND FOOD SAFETY – CHALLENGES  
AND POTENTIAL**

(Prepared by FAO and WHO)

1. One Health is a concept that recognizes the inextricable linkages between the health of humans, animals, and the environment. The One Health approach aims to prevent and mitigate health risks, promote well-being, and ensure sustainable and resilient food systems with a holistic perspective.
2. Food and the complex systems involved in their production, distribution, consumption to disposal sit at the nexus of the human–animal–plant–environment interface. Food can be a vehicle for hazards, and they can enter the food chain at any point. Foodborne and waterborne diseases are caused when unsafe levels of harmful microorganisms, including zoonotic and non-zoonotic pathogens, or chemical contaminants are present in food or water.
3. Food safety regulators and competent authorities set food standards and policies to provide a preventive, farm to fork approach to minimize food chain risks based on key principles. The food safety risk analysis paradigm provides national food safety authorities with a systematic approach for making evidence-based food safety decisions. For the effective implementation of these, the authorities recognize and endeavour to integrate expertise and resources from across the spectrum of multiple domains and sectors.
4. The One Health approach offers potential to consolidate these efforts further. It encourages collaboration across government authorities and various disciplines, including food safety, veterinary, public health, and environmental science in finding the root causes and drivers of current and emerging health issues. It can help to understand multiple pathways of foodborne pathogen transmissions and support early detection efforts by identifying and addressing risks at each stage of the food chain. Real-world examples of food safety risks which can be addressed through the One Health approach include mitigating foodborne brucellosis, reducing risks from pathogens such as *E. coli*, *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter* in food-producing animals, minimising foodborne antimicrobial resistance, avoiding excessive chemical residues in food and environment from improper use of pesticides and agricultural practices.
5. Key aspects of the One Health approach to manage food safety risks include establishing or enhancing coordination mechanisms, addressing root causes of foodborne diseases, sharing cross-sectoral data, improving surveillance and food control systems, and promoting risk-based management decisions. The need for training, legal frameworks, institutional capacity, and coordinated communication is emphasized to enhance cross-sector collaboration. Countries in the region are encouraged to integrate risk-based approaches and cross-sectoral data for better food safety risk management. This approach promotes better data sharing, communication, and collaboration, ultimately leading to increased efficiency, especially in resource-constrained environments. The One Health approach is in line with the food safety risk analysis framework, and further strengthens the multisectoral collaboration efforts at country, regional and international levels.
6. While the importance of the One Health approach has gained global recognition, challenges remain in its application particularly at country level. Limited understanding by high-level policy makers, ineffective collaboration mechanisms between authorities, lack of legal basis or clear action plans, access to funding for initiatives, lack of integrated surveillance, limited data generation and cross-sharing between sectors could be listed amongst the main issues. FAO and WHO work closely with the Member countries to overcome these challenges, particularly with the development of national action plans, providing technical advice and raising awareness.
7. Responding to international requests to prevent future pandemics and to promote health sustainably through the One Health approach, the global Quadripartite (FAO, UNEP, WHO and WOA) developed the One Health Joint Plan of Action (2022–2026) (OH JPA) <sup>i</sup>. This five-year plan provides a framework for action and proposes a set of activities that the four organizations can offer together to advance and sustainably scale

up One Health. The OH JPA seeks to strengthen collaboration, communication, capacity building and coordination equally across all sectors responsible for addressing health concerns at the human–animal–plant–environment interface. It proposes a number of activities and deliverables in six areas: 1) One Health capacities for health systems, 2) emerging and re-emerging zoonotic epidemics, 3) endemic zoonotic, neglected tropical and vector-borne diseases, 4) food safety risks, 5) antimicrobial resistance and 6) the environment. One Health is considered to be the main approach for addressing the complex health challenges facing our society, such as ecosystem degradation, food system failures, infectious diseases and antimicrobial resistance. Action track 4 is one of the 6 action tracks and specifically addresses: “Strengthening the assessment, management and communication of food safety risks”. In line with this action track, there are a number of actions proposed to advance the adoption of the One Health approach to address food safety issues.

8. Using the keynote address as a basis for further discussion, Codex Members in the European region are encouraged to share information and discuss the potential and challenges of operationalizing the One Health approach to address food safety risks. Suggestions on future regional activities or support from FAO and WHO in this area are welcomed.

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<sup>i</sup> [One health joint plan of action \(2022–2026\): working together for the health of humans, animals, plants and the environment \(who.int\)](#)