

# CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



World Health  
Organization

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Agenda Item 3

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## JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME CODEX COMMITTEE ON FISH AND FISHERY PRODUCTS THIRTY-FIFTH SESSION

VIRTUAL

20 SEPTEMBER – 25 OCTOBER 2021

Comments of the Philippines

### Agenda Item 3: Information on activities of FAO and WHO relevant to the work of CCFPP

#### ***Para. 1-2. FAO/WHO Report of the Expert Meeting on the Ciguatera Poisoning***

The ***Philippines supports*** the call of FAO and WHO on conducting further research on Ciguatera Poisoning (CP) to provide science-based risk management options. Being an archipelagic country and at risk to CP, the country imposed a regulatory limit on CP based on the limited scientific studies. However, it is recommended to include research studies on the use of a more sensitive and quantitative detection method to cope up with the changes in the ecological makeup. This will be a strong basis for regulatory standards to mitigate, manage, and address this public health concern.

#### ***Para. 3-8 FAO's Work on bivalve mollusc sanitation***

The ***Philippines supports*** the development of international guidance in implementing bivalve mollusc sanitation programs. This will serve as uniform guidance to be followed globally that can further enhance and standardize existing shellfish sanitation programs.

#### ***Para. 9-10 FAO's work on early warning systems for harmful algal blooms***

The ***Philippines supports*** the work of FAO on early warning systems for harmful algal blooms (HAB). The marine water dynamics are constantly changing. On-site sample collection as a basis for regulations may not always be feasible and expensive if conducted monthly. These early warning systems will greatly aid HAB management strategies and food safety measures once implemented.

#### ***Para. 11. Joint FAO/WHO's work on seaweed safety***

The ***Philippines supports*** the initiative of the FAO/WHO on developing a guidance document that identifies food safety hazards that are linked to the consumption of seaweeds and aquatic plants. Seaweeds is one of the major fisheries commodities and top major export products of the Philippines.

This guidance document will assist in addressing the issues and concerns that may be experienced by the country's seaweed industry. Furthermore, this will help establish guidelines on the assessment of the quality and safety of seaweeds and seaweed-based products developed.

#### ***Para. 12. FAO's work on microplastics and food safety***

The ***Philippines supports*** the desire of COFI-FT to have an exposure assessment that includes other relevant food commodities. At present, there are limited published studies on risk assessment regarding microplastic as food contaminants. Having information on the occurrence of microplastics in all commodities, microplastics contamination along food value chains, plastic migration from food contact materials and packaging, and toxicity of the most common plastic monomers, polymers, and additives, could help mitigate the potential threat to human food safety and security.

#### ***Para. 13. FAO's work on marine biotoxins in water from desalinization plants***

The Philippines has no comment.

#### ***Para. 14. FAO's publication on Food Safety and Climate Change***

The ***Philippines supports*** FAO's publication on the effects of climate change on food safety, especially by highlighting its environmental impacts in our ecosystems. We support the movement of creating public

awareness on the food safety issues associated with various climate change-related drivers. However, we also suggest the inclusion of specific effects of food safety hazards to human health such as foodborne diseases and risks of toxic contamination. Climate-sensitive risk factors and illnesses will be among the largest contributors to the global burden of food-related diseases and mortality including under-nutrition, communicable and non-communicable diseases. Aside from food safety, food security is of utmost concern since a diminished supply of raw materials for food processing will cause an imbalance in the food system. We are convinced that knowledge on specific public health risks will help raise awareness on a consumer level and will also create ways to combat future challenges associated with climate change.

**Para. 15. FAO's Risk profile - Group B Streptococcus (GBS) - Streptococcus agalactiae sequence type (ST) 283 in freshwater fish"**

The **Philippines supports** the initiative of FAO on Risk profiling of Group B Streptococcus (GBS) - *Streptococcus agalactiae* sequence type (ST) 283 in freshwater fish". Being one of the biggest producers of farmed and captured freshwater fishes in the Southeast Asian region, the country is prone to the Group B *Streptococcus* (GBS) disease since it is linked with the consumption of raw freshwater fish. The country supports the initiative of FAO and WHO to produce data on patterns of fish consumption and consumer demographics since it is relevant for the country. Thus, the call for action of FAO is suitable for the Philippines to adopt to carry out studies on GBS S283, specifically microbiological risk assessment, that is significant for risk management to ensure public health safety.

**Para. 16. Joint FAO/WHO work on advances in science and risk assessment tools for *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* and *V. vulnificus* associated with seafood**

The **Philippines supports** the initiative of FAO and WHO in conducting a microbiological risk assessment of *Vibrio* spp. to support management and control. These microorganisms have been observed to contaminate seafoods in tropical regions. In fact, the country has initiated studies on *Vibrio* spp. in bivalves and growing areas including Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR). Microbiological risk assessments will also be carried out in the future. Hence, the call for action of FAO and WHO is currently being done and adopted by the country. These studies will contribute to the mitigation, management, and control, thus ensuring food safety to public health.

**Para. 17. Joint FAO/WHO work on safety and quality of water used in food production and processing**

The **Philippines supports** the provision of risk-based guidance stated by FAO/WHO regarding the safe use and reuse of processing water. We also support amending the paragraph referring to water requirements in CXC 52-2003 (Code of Practice for fish and fishery products) so as not to duplicate the information from General Principles of Food Hygiene. The fishery business operators may include in their HACCP plans/programmes the risk assessment or risk reduction measures on the reuse of water in the fish processing establishments referring to the applicable hygienic practice.

**Para. 18. New food sources and production systems**

The **Philippines supports** the concern of FAO/WHO on the spurring of food innovations, particularly on the "new food sources and production systems" (NFSPS). The objective of these innovations must not just dwell on how to feed the growing global population but must also consider the risks associated, as well as all food safety and quality concerns to protect public health.

**Para. 19. Joint FAO/WHO work on risks and benefits of fish consumption**

The **Philippines supports** the FAO and WHO work on risks and benefits of fish consumption in the light of new and recent evidence. However, the Philippines recommends using updated references as almost all of the references used are already over a decade.

**Para. 20-21. WHO's work on dioxin and dioxin-like compounds**

The **Philippines supports** the initiative of the WHO to harmonize the toxic equivalency factors (TEFs) for dioxin and dioxin-like compounds. However, in the Philippines, limited laboratories can test and analyze the toxic compound. Thus, the country can contribute data regarding TEFs through the relative potencies (REPs) database by 2025.