



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

**Twenty-second Session**

**Virtual**

**12, 13, 14, 17, 18 and 21 October 2022**

**FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY SITUATION IN THE REGION: TOWARDS A BETTER NORMAL:  
LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PANDEMIC AND VIEWS FROM COUNTRIES**

(Prepared by the FAO and WHO)

**Part A: Survey results<sup>1</sup>**

**Introduction**

An online survey entitled “CCASIA22: towards a better normal – FAO/WHO preparatory survey” was administered from 24 July 2022 to 10 September 2022. Out of 24 CCASIA Members, 13 countries provided their responses. The response rate was thus 60%. There were a total of ten questions and all 13 respondents completed all the questions except for the last open question for suggestions to CCASIA.

**Q1. In your country, do you see any improvements or opportunities in food safety, as a direct or indirect impact of the Covid-19 pandemic?**

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <span style="color: blue;">●</span> Yes / maybe          | 12 |
| <span style="color: orange;">●</span> No / I am not sure | 1  |



**Q2. What improvement or opportunity in food safety have you observed?**

Multiple response options: Better personal hygiene, Better food business sanitation, Improved awareness of food safety, and Other.

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <span style="color: blue;">●</span> Better personal hygiene            | 11 |
| <span style="color: orange;">●</span> Better food business sanitation  | 10 |
| <span style="color: green;">●</span> Improved awareness of food saf... | 10 |
| <span style="color: red;">●</span> Other                               | 1  |

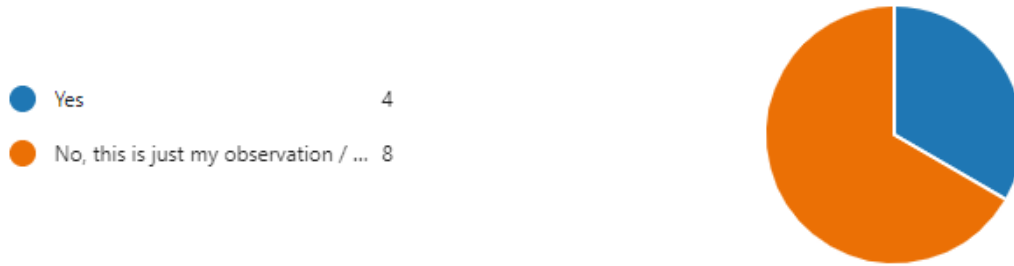


<sup>1</sup> The purpose of the survey was to prepare for the agenda item 3 of CCASIA22, and for FAO/WHO regional officers to have a rough understanding of the perceptions of the Codex Contact Points on the current food safety situations. Therefore, the results do not hold any statistical/scientific significances, but provide some indicative elements that can start the discussions at CCASIA. While it was most appreciated and encouraged for CCPs to have a short discussion with relevant colleagues to provide responses to the questions, it has been also acceptable to have CCP’s personal observations and perceptions. The responses do not represent responding country’s positions and each individual is not be quoted.

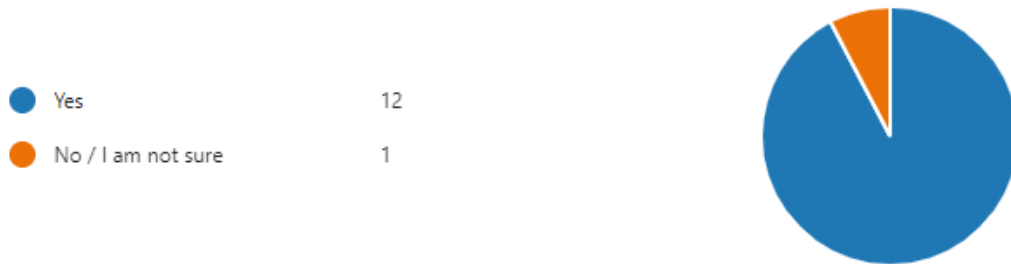
The “Other” stated “Establishment of regulations regarding cold-chained food.

**Q3. Do you have any data to support your observation at Q2?**

Response options: Yes and No, this is just my observation / perception.



**Q4. Have you faced any particular food safety challenges due to COVID-19 as a regulator / government entity?**



**Q5. What challenge(s) did you face as a regulator / government entity?**

Multiple response options: Amount of questions received from the public inquiring if COVID\_19 is foodborne, Many uncertainties to prepare solid communication about food safety and COVID-19, Regular inspections were impossible/limited due to movement restrictions, and Other.

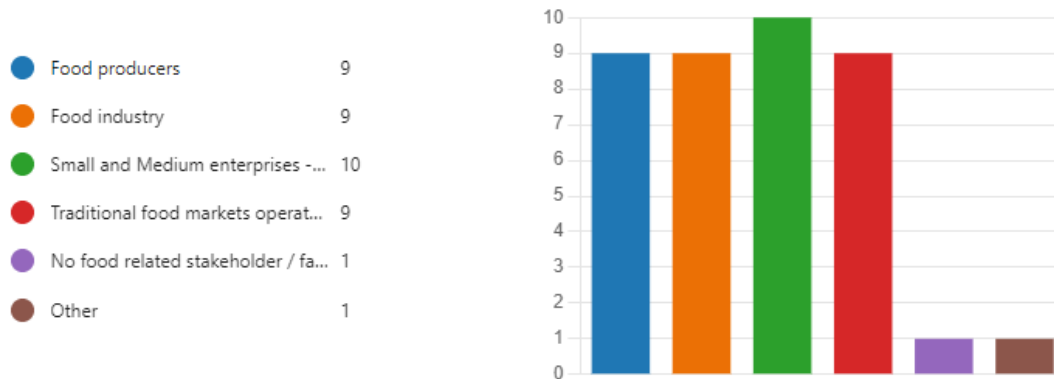


Two “Other”s stated:

- Lack of safety regulatory related to increase of delivery food an prepared meal, and etc.
- Covid 19 can affected food and transmit to human?

**Q6. In your opinion, what type of stakeholders / facilities have faced food safety challenges due to COVID-19 in your country?**

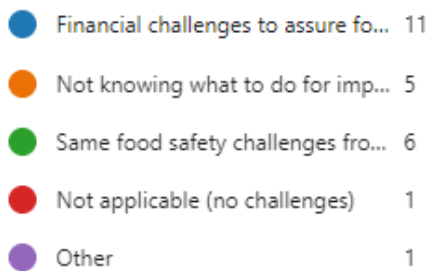
Multiple response options: Food producers, Food industry, Small and Medium enterprises - including food retailers, Traditional food markets operators and vendors; No food related stakeholder / facilities in my country has faced food safety challenges, and Other.



One Member stated that no food related stakeholders / facilities has faced the challenge; and the “other” stated: consumers.

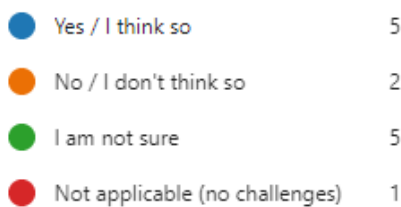
**Q7. What challenges have those stakeholders / facilities identified in Q6 faced in your observation?**

Multiple response options: Financial challenges to assure food safety, Not knowing what to do for improved food safety, Same food safety challenges from the pre-pandemic era, Not applicable (no challenges), and Other.



The “Other” stated: delays in approval e.g renewal or issuance of food safety assurance programme certification.

**Q8. Are those stakeholders / facilities identified in Q6 still facing such challenges as of July 2022?**



**Q9. Do you think CCASIA should consider developing regional texts (guidelines, standards, etc) for:**

Multiple response options: Food safety and hygiene in fresh markets, Food safety and hygiene in online food retail including app-based delivery services, Both of the above, Neither of them, and Other.

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| ● Food safety and hygiene in fres... | 2 |
| ● Food safety and hygiene in onl...  | 2 |
| ● Both of the above                  | 7 |
| ● Neither of them                    | 2 |
| ● Other                              | 0 |

**Q10. Do you have any suggestions / comments for CCASIA towards “better normal”?**

Two responses:

- CCASIA may discuss this issues/ challenges and the ways and policies implemented by the countries to manage the COVID pandemic .
- Had better if the CCASIA conduct some training for food safety officers and CCPs regarding Food safety and hygiene in online food retail including app-based delivery services

**Part B: Insights on the survey results and relevant activities in the region,  
FAO/WHO and Codex committees**

1. The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly impacted all government activities, and the impacts have been mostly negative. Travel restriction, movement control, lock-downs and government decisions to withhold non COVID-related programme and activities including relocating budget for the COVID response were major setback for normal function of Codex Contact Point and food inspection as well as relevant food safety management activities. Food safety staffs in many countries were reassigned to various different tasks to be covered, and many food laboratories were repurposed to support COVID diagnostic service.

2. At the same time there was a few silver linings of this pandemic, which could be considered as a rare but concrete opportunity for promotion of food hygiene and innovation of cashless and contactless food delivery across the world. Using face masks and frequent and effective hand washing were good practices which were made almost mandatory in many countries, and it may have contributed in reducing the cases of foodborne diseases.

3. It is important to continue encouraging the public to follow such new normal for better food safety. There was also a tendency to prepare food at home and make available online generating self-employment but it created a certain level of concerns as these food handlers may not be properly trained and may not be familiar with the everyday hygienic protocols to prepare safe and quality food for catering. Some of the established food industries have come up with an innovative approach to provide cashless, contactless food delivery systems and many have shared how food is prepared at kitchen and how COVID-appropriate protocol has been followed by food handlers and vendors to gain consumer confidence in this infodemic era. Such good practices have gained momentum in all countries and ensuring food quality and safety of online shopping has been raised by CCASIA Members in the past. Food industries have invested further to continue practicing the COVID-appropriate protocol for food safety in general. Regular temperature reading, mandatory use of face mask and frequent hand washing were introduced as a part of this evolving food safety culture.

4. During the pandemic, various virtual meetings were held in the Region in order to advance the implementation of both regional food safety frameworks. Such meetings discussed good practices, lessons learned from their experiences, success factors and challenges for strengthening national food control systems, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 situations. Several Members reported that it has been necessary to adapt different strategies and updated food safety programmes due to the conditions generated by the pandemic and by the public health social measures applied, especially in the intensification of the use of information technologies.

5. The infodemic was a greatest challenge not only for COVID-19 pandemic response but also for non-COVID businesses. The infodemic was such powerful and dangerous in generating unnecessary fear, rumour and stigma which caused negative socioeconomic impact in terms of consumer confidence for the entire agrifood systems. Many Members in the CCASIA region, together with the Pacific countries, participated the [webinar to observe the World Food Safety Day in 2020](#) to discuss various food safety issues at that time and four partner organizations namely FAO, WHO, World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH, formally known as OIE) and World Food Programme (WFP) collaborated to create a total of six different infographics to combine both COVID messages and fundamental food safety messages for the region ([Food is not known to transmit COVID-19. Enjoy your food to maintain good physical and mental health](#) | [Ignore fake news. There is no scientific evidence that any food prevents or cures COVID-19](#) | [Clean hands, utensils and surfaces when preparing meals](#) | [Cook food thoroughly. Separate raw and cooked foods](#) | [Food is not known to transmit COVID-19 and local and imported food is safe to eat](#) | [Wash your hands frequently! This is good for food safety and good for your health](#))

6. The COVID-19 pandemic, along with other factors, has triggered renewed interest in the risks inherent in various food markets. Traditional / fresh food markets are part of the social fabric of communities and are a main source of affordable fresh foods for many low-income groups and an important source of livelihoods for millions of urban and rural inhabitants worldwide. No matter how the markets are situated, good hygiene and sanitations are essential to protect consumer health as well as to assure safety of people working in the market situations.

7. The World Health Assembly 75 approved the resolution WHA75(23) that requests the update the interim guidance on reducing public health risks associated with the sale of live wild animals of mammalian species in traditional food markets to answer questions on the scope of the guidance, including the species that the guidance covers (mammalian species or mammalian species plus other species) and farmed or wild live animals. WHO has made an open [Call for experts – WHO Guideline Development Group – Traditional Food Markets](#) that will contribute to the update of the relevant interim guidance.

8. In 2021, FAO, WHO, WOA, WFP and UNEP collaboratively organized a webinar on the World Food Safety Day and distribute public awareness materials related to COVID-19 and food safety which was appreciated by participants and the general public. The WOA/UNEP/WHO interim guidance on public health risks and traditional food markets with six practical recommendations are important to improve overall hygiene and sanitation situation of traditional food markets through regulatory, technical and administrative interventions even in new normal situation. WHO in the region organized advocacy meetings on public health risk mitigation in the market situations and developed a 'Five keys to safer traditional food market' to improve hygiene and sanitation, to mitigate risk of emerging zoonoses and to prevent COVID-19 transmissions. FAO is working towards developing a practical handbook for hazard identification in the food market situations to provide technical assistance for those who may not necessarily be knowledgeable about every single technical food safety issues, for example, market business managers, market design companies and personnels.

9. Regular and continuous technical discussions are useful for countries advance the food security agenda and implement the Regional frameworks for action on food safety in the CCASIA region. The relevant meetings held by WHO in 2021 and 2022 highlighted gaps related to risk mitigation measures to address public health issues and indicated that changes are necessary in these settings to improve food safety practices, and reduce disease transmission (foodborne, zoonotic and respiratory diseases) in the fresh food market settings.

10. There are ongoing global discussions on the development and dissemination of good practices in improving hygiene and sanitation in food market situations with community engagement in resource-poor through the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH). Outcomes of this initiative are expected to have positive impacts for the CCASIA Members, and also CCASIA Members' experience sharing will significantly contribute to the relevant technical discussions.

11. There has been both positive and negative impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on food safety works as well as relevant Codex activities, and it is time to reflect challenges and lessons learned we had during the pandemic to turn into the positive outcomes. By going through a new normal and now going towards a better normal, it is a good opportunity for the CCASIA Members to share the experience and discuss a way forward, from sharing good practices to proposing concrete joint activities in the region.

### Part C: Key questions

1. There have been few opportunities arising during the pandemic to improve food safety. Would it be useful to capture concrete case studies of such for future reference in order prepare for the possible "next pandemic"?

2. Many food safety efforts towards better normal illustrated in the document can be common among any country in the world. Which topics/areas could be potentially unique to the CCASIA Members?

- 
3. Technical guidelines can be further developed to any specific topic. It can be done at different levels: national/sub-national level, global or regional levels, jointly done by trade-partner countries, by international organizations (i.e., FAO and WHO) and so forth.
- a. Considering the strategic effectiveness as well as the practicality of such technical guidelines' implementation, who should be guiding their development?
  - b. At this point in time, do you envisage/would you prioritize the need of any specific guidelines?