

REGIONAL CODE OF PRACTICE FOR STREET-VENDED FOODS (NEAR EAST)

CXC 71-R-2013

INTRODUCTION

Street-vended ready-to-eat foods constitute an important link of the food supply chain as they have spread at a rather fast rate in many countries due to socioeconomic changes. In fact, people opt for such foods for their special taste and affordability. These foods are also necessary to certain societies, namely in developing countries as they offer ready-to-eat meals that even the poorest can afford. Despite this important aspect, these foods represent on the other hand a possible health threat.

Due to the potential chemical and bacterial contamination out on the streets, the present guidelines recommend raising the awareness of the people working in the ready-to-eat foods sector and improving the environmental conditions in which those foods are vended. They also recommend providing the necessary services to help the vendors guarantee the safety of such foods.

In addition to tackling the role of authorities and entities regulating street food vending, the present examines the standards of this important sector of the food system, and sheds the light on the principles of hygiene that should be respected in every step of the process.

SECTION 1 – OBJECTIVES

The present directives tackle the conditions that should be taken into consideration when setting street food standards. They include legal provisions, accurate implementation and practice.

They also aim at helping the relevant authorities in improving the level of these foods' preparation and vending processes in way that guarantees safe, healthy and nutritional foods to the consumers, in accessible locations.

SECTION 2 – SCOPE, USAGE AND DEFINITIONS

2.1 Scope

The present guidelines define the general hygienic requirements and recommended practices concerning the preparation and vending of street foods.

2.2 Usage

Each Section of the present document indicates the goals to be achieved and the justifications of such goals, as far as food hygiene is concerned.

2.3 Definitions

For the purposes of the present guidelines, the terms used herein shall have the following definitions:

2.3.1 Appliances

The whole or any part of any utensil, machinery, instrument, apparatus or article used or intended for use, in or for making, preparing, keeping, selling or supplying of food.

2.3.2 Clean water

Water that does not compromise food safety in the circumstance of its use.

2.3.3 Crockery

All tools used for food serving and consumption (whether non-disposable or disposable), and they include cups (glasses), plates, trays, mugs, spoons, forks and ladles.

2.3.4 Disposable articles

Any appliance, container, implement, utensil or wrapper that is intended for use only once in the preparation, storage, display, serving or sale of food.

2.3.5 Impermeable

Preventing the passage/absorption of water and/or fluids.

2.3.6 Microorganisms

Any microscopic living organism that can cause disease or food spoilage.

2.3.7 Street food vendor

Individual selling street foods in street food stalls or centres.

2.3.8 Perishable food

Any food that needs to be kept refrigerated or frozen to minimize or prevent growth of food poisoning organisms (and/or food spoilage) (e.g. food that consists wholly or in part of milk, milk products, eggs, meat, poultry, fish or shellfish).

2.3.9 Potable/Drinking water

Treated water, which shall comply with WHO Guidelines for Drinking Water Quality.

2.3.10 Ready-to-eat foods

Any food (including beverages) which is normally consumed in its raw state or any food handled, processed, mixed, cooked, or otherwise prepared into a form in which it is normally consumed without further processing.

2.3.11 Relevant authority

Any ministry having competent responsibility or any local officially recognized authority.

2.3.12 Sealed containers

Food grade containers such as:

- (a) hermetically sealed containers;
- (b) sealed jars, with anchor and crown type closures;
- (c) milk bottles sealed with aluminium caps;
- (d) glass jars and bottles with screw caps; and
- (e) cans and similar containers with seals.

2.3.13 Street Food Centre

Any public place or establishment designated by the relevant authority for the preparation, display and sale of street foods by multiple vendors.

2.3.14 Street Foods

Wide range of ready-to-eat foods sold and sometimes prepared in public places, notably streets.

2.3.15 Street Food Stall

A place where street food is prepared, displayed, served or sold to the public. It includes carts, tables, benches, baskets, chairs, vehicles with or without wheels and any other structure approved by the relevant authority where on it or in it, any street foods are displayed for sale.

2.3.16 Waste Water

Waste water means sullage water arising as a result of the activity of vendors.

2.3.17 Water containers

Any form of food grade container which is used solely for the purpose of storing and serving water and has not been used previously for any other purposes which could cause contamination of the water stored in it.

SECTION 3 – GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

3.1 Rules and regulations

3.1.1 Appropriate rules and regulations should be drafted in order to be easily endorsed with the possibility of controlling the street foods industry as an integral part of the food preparation process. Such legislations can be either elaborated separately or for incorporation into existing food regulations.

3.1.2 The general hygienic requirements and practices to be followed by the vendors should be translated by the relevant authorities into Codes of practice which are recognized as cost effective tools for the control of street foods, by fully taking into account local conditions including specific risk factors that are relevant to each operation.

3.2 Licensing/ Registration of vendors

No vendor shall conduct his/her business of preparation, packing, storage, display and sale of any street foods unless he/she is licensed/ registered under the relevant food regulations.

3.3 Conditions for licensing

3.3.1 No relevant authority shall issue or renew the license of any vendor who does not commit himself to comply with all the requirements of the Code of Practice established by the officially recognized authorities within a determined period of time.

3.3.2 It is essential that basic training in food hygiene is carried out by the relevant authorities prior to issuing or renewing the license/ registration of street food vendors.

3.4 Display of notices

3.4.1 Every licensed vendor shall at all times display visibly his/her vendor's License/ Registration and any other notices that are required by the relevant authorities to be displayed.

3.5 Pest and animal control

- 3.5.1 Every vendor shall at all times take appropriate measures to keep his/her stall free from animals (e.g. cats and dogs) and pests (e.g. rodents or insects) to prevent contamination of the food.
- 3.5.2 Every vendor shall, on becoming aware of the presence of any such pest or harbourage, immediately take all practicable measures to get rid of the pest or harbourage and to prevent re-infestation.
- 3.5.3 Any food found to have become contaminated by pests shall be appropriately disposed of in a hygienic manner.
- 3.5.4 The direct or indirect contamination of food with pest control materials such as poisons must be prevented.

SECTION 4 – VENDORS

4.1 Health condition of the vendors

- 4.1.1 No vendor, assistant or food handler shall be allowed to perform his/her job if showing any of the following symptoms: jaundice, diarrhoea, vomiting, fever, sore throat with fever, discharge from ear, eye and nose, visibly infected skin lesions (boils, cuts, etc.) In such cases, he/she shall cease from handling food in any capacity and seek medical treatment.
- 4.1.2 Any vendor, helper or food handler who has been identified as or is known to be or has previously been a carrier of food borne disease organisms, shall not be involved in any food handling activity until certified by a Medical Officer of Health or any other medical practitioner as a non-carrier.
- 4.1.3 Any vendor, helper or food handler shall be required to be immunized as required by the relevant authority.

4.2 Personal hygiene and behaviour

Every vendor, helper or food handler, during the conduct of his business, shall observe the following:

- 4.2.1 Wear an identification tag if issued and required by the relevant authority.
- 4.2.2 Wear clean and proper clothing.
- 4.2.3 Wash hands thoroughly with soap and running clean water before and after handling food, after visiting the toilet, after handling unsanitary articles, touching animals, touching raw food, after handling toxic and dangerous materials as and when necessary. If running clean water is not available, an acceptable alternative hand washing method should be agreed to by the relevant authority.
- 4.2.4 Finger nails should be kept short and clean at all times, and avoid wearing jewellery or ornaments during food preparation.
- 4.2.5 Hair should be kept clean and tidy and should be covered during operation.
- 4.2.6 Non-infected cuts shall be completely protected by a waterproof dressing which is firmly secured and routinely changed.
- 4.2.7 Shall not smoke or chew chewing-gum while preparing or serving food.
- 4.2.8 Refrain from any unhygienic practices such as spitting and cleaning nose, ears or any other body orifice or touching any body part while handling food.
- 4.2.9 Shall not sneeze or cough over or onto the food.
- 4.2.10 No vendor is allowed to use the stall as a sleeping or dwelling place, or for any other personal activity.

4.3 Training of vendors

- 4.3.1 The vendor shall ensure that he/she and all food handlers and helpers have completed basic food hygiene training by the competent authority or other institution recognised or approved by the competent authority.
- 4.4 Vendors associations

The formation of street food vendor associations or cooperatives should be encouraged to provide a liaison point with the relevant authorities in view of facilitating the implementation of control measures.

SECTION 5 – DESIGN AND STRUCTURE

5.1 Location

- 5.1.1 The location of street food stall(s) should be suitable for the purpose of avoiding contamination of the food prepared and served or sold at or from the stall. Stalls shall be located in areas designated by the relevant authorities.
- 5.1.2 The area where the stall is located and immediate surroundings should be easily cleaned and capable of withstanding repeated washing and scrubbing.
- 5.1.3 The space in and around the street food stall shall be free of unnecessary stored goods or articles and discarded articles in order to permit easy access for cleaning.
- 5.1.4 The stall should have a convenient access to an inlet of a drainage system or any suitable means of disposing waste water in a sanitary manner.

5.2 Structures

- 5.2.1 Street food stall shall be of a type approved by the competent authority and shall be made of impervious materials that can be cleaned and disinfected and maintained in a good state of repair.

5.2.2 Food preparation areas and food contact surfaces should be made of a smooth and impermeable food grade material.

5.2.3 All cooking ranges, washing equipment, working tables, shelves and cupboards on or in which food is placed should be at least 45 cm above the ground.

5.2.4 There should be adequate provision of artificial light of sufficient intensity to ensure a reasonable standard of illumination for every part of the stall.

5.3 Sanitation

5.3.1 Water supply

Vendors should ensure sufficient supply of potable water at all times. Where necessary, such as in the case of mobile vendors or where potable water supply is not yet available, potable water should be stored in clean water containers.

5.3.2 Waste water disposal

Vendors' stalls should have an efficient waste water disposal system which should be maintained in a good state of repair and working order. The system should be large enough to carry peak loads and be provided with traps to ensure only liquid waste is discharged into the drain/sewer.

5.3.3 Solid waste disposal

Solid waste material should be handled in such a manner as to avoid contamination of food and/or potable water. Waste should be removed from the working area of the stall as often as necessary and at least daily. All solid waste should be properly disposed into suitable containers which are secured with tight fitting lids or placed in rubbish bins or central rubbish bins.

Waste receptacles, equipment which has come into contact with the waste and waste storage areas should be cleaned and disinfected when required by the relevant authority. Only appropriate and suitable sanitizing agents should be used.

In areas without garbage collection service, solid waste is to be disposed of in a sanitary manner, as recommended or approved by the competent authority.

5.3.4 Cleaning

All food contact surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected and floors and surrounding areas should be thoroughly cleaned at least daily.

Immediately after disposal of the waste, receptacles used for storage and any equipment which has come into contact with the waste should be cleaned using one of the methods described in paragraph (6.5). The waste storage area should also be cleaned daily.

5.3.5 Toilets

Every vendor, helper or food handler should have easy access to sanitary facilities which are kept at all times in a clean and operational condition.

SECTION 6 – APPLIANCES

6.1 The appliances should be kept clean. The equipment, including containers for storing drinking water, should be made of materials which do not transmit toxic substances, odour or taste, are not absorbent (unless its use is intended for that purpose and will not result in food contamination), are resistant to corrosion and capable of withstanding repeated cleaning and disinfection.

6.2 Every cutting surface used in the preparation of food should be free from cracks and crevices, with only reasonable wear and tear, and should be cleaned using one of the methods described in Section 6.5 at least on the following occasions:

- (f) before and after daily operations; and
- (g) immediately after being used to prepare raw food.

6.3 Cooked and uncooked food should be handled with separate utensils.

6.4 Every vendor should ensure that all defective, damaged, cracked, rusted, chipped and unsuitable appliances and crockery are removed from use and discarded.

6.5 All non-disposable utensils should be regularly cleaned by thoroughly washing them in warm water containing adequate amount of soap or other suitable detergents and then either immersing them for one-half (30 seconds) minute in boiling clean water and draining them or, for two (2) minutes in potable water at a temperature of not less than 77°C and draining them.

In the case where non-disposable crockery is used and water at 77°C or boiling temperatures is unavailable, potable water, wash soap or detergent and running water rinse is allowed. However, this method is not preferred.

6.6 Disposable crockery shall be used only once and properly disposed of. In the case where non-disposable crockery is used, the crockery is to be cleaned after each use using the method described for utensils in paragraph 6.5.

6.7 All appliances are to be maintained in good state of repair and working order.

SECTION 7 – FOOD PREPARATION

7.1 Requirements for ingredients

Every vendor should ensure the following

- 7.1.1 Supply of all raw materials, other ingredients, including ice, must be from known and reliable sources.
- 7.1.2 Freshness and wholesomeness of ingredients to maintain quality and safety of food.
- 7.1.3 Transportation of ingredients should be made in a manner so as to prevent exposure to the environment, spoilage and contamination.
- 7.1.4 Only permitted food additives should be used and the amount added should follow the specifications provided.

7.2 Cooking and handling

- 7.2.1 Thoroughly wash fresh vegetables and fruit whether for cooking or consuming raw, with sufficient running potable water, to remove adhering surface contamination. For any soaking, potable water should be used.
- 7.2.2 Where appropriate, wash raw food before using in food preparation to reduce the risk of contamination. Never wash raw food with other foods that will be consumed raw or in a semi-cooked state.
- 7.2.3 There should be an area for handling, storing, cleaning and preparing raw food ingredients, separate and apart from the cooked, street food display, handling and serving areas.
- 7.2.4 Thawing: large pieces of meat or large poultry carcasses often need to be thawed before cooking. When thawing is carried out as an operation separated from cooking this should be performed only in:
- (h) a refrigerator or purpose-built thawing cabinet maintained at a temperature of 4°C; or
 - (i) a commercial microwave oven only when the food will be immediately transferred to conventional cooking units as part of a continuous cooking process or when the entire, uninterrupted cooking process takes place in the microwave oven.

NOTE: Hazards associated with thawing include cross-contamination from drip and growth of micro-organisms on the outside before the inside has thawed. Thawed meat and poultry products should be checked frequently to make sure the thawing process is complete before further processing or the processing time should be increased to take into account the temperature of the meat.

- 7.2.5 The time and temperature of cooking should be sufficient to reduce to safe levels any pathogens that may be present in the food.
- 7.2.6 Water used for the purpose of drinking, preparation of hot or cold drinks and beverages should be potable.
- 7.2.7 Ice should be made from potable water. Ice should be handled and stored so as to protect it from contamination. Containers used to transport or store ice should meet the requirements for water containers prescribed by Section 2.3.18.
- 7.2.8 Food should not be re-heated more than once and only the portion of the food to be served should be re-heated. A temperature of at least 75°C should be reached in the centre of the food within one hour of removing the food from refrigeration.
- 7.2.9 Utensils used for tasting food should be washed immediately after each use.

7.3 Serving food

Every vendor should observe the following:

- 7.3.1 All vendors purchasing street foods for the purpose of serving or selling must assure that such food is from licensed and reliable sources.
- 7.3.2 Cooked street foods should not be handled with bare hands. Clean tongs, forks, spoons or disposable gloves should be used when handling, serving or selling food.
- 7.3.3 All crockery used should be clean and dry and not handled by touching the food contact surfaces.
- 7.3.4 Plates filled with food should not be stacked one on top of the other during display, storing or serving.
- 7.3.5 Food grade packing materials should be used.
- 7.3.6 Printed material should preferably never be used to serve food. Only food grade aluminium foil, waxed paper, food grade plastic and any other suitable material should be used for packing and serving food.
- 7.3.7 Never blow into plastic bags, wrappers or packages used for food.
- 7.3.8 All beverages offered for sale should be dispensed only in their individual original sealed containers or from taps fitted to bulk containers and made of food grade plastic or other suitable material. Bulk containers should be covered with tight fitting lids.
- 7.3.9 Cut fruit or other foods ordinarily consumed in the state in which they are sold may be set out in an enclosed display case, cabinet or similar type of protective device and should be displayed in a manner to protect the food from contamination.
- 7.3.10 Food handlers should avoid handling money. If this is unavoidable, the food handler should wash his hands before handling food again.
- 7.3.11 Ready-to-eat foods intended for continuous serving should be protected from environmental contamination and kept at the following holding temperatures:
- (j) for food served hot above 60°C;
 - (k) for food served cold below 5 °C;
 - (l) for food served frozen -18°C or below.

7.3.12 A food warmer should be used to maintain continuous holding temperatures (Section 7.3.11 (i)), and should not be used for re-heating purposes (Section 7.2.8).

7.4 Unsold Food

All unsold cooked food and prepared beverages that cannot be properly preserved should be safely disposed of at the end of the day.

7.5 Transportation of street foods

7.5.1 Street foods which require transportation to the point of sale/stall should be placed in a well protected, covered and clean container to avoid contamination

7.5.2 Any vehicle used in transporting food should be clean and in good condition, appropriately equipped to accommodate any special requirements of the food being transported and provide protection from environmental contamination.

7.5.3 Perishable food should be transported under temperature control

7.5.4 Street foods should not be transported together with raw food and ingredients, animals, toxic substances and any other materials which may contaminate the food.

7.6 Food storage

7.6.1 The food should at all times be kept clean and free from contamination, and be adequately protected from pests, environmental contaminants and stored at proper temperatures where appropriate.

7.6.2 Readily perishable food should be placed or stacked so that it is not likely to be contaminated by contact with raw food, pet food, toxic materials or any other materials which may cause contamination. The bulk of readily perishable foods should be stored in clean containers under temperature control. Quantities displayed for continuous serving should be handled according to the requirements listed in Section 7.3.11.

7.6.3 All dry ingredients should be stored and maintained in their original labelled commercial container or subsequent containers and should be properly labelled as to the content and designed to prevent moisture absorption.

7.6.4 All non-perishable food should be stored in a clean, protected and closed container/cupboard to prevent cross contamination by pests.

7.6.5 Once cleaned, following the requirements of Sections 7.2.1 and 7.2.2, the bulk of perishable raw food including wet milled legumes, cereals or pulses should be stored in clean separate containers preferably placed in a clean ice box, a refrigerator or a freezer to prevent spoilage.

7.6.6 Refrigerators and freezers should not be overloaded and their temperatures should be maintained at a maximum of 4°C and -18°C or below, respectively.

7.6.7 All enclosed spaces, cupboards, shelves and racks used for the storage of food should be constructed so as to be easily cleaned and to protect the food from pests.

7.6.8 All food stored in bulk should be stored in an orderly fashion and should be placed so as to facilitate ventilation, inspection and the detection of pests.

7.6.9 All food should be stored and handled separately from toxic, poisonous, deleterious and injurious substances.

7.6.10 The principle "First in, first out" should be applied to stock rotation.

7.6.11 Date marking on all food containers shall be checked before the food is used. Expired food shall not be sold or used for the preparation of food.

SECTION 8 – STREET FOOD CENTRES

8.1 General requirements

All vendors located in a street food centre should comply with all provisions stated in the officially recognized regulations applicable to street food vendors.

8.2 Location, design and construction and facility

8.2.1 The location of any street food centre is to be approved beforehand by the relevant authority, having taken into consideration the provisions stated in Section 5.1 - Location, of these Guidelines.

8.2.2 The design of the street food centre shall:

- (m) be reviewed and approved beforehand by the relevant authority;
- (n) provide sufficient and adequate space and orderly placement of vendor stalls, carts, display cases, food preparation, handling, storing, serving and selling areas;
- (o) allow for the orderly flow of materials and goods, in and out of the centres, which will prevent possible routes of food contamination;
- (p) Allow for the proper placement of client facilities, such as toilets, hand washing and eating facilities and be located or arranged in a manner that prevents routes of food contamination;
- (q) provide suitable, sufficient and properly placed areas for solid waste storage and crockery and appliance cleaning, washing and sanitizing;

- (r) be adequately ventilated to remove hazardous obnoxious gases and odours, cooking fuel fumes and other offensive airborne materials and provide a continuous and sufficient supply of fresh air to support the activities within the centre;
- (s) be provided with sufficient and adequate electrical power supply to support the vendors in the centre to operate appliances, equipment and other implements used in the preparation, handling, storage, serving and selling of food; and
- (t) have available an ample supply of potable water, under adequate pressure and of suitable temperature, with adequate facilities for its storage, where necessary, and distribution, and with adequate protection against contamination.

NOTE: Samples should be taken regularly, but the frequency should depend upon the origin and the usage of the water, e.g. more frequent from private supplies than from public supplies. Chlorine or other suitable disinfectants may be used. If chlorination has been employed checks should be made daily by chemical tests for available chlorine. The point of sampling should preferably be at the point of usage, but occasionally it would be useful to sample at the point of entry of the water to the establishment.

8.2.3 Street food centres shall be properly constructed in a manner using materials approved by the relevant authority, taking into consideration the provisions stated in the paragraph on "Structure, of these Guidelines. In addition to these provisions, street food centres should:

- (u) have smooth cement, glazed tile or tarmac paved floors, equipped with properly placed floor drains for the purpose of removing surface water and to facilitate cleaning and sanitizing;
- (v) have, where applicable, smooth non-permeable surface walls or partitions, such as glazed tile, to facilitate cleaning and sanitizing;
- (w) have, if applicable, a smooth non-absorbent ceiling to facilitate cleaning;
- (x) provide sufficient artificial lighting, properly placed to facilitate food preparation, handling, storage, serving and selling for each vendor located at the centre;
- (y) provide for smoke hoods and flues above cooking ranges to enable the removal of fuel and cooking gases, smoke and fumes from the centre into the open air.
- (z) provide centralized or individualized appliance, crockery, utensil and other implement washing facilities, equipped with hot and cold running potable water, wash basins or sinks with appropriate drains to an approved sewer or drain system, detergent and sanitizing agents to satisfy the proper sanitary and complete cleaning needs of the vendors in the centre; and
- (aa) comply with any other requirement of the relevant authority related to the structure of street food centres.

8.3 Liquid and solid waste

8.3.1 Pertaining to liquid waste disposal, street food centres are to:

- (bb) be equipped with an efficient centralized or individual (for each vendor in the centre) liquid waste disposal system(s) approved by the relevant authority and of suitable size and design to exceed the level of demand for liquid waste disposal at peak levels of activity by the vendors in the centre;
- (cc) maintain the liquid sewage disposal system in good working condition;
- (dd) ensure that the liquid waste disposal system exits to a relevant authority approved sewage drain system capable of efficiently carrying away the liquid waste from the centre; and
- (ee) comply with any other relevant authority requirements related to liquid waste disposal.

8.3.2 Regarding solid waste disposal, street food centres are to have an efficient system for disposal of solid waste complying with all solid waste disposal requirements of the relevant authority, to include:

- (a) the allocation of an appropriate and separate amount of space for solid waste storage, located at a convenient but suitably distant location from food preparation, storage, handling, serving or selling areas to prevent contamination;
- (b) sufficient number of suitably designed and constructed waterproof solid waste containers with tight fitting lids to adequately contain the volume of accumulated solid waste produced by vendor activity in one day. Containers should be lined with suitable disposable liners or inner containers for securing waste and which are easy to handle at time of disposal;
- (c) the daily, and more often if necessary, disposal of solid waste from the street food centre to:
 - (i) rubbish bins approved, designed and intended for the centralized collection of solid waste by garbage service agencies;
 - (ii) approved sanitary land fill; or
 - (iii) other disposal methods authorized and approved by the relevant authority.
- (d) routine inspection of solid waste disposal areas for the presence or harbourage of pests, taking any and all practical measures to eliminate and further prevent any infestation; and

- (e) compliance with any other requirement of the relevant authority related to solid waste disposal.

8.4 Customer hygiene facilities

Street food centres should have sufficient toilet facilities for each gender to accommodate the vendors, their employees and the clientele, conveniently located but separate and apart from food preparation, handling, storage, serving and selling areas, in order to prevent contamination of the food. The toilet facilities should be approved and subject to all requirements for such facilities by the relevant authority. Among other requirements the facilities should:

- (a) have smooth walls of glazed tile to a height of at least two (2) meters;
- (b) should be clean, free of bad odours and provided with a flushing system;
- (c) be well lit, ventilated, and routinely cleaned and sanitized and maintained in good working condition;
- (d) include hand washing and drying facilities and properly supplied with soap and other needed supplies;
- (e) contain posters instructing vendors and employees to wash hands thoroughly after each use of the toilet facilities before returning to work; and
- (f) have doors which are equipped with self-closing devices.