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Revised Proposal for New Work on Guidelines for Food Hygiene Control Measures in Traditional Markets for Food

PROJECT DOCUMENT

Development of *Guidelines for Food Hygiene Control Measures in Traditional Markets for Food*

1. Purpose and Scope of the Standard

Proposed new work to develop *Guidelines for Food Hygiene Control Measures in Traditional Markets for Food* would provide national and local governments worldwide with relevant advice to ensure that traditional markets for food are designed and managed effectively to promote food safety for the food sold in the markets. The proposed global guidelines would be informed by four regional guidance for street-vended food that have content on the management of markets and could also provide food business operators with advice on food handling, health and hygiene relevant to ensuring the safety of food sold in the markets.

Traditional markets for food have many names around the globe. In some areas they are called street food markets, local markets, public markets, municipal markets, open air markets and farmers' markets. Traditional markets for food are dedicated spaces for consumers, food retailers and wholesalers to purchase food for home preparation, and other food processing. Markets frequently also have street-vended food available for sale and consumption.

Traditional markets for food need focused attention and support if they are to improve food safety. In addition to being an important food source, markets are community gathering areas and an ideal place for sharing food safety, nutrition and community health information. Having a normative global exercise to update and harmonize guidelines will equip stakeholders (regulators, vendors, FBOs, consumers) to strengthen capacities in those markets so they can provide safer food, market access, and help in delivering the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. This was recognized by the World Health Organization in its Global Strategy for Food Safety 2022-2030, which says, "Developing guidance and scale-up plans to improve the safety of food traded in traditional food markets is a priority."¹

2. Relevance and Timeliness

Street-vended foods are defined by Codex as "ready-to-eat foods and beverages prepared and/or sold by vendors in streets and other public places for immediate consumption or consumption at a later time" (see Guidelines and Codes of Practice described in section 6). Codex Guidelines and Codes of Practice also provides definitions for "Street Food Centers" and "Street Food Stalls" as the places where street foods are prepared, displayed, served and sold to the public. The term "Traditional markets," is broader, and used to describe dedicated spaces where consumers, food wholesalers and retailers can purchase fresh food for home preparation. They also frequently allow vendors to sell street-vended prepared food.²

¹ WHO global strategy for food safety 2022–2030: towards stronger food safety systems and global cooperation. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2022.

² DeWaal et al; *Regional Codex Guidelines and Their Potential to Impact Food Safety in Traditional Food Markets*; J Food Prot (2022); <https://doi.org/10.4315/JFP-22-052>.

Traditional markets for food in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) play a critical role in food security and nutrition. In some regions, researchers estimate that up to 85% of food is purchased in those markets.³ They are a particularly important source for lower-income and food insecure populations to access fresh, highly nutritious foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables. They also provide hotels, local and international food companies with ingredients for the food they produce. Most of the small exporters, source their products from the traditional markets and they find their way to international trade.

However, these markets frequently lack the infrastructure and hygienic conditions needed to ensure food safety. These markets can be especially risky for foodborne hazards. This is due to poor market infrastructure, including limited access to potable water, poor hygienic conditions, and poor storage practices, among others.⁴

While four regional committees considered the food safety issues of street-vended foods, their scope has not addressed the hygienic conditions of traditional markets generally. While the content of the regional guidance is useful, it does not cover all aspects of market operations, with variability in coverage from region to region. Given the global burden of disease estimates of 600 million consumers a year, the need to improved conditions in traditional markets is acute. Given the importance of traditional markets for food in many areas of the world, global guidance would be very timely, and provide important health protection to consumers. As food security is of paramount importance for countries, updated and harmonized guidance to address food hazards will provide incentives for government to address conditions in and modernize existing traditional markets.

3. Main aspects to be covered

Appropriate food safety regulation, inspection and enforcement in traditional markets for food have an important role in preventing and controlling foodborne and zoonotic diseases, improving health, enhancing food security and strengthening the economy. The proposed *Guidelines for Food Hygiene Control Measures in Traditional Markets for Food* would be developed by the Committee, using a process to identify the relevant food safety topics from the existing Codex guidelines and codes of practice for street-vended foods. A 2021 comparative review of the regional guidance found there are many common food safety content areas and also gaps in the existing regional guidelines.⁵ The common areas relevant and important to harmonized global guidelines for traditional markets for food include:

- **Policy and regulation** Common topics include the roles of stakeholders and authorities; regulation and monitoring of markets; and registration of vendors.
- **Market infrastructure** Common topics include design and infrastructure of markets; and maintenance and sanitation in markets.
- **Food handling** Common topics include food sourcing and handling in markets; requirements for food preparation; and protection and sale of ready-to-eat food.
- **Personal health and hygiene of market participants.**
- **Training and education.**

In addition to this relevant content, WHO and FAO have published recommendations for governments on their oversight of traditional markets. This advice could also inform harmonized global guidelines for traditional markets for food.

³ Anenu, Kebede, Researcher, ILRI/Addis Ababa University, oral remarks at the International Association of Food Protection, August 2022. See also Tschirley, D., Reardon, T., Dolislager, M., & Snyder, J. (2015). The Rise of a Middle Class in East and Southern Africa: Implications for Food System Transformation: The Middle Class and Food System Transformation in ESA. *Journal of International Development*, 27(5), 628–646. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.3107>.

⁴ Alves da Silva, S., Cardoso, R. de C. V., Góes, J. Á. W., Santos, J. N., Ramos, F. P., Bispo de Jesus, R., Sabá do Vale, R., & Teles da Silva, P. S. (2014). Street food on the coast of Salvador, Bahia, Brazil: A study from the socioeconomic and food safety perspectives. *Food Control*, 40, 78–84. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodcont.2013.11.022>

Cortese, R. D. M., Veiros, M. B., Feldman, C., & Cavalli, S. B. (2016). Food safety and hygiene practices of vendors during the chain of street food production in Florianópolis, Brazil: A cross-sectional study. *Food Control*, 62, 178–186. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodcont.2015.10.027>

Gadaga, T. H., Samende, B. K., Musuna, C., & Chibanda, D. (2008). The microbiological quality of informally vended foods in Harare, Zimbabwe. *Food Control*, 19(8), 829–832. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodcont.2007.07.016>

Muyanja, C., Nayiga, L., Brenda, N., & Nasinyama, G. (2011). Practices, knowledge and risk factors of street food vendors in Uganda. *Food Control*, 22(10), 1551–1558. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodcont.2011.01.016>

⁵ DeWaal et al; *Regional Codex Guidelines and Their Potential to Impact Food Safety in Traditional Food Markets*; *J Food Prot* (2022); <https://doi.org/10.4315/JFP-22-052>.

4. Assessment against the Criteria for the establishment of work priorities

4.1 The text needs to be revised in order to meet the General criterion: Consumer protection from the point of view of health, food safety, ensuring fair practices in the food trade and considering the identified needs of developing countries.

Traditional markets for food provide consumers with both the ingredients for preparing meals at home and also fully prepared and ready-to-eat foods. The conditions at the markets, including access to clean water, waste management and proximity to live animals, can lead to the spread of food pathogens and unsafe food handling. Conditions and practices that promote food safety are vital for both raw ingredients and prepared foods.

Traditional markets for food are an important source of nutritious and culturally appropriate food contributing to food security for billions of people all over the world. The markets also have a critical social function as settings where people purchase their food and meet with others. They provide a source of income for the community and attract tourists.⁶ Considering street food alone, an estimated 2.5 billion people eat street food worldwide every day. It is a source of income for a vast number of people, particularly women.⁷

In addition to providing guidance for governments, some of the regional code of practice have useful advice for small and/or less-developed food businesses in both developed and developing countries. This objective should be retained in the new work.

4.2 Diversification of national legislation and apparent resultant or potential impediments to international trade

While there is not a survey of national legislation on traditional markets, the gaps evident in the regional guidelines for street-vended foods are indicative of gaps that may exist in national legislation. For example, the Latin America Code of Practice has specific detail on food handling relevant to street-food vendors but lacks infrastructure requirements for the markets.

4.3 Work already undertaken by other international organizations in this field

The World Health Organization published its Global Strategy for Food Safety 2022- 2030 and identified traditional markets for food as an important area of focus. It says, ‘Developing guidance and scale-up plans to improve the safety of food traded in traditional food markets is a priority.’ In addition, the Global Strategy recognizes the role that Codex standards play in helping national governments develop effective food safety programs: ‘Member States should promote the uptake of Codex standards within domestic legislation, setting public health goals that the food industry can use as a benchmark when bringing innovation and economic change to sustainable national food systems. Member States should also consult the guidance from Codex standards to improve food safety by implementing measures to improve food hygiene and food handling,’

The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition has undertaken research on the normative standards that apply to traditional markets for food, including a comparative review of the four regional texts on street-vended food. It also examined WHO and FAO documents that can inform the Committee’s work on traditional markets, including those developed during COVID to address conditions in markets that handle live animals.⁸

4.4 Amenability of the subject of the proposal to standardization

The four regional guidance for street-vended food provide many areas of overlap that indicate that global standardization would be achievable.

4.5 Consideration of the global magnitude of the problem or issue

Traditional markets for food exist all over the world and provide affordable fresh food for millions of consumers globally. In low- and middle-income countries, traditional markets for food can be the primary source of household foods, and they provide employment for many in the community. For consumers living in low- and middle-income countries, traditional markets are frequently their primary source of fresh foods, like meat, fish, fruits, and vegetables.

Markets that sit near country borders often sell foods to consumers, retailers and wholesalers on both sides of the border, so they are a source of food in regional trade. In addition, many fruits, spices, nuts and grains can enter international trade, as the markets are a source of products for commercial food processors and distributors. Examples of foods that might be sourced from traditional markets for food that enter international trade include frozen and dried fruits, vegetables, nuts, spices and grains. Lack of hygienic conditions in the market can impact the safety of all those foods.

⁶ FAO and WHO World Food Safety Day Poster on traditional markets for food

⁷ FAO and WHO World Food Safety Day 2022 Poster on street food vending

⁸ See <https://www.gainhealth.org/resources/reports-and-publications/regional-codex-guidelines-and-their-potential-impact-food-safety>. This research was also adapted for the Journal of Food Protection, previously cited.

The proposed *Guidelines for Food Hygiene Control Measures in Traditional Markets for Food*, as a harmonized global standard, could give governments relevant guidance on the market conditions and practices that can improve food safety and provide more efficient food control.

5. Relevance to the Codex strategic objectives

The proposed work directly relates to the following Codex Strategic Goals from the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan.

Goal 1 Address current, emerging and critical issues in a timely manner

COVID 19 illustrated the importance of addressing conditions in traditional markets for food, where food, people and animals all come together. Codex, through its regional Committees, has never directly addressed food safety issues in traditional markets, though its work on street-vended foods does indirectly provide some guidance in this area.

Goal 2 Develop standards based on science and Codex risk-analysis principles

Risk analysis as it applies to food safety across the food chain is an internationally accepted discipline and forms an integral part of any well-designed food safety control system. Through an active involvement of scientific and technical experts from many Codex members and observers we aim for a harmonized global standard addressing developments in the field of food safety risk management as they apply to traditional markets.

Goal 3 Increase impact through the recognition and use of Codex standards

By creating standards of importance for many countries in managing domestic food trade, Codex will increase its relevance to low- and middle-income countries where traditional markets for food play a vital role in food distribution.

Goal 4 Facilitate the participation of all Codex Members throughout the standard setting process

Development of harmonized guidance for traditional markets has already generated support from countries in three Codex regions. The new work should generate great interest and broad participation from all members, with the objective to produce a user-friendly document that could be adopted and enforced as widely as possible. It provides specific attention to the food safety activities of small enterprises and to developing countries.

Goal 5 Enhance work management systems and practices that support the efficient and effective achievement of all strategic plan goals

More expeditious and efficient work by Codex is necessary to provide members and international organizations with the standards, guidelines, and recommendations that they need. During the development of this harmonized guideline, all working documents and electronic discussions will be distributed in a timely and transparent manner, using web-based technologies available freely to all.

This strategic goal is one of the core objectives of the Committee for Food Hygiene, as it will provide a solid ground for all Codex works related to food hygiene in traditional markets.

6. Information on the relation between the proposal and other existing Codex documents

While there are four separate Codex regional guidance on the regulation of street-vended foods, there are no guidance specific to traditional markets for food where both raw and prepared foods are often sold at the same location. Taken as a group, the regional guidance on street-vended foods has significant information relevant to the regulation of traditional markets for food. However, taken individually, gaps in each of the Codex documents show that a global guidance is needed.

The regional guidance is listed below:

- CODEX Regional Guidelines for the Design of Control Measures for Street-Vended Foods (Africa) CAC/GL 22R-1997
- CODEX Revised Regional Code of Hygienic Practice for the Preparation and Sale of Street Foods (Latin America and the Caribbean) CAC/RCP 43R-1995/Revised in 2001
- CODEX Regional Code of Practice for Street-Vended Foods (Near East), CXP 71-R-2013
- CODEX Regional Code of Hygienic Practice for Street-Vended Foods in Asia, CXC 76R-2017

Many of the topics covered in the four regional guidance for street-vended foods are relevant to traditional markets for food, and many food safety topics are overlapping. But the approach varies widely between the regional guidance. For example, the African Guidelines contains specific advice on market infrastructure and cleaning practices; whereas the Latin American Code of Practice contains minimal content in those areas but has the most comprehensive information on the handling of raw foods in the market. Each of the regional guidance has content that should be considered in developing a uniform Codex text to cover the broader topic of traditional markets for food.

The proposed *Guidelines for Food Hygiene Control Measures in Traditional markets for food/Code of Hygienic Practice for Traditional Markets for Food* will provide advice on the food safety regulation and oversight activities relevant to traditional markets for food where both raw and prepared foods are often sold. It would be informed by the existing regional guidelines described above that cover street-vended foods and can co-exist with that guidance if the Committee chooses.⁹

7. Identification of any requirement for and availability of expert scientific advice

The FAO and WHO could facilitate this effort by reviewing their recommendations related to traditional markets for food and determining if there is useful information to address food safety that should be considered by the Committee. Also, a number of Codex observer organizations are willing to provide their expertise to aid in improving the content of the document or to make it easier to use.

8. Identification of any need for technical input to the standard from external bodies so that this can be planned for

Technical input is expected from Codex observer organizations, including the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition and the Consumer Foods Goods Forum. Such input is important as these organizations would be among the organizations that would be advocating for and applying the harmonized guidance.

9. The proposed timeline for completion of the new work, including the start date, the proposed date for adoption at Step 5, and the proposed date for adoption by the Commission

Supporters propose the following timeline for consideration:

Subject to the approval of the 46th session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission in 2023, the aim will be to complete the work within three sessions of CCFH, ie by CCFH56 for submission for final adoption to CAC.

⁹ We note some of the regional guidance have not been updated recently (e.g., the Africa Guideline was last updated in 1997; the Latin American Code of Practice was updated in 2001).