

CODEx ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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CRD18

**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD IMPORT AND EXPORT INSPECTION
AND CERTIFICATION SYSTEMS
Twenty-Fifth Session
Virtual, 31 May – 8 June 2021**

Opening remarks

Ms. Catherine Bessy, Food Safety Officer, Food Systems and Food Safety Division of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Distinguished Mrs Chair, delegates and colleagues

With these few words I would like to underline how important the work of this committee is for FAO and how much we value these discussions. FAO's mission in supporting countries to strengthen their food safety capacities is tightly intertwined with the work of this Committee.

FAO's involvement into CCFICS discussions intensified significantly when the Committee initiated its work on national food control systems, which eventually resulted into the "Principles and Guidelines for national food control systems". FAO contributions stemmed from our long standing work alongside with developing countries from all continents, which allowed us to be familiar with very different legal and administrative traditions pertaining to food control systems. While participating actively in the development of CXG 82-2013, FAO, subsequently joined by WHO, initiated the development of an assessment tool, to allow countries to evaluate their food control systems, based on these principles and guidelines under development within CCFICS. This was a long journey, involving creative pilot testing over different regions, questioning ourselves, re-thinking our models, generating passionate discussions over peer reviews cycles.... The English version of the FAO/WHO Food control system assessment tool was released at CAC 42; it is now also available in FR, SP, AR and RU. CCFICS discussions on performance monitoring were also very complementary to the work on the assessment tool and the Committee was regularly kept informed of the progress, as it was useful to reflect on the notion of indicators, objectives and outcomes, that are the backbone of the CXG 91-2017. In the same vein, FAO has actively participated in the discussions framing the work on equivalence of systems that the Committee has initiated in 2016, at its 22nd session. The practical experience of FAO, deeply rooted in its field work with countries, be them developing or in transition, brings in a variety of perspectives that we hope has helped to represent the diversity of situations.

The complementarities between FAO and Codex work reside in the fact that while Codex guidelines are at "a high" level, applicable for all members, an additional layer of explanations is often necessary for countries with less mature food control system to identify and design the most suitable options to their local contexts. Through our publications and projects we strive to improve the understanding by developing countries of the potential impact of CCFICS discussions for them, and the importance to join these. Given the increasing engagement of developing countries into global trade, including for small and sometimes landlocked, or island states, from an exporter's (for many of them) or an importer's (for all of them) perspective, CCFICS is more than ever a highly relevant committee to engage more meaningfully and dynamically into. FAO is doing its share to allow this to happen.

We therefore look forward to the upcoming discussions,

Thank you.

Ms. Haruka Igarashi, Technical Officer, Department of Nutrition and Food Safety, World Health Organization (WHO)

Distinguished delegates, dear colleagues,

On behalf of the World Health Organization, it is my great pleasure to welcome you to the 25th Session of Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems.

I also would like to express our warm congratulations to the CCFICS on its 25th anniversary. I am very pleased that, despite the global challenge of COVID-19, the work of Codex is able to continue through the use of virtual meetings.

I would also like to congratulate the Codex and CCFICS Secretariats for their efforts to make this Session here possible.

International trade of foods is an issue of huge food security and economic importance. CCFICS has produced principles and guidelines for harmonising methods and procedures regarding food import and export inspection system to facilitate international food trade.

Thank you once again to all for your continued commitment and support to ensuring all people have access to safe food.

Codex standards, guidelines and codes of practice form the basis for WHO's food safety work. Together with FAO and other partners, WHO has provided technical assistances, trainings and education and, guidance materials covering various aspects of food control and inspection to support countries in strengthening national food safety systems.

WHO looks forward to a continued collaboration with our Member States and the Codex in improving food safety throughout the world.

Thank you, and I wish you a very successful meeting.

Mr. Guilherme da Costa Junior, Chairperson of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC)

Ladies and gentlemen.

Good morning, good afternoon, and good evening everyone.

1. It is a great pleasure to be here with you all and participate in the 25th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS), which occurs exceptionally for the first time online. The past year and still this year have been unusually emotional, and I am more than happy to see you all well and healthy today.
2. I would like to extend my sincere condolences and support to all those who have had to live through challenging days during this pandemic.
3. I would like to welcome all Codex Members, Observers, Authorities and Delegates from different world regions.
4. It is a tremendous honour for the Vice-Chairs and for me to be with you all here.
5. I would like to express my great pleasure to be with my friend Ms. Fran Freeman, chair of this important committee, and congratulate Australia, particularly the CCFICS Secretariat, for the paramount work developed as the host country.
6. I would also like to commend the Codex Secretariat for its efforts in making this session possible and the excellent Webinar last week //and the parent organisations, namely FAO and WHO.
7. Figures on severe problems due to the lack of food safety control continue to cause thousands of food-borne illnesses, deaths, and rising unemployment every year, not to mention an economic crisis in different countries.
8. It is never too much to remember our great responsibility towards the global society regarding food safety. It is essential and paramount to do our best - now in this new normal - to develop and disseminate Codex standards to ensure the safety and quality of food for everyone, everywhere, following the Sustainable Development Goals which are linked to the Codex mandate.
9. In this context, scientific standards ensure transparency in market access, inclusion, and economic development. The foundation of Codex was based on concrete scientific evidence. Since the beginning, Codex Alimentarius has been a scientific activity. Experts and specialists from a wide range of disciplines have contributed to all aspects of Codex Alimentarius to ensure that its standards are based on the most rigorous scientific reviews. Therefore, science can be considered the heart of the Organization.
10. Despite its negotiating characteristics, Codex's work should focus on cooperation by strengthening all members' participation - especially of those who find it more difficult to participate. And of course, consensus building, particularly in the interests of the world related to food safety and fairness of international food trade.
11. Official and officially recognized inspection and certification systems are fundamentally essential and widely used in food control systems.
12. Consumers' confidence in the safety and quality aspects of their food supply depends in part on their perception of the effectiveness of these systems as food control measures. A substantial amount of the worldwide food trade relies on the use of inspection and certification systems.

13. Food safety inspection and certification convey to consumers and the marketplace, as well as to employees and key stakeholders that a food sector business has successfully met the requirements of a national or internationally recognized best practice approach.

14. As an inspector and auditor for more than 24 years in my country and working in capacity building on these areas in different parts of the world, I know how important it is the work developed by the CCFICS. Disciplines as those recommended in documents like the Principles for Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification, Guidelines for Food Import Control Systems, to mention a few, give an efficient basis to develop inspection and certification activities for Codex Members.

15. During this CCFICS session, we have some important issues before us, which we will have the opportunity to discuss. For example, the Draft principles and guidelines for the assessment and use of voluntary Third-Party Assurance programmes is submitted at Step 7, with the view to recommending for adoption at Step 8 by the Commission. The consensus is also paramount for this document.

16. And to reach consensus demands keeping in mind, among other aspects, the following question: "How can my country as a Codex member cooperate so that the other member state, my trading partner, can also guarantee the protection of the health of its consumers and also to have room to generate profits, currency and jobs for its people?"

17. This is an issue which, as I have been expressing, must remain alive in our work process. It is an essential way by which we must try to continue working in this Committee and implementing the Strategic Plan 2020 - 2025, with the real and concrete will to build a better Codex for the world.

18. I would also like to highlight the relevance to celebrate the World Food Safety Day on the 7th of June. It is essential to emphasize the role of all elements related to food safety, like science, which plays a vital role in keeping food safe, now and in the future, and the importance of inspection and certification systems, to mention a few. As we know, the World Food Safety Day theme is "Safe food now for a healthy tomorrow."

19. Finally, Madame Chair, on behalf of my fellow Vice-Chairs of the Codex Alimentarius, I would like to reiterate my honour to be here and wish you all an excellent session of the CCFICS.

Thank you very much for your attention.