

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR NORTH AMERICA AND THE SOUTH WEST PACIFIC

Seventeenth Session

Nadi, Fiji

3 - 7 February 2025

FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY SITUATION IN THE REGION - UPDATES:

FAO/WHO WORK IN THE REGION

(Prepared by FAO and WHO)

1. Introduction and background

The 16th session of FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for North America and the South West Pacific (CCNASWP16) took place in Nadi, Fiji from 30 January to 3 February 2023, and recommended continued capacity building efforts aiming to better structure and coordinate participation from countries in the region in Codex committees. This paper provides a brief overview of the food safety and quality situation in the region since the last CCNASWP meeting.

2. Strengthening national capacities on Codex standards and food safety

A regional TCP project “Strengthening national capacities on Codex standards and food safety” (TCP/SAP/3907) FAO is aimed at providing technical, including capacity building on food safety, to participating countries: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Vanuatu from 2023 - 2025.

Two missions to provide training and technical assistance were conducted from April 8-12, April 15-12024, and November 9-23 in Samoa, Tonga and Marshall Islands, addressing various aspects of national food control, including food safety emergencies, imported food control, food analytics, school food safety. Implementation is continuing.

3. Codex Trust Fund activities in the Pacific region

A. Samoa: A three-year Codex Trust Fund project was implemented in Samoa from 2021 to 2024, through a collaborative partnership between the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Labour (MCIL) and FAO. Key results of the project include:

- The publication of the Samoa National Codex Committee Procedural manual.
- The launch of the new Codex webpage on the MCIL website.
- Increased Codex awareness and understanding of Codex work capacity of and collaboration between Samoa National Codex Committee (SNCC) members, donor agencies, youth, and media.
- Enhanced participation in international Codex meetings where Samoa contributed important scientific information for the development of Codex food standards for noni and kava products.
- Increased recognition and support of Codex work in Samoa by high level national policy makers including the Cabinet

Products developed are available in the CTF repository, which can be accessed through this link: <https://www.who.int/initiatives/codex-trust-fund/repository-of-project-outputs>

B. Tonga: Tonga also applied to the CTF successfully and started implementing its CTF project in 2023. Several training workshops have been conducted to enhance national capacity on effective participation in Codex work and the roles of FAO/WHO expert committees. Project implementation is continuing.

C. CTF2 Round 7 applications from CCNASWP update:

A message was circulated by the Codex Trust Fund secretariat to successful applicants of the CTF2 Round 7 call for proposals to provide an update on the Codex Trust Fund (CTF) projects in the region.

The message indicated that the CTF has been facing a general decline in financial commitments from the donor community. With limited amounts of funding available and a resource mobilization outlook that remains challenging for 2025, the CTF decided to suspend the ninth CTF2 application round originally foreseen for 2024. As a further consequence, the CTF started prioritizing the implementation and completion of ongoing projects over the initiation of new projects, which remains in place until additional funding has been secured. Considering these difficult decisions, in effect, the start of the CTF2 project planned for the countries under the CTF2 Round 7 applications has been put on hold until further notice. Once the current funding shortage has been overcome, the countries from the South-West Pacific that successfully applied for Round 7 of support, will be first in line to start their CTF2 project. The countries were reassured that the CTF is working hard to overcome this challenge and will inform participating countries once a positive outcome has been achieved that will allow for the projects to commence.

4. SIDS Solutions Forum

The 2024 SIDS Solutions Forum on “Transforming agrifood systems for our Blue Pacific Continent through better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life” was held in Nadi, Fiji, from November 5-8, 2024. Discussions under the Better Nutrition sessions focused on the potential solutions to non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and increasing obesity rates, the barriers to adopting healthy diets and the situation of food safety in the Pacific region.

Food Safety Solutions highlighted in the technical background paper under Better Nutrition included:

- a. Codex Standards for Safe, Nutritious, and Healthy Foods: [Link](#)
- b. Farm to Fork (F2F) Initiative – “Connecting Farmers to Chefs” in Fiji: [Link](#)
- c. Improving Local Value Chains (Samoa): [Link](#)
- d. Food Processing centres (Fiji): [Link](#)
- e. Hot Air Dryer (Solomon Islands): [Link](#)

5. World Food Safety Day observance

The Food and Agriculture Organization Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO RAP), the World Health Organization Regional Office for South-East Asia (WHO SEARO) and Regional Office for the Western Pacific (WHO WPRO), hosted the webinar “[Food safety incident management – Experiences from the Asia-Pacific region](#)” (11 June, 2024) to celebrate WFSD 2024. National authorities participated as speakers to elaborate and share experiences on: responding to food safety emergencies; key messages to safeguard public health and trade; recall contaminated food; and preparedness actions for unexpected food safety incidents. The Solomon Islands Ministry of Health had a representative in the speakers panel and shared challenges and lessons learned in the webinar, representing the Pacific.

6. International Health Regulations (IHR) core capacities

Salomon Islands: a workshop to prepare for the Joint External Evaluation (JEE) had the participation of 15 stakeholders from technical areas of Food Safety, Risk Communication and Community engagement, and Antimicrobial Resistance. A report has been prepared to be shared with the external team of the evaluators. As a result of the workshop, the priority areas identified were integration of the existing surveillance systems, strengthening laboratory surveillance and the need to develop a coordination mechanism and a multisectoral plan to respond to foodborne disease emergencies. Tonga, Samoa and Solomon Islands conducted their first IHR JEE – priorities and outcomes from the Food Safety indicator highlighted the need to strengthen preparedness and response capacities for food safety incidents.

7. Strengthening food safety systems

Solomon Islands: two workshops were conducted with the objective to strengthen food safety systems, one at central level (Honiara) and another at provincial level (Noro Province) and gathered multiple sectors (Ministry of Health, Ministry of agriculture, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Fisheries, Ports Authorities, Local authorities) and stakeholders (food importers, food exporters and trade brokers) operating at key points of entry (Ports of both locations) to address food imports and standard operating procedures (SOPs) for food business operators. The Ministry of Health Standard Operational Procedures were updated with inputs from multiple sectors. The multisectoral coordination and communication among stakeholders was tested during a simulation exercise activity with the use of case scenarios based on priority imported foods in the Solomon Islands.

WHO supported the review of the Food Safety Legislation and Policy Framework in Kiribati, Papua New Guinea and Salomon Islands.

Kiribati: Revision of the National Food Safety legislation - the Food Safety Acts 2006 and Food Standards & Regulations 2014 in Kiribati (May 2024) and identified the provisions to be proposed for an amend of Export and Import regulations with the support of the National Codex Committee members.

Papua New Guinea: the country took critical initiatives to strengthen its food safety systems to ensure compliance with international standards and addressing gaps in its national food control mechanisms. From 27 November to 18 December 2024, WHO supported the country in their food safety policy review, stakeholder consultations, and pre-assessment preparations for the upcoming 2025 National Food Safety System Assessment. This initiative using the WHO/IFC food safety roadmap development tool provide countries with a framework for evaluating and improving their food safety infrastructures. By addressing gaps in policy, infrastructure, and inter-agency coordination, this initiative underscores Papua New Guinea's commitment to safeguarding public health and fostering sustainable food trade practices.

Fiji: Following the development of a guidance manual "Risk-based food inspection system: practical guidance for national authorities" – published in February 2024, With the support from WHO, Fiji started to adapt and update their training materials for food inspectors.

8. INFOSAN

WHO WPRO, WHO SEARO and FAORAP supported the organization of the INFOSAN Asia Pacific Meeting 2024 (Nov 2024) hosted in the Republic of Korea. During the meeting, a simulation exercise was conducted with a focus on the current emergency response mechanism at national level, as well as information exchange and coordination amongst sectors, with involvement of INFOSAN Emergency Contact Points (ECPs) and focal points. During the meeting priorities for the region were discussed. Identified priorities for CCNASWP were: policy and legislation review; development of a multisectoral food recall guideline, development and/or finalization of the food safety emergency response; capacity building for food safety incidents (including Simulation Exercise (SIMEX) and training of Rapid Response Teams (RRT), development of a roadmap/workplan for food safety actions and further work on One Health, follow up actions after IHR JEE.

9. Traditional food markets

WHO continues supporting Member States in the implementation of the Five keys for safer traditional food markets: risk mitigation in traditional food markets in the Asia-Pacific Region that was developed by WPRO/SEARO towards risk mitigation measures for public health risks at these facilities.¹

¹ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789290619956>