

**FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia
And
WHO Regional Office for Europe**

**COVID-19 and Food Safety Control and Management
REU webinars – Session 10
16 December 2020**

What: Virtual meeting (Zoom Webinar live streamed to YouTube)

When: Wednesday, 16 December 2020, 1.00-2.30 PM (Budapest time)

Language: English-Russian (simultaneous translation to be provided)

Concept Note

Purpose

The overall purpose of the webinar is to share information and experiences on how food safety management, control and attitudes have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The multi-stakeholder panel of experts will highlight opportunities and challenges from different stakeholder perspectives. It will facilitate sharing of lessons and enhance cooperation in the region, and inform the work of international organizations in the region (FAO and WHO).

Background

There is no evidence that COVID-19 can be transmitted by food or grow on food, however, public health measures necessary to limit the person to person spread of coronavirus have had an impact on operations in food production, transport and supply, trading routes and markets, and consumer purchasing patterns. Some examples of notable impacts include **food producers and food processors** to adapt to changes in supply of ingredients, packaging materials and other inputs, loss of key markets or changes in cross-border producers, changes in consumer demand. Many food businesses needed to introduce physical distancing measures, ventilation improvements, personal protective measures and reinforce strict personal hygiene all to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission and ensure safe handling of food.

Consumers have changed the way they buy food (online food shopping and an increase in home deliveries); increased demand for locally sourced foods revealed the need for small-scale food businesses to have robust food safety management systems in place and follow strict hygienic practices.

Furthermore, **food safety authorities** needed to prioritize their routine functions to critically important services during the COVID-19 pandemic to maintain the safety and integrity of the food supply chain and to support international trade.

Beyond the safety of food, it is observed that the COVID-19 pandemic has raised awareness and concern over potential hazards which can pass between humans, animals and the environment, leading to a renewed focus on the One Health approach, and the need for multi-sectoral collaboration between public health-agriculture-veterinary-environment sectors.

Many countries have been, and some still are, in full or partial lockdown. While it is important to continue assessing impacts to inform actions, it is timely to discuss how the COVID-19 pandemic has, and still is, affecting food control and food safety risk management in Europe and Central Asia.

Some questions we may discuss during the webinar:

1. Have disruptions to food supply chains, changes in food production and in consumption patterns, or shifts in responsibilities between stakeholders (i.e. government, private sector, consumers) changed food safety risks?
2. Is there any evidence of changes in risks of food fraud, food contamination and foodborne disease outbreaks?
3. Almost a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, what lessons have we learned and what have different stakeholders identified in terms of successful solutions or good practices to manage food safety risks?
4. What changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic do we expect to remain beyond the pandemic, e.g. online ordering and third-party delivery, e-commerce, and do they present potential food safety risks and challenges that need to be addressed?
5. To what extent will food safety competent authorities adopt new work methods? E.g. use of information technologies for food safety such as e-certification, block-chain data, and increased use of electronic documentation. Will these changes make food safety controls more robust?

Participants

The webinar targets policy-makers, food safety authorities, consumer organizations, food producers, academia, international development agencies working on food safety and FAO and WHO country offices in Europe and Central Asia.

FAO and WHO are supporting countries by providing guidance and policy briefs¹.

¹ <http://www.fao.org/food-safety/covid-19-materials/en/>

TENTATIVE AGENDA (90 minutes)

1.00-1.03	Short video/visual on objective of webinar and speakers-panel members. Moderator – introduction (a few points from the Concept note)	Mary Kenny , Food Safety and Consumer Protection Officer, FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia
1.03-1.09	Item 1 Opening remarks	Raimund Jehle , Strategic Programme Leader, FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia Caroline Brown , Programme Area Manager, Infectious Hazard Management, WHO Health Emergencies Programme, WHO Regional Office for Europe.
1.09-1.13	Moderator to introduce item 2 and the presenter Quiz – poll	Mary Kenny , Food Safety and Consumer Protection Officer, FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia
1.13-1.23	Item 2 - Setting the context – COVID-19 impacts on Food Safety Control and Management	Jeffrey LeJeune , Food Safety Officer, Food Systems and Food Safety Division, FAO
1.23-1.29	Item 3 - Regional perspectives Food controls during COVID-19: EC experience	Tim Gumbel , Deputy Head of Unit, DG Sante, European Commission.
1.29-1.35	Activities of the Eurasian Economic Commission in the context of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic	Natalia Pavlovna Zhukova , Director of the Department of Sanitary, Phytosanitary and Veterinary Measures of the Eurasian Economic Commission (EAEU).
1.35-2.00	Item 4 Facilitated panel discussion Focus on food safety control and management during early days of the pandemic and ongoing until now. What measures were taken, and what is the situation now?	Mary Kenny

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tim Gumbel, Deputy Head of Unit, DG Sante, European Commission. - Tengiz Kalandadze Head of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development Department of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA), Georgia. - Bakytzhan Abdrasilov, Meat Union NGO, Kazakhstan - Klaus Grunert, Aarhus University and partner of EIT Food - Volodymyr Lapa, Ukrainian AgriBusiness Club, Strategic Advisor to the President of UCAB and Former Head of State Service for Food Safety 	
2.00-2.08	Item 5: Q&A from the audience.	Peter Hoejskov. Technical Officer for Food Safety and Zoonotic Diseases with the WHO Regional Office for Europe
2.08-2.28	Item 6 - Facilitated panel discussion (continued) Focus on lessons learned and sharing forward looking perspectives on food safety management and control, and increasing resilience.	Peter Hoejskov
2.28-2.30	Item 5 - Wrap up and conclusion: Take-home messages from each panel member, what needs to be given immediate/medium term attention.	Mary Kenny