



Agenda Item 3b

CX/ASIA 16/20/4
August 2016

**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR ASIA
Twentieth Session**

New Delhi, India, 26-30 September 2016

**PRIORITIZATION OF THE NEEDS OF THE REGION AND
POSSIBLE APPROACHES TO ADDRESS THEM**

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. This paper has been consolidated based on the responses from 17 CCASIA members (74% response rate in the Asian region) to the questionnaire circulated to the Member countries in all RCCs. The paper follows from the summary and analysis of critical and emerging food safety and quality issues in Agenda Item 3a as well as other issues which have been raised by countries during various meetings and consultations. The objective of the paper is to promote discussion by the Committee in order to:

- i. Comprehend and further explore the priority issues highlighted in the responses to the questionnaire; and
- ii. Consider and recommend relevant follow up actions at national, regional or international levels. It is also important to suggest the appropriate persons/agencies/stakeholders (e.g. national Codex Contact Points, food safety competent authorities, risk assessment teams, policy makers) to be responsible for the recommended follow-up actions.

CRITICAL AND EMERGING FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY ISSUES IN ASIAN REGION AND FOLLOW UP ACTIONS NEEDED

2. With reference to Agenda Item 3a, Figure 1 and 2, the top six critical and emerging food safety and quality issues from the collective feedback to the questionnaire are identified as priorities:

- a) Lack of adequate resource capacity on food safety and quality
- b) Food contamination, food adulteration/fraud
- c) Food control systems
- d) Food safety policy
- e) Antimicrobial resistance (AMR)
- f) New technologies

3. Each identified priority is further described below with recommended follow-up actions. It may be noted that many areas are common between critical and emerging issues and therefore these have been covered together in this list.

a) Lack of adequate resource capacity on food safety and quality

4. Some main areas under inadequate resources include poor laboratory capacity, lack of availability of regular funding to undertake food control activities on a continuous basis, manpower capacity towards development and implementation of risk-based inspection and sampling, data and data analysis capacity for both standards setting and other risk management activities. An important area highlighted is also development and implementation of sampling and inspection plans.

b) Food contamination, food adulteration/fraud

5. Food contamination in terms of pesticide residues, veterinary drug residues and heavy metals, etc has been a major cause of concern in most countries in the region. There have been some initiatives towards implementation of Good Agriculture Practices (GAPs)/ Good Veterinary Practices (GVPs)/ Good Animal Husbandry Practices (GAHP), etc but many of these are focused towards exports rather than domestic supplies. A major reason being that domestic consumers are not ready to bear the additional costs which such schemes would entail so producers are not ready to invest additional time, effort and money for the same. Further whether the certifications are genuine is also a consumer concern. There needs to be a stronger focus on implementation of preventive approaches such as good practices across the food chain for the domestic food supply.

6. At the same time, the capacity in managing food adulteration and food fraud is also significant, with the increasing possibility to face unethical food businesses adulterating food for the purpose of quick economic gains. There is a need to develop risk assessment tools, stronger enforcement and improved accountability of food businesses to check for the increasing range of identified and non-identified adulterants.

c) Food control systems

7. A number of issues have been highlighted in relation to national food control systems, some of which include establishment of risk-based import control systems as well as capacity to inspect imported foods, coordinating food control efforts across different Ministries, agencies and national borders, development of risk-based standards and implementing the best risk-management option. FAO and WHO have developed relevance guidance documents to strengthen national food safety systems including the FAO guidance document on risk-based imported food control manual and the forthcoming FAO/WHO Food Control System Assessment Tool. A regional training on the subject will be useful.

d) Food safety policy

8. Development of national food safety policies with involvement and understanding at the highest political levels is needed to understand the importance and need of food safety as well as allocation of necessary resources for strengthening national food control systems and implementing food safety. Development of tools and guidance for advocacy to the highest levels, strengthening inter-sectoral approaches, development of food safety indicators and methods for measurement and tracking these are important areas which need stronger focus.

e) Antimicrobial resistance (AMR)

9. Public health concerns due to misuse and overuse of antibiotics which consequently lead to AMR has been identified as a major emerging issue. This has also led to the importance of the concept of the One Health approach which is a holistic approach to address complex threats to human, animal and plant health as well as to the ecosystem well-being. It is a unifying force to safeguard health of humans, plants and animals, to reduce pest and disease threats and to ensure a safe food supply through effective and responsible management of natural resources. The areas of focus in relation to food safety may be discussed so that food safety authorities can carefully consider their contribution to address this emerging health issue.

f) New technologies

10. The increasing role of new and emerging technologies in food production, post-harvest treatment, processing, packaging and sanitary treatment, ICT, nanotechnology, gene technology, food printing, etc have been identified as significant in the context of food safety. Understanding the food safety implications of these as well as measuring and monitoring hazards associated with these could be an important aspect for consideration

CONCLUSION

11. CCASIA, based on comments of Member countries, is encouraged to identify and propose suitable and feasible follow up actions and approaches to address the identified priority issues for the region. The discussion will become a standing item on the future agenda for CCASIA.

DISCUSSION ON CRITICAL AND EMERGING ISSUES

12. Through the discussion, the Committee is encouraged to consider the issues which were highlighted most frequently, bearing in mind the relevance of these issues to the region to identify suitable and feasible follow-up actions. This should not limit, however, the Committee in picking up some less highly ranked issues that they may also wish to discuss.

13. To support the discussion, the Committee is asked to reflect prior to CCASIA on the importance of the issues to your country and the region, and any relevant follow-up action that might be needed (within or outside of Codex). In doing so, countries may like to consider the following aspects:

- i. How does this process to identify critical and emerging issues contribute to identify priority action to strengthen food safety in your country?
- ii. How does this process to identify critical and emerging issues contribute to strengthen a regional approach to address common food safety issues of concern in the Asian region?
- iii. How are the identified critical and emerging issues influencing food safety systems in your country and highlight any ongoing activity in your country or region relevant to the topic?
- iv. How can Member countries, FAO and WHO prioritize interventions to address the identified critical and emerging issues (what criteria, indicators and approaches can be used)?

14. In addition, Member countries may like to consider:

- i. Information sharing during CCASIA on the relevance of the issue to your country and the region
- ii. Ongoing activity in your country and the region relevant to the topic
- iii. Whether one or more issue(s) benefit from any additional follow up action such as discussion or work within or outside of Codex; direct activity to be carried out by respective government; requesting assistance with future capacity development to FAO, WHO or bilateral organizations; and the type of relevant information/data needed to support the work.
- iv. Issues not requiring action now that should be monitored to see how they evolve.

15. The outcome of the discussion will be documented in the Committee report, with a focus on issues and approaches to follow up action and solutions.