

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 ASIA

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OPENING REMARK AND OTHER SPEECHES

Ms Shashi Sareen, FAO RAP Representative

Distinguished participants, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen

On behalf of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this 19th session of the FAO and WHO Coordinating Committee for Asia, or CCASIA as it is commonly known.

I take this opportunity to offer our sincere gratitude to the Government of Thailand as Coordinator for Asia and chair of this Session and Japan for co-hosting this meeting and the Japanese secretariat for the hard work put in to ensure the success of this meeting.

The role of Codex standards in the area of food safety, as you are aware, has become specifically important with globalization and establishment of the WTO and signing of the SPS Agreement which references Codex documents as the baseline for the purpose of human health. Thus the Codex Alimentarius has become the global reference point for standards for consumers, food producers and processors, national food control agencies and generally the international food trade. This implies that countries need to not only to develop national standards in line with Codex but also participate in international standards setting so as to be able to influence such standards.

Regional Coordinating Committees including CCASIA, as most of you are aware, meet every 2 years to discuss issues related to food safety and food trade. These have a major role to play in relation to food standards and food control in the region. These provide the link between the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) and its technical committees and the regions to ensure that Codex both represents and is responsive to country and regional needs as related to food standards. RCCs are also a useful forum for FAO and WHO to engage with countries, and discuss priority needs and challenges which subsequently inform the planning and monitoring of their food quality and safety activities in the regions.

This meeting is specifically important as it will be discussing a number of important issues. An important issue is the revitalization of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees (Agenda item 4) wherein it will be examined how the RCCs can contribute more effectively to not only Codex but also FAO and WHO activities and ensure that the considerable resources and time invested in the meeting is optimized.

In this meeting, the status of implementation of the strategic plan for CCASIA for 2009-14 will be reviewed and, the draft strategic plan for the period 2015 -2020 which presents the goals and strategic objectives for CCASIA and Asian members and also includes detailed activities, timelines and measurable indicators or outputs will also be considered for finalization.

Another important subject is the proposed Draft Regional Code of Practice for street-vended foods. In this connection, it may be mentioned that in a Regional Consultation held in September last year in which 41 representatives from 22 Asian countries had represented had developed a regional guidance document on Hygiene and safety in food retail sector based on inputs from members. This contains the important hygiene and safety requirements for both street foods and organised retail sectors. It is hoped that this will be duly considered while further moving ahead with this proposed Code.

I am pleased to note that as on date 23 Asian countries are members of CAC and 34 participants from 17 countries have been supported to attend this meeting as well as the one-day training workshop held yesterday on "Food recall/traceability within the risk analysis framework - Prevention of food safety emergencies" with the support of the FAO and WHO Codex Trust Fund.

Ladies and gentlemen

FAO and WHO have been continuously supporting various food safety related projects in Asia Pacific Region for capacity strengthening, covering different aspects of food safety including regional as well as country activities on food standardization, including strengthening country capacities to participate in as well as understand the importance and use of Codex standards and texts, harmonizing national standards with Codex, as well as supporting infrastructure establishment to implement such standards.

Currently FAO is implementing 15-20 food safety projects in the region – either country specific or regional ones. One such project is “Support to Capacity Building and Implementation of International Food Safety Standards in ASEAN Countries” funded by the Japanese government which aims at strengthening the capacities of ASEAN countries in contributing to Codex standards-setting and implementing the adopted Codex standards. I am pleased to inform that a side event on “Enhancement of Capacity on Codex Standards in ASEAN Countries” is also being organized on the 5th which will highlight the activities under this important FAO Regional project.

Ladies and gentlemen

Codex and standard setting are an important part of FAO’s mandate. Food safety is also integral to FAO’s global goal of eradicating hunger and malnutrition, since people cannot be food secure, if their food is not safe. FAO along with WHO and other partners, is committed to working with you towards safer food for the people we serve.

With these words, I wish the Committee successful deliberations over the week.

Thank you.

Mr Kazuaki Miyagishima, WHO Representative

FAO COLLEAGUE, DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

On behalf of the World Health Organization, I would like to start by conveying my sincere appreciation to the Governments of Thailand and Japan for facilitating and hosting the 19th Session of the Codex Coordinating Committee for Asia here in Tokyo. And I welcome all participants here from a huge area that encompasses three regions of WHO, the Western Pacific, South-east Asia, and part of the Eastern Mediterranean.

As we all know, access to sufficient, safe and nutritionally adequate food is a basic human right. The impact of food quality and safety goes beyond public health, often resulting in huge social, economic and political consequences. The Second International Conference on Nutrition, which will take place in Rome in two weeks, with representatives of all countries present here, will recognise once again the importance of food safety as an essential component to achieve food and nutrition security.

With the globalization of the world’s food supply, contaminated food can rapidly spread across national borders. Recent food safety incidents clearly demonstrate the urgent need for strengthening national food safety systems and international collaboration in a complex global food system. This evolution is giving a new meaning to Codex, which was established half a century ago and is since then playing a key role in establishing a common framework for harmonization of food standards across countries.

No single country can manage all food quality and safety problems alone. Regional and international collaboration is essential. This meeting, CCASIA, is an ideal forum to discuss matters of common interest and concern for food safety in the region every two years. WHO is very much looking forward to its evolution as a body to identify a common agenda in the region and support food standard setting at the global level, not restricted to the regional level.

The Codex Trust Fund has played a key role in supporting member countries’ participation in Codex work. The support has contributed to better representation of Asian countries in Codex Committees and supported capacity building at country level. We will discuss more, later today, how we would renew this initiative next year with a successor initiative and better cater to the demand of countries in need.

DISTINGUISHED PARTICIPANTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

The World Health Organization recognizes food safety as a key health security issue. Food safety incidents and emergencies are a threat to health security and countries need well-functioning and risk-based food control systems to effectively prevent and respond to foodborne disease outbreaks. The International Health Regulations of WHO provide a common global legal framework for protecting public health security. The Regulations provide a public health response to the international spread of disease and countries are legally required to meet a number of core capacities, including 21 core capacities for food safety.

To assist countries in achieving the minimum core capacities required under the International Health Regulations and to minimize the health, economic and social impact of emerging diseases in the Asia Pacific

region, the WHO Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases serves as a guiding document. This strategy provides guidance for countries to improve their ability to detect, assess, report and respond to public health threats. The strategy focuses on critical cross-cutting capacities, including surveillance, risk assessment and response.

In line with the Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases, the Western Pacific Regional Food Safety Strategy 2011-2015 and the South-East Asia Regional Food Safety Strategy 2013–2017 provide more focused approaches for reducing the risk of food contamination and foodborne diseases. The Strategies identifies priority strategic actions required to help ensure safe and healthy food and to initiate, develop and sustain multisectoral approaches and measures for the promotion of food safety among all population groups.

This 19th Session of CCASIA provides a great opportunity for advancing food safety in Asia and strengthening regional partnerships and collaboration across countries. We have a comprehensive agenda in front of us with a number of strategic discussions to take place. WHO, together with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and other partners, is committed to working with you towards safer and more nutritious food for the people we serve.

I wish you all a fruitful and productive Session.

Thank you.

Ms Awilo Ochieng Pernet, Chairperson of the Codex Alimentarius Commission

Distinguished Chairman of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Asia, Mr Pisan Pongsapitch

Distinguished Vice-Chairperson of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, Mrs Yayoi Tsujiyama

Honourable Director General for Technical Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan, Mr Tomohiro Bessho

Distinguished Representatives of FAO, Ms Shashi Sareen and WHO, Mr Kazuaki Miyagishima and the Codex Secretariat Distinguished Participants of the CCASIA

Distinguished Guests Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great privilege and honour for me to be with you here today in Tokyo for the 19th session of CCASIA and I would like to join the FAO and WHO and the CCASIA Chair in extending a very warm welcome to you all.

First of all, I would like to warmly congratulate Mrs Yayoi Tsujiyama from Japan on her election to the post of Vice-Chairperson of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. Yayoi, I am grateful for the opportunity to work with you together with the other two Vice-Chairpersons from Brazil and Mali.

I would also like to congratulate the CCASIA Chairperson Mr Pisan Pongsapitch from Thailand on his appointment as Chairperson of CCASIA following the nomination of Thailand as the new CCASIA Coordinator last July.

I also express my sincere appreciation to FAO, WHO and the Codex Secretariat for the very valuable assistance and support that they give to the CCASIA region all along the year. Furthermore, I would like to extend my gratitude and appreciation to the Japanese Codex Secretariat for their hard work and commitment.

I acknowledge the very precious financial support that is provided by the Codex Trust Fund (CTF) to beneficiary members of the CCASIA region to enable them to participate effectively in Codex work including this CCASIA session. As we were informed earlier on, the CTF sponsored 32 participants from 17 countries to attend this CCASIA session.

It is also thanks to the funding provided by the CTF, that FAO and WHO managed to organise the “Pre-CCASIA Workshop on Food Recall/Traceability within the Risk Analysis Framework – Prevention of Food Safety Emergencies” yesterday (2nd November 2014).

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the CCASIA Members who are donors to the CTF for their generous contributions and their continued support towards this noble initiative and I hope that they will continue supporting the Codex Trust Fund and its Successor Initiative in future.

I am also grateful for all the various partnership initiatives between the FAO/WHO and some Codex Members from your region and outside your region, which aim at improving food safety and quality in the Asian region. These capacity development initiatives have dealt with important subjects such as food hygiene and safety in the retail trade, the implementation of GMP/HACCP in Asia, the development of a

training module on implementing ASEANGAP in the fruit and vegetable sector, to mention but a few. Thank you very much for these important contributions!

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to say a few words regarding our two co-host countries: Japan and Thailand. Well, I don't know how many of you are aware of the fact that both Japan and Thailand are founding Members of the CAC. In fact, they were the only two Codex founding Members from the Asian region in 1963. Indeed, this co-hosting arrangement for the 19th session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for CCASIA in Tokyo this week, clearly illustrates the long-lasting commitment of both the Governments of Japan and Thailand towards the efforts undertaken by the Codex Alimentarius Commission to develop food standards in order to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade and I sincerely appreciate the engagement and work done by both countries.

The CCASIA was established as a Regional Coordinating Committee in 1978. Ever since then, 10 new countries have joined your region bringing the total CCASIA membership to 23 Members who represent 60% of the world's population, as indicated by our Chairperson in his opening remarks.

I acknowledge the efforts made by all of the 23 Member countries of the CCASIA region. Indeed, each and every country of your region is important to Codex. I value your leadership and dedication and I am grateful for your commitment to Codex work and your great efforts to ensure food safety and quality in order to protect the health of consumers and to ensure fair practices in the food trade, at the national level, in the CCASIA region and in the rest of the world. I also acknowledge all that you do to enable Codex to achieve its strategic goals and objectives.

The submission made by Indonesia in their written comments (ASIA/19 CRD 14) prompted me to look at the co-hosting arrangements that countries in your region have undertaken since 2012. It is therefore with great interest and satisfaction that I noted that:

- the 32nd session of the Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products was co-hosted by Indonesia and Norway in Bali, Indonesia in October 2012;
- the 20th session of the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems was co-hosted by Thailand and Australia in Chang Mai, Thailand in February 2013;
- the 45th session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene was co-hosted by Vietnam and the United States in Hanoi, Vietnam in November 2013;
- the 18th session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables was co-hosted by Thailand and Mexico in Phuket, Thailand in February 2014; and
- the 36th session of CCNFSDU will be co-hosted by Indonesia and Germany in Bali, from 24th to 28th November 2014.

I am told that there will be other co-hosting arrangements in your region in the near future and I am very pleased to hear this news. Indeed, I am convinced that co-hosting arrangements are very positive and therefore, they should be encouraged as they are a means of enhancing developing country participation in Codex work by taking Codex to different parts of the world, thereby enabling countries from the region to have an opportunity to participate in those Codex sessions. This in turn helps sensitise more national and regional stakeholders about Codex food safety and quality work. In addition, and among others, the country where the meeting takes place gets a unique chance to experience firsthand what it means to organise a Codex session which in turn has a positive impact on the organisation of Codex activities at the national level. I would also like to highlight other co-chairing initiatives of Electronic or Physical Working Groups involving Members of your region. This too is a very positive development.

As I studied the various documents that have been prepared in view of this session, and in particular Annex III of the document on the Status of Implementation of the Strategic Plan for CCASIA 2009-2014 (whose elements are now incorporated in the Draft Strategic Plan for CCASIA for 2015-2020) as well as the document on Agenda Item 3: FAO/WHO activities which are relevant to the region, I noted that both documents were extremely consistent regarding the identified challenges, priorities and capacity development needs in the CCASIA region.

Indeed, both documents identify several priority areas of action which include, among others, capacity building for national food regulatory systems, support for national Codex programmes including technical support for Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committees in order to enhance effective participation in Codex, training and cooperation among CCASIA Members in the form of regional workshops, mentoring programmes, technical support and the development of tools and training materials to assist food safety and quality control activities, enhancing scientific and technical capacities including supporting countries to

strengthen their risk analysis capacities, improving consumer education, etc. It is no surprise that the list of priority areas is as long as the list of identified challenges.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is true that there is still a lot of work to be done to ensure food safety and quality both in the CCASIA region and in the rest of the world. That is why I call upon all Codex Members to work with determination and perseverance in order to address the numerous challenges. Nevertheless, I believe that both CCASIA and Codex in general have come a long way since 1963 when the Codex Alimentarius Commission was established. Indeed, the enormous progress made so far has laid a solid foundation for future positive results. Therefore, there are good reasons to celebrate what has been accomplished so far at the national, regional and global levels thanks to the tireless efforts, commitment and engagement of Codex Members and FAO and WHO.

Indeed, the success achieved so far, however big or small it may be, should give us the confidence to anticipate the future with hope and optimism of improving even further the safety and quality of the food at the national, regional and global levels in order to protect the health of the world's consumers and to ensure fair practices in the food trade.

Let me conclude my remarks by expressing my sincere gratitude once again to Japan, Thailand, the FAO and WHO, the Codex Secretariat and the Members of CCASIA for having worked tirelessly for several months in order to ensure that the stage is set for the perfect and efficient deliberations of this session of CCASIA.

Distinguished Members of CCASIA, your participation in the 19th session of CCASIA in Tokyo this week as well as your active engagement in the discussions of the Working Groups on the Draft Regional Standard for Non-Fermented Soybean Products and on the Draft Strategic Plan for the CCASIA 2015-2020 last Saturday clearly indicate your desire to have a positive outcome from this session.

I look forward to exchanging views with you all and to learning more about the Codex activities as well as the food safety and quality priorities in your region.

I wish you a very successful 19th session of the CCASIA! Thank you for your attention!

Mr Tomohiro Bessyo, Director-General for Technical Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

Ms Awilo Ochieng Pernet, Chairperson of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, Mr Pisan Pongsapitch, Chairman of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Asia, Codex Secretariat in the front table, distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you very much for attending the 19th session of CCASIA. On behalf of Government of Japan, I would like to express my sincerest welcome to all of you attending the session.

Today lot of foods are distributed widely in the world due to rapid economic growth in Asian region and advancement in globalization. On the other hand international standards developed by Codex have contributed greatly to protecting the health of consumers and ensuring fair practices in the food trade. The SPS and TBT agreement which are part of WTO agreement encourage Governments to base their national measures such as food safety and food labelling on the Codex standards.

Making efforts for food safety, needless to say, is a shared important task for countries in order to protect life and health of humans. While the global environment surrounding foods is evolving due to climate change, innovation in food science and technology and consumer concerns. Under such circumstances as you would be aware, efforts have been made by countries including Japan to strengthen control against various hazard, such as acrylamide or mycotoxin. Codex is expected to adapt to this evolving environment and be capable of proactively responding in a timely manner to these emerging issues with an aim to protect consumer's health and ensure fair practices in food trade.

Japan as a Coordinator for CCASIA from July in 2011 to July this year had been trying to coordinate position of Asian members to work in partnership with each other at the Codex Alimentarius Commission and subsidiary bodies. In 2012 Japan held 18th session of CCASIA in Tokyo successfully. However at the 37th session of CAC held in July this year in Geneva, Ms Yayoi Tsujiyama of my Ministry was elected as one of Vice-Chairpersons of the CAC and interpretation of Codex rules regarding Executive Committee has been changed. Consequently Japan stepped down from the position of the Coordinator for CCASIA. As a former Coordinator Japan showed its concern about causing confusion about the 19th session of CCASIA which we had been preparing for more than a year to hold the meeting in Tokyo. In response to Japan's concern, however our friend Thailand showed its willingness to be an interim-Coordinator for CCASIA and agreed to chair 19th Session of CCASIA in Tokyo as planned. As a Co-hosting country Japan would like to express its sincerest gratitude to the government of Thailand. We also would like to express our deepest appreciation for warm supports by Asian members for Ms Tsujiyama at the Vice-chairperson election.

Lastly I am certain that CCASIA always provide us with good opportunities to discuss issues about food safety, food standards and quality control which are unique to the Asian region. I conclude my remark wishing for successful session for all of you and also that CCASIA will contribute to more fruitful activities in your country. On that positive note, I would like to conclude my remarks. Thank you for your attention.