



**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR AFRICA
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**PRIORITIZATION OF THE NEEDS OF THE REGION AND
POSSIBLE APPROACHES TO ADDRESS THEM**

(Prepared by FAO and WHO)

Introduction and Background

1. This paper follows from the summary and analysis of critical and emerging food safety and quality issues in agenda item 3a, CX/AFRICA 17/22/3 and is to promote discussion by the Committee in order to:
 - i. Explore the priority issues highlighted in the responses to the questionnaire on critical and emerging food safety and quality issues; and
 - ii. Consider and recommend relevant follow up actions at national, regional or international levels including the key appropriate stakeholders responsible for the recommended follow-up actions.

Priority critical and emerging food safety and quality issues

2. With reference to agenda item 3a, Figure 1, the most frequently cited critical and emerging issues (identified as both critical and emerging) are:

- a) Weak national food control system
- b) Consumers' awareness and education
- c) Climate change
- d) Antimicrobial resistance

3. Issues related to street food also ranked most frequently but were mentioned only as a critical issue. A recall of the issues is provided below with recommended follow-up actions. As many areas are common between critical and emerging issues, these are covered together in this list. Detailed explanations of the issues are provided in the Annex of CX/AFRICA 17/22/3.

- *Weak national food control system*

4. A number of issues in relation to national food control systems have been highlighted and they include fragmented structures coupled with lack of coordination, outdated regulations, limited control and enforcement capacities and weak laboratory capacities. FAO and WHO have developed a number of guidance documents to strengthen national food control systems (such as Assuring Food Safety and Quality: Guidelines to Strengthen National Food Control System¹; the FAO series on risk based inspection², including a general issue, an issue specific for fish products and the newest issue on imported food control). The Codex Alimentarius Principles and Guidelines for National Food Control Systems (CAC/GL 82-2013) also offers guidance to countries on how best to design their food control system and implement specific control measures. The new Food Control System Assessment tool, which has been tested in a number of African countries and will be officially released in the first quarter of 2017, will serve as a basis to analyse performance of national food control systems and define a shared vision among stakeholders of the priorities for progress. A number of tailored made capacity development approaches could then be formulated and prove useful to strengthen national food control systems, either on a national or a regional basis.

¹ <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/006/y8705e/y8705e00.pdf>

² <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/010/i0096e/i0096e00.pdf>; <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/011/i0468e/i0468e00.pdf>;
<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5381e.pdf>

- *Consumers' awareness and education*

5. There is often, a lacuna in awareness of consumers about food safety matters. With the development of media communication and use of social networks, past food safety incidents however have helped to increase consumers' awareness for food safety issues. There is need for sustained food safety consumer education targeting various settings including schools and certain segments of the population who, either directly or indirectly have a role in food preparation and/or increased vulnerability to foodborne diseases. WHO has developed simple global food safety messages with accompanying tools for consumer education "the Five Keys to Safer Food" adapted to different target audience and settings. Strengthening of platforms for the sharing of experiences between countries could be an aspect for consideration.

- *Climate change*

6. Climate change presents challenges which impact on food security, nutrition and may contribute to the spread of foodborne pathogens and occurrence of food safety hazards at various stages of the food chain. There is a need for countries to develop contingency plans to prepare for the management of emergency situations that arise from extreme weather events which are expected to be more frequent as a result of climate change. In addition, the capacity to integrate more subtle changes in climatic patterns into the hazard analysis along value chain, supported by early warning and foresight systems would need to be strengthened.

- *Antimicrobial resistance*

7. The control and prevention of diseases caused by foodborne bacteria and their associated antimicrobial resistance (AMR) requires multi-sectoral collaboration under the "One Health" approach. There is need to strengthen capacity building for surveillance for AMR including pilot projects to increase understanding of the contribution of the food chain to the overall AMR problem.

Discussion on critical and emerging issues

8. To support the discussion, the Committee is encouraged to reflect on the relevance of the issues to the region, and any relevant follow up action that might be needed (within or outside of Codex). In doing so, please consider:

- a) 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 region?
- b) Any ongoing activity in your country or in the region relevant to the topic.
- c) Is one or more issue(s) currently being addressed through an ongoing FAO, WHO or other bilateral capacity development project or programme?
- d) Which of the critical and/or emerging issues do the Committee consider most important to address?

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

- a) Whether one or more issue(s) benefit from any additional follow up action such as discussion or work within the Codex;
- b) Whether a direct activity could be carried out by your government;
- c) Whether one or more issue(s) could be supported through ongoing or future capacity development support from FAO, WHO or bilateral organizations.

Conclusions

10. Based upon the above discussion, the Committee is asked to prioritize the emerging and critical issues for follow up action within CCAFRICA and propose suitable approaches for follow up.

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