CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION E

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

World Health Organization

Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy - Tel: (+39) 06 57051 - E-mail: codex@fao.org - www.codexalimentarius.org

Agenda Item 3.1 **CX/LAC 19/21/3**

August 2019

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Twenty-first Session

Santiago, Chile, 21 - 25 October 2019

FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY SITUATION IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE REGION: CURRENT AND EMERGING ISSUES IN THE REGION

(Prepared by the Regional Coordinator, CCLAC Secretariat, FAO and WHO)

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. In order to address the dynamics of the global/regional/national food safety/control systems within an evolving global and interconnected food safety context, it is important to identify and prioritize the relevant issues for Codex work, and ongoing regional and national follow up.

1.2. Within the process of the revitalization of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees (RCCs), the 70th session of the Executive Committee (CCEXEC), and the 38th session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) requested FAO and WHO, in collaboration with the Codex Secretariat and the Regional Coordinators, to develop a set of questions on needs and priorities in the regions; and prepare an analysis of the information collected for presentation at the next round of the RCC sessions.

1.3. Following the request, a survey was prepared and the findings were presented at CCLAC20 in 2016. This Committee noted that critical and emerging issues would be a standing item on RCCs' agendas and suggested to effectively use this opportunity to identify more concrete and precise areas that RCCs would recommend countries as well as the Commission and its relevant committees to work on.

1.4. In response to the suggestion, a second version of the survey for the current round of RCCs was prepared by FAO and WHO, in collaboration with Codex Secretariat and the Regional Coordinators. The inputs from Codex Members from the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region are presented in this document. The objective of this paper is to support countries in identifying food safety/quality issues that could be of significance and lead to concrete action where necessary.

2. METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH TO THE SURVEY

2.1 To identify emerging issues of relevance to food safety and quality, an online questionnaire using the Survey Monkey platform was set up and the Regional Coordinator sent out the online link to the survey to the Codex Contact Points (CCPs) of all Codex Members across the region inviting them to answer the following questions in consultation with the relevant stakeholders in their countries.

- Identify the three most important emerging issues that are expected to have an impact on food safety in the next 5 -10 years;
- For each of the issues identified, provide a title, a brief description and an explanation of why this was considered to be an important issue;
- Describe the process (who was consulted and contributed to responses) and the information sources that were used to identify the issues.

2.2. In order to receive feedback and responses from the countries, as well as to draft this paper, the Regional Coordinator played a key role including active follow-up with the countries. In comparison with the last survey conducted by email, whose request was not very clear, the online survey of this year might have better facilitated response from countries, which is partially reflected to a slightly higher response rate described below.

2.3. Definitions of the key terms used in the questionnaire were provided (see Table 1).

Table 1. Key terms and their definition

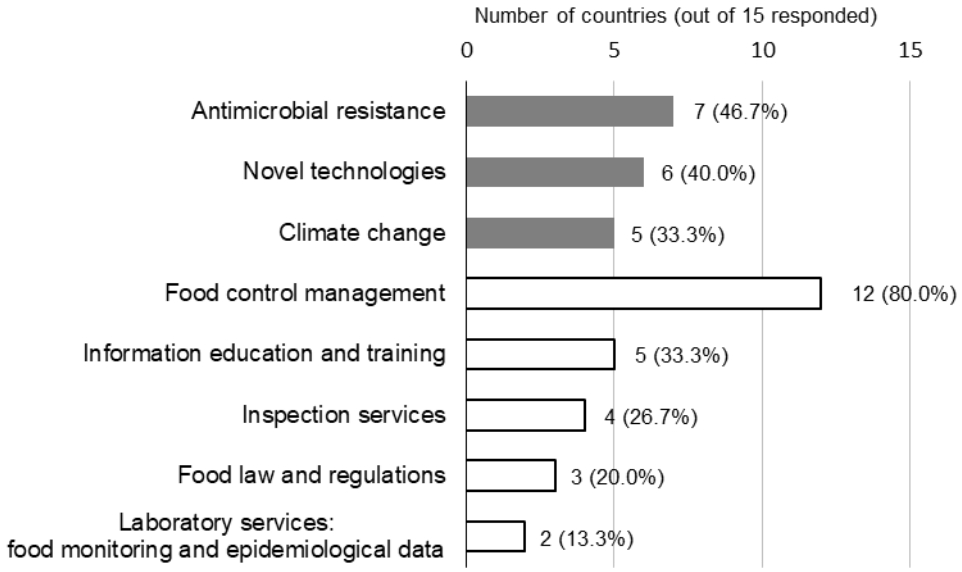
Key Terms	Definition
Issues	The term *issues* means hazards/challenges, but also opportunities or trends that might have an impact on food safety and quality.
Emerging issues	Those that are new or unexpected. Although their effect is currently not necessarily being experienced, these issues may cause a change in the status quo. Identification of these issues will help to provide proactive guidance and support to counties in addressing prospective issues that could be of regulatory significance.

3. SUMMARY OF THE REGIONAL EMERGING ISSUES

3.1 Responses were received from 15 out of a total of 33 member countries, which represent 45% of the countries of the region. Members that provided responses by the deadline for inclusion in this document were the following: Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Granada, Guyana, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, St. Lucia and Uruguay. The rate of response is slightly higher than the last survey conducted in 2016 when 12 out of 33 member countries submitted their responses.

3.2. The information received from the countries was consolidated into broad categories. An overview of all emerging issues that were identified is provided in Annex I. Figure 1 describes the distribution of emerging issues in food safety and quality for the responding LAC countries.

Figure 1. Distribution of the emerging issues in food safety and quality for the responding LAC countries.



3.3. The emerging issues expected to affect food safety in the next 5-10 years were identified in the region (Figure 1). The numbers at the right of each bar indicate the total number of countries out of 15 that brought up the respective issues, based on which the percentages were calculated.

3.4. The topics proposed by the countries were grouped into two major categories, the first category, shown as grey bars in Figure 1, includes major trends: antimicrobial resistance (AMR), new technologies and climate change. These three topics were identified to be emerging issues in more than one third of the countries.

3.5. The second category, shown as white bars in Figure 1, includes all other topics mentioned by countries which were classified as belonging to one of the 5 different pillars of the National Food Control Systems (NFCS) according to the FAO publications “Strengthening national food control systems. Guidelines to assess capacity building needs”[1] and “Strengthening national food control systems. A quick guide to assess capacity building

[1] ISBN 92-5-105536-6. Available at http://www.fao.org/3/a-a0601e.pdf

needs."[2]. Most of the countries (12 out of 15) identified food control management as an emerging issue followed by information education and training, and inspection services.

3.6. A summary of the emerging issues identified by the Member Countries is as follows:

4. ANALYZED RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

First category

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR)

4.1. Codex is currently addressing AMR via the reactivation of the Ad hoc Codex Intergovernmental Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance. This Task Force was launched in 2007 to develop guidance on methodology and processes for risk assessment, its application to the antimicrobials used in human and veterinary medicine as provided by FAO/WHO through the Joint Expert Meetings on Microbiological Risk Assessment (JEMRA), and in close cooperation with World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), with subsequent consideration of risk management options. The Task Force was dissolved by the 34th Session of the Commission (2011) upon completion of its mandate. The task force was reactivated in 2017 in order to:

(i) Review and revise as appropriate the Code of Practice to Minimize and Contain Antimicrobial Resistance (CAC/RCP 61-2005) to address the entire food chain, in line with the mandate of Codex.

(ii) Consider the development of Guidance on Integrated Surveillance of Antimicrobial Resistance, taking into account the guidance developed by the WHO Advisory Group on Integrated Surveillance of Antimicrobial Resistance (AGISAR) and relevant OIE documents.

4.2. Participation of countries from the region in the meetings of the Ad hoc Codex Intergovernmental Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance (TFAMR) has been historically low (see table 2). Under agenda item 4[3], the status of use of Codex standards including Guidelines for Risk Analysis of Foodborne Antimicrobial Resistance (CXG 77-2011) will be discussed during the CCLAC21.

Table 2. LAC countries that have participated in TFAMR meetings

Meeting	CCLAC countries that attended the meeting
TFAMR1 (2007)	Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, México
TFAMR2 (2008)	Brazil, Costa Rica
TFAMR3 (2009)	Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Perú
TFAMR4 (2010)	Brazil, Colombia
TFAMR5 (2017)	Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica
TFAMR6 (2018)	Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Paraguay

4.3. The region might consider a closer follow up of the meetings around the TFAMR and submit written comments and participate in the electronic working groups that have emerged from that work, to enhance further participation of CCLAC member countries.

4.4. However, it is worth noting that the level of participation of countries in the region in TFAMR does not necessarily reflect the commitment of the countries on the fight against AMR. Despite the low participation in the TFAMR, the countries have been working on the development of National Action Plans (NAPs) on AMR. As of August 2019, 15 out of 33 CCLAC member countries have approved their NAPs, while the remaining 18 countries are in the process of developing their NAPs (Table3).

Table 3. Status of the National Action Plants (NAPs) on Antimicrobial Resistance in the LAC countries

Status	CCLAC countries
Approved	Argentina, Barbados, Brasil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay
Under development	Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Belize, Bolivia, Cuba, Dominica, Grenada, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Panama, Dominican Republic, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela

[2] ISBN 92-5-105730-8. Available at http://www.fao.org/3/a-a1142e.pdf

[3] A paper on the use of Codex standards in the region developed for the CCLAC21. Available at http://tiny.cc/codex_standards_cclac21

New technologies

4.5. New technologies have formed part of the Codex agenda for some time. CCLAC countries have expressed some concern about the impact that new technologies applied to food safety might have on developing countries. The discussions held at CCMAS38 regarding technology that replaced biological methods used to detect chemicals of concern[4] and concerns expressed by CCLAC delegates on CCFICS regarding use of electronic certificates[5] are two examples of this.

4.6. The answers provided by countries are more focused on production technologies rather than technology incorporated in Codex standards. LAC countries may consider possible ways to tackle issues related to the incorporation of new technology both from a NFCS perspective by seeking advice from WHO/FAO or other relevant organizations, and ponder that Codex may increasingly incorporate new technologies into the drafting of standards.

Climate change

4.7. Climate change was mentioned by countries as a major factor that would influence the dynamics of food productive systems, and a major issue to be addressed by authorities. A need to strengthen country capacity to evaluate threats to public health and develop and implement effective preparedness mechanisms for the new scenario that climate change may produce might be considered by the CCLAC countries.

Second category

4.8. This category includes all topics that were not easily grouped under a specific theme. The distribution of the answers on the five pillars of the NFCS are show in Figure 1.

4.9. Sound NFCS are known to pave the way to effectively address the different challenges national authorities face in terms of food safety and food quality. Codex has developed two specific guidelines that help national authorities to improve the performance of the NFCS, Principles and Guidelines for National Food Control Systems (CXG 82-2013) and more recently Principles and Guidelines for Monitoring the Performance of National Food Control Systems (CXG 91-2017). There is no data to evaluate if countries have adopted these guidelines as a way to strengthen their NFCS.

4.10. FAO has also developed tools that help countries to better understand and improve the functioning of their NFCS. The FAO publication “Assuring food safety and Quality – Guidelines for strengthening national food control systems”[6], the 2006 document “Strengthening national food control systems. Guidelines to assess capacity building needs.”[7] and the following document from 2007 “Strengthening national food control systems. A quick guide to assess capacity building needs.”[8] as well as the latest document that was launched at the side event of the CAC42 “Food control system assessment tool, FAO Food safety and quality series n. 7”[9].

4.11. The InterAmerican Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) along with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) developed the Performance, Vision and Strategy (PVS) for National Food Safety Services, a document that can assist national food safety services to determine their current level of performance, create a shared vision with the private sector on how the services should perform in the future, individually and in relation to other services within the national food safety system, establish priorities, and facilitate strategic planning to fulfill their enormous responsibility towards the consumer, and to take full advantage of the new opportunities and commitments brought about by globalization.

4.12. Countries wishing to improve the functioning of their NFCS may want to explore the possibility to ask FAO/PAHO-WHO, IICA or other partners support to implement these or other relevant tools.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. CCLAC is requested to provide inputs to the following points that could guide further action by FAO/WHO, Codex members and the CAC:

(i) Is the online survey considered useful to identify national and regional emerging issues?

(ii) How can the process of identifying emerging issues in the region be improved?

(iii) Are there any other emerging issues in the region (18 out of 33 total member countries did not complete the survey)?

[4] REP16/MAS P.64 -70, REP17/MAS p.40-74
[5] ALINORM 07/30/30, Appendix II
[6] http://www.fao.org/3/a-y8705e.pdf
[7] ISBN 92-5-105536-6. Available at http://www.fao.org/3/a-a0601e.pdf
[8] ISBN 92-5-105730-8. Available at http://www.fao.org/3/a-a1142e.pdf
[9] ISBN 978-92-5-131624-5. Web link to be shortly available.

(iv) What topics could be prioritized and then addressed in a period of the coming two years, between CCLAC21 and CCLAC22.

(v) What follow-up actions need to be taken at the regional or country level to address emerging issues and activities identified in (iv)?

(vi) For (v), what is the role of FAO, PAHO-WHO and Codex?

ANNEX1

Country responses on emerging issues

Category (number of times it was mentioned)	Explanation of the emerging issue
AMR (7)	Countries mentioned the following specific topics under this category: AMR has been broadly discussed in different international, including Codex. This phenomenon has been exacerbated by the inappropriate and excessive use of antimicrobials, which constitutes a significant global threat to public health, as well as for economic and agricultural development. Antimicrobials are used in the production of plants and terrestrial and aquatic animals, either as a treatment or for non-therapeutic purposes. AMR is a national priority for countries, but there is a lack of capacity to monitor the appropriate use of antibiotics. The relation between the use of antimicrobials in animals destined for production of food and the emergence of resistant microorganisms in the food chain raises concerns and has been the subject of numerous national and international consultations.
Novel Technologies (6)	While the use of new scientific advances, technical discoveries and technological innovations can help the development of more economically and environmentally efficient food systems, new technologies also have the potential to bring along new hazards and new risks. Microplastics, packaging materials, digital traceability, GMOs and nanotechnology were mentioned as new trends that may impact the landscape in food safety
Climate change (5)	Countries expressed their concerns regarding how climate change is going to change the environment and therefore the dynamics in the distribution of pathogens, mycotoxins, marine biotoxins and heavy metals. It would also pose a challenge for NFCS to generate appropriate risk mitigation measures for the new scenario. Clean water and access to water was identified as a mayor challenge.
Food control management (12)	Countries mentioned the following specific topics under this category: Nutrition and food for special regimes Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) for Veterinary Drugs, Environmental Pollutants and Pesticides in food of animal origin New trends or consumption habits as a factor promoting change National Capabilities and decisions based on proven facts and recognized international standards Increase in international food adulteration The constant level of informality in the food sector Contamination in primary foods Certification of Food products manufactured at the national level Sustainability of a robust food control system Organic Food Safety of Processed foods, foodborne illnesses and food pollution
Information education and training (5)	Countries mentioned the following specific topics under this category: Allergens Andean tubers Stimulate rural economies Bad practices in the use of agricultural products to fight pests The use of manure and compost on farms and Potential food safety risk
Inspection services (4)	Countries mentioned the following specific topics under this category: Insufficient internal food control for local human and animal consumption Trade in primary food. internationally Food Safety/Food Defense/Food Adulteration. Food Adulteration and Food Fraud
Food law and regulations (3)	Countries mentioned the following specific topics under this category: Establishment of microbiological criteria Regulation of cross-border electronic commerce Regulations not adjusted to scientific evidence.
Laboratory services: food monitoring and epidemiological data (2)	Countries mentioned the need for strengthening capacities in the area of environmental monitoring as countries perceive this may be an issue due to the attention some markets are staring to put on this topic