



## JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

### FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR NORTH AMERICA AND SOUTH WEST PACIFIC

#### Fifteenth Session

Port Villa, Vanuatu, 16 - 20 September 2019

#### FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY SITUATION IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE REGION

#### USE OF THE ONLINE PLATFORM FOR INFORMATION SHARING ON

#### FOOD SAFETY CONTROL SYSTEMS AND FUTURE PLANS/PROSPECTS

*(Prepared by FAO and WHO)*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. During the round of FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees (RCCs) in 2013-2014, a discussion and consultation of members' views took place on the standard agenda item during RCCs to share information on food control systems. There was general recognition that there is value in sharing this information. However, the process of collecting information through a Circular Letter was considered cumbersome and did not facilitate ease of access to information.

1.2. These views were subsequently supported by the 38<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC38). FAO and WHO were requested to develop in collaboration with the Codex Secretariat, a prototype for information sharing on food control systems, including a set of questions on food control systems and roles and responsibilities, which was trialled at the round of RCCs in 2016-2017.<sup>1</sup>

1.3. The online questionnaire is divided into five main parts as listed immediately below. The list of questions included in the online questionnaire can be found in Appendix II of this document.

Part A	Competent authorities
Part B	Food safety and consumer protection – laws and regulations
Part C	The national Codex programme
Part D	Risk Assessments and Scientific Data
Part E	Surveillance of foodborne diseases and monitoring of food contamination
Part F	National capacity in food safety

### 2. OBJECTIVES AND BENEFITS OF THE PLATFORM

2.1. The primary use and purpose of the platform is to facilitate information exchange between Member countries. Secondary uses may include informing FAO, WHO and Codex work, including allowing for analysis to be undertaken on information submitted for presentation and discussion at RCCs.

2.2. There is value in having all information relevant to the national food control systems, including legislation, located in one place and easily accessible. Online access is a cost effective alternative for Member countries to have a better understanding of their food control systems, specifically those with limited resources. The information can provide a good basis to understand the national food control system and legislation, which is of benefit for those in a country (e.g., to assist the formulation of Codex Trust Fund project proposals) as well as those outside (e.g., information related to regulatory aspects of food control in a particular country).

<sup>1</sup> REP15/CAC para. 118 and REP15/EXEC para. 67

2.3. As far as feasible, the set of questions of the platform was kept consistent with existing questionnaires such as the International Health Regulations (IHR) monitoring and evaluation scheme and the new FAO/WHO food control system assessment tool. The intention is that new questions would be added, based on priority areas of food control systems, where Member countries see a value in sharing information.

### **3. MANAGEMENT OF THE PLATFORM**

3.1. The platform is currently supported, managed and maintained by a team of staff from FAO, WHO and the Codex Secretariat, while national Codex Contact Points (CCPs) are responsible for gathering food safety and quality related information on their countries. Only CCPs are able to upload information for their country.

3.2. The information is uploaded and submitted by the CCP in two stages: i) a draft version, which is not visible to anyone outside, and ii) a published version, which is accessible to all, except for Part F (the self-assessment questions), which is kept confidential.

3.3. CCPs have the possibility to access the platform all year round to update their profile, add or change information, and to decide when the information provided should be published (<http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/survey/>).

### **4. STATUS OF RESPONSES BY MEMBERS OF THE REGION**

4.1. In the NASWP region, 50% of Member countries (7 out of 14) have uploaded their information on the platform. Out of these, four countries have published the information, while three countries have submitted a draft. Details on the countries that have submitted information on the online platform and related status can be found in Appendix I of this document. The responses provided are made available on the Codex website on the Members page (<http://www.fao.org/fao-whocodexalimentarius/about-codex/members/en/>).

### **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1. Keeping in mind that the platform's success depends on Member countries' use of the platform and their willingness and capacity to upload/update baseline information in a timely manner, the Committee is invited to provide comments and feedback on the utility of the platform, in particular:

- a. Do Member countries confirm the value of exchanging information on their national food control systems?
- b. If yes, is the online platform considered fit for purpose?
- c. What are the reasons preventing (half of the) Member countries from submitting information?
- d. For those Member countries that have submitted a draft, what are the reasons preventing them from making the information public (by proceeding to "publish" the information)?
- e. What could be improved and how?
- f. How can FAO, WHO and the Regional Coordinator support Member countries to upload and utilize information on the online platform?
- g. What additional questions on aspects of food control systems may be included, if further developed?

## APPENDIX I

## LIST OF COUNTRIES THAT HAVE SUBMITTED INFORMATION ON THE ONLINE PLATFORM AND RELATED STATUS

Country	Year of last modification	Level of completeness	Information missing	Status
Canada	2019	Incomplete	Part D Q.8 (not stated the official competence of the laboratories)	Published
New Zealand	2016	Incomplete	No answers submitted	Draft
Cook Islands	2016	Incomplete	Part A Q.2 Part C Part D Part E Part F	Draft
United States of America	2016	Incomplete	Part A Q.2 Part D Q.7 – Q.8 (not stated the official competence of the laboratories) Part E Q.10	Published
Australia	2016	Incomplete	Part C Q.5 Part D Q.7 - Q.8 Part E	Published
Vanuatu	2019	Complete		Published
Samoa	2019	Incomplete	Part D Q.7 – Q.8 (not stated the official competence of the laboratories) Part E	Draft

## LIST OF COUNTRIES THAT HAVE YET TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ON THE ONLINE PLATFORM

Fiji
Kiribati
Micronesia (Federated States of)
Nauru
Papua New Guinea
Solomon Islands
Tonga

## APPENDIX II

**INFORMATION ON FOOD SAFETY CONTROL SYSTEMS AND ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES –  
LIST OF QUESTIONS INCLUDED ON THE ONLINE SURVEY PLATFORM****Part A. Competent authorities**

Q.1. Which are the competent authorities<sup>2</sup>

- Competent authority
- Mandate/competence (link to website if available)

Q.2. Provide details of the INFOSAN Emergency contact point responsible for food safety emergencies.

**Part B. Food safety and consumer protection – laws and regulations**

Q.3. Which are the main food laws and regulations setting out the legal basis and controls for food safety and consumer protection?

*Please do not reply to this question now. FAO maintains a database – FAOLEX – since 1995 that compiles legislation in the food and agriculture fields. We are working with the FAO Legal Office to extract the food safety and consumer legislation for each country. In due course, lists of legislation related to food safety and consumer protection in each country will be provided. Noting that FAOLEX may not be comprehensive and up to date because legislation is collected from a variety of sources, we would request you to verify the information and advise of updates, errors or omissions to ensure that the information available is as comprehensive and up-to-date as possible.*

**Part C. The national Codex programme**

Q.4. Describe the national consultative mechanism for Codex programme of work to ensure input from government stakeholders, private sector, scientific community and consumers.

*In providing answer, please identify main participants engaged regularly in consultation*

Q.5. Identify stakeholders providing core scientific and technical input during national consultation on Codex work. List which Codex issues input has been provided (indicator 2.1.2 in Codex Strategic Plan<sup>3</sup>).

**Part D. Risk Assessments and Scientific Data**

Q.6. Which bodies provide risk assessments and scientific advice to support risk management decisions by competent authorities?

- Name bodies or laboratories.

Q.7. Please provide any risk assessments (quantitative or qualitative), risk profiles or scientific opinions available in public domain.

- List, and provide links where available.

Q.8. List the official laboratories<sup>4</sup> involved in food safety and scope of competence.

- Official Laboratory
- Official Competence

**Part E. Surveillance of foodborne diseases and monitoring of food contamination**

Q.9. Which surveillance systems are in place to collect data on foodborne disease in humans?

Q.10. Which monitoring systems are in place to collect data on foodborne hazards in the food chain?

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<sup>2</sup> Codex defines Competent Authority (ies) as the official government organisation/agency (ies) having jurisdiction (CAC/GL 71-2009). The response to this question will be very country specific, but information may be provided on those authorities responsible for food production, imported food, exported food, prevention of fraudulent practices. They may be line Ministries or single agencies with responsibilities related to food safety. Briefly, indicate the main mandate and sphere of their competence.

<sup>3</sup> Codex Strategic Plan 2014-2019

<sup>4</sup> Could cover - pesticides, chemicals, veterinary drug residues, AMR, fish, microbiology. Include any private laboratories designated for official purposes. Where a country uses overseas reference laboratories, this can be indicated here.

**Part F. National capacity in food safety<sup>5</sup>**

Q. 11. "To what extent do you agree with the following statement?"

Please respond using the five point rating on the extent to which you agree with the statement.

Questions	Strongly Agree / Agree / Don't Know / Disagree / Strongly Disagree
<b>Policy and Legal frameworks</b>	
Food safety legislation includes all the powers and responsibilities necessary to meet the objectives and enforce the various elements of food control	
<b>Infrastructure and finances</b>	
In case of a food safety emergency, food control laboratories have the capabilities and versatility to adapt to the resulting changes/surges in demand of tests to be performed	
<b>Human resources</b>	
Adequate number of competent staff are employed and receiving regular trainings to ensure the delivery of functions required for national food control.	
<b>Implementation of core control activities</b>	
A central coordination mechanism is documented (i.e. SOPs, manual, TOR, etc.) and includes all relevant Competent Authorities to address Food Safety emergencies	
<b>Implementation of specific functions</b>	
Competent Authorities design a coherent risk based programme for control measures, taking into account relevant information (i.e. on product type, country of origin and importer's history)	
<b>Domestic stakeholders</b>	
High risk categories of Food Business Operators (FBOs) are provided with special categories of communication channels ensuring that messages and important technical communiqués are delivered to FBOs	
<b>International stakeholders</b>	
An INFOSAN Emergency Contact Point is designated and registered on the INFOSAN Community Website	
<b>Evidence/risk base</b>	
Data from routine monitoring and surveillance are utilized for informing new risk analysis activities or for the review of former risk analysis activities	

<sup>5</sup> The questions have been taken from the draft FAO/WHO Food control system Assessment Tool (November 2015 version). They are also consistent with those in the draft International Health Regulations (IHR) Monitoring and Evaluation scheme. This is for internal information only, access will be restricted to FAO, WHO and the responding country itself.