



## JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

### CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD HYGIENE

Fifty-fourth Session

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#### Revision of the Guidelines on the Application of General Principles of Food Hygiene to the Control of Viruses in Food (CXG 79-2012)

Comments of Argentina, European Union, Singapore and Thailand

#### Argentina

Argentina agradece a Canadá y los Países Bajos la elaboración del Proyecto de documento, está de acuerdo con el avance de la revisión del documento y manifiesta su intención de participar con observaciones durante el desarrollo del mismo.

#### European Union

In response to the request for comments, the European Union and its Member States (EUMS) would like to make the following comments.

#### I. General Comment

The EUMS would like to thank and congratulate Canada and the Netherlands with the drafting of the very useful project document on the revision of the Guidelines on the Application of General Principles of Food Hygiene to the Control of Viruses in Food (CXG 79-2012) The EUMS can support the recommendation that CCFH undertakes new work to revise and update the appropriate text in CXG 79-2012, subject to the considerations of the comments made below.

The EUMS also welcome the additional work accepted by JEMRA in 2023 and 2024 but urge FAO/WHO on the full publication of the meeting reports without undue delay.

#### II. Specific comments

##### Points 2 and 3 of the project document

The EUMS request confirmation that

- a risk assessment in frozen fruit and vegetables is included in the JEMRA work, and later on, will be considered in a revision of the Guidelines, considering the increasing number of outbreaks due to such food. Recent EFSA work<sup>1</sup> can provide input.
- JEMRA will establish limits for NoV in live bivalve molluscs to be eaten raw, in particular oysters, in order to protect consumers from this risk.

##### Point 3 of the project document

The EUMS support the expansion of the scope to include Hepatitis E virus and emerging vehicles of foodborne illnesses. However, the current proposal wording is not specific enough. The EUMS propose to replace the

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/6092>

first bullet by “Expansion of the scope to address Hepatitis E viruses (HEV) and emerging vehicles of foodborne illnesses, specifically frozen fruits in the case of Norovirus and Hepatitis A virus and pork and wild game in the case of Hepatitis E viruses”. This is because the JEMRA summary report supports expansion only where evidence is available, and this is specifically frozen fruits in the case of Norovirus and Hepatitis A virus, and pork and wild game in the case of Hepatitis E virus. This will avoid scope creep as the work progresses.

The EUMS have however doubts on the need to consider a separate annex for HEV. The most relevant new scientific information available seems to be limited to an opinion of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)<sup>2</sup> on this topic. That opinion includes an assessment of the importance of HEV in the EU, however, to decide on the need for guidelines at global level, the importance should be estimated at global level and taking into account the global human health burden compared to other foodborne disease. In addition, the EFSA opinion indicates that the only efficient control option for HEV infection from certain food sufficient heat treatment. If this is confirmed by JEMRA, the usefulness of specific guidelines might be limited.

### Singapore

Singapore thanks Canada and the Netherlands for preparing project document and supports the new work on the revision of the guidelines for approval by CAC47. This initiative offers clarity in safeguarding food safety, especially given the rising prevalence of norovirus (NoV) and hepatitis A virus (HAV).

### Thailand

Thailand does not object the proposal of new work on this issue. However, we would like to provide some comments to the project document as follows:

#### **Section 3 Main aspects to be covered**

We agree with the expansion of the scope to address viruses other than HAV and NoV such as Hepatitis E viruses (HEV) and emerging vehicles of foodborne illnesses such as frozen fruits as appeared in the first bullet since there is scientific information supported from the JEMRA experts.

For the second bullet point, we agree with the revision of interventions in the food chain to be in line with the updated scientific information. However, we are of the opinion that there are another guidelines which recommend control measures for specific commodities, i.e., fresh produce and bivalve mollusc as appeared in the Annexes of CXG 79-2012 such as Guidelines for the control of Shiga Toxin Producing *Escherichia coli* (STEC) in Raw Beef, Fresh Leafy Vegetables, Raw Milk and Raw Milk Cheeses and Sprouts (CXG 99-2023), Guidelines on the Application of General Principles of Food Hygiene to the Control of Pathogenic Vibrio Species in Seafood (CXG 73-2010). Thus, careful consideration should be taken when revision is carried out so that the control measures from various texts do not become burdens for related food business operators.

Also, the control measures in the revised Draft should focus on the control measures to prevent the contamination of viruses in the food chain rather than the emphasis on monitoring and detection after contamination since monitoring and detection require large amount of resources and might become burden for small-holder farmers and food business operators.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/4886>