

Strengthening efforts on food safety

The Seventy-third World Health Assembly,

Having adopted the written silence procedure through decision WHA73(7) (2020);¹

Recalling resolutions WHA53.15 (2000) on food safety and WHA63.3 (2010) on advancing food safety initiatives, and acknowledging that the challenges outlined in these resolutions continue as the food safety systems of many Member States are under development and need significant improvements in their key components, such as regulatory infrastructure, enforcement, surveillance, inspection, laboratory capacity and capability, coordination mechanisms, emergency response and food safety education and training;

Recalling also the international conferences in 2019 on food safety convened by WHO, FAO, and WTO and the African Union in Addis Ababa and Geneva, which identified key actions and strategies to tackle current and future challenges to food safety globally;

Noting that food safety plays a critical role in the achievement of many of the Sustainable Development Goals and contributes to relevant areas of WHO's Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2023 and efforts to address universal health coverage;

Considering that WHO published estimates on the global burden of foodborne diseases for the first time in 2015, in which it estimated that more than 600 million cases of foodborne illnesses and 420 000 deaths could occur in a year;² and that the burden of foodborne diseases falls disproportionately on groups in vulnerable situations and especially on children under 5 years of age, with the highest burden in developing countries;

Recalling the World Bank study, *The safe food imperative: accelerating progress in low- and middle-income countries*,³ which called upon national governments to increase investments in their food safety infrastructure, and which noted that foodborne diseases resulting from the consumption of unsafe foods cost low- and middle-income countries at least US\$ 110 billion in lost productivity and medical expenses annually;

¹ See also document A73/4.

² WHO estimates of the global burden of foodborne diseases: foodborne disease burden epidemiology reference group 2007–2015. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2015 (https://www.who.int/foodsafety/areas_work/foodborne-diseases/ferg/en/, accessed 4 February 2020).

³ Jaffee S, Henson S, Unnevehr L, Grace D, Cassou E. The safe food imperative: accelerating progress in low- and middle-income countries. Washington DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and The World Bank; 2019 (<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/30568>, accessed 4 February 2020).

Emphasizing the importance of the current WHO strategic plan for food safety including foodborne zoonoses, 2013–2022,¹ and noting its end date;

Noting the contribution of regional frameworks and networks to support food safety;

Recognizing that the development of standards, guidelines and recommendations by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, and their subsequent use by Member States, make a powerful contribution to food safety, and stressing the need to provide sufficient and sustainable funding for active participation in the provision of scientific advice to the Commission by experts from countries at all stages of development, especially developing countries, to underpin the elaboration by the Commission of science-based food safety standards, guidelines and recommendations;

Recognizing also that while progress has been made to strengthen national food safety systems, collective action is needed throughout all stages of the supply chain at the local, national, regional and global levels, involving different stakeholders, in order to respond to current and emerging food safety challenges including those linked to population-, age- and gender-based differences in risk analysis,² climate change and extreme weather events, and foodborne pathogens, including the growing threat of antimicrobial resistance, food safety risks related to food fraud as well as other foodborne risks;

Underlining that a One Health approach to food safety includes managing food safety risks along the entire food and feed chain; and recognizing that the interconnection between food safety and human, animal, plant and environmental health is necessary for the protection of human life and health and food safety, and that it should be pursued in the vision and strategic objectives of WHO;

Noting the availability of existing and new guidance and tools to support Member States in the design, development, operation, evaluation and monitoring of their national food control systems, such as the Principles and Guidelines for National Food Control Systems (CXG 82-2013) and the Principles and Guidelines for Monitoring the Performance of National Food Control Systems (CXG 91-2017) as well as the FAO–WHO Food control system assessment tool (2019)³ adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission;

Acknowledging the global relevance of the International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN) and its importance, especially during foodborne disease emergencies;

Recognizing that innovation and developments in science and technology are advancing and, in particular, that data relevant to food safety are increasingly available, and that technology to derive

¹ Advancing food safety initiatives: strategic plan for food safety including foodborne zoonoses 2013–2022. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2013 (<https://www.who.int/foodsafety/strategic-plan/en/>, accessed 5 February 2020).

² See Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, Codex Alimentarius Commission. Procedural manual, twenty-seventh edition. Rome: FAO/WHO; 2019:128 (<http://www.fao.org/3/ca2329en/CA2329EN.pdf>, accessed 5 February 2020).

³ FAO and WHO. 2019. Food control system assessment tool: Introduction and glossary. Food safety and quality series No. 7/1 (<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/329866>); FAO and WHO. 2019. Food control system assessment tool: Dimension A – Inputs and resources. Food safety and quality series No. 7/2. (<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/329867>); FAO and WHO. 2019. Food control system assessment tool: Dimension B – Control Functions. Food safety and quality series No. 7/3 (<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/329868>); FAO and WHO. 2019. Food control system assessment tool: Dimension C – Interactions with Stakeholders. Food safety and quality series No. 7/4. (<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/329869>); FAO and WHO. 2019. Food control system assessment tool: Dimension D – Science/knowledge base and continuous improvement. Food safety and quality series No. 7/5 (<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/329870>).

insights from data is increasingly affordable; that these contribute to and support the design, management, reinforcement, implementation and maintenance of effective national food safety systems; and that such approaches hold promise for improved food safety outcomes throughout all stages of the global supply chain, thereby also increasing consumer confidence;

Recalling that food business operators, at every stage of the food chain, have the role of, and responsibility for, ensuring the safety of their food products,

1. URGES Member States:¹

(1) to remain committed at the highest political level: to recognizing food safety as an essential element of public health; to developing food safety policies that take into consideration, as applicable, at all stages of the supply chain, the best available scientific evidence and advice as well as innovation; and to providing adequate resources at appropriate levels for improving systems to ensure food safety;

(2) to integrate food safety into national and regional policies on health, agriculture, trade, environment and development, as a means to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and to take coherent actions across all relevant sectors in order to promote food safety, while recognizing consumer interests;

(3) to strengthen cross-sector collaboration, using a health-in-all-policies approach, and to apply a One Health approach to promote the sustainability and availability of, and access to, safe, sufficient and nutritious food for all populations, while recognizing the importance of affordability;

(4) to participate actively, and support inclusive participation, in the standard-setting work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, including as a Member State, donor or beneficiary of the Codex Trust Fund, as well as by supporting the joint expert bodies of WHO and FAO, including through the provision of experts and data; and to take into account Codex standards, guidelines and recommendations when developing national legislation;

(5) to enhance participation in the International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN), including supporting the timely transmission of data, information and knowledge about food-safety emergencies; and to further develop and implement the core capacities required for participation in the Network;

(6) to promote coherent actions to tackle foodborne antimicrobial resistance, including by actively supporting the work of relevant national bodies together with intergovernmental groups, such as the Codex ad hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance;

(7) to promote increased use of Codex standards, guidelines and recommendations by governments, food business and other relevant operators, at all levels;

(8) to provide appropriate investment in national food safety systems and innovations in order to prevent food safety threats, including those associated with food fraud, and enable a rapid and appropriate response to food safety emergencies;

¹ And, where applicable, regional economic integration organizations.

(9) to improve the availability, sharing and use of scientific data and evidence to support food safety decisions, including through the systematic monitoring of foodborne hazards and surveillance of foodborne disease outbreaks, as well as through timely reporting of this information through the International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN);

(10) to promote the use of food safety management tools among food business operators at all levels, including small-scale producers, and to encourage private sector investment in safe and sustainable production and supply chains;

(11) to recognize that consumers also have a role in managing food safety risks under their control and that, where relevant, they should be provided with information on how to achieve this, through the promotion of a culture of food safety by means of education and training in communities and schools in order to foster dialogue and inspire actions that enhance public awareness of food safety and that are aimed at increasing public confidence;

(12) to recognize World Food Safety Day as an important milestone and a platform for raising awareness at all levels about the importance of food safety, and for promoting and facilitating actions to prevent foodborne diseases at local, national, regional and global levels;

(13) to participate in national, regional and global activities aimed at applying innovative food safety strategies, including enhancing traceability and early detection of contamination, to improve the supply chain and promote cost-effective and efficient food safety systems and simple, easy-to-use laboratory analysis;

2. REQUESTS the Director-General:

(1) to update, in coordination with FAO, and in consultation with Member States and OIE, the WHO global strategy for food safety¹ in order to address current and emerging challenges, incorporating new technologies and including innovative strategies for strengthening food safety systems, and to submit a report for consideration by the Seventy-fifth World Health Assembly in 2022;

(2) to explore with the Director-General of FAO a method for coordinating the two agencies' strategic efforts on food safety, and to provide a report on this proposed method to the Seventy-fifth World Health Assembly, and through Director-General of FAO to FAO's governing bodies, as appropriate;

(3) to strengthen WHO's capacities and resources for fulfilling its leadership role, together with FAO, as founding organizations of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, in promoting the use of Codex standards, guidelines and recommendations, and in providing support to Member States, upon request, in developing and implementing food safety policies;

(4) to ensure sustainable, predictable and sufficient resources from WHO for the provision of timely scientific advice on food safety to the Codex Alimentarius Commission in order to facilitate the timely development by Codex of its standards, guidelines and recommendations,

¹ WHO global strategy for food safety: safer food for better health. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2002 (<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/42559>, accessed 7 February 2020).

including by increasing the level of financial and in-kind contributions to support the Codex Alimentarius Commission and its work;

(5) to pursue, in cooperation with FAO, the further development of the International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN) to facilitate increased use of the Network by its members, including their rapid sharing of information on food hazards and risks;

(6) to pursue, in cooperation with FAO, effective and responsive training and capacity-building of members of the International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN);

(7) to facilitate understanding by Member States of developments in epidemiological and laboratory sciences and technologies in food and agriculture that provide new tools for risk assessment and management of food safety systems, and surveillance and outbreak response in respect of foodborne illness, and to support Member States' ability to assess the challenges and opportunities linked to the use of new and appropriate technologies in food safety, including the importance of fully realizing the benefits of such technologies by sharing the data generated;

(8) to place greater emphasis on food safety by encouraging the development of food safety infrastructure, including by collaborating with financial institutions, donor organizations, other multilateral organizations and regional economic communities in order to continue advancing the public health, social and economic benefits of improved food safety;

(9) to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and expertise with other relevant organizations, collaborating with them: to support the capacity-building of food safety systems in low- and middle-income countries; to conduct surveillance, investigation, control and reporting of foodborne illness and outbreaks; and to enable every actor of the food system to fulfil their responsibilities in the production and supply of safe food;

(10) to monitor regularly, and to report to Member States on, the global burden of foodborne and zoonotic diseases at national, regional and international levels, and in particular to prepare, by 2025, a new report on the global burden of foodborne diseases with up-to-date estimates of mortality, as well as incidence, and burden in terms of disability-adjusted life years;

(11) to report to the Seventy-fifth World Health Assembly on progress made in implementing this resolution.

C.L.31.2020, 3 August 2020

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