

New Food Safety And Quality Standards

Codex Alimentarius Commission has adopted 44 new and amended food standards and set up a comprehensive set of risk analysis principles to help governments establish their own standards, especially for food items that are not covered by Codex standards.

Codex food safety standards are developed using scientific advice from FAO/WHO expert committees that enables the rigorous standard setting procedures within Codex. According to Dr. Kazuaki Miyagishima, Secretary of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, "This is why Codex standards are so successful globally and the reason they have been recognized by the World Trade Organization (WTO) Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement."

"Because governments often adopt Codex Standards into their national legislation and sometimes even see the need for additional measures in areas not covered by Codex guidance, it is important that the extra safety measures are taken using the same rigorous and internationally recognized principles, not only to protect consumers, but to ensure they are consistent with multilateral trade rules" explained Dr. Miyagishima.

Codex moving to study new food issues

FAO and WHO welcomed the move of the Codex Commission to look for methods to prevent antimicrobial resistance in bacteria in food. FAO and WHO are ready to support Codex in areas such as the use of nanotechnology and the risk-benefit assessment of fish consumption.

To raise the necessary funding to conduct this new work the two Organizations launched the Global Initiative for Food related Scientific Advice (GIFSA) in an effort to encourage donors and civil society to support such international scientific investigations.

Additional guidelines on Salmonella and Campylobacter to be considered

The Codex meeting decided to develop additional guidelines to lower the frequency of Salmonella and Campylobacter in chicken. Together these two bacteria cause a significant proportion of food-borne diseases all over the world. Finding efficient ways of dealing with this problem from farm to table could result in the prevention of hundreds of thousands of foodborne disease cases every year.

This year's Codex gathering was attended by 133 countries, the highest number ever to attend an annual Commission meeting.

Developing countries begin contributing to Codex Trust Fund

This year for the first time, two emerging developing countries, Brazil and Malaysia said they intend to contribute to the Codex Trust fund, which assists developing countries to participate in Codex meetings. Currently, around 250 participants from developing countries receive assistance to attend a broad variety of Codex meetings. Brazil and Malaysia's contribution is the first example of countries with developing economies pledging development support to other countries in the food safety area.

"Hopefully this example will lead several more major emerging economies to follow suit enabling a more efficient global food safety system," said Dr Jorgen Schlundt of WHO.

African countries need special consideration

Many developing countries, particularly countries in Africa, have asked FAO, WHO and donor countries to step up technical assistance programmes for them. These countries need help to improve their food production, processing and distribution systems in order to meet Codex requirements and to help them develop their capacity to participate more regularly and effectively in Codex work.

This year's adopted Codes and Standards

This year's Codex meeting adopted several important new codes and standards, including:

A code that would prevent or reduce Ochratoxin A contamination in wines across the production chain (Ochratoxin A is a mycotoxin known to be toxic to the kidneys);

A revised standard for infant formulae and formulas for special medical purposes that is expected to help save many infant lives worldwide; and

A revised code of hygienic practice for eggs and egg products that will protect consumers from disease-causing bacteria such as Salmonella Enteritidis and make international trade in eggs and egg products safer.

About the Author

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