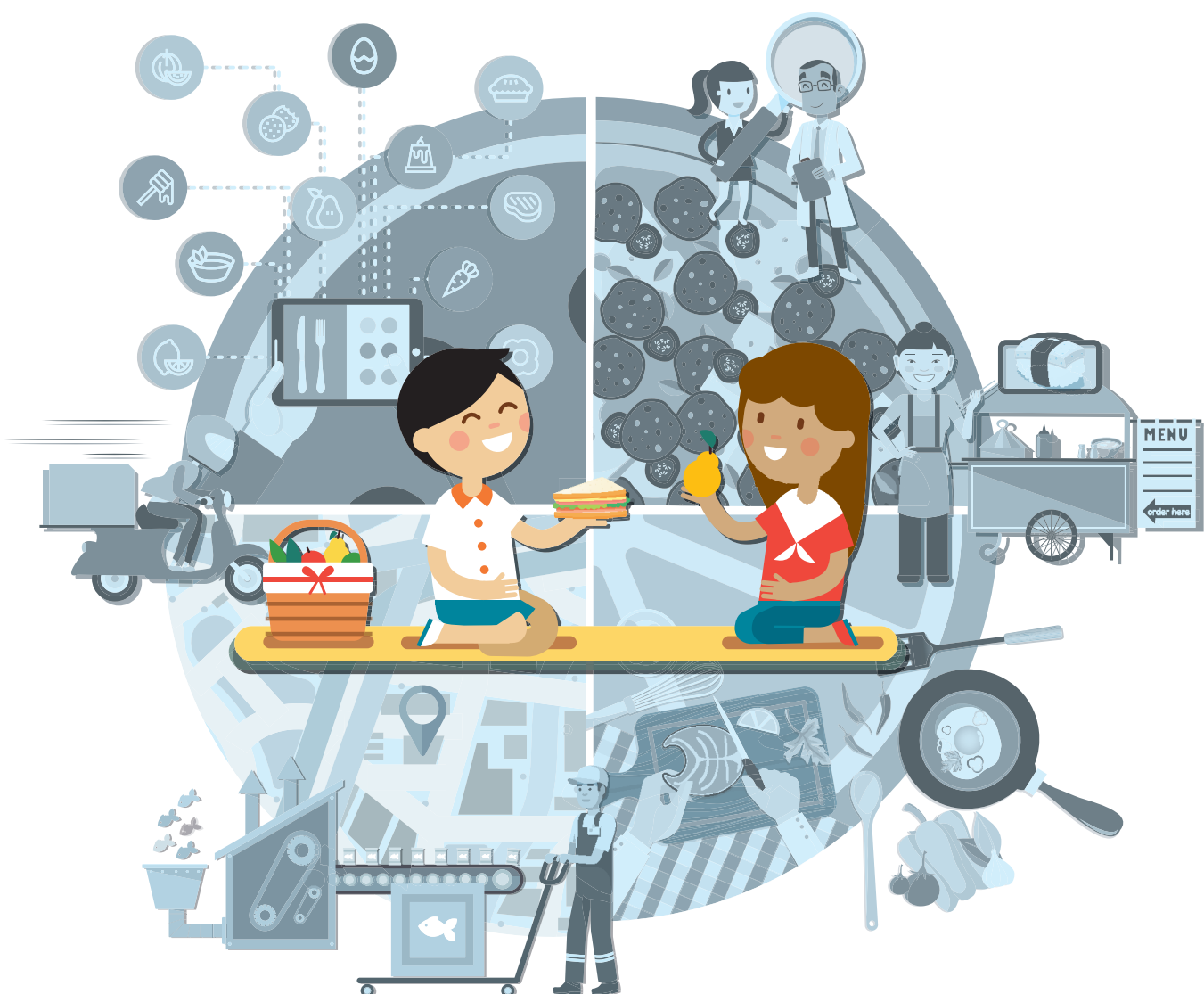


REGIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION on

# Food Safety in the Western Pacific





# **Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific**

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# CONTENTS

Abbreviations.....	iv
Foreword .....	v
Executive summary.....	vi
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Vision, goal, objective and action areas .....	9
3. Food safety in the Pacific .....	21
4. Implementation of the Framework.....	25
5. Connecting to other strategies and programmes .....	32
Bibliography.....	39

## ANNEXES

1. Burden of foodborne diseases in the Western Pacific Region .....	41
2. Process of developing the <i>Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific</i> .....	42
3. Glossary.....	46

## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AMR</b>	antimicrobial resistance
<b>APEC</b>	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
<b>APSED</b>	Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases
<b>APSED III</b>	Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases and Public Health Emergencies
<b>ARAC</b>	ASEAN Risk Assessment Centre for Food Safety
<b>ASEAN</b>	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
<b>CCASIA</b>	FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Asia
<b>CCNASWP</b>	FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for North America and the South West Pacific
<b>DRM-H</b>	disaster risk management for health
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
<b>FSCWG</b>	Food Safety Cooperation Working Group
<b>IHR (2005)</b>	International Health Regulations (2005)
<b>IHR MEF</b>	IHR (2005) Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
<b>INFOSAN</b>	International Food Safety Authorities Network
<b>JEE</b>	Joint External Evaluation
<b>NCD</b>	noncommunicable disease
<b>NTD</b>	neglected tropical disease
<b>OIE</b>	World Organisation for Animal Health
<b>POLHN</b>	Pacific Open Learning Health Network
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>UHC</b>	universal health coverage
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>WTO</b>	World Trade Organization

# FOREWORD

The impact of foodborne diseases on public health is staggering. More than 50 000 people die every year in the Western Pacific Region from consuming unsafe food. Another 125 million fall ill from unsafe food in the Region. Food safety concerns go beyond health; they impact trade and economic development.

Food safety risks cannot be eliminated. They can only be reduced. As such, food safety risk management must focus on the process of providing safe food: identify where food safety risks are highest and implement control measures. This approach helps to prevent foodborne diseases and to build trust and confidence in the food supply.

The context of food safety in the Western Pacific Region has changed in recent years. Technological advances, demographic changes and socioeconomic development have made food safety risk management and response to food safety incidents and emergencies more complex. In addition, public demand for safer food is increasing, and the requirements for documentation of food control procedures, particularly on export markets, are becoming stricter. This changing context of food safety calls for a new approach to strengthen national food safety systems.

The *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific* was endorsed by the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Committee for the Western Pacific in 2017. The new framework builds on achievements and lessons learnt from the *Western Pacific Regional Food Safety Strategy 2011–2015*. In addition, the new framework was based on months of comprehensive consultation with Member States, technical experts and partners. The process for developing the *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific* is described in Annex 2.

The new framework provides guidance on strategic action and a stepwise approach to strengthen food safety systems. Member States are urged to use the framework to develop national action plans and to allocate adequate technical and financial resources for implementation.

At WHO, we acknowledge that better food safety is a joint responsibility. We stand ready to provide technical support to ensure that countries strengthen food safety systems. We also encourage Member States to learn from each other. Sharing experiences and best practices in the Region will help to continuously improve food safety systems.

Working together we can achieve the vision laid out in this framework: “Safer Food for All”.



Shin Young-soo, MD, Ph.D.

Regional Director

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Food safety is a fundamental element of good health and is essential for sustainable development. The Sustainable Development Goals call for actions to end hunger, improve nutrition, promote sustainable agriculture and achieve food security, all of which require that all people have access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food.*

The *Western Pacific Regional Food Safety Strategy 2011–2015* has contributed to good progress in food safety across the Western Pacific Region. However, more than 125 million people fall ill and more than 50 000 die annually from unsafe food in the Region.

Food safety is a highly complex health issue involving multiple domestic and international stakeholders. Over recent years, new developments including the introduction of new technologies, increasing internationalization of the food chain and demographic changes have affected food safety in the Region. The changing context of food safety affects food safety risk management as well as trust in the safety of the food supply. Food safety trust is a multifaceted issue and an outcome of effective food safety systems. At the same time, it serves as an enabler for strengthening food safety systems to manage food safety risks and respond to food safety incidents and emergencies.

The *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific* builds on the achievement and lessons learnt from the 2011–2015 Strategy. It acknowledges the changing context of food safety and revisits the approach for strengthening national food safety systems. This includes a stronger focus on building trust and confidence in food safety systems and implementing strategic actions that create leadership, partnerships, competency and resources that are the necessary enablers for advancing food safety systems.

The Framework provides guidance on strategic action and a stepwise approach to strengthen food safety systems to better manage food safety risks and respond to food safety incidents and emergencies. It is intended to guide national food safety authorities in implementation of strategic action to strengthen national food safety systems as well as to obtain and advocate for high-level political support to enhance food safety. It is also intended to facilitate regional cooperation among food safety authorities.

The Framework is guided by: people- and country-focused principles; advancing food safety systems in a stepwise manner; positioning food safety in a broader context of sustainable development and “leaving no one behind”; establishing a learning culture



for continuous improvement and being proactive and flexible to embrace change; and fostering partnership across sectors, stakeholders and national borders.

The strategic direction for implementation emphasizes a broader focus on trust and confidence in food safety systems rather than a narrow focus on the safety of food products only. It emphasizes the adoption of risk-based approaches to the management of food safety risks, as well as alignment with international recommendations and requirements to promote equivalence in food safety systems.

The vision of the Framework is “Safer Food for All”, and the goal is to “Protect people’s health by advancing food safety systems”. It is structured around two interrelated objectives that aim to strengthen food safety systems to: 1) manage food safety risks; and 2) respond to food safety incidents and emergencies. Five interrelated action areas, with defined key strategic actions, support this vision, goal and objectives:

1. Food safety policy and legal frameworks
2. Risk-based food inspection and enforcement
3. Food safety information underpinning evidence
4. Food safety incident and emergency response
5. Food safety communications and education

The *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific* pays special attention to Pacific island countries and areas and the uniqueness of small island developing states. It identifies a number of food safety issues for consideration by Pacific island countries and areas including food import control, access to appropriate food analysis capacity, food safety issues associated with climate change, and interventions to address food-related noncommunicable disease risk factors. To address these issues, the Framework proposes various Pacific-specific approaches including strengthening and aligning food safety policy and regulatory frameworks, improving regional cooperation, strengthening linkages to other programmes, and utilizing online platforms for communications and education.

Recognizing the diversity of food safety systems across the Western Pacific Region, the Framework takes a stepwise approach to guide the strategic action of Member States to strengthen food safety systems. This approach aims to guide national food safety authorities to establish and strengthen food safety “systems” that consist of interacting and interdependent components that form comprehensive and well-coordinated entities at different stages of development.

The stepwise approach promotes the process of development from systems focusing on strengthening the minimum requirements for food safety risk management and response to systems adopting risk-based approaches, and further on to systems striving

to become fully documented and well-coordinated across sectors and stakeholders. The approach can help countries prioritize interventions as well as improve the effectiveness of investments in food safety systems. It also recognizes that existing food safety systems in Member States are dynamic structures and they may have components at various stages of development. As such, countries may use the stepwise approach to identify priority strategic action that can help strengthen the uniformity of food safety systems at their respective stages of development.

One country alone cannot ensure food safety. Increasing international trade in food and agriculture products, the rapid flow of information across borders, and the internationalization of the food chain have enhanced the need for food safety authorities to work closely together to reduce food safety risks and to respond to food safety incidents and emergencies. To facilitate the strengthening of food safety systems, the Framework recommends the improvement of regional cooperation through the establishment of a common platform to monitor progress, prioritize food safety action and enhance learning for continuous improvement.

Several multinational organizations, regional and bilateral programmes, private sector initiatives, consumer organizations, academic institutions and nongovernmental organizations are engaged in food safety work. The Framework will contribute to and influence the work of all these partners. Likewise, within the health sector, several regional strategies and frameworks contribute to and will be influenced by its implementation. The Framework considers the connections to other programmes and emphasizes the importance of strengthening these linkages.



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Food safety is a fundamental element of good health and essential for sustainable development. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) call for action to eliminate poverty and hunger and improve nutrition while promoting sustainable agriculture in order to achieve food security. This requires that all people have access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food at all times.

Implementation of the *Western Pacific Regional Food Safety Strategy 2011–2015* has contributed to significant gains in food safety. However, the public health and economic impact of foodborne diseases is still significant with about 125 million people falling ill and over 50 000 deaths in the Western Pacific Region annually from unsafe food.

Food safety is a highly complex health issue requiring joint efforts by multiple stakeholders domestically and internationally. Food safety risks cannot be eliminated, but must be managed through implementation of appropriate risk management options along the entire food chain.

Over recent years, food safety in the Western Pacific Region has been affected by new developments that have changed the conditions under which food is produced, processed, traded, distributed and consumed. Globalization of the food chain has accelerated, and international trade in food and agriculture products is higher than ever before. At the same time, increasing consolidation in the agricultural sector and among food business operators has changed the structure and power relationships in the food sector. Population growth, migration of people from rural to urban areas, and improved living standards have created greater distance from food producers to consumers and increased demand for ready-to-eat food and have made consumers more critical and demanding. Technological and scientific advances have provided new opportunities for managing food safety risks, as well as for investigating and responding to food safety incidents and emergencies. The emergence of social media has revolutionized the way consumers obtain food safety information and provided new opportunities for consumers to share their views on food safety issues. However, social media has

also contributed to the spread of unverified information that affects perceptions of food safety risks.

The evolving context of food safety and continuing food safety incidents and emergencies has affected trust in food safety systems. Distrust in the safety of the food supply has been shown to be a constraining factor for advancing food safety systems and a threat for broader socioeconomic development.

The *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific* builds on the achievements and lessons learnt from implementation of the *Western Pacific Regional Food Safety Strategy 2011–2015*. It acknowledges the changing context of food safety and provides guidance to national food safety authorities on strategic actions and a stepwise approach to strengthen food safety systems. Food safety authorities may also use the Framework to advocate for high-level political support to enhance food safety and to facilitate cooperation with food safety authorities in other Member States of the Region.

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## 1.2 Trust in the safety of the food supply

Trust in the safety of the food supply is a multifaceted issue that affects the relationship between all stakeholders in the food safety system. This includes trust in the competency of food businesses to supply safe food and the competency of governments to verify that food in the market is safe to consume. It also includes the trust between food manufacturers and their suppliers and trust between food safety authorities at the national and international level.

A strong trust relationship between all concerned stakeholders in the food safety system is fundamental to strengthen national food safety systems. Trust is affected by relationships between stakeholders of the food safety system and a breakdown of trust can have severe health, socioeconomic, political and reputational consequences. Trust can easily be lost, but it takes time and considerable effort to establish trustful relationships among stakeholders.

Building trust in food safety systems is a complex issue that is underpinned by a strong “food safety culture” where stakeholders understand the importance of food safety, take pride in reducing food safety risks and commit to do whatever it takes to ensure food safety throughout the food chain. Other traits of trustworthy food safety systems include:

- **competency** in having the necessary knowledge, skills, attitude and behaviour to identify food safety risks and implement appropriate control measures;

- **transparency** in providing open access to information about the origin of food, how it has been produced and what measures have been taken to ensure food safety;
- **ethics** in being committed, operating in good faith and doing what it takes to manage food safety risks; and
- **accountability** in being liable and meeting responsibilities.

Trust in the safety of the food supply is a result of effective food safety systems, and it is an enabler for strengthening systems to reduce food safety risks and, when needed, respond to food safety incidents and emergencies.

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### **1.3 Food safety in the broader context of universal health coverage and Sustainable Development Goals**

Food safety plays a vital role in attaining the right to the highest standard of health for all, a concept enshrined in the World Health Organization (WHO) Constitution. Health and food safety are intrinsically related and must be recognized as both preconditions for and outcomes of sustainable development.

The SDGs are charting a path towards meeting current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The 17 SDGs are interrelated and interdependent. Food safety is directly contributing to SDG 2 (End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture) and SDG 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages). In addition, food safety contributes to a number of other SDGs – including the goals for ending poverty, gender equality, water and sanitation, sustainable production and consumption, and climate change – and is also influenced by progress in these areas.

The SDGs aim to capture the many ways in which equitable and robust progress on health and development is influenced by a myriad of interconnected cultural, economic, political and social factors. This places greater emphasis on the social determinants of health, including for example linkages between food and health. Food safety is a multisectoral issue, and food safety risks need to be managed along the entire food chain from farm to plate.

The SDGs apply to all countries at all stages of development. They acknowledge that many of today's challenges, such as the impact of international trade and the health risks associated with climate change, go beyond traditional borders and shape health development in all countries. For example, international trade in food can facilitate access to safe and healthy food for communities, but may also result in new global threats from food safety incidents and emergencies.

Central to the SDGs is the principle of leaving no one behind, recognizing that inequities continue to pose challenges to health and development. For example, poorer households may be more vulnerable to foodborne pathogens than are wealthier households. Gender roles traditionally assign a more significant role to women and girls in handling and preparing food, resulting for example in gender-based differentials between women and men in exposure to food-related disease and injuries. Achieving the SDGs and ensuring that no one is left behind requires whole-of-government, whole-of-society and whole-of-system approaches, bringing together various government sectors, civil society, academia, development partners and communities.

Achieving the SDGs requires a health sector that can engage, advocate and lead effective action on health equity and the social determinants of health. Universal health coverage (UHC) means that all people and communities have access to quality health services, without suffering financial hardship associated with paying for care. UHC is a specific target under SDG 3 and serves as a pathway to equitable and sustainable health outcomes and resilient health systems. UHC provides a platform that can bring together diverse programmes and actions for health and development. The Western Pacific regional action framework *Universal Health Coverage: Moving Towards Better Health* provides a broad foundation for action in the Region.

The *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific* supports UHC as the overarching vision for health sector development and supports action on effective, responsive individual and population-based services, partnerships for public policy and public health preparedness. The Framework aligns with the overall approach of the SDGs and the *Regional Action Agenda on Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in the Western Pacific* to promote a whole-of-government, whole-of-society and whole-of-system approach to strengthen food safety in the Region.

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## 1.4 Food safety in the Western Pacific Region

### 1.4.1 Burden of foodborne diseases

In December 2015, WHO released *WHO Estimates of the Global Burden of Foodborne Diseases*. The report found that in 2010, an estimated 600 million illnesses and 420 000 deaths could be attributed to 31 foodborne hazards. The Western Pacific Region accounted for about 21% of the illnesses (125 million) and 12% of the deaths (50 000), with a significant number of deaths (7000) in children under the age of 5 years. Across the Western Pacific Region, diarrhoeal disease agents were the main cause of foodborne illness; the most common disease-causing agents were norovirus, non-typhoidal salmonella and campylobacter, accounting for nearly 45% of all foodborne illnesses.

However, the hazard responsible for the highest number of foodborne deaths in the Region was aflatoxin, a toxin produced by mould that grows on grain. Aflatoxin accounted for 18% of all foodborne deaths within the Region. This was followed by *Salmonella* Typhi, which accounted for 16% of all foodborne deaths, and the parasitic worms *Echinococcus multilocularis*, *Clonorchis sinensis* (Chinese liver fluke) and *Taenia solium*, which accounted for 14%, 11% and 7%, respectively. Chinese liver fluke alone infects more than 30 000 people a year, causing death in one in five cases. Some 99.9% of those who are infected with Chinese liver fluke globally live in the Western Pacific Region. A summary of the burden of foodborne diseases including illnesses and deaths in the Region is provided in Annex 1.

#### 1.4.2 International food trade

From 2004 to 2014, trade in food and live animals in Asia and the Pacific has more than doubled. According to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Statistical Database 2017, the total value of food and live animal imports increased from US\$ 96 billion in 2004 to US\$ 233 billion in 2014. Similarly for food and live animal exports, the total value increased from US\$ 78 billion in 2004 to US\$ 209 billion in 2014. Countries in South-East Asia experienced the greatest increase (more than 330%) in imports of food and live animals, while countries in East and North-East Asia had the greatest increase in food exports (more than 290%).

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### 1.5 Framework for action on food safety

The objectives of national food safety systems are to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in food trade. Food safety systems must build on the principles of food safety risk analysis, which is a structured approach comprising the three distinct but closely linked components of risk assessment, risk management and risk communication. Although the capacity, institutional arrangements and priorities of food safety systems vary from country to country, the following five interrelated core components are fundamental for providing a strong foundation for food safety systems:

- food safety policy and legal frameworks,
- risk-based food inspection and enforcement,
- food safety information underpinning evidence,
- food safety incident and emergency response, and
- food safety communications and education.

The complex nature of food safety and the interconnectedness of components, sectors and stakeholders require focus on utilizing and creating the enabling factors needed to facilitate the strengthening of national food safety systems.

*These enabling factors include:*

- **Leadership** in establishing a common vision, setting priorities and demonstrating commitment to strengthen food safety across sectors and stakeholders. Food safety leadership includes setting an example for good food safety practices as well as building a conducive and trustworthy environment for food safety authorities, businesses and consumers.
- **Partnerships** for working in a coordinated manner and together for a common goal across sectors, stakeholders and national borders. Effective coordination can reduce duplication and gaps in regulatory activities across food safety authorities and contribute to better utilization of human and financial resources. Partnerships are essential for bringing together government agencies, businesses and consumers to address issues of shared interest and achieve shared goals.
- **Competency** in demonstrating commitment and possessing the necessary technical skills, knowledge, attitude and behaviour to manage food safety risks.
- **Resources** for allocating appropriate human and financial resources to achieve the objectives of the food safety system. Making the best use of resources is important because no country has enough resources to protect consumers from unsafe food. Mobilizing additional resources, improving efficiency and prioritizing investments in food safety can contribute to make additional gains in food safety.

Food safety is a shared responsibility among the various stakeholders including those involved in production, processing, trading, transporting, preparing, serving and consuming food.

*These stakeholders include:*

- **Government**, including all ministries and agencies involved in official food control. The number of ministries and agencies involved varies from one country to another, but typically it encompasses the ministry of health, ministry of agriculture and fisheries, ministry of trade and industry, ministry of commerce, and ministry of tourism. Government-controlled media and public academia are also included in this group of stakeholders. It is the government's responsibility to verify that food businesses comply with applicable food safety rules and regulations and supply safe food to the market.
- **Business**, include food business operators such as farmers, food producers, processors and distributors, and food service providers, retailers, wholesalers, as well as suppliers of equipment, technology and ingredients. Food industry associations,

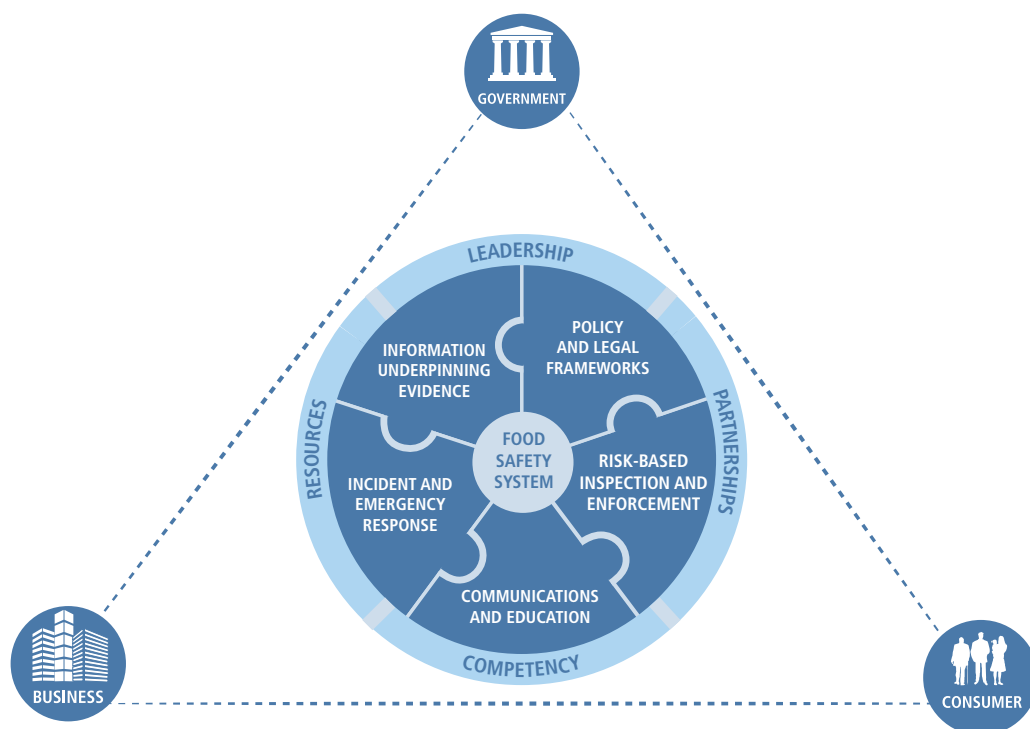


private research institutions and private media are also included in this group of stakeholders. Food producers carry the overall responsibility that food will not cause harm to the consumer when it is prepared and/or eaten according to its intended use.

- **Consumer**, including people consuming food as well as consumer groups. It is the responsibility of consumers to manage food safety risks when preparing and consuming food by adhering to good food hygiene practices and by preventing food contamination in their homes.

Figure 1 illustrates the framework for action on food safety systems. It shows how food safety systems consist of interrelated core components, enablers and stakeholders that together protect public health from unsafe food and facilitate food trade.

**Figure 1.** Framework for action on food safety



Considering the evolving context of food safety and the need for food safety systems to constantly adapt to address current and future food safety issues, there is a need for systems to be flexible and possess the capabilities to continuously improve through a process of review and reform, utilizing mechanisms that review and evaluate the performance of the system. The establishment of a learning culture and continuous improvements are required for systems to be proactive and embrace change.

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## 1.6 Target audience and rationale

The target audience for the *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific* is national food safety authorities as well as authorities responsible for and involved in managing food safety incident and emergency preparedness and response in Member States. The Framework is intended to guide strategic action on strengthening national food safety systems, as well as to support food safety authorities in obtaining and advocating for high-level political support to enhance food safety. The Framework is also intended to facilitate regional cooperation among food safety authorities in terms of monitoring progress, setting common priorities and fostering a learning environment for continuous improvements.

The Framework draws upon the global and regional commitments in World Health Assembly resolution WHA63.3 (2010) on *Advancing food safety initiatives* and WHO Regional Committee for the Western Pacific resolution WPR/RC62.R5 (2011) on the *Western Pacific Regional Food Safety Strategy (2011–2015)*. The resolutions urge Member States to strengthen food safety and request WHO to provide the necessary guidance and facilitation to advance food safety initiatives at national, regional and global levels.

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## 1.7 Time frame for implementation

The Framework is designed to have a flexible implementation time frame from 2018 up to 2025. The time frame for implementation reflects the strategic nature of the Framework and the need for long-term planning and strategic action to improve food safety. The Framework may be updated based on new developments in food safety. Progress of implementation will be reviewed periodically and reported to the Regional Committee.



## 2. Vision, goal, objectives and action areas

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### 2.1 Vision, goal and objectives

The vision of the Framework is “Safer Food for All”, and the goal of the Framework is “Protect people’s health by advancing food safety systems”. The Framework is structured around two interrelated objectives that aim to strengthen food safety systems to:

- manage food safety risks, and
- respond to food safety incidents and emergencies.

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### 2.2 Guiding principles for implementation of the Framework

Implementation of the Framework is guided by the following principles:

- **People- and country-focused** – strengthen food safety systems by keeping people and countries at the centre.
- **Step-by-step approach** – advance food safety systems in a stepwise manner.
- **Safe food for all** – position food safety in a broader context of sustainable development and “leave no one behind”.
- **Learning culture for continuous improvements** – be flexible and adaptive to change.
- **Partnerships** – foster partnerships across sectors, stakeholders and national borders.

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### 2.3 Strategic direction

The overall strategic directions that will guide implementation of the Framework are:

- transitioning from a focus on the safety of food to a broader focus that also encompasses trust and confidence in food safety systems;

- implementation of strategic action that creates leadership, partnership, competency, and resources to advance national food safety systems;
- adoption of risk-based approaches to the management of food safety risks; and
- alignment with international recommendations and requirements to promote equivalence in food safety systems.

## 2.4 Action areas

The vision, goal and objectives are supported by five interrelated action areas, for which key strategic actions are defined (Fig. 2).

**Figure 2.** Vision, goal, objectives and action areas of the Framework



### Action area 1

#### 2.4.1 Food safety policy and legal frameworks

##### Introduction

Evidence-based food safety policy and legal frameworks underpinned by effective food control management and consistent compliance and enforcement are pivotal for effective national food safety systems.

Food safety policies help countries set long-term goals and outcomes of food control activities at the national level. The course of action needs to be developed into opera-

tional strategies or action plans with prioritized activities and clear time frames. Such action plans can help ensure alignment between objectives and resources that can be used as a basis for overall resource allocation. Considering the multisectoral aspects of food safety, it is important that operational action plans are coherent with other government priorities and that they are feasible to implement considering the availability of human and financial resources.

Food safety laws and regulations are essential to create an enabling and predictable environment in which to develop and implement food safety measures based on risk analysis. Food safety legal frameworks must contain the legal obligations for managing food safety risks, define the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in the system, adopt risk-based approaches, and allow for legal updates and amendments as the food safety situation changes and new food safety issues emerge.

Food safety legislation must apply to all steps of the food chain and must be based on the best available scientific evidence and risk assessments. It must be developed through a comprehensive and consultative process, involving all concerned stakeholders, and managed and communicated appropriately. To facilitate international food trade, countries must ensure transparency and easy access to accurate and reliable information about legal requirements, and they must notify the international community about new or changed food safety requirements that may affect international trade.

Codex Alimentarius is the global reference point for food standards setting. Codex Alimentarius standards, guidelines and codes of practice are based on the best available science assisted by independent international risk assessment bodies and ad hoc consultations organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and WHO. The active participation by countries in Codex and other international food standards-setting bodies is crucial to ensure that their interests and concerns are adequately taken into consideration in the development of Codex standards.

The *Western Pacific Regional Food Safety Strategy 2011–2015* contributed to significant progress in the development of food safety policies, laws and regulations throughout the Region. Several countries have developed food safety policies and strategic plans, and they have reviewed, drafted and/or adopted new food safety policies, laws and regulations.

Despite the progress, there is still a need for strengthening policy and legal frameworks to better address emerging food safety issues, guide national food safety activities, and ensure consistency and compliance with international standards and obligations such as Codex Alimentarius, World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements and the International Health Regulations, commonly known as IHR (2005). This includes policy coherence and equivalence in food laws and regulations among countries that contribute to creating partnerships and improved coordination across sectors.

Evidence-based food safety policy and legal frameworks must be developed with consideration of the national context, as well as the competency of food business operators to implement the legislation and the competency of the food safety authorities to implement effective risk-based inspection and enforcement actions. This may require allocation of additional human and financial resources as well as further training and education of existing staff.

### *Strategic actions*

National food safety authorities, in partnership with key stakeholders, may want to implement the following strategic actions:

- In consultation with concerned stakeholders, define by law or other administrative arrangements, the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in the food safety system.
- In line with available enforcement and compliance capacity, strengthen the legal framework for food safety to ensure that food laws, regulations and standards are up to date, science- and risk-based, non-discriminatory, coherent across sectors, and aligned with Codex Alimentarius and other international recommendations and requirements.
- Establish by law or other administrative arrangement, a mechanism for coordination of food control activities across all concerned food safety authorities.
- Develop a national multisectoral operational food safety plan outlining the organization of the food safety system, priorities for food control, allocation of resources, training of people in the system and quality management procedures.
- Establish procedures and develop guidance for conducting food safety-related regulatory impact assessments.
- Implement a process of auditing the performance and effectiveness of the national food safety system.

#### **Action area 2**

### **2.4.2 Risk-based food inspection and enforcement**

#### *Introduction*

Food inspection is defined by the Codex Alimentarius Commission as the examination of food or systems for the control of food, raw materials, processing and distribution, including in-process and finished product testing, in order to verify that they conform to requirements. Food inspection protects consumers by ensuring that domestically produced, imported and exported food is handled, stored, manufactured, transported, prepared and sold in accordance with applicable legal requirements for food safety. The confidence of consumers in the safety of their food supply depends in part on their perception of the effectiveness of food control measures. As such, food inspection plays a key role in building trust in food safety systems.

Food business operators have the primary responsibility for ensuring food safety. The role of governments is to enact food safety laws and regulations and to verify compliance through enforcement actions. Food inspection is central to the enforcement process and as such it is a vital component of a national food safety system.

Traditionally, food inspection was product-based and centred around ad hoc enforcement of prescriptive food laws, regulations and standards with limited consideration of the public health impact of food safety practices. Food sampling and analysis was a key feature of such inspection systems, and violations typically were dealt with by issuing fines and closing businesses. Resource implications for such a food inspection approach are generally high, and the reliance on sampling and product testing bear the risk of missing a violation at a time when the inspector is not present. The approach is corrective as it has limited focus on implementation of preventive measures.

Risk-based food inspection, as opposed to traditional food inspection, provides opportunities to build systems to prevent food safety incidents by identifying risk factors and assessing the effectiveness of control measures in place. Risk-based food inspection uses the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) principles as a key tool to guide action. The approach of risk-based food inspection is outcome oriented and focuses on the examination of processes rather than final products. Risk-based food inspection systems make better use of existing resources by allocating resources towards processes and businesses presenting the greatest potential health risk to consumers and by implementing enforcement action proportionate to the level of risk. Strengthening risk-based food inspection and enforcement requires a comprehensive approach and a focus on building “systems” for risk-based food inspection. Effective risk-based food inspection systems follow a clear risk-based food inspection plan; they are well-coordinated across food inspection agencies; and adequate human and financial resources are allocated. Other traits of risk-based food inspection systems include competent food inspectors, registries of food businesses, models for risk categorization of food products and businesses, inspection record systems, risk-based inspection guidelines and checklists, and mechanisms for review and learning for continuous improvements.

The implementation of the *Western Pacific Regional Food Safety Strategy 2011–2015* has contributed to an emerging shift in the approach to food inspection. Several countries have adopted a risk-based approach to food inspection and strengthened their focus on the control of food safety risk factors. A significant number of food inspectors have been trained and new checklists and guidance documents have been developed. Despite the progress in transitioning from traditional to risk-based food inspection, there is still work to be done. Increasing global food trade and consolidation among food business operators, as well as increasing online trade in ready-to-eat food and the growing number of informal home-based food business operators selling food on the Internet,

has demonstrated a need for strengthening systems for risk-based food inspection and enforcement. Overlaps and gaps in current inspection and enforcement practices must be avoided and the training of food inspectors needs to be complemented by further advancements in the other components of risk-based food inspection systems. There is also a need for stronger linkages between risk-based food inspection and the broader national food safety system in order to improve the effectiveness and trust in national food safety systems.

### *Strategic actions*

National food safety authorities, in partnership with key stakeholders, may want to implement the following strategic actions:

- Adopt international principles and approaches for planning and implementation of risk-based food inspection activities covering domestically produced, imported and exported food.
- Designate an appropriate number and ensure appropriate geographic distribution of competent food inspectors to effectively enforce food laws and regulations.
- In partnership with appropriate government agencies, establish food business registries covering the informal as well as formal food sectors.
- Ensure availability of appropriate food inspection tools and equipment for effective implementation of risk-based food inspection activities.
- Develop a fully documented, coherent and coordinated risk-based food inspection plan covering the entire food chain and with clear performance indicators for consistent implementation across food safety authorities at the national and subnational levels.
- Strengthen the competency of food inspectors and allocate adequate resources for inspectors to effectively perform their duties with high ethical standards.
- Strengthen access to national or regional reference food laboratories with capacity to test food composition and priority food safety hazards.
- Develop procedures for food premises hygiene grading and make the information available to the public.

#### **Action area 3**

### **2.4.3 Food safety information underpinning evidence**

#### *Introduction*

Accurate and consistent information underpinning evidence is critical in health decision-making and planning as well as for implementation of international conventions and agreements, such as the Minamata Convention on Mercury and the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement) and Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT Agreement) of the WTO. However, available food safety information is often fragmented and inconsistent. Food safety risk analysis principles



emphasize the importance of independent scientific advice as the basis for food safety risk management and risk communication. Risk assessment is a key component of risk analysis, and the data and evidence provided through risk assessments provide the basis for risk management and decision-making. Food safety risk assessment uses multi-source information to identify and characterize food safety hazards, assess human exposure to these hazards and characterize the overall risks associated with the hazard exposure.

Information may be collected through studies on the burden of foodborne diseases, ongoing event- and indicator-based surveillance of foodborne diseases, food monitoring programmes, and other relevant sources. Linkages between data collected by food safety authorities and other programmes within the public health system and beyond are critical to inform appropriate risk management options. Likewise, strong linkages between food safety authorities and academia may enable faster and more consistent use of new international science-based developments in food safety.

Codex Alimentarius and FAO/WHO expert committees develop internationally recognized food standards and risk assessments that are available for countries to use and adopt into national food safety programmes. Countries are encouraged to contribute to this global process by providing input and sharing data that may strengthen global risk assessment work and by adopting Codex standards into national policy and legislation.

Food laboratories play a critical role in providing food safety data. Laboratories are responsible for analysing food samples to detect, characterize and quantify contaminants, pathogens and other food safety hazards, including antimicrobial-resistant pathogens and residues in food and for ensuring the quality assurance. The information produced by food safety laboratories provides an important basis to support policy and decision-making processes. Efforts are needed throughout the Region to work towards better utilization of existing laboratory capacity to support national food safety programmes.

New sciences in food technology including equipment, tools and methods for food tests and analyses are rapidly evolving, and new technologies are regularly introduced. This includes introduction of technology for ultra-sensitive levels of detection of food safety hazards as well as innovations in whole genome sequencing, nanotechnology and gene technology that provide new opportunities for scientific and regulatory developments in food safety.

The availability of food safety information and evidence and the capacity of Member States to conduct food safety risk assessments vary greatly across the Western Pacific Region. The *Western Pacific Regional Food Safety Strategy 2011–2015* has contributed to improving the availability of food safety information to better guide policy and risk analysis. The strategy, along with the *Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases* (APSED),

has contributed to strengthening the surveillance of and response to foodborne diseases, implementing total diet studies and conducting food safety risk assessments.

There is a need to build on these achievements and further strengthen the linkages between food safety authorities and disease surveillance units in charge of managing generic public health surveillance, risk assessment and response systems. There is also a need to strengthen regional cooperation in food safety information gathering as well as risk assessment work. In this regard, utilizing and contributing to regional and international risk assessment efforts such as the work conducted by the ASEAN Risk Assessment Centre for Food Safety (ARAC) and Codex Alimentarius is encouraged. Food safety authorities are also encouraged to establish stronger linkages to research institutions with the purpose of taking an outcome-oriented approach to the commission of scientific work to support food safety risk management.

### *Strategic actions*

National food safety authorities, in partnership with key stakeholders, may want to implement the following strategic actions:

- Ensure that existing generic systems for surveillance, risk assessment and response include foodborne diseases and that food safety authorities have access to disaggregated foodborne disease surveillance data.
- In partnership with appropriate research institutions and food laboratories, establish coordinated programmes for monitoring food consumption patterns, food composition and priority food safety hazards of public health concern and ensure easy access to monitoring data.
- Support and allocate adequate resources for research and development to improve the availability of evidence-based food safety information to inform food safety policy development, including conducting estimates of the burden of foodborne diseases and total diet studies.
- Establish a mechanism for discussing, agreeing on, planning and undertaking ad hoc research studies on food safety incidents and emergencies, including foodborne disease outbreaks.
- In collaboration with departments responsible for the management of emerging diseases and public health emergency preparedness and response, allocate adequate resources to strengthen the capacity of public health laboratories to confirm the etiology of unusual or novel foodborne disease outbreaks.

#### **Action area 4**

### **2.4.4 Food safety incident and emergency response**

#### *Introduction*

Food safety incidents and emergencies are very diverse and may be defined and responded to differently according to the capacity of a country's food safety system.

Food safety incidents and emergencies include foodborne disease outbreaks, food fraud and food adulteration, chemical contamination, food labelling and other non-compliance issues. With the increasing internationalization of the food chain and growing global trade in food and agriculture products, there is a growing risk of unsafe food spreading across national borders.

The capacity of countries to detect and respond to food safety events that may constitute a public health emergency of national and international concern is a core capacity under IHR (2005). National food safety systems are critical to manage food safety incidents and emergencies and to reduce the public health, economic and social impact from such incidents and emergencies. Food safety systems should apply the risk analysis principles and procedures as defined by Codex Alimentarius for preventing, preparing for and responding to food safety incidents and emergencies.

Food safety incidents and emergencies may originate from multiple domestic and international sources. As such, a multidisciplinary approach engaging all relevant sectors and stakeholders, as well as effective communication among countries, is the key to a successful response. This requires well-established and tested food recall and traceability systems, active participation in the International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN), and generic systems for public health emergency preparedness, risk assessment and response. Strategic actions to improve generic systems for surveillance, risk assessment and response are included in the *Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases and Public Health Emergencies* (APSED III). For an effective response to food safety incidents and emergencies, it is important that food safety authorities identify their specific role and responsibility in the investigation and response to food safety incidents and emergencies and collaborate with partners accordingly.

The *Western Pacific Regional Food Safety Strategy 2011–2015* contributed to strengthening the capacity of countries to detect, assess and manage food safety incidents and emergencies at national and regional levels. Good progress was made in developing national food safety emergency response plans, enhancing the participation of countries in INFOSAN, developing guidance for food recalls and strengthening risk communication applied to food safety. Along with APSED and APSED III, the regional food safety strategy contributed to strengthening the surveillance of and response to foodborne diseases as part of overall emerging disease surveillance systems.

Moving forward, there is a need for countries to continue to strengthen the food safety core capacities as defined under IHR (2005). Countries need to strengthen the generic approach to public health emergency preparedness, surveillance, risk assessment and response to foodborne diseases and clearly define roles and responsibilities among stakeholders. Countries also need to build capacity for food safety authorities to contribute to the investigation and response to food safety incidents and emergencies.

This includes a need to strengthen further food recall and traceability systems and the participation of countries in INFOSAN.

### *Strategic actions*

National food safety authorities, in partnership with key stakeholders, may want to implement the following strategic actions:

- In partnership with departments responsible for the management of emerging diseases and public health emergency preparedness and response, develop procedures for investigation and response to food safety incidents and emergencies with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
- Enhance participation in INFOSAN and coordination between the designated INFOSAN Emergency Contact Point and the National IHR Focal Point during public health events of international concern.
- Ensure food safety authorities have the necessary legal power to enforce and conduct food recalls and other emergency-related risk management measures.
- Establish or strengthen documented national food recall and traceability systems and work with food businesses to develop and strengthen food recall and traceability plans.
- Strengthen the competency of the INFOSAN Emergency Contact Point and food inspectors to effectively engage in and contribute to the investigation and response to food safety incidents and emergencies.
- In partnership with departments responsible for the management of emerging diseases and public health emergency preparedness and response, review, test and monitor the system for food safety incident and emergency investigation and response.

#### **Action area 5**

### **2.4.5 Food safety communications and education**

#### *Introduction*

Food safety communications and education have been an essential preventive function in national food safety systems. Food safety communications includes food safety risk communication<sup>†</sup> as well as broader communication about food safety risk management options and performance. Food safety communications can help raise the knowledge and awareness of stakeholders in the food safety system about food safety risk factors and possible ways to control these risks, encourage and advise stakeholders to adopt best practices, and change behaviours and inform appropriate actions to be taken during food safety incidents and emergencies. Food safety education is important to

<sup>†</sup> The Codex Alimentarius Commission defines food safety risk communication as the interactive exchange of information and opinions throughout the risk analysis process, concerning risk, risk-related factors and risk perceptions, among risk assessors, risk managers, consumers, industry, the academic community and other interested parties, including the explanation of risk assessment findings and the basis of risk management decisions.

ensure that food business operators, food handlers, food safety officers, consumers and other concerned stakeholders have the necessary competency to perform their duties.

Risk communication is a core capacity requirement under IHR (2005) and the basis for providing information that enables people to make informed choices in order to reduce food safety risks. Food safety risk communication must be provided in an open, transparent, timely and proactive manner. Food safety risk communication plays a key role in building and retaining trust, confidence and consumer satisfaction that are crucial for enhancing food safety.

Education of food safety officers, food handlers and others engaged in the production, distribution and control of food is an ongoing activity that needs to be constantly reviewed and updated in accordance with new developments in food safety. Education programmes for food handlers should be developed in partnership with food businesses, and they should include issues of ethical standards and behaviour in producing and serving safe food. The effectiveness of information and communications and education activities needs to be evaluated regularly, and innovative ways of delivery such as social media and online training should be considered.

In recent years, social media has become a pivotal tool for informal communication and rapid exchange of information. As a result, many issues related to food safety, regardless of their validity, are being communicated through social networks, sometimes well before official communication has been provided. Social media provides invaluable opportunities for communicating with the public as well as to improve informal event-based foodborne disease surveillance. However, social media also increases the risk of incorrect and unverified information to rapidly spread among stakeholders. This may lead to misperceptions of food safety risks and eventually irrational decisions that may put public health at risk. Food safety authorities need to adapt communications strategies to the emergence of new communication channels.

The *Western Pacific Regional Food Safety Strategy 2011–2015* contributed to significant progress in advancing food safety risk communication and education. Model curricula for food inspectors have been developed and a large number of food inspectors and food handlers have been trained either through in-country training sessions, specialized overseas training courses or online learning networks. In addition, food safety knowledge and awareness activities have been implemented at regional and national levels and promotional material has been produced in local languages and tailored to specific target audiences. School food policies with due consideration to food safety have been developed and training of food handlers has become a legal requirement in a number of countries.

However, in a rapidly changing food environment, food safety communications and education have become more important than ever. In addition to emergency risk communication,

behaviour change risk communication and operational risk communication, there is a need to also focus on open and transparent food safety communications in a broader sense. Food safety communications may include communications about how the food safety system manages food safety risks and what it does to protect people's health. Ongoing and transparent communications may help to build trust in the safety of the food supply and make stakeholders feel more confident about risk management practices.

Food safety communications and education need to be tailored to specific target audiences and focus on modern principles and approaches for risk-based food control. There is a need for stronger focus on establishing food safety education programmes and plans considering practical implementation and funding issues. Such education programmes and plans can help establish enabling environments for safe food production and consumption. There is also a need for designating appropriate spokespersons within food safety authorities and for adopting new technologies including social media and online applications for food safety communications and education.

### *Strategic actions*

National food safety authorities, in partnership with key stakeholders, may want to implement the following strategic actions:

- Ensure designation of appropriate spokesperson(s) in food safety authorities and develop a plan for food safety communications covering all concerned sectors and agencies.
- In partnership with food businesses and consumer representatives, allocate adequate resources and develop and implement through appropriate platforms consumer awareness programmes on food safety.
- Enhance public awareness of food safety through media and dissemination of appropriate information, education and communication material.
- Establish a mechanism that systematically monitors public perceptions, the media and other informal reports to inform food safety communications and education activities.
- Develop and implement a national outcome-based food safety education strategy covering training of people working in food businesses, enforcement agencies and food laboratories.
- In line with the national food safety education strategy and in partnership with appropriate educational institutions, develop and implement programmes for strengthening the competency of food handlers, food inspectors and food laboratory staff.
- Formalize a mechanism that routinely assesses the effectiveness of food safety communications and education efforts.
- Utilize INFOSAN or other existing mechanisms as platforms to strengthen continuous food safety communications across countries.



## 3. Food safety in the Pacific

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### 3.1 Introduction

The Western Pacific Region includes 21 Pacific island countries and areas. The Pacific subregion is diverse in terms of geography, demographics, culture, economy and health status. However, as a subregion, the small island states in the Pacific share a number of commonalities including relatively small populations scattered over large geographic areas, transport and communications infrastructure with poor coverage and high costs, remoteness from international markets, and limited human resource capacity.

The unique features of the Pacific make the subregion vulnerable to food safety incidents and emergencies. The subregion is highly dependent on food imports, with some countries importing up to 95% of their food supply. The effects of climate change have become an increasingly important issue for good health and food safety in the subregion and a high-level political priority. At the same time, Pacific leaders have declared a crisis due to a high burden of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs).

In most Pacific island countries and areas, food safety is part of the environmental health programme, and most food safety officers have multiple responsibilities and cover multiple tasks. Food safety systems in the Pacific are fragmented, with limited human and financial resources. The uniqueness of Pacific island countries and areas and their common food safety challenges call for Pacific-specific approaches to the implementation of this Framework.

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### 3.2 Food safety issues for consideration by Pacific island countries and areas

Within the broader perspective of the *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific*, a number of Pacific-specific issues have been identified for consideration by Pacific island countries and areas.

### *Food import control*

Pacific island countries and areas increasingly rely on imported food for their food security and this is expected to continue for the years to come. Food imports add to diet diversity and food availability, but also have the potential to expose consumers to substandard food products and food safety hazards, thereby increasing the risk for food safety incidents and emergencies. Common food safety issues associated with imported food in the Pacific include mislabelling and labelling in foreign languages; products which are close to or have passed their expiration date upon importation; time/temperature abuse during transport, transit and storage; and substandard quality products contributing to the burden of NCDs. Effective food import control systems consist of risk-based food laws and regulations; documented procedures for document checks, inspections, sampling and recalls; and clearly defined roles and responsibilities across sectors and stakeholders, including effective coordination among them. In most Pacific island countries and areas, food import control is a shared responsibility among several ministries and agencies, and strengthening imported food control is an issue that governments may want to pay particular attention to while protecting people's health and facilitating international food trade.

### *Access to appropriate food analysis capacity*

In most Pacific island countries and areas, capacity to conduct physical, microbiological and chemical food analyses is limited. Only few food laboratories within the subregion are accredited and have the necessary capacity to conduct the food analyses needed to verify the extent to which food safety measures applied by food businesses serve their purpose and to support investigation of foodborne disease outbreaks. The costs of establishing and operating food laboratories are relatively high. Considering the limited number of food samples to be tested in most Pacific island countries and areas, it is not practical for all countries to have sophisticated food laboratories. Instead, small island states in the Pacific may want to consider improving access to existing reference food laboratories within and beyond the subregion with capacity to test priority food safety hazards and food composition.

### *Food safety issues associated with climate change*

Climate change, including more frequent and intense natural disasters, is affecting food security and increasing foodborne and waterborne disease risks in the Pacific. Changes in temperature, rainfall and sea levels affect local agriculture and food production, and at the same time impact the growth and survival of pathogens. This increases the risk of diarrhoeal diseases and food poisoning. Within the last 20 years, the Pacific has experienced a steady increase in cases of shellfish and ciguatera-fish poisoning. This is



linked to harmful algae bloom that can be associated with extreme weather events and changing sea surface temperatures. The small island states of the Pacific are among the world's most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The detrimental effect of climate change is expected to continue to affect health and food safety, and Pacific island countries and areas may wish to implement appropriate adaptation measures, including risk communication to reduce and mitigate the effect of climate change on food safety.

#### *Food-related NCD risk factors*

Pacific leaders have declared an NCD crisis. Multiple risk factors contribute to NCDs, and an unhealthy diet is one of the most striking factors. Within recent years, various initiatives have been introduced to prevent and control NCDs. However, in a global context, Pacific island countries and areas are still among the countries with the highest burden of NCDs. Food safety systems play an important role in contributing to addressing the NCD burden and improving the safety and quality of the food supply. This may include development and implementation of food policies and legal frameworks with a broad scope to also address food-related NCD risk factors.

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### **3.3 Pacific approaches to strengthen food safety**

To address the identified food safety issues, Pacific island countries and areas may want to consider the following approaches for implementation, as seen in Box 1 (next page).

**BOX 1.** Pacific approaches to strengthen food safety**APPROACHES****1. Strengthen and align food safety policies and legal frameworks**

## MODE OF IMPLEMENTATION

- Work together to develop and implement model food safety regulations in line with international recommendations and requirements and Pacific-specific needs.
- Develop regional policies defining common requirements and procedures for food control.

**2. Strengthen linkages to other programmes for implementation of strategic action on food safety**

## MODE OF IMPLEMENTATION

- For effective detection, investigation and response to food safety incidents and emergencies, strengthen cooperation with departments responsible for the management of emerging diseases and public health emergency preparedness and response and National IHR Focal Points.
- For the development of food safety policies and legislation, strengthen linkages to broader health governance and regulatory initiatives as well as initiatives to strengthen legal frameworks for trade and agriculture.
- For food safety awareness raising, education and training, strengthen linkages to broader health promotion and education activities as well as environmental health and other existing training programmes.

**3. Utilize online platforms for communications and education**

## MODE OF IMPLEMENTATION

- In addition to traditional means of communication, utilize social media to communicate with the public and to reach people on outer islands and in remote communities with food safety messages to increase their knowledge and awareness about food safety risks and possible control measures.
- Utilize existing online training and education platforms such as the Pacific Open Learning Health Network (POLHN) for training and continuous education of food handlers and food inspectors.
- Utilize the INFOSAN Community Website as a platform for routine information sharing and for rapid exchange of information during food safety incidents and emergencies of international concern.

**4. Improve regional cooperation**

## MODE OF IMPLEMENTATION

- Improve access to food safety reference laboratories with the necessary capacity to test for priority food safety hazards and food composition.
- Explore opportunities for conducting biannual Pacific food safety meetings with the purpose to monitor progress on implementation of the *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific*, identify common priorities and promote learning for continuous improvements.



## 4. Implementation of the Framework

### 4.1 Introduction

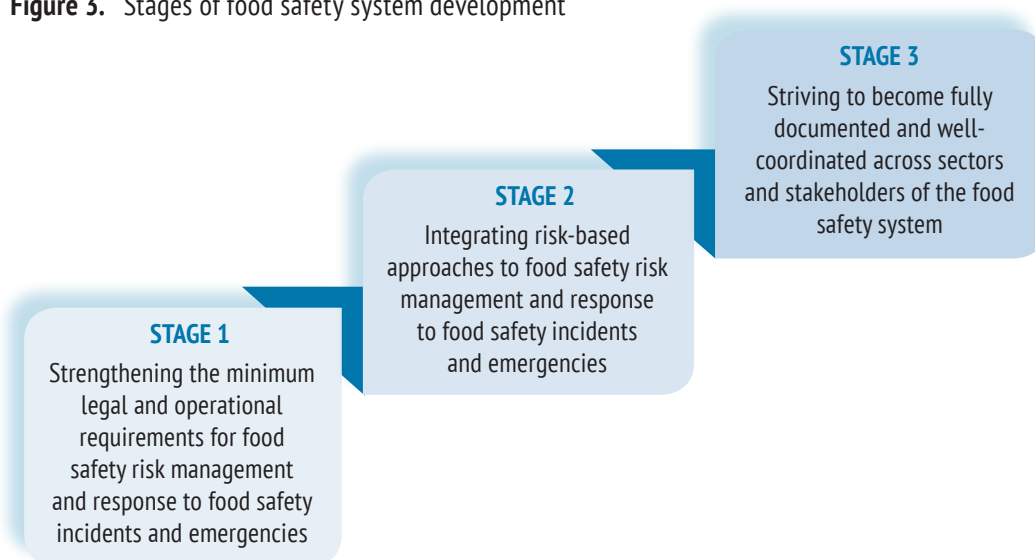
Food safety systems in the Western Pacific Region are at various stages of development, and countries have different means to address food safety issues. Hence, efforts to strengthen food safety must be tailored to specific country needs and priorities, and the correct timing for the introduction of interventions must consider political momentum, resource availability, country commitments at the global and regional levels, and public support.

Recognizing the diversity of food safety systems across the Western Pacific Region, the *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific* takes a stepwise approach to guide the strategic actions of Member States to strengthen food safety systems. The stepwise approach aims to guide national food safety authorities to establish and strengthen food safety “systems”. The approach consists of interacting and interdependent components that form a comprehensive and well-coordinated entity as opposed to an approach that seeks to strengthen individual components of the system with limited consideration to the uniformity and interdependency of components of the system.

The stepwise approach promotes the process of development from systems focusing on strengthening the minimum legal and operational requirements for food safety risk management and response, to systems adopting risk-based approaches, and further on to systems that strive to become fully documented and well-coordinated across sectors and stakeholders. The stepwise approach can help countries to prioritize interventions as well as to improve the effectiveness of investments in food safety systems. Figure 3 illustrates the stepwise approach and the main characteristics of food safety systems at different stages of development.

The stepwise approach recognizes that existing food safety systems in Member States are dynamic structures and they may have components at various stages of development. As such, countries may use the stepwise approach to identify priority strategic actions that can help strengthen the uniformity of food safety systems at their respective stages of development.

**Figure 3.** Stages of food safety system development



**Stage 1**

**4.1.1 Development: Strengthening minimum requirements**

Food safety systems at development stage 1 are focused on strengthening the minimum legal and operational requirements for food safety risk management and response to food safety incidents and emergencies. The components of food safety systems at stage 1 are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Components of food safety systems at development stage 1

ACTION AREAS	COMPONENTS
<b>Policy and legal frameworks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Defined roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in the food safety system</li> <li>▪ Legal measures for food production, handling, storage, processing, marketing and distribution in line with Codex Alimentarius and international requirements</li> </ul>
<b>Risk-based inspection and enforcement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Designated qualified food inspectors</li> <li>▪ Register of food businesses in the formal sector</li> <li>▪ Basic food inspection tools and equipment</li> </ul>
<b>Information underpinning evidence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Existing indicator- and event-based surveillance systems include foodborne diseases or syndromes</li> <li>▪ Generic system for risk assessment and response to emerging diseases and public health emergencies include food safety-related incidents and emergencies.</li> </ul>

ACTION AREAS	COMPONENTS
Incident and emergency response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legal authority by food safety authorities to enforce and conduct food recalls and risk management and other emergency-related risk management measures</li> <li>Designated INFOSAN emergency contact point and established linkage to the National IHR Focal Point</li> </ul>
Communications and education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spokesperson and guiding principles for coordination of food safety risk communication</li> <li>Programme for basic food safety training for food handlers</li> <li>Food safety awareness programme for consumers</li> </ul>

**Stage 2**

**4.1.2 Development: Adopting risk-based approaches**

Food safety systems at development stage 2 are beginning to adopt risk-based approaches to food safety risk management and response to food safety incidents and emergencies. The components of food safety systems at stage 2 are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Components of food safety systems at development stage 2

ACTION AREAS	COMPONENTS
Policy and legal frameworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mechanism for coordination of activities and functions across all agencies with responsibilities for food safety control</li> </ul>
Risk-based inspection and enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Risk-based food inspection plan</li> <li>Food business registry covering all food businesses</li> <li>Access to reference food laboratories with capacity to test food composition and priority food safety hazards</li> </ul>
Information underpinning evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Food consumption and food composition monitoring programmes</li> <li>Programme for monitoring food safety hazards of public health concern</li> <li>Ad hoc studies supplementing surveillance and response data</li> <li>Availability of laboratory-based surveillance of foodborne diseases</li> </ul>
Incident and emergency response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Food recall system</li> <li>Procedures for investigation and response to food safety incidents and emergencies</li> </ul>
Communications and education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Platform for food safety awareness programmes</li> <li>National food safety education strategy</li> <li>Food safety communications plan</li> </ul>

**Stage 3****4.1.3 Development: Striving to become fully documented and well-coordinated**

Food safety systems at development stage 3 have built a strong trust relationship among stakeholders and are working towards becoming fully documented and well-coordinated across sectors and stakeholders. The components of food safety systems at stage 3 are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Components of food safety systems at development stage 3

ACTION AREAS	COMPONENTS
<b>Policy and legal frameworks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Multisectoral national food safety plan</li> <li>▪ Procedures for conducting regulatory impact assessments incorporated into legislation</li> <li>▪ Clearly defined, risk-based and coherent food safety laws and regulations</li> <li>▪ Mechanism to monitor and evaluate performance of the food safety system</li> </ul>
<b>Risk-based inspection and enforcement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Documented system for consistent and impartial implementation of risk-based inspection and enforcement activities throughout the food chain</li> <li>▪ Procedures for food-premises hygiene grading</li> </ul>
<b>Information underpinning evidence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Coordinated national surveillance system (indicator- and event-based food monitoring system and ad hoc studies)</li> <li>▪ Research and development to improve the availability of evidence-based food safety information</li> <li>▪ Estimates of the national burden of foodborne diseases</li> <li>▪ Total diet studies or equivalent</li> <li>▪ Mechanism for collection, evaluation and use of foodborne disease surveillance data to inform policy</li> </ul>
<b>Incident and emergency response</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Procedures to test and monitor the system for food safety incidents and emergency investigation and response</li> <li>▪ Documented food recall and traceability system</li> </ul>
<b>Communications and education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mechanism to review and evaluate the effectiveness of food safety communications programmes</li> <li>▪ System for monitoring media and other informal reports and public perceptions</li> </ul>

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## 4.2 Regional mechanism to support implementation

One country alone cannot ensure food safety. Increasing international trade in food and agriculture products, the rapid flow of information across borders and the internationalization of food businesses have enhanced the need for food safety authorities to work closely together to reduce food safety risks and respond to food safety incidents and emergencies.

High-level political commitment to food safety is essential to implement actions recommended in this *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific*. Within the time frame of implementation, progress will be reported periodically to the Regional Committee for the Western Pacific. To facilitate implementation of the Framework, it is recommended that regional cooperation be improved through the establishment of a regional common platform with the objectives:

- to monitor progress of implementation of the Framework;
- to set common priorities for action; and
- to share experiences to promote learning for continuous improvements in national food safety systems.

The regional common platform would liaise with existing regional food safety initiatives to create a platform where food safety authorities meet, discuss and identify food safety issues of common interest. Such existing regional food safety initiatives include the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Asia (CCASIA) and the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for North America and the South West Pacific (CCNASWP), the APEC Food Safety Cooperation Forum and the ASEAN Health Cluster 4 on Enhancing Food Safety.

Considering the geographic, cultural and demographic diversity of Member States in the Western Pacific Region, as well as commonalities of food safety issues and priorities for some Member States, the establishment of separate regional platforms for Member States in Asia and the Pacific, respectively, may be considered.

The regional common platforms will gather managers of national food safety systems from ministries of health or other ministries, as appropriate, according to the national institutional setups in Member States. Partner organizations and donors may contribute and share information about their respective programmes and interventions, as well as experiences in strengthening food safety systems. WHO may serve as the secretariat and facilitate meetings, which are proposed to be held every two years, subject to funding availability.

The Food Safety Cooperation Working Group (FSCWG), which consists of APEC Food Safety Cooperation Forum, ASEAN Health Cluster 4 on Enhancing Food Safety, FAO,

the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and WHO, may continue to serve as a mechanism for informal coordination and information sharing between partners.

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### 4.3 Monitoring the implementation of the Framework

Monitoring the implementation of the *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific* will combine various tools and mechanisms.

At the regional level, the regional common platform will serve to review overall progress on implementation of the Framework. At the country level, the IHR (2005) Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (IHR MEF) will be used to monitor progress of countries in building capacity to detect and respond to food safety events that may constitute a public health emergency of national or international concern.

The IHR MEF consists of four components:

1. annual reporting,
2. after-action review,
3. exercises, and
4. Joint External Evaluation (JEE).

Food safety capacities required under IHR (2005) are assessed by the IHR Annual Reporting Tool and the JEE. The Annual Reporting Tool consists of three food safety-related indicators with a scoring range from 1 to 5. The indicators are:

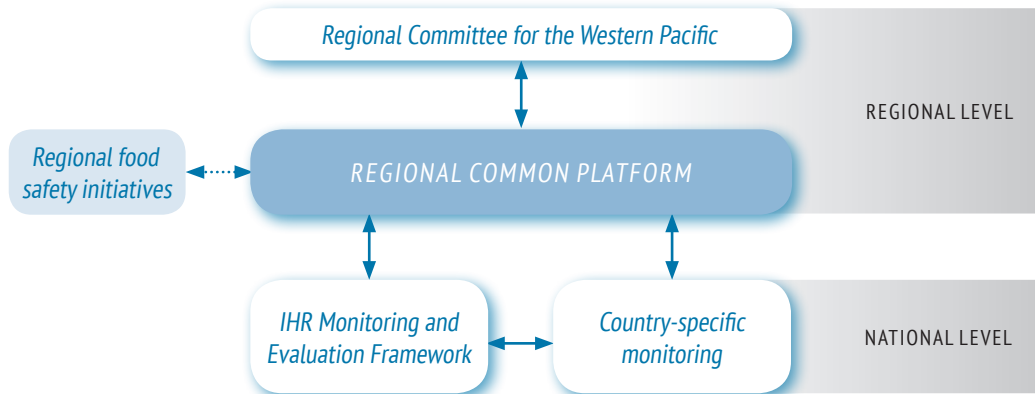
1. the scope of national food legislation;
2. multisectoral coordination to address food safety emergencies and INFOSAN participation; and
3. design and implementation of risk analysis for food safety control measures.

The JEE is conducted every five or six years by a JEE team comprised of national and international technical subject matter experts. For the IHR (2005) core capacity on food safety, the JEE uses a series of contextual and technical questions to assess if mechanisms for detecting and responding to foodborne diseases and food contamination are established and functioning. These mechanisms include training of people participating in outbreak response, procedures for outbreak response, communications and multisectoral engagement.

To complement monitoring through the IHR MEF, countries may want to identify country-specific food safety indicators for monitoring in line with national requirements, priorities and data availability. Figure 4 shows the national and regional monitoring mechanisms for implementation of the Framework.



**Figure 4.** National and regional monitoring mechanisms





## 5. Connecting to other strategies and programmes

This *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific* recognizes that many actions necessary to reduce food safety risks are beyond the control of the government and the health sector. Food businesses, consumers and their representatives, and multiple sectors within government including agriculture, environment, commerce, education, fisheries, industry, trade and tourism share the responsibility for food safety.

Several multinational organizations, regional and bilateral programmes, private sector initiatives, consumer organizations, academic institutions, and nongovernmental organizations are engaged in food safety work. The work of all these partners contributes to the implementation of this *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific* by strengthening the capacity of Member States to manage food safety risks and respond to food safety incidents and emergencies, while at the same time the Framework contributes to the efforts of the various partners to improve food safety.

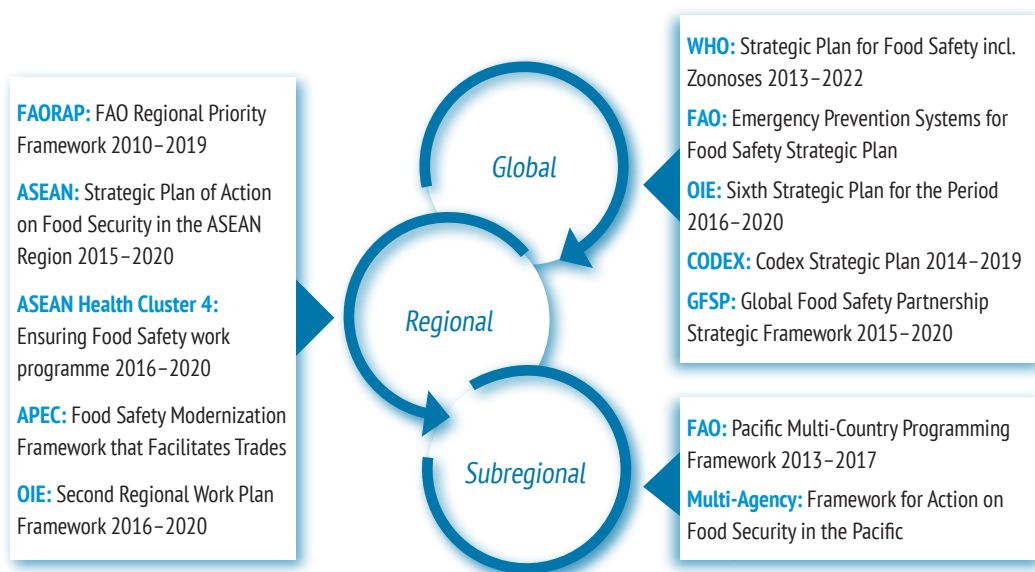
At the global level, *Advancing Food Safety Initiatives: Strategic Plan for Food Safety Including Foodborne Zoonoses 2013–2022* and the *Codex Alimentarius Commission Strategic Plan 2014–2019* guide WHO and Codex work on food safety and food standards development at the global level. WHO support to Member States implementing the regional Framework will be aligned with these two plans.

At the regional level, the work of CCASIA and CCNASWP supports implementation of the regional Framework, as do various regional food safety strategies and frameworks developed by partners such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), FAO and OIE.

At the Pacific subregional level, the Framework builds on the vision of Healthy Islands articulated in the Yanuca Island Declaration of 1995 and reconfirmed in the 2015 Yanuca Island Declaration on Health in Pacific Island Countries and Territories. It is aligned with the multi-agency *Towards a Food Secure Pacific: Framework for Action on Food Security in the Pacific*, which takes a holistic approach to food security and calls for action from a range of sectors, including food safety, to improve food security in the Pacific.

Figure 5 provides an overview of global, regional and subregional strategies and frameworks that contribute to and will be influenced by implementation of the *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific*.

**Figure 5.** Global and regional food safety strategies and frameworks that contribute to and are influenced by the *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific*



In addition to contributing to various global, regional and subregional food-safety-related strategies and frameworks and within the broader context of UHC and the SDGs, implementation of the Framework is also supported by and contributes to several health-related global and regional strategies and frameworks.

## 5.1 Emerging diseases and public health emergencies

Food safety is a key component of health security and a core capacity of IHR (2005). APSED III is the common framework to implement the core capacity requirements of IHR (2005), and it takes a generic approach to preparedness, risk assessment and response to all public health hazards, including those related to food safety. It provides an important collaborative platform for Member States, WHO and partners to work together to strengthen preparedness, risk assessment and response to outbreaks and public health emergencies, including those caused by unsafe food.

APSED III contributes to the *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific* by strengthening Member States' IHR (2005) core capacities, including the core capacity for food safety. In particular, APSED III contributes to action areas 3 (Food safety information underpinning evidence) and 4 (Food safety incident and emergency response). This is accomplished by building capacity in the following eight interrelated focus areas:

1. Public health emergency preparedness
2. Surveillance, risk assessment and response
3. Laboratories
4. Zoonoses
5. Prevention through health care
6. Risk communication
7. Regional preparedness, alert and response
8. Monitoring and evaluation

At the same time, the *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific* contributes to implementation of APSED III by strengthening food safety systems to manage food safety risks and respond to food safety incidents and emergencies, including through:

- strengthening the capacity of food laboratories to provide rapid testing for priority food safety hazards;
- strengthening the legal power and documented procedures for food safety authorities to implement necessary measures to respond to food safety incidents and emergencies such as temporarily closing businesses, demanding and conducting food recalls, collecting food samples and issuing fines;
- enhancing food recall systems to rapidly remove unsafe and potentially unsafe food from the market; and
- strengthening food safety operational risk communication during food safety incidents and emergencies including communication via INFOSAN as well as strengthening communications and coordination between INFOSAN Emergency Contact Points and National IHR Focal Points.

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## 5.2 Disaster risk management for health

The Western Pacific Region is the most disaster-prone region in the world. Six of the top 10 countries worldwide most exposed to disaster risks are located in the Western Pacific Region. Disaster risk management for health (DRM-H) is multisectoral and refers to the systematic analysis and management of health risks posed by emergencies and

disasters, through a combination of: 1) hazard and vulnerability reduction to prevent and mitigate risks; 2) preparedness; 3) response; and 4) recovery measures.

The *Western Pacific Regional Framework for Action for Disaster Risk Management for Health* guides capacity-building in all four phases of the disaster risk management cycle and it presents priority actions for the health sector to enhance risk management for natural and human-induced disasters. The DRM-H framework contributes to the *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific* by strengthening regional, national and subnational capacities to address the health aspects of disaster risk management, including aspects related to food safety.

The *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific* contributes to the implementation of the *Western Pacific Regional Framework for Action for Disaster Risk Management for Health* by strengthening the capacity of countries to manage food safety risks and respond to food safety incidents and emergencies, including those caused by emergencies and disasters. The *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific* also contributes to strengthening communications, coordination and partnerships across sectors and stakeholders, which is central to successful disaster risk management.

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### 5.3 Antimicrobial resistance

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) threatens historic achievements in modern medicine and public health as well as broader development. Alarming levels of resistance to common community-acquired pathogens have been reported across the world. Overuse and misuse of antimicrobials in food-producing animals has contributed to an increasing challenge of antimicrobial-resistant pathogens passing on to people through the food chain and the environment. This is especially an issue for vulnerable populations. Residues of antimicrobial agents ingested via food of animal origin are another health concern as they can cause allergies, alterations in the intestinal flora and bacterial resistance.

In line with the *Global Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance*, the *Action Agenda for Antimicrobial Resistance in the Western Pacific Region* recommends priority actions to reduce the health and development impact of AMR in the Region. This includes surveillance of AMR and monitoring of antimicrobial use, which is closely related to overall food monitoring and is an important component of a national food safety system. The regional AMR action agenda supports One Health, which is an approach to designing and implementing programmes, policies, legislation and research in which multiple sectors communicate and work together to achieve better public health outcomes. The approach requires collective action by the human health, animal health and environment

sectors to minimize the emergence and spread of AMR. The One Health approach is also important to strengthen multisectoral coordination within national food safety systems.

The *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific* recognizes that the prudent use of antimicrobials in agriculture and livestock production must occur at the primary production level and that the primary role of food safety authorities is to help combat AMR by:

- strengthening the legal framework for antimicrobial residues and microbial contaminant limits in food, as well as the use of antimicrobials in food-producing animals; and
- strengthening monitoring of antimicrobial residues in food and AMR in priority foodborne pathogens in the food chain.

In addition, the food safety authorities also play an important supportive role in advocating for high-level political attention to AMR, strengthening One Health governance structures and coordination across sectors, risk communication and education of consumers, and promoting the prudent use of antimicrobials at primary production level.

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## 5.4 Neglected tropical diseases

Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) are a medically diverse group of conditions that are strongly associated with poverty in the tropics. Many NTDs are acquired through ingestion of food contaminated with larval stages or eggs of parasites. Such NTDs include foodborne trematodiasis, taeniasis, cysticercosis, echinococcosis and soil-transmitted helminthiasis. The morbidity burden of these diseases is significant in some countries of the Western Pacific Region, and some of these diseases contribute to chronic morbidity resulting in liver or bile duct cancer, epilepsy and potentially premature death. Continued transmission is often linked to poor practices relating to the production, processing, preparation of food, and the consumption of contaminated food and livestock products, especially the consumption of raw fish or undercooked meats. A long-term solution to many NTDs requires improvements in hygiene and sanitation practices, food safety, agricultural methods and dietary practices linked to sustainable behaviour change and socioeconomic development.

The draft Regional Action Plan for Neglected Tropical Diseases in the Western Pacific, which is being developed, will directly contribute to the *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific* by promoting universal access to One Health interventions, including treatment and management of human and animal reservoirs, improving hygiene and sanitation practices in communities and improving also agricultural and aquaculture practices as well as empowering communities through effective

communications on food preparation and consumption practices among the public. The *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific* contributes to the NTD programme by improving hygiene, sanitation and food-handling practices through training of food producers and the education of the public about safe food-handling and preparation practices, as well as strengthening risk-based inspection and enforcement.

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## 5.5 Health and the environment

Food safety and environmental health are two closely related health programmes. In several Member States, environmental health programmes include food safety, and food inspectors are often environmental health officers covering several responsibilities. The *Western Pacific Regional Framework for Action on Health and Environment on a Changing Planet* offers practical strategies for countries to enhance their health and environment programmes by enhancing governance and leadership for stronger environmental health capacity; building networks, coalitions and alliances; communicating evidence on risk and vulnerability; and enhancing strategic financing and resource mobilization. These strategic actions contribute to strengthen food safety and implementation of the *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific*.

At the same time, the *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific* contributes to the *Western Pacific Regional Framework for Action on Health and Environment on a Changing Planet* by strengthening the capacity of countries to provide data and evidence on environmental hazards and pollutants in the food chain and their impact on health. The food safety framework also contributes to establishing partnerships across sectors, stakeholders and national borders and to promoting regional cooperation.

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## 5.6 Nutrition and noncommunicable diseases

Member States in the Western Pacific Region are challenged by a double burden of malnutrition.<sup>†</sup> Two regional action plans guide the work on improving nutrition and addressing food and diet-related NCD risk factors. The *Western Pacific Regional Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases (2014–2020)* aims to reduce the burden of preventable morbidity and disability and avoidable mortality due to NCDs in the Region. The *Action Plan to Reduce the Double Burden of Malnutrition in*

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<sup>†</sup> WHO defines the double burden malnutrition as undernutrition coexisting with over-nutrition and nutrition-related NCDs.

*the Western Pacific Region (2015–2020)* brings together actions from global and regional guidance on health and nutrition, and encourages coordinated and comprehensive implementation of strategies to address diet-related diseases and to reduce risk factors for malnutrition.

The two action plans contribute to the *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific* by strengthening national food and nutrition policies and action plans; developing guidelines and policy measures that engage food producers and processors; promoting the provision and availability of healthy food in public institutions; promoting nutrition labelling; protecting and promoting breastfeeding; and strengthening and enforcing legal frameworks that protect, promote and support healthy diets. At the same time, the Framework contributes to the nutrition and NCD action plans by building capacity in Member States to strengthen national food control including food policy and legislation; risk-based inspection and enforcement; and communications and education. Cooperation among food safety, nutrition and NCD programmes are particularly important in small island states in the Pacific where the NCD crisis is an overarching threat for good health and sustainable development.



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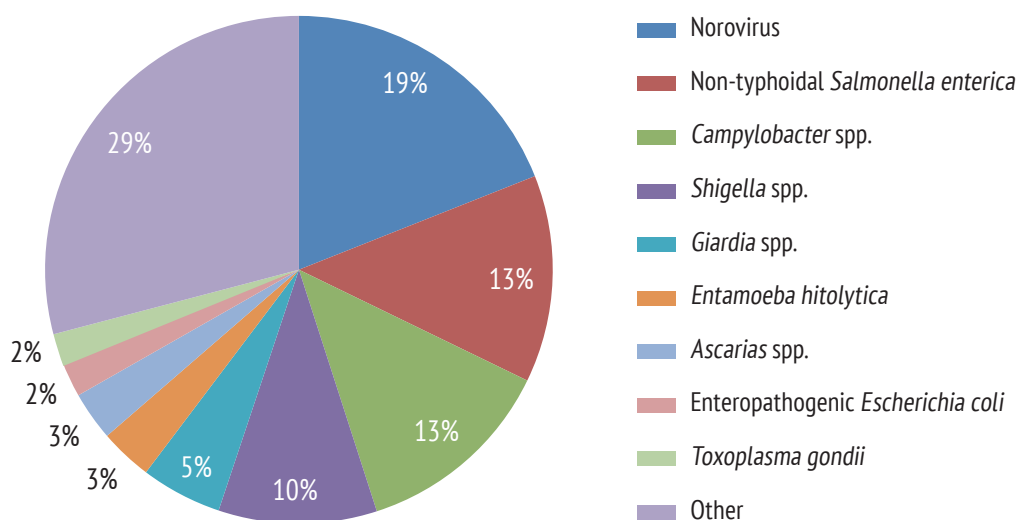
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# ANNEX 1

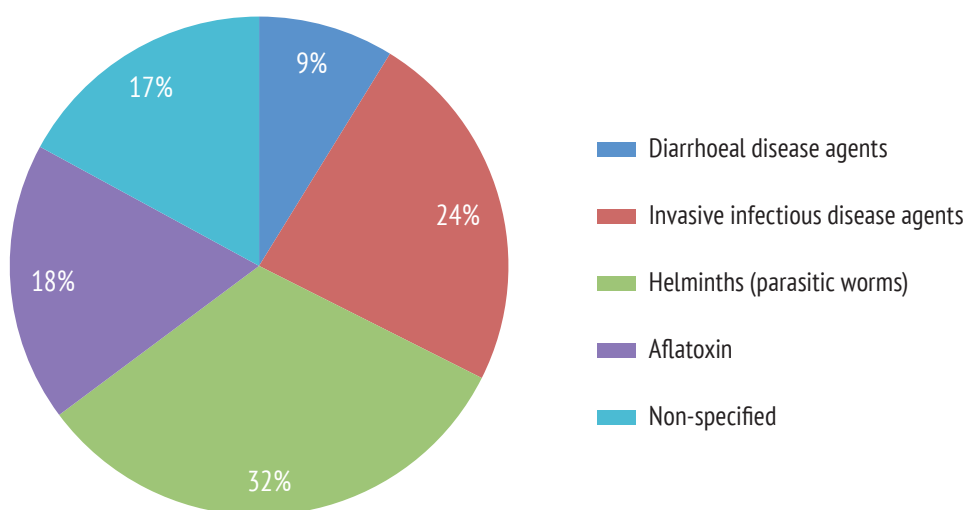
## Burden of foodborne diseases in the Western Pacific Region

**Figure A1.1** Percentage of foodborne illnesses by disease hazard within the Western Pacific Region



Source: WHO Estimates of the Global Burden of Foodborne Diseases, 2015

**Figure A1.2** Percentage of foodborne deaths by disease hazard within the Western Pacific Region



Source: WHO Estimates of the Global Burden of Foodborne Diseases, 2015

## ANNEX 2

### **Process of developing the *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific***

The *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific* was developed during a 20-month process from November 2015 to July 2017. The Framework is the outcome of a comprehensive consultation with Member States, technical experts and partners as well as a review of achievements and experiences from implementing the *Western Pacific Regional Food Safety Strategy 2011–2015*.

#### ***Achievements and experiences from implementing the Western Pacific Regional Food Safety Strategy 2011–2015***

The *Western Pacific Regional Food Safety Strategy 2011–2015* has contributed to good progress in strengthening national food safety systems. Improvements have been observed throughout the seven themes of the Strategy. However, progress has varied between Member States and between the different themes of the Strategy. The overall implementation of the food safety core capacities, among the Member States that responded to the annual IHR monitoring questionnaire, increased from 69% in 2010 to 85% in 2015. However, there was significant variation from country to country.

The Regional Food Safety Strategy supported food safety authorities in improving food control and coordination throughout the food chain continuum. Among the countries that responded to the IHR questionnaire, the percentage of countries that have implemented food safety control management systems increased from 77% in 2012 to 89% in 2015. Meanwhile, the percentage of countries with a mechanism in place for multi-sectoral collaborations for food safety events increased from 65% to 95%. However, the functioning and sustainability of multisectoral collaboration mechanisms have been challenging, as food safety strategies, policies and plans have often been developed inconsistently across sectors. This limits the effectiveness of systems in addressing cross-sector food safety issues and makes leadership in food safety risk management less clear.

Good progress has taken place in developing food laws and regulations in line with regional priorities and the internationally recognized standards of the Codex Alimentarius. Among the countries that responded to the IHR questionnaire, the proportion of countries with food safety standards available increased from 88% in 2012 to 95% in 2015 and that of countries with food laws, regulations or policies in place increased from 96% to 100%. However, assuring coherence of regulatory frameworks across various

sectors and adequate capacity for compliance and enforcement has been identified as a key challenge.

Improvements in foodborne disease surveillance, investigation and response were observed, including implementation of total diet studies. Among respondents to the IHR questionnaire, the proportion of countries that systematically collect and analyse epidemiological data related to food contamination increased from 65% in 2012 to 68% in 2015. Countries with timely and systematic information exchange between food safety authorities, surveillance units and other relevant sectors increased from 65% to 95% over the same time. However, the use of foodborne disease surveillance and food monitoring data to effectively guide policy and risk analysis continued to be a challenge for evidence-based policy-making.

An emerging shift from traditional food inspection and enforcement activities to risk-based food inspection has taken place. According to data collected through the annual IHR monitoring questionnaire (2015), 89% of Member States had risk-based food inspection services in place. A high number of food inspectors were trained in the principles and practices of risk-based food inspection, and training curricula and guidance documents were developed. More emphasis was placed on training food inspectors than on building systems for risk-based food inspection. As a result, inspectors faced difficulties in adopting a risk-based approach and improving practices over time.

Mandatory national food safety training programmes, education curricula and material for food handlers have been developed. Several training sessions were conducted and food safety advocacy activities were implemented. This included the World Health Day 2015 focus on food safety. Among respondents to the IHR questionnaire, the proportion of countries with communication mechanisms and materials ready to deliver information, education and advice to stakeholders across the farm-to-fork continuum increased from 77% in 2012 to 79% in 2015. Food safety training programmes contributed to improved awareness of risk factors, but changes in behaviour were less pronounced. Limited involvement of food businesses in the development and implementation of food safety training and education activities, as well as inconsistent funding, affected the effectiveness and sustainability of food safety training and education efforts.

Among respondents to the IHR questionnaire, the proportion of countries with operational plans to respond to food safety events increased from 50% in 2012 to 79% in 2015. A series of biregional meetings with Member States in the WHO South-East Asia and Western Pacific regions contributed to enhanced country use of INFOSAN to rapidly share food safety information. In 2014, more than half (55%) of INFOSAN members in the two regions were involved in a food safety event reported through INFOSAN. In three out of four cases, the INFOSAN emergency contact point acknowledged receipt of the information in the required 24-hour time frame. However, limited availability

of information related to food safety incidents and emergencies and unclear lines of INFOSAN communication at the country level restricted the effectiveness of country participation in INFOSAN.

### **Consultation process for the development of the *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific***

The *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific* was developed through a bottom-up consultation process to ensure a technically robust framework that addresses emerging food safety issues and that can be implemented at country and regional levels.

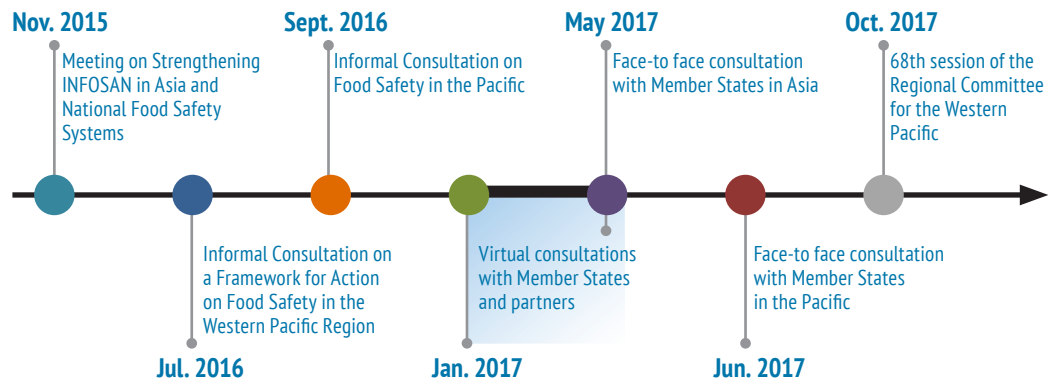
Current and future food safety issues for Member States in Asia were identified at the Meeting on Strengthening INFOSAN in Asia and National Food Safety Systems which was held in Hong Kong SAR (China) in November 2015. At the FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committee for Asia (20th Session of CCASIA) and the FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committee for North America and the South West Pacific (14th Session of CCNASWP) these priorities were further discussed and critical and emerging issues and priorities were identified.

Informal consultations with technical experts were held in July and September 2016. The informal consultations reviewed food safety issues and priorities and recommended an approach and strategic direction for implementation of priority actions to strengthen national food safety systems. Virtual consultations with Member States and partners were conducted via teleconferences and videoconferences from March to June 2017 with the aim to gain feedback, perspectives and ideas on the scope and approach of the Framework.

Face-to-face consultation meetings were held with Member States and partners in Asia in May 2017 and the Pacific in June 2017. The consultations reviewed and provided input to finalization of the *Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific*. The consultations concluded that Member States reconfirmed the need for the Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific to guide action on how to strengthen national food safety systems, obtain and advocate for high-level political support to enhance food safety and facilitate regional cooperation among food safety authorities. Member States agreed to the vision, goal, objectives, action areas and approach of the Framework and emphasized the need for the Framework to take a stepwise approach in strengthening national food safety systems.

In October 2017, the Framework was endorsed by the Regional Committee for the Western Pacific by adoption of resolution WPR/RC68.R6 on food safety.

**Figure A2.1** Timeline for consultation process for developing the framework



# ANNEX 3

## Glossary

### 1. Audit

A systematic examination to determine whether what is actually occurring complies with documented procedures.

### 2. Antimicrobial agent

Any substance of natural, synthetic or semi-synthetic origin which at low concentrations kills or inhibits the growth of microorganisms but causes little or no host damage.

### 3. Antimicrobial resistance

The ability of a microorganism to multiply or persist in the presence levels of therapeutic levels of and antimicrobial agent.

### 4. Capacity

The combination of all the strengths, attributes and resources available within a community, society or organization that can be used to achieve agreed goals.

### 5. Codex Alimentarius

A collection of internationally recognized standards, codes of practice, guidelines and other recommendations relating to food, food production and food safety.

### 6. Competency

Knowledge, skills, attitude and behaviour.

### 7. Education

The knowledge, skill and understanding obtained from attending a school, college or university.

### 8. Event

A manifestation of disease or an occurrence that creates a potential for disease.

### 9. Event-based surveillance

The organized collection, monitoring, assessment and interpretation of unstructured information about health events that may represent a risk to public health.

### 10. Farm-to-table

Includes all steps involved in the production, storage, handling, distribution and preparation of a food product.

### 11. Food

Any substance, whether processed, semi-processed or raw, which is intended for human consumption, and includes drinks, chewing gum and any substance that has been used



in the manufacture, preparation or treatment of “food”, but does not include cosmetics or tobacco or substances used only as drugs.

#### **12. Food additive**

Any substance not normally consumed as a food by itself and not normally used as a typical ingredient of the food, whether or not it has nutritive value, the intentional addition of which to food for a technological (including organoleptic) purpose in the manufacture, processing, preparation, treatment, packing, packaging, transport or holding of such food results, or may be reasonably expected to result, (directly or indirectly) in it or its by-products becoming a component of or otherwise affecting the characteristics of such foods. The term does not include “contaminants” or substances added to food for maintaining or improving nutritional qualities.

#### **13. Food business operators**

The owner of the business or the person in control of the food business including farmers, food producers, processors and distributors, and food service providers, retailers, wholesalers, as well as suppliers of equipment, technology and ingredients

#### **14. Food contaminant**

Any biological or chemical agent, foreign matter, or other substance not intentionally added to food that may compromise food safety or suitability.

#### **15. Food control**

A mandatory regulatory activity of enforcement by national or local authorities to provide consumer protection and ensure that all foods during production, handling, storage, processing and distribution are safe, wholesome and fit for human consumption; conform to quality and safety requirements; and are honestly and accurately labelled as prescribed by law.

#### **16. Food handler**

Any person who directly handles packaged or unpackaged food, food equipment and utensils, or food contact surfaces and is therefore expected to comply with food hygiene requirements.

#### **17. Food hygiene**

All conditions and measures necessary to ensure the safety and suitability of food at all stages of the food chain.

#### **18. Food inspection**

The examination of food products or systems for the control of raw materials, processing and distribution. This includes in-process and finished product testing to verify that they conform to regulatory requirements.

#### **19. Food monitoring**

Monitoring is a statistically-based, unbiased, random sampling, processing and analysis of samples to provide profile information on the occurrence and/or levels of food safety hazards in pre-defined, normal sample populations.

**20. Food safety**

Assurance that food will not cause harm to the consumer when it is prepared and/or eaten according to its intended use.

**21. Food safety authority**

A government agency responsible for managing food safety risks including developing and enforcing food safety rules and regulations.

**22. Food safety emergency**

A situation, whether accidental or intentional, that is identified by a competent authority as constituting a serious and as yet uncontrolled foodborne risk to public health that requires urgent action.

**23. Food safety incident**

A food incident is a situation within the food supply chain where there is a possible or confirmed risk associated with the consumption of a food.

**24. Food safety officer**

A government staff member who has the training, knowledge, skills and ability to perform an assigned task in accordance with applicable legislation.

**25. Food safety systems**

A system consisting of interrelated components and drivers for reducing and managing food safety risks.

**26. Food security**

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

**27. Foodborne disease**

Any disease of an infectious or toxic nature caused by the consumption of food.

**28. Foodborne disease surveillance**

The systematic collection, analysis, interpretation and dissemination of health data on an ongoing basis, to gain knowledge of the pattern of disease occurrence and potential in a community, in order to control and prevent disease in the community

**29. HACCP**

Hazard analysis and critical control points: A system that identifies, evaluates, and controls hazards that are significant for food safety

**30. Hazard**

A biological, chemical or physical agent in, or condition of, food with the potential to cause an adverse health effect.

### **31. Indicator-based surveillance**

The regular, systematic collection, monitoring, analysis and interpretation of structured data, i.e. of indicators produced by a number of well-identified, mostly health-based, formal sources.

### **32. One Health approach**

Collaborative multidisciplinary work at the local, national, and global levels to attain optimal health for humans, animals and the environment.

### **33. Policy coherence**

Policy coherence promotes mutually reinforcing policy actions across government departments and agencies. Policies from food, health, education, trade, agriculture, water, sanitation and trade, and other relevant government sectors should positively reinforce national development goals and contribute to food safety.

### **34. Preparedness**

The knowledge and capacities developed by governments, professional response and recovery organizations, communities and individuals to effectively anticipate, respond to, and recover from the impacts of likely, imminent or current hazard events or conditions.

### **35. Response**

Any public health action (e.g. event monitoring, providing information to the public, field investigations and control or mitigation measures) triggered by the detection of a public health risk.

### **36. Risk**

A function of the probability of an adverse health effect and the severity of that effect, consequential to a hazard(s) in food

### **37. Risk analysis**

A process consisting of three components: risk assessment, risk management and risk communication.

### **38. Risk assessment**

A scientifically based process consisting of the following steps: hazard identification; hazard characterization; exposure assessment; and risk characterization.

### **39. Risk communication**

The exchange of information and opinions concerning risk and risk-related factors among risk assessors, risk managers, consumers and other interested parties.

### **40. Risk management**

The process of weighing policy alternatives in consultation with all interested parties, considering risk assessment and other factors relevant for the health protection of consumers and for the promotion of fair trade practices, and, if needed, selecting appropriate prevention and control options

**41. SPS Agreement**

Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures of the World Trade Organization

**42. Stakeholder**

A person or group of people, or an industry, association, organization, etc. with an economic or professional interest/responsibility in an area or (involuntarily) affected by the developments in the same area.

**43. TBT Agreement**

Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade of the World Trade Organization

**44. Total diet study**

A total diet study consists of selecting, collecting and analysing commonly consumed food purchased at retail level, processing the food as for consumption, pooling the prepared food items into representative food groups, homogenizing the pooled samples and analysing them for harmful and/or beneficial chemical substances

**45. Training**

A process by which someone is taught the skills that are needed for an art, profession or job.







