



A r a b
C O D E X



ANALYSIS OF AGENDA ITEMS IN PREPARATION FOR THE 53rd SESSION OF CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD HYGIENE (CCFH53)

November 29 – December 2nd and December 8th, 2022

San Diego, California, United States

AGENDA ITEM 8

Discussion paper on revision of the Guidelines on the Application of General Principles of Food Hygiene to the Control of Viruses in Food

Objectives

This document offers an analysis of agenda items to support participation to the 53rd session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH53), taking place in November 2022. The document is intended for possible use by the Codex communities of practice promoted by [GForSS](#) and [PARERA](#), as part of their contribution to enhancing awareness and supporting effective participation in international food standard setting meetings (Codex meetings) by representatives from members and observers, in particular in **Arab Region**.

The analysis provided in this document offers a factual review of agenda items, their background and a discussion of some considerations. This analysis is indicative in nature and does not represent an official position of the organizations mentioned above ([PARERA](#) and [GForSS](#)), their membership or their management.

This analysis is prepared as part of the **Codex Initiative for the Arab Region: Arab Codex Initiative**, implemented by [PARERA](#) and [GForSS](#), hosted and coordinated by the [Arab Industrial Development, Standardization and Mining Organization \(AIDSMO\)](#), and funded by the US Codex Office, US Department of Agriculture.

**It is important to note that experts – members of the Expert Working Group (EWG) – do not represent the organizations and / or jurisdictions to which they are affiliated. The selection and participation in the EWG proceedings is based on each expert's own credentials and experience which should not be misconstrued as the country's / delegation's / organization's position to which they belong.*

Agenda Item 8: Discussion paper on revision of the *Guidelines on the Application of General Principles of Food Hygiene to the Control of Viruses in Food*

Documents

- ❖ CXG 79-2012 and CX/FH 22/53/8

Background

As agreed at CCFH51, a *Discussion Paper on Revision of the Guidelines on the Application of General Principles of Food Hygiene to the Control of Viruses in Food* was prepared by Canada, with support from the Netherlands (CX/FH 22/53/8).

This work aimed at outlining and assessing new information on food viruses, which may be considered in a revised version of the Guidelines (**CXG 79-2012**). The elements identified in the discussion paper as potential additions to the Guidelines include:

- ❖ Hepatitis E virus (HEV), as HEV cases have been increasing in some countries and outbreaks linked to undercooked pork liver have been reported. Specifically, guidelines on prevention and intervention measures for genotypes HEV-3 and HEV-4, which are transmitted through zoonotic and foodborne pathways, may be needed.
- ❖ Additional relevant food commodities, **notably, frozen produce**.
- ❖ Information on the efficacy of interventions on the control of viruses (e.g., heat treatment, high-pressure, cold plasma, disinfection, food handler hygiene).
- ❖ Advances in analytical methods for the detection and quantification of enteric viruses.
- ❖ Improved guidance on the control of hepatitis A virus (HAV) and norovirus (NoV) in bivalve molluscs. Specifically, enhanced guidance on the surveillance of water quality of growing areas and the use of viral indicators or other indicators of contamination would be of interest.
- ❖ Criteria on the required water quality to prevent contamination of fresh produce. These criteria should consider CCFH work on the draft *Guidelines for the safe use and reuse of water in food production* and JEMRA meeting reports on the prevention and control of microbiological hazards in fresh fruits and vegetables.
- ❖ A review of available risk assessment models (e.g., joint United States-Canada risk assessment on NoV in bivalve molluscan shellfish), aiming at developing more applicable models for wider use among member countries, including a **simplified risk calculator**.

Comments

The significance of viruses on the incidence of foodborne illness around the world has gained recognition in recent years.

New agents and new vehicles of infection have been identified, as well as new approaches for detection and quantification.

This discussion paper raises **relevant points that would enhance the existing Guidelines** (CXG 79-2012). Among the items identified, additional guidance on control measures targeting HEV and on the surveillance and requirements of water quality are of particular interest to the Arab region. Indeed, the occurrence of HEV cases – as well as other viral infections – has increased in the region in recent years. Although HEV infection vehicles have not been clearly identified, **produce contamination via water is suspected** (considering that pork consumption is rare in the region). **The establishment of water quality criteria** and the use of **viral indicators** would therefore offer valuable information to support regional programs targeting water quality surveillance.

Recommendations

Experts of the Arab Codex Initiative consider that the information presented in CX/FH 22/53/8 offers an excellent rationale to warrant a revision of CXG 79-2012.

It is recommended that Arab codex delegations at CCFH support the development of new work in this direction i.e. to initiate the review of CXG 79-2012.