FAO/WHO CODEX COORDINATING COMMITTEE
NEAR EAST

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

World Health Organization

12th Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for the Near East (CCNE12)

Muscat, Sultanate of Oman | 28 September – 2 October 2025

The Twelfth Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for the Near East (CCNE12) was held in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, at the invitation of the Government of Oman. The meeting was chaired by **Dr. Intisar Al-Gharibi**, Director of the Department of Risk Assessment and Crisis Management, Food Safety and Quality Center, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources. Twelve member countries from the Near East region, two from outside the region, and six observer organizations attended.

Opening of the Session and Adoption of the Agenda

The Twelfth Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for the Near East (CCNE12) was formally opened by the Chairperson, who welcomed delegates and participants to Muscat, Sultanate of Oman.

In his inaugural address, **Dr. Hussein Al Masroori**, Director General of the Food Safety and Quality Center, underlined the importance of this gathering as the first CCNE session held in the region in more than a decade. He emphasized that the meeting marked an opportunity to enhance cooperation, exchange expertise, and define a stronger regional vision for food safety and quality. Dr. Al Masroori reaffirmed Oman's dedication, as Regional Coordinator, to ensuring that the Near East's priorities and perspectives are effectively represented in Codex work. He further stressed the value of Codex standards as a means to support local producers, promote economic development, and safeguard consumer health throughout the region.

Opening statements were also delivered by **Mr. Thaer Yaseen** (FAO Representative in Oman), **Mr. Jean Jabbour** (WHO Representative in Oman), **Mr. Khalid Al-Zaharani** and **Ms. Betül Vazgeçer** (Vice-Chairpersons of the Codex Alimentarius Commission), and **Ms. Sarah Cahill** (Codex Secretary), who commended Oman's leadership and welcomed the resumption of CCNE activities in the region.

The Committee adopted its provisional agenda and agreed to include two additional topics for discussion: a proposal for the development of a regional standard for rose water (Golab), and a discussion paper on food contact materials (FCMs) and related food regulatory practices. It was further agreed that documents CRD4 (Syrian Arab Republic) and CRD6 (United Arab Emirates) would be considered under the item on Codex work relevant to the region.

To advance regional planning, the Committee established an In-Session Working Group (ISWG), chaired by Lebanon and open to all Members and Observers, to prepare a draft workplan supporting the implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026–2031 for the Committee's review during the session.

Eng. Saleh Al-Shanfari, Chairman of the Food Security Committee (Oman), delivered a keynote address highlighting collaboration between public authorities and the private sector to strengthen food safety, enhance labelling and communication, and improve consumer confidence

Key Discussions

- Methods of Analysis and Sampling: An Electronic Working Group (EWG), chaired by Oman and co-chaired by Qatar, was established to review and update sampling plans and methods of analysis for Near East standards.
- Food Additives and Nx Values: Revisions were agreed for Doogh and Tehena standards to update nitrogen-to-protein conversion factors (Nx) and additive provisions.
- Street-Vended Foods: Lebanon, Libya, and Algeria were tasked with preparing a discussion paper on revising the Regional Code of Practice for Street-Vended Foods (CXC 71R-2013), to ensure consistency with the General principles for food hygiene (CXC 1-1969) and the Guidelines for food hygiene control measures in traditional markets for food (CXG 103-2024).
- Regional Standard for Maamoul: Finalized and forwarded to CAC48 for adoption at Step 8, with updates to definitions, ingredients, and analytical references. Provisions on additives, labeling and methods of analysis and sampling will be forwarded to CCFA, CCFL and CCMAS, respectively, for endorsement.
- Labelling Alignment: Harmonized non-retail container labelling provisions across several regional standards, ensuring consistency with CXS 346-2021.

Food Safety and Quality in the Region

FAO and WHO presented updates on regional work, including use of the Food Control System Assessment Tool, collaboration under INFOSAN, and the WHO Global Strategy for Food Safety (2022–2030). The appointment of a Regional Food Safety and Quality Officer in Cairo was noted.

Codex Work Relevant to the Region

The Committee supported:

- Revision of the Olive Oils and Olive Pomace Oils Standard (CXS 33-1981) led by Syria
- Development of a standard for pasteurized camel milk proposed by the UAE
- Ongoing work about the proposal to add Bisphenol A (BPA) to the JECFA priority list
- Continued engagement in global discussions on cell-based foods and acrylamide reduction.

Strategic Planning and Communication

The Committee reviewed implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan 2020–2025 and endorsed a regional workplan for 2026–2027 to support the new Codex Strategic Plan 2026–2031. It also approved the communication workplan for the same period.

Use and Impact of Codex Standards

The 2024 regional survey achieved a 100% response rate, showing increased Codex use and collaboration. Members called for continued capacity building, data sharing, and investment in national food control systems.

Emerging Regional Matters

The Islamic Republic of Iran proposed developing a regional standard for rose water (Golab), noting its cultural and economic importance. While noting the importance of rose water for the region and the interest in the development of a standard for this commodity, members requested clarification of the scope of the proposed new work. The State of Qatar presented a discussion paper on food contact materials (FCMs), highlighting the need for harmonized risk assessment approaches. The Committee encouraged a regional workshop to advance this work.

Coordination and Future Work

The Committee unanimously reappointed the Sultanate of Oman as Coordinator for the Near East for a second term, commending its leadership.

The next session (CCNE13) will be held in approximately two years, with details to be confirmed by the Codex Secretariat.

Main Outcomes

- Adoption of the Regional Standard for Maamoul.
- Alignment of non-retail container labelling in regional standards.
- Updated additive and Nx provisions in Doogh and Tehena.
- Establishment of two EWGs (methods of analysis; strategic plan follow-up).
- Support for new Codex works on olive oil, camel milk, and BPA.
- Endorsement of 2026–2027 workplans for strategy and communication.
- Strengthened FAO/WHO collaboration and Oman's reappointment as regional Coordinator.

For More Information

Full documentation of the 12th Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for the Near East (CCNE12), including the complete report (REP25/NE), is available on the Codex Alimentarius website at:

CCNE/CODEXALIMENTARIUS FAO-WHO