



- SUMMARY REPORT -

The Third Codex and Food Regulatory Forum for North America and the South West Pacific

Supporting the Enhancement of Food Control Systems in the SWP Region



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Executive Summary

*The Third Codex and Food Regulatory Forum for North America and the South West Pacific (NASWP) brought together regional stakeholders to advance priority Codex work, strengthen coordination mechanisms, and support more effective participation of Pacific Island Countries in international standard setting, with the participation of **28 participants** and observers representing **10 Member countries**.*

*Over three days of structured discussions and technical working sessions, the Forum delivered tangible outputs aligned with CCNASWP priorities. These included significant progress in the development of draft **regional commodity standards for Galip (Canarium) nut and breadfruit flour**, advancement of a new work proposal on **traditional earth oven cooking**, and clearer pathways for addressing outstanding technical issues related to the **Codex kava standard**.*

*The Forum also reinforced the importance of adopting a more strategic and coordinated regional approach. This was reflected in the establishment of mechanisms **for prioritizing future work**, the development of **regional positions on emerging issues**, and the agreement to institutionalize **regular capacity building meetings** aligned with the Codex calendar.*

Capacity-related challenges, including limited technical resources, data gaps, and institutional constraints, were consistently highlighted. In response, the Forum emphasized strengthening data generation and use, enhancing participation in electronic working groups (EWG), and promoting practical, experience-based capacity building.

Overall, the Forum contributed to advancing a more structured, evidence-informed, and coordinated regional engagement in Codex, while laying the groundwork for sustained progress toward CCNASWP18, under the coordination and leadership of the newly appointed coordinator: the Cook Islands.

1. Background

The [Third Codex and Food Regulatory Forum for North America and the South West Pacific](#) was convened from 29 to 31 March 2026 in Nadi, Fiji. The Forum builds on previous NASWP Codex Colloquia and contributes directly to the implementation of outcomes from CCNASWP17.

Organized by the Global Food Regulatory Science Society (GFoRSS), in collaboration with Codex programs of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the Cook Islands and funded by the Government of Australia, the Forum was designed as a working-level platform to deliver concrete outputs aligned with regional priorities.

Discussions were framed by the recognition that Pacific Island Countries (PICs) remain underrepresented in Codex processes and that stronger regional coordination, improved data generation, and targeted capacity building are essential to ensure that Codex standards reflect regional realities, including traditional foods quality attributes, as well as contaminants and residues occurrence and consumption patterns of the region.

2. Day-by-Day Summary of Deliberations and Outputs

2.1 Day 1 – Setting the Scene, Regional Priorities, and Launch of Drafting Work

Day 1 opened with reflections on the cultural and economic importance of food systems in the Pacific region, emphasizing the need for Codex standards to reflect traditional foods and regional consumption patterns. Participants underscored that effective engagement in Codex is critical to ensuring that international standards are both relevant and applicable to the realities of the region.

Discussions on national perspectives highlighted ongoing efforts to strengthen Codex structures, while also pointing to persistent challenges in translating Codex standards into national regulatory action. This exchange revealed a gap between participation in Codex and effective domestic implementation, reinforcing the need for stronger institutional integration.

The review of CCNASWP17 commitments and preparation for CAC49 provided an opportunity to examine progress across Codex committees and identify priority areas for regional engagement. Discussions highlighted the importance of improving coordination and sharing responsibilities among countries to ensure more consistent and effective participation, given existing capacity constraints.

The day concluded with technical drafting sessions on regional commodity standards. Participants worked through draft texts for breadfruit flour ([Annex 1](#)) and Galip (Canarium) nut ([Annex 2](#)), focusing on aligning structure with Codex formats and refining key provisions. This process enabled a shared understanding of drafting requirements and helped advance the documents toward a more mature stage.

Day 1 Outputs:

- ❖ Regional priorities under CCNASWP17 were reaffirmed, with a clear focus on advancing commodity standards and strengthening coordination.
- ❖ Drafting of Galip nut and breadfruit flour standards was successfully initiated, with both texts reaching a stage suitable for further development through Electronic Working Groups (EWGs).
- ❖ The need for improved burden-sharing and structured regional engagement in Codex committees was clearly identified.

2.2 Day 2 – Consolidation of Drafts and Advancement of Technical and Strategic Work

Day 2 focussed on the development of a new work proposal on **traditional earth oven cooking**. Participants examined the increasing relevance of these practices in commercial and tourism contexts, and the associated need for harmonized hygiene guidance. Detailed deliberations on terminology and scope led to a shared understanding of how to frame the proposed Code of Practice (CoP) in a manner that reflects regional diversity while ensuring clarity ([Annex 3](#)).

The morning session of Day 2 also allowed to present the progress made by physical working groups tasked with the drafting of the regional standards on Galip nut and breadfruit flour.

The afternoon session on the Codex kava standard addressed longstanding challenges related to analytical methods for determining “noble” varieties. Discussions highlighted the importance of aligning Codex work with regional technical initiatives under the Pacific Islands Forum, including the Pacific Island Standards Committee (PISC) and its Technical Committee 3 on kava (TC3), and ensuring that proposed methods are both scientifically robust and feasible within the region’s laboratory capacities. Representatives from TC3 introduced the latest progress in developing analytical methods to ascertain “nobility” of kava. Fiji as the lead on the kava methods paper to be prepared for CCNASWP18 offered to include a report of activities of TC3 as part of the paper.

Strategic discussions also addressed the need for a more structured approach to selecting new work items under CCNASWP. Participants agreed criteria should be developed to guide prioritization of proposed regional commodity standards, recognizing that resource constraints require a more focused and coordinated approach to regional standard-setting efforts. An informal working group chaired by Fiji and co-chaired by Papua New Guinea and Tonga was established to support this effort of prioritization, with a paper proposing an approach to be presented at CCNASWP18.

Day 2 Outputs:

- ❖ Draft standards for Galip nut and breadfruit flour were consolidated and prepared for progression through EWGs toward CCNASWP18.
- ❖ Broad support was confirmed for advancing a new work proposal on traditional earth oven cooking, with agreement on scope and terminology.
- ❖ Progress was made in clarifying pathways for resolving outstanding issues related to the Codex kava standard through alignment with regional initiatives.
- ❖ An informal working group was established to develop prioritization criteria for future regional standards, supporting a more strategic approach to new work.

2.3 Day 3 – Data, Coordination, and Consolidation of Regional Approaches

Day 3 focused on strengthening the technical and institutional foundations for sustained regional engagement. Capacity-building sessions on data generation and use in Codex processes provided participants with practical insights into risk analysis, exposure assessment, and the role of data in supporting Codex decision-making. These discussions underscored the importance of improving regional data contributions to ensure that global standards reflect regional consumption patterns and exposure scenarios.

Discussions on regional coordination emphasized the need for structured and predictable communication mechanisms. Participants explored practical tools to enhance coordination and capacity building efforts, including regular meetings

aligned with the Codex calendar and improved information-sharing systems. These efforts aim to support consistent engagement and facilitate the development of regional positions.

The following Inter-session Capacity Building Meetings were agreed upon:

- Capacity Building Meeting 1: 6 May 2026 – 9:00 am Sydney – Item of Discussion – CCFL49
- Capacity Building meeting 2: 17 June 2026 – 9 am Sydney – Item of Discussion – CCEXEC90/CAC49
- Capacity Building meeting 3: 30 September 9 am Sydney – Item of Discussion – CCFICS28 and CCCF19
- Capacity Building meeting 4: 2 December 9 am Sydney – Item of Discussion – CCEXEC91/CCNASWP18

The benefits of developing positions that multiple members in the region could sign on to was discussed, particularly on emerging issues, with participants agreeing on the importance of proactive engagement in areas such as cell-based foods.

A draft position ([Annex 4](#)) was discussed on the new work proposal tabled at CCFA56 on “Agenda Item 10: New Work Proposal – Guideline for the Conduct of Food Safety Assessment of Cell Culture Media Components”, for sharing by the Coordinator (The Cook Islands) with members of the region for discussion and possible endorsement. This effort reflects a broader recognition of the need for the region to contribute to shaping Codex responses to emerging technologies.

The final session consolidated the outputs of the Forum and identified priority deliverables for CCNASWP18, while also reflecting on lessons learned and the importance of maintaining momentum through intersessional work.

Day 3 Outputs:

- ❖ The importance of strengthening regional data generation and submission to support Codex processes was clearly established.
- ❖ Agreement was reached on enhancing coordination and capacity building efforts through regular meetings and improved communication tools aligned with the Codex calendar.
- ❖ Agreement was reached to prioritise holding future capacity building centred around sharing experiences and information on national Codex structures and coordination mechanisms.
- ❖ An approach to developing coordinated positions on emerging issues, including cell-based foods, was endorsed.
- ❖ Key deliverables for CCNASWP18 were consolidated, providing a clear roadmap for intersessional work.

3. Conclusion

The Third Codex and Food Regulatory Forum for NASWP demonstrated continued progress toward a more structured and results-oriented regional engagement in Codex. Through a combination of technical drafting, strategic discussions, and capacity-building activities, the Forum delivered concrete outputs while addressing underlying challenges related to coordination, capacity, and data.

The Forum contributed to advancing priority regional standards and new work proposals, while also establishing mechanisms to support more strategic planning and coordination. It further reinforced the importance of data-driven participation and the need to strengthen the scientific basis of regional contributions to Codex.

Overall, the Forum contributed to establishing a strong foundation for enhanced regional collaboration, promoting a risk-based, transparent, and science-anchored approach to food safety governance, in line with the region's long-term objectives.

Annex 1: Updated Working Document on the Development of a Regional Standard for Breadfruit Flour

1. SCOPE

This standard applies to breadfruit flour, as defined in Section 2 below, which is used as a food or food ingredient. This standard does not apply to unprocessed breadfruit, other breadfruit products from fruit, leaves, bark or flowers, or breadfruit products for medicinal purposes.

2. DESCRIPTION

2.1 Product definition

The breadfruit flour is the flour that is derived from the milling of dry pulp of breadfruit plants, *Artocarpus altilis* of the Moraceae family.

2.2 Breadfruit

Fresh, firm and mature fruit, with white to yellow flesh. Fruit that is over-ripe, fallen, green, bruised and/or damaged, or containing foreign materials such as sticks, stem, leaves, bark and root material should be rejected and not be used in the production of breadfruit flour.

2.3 Production of breadfruit flour

Mature fruits are harvested. Washed breadfruits are peeled, and the pulp is sectioned, blanched, and then dried. Dried pulp is ground in a mill to produce flour that passed through a sieve.

[Time frame of processing when harvest]

3. ESSENTIAL COMPOSITION AND QUALITY FACTORS

To the extent possible, breadfruit flour shall be free from objectionable matter (e.g. leaves, seed fragments, fruit skin fragments, stems, insects, etc.) and according to good manufacturing practice. Breadfruit Flour is naturally gluten free and can be used as an alternative to gluten containing flours.

Breadfruit flour shall be:

- free of leaves, bark, and/or stems;
- free from chilling injury;
- have no intentional adulteration;
- practically free from pests;
- practically free from damage caused by pests;
- free of visible mould;
- free from soil and foreign materials; and
- free from foreign odour.

[Moisture Content]

[Ash Content]

4. FOOD ADDITIVES

No additives are permitted in the product as defined by the scope.

5. CONTAMINANTS

The products covered by this standard shall comply with the maximum levels for contaminants that are specified for the product in the General Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Food and Feed (CXS 193- 1985), and the maximum residue limits for pesticides established by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

6. HYGIENE

It is recommended that the products covered by the provisions of this standard be prepared and handled in accordance with appropriate sections of the General Principles of Food Hygiene (CXC 1-1969), and other relevant Codex texts such as codes of hygienic practice and codes of practice. The product should also comply with any microbiological criteria established in accordance with the Principles and Guidelines for the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria Related to Foods (CXG 21- 1997).

7. PACKAGING

The breadfruit flour must be packed in food-grade containers that safeguard the hygienic, and organoleptic quality. The materials used for packaging must be new (for the purposes of this standard, this includes recycled material of food-grade quality.) The containers shall meet the quality, hygiene, ventilation and resistance characteristics to ensure suitable handling, shipping and preserving of the flour. Packages must be free of all foreign matter and smell.

8. LABELLING

The products shall be labelled in accordance with the General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Food (CXS 1-1985).

8.1 Name of the product

The name of the food product shall be “breadfruit flour”. The term “breadfruit flour” may be replaced by a term which has customarily been used to describe the product in the country in which the product is intended to be sold (e.g. “Ma’afala” flour).

8.2 Labelling on non-retail containers

The labelling of non-retail containers should be in accordance with the General Standard for the Labelling of Non-Retail Containers of Foods (CXS 346-2021).

9. METHODS OF ANALYSIS AND SAMPLING

For checking the compliance with this standard, the methods of analysis and sampling contained in the Recommended Methods of Analysis and Sampling (CXS 234-1999)⁶ relevant to the provisions in this standard, shall be used.

Annex 2: Updated Working Document on the Development of a Regional Standard for Galip (Canarium) Nut

1. SCOPE

This standard applies to canarium nuts, as defined in Section 2 below, which is used as a food or food ingredient. This standard does not apply to other products of the canarium nut including, leaves, bark or flowers, nor products for medicinal purposes.

2. DESCRIPTION

2.1 Product Definition

Canarium nut (*Canarium indicum*) belongs to the kingdom Plantae, phylum Magnoliophyta, class Magnoliopsida, order Sapindales, family Burseraceae, genus *Canarium*, and species *Canarium indicum*. Other nuts from the Genus *Canarium* are not concern by this standard (The Genus *Canarium* includes 75 species of tropical and subtropical trees).

The following list is non-exhaustive and includes examples of vernacular terms used to described canarium nut.

- i. In Papua New Guinea, it is known as galip nut and also referred to as lawele (New Britain) and biuei (New Ireland).
- ii. In Solomon Islands, it is commonly known as Ngali nut (Kwara'ae language), angari (Santa Ana), ngari (Kausage/Simbo and Varisi), ngoeta (Marovo), nolepo (Garciosa Bay), nyia nyinge (Ayiwo), and other names in other parts of Solomon Islands.
- iii. In Vanuatu, it is known as nangai in local Bislama. Nanae (Santo Island), nige karia (Epi Island).

2.2 Styles:

The product can be fresh, dried, roasted or unroasted with or without the shell.

3. ESSENTIAL COMPOSITION AND QUALITY FACTORS

3.1 Production and post-harvest handling

Canarium indicum plants should be cultivated using good agricultural practices. Mature fruits are harvested. Fruits can either be picked up from the ground or harvested direct from the trees. Fruits that are un-ripe (green), rotten, bruised and/or damaged, or containing foreign materials such as sticks, stem, leaves, bark and root material should be rejected and not be used to produce canarium nuts.

3.2 Definition of defects

To the extent possible, canarium nut products shall be free from objectionable matter (e.g. leaves, seed fragments, fruit skin fragments, stems, insects, etc.) and according to good manufacturing practice.

Canariumnuts shall be:

- of known canarium nut varieties;
- have no intentional adulteration;
- free of leaves, bark, and/or stems;
- practically free from pests;
- practically free from damage caused by pests;
- free of visible mould;
- free from soil and foreign materials; and
- free from foreign odour.

4. FOOD ADDITIVES

No additives are permitted.

5. CONTAMINANTS

The products covered by this standard shall comply with the maximum levels for contaminants that are specified for the product in the General Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Food and Feed (CXS 193-9), and the maximum residue limits for pesticides established by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

The products covered by this standard shall comply with the Code of Practice for the Prevention and Reduction of Aflatoxin Contamination in Tree Nuts (CAC/RCP 59-2005)

6. HYGIENE

It is recommended that the products covered by the provisions of this standard be prepared and handled in accordance with appropriate sections of the General Principles of Food Hygiene (CXC 1-1969), and other relevant Codex texts such as codes of hygienic practice and codes of practice. The product should also comply with any microbiological criteria established in accordance with the Principles and Guidelines for the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria Related to Foods (CXG 21- 1997).

7. LABELLING

The products covered by this standard shall be labelled in accordance with the General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods (CXS 1-1985). In addition to these requirements, the following specific provisions apply:

7.1 Name of the product

The name of the food product shall be as described in Section 2.1.

The name of the country of origin and, optionally, island or district where grown, or national, regional or local place name shall be marked on each container.

7.3 Labelling of non-retail containers

The labelling of non-retail containers should be in accordance with the General Standard for the Labelling of Non-Retail Containers of Foods (CXS 346-2021).

7.4 Optional labelling

Galip nuts may have a clear marking to indicate that they are not intended for medicinal purposes.

8. METHODS OF ANALYSIS AND SAMPLING

For checking the compliance with this standard, the methods of analysis and sampling contained in the Recommended Methods of Analysis and Sampling (CXS 234-1999) 8 relevant to the provisions in this standard, shall be used.

Annex 3: Proposal for New Work on a Regional Code of Hygienic Practice for Food Prepared in Earth Oven Cooking**1. Purpose and Scope of the Proposed Code**

The purpose of this proposed new work is to develop a **Codex Regional Code of Hygienic Practice** addressing the preparation of foods using traditional earth oven cooking methods widely practiced across the South West Pacific region. These methods—known under various names such as lovo, hangi, imu, mumu, and umu—are integral to cultural, social, and community life and are increasingly being used in commercial and tourism settings.

The proposed Code will provide **practical, science-based guidance** on hygienic practices applicable to the preparation, cooking, handling, and storage of foods prepared in earth ovens. It is intended to support both traditional and commercial applications of these methods, while preserving their cultural integrity.

The Code will apply to **community groups, food business operators, event organizers, and relevant competent authorities**, and will be used in conjunction with existing Codex texts, particularly the *General Principles of Food Hygiene (CXC 1-1969)*. It will provide additional, context-specific guidance addressing the unique characteristics and constraints of earth oven cooking systems.

2. Relevance and Timeliness

Earth oven cooking is a longstanding and widely practiced traditional method across the Pacific Islands, deeply embedded in cultural and social practices and used for both daily consumption and large communal gatherings.

In recent years, the use of these cooking methods has expanded beyond traditional contexts into **hospitality, tourism, and commercial food service**, increasing their relevance to food safety regulatory frameworks.

At the same time, food safety authorities in the region face important challenges in addressing these practices, due to the absence of standardized guidance, variability in cooking processes, and limited availability of data related to consumption patterns and foodborne risks. Scientific observations have highlighted variability in cooking temperatures (ranging from approximately 60°C to over 300°C), as well as potential microbiological risks associated with inadequate cooking or post-cooking handling.

The absence of specific hygiene guidance tailored to earth cooking practices creates a clear gap in existing Codex texts. This gap has been explicitly identified by food regulatory authorities from the South West Pacific region, who have highlighted the need for practical and context-appropriate guidance to support food business operators and community practitioners engaged in these traditional methods. This issue was notably brought forward by Vanuatu during the **Second Codex Colloquium for the South West Pacific (Fiji, 2023)**, where participants identified the lack of guidance as a priority area requiring Codex attention. It was further discussed at CCNASWP 17, through a discussion paper introduced by Vanuatu.

The proposal is therefore timely, as it responds directly to priorities identified under the CCNASWP framework and reflects a regional consensus on the need to strengthen food safety governance while preserving culturally significant practices. It supports the safe continuation and adaptation of earth cooking methods and addresses their increasing commercialization, particularly within tourism and food service sectors. In doing so, it aims to bridge traditional knowledge and modern food safety principles through the development of practical, science-informed guidance adapted to regional realities.

3. Main Aspects to be Covered

The proposed Code will provide the guidance needed to cover the key stages and risk factors associated with earth oven cooking.

It will first establish **clear definitions and scope**, including a description of earth ovens, associated materials such as stones and plant layers, and their variations across the region.

It will then address **general hygiene requirements**, including food handler health and hygiene, training and competence, and responsibilities of food business operators in ensuring food safety.

The Code will include provisions related to the **location, construction, and design of earth oven**, including considerations for safe siting, appropriate selection of heating materials, and preparation of plant materials used in layering and cooking.

Detailed guidance will be provided on **food preparation and handling**, including sourcing of raw materials, prevention of contamination, safe handling of plant materials used for wrapping or insulation, and preparation steps such as thawing and washing of foods.

The Code will further address **cooking practices**, including the generation and maintenance of adequate heat, appropriate staging and layering of food within the oven, and considerations for achieving effective heat transfer. It will also emphasize the importance of process planning, given that adjustments cannot be made once the oven is sealed.

Provisions will also be included for **post-cooking handling**, including safe removal of covering materials, prevention of contamination from soil or ash, and appropriate temperature control during holding and serving.

Finally, the Code will address **education, training, and risk communication**, including the need for food safety training adapted to these practices and communication of residual risks, particularly for vulnerable populations.

4. Assessment Against the Criteria for the Establishment of Work Priorities

The development of a Code of Hygienic Practice for earth cooking meets the general criteria for new work under Codex.

From a consumer protection perspective, the variability inherent in earth cooking practices presents potential risks related to inadequate cooking, contamination, and improper handling. The absence of structured guidance increases the likelihood of foodborne hazards. The proposed Code will contribute to mitigating these risks by providing practical and accessible hygiene measures adapted to the context of use.

From the perspective of fair practices in food trade, the increasing commercialization of traditional cooking methods—particularly within tourism and hospitality sectors—creates a need for harmonized guidance to ensure consistent safety standards and consumer confidence.

With regard to criteria applicable to the practice, earth cooking is widely used across the region, both for subsistence and commercial purposes. Despite this widespread use, there is currently no harmonized regulatory or guidance framework addressing these practices at the regional or international level.

The practice is amenable to standardization, as it involves identifiable and reproducible steps—such as pit preparation, heating, layering, and cooking—each of which presents opportunities for the application of hygiene controls.

While some national-level guidance may exist, no Codex text specifically addresses earth cooking, confirming the existence of a gap at the regional level.

5. Relevance to Codex Strategic Objectives

The proposed work aligns with the **Codex Strategic Plan (2026–2031)**.

It contributes to **Goal 1**, by addressing an emerging and regionally significant food safety issue linked to traditional and informal food preparation practices.

It supports **Goal 2**, as it is based on available scientific observations and risk considerations related to temperature variability and microbiological hazards.

It advances **Goal 3**, by promoting the development and use of Codex guidance that is directly relevant to member countries and adapted to their specific needs.

More broadly, the proposed Code supports capacity building, strengthens food safety systems, and contributes to the sustainable development of culturally significant food practices.

6. Relationship with Existing Codex Documents

The proposed Code will complement and build upon existing Codex texts, particularly:

- General Principles of Food Hygiene (CXC 1-1969),
- General Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Food and Feed (CXS 193-1995),
- Principles and Guidelines for the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria Related to Foods (CXG 21-1997),

It will provide **specific interpretation and application** of these general principles to earth oven cooking practices.

7. Identification of Any Requirement for Scientific Advice and / or Technical Input from Other Bodies

There are no immediate needs for scientific advice.

The proposed code will be informed by the latest scientific and best practices information, sought from regional public health and food safety authorities, Academic and research institutions and Relevant stakeholders in tourism and food service sectors.

However, the proposed draft could be forwarded to CCFH for review and validation, as may warranted

8. Proposed Approach and Timeline

Subject to approval of new work, it is proposed that:

- An Electronic Working Group (EWG) be established,
- A draft Code be developed over one intersessional period,
- The draft be reviewed by CCNASWP and progressed for adoption within two sessions of CCNASWP.

9. Conclusion

The development of a **Regional Code of Hygienic Practice for Earth Cooking** addresses a clearly identified gap in Codex guidance and responds directly to priorities expressed by CCNASWP members. It will support the safe continuation and responsible development of traditional cooking practices, strengthen food safety systems in the region, and contribute to the protection of public health while respecting cultural heritage.

Annex: Regional Code of Hygienic Practice for Food Prepared in Earth Ovens

INTRODUCTION

Cooking food in earth ovens, also known as earth ovens, is an important tradition in different regions of the world. It often involves cooking large amounts of food (e.g., for gatherings) under or above ground, using heated stones and layers of plant materials. In the Pacific Islands, depending on the region, this cooking method is referred to as hangi, imu, mumu, um, lovo, laplap, bunia, tuluk or other indigenous names. A wide variety of foods may be cooked in earth ovens, including meats (e.g., pork, chicken, fish), fruits (e.g., bananas, breadfruit), and vegetables (e.g., sweet potatoes, taro). Beyond its role in community gatherings, earth ovens are increasingly used by the hospitality industry to showcase local cuisine and culture among visitors. Therefore, hygiene guidance specific to earth oven cooking would help mitigate food safety risks, while preserving culturally appropriate practices.

1. SECTION 1 – OBJECTIVES

This Code outlines requirements and hygiene practices to be considered when cooking food in traditional earth ovens.

2. SECTION 2 – SCOPE, USAGE AND DEFINITIONS

2.1 Scope

This Code may be applied by community groups and food business operators (FBOs) preparing foods in earth ovens, including organizers of events incorporating this traditional method, as well as relevant competent authorities.

2.2 Use

This Code is intended for use by Pacific Island countries to ensure the overall safety of foods prepared in traditional earth ovens. This Code should be used in conjunction with relevant Codex texts, including but not limited to the General principles of food hygiene (CXC 1-1969).

2.3 Definitions

For the purposes of this Code, the definitions specified in Codex documents shall apply. Other terms used herein have the following definitions:

- Earth oven: a traditional cooking method where food is placed over heated stones and plant material layers, inside a pit that is kept covered during the entire cooking time. Regional variations are possible including the use of heating materials other than stones (e.g., coral), different types and use (e.g., layering, food wrapping) of plant materials, and different oven designs.
- Plant materials: plant parts (e.g., leaves, stems, husks) used in an earth oven for purposes other than direct food consumption (e.g., layering inside the oven, oven insulation or covering, steam generation, food wrapping).
- Clean: Free from dirt, dust, grease, waste, food residues as well as all other foreign materials and objectionable odor.

3. SECTION 3 – GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

3.1 Rules and regulations

Appropriate policies and regulations should be formulated and implemented with the aim of guiding operations to ensure food safety during earth oven cooking. Such requirements should be elaborated either separately or incorporated into existing food regulations.

3.2 Licensing / registration

Where required by the national legislation, FBOs serving or selling food prepared in an earth oven should have registration/licensing from the relevant authority before starting its use.

If applicable, a fire permit should be obtained before setting up an earth oven. Fire-related restrictions and preventive measures must be observed when operating an earth oven.

4. SECTION 4 – FOOD HANDLERS

4.1 Health status

Food handlers should not show any signs of jaundice, diarrhea, vomiting, fever, sore throat, discharge from ear, eye and nose, frequent and rapid coughing, visibly infected skin lesions (boils, cuts, etc.).

4.2 Personal hygiene and behaviour

Food handlers, during the conduct of their business, should observe the following:

- Wear clean clothing and proper clothing.
- Always keep fingernails short and clean.
- Do not wear jewellery, ornaments, or similar items during food preparation.
- Keep hair, including facial hair, clean, tidy, and properly covered during food handling.
- Cover all non-infected cuts and wounds completely with a firmly secured, waterproof dressing that is routinely changed.
- Wear disposable gloves where necessary; gloves must be clean and properly used.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and running clean water before and after handling food, after visiting the toilet, after handling unsanitary articles, touching animals, touching raw food, after handling toxic and dangerous materials as and when necessary. If running clean water is not available, an acceptable alternative hand-washing method should be agreed to by the relevant authority.
- Do not smoke, chew gum, eat, or engage in similar activities while preparing or serving food.
- Refrain from unhygienic practices such as spitting, cleaning or picking the nose, ears, or other body orifices, touching any part of the body unnecessarily while handling food, sneezing or coughing over or onto food.
- Wear fire safety gear (e.g., gloves, boots, aprons) when starting, monitoring, or opening the earth oven.

4.3 Training and competence

Food handlers should have completed basic food hygiene training by the competent authority or other institutions recognized or approved by the competent authority.

4.4 FBOs responsibilities

FBOs are responsible for the hygiene and protection of the food they handle and for all aspects related to its safety.

5. SECTION 5 – LOCATION, STRUCTURES, DESIGN AND SANITATION

5.1 Earth oven location

The location of the earth oven should be at least 5 meters away from buildings, tents, vehicles, dry grass, overarching branches, waste, standing water, or animals.

5.2 Food preparation structures

Food preparation areas should have sufficient lighting.

Food contact surfaces should be made of a smooth and impermeable food grade material.

All food preparation areas, washing equipment, working tables, shelves on or in which food is placed should be at an appropriate height above ground.

5.3 Earth oven design and layout

The dimensions of the oven (depth and diameter) should be adapted to the amount and type of food that will be cooked.

The type of stones used is essential to ensure adequate heat generation and transfer throughout the cooking process. Stones that may contain moisture (e.g., porous rocks like limestone) should be avoided, as they may explode when heated. For even heat distribution, the stones used should be of similar size (e.g., the size of a closed fist or larger).

Enough stones to heat the amount of food that will be cooked, and enough firewood to heat the stones, should be readily available before setting up the earth oven.

Thick plant materials (e.g., banana stumps, coconut husks) that will be used in the earth oven's layers should be cut and/or pounded (to release moisture and facilitate steam production) in advance, such that they are ready to be placed in the oven as soon as the stones reach their maximum heat level.

5.4 Sanitation

Wastewater, ash, and organic waste should be disposed of safely and away from food preparation zones.

5.4.1 Water supply

Food preparation areas should have sufficient supply of potable or clean water.

Where possible, a clean hand-washing station with flowing water, soap and sanitary towels should be available near the earth oven.

Water to put out the earth oven's fire, if it escapes control, should be readily available near the pit (e.g., a hose connected to the tap, containers with water). A fire extinguisher should also be kept nearby, where possible.

5.4.2 Pest control

Measures should be taken to keep the food preparation and earth oven areas free from animals and pests to prevent contamination of the food. Any contaminated food should be appropriately disposed of.

5.4.3 Toilets

Personnel should have easy access to sanitary facilities, which are always kept in a clean and operational condition.

6. SECTION 6 – FOOD PREPARATION, HANDLING, AND STORAGE

6.1 Raw materials

All raw food materials and ingredients, including ice, should be sourced from appropriate and reliable sources.

Ice should be made of potable water. Where appropriate, ice that does not come into direct contact with food may be made from clean water.

Non-edible plant materials collected for use in the earth oven (e.g., for layering) must be, at a minimum, free of visible contamination.

Food contact materials, including plant materials used for wrapping, should meet relevant food safety standards.

6.2 Cooking

Meats, fish and poultry must be completely thawed before placing them in the earth oven. Thawing must be conducted under controlled conditions (e.g., refrigeration, cold water).

Fresh vegetables and/or fruits should be thoroughly washed in potable or clean water before cooking. They should be conditioned (e.g., chopped) as close as possible to the time of placement in the oven (e.g., less than 1 hour before).

Raw meats should be held at refrigeration until placement in the oven.

Food must be covered or kept in closed containers until placement in the oven.

Foods that will be cooked in the earth oven should be securely wrapped (e.g., in leaves, tinfoil) to prevent soil and ash from contaminating the product.

The fire should be started with dry paper and firewood to reduce the amount of smoke and obtain a clean fire. Fire accelerants (e.g., gasoline, kerosene, lighter fluid), plastic, painted wood, treated timber must be avoided.

The food should be placed in the oven only when the stones have been thoroughly heated (e.g., when they are white hot).

Food should be staged inside the oven such that optimal heat transfer is achieved. This step must be carefully considered since the oven remains closed during the entire cooking time and no adjustments can be made once the food are placed inside. Food size, food type, and separation from the heat source should be used to control the time needed to cook the different foods. In general, the food closest to the hot stones will achieve the highest temperatures.

If the food is placed in baskets inside the oven, they should be stacked no more than 2 baskets high.

Meats should be placed on the bottom layers of the oven so that they cook thoroughly.

Cooking whole animals (e.g., pork, deer) requires special measures (e.g., larger pit, longer cooking time, placing of hot stones wrapped in leaves inside the carcass).

When closing the oven, large gaps between the last layer of plant materials and the covering material should be avoided to prevent large temperature gradients. To prevent the heat from escaping the covering layer (e.g., mats, clothes, copra sacks) should extend beyond the diameter of the pit's opening and should be fully covered with loose dirt. Any heat or steam leaks should be quickly controlled by adding or adjusting covering materials.

At the end of the cooking process, the covering layers should be removed preventing dirt or other materials from being in contact with the food.

Cooking start and finish times and, where possible, internal temperatures should be recorded. Portable food thermometers should be used, where feasible, to verify that critical temperatures are reached throughout the food.

6.3 Handling and storage

Food cooked in an earth oven should be served promptly and kept at safe holding temperatures (≥ 60 °C or national standard) if not served immediately.

If foods prepared in an earth oven are to be stored, cooling time and temperature guidelines should be followed to prevent microbial growth and spore germination, and they should be stored refrigerated until the time of reheating and consumption.

Utensils used for cooked and uncooked food should be handled separately to prevent cross-contamination.

7. SECTION 7 – EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Food handlers should undergo basic food hygiene training, including hazard recognition, temperature and time control, and safe handling of raw and cooked food. Training should be conducted by the relevant authority or other institutions recognized or approved by the relevant authority.

When temperature monitoring is not conducted, consumers should be informed of the residual risk associated with potentially hazardous foods (e.g., meat, poultry) cooked in earth ovens. Vulnerable populations (e.g., pregnant women, young children, elderly, immunocompromised individuals) should avoid consuming such foods.

Annex 4: Draft Regional Position on Food Safety Assessment of Cell Culture Media Components

**CCFA Agenda Item 10: New Work Proposal – Guideline for the Conduct of Food Safety Assessment of Cell Culture Media Components*

Position on: Food Safety Assessment of Cell Culture Media Components

Agenda Item 10: New Work Proposal – Guideline for the Conduct of Food Safety Assessment of Cell Culture Media Components

The Members listed below (the Members) express their support for proceeding with the proposed new work on the development of a guideline for the conduct of food safety assessment of cell culture media components used in the production of cell-based foods.

The Members recognize that cell-based food production represents an emerging area of innovation within food systems, involving novel inputs and processes that may introduce specific food safety considerations requiring structured assessment approaches. As noted in the proposal, certain cell culture media components may not have a prior history of use in food and may remain in the final product, thereby necessitating appropriate risk assessment frameworks.

In this regard, the development of internationally harmonized guidance under Codex is considered timely and relevant. The Members note that the absence of such guidance may lead to divergent national approaches, potentially creating barriers to trade and inconsistencies in safety assessment outcomes. Establishing a Codex guideline would support competent authorities in ensuring consumer protection while facilitating fair practices in food trade.

The Members further acknowledge that, although the sector is still developing and trade volumes remain limited, Codex has an important role in proactively addressing emerging technologies, particularly where early guidance can contribute to coherent regulatory development and avoid future fragmentation.

While supporting the advancement of this new work, the Members emphasizes the importance of:

- maintaining a clear and appropriately defined scope;
- ensuring alignment with existing Codex risk analysis principles and relevant texts;
- adopting a practical and proportionate approach that can be applied by all Members, including developing countries; and
- ensuring that the work remains focused on food safety considerations.

In conclusion, the Members support the approval of this new work proposal.

Annex 5: List of Participants

Participants by Country (Countries are listed in Alphabetical order)

Name	Entity	Country*
Scott Mersch	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	Australia
Simon Leiva	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	Australia
James Roberts	Global Food Regulatory Science Society (GFoRSS) operated by Foodregsci Australia - Implementation team	Australia
Nancy Ing	Health Canada – Food and Nutrition Directorate	Canada
Alison Wereley	Canadian Food Inspection Agency	Canada
Samuel Godefroy	Laval University, Platform of Food Risk Analysis (PARERA), INAF and Global Food Regulatory Science Society (GFoRSS) – Implementation team	Canada
Amine Kassouf	Global Food Regulatory Science Society (GFoRSS) - Implementation team	Canada
Piriariki Maao	Ministry of Agriculture	Cook Islands
Temarama Anguna-Kamana	Ministry of Agriculture	Cook Islands
Sereima Rokoqiqi	Pacific Islands Forum	Fiji
Kemueli Seuseu	Ministry of Agriculture, Waterways & Sugar Industry	Fiji
Taina Ravula	Food Unit - Division Health Protection, Ministry of Health & Medical Services	Fiji
Sainiana Kirisitiana	Ministry of Agriculture, Waterways & Sugar Industry	Fiji
Jeremaia Koroiijuta	University of The South Pacific, Centre For Sustainable Future, Institute of Applied Science, Lower Marine Campus, Suva, Fiji	Fiji
Shafraaz Khan	Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)	Fiji
Elisha Mala	Global Food Regulatory Science Society (GFoRSS) - - Implementation team	Fiji
Jenny Reid	Ministry for Primary Industries	New Zealand
Elias Taia	Department of Agriculture & Livestock	Papua New Guinea
Geno Geno	Department of Agriculture & Livestock	Papua New Guinea
Nofoaga Lisale	Nafanua	Samoa
Max Lee Lo	Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour	Samoa
Rosalyn Mona	Anguna-Kamana	Solomon Islands
Ethel Mapolu	Environmental Health Division, Ministry of Health & Medical Services	Solomon Islands
Asena Faanunu	Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forests, Tonga	Tonga
Losalina Mafileo	Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forests	Tonga
Viran Tovu	Department of Strategy Planning, Policy & Aid Coordination	Vanuatu
Leyanii Livu La'au	Vanuatu Bureau of Standards	Vanuatu
Tina Soaki La'au	Vanuatu Bureau of Standards	Vanuatu