

Webinar report  
**World Food Safety Day 2020 - Food safety in the “new normal”**  
3 June 2020

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)  
World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)  
World Food Programme (WFP)  
World Health Organization (WHO)

Celebrating the **World Food Safety Day**

Joint FAO/OIE/WFP/WHO webinar for Asia and the Pacific

**Food safety in the “new normal”**



Guest panelists	Speakers and moderators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Junshi Chen, China</li><li>• Joanne Chan, Singapore</li><li>• Vishal Bhatia, India</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sridhar Dharmapuri &amp; Masami Takeuchi (FAO)</li><li>• Lesa Thompson (OIE), Carla Mejia (WFP)</li><li>• Simone Moraes Raszl &amp; Gyanendra Gongal (WHO)</li></ul>

**Wednesday, 3 June 2020**  
**11.00 – 12.30 hrs (ICT, Bangkok time)**

#FoodSafety #SafeFood #Codex #FAO #OIE #WFP #WHO



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## Abstract

The World Food Safety Day 2020 took place under the unique conditions of the COVID-19 global pandemic situation. In advance to the World Food Safety Day, four international organizations, namely the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO), jointly organized a webinar on 3 June 2020 and discussed what the “new normal”, a term describing the post COVID-19 lifestyle, will bring to the area of food safety in Asia and the Pacific. Nearly 1 000 people joined the webinar, in which both food safety policy advice and capacity development activities in the region were presented; perspectives from the government, industry and research sectors were also exchanged. While during the “new normal” food safety has benefitted from an increased awareness on good practices of personal hygiene, in the future, regulatory frameworks that have a long-term vision and that ensure consumers’ protection will need to be put in place. In order to facilitate access to safe foods to all, the implementation of regulations will need to be delegated to the industry sector, and the active and informed participation of the consumers will be more critical than ever. Furthermore, recognizing responsibilities and integrating them with those of others could be a key approach to tackle emerging food safety issues. The next efforts would thus focus on the provision of a good and constant education and communication to the different food safety stakeholders, with the theme tagline of the World Food Safety Day, “food safety, everyone’s business”.

**Keywords:** Food safety, World Food Safety Day, webinar, COVID-19, new normal, post pandemic, national food control systems, FAO, OIE, WFP, WHO, Codex Alimentarius

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

ASF	African Swine Fever
CoV	Coronavirus
COVID-19	Name of the disease caused by the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, standing for: <u>coronavirus disease of 2019</u>
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
INFOSAN	International Food Safety Authorities Network
MERS-CoV	Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus
OIE	World Organisation for Animal Health
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SARS-CoV	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus
SARS-CoV-2	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus 2
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SFA	Singapore Food Agency
SOPs	Standard Operational Procedures
UN	United Nations
WFP	World Food Programme
WGS	Whole Genome Sequencing
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization
WVA	World Veterinary Association

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1. Overview

In advance of the World Food Safety Day 2020, which was on Sunday 7 June 2020, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), World Food Programme (WFP) and World Health Organization (WHO) jointly held an online webinar entitled - Food safety in the “new normal”. The webinar took place on Wednesday, 3 June 2020 and it discussed the current food safety issues in Asia and the Pacific. The four organizations shared their ongoing food safety activities in the region and three guest panellists from government, industry and research from different countries (China, India and Singapore) shared their unique perspectives on the topic of food safety in the post-pandemic scenario. Information on all the speakers, moderator and panellists is available in Annex 1. A total of 1 505 people from 84 different countries registered to attend the webinar. Among them, nearly one thousand participants joined the webinar live through Zoom and YouTube Livestream. The webinar archive is available at <https://youtu.be/5HYSd2yecYM> and more than 4 300 views have been recorded as of 6 July 2020.

## 1.2. Background

Over the last few decades, a substantial effort has been made to improve food safety systems in Asia and the Pacific. Consumers are more aware of the importance of food safety and quality, demanding better and safer food. Many governments have introduced modernized food control systems and improved practical implementation and enforcement measures. Industries are recognizing new trends in people’s food habits, and the importance of self-checking on food safety practices has become very important. Innovative technologies are emerging to improve food safety assurance. Many stakeholders have significantly invested in food safety in the region, but there are still many shortcomings and food safety topics seem to be overwhelmingly important. In addition, fake news is everywhere and provision of accurate information has become extremely important. Food safety competent authorities in the region often ask international organizations to provide technical support to develop relevant capacities, as well as to assist in prioritization of food safety topics so that focused attentions and effective improvement can be provided for national food control systems.

## 1.3. Scope

While proper hand washing and other hygienic measures gained a new light during the pandemic, it is important that they are maintained during the so-called “new-normal”. New food consumption patterns have been observed during the lockdown period where consumers have relied on food delivery services and information on social media. The webinar aimed at forward-looking food safety situations rather than technical issues of the pandemic itself.

## 1.4. Structure of the webinar

The webinar was held for a total of one hour and thirty minutes and divided into two parts. Firstly, FAO, OIE, WFP and WHO provided a concise but comprehensive panorama of the food safety activities in the region. Secondly, a panel discussion was held with three experts and representatives of food safety stakeholders, followed by an open discussion with the participants of the webinar. Participants’ questions were collected through the “chat” box and some were addressed during the webinar. The questions that were not covered during the live webinar are addressed in Annex 2. In addition, to improve participants’ engagement during the webinar, some general questions were asked to the webinar participants to acquire real-time reactions. However, it is important to note that the results of such interactive questions do not represent any statistically significant data; therefore, they are not suitable to be treated as a validated source of information. Those questions and results are attached in Annex 3.

## 2 Opening remarks

On behalf of FAO, OIE, WFP and WHO, Simone Moraes Raszl, Technical Officer (WHO), welcomed the participants to the webinar. The webinar was part of the activities to celebrate the World Food Safety Day, a day that was officially designated by the United Nations General Assembly through the [Resolution 73/250](#), in 2018. Food safety is a responsibility shared among governments, producers and consumers. Everybody from farm to table has a role in ensuring that food is safe and it does not damage our health. Through the World Food Safety Day, food safety is brought into the mainstream of the public agenda to eventually reduce the burden of foodborne diseases globally. In 2020, the World Food Safety Day aimed at drawing attention and inspiring action to help prevent, detect and manage foodborne risks, contributing to food security, human health, economic prosperity, agriculture, market access, tourism and sustainable development in the context of the “new normal”.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected consumers and businesses around the world. The food industry is playing a critical role in continuing to provide a safe and secure food supply to consumers while mitigating risk of the novel coronavirus. While an improvement on hygiene measures had a positive impact on food safety, in some cases food workers became ill because of the absence of physical distancing when working in food industries. There was an increase in the use of food delivery services and a change of the work modalities for restaurants, and an unequal distribution of food was also observed. Therefore, it is important to discuss the aspects of the “new normal”, so that the needs and opportunities in achieving food security with food safety can be realized.

## 3 Part 1. Food safety activities in the region

### 3.1 FAO food safety activities in the region

Masami Takeuchi, Food Safety Officer (FAO) introduced the current FAO food safety activities in the region. One of FAO’s signature projects in the region aims at developing capacities to effectively participate to Codex Alimentarius activities, an international food standard-setting body. Ten countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are being supported under this project, namely, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam. Furthermore, FAO supports a number of Codex Trust Fund projects in several countries in the region, and it will soon support new ones in some pacific nations such as Samoa and Solomon Islands. In the last few years, assistance was provided to Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and the Philippines for the improvement of imported food control systems within the One Health framework. In addition to that, FAO has a regional project to strengthen the One Health programme to generate evidence on improved collaboration for managing food safety, plant and animal health risks: Nepal, Papua New Guinea and Vietnam have actively worked in this area.

FAO recognizes the complex nature of food safety and the importance of understanding the status of countries’ capacities to manage effective national food control system. Since 2017, an initiative on food safety indicators is being piloted within the region. Bhutan, China, Cook Islands and the Philippines participated in the pilot project, and produced excellent outputs, which confirmed the effectiveness of setting specific national food safety indicators. In conjunction to this project, in 2019, Bhutan also introduced the initiative of food safety culture, which was well received by various stakeholders especially in private sector, including small and cottage food enterprises.

Under the FAO country projects, Bangladesh is improving national food safety institutional capacities while Cambodia is developing standards for Good Agricultural Practices for national certification. Indonesia has gone through a comprehensive assessment of the national food control systems. Thailand just finished the project to strengthen their food safety and quality control of livestock products. Pakistan is piloting the national

programme on street food safety, while Mongolia is developing efficient systems for food control management and it is piloting quality assurance options for private sector.

FAO supports the development of risk-based food safety policy. This requires a systematic collection of scientific data and evidence, which needs to reflect the national contexts: thus, regular and streamlined consolidation of national data is necessary. Many countries in Asia and the Pacific expressed that they would like to improve a big time in this area. FAO listens to the different stakeholders of food safety and it will continue to provide technical support to build a “food safety world”, as any food sold in any type of marketplace in any countries, needs to be safe for human consumption, there can be no exceptions.

### 3.2 OIE food safety activities in the region

Lesia Thompson, Regional Project Officer (OIE) introduced OIE’s food safety activities in the region. The OIE has a vision to improve animal health and welfare worldwide. The mission of the organisation is to improve the safety of foods of animal origins by reducing the hazards originating from animal productions through supporting veterinary services. For this purpose, an OIE representative, referred to as “the Delegate”, in each Member country or territory appoints a dedicated person to be the Focal Point on Animal Production Food Safety. Delegates negotiate international veterinary standards, which are then published in the OIE Codes and Manuals and support is given to veterinary services to comply with these standards.

The OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code outlines the role of veterinary services in food safety systems, meat inspection, animal feeds, the control of antimicrobial resistance and prevention, and the control of bacterial infections like *Salmonella* in commercial production systems. Aside from the importance of good veterinary services, the OIE is also working on zoonotic diseases and it understands that a One Health approach is critical to ensure that the whole food production chain is appropriately regulated and managed.

The OIE collaborates with regional partners to promote multi-sectoral collaboration to improve food safety. Three food-borne zoonotic parasitic diseases (cysticercosis/taeniasis, echinococcosis and trichinellosis) are included in the OIE list of diseases that are considered specific hazards and important in international trade. Antimicrobial medicines have advanced animal health and welfare, food security and food safety: the OIE has standards and guidelines that provide a framework for responsible and prudent use of these products in animals, and for surveillance of their use and of antimicrobial resistance. With the growing demand for foods of animal origin, the demand for animal feed continues to increase.

Furthermore, ensuring animal feed safety has an impact on food safety and human health: in 2019, the OIE held a regional workshop on animal feed safety in collaboration with the Food and Agricultural Materials Inspection Centre of Japan. As a follow up to that workshop, the Laboratory Network on Animal Feed Safety in Asia and the Pacific was established. There are five OIE collaborating centres relating to food safety in Asia and the Pacific region; and they cover food safety, foodborne parasites, animal feed safety and analysis.

The OIE anticipates new sanitary and environmental risks, and to do this, it needs to be aware of the relationship between animal production systems, climate and environmental change, and the emergence and outbreak of animal diseases. The OIE provides recommendations to its Members to continue to implement sanitary measures to facilitate safe international movements of live animals and animal products.

### 3.3 WFP food safety activities in the region

Carla Mejia, Regional Food Safety and Food Technology Officer (WFP) introduced WFP food safety activities in the region. WFP is one of the lead humanitarian agencies that is tasked to deliver food assistance in emergencies, and that works with the different communities to improve nutrition and build resilience. WFP

firmly believes that strong national capacities in the area of food safety and quality are a priority in Asia, and that these will be key to ensure that sufficient, safe and nutritious foods can be part of the food supply chains that feed those people who are most in need. This is a very critical aspect, especially in the countries in Asia that face recurrent shocks due to climate change and which are now being heavily affected by the economic downturn provoked by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the past years, WFP has based its work on the generation of strong evidence for operations and advocacy, and it has built partnerships and collaborations with various stakeholders for the implementation of food safety on the field. The agency has prioritized four areas of work for the coming years. Firstly, the adoption of risk-based approaches on all the supply chain management operations that occur from farm to fork, namely: planning, procurement, quality assurance and control, storage, shipping and distribution. These risk-based approaches will be based on the renewed focus on improved information management systems. Another pillar will focus on enhancing incident management procedures and providing risk communication tools across all stakeholders at the internal and at the external level. Then, focus will also be given to the evaluation and strengthening of local value chains, particularly on those that could play a role in supporting social safety nets, such as complementary foods, fortified staples, and fresh foods that can be used for school meals programmes.

WFP has several ongoing projects across the region aimed at implementing these priorities. For example, the fortification of wheat flour or rice in Afghanistan or Bangladesh; the fresh food value chains in Bangladesh; the school meals programmes in Cambodia; the strengthening of the value chain for fortified complementary foods in Pakistan. Finally, in the coming years WFP aims at contributing to strengthen national institutions through advocacy and policy dialogues. This may lead to the adoption and implementation of risk-based regulatory frameworks and standards, and to the establishment of adequate infrastructure such as laboratories and inspection services to monitor the compliance to these frameworks and standards in countries like Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bhutan.

WFP believes that supporting local food systems to produce safer foods as well as small farmers and processors in emerging markets could lead to the achievement of multiple outcomes with different dimensions, to improvements of health conditions and livelihoods and to the enhancement of nutrition and equity.

### 3.4 WHO food safety activities in the region

Gyanendra Gongal, Food Safety Regional Advisor (WHO), introduced the WHO's food safety activities in the region. WHO has two regional offices in Asia and the Pacific, one is the WHO Western Pacific Regional Office based in Manila and the other one is the WHO Southeast Asia Regional Office based in New Delhi. In addition, the organization has established a Secretariat for Pacific Countries to meet the need of small island countries in the Pacific. Both regional offices are working together on food safety through a framework document that considers specific contexts and needs and that provides guidance to WHO, its Member states and its partners to work together until 2025. WHO prioritizes regional partnerships: the Asia-Pacific One Health coordination group was established together with FAO and OIE, and food safety is one of its four priority areas. Additionally, FAO and WHO developed together a tool to assess national food control systems, which was tested through a pilot in Indonesia.

Codex Trust Fund is a funding opportunity for low and middle-income countries to strengthen Codex systems: Codex group activities help collaborations and reciprocal support, and they thus contribute to the active participation of Codex Members in the standard setting process. India, Bhutan and Nepal recently secured a funding for a Codex group activity, and an application from Myanmar, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Cambodia is currently in the pipeline. WHO also provides support for the establishment of functional national Codex structures that enable the adoption of Codex standards at the country level. Through the

International Network of Food Safety Authorities (INFOSAN), WHO promotes, in collaboration with FAO, cross-sectoral collaborations and information sharing during food safety emergencies, and both a regional and a global INFOSAN meeting were organized on this topic in the Republic of Korea and Abu Dhabi respectively.

The “International Health Regulations” are an instrument for public health governance that also includes food safety: its implementation is monitored through joint external evaluations, which were completed by 27 countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Priority actions of the document are reflected on national action plans for health security. WHO also worked with OIE for the “International Health Regulations and Performance of Veterinary Services (IHR-PVS) Bridging workshop” supporting five countries to bring the human and animal health sectors together.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented situation: WHO has been working with partner organizations such as FAO, OIE, WFP and the World Trade Organization (WTO) to come up with policy and guidance documents for benefit of Member States in terms of food safety, food security and food trade in the face of COVID-19 crisis. Particularly, fake news had a negative impact on food consumption patterns and they have created anxiety among consumers. There is no scientific evidence that foods transmit viruses who provoke respiratory illnesses. Furthermore, coronaviruses are not known to multiply in fruits and vegetables. To mitigate foodborne risks, it is important to wash fresh fruits and vegetables with safe water before consumption and to keep practicing good hygiene practices.

## 4 Part 2. Expert panel discussion: food systems transformation

### 4.1 Panellists and the discussion moderator

Sridhar Dharmapuri, Senior Food Safety and Nutrition Officer (FAO) introduced three representatives for the panel discussion. The panel members were three regional experts, namely: Joanne Chan Sheot Harn, centre director at the National Centre for Food Science at the Singapore Food Agency (SFA) in Singapore, which is both a WHO collaborating centre on food contamination monitoring and an OIE collaborating centre for food safety; Vishal Bhatia, the chief executive officer of New Supply SWIGGY, India’s largest food delivery e-commerce company; and Junshi Chen, senior research professor and chief scientific advisor at the China National Centre for Food Safety Risk Assessment and also a WHO collaborating centre on food contamination monitoring.

### 4.2 Focus on new technologies and communications are key for the future of food safety

With the “new normal”, food deliveries were put at the forefront of a general greater awareness on proper hygiene measures. While good practices were implemented during the pandemic, structured training programmes and support for industries are still required, as well as stronger regulations and possible incentives for those who comply with norms and regulations. Delivery services are the link between restaurants and consumers: they have supported consumers by providing them with information and by promoting food safety as a primary driver in their choices. Delivery services have also worked closely with restaurants, to ensure the implementation of hygiene practices and social distancing, and by applying zero-tolerance for those not complying with the norms. As a result, restaurants started to share information on food safety; furthermore, if and when a complaint is received, delivery services share with the restaurants the accountability for the experience. While delivery services will need more well-trained employees on good practices in the future, they will also benefit from technologies that enable cashless payments, contactless deliveries and real-time communications with consumers.

New research or technologies will positively affect food safety management in general. Food businesses have a major responsibility in ensuring food safety, and technical innovation is key for them: for example, traceability solutions are being progressively developed and implemented, and Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS) is also

increasingly used to identify microbial contamination to ensure food safety throughout the whole value chain. Food industries in Asia are increasingly implementing these technologies, which will be key for the future.

In Singapore, the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the country's vulnerabilities: as of June 2020, Singapore imports more than 90 percent of their food and the country is subject to volatilities of the global food market. To achieve food security, Singapore focuses on 1) diversifying food sources; 2) supporting companies to go overseas; and 3) increasing local food production through the "30 by 30" initiative, which aims at producing 30 percent of their own nutrition by 2030 and thus to reduce their import dependence. Singapore also faced the need to mitigate the food safety challenges arising from new business models, novel foods whose demand is driven by changing consumption behaviours and the high consumers' expectation in food safety. In addition, there is an increasing trend to buy foods online, which will require a continuous review of both food safety policies and control measures. The SFA implemented a pre-market safety assessment process for novel foods and published a guidance document to help food traders better understand SFA's requirements regarding safety assessments, as well as the application process of novel foods. Through adoption of the approach of joint responsibility, SFA also collaborated with the industry to develop standards for food online retail.

#### 4.3 Consumer education on food safety can alleviate the weight of fake news

Fake news is an emerging issue that has the power to undermine consumers' trust in food safety systems. Risk communication strategies and data analytics to strengthen governments' scientific communication will be key to maintain consumers' confidence and trust. As an initiative to address the concerns on food safety, Singapore's government has worked with the industries and addressed them one by one on the government website in order to alleviate any fears. Consumers' concerns continue to be addressed by publishing feedbacks on several food safety issues that could help them increase their general understanding.

In China, fake news on foods could be considered the second major food safety issue, the first one being foodborne diseases. These rumours heavily affect consumers' trust in the whole food supply. To deal with this, in China the government asks the experts to refute rumours from a scientific viewpoint. However, improving consumers' knowledge on food safety remains the key method to reduce the impact of fake news to a minimum. Increased awareness means increased critical thinking on the news they read. In addition, consumers want "zero risk"; accordingly, risk communication should be broadened to "food information communication", which provides the whole picture on food, in addition to risk.

Fake news affects food businesses too, but high degrees of transparency and education could mitigate well the problem. Deliveries in India have been developing a channel that provides consumers with reliable information regarding the food that they order and consume. Proactive communication across different channels and updated information regarding delivery journeys have proved effective good practices even when addressing fake news.

#### 4.4 International organizations' role is key for global food safety

International organizations need to lead the area of food safety through the wide implementation of a One Health approach, through a strong science-based risk analysis paradigm and through evidence-based, effective communication releases. Food standards are very important, especially to protect consumer health, to eliminate food trade barriers and to reduce food trade disputes among countries: Codex Alimentarius remains key in these standards setting. Hence, capacity development is a key aspect for international organizations to play a role in, especially given the scientific and technological developments and the pace at which they evolve. It is vital for international collaborations to learn from each other and to progressively improve capacities. These organizations could have a key role in addressing problems related to misrepresentation of foods and in promoting stronger guidelines that overcome the lack of transparency in food trades. Playbooks related to

different food production sectors could also be useful to provide reference materials to be used by all stakeholders.

#### 4.5 Ensuring food safety is a shared responsibility

Regulations that are feasible to be followed by the private sector are key for an inter-sectoral collaboration. There is a fine balance to ensure that safety and industrial products go hand in hand; rather than laws, self-regulation in the implementation of guidelines would be the ideal way forward food safety within the industry at large. Joanne Chan said, “Ensuring safety is a fine balance and a joint responsibility,” a statement agreed by all speakers. Governments, for example, have a responsibility to provide transparent regulatory systems and an enabling environment to ensure food safety. The development of standards, dialogue and engagement with the industry sector is key to provide them with good practices; regulation can be a priority in public health. Junshi Chen stressed that government and industry are not enemies; governments do understand the situations that the industries are facing, and industries subsequently need to think from their perspective. The fine balance can be obtained through a science-based work, which may provide sectors with a good basis to work together.

Food safety is a joint responsibility in which government, industry and consumers have a role to play. Governments establish regulations and create enabling environments. Then, food safety standards that are evidence-based should be adopted throughout the whole food supply chain and consumer awareness should be raised to ensure safe and responsible food choices. Consumers look for food safety assurances, and accordingly, food industries need to start looking at food safety as an investment for the future: in these terms, industry and regulators complement each other’s work. All stakeholders have a responsibility in food safety; therefore, it is everyone’s business. While it is a right for consumers to ask for safe foods, they also need to understand their responsibilities in ensuring food safety and they thus need to be provided with the necessary food safety knowledge: participation of consumers as active role players in the food safety scenario would dramatically decrease the number of foodborne diseases.

### 5 Closing remarks and food safety infographics

Carla Mejia concluded the webinar on behalf of FAO, OIE, WFP and WHO by acknowledging all who contributed to make the webinar a success, and she introduced a set of new food safety infographics targeted to the current COVID-19 pandemic situation and illustrating the good practices to maintain to ensure food safety. The infographics were produced as a joint effort by the FAO, OIE, WFP and WHO. A particular emphasis was placed on the fact that food is not known to transmit COVID-19. The infographics can be used in different platforms to promote good food safety practices and to make accurate information is available. They can be downloaded or shared at <http://www.fao.org/asiapacific/resources/2019-ncov-asiapacific/>.



## 6 Conclusions

The webinar emphasized the importance of taking an integrated and collaborative approach. Food safety touches the mandates of all four organizations who co-organized the webinar, and its inter-sectoral nature requires different sectors to collaborate to tackle food safety issues.

Everyone has a role to ensure food safety: governments can provide clear guidance for food safety assurance and regulations to public health; industry, which is the primary interface with consumers, is responsible for the implementation of good hygiene practices and for promoting a food safety culture; consumers are responsible for their choices and they must be well educated to make them. Scientific and technological advancements such as WGS and Geographic Information System’s tracking technologies have a potentially significant supporting role in the area of food safety, and they could be further strengthened with the use of big data and relevant information technologies. In the future, it is inevitable that food systems will transform so that everyone will share the daunting responsibility of food safety. Hence, knowledge on food safety practices will need to be reinforced, information and communication strategies targeting the consumers will need to be improved, and regulatory frameworks will need to be based on scientific evidence.

The “new normal” posed by the global COVID-19 pandemic has significantly improved people’s awareness about hygienic practices. One of the key issues in the region was the negative impact induced by fake food safety news and rumours, which called for the joint efforts of FAO, OIE, WFP and WHO to develop a set of infographics to deliver the appropriate message that food is not known to transmit COVID-19. The “new normal” situation has also raised several questions on future food systems, which are seen as starting points and opportunities to make improvements that respond to the present-day scenario. Starting from this point of view, food safety education and communication to consumers is largely made possible with new scientific and technological developments.

FAO, OIE, WFP and WHO will continue to provide support in the area of food safety by providing countries who request it with necessary capacities and knowledge. As food safety is a multi-faceted area, such support may come from different angles, but ensuring safe foods on everyone's table will be a key priority whichever the perspective will be.

## Web resources/information resources

### FAO resources

- FAO.** 2020. Food safety and quality – In: *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations* [online]. Rome. [Cited 3 July 2020]. <http://www.fao.org/food-safety/en/>
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## Annex 1. Speakers, moderator and the panellists

### **External experts**

Vishal Bhatia  
Chief Executive Officer, New Supply SWIGGY  
India

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### **International Organizations**

#### **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**

Sridhar Dharmapuri  
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Masami Takeuchi  
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#### **World Organisation for Animal Health**

Lesa Thompson  
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#### **World Food Programme**

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Gyanendra Gongal  
Food Safety Regional Advisor  
South-East Asia Regional Office

## Annex 2. Written questions and responses

### A. Food safety in the pandemic

**1. How safe is our food in today's pandemic affected world?**

[FAO/OIE/WFP/WHO] Food is not known to transmit COVID-19. COVID-19 is transmitted primarily from human to human, mainly via respiratory droplets that infected people sneeze, cough or exhale. There is no evidence that the virus responsible for COVID-19 grows or multiplies on food surfaces. Therefore, our food supply is neither safer nor less safe due to the pandemic. One notable positive change is that, proper personal hygiene practices have spread to protect from the virus, and this likely contributes to improving the safety of food. However, there is insufficient data to compare between pre-pandemic and post-pandemic to confirm this statement. There are many other issues that need to be considered. For example, it is essential to maintain the movement of food along the food chain despite movement restrictions due to the pandemic. Hence, the application of environmental sanitation, personal hygiene, safe food handling principles and practices, as well as additional measures to protect food workers from contracting COVID-19 is key to reduce the risk of exposure to the disease, and to decrease the likelihood that harmful pathogens will threaten the safety of food supplies.

**2. What are the special precautions that need to be taken in this pandemic to keep our food safe?**

[FAO/WHO] As always, follow the five keys to safer food – keep clean; separate cooked and uncooked food; separate animal and plant source foods; cook thoroughly and to the right temperature; and use clean water and food materials. For more details about the five keys for safer food:

<https://www.who.int/foodsafety/publications/5keysmanual/>.

**3. How can we protect ourselves from COVID-19 through food?**

[FAO/WHO] People can protect themselves from COVID-19 by following all recommended health measures – physical distancing; hand hygiene; good coughing/sneezing etiquette; not touch your mouth, nose and eyes during shopping; wear masks when venturing out; avoid closed and crowded spaces and regularly monitor your temperature. Any food by itself does not protect against COVID-19.

**4. Can fresh fruits and vegetables transmit the virus? Is washing fruits and vegetables with soap recommended to protect ourselves from COVID-19?**

[FAO/WHO] As all other foods, fruits and vegetables are not known to transmit COVID-19. However, they can transmit foodborne pathogens such as *Escherichia coli* and *Salmonella*. To reduce the risks, use safe running water to remove dirt and to lower the risk of contamination. For more information, visit:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/question-and-answers-hub/q-a-detail/questions-relating-to-consumers>.

**5. I heard that 80% of the COVID-19 cases do not show the symptoms. Therefore, it is possible that food workers can be infected without any symptoms. How can we ensure that the food is safe?**

[WHO] COVID-19 is a respiratory illness and the primary transmission route is through person-to-person contact and through direct contact with respiratory droplets generated when an infected person coughs or sneezes. There is no evidence to date of viruses that cause respiratory illnesses being transmitted via food or food packaging. The main priority in food business is to keep the virus out of the food environment to avoid person-to-person transmission. Several key measures are required including upgrading of cleaning and sanitation measures, disinfecting surfaces and high-touch points, educating staff on the virus and how to protect themselves and others, reinforcing protocols such as physical distancing, hand-washing and

improved security with people staying in their vehicles/sanitizing hands when handing out documents and other materials.

**6. Being in a developing country, we have poor infrastructure that makes food more vulnerable to contamination. How can we address this issue?**

[FAO/WHO] Effective food control requires both a robust legal and regulatory framework and effective participation across the farm-to-plate chain from the private sector who implement standards and good practices. Consumers have to play their part as well by implementing safe practices at home, school and the workplace. In short, if food safety becomes everybody's business, food will be less vulnerable to contamination.

**B. "New normal"**

**7. I have realized that people no longer go grocery shopping every day and we tend to choose food items with a longer shelf life, for example, canned foods. This may become a new habit in the "new normal". Do you think it is a good choice and a healthy choice?**

[FAO/WHO] The food needs to be healthy/nutritious and the packaging needs to be safe. Choosing packaged over fresh food is a matter of convenience and a decision of the consumer. Frozen vegetables tend to be richer in micronutrients than canned ones, but in any case, consumers should read the labels to understand more. Fresh vegetables can also be bought and frozen at home for a longer shelf life.

**8. Since conventional dine-in experience becomes obsolete in this "new normal" era and food delivery becomes more preferred, how pressing is it to develop a safety standard for food (fresh or cooked) which arrived to our house by these practices?**

[FAO/WHO] Food delivery is a chain of actions. Each person involved in the chain needs to ensure food safety practices so that the product is safe for human consumption. Existing standards and Codes of Practice (such as those of Codex Alimentarius) cover these requirements and can ensure safe food delivery. In addition, the basic principles for safe food preparation and handling are the same to all food business. Those food deliveries need to follow the food safety regulations covered by the relevant national legislations.

**9. Do we need to develop any standards with regards food safety in the "new normal"?**

[WHO] Since food is not known to transmit COVID-19, the standards for the food preparation and handling are the same to all food business, and are normally covered by national legislations to protect consumers from foodborne diseases. Therefore, if there is already a good national regulatory framework with sound food safety standards, there is no need to develop any new standards.

**10. Has the pandemic changed food safety regulators' thinking in any way? How will regulators look at food safety differently after the pandemic?**

[FAO/WHO] The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic presents an exceptional and unprecedented challenge for competent authorities with responsibilities for national food control systems to continue conducting routine functions and activities in accordance with national regulations and international recommendations. On the other hand, the health measures in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19 including physical distancing, hand hygiene and use of Personal Protective Equipment can have a positive impact on food safety. These need to be remain in place across the food chain including trans-continental supply chains. In addition, measures such as regular body temperature monitoring, staggered work hours to reduce crowding and contact tracing will need to be implemented widely by food business operators to avoid COVID-19 spread. Regulators will therefore look to incorporate these measures into Standard

Operational Procedures (SOPs), Codes of Practices and standards. See also the FAO/WHO guidance entitled “COVID-19 and Food Safety: Guidance for competent authorities responsible for national food safety control system” available at <http://www.fao.org/3/ca8842en/CA8842EN.pdf>.

**11. How will the COVID-19 pandemic will affect the food production and food trade?**

[FAO/WFP] For information on the impacts of the pandemic on food supply chains including the subsectors of agriculture (crops, livestock, fisheries and forests) and related inputs, please visit the dedicated webpage at <http://www.fao.org/2019-ncov/>. In addition, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) has summarized the data and information entitled “Policy Responses to COVID-19 in Asia and the Pacific” at <https://www.unescap.org/covid19/policy-responses>.

**12. How has food supply chain affected during this pandemic? What are the recommendations for the government to cope with raw materials inadequacies, specifically for food industries?**

[FAO/WFP] For information on the impacts of the pandemic on food supply chains including the subsectors of agriculture (crops, livestock, fisheries and forests) and related inputs, please visit the dedicated webpage at <http://www.fao.org/2019-ncov/>.

**13. While so many people have returned to their home and in quarantine, the labour impacts of the local agricultural production is significant. In such conditions, how food safety can be ensured?**

[FAO/WFP] Good food safety practices are the same for both smallholder farmers and more intensive food agriculture production chains. Even if there is limited labours, it is not acceptable to have food that is not safe. Measures that can be put in place to facilitate these safe smallholder productions could include the introduction of safe trade corridors based on public health mitigation measures along market chains, priority inspection for vehicles transporting animal products and other perishables; and policy/ financial mechanisms to ensure rapid supply and distribution of food commodities and their inputs as needed.

**14. Some of the food supply chains have collapsed during the COVID-19 and it is an emergency situation. What measures have been taken by WFP for recovery?**

[WFP] COVID-19 could unfold from a global health into a food security emergency if supply chain disruptions lead to panic buying and economic anxiety starts to rule global food trade. Measures that WFP is taking to contribute to respond are:

- It is essential to monitor food prices and markets, and to transparently disseminate information. This will help to both strengthen government policies and avert public panic.
- Where food insecurity is caused by restricted access rather than lack of availability, cash-based transfers should be considered as a standard response as they can help to stabilize markets affected by containment measures. WFP can play a key implementing role as the largest cash provider in the humanitarian community. However, one of WFP’s most important ongoing priorities has been to work with national governments to strengthen their own social protection systems and enable them to be agile shock responsive safety nets in the face of COVID-19.
- For the humanitarian community, simultaneous planning for in-kind food assistance is essential as the disruption of supply channels is expected to cause an increase of cost and lead time throughout the supply chains.

For more details, visit: [https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000114205/download/?\\_ga=2.86498776.1554140906.1592975720-436442266.1526289719](https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000114205/download/?_ga=2.86498776.1554140906.1592975720-436442266.1526289719).

**15. Due to the pandemic, food transportation has been damaged greatly. After this pandemic, human resources for food supply chains will also be affected. How can FAO, OIE, WFP, and WHO help this situation?**

[FAO/OIE/WFP/WHO] Most countries have relaxed strict lockdowns and are already focused on ensuring transport of food, fresh produce as well as agricultural inputs (seed, feed, fertilizer chemicals and equipment) as well as labour. Guidance has been provided countries to:

- Open green lanes/corridors nationwide on roads and highways through which inputs and seed/plantation delivery vehicles can pass unhindered, and are not subjected to roadblocks.
- Sensitize truck drivers, traders, retailers, transporters, labourers, and other key stakeholders about social distancing norms.
- Label transport carrying agricultural produce and inputs could be done with a particular colour or sticker label to mark them as essential.
- Ensure that such labelled transport is eligible for reduced fuel charges at gas stations.

The OIE and World Veterinary Association (WVA, <https://www.oie.int/en/for-the-media/press-releases/detail/article/covid-19-and-veterinary-activities-designated-as-essential/> ) consider that veterinarians are an integral part of the global health community. Beyond the activities linked to the health and welfare of animals, they have a key role in disease prevention and management, including those transmissible to humans, and to ensure food safety for the populations.

Regarding international trade of animals and animal products for food, the OIE recommends ([https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Our\\_scientific\\_expertise/docs/pdf/COV-19/A\\_COVID-19\\_Considerations\\_OIE\\_Sanitary\\_Measures.pdf](https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Our_scientific_expertise/docs/pdf/COV-19/A_COVID-19_Considerations_OIE_Sanitary_Measures.pdf)) that no COVID-19-related sanitary measures are introduced unless and until these have been shown necessary to protect human or animal health, are scientifically justified by a risk analysis, and are fully in line with relevant International Standards. The OIE also recommends continuing implementation of OIE standards under WTO sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) principles, and (where possible) applying administrative flexibility to minimize the impact that this pandemic may have on procedural aspects of trade.

Where commercial capacity currently does not exist, WFP, working closely with UN sister agencies and other stakeholders, is using its logistics capacity and expertise to step in and provide transport services, ensuring critical cargo and personnel can move to where they are needed most. Read more on the FAO/WHO guidance entitled “COVID-19 and Food Safety: Guidance for food businesses: Interim guidance” at <http://www.fao.org/3/ca8660en/CA8660EN.pdf>.

**16. Food waste has been already a big global issue before the pandemic, and now I see many food producers have to waste their products, especially those with short shelf life. How should we address this issue?**

[FAO/WHO] Perishable foods, if damaged or spoiled, should not be sold but safely disposed to avoid food-borne diseases due to microbial contamination. It is preferable to have a first in and first out modality for sale of fresh food so that the produce harvested first is sold first, through systematic control of inventory.

For packaged food, those that have passed the expiry date must be removed from the food chain. However, those with a ‘best before’ date can still be consumed within a reasonable period of time. Government and local authorities have to create enabling environment for sale of fruits and vegetables such as subsidies, transportation of perishable products from village to urban growth centres, local tax exemption etc.

In some countries, dumping fruits and vegetables from outside of their provinces/countries has been observed. This action was led by fake news and wrong rumours and such unnecessary food waste must be stopped.

**17. In supply chain management system and food safety management system, is there any special recommendation from FAO in applying the systems during the pandemic?**

[FAO] Food safety management systems should always be in place in supply chains to ensure that there are no entry points for entry of physical, chemical or microbiological contaminants. In addition, COVID-19 health measures are essential to prevent the presence of infected persons in the chain that will slow or shut it down.

**18. Our small villages do not have good sanitation / hygiene facilities. In this “new normal” era, everyone realizes personal hygiene is important, but if facilities are not set up, it cannot be implemented. How can you help?**

[WHO] Best practice for hand hygiene requires the availability of clean water, soap, and single use disposable towels or alcohol-based hand sanitizer with a concentration of 70%. Availability of these resources is not always assured. When resources for hand hygiene are not available, other materials need to be considered to prevent transmission of infection. For more information on alternative hand cleaning procedures: [https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/wpro---documents/emergency/covid19/covid-ipc/handwashing-alternatives-20200608.pdf?sfvrsn=ce315e16\\_2&download=true](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/wpro---documents/emergency/covid19/covid-ipc/handwashing-alternatives-20200608.pdf?sfvrsn=ce315e16_2&download=true).

**19. In supporting small food business operators during and post pandemic, what would be the best way forward in ensuring food safety of the food products? How can government agencies assist them?**

[FAO] There are SOPs and Codes of Practices (Good Hygiene Practices, Good Manufacturing practices, and so forth) that can be implemented by small food business operators. A number of texts are available from Codex. Government agencies can assist by working together with Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to implement these food safety standards in a spirit of partnership and a common desire for improvement. Food business operators should also realize that food safety attracts customers and increases their incomes and accordingly follow regulations.

**20. How do international organizations collaborate to make a uniform system to ensure food safety in the "new normal"? Are there any guidelines / standards / guidance available?**

[FAO/OIE/WFP/WHO] International agencies are already collaborating by:

- supporting countries to strengthen their food control systems;
- to incorporate COVID-19 health measures into conventional food safety SOPs; and
- communicating food safety messages to all actors in the food chain including consumers.

The Codex Alimentarius Commission (<http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/en/>) has adopted several practical guidelines on how to apply and implement best practices to ensure food hygiene (Codex [General Principles of Food Hygiene, CXC 1- 1969](#)), handle meats (Codex [Code of Hygienic Practice for Meat, CXC 58 – 2005](#)), and control viruses in foods (Guidelines for the Application of General Principles of Food Hygiene to the Control of Viruses in Food, [CAC/GL 79-2012](#)) and others which can be consulted on the Codex [website](#). The Tripartite (FAO/OIE/WHO) and partners like WFP are working together to safeguard food safety, both in the region and globally. Specific guidelines are available on the organizations’ respective websites with the best scientific knowledge currently available of the “new normal” situation.

## C. Ready-to-eat food

**21. Do you think there is a food safety risk in the ready to eat food vendors in remote area? They have to ensure cooking food thoroughly. How do we ensure this?**

[WHO] Even for ready-to-eat vendors, the five keys for safer food provide the best way to produce and maintain the food safety. Not all ready-to-eat food are fully cooked, but in the case of cooked ready-to-eat food, the vendor must have adequate equipment to cook and to maintain the food under adequate temperature if they are not cooked at the serving moment.

**22. How do you think the street food vendors will adapt this “new normal”?**

[FAO/WHO] Street food vendors will need to adopt measures to guarantee physical distancing; more rigorous hand hygiene; minimizing touch on surfaces and adopting the use of Personal Protective Equipment to protect consumers and him/herself to get COVID-19. It may have a positive impact also on food safety, as hygiene practices will be strengthened. Vendors continuing to adopt these measures and keeping their surroundings clean can expect more business from their customers.

**23. How important are allergens information and packaging for online food delivery?**

[FAO/WHO] The allergen information in food delivery is important as for any type of food. Restaurants, food outlets and takeaways that serve food through on online orders should preferably supply the information as part of the offering on the menu, at least for key allergens such as eggs, nuts, milk and fish. However, many countries in the Asia-Pacific region do not have relevant regulations and this cannot be enforced everywhere.

#### D. Food security

**24. How can FAO, OIE, WFP and WHO can chip in to ensure the regional and global food safety and famine issues at this time of emergency with COVID-19?**

[FAO/OIE/WFP/WHO] In the Asia-Pacific region, the FAO/OIE/WHO Tripartite plus partners such as WFP are continuing to take action during the pandemic situation. FAO and the OIE focus on sanitary measures relating to animal health, animal welfare and animal product safety, covering the food supply chain through to sale of products. Studies are underway to better understand infection dynamics of SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19 disease in humans) in humans and susceptible animal species.

FAO is providing policy advice and support on keeping supply chains functional and suggesting ways to transport perishable food to markets as well as provision of inputs to farmers; social protection measures that could cushion the shock for citizens; incorporating health measures into food safety practices; re-orienting some of our ongoing projects into supporting the Government with assessing the impacts of COVID-19 and putting mitigating measures in place; for instance, increasing local food production particularly that of vegetables is a response that most countries want to implement.

Simultaneously, projects have been operationalized in the countries affected by locusts to control them and this is an ongoing process with all the affected countries working together to fight a common enemy. International organizations are following the same regional approach to combat African Swine Fever (ASF) in pigs and the Fall Army Worm, a serious pest of maize. Again, in response to the cyclones – Harold, Amphan, Vongphong – international organizations are responding through projects initially for relief and then supporting recovery of livelihoods. Our long-term objective is resilience in agriculture particularly that of small holders of whom there are millions in Asia and the Pacific.

WFP across the region is continuing to respond rapidly to the evolving situation through targeted COVID-19 response activities through service provision and/or relief food assistance. WFP continues to deliver

lifesaving food and nutrition support (for a planned 2.9 million beneficiaries in May) in several countries. WFP managed to modify asset creation and livelihoods or resilience activities in a number of countries to align with COVID-related regulations, including restrictions on movements and large gatherings. While school closures across the region have meant a suspension of school feeding programmes in almost all countries, some countries have modified their programmes to provide alternative solutions. WFP analysts constantly monitor markets, food prices and trends to provide actionable food security information to all stakeholders to adjust interventions and national programmes.

WHO monitors social media, fake news and social perception and prepares public health advice accordingly for the public on protecting themselves and others from spread of COVID-19, and provides technical guidance on preparedness for COVID-19. WHO is working with FAO, OIE and WFP to issue guidance documents for food business operators and food safety authorities on food safety during production, transportation and delivery of food and food products as well as additional measures to be taken to ensure consumer safety and consumer confidence.

**25. What responses and action plans are in place from the international organizations to help countries to cope with the pandemic, while facing big challenges in feeding the world, fighting other emerging pests and diseases, together with many other food safety concerns?**

[FAO/OIE/WFP/WHO] International organizations are working together to ensure food safety and security for everyone. At this time, COVID-19 is affecting everyone's activities but there is a continuous action to protect both humans and animals from other health concerns including food safety. Details of the international organizations' activities can be found on respective websites. For the relevant resources made available by FAO, please visit <http://www.fao.org/2019-ncov/>. OIE activities related to the pandemic can be found on these sites: <https://www.oie.int/en/scientific-expertise/specific-information-and-recommendations/questions-and-answers-on-2019novel-coronavirus/> and <https://rr-asia.oie.int/en/projects/covid-19-in-asia-and-the-pacific/>. To see WFP actions, visit <https://www.wfp.org/emergencies/covid-19-pandemic>. The areas in which WHO is working during the COVID-19 pandemic are notification and monitoring, country preparedness and capacity development, promoting research and development, and combating the infodemic. For more information: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>.

**26. We need to consider some realities on the ground. Poverty is still a big problem and there is a situation with lack of access to safe water, lack of space in their homes, many lost their jobs due to the lockdown. It is difficult to imagine how they can implement even the basic food safety measures. Any thoughts?**

[FAO/WHO/WFP] Food safety needs to be engrained in everyday behaviour. There are multiple and inexpensive-to-implement SOPs and Codes of Practices that can be employed across agri-food chains as well by consumers. Please visit the Codex, FAO/WHO websites. The five keys for safer food are simple measures that can be adopted also by consumers for food safety at home.

**27. I do not think a poor person can pay for a higher standard food. How can food safety be ensured when there is not enough amount of food?**

[FAO/WFP] Poverty is a challenge that has many dimensions that affect various elements of the basic human life. However, no matter how bad the economical situations are, unsafe food should not be provided to the populations. If it is not safe, it is not food, so unsafe food does not contribute to food security at all. Food safety is not a luxury or high standard. Food safety is a basic requirement for food security.

**28. How can we ensure food safety in population-dense countries with many poor people?**

[FAO] Asia has many densely populated countries and they are working towards effective food control systems. This requires a robust legal and regulatory framework and effective participation across the farm-to-fork chain from the private sector who implement standards and good practices. Consumers have to play their part as well by implementing safe practices at home, school and the workplace. In short, if food safety becomes everybody's business, food will be less contaminated

## E. Nutrition

- 29. As a pregnant woman, I would like to maintain appropriate and nutritious diet. However, I am now worried about my choice of food, due to the pandemic. Is there any food I should avoid for consumption?**

[WHO] The best way forward is to follow your doctor's instructions. There is no food that can protect from COVID-19. For more information related to COVID-19 and pregnancy, visit:

<https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/emergencies/COVID-19-pregnancy-ipc-breastfeeding-infographics/>.

- 30. Due to the pandemic situation, our school feeding programme change the modality and now delivering food packages to the targeted households. Those packages only include legumes, sardines, oil, salt, eggs and rice. No fruits or vegetables are distributed, although we would like to encourage the community to consume more fruits and vegetables. How can we distribute fruits and vegetables safely?**

[WFP] It is advised to use available resources to safeguard schoolchildren's food security and nutrition through local supply chains, as they would be able to provide the diet diversity needed by school age children. To accomplish that, change of the modality of distribution are recommended (from 100 percent take home rations to mixed cash/voucher and kind distributions, 100 percent cash/voucher, home delivery, etc). See guidance below for points to take into account to ensure safe school operations:

<https://www.wfp.org/publications/interim-guidance-covid-19-prevention-and-control-schools>. In addition, a guidance to ensure the safe reopening of schools is available:  
<https://www.unicef.org/media/68366/file/Framework-for-reopening-schools-2020.pdf>.

## F. Viruses

- 31. There is the article in OIE website stating some strains of coronaviruses are zoonotic diseases. Can you tell me more about this?**

[OIE] There are many coronaviruses (CoV). Some are zoonotic, meaning the infection can spread between animals and people, and others are not. In humans, CoV can cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases. Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS, caused by SARS-CoV) is believed to be a zoonotic disease, likely transmitted from civets to humans. Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS, caused by MERS-CoV) is transmitted from dromedary camels to humans. COVID-19 is caused by SARS-CoV-2, which is another coronavirus, suggested to have emerged from animals.

- 32. Can coronaviruses, including SARS-CoV, MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV-2 be present in meat? Can SARS-CoV-2 affect milk?**

[OIE] As per general good food hygiene practices, raw meat, milk or animal organs should be handled with care, to avoid potential cross-contamination with uncooked foods. Meat from healthy livestock that is prepared and served in accordance with good hygiene and food safety principles remains safe to eat.

Further recommendations from WHO can be consulted at [https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1).

**33. How long can SARS-CoV-2 live in still water?**

[OIE] In experimental conditions, SARS-CoV-2 remained viable in the environment after aerosolisation for at least 180 minutes. Experiences with other CoVs such as SARS-CoV, MERS-CoV, or endemic human coronaviruses show that:

- They can persist on surfaces such as metal, glass or plastic for up to 9 days, but they can be efficiently inactivated by surface disinfection procedures, as listed in the link below.
- SARS-CoV was found to remain infectious for 14 days at 4°C, but for only 2 days at 20°C in sewage water.

For more info, visit: [https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Our\\_scientific\\_expertise/docs/pdf/COV-19/A\\_Factsheet\\_SARS-CoV-2.pdf](https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Our_scientific_expertise/docs/pdf/COV-19/A_Factsheet_SARS-CoV-2.pdf).

**34. I have read that SARS-CoV-2 can survive on the surfaces of anything including metals and plastics. How can the safety food packaging be assured?**

[FAO/WHO/WFP] It is best to clean and sanitize surfaces at regular intervals. This is easier to do than to keep track of how long the virus can survive on different surfaces. When you bring packaged food home, use a tissue or cloth dipped in clean water or a very diluted cleaning product. Ensure that the food itself is not being wiped. Air-dry the package before storing. Wash your hands immediately after you have finished wiping the packaging.

**G. Animals and aquatic animals**

**35. Can live animals transmit COVID-19 to humans?**

[OIE] The current pandemic of COVID-19 is being sustained through human-to-human transmission. Animal infections with SARS-CoV-2 have been reported by several countries. Several animal species have proven to be susceptible to infection with SARS-CoV-2 either naturally or by experimental infection. Important livestock species (pigs and poultry) have been demonstrated not to be susceptible to infection through experimental studies. Transmission between farmed mink to humans has been suggested. Further studies are needed to understand if and how different animals could be affected by SARS-CoV-2. For more info, visit: [https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Our\\_scientific\\_expertise/docs/pdf/COV-19/A\\_Factsheet\\_SARS-CoV-2.pdf](https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Our_scientific_expertise/docs/pdf/COV-19/A_Factsheet_SARS-CoV-2.pdf).

**36. Do viruses in coronavirus group have a potential to infect aquatic animals? How about SARS-CoV-2? What about other virus/bacteria/parasites?**

[OIE] Studies into susceptibility of different animal species to SARS-CoV-2 are underway, but the focus is on livestock species, companion animal species and laboratory species. For example, ferrets and Golden Syrian hamsters are susceptible and may show clinical signs. Pigs and poultry appear to not be susceptible to infection. To date, scientific evidence suggests that aquatic animals are not susceptible.

**37. I am a veterinarian. What would be our key role in this COVID-19 or any other pandemic situations?**

[OIE] OIE information is available at

[https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Our\\_scientific\\_expertise/docs/pdf/COV-19/A\\_Q%26A\\_COVID-19.pdf](https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Our_scientific_expertise/docs/pdf/COV-19/A_Q%26A_COVID-19.pdf). The infection of animals with SARS-CoV-2 meets the criteria of an emerging disease (definition

detailed at

[https://www.oie.int/index.php?id=169&L=0&htmfile=glossaire.htm#terme\\_maladie\\_emergente](https://www.oie.int/index.php?id=169&L=0&htmfile=glossaire.htm#terme_maladie_emergente)).

Therefore, any case of infection of animals with SARS-CoV-2 should be reported to the OIE in accordance with the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code and include information about the species, diagnostic tests, and relevant epidemiological information. It is important for Veterinary Authorities to remain informed and

maintain close liaison with public health authorities and those responsible for wildlife, to ensure coherent and appropriate risk communication messages and risk management under a One Health approach.

It is important that COVID-19 does not lead to inappropriate measures being directed at domestic or wild animals, which might compromise their welfare and health or have a negative impact on biodiversity.

In some countries, National Veterinary Services are supporting core functions of the public health response, such as screening and testing of surveillance and diagnostic samples from humans. Veterinary clinics in some countries are also supporting the public health response by donating essential materials such as personal protective equipment and ventilators.

Guidance on Veterinary Laboratory Support to the Public Health Response for COVID-19 is available here: [https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Our\\_scientific\\_expertise/docs/pdf/COVID-19/A\\_Guidance\\_for\\_animal\\_health\\_laboratories\\_1April2020.pdf](https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Our_scientific_expertise/docs/pdf/COVID-19/A_Guidance_for_animal_health_laboratories_1April2020.pdf).

The OIE and WVA (<https://www.oie.int/en/for-the-media/press-releases/detail/article/covid-19-and-veterinary-activities-designated-as-essential/>) consider Veterinary Services as essential services. Veterinary Authorities can advocate for this within national COVID-19 response plans and operations, to ensure activities related to animal health, animal welfare and veterinary public health risk management continue, under appropriate hygiene protocols, to safeguard the ongoing production of the many and varied goods derived from animals, animal products and animal by-products upon which our societies depend.

## H. Fake news

### 38. Who, in the government system, should be dealing with fake news on food safety?

[FAO/WHO/WFP] The competent authorities need to monitor fake news and put out clarifications as soon as possible on social media (where news travels fastest). This has already been seen in recent months where food control authorities have been quick to put out messages that food does not transmit COVID-19 and that no food protects against the virus.

## I. Trade

### 39. Do you think international food trade increases the risk of disease outbreaks?

[OIE] The OIE is actively monitoring SARS-CoV-2 infections in animals, research, and risk analyses with an animal focus, and analysing implications for safe trade in animals and animal products. Based on currently available information, and with the support of expert advisory groups, the OIE does not recommend that any COVID-19 related sanitary measures be applied to the international movement of live animals or animal products without a justifying risk analysis. Evidence-based risk management principles should be applied to international movement of live animals and products from species in animal species demonstrated to be susceptible to infection with SARS-CoV-2. Evaluation and implementation of risk management for safe trade should follow the principles laid out in Section 2 (Risk Analysis), Section 4 (Disease Prevention and Control) and Section 5 (Trade Measures, Import/Export Procedures and Veterinary/Health Certification) of the Terrestrial Animal Health Code. Precautions for packaging materials are unnecessary over and above the observation of basic hygiene, such as ensuring it is clean and free of visible contamination.

The report of the OIE ad hoc Group on COVID-19 and Safe Trade in Animals and Animal Products can be consulted here: [https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Our\\_scientific\\_expertise/docs/pdf/COVID-](https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Our_scientific_expertise/docs/pdf/COVID-19/A_Guidance_for_animal_health_laboratories_1April2020.pdf)

[19/A AHG REPORT COVID19 April2020.pdf](#), and the OIE Considerations on the application of sanitary measures for international trade related to COVID-19 can be found here: [https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Our\\_scientific\\_expertise/docs/pdf/COV-19/A\\_COVID-19\\_Considerations\\_OIE\\_Sanitary\\_Measures.pdf](https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Our_scientific_expertise/docs/pdf/COV-19/A_COVID-19_Considerations_OIE_Sanitary_Measures.pdf) and at the “Guidance” section here: [https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Our\\_scientific\\_expertise/docs/pdf/COV-19/A\\_Q%26A\\_COVID-19.pdf](https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Our_scientific_expertise/docs/pdf/COV-19/A_Q%26A_COVID-19.pdf).

**40. Globalization of food, especially having a long supply chain, seems to affect food safety in one way or another. How can we go local to source food in this “new normal” era?**

[FAO/WFP] These actions need to be at policy and programme level. Governments need to encourage overall safe food production, and if the country aims to have a self-sufficiency to boost local food production, commodities that benefit domestic population, such as fruits, vegetables and traditional nutritious food can be focused. At the same time, adequate inputs such as seeds and good practices for safe food production need to be made available. This needs to be balanced with trade so that consumers have access to healthy diets at affordable prices. This will be important to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG2) and other SDGs. Please see: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6583e.pdf/>

## J. General questions

**41. Transboundary animal diseases, especially ASF is very concerning. What are the best measures for a developing country to realistically put in place to prevent the disease entering the country?**

[OIE] In the absence of an effective vaccine against ASF virus, prevention in countries free of the disease depends on stringent import policies, ensuring that neither infected live pigs nor pork products are introduced into areas free of ASF. This includes ensuring proper disposal of waste food from aircraft, ships or vehicles coming from infected countries, and enhanced biosecurity measures in particular in backyard or non-commercial pig farms. The OIE has produced many materials on ASF-related topics in Asia and the Pacific (<https://rr-asia.oie.int/en/projects/asf/>), including webinars.

**42. Fresh fruits can be contaminated with many pesticides, preservatives (candles) and others in my country. How should we wash them to avoid having so many preservatives?**

[FAO/WHO/WFP] Thorough washing of fresh fruits and removing the skin (where possible) can remove most contaminants. Waxing is a technique to increase the shelf life of fruits and food-grade wax is safe to eat.

**43. How long can food items be frozen for safe consumption?**

[FAO/WFP/WHO] It depends on the commodity, type, state and packaging of the food item. There is a useful reference developed by United States Food and Drug Administration at <https://www.fda.gov/media/74435/download>.

**44. For effective food safety assessment, is it essential to conduct risk profiling of all foods? Why or why not?**

[FAO/WHO] FAO and WHO have developed an assessment tool for the national food control systems (<http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca5334en/>). Risk profiling is the description of the food safety problem and its context, which is an important part of risk assessment and to operate effective, science-based national food control systems.

**45. Do you think digitalization of food and agriculture systems would affect any food safety measures to be put in place?**

[FAO/WFP] They would have a positive effect on food safety. Digitalization can enable traceability through technologies such as block chain. It would be possible to track the movement of food across borders and also ensure that they are stored at the right temperature, for the right length of time, use appropriate food-grade packaging and be recalled in case of a food safety incident.

**46. Many imported fake food products can be sold on the market in developing countries. Can it be controlled internationally, as our countries have limited capacities?**

[FAO/WFP] Authorities responsible for controlling food imports need to have effective inspection procedures in place to ensure safety and authenticity of products. For more information, please see the following relevant publications:

- <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5381e.pdf>; and
- <http://www.fao.org/3/ca0286en/CA0286EN.pdf>.

**47. How can we help developing countries to make better regulations and guidelines to prevent food fraud / counterfeiting?**

[FAO] By improving traceability of products and adopting technologies for authentication of food products; please see the examples below from the fisheries sector:

- <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i8183e.pdf>; and
- <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/l8791EN/>.

**48. Can regulators inspect all food items?**

[FAO] It is simply not realistic as the volume of food items in any country far exceeds human resource capacity. Therefore, implementation of food safety practices and standards needs to be delegated by the Government to industry and food business operators with inspectors providing oversight, where needed.

**49. Codex standards are voluntary. Wouldn't it be better to develop mandatory global technical regulations instead?**

[FAO] Countries can adopt or adapt Codex or other voluntary standards and declare them as mandatory standards within their territories.

**50. I think having strict food safety regulations and standards sounds good. However, don't you think they are too many and too complicated?**

[FAO] The legal and regulatory framework is important as it provides a structure for implementation of food safety. Effective regulations and standards have to be put into practice through a delegated and participatory approach that empowers the food industry and consumers with easy-to-understand SOPs. Food safety is an attitude and a part of behaviour and it should not be imposed with a top down approach.

**51. Can you share experience for the regulation infrastructure for the developing country?**

[FAO] Please consult the respective FAO webpages:

- <http://www.fao.org/food-safety/>; and
- <http://www.fao.org/asiapacific/perspectives/one-health/food-safety/>.

**52. The One Health approach is still new for many governments and privates. In addition, it is not so easy to implement. Would it be possible to prepare/compile some selected best practices on this and disseminate at countries to ease effective and situation-specific planning and interventions?**

[OIE] In 2018, the Directors General of FAO, the OIE and WHO signed a memorandum of understanding to reaffirm the global Tripartite collaboration. The Tripartite advocates for multi-sectoral collaboration at global, regional and local levels, using a One Health approach to address health risks at the human-animal-

environment interface. In 2019, the Tripartite published “Taking a Multi-sectoral, One Health Approach: A Tripartite Guide to Addressing Zoonotic Disease in Countries ([https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Media\\_Center/docs/EN\\_TripartiteZoonosesGuide\\_webversion.pdf](https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Media_Center/docs/EN_TripartiteZoonosesGuide_webversion.pdf), commonly referred to as the Tripartite Zoonosis Guide or “TZG”).

At the regional level, a biennial workshop (<https://rr-asia.oie.int/en/events/8th-asia-pacific-workshop-on-multi-sectoral-collaboration/>) is held on multi-sectoral collaboration to support Members. This leaflet (<https://rr-asia.oie.int/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/one-health-leaflet.pdf>) outlines our regional coordination. Members are welcome to request on the support specific to One Health/multi-sectoral activities.

**53. How can we make food safety as the “everyone’s responsibility” both for the supply and demand sides in the farm-to-plate paradigm?**

[FAO/OIE/WFP/WHO] By raising awareness that everyone has a role and improving food safety is good for business and good for nutrition and health. By increasing public and private investment into food environments that foster safe and nutritious foods, food safety truly becomes everyone’s responsibility.

**54. How can international organizations help developing countries to strengthen the national food safety scientific capacities?**

[FAO] For FAO’s activities in assisting countries to strengthen national food control systems, please consult the respective websites.

- <http://www.fao.org/food-safety/>; and
- <http://www.fao.org/asiapacific/perspectives/one-health/food-safety/>.

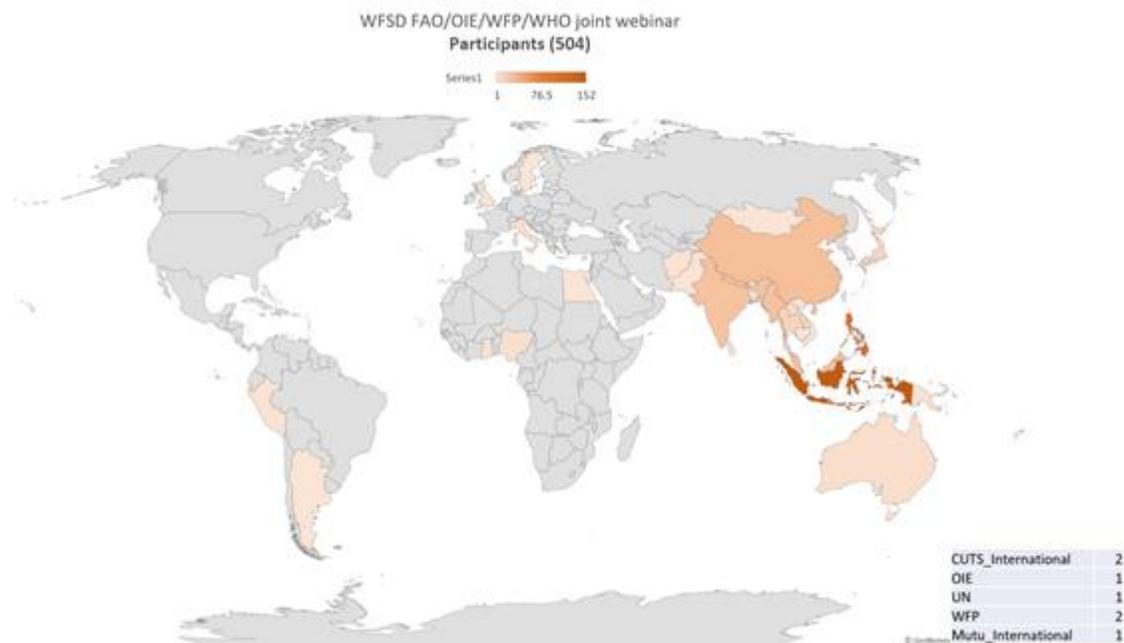
**55. Why we should collaborate across all countries to have effective food safety systems?**

[FAO/OIE/WFP/WHO] Food chains are regional and trans-continental. Therefore, food safety hazards and risks can cross international boundaries and cause foodborne diseases far away from the point of origin of the food. Moreover, these hazards can enter at any stage of the food chain. It is important to have effective controls across the chain to ensure safe food for domestic and international consumers.

## Annex 3. The results of the interactive questions

For the interactivity of the webinar, some general questions were asked to the webinar participants to demonstrate real-time reactions. Below are the questions and results of the sessions. It is important to note that the results of such interactive questions do not represent any statistically significant data; therefore, they are not suitable to be treated as a validated source of information.

### 1. Interactive question: Where are you from?



Where	Number
Afghanistan	2
Argentina	1
Australia	5
Bangladesh	3
Beijing	1
Bengkulu	2
Bhutan	3
Brunei Darussalam	4
Cambodia	1
China	28
Denmark	2
Dubai	3
Egypt	1
Fiji	2
Ghana	3
India	25
Indonesia	152

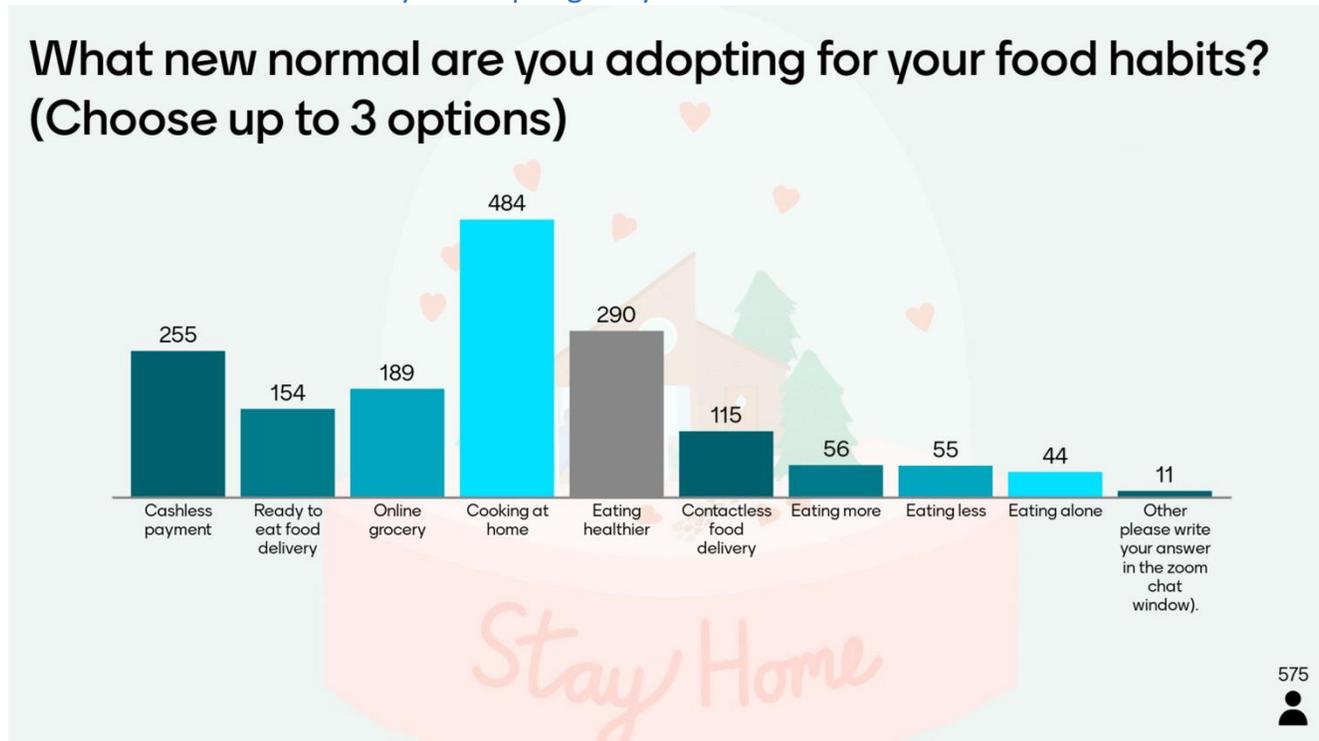
Italy	5
Japan	11
Kuwait	1
Lebanon	1
Malaysia	28
Mongolia	1
Myanmar	26
Nepal	29
Nigeria	4
Pakistan	1
Papua New Guinea	2
Peru	2
the Philippines	113
Singapore	5
Sri Lanka	2
Sweden	1
Taiwan Province of China	5
Thailand	13
the Lao People's Democratic Republic	6
Timor-Leste	1
the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	1
Viet Nam	1

## 2. To which sector do you belong?



Sector	Number
Academia and Research	215
Food industry/private sector	79
Food producers and farmers	17
Non-Governmental Organizations and civil society	25
Government	212
Intergovernmental organizations	43
Other	53

### 3. What “new normal” are you adopting for your food habits?



Habit	Number
Cashless payment	255
Ready to eat food delivery	154
Online grocery	189
Cooking at home	484
Eating healthier	290
Contactless food delivery	115
Eating more	56
Eating less	55
Eating alone	44
Other	11

#### 4. How was the webinar?



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Evaluation	Number
Excellent	200
Good	176
Average	26
Fair	5
Poor	3

#### 5. What topics should the next webinars cover?

Topics	Number
COVID-19 related topics on food safety: (regulations, "new normal", transportation, food waste, food quality, sustainability, Good Manufacturing Practices)	48
Risk Assessment	44
Food safety at home	29
Risk based inspection	23
Food standards / regulations / labelling	22
New technology for food safety, novel foods, plant based, functional foods	21
Emerging food safety issues	17
E-commerce, "web labelling", food delivery, contactless, including homemade food production, street food	16
Food safety (general)	16
Risk communication and risk perception	16
Traceability	16
Food security	10
Non Communicable Diseases (nutrition, breastfeeding, trans fats, immune response and food)	8

Foodborne diseases (bacteria, virus and parasites)	7
One health approach to food safety (including climate change)	7
Poultry meat, eggs and fish food safety precautions	7
Risk management	7
Food defence and food fraud	6
Chemical food contaminants (mycotoxins, micro plastics, pesticides)	5
Antimicrobial resistance	4
Digitalization and data science in food safety	4
Food safety as joint responsibility	4
Food safety culture	4
Efficient food safety measures for third world countries	3
Experiences from countries	3
Fake news	3
Global collaboration on food safety and security	3
Supply chain	3
Wet markets	3
Emergency response in food safety	2
Farmers, postharvest	2
Food system	2
Halal Food	2
Risk analysis	2
WGS	2
Allergens and regulations	1
Burden of foodborne disease	1
Food audit	1
Food production in the areas with a high risk of flood and drought	1
High risk foods	1
How to engage food safety with SDGs	1
Intergovernmental cooperation on food safety	1
Microbiology risk in water	1
Risk profiling	1
Sustainability of food safety	1
Wildlife	1

