

DEVELOPMENT AND APPLICATION OF INTERNATIONAL FOOD SAFETY STANDARDS—CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

International food standards offer the opportunity to provide guidance in preventing and mitigating food safety risks, while enhancing convergence of food regulatory measures adopted around the globe. The Codex Alimentarius Commission has achieved tremendous progress in developing standards, guidance and codes of practice that address various food safety hazards. These standards have guided food regulators worldwide in shaping their food safety requirements for foods produced domestically or imported. Despite this progress, several challenges have been identified in relation with the application and implementation of Codex standards by domestic jurisdictions. Given that Codex standards tend to be outcome-based to ensure more flexibility and their possible adaptation to various scenarios encountered by food regulators and food industry operators around the world, operationalizing such measures can be challenging for the food

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sector and/or regulators in low and medium economy countries. Helping the implementation of Codex standards is therefore a key area of food safety capacity building efforts, recognized in the Strategic Plan of the Codex Alimentarius Commission 2014-19. International standards have also to remain relevant for Codex membership, if they are to serve members' needs. Codex should therefore be able to adapt and address emerging issues resulting from changes in food safety and nutrition priorities, such as the expanding international trade in foods and food ingredients; the multiplication of free trade agreements at the bilateral and regional level where food and food products continue to be a centrepiece of most traded commodities; the requirements for resource optimisation in economically uncertain times and the importance of innovation to improve value-added of food products. This paper briefly reviews some accomplishments of Codex in the development of international food standards. It also attempts to identify areas of priority investments in capacity building initiatives aimed to propagate the use of these standards. It discusses synergies that can be found to optimize the use of resources and to enhance convergence of food safety regulatory measures, in support of consumers' health protection and reduction of impediments to international trade.

KEYWORDS: *food safety, risk management, international food standards, SPS requirements*