

**CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD HYGIENE
(Fifty-fourth Session)
Nairobi, Kenya
11 – 15 March December 2024**

European Union Comments on

Agenda item 10:

**DISCUSSION PAPER ON REVISION OF THE GUIDELINES ON THE
APPLICATION OF THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF FOOD HYGIENE
TO THE CONTROL OF VIRUSES IN FOOD (CXG 79-2012)**

(CX/FH 24/54/11)

***Mixed Competence
European Union Vote***

In response to the request for comments, the European Union and its Member States (EUMS) would like to make the following comments.

I. General Comment

The EUMS would like to thank and congratulate Canada and the Netherlands with the drafting of the very useful project document on the revision of the Guidelines on the Application of General Principles of Food Hygiene to the Control of Viruses in Food (CXG 79-2012) The EUMS can support the recommendation that CCFH undertakes new work to revise and update the appropriate text in CXG 79-2012, subject to the considerations of the comments made below. The EUMS also welcome the additional work accepted by JEMRA in 2023 and 2024 but urge FAO/WHO on the full publication of the meeting reports without undue delay.

II. Specific comments

Points 2 and 3 of the project document

The EUMS request confirmation that

- a risk assessment in frozen fruit and vegetables is included in the JEMRA work, and later on, will be considered in a revision of the Guidelines, considering the increasing number of outbreaks due to such food. Recent EFSA work¹ can provide input.
- JEMRA will establish limits for NoV in live bivalve molluscs to be eaten raw, in particular oysters, in order to protect consumers from this risk.

¹ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/6092>

Point 3 of the project document

The EUMS support the expansion of the scope to include Hepatitis E virus and emerging vehicles of foodborne illnesses. However, the current proposal wording is not specific enough. The EUMS propose to replace the first bullet by “Expansion of the scope to address Hepatitis E viruses (HEV) and emerging vehicles of foodborne illnesses, specifically frozen fruits in the case of Norovirus and Hepatitis A virus and pork and wild game in the case of Hepatitis E viruses”. This is because the JEMRA summary report supports expansion only where evidence is available, and this is specifically frozen fruits in the case of Norovirus and Hepatitis A virus, and pork and wild game in the case of Hepatitis E virus. This will avoid scope creep as the work progresses.

The EUMS have however doubts on the need to consider a separate annex for HEV. The most relevant new scientific information available seems to be limited to an opinion of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)² on this topic. That opinion includes an assessment of the importance of HEV in the EU, however, to decide on the need for guidelines at global level, the importance should be estimated at global level and taking into account the global human health burden compared to other foodborne disease. In addition, the EFSA opinion indicates that the only efficient control option for HEV infection from certain food sufficient heat treatment. If this is confirmed by JEMRA, the usefulness of specific guidelines might be limited.

² <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/4886>