

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

**European Union Comments on**

**Agenda item 5.1:**

**Proposed draft Annex II on fresh leafy vegetables of the Guidelines for the control of Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* (STEC) in raw beef, fresh leafy vegetables, raw milk and raw milk cheeses, and sprouts (CXG 99-2023) (Prepared by the Electronic Working Group chaired by Chile and the United States of America)**

**CX/FH 24/54/6**  
**(Reply to CL 2024/21-FH)**

*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 Comments**

The EUMS would like to thank and congratulate Chile and the United States of America with the proposed revision of the Guidelines on the draft Annex II on fresh leafy vegetables of the Guidelines for the control of Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* (STEC) in raw beef, fresh leafy vegetables, raw milk and raw milk cheeses, and sprouts. The EUMS generally support the draft, subject to the considerations of the comments made below and the outcome of the discussions at CCFH54. They also wonder if recommendations should not be added on hygiene conditions for pre-packaged salads. Rationale: the scope explicitly includes pre-packaged salads but no specific recommendations are made (except on labelling).

**II. Specific comments**

- Paragraph 1: The EUMS propose the following change to the second sentence: “They are grown **on open fields and in fully or partially protected facilities** farms of varying sizes ; distributed ...”. Rationale: it would be good to refer to the different production systems. In particular controlled environmental agriculture (CEA) is increasing all over the world.

- Paragraph 2: The EUMS propose the following changes:
  - The following additional sentence is proposed (e.g. after the third sentence: “**The increasing production under controlled environmental agriculture allows year-round production regardless of external weather conditions.**” Rationale: Changing reality relevant for this guidance document.
  - Fifth sentence: “Control measures such as antimicrobial washes– **treatments** to minimize cross-contamination ...”. Rationale: the EUMS would like to avoid the “wash” because then we are saying that the washing is to decontaminate. The term “treatment” is more general, including some antimicrobial treatments such as bacteriophages or protective cultures.
  - Sixth sentence: “...through cross-contamination with STEC, and STEC replication during **processing**, distribution and storage if...”. Rationale: cross-contamination is also possible during processing (e.g. conveyor belt, washing, etc).
  - Seventh sentence: “... by measures and treatments such as washing in water **possibly** containing biocides.” Rationale: In many cases, washing with water have the same effect as water with a residual concentration of disinfectant.
- Paragraph 6: the EUMS propose to refer also to General Principles of Food Hygiene (CXC 1-1969) and to the Guidelines for the Safe Use and Reuse of Water in Food Production, Annex I Fresh Produce (CXG 100-2023). Rationale: of major relevance for fresh leafy vegetables.
- Paragraph 9: the EUMS propose to delete this paragraph. Rationale: repetition of the introduction and no specific control measures for STEC in addition to the standards referred to in paragraph 8.
- Paragraph 15 to 17: The EUMS consider that these paragraphs could be replaced by a reference to CXG 100-2023, (Guidelines for the Safe Use and Reuse of Water in Food Production and Processing), Annex I. Rationale: no specific guidance on the control of STEC.
- Paragraph 26, last part: The EUMS propose to replace “[cross-contamination will be sufficiently minimized.] [that biocides are sufficient to reduce the potential risk of cross-contamination.]” by “**biocides are sufficient to avoid accumulation of microorganisms in the process water and reduce the risk of cross-contamination.**” Rationale: both are relevant.
- Paragraphs 30 and 33: these paragraphs refer to a storage temperature of less than 7°C. The EUMS note that this threshold was not included in the draft annex III on sprouts and the reference was changed to appropriate refrigerated temperatures due to a lack of scientific reference to support this temperature, according to JEMRA report MRA 43 (see paragraph 9 of CX/FH 24/54/6). Furthermore, the EUMS remind that the two former annexes on raw beef and raw milk also include a temperature threshold for storage: 7°C for raw beef (see REP23/FH Appendix III, Annex I, paras 75, 79 and 83), and 6°C for raw milk (see REP23/FH Appendix III, Annex III para 22). The EUMS would appreciate clarifications on whether or not this temperature can be included, what are the relevant

scientific or regulatory sources, and how to ensure that the different annexes are consistent on this point.

- Paragraph 31: It is indicated that cutting tools must be cleaned and disinfected frequently. The EUMS find this paragraph too vague and would appreciate more details.
- Paragraph 34: The EUMS consider the first sentence confusing as referring to primary production while Section 5 is on processing operations. It is therefore also not clear if the rest of the paragraph refers to primary production or not. The first sentence should be deleted or moved to Section 3. Rationale: logic structure needed.
- Paragraph 35: The EUMS consider that the recommendation on recording at primary production should not be in this paragraph but in Section 3. Alternatively, record keeping could be in a Section other than 3 or 5. Rationale: logic structure needed. It could be placed under section 9 to consolidate all records in one place in the document. Additionally, the wording regarding the record keeping should be fully aligned between ANNEX II and IV for consistency and avoids potential confusion.