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FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Europe

30/09/2019 - 04/10/2019 - Almaty, Kazakhstan

European Union comments on

Agenda Item 2

Keynote address

Food fraud –addressing risks, prevention and counteraction

*Mixed Competence
European Union Vote*

The European Union and its Member States (EUMS) fully recognise the priority of addressing food fraud.

The series of joint Europol-Interpol OPSON operations carried out over the years have demonstrated that both the complex nature of our globalised agri-food supply chain and the economic motivation for more profit continue to contribute to the prevalence of fraud.

The EU has also experienced a number of crisis caused by food fraud, such as the horse meat scandal and more recently the case of fipronil in eggs.

Addressing fraud should not only be about crisis management but also about being proactive in prevention, detection and exchange of information between operators and authorities. For this purpose, an EU Food Fraud Network was established in 2015. It is a network connecting the European Commission, all EU Member States, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Europol. It allows efficient cross-border cooperation between competent authorities and exchange of information on suspected cases of food fraud. Similar arrangements could be developed between authorities at regional level to facilitate sharing of information on food fraud.

Initiatives are under way by many governments and within the industry to combat food fraud. It is therefore very timely for Codex, as the pre-eminent international food standard setting body, to consider developing guidance assisting governments to tackle fraudulent practices in food trade.

Due to the complexity, potential public health implications, economic consequences, international aspects and the high interest of consumers, businesses and competent authorities in food fraud, the EUMS support developing Codex guidance on food fraud prevention and control. Such guidance would help governments to target food fraud within their national food control systems and promote a coordinated approach to fight food fraud at international level.

Discussions are ongoing within CCFICS on food fraud. A discussion paper is being developed by an electronic working group chaired by the US and co-chaired by the EU, Iran and China to consider the role of CCFICS in addressing food fraud.

In the view of the EUMS, CCFICS has the mandate and expertise to elaborate guidance in areas such as what type of vulnerabilities competent authorities should consider when designing control programmes targeting food fraud. Another priority area meriting CCFICS guidance would be the exchange of information and cooperation between different authorities at national and international levels as well as communication with stakeholders and general public on incidents of food fraud. Further guidance could also be developed on administrative measures specifically targeting food fraud. CCFICS should also start working on definitions for food integrity, food authenticity and food fraud to ensure that there is a common understanding what we mean by these terms. It could also be considered whether these definitions should be adopted as Codex definitions, which would be a work for CCGP.

CCEURO should encourage CCFICS to launch new work on food fraud, as there are clearly certain areas within the remit of CCFICS where Codex guidance would be very useful for Codex members.