

## SECTION 1 – OBJECTIVES

### 1.1 The Codex General Principles of food hygiene:

- identify the *essential* principles of food hygiene applicable *throughout the food chain* (including primary production through to the final consumer) to achieve the goal of ensuring that food is safe and suitable for human consumption;
- recommend an HACCP-based approach as a means to enhance food safety;
- indicate *how* to implement those principles; and
- provide a *guidance* for specific codes that may be needed for sectors of the food chain, processes, or commodities to amplify the hygiene requirements specific to those areas.

## SECTION 2 – SCOPE, USE AND DEFINITION

### 2.1 Scope

#### 2.1.1 The food chain

This document follows the food chain from primary production to the final consumer, setting out the necessary hygiene conditions for producing food that is safe and suitable for consumption. The document provides a base-line structure for other, more specific, codes applicable to particular sectors. Such specific codes and guidelines should be read in conjunction with this document and “Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system and guidelines for its application” (Annex).

#### 2.1.2 Roles of governments, industry, and consumers

Governments can consider the contents of this document and decide how best they should encourage the implementation of these General Principles to:

- protect consumers adequately from illness or injury caused by food; policies need to consider the vulnerability of the population, or of different groups within the population;
- provide assurance that food is suitable for human consumption;
- maintain confidence in internationally traded food; and
- provide health education programmes that effectively communicate the principles of food hygiene to industry and consumers.

Industry should apply the hygienic practices set out in this document to:

- provide food that is safe and suitable for consumption;
- ensure that consumers have clear and easily-understood information, by way of labelling and other appropriate means, to enable them to protect their food from contamination and growth/survival of foodborne pathogens by storing, handling and preparing it correctly; and
- maintain confidence in internationally traded food.

Consumers should recognize their role by following relevant instructions and applying appropriate food hygiene measures.

## 2.2 Use

Each section in this document states both the objectives to be achieved and the rationale behind those objectives in terms of the safety and suitability of food.

Section 3 covers primary production and associated procedures. Although hygienic practices may differ considerably for the various food commodities and specific codes should be applied where appropriate, some general guidance is given in this section. Sections 4 to 10 set down the general hygiene principles that apply throughout the food chain to the point of sale. Section 9 also covers consumer information, recognizing the important role played by consumers in maintaining the safety and suitability of food.

There will inevitably be situations where some of the specific requirements contained in this document are not applicable. The fundamental question in every case is "What is necessary and appropriate on the grounds of the safety and suitability of food for consumption?"

The text indicates where such questions are likely to arise by using the phrases "where necessary" and "where appropriate". In practice, this means that, although the requirement is generally appropriate and reasonable, there will nevertheless be some situations where it is neither necessary nor appropriate on the grounds of food safety and suitability. In deciding whether a requirement is necessary or appropriate, an assessment of the risk should be made, preferably within the framework of the HACCP approach. This approach allows the requirements in this document to be flexibly and sensibly applied with a proper regard for the overall objectives of producing food that is safe and suitable for consumption. In so doing, it takes into account the wide diversity of activities and varying degrees of risk involved in producing food. Additional guidance is available in specific food codes.

## 2.3 Definitions

For the purpose of this Code, the following expressions have the meaning stated:

**Cleaning** The removal of soil, food residue, dirt, grease or other objectionable matter.

**Contaminant** Any biological or chemical agent, foreign matter or other substances not intentionally added to food that may compromise food safety or suitability.

**Contamination** The introduction or occurrence of a contaminant in food or food environment.

**Disinfection** The reduction, by means of chemical agents and/or physical methods, of the number of micro-organisms in the environment to a level that does not compromise food safety or suitability.

**Establishment** Any building or area in which food is handled and the surroundings under the control of the same management.

**Food hygiene** All conditions and measures necessary to ensure the safety and suitability of food at all stages of the food chain.

**Hazard** A biological, chemical or physical agent in, or condition of, food with the potential to cause an adverse health effect.

**HACCP** A system that identifies, evaluates and controls hazards that are significant for food safety.

**Food handler** Any person who directly handles packaged or unpackaged food, food equipment and utensils, or food contact surfaces and is therefore expected to comply with food hygiene requirements.

**Food safety** Assurance that food will not cause harm to the consumer when it is prepared and/or eaten according to its intended use.

**Food suitability** Assurance that food is acceptable for human consumption according to its intended use.

**Primary production** Those steps in the food chain up to and including, for example, harvesting, slaughter, milking, fishing.

### **SECTION 3 – PRIMARY PRODUCTION**

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

Primary production should be managed in a way that ensures that food is safe and suitable for its intended use. Where necessary, this will include:

- avoiding the use of areas where the environment poses a threat to the safety of food;
- controlling contaminants, pests and diseases of animals and plants in such a way as not to pose a threat to food safety;
- adopting practices and measures to ensure food is produced under appropriately hygienic conditions.

#### **RATIONALE:**

To reduce the likelihood of introducing a hazard that may adversely affect the safety of food, or its suitability for consumption, at later stages of the food chain.

#### **3.1 Environmental hygiene**

Potential sources of contamination from the environment should be considered. In particular, primary food production should not be carried on in areas where the presence of potentially harmful substances would lead to an unacceptable level of such substances in food.

#### **3.2 Hygienic production of food sources**

The potential effects of primary production activities on the safety and suitability of food should be considered at all times. In particular, this includes identifying any specific points in such activities where a high probability of contamination may exist and taking specific measures to minimize that probability. The HACCP-based approach may assist in the taking of such measures – see “Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system and guidelines for its application” (Annex).