

Project to update guidance on Microbial Risk Assessment

Organized by

Joint FAO/WHO Expert Meetings on Microbiological Risk Assessment Methodologies of Microbiological Risk Assessment

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Background

Risk assessment of microbiological hazards in foods, commonly referred to as Microbiological Risk Assessment (MRA), has previously been identified as one of the priority area of work by the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC). Following the work of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH), CAC adopted Principles and Guidelines for the Conduct of Microbiological Risk Assessment (CAC/GL-30) in 1999.

Subsequently, the CCFH identified a number of areas in which it required expert risk assessment advice. In response to the needs of their member countries and Codex, FAO and WHO launched a programme of work in the early 2000's with the objective of providing expert advice on risk assessment of microbiological hazards in foods, including technical guidance on microbiological risk assessment. Three technical guidance documents were published in the Microbiological Risk Assessment Series: [Hazard characterization for Pathogens in food and water \(2003\)](#), [Exposure assessment of microbiological hazards in food \(2008\)](#), and [Risk characterization of microbiological hazards in food \(2009\)](#).

Science has evolved over the last decade and there is a need to update and incorporate new developments in the principles and methods for risk assessment of microbiological hazards.

Scope and Objectives of the Project

The purpose of the project is to consolidate and update the existing technical guidance documents on microbiological risk assessment, and by doing so also contribute to the international harmonization of MRA methods and principles.

As a first step the existing documents are integrated into one comprehensive guidance document for further work.

Specific tasks include update the chapters on:

- Risk Assessment in Context, including process initiation;
- Hazard Identification, including the process of identification, and the data source;
- Hazard Characterization, including Data Collection and Evaluation, Descriptive Characterization and Dose response modelling;
- Exposure Assessment, including the process, modelling approaches and data;
- Risk Characterization, including the process, qualitative/semi-quantitative/quantitative and other relevant issues;

- General considerations, including expert elicitation to fill data gaps and risk communication aspects.

The intended outcome is a comprehensive guidance document on MRA methods and principles, reflecting the latest science and current international practices.

With the work of a consultant FAO and WHO have compiled the existing technical guidance documents and prepared a first draft document with some updated text and highlighting areas for further work.

The objectives of the expert consultation will be:

- 1) review the draft consolidated document and comment on proposed Table of Contents and identify if additional topics are needed
- 2) discuss and identify the specific topics which require new texts and/or updates
- 3) advise FAO/WHO how to move forward the project
- 4) others