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Food Safety Act: basic principles, scope and limits

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Basic principles, scope & limits

- Objectives
- Scope
- Competent authority(ies)
- Fit for human consumption *versus* animal consumption
- Limits with regard to the Codex Alimentarius



Overall objectives

- The overall objective of a food safety act is to control the production, processing and distribution process at all relevant levels of the food chain, not just food products. The aim is to develop **preventive measures** rather than corrective measures, which are often too late and very costly.
- The main emphasis is on protection of public health from hazards in foods.
- Protection of animal health from infectious agents transmissible via food products is a further objective.



Basic principles

- Cover the whole of the food chain “from farm to fork”
- Traceability, including at the live animal-product interface
- Preventive approach, based on science and risk analysis
- Clarify responsibilities of food business operators, in particular requirement for self inspection.
- Clarify the responsibilities and powers of the competent authorities.
- Quality assurance and regulation of operators, premises, equipment, products, methods and personnel



Basic principles (continued)

- Requirements for means should be used sparingly and coupled with an obligation to achieve required results.
- Food safety (and quality) requirements should take into account the economic situation in the country and what is practically achievable.



Scope (1)

Food safety legislation should address the following:

- Recording all significant health events that occur during primary production
- Prohibition on marketing of infected products or products likely to be contaminated or hazardous for the consumer or for animal health.
- Inspection for food safety and food composition
- Inspection of premises



Scope (2)

- Controls on the implementation of the legislation at all stages of the production, processing and distribution of foods of animal origin
- Establish that food business operators have primary responsibility for food safety
- Obligation on food business operators to withdraw all products likely to be hazardous to human or animal health



Scope (3)

- Arrangements for inspection
- Conduct of inspection on the basis of veterinary expertise
- Relevant health standards
- Application of health identification marks, which are visible to the intermediate or final user
- Competent authority powers and means to rapidly withdraw hazardous products from the food chain or prescribe treatments or uses that ensure safety for human or animal health



Scope (4)

Regarding premises and establishments:

- Recording coordinates of food business operators.
- Implementation by operators of procedures based on HACCP principles.
- Prior authorisation of operators whose activities are likely to constitute a significant risk to human or animal health.



Competent authority(ies) (1)

Definition in the OIE *Terrestrial Animal Health Code*:

Competent Authority means the *Veterinary Authority* or other Governmental Authority of a Member having the responsibility and competence for ensuring or supervising the implementation of animal health and welfare measures, international veterinary certification and other standards and recommendations in the *Terrestrial Code* and in the OIE *Aquatic Animal Health Code* in the whole territory.



Competent Authority(ies) (2)

- When food safety matters are the responsibility of more than one administration (multiple competent authorities), a reliable system of coordination and cooperation between the different authorities should be put in place.
- The competent authorities should be organised in such a way as to provide for taking action quickly and coherently when such action is key to success, e.g. in veterinary public health crises.



Competent Authority(ies) (3)

- Legislation should provide for a chain of command that is as effective as possible, i.e. short, with all responsibilities clearly defined.
- The responsibilities and powers of the competent authorities, from the central level to those responsible for the implementation of legislation in the field, should be clearly defined.
- If they are not under the responsibility of a unique competent authority, the responsibility of each element in the public veterinary domain should be attributed to a specific competent authority.



Fit for human/animal consumption

Alternative actions when a product is deemed to be unfit for human consumption:

- Processing to make the product fit for human consumption
- Use as animal feed with or without processing
- Uses other than for human or animal consumption
- Destruction or deposition

Depending on the reasons why a product is deemed unfit for human consumption, the competent authority should decide on the action to be taken.

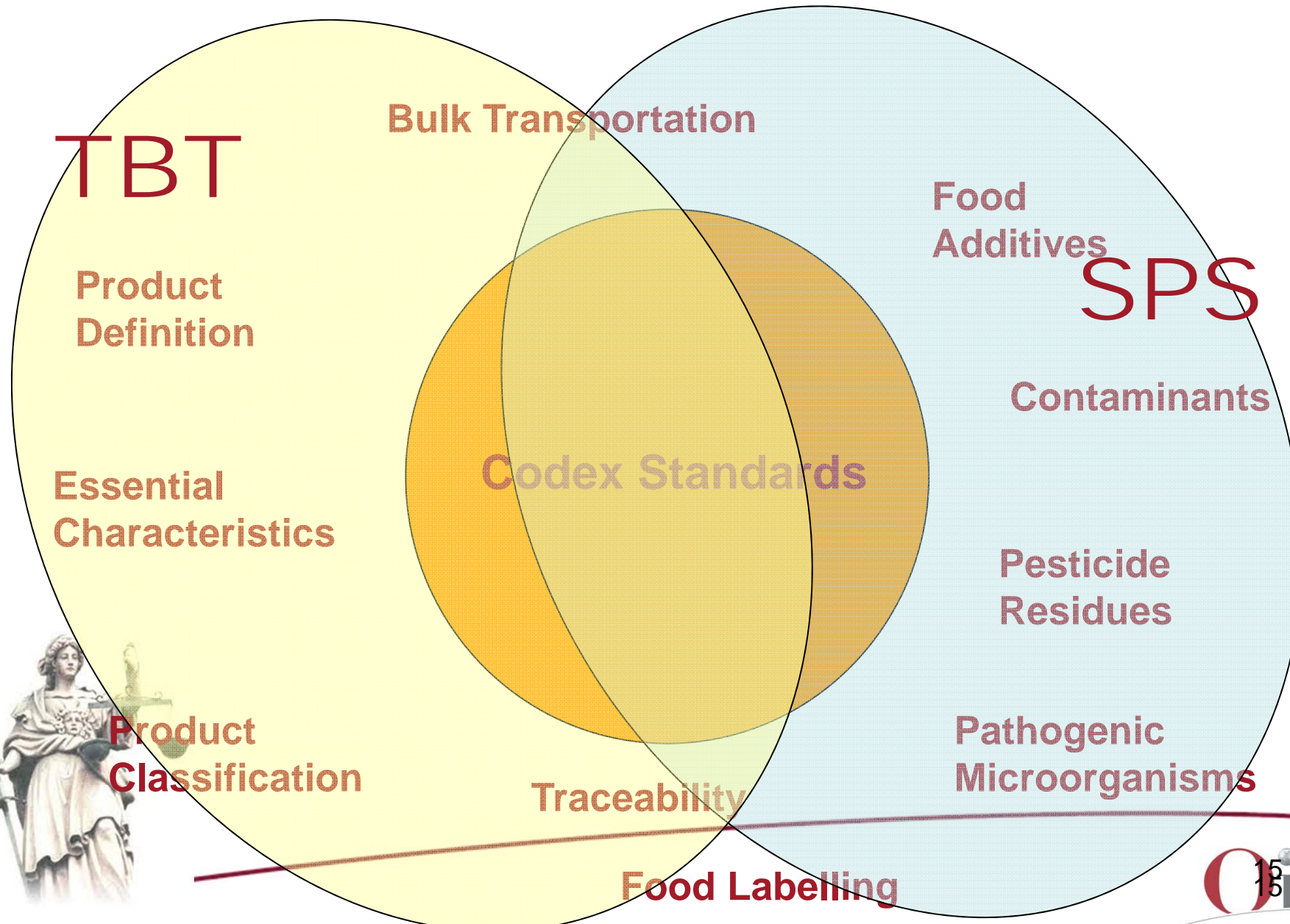


Codex Alimentarius

- Codex Alimentarius - a collection of international standards, codes of practice, guidelines, recommendations, etc. including:
 - Food commodity standards
 - General standards
 - Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs)
 - Codes of Practice
 - Guidelines

Codex standards, etc. must be incorporated into national legislation before they can be applied.





Codex commodity standards

Large number of standards - some examples:

- Standard for cooked cured chopped meat
- Standard for canned finfish
- Standard for live and raw bivalve molluscs
- Standard for milk powders and cream powder
- Standards for named cheeses, e.g. Cheddar
- Standard for honey



Codex general standards

Some examples of Codex general standards:

- General standard for food additives
- General standard for contaminants and toxins in food and feed



MRLs: veterinary drug residues

CAC has adopted more than 500 Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) covering over 50 veterinary drugs or groups of drugs.

Codex MRLs for veterinary drugs can be accessed via the Codex web site:

<http://www.codexalimentarius.net/vetdrugs/data/index.html>

Codex has also developed a *Compendium of methods of analysis identified as suitable to support Codex MRLs*



Codex guidelines

Some examples of Codex guidelines:

- Guidelines for the design and implementation of national regulatory food safety assurance programmes associated with the use of veterinary drugs in food-producing animals
- Guidelines for risk analysis of foodborne antimicrobial resistance
- Guidelines for the control of *Campylobacter* and *Salmonella* in chicken meat



Codex Codes of Practice

- General Principles of Food Hygiene, including an annex on HACCP System and Guidelines for its Application
- Code of Hygienic Practice for Meat
- Code of Hygienic Practice for Milk and Milk Products
- Code of Hygienic Practice for Egg Products
- Code of Practice for Fish and Fish Products
- Code of practice for reducing contamination with aflatoxins.



Codex: Meat Hygiene

- A Code of Hygienic Practice for Meat adopted in 2005
- The Code constitutes the primary international standard for meat hygiene and incorporates a risk-based approach to application of sanitary measures throughout the meat production chain.
- The Code specifically recognises the dual objectives that slaughterhouse inspection activities deliver in terms of animal and public health
- The Codex Code does not provide inspection measures for specific hazards, which remains the responsibility of the national competent authorities.



Codex: Inspection and certification systems

Some examples of Codex texts:

- Principles for food import and export certification and inspection
- Guidelines for design, production, issuance and use of generic official certificates
- Guidelines for food import control systems
- Principles for traceability/product tracing as a tool within a food inspection and certification system



Further information

Further information on Codex food safety standards can be obtained via the Codex web site:

www.codexalimentarius.net or www.codexalimentarius.org (new) or from the Codex Contact Point in your country.

Information on OIE food safety standards can be obtained via the OIE website (www.oie.int)

