Assessment of national food control systems in Africa:

A basis to improve the collaborative food safety agenda in the region

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- Strengthening food control and phytosanitary capacities governance in Africa: example of a regional programme

1. What does Codex Alimentarius say about national food control systems?

National food control systems:
What for?

Ensure the safety and quality of food supply at national level to:

- **Protect Public Health** from food safety risks

- **Guarantee fair practices in the food trade**
  - Fair conditions to market food products: **fair competition**
  - Ensure that food supply meets legal requirements regarding **quality**: Important for **nutrition**
  - Fight against **food fraud**

National food control systems:

What is it?

Food Control:

A **mandatory regulatory activity** of enforcement by national or local authorities to provide consumer protection and ensure that all food during production, handling, storage, processing and distribution are <u>safe, wholesome and fit for human consumption and conform to requirements prescribed by law</u>

Food Control System:

… integration of a mandatory regulatory approach with preventive and educational strategies that protect the <u>whole food chain</u>.

(*FAO & WHO, 2003. Guidelines for strengthening national food control systems*)

Codex principles and guidelines for national food control systems (CXG 82-2013)

Principle 1: *Protection of Consumers*
…In the event of a conflict with other interests, precedence should be given to protecting the health of consumers.

Principle 2: *The whole food chain approach*

Principle 3: *Transparency*
…Open to scrutiny by all stakeholders, while respecting legal requirements to protect confidential information as appropriate.

Principle 4: *Roles and responsibilities*
Food business operators, Competent Authorities, Consumers, Academia and Scientific Institutions

Principle 5: *Consistency and Impartiality*
The competent authority should be free of improper or undue influence or conflict of interest.

Codex principles and guidelines for national food control systems (CXG 82-2013)

Principle 6: Risk based, science based and evidence based decision making
...scientific information, evidence and/or risk analysis principle.

Principle 7: Cooperation & Coordination between multiple competent authorities
...for the most effective use of resources in order to minimize duplication and/or gaps and to facilitate information exchange.

Principle 8: Preventive measures
...prevention, intervention and response.

Principle 9: Self assessment and review procedures
...continuous improvement and include mechanisms to evaluate whether the system is able to achieve its objective.

Codex principles and guidelines for national food control systems (CXG 82-2013)

Principle 10: Recognition of other systems (including equivalence)
        …food control systems although designed and structured differently may be capable of meeting the same objective.

Principle 11: *Legal foundation*
        …establishment of food laws and competent authorities

Principle 12: *Harmonization*
        …consider Codex standards as elements of their national food control system
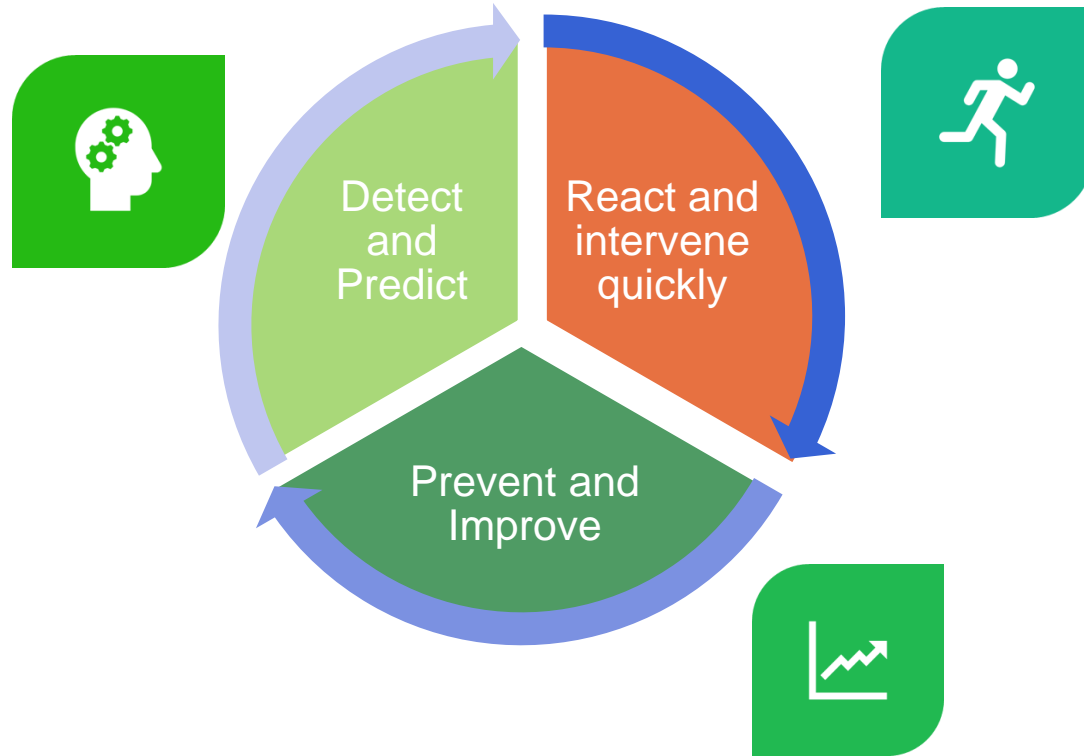
Principle 13: *Resources*
        ...provide adequate resources to enable the achievement of National Food Control Systems objectives

National food control systems:

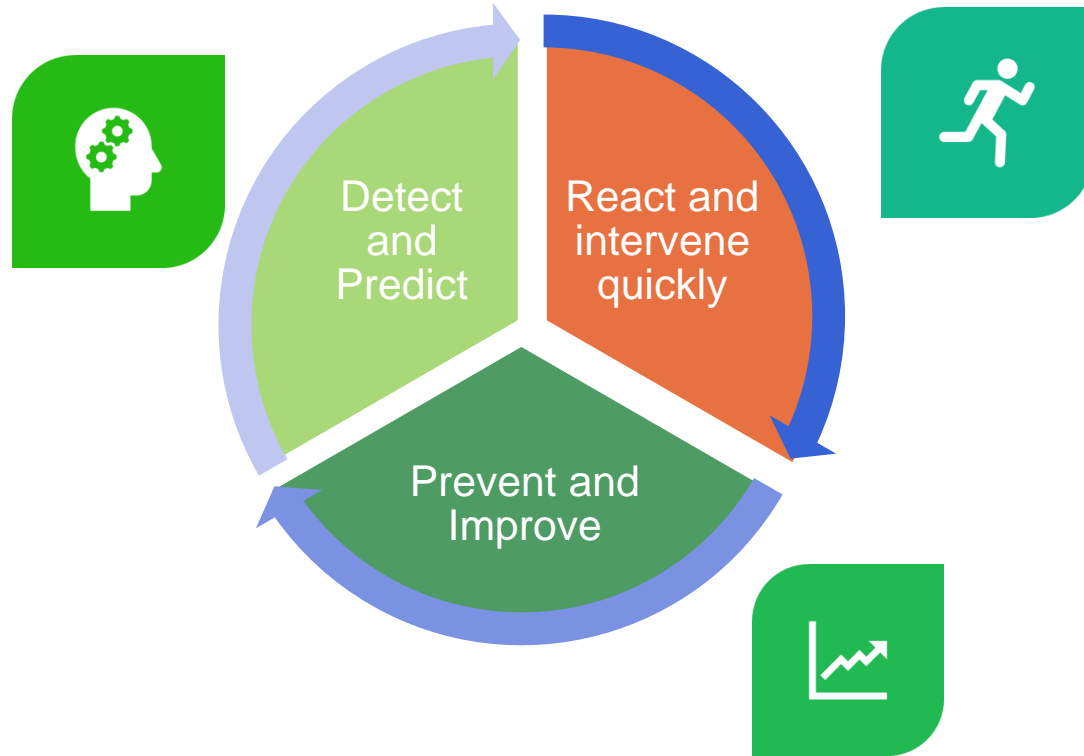## Systems approach: Dynamic, continuous improvement

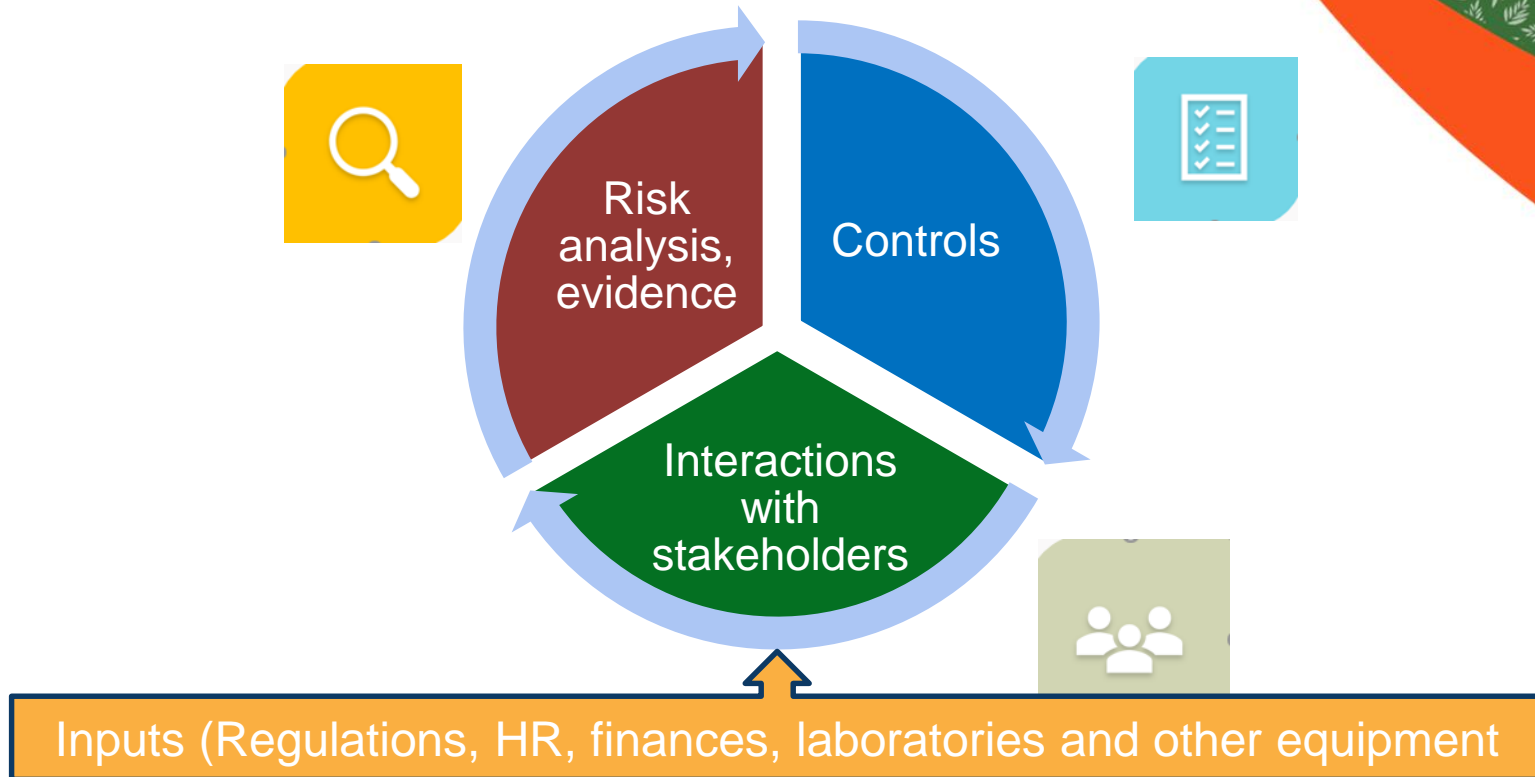# 2. FAO/WHO national food control system assessment tool

National food control systems:

Systems approach: Dynamic, continuous improvement

National food control systems:

Processes: integration of regulatory and non regulatory approaches

Risk analysis, evidence

Controls

Interactions with stakeholders

Inputs (Regulations, HR, finances, laboratories and other equipment

FAO/WHO Food control system assessment tool

- Consists of an integrated system-based assessment of **all parts of the food control system**

- Involves **all relevant competent authorities** and related stakeholders in food control – emphasizing interconnections that must exist

- Is based on **best practice from Codex** and facilitates implementation of **WTO** (SPS/TBT) obligations where appropriate

- Where the assessment is facilitated ensures it is **participatory** and **neutral**

- Is **confidential**: results are only provided to the assessed country

Steps of the "Facilitated Assessment"

1. **Agreement by government**

2. **Country Profile**

3. **Training focal points**

4. **National data collection**

5. **Data review, integration, Validation Mission**

6. **Strategic analysis of findings**

What is needed?

- High **political support**

- Willingness to dedicate time and resources

- **ALL competent authorities** must agree and commit to providing data (Primary responsibility for the collection of evidence is with the national authorities)

- Need for CAs to **work together** (multi-stakeholder exercise)

Food control system assessments: key outputs and outcomes

- Detailed assessment report, evidence based analysis and actionable recommendations
- Identification of key priorities for improvement, baseline to measure progress
- Strategic plan to facilitate resource mobilisation, guide investments and integrate technical assistance from different partners
- Improves collaboration among stakeholders and common understanding of the situation

3. Strengthening food control and phytosanitary capacities governance in Africa: example of a regional programme

Approach

- EUR 5 million project funded by the EU, 2 years duration, covers currently 11 countries

- Implements both key SPS assessment instruments, Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (IPPC) and Food control Systems Assessments (Codex Alimentarius)

- Complementary construct to the SPS for Africa project funded by the EU implemented by the AUC

KENYA
assessment completed in September 2023
Number of focal points trained: 25
Strategic action plan endorsed

MAURITIUS
assessment to be completed
in October 2023
Number of focal points trained: 22

SEYCHELLES
assessment completed in September 2023
Number of focal points trained: 22
Strategic action plan endorsed

UGANDA
assessment to be completed in January 2024
Number of focal points trained: 34

COMOROS
assessment completed in August 2023
Number of focal points trained: 23
Strategic action plan endorsed

RWANDA
assessment to be completed in November 2023
Number of focal points trained: 20

ESWATINI
assessment completed in September 2023
Number of focal points trained: 32
Strategic action plan endorsed

ZIMBABWE assessment to be completed in January 2024
Number of focal points trained: 24

Benefits of implementing the assessment tool

At a National level

- Evidence based and semi-quantitative results produced through independent process

- Overall output: report with set of recommendations, strategic framework to guide interventions & benchmark for measuring progress

- Overall vision that allows coherent and constructive contribution from each contributor to the system

- Commonly agreed priorities to achieve consistent improvements and investments

- Increased communication and understanding among competent authorities (across and within organizations)

- Increased Awareness among all players, including high level policy and decision makers, etc.

Benefits of implementing the assessment tool

At Regional level - I

Helps **build** a **common (harmonized) understanding** of food control systems design and operation:

- **Reference** to a **single benchmarking tool** anchored in Codex principles and internationally recognized best practices

- **Facilitates translating Codex definitions**, principles and norms into consistent, concrete actions and regulations in each country

- Allows **integration** of regional priorities for strategic improvements

Benefits of implementing the assessment tool

At Regional level - II

Helps build a **regional vision** and **mutual recognition** grounded in a **harmonized understanding** of food control systems' design and operation…

- **Sharing of ideas and expertise** to shed light on critical capacity development areas, **identify/expand** opportunities for smart **investments**

THE FAO/WHO TOOL, A REGIONAL SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DRIVER

promotes food trade & public health harmoniously

Thank you!