



Concept Note – FAO-led Regional Side Event

Regional Side Event during the 19th Session of the Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods (CCCCF19)

Title:

Mycotoxins in NENA Staple Foods: Bridging Data Gaps for Codex Risk Assessment and Trade Compliance

Date: Sunday, 18 October 2026 (pre-CCCCF19 programme).

Time and duration: 15:15 - 16:45 Cairo time (UTC+3) (90 minutes), followed by FAO and WHO Joint moderated Q&A and open discussion (15 minutes).

Format: In-person, with hybrid participation.

Location & venue: Sofitel Cairo Downtown Nile Hotel, Cairo, Egypt.

Registration Link: (TBC).

Target audience: CCCC delegates, national food safety authorities and Codex, laboratories, trade/SPS authorities, research institutions and relevant industry stakeholders.

Background and Rationale

Mycotoxin contamination of staple foods, particularly cereals and other widely consumed commodities, represents an important food safety concern in the Near East and North Africa (NENA) region. Climate variability and changing environmental conditions can influence food safety hazards, including the occurrence and distribution of mycotoxins, while changing agrifood systems may introduce or amplify emerging food safety risks (FAO, 2020; FAO, 2022b; FAO, 2025).

The FAO RNE regional assessment highlights the importance of strengthening the evidence base on mycotoxin occurrence, regulatory frameworks, surveillance and national capacities across NENA. Gaps in representative surveillance, laboratory capacity, data generation, quality assurance and systematic data management and sharing can constrain effective risk assessment and risk-based management (FAO RNE, 2026).

A key requirement for strengthening the evidence base is the availability of reliable, representative and quality-assured occurrence data. National surveillance and laboratory systems generate the primary evidence needed to understand contamination patterns and support scientific assessment.

Strengthening sampling, analytical capacity, data quality and data-management systems, including appropriate submission of occurrence data to GEMS/Food, can contribute to the evidence available for FAO/WHO scientific advice and subsequent Codex risk-management work.



The side event will present key findings from the FAO RNE regional assessment, *“Mycotoxins in Food Systems in the Near East and North Africa – Regional Assessment of Prevalence, Regulations and Priority Actions”* and connect these findings with the broader international food-safety and Codex framework (FAO RNE, 2026).

The discussion will follow an evidence-to-action pathway connecting regional evidence and climate-related considerations with national surveillance and laboratory data, quality-assured occurrence data and GEMS/Food, FAO/WHO scientific assessment, CCCF/Codex risk management, relevant standards and Codes of Practice, national implementation, and risk-based food safety management.

This approach is consistent with the role of Codex standards and Codes of Practice in supporting science-based food safety management, including the *“General Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Food and Feed”* (CXS 193-1995) and the *“Code of Practice for the Prevention and Reduction of Mycotoxin Contamination in Cereals”* (CXC 51-2003) (Codex Alimentarius Commission, 2025; Codex Alimentarius Commission, 2017).

The timing of the event, immediately prior to CCCF19, provides an opportunity to connect NENA regional evidence with global scientific and risk-management discussions, and to identify practical areas where FAO, WHO, countries and technical partners can support stronger evidence generation, scientific assessment, Codex engagement and national risk management.

Overall Objective

To strengthen understanding of mycotoxin risks and identify practical opportunities to strengthen the evidence-to-action pathway from national surveillance and quality-assured occurrence data through FAO/WHO scientific assessment and CCCF/Codex risk management to national implementation and risk-based food safety management.

Specific Objectives

The session will aim to:

1. Present key findings from the FAO RNE regional assessment on mycotoxin occurrence, regulatory frameworks, surveillance and priority actions (FAO RNE, 2026).
2. Highlight climate-related and other emerging food-safety considerations relevant to mycotoxin risks and identify priority evidence gaps (FAO, 2020; FAO, 2022b; FAO, 2026).
3. Highlight the public-health relevance of mycotoxins and the latest evidence on the burden of foodborne disease and foodborne chemical hazards, including aflatoxins, with particular relevance to the NENA region (Lake et al., 2026).
4. Discuss national surveillance and laboratory requirements for generating representative and quality-assured occurrence data, including data quality, analytical performance and data management.



5. Strengthen understanding of how national occurrence data, supported by appropriate data quality and management, can contribute to FAO/WHO scientific assessment and advice.
6. Clarify the link between FAO/WHO scientific advice and CCCF/Codex risk management, including the development and implementation of standards and Codes of Practice relevant to mycotoxins (Codex Alimentarius Commission, 2017; Codex Alimentarius Commission, 2025).
7. Identify priority areas for FAO, WHO, countries and technical partners to strengthen regional capacity, collaboration and the generation and use of mycotoxin evidence for risk-based food safety management.

Expected Outcomes

The session is expected to contribute to:

- Improved understanding of priority mycotoxin risks, public-health implications, evidence gaps and capacity needs in the NENA region;
- Awareness of the importance of representative, quality-assured occurrence data and strengthened national surveillance, laboratory and data-management systems;
- Improved understanding of the pathway from national occurrence data and GEMS/Food to FAO/WHO scientific assessment and advice;
- Clarity on how FAO/WHO scientific advice informs CCCF/Codex risk management, including relevant standards and Codes of Practice;
- Improved understanding of the importance of science-based, risk-based national food safety management for the prevention and control of mycotoxin risks;
- Greater recognition of climate-related considerations in mycotoxin surveillance, prevention and risk-based management (FAO, 2020; FAO, 2025); and

Identification of practical priority areas and potential partners for strengthened regional collaboration, including surveillance, laboratory capacity, occurrence-data generation and management, scientific evidence and Codex engagement.

Agenda: Sunday, 18 October 2026 | 15:15–16:45 Cairo time (90 minutes) |
FAO and WHO Joint moderated Q&A and open discussion (15 minutes).

Time	Session	Content	Lead / Speaker
15:15– 15:20 (5 min)	1. Opening and scene setting	• Welcome and framing by FAO RNE; • Relevance to CCCF19 and introduction of the evidence-to-action pathway.	Opening / moderation: Dr Moustapha Mohamed Food Safety and Quality Officer, FAO RNE
15:20– 15:30 (10 min)	2. Global perspective on climate change, mycotoxins and emerging food-safety risks	• Climate and agrifood-system drivers; • Emerging food-safety risks and foresight; • Implications for prevention and risk-based management.	Dr Vittorio Fattori Food Safety Officer, FAO ESF



15:30– 15:40 (10 min)	3. The NENA evidence base: what do we know and where are the gaps?	• Key findings from the FAO RNE regional assessment; • Surveillance, lab & data gaps. Implications for risk-based management.	Dr Moustapha Mohamed Food Safety and Quality Officer, FAO RNE
15:40– 16:10 (30 min)	4. From evidence generation to FAO/WHO scientific assessment	• Public-health burden of foodborne disease and mycotoxin-specific evidence, including aflatoxin B1 and M1, exposure evidence and data gaps in the NENA/Arab region.	Dr Eva Inam Al Zein Food Safety Technical Officer, WHO EMRO
		• Key requirements of mycotoxins testing and ensuring data quality; • Use of national data to generate evidence for scientific assessment and evidence-informed policymaking.	Dr. Ahmed Mamdouh, Dr. Alaa El-Din Fathy Mycotoxins Department, Central Laboratory of Residue Analysis of Pesticides and Heavy Metals in Food (QCAP), Egypt
16:10– 16:25 (15 min)	5. From scientific advice to Codex risk management and national implementation	• FAO/WHO scientific advice and CCCF risk management; • Codex standards and Codes of Practice; • Implications for national risk-based food safety management.	Mr Frans Verstraete Administrator at European Commission
16:25– 16:45 (20 min)	6. FAO-led moderated session: Translating evidence into action and Q&A	• Priority evidence and capacity needs; • Strengthening the national-to-international evidence chain; • Translating evidence into Codex and national action; • Interactive questions using Mentimeter/Slido; • Key takeaways and closing reflections.	Moderator: Dr Vittorio Fattori Food Safety Officer, FAO ESF + All speakers
16:45– 17:00 (15 min)	7. Joint moderated Q&A and open discussion with CCCF19 delegates and participants	• Questions and comments from CCCF19 delegates and participants; • Sharing of country experiences, insights and feedback; • Discussion of priority evidence gaps, surveillance and data needs, and practical opportunities for regional collaboration.	Joint moderation: FAO RNE and FAO ESF + WHO EMRO, speakers and participating delegates



Selected knowledge products and technical resources

Codex Alimentarius Commission. 2017. *Code of Practice for the Prevention and Reduction of Mycotoxin Contamination in Cereals*. CXC 51-2003. Rome, FAO and WHO [Revised 2016; amended 2017].

Codex Alimentarius Commission. 2025. *General Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Food and Feed*. CXS 193-1995. Rome, FAO and WHO [Last amended 2025].

FAO. 2020. *Climate change: Unpacking the burden on food safety*. Food Safety and Quality Series, No. 8. Rome. Available at:

<https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/ca8185en>

FAO. 2022a. *FAO Strategic Priorities for Food Safety within the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–2031*. Available at: <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb8667en>

FAO. 2022b. *Thinking about the future of food safety: A foresight report*. Rome. Available at:

<https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/cb8667en>

FAO. 2025. *Food safety and quality in the Near East and North Africa – Mapping drivers, challenges and imperatives*. Cairo.

(EN) <https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/cd6725en>

(AR) <https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/cd6725ar>

FAO. 2026a. *Food safety foresight: approaches to identify future food safety issues*. Rome, FAO.

<https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/cd6798en>

FAO RNE. 2026b. *Mycotoxins in food systems in the Near East and North Africa – Regional assessment of prevalence, regulations and priority actions*. Cairo.

<https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/ce0450en>

FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, WHO & ESCWA. 2025. *Near East and North Africa – Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2025*. Cairo.

<https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/3a87e219-c51f-429d-b0f4-f8d15c4184fa>

Lake, R., Devleesschauwer, B. et al. 2026. *World Health Organization estimates of the global, regional, and national burden of 42 foodborne infectious and chemical hazards, 2000–2021: an updated data synthesis*. The Lancet Global Health. Available at:

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(26\)00156-7/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(26)00156-7/fulltext)