

THE IMPORTANCE OF FOOD SAFETY IN FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CULTIVATION

Fruits and vegetables are essential for our health as they contain vitamins, minerals, and fibres that help prevent certain diseases. However, they can also pose certain risks to food safety if they are not handled properly, for example, they could become contaminated with chemicals and pathogens such as *Salmonella* spp or *Listeria* spp, which can make people sick. The detection of such contaminants in fruits and vegetables can have a negative impact on trade, leading to product recalls and economic and food losses.

Between 2020 and 2022, approximately 15% of international incidents related to food safety requiring product recalls were associated with fruits, vegetables, and legumes. Compliance with regulations and good agricultural practices is essential to prevent foodborne illnesses, improve health and food safety, and strengthen the economy.

HOW TO ENSURE FOOD SAFETY IN THE FISHERY SECTOR?

Fishermen, processors, and commercial operators should:

- Ensure that fishing vessels meet the food safety requirements for hygienic and high-quality handling of fishery products, following the Codex Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products.
- Maintain adequate temperature control, which is the most effective method to guarantee food safety.
- Implement, whenever possible, a Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system to supervise fishing operations and subsequent stages of the value chain.

The government has also established appropriate legislation and a competent authority dedicated to inspecting of establishments and monitoring contaminants.

KEY TAKEAWAY:

THE COLD CHAIN IS ESSENTIAL!
Fishery products should be rapidly cooled and maintained at a temperature as close to 0°C as possible.

Source:

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CODEX STANDARDS FOR FOOD SAFETY IN MAURITIUS



CODEx AND FOOD SAFETY

The Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) is an international organization established by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), comprising 189 members. The CAC develops and publishes standards, codes of practice, guidelines, and other recommendations regarding food safety and quality. These standards cover various topics such as maximum pesticide residue limits, contaminants, food labelling, food hygiene, and nutrition.

Since 1971, Mauritius has been a member of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and commonly uses Codex standards as the basis for its national food regulations.

BENEFITS OF FOOD SAFETY IN FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CULTIVATION:

For producers:

- ✓ Better health for the producers and their families
- ✓ Reduced product waste and food losses
- ✓ Improved access to markets

For consumers:

- ✓ Access to nutritious food in a greater number of outlets
- ✓ Reduced exposure to food borne illnesses
- ✓ Better health due to improved disease prevention and nutritional status

HOW TO ENSURE FOOD SAFETY IN THE HORTICULTURAL SECTOR?

Fruit and vegetable producers should:

- 1 Practice good personal hygiene.
- 2 Use water that is suitable for the intended purpose.
- 3 Assess and manage the water quality and its suitability for the intended use.
- 4 Prevent microbial contamination through soil amendments.
- 5 Control pests and plant diseases.
- 6 Protect orchards and vegetable farms from animal intrusions.
- 7 Use clean equipment and ensure the cleanliness of production facilities.
- 8 Clean and disinfect all equipment used for harvesting and transporting fruits and vegetables.

For more information on recommended practices such as good agricultural practices and good hygiene practices, please contact the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FOOD SAFETY IN THE FISHERY SECTOR

The fishery sector plays a crucial role in feeding millions of people worldwide and holds great importance for rural communities and small island developing states like Mauritius.

The fishery sector in Mauritius significantly contributes to our manufacturing exports. Fish contributes to a healthy and balanced diet by providing quality proteins, amino acids, vitamins (including A, B, and D), phosphorus, and minerals such as iron, calcium, zinc, iodine, magnesium, potassium, and selenium. Fish is also an important source of omega-3 fatty acids. However, fishery products from wild capture can present food safety hazards due to contaminants such as mercury or pathogens in their natural environment. Fishing activities involve additional risks during capture and on board the vessel. Maintaining the cold chain can be challenging without appropriate resources.

It is therefore essential to implement rigorous food safety measures in the fishery sector to minimize these risks. This involves regulating fishing practices, monitoring contaminant levels to ensure food safety at the early stages of the value chain, implementing good handling practices on board the vessels, and maintaining the cold chain throughout the supply chain. The Mauritian government has adopted appropriate regulations to ensure food safety in this vital sector.

FOOD SAFETY HAS SEVERAL BENEFICIAL EFFECTS ON THE FISHERY SECTOR, INCLUDING:

- ✓ Reducing food insecurity.
- ✓ Reducing food borne illnesses.
- ✓ Building consumer trust.
- ✓ Enhancing human development.
- ✓ Increasing the intake of important micronutrients derived from fishery products.
- ✓ Reducing losses and waste in the fishery sector.

