



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



World Health  
Organization  
Cambodia



## Joint Press Release

### **Cambodia to celebrate the World Food Safety Day highlighting the need to prioritize food safety throughout the food chain, from farm to table**

**Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 30 June 2022** – Like HIV or malaria, foodborne disease is one of the world's most serious public health challenges, with over 200 disease that have a direct link to eating food contaminated with bacteria, viruses, parasites and chemical substances.

Data by the World Health Organization (WHO) suggested the urgency of ensuring safe food, reporting that foodborne illness is responsible globally for 42,000 deaths yearly - particularly children under five years of age and people in low-income areas. African and South-East Asia regions have the highest incidence and highest death rates.

Foodborne diseases can cause short-term symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea (commonly referred to as food poisoning), but can also cause longer-term illnesses, such as cancer, kidney or liver failure, brain and neural disorders. These diseases may be more serious in children, pregnant women, and those who are older or have a weakened immune system. Children who survive some of the more serious foodborne diseases may suffer from delayed physical and mental development, impacting their quality of life permanently.

The good news is foodborne illness is preventable.

#### **The celebration of World Food Safety Day (WFSD)**

Cambodia celebrated the WFSD this year on 30 June 2022, which was jointly organized by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), WHO, and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in partnership with the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) under the leadership of Deputy Prime Minister Yim Chhay Ly, Chairman of the Council for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD) together with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), the Ministry of Health (MoH), the Ministry of Commerce (MoC), and other line ministries with financial support from the European Union (EU) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The celebration sought to raise public awareness on food safety matters and increasing recognition of the growing importance of food safety issues for Cambodia both for the protection of domestic consumers and for agri-food industry development.

With approximately 250 representatives of every stage of the food chain, including policy makers, national and sub-national technical government officials, representatives from private sector, retailers, farmers, professors, university students and media, the WFSD celebration in Cambodia highlighted the need to strengthen efforts to ensure that food safety is mainstreamed food safety in the public agenda to reduce foodborne diseases, while facilitating Cambodia's trade opportunities.

Safe food is essential to human health and well-being and is one of the most critical guarantors for a better life. This year's theme, **"Safer food, better health"** focused on the ways in which safer food can improve health and well-being, not only our physical health, but also that of animals and environment.

"If it is not safe, it is not food," emphasized Ms Rebekah Bell, FAO Representative to Cambodia. She explained that "we need collective efforts, commitment and investment to make safe food and healthy diets more affordable and accessible for all. To achieve this, we need to make food systems more efficient, resilient and sustainable at every step — from production and processing, to marketing, transportation and delivery. At the same time, every one of us can all change how we consume food, and make healthier choices — for ourselves, our families and communities and our planet."

Dr. Asheena Khalakdina, Country Team Lead, WHO Health Emergency Programme, Cambodia stated that, "food safety is a shared responsibility. In response to the global threat posed by foodborne diseases, the government, the food industry and individuals need to do more to make food safe and prevent contamination. There remains a significant need for education and training on the prevention of foodborne diseases among food producers, suppliers, handlers and the general public."

Dr. Khalakdina added that, "We've all experienced changes to the way we interact with food due to the impact of COVID-19, and some of these may have a more lasting impact than others. WHO is working closely with the Royal Government of Cambodia and partners to bring together global technical and social insights from across science, business and society to promote safe, healthy and sustainable food for all."

Food safety is a complex challenge in Cambodia. The RGC has made strong effort and commitment to address food safety issues. The passing of the Food Safety Law by His Majesty Norodom Sihamoni is a landmark step. The law sets out the framework and mechanisms for managing and ensuring food standards, safety, quality, hygiene and the legitimacy of food in all stages of food production chain, to provide protection of health and food safety for consumers and to ensure fair food trade. The RGC through CARD has launched the Second National Strategy on Food Security and Nutrition 2019-2023, the Cambodia's Roadmap for Food Systems for Sustainable Development 2030, as well as the sectoral action plan and strategies, aiming at "ending hunger, achieving food security, improving nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture" for the better development of human capital, increasing productivity and boosting economic growth, as stated by H.E. Dr Yim Chhay Ly, Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of CARD.

At the opening remarks, H.E. Dr Yim Chhay Ly stressed that, "food security, food safety and food systems are multidisciplinary issues that require a strong cooperation, coordination, intervention and investment from a wide range of sectors – particularly agriculture, health, education, water and sanitation, water resources management, social protection and other related areas."

"The continued cooperation of all stakeholders, including government institutions, development partners, civil society, the private sector, youth and the media will allow us to effectively address the complexities of the root causes of all forms of malnutrition, food security and food safety."

"Food safety is key for a sustainable food system, which lies at the heart of the European Green Deal and Farm to Fork Strategy. The EU is strongly committed to working with partner countries on this front not only from a human development angle, but more importantly an economic development perspective, whereby food safety can help countries like Cambodia to unlock greater trade opportunities in the

regional and global market,” said H.E Carmen Moreno, Ambassador, Delegation of the European Union to the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Ms Rebekah Bell, further stated that, “FAO stands ready to work with RGC, with development partners, civil society and the private sector to move forwards with the law to support the necessary regulations, the policy dialogue in food safety, especially for the conduct of food control system analysis, which is happening now. The food control system analysis is vital for gathering evidence, analysing that evidence, and providing concrete recommendations for stakeholders involved in agri-food systems to effectively address the food safety.”

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