

FAO/WHO session to focus on issues & best practices for evolving region

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Our Bureau, New Delhi

The 21st session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Asia (CCASIA), which kicked off in Goa on Monday, will focus on deliberations around food safety at primary production involving issues and best practices for an evolving region, critical and emerging issues related to food safety for the region with an effort to identify focused action areas.

It will also look at exploring possibilities of mutual cooperation and enabling a mechanism for sharing relevant data/scientific advice with other countries for the purpose of developing regional positions and preparing/ supporting new work proposals; and developing regional standards for food products important from regional trade point of view.

India is the host of the five-day event by virtue of being the incumbent coordinator for Asia, which was originally elected in July 2015 and re-elected in July 2017 by the Codex Alimentarius Commission. This is the second session of the Coordinating Committee in Asia, hosting delegates from 18 member countries.

Sunil Bakshi, chair, CCASIA, and head, regulations, FSSAI, while addressing the meet, emphasised that the main objective of CCASIA was to promote mutual communication and resource sharing to develop regional standards and regulations for food products, and this event will certainly help identifying a way forward to further strengthen the food safety preparedness in the region as a whole.

Rita Teotia, chairperson FSSAI during her inaugural address stated, "FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Asia (CCASIA) is a very significant regional coordinating committee, which affords its members the opportunity to focus on the concerns of the Asia region with respect to food safety and quality and this gathering for the 21st Session of CCASIA would pave the way for furthering and ensuring food safety and public health as well as trade and economic development in our region and beyond."

"Countries trade extensively with each other and at least in food, almost 60 per cent of food trade is within the region. To my view, this alone is enough reason for us to develop a common ground for cooperation," she added.

“And, therefore, a network of scientific and research institutions is needed for collection and assimilation of scientific facts and data for the region besides creation of an IT-enabled information platform to exchange information regarding food frauds and other areas of core interest,” Teotia said.

Present on the occasion was Steve Wearne, vice-chair, Codex Alimentarius Commission; Sarah Cahill, senior food safety officer, Codex Secretariat; Purwiyatno Hariyadi, vice-chair, Codex Alimentarius Commission; Sridhar Dharmapuri, senior food safety and nutrition officer, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations; Gyanendra Gongal, technical officer, WHO SEARO (representing Poonal Khetrapal, regional director, WHO SEARO), amongst others.