



WHO GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR FOOD SAFETY 2022–2030

*Towards stronger food
safety systems and global
cooperation*

Executive summary



WHO global strategy for food safety 2022–2030: towards stronger food safety systems and global cooperation. Executive summary

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INTRODUCTION

Safe food is a primary determinant of human health and well being. And even though it is a basic human right to have access to safe, nutritious and healthy food, many communities are unable to exercise the right to safe food. As a result, the people will suffer from foodborne diseases (FBD) having a significant impact on public health and development. Unsafe food containing harmful levels of bacteria, viruses, parasites, chemical or physical substances can cause acute or chronic illnesses – including more than 200 diseases (1) ranging from diarrhoea to cancers, which in some cases, leads to permanent disability or death. Every year, an estimated 600 million – almost 1 in 10 people in the world – fall ill after eating contaminated food, resulting in a global annual burden of 33 million disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) and 420 000 deaths (2). Low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) are most affected, with an annual estimated cost of US\$110 billion in productivity losses and medical treatment costs due to the consumption of unsafe food (3).

Since its establishment in 1948, the World Health Organization (WHO) has had an unwavering commitment to reducing the burden of FBD on global health. WHO has provided leadership in assessing the global burden of FBD and has helped countries build or strengthen national FBD surveillance systems, advocating for control and prevention strategies at the national level through actions focused in areas such as data collection, science based risk management decision making, educational programmes and global awareness-raising activities. The work of WHO has ensured that the global food safety standards of the Codex Alimentarius are based on public health concerns and that countries with limited capacities are able to participate in the work of Codex through capacity-building programmes. WHO has promoted international and national cooperation in setting and addressing the global food safety agenda.

In 2020, the 73rd World Health Assembly requested that WHO update its Global Strategy for Food Safety (2002) to address current and emerging challenges, incorporate new technologies and include innovative approaches for strengthening national food safety systems (4). This request was made in recognition that food safety remains a public health priority with a critical role in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Member States need to remain committed at the highest political level to recognize food safety as an essential element of public health; to develop food safety policies that take into consideration all stages of the supply chain, the best available scientific evidence and advice, as well as innovation; to provide adequate resources to improve national food safety systems; to recognize consumer interests; and to integrate food safety into national and regional policies on health, agriculture, trade, environment and development.

In developing this strategy WHO has had the support from the Technical Advisory Group on Food Safety: Safer Food for Better Health (5) and has consulted widely with scientific experts, Member States, WHO regional advisers in food safety, and international partners. Existing regional food safety action plans and food safety strategies were also taken into account, as well as the recommendations and guidelines of the Codex Alimentarius and the draft Strategic priorities for Food Safety 2022–2031 from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).



Target audience and timeframe

The target audience for this strategy includes policy-makers (national and subnational governments), technical authorities/agencies responsible for food safety, academia in public health and food safety, food business operators and private sector, consumers, civil societies, UN agencies with a role in food safety and WHO staff. The implementation of the strategy will take place over an eight-year period, from 2022 to 2030. This new strategy will contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)¹ and will be reviewed in 2030 when the world will reflect upon the progress made towards the SDGs.

Food safety: An integral part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The SDGs are a call for action by all countries to promote prosperity while protecting the planet; they are a blueprint for achieving a better and more sustainable future for all. Food security for all is a cornerstone of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development but without food safety, there is no food security. The 17 goals are interconnected and are to be collectively achieved by 2030. Sufficient, safe and nutritious foods are clearly identified as relevant to all SDGs, reaffirming the interdependence between health and well-being, nutrition, food safety and food security. Food safety must be incorporated into the interventions aiming to achieve the SDGs, especially **SDG 2** (Zero hunger), **SDG 3** (Good health and well-being) and **SDG 8** (Decent work and economic growth). But food safety must also be integrated into achieving **SDG 1** (No poverty), **SDG 12** (Responsible consumption and production), and **SDG 17** (Partnerships for the goals) (6). Additionally, **SDG 6** (Clean water and sanitation) is a foundation for food safety. The integral role of food safety is a critical factor in achieving these SDGs, which are likely to be unattainable without adequate, safe and healthy food – particularly for domestic consumers in LMIC.

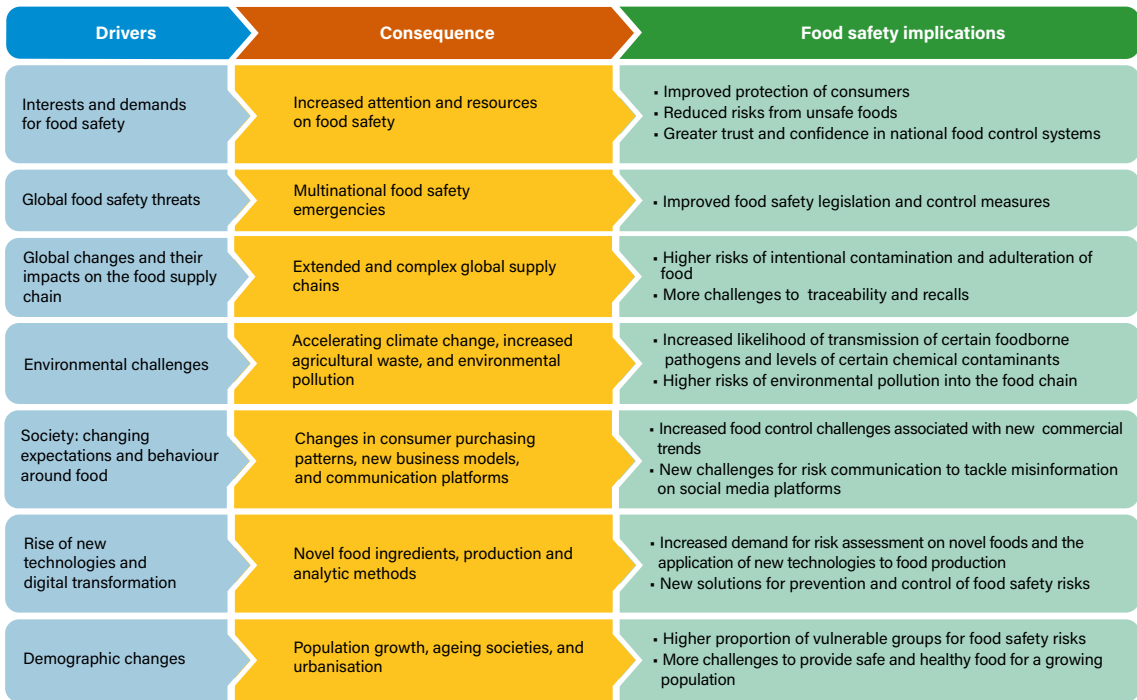


¹ The 17 goals. United Nations. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>.

Drivers of change and implications for food safety

Several drivers of change affecting food safety were identified during the development of this strategy. These are factors that are already affecting food safety nowadays, but they will have further impact in the future. While it is not always possible for food safety national authorities to control all the drivers of change when strengthening food control systems, it is imperative to be recognize and consider them, and ideally to make sure their impacts can be managed or mitigated into the overall design of the system. These, along with their present and future implications on food safety, are summarized in Fig. 1.

Fig. 1 Drivers of change and their implications on food safety



A One Health approach to food safety

The strategy recognizes that the safety of food is closely linked to the health of animals, plants and the environment within which it is produced. The strategy calls Member States to consider the One Health² approach when planning the implementation. This will allow national governments to detect, prevent and respond to existing and emerging diseases at the human-animal-environment interface and to rapidly respond and mitigate food-related public health issues resulted from these interactions. Mitigation of these food safety related threats cannot be achieved by one sector acting alone. The strategy stresses the importance of increased interorganizational and intersectoral coordination and cooperation. This is essential to facilitate relevant One Health science areas to contribute to a better understanding of current and future food safety risks, and to tackle the challenges to the safety of the food supply more effectively. Emerging health risks, as demonstrated by the COVID-19 pandemic, need to be evaluated and addressed using a multisectoral approach engaging experts in human health, veterinary medicine, environment, agriculture, wildlife, plant health, microbiology, and epidemiology, among others. (7)

² One Health: An integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals and ecosystems. It recognizes the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants and the wider environment (including ecosystems) are closely linked and inter-dependent.(7)

GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR FOOD SAFETY

Aim and vision

The Global Strategy for Food Safety has been developed to guide and support Member States in their efforts to prioritize, plan, implement, monitor and regularly evaluate actions towards the reduction of the burden of FBD by continuously strengthening food safety systems and promoting global cooperation.

The strategy's vision is all people, everywhere, consume safe and healthy food so as to reduce the burden of FBDs. This strategy gives stakeholders the tools they need to strengthen their national food safety systems and collaborate with partners around the world.

Scope

Strengthening national food safety systems begins with establishing or improving critical infrastructure and components of food control systems as described in Strategic Priority 1. For example, this can include developing an enabling framework of food legislation, standards and guidelines, laboratory capacity, human resources capacity, food control activities and programmes, and emergency preparedness capacity.

In addition to having legislation, policy, institutional frameworks and control functions in place, Member States need to consider and adopt four important principles for the system to be more effective:

1

Forward-looking. This principle is reflected as **Strategic Priority 2:** Identifying and responding to food safety challenges resulting from global changes and transformations in food systems. The global changes and transformation that food systems are experiencing today and that are predicted to occur in the future will have implications for food safety. Therefore, food safety systems should be equipped to identify, evaluate and respond to existing and emerging issues. The food safety systems must be transformed from reactive to proactive systems, especially when addressing health risks emerging at human-animal-ecosystems environment interface.

2

Evidence-based. This principle is reflected in **Strategic Priority 3:** Increasing the use of food chain information, scientific evidence, and risk assessment in making risk management decisions. Food safety risk management is based on science. The collection, utilization and interpretation of data lay the foundation for building evidence-based food safety systems.

3

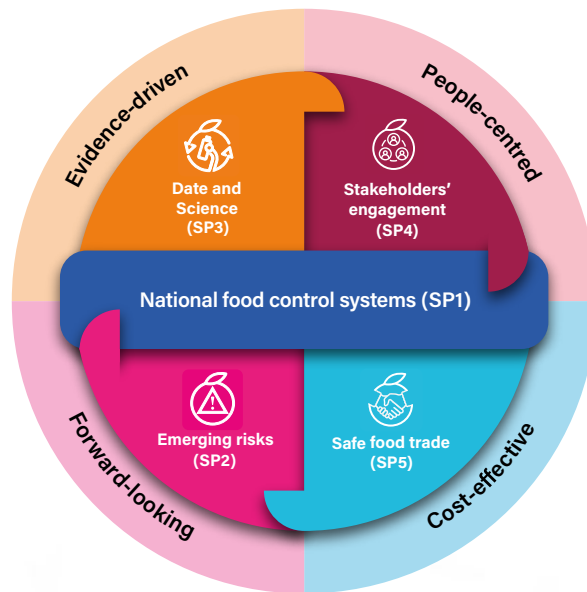
People-centred. This principle is reflected as **Strategic Priority 4:** Strengthening stakeholder engagement and risk communication. Food safety is a shared responsibility, and it requires a joint effort by all stakeholders in food systems. Successfully ensuring food safety from farm to fork requires a more inclusive approach with all stakeholders, including empowered consumers and FBOs.

4

Cost-effective. This principle is reflected as **Strategic Priority 5:** Promoting food safety as an essential component in domestic and international food trade. Food safety is a complex issue that is influenced by socioeconomic status. With the globalisation of food trade, foodborne pathogens and diseases can travel across borders and cause significant health and economic impacts. To ensure increased access to safe food in both domestic markets and international trade, food safety systems should be cost-effective for implementation at all levels (domestic markets, imports, and exports).

The Global Strategy for Food Safety's five strategic priorities are based on the fundamental components of the food safety systems and the above four principles as illustrated in Fig. 2.

Fig. 2 Conceptual framework for strategic priorities



This strategy refers to **food control systems** when addressing aspects or activities that are particularly driven or implemented by national governments and competent authorities. Furthermore, the term **food safety systems** is used when referring to joint efforts and partnership among all stakeholders.







STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The strategy has identified five interlinked and mutually reinforcing strategic priorities with respective strategic objectives. Using the identified five strategic priorities and respective strategic objectives, the strategy aims to build proactive, forward-looking, evidence-based, people-centred, and cost-effective food safety systems with coordinated governance and adequate infrastructures.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: Strengthening national food control systems.

Strengthening national food safety systems begins with establishing or improving the resources, infrastructure and various components of those systems. For example, this can include regulatory infrastructure, enforcement, surveillance, inspection, laboratory capacity and capability, coordination mechanisms, and emergency response. Under the Strategic Priority 1, six strategic objectives have been identified as intervention areas:

- 1** Establish a modern, harmonized and evidence-based framework of food legislation.
- 2** Establish an institutional framework to coordinate the work of different competent authorities that manage national food control systems.
- 3** Develop and implement fit-for-purpose standards and guidelines.
- 4** Strengthen compliance, verification and enforcement.
- 5** Strengthen food monitoring and surveillance programmes.
- 6** Establish food safety incident and emergency response systems.



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STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: Identifying and responding to food safety challenges resulting from global changes and food systems transformation

The global changes and transformations that food systems are experiencing today and those that are predicted to occur in the future will have implications for food safety. Food safety systems should thus be adequately equipped to identify, evaluate and respond to existing and emerging issues, such as the growing threat of foodborne antimicrobial resistance. Food safety systems must be transformed from reactive to proactive systems and should adopt a One Health approach when addressing health risks emerging at the human-animal-environment interface. Under the Strategic Priority 2, two strategic objectives have been identified as areas for intervention:

- 1** Identify and evaluate food safety impacts arising from global changes and food systems transformations and movement of food.
- 2** Adapt risk management options to emerging foodborne risks brought about by transformation and changes in global food systems and movement of food.



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STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: Improving the use of food chain information, scientific evidence, and risk assessment in making risk management decisions

Food safety risk management is based on science. The generation, collection, utilization, interpretation and sharing of data lay the foundation for food safety policy and building evidence-based food safety systems and strengthening international cooperation. Under the Strategic Priority 3, four strategic objectives have been identified as areas intervention:

- 1** Promote the generation and use of scientific evidence and risk assessment when establishing and reviewing food control measures.
- 2** Gather comprehensive information along and beyond the food chain and utilize these data when making informed risk management decisions.
- 3** Source food safety information and risk analysis experiences from beyond national borders to strengthen risk management decisions and technical capacity.
- 4** Consistent and transparent risk management decisions when establishing food control measures.



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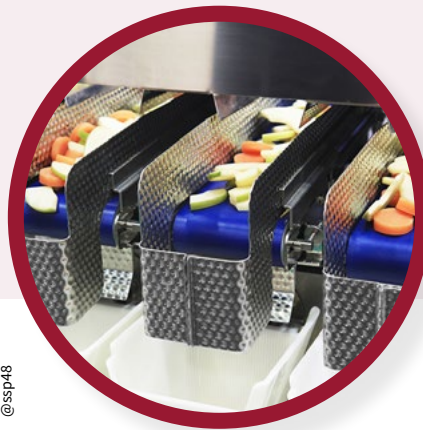
STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4: Strengthening stakeholder engagement and risk communication

Food safety is a shared responsibility that requires joint efforts to be made by all stakeholders involved in food safety systems. Successfully ensuring food safety from farm to fork requires a more inclusive approach encompassing all players involved in food safety systems, including empowered consumers. Under the Strategic Priority 4, five strategic objectives have been identified as areas for intervention:

- 1** Establish platforms for consultation on the national food safety agenda.
- 2** Assess the pertinence of using non-regulatory schemes for enhancing food safety across the food chain.
- 3** Establish frameworks for sharing verification of compliance with food safety regulatory requirements.
- 4** Facilitate communication, capacity-building and engagement with food business operators and foster a food safety culture.
- 5** Facilitate communication, education and engagement with consumers.



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STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5: Promoting food safety as an essential component in domestic, regional and international food trade

Food safety is a complex issue that is influenced by socioeconomic status. With the globalisation of the food trade, foodborne pathogens and diseases can travel across borders and cause significant health and economic impacts. To ensure increased access to safe food in both domestic and international markets, food safety systems should be more cost-effective for both importing and exporting countries, while enhancing food safety in domestic markets. Under the Strategic Priority 5, four strategic objectives have been identified as areas for intervention:

- 1** Strengthen food control systems and capacity development in regulatory systems for the domestic market.
- 2** Strengthen interaction between national agencies responsible for domestic food safety and those facilitating international fair trading practices.
- 3** Ensure that national food safety systems are aligned with the standards of the Codex Alimentarius to protect public health and facilitate trade.
- 4** Strengthen engagements of national competent authorities with international agencies and networks that establish standards and guidelines for food.



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Implementation of the strategy by Member States and the role of WHO

Member States should modify, redesign or strengthen their national food safety systems as appropriate based upon the strategic priority areas and strategic objectives identified in the strategy. As food safety systems in Member States are in various stages of development, the prioritization of strategic actions should be tailored to each country situation.

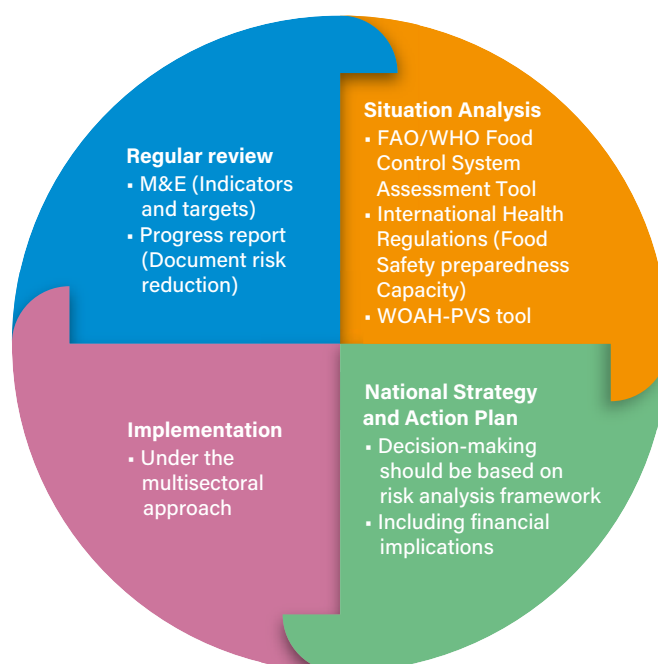


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Some Member States may wish to take a gradual or stepwise approach to guide strategic actions to strengthen their food safety systems. This approach consists of interacting and interdependent components that form a comprehensive and well-coordinated entity as opposed to an approach that seeks to strengthen individual components of the system with limited consideration to the uniformity and interdependency of components of the system. A stepwise approach will allow countries to identify priority strategic actions that can help strengthen the uniformity of food safety systems at their respective stages of development. The focus should initially be on strengthening the minimum legal and operational requirements for food safety risk management and responding to food safety incidents and emergencies. This will facilitate the establishment of a sound foundation on which to build an effective system, in addition to helping countries to prioritize interventions and maximize returns on investments in food safety systems.

The general approach for Member States to develop, update and implement their national food safety strategies is summarized in Fig. 3. For the situation analysis, the tool developed by FAO and WHO can be used to assist Member States in evaluating the effectiveness of their food control systems, whatever the level of its maturity (8). This tool can be used to evaluate the status of the national food control system, to identify strengths and weaknesses, and to identify priority areas for action. Besides this FAO/WHO tool, the Joint External Evaluation (9) and Electronic State Parties Self-Assessment Annual Reporting Tool (10) under the WHO International Health Regulations can also be utilized to assess the national food safety preparedness capacity. Additionally, the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS) Pathway specifically targets the safety assessment of production and processing of food of animal origins (11). Once a baseline assessment of the national food safety system has been carried out, it will be possible to define objectives and target interventions to strengthen the system based on the five strategic priorities areas identified in this strategy.

Fig. 3 General guidance for Member States for the development and implementation of the strategy



The situation analysis should be followed by the development of an implementation plan that includes the sequence for different elements of the restructured food safety system to be applied, the definition of roles and responsibilities, and the establishment of a monitoring and evaluation system. The plan needs to be properly resourced and financed to accomplish its objectives. This will require engagement and analysis by a variety of experts, disciplines, and all relevant stakeholders. Once the plan is agreed and communicated, the implementation phase can begin. Regular progress checks and reports should form a part of the regular monitoring to ensure the plan remains on course or that appropriate course correction measures are applied.



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Together with other international partners, WHO will support Member States by providing global leadership and fostering policy dialogues among stakeholders; synthesizing evidence and generating normative guidance in food safety; enhancing technical cooperation and building stronger capacities for countries; and strengthening partnerships and fostering global collaboration. WHO and FAO will develop a joint monitoring framework aligning their food safety strategies and ensure they are mutually supportive and for both organisations to work in close cooperation and harmonize strategic efforts on food safety with a common vision of safe food for all.



@JacobLund

Monitoring and evaluation of the updated strategy

Underpinning the updated strategy will be an accountability framework to measure the rate of implementation. The updated strategy encourages Member States to select indicators and set targets at the national level to evaluate the effectiveness and appropriateness of national food safety systems in achieving the objectives to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade. A global mechanism will also be established to measure the progress of the strategy using a set of global indicators and targets. The updated version of the strategy contains three global indicators:

- diarrhoeal diseases due to contaminated food consumption;
- multisectoral collaboration mechanisms for food safety events; and
- surveillance of foodborne diseases and contamination.

The first indicator is evaluated on an ongoing basis by WHO's Foodborne Disease Burden Epidemiology Reference Group. The second and third above mentioned indicators are already monitored and measured regularly through the International Health Regulations (2005).

Three global targets are defined in the strategy based on these three global indicators. By 2030, WHO will support countries to achieve:



A 40% reduction of foodborne diarrhoeal disease incidence estimated per 100 000 population.






All Member States with at least 80% of implementation for multisectoral collaboration on food safety events under State Party self-assessment annual reporting.



A global average capacity score of 3.5 or above (with 5 being the full mark) for surveillance of foodborne diseases and contamination under the Joint External Evaluation.

More details on the indicators proposed for the WHO Global Strategy for Food Safety are presented on Table 1.

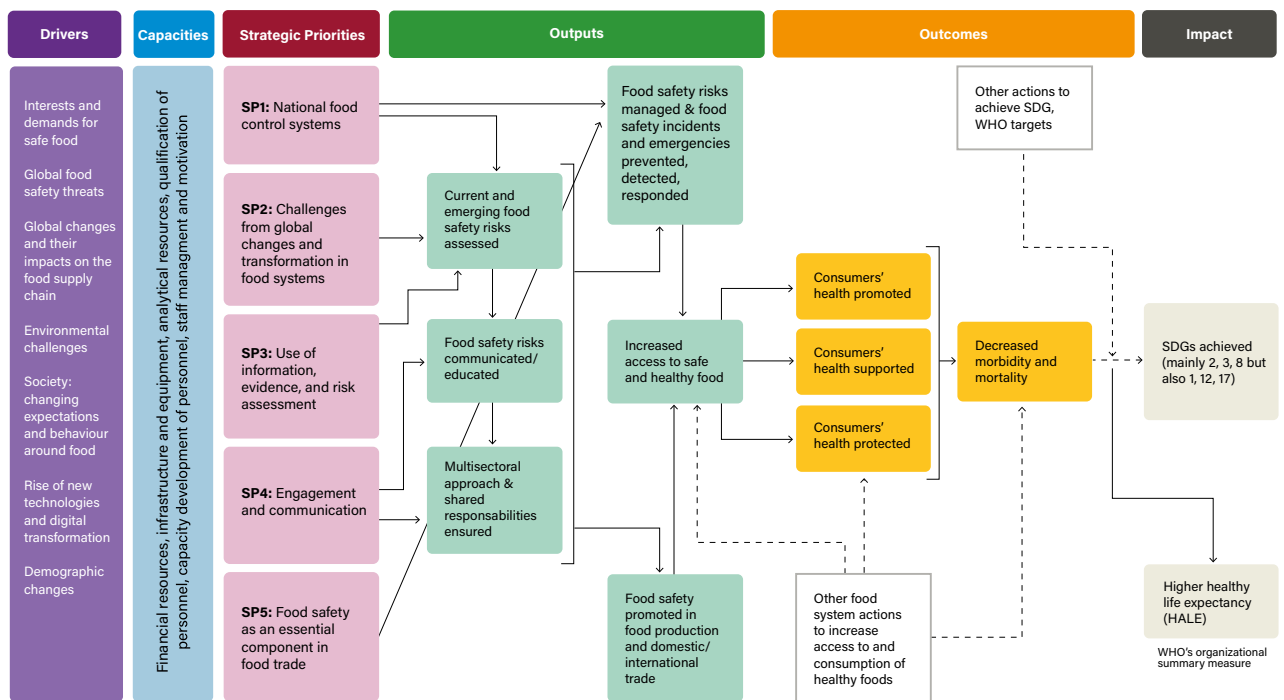
Table 1. Indicators proposed for the WHO Global Strategy for Food Safety and targets

Indicator	Type	Source	Indicator as of 2022	Target by 2030
 Foodborne diarrhoeal disease incidence estimated per 100 000 population	Outcome indicator (impact)	WHO global estimates on foodborne disease burden informed by FERG ^{1,2}	4 154*	40% reduction in the global average
 Multisectoral collaboration mechanism for food safety events	Capacity indicator (progress)	International Health Regulations (2005): State Party Self-Assessment Annual Reporting Tool (57)	57% of countries with at least 80% capacity**	100% of countries with at least 80% capacity
 Surveillance of foodborne diseases and contamination		International Health Regulations (2005): Joint External Evaluation Tool ³	1.5	Global average capacity score 3.5

- 1 Foodborne Disease Burden Epidemiology Reference Group (FERG). Geneva: World Health Organization (WHO) ([https://www.who.int/groups/foodborne-disease-burden-epidemiology-reference-group-\(ferg\)](https://www.who.int/groups/foodborne-disease-burden-epidemiology-reference-group-(ferg))).
- 2 Terms of Reference for the Foodborne Disease Burden Epidemiology Reference Group (FERG) 2021-2024. Geneva: World Health Organization (WHO); 2021 (<https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/food-safety/call-for-experts/tor-for-reference-ferg-31aug2020.pdf>).
- 3 The Global Health Observatory. Food safety (IRH 2010-2017). Geneva: World Health Organization (WHO) (<https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/indicators/indicator-details/GHO/food-safety>).

WHO will develop a framework to monitor implementation and to validate the progress made towards these global targets. The strategy’s theory of change (Fig. 4) shows the expected contribution of the strategy to the SDGs, particularly 2, 3 and 8, by continuously improving food safety systems.

Fig. 4: A path towards safe and healthy food for all



Principles: Forward-looking, Evidence-based, People-centered, Cost-effective

← WHO's continued guidance and support to prioritize, plan, implement, monitor and regularly evaluate actions by continuously strengthening food safety systems and promoting global cooperation →

To access the full text of the WHO Global Strategy for Food Safety: 2022–2030

<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/363475>

Towards stronger
food safety systems
and global cooperation



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