



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

## OP-ED on World Food Safety Day 2023



**By Dr. Renata Clarke**

*Sub-regional Coordinator of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)*

*The 5<sup>th</sup> World Food Safety Day will be celebrated on 7 June 2023, to draw attention and inspire action to help prevent, detect and manage foodborne risks, contributing to food security, human health, economic prosperity, agricultural production, market access, tourism and sustainable development.*

*The day is of particular importance considering the escalating cost of food globally and concerns about food security.*

Member Countries of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) and the 2017 FAO Conference led the call for the establishment of World Food Safety Day (WFSD), which was approved by the UN General Assembly in December 2018. Driven by the recognition of the human and economic cost of food safety failures, CAC and FAO wanted to call upon **all people everywhere** to think more about their role in ensuring food safety. The theme of the first ever WFSD in 2019 was indeed “Food safety is everyone’s business”.

We are now at the fifth annual celebration of this day. The theme for this year is “Food Standards save lives”. It is certainly true that food standards are essential

for saving lives. However, food standards are simply words on a page if countries, food businesses and consumers do not commit to implementing them.

Food safety is an essential part of food security. Only when food is safe can it serve our nutritional needs and promote our well-being in the short and long-terms. The assurance of food safety is also a necessary basis for efficient market access and the development of successful and dynamic agriculture sectors.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. This Commission pools the knowledge and experience of its 188 member countries to prioritise and elaborate food standards that are highly relevant and can effectively guide countries in managing food safety and quality. Additionally, the food safety work of Codex is informed by independent panels of scientific experts jointly managed by FAO and WHO. This ensures scientific rigour. Overall, the Caribbean countries remain weak participants in this crucial global process. As our countries increasingly embrace technological innovation as a means of transforming agriculture in the Caribbean, we urgently need to get off the side-lines and actively participate in the game of global food-standard setting.

How are we doing in the Caribbean in terms of implementing international food standards? We are seeing improvements in several countries but there is need to accelerate this progress. An FAO project recently assessed the capacity of national food control systems in two Caribbean countries (Guyana and the Bahamas) to implement food standards consistent with internationally agreed norms. The closing workshop of this project will be held in September of this year and will aim, in close collaboration with the CARICOM Secretariat and CAHFSA, to expand the food control system assessment to more countries in the region. This will enable the Caribbean countries to plan more effectively for strengthening food control and to collaborate more efficiently in promoting the safe movement of food within the CARICOM region.

Food standards do not save lives. It is our collective action to implement sound science-based standards that does.



**Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations**