1. Introduction

Street Foods are ready to eat foods and beverages prepared and or sold by vendors and hawkers especially in streets and other similar public places. With the changing social profiles, there is a perceptible change in the economy world-wide with a large number of women joining in the working population group. Thus the need to cook at home is also getting diluted to an extent and as well as the increase in disposable income is creating demand for eating out-of-home. However, street foods are quite economical as compared to restaurant meals and offer wide variety, which can be an alternative to home cooked food. For the migrant labour, the street vended food is an important source for meeting their day to day nutritional requirement. As a result, street food vending is on the rise in many developing countries. Street vended foods are easily accessible with unique flavors and play an important role in preserving the cultural and social heritage through the local cuisine. They are freshly prepared and generally offer a nutritionally balanced meal. Moreover, vending of street foods provides business opportunities for small scale vendors and is an important source of livelihood opportunities. Thus, Street food vendors also contribute to the economies of the developing countries.

2. Field of Application

This discussion paper covers the need to have a proposed “Draft Regional Code of Practice for Street-Vended Foods”, which assures safe and hygienic quality of food to the consumers.

3. Some problem areas

However, it is felt that the food that is served is not always hygienic and ensuring food quality and safety of such foods is a matter of concern. Some of the major problems associated with the street food vending are:–

a. Public Health Issues: - Street food vendors, as a class, usually come from poor background, with very little knowledge about food safety and hygiene practices. Moreover, their literacy level being low is an additional handicap. Thus, though they serve a large section of the society, their food is not always conforming to the norms and procedures of food safety and hygienic conditions for human consumption. Moreover, with very little resources to check upon the quality aspects of the food, it often is a dilemma for the consumers: whether to consume such food or to starve in the face of non-affordable and viable alternatives. Moreover, the quality of water that is used in the preparation of the food is also of questionable nature. Studies have shown that unhygienic water consumption has been the main cause for epidemics for the public at large.

b. Effect on the Urban Environment: - The urban environment is most affected in the face of the disposal of the waste by the street food vendors. The water that is used for drinking and that is used for washing of the utensils, are improperly disposed of, thereby creating a mess of urban waste management.
c. **Awareness of the food safety issues**: The consumers of street food currently do not have affordable alternative choices. Thus, they are forced to consume whatever is served to them. To create awareness among the consumers of street food would entail sustained promotion for demand of hygienic food from street food vendors, through vigorous media campaign. From the vendor’s point of view, it is important to train them on the need to serve safe and hygienic food to the consumers.

d. **Motivation of the street food vendors**: Motivating street food vendors to follow hygienic practices is a big challenge. They are also reluctant to participate in various trainings as attending training for even a day at distant location would invariably result in a loss of earnings for a day. They therefore, need to be educated about practicing safe & hygienic methods of preparing as well as serving food to their customers; they will attract more business thereby increasing their total sales and profit.

### 4. Justification

Due to its convenience, low cost, variety and flavors, more and more people in developing countries are choosing street food. However, as explained above food sold by street vendors could cause serious health problems due to lack of basic food safety and hygiene practices. Major sources contributing to microbial contamination are the place of preparation, utensils for cooking and serving, raw materials, temperature and time used for preparing and the personal hygiene of vendors. Therefore, there is a need for the proposed draft code of practice, as it ensures and endorses hygienic aspects in street food and focuses on education to vendors on preparation, storage and serving of safe food. Need for renewed focus to provide infrastructure and facilities like potable water and appropriate waste disposal systems to the street vendors’ thus promoting consumer awareness on food safety.

In the developing Countries, the number of street vendors has increased sharply during the past few years. Therefore, there is a need to adopt integrated approach to the issues in terms of provision of basic infrastructure, waste management, regulatory issues, enforcement issues by the local implementing agencies and the local bodies like the municipal/urban development authorities etc., It is also important that the Quality monitoring agencies have standardized code of hygienic practices that can be monitored by them to ensure safety and quality of street vended food. Training of the street food vendors on these standardized codes of hygienic practices will also bring in synergy in terms of content that would be delivered as part of the training programs.

Many regions of the world have already developed the Regional Code Of Hygienic Practice for the Preparation And Sale Of Street Foods (Latin America and the Caribbean) (CAC/RCP 43R-1997), Regional Guidelines for the Design Of Control Measures For Street-Vended Foods (Africa) (CAC/GL 22R – 1997), which are suited to their local conditions. Similarly, the Draft Regional Code Of Practice For Street-Vended Foods (NEAR EAST REGION), which is held at Step 8 would be discussed in the forthcoming 44th session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene. It is therefore important that developing countries in Asia, where the dependence of economically vulnerable sections of the society on street vended food is high should have its own Regional Code of Practice for Street-Vended Foods (Asia).

### 5. Objectives

The overall objective of this paper is to solicit the support of the various countries in the region to the proposal for the development of **Regional Code of Practice for Street-Vended Foods (Asia)**. Street food vendors have acquired their cooking skills from observation, taught by their parents or by trial and error. But, they need to be sensitized about the need for following basic food hygiene practices while preparing, storing and serving food. Therefore, the proposed code of practice strives to address issues of: consumer health protection, food safety and quality with regard to street-vended foods. These draft code of practice will address issues of hygiene and quality, operational concerns of street food vendors, their livelihood betterment and economical sustainability by ensuring that the livelihoods of vendors are preserved and authorities recognize the important socio-economic contribution of this sector. Through this proposal, vendors and food handlers will have necessary knowledge and skills to enable them to handle food hygienically.
6. Conclusion

To curb the number of health hazards related to consuming of the street vended foods, the safety of the Street Foods should be made mandatory in the developing countries. The holistic approach for safety of street food involves adoption of good practices at every step in the chain; from raw materials to food consumption. The proposed Draft Regional Code of Practice for Street-Vended Foods which has all the components of the chain (Annex 1) will be able to assist the vendors to know and follow the procedures necessary to maintain the safety and suitability of Food. The proposal includes sections on training the street food vendors to learn and adopt hygienic and safe food handling practices, which will contribute to the safety of the street foods.

It is therefore recommended that the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Asia may consider the proposal and the project document in its forthcoming 18th session at Tokyo as this proposal addresses the safety concerns of the consumers in the developing countries of Asia.
The Development of Regional Code of Practice for Street-Vended Foods (Asia)

Prepared by India

1. Purpose and Scope

The purpose and Scope of the work is to develop the Code of Practice for Street-Vended Foods for the Asian region.

Street vendors form a very important segment of the unorganized sector in the countries of this region. Street vendors are often those who are unable to get regular jobs in the remunerative formal sector on account of their low level of education and skills. They try to solve their livelihood issues through their own meager financial resources and sweat equity. Public authorities often regard street vendors as a nuisance and as encroachers of sidewalks and pavements and do not appreciate the valuable services that street vendors render to the common man.

At the same time, street food vending has become a serious public health issue and a great concern to everybody. This is due to widespread food borne diseases, due to the mushrooming of wayside food vendors who lack an adequate understanding of the basic food safety and hygiene issues. Major sources contributing to microbial contamination are the place of preparation of food, utensils used for cooking and serving, raw materials, lack of access to potable water, time and temperature abuse of cooked foods, inadequate solid waste management systems and the personal hygiene of the vendors.

The purpose of this new work is to help improve the condition of the Street-Vended foods thus ensuring Public Health Safety.

2. Relevance and timelines

Street foods are perceived to be a major public health risk due to lack of basic infrastructure and services, difficulty in controlling the large numbers of street food vending operations because of their diversity, mobility and temporary nature. A general lack of factual knowledge about the epidemiological significance of many street vended foods, poor knowledge of street vendors in basic food safety measures and inadequate public awareness of hazards posed by certain foods has severely hampered the deployment of a scientific approach to this very serious issue of public health and safety. Review of literature reveals that there have been several documented cases of food poisoning outbreaks due to street foods. Street foods were responsible for 691 food poisoning outbreaks and 49 deaths from 1983 to 1992 in Shandong Province (China). Foodborne bacterial pathogens commonly detected in street vended foods are Bacillus cereus, Clostridium perfringens, Staphylococcus aureus and Salmonella spp. People, who patronize street food, have been reported to suffer from food borne diseases like diarrhoea, cholera, typhoid fever and food poisoning.

3. The main aspects to be covered:

It is a well-known fact that most food borne diseases, if not all, can be prevented by applying the basic principles of food hygiene throughout the food chain. The proposed Draft Code of Practice for Street Vended Foods would provide the Guidelines defining the general hygienic requirements and recommended practices concerning the preparation and vending of street foods. The guidelines will address the conditions that should be taken into consideration when setting street vending food standards. They also aim at helping the relevant authorities in improving the level of hygiene of these food preparations and vending processes in way that guarantees safe, healthy and nutritional foods to the consumers, in accessible locations.

4. Assessment against the Criteria for the Establishment of Work Priorities:

4.1 Assessment with respect to the General Criterion: Consumer protection from the view of health, food safety, ensuring fair practices in food trade and taking into account the identified needs of developing countries.

Street vended foods are an important component of the food supply chain. It assumes greater significance in developing countries where it provides nutritional security to the poor and vulnerable sections of the society. The proposed work is directed primarily to develop Code of Practice for street vended foods that will safe
guard health of the people consuming street food by assuring them of safe and wholesome food. The Code of Practice will provide useful guidance, in particular to the developing countries in the region for upgrading the operation of the street food operators to ensure that the population has access to safe and nutritious food at convenient locations.

4.2 Assessment with respect to criteria applicable to general subjects:

**Diversification of national legislations and apparent resultant or potential impediment to international trade**

In the four level of standard setting that is prevalent, regional standards are for regional groups with similar geographical, climate, and cultural factors. Developing countries particularly in Asia region have the street food operations in similar climatic and economic scenarios. However, street-food vending is inherently fraught with risk because of the nature of operations, educational and skill profile of the street food vendors, lack of access to potable water, solid waste management facilities etc. Therefore, development of a Codes of Practice will help the respective national authorities to address these concerns in a cohesive framework. The development of Draft Code of practice for Street-Vended Foods (Asia) is intended to address the Public Health issues of the region and is in no way an impediment to the international trade. On the other hand, the work by an international organization can be used as an ideal model to create national standards for the sector.

4.3 Work already undertaken by other international organizations in this field and/or suggested by the relevant international intergovernmental bodies

The World Health organization (WHO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Near East (CCNEA), FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Africa (CCAFRICA) and FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (CCLAC) are some of the International Organizations who are actively involved in regard to the safety of street vended foods.

4.4 Consideration of the global magnitude of the problem or issue

The Code of Practice will address the regional issues pertaining to safety and hygiene of the street vended food in the region.

4.5 Amenability of the subject of the proposal to standardization

The development of Draft Regional Code of Practice for Street-Vended Foods (ASIA), at the regional level can be used by respective national governments as a model for setting / creating their own national or even local/municipal level guidelines depending on local consideration.

5. Relevance to Codex Strategic Objectives:

The proposed work directly relates to the following Codex Strategic Goals/Activities from the Codex Strategic Plan 2008-2013:

**Goal 1.1: Promoting sound regulatory frameworks**

The development of Draft Code of practice for Street-Vended Foods (Asia) is consistent with the direction elaborated under Goal 1, i.e., CAC will develop international standards, guidance and recommendations based on scientific principles for the reduction of health risks along the entire food chain.

**Goal 4.5: Promote interdisciplinary coordination at the national and regional level**

The development of a Draft Code of practice for Street-Vended Foods (Asia) will help to establish coordination and communication among the national and regional level.

**Goal 5: Maximum and effective participation of members**

The development of a Draft Code of practice for Street-Vended Foods (Asia) should generate interest in participation from developing countries of the region. We anticipate conducting this Draft Code of practice for Street-Vended Foods (Asia) through an electronic working group using email exchanges and web meetings designed to foster increased participation, as was done with the development of the hygiene provisions in the Draft regional code of practice for Street-Vended Foods (Near East) (CX/NEA 07/4/6).
6. **Information on the relation between the proposal and other Codex documents**

This work has been developed keeping in mind the “Hygiene provisions in the Draft regional code of practice for Street-Vended Foods of (Near East)” (CL 2012/1-FH), Regional Guidelines For The Design Of Control Measures For Street-Vended Foods (Africa) (CAC/GL 22R – 1997), Regional Code Of Hygienic Practice For The Preparation And Sale Of Street Foods (Latin America and the Caribbean) (CAC/RCP 43R-1997) and Essential Safety Requirements For Street-Vended Foods-Food Safety Unit Division of Food and Nutrition, World Health Organization-1996.

With regard to the hygienic provisions in the draft Code of Practice, consultation will be done, if necessary with the Codex Committee on Food hygiene.

7. **Identification of any requirement for and availability of expert scientific advice.**

No expert scientific advised is envisaged at this stage.

8. **Identification of any need for technical input to the standard from external bodies so that this can be planned for**

No expert scientific advised is envisaged at this stage.

9. **Proposed timeline for completion of the new work including the start date, the proposed date for adoption at Step 5, and the proposed date for adoption by the Commission; the time frame for developing a standard should normally not exceed five years.**

Proposed timeline-

- Consideration of new work by the **18th Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Asia (CCASIA) to be held in Tokyo, Japan from 5-9 November, 2012**
- Consideration of new work by CAC, 2013.
- Consideration of draft of Code of Practice at Step 3 at the next Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Asia (CCASIA), 2014.
- Depending upon the progress, CCASIA might forward the draft to the 2014 session of Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH) for endorsement of the hygienic provision and subsequent adoption at Step 8 by CAC at its 2015 Session.
- Alternatively, consideration at Step 5 (or 5/8) at the next Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Asia (CCASIA), 2016.
- Consideration for Adoption at Step 8 by CAC at the 2017 Session.