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## Main objective of CCASIA is to promote regulations for food products: Dr Bakshi

### 21st session of FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee of Asia begins

BY A STAFF REPORTER  
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**PANAJI:** Developing regional standards for food products is important from regional trade point of view, said Dr Sunil Bakshi, chairperson of Coordinating Committee for Asia (CCASIA) and Head of Regulations Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) at the 21st session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Asia held at Panaji on Monday.

The Committee for Asia focused 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.

"We need to explore the possibilities of mutual cooperation and enable a mechanism for sharing relevant data or scientific advice with other countries for the purpose of developing regional positions and supporting new work proposals," he said.

He emphasised that the main objective of CCASIA is to promote mutual communication and resource sharing to develop regional standards and regulations for food products and this five-day event will certainly help us identify a way forward to further strengthen the food safety preparedness in the region as a whole.

FSSAI chairperson Rita Teasota in her inaugural address stated that "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."

**“**Trade tensions and rising protectionism are increasing and in this environment the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) and CCASIA in particular offer us a great opportunity to work together to strengthen both the Codex systems as well as our regional cooperation.”

**Rita Teasota,**  
Chairperson, FSSAI

She further mentioned that 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.

"This is a difficult time for trade and globally economies of some significant and very large markets are slowing. Trade tensions and rising protectionism are increasing and in this environment the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) and CCASIA in particular offer us a great opportunity to work together to strengthen both the Codex systems as well as our regional cooperation," Teasota

highlighted while stressing on the importance of such deliberations.

She further emphasised that Asia, as a region, is perhaps, the most diverse of the Codex regions (its member countries span from the most advanced countries to amongst the least, sophisticated, highly educated and well resourced nations to countries grappling with infrastructure and health challenges).

With diversity in terms of linguistic, economic and cultural dimensions, Asia, no doubt is one of the fastest growing regions in the world and shares an ancient history of robust trading relations.

"Countries trade extensively with each other and at least in food, almost 60 percent 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 stressed upon creating a network of scientific and research institutions for collection and assimilation of scientific facts and data for the region and worthwhile, to create an IT enabled information platform to exchange information regarding food frauds and other areas of core interest", she elaborated.

Highlighting the role of capacity building initiatives between the Codex member countries in Asia, she mentioned that the countries need to pool their resources and provide support to least developed countries in the region. FAO and WHO have taken several initiatives in this direction.

"On behalf of India, FSSAI is happy to offer the capacity we have built-up at the international training centre for food safety and nutrition at Mumbai for such capacity building programs", FSSAI Chair remarked.

Vice Chair, Codex Alimentarius Commission, Steve Wearne highlighted that the regional coordinating committees and member countries collectively set the direction and the priorities of Codex.

"The 21st Session of the Coordinating Committee for Asia (CCASIA) has a very important agenda for a week and I look forward to seeing the results of the deliberations and key analysis to facilitate the continuing discussions on what more Codex can do to ensure our international and national food control systems," Wearne said.

Technical Officer, WHO South-East Asia Regional office (SEARO) Dr Gyanendra Gongal representing Regional Director Dr Poonal Khetrapal, highlighted that standards set by Codex are most comprehensive and is of global relevance and committees play an important role in ensuring health of people and provision of safe food to the population of different member countries.

"All countries have a duty to adhere to the Codex standards and guidelines to ensure more coordination amongst the regions. The Codex Trust Fund can ensure promoting capacity building of various countries especially the least developing nations as to strengthen their capabilities," Dr Gongal said.

BY A STAFF REPORTER

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