



# Street foods (FAO food and nutrition paper) - Alimentation de rue (Étude FAO alimentation et nutrition) - Alimentos que se venden en la vía pública (Estudio FAO alimentación y nutrición)



Report of an FAO Technical Meeting on Street Foods  
Calcutta, India  
6-9 November 1995

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

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## **STREET FOODS**

### **REPORT OF AN FAO TECHNICAL MEETING**

**CALCUTTA, INDIA 6-9 NOVEMBER 1995**

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**Fr**

Rapport d'une réunion technique de la FAO sur l'alimentation de rue  
Calcutta, Inde  
6-9 novembre 1995

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### **RAPPORT D'UNE REUNION TECHNIQUE FAO**

**6-9 NOVEMBRE 1995 CALCUTTA, INDE**

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Informe de la reunión técnica de la FAO sobre los alimentos que se vendee en la vía pública  
Calcuta, India  
6-9 de noviembre de 1995

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#### **INFORME DE UNA REUNION TECNICA DE LA FAO**

**6-9 DE NOVIEMBRE DE 1995  
CALCUTA, INDIA**

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## [Foreword](#)

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# Foreword

Over the past 10 years, FAO has collaborated with a number of countries in various parts of the world in the evaluation of street food quality, safety and socio-economics and in implementing recommendations for improvement.

The FAO Expert Consultation on Street Foods which was held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, in 1988, was the first international consultation of this subject. That Consultation assessed the role and importance of this informal food service sector in providing a convenient and economic food supply to the urban population, particularly in developing countries. It identified and recommended measures to improve the quality and safety of street foods. Since then, and as a direct follow-up to the Consultation's recommendations, a number of activities have been developed and implemented in different parts of the world, many with FAO's involvement. Several other meetings have been held to periodically review progress made in improving street food quality and safety, at regional, sub-regional and national levels.

As a follow up to these extensive activities, it was agreed that there was a need to review the progress made in improving street foods quality and safety at a global level; to analyze different experiences and lessons learnt; and to provide the international community with an updated set of recommendations and guidelines to stimulate new and enable continuing improvement. Thus, this FAO Technical Meeting on Street Foods was held from 6 to 9 November 1995 in Calcutta, India for this purpose.

Calcutta was chosen as the venue for this meeting because of the highly successful street food improvement project undertaken in this city beginning in 1992. In 1995 the All India Institute for Hygiene and Public Health received the FAO/Edouard Saouma Award for its significant contribution to the success of the project entitled "Improving Street Foods in Calcutta". That project, identified as TCP/IND/0155, was sponsored by FAO under its Technical Cooperation Programme. In addition, much experience has been gained by India by studying street food quality, safety and socio-economics in other cities including Bombay, Pune, Hyderabad and Secundarabad.





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## [I Introduction](#)

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# I Introduction

## REPORT OF AN FAO TECHNICAL MEETING ON STREET FOODS

**6-9 November 1995**

**CALCUTTA, INDIA**

1. The FAO Technical Meeting on Street Foods was held in Calcutta, India from 6 to 9 November, 1995. The agenda is attached as Annex 1. The meeting was attended by 10 experts, each from a different country. The list of experts and other participants is appended as Annex 2.





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## [II Opening session](#)

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# II Opening session

2. Prof. (Dr.) Indira Chakravarty, the Principal Coordinator of the joint FAD/All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health (AIHH&PH) project TCP/IND/0155 entitled "Improving Street Foods in Calcutta" welcomed the guests and participants at the inaugural session of the meeting.

3. Mr. Prasanta Chatterjee, Mayor, Calcutta Municipal Corporation (CMC), the Chief Guest, welcomed the participants and outlined the involvement of the Calcutta city authorities in the promotion and control of street foods. Dr. Obaidullah Khan, Assistant Director-General and FAO Regional Representative for Asia, welcomed the participants and thanked the Government of India, the Government of West Bengal and the Calcutta Municipal Corporation for hosting the meeting. He stressed the importance FAO gave to street foods. He congratulated and praised the All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health (AIHH&PH), Calcutta which was awarded the FAO/Edouard Saouma Award for its outstanding work in carrying out the FAO/AIHH&PH Street Food Project in Calcutta and for improving street food quality and safety in various areas of the city. Dr. A.K. Mukherjee, Director-General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, in welcoming the participants pointed out the interest created at the national level by the Calcutta experience. He informed the participants about various planned initiatives which would ensure the extension of activities in the informal food sector to other parts of the country. Mr. R.J. Dawson, Chief, Food Quality and Standards Service, FAO, Rome praised the AIHH&PH, Calcutta for its achievement in gaining the Edouard Saouma Award. He informed the participants that FAO had been collaborating with a number of countries around the world to improve the quality and safety of street foods. He also reminded the experts that they had been invited to the meeting in their personal capacity and were not representing their organizations or countries at the meeting. He reiterated the meeting objectives, which were: to consider the progress made to date in improving the quality and safety of street foods at the global level; to analyze different experiences and lessons learned as well as to provide the international community with an updated set of guidelines for renewed or extended action. Mr. P. Rosenegger, FAO Representative, India concluded by giving a vote of thanks to the Indian authorities for hosting the meeting.

4. The meeting elected Prof. (Mrs.) Indira Chakravarty (India) as Chairperson and Mr. Jairo Romero Torres (Colombia) as Vice Chairman. The meeting appointed Prof. F.G. Winarno (Indonesia) as Rapporteur.

5. Following the adoption of the agenda, the Chairperson indicated in her introduction that a major issue to be addressed by the meeting was the possible development of an action plan for further work on street foods at global, regional and national levels. The Chair drew the attention of the experts to the background and reference papers available for the street foods meeting. The list of such documents is appended as Annex 3.





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## [III Socio-economic aspects of street foods](#)

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# III Socio-economic aspects of street foods

6. While reviewing the information from various street food projects and activities carried out in Asia, Latin America and Africa, the meeting recognized the socio-economic, nutritional and cultural significance of street foods. The meeting reiterated that street food vending provided food at the work place as well as at other important locations in the city; and its variety and form depended upon local eating habits, socio-economic environment and trends in style of living.

7. Street foods, defined as "ready-to eat foods and beverages prepared and/or sold by vendors and hawkers especially in street and other similar public places", can be found in clusters around places of work, schools, hospitals, railway stations, bus terminals etc. They are inexpensive when compared to food from the formal sector and in fact are often less expensive when compared to home cooked food. They also fill the need of providing food at places where people work or otherwise congregate. A major concern is that while they play an important socio-economic role, their tremendous unlimited and unregulated growth has placed a severe strain on city resources and through congestion and littering adversely affected daily life.

8. The meeting recognized that setting up as a street food vendor involved a low-cost investment. Further, it required no special training other than the domestic experience of preparing food and provided employment. Street food operations often involved entire families in the procurement of raw materials, preparation and cooking of meals and their sale. The role of women in the street food sector and the potential for their employment in this sector was most significant. The overall economic implications of street foods were immense. It was recognized that in many cities of the world, the equivalent of millions of US dollars exchanged hands each day as a result of the vending of street foods. The impact on local agricultural production is in many cases immense.

9. The meeting discussed how cultural, ethnic and religious differences had influenced the variety and nature of street foods around the world. The food might be cooked at home and distributed or alternately prepared on the spot depending upon the space available. There are fixed stalls, a variety of types of push-carts, road side stands, hawkers with head-loads, and other arrangements depending upon the ingenuity of the individual, resources available, the type of food sold, and the availability of other facilities either acquired officially or appropriated from the city.

10. The meeting reaffirmed that street foods have significant nutritional implications for consumers, particularly for middle and low income sectors of the population who depend heavily on street foods. In this, a number of factors that influence the consumer's choice play an important role. These include cost, convenience and type of food available, the individual's taste and the organoleptic qualities of the food (smell, texture, colour, appearance). The nutritional value of street foods depends upon the ingredients used and how they are prepared, stored and sold. The meeting urged the development and use of proper technologies in order to preserve the nutritional value of street foods. On the basis of the information so far available, the meeting was of the opinion that the eating of a combination of street foods did provide the consumer adequate opportunity to meet his or her daily nutritional requirements at an affordable pace.

11. The meeting pointed out that an important aspect of street foods that deserved particular attention related to their safety. It was recognized that street foods raise concern with respect to their potential for serious food poisoning outbreaks due to microbiological contamination, improper use of additives (in particular the use of unapproved colourings) and the presence of other adulterants and environmental contaminants. Surveys in Africa, Asia, and Latin America suggested that these concerns were real and needed to be addressed to protect consumers. Improper food handling practices could be a serious cause of contamination. There were also problems with potable water supply, the quality of raw materials used (for example rottenvegetables or spoiled meat) and unsuitable environments for street food operations (such as proximity to sewers and garbage dumps). Inadequate facilities for garbage disposal posed further hazards.





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## [IV Role of municipal/national authorities](#)

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# IV Role of municipal/national authorities

12. The meeting recognized that one of the most difficult decisions for city authorities was to determine whether or not to allow the informal street food sector to function at all, and then if so, under what conditions. Logically, this decision should depend upon an evaluation of the positive socio-economic and cultural factors in favour of street foods and the potential negative factors including traffic congestion, encroachment on and blocking of pavements, accumulation of filth and garbage and the illicit use of water and electricity. The meeting agreed that the ultimate cost/benefit (or more correctly, cost/effectiveness) analysis would indicate a strong case for recognition of street foods within specified parameters. This might include restricting locations where street foods can be prepared or sold or confining them to particular sales centres, depending upon the local situation. This would involve including provision for street foods within the city's plan and its infrastructure. It could include demarcation of areas for street food vending, and providing adequate space and facilities, such as potable water, garbage disposal services, toilets and the like.

13. While the public health authorities could provide technical guidance and organise monitoring and educational programmes, the main responsibility of bringing about a measure of discipline within the street food trade seems to lie with the local body (including at the highest political level) and the police authorities. A close coordination between various agencies concerned with street food control is essential for orderly development of the street food sector. Such an initiative would necessarily call for active cooperation of street food vendors, through their associations, if such exist.

14. The meeting was of the opinion that before launching a large country-wide street food programme, it might be useful to develop and implement activities on a model "pilot" area basis. Such a project should be developed in consultation between food control, police and city authorities, and vendors. Such activities should include a built-in multi-disciplinary "task force" which could help in ensuring longer term sustainability of benefits. On the completion of such a project, the subsequent evaluation of its impact in terms of food safety and economics should result in a change in the perception of the authorities as to the socio-economic and nutritional benefits of street foods and the feasibility of undertaking a larger programme covering other localities. The meeting appreciated that the whole process required time, the length of which would depend upon the local environment. To further improve the sustainability of the programme, on-going training of local-body officials, mayors and other persons

at management levels, was considered necessary so that they continue to be supportive of a role for street food in the city food supply system.

15. The meeting was deeply concerned about the impact of anti-social elements - among which it did not include legitimate vendors' associations - on street food vendors in several parts of the world. This impact was exerted through the levy of some kind of "protection money" required to be paid by vendors, the amount of which was often much more than would be paid legitimately by the vendors to the governmental authorities through licensing. It was felt that national and municipal authorities should take cognizance of such exploitation and undertake suitable remedial measures, perhaps with the help of Non Government Organizations (NGOs) and enlightened members of the community.





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## [V Regulatory aspects of street foods](#)

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# V Regulatory aspects of street foods

16. Control of street foods mainly calls for two types of legal provisions. The first is the issue of a license to operate and may include restrictions on the type of food to be sold and on the location where they may be sold. The second concerns enforcement of specific measures to protect the consumer against health hazards and commercial fraud. The meeting strongly endorsed the need for transparency in the development as well as enforcement of regulations concerning street foods, and the full involvement of the vendor and consumer representatives in the whole process. The issuance of a license which could be valid for a period of one year (unless otherwise revoked for some legitimate reason) would go a long way toward bringing about a measure of confidence to vendors. This measure of security could motivate them to improve their food handling practices through introduction of appropriate and simple practices and technologies suiting their specific operation. It is desirable that a single designated office within the local authority be responsible for all aspects of licensing of street food vendors.

17. When it comes to food safety, many countries still did not have specific regulations on street foods. The meeting recommended a scientific approach in the development of such regulations, keeping in mind the special characteristics of street foods such as traditional technologies, low levels of investment and restricted access to municipal facilities such as water and waste disposal. The meeting was of the opinion that codes of practice could be more appropriate for street food type of operations, rather than the traditional rules and regulations. Such codes, generally recommended by national food control authorities, could be further modified as necessary by the local authorities to suit the local situation. Codes of practice recommended by the Joint FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission could provide useful guidance in this area.

18. In dealing with a complex sector such as street foods, which has socio-economic as well as nutritional implications, it was considered necessary for training to continue to be an integral part of the regulatory approach. Thus, training of inspectors in street food inspection techniques and vendors in good food handling practices was considered essential. The information so imparted could be both general and product specific so as to give rise to appropriate interventions for improvement. Training of vendors prior to issuance of license, though desirable, depended upon the availability of local facilities, and may not be possible in all cases.

19. Based on the latest thinking on the subject, the meeting felt that compulsory medical examination of prospective vendors may not necessarily be an essential condition for the issuance of license. Where carried out, the limitation of medical examinations would need to be recognized.





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## [VI Development of appropriate technologies](#)

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# VI Development of appropriate technologies

20. The preparation of food by the side of the road and holding it over a period of time has several key elements in purely technological terms. Besides the traditional technologies used in food preparation there are other technologies which have a bearing on food safety and sale value. These include storage of potable water, utensils for cooking, storage and sale, the means of heating or cooling and the source of energy for the same, the design of stalls and push-carts, the wrapping and packing applied to food, the means of serving the food, the means of cleaning and the facilities for waste disposal, and the provision of toilet facilities. Even slight improvements in any one of these would go a long way toward better serving the needs of millions of people who depend upon street foods, whether as vendors or consumers. The meeting felt that it was rather unfortunate that relatively little had been done in a concerted manner to develop appropriate technologies to serve this immense informal food sector. This deserved more attention taking into consideration the local environment and the needs and expectations of the vendors. New technologies would need to be simple, cost effective and practical.

21. The meeting noted that in a few instances remarkable advances had been achieved by relocating or concentrating street food vending into specially designed centres with all the necessary services such as a potable water and electricity supply, adequate waste disposal services and toilet facilities. In some instances even heating and freezing facilities, under supervision of health authorities, had been provided for use with high risk foods. In the majority of cases however, such facilities were not available, or even planned in the near future. The cost of establishment of and relocation of vendors to such a centre is high.

22. Street food vending involves a lot of manual labour, low levels of technology, minimum capital investment and limited knowledge of hygiene and sanitation. The itinerant vendor has simply transferred his or her experience from home preparation of food to the preparation on the street. The differences are that quantities are larger, storage of food is over a longer period of time and there are many more consumers. There is a need for technical institutions to "industrialize" local food processing patterns and systems in a way which is capable of being managed by the food vendor.

23. The meeting was of the opinion that certain key technical institutions in different regions of the world might be encouraged to take a direct interest in the development of appropriate technologies for the street food sector. Experience gained over the past couple of decades in this area should be evaluated with

respect to the impact of various factors on food safety as well as on acceptability to vendors and consumers within the local physical and socio-cultural environment. This would assist in identifying further actions that might be initiated. NGOs could play a key role in this area of development. Exchange of information on a TCDC\* basis should be encouraged so as to quicken the pace of development.

\* TCDC is a programme of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries.





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## [VII Consumer perceptions](#)

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# VII Consumer perceptions

24. The meeting noted that the public tendency for taking various kinds of risk varied widely from society to society and between individuals depending on cultural, socio-economic and psychological factors. The meeting felt that in most cases the majority of consumers were not aware of, and hence not unduly concerned about, the safety and nutritional aspects of street foods. Rather, it is the taste and variety, appearance and price that plays the important role in the selection of food by consumers. Availability of food at convenient times and locations for the consumer are other very important factors. Discriminating consumers look for general cleanliness of street food vendors but this factor might not be a significant consideration when the total overall environment in which they operate is far from satisfactory.

25. The meeting felt that once consumers become aware of food safety issues and therefore more discriminating, and commence insisting on improved hygiene, sanitation and food handling practices, they could greatly influence vendors to improve their food handling practices. This could be achieved through consumer education in matters relating to food safety and nutrition. It therefore is the responsibility of national food control authorities, technical institutions and local health authorities to take the necessary action to increase consumer awareness of these matters.





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## [VIII Role of women and children](#)

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# VIII Role of women and children

26. The meeting gave particular attention to children as consumers of street foods, while it also recognized that they may equally be involved in their preparation and vending. The subject of children as consumers of street foods deserves very special attention and calls for interaction among parents, school authorities and teachers on the one hand, and vendors on the other. Active involvement of parents associations and the public health and other authorities was considered essential. As street food vendors often locate outside school premises, and in many cases even operate within the school premises, the school authorities are in a strong position to influence them to serve safe and nutritious food to the children. The meeting considered that action by the authorities could include priority training of school principals and teachers to enable them to monitor the quality and safety of street foods. Training of vendors and provision of improved infrastructure was equally necessary. At the same time, the education of the children, both at home and in the school, on food safety in general and in the quality and safety of street foods in particular, was essential.

27. The meeting recognized that street foods offer an indisputable opportunity of employment for women. It is not by chance that the majority of street food vendors around the world are women. Women are involved in food preparation for the family at home and therefore establishing a small street food vending business comes naturally to them. Street food vending gives a measure of economic independence to women which has many significant positive social implications. The meeting therefore recommended that the important role of women in street foods be fully recognized and appreciated when dealing with the sector.





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## [IX Educational programmes](#)

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# IX Educational programmes

28. The meeting recognized that the education and training of food handlers, vendors and consumers of street foods was a fundamental and most urgent need. The purpose of such programmes was to make them aware of hygienic, sanitary and technological aspects of street food vending and consumption. It is only through such training and subsequent monitoring of the situation that street food vendors could be integrated into, and considered a responsible part of, a city's food supply system. Consumers who are aware of food hygiene and nutritional requirements become discriminating buyers and thereby not only protect themselves and their family but also place pressure on vendors to practice good food handling and preparation practices.

29. The meeting noted that many street food projects and studies carried out in Africa, Asia and Latin America have strong training components. Considerable work has been done in this field and several approaches and strategies have been tried. There has been formal training programmes for groups of vendors. These have included individually oriented sessions, courses for training of trainers, public educational programmes through the mass media, and programmes for special target groups such as school children. Several training modules have been developed on various aspects of educational programmes under these projects.

30. The meeting recommended the strengthening of training activities keeping in view the lessons learned. The aims of training programmes should be clearly identified. Selection of trainees was considered a key element of a successful programme. The design of training modules should meet the specific requirements of each category of trainees, whether food inspectors, vendors or consumers. Pretesting of training modules was considered a desirable practice. The meeting stressed the particular importance of training of trainers. While traditional approaches based on theoretical and practical sessions might still be valid at the inspector's level of training, at vendor levels it was considered necessary to develop more innovative approaches. In general, the training agenda should be focused on the identification of hazards and on control measures to be implemented. Changes in attitudes and practices would need to be followed closely after training and future activities continuously revised on the basis of past experience. The involvement of NGOs in training vendors would in many cases ensure sustainability of such programmes.

31. The meeting stressed that means should be identified for the implementation of extensive training programmes and for ensuring their sustainability at management and funding levels. Collaboration with NGOs and the private sector could contribute in funding such programmes.

32. The meeting also discussed at length the need for consumer education. It recognized that more work was required in this field covering an improved definition of objectives, targets and strategies. The positive role of on-the-spot demonstrations in model street food areas was underlined.

33. The meeting emphasized the key role of food inspectors or public health inspectors belonging to the local body in ensuring the quality and safety of street foods. It was considered essential that such inspectors be trained not only in identification of food hazards and control measures, but also in the technologies of food preparation at street level. This would enable them to pass on their knowledge of ways to improve food handling to vendors. To make this work, they required training skills. Several countries had prepared training modules for inspectors and run successful courses in training of trainers. This experience should be utilized and expanded throughout all the regions. The meeting was of the opinion that this matter deserved priority attention.

34. Considering the special characteristics and linguistic requirements of each region the meeting considered it appropriate that various training programmes and modules might profitably be developed at regional levels and thereafter adapted at national and local levels. There were several other areas covering street food technologies, socio-cultural aspects of street foods and the likes that deserved attention at a regional level. The meeting recommended that consideration be given by FAO to establishing or recognising some of the existing national institutions as "Regional Centres of Excellence for Street Foods". Such centres could collaborate and share experiences on street foods on a TCDC basis. Special consideration should also be given to the development of an electronic information and library exchange network covering street foods, with advice from a group of international experts, as appropriate.





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## [X Guideline action plan](#)

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# X Guideline action plan

35. Based on the available experience in the street food area of almost two decades, and to quicken the pace of development, the meeting considered it appropriate to develop a "guideline action plan" on street foods which includes essential elements, and to identify strategies for action for the improvement of the street food sector in an integrated manner.

36. The meeting prepared a "Guideline Action Plan on Street Foods". This is Annex 4 of this report. The meeting recommended that governmental authorities at national and local levels, as well as relevant international organizations, give it priority consideration for implementation.





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## [XI Recommendations](#)

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# XI Recommendations

37. The meeting made recommendations as set out below.

- On the basis of the available data, awareness of countries regarding the important socio-economic and nutritional implications of street foods has increased. ***It is recommended*** that such awareness should be developed further on a world wide basis and sustained, and also that necessary steps be taken to formally recognize the sector at national and local levels.

Development of model street foods areas is a useful means to raise awareness amongst policy makers and to launch specific actions for improvements in the informal sector.

- Recognizing that the role of women in street food vending has many positive social and economic implications, ***it is recommended*** that their important role be fully recognized and taken into account when dealing with the sector.

- ***It is recommended*** that specific regulations be prepared and implemented to ensure sustainable improvement of street foods. These regulations should be scientifically based and recognize the special characteristics of street foods. Responsibilities of national and municipal authorities should be clearly defined. Vendors' and consumers' representatives should be actively involved and consulted in the formulation process. Licensing and development of codes of practices were stressed as essential components of sound regulations for street foods. Codes of practices should be established by national authorities for adaptation to the particular circumstances at the location they are to be implemented. Control and monitoring should principally be carried out through regular presence of adequately trained food inspectors to provide advice and rectify inappropriate practices. These actions should be based on the use of risk analysis methodologies and implementation of Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs).

- Considering the outcome of previous meetings, the experience gained in improving sanitary environment of street foods (supply of potable water and waste disposal facilities in particular) and the improvement of street food vending infrastructure, ***it is recommended*** that the actions initiated continue to be vigorously pursued. ***It is recommended*** that the participation of vendors and NGOs be strengthened in the design of the developmental programmes, mobilization of

financial resources, and in development and maintenance of appropriate infrastructures. *It is recommended* that special attention be given to development of adequate sanitary facilities on a collective basis, in selected areas identified by local authorities.

- The training of all involved in street foods is a fundamental need. *It is recommended* that efforts made in this field be sustained and training methodologies continue to be developed on the basis of experience. *It is further recommended* that training continue to address specific requirements for training of food inspectors, trainers, vendors. Education of consumers including school children should receive attention. Issues like those of participatory approach, setting of model areas, pretesting and evaluation of training modules should be studied and developed further. The establishment of "Regional Centres of Excellence" *is recommended* so as to contribute to the exchange of knowledge and experience towards improving street foods technologies and training methodologies. Consideration of electronic networking for exchange of information *is recommended*.

- Considering the outcome of past meetings and the experience gained from activities carried out in a number of countries over the last two decades, a framework for a guideline action plan on street foods for implementation at local, national and international levels *is recommended*. This is attached as Annex 4.





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## [XII Adoption of the report](#)

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# XII Adoption of the report

38. The meeting adopted the report.





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## [XIII Closing ceremony](#)

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# XIII Closing ceremony

39. The closing ceremony was chaired by Mr. N. Krishnamurthy, Chief Secretary, Government of West Bengal and co-chaired by Mr. R. J. Dawson, Chief, Food Quality and Standards Service, FAO, Rome. The closing remarks were made by Mr. Tushar Kanti Talukder, Commissioner of Police, Calcutta. Prof. I. Chakravarty concluded by expressing thanks to all those involved in the meeting.





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## [Annexes](#)

[Annex 1 Provisional agenda](#)

[Annex 2 List of participants](#)

[Annex 3 References](#)

[Annex 4 Guideline action plan on street foods](#)

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# Annexes

## ***Annex 1 Provisional agenda***

### **FAO TECHNICAL MEETING ON STREET FOODS CALCUTTA, INDIA, 6-9 NOVEMBER 1995**

1. Opening of the Meeting
2. Adoption of the Agenda
3. Current Information on Street Foods
  - 3.1 FAO Activities on Street Foods
  - 3.2 Selected Case Studies:
    - India
    - Indonesia
  - 3.3 Experience of Street Foods in:

- Africa

- Latin America

4. Role of Municipal/National Authorities in City Management vis-à-vis Street Foods
5. Advance in Regulatory Aspects of Street Foods
6. Development of Appropriate Technologies for Street Foods
7. Consumer Perceptions on Street Foods
8. Role of Women and Children on Street Foods
9. Education Approaches in Improved Street Food Management and Role of NGOs
10. Proposal for a Guideline Plan of Action on Street Foods
11. Adoption of the Report of the Meeting
12. Closing of the Meeting

## ***Annex 2 List of participants***

### **Experts**

#### **China**

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## ***Annex 4 Guideline action plan on street foods***

### **SCOPE**

1. The purpose of the action plan is not to propose a world-wide project on street foods, but rather to determine certain essential elements, in a sequential order, which could be applied as such or with modifications, in different parts of the world. Application of various elements would need to be carried out in an integrated manner, with a judgement being taken as to the appropriateness of each depending upon the socio-economic and political environment of the particular country or region.

### **BACKGROUND**

2. It is recognized that street foods play an important socio-economic role in terms of employment potential, particularly for women, and in serving the food and nutritional requirements of consumers at prices affordable to the lower and middle income groups. It is estimated that in several major cities of the world the equivalent of millions of US dollars changes hands every day through the sale of street foods. The economic significance of street foods is therefore immense. Street foods have become a big part of the present day urban scenario of many countries, even though they may not always be formally recognized or acknowledged.

3. While there are many positive aspects of street foods, there are also several negative aspects. Hence

any plan or initiative taken to improve the street food situation will succeed only when both the positive and negative aspects are fully taken into consideration. The negative aspects include encroachment on roadsides and pavements, creation of problems of hygiene and sanitation, potential disturbance in the lives of other citizens, and a possible contribution to the deterioration of the law and order situation within the city. It must be recognized that the enlightened citizen's concerns in these matters are genuine. Thus, while local bodies must deal with the potential health hazards of street foods, at the same time they should also be equally concerned about the total environment in which the citizenry of the city has to live and function. Basically it is a matter of cognizance of the issues and problems involved. This calls for long term planning of the city infrastructure, provision of adequate civic amenities, and efficient overall management of the same.

## **THE PLAN**

4. The first step in the guideline action plan would therefore be to recognize that the informal street food sector has a legitimate place in a city. However, this should not be at the cost of the normal civic life, and need not be detrimental to the interests of the more formal food service sector. In turn, it means that city infrastructure and facilities have to be so developed and managed that street foods and the orderly life of the city can co-exist, and even support each other. How this is to be achieved is a decision that each government must make, at the local level, keeping in mind its own particular circumstances. There are problems that need to be faced and decisions that must be made. Otherwise, street food vending can become a problem in terms of degradation of the environment, deterioration of law and order, and jeopardy to the health of the consumer from food sold under unregulated conditions. It is anticipated that in most situations, and on cost effectiveness considerations, the logical decision would be to permit a street food industry but control the conditions under which it operates and ensure improved management and control of the sector.

5. There are a range of options that are available. One is the relocation of vendors into "food centres" located at strategic sites where people congregate in the city. In such centres they would operate under one roof and have facilities such as water, electricity and a garbage disposal service. Some cities may consider following this approach in highly-congested city centres or other similar locations, and license vendors to operate only from these centres. In the peripheral areas vendors may be allowed to operate as before but within a regulatory system. Another approach is that of "special areas" for street food vending where again the necessary facilities are provided by the local body. Yet another option might be to allow street food vending within specified time periods. There might yet be still other options that have not been reviewed or tried. Any provision of basic facilities such as water, electricity, waste disposal and toilets by the local bodies is bound to require capital investment and additional recurring maintenance costs. Active participation by representatives of street food vendors in the development of such options is therefore crucial. Their cooperation will also be necessary in the day-to-day operations. This may help in recovering a part of the additional costs incurred by the government or the local body.

6. Once the street food sector is officially recognized, street food vendors should be issued with licences to operate and these may specify the food or foods for which the licence is valid and the location in which it is to be prepared or sold. It is desirable that the issuance of licences is done through a single designated

agency or office within the local body. The duration of the licence should be a minimum of one year, renewable, unless the vendor has been found guilty of a sufficiently serious offence. An element of transparency is necessary in all decisions relating to the issue or non-issue of licences and the participation of street food vendors or their representatives in this process is essential.

7. Health hazards are present in a wide range of foods and assessing the health risk associated with food is not an easy task. As the variety of foods sold on the street are numerous it may be desirable to develop priorities utilizing the risk analysis approach (an approach which includes risk assessment, risk management and risk communication), and categorizing street foods on a health risk basis into "high risk foods" and "lower risk foods". The bulk of food borne illness is associated with microbiological contamination of foods. Food that can support multiplication of pathogens, namely foods with high water-activity that have been kept at ambient temperature (above 15°C) for several hours, are particularly dangerous. This categorization will help in reducing the task of licensing to manageable proportions. It needs to be noted that such categorization need not have a permanent status and that as additional data from monitoring of foods and the environment becomes available, the priorities for action should change accordingly. It also does not mean that food hazards from chemical contamination or other sources can be ignored altogether. Thus, it might be proposed that:

- in the first instance consideration be given to not licensing the least sophisticated vendors (usually the poorest, such as hawkers with head-loads or carry bags) and restricting them to selling dry goods such as roasted grain, rice puffs, potato chips, and roasted and salted nuts. Thus they would not be allowed to prepare and sell high risk foods.
- Another class of lower-risk foods might be factory packed ice cream and yogurt (sold in push cart ice boxes which are usually provided and maintained by the supplying company) and factory bottled beverages. These foods are usually sold by itinerant hawkers who move from one part of the city to another, usually frequenting schools, parks and bus terminals. Such vendors could be licensed without great difficulty as these are outlets for the more organized food sector.
- The third category comprises all types of higher-risk foods. These include foods such as cooked meat or fish dishes, curries, soups, salads, lentils, cut fruits, individually prepared ice creams and sorbets, fresh juice, milk and milk products and sandwiches. Vendors need to be licensed specifically for these. Most of these foods are normally sold through fixed stalls or push carts.

8. To ensure that street food management is carried out in an integrated manner, it is essential that there be good coordination between the public health authorities, police and local body administration right up to the political level of the mayor or deputy mayor. This coordination can be in the nature of a formal letter of agreement between the various agencies or the setting up of a special task force on street foods. In addition, a city level mechanism would need to be developed which would enable active participation of street food vendors' representatives. The authorities may in fact encourage the formation of vendors' associations or cooperatives and involve them and representatives of consumers in all the decision making processes concerning street foods. Such a special task force set up by the municipality can interact with the vendors and can bring about attitudinal changes in their behaviour over a period of time.

9. The authority responsible for street food would need to set up a special cell or unit to deal with this informal sector. It is often the case that regulations cover all food and there are no regulations specific to street foods. Food regulations concerning street foods, where they exist, should be reviewed. The national food control authorities should take steps to prepare codes of practice for street foods that might apply to the whole country or on a regional basis within large countries with regional ethnic variations. Such codes can be further modified to suit the local city situation. Food inspectors at the local body level would need specialized training so that they can adequately monitor the safety of street foods and to ensure proper implementation of the codes of practice. Street foods consumed by children should receive special attention.

10. In the monitoring and inspection of street foods, it is important that decision-makers give priority attention to high risk operations. A limited number of problems occur repeatedly and cause the greatest harm. Examples are holding food at room temperature for several hours, having an inordinate period of time between preparing and serving food, inadequate time-temperature exposure during cooking or reheating of food, storing food in bulk in large pots in refrigerator, insufficiently high temperatures during hot storage, and cross contamination between raw and cooked food. Such critical problem areas should receive the most attention by inspectors compared to those problems which occur either less frequently or rarely.

11. An integrated action plan on street foods should have a strong educational and training component. Food handlers need to be trained in food hygiene and good food handling practices and also in small business management. They should be knowledgeable about regulatory aspects of preparing and selling street foods. It is desirable that such training be imparted within an overall programme for street food improvement. As far as possible, such qualified vendors should be asked to wear something distinctive, such as an apron or a badge, which may also give them recognition and an enhanced sense of pride in their work. NGOs can play an important role in educational and training programmes, in motivating vendors towards better performance and in raising financial and other resources.

12. Among the very basic facilities to be provided by the local authority are space, water, electricity, lavatories, and garbage disposal services. Depending upon the local situation, serious consideration should also be given to the provision of community or collaborative cooking, promoting community cleaning and sanitation of utensils, provision of tableware and the likes. The logistics of such common services would need to be worked out carefully and in consultation with vendors. This may help in the recovery of day-to-day running costs from the vendors on a "cost recovery only" basis.

13. As there are several technological aspects to street food vending, it would be useful to involve appropriate technical institutions in the subject. This will enable further scientific and technical inputs appropriate to the needs of both vendors and consumers. These might include improved water storage and dispensing equipment, improvements in preparation of foods to achieve more nutritious meals, improvements in maintaining food at the correct temperature and innovative designs for food stalls and push carts. Weaning foods prepared and sold by street vendors in certain countries is another important area which may call for attention from technical institutions. National authorities could sponsor work on

these matters. The impact of such improvements on the ultimate cost of the food and on vendor's income should be carefully considered so that they are not burdened with unrecoverable costs.

## **ACTION AT NATIONAL LEVEL**

14. It is recognised that the issue of street foods is quite complex in terms of its political, economic and health implications. It may therefore be advisable under certain circumstances to commence with a limited project and subsequently expand the work based on the initial experience. Keeping this approach in view, it is suggested that governments identify and select one city in each state or region which they might develop as a model for a street food programme. In each of the cities selected, a beginning could be made with certain selected areas which should either have, or be provided with, the necessary infrastructure and facilities. These should include provision of potable water and garbage disposal services and street food vendors operating within the regulatory framework of the local body. This pilot operation should involve:

- Establishing a street food unit or cell at the local body level.
- Setting up of an inter-departmental committee or task force on street foods.
- Developing a suitable mechanism within the city hierarchy for a continuing dialogue with vendors' and consumers' representatives, as well as with NGOs.
- Providing potable water, garbage disposal and toilet facilities in the project areas, if necessary on community or collaborative basis.
- Framing of rules for issuance of licences.
- Development of codes of practice for street foods based on risk analysis, taking into consideration both the potential hazards and the possible control measures so as to provide consumer protection.
- Drafting of appropriately adapted food regulations based on experience.
- Strengthening of surveillance and monitoring programmes for street foods.
- Preparing training modules and course material for training of trainers and vendors, as well as the organizing of training.
- Preparing and disseminating education material and media messages on food safety issues, including food hygiene, sanitation, food colourings, other additives and nutrition issues.
- Encouraging developments in street food vending technology and the introduction of

technological improvements in preparation, packaging, storage and sale of street foods.

- Making efforts to mobilize resources, and obtaining support of NGOs as necessary, for loans to vendors to enable them to invest in improvements.
- liaising with consumer groups and NGOs, so as to obtain their cooperation with regulatory authorities in the monitoring of the performance of the street food sector.
- Evaluation of processes and results for their impact and determining further action required.
- Extension of the programme to other areas and cities.

15. Based on the success of the above model it should be possible to replicate the operations in other places. Technical Cooperation Among Developing Countries (TCDC) to share each others experience and knowledge should be undertaken.

## **ACTION AT INTERNATIONAL LEVEL**

16. City authorities in most developing countries are confronted with multi-faceted problems of rapid urbanization. Street food is just one of these problems. Realizing the importance of this informal food sector to several city population sectors, as well as its potential to provide employment, international organizations such as FAO, WHO, ILO, etc., should continue to cooperate with national and local bodies in:

- Carrying out "cost/effectiveness" evaluations for the launching of specific interventions which would, over a period of time, help to improve the quality and safety of street foods sold in the market while avoiding serious problems for the city environment.
- Monitor and evaluate the socio-economic impact of the above actions.

17. As street food vending has distinct local, national or regional characteristics, steps should be taken to initiate and support the establishment of regional "Centres of Excellence" for street foods. These could provide training for trainers, managerial staff from street food control agencies, local bodies, police, public health department and others. They could also help in collaboration between countries and sharing of experiences on street foods on a TCDC basis. Through a system of networking with other institutions, such centres could be precursors to development of actions in areas related to street food requiring attention. Special consideration should be given to the development of electronic information and library exchange network.

18. Several studies have been undertaken to determine the nutritional content of street foods. To obtain a better profile of the nutritional aspects of street foods, an additional limited number of studies may be necessary to determine the type of street foods eaten and their contribution to the diet of different groups

of the population, particularly the children and women. This would assist the estimation of the percentage of the daily nutrients requirements met from these sources. Such information could then be used in developing educational programmes for the consumers and also for training of vendors to promote preparation of more nutritious foods. In any such survey, special attention should be paid to the collection of data on micronutrients.

