

The Caribbean Task Force on Food Safety Advances Regional Food Safety Initiatives in 2025

The Caribbean Task Force on Food Safety (CTFS) continues to make progress in strengthening food safety systems across the region. Following the CTFS Conference in Suriname (September 10-12, 2024), a follow-up meeting was convened in Barbados (January 28-29, 2025) to advance the development of a three-year work plan.

This high-level meeting brought together key sponsors, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the European Union (EU), with the Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency (CAHFSA) serving as facilitator and the in-person and virtual task force members who participated from CARICOM Member States.

Representatives from the following list of National, Regional and International Organizations also participated, sharing some expert advice for the work plan.

- Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)
- The University of the West Indies (UWI)
- Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM)
- Caribbean Regional Organization for Standards and Quality (CROSQ)
- Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI)
- Committee of Caribbean Plant Health Directors (CCPHD)
- Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF)
- Caribbean Council of Veterinary Officers (CCVO)
- Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA)
- Scientific Research Council (SRC) Jamaica
- Global Food Regulatory Science Society (GForSS)
- Ministry of Agriculture – Guyana
- National Institute on Food Safety, Suriname
- CARICOM Secretariat

Advancing Food Safety as a Public Health and Economic Priority

Recognizing food safety as both a public health priority and an economic driver, the CTFS is committed to strengthening regional regulatory frameworks, enhancing food safety resilience, and addressing emerging threats to food and nutrition security. The three-year work plan was developed in response to recommendations from the September 2024 conference. The following recommendations and key goals outlined in the work plan serve to address priority food safety issues in CARICOM.

1. Strengthen Training Programs as the foundation for Food Safety

- Enhance food safety knowledge and compliance across the food chain.
 - Develop Continuous Professional Development Programs for Key Stakeholders
2. Network and modernize Laboratory Services in the Caribbean.
 - Improve laboratory capability to reliably conduct tests for food safety and SPS compliance to facilitate regional and international trade.
 - Enhance the national monitoring program for food safety violations and incidents.
 3. Shape the Caribbean Food Safety Culture for compliance to excellence.
 - Develop a comprehensive Food Safety Culture Transformation Plan.
 4. Support Legislative Updates and Manage Political Influences.
 - Modernize, develop, update and enforce Food Safety and Quality Legislation.
 - Harmonize Food Safety Legislation across the region.
 5. Initiate Risk-Based Assessment to mitigate Food Vulnerabilities (Food Fraud) and Threats (Food Defense).
 - Develop a regional electronic Risk-Based Food Inspection Tool.
 6. Critical elements of Codex Standards should be included in the legal framework for Caribbean Member States.
 - Strengthen the regional and national process for Codex.

Aligning with World Food Safety Day

In a significant move to maintain momentum, the CTFS has permanently scheduled its annual meetings for June 3-4, aligning with World Food Safety Day on June 7. This decision underscores the task force commitment to ongoing collaboration and innovation in food safety across CARICOM.

Further updates on projects, initiatives, and partnerships will be shared in the coming months. Stakeholders and industry professionals are encouraged to stay engaged as the region works towards a safer, more resilient food system.