COVID-19: Scientific Status and Ensuring Safety

Science Approach: COVID-19 disease, caused by SARS-CoV-2 virus, is challenging our domestic and global food production and trade systems. Understanding and acting upon scientific fact is critical in order that consumers have a reliable and safe food supply which is essential for their individual nutritional and health needs. Based upon WHO, FAO, OIE, Codex and WTO scientific understanding regarding COVID-19 and sanitary measures the current status regarding food include:

- **Food safety**: COVID-19 is not a food safety issue; it is a respiratory illness and the primary route of transmission is person-to-person via respiratory droplets. It cannot multiply in food. It needs specific live mammals or a human host for the virus to multiply. Currently, there is no evidence that this disease can be transmitted by food or by meat, whether fresh or frozen. Poultry is not affected by the SARS-CoV-2 and thus plays no role in the spread of COVID-19. Nevertheless, the food industry continues to practice stringent food safety procedures to ensure safe food.
- **Packaging safety**: There is no evidence of virus transfer via packaging to date. Research has indicated the SARS-CoV-2 virus only lasts up to 24 hours on cardboard and 72 hours on plastic and stainless steel. Current safety measures and practices should minimize or eliminate the risk of exposure to viable infectious viruses due to packaging, when considering factors of time, temperature, and medium from initial packaging till utilization.
- **Handling and surfaces safety**: Food handling procedures include stringent sanitation and hygiene practices that minimize or eliminate the risk of transferring the virus via food handling, utensils, and surfaces. HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) procedures that are in place globally are a systematic preventive approach to food safety biological risks, including for viruses such as SARS-CoV-2.
- **Worker safety**: Safety of people, including all those involved in the supply chain, is of the highest priority for food Companies and producers regarding COVID-19. For the global poultry sector this includes biosecurity measures, temperature monitoring, physical separation, protective equipment, and clothing for workers, that limits the potential spread of the disease. These measures start with input suppliers, then to farmers and producers, to processors and distributors, to exporters and importers, to retailers and quick service, and ultimately to the consumer. Any intervention that may be necessary to guarantee workers safety takes place in collaboration with the Competent Health Authorities.
- **Detailed information**: SARS-CoV-2 can only infect people when present in its intact form. Inactive fragments of the virus may remain on surfaces, but these inactive fragments cannot transmit COVID-19. Most tests cannot differentiate between inactive virus fragments that are not infectious and the intact virus. Therefore, caution in the interpretation of test results is required based on testing methodology. Environmental contamination can result in positive test results in areas where COVID-19 patients are present or have been present. Heat at 56 degrees Centigrade, or 133 degrees Fahrenheit, inactivates or kills the SARS coronavirus at around 10,000 units per 15 minutes (quick reduction).

The International Poultry Council (IPC) and its Members are committed to ensuring the highest level of safety at each step from the farm to the consumer. IPC encourages all Members to follow the established international governmental recommendations and guidance as well as that of National Authorities to ensure safety. Working together, between the government sector and private sector, supply chain and trade disruptions can be avoided so the essential nutritional needs of consumers can be met globally.

IPC recognizes, based on current scientific understanding, that following the established sanitary and phytosanitary measures will ensure safety in the production and trade of food. IPC notes the critical importance of following the evolution of scientific knowledge and updating all measures and practices based upon science-based risk analysis principles and processes.

Scientific Sources: The core international scientific, and sanitary and phytosanitary measures, sources are:

- Codex Alimentarius - International Food Standards: General information: http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/thematic-areas/COVID-19/en/
- FAO - Food and Agriculture Organization: General information: http://www.fao.org/2019-ncov/en/, and specific to food safety: http://www.fao.org/2019-ncov/q-and-a/food-safety/en/, and interim guidance for business: http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca8660en
- WHO - World Health Organization: General information: https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019, and technical guidance: https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance
- OIE - World Organisation for Animal Health: General information: https://www.oie.int/en/scientific-expertise/specific-information-and-recommendations/questions-and-answers-on-2019novel-coronavirus/
- WTO - World Trade Organization: General information: https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/covid19_e/covid19_e.htm