

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

(Adapted from ICD/WHO/SEAMEO/GTZ Manual: Food Safety for Nutritionists and Other Health Professionals)

Additives and ingredients	Substances added to foods to influence their condition or to bring about specific characteristics or effects (help manufacture, preserve, improve palatability, eye appeal, convenience - e.g. emulsifiers, flavours, thickeners, curing agents, humectants, colours, vitamins, minerals, moulds, yeasts, and bacterial inhibitors).
Allergy	A reaction provoked by antigen contact with antibodies. Symptoms include widening of capillaries (reddening of skin or mucous membranes), increase in permeability (local swelling) and secretion (tears, sputum, rhinitis), itching.
Ambient temperature	Surrounding temperature; usually refers to room temperature.
Antibiotics	Secondary metabolites of microorganism which, in small quantities, can inhibit or lethally harm another microorganism.
Bacteria	A diverse group of single-celled organisms that are neither plants nor animals. Some bacteria are useful; others are harmful.
Botulism	Neuromuscular intoxication caused by Clostridium botulinum toxin. When the vegetative cells grow in a food they produce a potent exotoxin which causes botulism when ingested. It is the most dangerous type of food poisoning and is usually caused by under-processed contaminated canned or vacuum-packed foods.
Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex)	The Commission was jointly established by FAO and WHO to develop food standards guidelines and related texts such as code of practice. Its main purposes are the protection of consumer health, ensuring fair trade practices in the food trade and providing co-ordination of all food standards developed by international, governmental and non-governmental organisations.
Critical Control Point (CCP)	A step at which control can be applied and is essential to prevent or eliminate a food safety hazard or reduce it to an acceptable level. (Codex)
Contaminant	Any biological or chemical agent, foreign matter or other substances not intentionally added to food that may compromise food safety and suitability. (Codex)
Contamination	The introduction or occurrence of a contaminant in food or food environment. (Codex)
Cross Contamination	A contamination occurring during the production, processing or preparation of food, either through direct contact of uncontaminated materials with contaminated materials or through transmission by a vehicle.
Danger zone	The temperature range most conducive to the multiplication of bacteria (5 ^o C to 60 ^o C).
Decontamination	Sanitation, disinfection. Drastic reduction of the microbial population.
Deep freezing	A method to extend the shelf life or keeping quality of a food product by storing it at temperatures below -18 ^o C until it is delivered to the consumer.
Dehydration	Loss of water.
Diarrhoea	Refers to passing a fluid stools with a high frequency. This is the most typical symptom associated with foodborne infection.
Disinfection	The reduction, by means of chemical agents and/or physical methods, of the number of microorganisms in the environment, to a level that does not compromise food safety or suitability. (Codex)
Endemic:	A disease that prevails or recurs frequently in a locality or population.
Epidemic	An outbreak of an infectious disease that affects many people at one time in the same area.
Extrinsic factors	Factors external to a food that may be applied (e.g. by the processor) for extending the shelf life or keeping quality of a food (e.g. temperature, preservatives, storage).
Fermentation	A desirable process of biochemical modification of primary food products brought about by microorganisms and their enzymes.

Food handler	Any person who handles packaged or unpackaged food, food equipment and utensils or surfaces in contact with food and is therefore expected to comply with food hygiene requirements. (Codex)
Food hygiene	All conditions and measures necessary to ensure the safety and suitability of food at all stages of the food chain. (Codex)
Foodborne disease	A disease, usually either infectious or toxic in nature, caused by agents that enter the body through the ingestion of food. The term “food” includes drinking-water. Sometimes this is incorrectly referred to as food poisoning.
Food poisoning	This is a term that is often used to refer to foodborne illness/disease but WHO does not recommend it.
Food safety	Assurance that food will not cause harm to the consumer when it is prepared and/or eaten according to its intended use. (Codex)
Food spoilage	Food becomes unfit to eat as a result of: growth and activities of microorganisms, insect infestation, action of enzymes, chemical reactions, and physical changes (e.g. freezing, burning, drying, pressure, and humidity).
Food toxin	Compounds naturally present in food that are toxic or carcinogenic or have pharmacological effects. This includes natural carcinogens and nutritional inhibitors.
Fungus	See Mould.
Gastro-enteritis	Also known as gut infection. Inflammatory change of the lining of stomach and intestine usually caused by microorganisms ingested with the food or water.
Gut microbes	Microorganisms that live in the gastrointestinal tract of man or animals.
HACCP	“Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point”. A system that identifies, evaluates, and controls hazards that are significant for food safety. (Codex)
Hazard	A biological, chemical or physical agent in, or condition of, food with the potential to cause an adverse health effect. (Codex)
Heat sterilisation	Commonly practised method for the destruction (killing) of all viable microorganisms.
Heavy metals	Metals with a specific gravity of >5, such as iron, lead, copper, zinc, nickel, chromium, molybdenum, cadmium, silver, as well as semi-metals such as arsenic.
High-risk food	These include foods that have been linked epidemiologically to foodborne disease or that, due to their nature, preparation or storage, present a greater risk of foodborne disease than other foods.
International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO)	A global network of national standards institutions, working in partnership with international organisations, governments, industry, business and consumer representatives to establish internationally recognised quality and good practice standards such as ISO 9000.
Immunity	Part of the defence system of man and animal against infections.
Incubation period	The time interval between exposure to a pathogen or toxin and the appearance of the first clinical symptoms (e.g. 7-21 days for enteric fever). It differs considerably between foodborne infections and intoxication.
Indicator organism	A microorganism used to check the effectiveness of GHP.
Infection	Entry and colonisation of an infectious microorganism in a living macroorganism (host). Disease does not always develop but the host becomes a “carrier”.
Irradiation	Treatment with ionising radiation to render food safe or increase its shelf-life.
Metabolism	Biochemical process in all living cells. Uptake of nutrients and assimilation in the cell.
Metabolite:	An intermediate or end product of microbial metabolism partially excreted in food, with a desired or undesired effect e.g. organic acids, Carbon Dioxide and other gases, ethanol, antibiotics, mycotoxins, flavour and other substances influencing the taste.
Microorganisms (microbes)	Simple living creatures comprising viruses, bacteria, algae, protozoa and fungi (fungi include yeast and moulds).

Monitoring (HACCP)	The act of conducting a planned sequence of observations or measurements of control parameters to assess whether a CCP is under control. (Codex)
Mould	Refers to any fungus that normally forms a mat of branched elongated cells. Several moulds are useful in the preparation of food (e.g. cheese and Tempe) but many cause spoilage. Some moulds produce harmful mycotoxins.
Mycotoxins	Toxins produced by fungi during growth. The most widely studied mycotoxins are the aflatoxins produced by the moulds <i>Aspergillus flavus</i> and <i>parasiticus</i> .
Nutrition	The combination of processes by which a living organism receives and uses the material necessary to maintain its function, to grow, and to renew its components.
Ochratoxins	A group of mycotoxins produced by Aspergilli and Penicillia growing on foodstuffs. Ochratoxin A is the best known.
Packaging	A container or wrapping designed to protect food commodities from mechanical and climatic influences, and to act as a barrier to pests and microorganisms.
Pasteurisation	Heating a food to temperatures at least the equivalent of 72 ⁰ C for 15 seconds. Pasteurisation destroys most toxins and vegetative cells of microorganisms causing food poisoning. Most bacterial spores survive pasteurisation.
Pathogenic	Pertaining to the ability to produce disease.
Pathogens	Any disease-causing microorganism or material (bacteria, yeast, fungi, and viruses) that may affect other living organisms, to the detriment of their health.
Pesticides	All compounds used in plant protection against pests.
pH value	Measure of the “acidity” or “alkalinity” of a water-containing product.
Preservation	Various methods to extend the shelf life of food (e.g. dehydration, heat sterilisation, freezing, radiation, addition of preservatives) by inhibiting the multiplication and/or growth of microorganisms and by minimising chemical and sensory changes.
Preservatives	Antimicrobial substances that prevent multiplication of microorganisms and sometimes also used for preventing other types of undesirable activities.
Risk	A function of the probability of an adverse health effect and the severity of that effect, consequential to (a) hazard(s) in food. .
Spore	“Bacterial spores”. Extremely resistant survival forms produced by bacteria (genera <i>Bacillus</i> , <i>Clostridium</i>) under conditions of nutrient limitation.
Sterilisation	In the context of food processing, a method of preservation by killing all microorganisms associated with a foodstuff usually by applying heat, for example in bottling and canning. (WHO)
Toxic	Poisonous.
Vector	Also known as a vehicle. Method of transport for microorganisms to hosts or habitats (e.g. wind, water, insects, rodents, pets, man, utensils).
Verification	The application of methods, procedures, tests and other evaluations, in addition to monitoring to determine compliance with the HACCP plan. (Codex)
Viral gastro-enteritis	Collective term for gastro-enteritis caused by viruses, mostly transmitted to man by water, raw salads, and vegetables. The following are described as pathogens: Rota viruses Group A and others, Norwalk viruses and large “related” types, (27 - 32 nm), Adeno-, Astro- and Caliciviruses.
Viral hepatitis	Also known as infectious jaundice. An acute infection that is caused by the type A hepatitis virus. The virus is transmitted from person to person by the faecal-oral route, such as on contaminated food, water and utensils.
Virus	Internal parasites of the cells of many organisms; they are unable to grow outside of the living cells of their host.
World Health Organisation (WHO)	The United Nations specialised agency intended to provide leadership in attainment by all peoples of the highest possible levels of health.
Zoonoses	Communicable diseases that can be transmitted to man by animals.