

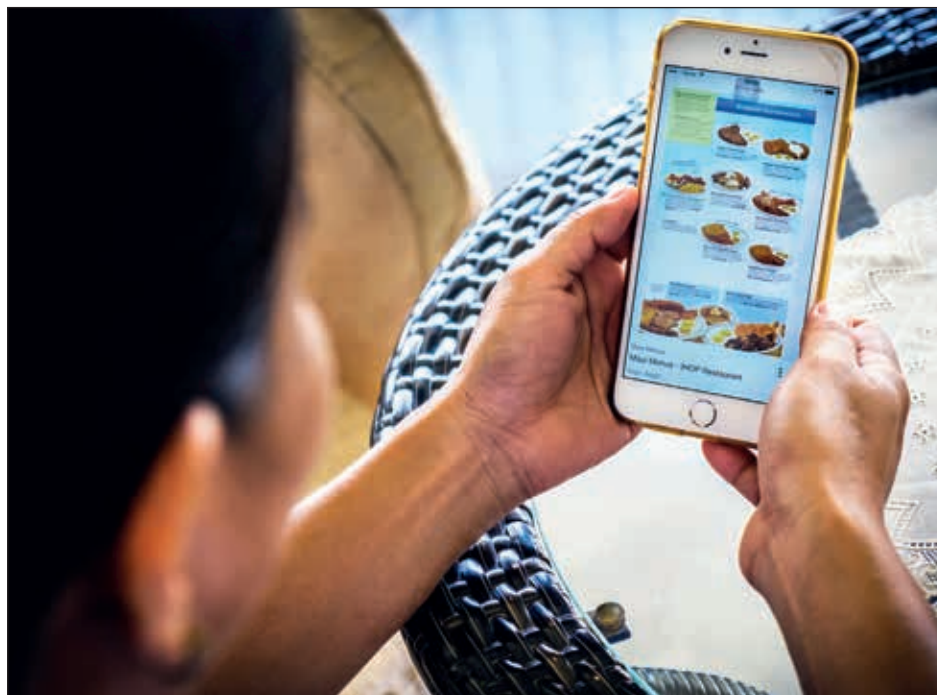
4. The future of food safety in the Region

With growing consumer demand, mistrust in food safety is an increasing concern. Health, socioeconomic and political consequences can be severe if food safety incidents are not well managed. Consumers may lose confidence in food safety systems. In addition, the emergence of social media has revolutionized the way people obtain information. As a platform for consumers to share their views, social media has also accelerated exponentially the spread of rumours and unreliable reports on food safety that affect perceptions of risk and trust in food safety systems.

Changes in the food supply chain have made it easier to enjoy food from all corners of the world. Online shopping and speedy delivery of ready-to-eat food have accelerated this market's growth. These conveniences, however, have created new challenges for food safety in the Western Pacific Region.

In response to Member State concerns expressed at the October 2016 session of the Regional Committee, an intensive country consultation process was initiated to identify anticipated changes affecting food safety issues. Consultation topics included possible new ways of addressing the public's demands for safe food and the strategic direction of strengthening of national food safety systems.

Based on the bottom-up consultation, a draft regional framework for action on



The draft Regional Framework for Action on Food Safety in the Western Pacific calls for new approaches for the management of food safety risks to address the complexity of new food supply chains, including increasing access to social media for information.

food safety in the Western Pacific is being developed to guide national authorities in strengthening national food safety systems. While the core components of national food safety systems remain relevant, the draft framework highlights the need to build trust and develop a step-by-step approach to strengthen food safety systems. The framework also addresses further strengthening of a re-

gional mechanism to monitor progress, identifies common priorities and serves as a regional platform for continuous improvements in national food safety systems. The new regional framework is slated for consideration for endorsement by the Regional Committee for the Western Pacific in October 2017. ■