



World Health Organization

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS
UNDERSTANDING CODEX



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the United Nations
and World Health Organization
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Preface

From the internet, TV or journals and newspapers we receive a constant stream of information about health risks associated with the food we eat. Food arrives in every home from all over the world and it is a sensitive commodity.

It can be affected by contamination from microbes, heavy metals and toxins which get to the food inadvertently through poor hygiene, or it can be tampered with intentionally via food fraud.

Everything that finds its way into food, if not used correctly, can be dangerous. Food additives, intentionally put into food to facilitate production. Residues of pesticides, used to protect plants against pests that may ruin our harvest and cause famines. Residues of veterinary drugs used in animal production.

Numerous experts tell us which nutrients are good for us and which are not and we need to know what is in a food in order to compose a healthy diet.


Population growth, animal health and climate change are important issues affecting our food supply and as the United Nations family begins to chart a path to the future through the Sustainable Development Goals, food safety and quality, a level playing field for trade, healthy and nutritious diets and consumer information are right at the centre of improving the world we live in.

The Codex Alimentarius, the compilation of Codex standards, guidelines and codes of practice, are developed jointly by experts from Codex Members representing over 99% of the world's population.

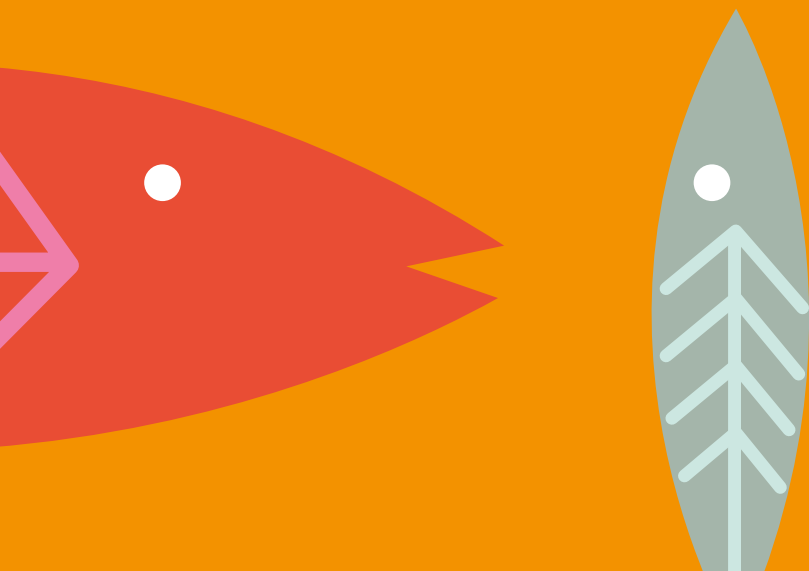
For more than five decades Codex texts have contributed immensely to the safety and quality of the food we eat. The Codex Alimentarius forms a global rule book that everyone in the food chain can follow, and it is at the same time a lifeline to those countries still working to strengthen their own national food safety control systems.

Consumers are today better aware of international trade agreements and worried whether the current rules, laws and standards applied to food being traded around the world are protecting trade more than the health of consumers.

This 4th edition of Understanding Codex will allow readers have an informed view of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, how it works and what it has achieved. Interested readers will quickly grasp the structure of the Codex system and gain an insight into the specialized technical committees and the detailed procedures and processes of Codex.

Sound science, inclusiveness and consensus are at the heart of the Codex mandate to protect consumer health. Understanding this and recognising the value of harmonised international standards in food trade will be the key to a reader truly understanding Codex. 

The Codex Alimentarius
is the product of
an evolutionary process
involving a wide
cross-section of
the global community.



01. Origins of the Codex Alimentarius

ANCIENT TIMES

Evidence from the earliest historical writings indicates that governing authorities were already then concerned with codifying rules to protect consumers from dishonest practices in the sale of food. Assyrian tablets described the method to be used in determining the correct weights and measures for food grains, and Egyptian scrolls prescribed the labelling to be applied to certain foods. In ancient Athens, beer and wines were inspected for purity and soundness, and the Romans had a

well-organized state food control system to protect consumers from fraud or bad produce. In Europe during the Middle Ages, individual countries passed laws concerning the quality and safety of eggs, sausages, cheese, beer, wine and bread. Some of these ancient statutes still exist today.

EMERGING ROLE OF SCIENCE AS THE BASIS FOR FOOD CODES

The second half of the nineteenth century saw the first general food laws adopted and basic food control systems put in

“Food regulations in different countries are often conflicting and contradictory. Legislation governing preservation, nomenclature and acceptable food standards often varies widely from country to country. New legislation not based on scientific knowledge is often introduced, and little account may be taken of nutritional principles in formulating regulations.”

Report of the First Meeting of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Nutrition, 1950 – an extract.

In the 1940s, rapid progress was made in food science and technology. With the advent of more sensitive analytical tools, knowledge about the nature of food grew quickly.

place to monitor compliance. During the same period, food chemistry came to be recognized as a reputable discipline, and the determination of the “purity” of a food was primarily based on the chemical parameters of simple food composition. When harmful industrial chemicals were used to disguise the true colour or nature of food, the concept of “adulteration” was extended to include the use of hazardous chemicals in food. Science had begun providing tools with which to disclose dishonest practices in the sale of food and to distinguish between safe and unsafe edible products.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

In the Austro-Hungarian Empire between 1897 and 1911, a collection of standards and product descriptions for a wide variety of foods was developed as the Codex Alimentarius Austriacus. Although lacking legal force, it was used as a reference by the courts to determine standards of

Milestones in the evolution of food standards

Ancient times

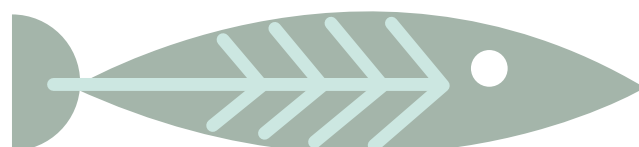
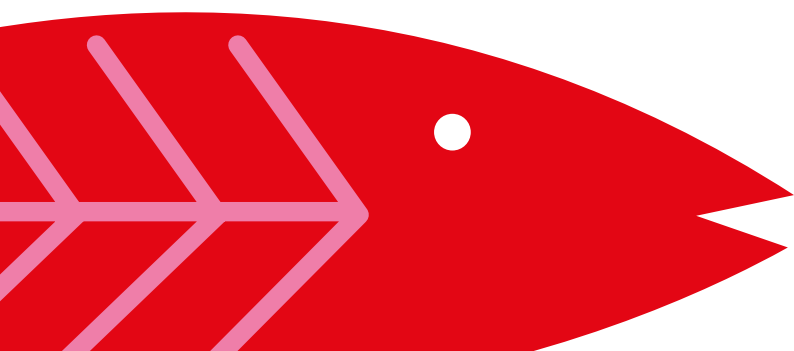
Attempts are made by early civilizations to **codify foods**.

Early 1800s

Canning is invented.

Mid-1800s

Bananas are **first shipped** to Europe from the Tropics.



identity for specific foods. The present-day Codex Alimentarius draws its name from the Austrian code.

TRADE CONCERNS

The different sets of standards arising from the spontaneous and independent development of food laws and standards by different countries inevitably gave rise to trade barriers that were of increasing concern to food traders in the early twentieth century. Trade associations that were formed as a reaction to such barriers pressured governments to harmonize their various food standards so as to facilitate trade in safe foods of a defined quality. The International Dairy Federation (IDF), founded in 1903, was one such association. Both The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) established in 1947 and the International Standards Organization (ISO) which first met in 1947 have also been instrumental in harmonizing standards to ensure quality and safety in trade.

When FAO and WHO were founded in the late 1940s, there was heightened international concern about the direction being taken in the field of food regulation. Countries were acting independently and there was little, if any, consultation among them with a view to harmonization. This situation is reflected in the observations of international meetings of the time.

CONSUMERS' CONCERNS

In the 1940s, rapid progress was made in food science and technology. With the advent of more sensitive analytical tools, knowledge about the nature of food, its quality and associated health hazards also grew quickly. There was intense interest in food microbiology, food chemistry and associated disciplines, and new discoveries were considered newsworthy. Articles about food at all levels flourished, and consumers were bombarded with messages in popular magazines, in the tabloid press and on the radio. Some were correct, some incorrect – but all were

intended to absorb interest, and many were overly sensational.

Despite the questionable quality of some of the information disseminated, the outcome was an increase in the public's food consciousness and, consequently, knowledge about food safety gradually grew.

At the same time, as more and more information about food and related matters became available, there was greater apprehension on the part of consumers. Whereas, previously, consumers' concerns had extended only as far as the "visibles" – underweight contents, size variations, misleading labelling and poor quality – they now embraced a fear of the "invisibles", i.e. potential health hazards due to micro-organisms, excessive pesticide residues, environmental contaminants and inappropriate food additives that could not be seen, smelled or tasted. With the emergence of well-organized

1800s

The **first general food laws** are adopted and enforcement agencies established

Food chemistry gains credibility, and reliable methods are developed to test for food adulteration.

Late 1800s

A new era of **long-distance food** transportation is ushered in by the first international shipments of **frozen meat** from Australia and New Zealand to the United Kingdom.

1903

The International Dairy Federation (IDF) develops **international standards for milk and milk products**. (IDF was later to be an important catalyst in the conception of the Codex Alimentarius Commission).

1945

FAO is founded, with responsibilities covering nutrition and associated international food standards.

1948

WHO is founded, with responsibilities covering human health and, in particular, a mandate to establish food standards.



In 1955, the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Nutrition recorded that:

“... the increasing, and sometimes insufficiently controlled, use of food additives has become a matter of public and administrative concern.”

The Committee also noted that the means of solving problems arising from the use of food additives may differ from country to country and stated that this fact:

“... must in itself occasion concern, since the existence of widely differing control measures may well form an undesirable deterrent to international trade”.

The problem of food additives.

and informed consumers' groups, both internationally and nationally, there was growing pressure on governments worldwide to protect communities from poor-quality and hazardous foods.

A DESIRE FOR INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Food regulators, traders, consumers and experts were looking increasingly to FAO and WHO for leadership in unravelling the complexity of food regulations that were impeding trade and providing mostly inadequate protection for consumers. In 1953, the governing body of WHO, the World Health Assembly, stated that the widening use of chemicals in food presented a new public health problem, and it was proposed that the two Organizations should conduct relevant studies.

FAO and WHO convened the first joint FAO/WHO Conference on Food Additives in 1955. That Conference led to the creation of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA),

1949

Argentina proposes a regional **Latin American food code**, Código Latinoamericano de Alimentos.

1950

Joint FAO/WHO expert meetings begin on nutrition, food additives and related areas.

1953

WHO's highest governing body, the **World Health Assembly**, states that the widening use of chemicals in the food industry presents a new public health problem that needs attention.

1954–1958

Austria actively pursues the creation of a regional food code, the **Codex Alimentarius Europaeus**, or European Codex Alimentarius.

1960

The first FAO Regional Conference for Europe endorses the desirability of international – as distinct from regional – agreement on minimum food standards and invites the Organization's Director-General to submit proposals for a joint **FAO/WHO programme on food standards** to the FAO Conference.



which, after more than 60 years, still meets regularly. JECFA's work continues to be of fundamental importance to the Codex Commission's deliberations on standards and guidelines for food additives, contaminants and residues of veterinary drugs in foods. It has served as a model for many other FAO and WHO expert bodies, and for similar scientific advisory bodies at the national level or where countries have joined together in regional economic groupings.

INTEGRATING NON-GOVERNMENTAL ACTIVITIES

While FAO and WHO furthered their involvement in food-related matters, a variety of committees set up by international NGOs also began working in earnest on standards for food commodities. In time, the work of those NGO committees was either assumed by, or continued jointly with, the appropriate Codex Alimentarius Commodity

Committees and, in some cases, the non-governmental committees themselves became Codex committees.

INTERNATIONAL CONSULTATION AND COOPERATION

Two landmark years in the foundation of the Codex Alimentarius were 1960 and 1961. In October 1960, the first FAO Regional Conference for Europe crystallized a widely held view when it recognized:

"[t]he desirability of international agreement on minimum food standards and related questions (including labelling requirements, methods of analysis, etc.) ... as an important means of protecting the consumer's health, of ensuring quality and of reducing trade barriers, particularly in the rapidly integrating market of Europe".

The Conference also felt that:

"... coordination of the growing number of food standards programmes undertaken by many organizations presented a particular problem".

Within four months of the regional conference, FAO entered into discussions with WHO, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Council of the Codex Alimentarius Europaeus with proposals that would lead to the establishment of an international food standards programme.

In November 1961, the Eleventh Session of the FAO Conference passed a resolution to set up the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

In May 1963, the Sixteenth World Health Assembly approved the establishment of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme and adopted the Statutes of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

Thus, the Codex Alimentarius Commission was born and its first meeting was held in Rome 25th June – 3rd July, 1963. **91**

1961

The Council of the Codex Alimentarius Europaeus adopts a resolution proposing that its work on **food standards** be taken over by FAO and WHO.

With the support of WHO, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Council of the Codex Alimentarius Europaeus, the FAO Conference establishes the **Codex Alimentarius** and resolves to create an **international food standards programme**.

The FAO Conference decides to establish a **Codex Alimentarius Commission** and requests an early endorsement by WHO of a joint FAO/WHO food standards programme.

1962

The Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Conference requests that the Codex Alimentarius Commission implement a joint FAO/WHO food standards programme and create the **Codex Alimentarius**.

1963

Recognizing the importance of WHO's role in all health aspects of food and considering its mandate to establish food standards, the World Health Assembly approves establishment of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme and adopts the Statutes of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

Inaugural meeting of the Codex Alimentarius Commission held in Rome.



In 2013, Codex celebrated its 50th Anniversary – 50 years of setting standards to protect consumer health and ensure fair practices in the food trade. For over 50 years thousands of experts from all over the world have dedicated themselves to building and refining the Codex system of international food standards bringing us closer to a world where food is safe, of good quality and available – in every home.



02. The first 50 years: the Codex achievement



A SINGLE INTERNATIONAL REFERENCE POINT

The best traditions of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have encouraged food-related scientific and technological research as well as discussion. In doing so, they have lifted the world community's awareness of food safety and related issues to unprecedented heights.

The Codex Alimentarius Commission, established by the two Organizations in the 1960s, has become the single most

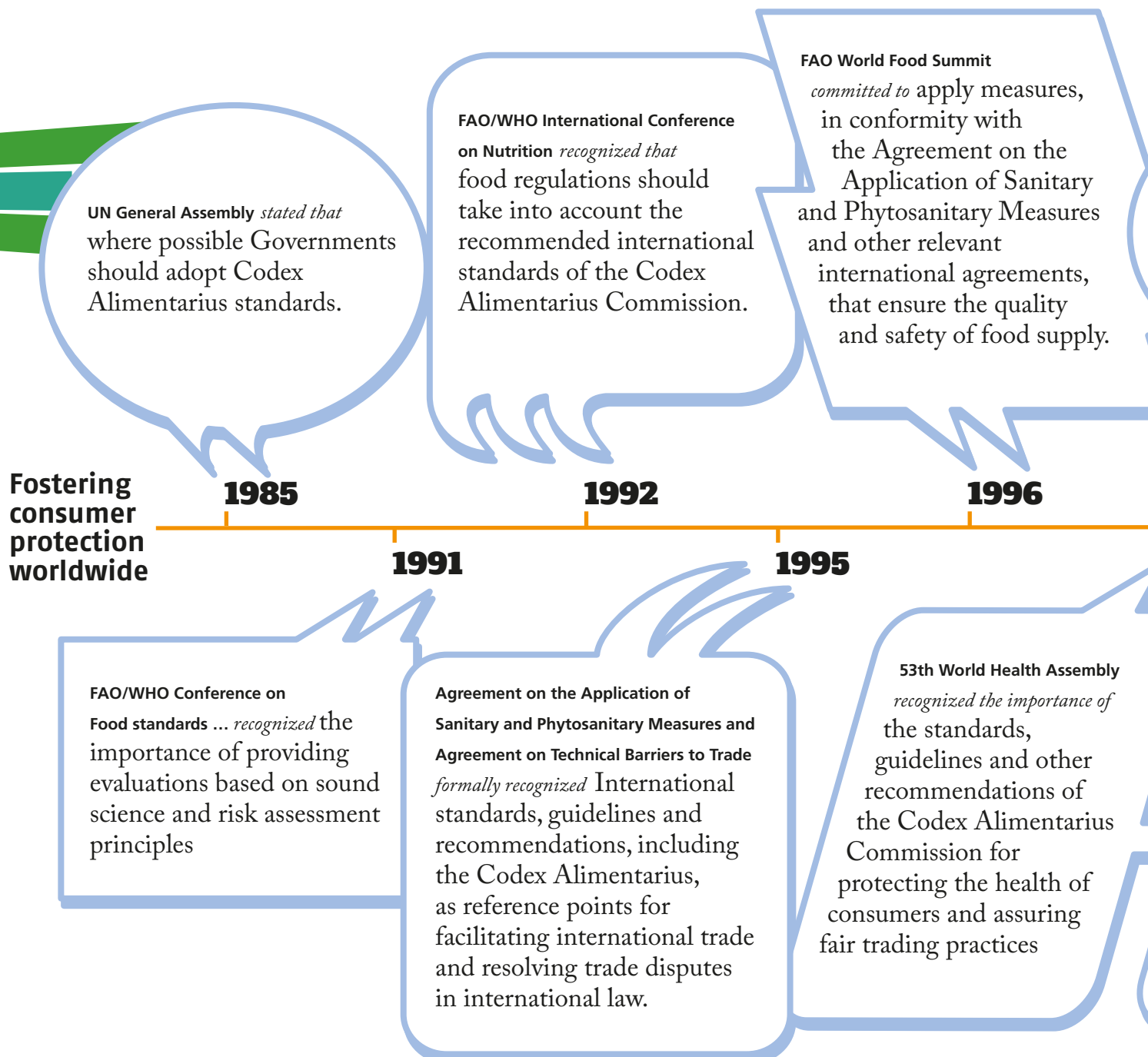
important international reference point for developments associated with food standards.

GREATER GLOBAL AND NATIONAL AWARENESS OF FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY

Throughout much of the world, an increasing number of consumers and governments are becoming aware of food quality and safety issues and are realizing the need to be selective about the foods being consumed. It is now common for consumers to demand that their

The task of creating a food code is immense and, because of continuing research and product development, virtually endless.

governments take legislative action to ensure that only safe food of acceptable quality is sold and that the risk of food-borne health hazards is minimized. It is fair to say that through its elaboration of Codex standards and its consideration of all related issues, the Codex Alimentarius Commission has helped significantly to put food as an entity on political agendas. In fact, governments are extremely conscious of the political consequences should they fail to heed consumers' concerns regarding the food they eat.



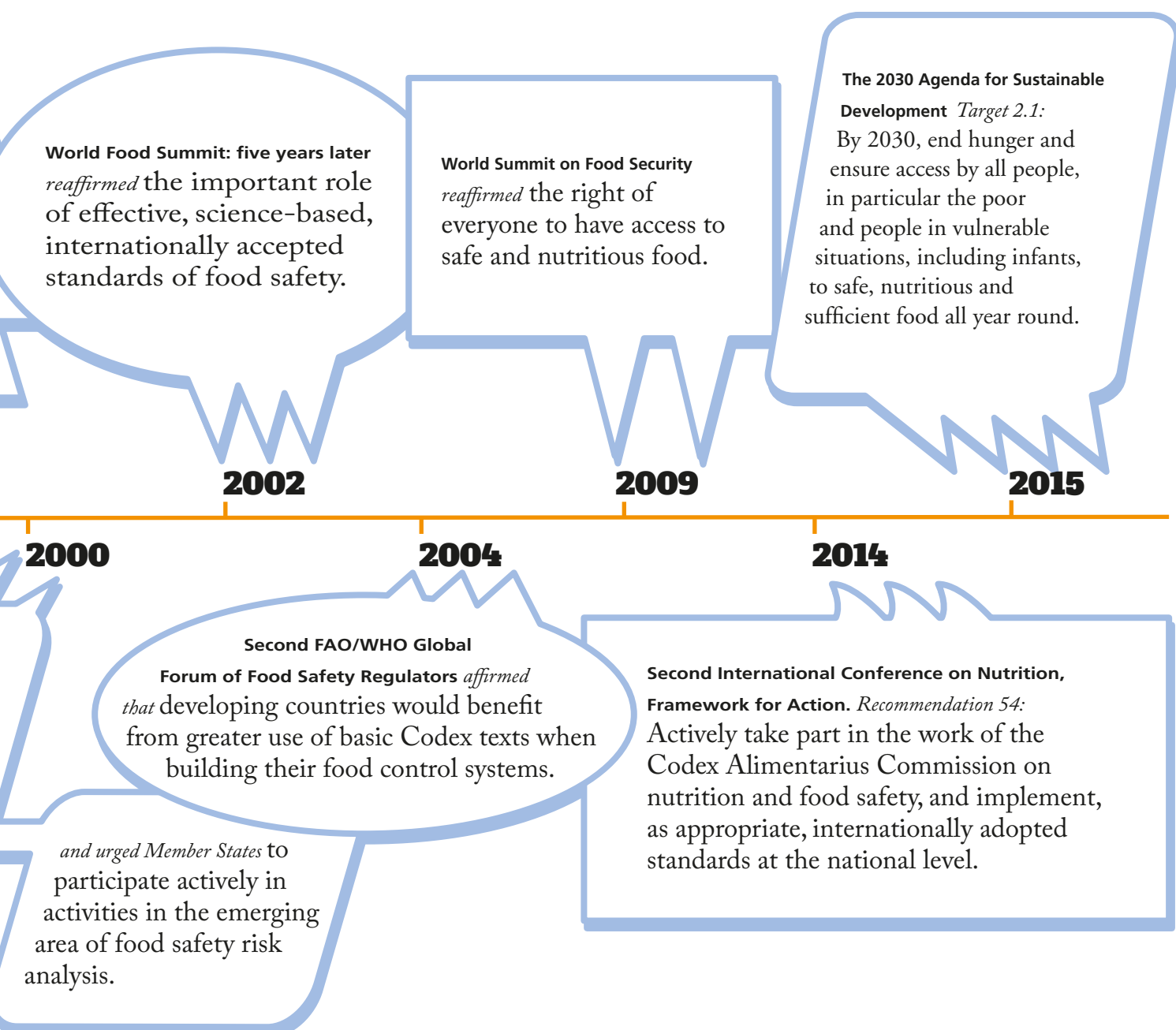
INCREASED CONSUMER PROTECTION

The Codex Alimentarius Commission has been supported in its work by the now universally accepted maxim that people have the right to expect their food to be safe, of good quality and suitable for consumption. Food-borne illnesses are at best unpleasant – at worst they can be fatal. But there are other consequences. Outbreaks of food-borne illness can damage trade and tourism and can lead to loss of earnings, unemployment and

litigation. Poor-quality food can destroy the commercial credibility of suppliers, both nationally and internationally, while food spoilage is wasteful and costly and can adversely affect trade and consumer confidence.

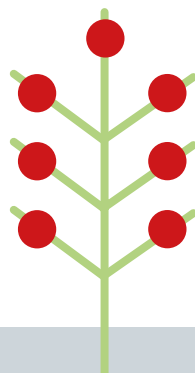
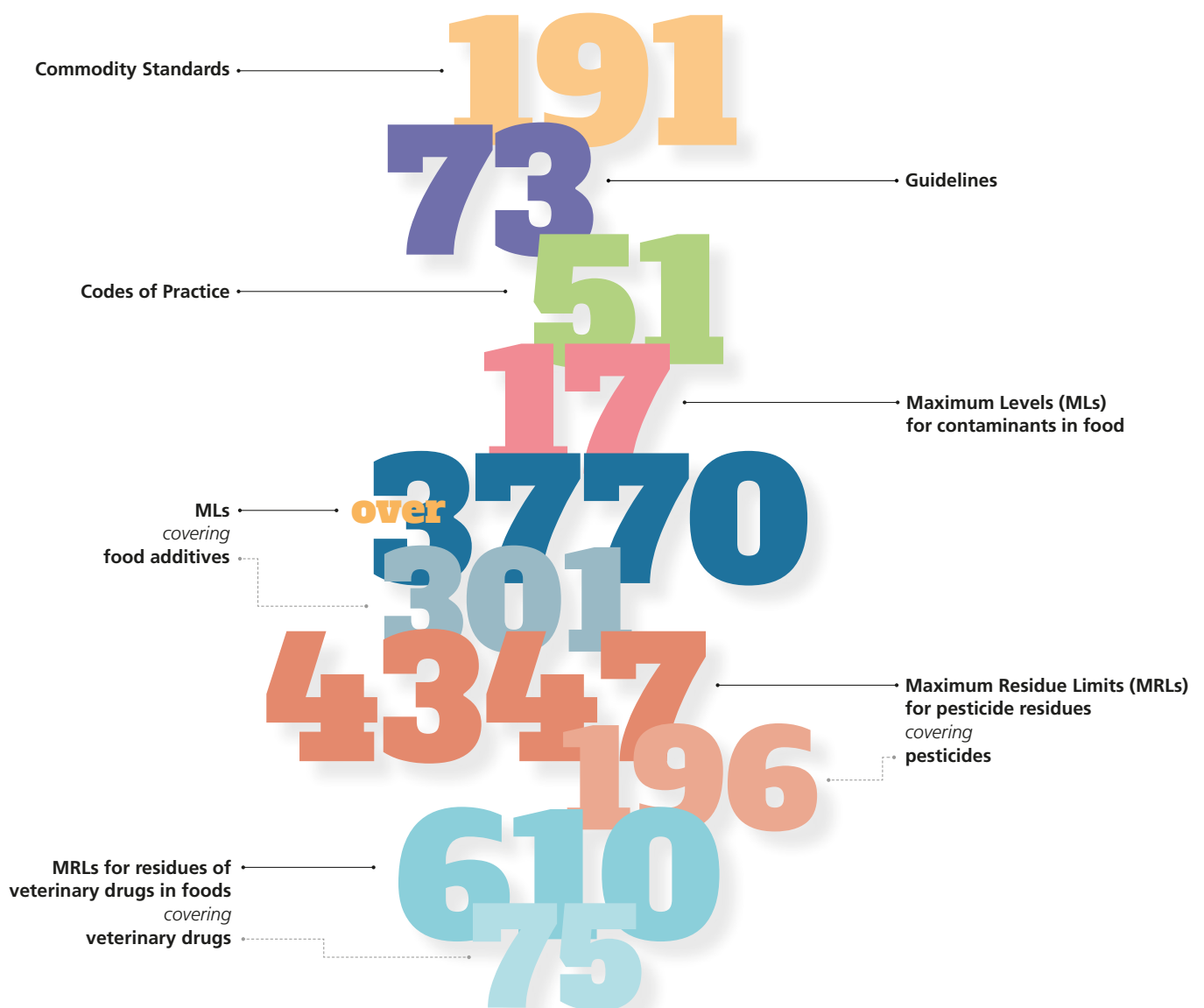
The positive effect of the Commission's work has also been enhanced by the declarations produced by international conferences and meetings that have, themselves, been influenced by the Commission's activities. Over the past

20 years, national representatives to the United Nations General Assembly, the FAO/WHO Conference on Food Standards, Chemicals in Food and Food Trade (held in cooperation with the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade [GATT]), the FAO/WHO International Conferences on Nutrition, the FAO World Food Summit and the WHO World Health Assembly have either encouraged or committed their countries to adopt measures ensuring the safety and quality of foods. The Global Fora of Food Safety Regulators have



The Codex scorecard

This table gives the number of Codex standards, guidelines and codes of practice by subject matter as of July 2015 after the decisions of the 38th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.



noted that the Codex system provides an important opportunity for countries to work together to develop international standards in a representative manner.

BROAD COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The role of the Codex Alimentarius Commission has evolved with the development of the Codex Alimentarius itself. The task of creating a food code is immense and, because of continuing research and product development, virtually endless. The finalisation of food standards and their compilation into a code that is credible and authoritative requires extensive consultation. It also takes time for information to be collected, evaluated and then followed up by confirmation of final results and sometimes objective compromise to satisfy differing sound, scientifically based views.

Creating standards that protect consumers, ensure fair practices in the sale of food and facilitate trade is a process that involves specialists in numerous food-related scientific disciplines, together with consumers' organizations, production and processing industries, food control administrators and traders. As more people become involved in the formulation of standards and as the Codex Alimentarius – including related codes and recommendations – covers further ground, so the Commission's activities are becoming better known and its influence strengthened and widened.

SCIENTIFICALLY SOUND STANDARDS

While the *Codex Alimentarius* as it stands is a remarkable achievement, it would be quite wrong to see it as the only product of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, although it is the most important. Resulting from the creation of


the *Codex Alimentarius*, another major accomplishment has been to sensitize the global community to the danger of food hazards as well as to the importance of food quality and hence to the need for food standards.

By providing an international focal point and forum for informed dialogue on issues relevant to food, the Codex Alimentarius Commission fulfils a crucial role. Six Joint FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committees also provide vital geographical coverage to define the problems and needs of each region concerning food standards and food control.


In support of its work on food standards and codes of practice, it generates reputable texts for the management of food safety and consumer protection based on the work of the best-informed individuals and organizations concerned with food and related fields. Countries have responded by introducing food legislation and Codex-based standards and by establishing or strengthening food control agencies to monitor compliance with such regulations.

EVALUATING THE OUTCOME

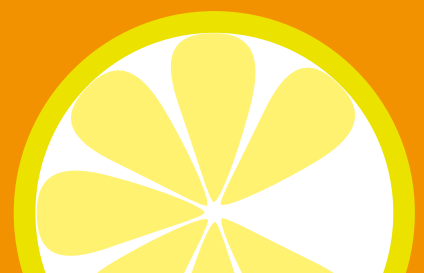
A major, global programme such as the Codex Alimentarius needs to be evaluated to ensure that the work of standard setting is being managed in the most effective way possible. The first complete evaluation of Codex took place in 2002. The areas that Codex continually strives to improve performance on include the relevance and usefulness of standards and the speed of the standard setting process. Changes introduced in Codex since the evaluation include annual Commission sessions and a new responsibility for the Executive Committee to conduct a critical review of proposals to undertake work and monitor the progress of standards development. Codex, through the work of the Codex Trust Fund, also works to enhance the skills and knowledge regarding standard setting in developing countries so that national food control systems can be stronger and better prepared.

A more recent global awareness survey on Codex in 2015 underlined the need for Codex to strengthen and target its communications. Codex is now responding to the changing ways people today search for information over the internet and via social media. 

Another major accomplishment has been to sensitize the global community to the danger of food hazards as well as to the importance of food quality and hence to the need for food standards.



Simply stated,
the Codex Alimentarius is
a collection of standards,
codes of practice, guidelines
and other recommendations
relative to food. Some of these
texts are very general, and
some are very specific.
Codex texts are updated
regularly to ensure
they are consistent with
current scientific knowledge
and relevant.



03. What is the Codex Alimentarius?

STANDARDS, GUIDELINES AND CODES OF PRACTICE

Codex standards and related texts are voluntary in nature. They need to be translated into national legislation or regulations in order to be enforceable. Codex standards can be general or specific. General Standards, Guidelines and Codes of Practice are applied transversely. These texts deal with hygienic practice, labelling, additives, inspection & certification, nutrition and residues of veterinary drugs and pesticides. Codex commodity standards refer to a specific product although increasingly Codex now develops standards for food groups i.e. one general standard for fruit juices and nectars as opposed to one per fruit.

Codex methods of analysis and sampling, including those for contaminants and residues of pesticides and veterinary drugs in foods, are also considered Codex standards.

Codex guidelines fall into two categories:

- principles that set out policy in certain key areas; and
- guidelines for the interpretation of these principles or for the interpretation of the provisions of the Codex general standards.

In the cases of food additives, contaminants, food hygiene and meat hygiene, the basic principles governing the regulation of these matters are built into the relevant standards and codes of practice.

An example of a Codex guideline would be *Guidelines for the Design and Implementation of National Regulatory Food Safety Assurance Programmes Associated with the Use of Veterinary Drugs in Food Producing Animals* (CAC/GL 71-2009).

Codex codes of practice – including codes of hygienic practice – define the production, processing, manufacturing, transport and storage practices for individual foods or groups of foods that are considered essential to ensure the safety and suitability of food for consumption. For example, for food hygiene, the basic text is the *Codex General Principles of Food Hygiene*, which introduces the use of the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) food safety management system. Another example of a code of practice is the *Code of Practice for the Reduction of Acrylamide in Foods* (CAC/RCP 67-2007).

A PAPERLESS CODEx

The original Codex texts in the 1960s were hardcopy volumes. With advances in electronic archives, CD-ROMs were adopted in the 90s. Today every Codex standard is created and stored digitally and made publicly available on the Codex website in multiple languages as soon as it is adopted by the Commission. 91

MILK AND DAIRY PRODUCTS

How do you get safe, quality milk?

Milk, and products such as cheese and yoghurt, accompany you throughout your life and they are therefore an ideal choice to highlight the work of Codex throughout the supply chain – from the farm to your glass.

The clear goals in the work of Codex are that food is safe, of good quality and that there are harmonized rules to promote fair practices in food trade.

This work begins with the animal and how it is reared e.g. the feed and medicines it is given. The animal is milked and when the milk is collected, transported and stored it has to be carefully controlled to ensure that it is safe, of good quality and nutritious. When the milk is processed, checks need to be in place to ensure that harmful bacteria and other contaminants are removed while nutritional characteristics and the taste, look, smell, and texture of the product remain.

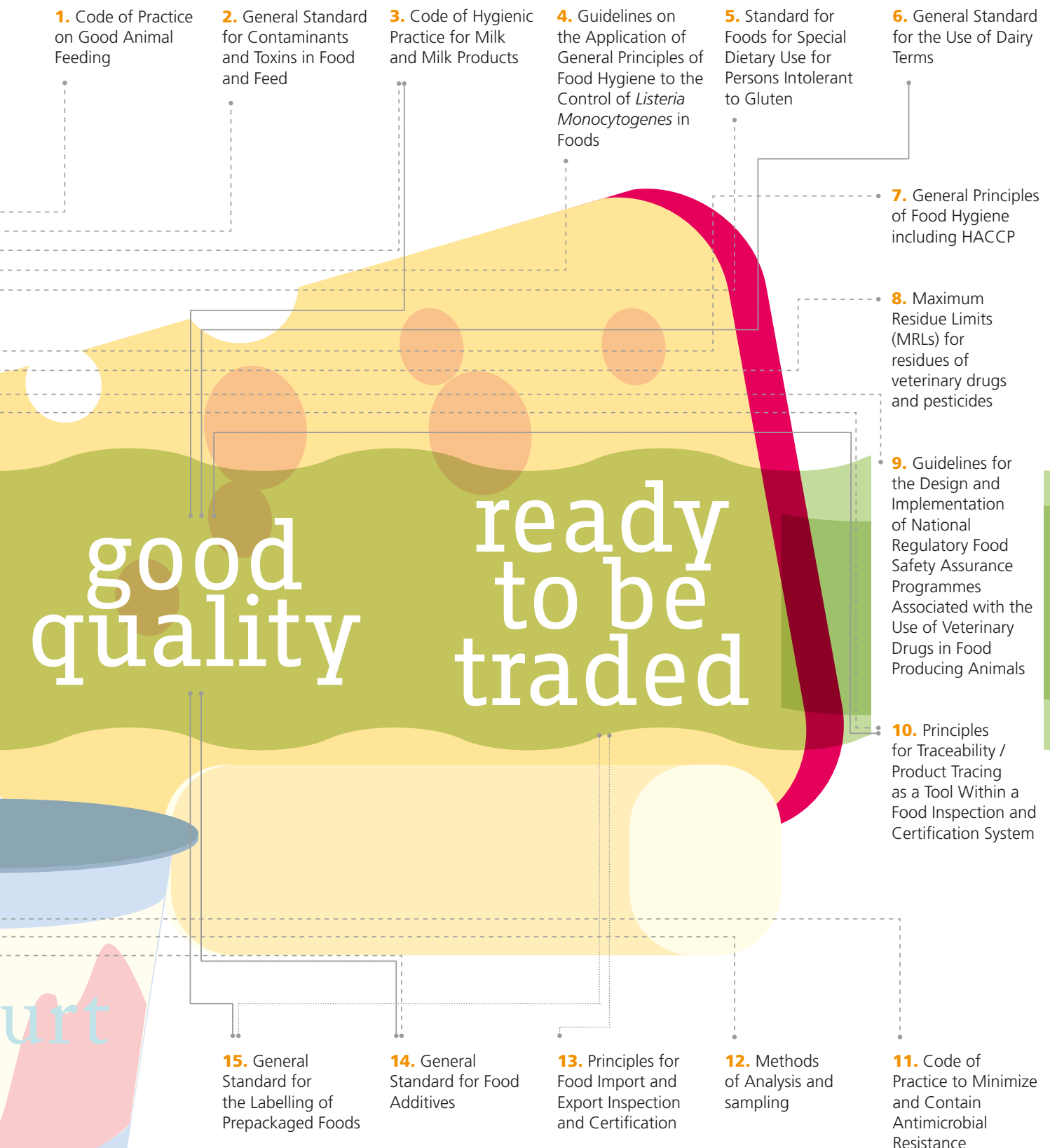
If the milk is to be transported and perhaps transformed into another product then in each phase it has to be tracked and labelled.

If the product is for export, it will have to meet international standards and regulations and the needs of consumers.

And when you taste and enjoy that glass of milk, it will be the aroma, flavour and overall satisfaction that dictate whether you continue to purchase the product.

So as you drink your milk, sample a fine cheese or purchase a tasty fermented milk product, consider how Codex is operating globally to ensure that, wherever you are, what you consume is safe and of good quality.





The standards indicated above are a sample.

There are currently **over 30 specific Codex standards** regarding milk and milk products and **over 50 guidelines and codes of practice** that affect the way these products are manufactured and traded.

GENERAL STANDARDS

General Standards, Guidelines and Codes of Practice are applied to all foods

Food additives

permitted to be used are typically identified by referencing the *Codex General Standard for Food Additives*. **Exceptions** from, or addition to, the *General Standard for Food Additives* with respect to a food are rare and must be **fully justified**. Nevertheless, all additives must undergo a review by **JECFA** and be endorsed by the Codex Committee on Food Additives.

Hygiene

makes reference to relevant Codex Codes of Hygienic Practice for the commodity concerned. In almost all cases it is required that the product shall be **free from pathogenic micro-organisms, toxins** or other poisonous or deleterious substances in amounts that represent a hazard to health.

Contaminants

contains **limits** for contaminants that may occur in the product(s) covered by the standard. These limits are based on the scientific advice of FAO and WHO and must be **consistent** with the *Codex General Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Food and Feed*. Where appropriate, reference is also made to the Codex Maximum Limits for **pesticide residues** and for **residues of veterinary drugs** in foods.

GENERAL STANDARDS deal primarily with food safety, consumer information and trade requirements. **COMMODITY STANDARDS** have a common format stating what the commodity is, how it is made and what it may contain.

Commodity standards are the largest group of specific standards in Codex

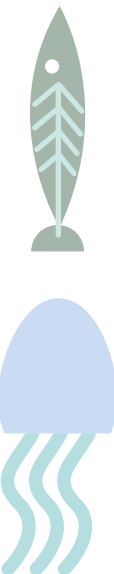
cereals, pulses (legumes) and derived products including vegetable proteins



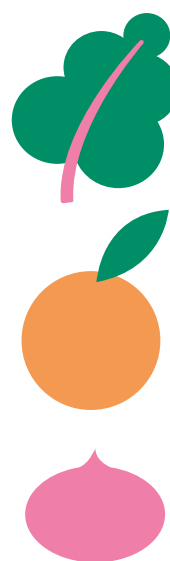
fats and oils and related products



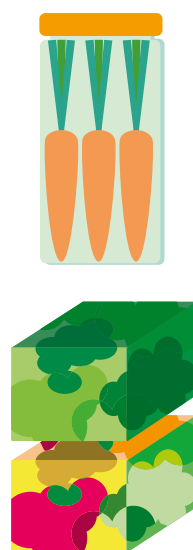
fish and fishery products



fresh fruits and vegetables



processed and quick-frozen fruits and vegetables



COMMODITY STANDARDS

Labelling

includes provisions on the name of the food and any **special requirements** to ensure that the consumer is not deceived or misled about the nature of the food. These provisions must be consistent with the *Codex General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods*. Requirements for the listing of ingredients and date-marking.

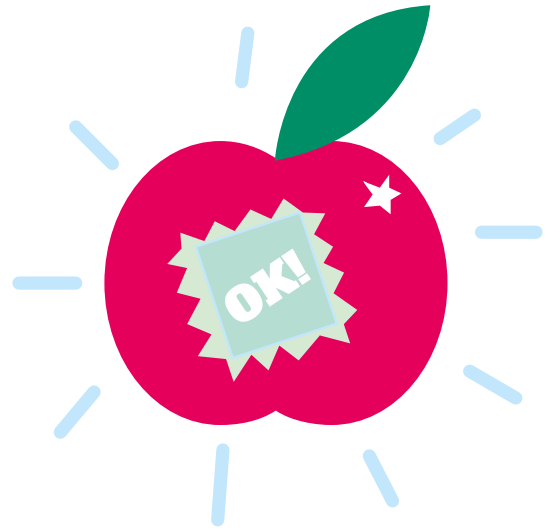
Methods of Analysis and Sampling

contains a list of the **test methods** needed to ensure that the commodity conforms to the requirements of the standard. References are made to internationally recognized test methods that meet the Commission's criteria for accuracy, precision, etc.

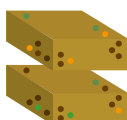
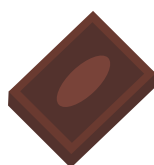
Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification

ensures **fair trading** practices to facilitate international trade.

The nutritional aspects of foods and foods for **special dietary uses** are considered.



Each general subject and commodity group is represented by a **CODEX COMMITTEE**

fruit juices**meat and meat products; soups and broths****milk and milk products****sugars, cocoa products and chocolate and other miscellaneous products**

Name of the standard is a clear, concise articulation of the common name of the food.

Scope includes the name of the food to which the standard applies and, in most cases, the purpose for which the commodity will be used.

Weights and measures contains provisions such as fill of the container and the drained weight of the commodity.

Description

includes a definition of the product or products covered with an indication, where appropriate, of the raw materials from which they are derived.

Essential composition includes information on the composition and identity characteristics of the commodity, as well as any compulsory and optional ingredients.



The Codex Alimentarius Commission was born of necessity. Its carefully crafted Statutes and Rules of Procedure ensure that it pursues its clearly defined objectives in a disciplined, dispassionate and scientific way.



04. The Codex system: the Codex Alimentarius Commission and how it works

THE COMMISSION

The Codex Alimentarius Commission was established by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) to implement their joint food standards programme and held its first session in 1963. The legal basis for the Commission is contained in the ten articles that form the Statutes of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. These were

adopted by the FAO Conference and the World Health assembly enabling it to function as a UN body. Its *raison d'être* is embodied in Article 1 which mandates the Commission to elaborate international food standards to **protect the health of consumers and to ensure fair practices in the food trade**. Article 2 defines eligibility for membership of the Commission, which is open to all Member Nations and Associate Members of FAO

The Codex Alimentarius Commission shall ... be responsible for making proposals to, and shall be consulted by, the Directors-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) on all matters pertaining to the implementation of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, the purpose of which is:

- (a) **protecting** the health of consumers and ensuring fair practices in the food trade;
- (b) **promoting** coordination of all food standards work undertaken by international governmental and non-governmental organizations;
- (c) **determining** priorities and initiating and guiding the preparation of draft standards through and with the aid of appropriate organizations;
- (d) **finalizing** standards elaborated under (c) above and publishing them in a Codex Alimentarius either as regional or worldwide standards, together with international standards already finalized by other bodies under (b) above, wherever this is practicable;
- (e) **amending** published standards, as appropriate, in the light of developments.

Statutes of the
Codex Alimentarius Commission
ARTICLE 1.

The Rules of Procedure

describe and formalize working procedures appropriate to an intergovernmental body.

Conditions of membership of the Commission

Appointment of Commission officers, including the chairperson, three vicechairpersons, and a secretary, and prescribe their responsibilities

Appointment of regional coordinators

Establishment of an Executive Committee to meet between Commission sessions, to act on behalf of the Commission as its executive organ

Frequency and operation of Commission sessions

Nature of agendas for Commission sessions

Voting procedures

Observers

Preparation of Commission records and reports;

Establishment of subsidiary bodies;

Procedures to be adopted in the elaboration of standards;

Allocation of a budget and estimates of expenditure

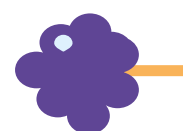
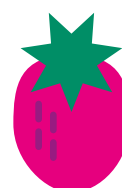
Languages used by the Commission

and WHO. In May 2016, 99.8 percent of the world's population were represented in the Commission through 188 member countries and one Member Organization (European Union).

Representation

The Codex Alimentarius Commission is truly an international body. Typically more than 600 delegates representing over 130 member governments and 40 observer organizations attend the annual session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. Chairpersons and Vice-chairpersons have been elected from all regions – Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Near East, North America, and the South-West Pacific.

In keeping with the recommendations stemming from a 2002 evaluation, the Commission now meets annually, alternately at FAO headquarters in Rome and at WHO headquarters in Geneva, although on occasion it may meet more frequently or in special or extraordinary sessions. Representation at sessions is on a country basis and national delegations are normally led by senior officials appointed by their governments. National



delegations may, and often do, include representatives of their food industry, consumer organizations and academic institutes. Countries that are not yet members of the Commission sometimes attend in an observer capacity.

A number of international governmental organizations (IGOs) and international NGOs that have observer status in Codex also attend. Although they are “observers”, the tradition of the Codex Alimentarius Commission allows such organizations to put forward their points of view at every stage of the standard setting process except in the final decision, which is the exclusive prerogative of member governments.

To facilitate continuous contact with member countries, the Commission, in collaboration with national governments, has established country Codex Contact Points, and many member countries have National Codex Committees to coordinate activities nationally.

Interest in Codex Alimentarius activities has been growing steadily since the Commission began, and the increasing

involvement of developing countries in its work has been a highlight of the progress made, as well as a vindication of the foresight shown by the founders of the Commission.

THE COMMISSION'S OPERATIONS

Compiling the Codex Alimentarius

As stated in Article 1 of the Commission's Statutes, one of the principal purposes of the Commission is the preparation of food standards and their publication in the *Codex Alimentarius*.

The legal basis for the Commission's operations and the procedures it is required to follow are published in the *Procedural Manual of the Codex Alimentarius Commission*. Like all other aspects of the Commission's work, the procedures for preparing standards are well defined, open and transparent. In essence they involve:

- The submission of a **proposal for a standard** to be developed by a national government or a subsidiary committee of the Commission. This

is usually followed by a **discussion paper** that outlines what the proposed standard is expected to achieve, and then a **project document** that indicates the time frame for the work and its relative priority.

- A decision by the Commission that a standard be **developed as proposed** is taken based on a review of the project document. “Criteria for the Establishment of Work Priorities” exist to assist the Commission or Executive Committee in their decision-making and in selecting the subsidiary body to be responsible for steering the standard through its development. If necessary, a new subsidiary body – usually a specialized task force – may be created. (1)
- The preparation of a **proposed draft** standard is arranged by the Commission Secretariat (2) and circulated to member governments for comment. (3)
- **Comments** are considered by the subsidiary body that has been allocated responsibility for the development of the proposed draft standard (4), and this subsidiary body may present the text to the Commission as a

Like all other aspects of the Commission's work, the procedures for preparing standards are well defined, open and transparent.

draft standard (5). The draft may also be referred to the Codex Committees responsible for labelling, hygiene, additives, contaminants or methods of analysis for endorsement of any special advice in these areas.

- Members and interested international organizations have **another opportunity to comment** on the draft standard (6). Their comments are considered by the body assigned the work and **final amendments are made** (7).
- **Most standards take several years to develop.** Once adopted by the Commission, a **Codex standard** is added to the *Codex Alimentarius*. (8)

Revising and adapting; keeping the *Codex Alimentarius* up to date

The Commission and its subsidiary bodies are committed to keeping the Codex standards and related texts up to date to ensure that they are consistent with current scientific knowledge and with the needs of the member countries. Most countries now require less prescriptive standards – especially for commodities – than those developed in the 1970s and 1980s. The Commission keeps abreast of these changes, and it has been consolidating its many older, detailed standards into new, more general standards. The benefits of this approach are that it allows wider coverage and allows for innovation in the development of new food products. Of course, the scientific basis for consumer protection

is maintained and strengthened by this process of review and renewal.

The procedure for revision or consolidation follows that used for the initial preparation of standards.

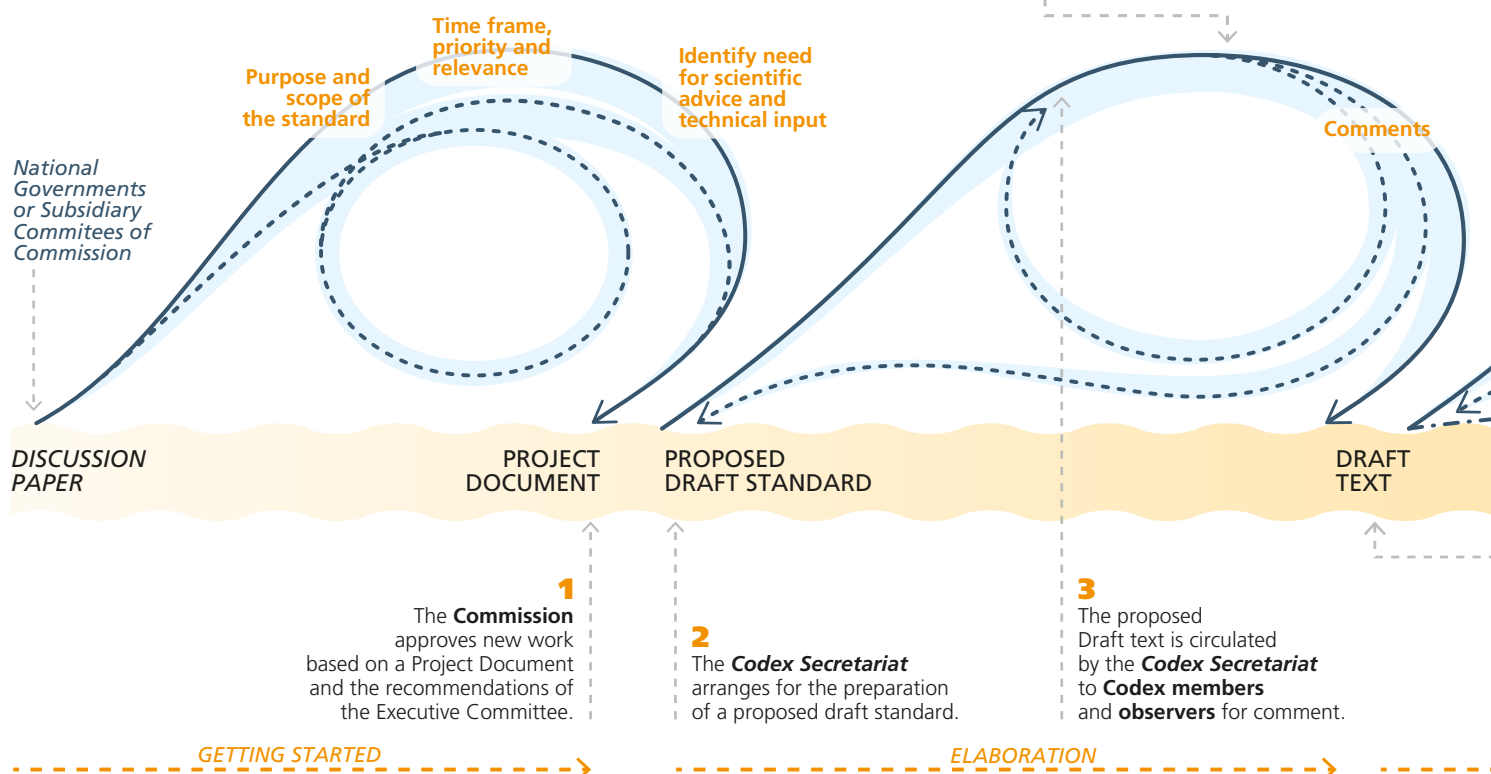
SUBSIDIARY BODIES

Under its Rules of Procedure, the Commission is empowered to establish three kinds of subsidiary body:

- **Codex Committees**, including *ad hoc* intergovernmental task forces, which prepare draft standards for submission to the Commission. These committees are hosted by a member country, which is chiefly responsible for the cost of the committee's maintenance and administration and for providing its

THE STEP PROCEDURE FOR ELABORATING CODEX STANDARDS

Before a decision is made to undertake the development of a new standard or other text, a project proposal is prepared and discussed at Committee level.



chairperson. Typically host countries do not change. although the designation of host countries for the committees is a standing item on the agenda for the Commission.

- **Coordinating Committees**, through which regions or groups of countries coordinate food standards activities in the region, including the development of regional standards

General Subject Committees

General Subject Committees, sometimes referred to as “horizontal committees”, develop all-embracing concepts and principles applying to foods in general, specific foods or groups of foods; endorse or review relevant provisions in Codex commodity standards; and, based on the advice of expert scientific

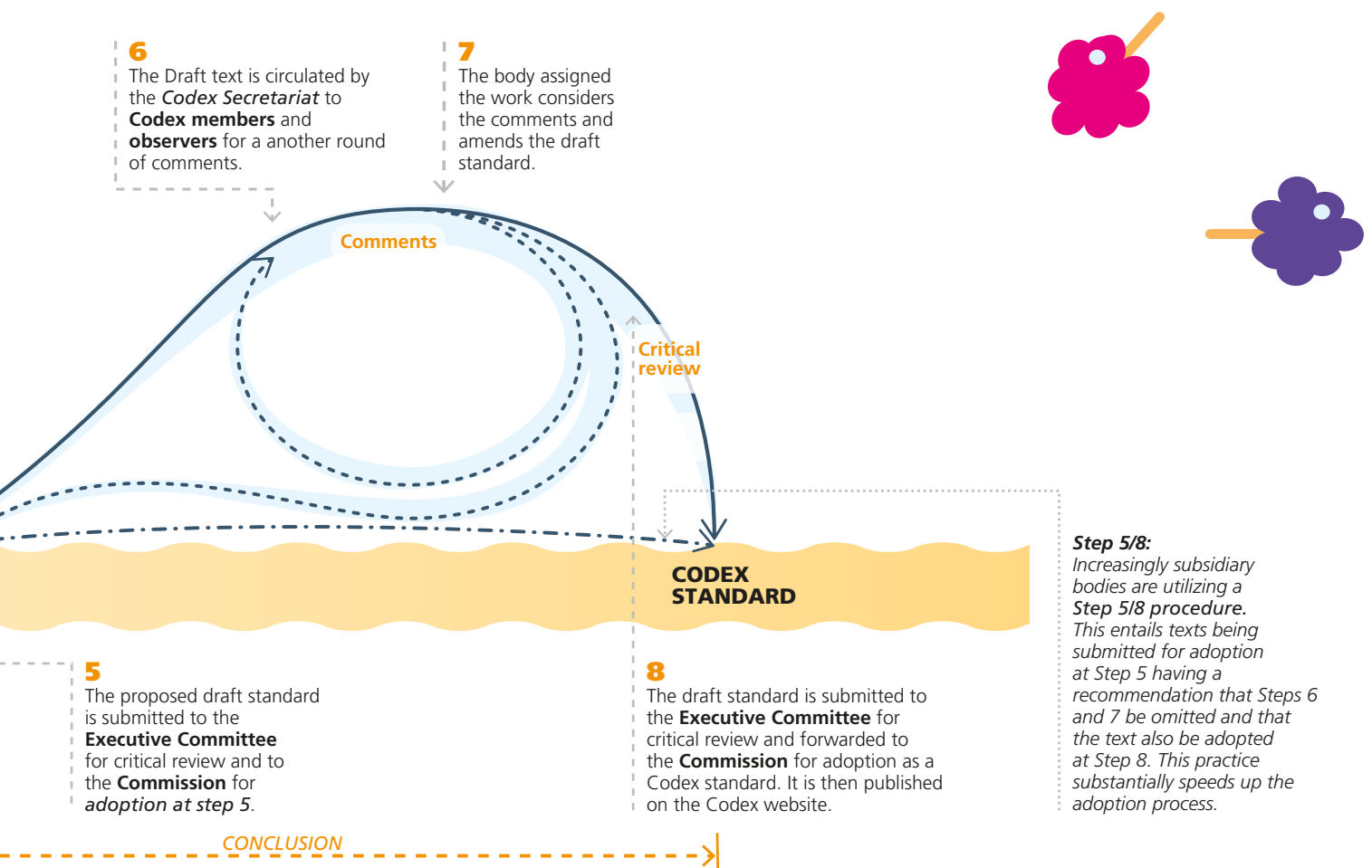
bodies, develop major recommendations pertaining to consumers’ health and safety.

The following Committees are considered to be “general subject” or “horizontal” committees:

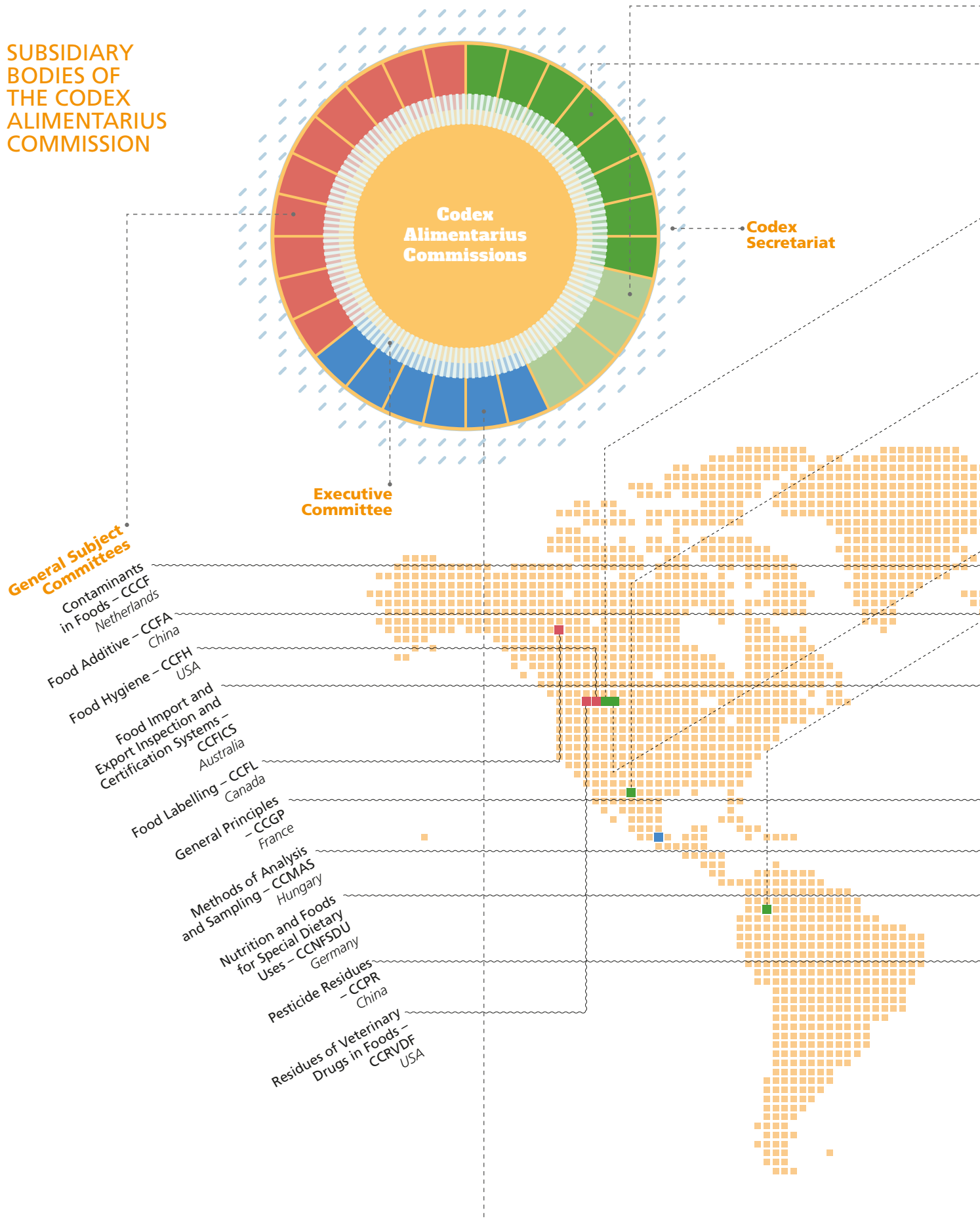
- Codex Committee on Food Additives (CCFA)
- Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods (CCCF)
- Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH)
- Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL)
- Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling (CCMAS)
- Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (CCNFSDU)

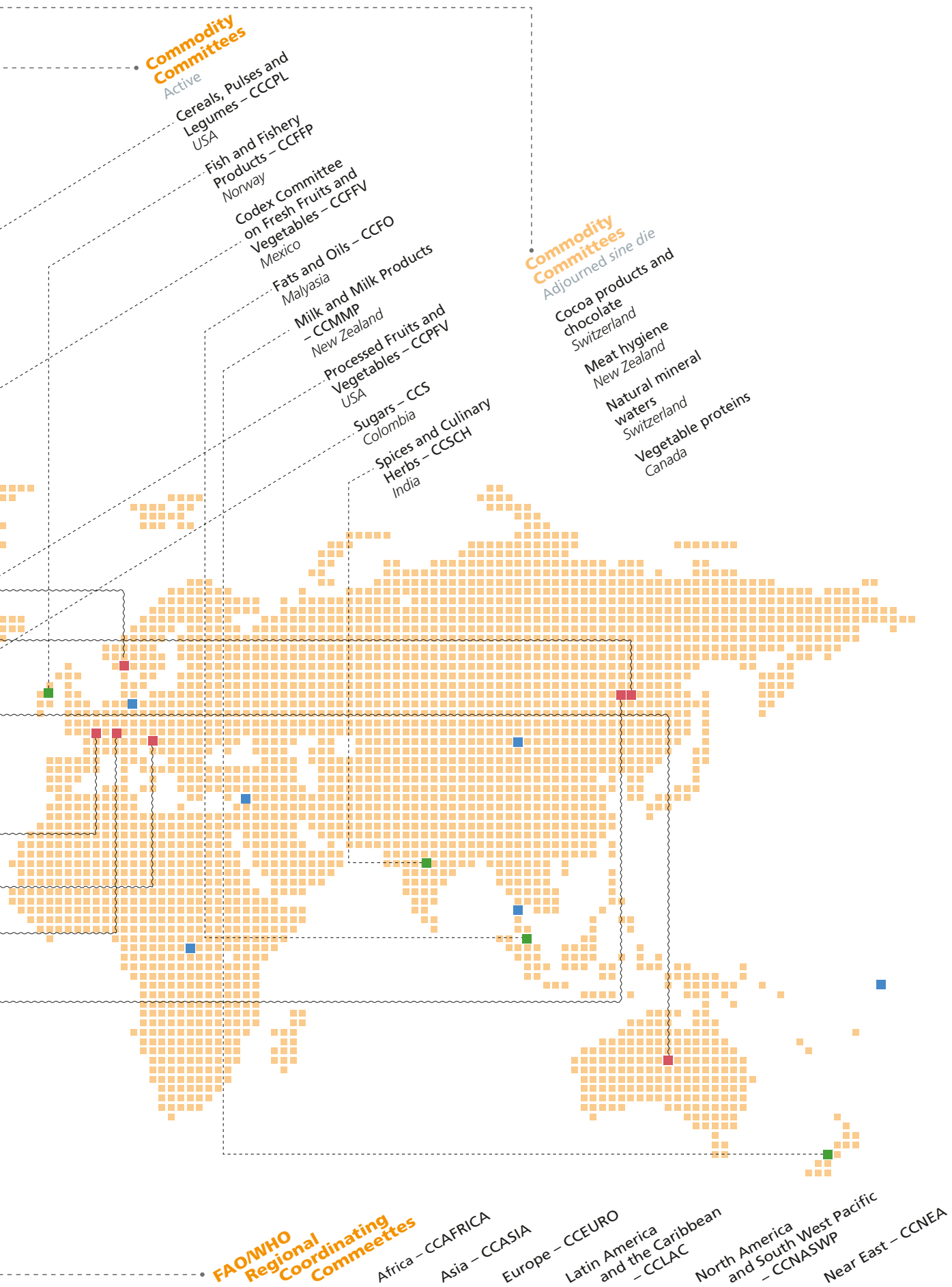
- Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues (CCPR)
- Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods (CCRVDF)
- Codex Committee on General Principles (CCGP)
- Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS).

These Committees develop standards, maximum limits for additives and contaminants, codes of practice or other guidelines for either general application or in specific cases where the development of a complete commodity standard is not required. For example, the Committee on Food Hygiene has developed a Code of Hygienic Practice for Spices and Dried Aromatic Plants, and the Committee on



SUBSIDIARY BODIES OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION





Contaminants in Foods has developed a Standard for Maximum Levels of Lead in Foods. The Committees on Food Labelling and on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses have worked together to prepare the *Codex Guidelines on Nutrition and Health Claims*.

The Committee on Pesticide Residues and the Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods prepare MRLs for these two categories of chemicals used in agricultural production. The MRLs are based on scientific advice regarding the safety of the residues that remain after the substances are used in accordance with defined good agricultural or veterinary practices.

The Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems deals with the application of standards to foods moving in international trade, in particular to the regulatory measures applied by governments to assure their trading partners that foods and their production systems are correctly regulated to protect consumers against foodborne hazards and deceptive marketing practices.

Commodity Committees

The responsibility for developing standards for specific foods or classes of food lies with the Commodity Committees. In order to distinguish them from the “horizontal committees” and recognize their exclusive responsibilities, they are often referred to as “vertical committees”. New Committees may be established on an *ad hoc* basis to cover specific needs for the development of new standards. Since the 2015 Commission the active Commodity Committees are:

- Committee on Fats and Oils
- Committee on Fish and Fishery Products
- Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables
- Committee on Processed Fruits and Vegetables

- Codex Committee on Culinary Herbs and Spices
- Committee on Cereals, Pulses and Legumes
- Committee on Sugars
- Codex Committee on Milk and Milk Products.

The following Commodity Committees have been adjourned *sine die* but may work through correspondence if required:

- Committee on Cocoa Products and Chocolate
- Committee on Meat Hygiene
- Committee on Natural Mineral Waters
- Committee on Vegetable Proteins.

Host countries convene meetings of Codex subsidiary bodies at intervals of between one and two years, according to need. Attendance at some Codex Committees is almost as large as that drawn by a plenary session of the Commission.

Ad hoc Intergovernmental Task Forces

In 1999, the Commission realized that its rather inflexible committee structure was not able to cope with the demand for standards and guidelines across an everwidening range of subjects. It decided to create a third type of subsidiary body called a Codex *ad hoc* Intergovernmental Task Force, which is a Codex Committee established for a fixed period of time. To date the Commission has established the following *ad hoc* Intergovernmental Task Forces:

- Task Force on Animal Feeding, 2000–2004 and 2011–2013
- Task Force on Foods Derived from Biotechnology, 1999–2003 and 2005–2008
- Task Force on Fruit and Vegetable Juices, 1999–2005
- Task Force on the Handling and Processing of Quick Frozen Foods, 2006–2008
- Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance, 2006–2011.

Regional Coordinating Committees

Regional Coordinating Committees play an invaluable role in ensuring that the work of the Commission is responsive to regional interests and to the concerns of developing countries. They normally meet at two-year intervals, with representation from the countries of their respective regions. Meeting reports are submitted to and discussed by the Commission. The country that chairs the Coordinating Committee is also the Regional Coordinator for the region concerned.

Coordinating Committees do not have a standing host country as responsibility for hosting a coordinating committee normally resides with the member who is the Regional Coordinator. Depending on the Region, the role of Regional Coordinator rotates amongst members of the region. In principle, Regional Coordinators are appointed by the Commission based on nominations received from the Regional Coordinating Committee. Regional Coordinators hold office from the end of the session at which they were appointed and normally would remain in office for a two year term. Coordinators may be reappointed for a second two year term. There are six Coordinating Committees, one each for the following regions:

- Africa
- Asia
- Europe
- Latin America and the Caribbean
- Near East
- North America and the Southwest Pacific.

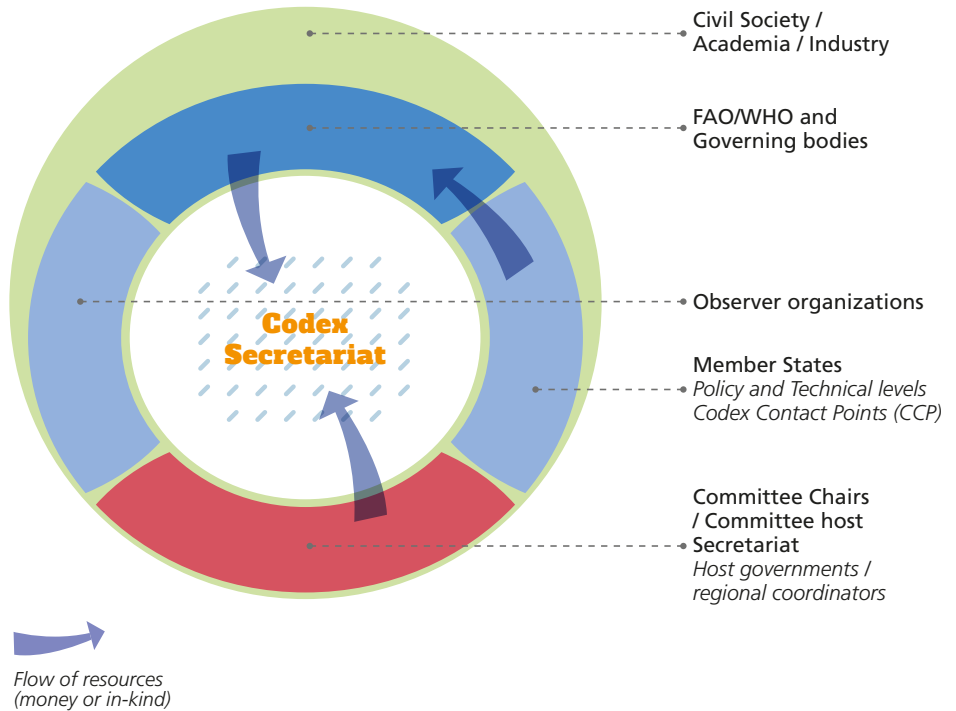
CODEX ADMINISTRATION

The Secretary of the Codex

Alimentarius Commission is appointed jointly by the Directors-General of FAO and WHO following an open worldwide search for qualified candidates. The Secretary is supported by a small staff of professional and technical officers. Typically a Food Standards Officer in Codex may have a background in Food Safety Control, Public Health, Standard Setting, Food Technology, Chemistry, Microbiology or Veterinary Medicine. The Secretariat is based at FAO headquarters in Rome and provides a coordination and liaison role across the entire spectrum of Codex activities. Codex Food Standards Officers are responsible for the preparation, management and distribution of information from Codex committees to members and observers on matters such as proposed draft standards, revisions to texts and the publication of committee reports. The Codex Secretariat provides the link between all the subsidiary bodies in Codex. It is also responsible for managing the coordination of work between committees and constantly monitors work planning in Codex, both for active and adjourned committees, to ensure that Codex texts remain consistent with current scientific knowledge and relevant. Commission and Executive Committee meetings are administered and serviced entirely by the Rome-based staff.

FAO and WHO

The two parent organizations responsible for managing the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme work in close harmony with the Codex Secretariat on all matters regarding the work of the programme and guarantee that Codex has access to expertise and support in operational and technical areas ranging from nutrition and food safety to communication and legal services.



National Host Secretariats

Many subsidiary committees are hosted, financially maintained and serviced by member governments. These bodies provide an immense in-kind contribution to the work of Codex. Member governments also plan co-hosted meetings, often in developing countries to increase both awareness and involvement in Codex work. The Codex Secretariat coordinates the activities and oversees the operations of these committees.

Codex Contact Points

Each Codex member country has a nominated Codex contact point (CCP) who will typically be based in a ministry dealing with food administration. The CCP acts as the link between the Codex Secretariat and the member country coordinating all relevant Codex activities at the national level. They are a liaison point with the food industry, consumers, traders and all other concerned parties to ensure that their government is provided with an appropriate balance of policy and technical advice upon which to base decisions relating to Codex work.

Observer Organizations

It would not be possible to claim authority in the field of international standard setting if Codex did not welcome and acknowledge the valuable contribution made by observers. Both governmental and non-governmental, public and private sector organizations play a vital role in ensuring Codex texts are of the highest quality and based on sound science. Expert technical bodies, industry and consumer associations contribute to the standard setting process in a spirit of openness, collaboration and transparency. 🍏



The first Statement of Principle concerning the role of Science in the Codex decision-making process says,
"The food standards, guidelines and other recommendations of the Codex Alimentarius shall be based on the principle of sound scientific analysis ...".



05. Codex and Science

SCIENTIFIC PRINCIPLES FOR STANDARDS-SETTING

The foundation of Codex standards is sound scientific evidence. From the very beginning, the Codex Alimentarius has been a science-based activity. Experts and specialists in a wide range of disciplines have contributed to every aspect of the Codex Alimentarius to ensure that its standards withstand the most rigorous scientific scrutiny. It is fair to say that the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, together with that of FAO and WHO in their supportive roles, has provided a focal point for food-related scientific research and investigation, and the Commission itself has become an important international medium for the exchange of scientific information about food.

In 1995, the Commission adopted four *Statements of Principle Concerning the Role of Science in the Codex Decision-Making Process and the Extent to Which Other Factors are Taken into Account*. These principles were supplemented by *Statements of Principle Relating to the Role of Food Safety Risk Assessment (1997)* and by *Criteria for the Consideration of the Other Factors Referred to in the Second Statement of Principle (2001)*.

A comprehensive statement of Working Principles for Risk Analysis in food safety and health was adopted by the Commission in 2003 and incorporated into the *Procedural Manual of the Codex Alimentarius Commission*.



The main principles of developing scientific advice

Excellence

Use of internationally recognized expertise, supported by the creation of a platform for global scientific discussions based on best practices in elaborating guidance.

Independence

Experts contribute in their own capacity and not on behalf of a government or institution; they are required to declare possible conflicts of interest.

Transparency

Procedures and methods to ensure all interested parties understand the processes for the development of scientific advice and have access to the reports, safety assessments and evaluations, and other basic information.

Universality

A broad base of scientific data is critical for the elaboration of international standards-setting activities. Therefore, institutions and all interested parties throughout the world are invited to make data available. It should be noted that in support of this principle, one of the objectives of the Codex Strategic Plan 2014 – 2019 is to “Increase scientific input from developing countries”.

EXPERT BODIES AND CONSULTATIONS

Elaboration of the *Codex Alimentarius* has stimulated activity in the fields of food chemistry, food technology, food microbiology, mycology, and pesticide and veterinary drug residues. Much work is carried out in the form of collaborative studies among individual scientists, laboratories, institutes and universities and joint FAO/WHO expert committees and consultations.

FAO and WHO expert meetings are independent of the Commission (and the Commission's subsidiary bodies), although their output contributes

significantly to the scientific credibility of the Commission's work. The principle of ensuring the independence of scientific advice from practical realities of risk management has been followed by Codex from the earliest days.

The membership of expert consultations is of critical importance. The credibility and acceptability of any conclusions and recommendations depend to a very large degree on the objectivity, scientific skill and overall competence of the members who formulate them.

For this reason, great care is taken in the selection of experts invited to participate. Those selected must be pre-eminent in their specialty, have the highest respect of their scientific peers, and be impartial and indisputably objective in their judgement. They are appointed in their own personal right – not as government representatives or as spokespeople for organizations – and their inputs are theirs alone. Experts are invited through a “call for experts”

Joint FAO/WHO expert meetings and consultations, 2005 – June 2016

Excluding regular sessions of JECFA and JMPR

2005

- Expert meeting on the benefits and potential risks of the Lactoperoxidase system of raw milk preservation

2006

- Technical Meeting on *Enterobacter sakazakii* and *Salmonella* in powdered infant formula
- Meeting on the use of microbiological risk assessment outputs to develop practical risk management strategies



to be considered in the selection process and inclusion on rosters as appropriate. Scientists from all parts of the world, in particular from developing countries, are encouraged to apply.

Procedures for the selection of experts are applied to assure the excellence, independence, and transparency of the recommendations of the FAO/WHO scientific committees. Experts attend as independent internationally recognized specialists who act in their personal capacities and not as representatives of their employers, governments, or other institutions. They are required to declare any potential conflict of interest regarding the substances they will be evaluating.

Two expert groups, the Joint FAO/WHO Meetings on Pesticide Residues (JMPR) and the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA), have for many years produced internationally acclaimed data that are widely used by governments, industry and research

Great care is taken in the selection of experts invited to participate.

centres. Their input into the work of the Codex Commission is of fundamental importance, and the publications resulting from their activities are acclaimed international references. The safety assessments and evaluations performed by JECFA, like those performed by JMPR, are based on the best scientific information available, comprising inputs from many authoritative sources.

JEMRA, the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Meetings on Microbiological Risk Assessment, began its work in 2000. JEMRA aims to optimize the use of microbiological risk assessment as the

scientific basis for risk management decisions that address microbiological hazards in foods. Its assessments and other advice contribute to the development of Codex standards, codes of hygienic practice and other guidelines in the area of food hygiene and provide the scientific basis for this work.

Following the successful model of other long-standing joint FAO/WHO scientific advice committees, the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Meetings on Nutrition (JEMNU) was established in 2010. JEMNU strengthens the role of FAO and WHO in providing scientific advice on nutrition to Member

2007

- FAO/WHO/OIE Expert Consultation on Antimicrobial Use in Aquaculture and Antimicrobial Resistance
- Meeting on Enterohaemorrhagic *Escherichia coli* (EHEC) in raw meat and meat products: approaches for the provision of scientific advice

- Expert Consultation on Safety Assessment of Food Derived from recombinant-DNA Animals
- Expert Meeting on Viruses in Food: Scientific Advice to Support Risk Management Activities

- Expert Meeting on Microbiological Hazards Associated with Fresh Produce
- Expert Meeting on Animal Feed Impact on Food Safety
- Joint FAO/WHO/OIE Expert Meeting on Critically Important Antimicrobials

2008

- Expert Meeting on Microbiological Hazards in Fresh Leafy Vegetables and Herbs
- Expert meeting on chlorine-containing disinfectants used in the food production and food processing

- Expert Meeting on *Enterobacter sakazakii* (*Cronobacter* spp.) in powdered follow-up formulae
- Expert meeting to review toxicological aspects of melamine and cyanuric acid



Main FAO/WHO expert bodies

1955

The Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) was established in 1955 to consider chemical, toxicological and other aspects of contaminants and residues of veterinary drugs in foods for human consumption. The Codex Committee on Food Additives, the Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods and the Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods identify food additives, contaminants and veterinary drug residues that should receive priority evaluation and refer them to JECFA for assessment before incorporating them into Codex standards.

1963

Joint FAO/WHO Meetings on Pesticide Residues (JMPR) began in 1963 following a decision that the Codex Alimentarius Commission should recommend maximum residue limits (MRLs) for pesticide and environmental contaminants in specific food products to ensure the safety of foods containing residues. It was also decided that JMPR should recommend methods of sampling and analysis. There is close cooperation between JMPR and the Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues (CCPR). CCPR identifies those substances requiring priority evaluation. After JMPR evaluation, CCPR discusses the recommended MRLs and, if they are acceptable, forwards them to the Commission for adoption as Codex MRLs.

2000

Joint FAO/WHO Expert Meetings on Microbiological Risk Assessment (JEMRA) began work in 2000 to develop and provide advice to the Codex Alimentarius Commission on microbiological aspects of food safety. In addition to providing risk assessments, JEMRA develops guidance on related areas such as data collection and the application of risk assessment. JEMRA works most closely with the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene, but has also provided advice to other Codex committees, such as the Committee on Fish and Fishery Products.

2009

- Expert Meeting on *Campylobacter* and *Salmonella* in chicken meat

2010

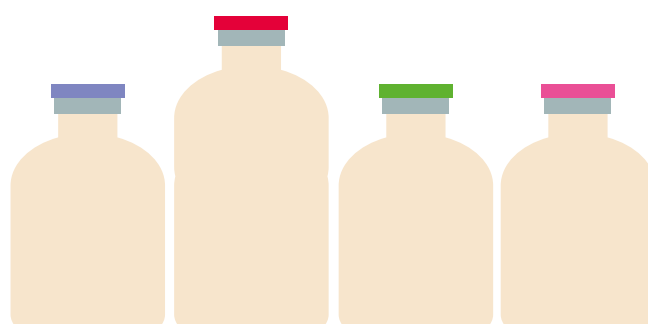
- Expert Consultation on the Risks and Benefits of Fish Consumption
- Expert meeting on issues relating to *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* and *Vibrio vulnificus*
- Expert meeting to review toxicological and health aspects of Bisphenol A

2011

- Electronic Expert Group on assessment of public health risk due to the presence of *Salmonella* in bivalve molluscs.
- Expert Meeting on Methodology and Enumeration of *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* and *Vibrio vulnificus* in Seafood

2012

- Expert Meeting on the Public Health Risks of Histamine and other biogenic amines from fish and fishery products
- Expert Meeting on Foodborne Parasites – Prioritization for risk management



States and bodies such as the Codex Alimentarius Commission and in particular the Codex Committee for Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (CCNFSDU). JEMNU convenes in response to a specific request from CCNFSDU or another Codex body. The joint FAO/WHO JEMNU secretariat identifies and invites the relevant global experts to a JEMNU meeting where the necessary evidence is reviewed and evaluated and objective assessment of the quality of the evidence will be provided to the risk managers at Codex Alimentarius to set suitably health-protective and trade-inclusive global nutrition standards.

Codex can also receive scientific advice from the **WHO Nutrition Guidance Expert Advisory Group (NUGAG)** which was established in 2010 taking into account a request from the 63rd World Health Assembly “...to *strengthen the evidence base on effective and safe nutrition actions to counteract the*

public health effects of the double burden of malnutrition...”. NUGAG’s work includes updating the dietary goals for the prevention of obesity and diet-related noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and the WHO guidelines on sugars and fatty acids.

One of the strengths of the Codex and FAO and WHO relationship in scientific matters is its flexibility. In recent years, FAO and WHO have held expert scientific consultations on a broad range of matters. Not all of these have resulted in the development of new Codex standards, as sometimes the best way of managing food safety risks is determined to be through other means. FAO and WHO also provide advice on how alternative means of risk management can be brought about.

FAO and WHO are not the only sources of scientific excellence on which Codex depends. Codex encourages other scientifically based intergovernmental organizations to contribute to the joint

FAO and WHO scientific system. The **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)** provides advice and support on levels of radionuclide contamination in foods and on food irradiation. The **World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)** provides advice on animal health, on animal diseases affecting humans and on the linkages between animal health and food safety.

The critical importance of scientific advice to the work of Codex is well recognized. In recent years, with the downturn in the economy, the availability of funding for scientific advice has diminished. This has impacted on the ability of FAO and WHO to convene the necessary number of expert consultations required to provide the advice requested by Codex and member states. Subsequently the ability of Codex to advance some of its standards has been impeded as a standard cannot be elaborated without scientific advice. 91

2013

- Expert meeting on risk-based examples for control of *Trichinella* spp. and *Taenia saginata*/ *Cysticercus bovis*

2014


- Expert meeting on the microbiological safety of lipid based ready to use foods for management of moderate and severe acute malnutrition
- Expert Meeting on Microbiological hazards associated with spices and dried aromatic herbs

2015

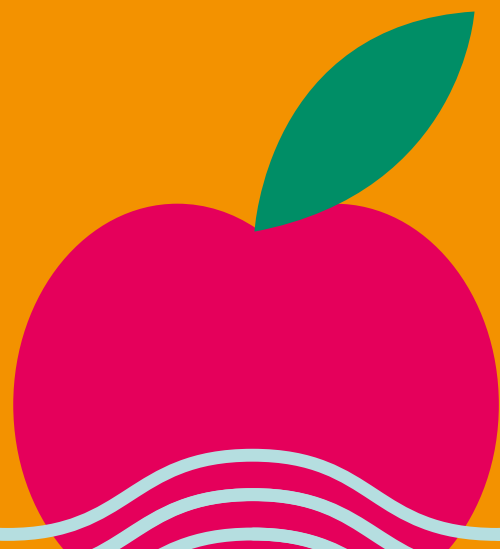
- Expert meeting on interventions for the Control of Non-typhoidal *Salmonella* spp. in Beef and Pork
- Expert Meeting on Hazards Associated with Animal Feed

2016

- Expert meeting on toxicological equivalence factors of shellfish poison



From their beginnings,
FAO and WHO have promoted
the improvement of quality
and safety standards
applied to food.
The highest priority of
the Codex Alimentarius
Commission is to protect the
health of consumers.



06. Codex and Consumers

COMMITMENT IN THE INTEREST OF CONSUMERS

Since its inception, the Codex Alimentarius Commission, together with its subsidiary committees, has given top priority to the protection and interests of consumers in the formulation of food standards and related activities.

Other United Nations (UN) bodies have also recognized the importance of consumer protection and in 1985 a UN General Assembly Resolution gave rise to the Guidelines for consumer protection, published in 1986. These

guidelines identify food as one of three priority areas that are of essential concern to the health of consumers, and the document specifically identifies the *Codex Alimentarius* as the reference point for consumer protection with regard to food.

There were two conferences held in the early 1990s that were relevant to promoting the interests of consumers with respect to food safety and quality. The 1991 FAO/WHO Conference on Food Standards, Chemicals in Food and Food Trade (held in cooperation with GATT), recommended continuing and strengthening consumer participation

To ensure that nutrition labelling is effective:

“In providing the consumer with information about a food so that a wise choice of food can be made ...”

Purpose of
the Codex Guidelines
on Nutrition Labelling.

Instruments such as principles and codes have been developed for the express purpose of protecting the health of consumers against food-borne hazards.

in food-related decision-making at national and international levels. The 1st FAO/WHO International Conference on Nutrition held in 1992 recommended that consumers be protected through improved food quality and safety, and outlined measures to accomplish that recommendation.

Furthermore, in 1993, FAO held an expert consultation on the Integration of Consumer Interests in Food Control. The purpose of the consultation was to provide guidance and assistance to countries in the early stages of integrating consumer interests in their overall food control systems, as well as to improve this process in countries that already have initiatives in this regard. The consultation produced a number of general recommendations as well as recommendations to government, consumers and industry.

A second FAO/WHO International Conference was held in Rome in November 2014 that focused global attention on addressing malnutrition in all its forms. The Conference reaffirmed

Food quality and safety

The 1993 FAO Expert Consultation on the Integration of Consumer Interests in Food Control identified the following issues as being of particular concern to consumers.

Standards

Consumers feel that they do **not always get fair value for their money**. They are discontented with food that spoils or fails to meet expectations in taste, aroma and palatability.

Nutritional quality

In many developing countries, **adulteration deprives consumers of nutritional value**. In developed countries, consumers are dissatisfied with inadequate nutrient information on labels.

the commitments made at the 1992 International Conference on Nutrition, the World Food Summits in 1996 and 2002 and the World Summit on Food Security in 2009. The Conference developed a *Declaration on Nutrition* and a voluntary *Framework for Action* to guide the implementation of the commitments of the Declaration on Nutrition.

FOOD COMMODITY AND GENERAL STANDARDS

Both the Commission and Codex subsidiary bodies give the highest priority to consumer interests in the formulation of commodity and general standards. The prescribed format for commodity standards reflects the emphasis that Codex places on ensuring that consumers receive products that are of an acceptable quality and do not present a health hazard. Format provisions for commodity standards, including the name of the standard, its scope, description, weights and measures and labelling, are intended to ensure that the consumer is not misled and to induce confidence that the food

item purchased is what the label says it is. The provision covering essential composition and quality factors ensures that the consumer will not receive a product below a minimum acceptable standard. The provisions concerning food additives and contaminants and hygiene are aimed at protecting the health of consumers.

The Codex Alimentarius contains more than 200 standards in the prescribed format for individual foods or groups of foods. In addition, it includes the *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods*, the *General Guidelines on Claims* and the *Guidelines on Nutrition Labelling*, all of which are aimed at ensuring honest practices in the sale of food while also providing guidance to consumers in their choice of products.

Other general standards for food hygiene, food additives, contaminants and toxins in food and for irradiated foods are of pre-eminent importance in protecting consumers' health, and they are valued widely for this purpose.

Similarly, MRLs for pesticides and veterinary drugs and maximum limits for food additives and contaminants have been established to ensure that consumers are not exposed to unsafe levels of hazardous materials.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES, GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDED CODES OF PRACTICE

Instruments such as principles and codes have been developed for the express purpose of protecting the health of consumers against food-borne hazards. For example, general principles have been developed for the use of food additives, food import and export inspection and certification and the addition of essential nutrients to foods.

The Codex Alimentarius contains wide-ranging guidelines for the protection of consumers, including such diverse subjects as the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria for Foods and Levels for

Food control processes

While **consumers are aware that food control regulations exist**, they are not convinced that they are applied effectively. Some food producers and distributors feel that they can ignore the law with impunity.

Information

Consumers believe that government and industry do not provide **enough information to enable them to make an informed choice**. Very often, labels on food do not carry adequate, easy-to-read information. Information from government, industry and other sources is often not clear or may be conflicting.

Environmental contamination

Consumers' concern has grown rapidly over possible environmental **contamination of the food supply during the various stages of production, harvesting, processing, storage and distribution**. They lack confidence in the ability of food control services to provide the necessary protection.

Irradiation and biotechnology

Consumers feel that some processes using new technology are unsafe because they have not been adequately evaluated. Reliable **information about newer technologies** is not always available.



Codes of hygienic practice provide guidance on the production of food that is safe and suitable for consumption, to protect the health of consumers.

Radionuclides in Foods Following Accidental Nuclear Contamination for Use in International Trade.

It also contains codes of practice, most of which are codes of hygienic practice providing guidance on the production of food that is safe and suitable for consumption – in other words, their purpose is to protect the health of consumers. The *Recommended International Code of Practice – General Principles of Food Hygiene* applies to all foods. It is particularly important in protecting consumers because it lays a firm foundation for food safety and follows the food chain from primary production through to final consumption, highlighting the key hygiene controls required at each stage.

NEW AREAS: EMERGING CONSUMER CONCERNS

With the globalization of the trade in foods, the potential for food borne illnesses to extend beyond national borders is greatly increased. Likewise, with today's access to the internet, information – and misinformation – can also spread extremely rapidly. Codex needs to be able to respond appropriately to these instances to ensure that confidence in the food supply is not jeopardized. This is recognized in the Strategic Plan 2014 – 2019 where the first strategic goal is to "*Establish international food standards that address current and emerging food issues*".

Codex has been in the forefront in identifying and addressing emerging food issues. For example, consumer concerns in the wake of the bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), or "mad cow", crisis of the early 1990s led Codex to take up the question of the safety of feed for food-producing animals. The Commission

went even further than responding to the immediate crisis, and the resulting *Code of Practice on Good Animal Feeding* takes into account all relevant aspects of animal health and the environment in order to minimize risks to consumers' health. It applies to the production and use of all materials destined for animal feed and feed ingredients at all levels, whether produced industrially or on a farm. It also includes grazing or free-range feeding, forage crop production and aquaculture. Recognizing the interface between animal health and food safety, a close working relationship exists between Codex and the OIE.

The *Codex Principles for the Risk Analysis of Foods Derived from Modern Biotechnology* were developed to guide a pre-market safety evaluation of these foods on a case-by-case basis. The Principles provide for post-market monitoring of potential consumer health effects and nutritional effects, as appropriate. Two detailed guidelines on the conduct of safety assessments, one for foods from DNA-modified plants and the other for foods from DNA-modified micro-organisms, include consideration of both intended and unintended effects of the genetic modification and an assessment of possible allergenicity.

Examples of other guidelines and codes of practice developed by Codex to address emerging issues include: Guidelines for the Control of *Campylobacter* and *Salmonella* in Chicken Meat, Code of Practice for the Reduction of Acrylamide in Foods, Code of Practice for the Prevention and Reduction of Ethyl Carbamate Contamination in Stone Fruit Distillates and Code of Practice for Weed Control to Prevent and Reduce Pyrrolizidine Alkaloid Contamination in Food and Feed.

CONSUMER PARTICIPATION


Since its beginning, the Commission has welcomed the participation of consumers, whose organizations have been represented at its sessions since 1965. The involvement of consumers in the Commission's work has been the subject of explicit discussions within the Commission. Consumers' participation in decision-making in relation to food standards and the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, for instance, was an item on the agenda of the Twentieth Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, when it was agreed that it is necessary to continue working in close cooperation with consumers' organizations.

Because of its international nature, the Commission is aware that it can only go part of the way towards involving consumers in its food standardization and related work. Therefore, the Twentieth Session of the Commission invited governments to involve consumers more

effectively in the decision-making process at the national level:

"The Commission has continued to involve consumer interests in its work while recognizing that it is at the national level that consumers can make their most valuable and effective input".

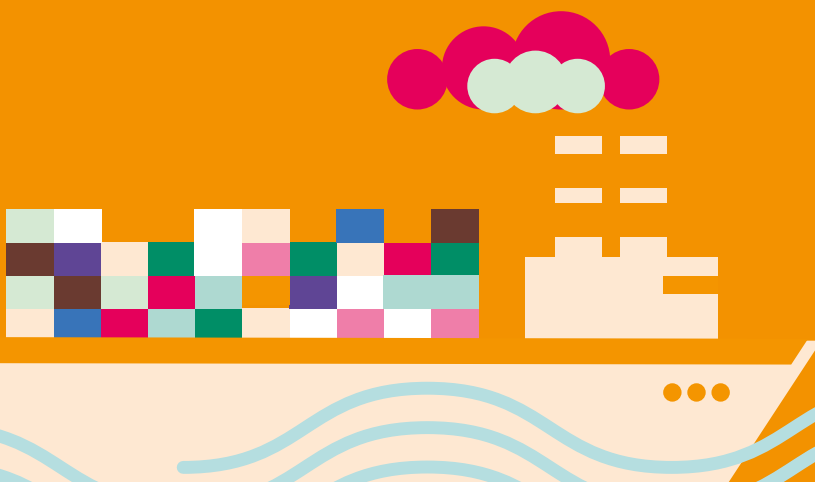
INFORMATION DISTRIBUTED TO CONSUMERS

The Codex Alimentarius Secretariat disseminates Codex documents to international consumers' organizations and provides information on request. It also distributes all Commission documents and those of its subsidiary committees to Codex Contact Points in member countries. This is done in the expectation that they will be forwarded to nationally based consumers' organizations for comment as required. All of these documents, including working papers, information papers and meeting reports are publicly available on the Codex Web site, www.codexalimentarius.org 





According to
FAO trade statistics,
the value of trade in
food exceeded
US\$ 1.12 trillion
in 2013 and
is increasing.



07. Codex and the international food trade

APPLYING CODEX STANDARDS

The harmonization of food standards is generally viewed as contributing to the protection of consumer health and to the fullest possible facilitation of international trade. Although the Codex Alimentarius Commission does not have a mandate to facilitate trade, trade facilitation occurs as a result of countries aligning their domestic standards with Codex standards.

While the growing world interest in all Codex activities clearly indicates global acceptance of the Codex philosophy –

embracing harmonization, consumer protection and facilitation of international trade – in practice it is difficult for many countries to accept Codex standards in the statutory sense. Differing legal formats and administrative systems, varying political systems and sometimes the influence of national attitudes and concepts of sovereign rights impede the progress of harmonization and deter the acceptance of Codex standards.

Despite these difficulties, however, the process of harmonization is gaining impetus by virtue of the strong international desire to facilitate trade and the desire of consumers around the world to have access to safe and

“The publication of the Codex Alimentarius is intended to guide and promote the elaboration and establishment of definitions and requirements for foods to assist in their harmonization and in doing so to facilitate international trade.”

The General Principles of
the Codex Alimentarius.

nutritious foods. An increasing number of countries are aligning their national food standards, or parts of them (especially those relating to safety), with those of the Codex Alimentarius. This is particularly so in the case of additives, contaminants and residues, i.e. the invisibles.

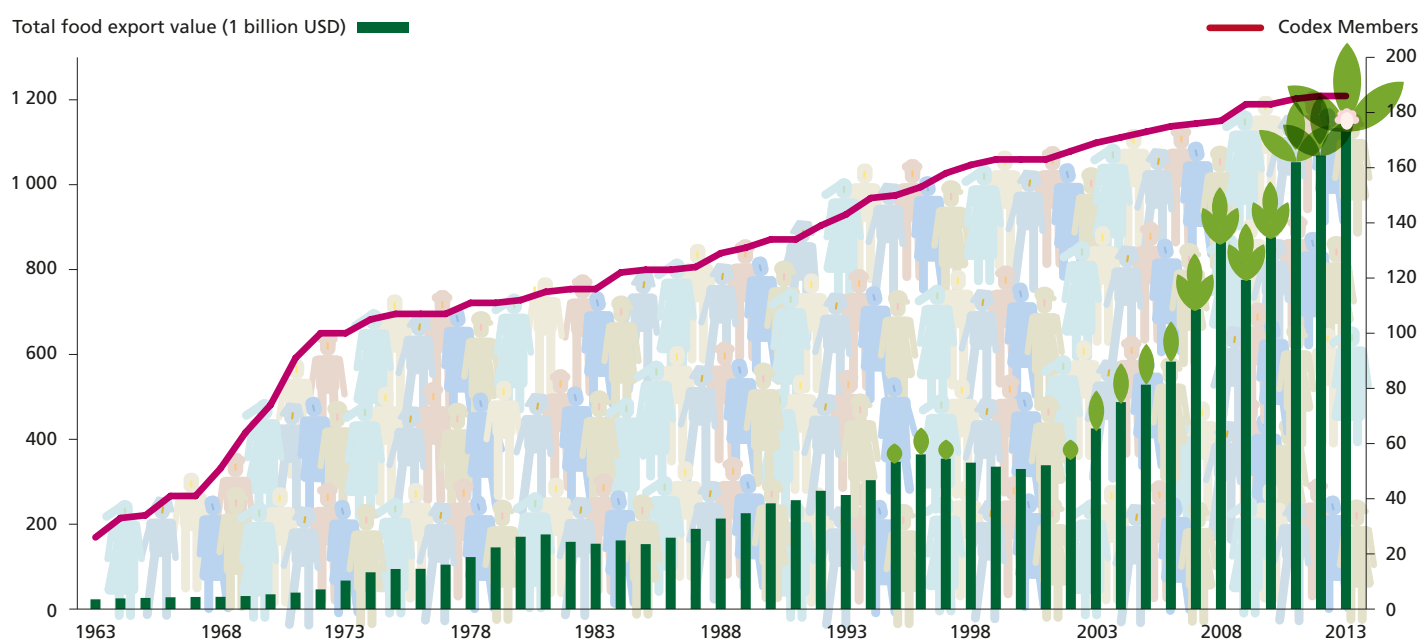
The officials and experts who laid the foundations and determined the direction taken by activities of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme and the Codex Alimentarius Commission were first and foremost concerned with protecting the health of consumers and ensuring fair practices in the food trade.

They felt that, if all countries harmonized their food laws and adopted internationally agreed standards, such issues would be dealt with naturally. Through harmonization, they envisaged fewer barriers to trade and freer movement of food products among countries, which would be to the benefit of farmers and their families and would also help to reduce hunger and poverty. The founders concluded that the Codex Alimentarius would resolve many of the difficulties that were impeding freedom of trade, a view that is reflected in the Purpose of the Codex Alimentarius, described in the *General Principles*.

A principal concern of national governments is that food imported from other countries should be safe and not jeopardize the health of consumers or pose a threat to the health and safety of their animal and plant populations. Consequently, governments of importing countries have introduced mandatory laws and regulations to eliminate or minimize such threats. In the area of food, animal

As global trade rises an ever increasing number of countries see the value of Codex membership.

GROWTH IN WORLD FOOD EXPORTS AND CODEX MEMBERSHIP



Source: FAOSTAT.

and plant control, these measures could be conducive to the creation of barriers to food trade between countries.

While there are several trade agreements that have implications for food, there are two agreements of particular interest with respect to the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission; the *Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measure* (SPS Agreement) and the *Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade* (TBT Agreement).

TRADE AGREEMENTS

The GATT Uruguay Round (1986–1994) Agreements represent a milestone in the multilateral trading system because, for the first time, they incorporated agriculture and food under operationally effective rules and disciplines.

Country participants in the round of negotiations recognized that measures ostensibly adopted by national governments to protect the health of their consumers, animals and plants could become disguised barriers to trade as well as being discriminatory. Consequently, the SPS and TBT Agreements were included among the Multilateral Agreements on Trade in Goods, annexed to the 1994 Marrakesh Agreement, which established the World Trade Organization.

The SPS Agreement contains provisions with respect to measures that may be taken to protect animal, plant and human health. With regards to human health, it acknowledges that governments have the right to take sanitary and

phytosanitary measures necessary for the protection of the health of their citizens. However, the Agreement requires them to apply those measures only to the extent required to protect human health. It does not permit member governments to discriminate by applying different requirements to different countries where the same or similar conditions prevail, unless there is sufficient scientific justification for doing so.

The TBT Agreement seeks to ensure that technical regulations and standards, including packaging, marking and labelling requirements, and analytical procedures for assessing conformity with technical regulations and standards do not create unnecessary obstacles to trade. It should be noted that the TBT Agreement applies to all regulations and standards and is not specific to food.

It is noteworthy that the SPS and TBT Agreements both acknowledge the importance of harmonizing standards internationally so as to minimize or eliminate the risk of sanitary, phytosanitary and other technical standards becoming barriers to trade.

In its pursuance of harmonization, with regard to food safety, **the SPS Agreement has specifically identified the standards, guidelines and recommendations established by the Codex Alimentarius Commission** for food additives, veterinary drug and pesticide residues, contaminants, methods of analysis and sampling, and codes and guidelines of hygienic practice. This means that Codex standards are considered scientifically justified and are accepted as the benchmarks against which national measures and regulations are evaluated.

The specific recognition by WTO of Codex standards has stimulated considerable interest in the activities of the Commission.

Consequently, attendance at Codex meetings, especially by developing countries, has markedly increased. This is a welcome development, particularly as both the SPS and TBT Agreements direct members, within the limits of their resources, “to play a full part” in the work of international standards organizations and their subsidiaries.

The adoption of Codex standards as scientifically justified norms for the purpose of the SPS and TBT Agreements is of immense significance. The standards have become an integral part of the legal framework within which international trade is being facilitated through harmonization. Codex standards prevent, (and assist in the resolution of) trade disputes before WTO. They provide a benchmark and it is expected that they will be used increasingly in this regard.

CODEX AND OTHER TRADE AGREEMENTS

Reference to the Codex Alimentarius occurs in many bilateral and plurilateral trade agreements. Several trade agreements have recently been negotiated or are being negotiated including the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) among twelve Pacific Rim countries; the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between Canada and Europe, and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) between the European Union and the United States. These agreements typically contain provisions related to SPS measures and invariably reference the standards adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission. **91**

FAO and WHO complement the Commission's activities significantly in a number of practical ways. FAO and WHO not only support but also help developing countries to apply Codex standards, to strengthen their national food control systems and take advantage of international food trade opportunities.



08. More than Codex: FAO, WHO and wider partnerships

BUILDING NATIONAL CAPACITIES

To adopt Codex standards, countries require an adequate food law, as well as a technical and administrative infrastructure with the capacity to implement it and ensure compliance. For many years, FAO and WHO have been providing assistance to developing countries to enable them to take full advantage of the Commission's work. This effort has been enhanced to a considerable degree by financial and technical support from industrialized countries and international funding institutions.

Technical assistance

Enabling developing countries to strengthen their food control systems also contributes to improving their socio-economic situation. Improved food control systems leads to a safer domestic food supply and hence less of a burden to health care systems, less absenteeism from work and school due to illness and improved nutrition. It also enhances opportunities for those countries to export foods thus increasing their GDP.

Assistance given to developing countries has included:

- establishing and strengthening national food control systems, including the formulation and revision of food legislation (acts and regulations) and food standards in accordance with Codex standards;
- helping with the establishment and strengthening of food control agencies,

as well as with training in the necessary technical and administrative skills to ensure their effective operation;

- strengthening laboratory analysis and food inspection capabilities;
- conducting workshops and training courses, not only for transferring information, knowledge and skills associated with food control, but also to increase awareness of the Codex Alimentarius and activities carried out by the Commission;
- providing training in all aspects of food control associated with protecting the health of consumers and ensuring honest practices in the sale of food;
- extending guidance on matters directly related to Codex activities, such as safety assessment of food produced using biotechnology;
- developing and publishing manuals and texts that are associated with food quality control and that provide recommendations for the development and operation of food quality and safety systems;
- developing and publishing training manuals on food inspection and quality and safety assurance, particularly with respect to the application of the HACCP system in the food-processing industry;

- assisting countries to conduct own needs assessment in food safety and quality;
- assisting countries to estimating burden of foodborne diseases;
- helping countries to strengthen their risk communication capabilities;
- providing guidance to produce safe foods;
- providing training and guidance to improve the surveillance of foodborne diseases.

Standards and Trade Development Facility

Based at the headquarters of WTO, the Standards and Trade Development Facility is a global programme for capacity building and technical assistance in sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) matters related to trade. It was established in 2001 when the Executive Heads of FAO, OIE, the World Bank, WHO and WTO issued a joint communiqué committing the institutions to exploring new technical and financial mechanisms for coordination and resource mobilization to assist developing countries in the establishment and implementation of appropriate measures.

The Facility is both a financing and a coordinating mechanism. It provides grant financing for developing countries seeking to comply with international SPS standards and hence gain or maintain market access. It also provides a forum for dialogue on

SPS technical assistance issues among its five partner organizations and interested donors.

The Facility aims to:

- act as a reference point for good practice by implementing demonstration projects with innovative approaches;
- address longer-term issues of capacity and compliance, rather than involve itself in short-term, policy-driven “firefighting” projects; and
- offer technical expertise and experience to developing countries in this highly technical area.

Global Food Safety Partnership

The Global Food Safety Partnership, operated under the World Bank, is a unique public-private initiative dedicated to improving the safety of food in middle-income and developing countries. The partnership's main goal is to promote and coordinate capacity building for improved food safety systems, agri-food value chains, and public health outcomes. The GFSP serves as a platform in which concerned international organizations, public sector agencies, private sector producers, processors and retailers,

technical service providers, leading academic institutions, consumer groups, and other stakeholders can convene to work out synchronized, collaborative approaches to food safety issues rather than working separately and independently.

The GFSP combines food safety training and technical support so developing countries can improve their food safety systems and benefit from better compliance with food safety standards.

Tailored to the specific needs of individual countries and segmented to reach all the way up, down and across the food value chain, the Partnership benefits small farmers, food processors, retailers, supervisory and regulatory agencies, and policy-makers, among others.

FAO/WHO TRUST FUND FOR PARTICIPATION IN CODEX

The first FAO/WHO Project and Fund for Enhanced Participation in Codex (Codex Trust Fund or CTF) was launched in 2003 by the Directors-General of FAO and WHO for a 12 year period (2004–2015). By bringing some 2300 delegates to Codex meetings, and supporting Codex training for over 1000 people, CTF acted as a catalyst to highlight the importance of Codex in protecting public health and enhancing trade opportunities for developing and transition economy countries.

Building on the success of CTF, a successor initiative (CTF2) was launched in January 2016 and will run for another 12 year period (2016–2027). The focus of the new Codex Trust Fund will shift from widening participation in Codex, to building strong, solid and sustainable national capacity to engage in Codex. It will do this by supporting:

1. One to three year projects in individual countries or groups of countries tailored to meet specific needs of the country/group of countries;
2. Tailored capacity development activities carried out by FAO/WHO at global, regional and sub-regional levels.

When all Codex member states engage fully in the development of international food safety standards the result is a more inclusive, equitable and participatory global standard-setting body. The FAO/WHO Codex Trust Fund is essential to ensuring this engagement. When developing and transition economy countries participate fully and effectively in Codex they realize a “triple win” through improved consumer health on all sides of the food supply chain, better access to international trade in food and the economic benefits that come from both better health and increased economic opportunities.

MECHANISMS FOR SHARING INFORMATION

Access to information about food standards and food regulatory requirements is critical in today's world. Governments and traders need to know

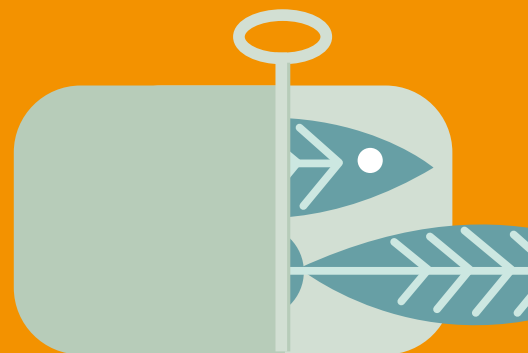
the requirements of their trading partners; consumers and the media have the right to have access to a safety assessment of potential hazards in the food supply; and everyone needs to know how to respond correctly in an emergency situation when something in the system “goes wrong”.

Fortunately, the Internet allows rapid access to all types of information about regulatory matters concerning food. However, sometimes the information available is excessive, inconsistent or of doubtful quality. The international organizations associated with Codex have therefore combined their efforts to provide easy access to authoritative information on food standards and related matters.

International Food Safety Authorities Network

INFOSAN promotes the exchange of food safety information among food safety authorities at national and international levels. A food safety emergency network is an integral part of INFOSAN and will implement the emergency information exchange system recommended by the Codex Alimentarius Commission in its Guideline on the Exchange of Information in Food Control Emergency Situations. The INFOSAN Secretariat maintains a list of food safety emergency contact points and envisages the strengthening of information exchange between national authorities in the case of international health emergencies. These include emergencies where food is the vehicle causing serious international public health risks. INFOSAN is managed by WHO. **91**

It is difficult to imagine
a world without the
Codex Alimentarius.
Consumer demand, recognition
by WTO, the growing
attendance at Codex meetings
and the greater involvement
of developing countries all
point to a long and active life
for the Commission.




09. Codex: looking ahead

Codex never stops. It cannot, as food is a commodity like no other. But what challenges will Codex face in the future to remain the pre-eminent, science-based international food safety and quality standard setting body? Codex in its strategy is already examining issues on the horizon such as climate change and new ways of managing the environmental impact of agriculture, and Codex is aware of a need to be more proactive with regards to new technologies, food fraud or emerging pathogens.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals provide a framework for future developments in Codex regarding food safety and quality, preventing trade restrictions and distortions and ensuring access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round. Indeed consumers are ever more aware of food safety issues and increasingly sensitive to the information provided to them regarding the food we eat either via food labelling or in the media.

Codex must therefore continue to help build public confidence in the safety of the food supply. The legitimacy of Codex rests on the belief that the best work comes out of inclusiveness and openness; from consensus and collaboration; with sound science and evidence based analysis. These are the values that should not change as old systems give way to the internet, as new products are marketed and advanced technologies – some of which are yet to be invented – begin to emerge and effect our food from the farm to the fork.

Building Codex globally by supporting the development of national food control systems in developing countries will contribute to all those involved in food safety being empowered to operate with harmonized rules on a level playing field. Engaging with partner organizations will also allow Codex to measure itself against the best.

Whatever the future holds food safety measures will need to be taken and when they are taken they will need to follow internationally agreed, harmonized standards born out of consensus and founded on sound science. That will be Codex. 

 Codex on the Internet
www.codexalimentarius.org

For news and information on:

- Standards and other recommendations
- Codex Committees
- Codex meetings and reports
- Statutes and procedures
- Strategic Plans.

Abbreviations

APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CAC	Codex Alimentarius Commission
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CETA	Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement
DNA	deoxyribonucleic acid
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFSP	Global Food Safety Partnership
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
HACCP	Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
INFOSAN	International Food Safety Authorities Network
IPPC	International Plant Protection Convention
ISO	International Standard Organization
JECFA	Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives
JEMNU	Joint FAO/WHO Expert Meetings on Nutrition
JEMRA	Joint FAO/WHO Expert Meetings on Microbiological Risk Assessment
JMPR	Joint FAO/WHO Meetings on Pesticide Residues
MERCOSUR	Southern Common Market
MRL	maximum residue limit
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NGO	non-governmental organization
NUGAG	Nutrition Guidance Expert Advisory Group
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OIE	World Organisation for Animal Health
SPS Agreement	Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures
TBT Agreement	Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
TTIP	Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership
UN	United Nations
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization 

UNDERSTANDING CODEX

The best traditions of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have encouraged food-related scientific and technological research as well as discussion. In doing so, they have lifted the world community's awareness of food safety and related issues to unprecedented heights. The Codex Alimentarius Commission, established by the two Organizations in the 1960s, has become the single most important international reference point for developments associated with food standards.

Throughout much of the world, an increasing number of consumers and governments are becoming aware of food quality and safety issues and are realizing the need to be selective about the foods being consumed. It is now common for consumers to demand that their governments take legislative action to ensure that only safe food of acceptable quality is sold and that the risk of food-borne health hazards is minimized. ¶

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