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Codex Alimentarius

The global institution that assures food safety for everyone



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For more than 50 years the member countries of Codex have agreed on global standards for foods traded internationally. These standards have led to improvements in consumer safety and public health across the world, while simultaneously reducing unnecessary trade barriers between countries. Such is the success of this joint FAO/WHO programme that today, it is virtually impossible to buy any food product whose safety and quality is not aligned with Codex standards.

What we do

The purpose of Codex is to both protect the health of consumers and to ensure fair practices in food trade. This is achieved by developing international food standards, guidelines and codes of practice— directed primarily at the commercial actors in the food chain. Codex texts are non-binding recommendations that only become mandatory if and when they are accepted into national legislation. There tends to be a wide uptake of these recommendations, as countries see the benefits of adopting universally acknowledged rules for food safety. Aside from the direct public health benefits,

adopting Codex standards also levels the playing field so countries can be assured of the safety of imported foods and reduce excessive border controls.

Sound science, inclusiveness and consensus are at the heart of the Codex mandate. Approved Codex food standards take many forms; from regulations on levels of food additives or limits for pesticide residues, to guidelines on nutrition labelling, food hygiene and antimicrobial resistance. Following these rules set by Codex, national governments and all food business operators, from growers to retailers, are able to ensure that food is safe in every home.

Codex adheres to risk analysis



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In the widely acknowledged approach of risk analysis, Codex is the risk manager taking a political decision based on the risk assessment carried out by the international, independent, expert scientific committees of FAO and WHO. Risk communication is assured through transparent discussions during the drafting of a standard and by publishing all Codex documents on the Codex website – to be used without any limitations, free of charge and for the benefit of all.

How Codex ensures our food is safe

If you the consumer purchase, for example, a bottle of milk, or a product such as cheese or yoghurt, you need to be sure it is safe and of good quality. For Codex this work begins with the animal, how it is reared and the feed and medicines it is given. When milk from the animal 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 traded, either at

home or abroad, it will also have to meet international standards and regulations and the needs of consumers. So 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.

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. So as you drink your milk, sample a fine cheese or check the label before purchasing a fermented milk product, consider how Codex is operating.

Who we are

The Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) is a food standards programme that was founded by FAO and WHO in 1963. Codex is a member-driven organization with 187 member countries and one member organization, the EU.



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Contributes to UN SDGs

1, 2, 3, 8, 12 and 17



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MORE INFORMATION

<http://www.codexalimentarius.org>