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FOOD CONTROL SYSTEM
ASSESSMENT TOOL

DIMENSION C INTERACTIONS WITH STAKEHOLDERS

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ASSESSMENT TOOL

DIMENSION C

INTERACTIONS WITH STAKEHOLDERS

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
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DIMENSION C identifies the interactions that must take place for the system to regularly adjust to national and international stakeholders' evolving needs, inspire confidence for stakeholders and to keep them well informed about their responsibilities.

SUB-DIMENSION C.1

DOMESTIC STAKEHOLDERS

This sub-dimension focuses on the transparency of communication to consumers and on the FBOs and their integration into the food control system.

Competency C.1.1 (Relationships between CAs and private sector regarding training needs) reviews how capacity development needs of FBOs are addressed to support compliance with regulatory requirements. CAs should perform an analysis of FBOs' capacity development needs to inform and plan awareness campaigns, training and educational programmes. When needs are identified, capacity development activities should be leveraged or implemented by CAs so that all risk categories of FBOs are informed and aware of legally required food standards. Formal attempts should be made to identify and address specific food controls that are often poorly carried out by FBOs, in order to address these in targeted training programmes.

Competency C.1.2 (Information flows and integration of FBOs into risk management) ensures that an efficient communication system operated by CAs enables FBOs and their trade organizations to remain updated on relevant food safety and quality information. It should also ensure that information can flow back to CAs and provide them with a mechanism for data generation and information gathering. FBOs' associations should be acknowledged by CAs and facilitate the transmission of accurate and timely information to and from their members. All categories of FBOs should be properly informed, updated and provided with equal opportunities to understand, contribute to the development of and implement any newly introduced methodologies or hygiene standards. The food industry should have open access to public information about food standards and regulations and to communication channels with the CAs. FBOs in special risk categories should be directly updated through communication channels that can verify receipt of information and they should transmit data directly to CAs. Finally, FBOs should be informed on the results of surveillance and routine reports to incentivize positive collaboration with government and enhance compliance.

Competency C.1.3 (Communication flows and involvement with consumers) assesses whether an internal policy for food safety risk communication to consumers is in place and is implemented based on openness, transparency, timeliness and responsiveness. The general public should be informed about food safety issues and their impact on public health through the dissemination of information by CAs, at all times, and especially during food safety crises. Different methods and means of communication for food safety issues could be used, also supported by communication specialists, to create food safety awareness among the general public

and consumers. During food safety crises, CAs should be prepared to communicate and deliver relevant food safety messages to consumers through an established risk communication plan. A mechanism for consumers' questions and complaints, such as a hotline, should also be in place so that information stemming from consumers is used by CAs to improve controls.

SUB-DIMENSION C.2

INTERNATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

This sub-dimension explores the interactions of CAs at international level to support national imports and exports, and the participation and engagement of CAs in International Organizations (IOs) to benefit from international expertise and to shape national legislation.

Competency C.2.1 (Interactions among CAs at international level) assesses how CAs engage with their counterparts at international level and how this supports agreements for export and import to occur. Effective channels of communication should be developed between countries engaged in extensive trade to support the development of bilateral or regional trading relationships. Importing and exporting countries should be facilitated in the trade process by having access to relevant information and by a system of transparent and predictable rules that complies with WTO requirements. Cooperative agreements and arrangements between trading countries regarding control measures for specific categories of food products should help to reduce the burden of import controls on specific categories of food products.

Competency C.2.2 (Engagement of CAs with International Organizations) evaluates whether CAs are actively engaged in IOs to inform and benefit from international expertise. The country should be an active member of Codex and other relevant IOs with mandates in food safety and quality, to have the opportunity to influence international food safety and quality governance. An inclusive, transparent and effective consultation mechanism should be in place at national level on Codex-related matters, to build informed and strategic country positions. It would be ideal if the country could also provide Codex, and related scientific advice bodies, with relevant scientific and technical information. Lastly, Codex standards and other guidance should be used in an appropriate manner at national level to shape national legislation.





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C.1 DOMESTIC STAKEHOLDERS

COMPETENCY C.1.1 **RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CAs AND PRIVATE SECTOR REGARDING TRAINING NEEDS**

OVERALL OUTCOME	Capacity development needs of FBOs are addressed with the right quality level to support compliance with regulation requirements.
C.1.1.1	The CAs assess FBOs' capacity development needs to inform and plan awareness campaigns, training and educational programmes.
C.1.1.2	Where needs are identified, capacity development activities are leveraged or directly implemented by CAs to improve the understanding of a range of FBOs (primary producers, processors, small traders, food vendors, etc.) regarding the requirements of food regulations.
C.1.1.3	There are formal attempts to identify which specific food controls are often poorly carried out by FBOs and these are addressed in the capacity development activities as conceived and arranged by, or in collaboration with, the CAs.

COMPETENCY C.1.2 **INFORMATION FLOWS AND INTEGRATION OF FBOs INTO RISK MANAGEMENT**

OVERALL OUTCOME	An efficient communication system operated by CAs enables FBOs and their trade organizations to remain updated on relevant food safety and quality information and allows information to flow back to CAs for standards development and information and data generation.
C.1.2.1	FBOs' associations are acknowledged by and collaborate with CAs to serve their members with relevant food safety and quality information.
C.1.2.2	FBOs have access to information about and are engaged in the development of food control regulations and food standards, and have the possibility to provide feedback and channel complaints to CAs.
C.1.2.3	High-risk FBOs are provided with special communication channels ensuring that CAs' messages are delivered to FBOs.
C.1.2.4	All FBOs, including micro-businesses, are properly informed, updated and provided with equal opportunities to properly understand and adopt recommended approaches and legislation requirements.
C.1.2.5	CAs inform FBOs on the results of monitoring and routine inspection reports to incentivize positive collaboration with government and enhance compliance.

COMPETENCY C.1.3 COMMUNICATION FLOWS AND INVOLVEMENT WITH CONSUMERS**OVERALL OUTCOME**

The CAs implement an established internal policy for food safety risk communication to consumers based on openness, transparency, timeliness and responsiveness and its effectiveness is monitored.

C.1.3.1

The CAs have an established internal policy of disseminating information to consumers, including special needs groups, on the importance of food safety, including safe food handling practices and critical quality issues.

C.1.3.2

Decisions and information about official food control are made available to consumers at all times and with particular attention during food safety crises.

C.1.3.3

CAs make use of the different methods and means of communication for food safety issues supported by communication specialists.

C.1.3.4

The CAs have a risk communication plan for crises (on food safety or fraud issues) to deliver relevant food safety messages to consumers.

C.1.3.5

CAs provide a mechanism for consumers' questions and complaints.

C.1.1

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CAs AND PRIVATE SECTOR REGARDING TRAINING NEEDS

OVERALL OUTCOME

Capacity development needs of FBOs are addressed with the right quality level to support compliance with regulation requirements (Ref. para 66 of CAC/GL 82-2013).

C.1.1.1



ASSESSMENT CRITERION: The CAs assess FBOs' capacity development needs to inform and plan awareness campaigns, training and educational programmes.

GUIDANCE

CAs have to establish regulations governing food products and to enforce these. In the food-producing private sector, the principal agenda of business owners is to make profits. Food producers' profits are dependent on supplying the needs of consumers. However, in all countries there are FBOs that are poorly educated and unaware of food safety risks and mitigation steps. In a few cases, there are elements who fraudulently attempt to make profits by deceiving customers about the nature and quality of the food they are selling. All these operators need to be informed and guided to improve their approach to food safety risks and mitigation steps. The government policy should be to facilitate training and orientation regarding food standards and the national food safety requirements to be observed by FBOs.

If CAs can influence FBOs to produce food safely by means other than formal enforcement, then this is more conducive to positive working relationships between the public and the private sector. The CAs should aim to understand the capacity development needs of the FBOs (private sector) with enough precision that they can design and deliver food safety education and advice to FBOs to address priority food safety risks or faulty processes. To this end, a needs analysis of the different categories of FBOs (by sector, size, recurring food safety issue or by the specific type of regulation that applies) should be implemented with enough precision to inform the content of capacity development activities (Ref. para 67 and 78 of CAC/GL 82-2013). Careful planning is key for success in capacity development.

This includes, among other things, deciding on the most adapted types of capacity development and communication approaches (i.e. training programmes, education and awareness raising, mentoring, etc.), as well as on the relevant and reliable partners to subsequently implement these activities. In some countries, implementation of capacity development activities could be directly done by the CAs (possibly another unit than the one that is controlling the FBOs). However, ideally, this transfer of skills is performed by other entities who train the FBO workers, operatives and their managers; this reduces the risk of conflicts of interest.

Government data (e.g. inspection reports, monitoring and surveillance programmes) can elucidate which food safety controls (as required by regulations to FBOs) are often poorly implemented. Further findings stemming from risk profiles, risk assessments (including identification of the most efficient control measures, important points in the food chain to act on, etc.) can further inform where critical efforts by FBOs should be undertaken. This should be taken into account when designing capacity development activities arranged by or in collaboration with CAs responsible for food safety and quality regulations. FBOs (e.g. through their representative associations) are encouraged to regularly engage in such activities and/or to progressively organize themselves to obtain such capacity development through appropriate means. Relevant links with academia should be fostered to create an option for training at individual (staff) level or at business level (Ref. para 74 CAC/GL 82-2013).

This non-regulatory approach to food safety assumes that there is genuine willingness from FBOs to improve. In the case of fraudsters (intentionally counterfeiting their products for economic gain), this would not apply. However, raising awareness of the other stakeholders in the food chain about such behaviours and the tools that they can develop to defend themselves (such as vulnerability assessments) would also be part of these capacity development programmes.

POSSIBLE OUTCOME

FBOs' capacity development needs can be addressed through well-targeted programmes.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- > CAs that carry out regular capacity development needs analysis of FBOs.
- > CAs that review training offers, including quality and content, to identify gaps.
- > Inspection records of trainings followed by FBOs when legislation requires FBOs to undergo regular training in food safety.
- > Needs analysis that considers the different categories of FBOs (e.g. by sector, size, recurring food safety issue or by the specific type of regulation that applies).

- > CAs that actively assess the need for awareness training for food requirements compliance in the various sectors.
- > CAs' planning proposals to deal with awareness and possible training of operatives and managers in the legal requirements for GHP and other food-related aspects presented in food law.
- > Suitability of the training needs analysis to properly inform planning.
- > Reliable entities identified to carry out the training of FBO workers, operatives and managers.
- > Analytical reports, risk profiles, risk assessments or correspondence about investigation of food control measures or regulations, which are more frequently associated with non-compliance.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

- > Report of the training needs analysis.
- > Correspondence about the needs of FBOs.
- > Report/correspondence supporting an analysis of the specific training needs of different categories of FBOs (less well-established operators, food production sectors, traders, etc.).
- > Correspondence with entities contracted to carry out the training of FBOs.
- > Annual/biannual training schedules that support delivery of the training.
- > Inspection records.

SEE ALSO

- B.1.1.8** [The national inspection plan includes routine inspection at all registered farms]
 - B.1.2.1** [Importers are identified through a registration system and importer compliance profiles are established over time]
 - D.1.2** [Capacity to collect and analyse data for risk analysis purposes]
 - D.1.3.3** [When necessary, CAs use risk profiles to guide and inform the deployment of resources into official controls]
 - D.1.3.5** [Risk assessments are being conducted and they deliver scientifically defensible risk estimates (qualitative or semi- quantitative)]
-

C.1.1.2

ASSESSMENT CRITERION: Where needs are identified, capacity development activities are leveraged or directly implemented by CAs to improve the understanding of a range of FBOs (primary producers, processors, small traders, food vendors, etc.) regarding the requirements of food regulations.

**GUIDANCE**

CAs may arrange (or commission) capacity development activities for FBOs that outline legal requirements and clarify technical food safety and quality standards or the government's interpretation of GHP, the principles of HACCP and the principles of risk analysis. In some countries, this is actually required by legislation, especially for less well-established FBOs.

Capacity development needs may vary, in the sense that different levels of food businesses and different types of food will require different types of training or information. The primary production sector (including farming, wild fisheries and game meat) will require different training than the processors or small traders, while less well-established FBOs,¹ which are typically not as well equipped or informed as established food businesses, should be targeted with yet another type of training. In the latter case, while recognizing that serious non-compliance must be addressed immediately, some structural improvements and improved personnel hygiene can sometimes be met with some increased flexibility in enforcement – for example, by providing a lag phase for ordering services and materials to meet food safety and quality requirements. The agreement with the less-established FBO, however, must be that the training leads to improvement, compliance and lowered risk for consumers, failing which formal enforcement should/would be used. The recognition that a gradual but steady trend toward improvement must be in place can help overcome the initial overwhelming lag phase that some less well-established FBOs may face.

If the government commissions third parties to deliver short courses or workshops, this approach can protect the government from immediate exposure to conflicts of interest, while also allowing officials or food business sectorial associations to elaborate and decide upon content and to provide oversight on quality. Such facilitation for industry can help with those aspects of compliance that are known to be poorly performed or those that are often found to be non-compliant. This will also lead the CAs to better understand the operational challenges that are faced by FBOs, leading to constructive dialogue and discussion (Ref. para 57, 2nd point, of CAC/GL 82-2013).

¹ A less well-established FBO may be any business, from street vendor to small trader, or a start-up business with less experienced staff.

POSSIBLE OUTCOME

All risk categories of FBOs are informed and aware of legally required measures to achieve compliance with food standards.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- > Evidence that awareness training and orientation for food safety and quality is applied widely in the country and along all stages of the food chain (food production sectors including farms, wild fisheries and game, food processors, food traders, less well-established FBOs).
- > Activities to connect FBOs with possible and well-informed service providers (e.g. academia) providing regular and high-quality capacity development activities.
- > Documentation regarding targeted training events for FBOs that provide awareness about important food safety and quality measures.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

- > Documents/reports related to planning and implementation of awareness training for the different sectors.
- > Analysis reports about previous training of FBOs and overall needs analysis.
- > In case of several years of implementation, the report of the outcome in terms of improvement in compliance.

SEE ALSO

- C.1.2.4** [All FBOs, including micro-businesses, are properly informed, updated and provided with equal opportunities to properly understand and adopt recommended approaches and legislation requirements]

C.1.1.3

ASSESSMENT CRITERION: There are formal attempts to identify which specific food controls are often poorly carried out by FBOs and these are addressed in the capacity development activities as conceived and arranged by, or in collaboration with, the CAs.

**GUIDANCE**

Government data (e.g. inspection reports, monitoring and surveillance programmes) can elucidate which food safety controls (as required by regulations for FBOs) are often poorly implemented. Further findings stemming from risk profiles, risk assessments (including identification of the most efficient control measures, important points in the food chain to act on, etc.) can further inform where critical efforts by FBOs should be undertaken. This should be taken into account when designing capacity development activities arranged by or in collaboration with CAs responsible for food safety and quality regulations. FBOs (e.g. through their representative associations) are encouraged to regularly engage in such activities and/or progressively organize themselves to obtain such capacity development through appropriate means. Relevant links with academia should be fostered to create an offer for training, at individual (staff) level or at business level (Ref. para 74 CAC/GL 82-2013).

POSSIBLE OUTCOME

Food safety and quality problems are identified, to be addressed strategically through capacity development programmes.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- > Analytical reports, risk profiles, risk assessments, or correspondence about investigation of food control measures or regulations, which are more frequently associated with non-compliance.
- > Activities developed by CAs reaching out to other partners to create or support an offer for capacity development activities with relevant content (e.g. contacts with academia).
- > Documentation regarding targeted training events for FBOs that provide awareness about important food safety and quality measures.
- > Activities to connect FBOs with possible and well-informed service providers (academia) providing regular and high-quality capacity development activities.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

- > Analytical reports.
- > Training records as part of Good Hygienic Practices implemented by FBOs.
- > Correspondence.
- > Review of inspection and monitoring programme results.
- > Documentation on training events.

SEE ALSO

- B.1.1.8** [The national inspection plan includes routine inspection at all registered farms]
 - B.1.2.1** [Importers are identified through a registration system and importer compliance profiles are established over time]
 - D.1.2** [Capacity to collect and analyse data for risk analysis purposes]
 - D.1.3.3** [When necessary, CAs use risk profiles to guide and inform the deployment of resources into official controls]
 - D.1.3.5** [Risk assessments are being conducted and they deliver scientifically defensible risk estimates (qualitative or semi- quantitative)]
-

C.1.2**INFORMATION FLOWS AND INTEGRATION OF FBOs INTO RISK MANAGEMENT²**

An efficient communication system operated by CAs enables FBOs and their trade organizations to remain updated on relevant food safety and quality information (Ref. para 66 of CAC/GL 82-2013) and allows information to flow back to CAs for standards development and information and data generation.

OVERALL OUTCOME**C.1.2.1**

ASSESSMENT CRITERION: FBOs' associations are acknowledged by and collaborate with CAs to serve their members with relevant food safety and quality information.

**GUIDANCE**

Producers' Associations (PAs) have a valuable role to play to represent the interests of the FBOs that are members of their particular food sector. Examples could be a vegetable growers' association or a dairy producers' association. One important aspect is the government's ability to explain to the members of the association the official food control priorities, as seen by the government, and to discuss the challenges and constraints that exist. In this way and in a moderated forum, all individual producer members remain updated on food controls. Another aspect of this acknowledgement and collaboration is active participation in shaping legislation or addressing policy issues, including the development of food control measures. Note that, inherently, the government has to recognize and support PAs if this benefit is to accrue. (Ref. para 79, last point, of CAC/GL 82-2013).

POSSIBLE OUTCOME

FBOs receive accurate and timely information on, and have the opportunity to be engaged in, food control policy and measures development, through their associations.

² See also: A.1.1.4 and A.2.2.4.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- > Independent food PAs (or equivalent) advocated, allowed and/or enabled by CAs to facilitate CAs' communications with food sector.
- > Established and active independent food PAs, especially of "risk food" producers (such as dairy, meat, fish), but also cereal, fruit and vegetable producers.
- > Evidence that the system is functioning well to widely convey food control information from CAs to FBOs via the moderating PAs.
- > Contributions of PAs in drafting legislation.
- > Existence of policies promoting engagement of FBOs in food control governance.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

- > Reports of relevant producers' associations (PAs), indicating:
 - i. The type of support that CAs have offered to the PAs; and
 - ii. How the PAs have approached FBOs with support and information dispersal regarding food controls.

C.1.2.2

ASSESSMENT CRITERION: FBOs have access to information about, and are engaged in the development of, food control regulations and food standards, and have the possibility to provide feedback and channel complaints to CAs.



GUIDANCE

It is in the national interest to address food safety and quality governance challenges with maximum cooperation and collaboration from all stakeholders (whether they represent the private sector or the public sector). The Internet and other modern technological media are available in almost all countries, presenting opportunities for the government to promote food safety and quality messages and relevant information. Ideally, the FBOs will actively wish to achieve compliance with food regulations. For this purpose, they should be able to access information about food safety regulations and food standards online or via other media. The FBOs should also be able to access information and advice on how and where to obtain training for themselves and for their employees who handle food. A government website dedicated to GHP, food standards, food safety regulations, achievement of compliance and access to formal training in the principles and practices of food safety will be useful for the industry and will give the CAs more visibility, status and credibility. This could address coverage of food producing and processing operations from farm to fork, with special features for catering operations such as restaurants, etc.

A progressive government will also seek to be receptive to FBOs' concerns, appeals and complaints. A pragmatic and effective mechanism for feedback from FBOs, arranged and supported by the CAs, would facilitate meaningful and potentially fruitful dialogue and focus. The goal is to avert harmful dissent and to secure constructive solutions to difficulties. This will support the consultation mechanisms when preparing new regulations (for CAs to be aware of potential technical implementation problems by FBOs and for identifying the control measures that are least trade- disruptive while solving food safety or quality issues) and during the process of regulatory impact assessments.

POSSIBLE OUTCOME

The food industry has ready access to public information about food standards and regulations and to specific channels for seeking compatible solutions from, or with, the CAs.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- > Availability of information about regulations.
- > Availability of information about formal training for food safety principles and practices, and about how FBOs can locate accredited (or approved) training courses.
- > Existence of a sustainable consultation framework that allows FBOs to air their concerns, appeals, and even complaints or grievances.
- > A system that is functional and satisfactory to both the CAs and the FBOs.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

- > A government website (or suitable information medium) dedicated to information about food safety (GHP, food safety regulations, food standards and compliance with food standards).
- > Reports from ad hoc or formal group consultations.
- > Hard evidence that arising issues have been addressed or processed.
- > Records of communications with FBOs.
- > Interviews with CAs and FBOs.

SEE ALSO

- A.1.1.3** [Food safety and quality policy and legislation are developed on the basis of written principles and procedures that enable comprehensive and participatory processes and ensure "fit for purpose" results]
- A.1.1.4** [Legislation recognizes the stakeholders' right to have access to information on food control measures (including sanitary and quality requirements) and includes provisions on publicizing them]
- A.1.3.8** [National food standards, regulations and guidelines provide an appropriate foundation for food control, and these are based on Codex or other international reference standards]

C.1.2.3



ASSESSMENT CRITERION: High-risk FBOs are provided with special communication channels ensuring that CAs' messages are delivered to FBOs.

GUIDANCE

Some FBO categories are associated with special risks; hence, they have special risk-reduction measures to implement. These risks may be inherent and generic (as in meat processing, or milk processing) or may be temporary, as during emergencies (such as livestock or vegetables contaminated with radioactive isotopes). In these cases, the information transfer is critical and the government will need to have communication channels that can verify receipt of information by the FBOs. The same channels can also be used for the transmission to the CAs of special monitoring data collected by the FBOs. The role of representative bodies or professional associations is also very important to support this communication.

POSSIBLE OUTCOME

Categories of FBOs with special risk control features are directly updated and they directly transmit data to CAs.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- > There is evidence of communication channels specifically targeting high-risk categories of FBOs.
- > CAs have communication channels that can verify receipt of information by the FBOs.
- > These channels are also used by FBOs for the transmission to CAs of special monitoring data when appropriate.
- > The system is functional and satisfactory to both the CAs and the FBOs.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE:

- > Records of communications/transmission of data among CAs and high-risk categories of FBOs.
- > Interviews with CAs and FBOs.

SEE ALSO

D.1.3.4 [CAs have collaborated to produce a risk categorization framework of FBOs]

C.1.2.4

ASSESSMENT CRITERION: All FBOs, including micro-businesses, are properly informed, updated and provided with equal opportunities to properly understand and adopt recommended approaches and legislation requirements.



GUIDANCE

When new food safety methodologies and hygiene standards are adopted as regulations, CAs have the responsibility to provide FBOs and the private sector with the relevant information for adopting these as daily practice. If the changes represent significant shifts in approach (such as the implementation of “own-controls” and GHP and HACCP-based systems, for example) CAs need to ensure that access to information is adapted to the needs and resources of the audience, through suitably scaled change-management packages, in order to allow for changes.

Specific categories of micro-businesses might have difficulties grasping the essence of these changes and require specific support in that regard. It is therefore important that provision of relevant access to information be accompanied by appropriate capacity development activities, as well as relevant internal policy decisions (for example, the granting of transition time to progressively implement the changes).

POSSIBLE OUTCOME

Any important and newly introduced methodologies and hygiene standards are properly implemented.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- > Government activities designed to communicate new requirements to the FBOs.
- > CAs briefing of the private sector regarding special subject communications (such as the adoption of GHP and HACCP-based self-controls) with suitably scaled change-management packages.
- > CAs monitoring data of incremental improvement by micro-businesses.
- > Workshops, conferences, awareness events, open or public “question and answer” sessions and training events (possibly delivered by a contractor).

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

- > Reports/documentation from workshops, conferences, awareness events.
- > Analysis report identifying specific FBOs requiring special attention.
- > Monitoring reports.

SEE ALSO

- A.1.1.4** [Legislation recognizes the stakeholders' right to have access to information on food control measures (including sanitary and quality requirements) and includes provisions on publicizing them]
 - C.1.1.2** [Where needs are identified, capacity development activities are leveraged or directly implemented by CAs to improve the understanding of a range of FBOs (primary producers, processors, small traders, food vendors, etc.) regarding the requirements of food regulations]
-

C.1.2.5

ASSESSMENT CRITERION: CAs inform FBOs on the results of monitoring and routine inspection reports to incentivize positive collaboration with government and enhance compliance.

**GUIDANCE**

The concept of "self-controls" for the food industry private sector foresees that owners and managers in the food business will take major responsibility for food safety. While the private sector is in many instances engaged in commercial competition, it is in the interest of the national economy that all of these businesses are performing at the optimum level of food safety and in cooperation with the priorities of the CAs. To facilitate this, the CAs need to communicate through different ways, as appropriate to the FBOs' specific situations and structure of the value chain to ensure that FBOs fully appreciate CAs' priorities and activities. The aim is to generate positive cooperation from the private sector to respond to the needs of the state sector.

POSSIBLE OUTCOME

Collaboration between FBOs and CAs is incentivized by a high degree of collaboration to address food safety and quality problems emerging from monitoring and routine inspection activities.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- > Awareness activities carried out for FBOs.
- > Clear examples of CA debriefings on surveillance and control annual reports.
- > Information on how these have been delivered to FBOs.
- > Evidence that the signals and announcements contained in these have led to positive collaboration with government intentions by FBOs.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

- > Records of communication/correspondence.
- > Reports/documentation on awareness activities.
- > Interviews with FBO associations.

C.1.3

COMMUNICATION FLOWS AND INVOLVEMENT WITH CONSUMERS

OVERALL OUTCOME

The CAs implement an established internal policy for food safety risk communication to consumers based on openness, transparency, timeliness and responsiveness (Ref. para 64 and 66 of CAC/GL 82-2013) and its effectiveness is monitored.

C.1.3.1



ASSESSMENT CRITERION: The CAs have an established internal policy of disseminating information to consumers, including special needs groups, on the importance of food safety, including safe food handling practices and critical quality issues.

GUIDANCE

The general public can be supported and empowered by CAs to maintain their own health through the provision of best practices for handling food (e.g. handling high-risk foods, general hygienic practices). As part of their control activities (as explained in Dimension B) CAs may be in a position to collect scientific information relating to public health profiles. This could be for the entire country; for specific areas, such as regions or cities; or for specific populations (e.g. specific consumer groups such as children, pregnant women, the elderly, immunocompromised groups; or specific diets for regions or areas, which affect the exposure of such populations). Such information may be gathered from records kept by CAs or other national institutions as appropriate (e.g. for outbreaks of salmonellosis, campylobacteriosis, listeriosis, E. coli or other common public health issues). This information is then used for different purposes, including for dissemination to consumers, with a capacity to target particular issues, groups, areas, etc.

Critical quality issues (including fraud) can also be subject to important communication messages – for example, when these are likely to have an effect on nutritional status or to have an important economic impact for consumers.

The information disseminated should be accurate and tailored to the needs of the targeted audience, which means that content, format and vehicle are considered. Depending on the topic at hand and the communication strategy, selected CAs can decide to communicate directly with consumers or through consumers' associations (Ref. para 14 of CAC/GL 82-2013).

POSSIBLE OUTCOME

The general public is informed about general food safety issues and their impact on public health.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- > CAs provide information on best practices for handling food.
- > CAs target specific audiences such as pregnant women, the elderly, immunocompromised, etc.
- > CAs actively use public media for disseminating public health information (fact sheets, posters, radio transmissions, websites, etc.).
- > CAs use information, education and communication (IEC) methods in schools, social media, newspapers, cinemas, etc.
- > Meetings or consultations are held between consumer associations and officials or political representatives.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

- > Hard evidence of dissemination of information (fact sheets, posters, websites, etc.).
- > Surveys of public opinion regarding the CAs' efforts to deliver risk communication and advice.
- > Any open correspondence or open meetings between consumer associations for food safety and CAs to discuss official controls for food safety and the government's achievements or policies.

C.1.3.2

ASSESSMENT CRITERION: Decisions and information about official food control are made available to consumers at all times and with particular attention during food safety crises.

GUIDANCE

Citizens have the right to information about matters that have the potential to affect them and their families. Transparency is about information being made available in the public domain. The principle of transparency is to support this right and it guards against CAs being accused of harbouring information to preserve the power of individuals or to serve vested interests. Decisions and information about official food control and food safety governance should be made available in the public domain at all times and in particular during food safety crises. This will generate trust and credibility about CAs' actions which is a pillar for any communication strategy.

POSSIBLE OUTCOME

CAs generate trust among consumers through open communication.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- > Deliberations and decisions of national food safety committees (or other official national food safety gatherings) are made available in the public domain.
- > Citizens can gain access to information about the government's decisions in relation to food safety.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

- > Policy documents showing that the government adopts the principle of transparency for information that deals with food safety, especially in the face of food safety crises.
- > Information and data published on the websites and journals of food safety authorities.

SEE ALSO

- A.1.1.4** [Legislation recognizes the stakeholders' right to have access to information on food control measures (including sanitary and quality requirements) and includes provisions on publicizing them]

C.1.3.3

ASSESSMENT CRITERION: CAs make use of the different methods and means of communication for food safety issues supported by communication specialists.

**GUIDANCE**

The means by which CAs communicate with consumers about food safety issues will vary from country to country, depending on mass communication methods and technologies. However, CAs should be well prepared to communicate through well-established approaches for:

- i. Identification of key communication drivers, through an analysis of factors affecting communication messages (key scientific facts; potential impact on production and consumers; capacity to act and potential influence on risk; risk perception by the public).
- ii. Identification of key stakeholders (affected population; opinion leaders; who has the capacity to do what and to further transmit information) and relevant vehicles for communication with those identified.
- iii. Elaboration of a communication strategy, including structured messages taking into account the preliminary analysis described above.

The CAs should be fully informed about the most appropriate (national) methods and means of mass communication, including in the event of a food safety crisis, and these should have previously been the subject of analysis, policy research and identification.

The communication approaches involved can be many: interaction with general, technical and scientific media (including basic tools like press releases and participation in interviews); public meetings; participation in scientific and other professional meetings; networking with different categories of stakeholders, including organization of workshops and meetings. Social media and websites remain the most popular and easy-to-update channels. Other methods of distributing information include IEC methods in schools, social media, newspapers, cinemas, etc. The CAs should also target schoolchildren by introducing subjects such as “health and nutrition” and “food safety awareness” in school programmes, to deliver basic best practice messages for food safety. CAs should include in their targets consumers’ associations and social structures (such as village leaders) appropriate to the type of message to be disseminated.

In order to generate awareness CAs should have access to personnel specialized in the communication approaches as well as on technologies supporting the delivery of IEC and awareness about food safety, such as communication specialists, video producers, website producers, print producers and graphic designers, as well as photographers, video camera operators and specialists in productions for social media.

POSSIBLE OUTCOME

Specialized activities and methods effectively and constructively create food safety awareness among consumers and the general public.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- > Diversity of media available.
- > Media selected based on the target population.
- > CAs fully informed of the most appropriate (national) methods and means of mass communication, including in the event of a food safety crisis.
- > A significant network of technical specialists used to deliver awareness messages for food safety in the country's communities.
- > Secondary school curricula designed to educate students on food safety awareness.
- > Existence of a commitment by CAs to engage and communicate with civil society.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

- > Documents/reports on identification, analysis and assessment of best national communication channels (including in the event of a food safety crisis).
- > Records of messages delivered in the past.
- > Reports of public or scientific meetings.
- > Social media accounts, websites, etc.
- > School curricula.
- > Interviews with CAs.

C.1.3.4

ASSESSMENT CRITERION: The CAs have a risk communication plan for crises (on food safety or fraud issues) to deliver relevant food safety messages to consumers.

GUIDANCE

During food safety crises people become concerned about what actions they should take, and the level of risk they are exposed to. Concerns such as whether children, hospital patients, elderly people and home-care residents are being fed the food in question from canteen meals can become contentious issues in society and in political exchanges.

The commercial result can be disastrous for food sales companies and sectors of the food industry when profits drop sharply, even if they are not directly involved in the production of the incriminated food, and food emergencies can even harm the national economy. Efficient communication requires a lot of preparatory work, but in times of food safety crisis, communication must also be timely and responsive; therefore it is best practice for CAs to develop a communication plan. The communication plan should consider the different types of communication media (see C.1.3.3) and select the ones most appropriate to a crisis situation. This also requires training in advance, in particular with regard to the media, and the organization of “mock” exercises. Templates for analysing message substance and target audience, and support tools (summary sheets, press releases, etc.) should be ready in advance of a crisis.

POSSIBLE OUTCOME

CAs is prepared to communicate during food safety crises.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- > Identification and training of spokespersons.
- > Quick reference to factual information already available about the hazard/risk.
- > Mechanism to ensure that there is coordination among CAs and other relevant stakeholders as to which information is to be released, how, when and by whom.
- > Advice of media experts to ensure:
 - i. Choice of the appropriate communication channels;
 - ii. Delivery of the correct message with balanced tone and pitch that accurately informs the public, while avoiding unwarranted anxiety.
- > Trained specialist technical experts and communicators interviewed (e.g. on television or in podcasts) or featured in social media, radio programmes, newspapers and journals, etc.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

- > Special policy for dealing with risk communication for the general public during food safety crises.
- > Strategy documents/contingency documents on:
 - i. Response strategy to food safety emergencies;
 - ii. Best practices for risk communication in the event of food safety emergencies.
- > Templates for structuring messages.
- > List of experts that can be contacted to ensure credibility of messages.

C.1.3.5**ASSESSMENT CRITERION: CAs provide a mechanism for consumers' questions and complaints.****GUIDANCE**

Information about complaints can be passed on to the relevant authorities for further verification and potential eventual trigger of food controls. A mechanism allowing simple and timely reporting (such as a hotline or similar mechanism) that is accessible to all and allows the reporting of key information in a very simple manner for the consumer is critical to identify and respond to food safety incidents. Any effort made by CAs to provide information on where to contact them (e.g. websites) contributes to this timely reporting of incidents. Dedicated consumer contact points in CAs are useful and information about these should be passed on to consumers, including through consumers' associations.

POSSIBLE OUTCOME

Information from consumers is used by CAs to improve controls.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- > Existence of a functioning mechanism that addresses consumers' questions and complaints.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

- > Hotline number / email address / box / office.
- > Written exchanges on consumers' complaints (that have been received/addressed through this mechanism).



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C.2 INTERNATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

COMPETENCY C.2.1 INTERACTIONS AMONG CAs AT INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

OVERALL OUTCOME

CAs actively engage with their counterparts at international level and this supports agreements for export and import to occur.

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| C.2.1.1 | The CAs support the development of bilateral or regional trading relationships with an open and pro-active communication approach on food safety and quality regulations, as well as on control measures and documentation requirements. |
| C.2.1.2 | Trading partners have easy access to up-to-date information regarding food safety and quality requirements and controls. |
| C.2.1.3 | Through the WTO, Member countries notify other countries of any new or changed food safety and quality requirement that affects trade. |
| C.2.1.4 | CAs of importing and exporting countries have capacity to reach and maintain cooperative arrangements and agreements regarding control measures for specific categories of food products to allow trade. |

COMPETENCY C.2.2 ENGAGEMENT OF CAs WITH INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

OVERALL OUTCOME

CAs are actively engaged in IOs to inform and benefit from international expertise.

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| C.2.2.1 | The country is an active member of Codex and other relevant IOs with mandates in food safety and quality. |
| C.2.2.2 | An inclusive, transparent and effective consultation mechanism is in place on Codex-related matters. |
| C.2.2.3 | The country provides Codex and related scientific advice bodies with relevant scientific and technical information. |
| C.2.2.4 | Codex standards and other guidance are appropriately used at national level. |

C.2.1

INTERACTIONS AMONG CAs AT
INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

CAs are actively engaging with their counterparts at international level and this supports agreements for export and import to occur.

OVERALL OUTCOME

C.2.1.1

ASSESSMENT CRITERION: The CAs support the development of bilateral or regional trading relationships with an open and pro-active communication approach on food safety and quality regulations, as well as on control measures and documentation requirements.



GUIDANCE

Two or more nations can build strong trade relationships beneficial to the countries' economies and livelihoods. To build trust and to support successful ongoing trade in food, exchanges of information and technical observations (also regarding food safety and quality) will be essential. When trade relationships are already established, this also includes the provision of information and feedback to the exporter country on import control results, which will allow corrective measures to be taken in case of unsatisfactory results. Such information will support a better understanding of the food control system of foreign trading partners (from which the country is importing) and will allow building imported food control profiles (see B.1.2.3). It will also support the exporting country to better understand the requirements of its trading partners (see B.1.3.2 and B.1.3.4) and to build the capacities to respond to these. Last, but not least, this dialogue is critical to create a basis of trust which can help to overcome challenges more rapidly (Ref. para 79, 1st point, of CAC/GL 82-2013). To support such exchanges of information in a structured and harmonized manner, countries have agreed on principles and guidelines, as per CAC/GL 89-2016. This document provides guidance to assist CAs of importing and exporting countries to identify when the exchange of information may be necessary and what information is essential for the assessment of the relevant component(s) of the national food control system.

POSSIBLE OUTCOME

Effective channels of communications are developed between countries engaged in substantial trade.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- > Authorities communicate pro-actively and regularly with foreign stakeholders and with diplomatic representations to exchange information and technical observations.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

- > Records of exchanges of trade delegations and communiqués (and government support for these).
- > Examples of regional standard setting processes.

SEE ALSO

- B.1.2.3** [CAs design a coherent risk-based import control programme based on relevant information and responsive to evolving situations]
- B.1.3.2** [CAs have the capacity to support the requirements of importing countries]
- B.1.3.4** [Certificates respond to required design features as indicated by importing countries and are issued by officers authorized by the CAs (qualified and fully trained)]

C.2.1.2

ASSESSMENT CRITERION: Trading partners have easy access to up-to-date information regarding food safety and quality requirements and controls.

GUIDANCE

Reliable information, and rapid access to it, facilitate international trade in food and support all the transactional processes associated with it. Countries should ensure transparency and availability of information regarding food safety and quality requirements and controls through updated websites and dedicated enquiry points.

Websites are an easy way to provide information to all trading partners in a transparent and cost-effective manner. As circumstances in the food industry may change rapidly, all websites that provide information to trading partners (importing food from or exporting into the country being assessed) must be regularly checked and reviewed for validity and for accuracy. Websites that have the relevant information posted in one or more languages will greatly assist the importers, and will engender trust and efficiency.

Another useful facility for trading partners to obtain information and answers to queries are enquiry points. Enquiry points, which are mandatory under the SPS and TBT agreements, are offices designated to receive and respond to any requests for information regarding the country's SPS or TBT measures. Such requests may be for copies of new or existing regulations, information on relevant agreements between two countries or information about risk assessment decisions. The addresses of the enquiry points can be found on the respective databases (**SPS-IMS** and **TBT-IMS**) (Ref. para 10 of **CAC/GL 82-2013**).

CAC/GL 89-2016 provides guidelines to structure standard and essential information to be provided to trading partners.

POSSIBLE OUTCOME

Importing and exporting countries are strongly facilitated and assisted in the trade process by having access to relevant information.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- > Websites in one or more languages commonly used in international trade.
- > Websites that are up-to-date.
- > Operating enquiry point/s providing information on food safety and quality requirements.
- > For WTO Members: enquiry points notified to the WTO and listed on the SPS-IMS and TBT-IMS databases.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

- > Websites providing food safety and quality information to trading partners.
- > Examples of responses provided to queries, including time taken for responses to be made.
- > Addresses and contact details of the enquiry point(s) on the WTO **SPS-IMS database** and **TBT-IMS database**.

SEE ALSO

- A.1.1.4** [Legislation recognizes the stakeholders' right to have access to information on food control measures (including sanitary and quality requirements) and includes provisions on publicizing them]
- B.1.2.3** [CAs design a coherent risk-based import control programme based on relevant information and responsive to evolving situations]

C.2.1.3³

ASSESSMENT CRITERION: Through the WTO, Member countries notify other countries of any new or changed food safety and quality requirement that affects trade.

GUIDANCE

The WTO SPS Agreement requires that whenever a government is proposing a new regulation (or modifying an existing one) which differs from an international standard and may affect trade, this must be notified to the WTO Secretariat, who then circulates the notification to other WTO Member governments. Although the SPS Agreement refers only to measures that are not based on international standards, the SPS Committee has developed recommendations for notifying all new and modified measures, even if they are based on international standards, for improved clarity and transparency (Ref. para 10 of **CAC/GL 82-2013** and para 35 of **CAC/GL 47-2003**). Governments are required to submit the notification in advance of the implementation of a proposed new regulation, so as to provide trading partners with an opportunity to comment. In cases of emergency, governments may act without delay, but must immediately notify other Members, through the WTO Secretariat, and also still consider any comments submitted by other WTO Member governments. Some food-related measures, such as labelling requirements providing information on nutrition and quality and packaging regulations, are generally not considered to be SPS measures; within the WTO they are subject to the TBT Agreement and should therefore be notified to the WTO TBT Secretariat. The systematic communication increases transparency and protects the interests of consumers and of trading partners.

Under both the SPS and the TBT Agreements, Members are required to identify a single central government authority to be responsible for the notification requirements, the National Notification Authority (NNA). It is important that good working relationships and communication exist between the CAs representing the NNA and the CAs responsible for food safety, when these do not coincide.

POSSIBLE OUTCOME

Importing and exporting countries are strongly facilitated in the trade process by a system of transparent and predictable rules.

³ This Assessment criterion only applies to countries that are Members of the WTO, but it is still relevant in more global terms to all nations trading.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- > Existence of National Notification Authorities (NNAs) for SPS and TBT.
- > Notifications already submitted by the country.
- > Active channels of communication and effective exchange of information between the NNAs and CAs responsible for food safety.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

- > Addresses and contact details of NNA on the **SPS-IMS database** and **TBT-IMS database**.
- > Submitted notification on the **SPS-IMS database** and **TBT-IMS database**.
- > Evidence of regular communication exchanges between the NNA and food safety CAs.

SEE ALSO

- A.1.1.3** [Food safety and quality policy and legislation are developed on the basis of written principles and procedures that enable comprehensive and participatory processes and ensure “fit for purpose” results]

C.2.1.4

ASSESSMENT CRITERION: CAs of importing and exporting countries have capacity to reach and maintain cooperative arrangements and agreements regarding control measures for specific categories of food products to allow trade.

**GUIDANCE**

As an import control strategy, countries may develop strong pre-border controls through cooperative arrangements and agreements with CAs from exporting countries that provide all necessary insurances for the safety of food (Ref. para 26, 8th point, para 39, 4th point, of **CAC/GL 82-2013** and para 13 of **CAC/GL 47-2003**). In some cases, these agreements can replace certification (for example, joint agreement on a list of premises being authorized for export). In some other cases, these agreements mean that certification by CAs is fully recognized and that a lighter regime for controls at borders would be adopted (for example, reduced physical inspection or sampling rate). As entering into and maintaining cooperative agreements takes time and resources, these agreements might be limited to certain categories of high-risk products or to situations when a large number of products are imported.

They can take different formats, as appropriate, from international instruments (binding instruments) to less formal agreements (MoUs). They can be bilateral or multilateral, as required by the trading partners. For example, those countries that are part of a regional economic grouping may rely on import controls implemented by another country (Ref. para 7 of **CAC/GL 47-2003**). Another typical agreement regarding food control is the recognition of equivalence of trading partners' control measures based on the actual achievement of the required Appropriate Level of Protection (ALOP). The recognition of equivalence is also encouraged by the SPS Agreement, while guidance on process and on content for the judgment of equivalence has been developed by Codex (Ref. para 21 and 43, 3rd point, of **CAC/GL 53-2003**).

POSSIBLE OUTCOME

The burden of import controls on specific categories of food products is reduced by stable agreements between trading countries.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- > Certifications by CAs of importing/exporting country fully recognized for specific products.
- > Official mechanism for exchange of certificates.
- > Cooperative arrangements with other countries.
- > Agreement on recognition of equivalence.
- > Discussions or formal steps in view of such agreements.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

- > Agreements covering specific products with trading partners (binding instruments, MoUs).
- > Lists of FBOs authorized for export.

SEE ALSO

B.1.2.3 [CAs design a coherent risk-based import control programme based on relevant information and responsive to evolving situations]

C.2.2

ENGAGEMENT OF CAs WITH INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

CAs are actively engaged in IOs to inform and benefit from international expertise.

OVERALL OUTCOME

C.2.2.1

ASSESSMENT CRITERION: The country is an active member of Codex and other relevant IOs with mandates in food safety and quality.



GUIDANCE

The engagement of the country in the international food control governance can happen:

- i. Through its membership in relevant IOs (such as Codex Alimentarius Commission, FAO, WHO, WTO, OIE, etc.);
- ii. Through active service by its CAs and its experts on the committees that decide on technical issues of food control and best approaches to challenges (Ref. para 79, 2nd and 3rd points, of **CAC/GL 82-2013**).

Membership in the Codex Alimentarius Commission requires the nomination of a Codex Contact Point (CCP) and its ToRs are provided in the Codex procedural manual, as follows:

- i. Act as the link between the Codex Secretariat and Member countries;
- ii. Coordinate all relevant Codex activities within their own countries;
- iii. Receive all Codex final texts (standards, codes of practice, guidelines and other advisory texts) and working documents of Codex sessions and ensure that they are circulated to those concerned within their own countries;
- iv. Send comments on Codex documents or proposals to the Codex Alimentarius Commission or its subsidiary bodies and/or the Codex Secretariat;
- v. Work in close cooperation with the national Codex committee, where such a committee has been established. The CCP acts as the liaison point with the food industry, consumers, traders and all others concerned to ensure that the government is provided with an appropriate balance of policy and technical advice upon which to base decisions relating to issues raised in the context of the Codex work;

- vi. Act as a channel for the exchange of information and coordination of activities with other Codex Members;
- vii. Receive the invitation to Codex sessions and inform the relevant chairpersons and the Codex Secretariat of the names of participants from their own countries;
- viii. Maintain a library of Codex final texts;
- ix. Promote Codex activities throughout their own countries.

It is recognized that day-to-day operations of CCPs will differ for each country depending on the legislation, government structure and practices. The CCP should be able to demonstrate how working processes are documented (e.g. communication flows, involvement of other relevant CAs) and implemented in a way that supports working processes at international level. This includes, for example, relevant timing for distribution of documents and communication with the Codex Secretariat, proposal of a process to gather the different views and build a national position, follow up to meetings that were attended so that strategic engagement can occur. As a basis for this, the CCP should demonstrate a sound understanding of the Codex Alimentarius role, working processes and importance in international food standards harmonization.

Attendance to all regional/international meetings and conferences is generally not possible. Key meetings to attend should be identified with a strategic vision so as to target participation in regional conferences/meetings or in Codex Committees that are strategically relevant for the country. Strengthening regional coordination could also contribute to supporting and facilitating the adoption of positions favourable to the country.

POSSIBLE OUTCOME

The country has the opportunity and channels to influence international food safety and quality governance.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- > Country membership in IOs that have mandates in food safety and food quality or consumer protection (WHO/FAO/Codex Alimentarius/WTO/OIE).
- > Instances of national officers or experts contributing to relevant committees of IOs.
- > Designated CCP.
- > Clearly defined responsibilities.
- > Documented procedures of work which are supporting and complementary of Codex processes.
- > Participation in strategically relevant regional/international conferences or meetings.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

- > Terms of reference for CCP.
- > Records of communication sent by CCP to CAs.
- > Records of communication from CCP to Codex Secretariat.
- > Interviews with CCP.
- > Interviews with other CAs participating in Codex work and recipients of Codex services.
- > Lists of participants in international conferences or meetings.

SEE ALSO

A.2.1.9 [Staff preparation for, and attendance at, selected international scientific and policy-makers' meetings and conferences relevant for food safety and quality is financially secured in the CAs' budgets]

D.2.2.2 [CAs adopt foresight techniques to support a preventative approach to food control, early identification of emerging and critical issues and implementation of effective policies and decision-making]

C.2.2.2



ASSESSMENT CRITERION: An inclusive, transparent and effective consultation mechanism is in place on Codex-related matters.

GUIDANCE

Countries with well-considered positions on important food control issues that may have global contexts tend to be strongly influential on global decisions. How the country establishes its internal networking and its internal procedures for establishing these positions influences the quality and impact of its contribution to any IO. To this end, inclusive consultation processes (i.e. involving the relevant stakeholders, such as CAs in the areas of trade, agriculture and public health; private sector; consumers; academia; specific experts), together with mechanisms and procedures ensuring transparency in communication and decision-making, are key. Stakeholders should demonstrate knowledge of the Codex purpose, scope of work and processes, and of how these contribute to advance national food safety and quality, health protection and trade interests.

Clear and documented processes for developing and submitting written comments, criteria for selecting national delegations, procedures for preparing national positions, briefing of delegations, procedures for follow-up to Codex sessions and capacity to engage with other countries' Codex delegations are some examples of tools to support effective management of Codex work at national level.

This approach should be strategic: based on a sound analysis of the national standardization needs and priorities; rooted in a clear vision of where Codex work fits into the national food control system and policy; and supported by high-level political support. Some countries have established bodies, such as National Codex Committees, to support the coordination element embedded in the national CCP terms of reference, ensure a stronger consultation mechanism and convey an inclusive country position to the Codex Alimentarius Commission. These consultation mechanisms, based on clear terms of reference, should also ensure that participation in the SPS and TBT Committees of the WTO is equally inclusive and supported by all relevant competences.

POSSIBLE OUTCOME

Country positions communicated to CAC are strategic, and comprehensive of the views of relevant stakeholders.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- > Existence of a formal consultation body (for example, a National Codex Committee or other coordinating committee) with clear terms of reference.
- > Consultation body meeting at regular intervals.
- > All key stakeholders included in the consultation mechanism (government agencies, industry, consumers, academia, scientific groups, etc.).
- > Existence of clear procedures for:
 - i. Developing and submitting written comments, selecting national delegations, preparing national positions, briefing delegations, following up on Codex sessions.
 - ii. Gathering and considering perspectives from different CAs and other stakeholders.
 - iii. Ensuring good planning, transparency in decision-making, reporting and communication to members.
- > Different stakeholders providing inputs on Codex issues when requested.
- > Positions expressed at Codex Alimentarius Commission, SPS or TBT Committees.
- > Negotiation mandates.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

- > National Codex committee.
- > Written procedures.
- > ToRs.
- > List of participating stakeholders (institutions, other experts).
- > Records of follow-up given on Codex meetings, ensuring sharing and dissemination of new information.
- > Records of positions expressed at Codex Alimentarius Commission, SPS or TBT Committees.
- > Documentary evidence of the planning and implementation of Codex-related matters.

SEE ALSO

C.2.2.4 [Codex standards and other guidance are appropriately used at national level]

C.2.2.3



ASSESSMENT CRITERION: The country provides Codex and related scientific advice bodies with relevant scientific and technical information.

GUIDANCE

Outputs on food standard setting from IOs depend upon the contribution of their members, which relies on knowledge or work performed in the country. The more contributions there are from the different participating countries, the greater the international value of the output. These contributions may entail information and data on national food safety situations (e.g. data on contamination, consumption, control approaches, technical constraints, etc.) that countries share in the Codex arena, or participation by specific experts in expert bodies that are providing scientific advice to Codex (JECFA, JEMRA, JMPR, JEMNU, ad hoc expert consultations). A good understanding and awareness of the importance of Codex work among all stakeholders at national level will be fundamental to support the provision of relevant contributions for advancing national food safety, health protection and trade interests. Government officials should show an ability to analyse national technical data and information related to standards development and related discussions, supported by industry and the scientific community. They should also demonstrate an understanding as to how scientific advice bodies feed into the work of Codex.

POSSIBLE OUTCOME

International work in risk assessment and standard setting takes a variety of countries' situations into account.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- > Records of national positions supported by scientific data communicated to Codex regarding specific issues (contribution to electronic or physical working groups, contribution to Codex committees).

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

- > Documentary evidence of the country's scientific contributions to specific food safety standards-setting events or to scientific committees in charge of risk assessment (e.g. JECFA, JEMRA, JMPR, regional food safety agencies).

SEE ALSO

- A.2.1.9** [Staff preparation for, and attendance at, selected international scientific and policy-makers' meetings and conferences relevant for food safety and quality is financially secured in the CAs' budgets]

C.2.2.4**ASSESSMENT CRITERION: Codex standards and other guidance are appropriately used at national level.****GUIDANCE**

As a benefit from their engagement and active participation in Codex work, it is expected that standards and guidance developed by Codex are relevant to countries' needs, solving issues of international trade or providing a solid basis for developing national regulations on food safety and quality. CAs at national level should demonstrate their understanding of how to use Codex standards to develop their national regulations by adapting them to their national context (see **A.1.3.8**). This is also connected to a strategic approach to national engagement in Codex (see **C.2.2.2**). CAs should also demonstrate understanding of the implications of WTO's SPS and TBT agreements (if the country is a Member of WTO) in terms of harmonization of food standards and regulations and the opportunity that Codex standards offer for this (Ref. para 23 of **CAC/GL 82-2013**).

POSSIBLE OUTCOME

The country uses its membership in Codex in a strategic manner to shape national legislation.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- > Specific Codex standards that have been used as a support to develop national regulations.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

- > Policies or strategies mentioning or using Codex processes to advance national issues in the international arena.
- > Regulations.

SEE ALSO

- A.1.3.8** [National food standards, regulations and guidelines provide an appropriate foundation for food control, and these are based on Codex or other international reference standards]
- C.2.2.2** [An inclusive, transparent and effective consultation mechanism is in place on Codex-related matters]



DIMENSION C

INTERACTIONS WITH STAKEHOLDERS

While the regulatory arm (policy and legal basis supported by official control functions) is usually what comes first to mind when reflecting about a national food control system, the “non-regulatory” components of that system also need to be taken into consideration. Dimension C identifies the *interactions* that must take place for the system to regularly adjust to national and international stakeholders’ evolving needs, to inspire confidence to stakeholders and to keep them well informed about their responsibilities. It focuses on the transparency of communication to consumers and on the food business operators and their integration into the food control system. It also explores the interactions of competent authorities at international level to support national imports and exports, and their participation and engagement in International Organizations to benefit from international expertise and to shape national legislation. Owing to their nature, these processes strongly rely on the social context and needs.

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