



**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME**  
**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION**

**71<sup>st</sup> Session**

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**FAO/WHO SCIENTIFIC SUPPORT TO CODEX**  
**(INCREASING SUSTAINABILITY)<sup>1</sup>**

**(Prepared by FAO and WHO)**

1. The development of international food safety standards through Codex Alimentarius is core to the mission of both FAO and WHO. FAO and WHO jointly fund the operations of the Codex Alimentarius Commission to develop health-protective and trade-inclusive food safety standards on the basis of a risk-based and scientific approach.
2. A critical and essential part of FAO and WHO risk analysis framework, is the joint risk assessment activities through various expert bodies to perform risk assessments for pesticide residues, microbiological contamination, residues of veterinary drugs as well as contaminants and additives in food. Furthermore, FAO and WHO convene ad hoc expert meetings to address emerging foodborne hazards or the safety of new technologies. This risk assessment is performed on request from and in support of Codex Alimentarius and serves as the objective, science-based foundation of the risk management decision by Codex Alimentarius.
3. Sustainable funding of the Joint FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission and related activities of FAO and WHO in support of Codex has often been a serious concern of Codex Members. In particular, the funding for the provision of scientific advice by FAO/WHO expert meetings in the area of food safety and nutrition has been extensively discussed at the Executive Committee of the Commission and at the Commission on a regular basis. The Commission continued at its 38<sup>th</sup> session the discussion about on the sustainable funding for the provision of scientific advice (CX/CAC 15/38/15 Rev.1) to Codex and Member States from its 37<sup>th</sup> Session (CX/CAC 14/37/12 Add.2). The Commission, in conclusion, noted that it was necessary to find a sustainable solution to address the chronic shortage of funds for scientific advice.
4. At its 38<sup>th</sup> Session, the Commission supported Option 1 (regular budget funds from FAO and WHO) as the most feasible, long-term solution and encouraged Codex members to make every effort to take action immediately after CAC38, which would lead to a favorable decision by the FAO and WHO governing bodies. It was also stressed that FAO and WHO would provide support to Codex members in this effort as required; and acknowledged the urgency of the situation and urged delegations to bring the matter to the attention of their governments in an attempt to mobilize more extra-budgetary funding for the provisions of scientific advice in the short and medium term.<sup>2</sup>
5. FAO and WHO analyzed the recommendation from the 38<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission and proceeded and discussed this issue between the secretariats. In order to further strengthen the scientific advice activity and ensure its uninterrupted funding, FAO assigned the FAO Scientific Advice Programme the status of "Corporate Technical Activity" and ring-fenced staff and non-staff allocations to the Programme. FAO has now protected well over 80% of its contribution to the scientific advice programme through regular budget allocations.
6. WHO contributes approximately 20% of the budget for the Codex Alimentarius Commission, using its core budget mostly financed by assessed contributions of Member States. However, the majority of the funds for the activity and staff costs for the provision of scientific advice in food safety and nutrition continues to be provided through extra budgetary voluntary contributions from Member States and other donors). This situation does not allow for any stability and proper programme planning and may jeopardize the work of Codex.

<sup>1</sup> This document has been also included in the agenda of CAC39 as document CX/CAC 16/39/17

<sup>2</sup> REP15/CAC, paras 138-155

7. For the stability and continuity of the standard-setting activity of the Codex Alimentarius Commission it will be paramount to find a way forward that allows for an appropriate and predictable funding from both parent organizations for the scientific advice programme, as basis for Codex work. This is even more critical in light of increasing requests for scientific advice from the joint FAO/WHO risk assessment bodies and the urgent need to update and harmonise risk assessment methods and principles, and to improve efficiencies to the extent necessary to guarantee the scientific rigor necessary for Codex's normative work. The current funding levels are inadequate to undertake this work and the current staffing level at the Joint Secretariats are insufficient.
8. An equally predictable and stable funding base for joint risk assessment work as well as the secretariat of the Codex Alimentarius Commission is critical and essential for the future development of international food safety standards. Additional resources that go beyond the current funding levels will be required to improve efficiencies, modernize methodologies, reduce backlogs and accelerate the delivery of scientific advice.
9. At current funding levels the pace of answering requests for scientific advice is expected to become even more the limiting factor for the standard setting work of Codex Alimentarius. The attached document gives a brief overview of a 6 year plan to strengthen the scientific advice programme in order to tackle the challenges and be sufficiently responsive to the needs of Codex as well as Member States.
10. The Commission is invited to note the document and to strongly encourage FAO to continue its efforts to protect at least the current baseline funding levels of the scientific advice programme and the Codex Secretariat. The Commission is invited to further encourage WHO to devise some measures that would provide a similar protection to the funding of the scientific advice programme and the Codex Secretariat at an appropriate baseline level.
11. The Codex Members are further encouraged to note the additional needs under the consideration that both parent organization will face limitations of the baseline funding that can be provided, and are encouraged to consider alternative mechanisms to mobilize extra-budgetary resources in a manner that allows a long-term planning of the outlined work programme.

## Enhancing the joint FAO/WHO scientific advice programme

### 1. Introduction

FAO/WHO's joint scientific advice programme supports the Codex Alimentarius Commission and the work of several of its subsidiary bodies: CCFA, CCCF, CCRVDF, CCFH, CCPR and other committees as well as ad hoc intergovernmental task forces. FAO continues to support the scientific advice activities largely through its regular budget, while WHO funding is significantly depending on voluntary contributions from member states. The programme includes hosting the FAO/WHO joint secretariats and implementing regular joint FAO/WHO expert meetings, JECFA, JEMRA, and JMPR, as well as hosting numerous ad-hoc meetings. The instability and unpredictability caused by of the overdependence on extra-budgetary funding at WHO is hampering the functioning of the scientific advice programme. This situation is further exacerbated as extra-budgetary contributions are often ear-marked for activities and therefore not addressing the fact that there is a need for adequate staffing to ensure adequate preparation for meetings as well as their effective implementation and follow-up.

### 2. Issues to be addressed:

- ***Reducing the backlog by increasing and accelerating the delivery of scientific advice***

None of the joint expert bodies can currently deliver the amount of output necessary to match the demands: JECFA has a waiting list for the evaluation of additives and contaminants worth about three years of work, JEMRA on the other side has asked the Codex committees it is serving to allow for longer response times and match their requests for scientific advice to the resources available and, JMPR is struggling too to keep up with demands routinely asked by CCPR.

- ***Challenges in accessing experts***

Currently the pool of available experts keeps shrinking and is becoming insufficient. Also, insufficient global coverage of *the* expert pool, negatively impacts the scientific reach and global impact of the scientific advice programme.

- ***Opportunities to stream line and harmonize approaches across expert bodies***

Harmonization of the approaches is critical for maintaining scientific rigor and excellence, and ensuring the consistency of scientific advice across the various expert bodies.

- ***Complex emerging risks and new methodological approaches:***

Emerging risks, new food sources, and an increase in the complexity of scientific advice requested will pose new challenges and demands on the resources and expertise of the expert bodies and the scientific Secretariats servicing them. At the current resource levels it is very unlikely that these demands can be met.

### 3. Expected Outcomes

This programme is designed to strengthen consumer protection and facilitate trade by improving the credibility and impact of Codex Alimentarius Standards through increasing the responsiveness and scientific rigor and excellence of the scientific advice provided as basis of food safety standards, and thereby increasing the global acceptance of food safety standards.

- ***Outcome 1: FAO/WHO's scientific advice programme continues to be recognized as global authority in food safety***

The relevance and credibility of FAO and WHO as well as Codex Standards depend on the scientific excellence, leadership and the responsiveness of the joint scientific advice programme to demands as well as to new scientific knowledge.

- ***Outcome 2: Global food safety standards of the Codex Alimentarius Commission continue to be recognized as the global science-based reference point for food safety***

Codex Alimentarius' globally accepted health-protective and trade-inclusive food safety standards are based on sound scientific evidence provided through the FAO/WHO scientific advice programme.

#### 4. Main outputs and activities

To ensure the continued global authoritative standing of FAO/WHO's scientific advice programme, as well as the continued availability and timeliness to serve the Codex Alimentarius Commission in the global food safety standard setting process, a 6 year plan to enhance the scientific advice programme is outlined below, addressing current and future needs, including resources required. The outputs will improve the predictability and sustainability of the programme by deepening the pool of experts, by raising the inclusiveness of the available data, by strengthening the scientific rigor applied through the use of the latest scientific approaches, tools and methods and by accelerating deliverables.

##### ***Outcome 1: FAO/WHO's scientific advice programme continue to be recognized as global authority in food safety***

The project is designed to achieve the following outputs that are quintessential to maintain and increase the standing of the joint FAO/WHO risk assessment programme:

- **Output 1.1 Maintained scientific excellence and leadership.** The integration of new scientific concepts in the area of microbiological and chemical risk assessment will be paramount to continue to ensure the scientific credibility and excellence of the joint FAO/WHO scientific risk assessments underpinning Codex standards. This requires also widening and deepening the expert pool, and strengthening of the Secretariat.

The supporting activities include:

- Updating the methods and approaches for undertaking chemical risk assessments and developing scientific advice on microbiological hazards in foods.
  - Improving access to data on contaminants to support international risk assessment work
  - Developing approaches for uncertainty measurement in risk assessment
  - Threshold of Toxicological Concern concept for flavors and for veterinary drugs and others
  - Guidance on acute reference doses for veterinary drugs
  - Enhanced Secretariat to broaden expertise
  - Increase access to global expertise
- **Output 1.2 Harmonized approaches.** Going forward it will be critical to harmonize the risk assessment approaches, including the exposure models, across the work areas of FAO and WHO's scientific advice programme. These efforts are further instrumental to facilitate the harmonization of risk assessment methods and principles across the various regional and national authorities. The supporting activities for this output are:
    - Considering impurities and metabolites in risk assessment
    - Compatibility of exposure assessment approach across hazards
    - Guidelines for data needs and evaluation of enzyme preparations
    - Guidelines that aid in improved management of emerging issues such antimicrobial resistance

##### ***Outcome 2: Global food safety standards of the Codex Alimentarius Commission continue to be recognized as the global science-based reference***

The credibility of FAO/WHO's risk assessment is dependent on its preparedness to match the demand of Codex Alimentarius for scientific advice, ever-increasing in its volume and complexity, in order to provide in a timely and responsive manner the basis for the standard-setting activities of Codex Alimentarius. This will require the joint FAO/WHO secretariat to provide for:

- **Output 2.1 Facilitated international uptake of scientific advice and resulting international standards** by strengthening internal and external efforts for dissemination and outreach also to increase the geographical inclusivity of data and experts. The supporting activities for this output are:
  - Improved communication of risk assessment outcomes: Support uptake of international risk assessments at national level.
  - Improved data sharing
  - Global Advisory Group of international experts to advise the joint secretariat on upcoming developments and emerging issues and risk assessment approaches
  - Improved data generation and sharing for contaminants (micro and chemical)

- **Output 2.2: Accelerated delivery of scientific advice through operational improvements** by increasing meeting frequency and by providing a higher level of scientific support to the work of the experts in order to increase the output per meeting without straining volunteer experts more. The supporting activities for this output are:
  - Increase meeting frequency
  - Increase support by secretariat in preparatory work (e.g., literature research) to enable higher output by experts
  - Novel processes to accelerate delivery of scientific advice

## 5. Budget considerations

### Future needs

Current funding levels will not allow engaging in this overhaul of FAO/WHO's scientific advice programme. Predictable and reliable funding will be necessary to build and establish the programme outlined above and to ensure its viability for the years to come.

### Staffing

To ensure that enhancements considered above can be performed in a 6 year timeframe, staff increases at WHO and FAO are required.

	<b>Current staffing</b>	<b>Increase needed to operationalize improvements</b>	<b>Total staffing for improved operations</b>
<b>WHO</b>	3 professionals	2.5 professionals	<b>5.5 professionals</b>
	0.8 admin	1.7 admin staff	<b>2.5 admin staff</b>
<b>FAO</b>	3 professionals <sup>3</sup>	2.5 professionals	<b>5.5 professionals</b>
	1.5 admin staff	1 admin staff	<b>2.5 admin staff</b>

Additional financial commitments necessary for FAO and WHO to improve the programme as proposed (i.e. increase in meetings/output, improved dissemination and impact, and updated, harmonized methodology) are estimated US\$ 1,100,000 per year per organization. Additional funds may be needed at WHO to cover staff cost.

<sup>3</sup> On an ad hoc basis and according to the issues being addressed some additional support may be provided from other relevant units in the organization which would amount to 0.25 to 0.5 of a professional per year