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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION**

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REGULAR REVIEW OF CODEX WORK MANAGEMENT: ELECTRONIC WORKING GROUPS¹

(Prepared by the Codex Secretariat)

PURPOSE

1. The purpose of this document is to present the conclusions and recommendations of the review of Electronic Working Groups (EWGs). The full report, including the review duration, period covered, methodology, sources and findings, is contained in Appendix I.

BACKGROUND

2. In 2016, the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) agreed at its 39th session to discontinue discussions on the Terms of Reference of an internal Secretariat-led review of Codex work management practices and the functioning of the Executive Committee and instead requested the Secretariat of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex Secretariat) to regularly review Codex work management as part of the monitoring of the Codex Strategic Plan 2014–19 (the Strategic Plan)².

3. Following this decision, the Codex Secretariat reviewed the activities contained in the Strategic Plan and decided that year one (2016) of the regular review would focus on the work processes and procedures used by EWGs to examine how effective and efficient they are in advancing the work of the Commission. This decision was motivated by the fact that EWGs are frequently used in the Codex standard setting work, show an increasing diversification in host countries and have many links to a number of objectives and operational activities contained in the Strategic Plan. The Secretariat informed the Executive Committee at CCEX72³.

REPORT CONCLUSIONS

4. EWGs generally fulfill their mandate and are appreciated by members and observers alike as a cost efficient and effective tool to work on specific issues of relevance or concern to Codex.

5. EWGs are inconsistent in their approach to co-chairing (i.e. division of responsibilities between Chair and Co-chairs); the publication of work plans; reporting and documentation; and timely availability of final reports.

6. The participation and progress of the work of EWGs is not monitored systematically and it is therefore not possible to measure the extent to which EWGs contribute to Goal 3 of the Strategic Plan ("*facilitate the effective participation of all Codex members*").

7. The use of a Codex online platform was welcomed for increased transparency and efficiency in work management practices (Goal 4 of the Strategic Plan), but not all participants were as yet fully comfortable with the changes in technology introduced.

¹ This document has also been included in the agenda of CAC40 as document CX/CAC 17/40/11. CAC40 will consider this matter based on any recommendations of CCEX73.

² Codex Alimentarius Commission Strategic Plan 2014-19

³ CX/EXEC 16/72/4

RECOMMENDATIONS

8. Request the Secretariat to:
- (i) harmonize guidance for EWG Chairs on roles and responsibilities; procedures and planning; and monitoring, reporting and communication, when leading an EWG, to promote consistency and enhance participation;
 - (ii) provide members with continued support on the use and management of Codex online tools (e.g. platform);
 - (iii) continue exploring new technologies to track and *“improve Member participation in (electronic) Working Groups”*⁴ and to increase the visibility of EWGs;
 - (iv) offer members opportunities to learn and exchange best practices on how to manage EWGs (e.g. webinars);
 - (v) report on the implementation of points (i)-(iv) as part of the annual reporting on the Strategic Plan.

⁴ Activity 4.1.3 (goal 4: implement effective and efficient work management systems and practices) of the Codex Strategic Plan 2014 -2019.

APPENDIX I**REPORT ON THE 2016 REVIEW OF ELECTRONIC WORKING GROUPS**

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INTRODUCTION

1. This review was performed by the Codex Secretariat with the objective to assess work processes and procedures used by EWGs in terms of efficiency and effectiveness to identify potential strengths, weaknesses, inconsistencies and best practices. The review findings and conclusions are intended to inform the decisions and actions of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) and its Executive Committee (CCEXEC).

BACKGROUND ON EWGS

2. Subsidiary bodies of the CAC and the CAC itself establish EWGs to advance work between their sessions.¹ EWGs work exclusively through electronic means and no physical meetings are to be held. The responsibility for the management and functioning of an EWG lies with the appointed Host Member.

3. EWGs play an important role in facilitating the work of CAC subsidiary bodies by facilitating discussion at plenary sessions. The Guidelines on EWGs (Procedural Manual, Section III) were adopted by CAC in 2005. In line with strategic goal 3 and 4 of the CAC Strategic Plan 2014-19, EWGs are envisaged as a means of achieving greater involvement of all Members and more active participation of developing countries in the work of the CAC.

4. Currently, 83 percent of all Codex subsidiary bodies are using EWGs to facilitate their work and the majority are established by general subject committees. While the annual number of EWGs has remained steady over the past six years,² more developing countries³ are acting as hosts or co-hosts of EWGs. In 2015 for example 30 percent of the 56 established EWGs were (co-)hosted by a developing country while in 2010, developing countries (co-)hosted only 17 percent of the 59 established EWGs. In addition, the overall trend of co-hosting has increased in the last six years (2015: 66 % of EWGs were co-hosted, compared to 22% in 2010).

REVIEW DURATION AND PERIOD COVERED

5. The review was conducted by the Codex Secretariat between September 2016 and February 2017 and focused on EWGs established in the period between July 2014 (after CAC37) and July 2016 (until CAC39).

¹ EWGs established by the Codex Alimentarius Commission were not part of this review.

² No detailed records exist of EWGs held before 2010.

³ For the purpose of this review developing countries are those that are eligible for support from the Second Codex Trust Fund (CTF2). The list of countries selected based on several UN classifications currently includes 103.

METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE

6. To ensure a detailed analysis of work management practices and procedures, a sample of 41 EWGs was selected (see Annex), which corresponds to around 40 percent of all EWGs established in the review period. The sample included a representative number of EWGs of each type of subsidiary body and covered the following characteristics: EWGs hosted by one member, co-hosted EWGs, EWGs hosted by developing countries, EWGs run in English only, EWGs run in more than one language. A predetermined number of cases was selected to represent each of these categories. This sample size allowed for collection of comprehensive data and in-depth investigation.

7. The review focused on three main questions:

- i. To what extent have the objectives in the Terms of Reference (TOR) of EWGs been achieved?
- ii. To what extent did EWGs contribute to goal 3 of the Codex Strategic Plan, “*facilitate effective participation of all Codex members*”?
- iii. To what extent did EWGs contribute to goal 4 of the Codex Strategic Plan, “*implement effective and efficient work management practices*”?

8. Matters falling under goal 1 and 2 of the Codex Strategic Plan were not addressed by the review.

SOURCES

9. The review was informed by the sources of data stated in the following table. It should be noted that not all EWG participants could be contacted due to the limited availability of detailed list of participants in EWG reports and/or non-response of EWG hosts to requests for participant contact details.

Table 1: Overview of sources for EWG review

Information source	Quantity	Sampled EWGs covered
EWG invitation messages	41	100%
EWG programmes of work	15	37 %
Committee reports	65	68%
EWG reports/working documents/discussion papers	35	85%
Interviews with representatives of the Codex Secretariat	5	100%
Interviews with representatives of FAO and WHO	2	100%
Responses to survey of EWG Chairs/Co-chairs	51	98%
Responses to interviews with EWG Chairs/Co-chairs	6	10% (only CCNFSDU)
Responses to survey of EWG participants	112	80%

10. All interviews and surveys were held in English. However, replies in other languages were accepted.

REVIEW FINDINGS

11. The following section contains the findings related to each of the three evaluation questions. All findings relate to detailed information obtained on the EWG sample selected and listed in an **Annex**. In addition, **Appendix II** provides the data analysis on which the findings are based as well as links to the full set of data deriving from surveys of (Co-)chairs and participants and an overview of chairs’ and participants’ main challenges and lessons learnt in relation to EWGs.

EWG Adherence to Terms of Reference

12. The Guidelines on EWGs state that “*the terms of reference of the electronic working group shall be established by the Committee during its plenary session, shall be limited to the immediate task at hand and normally not be subsequently modified*”.

13. The first review question sought to analyse how effective Codex EWGs are in fulfilling their mandate.

14. **Finding 1 (effectiveness):** The majority of EWGs (93%) delivered on their mandate and shared the outcome of their work with the respective Committee through a working document or discussion paper. Despite having fulfilled their mandate, EWGs are frequently re-established by the respective Committee to continue working on additional considerations made in subsequent physical meetings (i.e. Physical Working Groups or meetings of the Committee establishing the EWG). Only seven percent of EWGs failed to accomplish their objectives as stipulated in the Terms of Reference. The reasons included the non-availability of sufficient data on the subject and too low levels of participation.

EWG's Contribution to Goal 3 of the Codex Strategic Plan (effective participation)

15. The Guidelines on EWGs state that “(t)he search for worldwide consensus and for greater acceptability of Codex Standards requires the involvement of all the Members of Codex and the active participation of developing countries. Special efforts are needed to enhance the participation of developing countries in Codex Committees, by increased use of written communications, especially through remote participation via email, internet and other modern technologies, in the work done between sessions of Committees”. This objective is echoed in the Codex Strategic Plan 2014-19 under goal 3 “to facilitate the effective participation of all Codex Members”.

16. The management of and reporting on EWGs is the responsibility of the host. The participation in EWGs has so far not been monitored by the Codex Secretariat although with the implementation of an online platform this data is now becoming automatically available.

17. The second review question sought to analyse the level of participation (both reported and actual) in Codex EWGs, which were part of the selected sample, and consequently the contribution of EWGs to strategic goal 3.

18. **Finding 2 (announcement of EWGs):** As Codex subsidiary bodies establish on average 55 EWGs per year members and observers need to keep a vigilant watch on the announcements of newly established EWGs to identify EWGs of their interest and register in time. Information on the establishment of an EWG can currently be obtained from three sources: (i) the reports of the respective Committee, (ii) physical attendance of Committee sessions or (iii) EWG invitation messages that are sent out by the Codex Secretariat following the Committee session in which the EWG was established. In addition to these sources, participants felt that Codex Contact Points played an important role in informing about the establishment of new EWGs. The Codex website did not provide a comprehensive overview of active and closed EWGs at the time of the review⁴.

19. **Finding 3 (reporting on participation):** There is currently no harmonized way of reporting on participation in EWGs. The Guidelines on EWGs advise to send a “*list of participants to the Joint FAO/WHO Secretariat and the host country secretariat of the Committee*”, however there is no clear definition of “*list of participants*” and different approaches were chosen by EWG hosts, namely

- (i) An annex to the EWG report with a detailed list of registered participants including individual contact details for members and observers (57 % of EWGs);
- (ii) A header or footnote listing registered member and observer names without contact details (38% of EWGs);
- (iii) A paragraph in the report (under a section on the background or conduct of the EWG) stating the number of members/observers that provided active feedback during comment rounds (5% of EWGs).

20. **Finding 4 (participant registration rates):** The participant registration rates in EWGs established by General Subject Committees were higher than those of Commodity Committee EWGs both as regards members and observers. The average registration rate of developing countries was low and not representative of the membership of the Commission. Co-hosted EWGs did not show significantly higher registration rates of developing countries (i.e. less than 2 %) than EWGs that were led by only one member. The official language did also not appear to have any significant impact on participant registration rates.

21. **Finding 5 (management of participant registrations):** Members and observers frequently register late to EWGs. The great majority of EWG hosts however allowed them to join after expiry of the registration deadline without applying specific criteria in making this decision.

22. **Finding 6 (participants' motivation):** While most participants signed up to an EWG to provide technical input in the development process of a standard (guideline, code of practice etc.), a small group of participants (under 10 percent) stated that their main motivation was to stay informed on behalf of their country/organization, learn about or monitor Codex activities.

⁴ In January 2017 the Secretariat however began publishing new EWGs on a dedicated page on the Codex website: <http://www.codexalimentarius.org/e-working-groups/en/>

23. **Finding 7 (participant involvement):** EWG chairs usually held two rounds of comments of which the first served to obtain initial comments on the subject and the second to endorse or reject findings of the EWG report drafted by the chair(s). Around half of the EWG chairs shared the final report with participants prior to submission to the Codex and Committee host secretariat despite this not being prescribed by the Guidelines for EWGs. Whenever Members and Observers participated with more than one person in an EWG it was not clear how Chairs assessed consensus and whether the participants coordinated their position (on behalf of the Member/Observer) or provided inputs in their individual capacity.

24. **Finding 8 (inclusiveness):** The majority (over 60%) of EWGs were very much or at least somewhat dependent on a small number of active participants meaning that comments were often received by far fewer EWG members than those that signed up to participate. Half of the participants that provided feedback felt that their contributions were adequately reflected in the final report of the respective EWG they participated in.

25. **Finding 9 (accessibility):** Emails were the primary means of communication used in EWGs. Most participants (over 90%) did not encounter any technical problems in the EWG they participated in. Also problems of language and understanding did not appear frequently (reported by only 15% of participants that replied). EWGs that used more than one language did not show significantly higher participant registration rates.⁵

EWG's Contribution to Goal 4 of the Codex Strategic Plan (effective and efficient work management practices)

26. The fourth goal of the Codex Strategic Plan 2014-19 is to “*implement effective and efficient work management systems and practices*”. The third question under this review sought to assess the extent to which EWGs contribute to goal four and one of its underlying objectives, namely to “*strive for an effective, efficient, transparent and consensus based standard setting process*”. The review question also looked at the implementation of the following activities of the current Strategic Plan:

- 4.1.2: Codex Secretariat to assess benefits and, where cost effective, implement new technologies to improve Codex communication, work flow, and management of activities.
- 4.1.3: Codex Secretariat to assess benefits and, where cost effective, implement new technologies to improve Member participation in committees and working groups.
- 4.1.4: All Committees to enhance timely distribution of all Codex working documents in the working languages of the Committee/Commission.

27. **Finding 10 (Adherence to the Guidelines for EWGs):** Two major gaps between the Guidelines for EWGs and the actual conduct of EWGs could be observed: (i) Codex Committees have no mechanism to ensure “that the membership (of a EWG) is representative of the membership of the Commission” and (ii) none of the Terms of Reference of EWGs did “clearly state the time frame by which the work is expected to be completed”. With regards to point (ii) it is generally assumed that the EWG report is to be prepared in time for the following session of the Committee that established the EWG and the Codex Secretariat advises EWG hosts to prepare an adequate timeframe for their work. Some EWG hosts (38 percent) communicated the expected date of submission of the EWG report to the secretariats in the invitation message circulated by the Codex Secretariat.

28. **Finding 11 (work management and reporting):** Several Chairs (12 out of 46) found it challenging to analyse and summarize numerous (and often late) comments expressing diverging views. Reporting did generally not follow a template structure and there was no consistency in the way EWG reports were structured. The majority of reports (over 50 percent) lacked information on how the EWG was conducted and both the quantity and quality of feedback obtained from participants.

29. **Finding 12 (co-hosting/co-chairing):** The majority (66%) of chairs that co-hosted a EWG found that this arrangement positively contributed to the success of the respective EWG despite potential additional burdens (e.g. bigger time investment, translation costs). Currently no guidance on the co-hosting of EWGs exists. Two Chairs stated that more guidance in this area and specifically regarding the division of responsibilities between co-chairs would be useful.

⁵ In EWGs working in only one official language, participants sometimes volunteered to translate key documents in order to facilitate the discussions. In the few EWGs (5) where this new practice was implemented, the final report was submitted well ahead of the Committee meeting.

30. **Finding 13 (new technologies and transparency):** The Codex Secretariat started piloting an online platform for EWGs in 2015. A minority of EWG hosts (17%) were using the online platform provided by Codex and one host used its own platform in addition to or instead of emails. While chairs and participants generally appreciated the increase in transparency deriving from the discussion forum as well as the assistance provided by the Codex Secretariat, some technical problems in accessing and using the forum were experienced. On the other hand, EWG Chairs that chose to work via email reportedly experienced non-reception of emails by individual participants (e.g. due to spam filters, limited size of email boxes).

31. **Finding 14 (timeliness of report delivery):** The Guidelines for EWGs state that “*materials should be sent to the secretariat of the host, in good time*”⁶ and that “*as soon as possible after the end of the business of an electronic working group, the secretariat of the host should send a copy of the final conclusions, in the form of either a discussion paper or a working document and of the list of participants to the Joint FAO/WHO Secretariat and to the host country secretariat of the Committee*”.

32. The date of reception of EWG reports by the Codex Secretariat and the respective Committee is currently not documented systematically. While the majority of chairs reported to set up a work schedule prior to the start of the EWG work, only one third of the EWG hosts formally disseminated their schedules as part of the EWG invitation message. For those EWGs that disseminated a timetable including the estimated report submission date, on average one month passed between the planned submission date and the final report dissemination. Upon reception of the EWG report the Codex Secretariat generally provided feedback to the EWG chair/host secretariat for finalisation of the report.

33. The majority of EWG reports were disseminated at least two months prior to the meeting of the respective Committee. However, this timespan cannot be considered sufficient in cases where EWG reports needed to be circulated for comments prior to a committee meeting and translated in other languages.

34. A number of chairs mentioned to have extended the deadlines for comments more than once upon request of participants which impacted negatively on the planned report delivery date.

REQUEST FOR COMMENTS

35. In March 2017 a Circular Letter⁷ was issued requesting the feedback of members and observers on the above findings of the review. Two members submitted their comments⁸ which were subsequently considered in finalising this document.

CONCLUSIONS

36. EWGs generally fulfill their mandate and are appreciated by members and observers alike as a cost efficient and effective tool to work on specific issues of relevance or concern to Codex.

37. EWGs are inconsistent in their approach to co-chairing (i.e. division of responsibilities between Chair and Co-chairs); the publication of work plans; reporting and documentation; and timely availability of final reports.

38. The participation and progress of the work of EWGs is not monitored systematically and it is therefore not possible to measure the extent to which EWGs contribute to Goal 3 of the Strategic Plan (“*facilitate the effective participation of all Codex members*”).

39. The use of a Codex online platform was welcomed for increased transparency and efficiency in work management practices (Goal 4 of the Strategic Plan), but not all participants were as yet fully comfortable with the changes in technology introduced.

RECOMMENDATIONS

40. Request the Secretariat to:

- (i) harmonize guidance for EWG Chairs on roles and responsibilities; procedures and planning; and monitoring, reporting and communication, when leading an EWG, to promote consistency and enhance participation;
- (ii) provide members with continued support on the use and management of Codex online tools (e.g. platform);

⁶ While there is no definition for the expression “in good time”, papers for a session of a subsidiary body should generally be disseminated at least two months before the opening of the session according to the Guidelines for Subsidiary Bodies (Procedural Manual, Section III).

⁷ CL 2017/35-CAC

⁸ Comments to CL 2017/35-CAC

- (iii) continue exploring new technologies to track and *“improve Member participation in (electronic) Working Groups”*⁹ and to increase the visibility of EWGs;
- (iv) offer members opportunities to learn and exchange best practices on how to manage EWGs (e.g. webinars);
- (v) report on the implementation of points (i)-(iv) as part of the annual reporting on the Strategic Plan.

⁹ Activity 4.1.3 (goal 4: implement effective and efficient work management systems and practices) of the Codex Strategic Plan 2014 -2019.

ANNEX: EWG SAMPLE SELECTED FOR REVIEW

1. CF10 - Draft MLs for lead in selected fruits and vegetables and other selected food categories (USA)
2. CF10 - Draft MLs for cadmium in chocolate and cocoa-derived products (ECU/BRA/GHA)
3. CF10 - Draft Code of Practice for the Prevention and Reduction of Mycotoxin Contamination in Spices, and its annexes (ESP/NLD/IND)
4. CF9 - Draft ML for inorganic arsenic in husked rice (JPN/CHN)
5. CF9 - Draft ML for cadmium in chocolate and cocoa-derived products (ECU/BRA/GHA)
6. CF9 - Draft Code of Practice for the Prevention and Reduction of Mycotoxin Contamination in Spices, and Discussion Paper on possible annexes (ESP/NLD/IND)
7. CF9 - Discussion Paper and Project Document for establishment of ML for Mycotoxins in spices (IND/EU/IDN)
8. FA48 - General Standard for Food Additives/ GSFA (USA)
9. FA48 - Discussion Paper of the use of food additives in the production of wine (EU/AUS)
10. FA47 - Draft revision of the food category 01.1 "Milk and dairy-based drinks" and its sub-categories of the GSFA (NZL)
11. FA47 - Alignment of the food additive provisions of commodity standards and relevant provisions of the GSFA (AUS/USA)
12. FA47 - Discussion Paper on secondary additives (EU)
13. FH47 - Revision of the General Principles of Food Hygiene and its HACCP Annex (FRA/CHL/GHA/IND/USA)
14. FH47 - Revision of the *Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables* (BRA/FRA)
15. FH46 - Draft Guidelines for the Control of Nontyphoidal *Salmonella* spp. in Beef and Pork Meat (USA/DNK)
16. FFV19 - Draft Standard for Kiwifruit (NZL/IRN)
17. FICS22 - Discussion Paper: Use of Electronic Certificates by Competent Authorities and Migration to Paperless Certification (NLD/AUS)
18. FICS21 - Draft Principles and Guidelines for the Exchange of Information (incl. questionnaires) between Countries to support Food Import and Export (NZL/BRA/MEX)
19. FICS21 - Revision of the *Guidelines for the Exchange of Information between Countries on Rejections of Imported Food* (CAN/AUS)
20. FO24 - Amendments Appendix 2 "List of Acceptable Previous Cargoes" of the *Code of Practice for the Storage and Transport of Edible Fats and Oils in Bulk* (MYS)
21. FO24 - Amendments to the *Standard for Named Vegetable Oils: Addition of Palm Oil with High Oleic Acid* (COL/ECU)
22. FO24 - Amendments to the *Standard for Olive Oils and Olive Pomace Oils: Revision of the Limit for Campesterol* (ARG/AUS/ITA)
23. FO24 - Discussion Papers on Amendments of the *Standard for Named Vegetable Oils: Revision of Limits of Oleic and Linoleic Acids in Sunflower Seed Oils* (ARG/BRAZ)
24. MAS36 - Discussion Paper on criteria for endorsement of biological methods to detect chemical of concern (CHL/FRA)
25. MAS36 - Criteria approach for methods which use a "sum of components" (GBR)
26. MAS36 - Review and update of methods in CODEX STAN 234-1999 (BRA/JPN)
27. NFSDU37 - Guideline for ready to use therapeutic foods/ RUTF (ZAF/SEN/UGA)
28. NFSDU37 - Review of the Standard for Follow-up Formula (NZL/FRA/IDN)
29. NFSDU36 - Review of the Standard for Follow-Up Formula (NZL/FRA/IDN)
30. NFSDU36 - Draft NRV-NCD for EPA and DHA long chain omega-3 fatty acids (RUS/CHL)
31. PR48 - Establishment of Codex schedules & priority list of pesticides for evaluation by JMPR (AUS/DEU)
32. PR47 - Draft Guidance on performance criteria for methods of analysis for the determination of pesticide residues (USA/CHN/JPN)
33. RVDF22 - Discussion Paper on the establishment of a scoring system to establish priorities for CCRVDF work (FRA)
34. RVDF22 - Discussion Paper on unintended presence of residues of veterinary drugs in food commodities from the carry-over of drug residues into feed (USA/CAN)
35. SCH2 - Draft Standard for Oregano (ARG/TUR)
36. SCH2 - Draft Standard for Black, White and Green Pepper (IND/IDN/CMR)
37. AFRICA21 - Draft Regional Standard for fermented cooked cassava based products (CAM/COG/COD)
38. ASIA19 - Draft Regional Code of Hygienic Practice for Street-Vended Foods (IND)
39. LAC19 - Draft Regional Standard for Yacon (PER/BLZ)
40. NASWP13 - Draft Regional Standard for Fermented Noni Juice (TON)
41. NEA8 - Draft Regional Standard for Doogh (IRN)

Selection Factor	Number of EWGs established in review period	Number of EWGs selected for review	Percentage of total established in review period
General Subject Committee	72	29	40%
Commodity Committee*	15	7	47%
FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee	11	5	45%
Total	104	41	39%

Selection Factor	Out of 104 EWGs established in review period	Out of the 41 EWGs selected for review	Percentage of total established in review period
Co-hosted	67	32	48%
Developing country host or co-host	24	14	49%
English only	75	29	39%
More than 1 language	23	13	57%

* NB: EWGs of Committees working by correspondence only are excluded for the purpose of this review as this subject is dealt with by the Executive Committee and covered in CX/EXEC 17/73/7.

DATA

ACCESS TO COMPILED ANONYMOUS SURVEY REPLIES

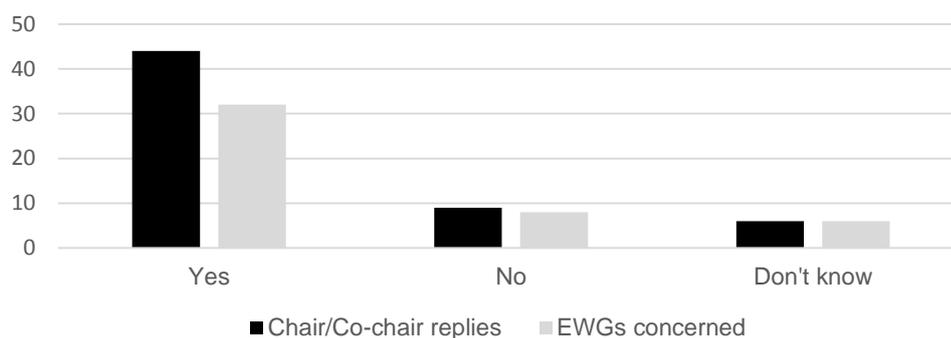
Survey of EWG Chairs and Co-Chairs	http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/codexalimentarius/doc/ChairSurvey.pdf
Survey of EWG Participants	http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/codexalimentarius/doc/ParticipantSurvey.pdf

DATA ANALYSIS

FINDING 1: EFFECTIVENESS

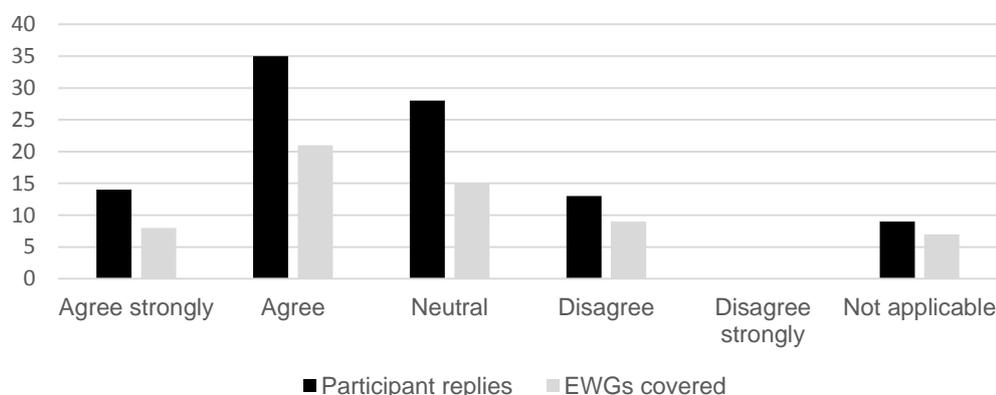
Question 17 Survey & Interview of Chairs: 68 % response rate, answers for 40 EWGs

Was the EWG able to meet all objectives stipulated in its Terms of Reference according to the schedule?



Question 13 in Survey of Participants: 100 participants, answers for 34 EWGs

The EWG I participated in was able to meet all its objectives.



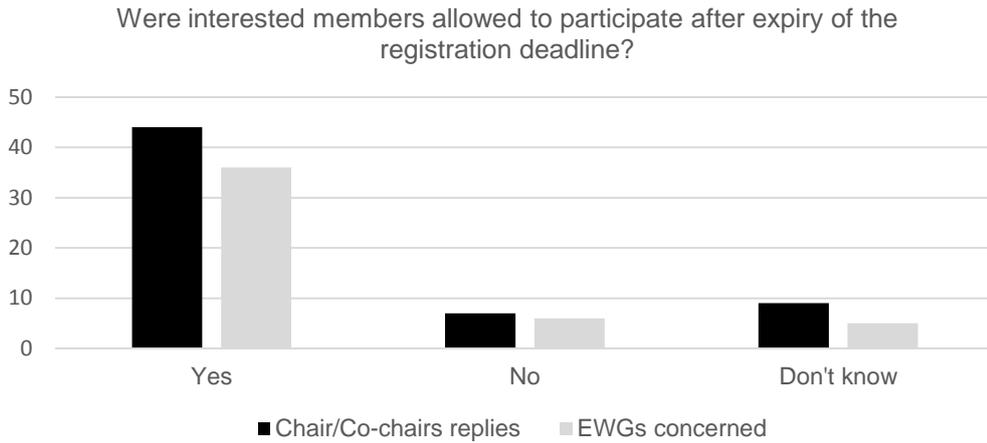
FINDING 4: PARTICIPANT REGISTRATION RATES

	Average number of registered Members	Average number of registered Observers
All EWGs in sample	19 (4 developing countries)	4
General Subject Committees	22 (4 developing countries)	6
Commodity Committees	15 (3 developing countries)	1
Co-chaired EWGs*	21 (4 developing countries)	/
EWGs with only 1 Chair*	20 (3 developing countries)	/
EWGs run in several languages*	23 (5 developing countries)	/
EWGs run in English only*	20 (4 developing countries)	/

*EWGs of Regional Coordinating Committees have not been included as their membership is by default more restrictive.

FINDING 5: MANAGEMENT OF PARTICIPANT REGISTRATIONS

Question 6 Survey & Interview of Chairs: 69% response rate, answers for 40 EWGs



FINDING 6: PARTICIPANTS' MOTIVATION

Question 4 in Survey of Participants: answers from 107 participants for 34 EWGs

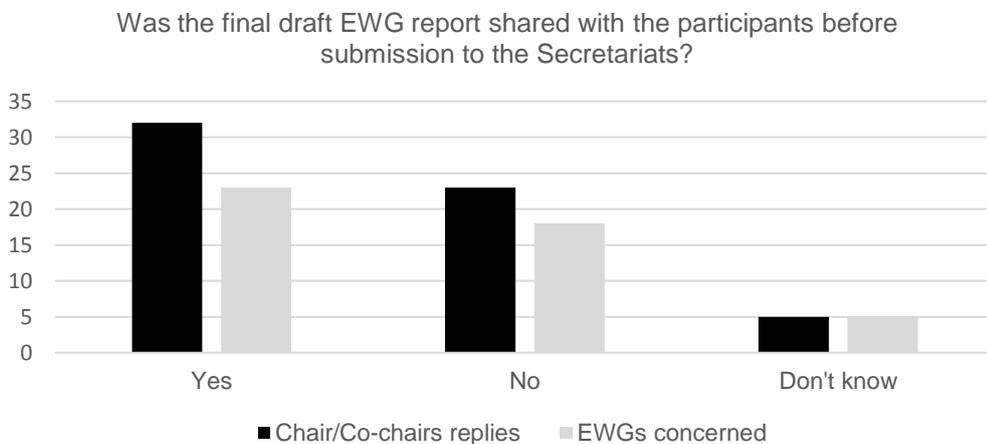
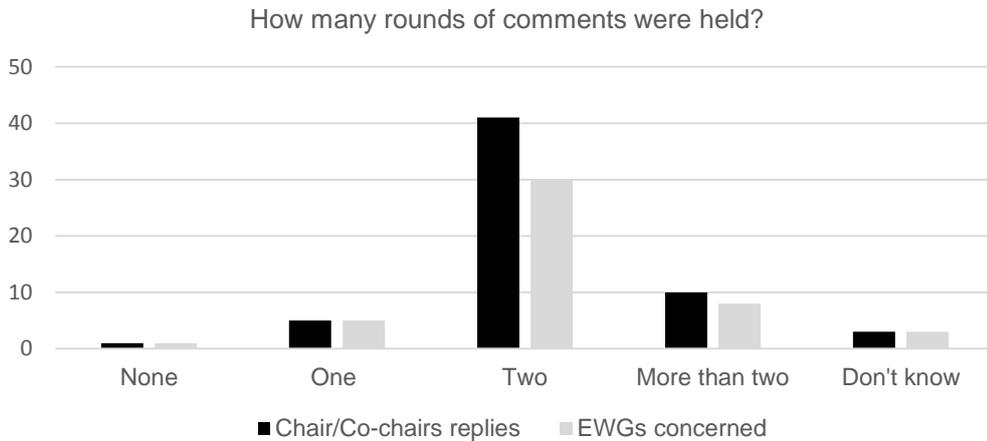
Q4: What was your primary motivation for participating in a Codex EWG?

Examples of answers:

- ❖ Participant A: *"The standard is a priority for my country. I wanted to share experience with others and be involved in the making of the standard."*
- ❖ Participant B: *"To provide input in the discussion as early as possible."*
- ❖ Participant C: *"It's part of my duties"*
- ❖ Participant D: *"To monitor the activities."*

FINDING 7: PARTICIPANT INVOLVEMENT

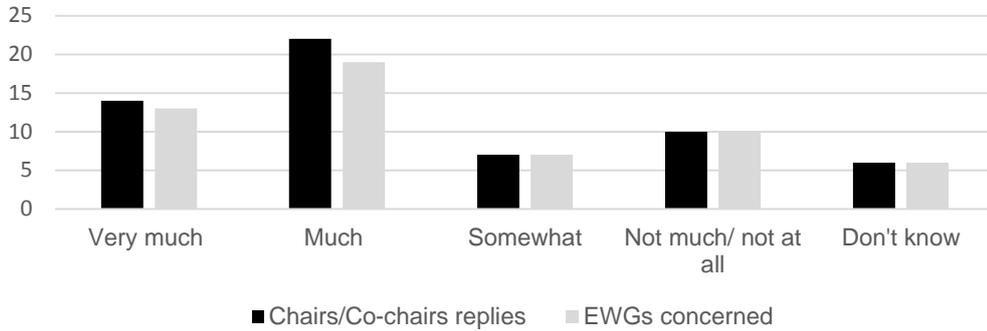
Question 10 and 12 in Survey of Chairs: answers from 69% of Chairs/Co-chairs, covering 40 EWGs



FINDING 8: INCLUSIVENESS

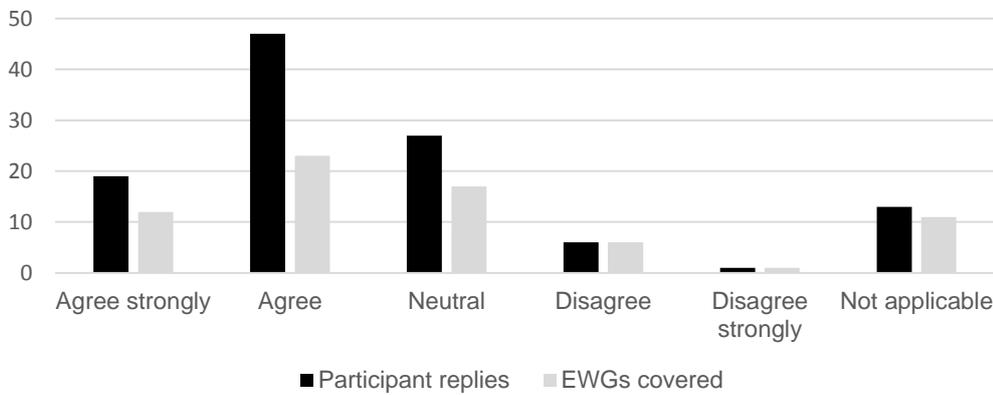
Question 15 Survey & Interview of Chairs: 68% response rate, answers for 40 EWGs

How dependent was the EWG on a small number of active participants (e.g. only 5 out of 30 registered participants providing comments)?



Question 13 in Survey of Participants: 100 participants, answers for 34 EWGs

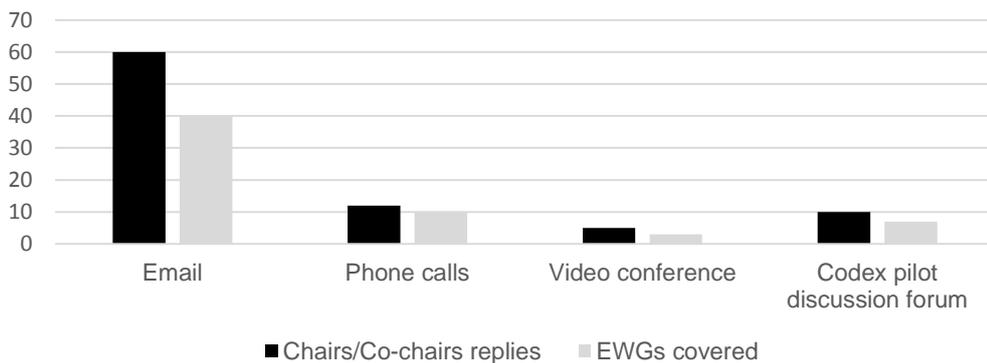
My contributions were adequately reflected in the final EWG report.



FINDING 9: ACCESSIBILITY

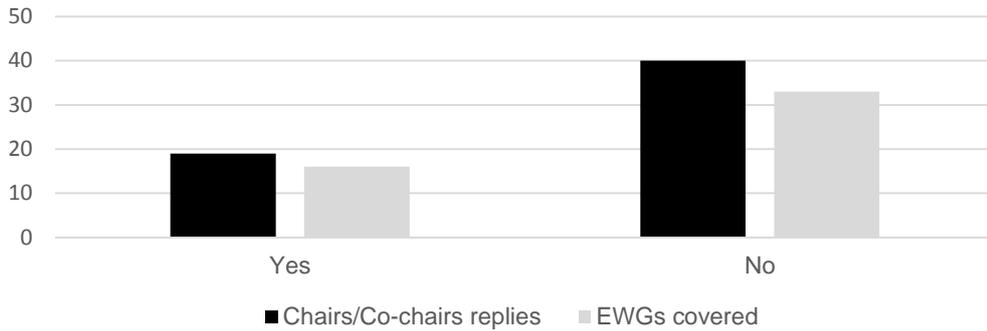
Question 4 Survey of Chairs: 69% response rate, answers for 40 EWGs

Which tools were used to run the EWG (select all applicable options)?



Question 16 Survey of Chairs: 68% response rate, answers for 40 EWGs

Are you aware of any technical problems encountered by participants during the work of the EWG (e.g. non-reception of emails, inaccessibility of platform) ?

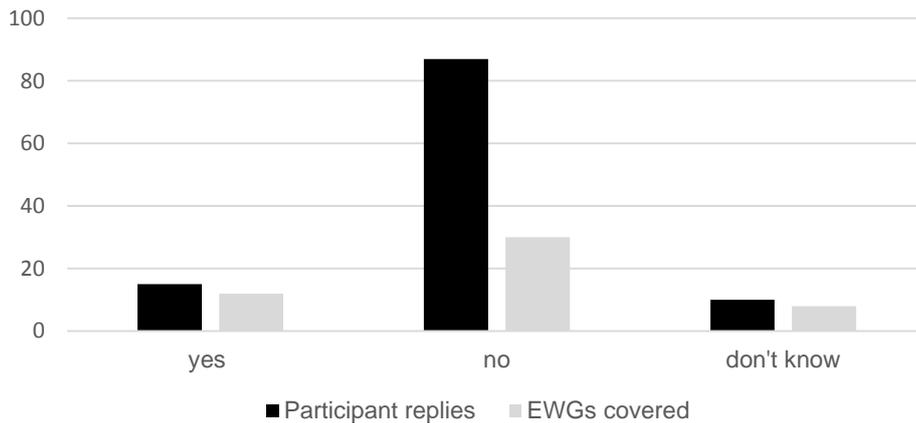


Examples of additional comments:

- ❖ Chair A: *“Occasionally we find an email address is not working, but this is not a problem for the most part.”*
- ❖ Chair B: *“Those using gmail, hotmail and yahoo experience problems because broadcast emails (200 participants) filter out these email platforms - in future, I will keep them separate and email in a smaller group.”*
- ❖ Chair C: *“Some access problems to the forum - most related to training issues.”*

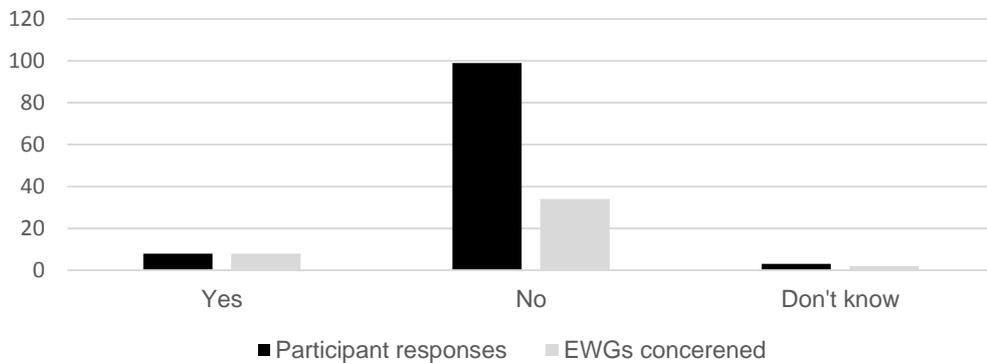
Question 9 Survey of Participants: 112 participants, answers for 34 EWGs

Have you encountered any technical problems during the work of the EWG you were involved in (e.g. non-reception of emails, inaccessibility of the platform) ?



Question 10 Survey of Participants: 109 participants, answers for 34 EWGs

Have you encountered any problems of understanding/language(s) used in the EWG you participated in?



Examples of additional comments:

- ❖ Participant A: *“When a EWG is working on a document in 3 languages in parallel, each country sends comments in its language and it is very difficult to track the document and not lose comments.”*
- ❖ Participant B: *“English as an only language is a restrictive factor for Latin American countries to participate.”*
- ❖ Participant C: *“The official working language was English but the Chair was Spanish mother tongue which sometimes made the wording a bit confusing.”*

FINDING 11: WORK MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

📄 **Question19 – Survey of Chairs:** 53% response rate, answers for 38 EWGs

Please share which difficulties you encountered as an EWG Chair/Co-chair and which lessons you have learnt:

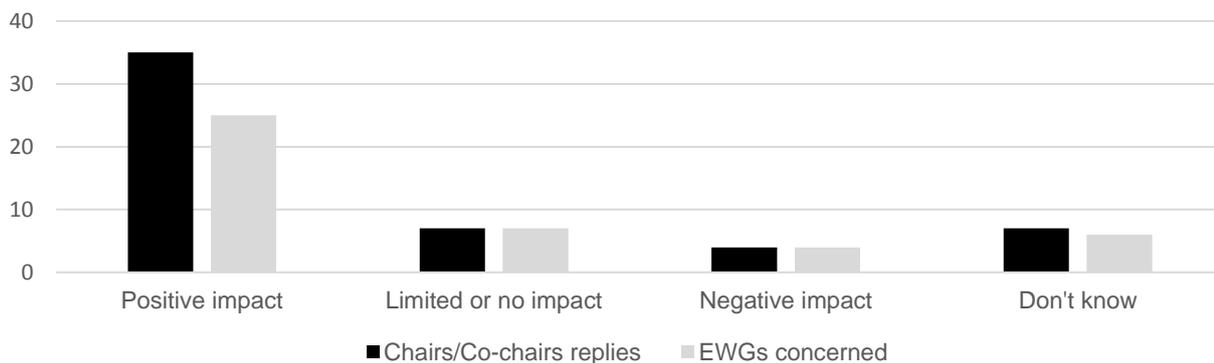
Examples of answers:

- ❖ Chair A: *“The main difficulty was, as expected, the differing opinions between members. The necessity to understand the concern of each members.”*
- ❖ Chair B: *“The major difficulty was the receipt of comments from countries AFTER the final draft was prepared, who later blocked the advancement of the document to Step 8 since we did not address their comments after the draft was already submitted.”*
- ❖ Chair C: *“Many comments and a lot of different views – difficult to summarize”.*
- ❖ Chair D: *“Most of the participants did not participate actively in the debate and the exchange of information. This situation did not allow to reach the objectives set by the EWG”.*

FINDING 12: CO-HOSTING/CO-CHAIRING

📄 **Question18 – Survey of Chairs:** 69% response rate, answers for all 32 co-chaired EWGs in the sample

If your EWG was co-chaired, which impact did this arrangement have on the success of the EWG?



📄 **Question19 – Survey of Chairs:** 53% response rate, answers for 38 EWGs.

Please share which difficulties you encountered as an EWG Chair/Co-chair and which lessons you have learnt.

Examples of answers:

- ❖ Chair A: *“Co-chairing an EWG represented the challenge of analyzing the comments of EWG participating countries, as well as developing a consensus version with the co-chairs and translating it into Spanish-speaking countries in a short time, prior to recirculation among the members of the EWG, however the experiment was very positive.”*
- ❖ Chair B: *“Too general guidance for chairs and co-chairs of an EWG presented a challenge”*
- ❖ Chair C: *“It is OK to work with chairs and co-chairs but there has to be an agreement who takes the lead and there should not be a rule that a document has to be formally agreed by co-chairs before sending it out to other participants of the EWG.”*
- ❖ Chair D: *“Co-chairing can cause time delays as need to share information. Benefits of having both perspectives far outweighs the difficulties”.*

FINDING 13: NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND TRANSPARENCY

📄 **Question 16 Survey of Chairs:** 68% response rate, answers for 40 EWGs:

Examples of additional comments related to the question *Are you aware of any technical problems encountered by participants during the work of the EWG (e.g. non-reception of emails, inaccessibility of platform)?*

- ❖ **Chair A:** *“Inaccessibility of the Codex Platform by one developing country both years. Not many participants access the platform (I am not aware of the reasons, but I guess that it is because they are not familiar with the system and it requires some time to get into it)”*
- ❖ **Chair B:** *“Initial access to the forum was not intuitive, but the Codex Secretariat worked to facilitate access. The notification issue was more problematic. Test procedures seemed to suggest the system was working, so we assumed we were getting notifications, which was not the case. Since we did not know until late that there was an issue, this problem was not resolved.”*
- ❖ **Chair C:** *“Some members had difficulty registering or accessing the electronic forum, but worked with the Codex Secretariat directly to correct the problems.”*

📄 **Question 7 – Survey of Participants:** 9 participants, answers for 3 EWGs

If your EWG was held on the Codex pilot discussion forum, how useful did you perceive this tool compared to other tools (e.g. email)?

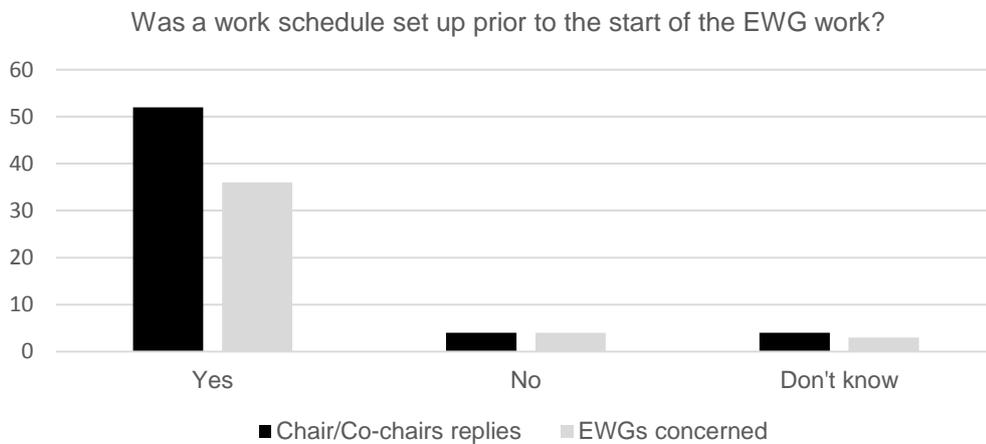
Examples of answers:

- ❖ **Participant A:** *“It was not easy to find the documents as we didn't receive alert messages when there is some new document in the platform”.*
- ❖ **Participant B:** *“It allowed us to easily contribute and review the contributions of others as well as conduct some bilateral discussions.”*

- ❖ **Participant C:** *"This significantly improves the transparency as all comments and discussion documents are available for the member of the EWG to review. Also, all documents are available online. Hence, information can be retrieved even when one is out of the office."*

FINDING 14: TIMELINESS OF REPORT DELIVERY

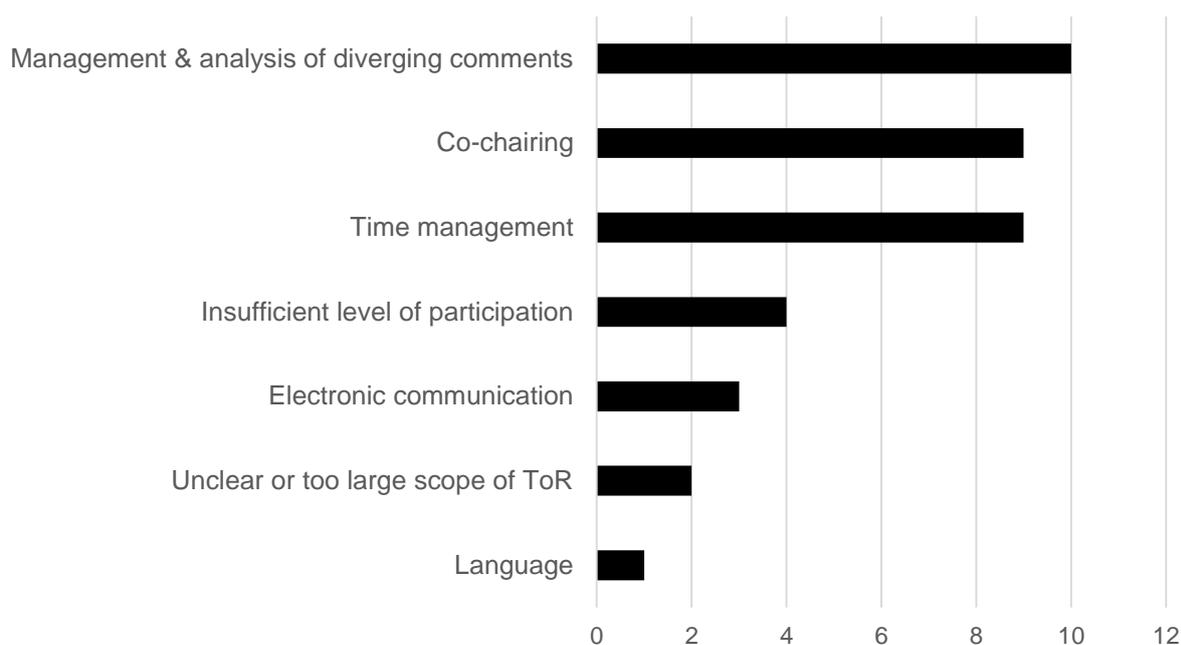
📎 **Question 8 Survey of Chairs:** 87% response rate, answers for 40 EWGs



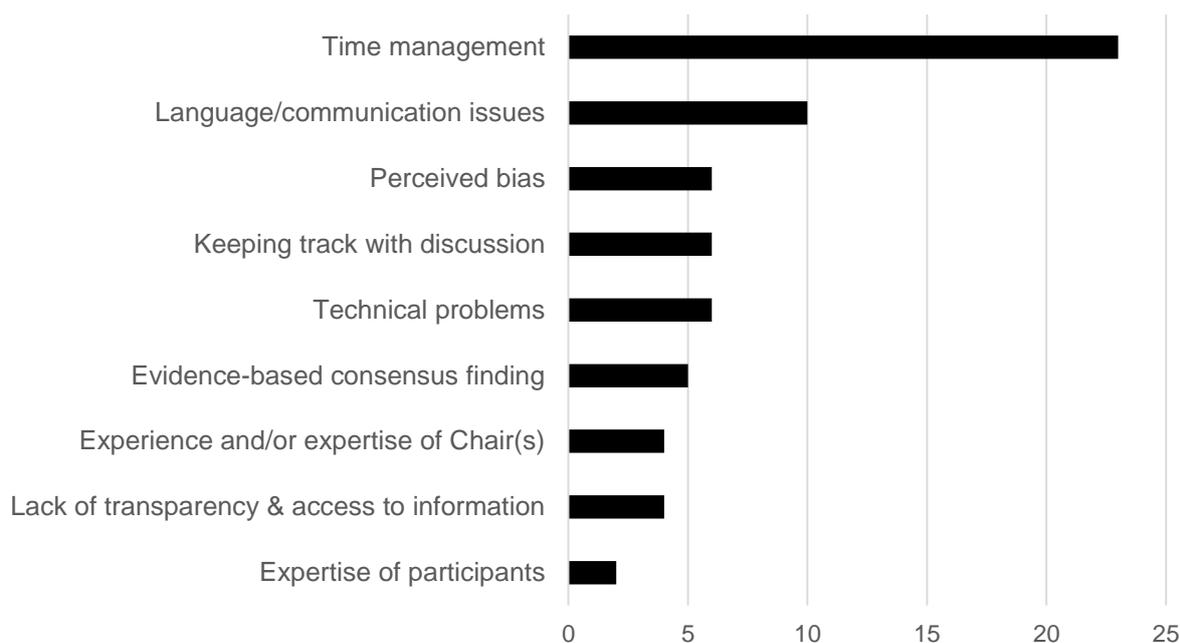
Examples of additional comments:

- ❖ Chair A: *"Yes, but the schedule was not fully respected and so final report has been sent with a slight delay (one month)."*
- ❖ Chair B: *"Yes. The schedule was generally respected with only minor lateness e.g. comments received the following week. These were able to be used."*
- ❖ Chair C: *"Keeping to the schedule meant that comments from some WG members were not reflected in the final submission."*
- ❖ Chair D: *"In many cases, deadlines were extended to allow the majority of members to submit their responses."*

❖

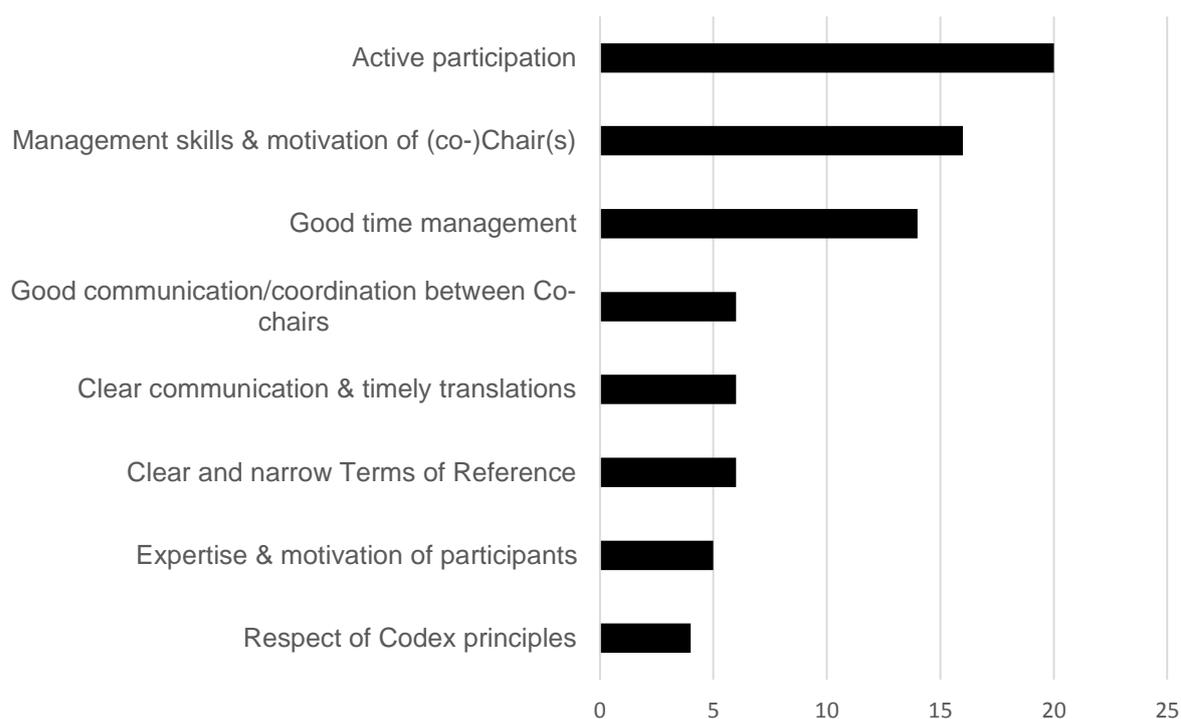
CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED BY (CO-) CHAIRS

Challenge	Examples of (Co-)Chair feedback
Management & analysis of diverging comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The challenge was to capture all the views and to formulate recommendations on the basis of the views expressed - The main difficulties of the EWG are on analysing comments received by Members and coming up with an agreed format for the data analysis. These are essential to ensure that all comments are taken into consideration for an inclusive and comprehensive final report.
Co-chairing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is OK to work with chairs and co-chairs but there has to be an agreement who takes the lead and there should not be a rule that a document has to be formally agreed by co-chairs before sending it out to other participants of the EWG. - Co-chairing can cause time delays as need to share information. Benefits of having both perspectives far outweighs the difficulties
Time management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As co-chair the most outstanding difficulty was in terms of finding time apart from my usual work schedule to dedicate to working on the draft standard. - Difficulty in keeping the agreed timetable
Insufficient level of participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Only a few countries were providing inputs as EWG members. Lack of active discussions make it difficult to meet the expectations of members commenting on the documents. - Most of the participants did not participate actively in the debate and the exchange of information. This situation did not allow to reach the objectives set by the EWG.
Electronic communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communication with members via a better platform is necessary. Time lag is another barrier for live chat forum. - The only difficulties we had were linked to the electronic forum/platform. All my comments about it have been sent to the Codex Secretariat
Unclear or too large scope of ToR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sometimes the scope of the e-WG mandate is too large to allow thoughtful consideration of complex issues. - Unclear ToR
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hemos tenido dificultades para realizar las traducciones de los documentos.

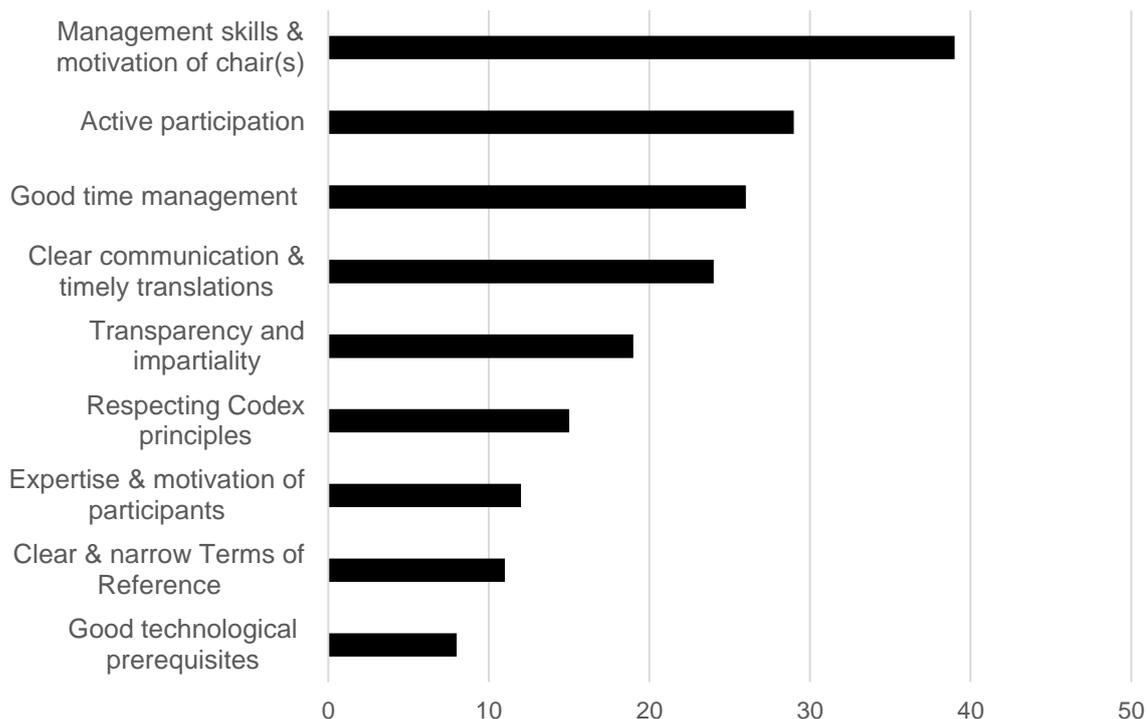
CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED BY PARTICIPANTS

Challenge	Examples of participant feedback
Time management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Timelines were not clear, sometimes commenting time too short, no discussions (only replies to chair). - Late submission of data/information/comments resulting in late preparation/distribution of documents intended for discussion in the EWG - Dedicar el tiempo necesario para el estudio de los documentos y la coordinación con los demás integrantes del Subcomité.
Language/communication issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sometimes difficult to understand the replies of other countries and/or surprised by the interpretation of the questions raised within the EWG. - When we discuss somewhat conceptual issues like HACCP guidelines, it was extremely difficult to understand each other by electronic means. We should consider having PWG when needed and appropriate. - In this group the document was worked in English, Spanish and French. I think the work was harder because of the differences in the translation of documents. Particularly I prefer to work the document in the EWG only in English and then discuss it in a physical Working Group in the official codex languages.
Perceived bias	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This particular EWG was hijacked by a political agenda promulgated by the EU and was not able to make science based recommendations. - NGO comments did not seem to carry much weight. Documents reflected country positions and weighted toward industry feedback. - EWGs can often be created with a "leading proposition" by the chairing Member. Often, comments and suggestions that depart from this path (even if within the terms of reference of the EWG) are ignored
Keeping track with the discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As a new delegate to CCFA it was difficult to understand the whole range and summary of the discussed items.
Technical problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The challenges I have encountered mostly are from the internal process within my countries, for example technical problems in receiving emails from the secretariat/EWG. - Challenge of getting Access to relevant discussions on platform, work load in Office did not allow to participate the way I planned.
Evidence-based consensus finding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The development of the Guidance proceeded before important questions were asked. For example: Decisions seemed to be reached by 'consensus' rather than on the basis of evidence. - Difficulty to achieve an evidence based consensus

Experience/expertise of Chair(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- It is always difficult to engage people. strong leadership is required to make EWG a success- The leaders of the EWG did not seek to engage enough with the participants.- This EWG should have been accompanied by people having more experience in Codex procedure and other standards.
Lack of transparency & access to information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- I have had experiences where an EWG has been very poorly managed, e.g. submitted comments ignored and not even circulated, i.e. no transparency, lateness. It seems there is no accountability to prevent this from happening again. However, most of the EWG in which I have participated are well managed and transparent.
Expertise of participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Lack of product and trade knowledge by some participants.
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Not all the EWG draft documents are clear in initially stages, so we need sometimes to interact with the host/co-host- Some suggestions made during the EWG were later supported by others countries although during the EWG that was not the case

(CO-)CHAIRS' VIEWS ON KEY ELEMENTS FOR A SUCCESSFUL EWG

Challenge	Examples of participant feedback
Active participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High participations and constructive comments - Active participation from EWG is critical to achieving a successful EWG. - Active participation from Members in providing required information/inputs.
Management skills & motivation of (co-)Chair(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The chair should master the subject and be patient. - Enthusiasm and motivation of chair and co-chair. - Careful documentation of the comments received and notes on the action taken so that members can see that their comments have been considered.
Good time management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sticking to the schedule of activities established Clear advice to the members of the timelines and if the timeline needs to be amended that this is advised to the members. - You need to stick to deadlines and participants should sign up in time. Countries should be well aware of the amount of work needed to chair or co-chair an EWG.
Good communication/coordination between Co-chairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Al tener co presidentes, es fundamental una buena comunicación con ellos. - Coordination and effective communication between co-chairpersons.
Clear communication & timely translations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear communication to participants on what is expected - Mantener una comunicación fluida con los integrantes del GET.
Clear and narrow Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear mandate and formulation of clear questions to the EWG - Term of References must be clear and, once established, MUST be supported by all, including the Codex Secretariat.
Expertise & motivation of participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Members interested in the topic were specialized in the right field of research/management - Participants with good knowledge of the matter (and data)
Respect of Codex principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Openness, transparency and inclusivity - Consensus
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guidance for chairs and co-chairs on the conduct of an EWGs - Participants should be reminded that if they sign up to an EWG they are expected to give input and if they stay silent then it is counted as an endorsement or neutrality. - Participants should also not change position from one round to another round of comments. - To be able to count on a platform in the web page of the codex, in which the EWG is accessed and worked by that way.

PARTICIPANT VIEWS ON KEY ELEMENTS FOR A SUCCESSFUL EWG

Challenge	Examples of participant feedback
Management skills & motivation of chair(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong leadership and understanding of the issue by the Chair/co-Chairs - Commitment from chairs to complete the agreed work on time - The chair(s) should be experienced in leading the discussion in an impartial way. Further, the chair(s) should be able to set up reasonable deadlines while giving sufficient time for members to provide comments on specific issue.
Active participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Active participation from a number of contributors - Active participation of the members, contribution of data that support the goal sought, scientific support that leads to the success of the work. - Representative and active participation in the EWG of the Codex members and IAMs
Time management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - enough time to bring input. - clear time table/ realistic timeline
Clear communication & timely translations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear communication about expectations, timelines, and outcome - I think good communication is crucial for a successful EWG.
Transparency and impartiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transparency and impartiality are the key elements for a successful EWG. - Ensuring for a good atmosphere among participants and working with a maximum of transparency. - Chairs should be unbiased, and opinions should be respected.
Respecting Codex principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The report of the EWG should summarize the consensus or majority opinion. However, any dissenting opinion should be highlighted for the Committee to further consider.
Expertise & motivation of participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - That the members of the working group have a high knowledge of the subject matter. - Technical knowledge of the subject English language proficiency
Clear & narrow Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A clear mandate - Start work with clear objectives
Good technological prerequisites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Codex platform developed for EWG was user friendly - A good Connection via internet