



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEx COMMITTEE ON GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Thirty-second Session

Virtual meeting, 8-17 February 2021

FORMAT AND STRUCTURE OF THE CODEx PROCEDURAL MANUAL

(Prepared by the Codex Secretariat)

1. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Codex Committee on General Principles (CCGP) has reviewed the Procedural Manual (PM) on several occasions over the last twenty years¹ and improved its structure and presentation to make it more user-friendly.
- 1.2 CCGP31 (2018) further discussed possible changes, noted that the review of the structure of the PM was under the purview of the Codex Secretariat and requested the Codex Secretariat to present a document on this matter at its next Session².
- 1.3 This document has been prepared to respond to this request and considers how the PM could be published in a more user-friendly manner with improved navigation, with some general considerations on possible additions and revisions.

2. CURRENT FORMAT AND STRUCTURE OF THE PM

- 2.1 The 27th edition of the PM is currently divided into seven sections, including introduction and appendix:
 - Section I: Basic Texts and Definitions
 - Section II: Elaboration of Codex Standards and Related Texts
 - Section III: Guidelines for Subsidiary Bodies
 - Section IV: Risk Analysis
 - Section V: Subsidiary Bodies of the Codex Alimentarius Commission
 - Section VI: Membership
 - Section VII: Relations with Other Organizations
- 2.2 Recognizing that some information contained in the PM was also available on the Codex website and could easier be kept up-to-date there, the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) has in the past agreed to remove parts from the manual, e.g. the list of Codex Contact Points (CCPs) and the list of Codex meetings³.
- 2.3 For the same reason, Sections V and VI, could be transferred to the Codex website.
Section V – Subsidiary Bodies of the Codex Alimentarius Commission
- 2.4 With the publication of the Codex website, the information provided in Section V is already available online under “Committees”. This online section allows for better and continuous management of the information included and contains, in addition to the terms of reference of general and commodity committees and *ad hoc* task forces taken from the PM, information on meetings, standards, Circular

¹ CCGP19, CCGP20, CCGP22, CCGP23, CCGP24, CCGP31

² REP19/GP, paragraph 87

³ ALINORM 05/28/33A

Letters (CLs) and information documents which is continuously extended and improved.

Section VI - Membership

- 2.5 The list of Members of the Commission is currently available online in its updated and complete form in a dedicated section of the website, which allows for an immediate revision to (i) add new Members; (ii) modify the name of Members; and (iii) add/modify related contact information.

3. PROPOSAL FOR A NEW FORMAT OF THE PM

A digital version of the PM

- 3.1 In recent years, the Codex website has become the principal source of information for Members, Observers and other Codex stakeholders. Every Codex standard is created and stored digitally and made publicly available on the website in multiple languages as soon as the Commission has adopted it. To date the PM is only available as a PDF file on the Codex website which provides no major added value in terms of ease of use and access to sections of interest.
- 3.2 A new digital version of the PM, available on the Codex Alimentarius website would:
- facilitate a user-friendly search for content with an online index and a list of acronyms and abbreviations;
 - provide the possibility to add user-friendly guidance and tutorials, via “how-to” links to additional information and examples to support understanding and use of the PM and useful for those not so familiar with the PM;
 - guarantee Members and Observers an up-to-date living document in six languages.
- 3.3 The digital version of the PM will respond to the request of Codex Members and Observers to have a more user-friendly version of the PM providing easy access in a searchable form. The PM will still be available for download as a PDF and/or printed in its entirety or by section.
- 3.4 A preview of the digital version of the PM is available in Appendix I.

4. FUTURE SUBSTANTIVE REVISIONS

- 4.1 CCGP31 clarified that the review of the PM did not have the objective to make substantive changes, but would seek to improve the usability of the PM. However, at the time of the meeting, the Codex Secretary noted that if the Codex Secretariat in the context of their review discovered any need for substantive changes to the PM, these would be brought to the attention of CCGP⁴.
- 4.2 The Codex Secretariat has started the process to carry out a comprehensive review of the PM, which will also require discussions with the legal offices of FAO and WHO. The Secretariat will present a document at the next session of the Committee (CCGP33) including whether any changes might be needed to make Codex more resilient and prepared for situations such as remaining operational during the COVID-19 pandemic or other future crises.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 A procedural manual should be simple to read and use. A procedural manual that is not consistent in all its elements – including style and information – will not achieve its main goal: to guide and assist. The proposed new format of the PM would ensure it is always up-to-date and improve its usability, searchability and flexibility, facilitating the work of Members, Observers and all Codex stakeholders.
- 5.2 The Committee is invited to note the proposed new format of the PM.

⁴ REP19/GP, paragraph 84

MOCKUP OF THE NEW DIGITAL VERSION OF THE PROCEDURAL MANUAL



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Procedural Manual

The Procedural Manual of the Codex Alimentarius Commission describes the legal foundations and practical functioning of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies. Knowledge of the contents of this Manual is essential for Codex members and observers to participate effectively in the work of the Commission. The Manual has been organized into seven sections and one appendix as follows:



Sections





Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS

INTERNATIONAL FOOD STANDARDS

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Section I

Basic Texts and Definitions

Sets out the Commission's Statutes, Rules of Procedure and the General Principles of the Codex Alimentarius, as well as definitions of terms for the Purpose of the Codex Alimentarius which assist in the uniform interpretation of these texts.



Statutes of the Codex Alimentarius commission

Article 1

The Codex Alimentarius Commission shall, subject to Article 5 below, be responsible for making proposals to, and shall be consulted by, the Directors-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) on all matters pertaining to the implementation of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards

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

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Elaboration of Codex
Standards and Related Texts



SECTION 3
Guidelines for
Subsidiary Bodies



SECTION 4
Risk Analysis



SECTION 5
Subsidiary Bodies of the
Codex Alimentarius Commission



SECTION 6
Membership



SECTION 7
Relations with
other Organizations



APPENDIX
General Decisions
of the Commission