



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODEx STRATEGIC PLAN 2014-2019
(STRATEGIC PLAN FOR CCLAC 2014-2019: STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION)

(Prepared by the Codex Secretariat and the Regional Coordinator)

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. The Codex Alimentarius Commission at its thirty-sixth session (CAC36 in 2013) adopted the “Strategic Plan of the Codex Alimentarius Commission for 2014-2019” (the global Strategic Plan)¹ and implementation reports were presented annually at sessions of the Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CCEXEC) since 2015. The responsibility for implementing activities is shared between the Codex Secretariat, FAO and WHO, the Executive Committee, Chairs of CAC subsidiary bodies and CAC members.

1.2. During the last round of meetings of FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees (RCCs) in 2016/17, three out of six RCCs decided to implement regional strategic plans in addition to the global Strategic Plan² and to report on progress at their subsequent meetings³. CCLAC20 noted:

- the importance for CCLAC to continue to implement the Strategic Plan for CCLAC 2014-2019;
- the implementation of the Strategic Plan was the responsibility of all Members of the region; and
- the report on the implementation of the CCLAC Strategic Plan should identify gaps and information on activities to be prioritised⁴.

1.3. This paper provides an overview and status report on activities under the global Strategic Plan for which the Codex Secretariat relies on Member feedback and collects views from Members on the progress of implementation of the global strategic plan as well as the mechanism to acquire more detailed information. In doing so, the paper addresses the recommendation of CAC40 that the Codex Secretariat work with regional coordinators in examining barriers to active participation in Electronic Working Groups (EWGs) and identifying possible solutions⁵.

1.4. The paper also presents developments in relation to the regional strategic plan of CCLAC based on information received from the regional coordinator.

2. GLOBAL STRATEGIC PLAN ACTIVITIES REQUIRING MEMBER INFORMATION

2.1. The global Strategic Plan includes four goals, ten objectives, 32 activities and 61 indicators, many of which were deemed unmeasurable⁶. The Codex Secretariat has informed CCEXEC on several occasions that the collection of country specific information from Codex Members with regards to certain strategic activities (e.g. networking, changes and robustness of national institutional arrangements, identification of priority committees) remains challenging⁷. Attempts to collect such information via surveys or an online platform embedded in the Codex website frequently resulted in low response rates and/or incomplete information.

¹ <http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/publications/en/>

² These RCCs are: CCAFRICA, CCLAC and CCNE.

³ In January 2018, the meetings of the RCCs were postponed from the second half of 2018 to the second half of 2019 due to staff capacity constraints.

⁴ REP17/LAC para. 114

⁵ See REP17/CAC para. 116

⁶ See e.g. CX/EXEC 18/75/3 para. 3.

⁷ See e.g. CX/EXEC 17/73/5 Rev.1 para 4 and CX/EXEC 18/75/3 para. 4.

2.2. While multiple data sources are used to monitor progress towards the global Strategic Plan, the focus of this paper is on information from Members of CCLAC and challenges in obtaining such information for certain areas of Codex work.

Goal 1: Establish international food standards that address current and emerging food issues

2.3. The proactive identification of emerging issues and member needs to ensure relevance of food standards (Objective 1.2) currently relies on the initiative of members to flag a specific issue/need during meetings of CAC or a relevant subsidiary body. Neither the number of times a member raises a specific issue nor the follow-up actions on an emerging issue identified by a member are currently monitored in a systematic manner.

2.4. FAO and WHO encouraged countries to identify food safety/quality issues through a survey sent out prior to RCC meetings. The analysis of survey replies from Members of CCLAC is presented in CX/LAC 19/21/3.

Goal 2: Ensure the application of risk analysis principles in the development of Codex standards

2.5. In order to increase the scientific input from developing countries (objective 2.3), FAO/WHO provided support through several activities including a series of webinars ranging from training on metrology to the implementation of laboratory risk analysis plans in the CCLAC region⁸. There is no long-term monitoring mechanism to assess the impact of such capacity building activities in developing countries and further efforts are needed to increase quantity and quality of scientific data from the CCLAC region.

2.6. The participation of technical and scientific experts from developing countries in Codex committees as well as the participation of developing countries in networks are further indicators related to objective 2.3 that require individual information or validation of data by members.

Goal 3: Facilitate the effective participation of all Codex Members⁹

2.7. The share of developing country delegations out of the total number of Codex Member delegations at all Codex meetings held in a calendar year remained stable at an average of 30 percent since 2014¹⁰. As regards sessions of the CAC

2.8. , a decrease in the number of delegations, including delegations from the CCLAC region, can be observed in the period 2017-2019.

2.9. Furthermore, no increase in participation of Members from CCLAC in meetings of CAC subsidiary bodies can be noted. Codex meetings between January 2017 and June 2019 had on average eight delegations from the CCLAC region (i.e. 24% of the region). The only Committee meeting that was attended by more than half of the CCLAC region in said period was CCRVDF24.

2.10. Under objective 3.1, Members, in particular developing country Members, shall be encouraged to develop sustainable national institutional arrangements in order to increase effective participation. The Codex Secretariat has created an online platform for information sharing on food safety control systems. In the CCLAC region, around 40 percent of members have shared information. Document CX/LAC 19/23/05 addresses the matter in detail.

Goal 4: Implement effective and efficient work management systems and practices

2.11. The 2017 regular review of Codex work management on EWGs¹¹ made a number of recommendations to increase work effectiveness and efficiency when working in EWGs. Appendix II contains information to serve as a basis for discussing how Members from the CCLAC region can participate more actively in Codex work via EWGs.

2.12. On the Codex website, new regional web pages have been designed to promote specific Codex activities taking place locally. In the case of CCLAC, there is healthy collaboration with FAO/WHO offices, however few news items have been received by Members in the region and the region is invited to share more local information to be promoted globally by the Codex Secretariat. Document CX/LAC 19/21/11 addresses the matter in more detail.

⁸ See CX/CAC 19/42/16 for capacity building activities implemented since CAC41 (July 2018)

⁹ See Appendix I

¹⁰ As of July 2019, 5 out of 33 members from the CCLAC region are classified as developing countries (i.e. low or lower middle income countries according to the World Bank list of economies).

¹¹ CX/EXEC 17/73/3

3. STATUS OF REGIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN ACTIVITIES

3.1. Following CCLAC20, Chile as Regional Coordinator has continued to work on strengthening Codex work in the region and has implemented activities to meet the objectives of the Regional Strategic Plan, which has five goals that are in line with the global Strategic Plan.

Goal 1: Promote effective communication between CCLAC Members and other Codex Members and regions, the Codex Secretariat and relevant organizations

3.2. To promote effective communication between CCLAC members, the Regional Coordinator and CCLAC Secretariat have maintained constant communication with the Codex Contact Points (CCPs) in the region (email, WhatsApp, video conferences etc.) and made efforts to support and strengthen CCPs, e.g. by directing them to relevant information on the Codex webpage and following up directly with non-responsive CCPs. Communication in advance of Codex Committees is further facilitated by liaising with the Codex Secretariat to identify participants from the region planning to attend each meeting.

3.3. Coordination meetings prior to each Codex Committee meeting are a useful tool helping Members voice regional perspectives on Codex work. Therefore, there is a strong emphasis on regional coordination in advance of all Codex Committee meetings, with the Coordinator reaching out directly to registered delegates and CCPs. Such coordination is facilitated by sending letters from the Coordinator to all Members approximately one month in advance of Codex meetings to ensure Members are available to participate in physical coordination meetings on the day immediately preceding Codex Committee meetings. Since CCLAC20, 34 physical coordination meetings as well as 40 virtual meetings (English and Spanish, supported by IICA¹²) were held. These meetings supported Members from the region to effectively prepare for Codex meetings, find common ground on specific issues and discuss and agree on strategies, interventions and positions on relevant Codex work.

3.4. The Regional Coordinator would like to recognise the role the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) has played in supporting regional coordination and the requests for information that are periodically sent to CCLAC members.

Goal 2: Ensure the active participation of all of the region's countries in the Codex Alimentarius Commission and its Subsidiary Bodies and particularly in the CCLAC

3.5. Enhancing the participation of countries in the region in Codex work has also been supported by a series of colloquiums organized by IICA, with the support of the United States Codex Office. Five colloquiums have been convened since CCLAC20, each with a focus on a different set of Codex Committees:

- CCLAC Colloquium in Ecuador, March 2017: CCFA, CCCF and CCPR
- CCLAC - CCAFRICA Colloquium in Canada, June 2017: CAC
- CCLAC Colloquium in Argentina, September 2017: CCFH, CCFL and CCFFV
- CCLAC - CCAFRICA Colloquium, May 2018: CAC
- CCLAC Colloquium in Brazil, October 2018: CCFH, CCNFSU and TFAMR
- CCLAC Colloquium in Costa Rica, June 2019: CAC
- CCLAC Colloquium in Brazil, October 2019: CCFH, CCNFSU and TFAMR

3.6. In order to ensure regular and effective communication between delegates attending each Codex Committee Meeting, the Regional Coordinator has created WhatsApp groups for all Codex Committee meetings. These groups usually continue to work as a networking space for the ongoing communication between experts in the region.

3.7. Chile as Regional Coordinator has periodically assisted countries that have asked for support to draft project proposals for the Codex Trust Fund and followed up to the extent possible, to ensure Members are kept informed throughout the process.

Goal 3: Promote capacity development and capacity building for Codex Focal Points and/or National Committees in CCLAC member countries

3.8. During the reporting period, Chile implemented the project "*Strengthening of Codex functioning at the national level in Jamaica, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Saint Lucia and Suriname*" and supported national Codex capacity building in Honduras. Chile as Regional Coordinator, hosted a workshop organized by the European Union funded initiative "Better Training for Safe Food (BTSF)" in December 2016 that focused on

¹² The regional videoconferences are possible due to the support given by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)

effective participation in Codex Alimentarius meetings. Thirty-nine participants from 23 countries in the region joined the training, which included contributions from the representatives of the Codex Secretariat, a Vice Chairperson of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and various delegates from the European Union.

3.9. As Regional coordinator, Chile has supported IICA in the implementation of a range of twinning initiatives with Members, which focused on strengthening the national Codex capacities. These included:

- Nicaragua: Workshop on Risk Analysis in Food Safety aimed at strengthening knowledge on risk analysis to promote its application in food safety management and strengthening the National Codex Committee in Nicaragua.
- Honduras and Guatemala: A twinning workshop aimed at strengthening the institutional capacities of the National Codex Committees of Honduras and Guatemala through the development of a training program for members and delegates.
- Peru: A training workshop on the preparation of proposals for the analysis of the FAO/WHO Expert Bodies and the use and the GEMS/Foods platform.
- Dominica Republic: Workshop on Food Safety Risk Analysis.

3.10. Chile as Regional Coordinator has worked directly with CCLAC Members to address any concerns raised regarding Codex work and the regional video conferences (see para 3.3) have also provided a useful means for discussion on specific areas where support was needed.

Goal 4: Harness existing scientific and technical capacities within CCLAC member countries

3.11. The Regional Coordinator has encouraged countries in the region to prepare discussion papers for Codex Committee meetings. Honduras is currently being supported by the CCLAC Secretariat in its role as chair for the preparation of the document on “principles for the safe use of water in food processing” for the next session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene.

3.12. The importance of submitting data from the region to the different FAO/WHO platforms, so that national and regional data are available and considered by the relevant FAO/WHO expert bodies responsible for providing scientific advice to Codex is well recognized as an area that needs strengthening. In this regard the Regional coordinator identified and prioritized submission of data to the GEMS/Foods platform and a work proposal was developed to train the countries of the region on the GEMS/Foods platform. Chile, as Regional Coordinator built on its own positive experience of a twinning project carried out with Brazil, where Brazil trained Chile for the use of this platform. Since then, Chile has worked with countries in the region identifying the appropriate national stakeholders to receive training and providing them with the tools to upload their national information to the platform. To date, Peru, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica have received training and a total of 10 countries will have been trained by CAC 43.

Goal 5: Ensure continuity, development and sustainability of the Committee’s work

3.13. In order to ensure sustainability of Members participation in Codex work Chile as Regional Coordinator has continued to support the project for the “Strengthening of Codex functioning at the national level in Jamaica, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Saint Lucia and Suriname” with the objective of reinforcing Codex work at the national level.¹³

3.14. As Regional coordinator, Chile has also supported study tours with a delegation from Honduras visiting Chile in July 2019 to learn about the Codex system in Chile. This was undertaken within the framework of the CTF2 project attained by Honduras for the “Strengthening of the management of the Codex Contact Point, National Committee and Codex Subcommittees in Honduras”.

4. CONCLUSIONS

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2014-2019

4.1. Codex Members share the responsibility for implementing the global Codex Strategic Plan together with the Codex Secretariat, FAO and WHO. As activities that cannot be measured and monitored can also not be managed and improved, it is indispensable that members agree on suitable mechanisms through which they regularly report to the Codex Secretariat on progress made.

¹³ Implemented with the financial support of the UNDP/Chile Fund against Hunger and Poverty in conjunction with IICA, and also with support from the U.S Codex Office

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4.2. The responsibility for the implementation of the regional Strategic Plan has primarily been with the Regional coordinator. In this regard Chile has supported the implementation of various activities in line with the regional objectives. These efforts has facilitated more frequent and open dialogue of Members and enabled them participate in the wider Codex work in a progressively more cohesive manner. The Members in the region are open to dialogue with other Codex Members and observers and capacities continue to increase at national level although there remains a need for ongoing support in this area. The support of Observers such as IICA in the implementation of the regional strategic plan has also been very important.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- a. CCLAC is requested to:
 - (i) consider the relevance of adhering to the Global Strategic Plan 2020 – 2025;
 - (ii) consider what progress has been made in the region with regards to the goals of the global Strategic Plan 2014-2019 and whether a separate plan is really needed to facilitate the implementation of activities related to regional priorities;
 - (iii) agree on suitable mechanisms through which members best communicate progress and obstacles in relation to the global Strategic Plan activities that require member feedback (paras. 2.3-2.11) to inform the final status report for the period 2014-2019 which will be presented at CCEXEC79; and
 - (iv) discuss how Members from the CCLAC region can participate more effectively in EWGs (Appendix II).

Physical participation in Codex meetings

CCLAC comprises 33 Codex Member countries, which corresponds to 18 percent of the global Codex membership. The following figures provide information on participation broken down by different categories such as developing countries and Members from CCLAC.

Figure 1: Number of total delegations and share of developing country delegations to all Codex meetings, 2014-2018¹⁴

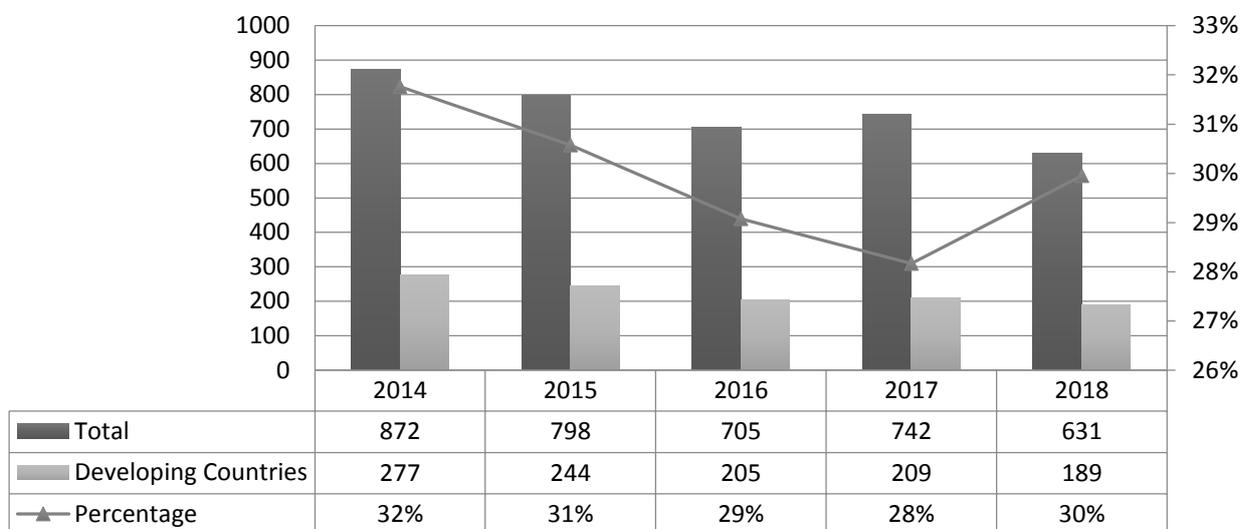
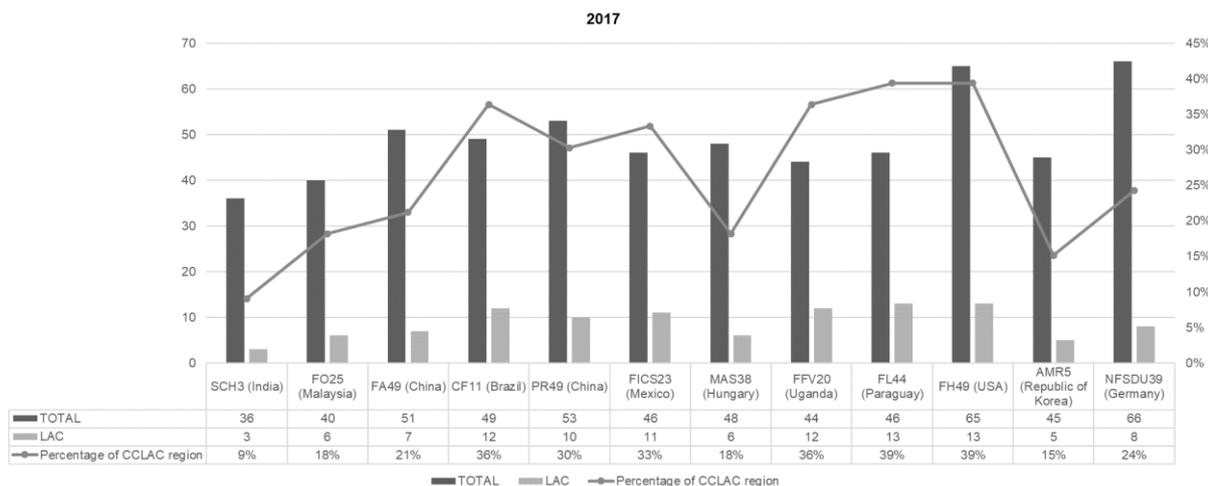


Figure 2: Number of total delegations and number and share of CCLAC delegations at meetings of CAC subsidiary bodies 2017, 2018 and January–June 2019



¹⁴ As of July 2019, 5 out of 33 members from the CCLAC region are classified as developing countries (i.e. low or lower middle income countries according to the World Bank list of economies).

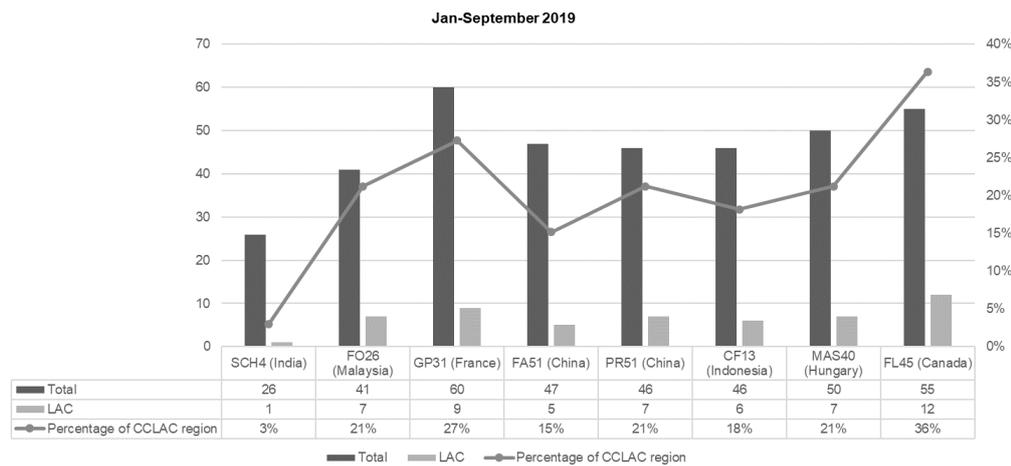
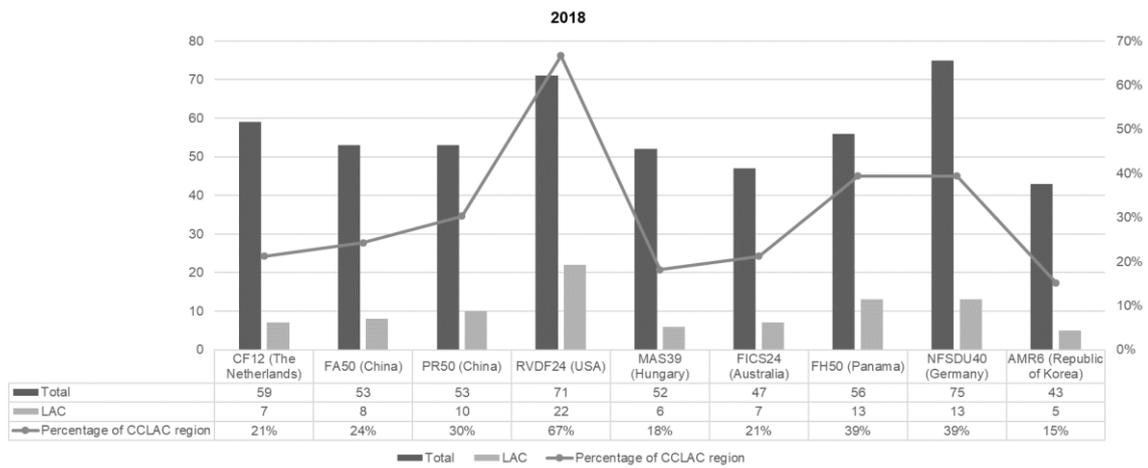
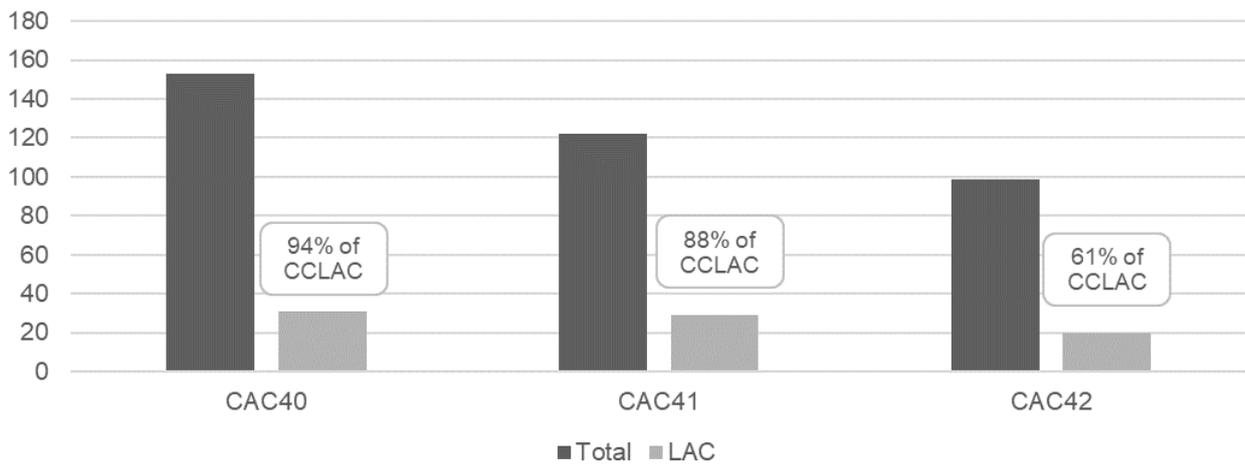


Figure 3: Total number of delegations and number of CCLAC delegations at meetings of CAC40 (2017), CAC41 (2018) and CAC42 (2019)



Electronic Working Groups (EWGs)

Purpose of an EWG

EWGs are online working groups established on an *ad hoc* basis to accomplish a specific task of a subsidiary body of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) between its physical sessions rather than during a physical meeting of a CAC subsidiary body.

EWGs are also envisaged as a means of achieving greater involvement of all Members and more active participation of developing countries in the work of the CAC.

When to establish an EWG

EWGs should only be established where there is consensus in the Committee to do so and where other strategies to accomplish a specific task have been considered by the Committee and deemed unsuitable. Actively contributing to EWGs may have significant human-resources and cost implications for a Member, in particular for those with broad interest in Codex work. It is therefore preferable to establish EWGs selectively, primarily for items in the Step procedure, rather than for discussion papers, which can be developed more efficiently by one or more Members/Observers.

2017 EWG review findings related to participation

The 2017 review of Codex work management practices looked into several aspects of the functioning of Codex EWGs based on a sample of 41. With regards to participation, the review made several findings of which four are highlighted for the Committee's attention in the table below.

Table 1: 2017 work management review findings on EWG participation

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.
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.
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.
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.

Statistics on EWG registrations

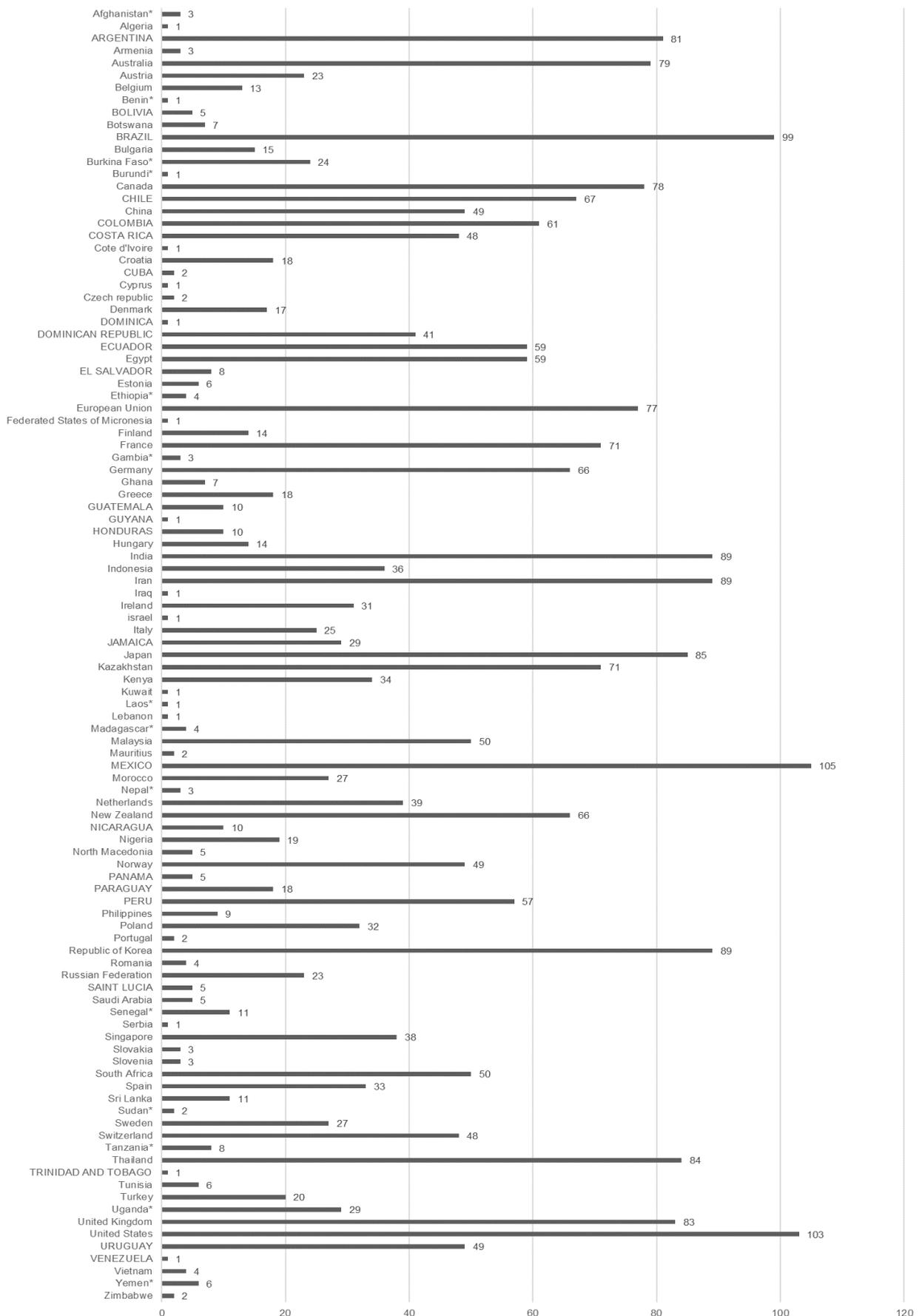
The management of and reporting on EWGs is the responsibility of the chair. The participation in EWGs has so far not been monitored by the Codex Secretariat. However, since 2017, data on more and more EWGs is becoming available as around 80 percent of CAC subsidiary bodies use the online discussion forum for their electronic group work between sessions.

The following statistics concern EWG registrations/sign-up rates only and are derived from the Secretariat-managed online discussion forum. The analysis does not include EWGs which have not started using the online platforms. The data covers 107 EWGs established between January 2017 and June 2019, excluding EWGs established by RCCs and CCEXEC, and has a 3 percent margin of error.

Figure 1 shows which Codex Members have registered in EWGs on the Codex discussion forum and the number of EWGs they are registered in. Least Developed Countries (LDCs) are marked with an asterisk and Members from CCLAC are in capital letters.

In total 24 of the 33 members from the CCLAC region (i.e. 73%) are part of the list and 15 countries have signed up to more than 10 EWGs in the reviewed period.

Figure 1: Codex Members registered in EWGs and number of EWGs they are registered in (Members from the CCLAC region in caps)



* Least Developed Countries as of December 2018 (Source: UN Committee for Development Policy)

Figure 2: Percentage of Codex Members registered in EWGs and breakdown of registrants by region

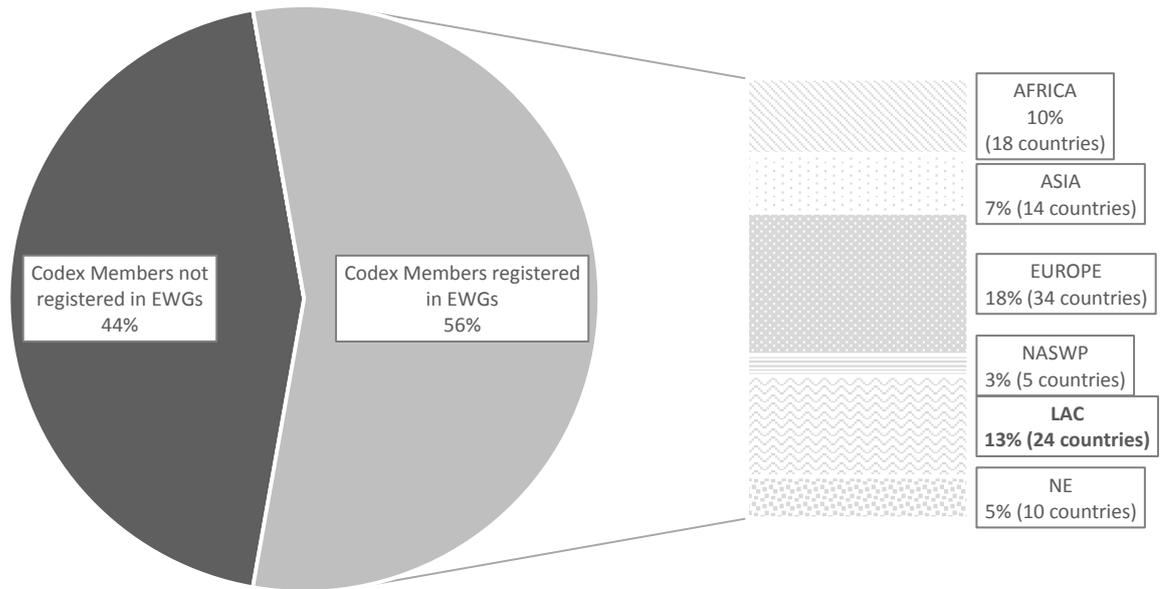


Figure 3: EWGs in which CCLAC members registered, sorted by CAC subsidiary body, and average number of registrants

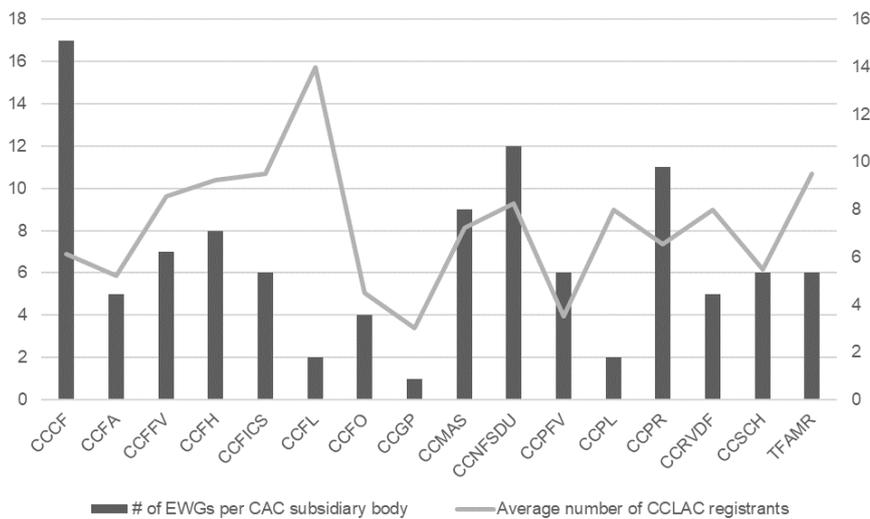


Figure 2 shows that more than half of Codex members (105 out of 189) are signed up to EWGs on the online discussion forum. In that group, members from the CCLAC region make up 13% (i.e. 24 out of the 33 countries or 73% of the region).

Figure 3 shows that one or more Member from the CCLAC region registered in EWGs of CAC subsidiary bodies using the Codex online discussion forum. Overall, the average number of Members from the CCLAC region registered in EWGs is 7. CAC subsidiary bodies with EWGs that show a higher average are: CCFL, CCFICS, and TFAMR.

Comparing this data to physical attendance of subsidiary body sessions (Appendix I), CCFL sticks out as a committee with high involvement of Members from the CCLAC region in Codex work both during and in-between committee sessions.

Questions for discussion

Based on the information and statistical data presented in Appendix II, CCLAC is invited to consider the following questions for discussion:

1. What are your criteria for selecting EWGs?
2. What is your strategy for monitoring which EWGs are established by CAC or its subsidiary bodies? How do you monitor new developments in EWGs you signed up to?
3. In which cases were you not able to participate in an EWG on a priority subject for your country? Why was this?
4. How are you organized internally for participating in an EWG (e.g. work flow, authorization, collaboration)?
5. How successful do you think your participation in EWGs is and why?
6. Which actions do you think are needed to enhance your participation in EWGs on priority subjects for your country?