

CODEx ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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CODEx ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

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REPORT ON SIDE EVENT:

ENHANCING ENGAGEMENT IN CODEx – EXAMPLES FROM CODEx TRUST FUND SUPPORTED COUNTRIES

A side event was organized by FAO, WHO, the Codex Secretariat and the Codex Trust Fund Secretariat on “Enhancing Engagement in Codex – Examples from Codex Trust Fund supported countries” on 3 July 2018 from 13h00-15h00 on the side lines of the 40th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. Over 80 delegations attended the side event which was run as an interactive session. The four countries being supported from Round 1 (Ghana, Kyrgyzstan, Madagascar and Senegal) kicked off the side event by presenting photos of some of their activities and describing to participants what was taking place and why it was important.

Kyrgyzstan talked about an event organized with high level policy and decision-makers and underscored the importance of securing this support for Codex activities. Senegal presented a workshop during which a mock simulation of a Codex meeting had been organized for members of the National Codex Committee. Not all members of the National Codex Committee can attend Codex meetings and this allowed them to understand better how Codex works. The project in Madagascar is helping the country organize their Codex activities in a more dynamic way and the Codex Contact Point emphasized the importance of providing training on Codex to all stakeholders as well as explaining the importance of Codex to producers and exporters of key products. Ghana spotlighted the role that journalists play in conveying information to the wider society. This information must be accurate and so these journalists are being trained on food safety and Codex activities.

Partnering between countries is also important in many of the Round 1 countries. A video was shown on how Ghana took advantage of their participation in CCCF to learn more about how Codex activities work in the Netherlands was shown. The Netherlands underscored that many countries are happy to contribute by sharing their knowledge and experience and encouraged countries to take advantage of this by saying “Just ask.” When Ghana approached the Netherlands with specific questions in the contaminants area, they were able to put together a range of specialists to respond to these questions. The video can be found at <https://youtu.be/2ZHB-uO7r3o>. This peer learning component is taking place in many countries and is one of the key features of the Codex Trust Fund.

The sharing of experiences continued with many countries contributing on the following areas:

- The importance of securing political and economic support for Codex at the national level. This was a key theme in many interventions from participants. Ways to secure this support were explored and both CTF-supported and other countries shared examples of both top down and bottom up approaches. These included:
 - Organizing advocacy and awareness-raising events for high level officials from relevant ministries. This may need to be repeated frequently as ministers change but it is important to keep doing it and is an essential condition for the sustainability of project activities. In some countries these efforts have led to the establishment of a budget line for Codex activities. The delegation from Senegal to CAC41 includes a high level official from the Ministry of Health and this is testimony to the support for Codex in the country.
 - Using the power of public opinion to push for support to Codex. One country is setting up a network of consumer organizations so that the voice of consumers can be heard at high levels. Another country is using traditional media and journalists to inform the public and get them to push for support to Codex activities.

- Taking advantage of visits from e.g. the Chairperson of the Codex Alimentarius Commission to the country to organize meetings with ministers.
- Using local champions. The example of Ghana was given where a former vice-chair of Codex has been instrumental in getting attention for Codex issues.
- Leveraging external champions. Ghana is seeking engagement from Ambassadors of countries that have prioritized Codex work.
- Using the power of communications to make high level meetings visible both within and beyond country borders. The Codex Secretariat encouraged countries to send photos and short text that could be relayed on websites and social media to call attention to the importance of Codex globally.
- Working closely with parliament. Kyrgyzstan shared their example of working with the agriculture and health committees in parliament. Seminars and meetings have been organized in which members of these committees take part.
- Peer learning and sharing between countries. A number of countries wishing to seek CTF support are reaching out to CTF-supported countries for guidance on undertaking the Codex diagnosis using the “FAO/WHO Diagnostic tool for assessing status of National Codex Programmes” (Codex Diagnostic Tool) and preparing and submitting a strong application.
- The importance of doing a good diagnosis of Codex in the country and basing the application on the results. Kyrgyzstan stated that the Codex Diagnostic Tool had allowed them to understand where to focus their efforts and establish priorities. A number of countries referred to their submissions to the Codex Trust Fund and requested assistance to understand better how to use the Codex Diagnostic Tool and use the written comments provided on their application to strengthen their application for submission in subsequent rounds. FAO, WHO and the Codex Trust Fund Secretariat will follow up with countries. The tools available on the CTF website were also highlighted including the Webinar on how to use the Codex Diagnostic Tool and a virtual session and slide decks in all languages on how to prepare a robust application. These can be found at <http://www.who.int/foodsafety/publications/codex/CTF2application/en/>.
- How to ensure sustainability. One country asked for information on how CTF supported countries were prepared to sustain activities.
 - Madagascar highlighted that the National Codex Committee is working on a three year plan which contains continuous awareness-raising and allows them to project Codex activities beyond the end of support from CTF.
 - Philippines shared key actions that they had taken to ensure sustainability of Codex activities in the country. These included: revision of the national manual of operation for Codex; continuous participation in Codex meetings financed by the ministries of health and agriculture; adoption of Codex standards as the basis for national standards; quarterly meetings to discuss Codex issues; immediate report backs from all delegates attending Codex meetings; commitment to Codex from Secretaries in the relevant ministries.
- Sharing of information and material is also a key feature of the Codex Trust Fund. The CTF Administrator called attention to the community page that has been set up on the CTF website. This includes a library of all materials received from countries that are freely available for consultation, adaptation and use by any interested parties. The community page also allows for discussions and sharing of experiences and information between countries. All participants were encouraged to sign up for the CTF community at <https://workspace.who.int/sites/CodexTrustFund/Community>.

In summarizing, FAO and WHO called on all countries to keep both their expectations and commitment high. The lively exchange had highlighted the importance of making the case for Codex at the highest levels of government. Countries were encouraged to identify the arguments to which high level officials would be most sensitive, and use the technical and communications materials available on FAO and WHO websites to help make these arguments.

The information sharing in the event had been very valuable and FAO, WHO, the Codex Secretariat and the Codex Trust Fund will continue to look at different ways to encourage this information-sharing throughout the year.