



## JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

### CODEX COMMITTEE ON GENERAL PRINCIPLES

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#### **Codex Procedural Manual: update to the Guide to the Procedure for the Amendment and Revision of Codex Standards and Related Texts**

### 1. Introduction

1.1 At its 45th session, the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC45) requested that the Codex Secretariat prepare a document for CCGP33<sup>1</sup> that would: a) examine how amendments and revisions of Codex texts have been treated historically; b) suggest improvements to enhance consistency and alignment with FAO and industry publishing standards; c) recommend clear criteria and options for current and future publications concerning amendments/revisions and new editions; and d) indicate draft revised text for the Codex Procedural Manual's (PM) *Guide to the Procedure for the Amendment and Revision of Codex Standards and Related Texts*.

1.2 This document describes the way changes to Codex texts have been identified over the years and the methodology adopted in reviewing past amendments and revisions to 10 percent of Codex standards and related texts (in total 36 texts) currently available on the Codex web site. It presents a clear and logical set of guidelines to harmonize with industry standards and the FAO digital publishing guidelines and the way those changes (corrections, amendments/revisions, editions) could be managed by Codex and proposes revisions to the current PM text.

1.3 For additional background, this document should be read in conjunction with the document presented under agenda item 5 at CCGP32, Revisions/Amendments to Codex Texts.<sup>2</sup>

### 2. Purpose

2.1 Taking into consideration the document discussed at CCGP32<sup>2</sup>, the current document describes how to:

1. better clarify and define the terminologies of "revisions", editorial and substantive "amendments", and "corrections".
2. clarify workflows and responsibilities.
3. establish what standard documentation is needed to explain changes, proposed through a subsidiary body.
4. establish a comprehensive version numbering system and a version history.

### 3. Methodology

3.1 To arrive at a simple, transparent, and sustainable solution with broad applicability, the Codex Secretariat, in collaboration with the FAO Office of Communications – Publications Branch (OCCP) examined over 100 recorded amendments and revisions to 36 Codex and related texts from a comprehensive range of committees.

3.2 Approximately ten percent (36) of Codex texts, made up from standards (including general, commodity and regional standards), codes of practice (including a code of ethics, a regional code, and one general principle), guidelines (including one general and one regional guideline) and one list of

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<sup>1</sup> REP22/CAC (paragraph 44)

<sup>2</sup> CX/GP 21/32/5

Codex specifications were reviewed. All of the past amendments (including editorial amendments) and revisions to these 36 texts were reviewed equalling over 100 recorded changes.

3.3 Texts from each of the currently active committees were included when possible (not all the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees have texts that have been revised or amended).

3.4 The recorded amendments (including editorial amendments) and revisions for each selected text was traced through corresponding committee meeting reports to determine:

- how the change was described;
- what exactly was changed in the text – when it was possible to discern;
- the step at which the updated text was proposed for review – if it was; and
- what was the most significant of the changes – if there were more than one.

3.5 The PM (Section 2, Part 7, paragraph 26) states that:

Amendment means any addition, change or deletion of text or numerical values ... editorial or substantive, and concerns one or a limited number of articles in the Codex text ... may include but are not limited to: a) correction of an error ...

3.6 When evaluating the application of this definition to actual changes, it was found that most changes could be categorized as an amendment. When reviewing the past changes to texts, five main categories of change, ranked in order from lowest to highest importance were identified to clarify what types of changes committees are making most often:

- grammatical or spelling corrections;
- partial revision (also described as an amendment) to an existing section/sub-section that did not introduce new data;
- alignment with another text or to adopt recommendations of another committee;
- the replacement of current content with a reference to another text;
- the addition or complete re-write of a section, whether in the main text or end matter (annex); or
- the addition or removal of any data.

3.6 The changes made to the Codex texts were not always obvious. Occasionally records of the changes could not be found. Examples include the *General Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Food and Feeds* (CXS 193-1995), which was revised in 2008 but the comment in the report of the 2nd session of the Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods (CCCF2) indicates only that there was a proposal for revision of text, and the *Code of Ethics for International Trade in Food Including Concessional and Food Aid Transactions* (CAC/RCP 20-1979), which was revised in 1985, but no meetings before that year reference this specific change to the Code. In other cases, such as the *Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products* (CXC 52-2003), both an amendment and revision were recorded as having happened in 2011 possibly because several changes were made to the Code and recorded separately rather than as a revision, also noting that this is a very extensive text with multiple sections.

#### 4. Analysis of results

4.1 The examination confirms that different approaches have been taken in interpreting the current guidance in the PM concerning amendments and revisions, and that a reader unfamiliar with the history of a particular document may not readily grasp how, why, or where changes were made and the exact nature and magnitude of those changes.

4.2 When considering the types of changes observed in the texts analyzed, there is no single type of change that cannot be, and has not been, registered as an amendment, based on the current definition. Additionally, the terms editorial and substantive are used infrequently and inconsistently in meeting reports and their use in the current definition does not seem to provide committees enough structure to make clear distinctions between amendments, editorial amendments, and revisions.

4.3 Inconsistent identification of revision/amendment also means that the decision to omit certain steps from the revision process have been applied inconsistently for similar types of changes. The language used for the step process differs across committees and years within meeting reports, as well, which makes this difficult to review. Out of 42 revisions, more than half were not clearly identified as

going through all steps unlike other revisions of a similar nature, and depending on the nature of the revision, pragmatic decisions may have been made with regard to the need to go through the full step procedure.

4.4 Finally, the current definitions do not “map” onto standard publishing practices, particularly in a digital environment where a distinction between “updates” and “new or changed content” determines which versions of a publication to replace or to publish in addition to previous versions. For example, in 2007, the addition of a species in the *Standard for Canned Sardines and Sardine-type Products* (CXS 94-1981) was classified as a revision, whereas in 2009, when the *Standard for named Vegetable Oils* (CXS 210-1999) was updated to add rice bran oil, the change was classified as an amendment. Based on the recommendations in this document, both of these updates include adding new items to the relative standard, which would automatically require a new edition of the text.

4.5 In another example, a significant re-write of the entire text of the standard was determined to be a revision in 2021 for the *Code of Practice for the Prevention and Reduction of Lead Contamination in Foods* (CXC 56-2004), while this same level of re-write was considered an amendment in 2014 for the *General Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Food and Feed* (CXS 193-1995).

## 5. Suggested improvements

### Consistency

5.1 Changes of a similar nature introduced into Codex texts should be treated uniformly across committees and facilitate the work in the Codex Secretariat documentation presented to the Commission. Additionally, diversity of changes must be acknowledged using a more specific set of criteria to identify their significance.

### Hierarchy

5.2 Definitions for changes should clearly identify a hierarchy of importance making it easy to identify which type of change a committee is making. The addition of any new data, whether it is as small as a single line on a table or a few words in a sentence, should trigger the highest type of change in the hierarchy. Any other changes made to a text are secondary to the addition or removal of data.

### Alignment with publishing standards

5.3 The Codex Secretariat, in collaboration with OCCP, has already standardized the way in which Codex texts should be cited to reflect recognised publishing standards and FAO guidelines. This has involved, for example, creating series titles for standards, guidelines, and codes of practice.

5.4 Codex texts now pass through a ten-step internal workflow before being published under an umbrella publishing agreement between FAO and WHO. Before seeking to establish specific criteria for Codex, the procedures adopted within FAO regarding the terminology for addressing changes in published texts were examined, as were those of the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO).

### Current practice in FAO

5.5 There are three categories of changes that FAO uses to describe updated publications: corrections, revisions, and new editions. Corrected and revised texts are both considered to contain “fixes” to the original text, and the updated file is published by replacing the previous version. A new edition is produced when the original text is updated, or there is any change to the registered metadata of the publication’s online record. Revisions and new editions are provided new copyright dates. While corrections and revisions replace the previous version of the publication, new editions do not. New editions exist simultaneously with all previous editions. In all cases, once published, the information page and the text both indicate that the publication has been re-issued.

5.6 In the FAO publishing process, language versions, like new editions, are treated as separate publications. This process means that the evolution of each language of the publication can be tracked, providing the reader with clear information about the version of the text they are reading. This becomes relevant to Codex when language-specific terminology is updated. Examples of updates to specific languages can be found in the Report of the thirty-seventh session of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL37).

### Current practice in the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO)

5.7 Like FAO, ISO has three categories of updates that describe levels of changes to published standards. These categories include corrections and editions, but unlike FAO their “middle” category is referred to as amendment, not revision.

5.8 Also, like FAO, ISO assigns new editions and amended versions of texts new copyright years, while corrected versions of standards maintain the copyright from the current edition.

## **6. Establishing criteria for changes in Codex texts**

6.1 To improve consistency and clarify hierarchy, and align with international publishing practices, it is proposed to apply three distinct categories of change, each with specific criteria.

6.2 The three categories would be: **correction**, **amendment** and **new edition**.

### Correction

6.3 The new term “corrections” would help remove doubt regarding what may be considered in the current wording in the PM an amendment “of an editorial nature”, or of “a substantive nature but consequential to provisions in similar standards...” (PM Section II, paragraph 8).

6.4 Corrections are editorial in nature only and include spelling mistakes, incorrect bold or italics, other incorrect formatting of text, incorrect footnote, or an incorrect value or symbol, etc.

6.5 Corrections are not recorded long-term as part of the history of the standard, but identified only for the re-issue of the current edition through the insertion of a corrigendum. For the purposes of transparency, corrections should be accompanied by a corrigendum that itemizes changes that were made to the previous version of the publication. A correction is the bottom of the hierarchy of changes.

6.6 The PM’s Guide to the Procedure for the Amendment and Revision of Codex Standards and Related Texts 5(i) states: “In the case of an amendment of an editorial nature, it will be open to the Commission to adopt the amendment at Step 8 of the Uniform Procedure (see Part 3 of the Elaboration Procedures).” In practice however, the Codex Secretariat informs the Commission of editorial changes to a standard, but generally such changes are immediately addressed when identified to ensure accuracy of the available standard.

6.7 An example is the 2022 revision to the *Code of Practice for the Storage and Transport of Edible Fats and Oils in Bulk* (CXC 36-1987) that updated spelling and spacing, which would be considered a correction with the proposed categorization.

### Amendment

6.8 The term “amendment” would be applied when:

- fixing a technical inaccuracy or an incorrectly reported number;
- partial re-writing of existing sections or sub-sections when there is no new data introduced;
- inserting or updating an explanatory footnote;
- updating of references and other relevant content of Codex texts consequential to the adoption, amendment or new edition of other Codex standards and related texts of general applicability, including the provisions in the Procedural Manual when there is no new data introduced
- replacing content with a reference to another Codex text when there is no new data introduced, and
- finalization or updating of methods of analysis and sampling when there is no new data introduced.

6.9 For the purposes of transparency, amendments should be accompanied by an explanation that identifies changes that were made to the previous version of the publication. Multiple amendments, over the course of years, would carry a cumulative set of these explanations, covering all changes. Any corrections made in conjunction with an amendment should be identified separately in a corrigendum that is only added to the current version of the text.

6.10 The general current practice with regard to the above-described amendments is that they can be forwarded to the Commission for adoption, either from the Codex Secretariat (e.g. in case of consequential change to an existing Codex text due to the adoption or update of another Codex text

where the relevant Committee is adjourned or dissolved) or from a Codex Committee (following discussion and agreement within that committee).

6.11 With this new approach, some changes which in the past were categorized as revisions to standards would be categorized as amendments using this new definition. One such example was the 2013 revision that resulted in restricted definition of molasses and the deletion of an additional condition related to potable water in the *Code of Practice for the Storage and Transport of Edible Fats and Oils in Bulk* (CXC 36-1987). Another example is the 2015 revision of the *General Principles for the Addition of Essential Nutrients to Foods* (CXG 9-1987), which updated the definition for voluntary nutrient addition.

#### New edition

6.12 "New edition" would replace the term "revision" and would be used for:

- any new data/provision added to the text, regardless of how small the change;
- the addition or deletion of a section or end matter (appendix);
- changing titles of sections or sub-sections; and
- re-writes of entire sections, regardless of length.

6.13 The new edition's copyright page should include a justification for the new edition – typically a sentence or two to briefly explain what has changed since the previous edition. Any amendments or corrections made in conjunction with the changes that merit a new edition should be referred to in the justification of the new edition for transparency. Editions are tracked on the copyright page and past editions would remain online through the FAO knowledge repository and can be linked to from new editions in order to track the evolution of a text. New editions are sequentially numbered – the first new edition is called "second edition" and the following new edition is called the "third edition" and so forth.

6.14 An example that was previously considered an amendment but would now classify as a new edition, is the application of the Standard Layout for Codex Standards for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables to the *Standard for Pineapples* (XCS-1993) in 2005. While this update may not introduce new information, even if each paragraph is left intact, the changes to section titles indicates that this is a new edition.

6.15 A new edition of a Codex standard would have to go through all steps of the procedure (with the possibility of omitting steps 6 and 7, as appropriate).

## **7. Preserving past updates while adopting industry standards: Copyright statement**

7.1 It is unusual but not unheard of for a publisher, in this case FAO, to re-establish a first edition. Capitalizing on the new design of the Codex texts since 2022 is the proposed way forward to adopt the above changes and demonstrate commitment to industry standards. Once a text has been published as a (new) first edition, it is proposed that the Codex Secretariat require subsequent amendments and editions include a statement on the copyright page, such as the following:

*From 2022, the Codex Alimentarius Commission republished first editions of all standards, codes of practice and guidelines to establish a framework for future corrections and updates that ensures consistency across all Codex texts while aligning with accepted publishing practices adopted by FAO.*

7.2 In addition to the statement, it is proposed that all revisions and amendments made prior to 2022 will be listed below the current copyright date under the heading: **Revisions and amendments prior to 2022.**

7.3 A set of proposed covers, title pages, copyright pages indicating how corrections, amendments, and new editions will be treated, based on the above recommendations, have been mocked up.<sup>3</sup>

## **8. Proposed revisions to the Procedural Manual**

8.1 As a consequence of the proposed new criteria and categorization for changes made to Codex texts, a revision of the current working modalities in the PM is necessary. A proposal is presented in Appendix 1. In addition to the proposed changes to Section 2 Elaboration of Codex standards and related texts, Procedures for the elaboration of Codex standards and related texts, Part 7. Guide to the

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<sup>3</sup> [Mock-up of templates for Codex texts](#)

procedure for the amendment and revision of Codex standards and related texts, changes are proposed to two other paragraphs of the Procedures for the elaboration of Codex standards and related texts in Section 2.

## **9. Recommendations**

9.1 CCGP33 is invited to consider the above analysis and the proposed changes to the PM as outlined in Appendix 1, and whether the proposed changes to the PM should be recommended for adoption by the Commission.

## APPENDIX 1

## Proposed updates to the Codex Procedural Manual, section 2

## Elaboration of Codex standards and related texts; Procedures for the elaboration of Codex standards and related texts

## Introduction

Paragraph 8. It will be for the Commission itself to keep under review the ~~revision~~ update of Codex standards. The procedure for ~~revision~~ a new edition should, mutatis mutandis, be that laid down for the elaboration of Codex standards, ~~except that~~ The Commission may decide to omit any other step or steps of that procedure where, in its opinion, an amendment or new edition proposed by a Codex committee or the Codex Secretariat is in line with the criteria outlined in part 7 - Guide to the procedure for the correction, amendment and new editions of Codex standards and related texts. is either of an editorial nature or of a substantive nature but consequential to provisions in similar standards adopted by the Commission at Step 8.

## Part 2. Critical review

Proposals to undertake new work or to ~~revise~~ update a standard

Paragraph 12. Prior to approval for development, each proposal for new work or ~~revision~~ a new edition of a standard shall be accompanied by a project document, prepared by the Committee or Member proposing new work or ~~revision~~ a new edition of a standard detailing: .....

Part 7. Guide to the procedure for the correction, amendment and ~~revision~~ new editions of Codex standards and related texts

Paragraph 24. The procedure for ~~amending or revising~~ updating a Codex standard is laid down in paragraph 8 of the introduction of Section 2: [Procedures for the elaboration of Codex standards and related texts](#). This guide provides more detailed guidance on the ~~existing~~ procedure for updating of Codex standards: the corrections, amendments and revision new editions of Codex standards and related texts.

Paragraph 25. When the Commission has decided to amend or ~~revise~~ a develop a new edition of a standard, the ~~unrevised~~ existing standard will remain the applicable Codex standard until the amendment to the standard or the ~~revised~~ new edition of the standard has been adopted by the Commission. Corrections, as described in paragraph 26, will be the responsibility of the Codex Secretariat, who will inform the subsequent Commission of any corrections made to Codex standards since its previous session.

Paragraph 26. For the purpose of this guide:

A **correction** means editorial fixes and includes spelling mistakes, incorrect bold or italics, other incorrect formatting of text, an incorrect footnote, or an incorrect value or symbol. Omit steps 1-7 when making a correction. A corrigendum itemizing the changes made is required.

An **amendment** refers to any change to the standard that updates the existing information. means any addition, change or deletion of text or numerical values in a Codex standard or related text, may be editorial or substantive, and concerns one or a limited number of articles in the Codex text. In particular, amendments of an editorial nature may include but are not limited to:

- fixing a technical inaccuracy or an incorrectly reported number ;
- partial re-writing of existing sections or sub-sections when there is no new data introduced;
- inserting or updating of an explanatory footnote; and
- updating of references and other relevant content of Codex texts consequential to the adoption, amendment or new edition ~~revision~~ of other Codex standards and other related texts of general applicability, including the provisions in the *Procedural Manual* when there is no new data introduced; and

- replacing content with a reference to another Codex text when there is no new data introduced; and
- Paragraph 27 finalization or updating of methods of analysis and sampling when there is no new data introduced, as well as alignment of provisions, for consistency, to those in similar standards or related texts adopted by the Commission may be handled by the Commission in the same manner as amendments of an editorial nature, as far as the procedure described in this guide is concerned

An explanation of the changes made to the text is required for all amendments.

Paragraph 28. Revision means any changes to a Codex standard or related text other than those covered under “amendment” as defined above. **New edition** applies to any change to a standard made in the spirit of updating the content, and for anything not covered by a correction or amendment, including:

- any new data/provision added to the text, regardless of how small the change;
- the addition or deletion of a section or end matter (appendix);
- changing titles of sections or sub-sections; and
- re-writes of entire sections, regardless of length.

A sentence justifying the reason for the new edition is required for all new editions.

Paragraph 29. The Commission has the final authority to determine whether a proposal made constitutes an amendment or a revision/new edition, ~~and whether an amendment proposed is of an editorial or substantive nature.~~

Paragraph 30. Proposals for ~~the amendments to~~ or for a revision/new edition of Codex standards and related texts should be submitted to the Commission by the subsidiary body concerned, by the Secretariat, or a Member of the Commission where the subsidiary body concerned is not in existence or has been adjourned *sine die*. In the latter case, proposals should be received by the Secretariat in good time (not less than three months) before the session of the Commission at which they are to be considered. The proposal for a new edition should be accompanied by a project document (see Part 2 of the elaboration procedures) unless the Executive Committee or the Commission decides otherwise. ~~However, if the amendment proposed is of an editorial nature, the preparation of a project document is not required.~~

Paragraph 31. Taking into account the outcome of the ongoing critical review conducted by the Executive Committee, the Commission decides whether the proposed amendment or revision/new edition of a standard is necessary. If the Commission decides in the affirmative, one of the following courses of action will be taken:

- ~~In the case of an amendment of an editorial nature, it will be open to the Commission to adopt the amendment at Step 8 of the uniform procedure (see Part 3 of the elaboration procedures).~~
- a) In the case of an amendment proposed and agreed upon by a subsidiary body, it will also be open to the Commission to adopt the amendment at Step 58 of the uniform procedure (see Part 3 of the elaboration procedures).
- ~~b) In other case of a new editions, the Commission will approve the proposal as new work and the approved new work will be referred for consideration to the appropriate subsidiary body, if such body is still in existence. If such body is not in existence, the Commission will determine how best to deal with the new work.~~

Paragraph 32. Where Codex subsidiary bodies have been abolished or dissolved, or Codex committees have been adjourned *sine die*, the Secretariat keeps under review all Codex standards and related texts elaborated by these bodies and determines the need for any corrections, amendments or new editions, in particular those arising from decisions of the Commission. If the need for corrections of an editorial nature is identified, then the Secretariat should prepare proposed amendments for makes the corrections and informs consideration and adoption by the Commission accordingly. If the need for amendments or a new edition a substantive nature is identified, the Secretariat, in cooperation with the national secretariat of the adjourned committee if applicable, should prepare a working paper containing the reasons for proposing amendments and the wording of such amendments as appropriate, and request comments from Members of the Commission: a) on the need to proceed with such an amendment and b) on the proposed amendment itself. If the majority of the replies received from Members of the Commission is affirmative on both the need to amend the standard or make a new



edition, and the suitability of the proposed wording for the amendment or new edition or an alternative proposed ~~wording~~, the proposal should be submitted to the Commission for consideration and adoption. In cases where replies do not appear to offer an uncontroversial solution then the Commission should be informed accordingly, and it would be for the Commission to determine how best to proceed.