



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Twenty-first Session

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USE OF CODEX STANDARDS IN THE REGION

(Prepared by the Codex Secretariat)

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. In the context of the revitalization of FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees (RCCs) in 2016, the Codex Secretariat introduced a new survey-based system to continuously collect data on use of Codex standards¹ for all six RCCs with the aim of gaining a better understanding of the relevance of Codex work.

1.2. While the first survey round started in July 2016 and focused on the use of Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs) for pesticides in food and feed, three general subject standards and the General Principles of Food Hygiene, the second survey round in 2019 focused on a different set of Codex standards, namely:

- (i) MRLs for residues of a veterinary drugs in foods;
- (ii) Two Codex texts on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) i.e. Guidelines for Risk Analysis of Foodborne AMR and the Code of Practice to Minimize and Contain AMR; and
- (iii) The Regional Code of Hygienic Practice for the Preparation and Sale of Street Foods².

1.3. In addition, Members were asked about difficulties related to the general use of Codex standards and were informed that other standards would be covered in future survey rounds to build up, over time, a representative data set on the use of Codex texts worldwide.

1.4. The term “use” was employed very broadly to include not only the incorporation of Codex standards into national legislation, but also other types of use such as in support of training or extension programmes.

1.5. The survey was conducted online using the software SurveyMonkey which allowed for easier data analysis and representation. A separate translation into Spanish was provided and Members were given a period of one month to provide answers.

2. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION SURVEY RESULTS

2.1. The survey on the use of Codex standards obtained a response rate of 61 percent (20 out of a possible 33 member countries) in the LAC region. **Table 1** highlights all respondents in the region in bold and marks low and lower middle income countries (LMICs according to the World Bank) with an asterisk. Three of the five LMICs in the region responded to the survey.

2.2. The response rate dropped by six percent compared to the previous survey round³. Fifteen Members from the LAC region responded to both the survey conducted in 2016 and the survey in 2019, while seven members that responded in 2016 did not react to the survey disseminated in 2019.

¹ Throughout this document Codex standards refers to all Codex products including standards, guidelines, codes of practice, Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs) etc.

² Countries of the CCNASWP and CCEURO regions were not asked to respond to this part of the survey as no regional standards for street-vended foods exist in their respective regions.

³ See CX/LAC 16/20/5 Rev

Table 1: Overview of Codex Members from the CCLAC region and respondents (in bold) to the 2019 survey on use of Codex standards

Antigua and Barbuda	Dominica	Nicaragua*
Argentina	Dominican Republic	Panama
Bahamas	Ecuador	Paraguay
Barbados	El Salvador*	Peru
Belize	Grenada	Saint Kitts and Nevis
Bolivia*	Guatemala	Saint Lucia
Brazil	Guyana	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Chile	Haiti*	Suriname
Colombia	Honduras*	Trinidad and Tobago
Costa Rica	Jamaica	Uruguay
Cuba	Mexico	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

*Low and lower middle income countries (World Bank list of economies June 2019)

2.3 The following is a summary of the survey results:⁴

- (i) *Alignment of MRLs for veterinary drugs in food*⁵: Nine countries (45%) stated that their MRLs for veterinary drugs in food sold nationally had been fully aligned with Codex MRLs, citing their use in national and multilateral regulation and surveillance or monitoring programmes. Eight countries (40%) reported that they had partially aligned with Codex MRLs as regards the food sold nationally. These Members reported different reasons for deviations such as national regulations based on multilateral agreements that would not align with Codex MRLs but were in the process of revision and the lack of implementation and surveillance infrastructure (mainly related to laboratory capacities). Several countries explained that MRLs for food sold nationally would align to a great extent with Codex MRLs, but in the case of exported products of animal origin stricter limits were often prescribed by importing nations. Two countries (10%) stated that they had not at all aligned with Codex MRLs for veterinary drugs. In one case this was due to a general lack of regulation on residues of veterinary drugs in food. The remaining countries (5%) were unaware of the national level of alignment.
- (ii) *Use of the Guidelines for Risk Analysis of Foodborne Antimicrobial Resistance (CXG 77-2011)*: Seven countries (35%) indicated that the AMR Guidelines were either already incorporated into national legislation/standards or served as reference when designing the national AMR action plans. Ten countries (50%) stated that they would not yet make use of the guidelines, mainly due to the inexistence of national regulation, AMR action plans, and/or overall capacity in this area or that there were AMR regulations in place that did not consider this Codex text. Several countries indicated that their national AMR action plans were being developed or that they were in the implementation stage. Three countries (15%) were not aware of the level of use.
- (iii) *Use of the Code of Practice to Minimize and Contain Antimicrobial Resistance (CXC 61-2005)*: According to the Member responses, the AMR Code of Practice is slightly more used in the region (45%). An equal amount of Members (45%) stated they had not adopted it due to either resource limitations, staff capacity constraints in laboratories or ongoing work on national legislation and policy documents in the area. The remaining two countries (10%) stated not knowing whether the AMR Code of Practice was utilized in their country.

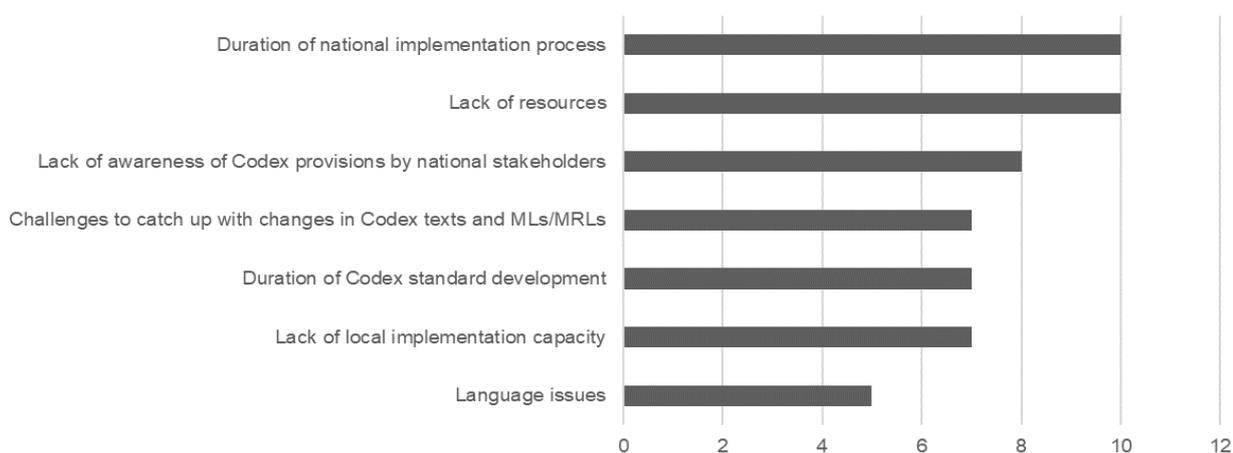
⁴ The full survey results can be accessed in original language under this link: http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/sh-proxy/en/?lnk=1&url=https%253A%252F%252Fworkspace.fao.org%252Fsites%252Fcodex%252FMeetings%252FCX-725-21%252FWORKING%2BDOCUMENTS%252F1a21_6eSURVEYRESULTS.pdf

⁵ As of June 2019, Codex has 632 MRLs for veterinary drugs in foods covering 66 veterinary drugs.

- (iv) *Use of the Regional Code of Hygienic Practice for the Preparation and Sale of Street Foods (CXC 43R-1995)*: Although the regional Code has been adopted over 20 years ago by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, only nine countries in the region (45%) stated to use it either as part of national legislation/standards or basis for the development of regulation in the area. A couple of countries noted that monitoring and control of the actual implementation of regulation on street foods was extremely challenging due to resource constraints combined with an increase of street-vending activities in times of economic recession and increasing unemployment. Respondents indicating that they did not use the Codex Code (40%) stated they had their own country level regulation which better fit their country context or there was limited knowledge of the Code and insufficient resources for the enforcement of a regulation on street vended foods. Three countries (15%) were unaware of the status of policies regarding street vended foods.
- (v) *Difficulties with regards to the use of Codex provisions*: The issues most frequently rated as having a high or very high negative impact on the use of Codex standards in the region were: the duration of the national implementation process and lack of resources, which were needed for adequate testing, monitoring, interpretation and implementation of Codex standards.

2.3. **Figure 1** sums up further difficulties affecting the use of Codex standards that were faced by at least five countries in the region. In addition, one country noted that the short commenting periods in Codex prevented reasonable participation in the standard development. Another country highlighted that lack of clarity and precision in the definition of some Codex standards (e.g. on milk and milk products) made their national implementation challenging.

Figure 1: Examples of difficulties with the use of Codex standards in the CCLAC region



2.4. Some respondents made suggestions how to better measure the use of Codex standards in future. Possible approaches identified by Members from the CCLAC region ranged from the use of technology (e.g. web downloads of standards, set-up of a platform for country reporting of use) to comprehensive national reviews of use.

3. CONCLUSIONS

3.1 Overall, the survey on use of Codex standards obtained a completion rate of 61 percent of the CCLAC region which will assist in establishing a baseline on the use of certain Codex standards. Around 45 percent of Members from the CCLAC region showed continuity in providing responses to surveys of the Codex Secretariat on the subject of use of standards.

3.2 There is a high level of alignment with Codex MRLs for veterinary drugs in food in the CCLAC region (similar to Codex MRLs for pesticides that were surveyed in 2016) in particular with regards to food sold nationally. Members in the region also show a high level of awareness of both the AMR Guidelines and the AMR Code of Practice. Implementation of these two texts into national legislation and/or policy is underway in the region, yet resource and capacity constraints were flagged by several countries irrespective of whether they would use or not use the Codex texts. The regional Code of Hygienic Practice for the Preparation and Sale of Street Foods is used by less than half of the survey respondents.

3.3 For many Members from the CCLAC region difficulties regarding the use of Codex standards continue to relate to issues at national level such as resource constraints and the duration and/or complexity of the standard implementation process at national level. The latter issue is further complicated in cases where the finalization of Codex texts takes a long time or adopted Codex texts are insufficiently clear.

4. RECOMMENDATION

4.1 CCLAC is requested to take note of the results of the survey and examine how Members can better utilize these results in the engagement of relevant stakeholders to seek support for food safety work and raise awareness of the importance of Codex standards at the national level.

4.2 CCLAC is further requested to provide inputs on the following questions to guide future action by the Codex Secretariat in this area:

- *Next survey:* Would you like to see a continuation of the survey? If so, which areas of Codex work would you like to see covered in future surveys on the use of Codex standards?⁶
- *Evaluation of Codex standards:* How feasible do you consider responding to annual surveys on use of Codex standards? Which actions should be taken to increase survey response rates? Are there any national or regional efforts ongoing to assess the level of use of Codex standards?

⁶ Note: At CCLAC20 delegations suggested to cover food commodity standards and the Principles and Guidelines for National Food Control Systems (CAC/GL 82-2013), which may still be valid (see REP17/LAC, para. 43).