

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

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Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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REP17/FICS

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

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17 – 22 July 2017

REPORT OF THE 23rd SESSION OF THE CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD IMPORT AND EXPORT INSPECTION AND CERTIFICATION SYSTEMS

Mexico City, Mexico

1 -5 May 2017

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SUMMARY AND STATUS OF WORK

Responsible Party	Purpose	Text/Topic	Code	Step	Para(s)
Members CCEXEC73 CAC40	Adoption	Draft Principles and guidelines for monitoring the performance of national food control systems	N02-2015	8	18 and App. II
CCEXEC73 CAC40 EWG/PWG Members CCFICS24	Approval/ Drafting/ Comments	Project document for new work on guidance on the use of systems equivalence		1,2,3	47 and App. III
		Project document for new work on guidance on paperless use of electronic certificates (Revision of <i>Guidelines for Design, Production, Issuance and Use of Generic Official Certificates</i>)		1,2,3	53 and App. IV
		Project document for new work on guidance on regulatory approaches to third party assurance schemes in food safety and fair practices in the food trade		1,2,3	62 and App. V
EWG CCFICS24	Drafting Discussion	Discussion paper on food integrity and food authenticity			30
Australia/Canada CCFICS24	Drafting Discussion	Discussion paper on consideration of emerging issues and future directions for the work of the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems			69
Australia CCFICS24	Drafting Discussion	Framework for the preliminary assessment and identification of priority areas for CCFICS			72
Host country/Codex Secretariats	Information	Intersessional physical working groups (trial)			80

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMR	Antimicrobial Resistance
CAC	Codex Alimentarius Commission
CCEXEC	Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission
CCFO	Codex Committee on Fats and Oils
CCFICS	Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems
CCFL	Codex Committee on Food Labelling
CCGP	Codex Committee on General Principles
CCMAS	Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling
CL	Circular Letter
CRD	Conference Room Document
COFEPRIS	Federal Commission for Protection against Sanitary Risks
EWG	Electronic Working Group
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GL	Guidelines
INFOSAN	International Food Safety Authorities Network
IPPC	International Plant Protection Convention
NFCS	National Food Control Systems
OIE	International Organisation for Animal Health
PWG	Physical Working Group
WCO	World Customs Organization
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization
WG	Working Group

INTRODUCTION

1. The Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) convened its twenty-third session, in Mexico City, Mexico, from 1 to 5 May 2017, at the kind invitation of the Governments of Australia and Mexico. Mr Gregory Read, First Assistant Secretary, Exports Division, Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, Australia, chaired the Committee, assisted by Ms Pamela Suárez Brito, Executive Director, Special Programmes, Sanitary Operation Commission, Federal Commission for Protection against Sanitary Risks (COFEPRIS), Mexico. Forty-five Member countries, one Member organization and ten international organizations attended the session. A list of participants is contained in Appendix I.

OPENING OF THE SESSION¹

2. Mr Julio Sánchez y Tépoz, Commissioner of COFEPRIS, addressed the Committee and extended his warmest welcome to all participants.

Division of Competence²

3. The Committee noted the division of competence between the European Union and its Member States, according to paragraph 5, Rule II, of the Rules of Procedure of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Agenda item 1)³

4. The Committee adopted the Provisional agenda as the Agenda for the session.

MATTERS REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND ITS SUBSIDIARY BODIES (Agenda item 2)⁴

5. The Committee noted matters referred from the thirty-ninth session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC39) (2016) and the responses regarding food integrity and food authenticity provided by the Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling at its thirty-seventh session (CCMAS37) and by the Codex Committee on Food Labelling at its forty-third session (CCFL43).

Authenticity of different fish oils (CCFO25)

6. The Committee noted the concerns of the Codex Committee on Fats and Oils (CCFO), expressed at its twenty-fifth session, regarding the difficulties associated with using fatty acid range profile or ranges as the sole measure to determine the authenticity of fish oils, and its view that further consideration should be given to this matter in the context of CCFICS work on food authenticity/food integrity (agenda item 5).
7. Chile commented that its main concern was the impossibility to address the issue of authenticity by referring to CCFICS texts in the standard for fish oils and other oils standards, highlighted the need for CCFICS to provide a response to this issue and to the request made at CCFO25.

Conclusion

8. The Committee noted Chile's concern and agreed to discuss it under agenda item 5 would provide an opportunity to consider the applicability of CCFICS texts on traceability/product tracing and other relevant texts on inspection and certification in addressing the issue of food integrity and authenticity.

INFORMATION ON THE ACTIVITIES OF FAO, WHO AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS RELEVANT TO THE WORK OF CCFICS (Agenda item 3)⁵

Report of FAO and WHO

9. The representative of FAO informed the Committee of recent and ongoing work relevant to CCFICS, including:
 - the recent publication of: (i) "Risk-based Imported Food Control Manual"; and (ii) a training handbook on "Enhancing Early-Warning Capabilities and Capacities for Food Safety";
 - the near-complete work on the FAO/WHO food control system assessment tool, with primary assessment criteria anchored to the *Principles and Guidelines on National Food Control Systems* (CAC/GL 82-2013) and other relevant Codex texts;

¹ CRD20 (Opening remarks).

² CRD01.

³ CX/FICS 17/23/1 Rev.2

⁴ CX/FICS 17/23/2; CX/FICS 17/23/2 Add.1; Comments of Kenya (CRD02).

⁵ CX/FICS 17/23/3; Comments of Kenya (CRD03).

- new work on risk-based meat inspection;
- progress made by the joint FAO/WHO International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN) in terms of the number of active members and new or strengthened partnerships with existing networks and authorities; and
- work on antimicrobial resistance (AMR), including the recent political declaration by General Assembly of the United Nations (A/RES/71/3) and the preparations for an expert consultation, to be held in 2018, to address the CAC39 request for scientific advice on foodborne AMR.

Report of the International Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)

10. The Observer of OIE informed the Committee that:

- the revised text of Chapter 6.1 “The role of the Veterinary Services in food safety”, of the Terrestrial Animal Health Code had been circulated among OIE Members Countries for comments, and that Codex members should liaise with their national OIE focal points to provide input to their country positions;
- the OIE and World Customs Organization (WCO) pilot workshop, postponed from May until later in 2017, would focus on the implementation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement and promote collaboration between customs and veterinary services at the national level; and
- OIE was considering its future approach to e-certification but had no immediate plans to revise Chapter 5.2 “Certification procedures”, in either the Terrestrial or the Aquatic Animal Health Code, noting that the workshop held immediately prior to CCFICS23 on the development of Codex guidance for paperless certification, along with ongoing discussions on the subject in Codex, would inform OIE’s work in this area.

Report of the World Trade Organization (WTO)

11. The Committee noted the information provided by the WTO in document CX/17/23/3 Add.2.

Conclusion

12. The Committee thanked FAO, OIE, WHO and the WTO for the information provided.

DRAFT PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES FOR MONITORING PERFORMANCE OF NATIONAL FOOD CONTROL SYSTEMS (Agenda item 4)⁶

13. The United States of America gave a brief overview of the development of the guidelines, recalling that, since this item was first considered, at CCFICS19 (2012), the work had gone through a series of consultative steps, including: the development of a questionnaire for countries on how they assessed and managed the performance of their National Food Control Systems (NFCSs); the refinement of the scope of the work and the draft project document; and the definition of an outline of the proposed draft principles and guidelines for monitoring regulatory performance of national food control systems. The text adopted at Step 5 by CAC39 upon the recommendation of CCFICS22 (2016) represented the consensus outcome of these extensive consultations and was therefore ready for final adoption.

14. The Chair noted:

- the efforts of Chile in coordinating the resolution of issues with the Spanish translation of the guidelines;
- the extensive consultations held in developing the document, including discussions at five physical meetings, through which the logical flow of the texts was agreed;
- his view that any further effort on the document was unlikely to yield any new or substantial change; and
- the primarily editorial nature of the comments submitted at Step 6, intended to reshape the language of the text rather than its technical content, many of which had already been taken into consideration in the course of the consultative process.

15. The Chair therefore proposed that the Committee consider adopting the current text without further changes.

⁶ REP16/FICS Appendix III; CX/FICS 17/23/4; Comments of Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Egypt, Ireland, Indonesia, Mexico, New Zealand, Paraguay, Peru, Somalia, FAO (CX/FICS 17/23/4); European Union, Indonesia, Kenya, Philippines and Thailand (CRD04); Ecuador, India, Paraguay and Peru (CRD10); Ghana (CRD18).

Discussion

16. The Committee generally supported the proposal by the Chair to adopt the text without any further amendments, with the following comments:
- the draft text had been reviewed at all levels, including in plenary and in physical and electronic working groups;
 - the comments received at Step 6 had already been discussed and resolved at previous meetings;
 - the principles and guidelines would assist competent authorities in assessing the effectiveness of NFCs and facilitate their continuous improvement;
 - the principles and guidelines would be a living document that could be improved during implementation, and the draft text should be adopted with the understanding that it could be revised in future; and
 - editorial comments, including regarding translation, should be referred to the Codex Secretariat.
17. Brazil expressed discomfort with recommending the adoption of the draft principles and guidelines at Step 8 with Appendix B retained as part of the document, taking the view that Appendix B, providing examples, should be removed pursuant to previous decisions of the Commission and other committees regarding the inclusion of examples in Codex texts. Brazil further noted that examples should not be included in a Codex standard since they may not be relevant in all areas of the food sector and may create unnecessary and inapplicable links to different contexts. In the light of its relevance, Appendix B should be made available as an information document on the Codex website.

Conclusion

18. The Committee agreed to forward the draft Principles and Guidelines for Monitoring Performance of National Food Control Systems (Appendix II) to CAC40 for adoption at Step 8.

DISCUSSION PAPER ON FOOD INTEGRITY AND FOOD AUTHENTICITY (Agenda item 5)⁷

19. The Islamic Republic of Iran introduced the discussion paper and gave a comprehensive overview of its content and recommendations, as contained in paragraph 28.
20. The Chair noted that the paper called for an integrated approach in addressing the question of food integrity/authenticity, and that its recommendations pointed to the need to undertake an analysis of gaps within CCFICS texts. However, there was a need to define the objectives and criteria of the gap analysis, after which its outcomes would contribute to determining next steps in this area.

Discussion

21. There was broad support in the Committee for the need to pursue further preliminary work in this area in the light of shared concerns regarding the definition of the fundamental concepts involved, in particular, the overlapping terms of “food authenticity” and “food integrity”, and “food fraud” and “economically motivated adulteration” (EMA). Potential deviation in the interpretation of such terms required further effort to clarify their definitions before proceeding to develop new work and delineate its scope.
22. Underscoring the complex implications of this area and the crosscutting nature of concerns involved, the Committee agreed that, while CCFICS undoubtedly had a role to play given the international trade-related implications, an integrated approach was required across Codex, involving CCFL, CCMAS, CCGP and other committees in addition to CCFICS. It was suggested that, while commodity committees could contribute to determining the authenticity/integrity of food products through defining quality requirements, CCFICS may be better positioned to provide general higher-level guidance. It would be difficult for any single committee to address such diverse concerns through a single document, and measures should not be limited to fraud detection but also seek to achieve mitigation.
23. Chile recalled its concerns, recorded in CCFO, regarding the impossibility of referring to CCFICS texts in commodity standards due to layout provisions in the Codex Procedural Manual, which did not provide for the inclusion in commodity standards of horizontal provisions regarding traceability/product tracing and certification.
24. The Committee noted that the concerns raised by Chile applied beyond fish oils to include all types of oils and all other commodities, and that it was therefore important for CCFICS to frame a response relevant to all Codex commodity standards.

⁷ CX/FICS 17/23/5; Comments of El Salvador, European Union, Kenya, Thailand, SSAFE (CRD05); Ecuador, India, Peru (CRD11); Ghana, Mexico (CRD18); USP (CRD21).

25. A number of members underscored the potential links between the aspects discussed under agenda item 5 and the matters relating to traceability/product tracing and certification to be considered later under agenda items 7 and 8.
26. Trinidad and Tobago underscored how small island developing States relied heavily on the guidance and approaches developed in CCFICS; noted that food fraud represented an issue of growing concern at the national level; and expressed the intention to contribute to work on this matter through the EWG and future CCFICS meetings.
27. In recognition of these difficulties, the Committee endorsed and expanded upon the approach proposed in paragraph 28, whereby CCFICS would undertake a review of existing Codex texts with a view to obtaining a clear picture not only of gaps but also of how and to what extent food integrity and authenticity were already covered by Codex texts, focusing primarily on texts of CCFICS.
28. The Codex Secretariat clarified that, while no provisions in the Codex Procedural Manual prevented CCFICS from undertaking such a review of texts developed by other Codex committees, any amendment CCFICS may wish to recommend to another committee's text would have to be considered and executed by that committee.

Conclusion

29. The Committee agreed to establish an EWG, chaired by the Islamic Republic of Iran and co-chaired by Canada and European Union, working in English only, with the following terms of reference:
 - a. clarify the definitions of food integrity, food authenticity, food fraud and EMA and delineate the scope for the preliminary assessment of CCFICS texts;
 - b. based on those definitions, undertake a preliminary assessment of existing CCFICS texts to identify possible gaps and the impact, whether positive or negative, of those texts in mitigating potential problems; and
 - c. prepare a discussion paper presenting the findings of that assessment and any need for further work or potential new work.
30. The EWG report shall be made available to the Codex Secretariat at least three months in advance of CCFICS24. Depending on the findings of the EWG, CCFICS24 shall take a decision on the need for new work.

DISCUSSION PAPER ON USE OF SYSTEMS EQUIVALENCE (Agenda item 6)⁸

31. New Zealand, as Chair of the EWG, introduced the discussion paper, recalling that CCFICS had considered the use of systems equivalence since its twenty-first session and explaining that the proposed new work would complement the other three texts that explicitly mentioned equivalence, namely: the *Guidelines for the Design, Operation, Assessment and Accreditation of Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems* (CAC/GL 26-1997), the *Guidelines of Equivalence Agreements regarding Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems* (CAC/GL 34-1999) and the *Guidelines on the Judgement of Equivalence of Sanitary Measures associated with Food Inspection and Certification Systems* (CAC/GL 53-2003). Moreover, the proposed new guidance would also fit well with the *Guidelines of National Food Control Systems* (CAC/GL 82-2013) and the *Principles and Guidelines for the Exchange of Information between Importing and Exporting Countries to Support the Trade in Food* (CAC/GL 89-2016).
32. The EWG Chair noted that, while both CAC/GL 26-1997 and CAC/GL 34-1999 covered the dual mandate of Codex and anticipated the potential for systems equivalence, neither provided practical guidance on processes and procedures that could assist countries in approaching systems equivalence considerations. Further, CAC/GL 53-2003 had limited application to overarching systems-equivalence processes as its specific focus was on the equivalence of sanitary measures.
33. The EWG Chair noted that the examination of CCFICS texts had clearly shown a gap in guidance on how to initiate and conduct a systems-equivalence assessment. He emphasized that practical guidance was needed that would not contradict existing standards but build on them to help countries, where their relationships and confidence were sufficiently evolved, to begin a process for considering systems-equivalence recognition.
34. He noted that the EWG had identified a number of general principles and processes that could serve as a starting point for the development of the proposed document, as set out in paragraph 44 of CX/FICS 17/23/6, and that CRD16 included additional useful suggestions.

⁸ CX/FICS 17/23/6; Revised project document on systems equivalence prepared by New Zealand with the assistance of Chile and the United States of America (CRD17); Comments of El Salvador, European Union, Kenya, Nicaragua, Philippines, Thailand (CRD06); Ecuador, India, Paraguay, Peru (CRD12); United States of America (CRD16); Ghana, Mexico (CRD18); Indonesia (CRD22).

35. The EWG Chair further explained that the project document had been revised (CRD17) to fill gaps and address comments contained in other CRDs.
36. The United States of America and Chile, co-chairs of the EWG, noted that the proposed new work was intended to provide countries with clear guidance on the process for determining the equivalence, in part or in whole, of an NFCS.

Discussion

37. The Chair invited comments on the discussion paper to determine whether there was support for starting new work.
38. The Committee expressed broad support for developing additional guidance on the use of systems equivalence and noted the following aspects:
 - i. There was a need for more-detailed guidance on the development of systems-equivalence agreements, including on information exchange, which was a critical factor in determining equivalence.
 - ii. Guidance would assist countries in tackling this complex issue and may reduce unnecessary trade restrictions and save competent authority resources.
 - iii. The guidance should provide clear recommendations for developing and implementing systems equivalence; facilitate the use of CAC/GL 34-1999; and focus on systems equivalence for food import and export.
 - iv. The guidance should be consistent and avoid overlapping with, existing Codex texts.
 - v. The guidance should serve as a foundational document for initiating discussions on systems equivalence between food exporting and importing countries, and should take into account countries' development status.
 - vi. The work should be conducted in such a way as not to become a barrier to trade, noting that the Codex Procedural Manual states that food-safety assurance should be achieved through a risk-analysis approach.
 - vii. The new work should describe factors that facilitate the appraisal of the experience, knowledge and confidence of the importing country regarding the exporting country's food-control system and criteria for evaluating systems equivalence.
39. Regarding whether the outcome of the new work should be a stand-alone document or appended to an existing Codex text, the Committee noted the following views:
 - the new work should have clear linkages to other documents on equivalence;
 - CAC/GL 34-1999 and CAC/GL 26-1997 should provide the foundation for the new work and other texts on equivalence;
 - the new work should be an Appendix to CAC/GL 53-2003 or CAC/GL 34-1999 to avoid overlap; and
 - a determination in this regard could only be made during the development of the new work.
40. The Committee noted the offer from FAO to contribute to developing the new guidance and share information on the criteria developed as a basis for the FAO/WHO food control assessment tool, which was based on CAC/GL 82-2013.
41. The Chair noted that CAC/GL 53-2003 focused on the equivalence of sanitary measures and, at the time of its development, the equivalence of systems had not been addressed because it had not been possible to identify examples of how technical requirements could work. Since the development of the CAC/GL 82-2013 had laid out the key characteristics of an NFCS and how the objectives of such a system could be met, it would now be possible for countries to establish equivalence of systems covering both food safety and fair practices in the food trade rather than go through the complex process of establishing equivalence for individual measures.
42. Brazil expressed reservations on commencing new work on the guidelines as a stand-alone document, viewing that there might be an overlap with CAC/GL 53-2003.
43. The Chair clarified that it was premature to decide whether the outcome of the new work should be a stand-alone document or appended to an existing Codex text, as such a decision would depend on the format and content of the new work. Therefore, a decision would only be taken during its development.

Project document for new work

44. Given the support for starting new work, the Committee considered the revised project document (CRD17) in detail, noted comments and took the following decisions pursuant to the discussion:
- 1. Purpose and scope of the proposed standard —to add text indicating that the outcome of the new work could be either a stand-alone document or an appendix to an existing CCFICS text and clarifying that the work could result in the modification of existing texts;
 - 4c. Work already undertaken by other international organizations — to add a reference to the FAO/WHO tool to assess national food control systems as an example of relevant international work; and
 - 6. Information on the relationship between the proposal and existing Codex documents — to add a sentence to clarify that the work would take into account CAC/GL 53-2003.
45. In response to the concerns regarding the resource implications of participating in physical working groups (PWGs), the Chair proposed discussion under other business (agenda item 10).

Conclusion

46. The Committee agreed to:
- a. start new work on developing guidelines on the use of systems equivalence and submit the revised project document (Appendix III) for approval by CAC40;
 - b. establish an EWG, with the possibility of convening physical meetings, chaired by New Zealand and co-chaired by Chile and the United States of America, working in English only, that, subject to approval of new work by CAC40, would prepare a proposal for circulation for comments and for consideration at CCFICS24; and
 - c. consider whether the outcome of new work would be a stand-alone document or an appendix to an existing text at a later stage of its development.
47. The Committee noted that the EWG documents would be made available in Spanish to facilitate the participation of Spanish-speaking countries and that the report of the EWG should be made available to the Codex Secretariat at least three months in advance of CCFICS24.

DISCUSSION PAPER ON THE USE OF ELECTRONIC CERTIFICATES BY COMPETENT AUTHORITIES AND MIGRATION TO PAPERLESS CERTIFICATION (Agenda item 7)⁹

48. The Netherlands, as Chair of the EWG, introduced the discussion paper, gave a brief overview of previous discussion in CCFICS on this matter and noted that the project document had been revised based on the written comments received (CRD23). He further drew attention to the workshop to raise awareness around the development of Codex guidance for paperless certification held immediately prior to the opening of CCFICS23.

Discussion

49. The Committee noted the valuable exchanges and information provided during the workshop.
50. The Committee noted that electronic certification (e-certification)/paperless certification was increasingly used to provide assurances in international trade in food, broadly agreeing that it was the way of the future. Developing harmonized guidance on paperless certification was therefore timely and would promote broader participation and facilitate the use of electronic certificate. The Committee further noted that e-certification had the potential to reduce the burden on exporting countries by allowing for the implementation of more transparent and simplified approaches.
51. In the light of the support for new guidance on paperless certification, delegations expressed the following views:
- i. The guidance should take into account such elements as: the need for contingency plans where electronic systems may not be available; the integrity of information-exchange systems; digital security measures and verification of electronic signatures; and the compatibility of platforms for the exchange of digital information.

⁹ CX/FICS 17/23/7; Comments of the European Union, Kenya, Nicaragua and Philippines (CRD07); Ecuador, India, Paraguay, Peru (CRD13); Ghana, Mexico (CRD18); Indonesia (CRD22); Revised project document on new work on Codex guidance for paperless certification – prepared by the Netherlands and Australia (CRD23).

- ii. Since food-exporting and -importing countries had different needs and requirements in terms of NFCS, including technological capabilities and available resources, there should be flexibility to allow for the use of both paper certificates and e-certificates, and a step-by-step approach should be taken in the transition to paperless certification.
- iii. Consideration should be given to the need for countries to update their existing national protocols and regulations and the potential need among developing countries for technical assistance in various areas.
- iv. The implementation of paperless certification would depend on the availability of funding and provision of technical assistance to developing countries, and support from countries experienced in paperless certification willing to share their experiences and information in this regard.
- v. Existing initiatives such as those of IPPC, OIE, WCO and the WTO as well as the “Single Window Concept”, should be taken into account in developing the guidance.

Project document for new work

52. In the light of the support for new work, the Committee considered the revised project document (CRD23) in detail, noted comments and took the following decisions:
- Title of the project document — to realign and harmonize the title to reflect that the revision of CAC/GL 38-2001 would focus on including guidance on using paperless certificates.
 - 3. Main aspects to be covered — to redraft to: (i) reflect the need for the guidance to take into account a step-by-step approach in transitioning towards paperless certification; (ii) reflect that the work would “define fundamental concepts necessary to understand and interpret requirements for exchange mechanisms, data mapping and legal and regulatory changes needed to facilitate electronic-certification systems”; and (iii) clarify that the work would take into account, as appropriate, related electronic-certification efforts of international organizations, such as IPPC, OIE, WCO and the WTO”.

Conclusion

53. The Committee agreed to:
- a. start new work on the revision of the *Guidelines for Design, Production, Issuance and use of Generic Official Certificates* (CAC/GL 38-2001) to include guidance on paperless electronic certification and submit the revised project document (Appendix IV) to CAC40 for approval; and
 - b. establish an EWG, chaired by the Netherlands and co-chaired by Australia, working in English only, that, subject to approval of new work by CAC40, would prepare proposed draft guidance for circulation for comments and for consideration at CCFICS24.
54. The Committee noted that the report of the EWG should be made available to the Codex Secretariat at least three months in advance of CCFICS24.

DISCUSSION PAPER ON REGULATORY APPROACHES TO THIRD PARTY CERTIFICATION IN FOOD SAFETY (Agenda item 8)¹⁰

55. Canada introduced the discussion paper by underscoring that the scope of the work applied to voluntary third-party assurance schemes for food safety within a business-to-business relationship. Such schemes included audit and inspection by an accredited, independent third party against the scheme standard. Canada further clarified that the scope of the proposed new work excluded “certification” as the issuing of official certificates as part of the official controls within an NFCS. For this reason, and to avoid possible confusion, it was proposed to replace the term “third-party certification scheme” with “third-party assurance scheme”.
56. Canada further explained that the discussion paper highlighted: (i) the challenges and opportunities for collaboration between the public and private sectors on the use of third-party assurance schemes; (ii) the various approaches taken by different countries to benefit from industry investments in third-party assurance programmes; and (iii) the principles under which regulatory approaches to third-party assurance programmes in food safety should be considered.

Discussion

57. The Chair opened the discussion to consider the recommendation to commence new work on developing guidance on using third-party assurance schemes.

¹⁰ CX/FICS 17/23/8; Comments of European Union, Kenya, Philippines, Thailand, SSAFE (CRD08); Ecuador, India, Paraguay, Peru, FoodDrinkEurope (CRD14); Ghana, Mexico, Consumer Food Group Forum (CRD18); Brazil (CRD19).

58. The Committee broadly acknowledged the importance of the subject, supported commencing new work as proposed and expressed the following views:
- i. Competent authorities in various countries were increasingly considering and using third-party assurance schemes to better inform their risk profiling of food businesses so as to more effectively target resources within their NFCS.
 - ii. Using third-party assurance schemes could enhance but not replace NFCSs, and the standards used in such schemes should take into account international standards, such as those of Codex.
 - iii. Using third-party assurance schemes had the potential to enable a competent authority and industry to improve food-safety outcomes, while allowing each stakeholder to operate within its defined roles and responsibilities.
 - iv. Developing guidance on how and under which conditions a competent authority could make use of third-party assurance schemes in its NFCS was very timely, may prevent potential barriers to trade and could benefit from the experience of those countries already using such schemes.
 - v. It was important to establish principles to: ensure the integrity, competency and voluntary nature of third-party assurance schemes; allow for the consideration of such schemes by national competent authorities but not require their use; and provide for the use by competent authorities of the regulatory elements of such schemes within their national boundaries.
 - vi. Guidance on the use of third-party assurance schemes should: cover the dual mandate of Codex, not be limited to food safety; make reference to the *Guidelines for the Design, Operation, Assessment and Accreditation of Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems* (CAC/GL 26-1997); and be consistent with other CCFICS texts.
59. Brazil expressed concern that developing such guidance may have an economic impact on food-importing and -exporting countries alike as the use of third-party certification was not yet widespread. It was premature to embark on new work and that an additional round of discussions would allow for further analysis of the regulatory approaches used and for the assessment of the impact on the various sectors involved in food production and the food industry, given their diverse and specific characteristics.

Project document for new work

60. In the light of the support for commencing new work, the Committee considered in detail the project document in CX/FICS 17/23/8, noted comments and took the following decisions:
- i. to refer throughout the document to “third-party assurance schemes” rather than “third-party certification schemes” to avoid confusion;
 - ii. to include “fair practices in the food trade” to reflect the dual mandate of Codex and accordingly amend the project document to reflect the broader scope;
 - iii. 1. Purpose – to amend the section to clarify that the objective of the new work would be to enhance the regulatory arrangements and official controls within the entire NFCS and not only for import/export purposes;
 - iv. 2. Scope – to amend the section to include two additional points on the list of exclusions, namely: components of assurance schemes outside the requirements of NFCSs; and private standards set under buyer-seller contractual arrangements (the explicit listing of first- and second-party assurance schemes under the excluded items was considered unnecessary as the scope clearly did not cover these);
 - v. 3. Relevance and timeliness – to delete the sentence on emerging trends since it was not relevant to the section;
 - vi. 4. Main aspects to be covered – to clarify, at the suggestion of Thailand, the criterion for standards by subdividing it into (i) standard-setting arrangements and (ii) the utilization of national/international standards and to replace, for clarity, the term “robustness” with “credibility and integrity”;
 - vii. 5. Assessment against the *Criteria for the establishment of work priorities* – to amend the language to clarify that third-party schemes may enhance food-safety outcomes ;
 - viii. 5.c Work already undertaken by other international organizations in this field – to amend the section to clarify that the list of international organizations was not exhaustive so as to allow the work of other organizations to be taken into account; and
 - ix. 9. Identification of any need for technical input to the standard for external bodies so that this can be planned for – to delete the “Global Food Safety Initiative” since it had no Observer status in Codex.

Conclusion

61. The Committee agreed to:
- a. start new work on developing guidelines on regulatory approaches to third-party assurance schemes in food safety and fair practices in the food trade, and to submit the revised project document (Appendix V) for approval to CAC40; and
 - b. establish an EWG, with the possibility of convening physical meetings, chaired by the United Kingdom and co-chaired by Canada and Mexico, working in English only, that, subject to approval of the new work by CAC40, would prepare proposed draft guidelines for circulation for comments and for consideration at CCFICS24.
62. The Committee noted that the EWG documents would also be made available in Spanish to facilitate the participation of Spanish-speaking countries and that the report of the EWG should be made available to the Codex Secretariat at least three months in advance of CCFICS24.

DISCUSSION PAPER ON CONSIDERATION OF EMERGING ISSUES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR THE WORK OF THE CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD IMPORT AND EXPORT INSPECTION AND CERTIFICATION SYSTEMS (Agenda item 9)¹¹

63. Australia introduced the discussion paper and recalled the rationale behind its inclusion as a standing item on the agenda: in recognition of the impact of emerging global challenges on approaches and technologies relating to food safety controls, CCFICS21 had agreed that such a discussion paper should be updated annually to allow CCFICS to keep abreast of issues as they came to prominence at the global level, with responsibility for revising the paper between sessions ideally transferring between members so as to provide a diversity of strategic perspective.
64. Pursuant to discussion at CCFICS22, the discussion paper comprised two distinct components: Appendix A, presenting emerging global issues relevant to the work of CCFICS; and Appendix B, sketching out a framework for the preliminary assessment and identification of priority areas for CCFICS. The former was not an exhaustive list or intended to mandate new work, while the latter proposed a method for self-assessment by members. Feedback was welcomed, especially on the scope for better integrating links to trade in self-assessment and drawing out ties to the work of other committees.
65. The Chair recalled the unique value of this horizon-scanning tool (Appendix A) in allowing members to achieve two objectives: learn comparatively from each other's strategic outlooks; and assess to what extent international standards existed to address the areas of concern identified, and thereby consider future steps necessary to fully mitigate emerging issues. He encouraged the Committee to reflect critically on whether the range of items contained in Appendix A provided an accurate snapshot of strategic challenges, and to provide feedback for the further development of the document.

Discussion

Appendix A

66. The Committee expressed broad approval of the reformatted document as a coherent approach to the content.
67. Members made the following proposals with respect to Appendix A:
- i. appeal mechanisms for rejections should be considered (issue identified at CCFICS22);
 - ii. increasing electronic transactions and ICT capabilities should be expanded to include e-commerce;
 - iii. the three issues — “New food-production, -processing, -transport and -distribution technologies”; “Given the rapidly changing technologies and processes supporting food production, globalization and the emergence of other risks there is an ever-increasing need to ensure consumers are protected from unsafe foods”; and “Evolving global food-production systems” — could be merged;
 - iv. “novel food”/“new food” should be incorporated into “New food-production, -processing, -transport and -distribution technologies” in the light of the potential to meet the needs of the growing global population through the production of new foods subject to due regulation;
 - v. “Private standards” should not be included since this matter had been thoroughly discussed in the past at the Commission and no request had been made to address it further in CCFICS; and
 - vi. food waste as related to international food trade should be included as an emerging global issue.

¹¹ CX/FICS 17/23/9; Comments of European Union, Kenya, Philippines, Thailand (CRD09); Ecuador, Peru (CRD15); Ghana, Mexico, The Consumer Goods Forum (CRD18).

68. Regarding how to address the key emerging issues identified, the Chair clarified that the list outlined key areas on the horizon relevant to the work of CCFICS, and that any member or observer could bring a proposal regarding any emerging issue to CCFICS. In this regard, the Chair underscored that Appendix A was not a prescriptive list of proposals and that it was incumbent on Codex members to undertake a self-assessment, analyse issues and bring discussion papers to CCFICS for consideration.

Conclusion

69. The Committee agreed that Australia and Canada would update Appendix A to take into account the issues raised and comments submitted at the present session for consideration at CCFICS24.
70. The Chair noted the need to capture a broader international perspective, which could be achieved by members from different parts of the world volunteering, on a rotational basis, to take on the task of updating the paper.

Appendix B

71. New Zealand expressed concerns regarding the coherence of the methodology and criteria proposed for assessing and prioritizing new work, in particular the provisions set out in paragraph 6 for determining the potential impacts on trade. Further work was necessary to refine the evaluation of “fair trade practices” versus “global trade impact” as proposed under the present approach.

Conclusion

72. The Committee agreed, at the proposal of the Chair, that Australia would revise the framework for the preliminary assessment and identification of priority areas for CCFICS for consideration at its next session.

OTHER BUSINESS (Agenda item 10)

Enhancement of participation in CCFICS work

73. The Chair recalled concerns expressed by developing countries regarding the implications of resource constraints for their regular attendance at PWG meetings. Acknowledging those difficulties, he noted that certain types of work could be conducted effectively through EWGs but that on other, complex issues, such as NFCs, PWGs had contributed to resolving concerns in the development of texts. He emphasized the benefit of PWGs as effective in capturing the needs of developing countries and producing outputs valuable to them.
74. The Chair recalled that the Committee had agreed to establish two EWGs, with the possibility of convening physical meetings, to develop guidance on “Use of Systems Equivalence” and “Regulatory Approaches to Third-Party Assurance Schemes”. To ensure broad participation among members, he proposed holding the two PWGs in advance of CCFICS24, scheduled for October 2018, in two different locations – in Chile, in November/December 2017, and in Ireland or the United Kingdom, in April/May 2018. He further proposed combining the PWGs via a webinar or similar modality to facilitate the participation, with real-time responses, of a range of countries that may not be able to participate physically. This experimental approach would be assessed after 12 months.
75. The Chair requested that the Committee discuss and provide views on the proposal.

Discussion

76. The Committee broadly supported the proposal and expressed the following views:
- i. Since the complex work of CCFICS required physical meetings, the Committee would draw on its experience in organizing PWGs in different regions and regional workshops.
 - ii. The use of webinars or similar modalities blended with PWG meetings would promote inclusion.
 - iii. PWG meetings, while effective, should be kept to a minimum and used only when necessary.
 - iv. Consideration should be given to holding a workshop or a PWG meeting immediately prior to CCFICS24, so as to facilitate the broadest possible participation among members, to consider the outcomes of the intersessional PWGs.
 - v. The difference between time zones should be taken into account in using web-based meeting modalities.
77. Chile confirmed its willingness to facilitate one of the PWGs.

78. Brazil, while thanking the Chair for his efforts to facilitate the participation of developing countries in the work of CCFICS, recalled the preference of developing countries for EWGs since they allowed for broader participation in the work of Codex. APWG should only be established considering what is stated in the *Guidelines for Physical Working Groups* as well as based on consensus within the Committee following the consideration of other approaches; and, when a PWG was unavoidable, it was important to guarantee broad participation.
79. The Chair clarified that the combination of a PWG meeting and the use of web-based modalities would represent a hybrid physical-electronic working group intended to enable countries from different parts of the world to participate.

Conclusion

80. The Committee agreed:
- a. Two intersessional PWGs would be held on an experimental basis, one in Latin America (Chile) and one in Europe (Ireland or the United Kingdom), to make progress in developing guidance documents on the “Use of Systems Equivalence” and “Regulatory Approaches to Third-Party Assurance Schemes”;
 - b. Each PWG would last four days, with the time split equally between the two work items; and
 - c. Both PWGs would be broadcast via webinar to enable broader participation.

DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT SESSION (Agenda item 11)

81. The Committee was informed that the twenty-fourth session of CCFICS was tentatively scheduled to be held in Australia in October 2018, the final arrangements being subject to confirmation by the Host Government in consultation with the Codex Secretariat.

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Appendix II

DRAFT PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES FOR MONITORING THE PERFORMANCE OF NATIONAL FOOD CONTROL SYSTEMS**(for adoption at Step 8)****SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION**

1. An effective national food control system (NFCS) is essential for ensuring the safety and suitability of food for consumers and ensuring fair practices. An effective NFCS may employ different approaches, core elements, and components, as appropriate to the national circumstances, and as described in the *Codex Principles and Guidelines for National Food Control Systems* (CAC/GL 82-2013).
2. The policy setting, design, implementation and other technical components of the NFCS should operate effectively over the course of time, and have the capacity and capability to undergo continuous improvement. As scientific and technical advances occur, it is important that the NFCS demonstrates its ability to adapt.
3. The monitoring and system review function of the NFCS calls on the competent authority¹ to regularly assess the effectiveness and appropriateness of the NFCS in achieving its objectives of protecting the health of consumers and ensuring fair practices in the food trade.² The evidence generated through monitoring and system review informs the policy setting, system design, and implementation functions of the NFCS.
4. This document presents a performance monitoring framework to support the monitoring and system review function of the NFCS as described in section 4.4 of CAC/GL 82-2013. The guidance is not intended to be used as a basis for comparing systems or imposing barriers to trade.
5. Many strategies for performance monitoring exist, but there is no guidance specific to performance monitoring for an NFCS. This document seeks to fill this gap.
6. Other assessment tools, like the FAO/WHO food control system assessment tool, can be used in conjunction with performance monitoring to provide a comprehensive view of the NFCS.

SECTION 2 PURPOSE OF GUIDANCE

7. This document describes a logical framework of planning, monitoring, and system review steps for performance monitoring of an NFCS and establishes a common understanding of performance monitoring principles, terminology, and best practices.
8. The guidance is intended to support self-assessment of countries NFCS.
9. This guidance focuses on planning steps within the performance monitoring framework that establish a foundation for assessing the effectiveness of the NFCS and for facilitating continuous improvement as appropriate.
10. A competent authority can use this framework to implement monitoring and system review, or incorporate this approach to make existing processes more robust.

SECTION 3 DEFINITIONS³

Activity: Actions taken or work performed through which inputs are mobilized to produce specific outputs.

Assessment: A process of determining the presence or absence of a certain condition or component, or the degree to which a condition is fulfilled.

Effectiveness: The extent to which NFCS objectives or related outcomes were achieved, or, are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance.

Indicator: Quantitative variable or qualitative factor that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement, to reflect the changes connected to activities, or to help assess the performance of a program or system.

¹ Throughout the document “competent authority” refers to one or more competent authorities.

² Throughout this document, the term “Objectives” refers to the NFCS Objectives *Principles and Guidelines for National Food Control Systems* (CAC/GL 82-2013).

³ Most definitions were adapted from OECD. 2002. “Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management.” Paris: OECD/DAC.

Inputs: The financial, human, technical and material resources used for activities.

Outcome: Intended effects or results that contribute to achieving the NFCS Objectives. Outcomes may be categorized at different levels, such as ultimate, high-level, intermediate, preliminary, or initial.

Outputs: The products and services which result from activities; may also include changes resulting from activities which are relevant to the achievement of outcomes.

Performance monitoring: A continuous or ongoing process of collecting and analyzing data to compare how well the stated objectives and outcomes of the NFCS are achieved.

SECTION 4 PRINCIPLES OF THE PERFORMANCE MONITORING FRAMEWORK

11. In a comprehensive approach, a competent authority would monitor its performance across all components of the NFCS. However, depending on the priorities and capabilities of the competent authority, it may be more practical and affordable to apply the performance monitoring framework in a phased or targeted approach. A targeted approach is application of performance monitoring to specific programs or components of the NFCS. A phased approach is a gradual expansion of the performance monitoring framework as capacity within a country grows.
12. Regardless of whether it is used in a comprehensive, phased, or targeted approach, the performance monitoring framework is characterized by the following principles:

Principle 1 Relevancy

13. It is customized to the unique needs and structure of the NFCS, and uses information collected from within and outside the system to identify gaps, optimize operations, and promote continuous improvement.

Principle 2 Transparency

14. It is open to consultation and review by relevant national stakeholders during multiple stages of the process, while respecting legal requirements to protect confidential information as appropriate.

Principle 3 Efficiency and Reliability

15. It should operate within its current capacity to remain practicable and affordable. It builds on existing data collection and program management and utilizes appropriate external data sources to assess the performance of its NFCS. Attention should be given to the quality and reliability of the data.

Principle 4 Responsiveness

16. It is adaptive to changes to the NFCS and the environment in which it operates and accommodates revisions to both the outcomes sought, associated activities, and the indicators applied.

SECTION 5 PERFORMANCE MONITORING FRAMEWORK FOR AN NFCS

17. Countries should have established an NFCS or components of an NFCS prior to using this framework.
18. The performance monitoring framework presents a cyclical process (refer fig 1) that includes three broad tasks: planning, monitoring, and system review. Performance monitoring is an on-going process, where each step feeds into the next step in the cycle and will be revisited over time.
 - Through the planning steps, the competent authority identifies specific and related outcomes through which the NFCS contributes to its objectives and identifies indicators that can measure progress toward the outcomes. The planning steps establish a foundation for monitoring and system review.
 - Through the monitoring steps, the competent authority collects data and generates the information necessary.
 - Through the system review steps, the competent authority uses information generated through the monitoring steps to assess the effectiveness and appropriateness of the NFCS. This can confirm that the relevant component(s) are operating as intended, and facilitate continuous improvement as necessary.

Figure 1: Performance Monitoring Framework



SECTION 5.1 PLANNING STEPS

19. The planning steps are arranged in logical order, in which a preceding step supports or enables the next step. For example, it is necessary to identify the intended outcomes (step 2) before identifying indicators to measure progress toward those outcomes (step 3).
20. Upon completion of these steps, the competent authority will have clearly defined the specific outcomes that the NFCS is designed to achieve and developed a plan for monitoring progress towards achieving these outcomes.

Step 1: Preparation

21. Effective performance monitoring requires organisational commitment, established processes, and sufficient resources and technical capacity. The first step of the performance monitoring framework is to conduct an assessment to determine the competent authority's current capacity for monitoring and system review. The following paragraphs may assist the competent authority in assessing their readiness to design and implement a performance monitoring framework.
22. Organizational commitment is essential for ensuring that monitoring and system review are prioritized and resourced as an integral component of the NFCS. The following questions can help the competent authority to assess the level of organizational commitment to monitoring and system review:
 - What are the legislative or policy objectives of the NFCS and how does the competent authority support those objectives?
 - How does the competent authority intend to support performance monitoring at various levels of the NFCS?
 - How does the competent authority intend to use performance monitoring data (e.g. to assess the effectiveness of the NFCS and take preventive or corrective action or improve the system as appropriate)?
23. Established processes for data collection and program management can be used for monitoring and system review. The following questions can help the competent authority to assess established processes that support monitoring and system review:

- What types of data are currently being collected?
 - How is the data used (i.e. what types of information is being generated and for what purpose)?
 - What are the existing processes for data collection and analysis?
 - What are the existing processes for ensuring data quality?
 - What are the existing processes for reporting data on results or progress toward goals or objectives?
 - How is data currently being used to assess the effectiveness of different programs or components?
24. Monitoring and system review requires sufficient financial and human resources with relevant expertise to support the collection and use of data. The following questions can help the competent authority to assess existing resources and technical capacity:
- What resources (financial, human, technical and material) are available to support monitoring and system review? How can existing resources be leveraged if necessary?
 - Does the competent authority have access to individuals with expertise in strategic planning, performance management, program management, analysis, and data management?
25. If the competent authority lacks sufficient capacity or resources to monitor performance of the entire NFCS, the competent authority may implement monitoring and system review in a phased or targeted approach, beginning with a limited number of priority components. The competent authority may use CAC/GL 82-2013 in conjunction with national goals to identify priority components for a phased or targeted approach.
26. If the competent authority decides to implement monitoring and system review in a phased or targeted approach, the competent authority should consider steps to address these challenges to enable comprehensive performance monitoring at a later date.
- If there is insufficient human resource capacity, the competent authority should develop a plan to develop capacity where necessary, setting the shortest possible deadlines for completion.
 - If there are insufficient financial resources available, the competent authority should seek out additional funding from national or international sources, setting the shortest possible deadlines for completion.
27. On a regular basis, the competent authority should revisit the above assessment. As capacity for monitoring and system review improves, or becomes available, the competent authority may consider a more comprehensive approach.

Step 2: Define Outcomes to Monitor and Evaluate

28. Monitoring and system review should go beyond measuring the outputs of activities and focus on measuring intended effects or outcomes. Outcomes capture what has to be achieved for success, as opposed to what processes or steps need to be completed. By defining and monitoring outcomes, a competent authority can make more informed decisions and better target its programs and resources to achieve the objectives it is seeking.
29. In addition to capturing what is to be achieved, outcomes should follow SMART criteria.
- Specific: What exactly is going to be achieved?
 - Measurable: Can the outcome be measured through qualitative or quantitative indicators?
 - Attainable: Is the outcome in line with the competent authority's competencies and authorities?
 - Relevant: Will achieving an outcome contribute to achieving the NFCS Objectives?
 - Time-bound: Can a timescale be defined for achieving the outcome?
30. The competent authority should engage relevant stakeholders in a participatory process for the identification and general understanding of the outcomes to be achieved.
31. The starting point for defining outcomes will depend on the competent authority's approach to monitoring and system review. In a comprehensive approach, a competent authority may start by defining an NFCS Objective or a national goal as the highest-level outcome to be achieved. If the competent authority decides to implement monitoring and system review in a phased or targeted approach, it should identify the highest-level outcome that is applicable to their approach.

32. After defining the starting point, the competent authority should ask “How will this be achieved?” to identify the next level of outcomes that contribute to achieving the highest-level outcome. There may be several intermediate or lower-level outcomes that contribute to achieving the highest-level outcome. The competent authority can ensure that all of the relevant outcomes have been identified by asking “What else is necessary?” to achieve the highest-level outcome.
33. This process of asking “How will this be achieved?” and “What else is necessary?” should be repeated for each intermediate and lower-level outcome until no further outcomes can be identified. For outcomes at the lowest-levels, the answer to “How will this be achieved?” will usually be outputs or activities.
34. Through this process, the competent authority will develop an outcome framework that visually reflects the causal or logical processes that contribute to achieving the highest-level outcome. When read from the top down, an outcome framework explains how each outcome will be achieved – by first achieving the outcomes at the next lowest level. When read from the bottom up, it explains why each outcome is important – because it contributes to achieving an outcome at the next highest level. See Appendix A for an example of a simplified outcome framework.
35. There are other approaches that may be used for identifying and visually displaying outcomes and their causal relationships, including logic models, program theories, or theory of changes.
36. Some outcomes may be beyond the full control of the competent authority in that they rely on other government entities or stakeholders to be fully accomplished. Such outcomes can still be monitored if they can be significantly impacted through the competent authority’s activities.
37. After identifying outcomes, the competent authority should map current activities that contribute to achieving the outcomes, assess gaps, and identify additional activities that could further contribute. Once current and potential activities have been identified, a competent authority can prioritize and schedule activities.

Step 3: Establish Indicators

38. Indicators are means for measuring achievement, reflecting changes, or assessing performance. Indicators should be established for each individual outcome.
39. Indicators may also be established for inputs and outputs to allow the competent authority to monitor how specific activities are contributing to specific outcomes. Various tools may be used to manage inputs and outputs, such as budgets, staffing plans, and activity plans.
40. Where there is limited capacity for monitoring and system review, the competent authority may choose to start with a limited number of indicators and increase the number of indicators as capacity expands.
41. As part of a phased or targeted approach, the competent authority may initially establish indicators for which there are existing processes for data collection and analysis or addressing priority components of the NFCS.
42. As the global knowledge base on indicators for NFCSs develops, the competent authority should consider these indicators as appropriate.
43. The process for selecting indicators should build on the review of established data collection processes conducted during the assessment phase.
44. The competent authority should convene a group of technical, substantive, and policy experts to brainstorm potential indicators for each of the outcomes identified in Step 2. Some examples of indicators are included in Appendix B.
45. Indicators may be qualitative or quantitative and should fulfil the following criteria:
 - unambiguous, easy to interpret, monitor and transparent.
 - closely linked to the outcomes (including timing) and meaningful from an organisational perspective.
 - amenable to independent validation and or verification.
 - Obtainable given available resources.
46. Among the many potential indicators that meet these criteria, the competent authority should consider the following information to choose the most direct indicators for which it is technically and financially capable of collecting and analysing data.
 - Frequency of data collection
 - Financial cost of data collection

- Challenges for data collection or limitations to interpreting the data
47. Measurement influences behaviour, so it is important to choose indicators that will incentivize the actions that will lead to achieving the intended outcomes.

Step 4: Create Monitoring Plan

48. To ensure that indicators are successfully integrated into the monitoring and system review function of a competent authority, a performance monitoring plan (PMP) should be created to provide detailed information on how performance data will be collected and analysed. For each indicator, the PMP should include:
- Explanation or definition of indicator
 - Source of data
 - Frequency of data collection
 - Methods for data collection
 - Methods for ensuring data quality
 - Methods for data analysis
 - Roles and responsibilities for data collection
 - Roles and responsibilities for data analysis
 - Roles and responsibilities for ensuring data quality
 - Baseline data
 - Targets
49. The competent authority should collect baseline data for each indicator. Baselines establish the current situation and are used as a starting point against which future performance will be measured. Additionally the collection of baseline data under a pilot program can serve to identify indicators that may not work.
50. After baseline data has been collected and as appropriate, the competent authority should establish targets for indicators. A target is a specified result that is to be realized within a specific timeframe. For some indicators, the target might simply be to “increase”, “maintain”, or “decrease” from the baseline.
51. When establishing targets, the competent authority should consider the baseline levels, the desired level of improvement, and the resource levels needed to meet the target.
52. For indicators with long-term targets, it may be helpful to identify sub-targets or milestones.

SECTION 5.2 MONITORING & SYSTEM REVIEW STEPS

53. Completing the steps above provides a foundation for making the monitoring and system review steps of the NFCS operational. These system review steps include: data collection, data analysis, reporting findings, and incorporating findings.

Step 5: Collect and Analyse Data

54. The PMP describes roles and responsibilities for data collection and analysis. Often, raw data will need to be managed in order to calculate indicators. Depending on the nature of the indicators, data analysis may include comparing results to baselines and targets and assessing trends over time.

Step 6: Report and incorporate findings

55. There are multiple uses for the information produced through monitoring and system review. Performance data should be presented in a clear and understandable format that is targeted to specific audiences and may be presented in various formats as appropriate (e.g. written summaries, executive summaries, oral presentations, visual presentations, dashboards).
56. Monitoring and system review is only useful if the findings are used to inform and influence the policy setting design and implementation of the NFCS. Simply reporting the data is not enough. The competent authority should institute approaches that will ensure the full integration of performance data. Some examples include:
- Conducting formal, regularly scheduled performance review meetings to assess continued appropriateness of activities and relevance of selected outcomes and associated indicators

- Integrating performance data into resource prioritization and budgeting decisions
 - Identifying and sharing best practices and lessons learned
 - Identifying gaps or problems that could be addressed with capacity building
 - Assessing other opportunities within the competent authority to use performance data
57. When the findings from performance monitoring and systems review reflect unfavourable results, problem-solving methods, such as root cause analysis, may be used to identify corrective actions.
58. As the use of performance data results in changes to policies, system design, or program implementation, the competent authority should revisit the planning steps.
- With any refinement or shift in national strategies or goals for the NFCS, the competent authority should review the outcome framework. Irrelevant outcomes should be discarded and new outcomes should be incorporated as necessary.
 - On a regular basis, the competent authority should also review the indicators used to monitor outcomes to ensure that they are meaningful and appropriate. Indicators that are not meaningful should be discarded and more appropriate indicators should be incorporated as necessary.
 - The PMP should be updated on a regular basis to reflect institutional changes, technological advancements, or evolving methods for data analysis.
59. Findings from monitoring and system review and subsequent changes to the NFCS should be communicated effectively and efficiently to ensure the clear exchange of information and engagement between all relevant stakeholders in the NFCS.

APPENDIX A: ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE OF A SIMPLIFIED OUTCOME FRAMEWORK

Highest-level outcome

Protect the health of consumers

Intermediate and lower-level outcomes

Increased industry use of effective controls to prevent contamination of food

Improved consumer awareness of food safety risks and mitigation strategies

Improved response to food safety emergencies

Increased industry compliance with evidence-based regulations to prevent contamination of food

Increased use of evidence-based controls not required by regulations

Increased industry compliance with requirements for the prompt removal of unsafe food

Increased traceability of food products

Increased industry knowledge of evidence-based regulations to prevent contamination of food

Improved enforcement of regulations to prevent contamination of food

Notes:

When read from the top down, an outcome framework explains how each outcome will be achieved – by first achieving the outcomes at the next lowest level. When read from the bottom up, it explains why each outcome is important – because it contributes to achieving an outcome at the next highest level.

Activities

Establish evidence-based regulations to prevent contamination of food

Provide industry training on regulations to prevent contamination of food

This is a simplified framework where not all outcomes have been expanded to the same level. Ideally, the competent authority should develop a framework that fully reflects the causal or logical processes that contribute to achieving its highest-level outcome.

APPENDIX B: ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES OF INDICATORS FOR SELECTED OUTCOMES

The following table provides illustrative examples of indicators for selected outcomes from Appendix A. When applying the performance monitoring framework, each country will establish indicators specific to their desired outcomes.

Examples of Outcomes	Examples of Indicators
Protect the health of consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • incidence of foodborne illness (# of cases per 100,000 population) (e.g., Salmonella) • average dietary exposure to chemical contaminants mg/kgbw per day (e.g., organophosphate pesticides)
Increased industry use of effective controls to prevent contamination of food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • percent of samples that test positive for microbial contaminants (e.g., Salmonella spp.) • percent of samples that test positive for chemical contaminants (e.g., organophosphate pesticide residues)
Increased industry compliance with evidence-based regulations to prevent contamination of food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • percent of farms using specified controls to prevent salmonella • percent of inspections for which food producers were found to be compliant with pesticide regulations • percent of inspections for which there is noncompliance by industry
Increased industry knowledge of evidence-based regulations to prevent contamination of food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • percent of food producers that are aware of current evidence-based regulations
Improved response to food safety emergencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • percent of recalled products that were recovered and destroyed or disposed of properly • average response time between the recognition of a food safety concern and initiation of recall
Increased traceability of food products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • existence of a food traceability tool/mechanisms (yes/no) • percent of domestic food producers with traceability practices • percent of imported foods that are tracked or registered using identifiers (e.g., barcodes, RFID)

PROJECT DOCUMENT FOR NEW WORK ON GUIDANCE ON THE USE OF SYSTEMS EQUIVALENCE

1. Purpose and scope of the proposed standard

The purpose of the work is to provide guidance to competent authorities of importing and exporting countries on the use of systems equivalence recognition as a means to further facilitate protection of the health of consumers and ensuring fair practices in the food trade. It is intended to cover situations where it can be reasonably expected that the national food control system (NFCS) of the exporting country will, on an ongoing basis, reliably deliver food that meets similar overall human health, food suitability and technical outcomes as achieved within the importing country. The scope of the guidance is intended to apply to the process for importing and exporting countries to follow when a request has been made by an exporting country for the recognition of the equivalence of the whole or part of its NFCS. In this regard it is noted that a NFCS includes import and export inspection and certification systems and has the objective of both protecting public health and ensuring fair practices in trade (CAC/GL 82-2013 paras 2 and 6).

The proposed guidance could be either an appendix to one of the existing CCFICS texts or a standalone document. As a consequence of this new work modification of existing texts might be necessary.

2. Relevance and timeliness

With the continuing globalization of the food trade and growth in associated consumer concerns, countries are increasingly prescribing not only standards for end products but also detailed production and processing requirements, resulting in increased requests for information, audit visits and product inspections. Better use of systems equivalence recognition where effective regulatory systems are already in place could reduce the burden on resources and unnecessary restrictions on trade caused by such processes. Specifically, it could provide for facilitated individual establishment listings, where required, and expedited border clearance processes based on confidence in the systems already in place in the exporting country to appropriately manage any risk associated with the trade to the level of protection required and achieved by the importing country.

The recognition of systems equivalence for all or part of the trade in food between countries has the potential not just to remove unnecessary restrictions on trade but also to free up resources in importing and exporting countries alike, which could be better allocated to manage more pressing areas of risk.

3. The main aspects to be covered

This new work will provide principles and processes for the initial consultation process to determine if more in-depth consideration of systems equivalence is appropriate; principles and processes possibly appropriate to an in-depth consideration of systems equivalence; and any additional guidance as required on the development of bilateral agreements to document the recognition of systems equivalence, including expectations for maintenance of the equivalence agreement. The new work will also consider the factors that facilitate the appraisal of systems equivalence, including criteria for Experience, Knowledge, and Confidence, as well as criteria for evaluating systems equivalence. The new work will consider the application of systems equivalence to countries at different stages of development.

4. An assessment against the *Criteria for the Establishment of Work Priorities*

General Criterion: Consumer protection from the point of view of health, food safety, ensuring fair practices in the food trade and taking into account the identified needs of developing countries.

The proposed new work will further facilitate the trade of safe food while freeing up resources to allow better targeting of greater risk scenarios, thus meeting the general criterion of consumer protection.

Criteria Applicable to General Subjects:

a) Diversification of national legislations and apparent resultant or potential impediments to international trade:

Countries are increasingly prescribing not only standards for end products but also detailed production and processing requirements, resulting in increased requests for information, audit visits and product inspections. Recognition of systems equivalence, where competent regulatory systems are already in place, could reduce the burden on resources and unnecessary restrictions on trade caused by such processes.

b) Scope of work and establishment of priorities between the various sections of work:

Refer to Scope above.

c) Work already undertaken by other international organizations in this field and/or suggested by the relevant international intergovernmental body(ies):

The WTO/SPS Committee's decision (G/SPS/19) provides for some further clarification on how WTO members should make use of the "equivalence" provisions of the SPS Agreement, i.e. Article 4. This decision strongly encourages the CAC to, on an ongoing basis, further progress its guidance covering the full scope of the decision. CCFICS has developed a number of standards that provide for the use of systems equivalence but to date has only developed specific guidance more targeted to the judgement of the equivalence of specific sanitary measures (CAC/GL 53-2003). Specific guidance on a process for the potential recognition of the equivalence of whole food control systems, or those covering specific food, is however currently lacking. Development of such guidance would further facilitate and enable better use of the existing Codex guidance: *Guidelines for the Development of Equivalence Agreements Regarding Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems* (CAC/GL 34-1999). The Committee will take into account any relevant international work in this area that is identified during the course of the work, such as the FAO/WHO Tool to assess National Food Control Systems.

d) Amenability of the subject of the proposal to standardisation:

The Committee believes that principles and guidelines can be developed to address the issues identified.

e) Consideration of the global magnitude of the problem or issue:

The Committee has assessed that there is currently a significant burden imposed on importing and exporting countries due to a lack of practical international guidance in this area. The scarcity of notified equivalence agreements to the WTO/SPS Committee in accordance with G/SPS/7/Rev.2/Add.1 is further evidence that additional guidance in this area is both timely and relevant.

5. Relevance to Codex strategic objectives

The proposed work is directly related to the purpose of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, according to its statutes, to protect the health of the consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade, as well as to the first Strategic Goal of the Codex Alimentarius Commission's Strategic Plan 2014-2019 "establish international food standards that address current and emerging food issues", and is consistent with Objective 1.2 "proactively identify emerging issues and member country needs and, where appropriate, develop relevant food standards". Further, it contributes to Activity 1.2.2 "develop and revise international and regional standards as needed, in response to needs identified by Members and in response to factors that affect food safety, nutrition and fair practices in the food trade". It is also consistent with Objective 1.3 "strengthen coordination and cooperation with other international standards-setting organizations seeking to avoid duplication of efforts and optimize opportunities."

6. Information on the relation between the proposal and other existing Codex documents

The proposed work will take into consideration the *Guidelines for the Development of Equivalence Agreements Regarding Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems* (CAC/GL 34-1999) and the *Guidelines for the Design, Operation, Assessment and Accreditation of Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems* (CAC/GL 26-1997). The original references to equivalence in both CAC/GL 26-1997 and CAC/GL 34-1999 incorporate a wider context for the concept and therefore can be said to explicitly contemplate the potential for systems equivalence determinations and agreements. However, neither document provides specific, practical guidance on how such evaluations should be made. The recently promulgated *Guidelines for National Food Control Systems* (CAC/GL 82-2013) also now provide a basis for a more common understanding of the generic components of NFCS among countries.

The *Guidelines on the Judgment of Equivalence of Sanitary Measures Associated with Food Inspection and Certification Systems* (CAC/GL 53-2003), was primarily developed to provide guidance on directly comparing the outcomes of a specified measure or set of sanitary measures rather than recognizing the equivalence of the system as a whole. It also does not provide specific, practical guidance on the recognition of those aspects of a NFCS relating to fair practices in the food trade. The proposed work will take into account those relevant aspects already covered by CAC/GL 53-2003 and how any proposed guidance will interface with this.

The proposed guidelines when completed are intended to be read in conjunction with the *Guidelines for the Design, Operation, Assessment and Accreditation of Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems* (CAC/GL 26-1997), and the *Guidelines for Food Import Control Systems* (CAC/GL 47-2003). The proposed guidance would also fit nicely with, and is a natural extension and progression of the *Principles and Guidelines for the Exchange of Information between Importing and Exporting Countries to Support the Trade in Food* (CAC/GL 89-2016).

7. Identification of any requirement for and availability of expert scientific advice

Not required.

8. Identification of any need for technical input to the standard from external bodies so that this can be planned for

Not required at this time.

9. Proposed timeline for completion of the new work, including the start date, the proposed date for adoption at Step 5, and the proposed date for adoption by the Commission; the timeframe for developing a standard should normally not exceed five years

Subject to the Codex Alimentarius Commission approval at its 40th session in 2017, it is expected that the work can be completed in two to three sessions:

- Consideration at Step 3 by CCFICS24
- Consideration at Step 5 by CCFICS25
- Adoption by the Commission

PROJECT DOCUMENT FOR NEW WORK ON

GUIDANCE ON PAPERLESS USE OF ELECTRONIC CERTIFICATES

Revision of *Guidelines for Design, Production, Issuance and Use of Generic Official Certificates* (CAC/GL 38-2001)

1. Purpose and scope of the proposed standard

The purpose and scope of the work is to develop a framework with guidance to assist the competent authority(ies) to develop and implement paperless electronic certification exchanges in food. Harmonized guidance would allow broader participation and promote consistency and simplify the development process for countries developing electronic certification solutions. The guidance can further help to evaluate the design and appropriate adjustment of required certification information and solutions that facilitate paperless electronic certification. The guidance would not be mandating a particular electronic certification system but functioning as a help to develop and modernize procedural systems that support the electronic availability as well as exchange of certificates in a consistent manner with a view to removing the requirement for paper certificates.

2. Relevance and timeliness

This proposal relates to the Codex *Guidelines for Design, Production, Issuance and Use of Generic Official Certificates* (CAC/GL 38-2001), and would support common understanding and implementation of paperless electronic certification.

An increasing number of countries are developing or have introduced electronic certification solutions. In recognising the increasing use and availability of electronic certificate information, guidance will facilitate countries to profit from existing experiences and benefits and help to cover the risks using electronic exchanged certificates instead of paper certificates.

Common understanding of, as well as adequate definition of electronic certificate exchanges with a view to removing paper certificates will help countries to efficiently invest resources in certification systems, where better guidance will encourage inclusion of more countries that use harmonised protocols and exchanges.

3. The main aspects to be covered

The initial work would focus on the review and revision of the *Guidelines for Design, Production, Issuance and use of Generic Official certificates* (CAC/GL 38-2001) to underpin the ability of the competent authority(ies) to engage in paperless exchange of electronic certificates with multiple partners.

The guidance would define fundamental concepts, including the development of key definitions and principles, necessary to understand and interpret requirements for exchange mechanisms, data mapping, and legal and regulatory changes needed to facilitate electronic certification systems.

The guidance would take into account, and be sufficiently flexible, for different countries having systems at different stages of development, depending on their national circumstances and may reflect a step by step approach towards paperless certification.

The work will take into account as appropriate related electronic certification efforts by international organisations like IPPC, OIE, WCO and WTO.

4. An assessment against the *Criteria for the Establishment of Work Priorities*

General Criterion: Consumer protection from the view of health, food safety, ensuring fair practices in food trade and taking into account the identified needs of developing countries.

The proposed work on guidance on paperless electronic certification is to assist countries in protecting their consumers from the point of view of health, food safety, ensuring fair practices in the food trade by promoting consistency and providing simplification of the development process of modernized procedural systems using paperless electronic certificate information.

The result of the work will enable countries to self-evaluate the dimensions of their capacity to adopt paperless electronic certification which contributes to increased consumer protection. The needs of developing countries will be taken into account by recognising that electronic certification and certification solutions in different countries may be at different stages of development.

Broader participation and promoting consistency and simplification of the development process for countries developing electronic certification solutions is relevant for import and export procedures worldwide.

Criteria applicable to general subjects:**a) Diversification of national legislations and apparent resultant or potential impediments to international trade:**

In general national legislations require paper certificates at the border as well as for legal issues related to import. National legislations may need to be amended to allow exclusive use of electronic certificates as a means to clear products at import. Additional guidance by Codex might assist countries in amending their legislation to support the use of electronic certificates with a view to remove paper.

b) Scope of work and establishment of priorities between the various sections of work:

Development of definitions to assist consistency in interpretation and implementation of requirements to facilitate paperless exchange of electronic certificates. Consistency in understanding and interpretation will be assisted by mapping of the electronic certificate data fields with the Codex generic model official certificate.

Codex work will focus on defining requirements for paperless exchanges of electronic certificates and the mapping of data fields to the generic model certificate.

c) Work already undertaken by other international organizations in this field and/or suggested by the relevant international intergovernmental body(ies):

With regard to the exchange of certificate information the work will also take into account the UN/CEFACT standards, International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) codes as well as UNTDED (United Nations Trade Data Elements Directory) for data elements.

Concerning electronic phytosanitary certificates IPPC has undertaken work. International standards and recommendations applied in the work by IPPC which are relevant for the work on paperless exchange of electronic certificates by Codex will be respected and where applicable implemented.

The Terrestrial and Aquatic Animal Health Codes of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) both include a chapter 5.2. "Certification procedures" that includes an article titled Electronic certification. This article was last amended in 2014.

The OIE is undertaking some preliminary work to collate activities currently being undertaken by relevant international organisations and some countries regarding e-certification but has no immediate plans to review Chapter 5.2. of the two Codes.

d) Amenability of the subject of the proposal to standardisation:

The Committee believes that principles and guidelines can be developed to address the issues identified.

e) Consideration of the global magnitude of the problem or issue:

Major concern is that deficiencies in Codex guidance on paperless electronic exchanges will exclude countries on the basis of ability to invest in various solutions making it unnecessarily difficult for developing countries.

Codex guidance on paperless certification is an essential contribution to global standardisation of paperless exchange of certificate information.

5. Relevance to Codex strategic objectives

The proposed work directly relates to Codex Strategic Goal 1: Promoting sound regulatory frameworks. Guidance on paperless electronic certification provides the basis for countries to undertake systematic self-evaluation of electronic certification capability and supports the electronic availability as well as exchange of certificate data for food in a consistent manner with the goal of removing the need for paper certificates.

6. Information on the relation between the proposal and other existing Codex documents

Though a reference for the use of electronic certificates already exists in paragraph 39 and 40 of the *Guidelines for Design, Production, Issuance and use of Generic Official certificates (CAC/GL 38-2001)* it is limited with regards to paperless certification.

Paperless electronic certification is about the use of the data elements contained in CAC/GL 38-2001. Equivalency between paper and electronic generic official certificates is consistent with the guidance in CAC/GL 38-2001.

In other Codex documents (*Principles for Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification CAC/GL 20-1995*; *Guidelines for Food Import Control Systems (CAC/GL 47-2003)*; *Model Certificate for Fish and Fishery Products (CAC/GL 48-2004)*; *Model Export Certificate for Milk and Milk Products (CAC/GL 67-2008)*) there is reference to CAC/GL 38-2001.

Guidance on paperless electronic certification supports and simplifies certification validity as mentioned in the *Principles for Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification (CAC/GL 20-1995)*.

7. Identification of any requirement for and availability of expert scientific advice

None anticipated.

8. Identification of any need for technical input to the standard from external bodies so that this can be planned for

None anticipated.

9. Proposed timeline for completion of the new work, including the start date, the proposed date for adoption at Step 5, and the proposed date for adoption by the Commission; the timeframe for developing a standard should normally not exceed five years

- Consideration at Step 3 by CCFICS24
- Adoption by the Commission

**PROJECT DOCUMENT FOR NEW WORK ON
GUIDANCE ON REGULATORY APPROACHES TO THIRD PARTY ASSURANCE SCHEMES IN FOOD
SAFETY AND FAIR PRACTICES IN THE FOOD TRADE**

1. Purpose

The purpose of the new work is to provide Codex members with guidance on the assessment and use of third party assurance schemes by competent authorities. The objective is to promote a harmonised and robust approach in countries' consideration of third party assurance schemes to enhance their regulatory arrangements and delivery of official controls within the National Food Control System (NFCS), with effective utilization of NFCS resources in order to improve food safety outcomes for consumers and fair practices in the food trade.

2. Scope

The guidance is intended to cover the use of voluntary⁴ third party assurance schemes as they relate to food safety and fair practices in the food trade as they relate to the National Food Control Systems (NFCSs).

This guidance excludes:

- Official inspection systems and official certification systems administered by a government agency having jurisdiction to perform a regulatory or enforcement function or both; and,
- Official recognised schemes that certify to a regulatory standard and for which membership is mandatory.
- Components of assurance schemes that are outside the requirements of the National Food Control System
- Private standards that are set under a buyer/seller contractual arrangement

3. Relevance and timeliness

Competent authorities are starting to consider how to make use of information derived from third party assurance schemes to inform their regulatory activities in regard to the NFCS. While current Codex guidelines include references to the use of third party assurance schemes there is no guidance that would assist a competent authority in assessing the robustness of a scheme, e.g. whether it meets criteria that would allow elements of the scheme to be leveraged for regulatory purposes. Codex is best placed to fill this gap given its status as the pre-eminent food standards setting body in the world, and the recognition afforded to its standards and guidelines by the World Trade Organisation.

4. The main aspects to be covered

The guidance will cover the following aspects:

- Definitions
- Roles and responsibilities: competent authorities, businesses, and scheme owners
- The core characteristics of voluntary third party assurance schemes
- Criteria used to assess the credibility and integrity of a scheme including e.g.:
 - Governance arrangements
 - Standard setting arrangements
 - Utilization of national/international standards for assurance
 - Audit/inspection and information exchange
 - Accreditation arrangements
 - Sanctions
- Regulatory approaches to integrate schemes into a country's NFCS, e.g. risk profiling and risk management decisions

⁴ Scheme membership is a business decision.

5. An assessment against the *Criteria for the Establishment of Work Priorities*

General Criterion: Consumer protection from the view of health, food safety, ensuring fair practices in food trade and taking into account the identified needs of developing countries.

The proposed new work responds to an emerging trend in some countries where efforts to support regulatory activities include taking account of third party assurance schemes in the planning and delivery of official controls to ensure compliance with food laws, and improve food safety outcomes and fair trade practices. Initiatives that aim to enhance a country's NFCS are designed to assure food safety outcomes and fair trade practices and provide a trusted platform for the sale of food on national and international markets.

For developing countries, third party assurance schemes may offer opportunities to help strengthen a country's NFCS.

Furthermore, public private partnerships may facilitate fair trade practices between countries with different regulatory systems through benchmarking common to many third party assurance schemes.

Hence, robust third party assurance schemes are a source of information and data that can be used by competent authorities to monitor aspects of their NFCSs in line with the Draft Codex Principles and Guidelines for Monitoring Performance of National Food Control Systems.

Criteria applicable to general subjects:

a) Diversification of national legislations and apparent resultant or potential impediments to international trade:

Some governments (e.g. the Netherlands, Canada) have developed policies on the use of third party assurance schemes, which can influence the risk characterization at the establishment level and the subsequent frequency of official intervention by the regulatory authority, allowing regulatory resources to better target areas of higher risk. Development of Codex guidance will provide a framework for a harmonised approach on how competent authorities can take into consideration voluntary third party assurance schemes to strengthen their NFCSs

b) Scope of work and establishment of priorities between the various sections of work:

Refer to scope above.

c) Work already undertaken by other international organizations in this field and/or suggested by the relevant international intergovernmental body(ies):

The project will take into consideration for example work undertaken by:

- The International Organization for Standardization (ISO), which has developed standards that support the integrity of third party assurance schemes. International Accreditation Forum (IAF) oversight (ISO/IEC 17011)
- The Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI), a non-governmental organization that establishes benchmarking criteria for food safety standards.⁵

d) Amenability of the subject of the proposal to standardisation:

There are many similarities in approaches in those countries that have started to take account of third party assurance schemes in their NFCSs suggesting that development of Codex guidance would be timely.

e) Consideration of the global magnitude of the problem or issue:

As competent authorities seek to modernize their regulatory regimes, some have begun to look more closely at ways to harness the opportunities that third party assurance schemes offer to complement, support and improve their regulatory oversight. These countries include: The Netherlands, Canada, China, Belgium, and the United Kingdom. There is a growing interest by other countries to leverage these opportunities. Guidance is necessary to promote a harmonized approach, assist those countries considering it, and to avoid future barriers to trade.

6. Relevance to the Codex strategic objectives and goals

The proposed new work is consistent with Codex's Strategic Vision Statement:

- *To be the preeminent international food standards-setting body to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade*

⁵ Global Food Safety Initiative website: <http://www.mygfsi.com/about-us/about-gfsi/what-is-gfsi.html>

The development of the guidelines also supports particular objectives and activities contained in the **Codex Strategic Plan 2014–2019**⁶, in particular:

Objective 1.2, Activity 1.2.2

- *Develop and revise international and regional standards as needed, in response to needs identified by Members and in response to factors that affect food safety, nutrition and fair practices in the food trade. Proactively identify emerging issues and Member needs and, where appropriate, develop relevant food standards.*

Objective 1.3, Activity 1.3.2

- *Promote cooperation with other international governmental and non-governmental standard setting organizations to support development of relevant Codex standards and to enhance awareness, understanding and use of Codex standards.*

7. Information on the relationship between the proposal and other existing Codex documents

The work will take into consideration existing Codex texts, such as the: *Principles for Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification* (CAC/GL 20-1995) and the *Guidelines for Design, Production, Issuance And Use Of Generic Official Certificates* (CAC/GL 38-2001); *Guidelines for Design, Production, Issuance and use of Generic Official Certificates* (CAC/GL 38-2001); *Guidelines for the Design, Operation, Assessment and Accreditation of Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems* (CAC/GL 26-1997); *General Principles of Food Hygiene* (CAC/RCP 1-1969); *the Principles and Guidelines for National Food Control Systems* (CAC/GL 82-2013) and, any other applicable Codex guidelines.

8. Identification of any requirement for any availability of expert scientific advice

Nil

9. Identification of any need for technical input to the standard from external bodies so that this can be planned for

Technical input is expected from for example the International Organization for Standardization, and the International Accreditation Forum.

10. The proposed time line for completion of the new work

- Consideration at Step 3 by CCFICS24
- Consideration at Step 5 by CCFICS25
- Adoption by the Commission

⁶ ftp://ftp.fao.org/codex/Publications/StrategicFrame/Strategic_plan_2014_2019_EN.pdf