

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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Agenda Item 6

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR NORTH AMERICA AND THE SOUTH WEST PACIFIC

Sixteenth Session

Nadi, Fiji

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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025

(Prepared by the Coordinator for North America and South West Pacific and the Codex Secretariat)

1. Introduction

1.1 The FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for North America and the South West Pacific at its fifteenth Session (CCNASWP15, 2019)¹ discussed the roadmap to implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan (2020-2025) and established an in-session working group (WG) to address the request from the Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CCEXEC) to the regions to provide details on the activities it would undertake to support the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 during 2020-2021.

1.2 The WG prioritized activities under Goals 1, 2 and 3 for the next two years for the region and identified the following activities:

Goal 1: strengthening the National Codex Committee (NCC); improving the performance of the CCPs by assigning qualified staff to that position; providing sufficient funding and resources; improving the linkages with the Codex Secretariat; and establishing and participating in the Pacific Islands EWG.

Goal 2: hosting a regional workshop with support from FAO and WHO on the use of expert scientific advice in the development of Codex standards; developing and implementing a workplan to generate relevant data to elaborate Codex standard, specifically referring to scopoletin in the regional standard for fermented noni fruit juice; and promote sustainable funding for scientific advice for use by Codex.

Goal 3: deal with lack of effective enforcement of Codex standards; coordination among relevant authorities; awareness of rules and responsibilities; ownership; and resources.

1.3 CCNASWP15 concluded that CCNASWP in the implementation of the SP would focus on the implementation of activities aimed towards achieving Goals 1, 2 and 3 and agreed to establish an electronic WG (EWG), chaired by Vanuatu and co-chaired by Fiji, to a) refine the activities to be undertaken in the region to support the implementation of the SP over the next two years taking into consideration the discussions at CCNASWP15; b) include the additional information required in the workplan on responsibilities, targets and approach for monitoring; and c) submit the proposed workplan for CCNASWP to the Codex Secretariat through the Regional Coordinator by 31st December 2019, for incorporation into the overarching workplan for implementation of the SP by the Strategic Planning sub-committee of CCEXEC. CCNASWP15 encouraged all Member countries to participate in the EWG to ensure that the work plan was realistic and achievable in the next two years while also reflecting on the priority needs of the region.

1.4 CCNASWP15 was also presented with the draft Regional Communications Workplan 2020-2025². CCNASWP15 adopted this workplan and agreed to work towards its implementation and liaise with the Codex Secretariat primarily through the Coordinator to execute the Communications Workplan between CCNASWP15 and CCNASWP16.

¹ REP20/NASWP, paragraphs 52-58

² CX/NASWP 19/15/11, Appendix I

2. Further process in developing the Regional Workplan for 2020-2021

2.2 The period 2020 and 2021 was an unfavourable period not only in the NASWP region but globally as the COVID-19 pandemic took its toll on people's lives and greatly impacted countries' economy. However, despite the global challenges and the need to postpone most Codex meetings, Codex Members were able to meet through virtual platforms and progress work.

2.3 Fiji and Vanuatu, as the new and previous Coordinator of CCNASWP, and EWG chairs, met with Members from the region virtually to further develop the regional workplan as commissioned by CCNASWP15.

2.4 A regional workplan with activities to be implemented in the CCNASWP region in 2020-2021 to support the implementation of the SP was submitted to the CCEXEC subcommittee and presented in a document from the CCEXEC subcommittee to CCEXEC81 (November 2021) together with workplans from other regions.³ The same document also included reports from the regional Coordinators on the major achievements and challenges in implementing the workplan in their regions and the next steps they envisaged.

3. Major achievements in the NASWP region during 2020-2022

3.1 Fiji has made significant progress in its role as regional Coordinator despite the challenges caused by the pandemic times including by

- i. Completing the CCNASWP Regional Workplan development through an EWG.
- ii. the successful assignment of a Codex Contact Point (CCP) through the office of the Chief Economist of the Ministry of Agriculture of Fiji to support their role of Regional Coordinator and establishment of a generic email address for communication.
- iii. updating of the contact list for each Member
- iv. strengthening of the NCC and increased participation of its members in various Codex meetings and activities, including the observance of World Food Safety Day which was organized through the Regional Coordinator office.
- v. Contributing to implementing the Regional Communications Workplan

3.2 Codex Members in the NASWP region continued to actively participate in and contribute to Codex work at the global level, using the possibilities the virtual platforms provided to the maximum extent. As such, the region has significantly contributed to the implementation of the SP at the global level,

3.3. Although the COVID-19 pandemic caused delays in the implementation of the regional work, considerable progress was made. Major achievements are outlined in Annex I.

4. Next steps for the region

4.1 Due to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic in progressing the implementation of the workplan, it is proposed that the workplan for 2021-2022 is maintained for the next two years and that some specific activities are carried out as indicated in Annex I.

4.2 A progress report on the Codex Communication Workplan (Annex II) summarizes the activities in terms of communication in the past two years and put forward suggestions on future plan.

³ CX/EXEC 21/81/5

Activities implemented and planned in the CCNASWP region to support the implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025

Priority Goal	Priority objective	Regional activities for the period 2020-2021	Major achievements during 2020-2022	Planned activities for 2023-2024
1. Address current, emerging and critical issues in a timely manner	1.2 Prioritize needs and emerging issues.	1.2.1 Improving the linkages with the Codex Secretariat through the CCP in member countries	Regional Members have successfully established a generic email address for communication with the Codex Secretariat and the Regional Coordinator.	Continued active participation of the region in all Codex meetings.
		1.2.2 Pacific Islands countries establishing or participating in relevant discussion groups or EWGs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The region through the Electronic Working Group (EWG) collaborated on the completion of the <i>Regional Standard for Kava Products for Use as a Beverage When Mixed with Water</i> which resulted in its adoption (at step 5/8) by CAC43 (2020). •The region through the EWG further developed the draft regional standard for fermented noni juice for consideration by CCNASWP16 •Timely response provided on emerging issues such as discussions on maximum residue limits (MRLs) for zilpaterol hydrochloride. •Active participations of the region in Codex meetings: Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC), Executive Committee of CAC (CCEXEC), Codex Committee on General Principles (CCGP), Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods (CCCF), Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling (CCMAS), Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS), and Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL). •Members from the SWP region participated at CCEXEC82 creating a regional hub bringing the regional coordinator, member and advisors together. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Develop a Standing Operating Procedure (SOP) on methods of analysis for Kava as proposed by CCMAS41. •Proper consultations with regional Members <u>should there be a need</u> for new Codex work from the region. As discussed and noted in CCEXEC82, ultimately decisions to work on specific new food sources and productions systems remain with the Members, through the endorsement or rejection of new work proposals by CAC.

Priority Goal	Priority objective	Regional activities for the period 2020-2021	Major achievements during 2020-2022	Planned activities for 2023-2024
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members in the region participated actively in CCEXEC's work on Statements of Principle and Future of Codex 	
2. Develop standards based on science and Codex risk-based principles	2.1. Use scientific advice consistently in line with Codex risk analysis principles	2.1.1 Hosting a regional workshop with support from FAO and WHO on the use of expert scientific advice in the development of Codex standards		
	2.2 Promote the submission and use of globally representative data in developing and reviewing Codex standards	2.2.1 Developing and implementing a work plan to generate relevant data to elaborate Codex standard, specifically referring to scopoletin in the Regional Standard for Fermented Noni Fruit Juice	Scientific advice is taken into account prior to the submission of scopoletin test results to the GEMS/Food database. This is to ensure that work is in line with Codex risk analysis principles.	
	2.3 Promote sufficient and sustainable funding for expert bodies that deliver scientific advice.	2.3.1 Promote sustainable funding for scientific advice for use by Codex		
3: Increase impact through the recognition and use of Codex standards	3.1 Raise the awareness of Codex standards	3.1.1. Conduct targeted activities (e.g virtual sessions) that increases understanding of Codex standards within governments and among national stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of Codex standards in National Food Regulations A training was held in Auckland, New Zealand. The Codex capacity building initiative was funded by the US Codex Office (USCO) and Australia, and implemented by the Global Food Regulatory Science Society (GFoRSS), in collaboration with Landolakes - 	A series of roundtable meetings are set to be held to support Members of the region to effectively participate in future Codex meetings under the Codex capacity building initiative in the region.

Priority Goal	Priority objective	Regional activities for the period 2020-2021	Major achievements during 2020-2022	Planned activities for 2023-2024
			<p>Venture 37, in partnership with the Codex Contact Points of Australia and New Zealand.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Coordination of nation-wide awareness events such as World Food Safety Day on the use of Codex standards., using kava as an example 	
	3.2 Support initiatives to enable the understanding and implementation /application of Codex standards	3.2.1 Promote coordination among relevant authorities	<p>The <i>Regional Standard for Kava Products for Use as Beverage when Mixed with Water</i> was adopted by the CAC in 2020. This was the first regional standard developed by CCNASWP and has had a significant impact in terms of efforts to expand trade of this product. The adoption of the standard has significantly impacted the Commercial Kava Pilot Program which has progressed to Phase 2 allowing the commercial importation of Kava into Australia for use as a food.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing collaboration work between the National Codex Committee and Government Departments in ensuring National Food Safety Standards are intact • Preventing food fraud and monitoring pesticide residue levels in fruits and vegetables.
4. Facilitate the participation of all Codex Members throughout the standard setting process	4.1 Enable sustainable national Codex structures in all Codex Member countries.	4.1.1 Strengthening the National Codex Committee (NCC) through training sessions including virtual sessions that promote the use of the FAO/WHO Diagnostic Tool for Assessing Status of National Codex Programmes	<p>Establishment of NCCs in Member countries throughout the region.</p> <p>Capacity building in Fiji and Vanuatu to support their role in CCEXEC</p> <p>Capacity building to support applications from eligible countries to Codex Trust Fund (CTF)</p>	
		4.1.2 Improving the performance of the CCPs by assigning qualified staff to that position; providing sufficient funding and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •All Members in the region has successfully assigned a Codex Contact Point (CCP). •Samoa and Tonga are recipients of CTF support whereas Fiji has been approved for funding and is awaiting the final agreement. 	<p>Each Member develops a National Codex Committee (NCC) structure to ensure that NCC members actively participates in regional discussions, EWG and Codex meetings specifically on issues that could directly impact trade in the region trade and support incorporation of standards in national food regulations.</p>

CODEX COMMUNICATIONS WORKPLAN – PROGRESS REPORT

(Prepared by the Codex Secretariat)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for North America and the South West Pacific at its fifteenth Session (CCNASWP15) acknowledged the importance of prioritizing regional Codex communications and adopted the Regional Communications Workplan 2020-2025⁴ with the objectives of establishing clear communication channels and communicating the value of Codex Standards in the region.
- 1.2 Both traditional and social media offer opportunities for raising awareness of Codex issues whether at the highest political level or when reporting, for example, on technical and capacity building initiatives. The Communications Workplan had two key objectives; i) to establish clear communication channels e.g. through the creation of rapid communications groups and ii) to communicate the value of Codex standards in the region. The Communications Workplan also aimed to contribute to the implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025, namely Strategic Goal 3 “Increase impact through the recognition and use of Codex standards”; in particular Objective 3.1 “Raise the awareness of Codex standards”. This paper highlights the progress made on implementation of the Regional Communications Workplan and proposes that the region maintain such a work plan moving forward.

2. SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

Objective 1: Establish clear, communication channels

- 2.1 The Coordinator has worked to continue communication among Members in the region by means of email.
- 2.2 It is also important that Members ensure that the official contact detail of their CCP⁵ are up to date as this ensures that they receive formal communications from the Codex Secretariat. Updates can be provided directly to Codex@fao.org.
- 2.3 CCNASWP15 set a target that by CCNASWP16, 75 percent of Members/Observers surveyed would indicate timeliness, accessibility and quality of Codex regional communications “excellent” or “good”. To facilitate receipt of information on this, a very short survey has been developed. Members are encouraged to complete this survey at: <https://forms.office.com/e/ubtx5q2uub> which will only take 2-3 minutes and the results will be provided during the discussion on Agenda Item 6.

Objective 2: Communicate the value of Codex standards in the region

- 2.4 The proposed activities under this objective primarily related to sharing information related to success stories in the region, stories on food safety, standards work or capacity development initiatives in the region and activities undertaken under Codex Trust Fund (CTF) projects. There has been an effort in the region to document and communicate activities through the preparation of short web stories that have been subsequently published on the CCNASWP news page⁶ on the Codex website.
- 2.5 Over the past three years World Food Safety Day has provided the main incentive to raise awareness on food safety and share information on national and regional initiatives. Six countries in the region have contributed stories since CCNASWP15⁷. While not quite reaching its target of 50 percent of countries contributing to news items, this represents an improvement.
- 2.6 Published news on the Codex website provides valuable information about key achievements from Members on food safety issues, beyond awareness raising and training and presents a low resource opportunity to communicate on activities in the region. In particular, it could be valuable for the small island developing states to share their experience, successes, ongoing challenges and future needs. The Codex Secretariat remains available to provide support and guidance in this area and can share the approach of other regional coordinators in making improvements in this area through ongoing encouragement of members to share information on their activities and progress, however small.
- 2.7 There are currently two CTF recipient countries in the region, Samoa and Tonga. Sharing information on activities and initiatives implemented under the CTF is a valuable means of sharing experiences and lessons learned and highlighting progress. This is an area which could be further exploited in terms of communications moving forward.

⁴ CX/NASWP 19/15/11, Appendix I

⁵ List of CCNASWP CCPs: <https://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/committees/codex-regions/ccnaswp/members/en/>

⁶ <https://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/committees/codex-regions/ccnaswp/about/en/>

⁷ Australia, Canada, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, USA, Vanuatu

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

3.1 The regional communication channels are currently based around email exchanges, and this is an area that has scope for expansion. With regard to Objective 2, World Food Safety Day served as an important driver, and this can be further exploited. The CTF can also provide an opportunity for improving communications. Moving forward, efforts should be made to continue to build communications into all initiatives to maintain this situation, as well as to engage other Members in the region to share their experiences.

3.2 In this context, it is recommended that CCNASWP16:

- renew its commitment to the Communications Workplan, as updated in Annex II;
- continue its efforts to enhance the regional communications network; and
- enhance efforts to communicate on and promote its food safety and standard setting efforts and successes.

ANNEX II

PROPOSED REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS WORKPLAN 2023-2024

The table shows the objectives, activities, targets and indicators for the CCNASWP Regional Communications Workplan. These elements derive from Strategic Goal 3 of the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025 “Increase impact through the recognition and use of Codex standards”; in particular Objective 3.1 “Raise the awareness of Codex standards”.

Objectives	Activities	Responsible party	Targets	Indicators
1. Establish clear, communication channels	<p>1.1. Consolidate and improve information flow and exchange between countries and Codex Secretariat (CS)</p> <p>1.2. Establish simple and rapid communications methods (e.g. WhatsApp or similar. A system that is optimal for the members in the region)</p>	<p>1.1 Member Countries and CS</p> <p>1.2 Regional Coordinator (RC), Member Countries and CS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By CCNASWP17, 80% of Members/Observers surveyed indicate timeliness, accessibility and quality of Codex regional communications “excellent” or “good” 	Number of survey responses rating regional communications “excellent” or “good”
2. Communicate the value of Codex engagement and use of standards in the region	<p>2.1. Provide CS with monthly drafts of web stories capturing food safety, standards work or capacity building initiatives in the region</p> <p>2.2. Promote regional success stories and initiatives in conjunction with CS and FAO/WHO</p> <p>2.3 Liaise with Codex Trust Fund beneficiary countries in the region to communicate on every phase of CTF projects</p>	<p>2.1 Member Countries, RC</p> <p>2.2 CS, RC, FAO/WHO</p> <p>2.3 CTF Beneficiary Countries, FAO/WHO, CS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By CAC46, 10 news items from countries in the region published By CCNASWP17, 30 news items from countries in the region By CCNASWP17, 50% of countries in the region have make a contribution to Codex news on the regional webpage 	<p>Number of CCNASWP news stories published</p> <p>Number of countries who have made a published contribution</p>