

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION **E**



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

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**REPORT OF THE SEVENTY-EIGHT SESSION OF THE
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION**

WHO Headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland, 10 - 14 February 2020

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission held its Seventy-eighth Session (CCEXEC78) at the Headquarters of the World Health Organization (WHO), in Geneva, Switzerland, from 10 to 14 February 2020. The Chairperson of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC), Guilherme da Costa Junior (Brazil), opened the session. The Assistant Director-General Universal Health Coverage/Healthier Populations WHO, Naoko Yamamoto and the Acting Head of the Food Safety and Quality Unit of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Markus Lipp welcomed the participants on behalf of the parent organizations.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Agenda item 1)¹

2. CCEXEC78 adopted the provisional agenda with the addition, under item 9 Any other business, of:
 - i. Dealing with Exceptional Interruptions to Codex Meetings (proposed by the Codex Secretariat);
 - ii. Delegate's Contact Information in Codex Reports (CRD1) (proposed by the Regional Coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean);
 - iii. Rescheduling of Codex meetings due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak (proposed by the Codex Secretariat);
 - iv. Update from the meeting on practical guidance for Electronic Working Groups (EWGs) held in Brussels on 30-31 January 2020 (proposed by the Codex Secretariat); and
 - v. Status of the proposed resolution of the World Health Assembly "Strengthening efforts on food safety" (proposed by the Codex Secretariat).
3. The Codex Secretary stated that the Member for Africa (Tanzania) had informed the Secretariat that they were unable to participate in the session and had proposed that their advisor from The Gambia, be exceptionally authorized to actively participate in CCEXEC78 discussions on behalf of the Member for Africa. With a view to ensuring a fully geographically represented debate, CCEXEC78 agreed with the proposal on an exceptional no-objection basis.
4. The Member for North America drew the attention of CCEXEC78 to the presence of the European Union (EU) as advisor to the Member for Europe, requesting the Representative of the Legal Counsel of WHO to clarify whether this was in line with the formal declaration by the European Community (EC) at the 18th session of the Codex Committee on General Principles (CCGP)² stating: "*Although the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters of the FAO considered that the participation of a Member Organization in the Executive Committee depended on the functions and activities of this Committee, the European Community declares formally that it gives up in every case the possibility of taking part in the proceeding of the Executive Committee when a Member State of the European Community is elected for the Region of Europe.*" She noted further that this was a commitment and condition of EU membership in Codex Alimentarius and that FAO rules did not permit a member organization to participate in committees with restricted membership.
5. The Member for Europe indicated that the statement of the EC had not been accurately reflected since the end of the declaration reads: "*and that an agenda item would be of European Community competence*" and noted that all items on the agenda of this meeting were of EU Member State competence.
6. The Member for Europe clarified that they had chosen their advisors in good faith not to represent countries or organizations, but to advise them in the interest of the Codex Alimentarius Commission as a whole; that the Procedural Manual (PM) did not provide any specific rule on the participation of advisors in the Executive Committee and that at previous sessions of CCEXEC (in 2012, 2013 and 2014) a staff member of the EU had participated as an advisor to a previous Member for Europe (France).
7. The Member for North America stated that there was no declaration of division of competence in CCEXEC as specified in the PM, which made it impossible for members to know if EU participation was consistent with the declaration presented at CCGP18.

¹ CX/EXEC 20/78/1; CX/EXEC 20/78/9; CX/EXEC CRD 1

² ALINORM 03/33A, para 76

8. The Representative of the Office of the Legal Counsel of WHO stated that the matter was complex and related to the accession of the EC to FAO and later to Codex and also related to the participation of advisors in the CCEXEC which had evolved. Extensive research would be needed to provide detailed advice on the question to CCEXEC79. The Representative suggested that CCEXEC agree with the participation of a staff member of the EU as advisor to the Member for Europe at the current session on the understanding that this would not constitute a precedent that could influence further decisions on this matter.
9. CCEXEC78 acknowledged the proposal of the Representative of the Office of the Legal Counsel of WHO to provide detailed legal advice to CCEXEC79.

THE ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION (AGENDA ITEM 2)³

10. The Chairperson introduced the agenda item and explained that the document was a revision of a Conference Room Document (CRD)⁴ made available to CCEXEC75, which had not yet been discussed by CCEXEC. He noted that the document addressed various issues related to CCEXEC work in accordance with its mandate that might be enhanced in order to strengthen the function of CCEXEC as an executive branch of CAC rather than a negotiation body.
11. CCEXEC78 discussed the document section by section.
12. With regards to acting as a “think tank” (3.1.1) members noted that CCEXEC could have such a role, but it was necessary to take into account the workload of CCEXEC, recalling that CCEXEC had not had time to complete its agenda at recent sessions. It was highlighted that CCEXEC should focus on its core functions and the efficient execution of its specific mandate and, in particular, the Critical Review.
13. With regards to consensus building (3.1.2), CCEXEC78 acknowledged the important commitment that the Chairperson and Vice-chairpersons had made after their election in 2017 to attend all subsidiary body sessions and their useful contribution to consensus building in Codex work. It was noted that these experiences had also been useful in the context of the Critical Review work.
14. Regarding the official status of the Chairperson and the Vice-chairpersons when participating in sessions of CAC subsidiary bodies or external events, the Representative of the Office of the Legal Counsel of WHO recalled that relevant advice had been given in the CCGP⁵ and that with one exception (CCGP) in relation to the Chairperson, participation was as part of their national delegation. It was further noted that the Commission was officially represented by the Secretariat at external meetings. Because of a number of implications including costs, the advice had been not to create a “Codex bureau”, but this could be revisited if needed.
15. With regards to representation of a Member of CCEXEC at subsidiary bodies there was a general sense that no single individual could represent CCEXEC. However, if Members of CCEXEC attended a subsidiary body meeting they could use that experience to feed into discussions at CCEXEC.
16. With regards to science-policy interface (3.2.2) it was noted that the intent of this proposal was to explore whether the expertise of observers from technical organizations could be harnessed to ensure that Codex standards were pragmatic and implementable and that this could contribute to uptake of Codex standards and thereby support Goal 3 of the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025.
17. CCEXEC78 recalled that the Critical Review documents (including comments from chairpersons) could be used to identify crosscutting issues where discussion by CCEXEC might add particular value, something that had also been noted by CCEXEC77.⁶ CCEXEC78 acknowledged the essential role of CCEXEC in the Critical Review and noted that this would be further discussed under agenda item 4.1.
18. In response to the point identified during the Critical Review by CCEXEC77 and raised by the Coordinator for Asia regarding the review of the sequencing and frequency of meetings of Codex committees specifically those which do not meet annually, the Codex Secretary reconfirmed that a discussion paper on the this matter would be presented to CCEXEC79.
19. CCEXEC78 was of the opinion that its work related to the applications from non-governmental organization (NGO) for observer status did not represent a considerable workload and that there was no need to change the current practice. However, some new arrangements such as consideration of new applications at each session of CCEXEC could be considered to speed up the endorsement process.

³ CX/EXEC 20/78/2

⁴ EXEC/75 CRD/3

⁵ REP12/GP, paras 86-93

⁶ REP19/EXEC2

20. With regards to the proposal to give more guidance on which issues should be discussed by CCGP and which by CCEXEC, CCEXEC78 was of the opinion that the Terms of Reference (ToR) for CCGP and the mandate of CCEXEC were clear and that there was no need to further elaborate on these.
21. One member while agreeing not to re-open the CCGP ToR stated that it was important to create awareness of how different tools allowed Codex to undertake its work in an efficient and inclusive manner and noted that some topics benefitted from discussion in a forum open to all members such as CCGP.

Conclusion

22. CCEXEC78 recognized the importance of the document on the role of CCEXEC and welcomed the initiatives taken by the Chairperson and Vice-chairpersons in attending the CAC subsidiary bodies meetings, noting that it was not necessary to change the current procedures in this regard. CCEXEC78 underlined that such attendance did not constitute formal representation of CCEXEC members in CAC subsidiary bodies.
23. While wishing to maintain Rule IX.6 of the Rules of Procedure, which specifies that the Directors-General of FAO and WHO approve NGO applications "on the advice of the Executive Committee", CCEXEC78 was of the opinion that the Codex Secretariat together with FAO and WHO could explore mechanisms to speed up the process.
24. CCEXEC78 agreed that it was not necessary to develop procedural guidance on the division of work between CCEXEC and CCGP since the current mandate and procedures were sufficient.

IMPLEMENTATION OF CAC42: FEEDBACK ON CHANGES AND PROPOSALS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS (Agenda item 3)⁷

25. The Codex Secretariat introduced the document noting the changes made to the organization of CAC42 following comments made at CAC41 to focus on the core business of the Commission. Changes included:
 - a limited number of speakers for the opening session;
 - removing items from the formal CAC agenda; and
 - holding side events on the report writing day only.
26. The Secretariat noted the overall positive feedback received regarding these changes.
27. CAC42 delegates had in addition noted areas for improvement such as:
 - the communication on announcements for evening session arrangements (as it had been unclear that substantive sessions would continue after elections); and
 - the time-management of agenda items with extended and challenging discussions.
28. The Secretariat also noted that feedback received from the informal meeting of the chairpersons led by the Chairperson of CAC42 had been included in the document.
29. CCEXEC78 discussed the document and noted:
 - The positive impact of the efforts made by the Secretariat to date;
 - The value of providing a provisional schedule for agenda items before CAC sessions to orientate both chairperson and delegates;
 - The value of providing CAC Chairperson with flexibility in the management of the session (e.g. by extending the available interpretation time) so that informal discussions among interested parties could be held as needed;
 - The value of informal engagement prior to CAC sessions (e.g. informal meetings between the Chairperson and Vice-chairpersons with Members provide an opportunity to better anticipate and manage the discussions);
 - The importance of including relevant informal meetings of chairpersons of subsidiary bodies, CAC Chairperson and Vice-chairpersons and Members in the official programme of CAC to facilitate the authorisation of participation by Members;
 - The usefulness of the Codex Chairperson's Handbook to explain how to manage meetings and facilitate consensus and that it could be updated with additional guidance as needed;

⁷ CX/EXEC 20/78/3

- The development of guidance for Members on participation in meetings/meeting etiquette could assist delegates and potentially facilitate discussions at CAC; and
- The importance of sharing the details and outcome of CCEXEC78 discussions with the wider Codex membership to increase awareness on the issues of time management and consensus-building.

Conclusion

30. CCEXEC78 requested that:

- i. The Codex Secretariat
 - a. continue implementing the changes that had been made for CAC42 in the planning and implementation of CAC43;
 - b. clearly communicate the timing of sessions, especially planned evening sessions. The Secretariat should also make a provisional schedule available before CAC43;
 - c. give further consideration to the development of a handbook for delegates; and
 - d. bring the information in this discussion to the attention of all subsidiary bodies.
- ii. Chairpersons of subsidiary bodies and CAC together with the Secretariat:
 - a. develop strategies to prevent or mitigate technical discussions at CAC on topics for which there was no consensus and communicate these strategies to Members. Such strategies may include short adjournments of the session for informal discussions or suspension of discussions on items that overrun the planned time limit; and
 - b. ensure that, at meetings of CAC, written comments received were given due consideration and the technical basis of reservations were included in meeting reports.

REGULAR REVIEW OF CODEX WORK MANAGEMENT 2018-2019: CRITICAL REVIEW PROCESS (Agenda item 4.1)⁸

31. The Codex Secretariat introduced the document on the second phase of the review concentrating on the impact of the critical review. The findings of the first phase dealing mainly with the presentation of the relevant document had been available at CCEXEC77⁹ and the feedback of the revised presentation had been positive.
32. The Secretariat noted that issues raised in the document were linked to other topics under discussion in CCEXEC (e.g. the role of the CCEXEC, periodic review of Codex standards) and in CCGP (e.g. amendments and revisions).

Discussion

Section 2: Coherence between CCEXEC recommendations and CAC decisions

33. CCEXEC78 noted that there was a very high degree of coherence between CCEXEC recommendations and CAC decisions indicating that current practices and procedures were working well. It was also noted that the presentation and content of the Critical Review had improved in recent years.

Section 3: History of three particular cases of discontinuation

34. The Secretariat introduced three case studies, where CAC had not followed CCEXEC recommendations for discontinuation of work immediately and sometimes with over five years delay and noted that these cases were informative and had been used to develop the qualitative analysis in section 5.

Section 4: Presentation of the Critical Review to CAC

35. The Secretariat noted that while the Critical Review did not have the power to impose decisions on CAC, it should be assumed that its recommendation would have impact, which could be enhanced by the Chairperson when reporting on the Critical Review and when ruling on controversial cases.

Section 5: Qualitative review of the Critical Review process

36. *New work*: The Secretariat noted that with regards to new work, a *Guideline on the Application of the Criteria for the Establishment of Work Priorities (Criteria Applicable to Commodities)* existed, whereas a guideline was never developed for general subjects. Before engaging in the development of additional guidelines, the usefulness of the present guideline for commodities should be evaluated. CCEXEC78 agreed that this should be explored.

⁸ CX/EXEC 20/78/4

⁹ CX/EXEC 19/77/5

37. *Identifying needs of developing countries:* The Secretariat noted that there was no guidance on how to take the needs of developing countries into account when reviewing new work proposals.
38. *Advice on the coordination of work:* The Secretariat noted that the concept of a cross-committee task force was introduced in this part of the critical review definition but that there were also other ways to facilitate and promote cooperation between committees such as alignment of the meeting schedule and parallel EWGs such as those piloted between CCRVDF and CCPR.
39. CCEXEC78 noted that cross-committee cooperation including joint EWGs was important and should be encouraged and taken into account in future work planning.
40. *Project document:* The Secretariat noted that there might be benefits in reviewing the requirements for project documents to facilitate the work of subsidiary bodies and CCEXEC. This could assist in prioritizing projects in line with the Codex core mandate i.e. protect consumer health and promote fair practices in food trade.
41. *Ongoing work:* The Secretariat noted that there was little guidance on this task.
42. One Member stated that there would be merit in providing more guidance to undertake the critical review for ongoing work and especially to make the “Criteria to facilitate the conduct of monitoring progress of standards development” developed by CCEXEC57 (2005)¹⁰ and CCEXEC58 (2006)¹¹ and endorsed by CAC29 (2006)¹² visible and accessible. CCEXEC78 noted that this would be further discussed when considering the format and structure of the PM at CCGP32.
43. *Final adoption:* The Secretariat noted that the guidance in the PM was very limited and included “linguistic consistency” and “format and presentation” which were Secretariat duties. Consideration of more substantive aspects and obstacles encountered during standards development could ensure smoother adoption by CAC.
44. There was no interest expressed to work further on this question, as it was noted that CCEXEC already reviewed documents more in depth than that required by the procedure.

Other discussions

45. The Secretariat, regarding possible changes to the PM, clarified that the intention was to facilitate the current process that had developed over the years and keep the rules flexible to allow future improvement.
46. CCEXEC78 recognized that CCEXEC could provide guidance and advice to subsidiary bodies and that subsidiary bodies could also seek advice from CCEXEC and that such exchange could take place outside of the Critical Review process.
47. The Coordinator from Europe recalled her experience as coordinator for the largest region with 52 members, which is very diverse and with many new Member countries and four working languages, making it difficult to coordinate, also in light of the many important issues and the fact that the coordinating committees only meet every two years.
48. The Member for Europe highlighted that interaction between CCEXEC and other bodies also depended on an atmosphere of acceptance and trust and was linked to a discussion at CCEXEC70, which had identified six key areas for Codex work management, namely: strategic governance; responsiveness to emerging issues; consensus; cross collaboration amongst Codex committees; effectiveness and representativeness of CCEXEC; and efficiency of CCEXEC and CAC¹³. The Member further recalled Article 6 of the Statutes of CAC referring to the need to ensure “adequate representation” in CCEXEC.
49. The Member for Latin America and the Caribbean noted that these issues had already been debated at length and resulted in a consensus on what we have now in CCEXEC.
50. The Chairperson suggested that the Member for Europe could present a paper on why these matters should be re-discussed, taking into account comments made at the session.

Conclusion

51. CCEXEC78 concluded that the Critical Review was overall an efficient and effective work management tool and that there was no urgent need to revise it substantively while recognizing that improvements could be further discussed.
52. CCEXEC78 requested that the Codex Secretariat consult and bring proposals to CCEXEC on the following aspects:

¹⁰ ALINORM 06/29/3 (2005), paras 52-63

¹¹ ALINORM 06/29/41 (2006), para 13

¹² ALINORM 06/29/41 (2006), para 13

¹³ REP15/EXEC, para 55

- i. revisions to the content and format of project documents to improve their utility for the Critical Review for new work, revisions and amendments of Codex texts, and development of related guidance for committees;
 - ii. cross-committee cooperation, and in particular the potential for, or any impediments to, the establishment of joint EWGs; and
 - iii. how to give more weight to the outcome of the Critical Review in discussions at CAC.
53. CCEXEC78 noted the Chairperson's request that the Member for Europe present a paper for discussion at a future meeting of CCEXEC on the geographical representation of CCEXEC in the light of Article 6 of the Statutes of CAC.

FOLLOW-UP TO REGULAR REVIEW OF CODEX WORK MANAGEMENT 2017-2018: PERIODIC REVIEW OF CODEX STANDARDS (Agenda item 4.2)¹⁴

54. The Codex Secretariat provided an overview of the current procedures for the review of Codex standards, the tools that facilitated such review, and the specific practices of selected subsidiary bodies. External factors contributing to the review of Codex standards were also identified. It was noted that while the date of revision or amendment of Codex standards was included in the standard, this did not provide the reader with details of the nature or location of the changes made, which could be substantive or only an alignment of the text with changes to a general standard.
55. CCEXEC78 noted that CCGP32 would consider a paper relating to revisions and amendments of Codex standards covering aspects such as clearer version control and differentiation between revisions and amendments.
56. The paper provided more visibility on the different processes used to review Codex texts. Discussions revolved around the four areas identified in the recommendations in the document as follows:

Enhancement of work management processes:

- It would be useful to encourage committees that do not currently have a mechanism in place to undertake a periodic review of standards, to consider the possibility of developing such a mechanism;
- The use of different processes by different subsidiary bodies was considered appropriate given their different mandates.
- While many subsidiary bodies had effective work management processes in place, there may, in some cases, be value in improving those with regard to standards revision.
- While the current process gave all Members the opportunity to propose revisions, it could be challenging for resource limited countries to initiate a review of a standard.

Tracking standards review and enhancing the visibility of standards review work:

- Incorporating a question on revision of standards in the critical review could be a reminder of the need to review Codex standards.
- Increasing the visibility of older standards could prompt Members to review them.
- Older standards may be perceived as being no longer relevant. It could be considered how the validity of standards that had never been revised or amended could be reconfirmed.
- Periodic surveys to Members on the potential revision of certain standards, followed by a CCEXEC review of the feedback, may provide a stimulus to update old standards, and would inform goal 3 of the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025.

Process to review standards of Committees adjourned sine die:

- It was acknowledged that while the PM provided guidance on the revision of standards developed by adjourned or abolished Committees, it was necessary to create more awareness of the procedure to be followed in a clear and accessible manner to help Members apply it.

¹⁴ CX/EXEC 19/77/8

Role of FAO and WHO in raising issues for review

- The importance of having a scientific basis for review, based on the outcomes of FAO/WHO expert meetings was emphasized.
- The possibility for FAO and WHO to initiate a review process based on new or emerging public health concerns or trade issues information was also highlighted.

Conclusion

57. CCEXEC78:

- i. concluded that the current approaches to standards review were working for active subsidiary bodies, and encouraged these bodies to continuously enhance their work management processes to consider the need for reviewing existing Codex standards;
- ii. requested the Secretariat to increase awareness and visibility of the procedures for revision of standards that were developed by Committees that have since been adjourned and provide additional guidance to facilitate application;
- iii. requested the Codex Secretariat to consider whether a more active approach to prompt Members to the need for revision might inform Goal 3 of the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025; and
- iv. encouraged FAO and WHO to continue raising any issues/proposals related to the review of Codex Standards based on new or emerging public health concerns or trade issues which may need to be addressed.

FOLLOW-UP TO REGULAR REVIEW OF CODEX WORK MANAGEMENT 2017-2018: USE OF REFERENCES IN CODEX TEXTS (Agenda item 4.3)¹⁵

58. The Codex Secretariat introduced the document noting the absence of rules on the use of references to other standard-setting organizations.
59. Current references to other standard-setting organizations or their standards in Codex texts concern methods of analysis and sampling; are used to demonstrate the intent of a standard; and provide additional guidance on a certain aspect of a Codex text.
60. The Secretariat clarified that references to methods of analysis are not sporadic but an integral and consistent part of Codex standards.
61. The Secretariat further clarified that the use of references so far had not caused problems with regards to intellectual property rights.
62. CCEXEC78 noted that CAC subsidiary bodies were aware of the consequences of including either references to, or content of, other standards and largely kept such references to the minimum level necessary.
63. It was also noted that other standards setting organizations may have more limited membership and may develop standards in a less transparent manner than Codex.

Conclusion

64. CCEXEC78 emphasized that while there may on occasion be merit in including references to standards of another standard setting organization, these should be kept to a minimum since they become an integral part of a Codex text and require life-long monitoring.

FOLLOW-UP TO REGULAR REVIEW OF CODEX WORK MANAGEMENT 2017-2018: RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Agenda item 4.4)¹⁶

65. The Secretariat introduced the recommendations and their budgetary implications one by one:
66. *Recommendation A: Establishing a single focal point for observer organizations in the Codex Secretariat:* The Secretariat reported that work on providing more clarity on communication pathways for Observers was ongoing.
67. *Recommendation B: Information and Communications Technology (ICT) solutions to provide more tailored support:* The Secretariat noted that help desk support on the EWG platform was already being provided to both Members and Observers. Further assistance would have to be budgeted for 2022-2023.

¹⁵ CX/EXEC 19/77/7

¹⁶ CX/EXEC 19/77/8

68. *Recommendation C: Assess the specific needs of Codex Contact Points (CCPs) that also served as contact points for other standard-setting organisations:* For the Codex Secretariat to undertake this work, it would have to be budgeted for 2022-2023. In the interim, CCPs could use the Codex Trust Fund (CTF) diagnostic tool to assess their needs.
69. *Recommendation D: OECD led “partnership for effective international rule-making”:* CCEXEC78 noted that participation would have value as regards, for example, measuring the impact of standards but should not place any additional burden on resources. The Representative of the Office of the Legal Counsel of WHO noted that eventual participation by the Secretariat in the OECD led partnership, in addition to the participation by FAO and WHO as organizations, would need to take place under certain conditions and provided that the terms concerning the participation in the partnership were satisfied.
70. *Recommendation E: Future guidance for observers:* It was noted that guidance either as a handbook or on the Codex website could help clarify questions that standard-setting organizations and other observers may have regarding the procedures for initiating new work or standard reviews in Codex. It was also noted that this was similar to the guidance requested for Members under Agenda Item 4.2.
71. *Recommendation F: Individual follow-up with reviewed organizations:* The Secretariat reported on ongoing communication with the reviewed organizations and attendance at external meetings when possible and after prioritization of Codex core activities.
72. On recommendations B to E, it was noted that the needs of Members should be given priority in work and budget planning and existing tools should be exploited to the greatest extent possible to address the review recommendations.

Conclusion

73. CCEXEC78 concluded that:
- i. recommendations A and F were being implemented to the extent possible;
 - ii. for recommendations B and E, efforts to develop guidance and ICT should focus on Members as the priority but may incorporate relevant guidance and support to Observers;
 - iii. for recommendation C, there were tools available from the Codex Trust Fund (e.g. diagnostic tool) to assist CCPs in identifying their needs, and
 - iv. for recommendation D, the Codex Secretariat could observe the OECD initiative as a means of learning from other standard setting organizations and to inform the implementation of goal 3 of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025, provided participation was not overly demanding on resources, and conditions to attend those meetings were met by the Secretariat of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

COMMUNICATIONS WORK PLAN 2017–2019: IMPLEMENTATION STATUS (Agenda item 5)¹⁷

74. The Codex Secretariat introduced the paper noting highlights and conclusions to finalise the 2017-2019 reporting period of the communications work plan.
75. The discussion is available as a verbatim record in English, French and Spanish (Appendix II).
76. CCEXEC78 congratulated the communications team of the Codex Secretariat on the achievements and successful completion of the Codex Communications Work Plan 2017-2019 and noted that the Codex Communications Work Plan 2020-2022 would be presented at CCEXEC79;
77. CCEXEC78 further noted the need for sufficient resources to be made available to continue delivering effective communications in Codex.

Conclusion

78. CCEXEC78:
- i. encouraged all Members and Observers, especially through the recently adopted regional communications work plans, to continue to actively contribute to the promotion of Codex with all stakeholders, especially policy makers, and
 - ii. encouraged all Members and Observers to support World Food Safety Day 2020.

¹⁷ CX/EXEC 20/78/5

WORK PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC-PLAN 2020-2025: INTERIM REPORT OF THE THIRD STRATEGIC PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE (AGENDA ITEM 6)¹⁸

79. The Chairperson of the CCEXEC sub-committee on the implementation of the Strategic-Plan 2020-2025 introduced the item, with reference to the background document and the Chairperson's report of the physical meeting of the sub-committee that had taken place immediately prior to CCEXEC78. It was agreed to use the report of that meeting as the basis for discussion.

Review of the work plans developed by the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees

80. CCEXEC78 noted:

- the work plans already developed or near completion by each of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees (RCCs) and welcomed the focus on priority activities to be undertaken in 2020 and 2021;
- that it will be the responsibility of the Regional Coordinators to lead on the co-ordination of these activities some of which may benefit from inter-regional collaboration; and
- alignment of the proposed activities with the actions for Member States contained within the food safety resolution that is expected to be adopted by the World Health Assembly in May 2020.

Commissioning input from other Codex actors

81. Consideration was given on whether specific inputs should be sought from other Codex actors (Members and Observers, parent organizations and chairpersons of subsidiary bodies) to the work plan. In this regard CCEXEC78:

- agreed that the sub-committee should not attempt to seek specific input from Members and Observers, but noted that information could be added on a voluntary basis and CCEXEC should remain open to additions to the work plan;
- agreed that the Chairperson of the sub-committee should work together with representatives of FAO and WHO with the aim of ensuring that relevant FAO and WHO activities can be cross-referenced to the appropriate strategic goals/objectives;
- noted the importance of sensitizing Ministries of Agriculture and Health on Codex and food safety issues and requested the collaboration of FAO and WHO regional and country offices in this regard;
- noted the resource limitations of FAO and WHO regional and country offices to support country level initiatives, but nevertheless highlighted that all opportunities should be availed of to ensure these offices were aware of Codex and food safety (e.g. briefing of FAO country representatives by the Codex secretariat when they visit FAO headquarters); and
- agreed that the Chairperson of the sub-committee should reach out to the chairpersons of subsidiary bodies for their input.

Provisional proposals from the Secretariat for activities to support implementation of strategic goals 3 and 5 of the strategic plan.

82. With regard to strategic goal 3, CCEXEC78:

- agreed that the Codex-wide communications plan and the communications plans adopted by the RCCs at their meetings in 2019 all supported delivery of objective 3.1 and should be appropriately captured in the work plan to support implementation of the Strategic Plan;
- noted and welcomed the activity proposed by the Codex Secretariat for the next two years relating to development of stories to illustrate the impact of the use of Codex standards, which supports delivery of objective 3.3 of the Strategic Plan; and
- agreed that it was important to provide Members with opportunities to discuss and consider appropriate means to measure the impact of Codex and therefore welcomed the plan to discuss monitoring the implementation of Codex standards at CCGP32.

83. With regard to strategic goal 5, CCEXEC78:

- supported prioritization of the ongoing engagement on the Critical Review process and potential improvements, improving the efficiency and ease of use of information technology infrastructure, and exploring and piloting how machine translation and other technologies may support the more regular

¹⁸ CX/EXEC 20/78/6, CRD 2

conduct of Codex work, and faster translation of documents, in more of its six official languages, noting these would support implementation of objective 5.1; and

- supported the proposals to continue to hold workshops for host secretariats and chairpersons of subsidiary bodies, to facilitate the transition from outgoing to incoming regional coordinators in five of the six Codex regions, the completion of guidance for host country secretariats, revision as needed of the Codex Chairpersons' Handbook, and the development of a handbook for Codex delegates, noting these would support implementation of objective 5.2.

84. CCEXEC78 was reminded that these proposals were still subject to budgetary confirmation.

Monitoring and Evaluation

85. CCEXEC78 noted the importance of ensuring that activities of subsidiary bodies, particularly in relation to goals 1 and 2, were monitored and reported on, although they may not be explicitly included in the work plan.

86. The Codex Secretariat informed CCEXEC78 about progress indicators that were annually monitored and reported upon since 2014 under the Codex Strategic Plan 2014-2019 and consequently could be used to help define a baseline for progress related to objectives under the new strategic plan, including among others:

- participation in physical committee meetings;
- EWG registrations;
- duration of standard development and revisions;
- number of standards adopted, progressed and new work agreed;
- timeliness of working documents; and
- website statistics and social media outreach among others.

87. The Codex Secretariat also stressed that challenges in measuring progress persisted in relation to:

- scientific input (quality and quantity) from developing countries and engagement of scientific experts;
- use of Codex standards,
- national food safety governance systems (platform); and
- Members' partnership or network activities on Codex and foresight.

88. The importance of using this information in developing the monitoring and evaluation framework for the Strategic Plan was emphasised.

Next steps

89. CCEXEC78 noted that the key follow-up activities for the sub-committee in collaboration with the Codex Secretariat, FAO and WHO included incorporation of the final two regional work plans, development of the monitoring and evaluation framework; reaching out to chairpersons of subsidiary bodies and FAO and WHO for their inputs and drafting the final report of their work.

90. In terms of the report of the work of this sub-committee, CCEXEC78 agreed that the work should be completed in a timely manner, with a report agreed and forwarded to the Codex Secretariat no less than two months before CAC43.

THE APPLICATION OF THE STATEMENTS OF PRINCIPLE CONCERNING THE ROLE OF SCIENCE: INTERIM REPORT OF THE CCEXEC SUB-COMMITTEE (Agenda Item 7)¹⁹

91. The Chairperson of the CCEXEC sub-committee introduced the item and summarized the process that had been undertaken by the sub-committee since its inception. The Codex Secretariat introduced the document noting that it contained a summary of the replies received in response to a Circular Letter (CL), and an overall analysis of comments received. The comments pointed to overall support for the Statements of Principle (SoP) on the Role of Science as included in the PM and the importance of their implementation. While a number of replies indicated that the SoP simply needed to be applied consistently, there were also requests for more clarity and guidance that could facilitate their use for standards advancement in general.

92. The Member for Europe clarified that the number of replies was twice as high as mentioned in the interim report due to the coordinated position of the EU Member States.

¹⁹ CX/EXEC 20/78/7, CX/EXEC CRD 3

93. The Codex Secretariat further noted that the received comments reiterated the importance of the role of science in Codex standard setting and that the successful adoption of a large number of Codex standards demonstrated that the chairpersons and delegates were successfully applying the guidance in the Codex PM to facilitate consensus. The Codex Secretariat also presented the results of the first physical meeting of the CCEXEC Sub-committee on the Application of the SoP, and CCEXEC78 agreed to use this report as the basis for progressing their discussions. It was clarified that the current CCEXEC discussions also allowed the regional coordinators to bring the perspectives of members in their region to the attention of the committee.
94. The Representative of FAO pointed out that a coherent application of the SoP would not only require consistent interpretation by Codex chairpersons, but also by Codex Members, which in turn may require closer cooperation among Member States to ensure a harmonized interpretation.

Discussion

95. CCEXEC78 noted that the conclusions of the physical meeting of the Sub-committee reflected personal ideas expressed in that context.
96. CCEXEC78 first discussed its understanding of the term “operationalization of the statements of principle” based on what had been developed in the meeting of the sub-committee. It was not considered necessary to develop a definition as CCEXEC78 understood operationalization to mean the development of practical guidance to ensure consistent application of the SoP by Codex chairpersons.
97. CCEXEC78, in a first round of interventions, noted the following:
- Operationalization is practical guidance which needs certain pre-requisites: awareness and common understanding of the SoP among chairpersons and delegates; clarity on some of the aspects related to the application of the SoP such as other factors/other considerations; understanding of the chairpersons’ needs.
 - The SoP, in particular statement 4, contained several terms which were open for interpretation (e.g. other considerations) and there was a need to explain these terms to ensure their consistent application e.g. through use of examples.
 - The ToR of the sub-committee did not include reopening the SoP as set out in the PM.
 - Any future guidance on the operationalization should also be part of guidance for delegates (e.g. a handbook for delegates, if developed).
 - All available documents on the matter should be considered when developing the draft guidance, (including CX/EXEC 19/77/10 and comments from the regions²⁰).
 - CAC42 had made decisions based on CX/EXEC 19/77/10 and that the working document for this session was CX/EXEC 20/78/7.
98. CCEXEC78 also discussed possible actions developed in the meeting of the sub-committee and agreed with the proposal from a Member that a first draft of the guidance could be developed by the Secretariat, FAO and WHO.
99. There was a substantive discussion on the nature and placement of the guidance.
- The Coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) expressed concern with the development of guidance if at any stage this could alter the PM since existing information in the PM was deemed sufficient by Members of the region to guide the chairpersons in applying the SoP.
 - The Member for Europe, underlining the need for guidance on the application of the SoP, noted that any explicit restriction on making improvements to the PM in future could prevent coherent operationalization of the SoP. The Member also recalled the decision of CAC42²¹ that it was desirable to reinforce transparency and the possibility for all Members to give input to the work of the sub-committee by e.g. holding informal discussions on the issue at CCGP.
 - The Coordinator for Europe informed CCEXEC that this topic had been discussed informally in the margins of the last CCEURO meeting and brought the conclusions of this discussion to the attention of CCEXEC78 as contained in Codex/CX/EURO 19/31 CRD9.
100. In light of these discussions CCEXEC78 noted that it was not the intention of the current effort to make changes to the PM.

²⁰ CX/EURO 19/31/CRD9

²¹ CAC42 paras 11-12

Conclusion

101. CCEXEC78 noted the progress made at the physical meeting of the sub-committee as contained in CRD3 and requested that:
- i. the Codex Secretariat in collaboration with FAO and WHO develop a first draft of the practical guidance in accordance with the ToR of the sub-committee, having consulted the chairpersons of the Codex subsidiary bodies to obtain feedback on their understanding and application of the SoP;
 - ii. the Codex Secretariat make available the draft guidance on the electronic discussion forum of the sub-committee in advance of the second physical meeting planned to take place immediately prior to CCEXEC79;
 - iii. the CCEXEC sub-committee consider the draft guidance at its second physical meeting (immediately prior to CCEXEC79) and advise CCEXEC79 on the next steps required to complete the work including steps to ensure the transparency of the process.

TIMELINESS OF CODEX WORKING DOCUMENTS (Agenda item 8)²²

102. The Codex Secretariat introduced the document, which identified potential reasons for delays of documents and suggested possible solutions. It was noted that the document addressed delays regarding the English language versions only, and that delays with the first language version (normally English) caused further delays with the other language versions.
103. The Secretariat highlighted that delays in timely distribution of documents was an issue and that during 2014-2019, the average percentage of working documents distributed two months before the session had remained relatively stable at around 40 percent, irrespective of the overall number of working documents produced. Bodies with the greatest challenges with late documents had been selected for further examination (CCEXEC, CAC, CCPR and CCCF), which had shown that the reason for late documents were not uniform and that delays in document distribution did not necessarily correlate with disruptions or delays in the actual development and progression of standards. It was further noted that CCPR and CCCF were among the most prolific and successful subsidiary bodies of CAC.
104. Members emphasized that while understanding that documents could be delayed, timely distribution was important and should always be pursued, as Members needed to prepare for their participation in Codex meetings, including consulting with stakeholders.
105. The Secretariat noted that for Government representatives as well as FAO and WHO colleagues, Codex was not their only assignment and that the Codex Secretariat was involved in many other activities beyond creating working documents that contributed to the overall workload and subsequent delays. It was also noted that Committees had the possibility to reject late documents for discussion. The Representative of FAO noted that limited resources in the parent organizations contributed to late distribution of documents and pointed out that there was a choice between having late or fewer documents.
106. It was recognized that while the overall intention was to facilitate effective working in Codex and always seek to improve, timeliness may vary from one committee to another and working practices have evolved over time with electronic distribution replacing postal paper distribution. It could be useful to invite Committee chairpersons and host secretariats to revisit their practices regarding deadlines.
107. A measure to mitigate negative effects related to possible delays could be to have more transparency on the status of documents on the Codex website, which may help empower committees to have workable mechanisms. The Secretariat informed that it would work towards more predictability regarding availability of documents, while continuing to record and monitor distribution in a transparent way, proposing deliver in instalments when possible.
108. One Member noted the need for support to Host Secretariats on how to follow up on document preparation in order to ensure timeliness.

Conclusion

109. CCEXEC78 acknowledged the importance of timely distribution of Codex documents while noting that:
- i. reasons for lateness of documents were not uniform and depended on the nature of the documents being prepared; and
 - ii. delays in document distribution do not necessarily correlate with disruptions or delays in the actual development and progression of standards.

²² CX/EXEC 20/78/8

110. CCEXEC 78 requested the Codex Secretariat to:

- i. continue monitoring and documenting the document distribution dates and delays in a transparent way;
- ii. distribute documents in instalments where this makes sense (e.g. Critical Review; Commission documents);
- iii. provide a realistic timeline on the distribution of documents for CCEXEC and CAC taking into account the overall workload; and
- iv. continue encouraging EWG chairpersons to develop realistic timelines for submission of reports.

111. CCEXEC78 also requested that the Secretariat bring the information in the document to the attention of subsidiary bodies for their review and suggestions.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS (Agenda item 9)

Dealing with Exceptional Interruptions to Codex Meetings²³

112. The Codex Secretariat introduced the item, which focussed on the consequences of the unexpected security situation at the Twenty-first Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for LAC held in Santiago, Chile in October 2019 (CCLAC21) where it had not been possible to continue with the meeting. The Secretariat described how work was continuing via online tools on a non-objection basis in response to delegates requests to continue the business of the committee, while also acknowledging concerns with regards to following procedures. The Secretariat also raised the issue of which mechanisms or procedures may be required in the future for other scenarios where meetings could not be completed. The Secretariat cited the specific and extremely unpredictable instances witnessed during CCLAC21 where the public were no longer admitted due to security concerns and where the plenary had not been in a position to decide how to continue as it was not in session when the suspension of the meeting had been decided by the host country.

113. The Coordinator for LAC acknowledged the support of delegates and the Codex Secretariat in what, at that time, had become a situation where safety was the primary concern. Nevertheless, the experience raised questions about what appropriate procedures to follow in similar circumstances might be.

114. The Codex Secretary reiterated that safety was always the primary concern in such situations and that only as a secondary consideration was it now possible to explore how to serve the membership in finalizing the discussions.

115. The Representative of the Office of the Legal Counsel of WHO noted that the events at CCLAC21 represented an exceptional situation and that subsequent adjustments in procedure that had been made in order to complete the business of the session were understandable due to the nature of the circumstances.

Conclusion

116. CCEXEC78:

- i. acknowledged the difficult challenges faced by the Regional Coordinator, host secretariat, participants and the Codex Secretariat with regard to the conduct of CCLAC21 and expressed appreciation for the efforts made by the Regional Coordinator to ensure the security of all participants and subsequently to adopt a session report by virtual means;
- ii. noted the ongoing effort to complete the discussion of the CCLAC21 agenda by correspondence, recalling that this was an exceptional situation and while the interest of the membership to conclude their discussions was to be applauded, this process should not be considered as a standard procedure within Codex;
- iii. encouraged the Codex Secretariat to work with host secretariats to ensure that there was awareness and preparedness to address potential security situations at Codex meetings;
- iv. requested the Codex Secretariat to be prepared to the extent feasible, to deal with exceptional situations should they arise in the future.

²³ CX/EXEC 20/78/9

Rescheduling of Codex meetings due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

117. The Codex Secretariat confirmed that due to the ongoing situation with COVID-19 the planned 52nd session of the Codex Committee on Food Additives (CCFA) had been scheduled to take place in Lanzhou, China from 22 to 26 June 2020. The Secretariat further confirmed that the 52nd Session of the Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues (CCPR52) would not proceed as originally scheduled and that discussions were ongoing to identify new dates for the session.
118. The Chairperson of CCFA (Advisor to the Member for Asia) underlined the difficulties they were experiencing as hosts in attempting to reschedule a Codex meeting in a busy calendar and before the annual CAC meeting (July 2020). The CCFA Chairperson highlighted the challenges in identifying appropriate channels of communication to set new dates bearing in mind the number of stakeholders involved and the inevitable technical difficulties the committee would face in delivering meeting reports and texts for the Critical Review in a reduced timeframe.
119. The Codex Secretary acknowledged the extremely challenging situation and confirmed that everything possible was being done with maximum flexibility to ensure the continuity of the CCFA and CCPR work programmes. In this context the Codex Secretariat identified the adoption of standards by CCEXEC80 if it is authorised to do so on an exceptional basis by CAC43, as one option being considered to allow timely advancement of standards proposed by CCPR52 when meeting after CAC43.

Update from the meeting on practical guidance for Electronic Working Groups (EWGs) held in Brussels on 30-31 January 2020

120. The Codex Secretariat reported that the workshop had been held with a cross-section of Codex Members particularly involved in EWGs to complete its commitment under the regular review of Codex work management to develop practical guidelines relating to the implementation, management and reporting of EWGs.
121. The Secretariat confirmed they planned to present a completed handbook at CCEXEC79 (June 2020).

Status of the proposed resolution of the World Health Assembly on “Strengthening efforts on food safety”

122. The representative of WHO confirmed that the draft resolution “Strengthening efforts on food safety”²⁴ would go to the 73rd World Health Assembly in May 2020. The resolution recognised a number of important areas of work of interest to the Codex membership including strengthening the scientific advice programme and promoting increased use of Codex texts nationally.
123. CCEXEC78 acknowledged this important development also within the context of the new Strategic Plan 2020-2025. CCEXEC78 further noted the support the resolution had received at the recent RCCs (and the future contribution they could provide in the implementation of the strategy described in the resolution) and the importance of ensuring support for the scientific advice programme.

Including delegate contact information in Codex reports²⁵

124. The Coordinator for LAC introduced the item and noted how valuable they considered the contact information for attending delegates that had until recently been provided in all Codex meeting reports.
125. The Codex Secretariat, in response to support for the position presented by the CCLAC Coordinator, confirmed that the change removing such data had been introduced initially at CAC42 in Geneva in line with current WHO practice. The Secretariat agreed to seek a solution to make personal information available. Possible options to be explored included an opt-in preference for sharing contact details to be expressed by individual delegates during meeting registration or a solution where such data would be available behind a login.

²⁴ EB146/CONF./9 – available: http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EB146/B146_CONF9-en.pdf

²⁵ CX/EXEC CRD 1

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**VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT OF CCEXEC78 DISCUSSION ON AGENDA ITEM 5
COMMUNICATIONS WORK PLAN 2017–2019: IMPLEMENTATION STATUS**

Chairperson: Agenda item five. The communications work plan implementation status. I would like to congratulate the special effort that David and the team have made until the issue of communication has become a basis on which to build and enter into Codex strategic planning and contribute to achieve the goals of Codex Alimentarius. But it has become an approved means of communication between the Codex Commission subsidiary bodies and at the same time to deliver Codex Alimentarius to everyone everywhere. So I leave the word to David to summarize for us thank you. You have five minutes for the video and for your presentation.

Codex Secretariat: Thank you, Madam Chair. You give me a time limit. The document that you will need for this agenda item is displayed on the screen. CX/EXEC/78/5. Hands up if you haven't read, it. Thank you, friends.

Codex Secretariat: A major test for the success of communications. We will dim the lights as well, but stay awake. A major test for the success of communications will be how many members and observers know about what we do. So last Sunday, I ran a quick straw poll with you asking which communications tools you were aware of. And this is what you said. My apologies to the interpreters. There is no script, but the speakers are all in the room and they know what they said.

[video clip]

Codex Secretariat: Ok. The paper covers all the areas all the data all the numbers of the work plan. And I will welcome questions from you at the end. I just would like to focus briefly on what in the paper we called the highlights. And again, interpreters, it's only pictures, no words, so. World Food Safety Day; the Codex web site; Social media; the workshops; publications and then working with the regions.

Codex Secretariat: Starting with World Food Safety Day. This was my favorite picture. This was, I believe, Vietnam. And I put this at the top of the presentation to remind you that 2020 June 7th is on its way and we'll be reaching out to you very, very shortly. We have great response from the regions. We had great response from FAO and WHO in the regions as well. And we look forward to continued support. The guide has been cleared and is being published as we speak and will shortly be available. But I love the Vietnamese.

Codex Web site. In the paper, we gave you some statistics about the Codex web site, and just out of curiosity, I ran the analytics again today and those are the results. We're always amazed, actually, Mexico has gone to second place after a long reign at the top of the Codex charts. It makes us wonder where our servers are, but we see we have a lot of engagement through the web site. And as I say in the paper, the most visited areas of the web sites are the databases. And this is why I think we will be looking very, very carefully about trying to upgrade the usability of that. We believe in FAO we have a window of opportunity with a change in leadership in in many different areas. And we hope to be able to move forward with that. We think we need to raise the level of those tools.

Codex Secretariat: Secondly, sorry, thirdly, social media. The social media numbers continue to grow, which is a direct reflection on the effort put in. My advice to all of you always is never open a social media account. It is a massive, massive commitment. Thanks to the team led by Giuseppe, which includes Giuseppe and Giuseppe. We manage to have a strong game. The data is in the paper, but we are very proud of the fact that in our very, very niche area, we are one of the most, certainly always in the top three, of channels providing information about our very, very specific area of work. The next phase would be to take us into the tens of thousands, but that would require finding and engaging with a new audience, beyond the specific safety of food safety or standards community.

Codex Secretariat: Several countries and I'm thinking of India, for example, have been very, very good at using public figures and celebrities in their messaging on food safety. And I think perhaps we can get some involvement for that, maybe for World Food Safety Day.

Codex Secretariat: When we come to the regions, I will underline again how different they are. And I think the way that they are able to engage locally is amazing. So social media, we're very, very pleased with that.

Codex Secretariat: Moving on to workshops, why am I so pleased with this picture? Because we didn't organize the workshop and we didn't take the picture. This has been the work of. In this case, Egypt, together with FAO. And like many other countries, I could list the ones off the top of my head, Senegal, recently, Burkina Faso all doing amazing work. Kazakhstan took their work around the region to the less experienced countries. So to see countries using our tools and using the step process and running workshops is really very rewarding for us to see. And I think in this particular example, there were three, if not four workshops in the series and also the work done through WHO and FAO and through the Codex Trust Fund of course. I can show you some more examples of that from every region. So, in Ghana, this was a trust fund project. Again, this is India. And we didn't organize it. This is India with a trust fund project. The regional group project with Bhutan and Nepal. Thank you. This one was with us. This was in the LAC region. We did Vanuatu. Amazing being able to engage with the other side of the world and then back again to Kazakhstan for the CCEURO region. So workshops for us, face to face engagements in a non-formal setting.

Codex Secretariat: The chairs we've put together, we had another workshop in the in the period. And this was very successful. And the thing I liked about this workshop and also the ones we've had more recently is that we're also looking at improving the products that come out of them. So the Chairs' handbook and any updates we do to that is a positive product that comes out of this engagement.

Codex Secretariat: Publications we're very proud of where we've come from and where we're going, too, with publications. We worked with Australia to produce what was for me the first really technical publication, aside from, of course, all the standards we produce. And that was a very, very interesting experience. And we continue to have plans for more publications in the future also based on the feedback that you all give us about what's needed. So I'm glad you noticed them. And we try to make sure at least we have three languages and I think for some, for the couple of these, four, five and six languages. So not bad.

Codex Secretariat: My final highlight really is with the regions and the regional coordinators. I see working with the regions where we have huge value and potential, and I want to thank the coordinators for always being so available, so proactive and skillful in pushing their regions to do more. CCAFRICA had the crazy idea of creating a WhatsApp group for the whole continent. And we did. And we have and it's working. Although I think the coordinator would like to remove a couple of people to achieve consensus.

Codex Secretariat: We set very modest targets in the regional communications work plans. And let's see, with the help of the coordinators if we can deliver on those by the time we get to the Commission. You remember I showed you this, this charts of where the regions were at. And since we've had the regional meetings, really pleased that they've all been proactive in coming to us with their content. Even the EU. I think India is still in the lead, though.

Codex Secretariat: I always say to colleagues in the Secretariat or in the presentations I give that I'd love us to have a front page story on a national newspaper. One of the ones that I read and of course CCAFRICA does this every year. And again, this shows that the different way that countries can engage with a huge number of people. This Kimutai was a national daily. Yes. Around the time. And India. Exactly the same. I don't have the picture here from India, but exactly the same. Yesterday, The Guardian did have a story which mentioned FAO, and of course WHO is all over the news at the moment, but it had an FAO story and a 28 words quoting someone from FAO. So I think if we can get food safety there unfortunately, this was about locusts, but we are we're working on it now.

Codex Secretariat: Okay. Visuals in the regional meetings. I spoke to you about the importance of visuals. And my colleague Roberto is probably not here. He's working. He's up there. Roberto's, up there. He takes many of our photos. Say hello, to Roberto. And these visuals that we have in meetings are very nice, but they're very nice for people who are at the meetings. All of you know that we are looking all the time for more pictures, more stories which shine the light on the good that Codex does this. This is one of Roberto's pictures. Yes. And this actually, again. Thank you. Coordinator for Europe. This is a picture from your team, which actually we used today on UN Women's UN Women Scientists, Women in Science Day. So, we've been promoting that. And these pictures, like the stories, allow us to say so much more.

Codex Secretariat: As we say in the paper, all of this requires resources and support. So in my conclusions, Madam Chair, the original communications work plan did have an objective which looked at the document management, and that's more or less been taken over though by reporting on the strategic plan. The ... but what we are trying to do with this agenda item and this is why Roberto is sitting up there, is that we're going to see if our pilots on artificial intelligence, if and how technology can assist us. And we are always alert to try and improving the tools that we have introduced. There'll be a survey before the next Commission, because

that was that's kind of the benchmark. Has awareness of Codex communications improved over the last two, two and a half years of the plan? We continually strive to do more with limited resources. I think it takes quite a long time to understand how Codex works, so it's not easy to pluck somebody out and get them to work on Codex matters. But we have outsourced some writing and some film-making and we'll be looking to continue to produce the products that we have done over the last couple of years. At that point, Madam Chair, I would pause very happy to handle any questions that there may be. Thank you very much.

Chairperson: Thank you, David. A good presentation for tonight's session. The floor is open for comment. Question please Advisor for Near East.

Advisor NE: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair, I don't have a question. I just wanted to thank David. Egypt, in fact, did organize this seminar and we are looking at how to implement the communication work plan together with FAO. We held three workshops in Cairo and Alexandria, among others, and the main topic chosen was of food that enters Egypt. We have a national plan as well and we have visited with all the bodies that work together with Codex Alimentarius and with the representation of FAO, as well as the regional coordinators within Egypt. This person working within Codex has made it possible to have more, more workshops and to broaden the scope so that they cover all of Egypt, not just three specific regions. And we are working on putting in to this communication work plan.

Chairperson: Thank you to the Middle East.

Coordinator Europe: Thank you. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I would like to begin by pointing out that, in fact, in Almaty Kazakhstan, when I came to the first session, the first meeting that was held, I think that all of those who were there actually decided that having a contact point for our region would be something that would really help us to take a significant step forward. And we would then have a focal point. It could really help us to gather information to share news either relating directly to the Codex or to particular things that might arise in our area. And we felt that therefore having our committee could allow us to gather information and to ensure that information got through to those you required it. And I think that it's been something that's really stimulated the active interest of countries in our region and I hope they'll be more news coming out from us in future because we are seeking to do more and to be more active on communication. I really would like to thank David and his team because they've helped us a lot and they've given us an awful lot of very good printed material. Workshops and seminars are very good for the people who attend them. But what's really important is to have printed material so that people can take it home and pass it on to other people. And we really would like to say that we find that we have very high quality and very useful material from you. And we get a lot of detailed information about the role of Codex and about what exactly is meant by to get even more information. At this time, it would be even better.

Chairperson: Thank you Nailya Coordinator for Europe. Any other comment. It seems we can conclude. Member for Europe.

Member Europe: Just a quick word of gratitude, thanks for the lively presentation that was very entertaining and also for the implementation status report. We noticed and we appreciate your efforts and we try to do our best to feed in and do our part to make your life easier. I'm not sure if one thing fits into this item, but it's something also for you who are tech people and know what is possible and what is not possible. It's a suggestion for internal communications, and that would be maybe you're thinking about something like push notifications, you can subscribe to, for a news on, for example, the publication of documents that, you know, you attend three committees and if you click the right button, you will get a push notification, there's a new document out, have a look at the website, something like that. If that would be possible. If that where possible, one day it would be surely appreciated.

Chairperson: Thank you. Member for Europe. Coordinator for NASWAP.

Coordinator NASWAP: Thank you, Madam chair. Just echoing the gratitude to David and the team also for engaging in the NASWAP region. I think in 2018 there were some very colorful characters that you met over there and it was their first time as well to work with a team, so I believe it's a region has still got some way to with engaging in a work of Codex. But the workshop in 2018 was a good start, and I believe this is a good engagement. In the coming years with the NASWAP region. Thank you.

Chairperson: Thank you Coordinator for NASWAP. Coordinator for Africa.

Coordinator Africa: Thank you. Madam Chair and also thank you, David, for a wonderful presentation on communication. I think it is the role for Codex that we communicate what we do in terms of, remember when you are talking about the standards up-take. Last year, at least, we had two workshops, which we had some engagement of the high policy makers. And I think through communication, we need to reach out and there cascade what was the result in those two meetings. And I've not seen the strategy you have put in place to engage the policy makers other than the technical team, which we normally communicate on a day to day business. But there is a missing link in terms of reaching back to the high-policy governance and the people who are holding the purse strings. So I think that is the one which we really need to focus also as we talk about how to communicate among ourselves. And I remember CCAFRICA came up with an innovative strategy that. The recommendation to establish a goodwill ambassador, which would be the one to carry the flag, reaching out to the policy makers and also trying to harmonize the working of the diverse region in terms of advocating for issues, Codex standards, and that is a key issue. I know also quite a number of countries are doing something on anti-microbial resistance and Kenya is one of them. I don't know why they have not uploaded to the website, but we did quite a lot. Thank you.

Chairperson: Thank you Coordinator for Africa, Coordinator for Asia.

Coordinator Asia: Thank you, Madam Chair. Let me first of all, congratulate the media team at Codex Secretariat, led by David, for having done a lot of work over the past couple of years or more and coming out with very good products that have been of use, good use for all the regions, and at least I would say that for the Asian region. In fact, I told him yesterday that daily I get up and I look towards the Twitter messages of Codex and then I pass it on to all within my reach and so that it gets a full coverage. But one thing is certain that in order to have ... for scaling up these initiatives, we need to use certain innovative techniques so that it can have impact on masses. And I would also echo in that case, what the Coordinator of Africa has said, targeting the policy makers so that Codex gets due recognition everywhere. And of course, I mean, I would also commit full support from our region and the countries in the region, and we'll keep on providing more and more stories. Thank you.

Chairperson: Thank you. Coordinator for Asia, Coordinator for Latin America.

Coordinator LAC: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd just like to add my words thanking the communications team. And also comment as the chair and vice chair have said, we work very closely with the communication team and they have provided lots of support and we hope that my region will be able to continue to give them to get them material for stories and information. Thank you.

Chairperson: Thank you. Coordinator for Latin America. Other comments? OK, we can conclude.

CCEXEC noted the Codex communication work plan, implementation of status report. Of course, the conclusion is the result of the paper presented and from the presentation, so CCEXEC noted the Codex Communication Work Plan Implementation Status Report CCEXEC noted the Codex Communication Plan 2020-2022 will be presented CCEXEC79. Noted the need for sufficient resources to be made available to continue delivering effective communication in Codex and encouraged all members and observers, especially through the recently adopted regional communication work plans to continue to actively contribute to the promotion of Codex with all stakeholders, including their celebration of World Food Safety Day 2020. An important issue to add: to continue to actively contribute to the promotion of Codex with all stakeholders, especially policy makers, including Food Safety Celebration, World Food Safety Day 2020.

Chairperson: Okay. Steve please.

Vice-chair Steve: Thank you, Madam Chair. Your first proposed conclusion was to note the communication work and implementation status. I think it would possibly better reflect the nature of the comments and the discussion if we if instead of just noting we congratulated the communications team in the Codex Secretariat on the achievements and the successful completion of the Codex Communications Work Plan 2017 to 19. Thank you.

Chairperson: OK we will take the proposal, of course, we recognize, the we decide to add this to the discussion. But now we can take that conclusion. Can you write your ... Steve, in order to gain time, please read what you want to add and we will agree with that.

Vice-chair Steve: I'll read it. I'll read it again, see if I can make the same as the first time. Congratulated the communications team in the Codex Secretariat on the achievements and successful completion of the Codex Communications Work Plan 2017-19.

Chairperson: So we'll start our conclusion with this sentence. Do you agree? Okay. Thank you for your time. We've finished item 5 and I give now my place to vice-chair Steve to continue.