



## JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

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

#### Fifteenth Session

Port Vila, Vanuatu, 16-20 September 2019

### USE OF CODEX STANDARDS IN THE REGION

(Prepared by the Codex Secretariat)

#### 1. BACKGROUND

1.1. In the context of the revitalization of FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committees (RCCs) in 2016, the Codex Secretariat introduced a new survey based system to continuously collect data on use of Codex standards<sup>1</sup> for all six RCCs with the aim of gaining a better understanding of the relevance of Codex work.

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

- (i) MRLs for veterinary drugs in foods;
- (ii) Two Codex texts on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) i.e. Guidelines for Risk Analysis of Foodborne AMR and the Code of Practice to Minimize and Contain AMR; and
- (iii) The Regional Guidelines for the Design of Control Measures for Street-Vended Foods<sup>2</sup>.

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

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

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

#### 2. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION SURVEY RESULTS

2.1 The survey obtained a response rate of 64 percent (9 out of a possible 14 Members) in the CCNASWP region, which is the highest level achieved up to now in any survey on the subject. Out of the nine respondents, six were Small Island Development States (SIDS), which is an encouraging result. **Table 1** marks all respondents in the region in bold.

2.2 One Member that did not respond to the survey mentioned that it had a national policy of harmonisation based on which the country harmonised with Codex standards to the maximum extent possible. In cases where for instance MRLs for veterinary drugs in food were not aligned with Codex MRLs they would be based on national (science and risk-based) requirements.

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this document Codex standards refers to all Codex products including standards, guidelines, codes of practice, Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) etc.

<sup>2</sup> Countries of the CCNASWP and CCEURO skipped this part of the survey as no regional guidelines for street-vended foods exist for their respective regions.

**Table 1: Overview of CCNASWP respondents to the 2019 survey on use of Codex standards (in bold)**

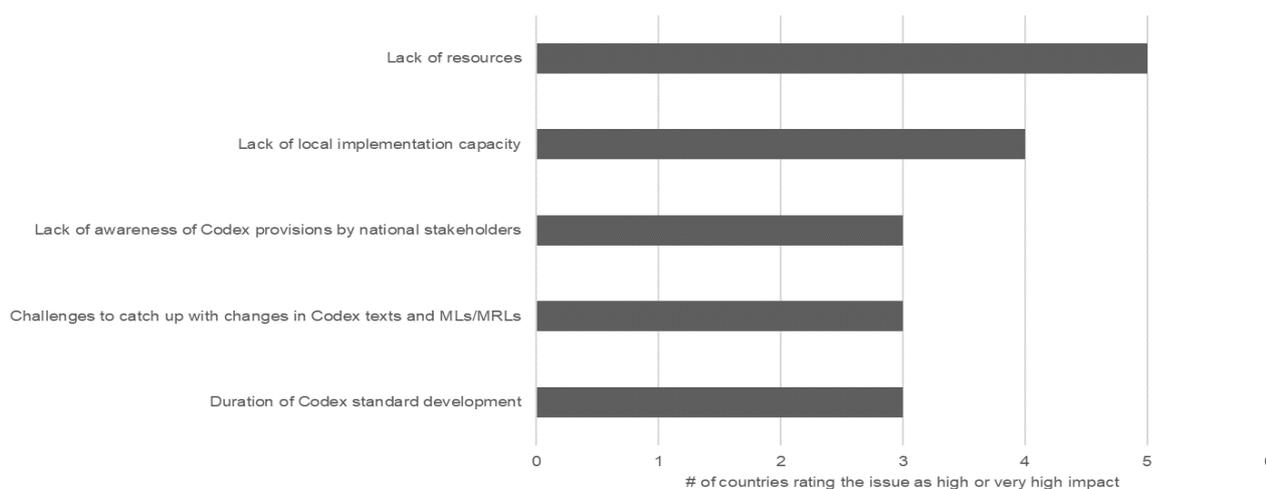
<b>Australia</b>	New Zealand
<b>Canada</b>	<b>Papua New Guinea*</b>
Cook Islands*	<b>Samoa*</b>
<b>Fiji*</b>	<b>Solomon Islands*</b>
<b>Kiribati*</b>	Tonga*
<b>Federated States of Micronesia*</b>	<b>United States of America</b>
Nauru*	Vanuatu*

\* Small Island Development States (according to UN list of 2019)

2.3 The following is a summary of the survey results.<sup>3</sup>

- (i) *Alignment of MRLs for veterinary drugs in food<sup>4</sup>*: Two countries (22%) stated that MRLs for veterinary drugs in food that was sold nationally would fully align with Codex MRLs while three countries (33%) stated that national MRLs would partially align with those of Codex. Reasons for partial non-alignment related to difference in pest pressures, animal production practices and overall risk assessment methodologies as well as commercial reasons preventing submission for registration of certain veterinary drugs. One country stated Codex MRLs for veterinary drugs in food were not used at all because the country does not produce food products from animals treated with veterinary drugs. The remaining three countries (33%) were unaware of the national level of alignment.
- (ii) *Use of the Guidelines for Risk Analysis of Foodborne Antimicrobial Resistance (CXG 77-2011)*: Three countries (33%) indicated that the guidelines were used as an important reference document for risk assessments e.g. when authorizing new veterinary antimicrobial drug products. Four respondents (44%) stated they were either in the process of developing national legislation or did not have the overall capacity to make use of the guidelines. Two countries (22%) were not aware of the level of use.
- (iii) *Use of the Code of Practice to Minimize and Contain Antimicrobial Resistance (CXC 61-2005)*: Similarly to the Guidelines, the AMR code of practice is used by 33 percent of respondents while 44 percent stated they have not adopted it but are developing national guidelines. The remaining countries stated that they did not know if the code of practice was utilised in their country.
- (iv) *Difficulties with regards to the use of Codex provisions*: The issues most frequently rated as high or very high negative impact on the use of Codex standards in the region were: lack of national resources and local implementation capacity. Other difficulties impacting on the use of Codex standards are shown in **Figure 2**.

**Figure 2: Examples of difficulties with the use of Codex standards in the CCNASWP region**



<sup>3</sup> The full survey results can be accessed in original language under this link: [http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/sh-proxy/en/?Ink=1&url=https%253A%252F%252Fworkspace.fao.org%252Fsites%252Fcodex%252FMeetings%252FCX-732-15%252FWorking%2Bdocuments%252Fna15\\_6e%20NASWP%20SURVEY%20RESULTS.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/sh-proxy/en/?Ink=1&url=https%253A%252F%252Fworkspace.fao.org%252Fsites%252Fcodex%252FMeetings%252FCX-732-15%252FWorking%2Bdocuments%252Fna15_6e%20NASWP%20SURVEY%20RESULTS.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> As of June 2019, Codex has 632 MRLs for residues of veterinary drugs in foods covering 66 veterinary drugs.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

3.1 The responses indicate that for SIDS in the CCNASWP region, difficulties regarding the use of Codex standards frequently relate to resource constraints and lack of local implementation capacity. Other Members highlighted the complexity of their national implementation processes in the area of food safety and the time taken to finalize Codex standards as factors that influence their uptake.

3.2 Overall, the survey on use of Codex standards obtained a high completion rate (64%), which is a useful reference for future work and assists in providing insights into the use of Codex texts and difficulties encountered in the implementation at national levels.

### 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Codex members from the CCNASWP region are requested to take note of the outcome of the survey and examine how they can better utilise these results in the engagement of relevant stakeholders to seek support for food safety work and raise awareness of the importance of Codex standards in their respective countries.

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

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