

REGIONAL GUIDELINES FOR CODEX CONTACT POINTS AND NATIONAL CODEX COMMITTEES (NEAR EAST)

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INTRODUCTION

1. Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committees are amongst the essential organs of the Codex Alimentarius Commission that enhance the active involvement of various stakeholders at the national level, which translates to effective participation of Codex member countries in the activities of the Commission, resulting in a credible food code.
2. This document outlines basic guidelines for the establishment, structure, tasks and organisation of effective Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committees. Should there be existing Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committees, these guidelines could serve to further improve on their efficiency.

CODEX CONTACT POINT

DESCRIPTION

3. In order to facilitate efficient and effective communication and working relations between the Codex Alimentarius Commission and governments, the Commission recommends the establishment of Codex Contact Points in every Codex member country.
4. The Codex Contact Point serves as the official link between the Codex Alimentarius and the member country concerned. In essence, the Codex Contact Point serves as the official national communication agent (for and on behalf of the member country) to the Commission. This implies that all communication from the member country to the commission and vice versa, as well as within national authorities, goes through the Codex Contact Point.

TASKS

5. The tasks of the national Codex Contact Point should include the following, among others:
 - (a) receiving all Codex communications, documents and publications from the Commission;
 - (b) initiating relevant action on the received documents either directly or through the National Codex Committee and/or the relevant sub-committee(s) or institution;
 - (c) maintaining a library of all Codex standards, Codes of Practice, Guidelines and any other documents and publications on or relating to Codex;
 - (d) distribution of Codex documents, publications and other information to all stakeholders;
 - (e) acting as the link between the Codex Secretariat and Codex member countries;
 - (f) performing any other tasks that may be recommended by the National Codex Committee and/or the government.

LOCATION

6. Upon carefully reading and understanding the rule and tasks of the national Codex Contact Point, the decision on where to locate the Codex Contact Point basically rests with the member country concerned.
7. This decision may be made either by the government and/or through consultation with the relevant stakeholders at the national level.
8. However, it is common practice for the government to take up responsibility for hosting the national Codex Contact Point.

9. Whatever the location of the national Codex Contact Point, it is desirable that the location meets the following criteria:

- that it is as neutral as possible as regards all interested parties' involvement in Codex work;
- that it is capable of performing the tasks of the Codex Contact Point;
- that it is accessible to all parties interested and/or those involved in the activities of Codex.

REQUIREMENTS

10. The basic requirements for a Codex Contact Point may include the following:

- committed staff;
- code of conduct;
- adequate office space;
- communication facilities, e.g. telephone, fax, e-mail, postal address, etc.
- stationery;
- printing and photocopying equipment, e.g. computer, printer, photocopier, etc.

NATIONAL CODEX COMMITTEE

11. The primary objective of the National Codex Committee is to act as a consultative group to the government on matters related to Codex.

12. Representatives from all relevant national bodies, including consumers' organizations, professional associations, etc. should be invited to attend meetings of the National Codex Committee to put forward their views for consideration and inclusion in the national negotiating position.

TASKS

13. The primary tasks of the National Codex Committee may include:

- (a) advising the government on the best possible decisions as regards Codex standards and their implementation;
- (b) formulating the country response to the proposals of the Codex Alimentarius Commission;
- (c) proposing relevant parties to represent the country at various Codex meetings;
- (d) appointing such technical sub-committees as may be necessary for the country's effective participation in Codex;
- (e) undertaking such other duties as the government may deem appropriate.

COMPOSITION AND STRUCTURE

14. An example of a National Codex Committee could include representatives from the following institutions:

i. Relevant Ministries/Government institutions such as:

- Ministry of Health;
- Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Livestock;
- Ministry of Trade and Industry;
- Ministry of Environment;

- National Bureau of Standards;
 - Government laboratories and analytical service;
 - Any other national authorities related to food safety and food control.
- ii. Local authorities
 - iii. Consumers' organizations
 - iv. Professional associations (e.g. food industry, manufacturers, food importers and exporters)
 - v. Universities;
 - vi. Leading research organizations;
 - vii. Notable experts.

15. The responsibilities of the chairperson are decided by the National Codex Committee, and may include conducting meetings of the Committee, among other duties.

16. The responsibilities of the person who serves as the secretary of the National Codex Commission may include:

- taking minutes at meetings of the National Codex Committee;
- keeping all records relating to the Committee's activities;
- drafting agenda items and sending invitations to meetings, in conjunction with the chairperson;
- undertaking such other duties as may be prescribed by the Committee and/or the government;
- assuring the communication between all members of the National Codex Committee.

17. National Codex Committee members should agree among themselves on basic operational matters, including the quorum, the schedule and procedure at meetings.

18. Documents should be circulated as widely as possible and with ample time to enable those who are not able to attend a particular Committee meeting to submit their inputs, which should be considered at the meeting.

19. All sub-committees appointed by the National Codex Committee report to the Committee.

20. The Committee's decisions should be reached by consensus and as agreed at its respective meetings.

NOMINATION TO THE NATIONAL CODEX COMMITTEE

21. The procedure for nomination to/inclusion in the National Codex Committee should be known, open and transparent. Different countries may use different methods to select persons to participate in the work of the Committee, depending on the available resources and structures.

22. Participation in Committee meetings should be reviewed annually, and new members appointed to replace inactive members.

FUNDING

23. The source of funding for running and/or for the activities of the Codex Contact Point and the National Codex Committee must be known to all members of the Committee. Contributions must not be attached to any conditions in order to ensure impartiality and avoid any conflict of interest, so that the two bodies can operate effectively without fear or favour.