CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

World Health Organization

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Agenda Item 7 **CX/CAC 22/45/14**

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Forty-fifth Session

STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025:

IMPLEMENTATION REPORT 2020-2021

(Prepared by the Codex Secretariat in collaboration with FAO and WHO)

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. The 42nd Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC42) adopted the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025 (SP) as proposed by the 77th Session of the Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CCEXEC77).

1.2. The Codex Secretariat carried out an in-depth review of the monitoring framework of the SP, with a view to providing complete, objective, and reliable information to the Membership on the implementation of the SP. It was found that several indicators that were included in the current SP were not readily amenable to monitoring and evaluation. They all required a baseline and a target, and in most cases further specification of the Means of Verification.

1.3. Several indicators measured qualitative dimensions on progress on a specific outcome which is subjective and may not be comparable between biennia. Data collection for several other indicators relied on manual counting and/or on a survey to be submitted to Members. The Secretariat has limited capacity in this kind of work and surveys often have low response rates which makes them difficult to interpret. Members have also pointed out their limited capacity to provide support in monitoring the implementation of the SP and have cautioned the Secretariat against sending too many surveys.

1.4. The Secretariat proposals on how to report on the implementation of the SP were presented and endorsed at CCEXEC81[1] with specific comments provided regarding the following indicators:

- Indicator 2.3.1: A short narrative report (qualitative description of progress) could be included in the monitoring and evaluation framework to report on FAO/WHO core funding for scientific advice to CAC, based on the related CAC document from FAO/WHO on scientific advice.
- Indicator 4.1.1: Rather than registration, it was proposed that the Secretariat monitor trends in Member Countries' participation in Codex meetings using the participants lists.
- Indicator 4.2.1: The reply to one CL seemed too low to indicate active participation, and thus the number of replies could be increased to two or three replies.

1.5. In the following, the Secretariat presents a report on the implementation of the SP according to its revised monitoring framework noting that:

- Monitoring against indicators 3.1.1, 3.2.1, 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 is based on the activities included in the regional work plans. Regional Coordinators (RCs) report regularly on progress on the implementation of their work plans either to CCEXEC or the Regional Coordinating Committees (RCCs). As RCCs did not meet in the 2020-21 biennium due to the COVID-19 pandemic, information on these indicators is contained in the reports provided by RCs to the CCEXEC SP sub-committee.[2]
- With regards to Indicator 3.3.1 (Progress on the development of a mechanism to measure impact of Codex standards), at the time of preparation of this report, data on the use and impact of Codex texts was being gathered through a survey to Members. The results of the survey are presented in a separate document as an Addendum to this report.

[1] CX/EXEC 21/81/5 Add.1 and REP21/EXEC2 (paragraphs 86-91)
[2] CX/EXEC 21/81/5

1.6. This comprehensive report on SP implementation focuses on achievements in the 2020-21 biennium. It reports against the indicators set out in the monitoring framework of the SP to the best extent possible. Where data were available for previous biennia, a comparison is presented. When previous data were not available, the information is presented as a baseline against which achievements of future biennia can be compared.

1.7. The Secretariat acknowledges that challenges remain regarding monitoring against some of the indicators and is of the opinion that a further review of the monitoring framework will be required in the context of the development of the next SP with the aim to improve monitoring and provide a more comprehensive paper.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025

Goal 1. Address current, emerging and critical issues in a timely manner

Objective 1.1 Identify needs and emerging issues

Outcome 1.1.1 Improved ability of Codex to develop standards relevant to the needs of its Members

Indicator 1.1.1 The number of emerging issues identified by subsidiary bodies

2.1. As agreed during CCEXEC81, counting the number of emerging issues identified by subsidiary bodies provides limited information and does not necessarily reflect an improved ability to develop standards that meet Members' needs. To answer to the outcome statement, the question is to understand if Codex has put in place the right mechanisms to identify and act on emerging issues. The Secretariat is therefore providing a short narrative report on the evolution of the procedures to identify and prioritize emerging issues in Codex Committees.

2.2. For previous sessions of Regional Coordinating Committees (RCCs) (2016-2017 and 2018-2019) a survey on critical and emerging issues was conducted. As this approach seemed to confirm already identified and well-known issues rather than new ones, and the response rate was low, this approach was discontinued under the new SP. In the current RCC cycle (2022-23), the agenda provides an opportunity for regions to jointly identify and discuss current and emerging issues from a regional perspective that feed into the discussion in Codex as a whole through the RC's participation in CCEXEC and also the critical review process.

2.3. The Codex general subject committees have processes in place to propose and discuss already identified issues (e.g., new work proposals) and emerging issues (e.g., through discussion papers and CRDs) relevant to the subject of the committee, and agree on the order in which they should be addressed at forthcoming session(s). These discussions also feed into the critical review process by CCEXEC. The approach varies across committees with some committees such as the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH)[3], the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS)[4], and the Codex Committee on Pesticides Residues (CCPR)[5] having well established approaches, while others continue to develop their processes. Examples of some of the developments in this area during the reporting period are outlined in the following paragraphs.

2.4. The Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods (CCCF) in 2019 agreed on a forward workplan consisting of four work-lines, namely: (i) Identification of key staple food/ contaminant combinations; (ii) Review of existing standards for contaminants that may need revision; (iii) Evaluation of implementation of Codes of Practices; and (iv) Possible other future topics for CCCF. However, discussions are ongoing on the approach/methodology to identify food contaminants of public health and trade concern in staple foods moving in international trade which might need to be addressed by CCCF in future. CCCF has also agreed on a systematic approach to review existing standards and related texts for contaminants in food and feed to determine the need for their revision. The approach is based on prioritization criteria to identify standards and related texts for review, taking into account both potential human health impact and possible trade disruptions. This approach/methodology is expected to contribute to better work management of CCCF when managing proposals for new work on review existing standards and related texts for contaminants in food and feed.

2.5. A joint CCPR/CCRVDF EWG was established by CAC44 (2021) to facilitate coordination between CCPR and Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods (CCRVDF). This was established to respond to the recommendation of CCEXEC for closer collaboration between CCRVDF and CCPR when considering MRLs for compounds used as both veterinary drugs and pesticides

[3] The process by which CCFH undertakes its work is available as an Information document at https://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/codexalimentarius/committee/docs/INF_CCFH_e.pdf
[4] CCFICS has a standing agenda item on Emerging issues and Future directions of CCFICS
[5] CCPR regularly develops schedules and priority lists of pesticides for evaluation by JMPR

2.6. The Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (CNFSDU) at its 42nd session (2021) agreed to establish a EWG to revise the draft guideline for the preliminary assessment and identification of work priorities and the proposed criteria. It is expected that the prioritization mechanism will not only help the Committee to focus its work on the most important and emerging issues but will also shorten the discussions on new work proposals in the plenary.

2.7. In the context of CCFICS' standing agenda item on emerging issues and future directions, CCFICS25 (2021) agreed to convene a working group in advance of CCFICS26 to consider an updated list of emerging issues and prioritization of new work.

2.8. Some commodity committees have also started to apply prioritization processes. The Codex Committee on Fats and Oils (CCFO) at its 27th Session (2021) for the first time applied its new work management mechanism to evaluate the proposals for new work.

2.9. At each session of CAC and the proceeding session of the CCEXEC, FAO and WHO present a document with matters arising from their work on food safety and nutrition and other Codex-related matters. This document also includes emerging issues as seen by the parent organization and stimulates discussion at both CCEXEC and CAC. In 2021, the FAO and WHO document on new food sources and production systems resulted in the establishment of a CCEXEC sub-committee dedicated to this topic to provide further guidance to Codex as a whole on how to best address these issues.

Objective 1.2 Prioritize needs and emerging issues

Outcome 1.2.1 Timely Codex response to emerging issues and the needs of members

Indicator 1.2.1 Proportion of identified emerging issues that lead to proposals for new work

2.10. As agreed during CCEXEC81, the intent of this indicator with regard to the outcome statement which focuses on timely response, is encompassed in indicators 1.2.2 and 1.2.3. Indicator 1.2.1 is not considered to provide any additional value or information to the extent that it would justify the effort required to collect such data.

Indicator 1.2.2 Time taken from the identification of new issues to the submission of proposals for new work to CCEXEC

2.11. A consistent approach for its measurement was difficult to identify. The Secretariat measured this indicator by looking at new issues addressed by General Subject Committees (with the exception of numerical standards) and assessed the time taken from their identification to new work proposals approved by CAC from 2018 to 2021. Most new issues from 2018 to 2021 were submitted to CCEXEC and approved by CAC as new work proposals within 2 years.

2.12. The role of discussion papers in scoping work from the point of first identification to presentation of a project proposal, particularly on complex issues, was seen to be valuable in facilitating later work on developing a relevant Codex text. This shows the difficulties in defining success through a numeric indicator where actually more time spent in well defining the project through discussion papers leads to improved work on developing Codex texts.

Indicator 1.2.3 Time taken for prioritized emerging issues to result in revised or new Codex texts

2.13. The Secretariat annually monitors the time needed for the elaboration or revision of Codex standards. Table 1 below shows the percentage of non-numerical standards and revisions adopted between 2018 and 2021 within 5 years' time. The majority of final texts was adopted within 5 years. The few standards that were adopted after more than 5 years are all commodity standards.

Table 1: Time taken for prioritized emerging issues to result in revised or new Codex texts[6]

Year	CAC Session	Percentage of STDs approved within 5 years
2018	CAC41	86%
2019	CAC42	100%
2020	CAC43	76%
2021	CAC44	94%

[6] Table 1 is based on Codex texts that were adopted following submission and approval of new work proposals. Standards without a job number such as ongoing work and amendments were excluded from the scope of this study. Numerical standards such as maximum residue limits (MRLs), food additive provisions and maximum levels for contaminants that are developed following approval of priority lists for scientific advice are also not considered in Table 1.

2.14. Table 1 does not capture extensive work ongoing in some committees to revise and/or restructure existing standards e.g., Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling (CCMAS) and Codex Committee on Food Additives (CCFA). Given the differences in the standard setting mechanism, the numbers of standards set and their complexity, it is not possible to give a complete picture of the rate of standards development with a single methodology. Therefore, narratives highlighting how work has progressed in the Committees, for which the outputs are not sufficiently captured in table 1, are provided in Annex 1 of this report.

Indicator 1.2.4 Committees documenting their approach to work prioritization based on criteria for establishment of work priorities in the Procedural Manual

2.15. Information on committees documenting their approach to work prioritization based on criteria for establishment of work priorities in the Procedural Manual can be found under indicator 1.1.1 above.

Goal 2. Develop standards based on science and Codex risk-analysis principles

Objective 2.1 Use scientific advice consistently in line with Codex risk analysis principles

Outcome 2.1.1 Scientific advice is taken into account consistently and in line with Codex risk analysis principles by all relevant committees during the standard setting process

Indicator 2.1.1 Proportion of texts considered by CCEXEC, as part of its work to monitor the progress of standards development, for which reports by subsidiary body Chairs indicate how scientific advice was used and any other legitimate factors were considered in developing Codex texts

2.16. The critical review process includes comments by the Codex Secretariat and the Committee Chairpersons on the use of or need for scientific advice for the different topics under consideration by the various committees. For CCFA and CCCF there is a well-defined and well-established mechanism in place for obtaining scientific advice, as need be, from JECFA, for CCPR from JMPR, for CCFH from JEMRA, and for CCNFSDU from JEMNU. For the other committees, that may request scientific advice on an ad-hoc basis, FAO and WHO convene ad hoc expert meetings to address these, time and resources permitting.

2.17. The role of science and other legitimate factors have been extensively discussed during the biennium with regard to Zilpaterol.

2.18. The Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL) at its 45th session in 2019 had requested scientific advice from FAO and WHO to support its work on developing Guidelines on Precautionary Allergen labelling. CCFL46 (2021) noted that the delay in the expert meetings and publication of the final reports of the ad hoc Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on Risk Assessment of Food Allergens due to the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted progress on parts of the Committee's work on food allergen labelling.

2.19. CCNFSDU42 (2021) saw detailed discussions on the General Principles for establishing Nutrient Reference Values – Requirement (NRVs-R) for persons aged 6 to 36 months, which will continue at CCNFSDU43 (2023). The work will take into account the FAO scientific report on Review of derivation methods for dietary intake reference values for older infants and young children. Exchange with FAO and WHO is taking place to benefit from their joint work on the update of FAO's/WHO's nutrient requirements for infants and young children aged 0-36 months and to avoid any unnecessary duplication of work. Some parts of the work on the Guidelines on Ready-to-use Therapeutic Foods (RUTF) and the review of the *Standard for Follow-up Formula* relied on scientific advice from FAO on protein quality assessment in follow-up formula for young children and ready to use therapeutic foods and also the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Meetings on Nutrition (JEMNU) on nitrogen to protein conversion factors for soy-based and milk-based ingredients used in infant formula and follow-up formula, amongst others.

2.20. In CCPR, the priority lists of pesticides for evaluation by JMPR is the foundation for its work. CAC43 approved the new work proposal on priority lists of pesticides for evaluation by JMPR in 2021, allowing CCPR to progress its work even though no session was held in 2020.

2.21. In CCFA, the priority list of substances proposed for evaluation by JECFA is an important pillar of its work. More and more substances have been put on the priority list which need to be further prioritized considering the limited resources of JECFA. With the confirmation from sponsors regarding data availability, the priority list has become more promising.

Objective 2.2 Promote the submission and use of globally representative data in developing and reviewing Codex standards

Outcome 2.2.1 Codex standards are developed with reference to globally representative data

Indicator 2.2.1 Proportion and regional distribution of Codex members who contribute to calls for data from working groups and Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committees/Meetings

2.22. FAO continues to develop Members' capacity to participate in and submit data to FAO/WHO Expert Committees.

2.23. In the 2020-2021 biennium, a FAO project started in the Latin America and the Caribbean on JECFA food safety risk assessments of residues of veterinary drugs in food focuses on the critical data needed from members for these assessments and how the assessments underpin the setting of Codex MRLs.

2.24. FAO continues to support countries on the use of Individual Quantitative Food Consumption (IQFC) data shared through the FAO/WHO Global Individual Food consumption data Tool (FAO/WHO GIFT) to improve the consistency and reliability of dietary exposure assessments. A critical step in establishing suitably protective limits for microbiological or chemical agents in food. Capacity building on the importance of IQFC data to understand food safety was completed in Lao PDR in November 2021 and is planned in Nigeria and the Philippines in 2022. A specific training session on the use of IQFC data was also delivered during the ASEAN Health Cluster in December 2021.

2.25. WHO facilitated submissions received by GEMS/Food in response to calls for data by CCCF, including on Cadmium in Cocoa and Lead in herbs and dried spices to support the setting of MLs. Furthermore, the WHO JECFA Secretariat provided an analysis of the identification of ready-to-eat peanuts and peanuts intended for further processing in the current GEMS/Food data.

Objective 2.3 Promote sufficient and sustainable funding for expert bodies that deliver scientific advice

Outcome 2.3.1 FAO and WHO expert bodies are providing scientific advice within timeframes agreed between committees and FAO/WHO, and these timeframes allow standard development to progress in a timely manner

Indicator 2.3.1 Extent of and any changes in core funding for scientific advice within FAO and WHO

2.26. FAO and WHO continue assigning high importance to the scientific advice programme to provide a strong scientific foundation for all Codex standards. The delivery of scientific advice continues at an accelerated level despite the challenges that pandemic related restrictions have imposed on the meeting formats. This was made possible through the highly appreciated contributions of Australia, Canada, the European Union, Japan, and the United States of America (USA).

2.27. While Codex remains the primary beneficiary of the joint FAO/WHO scientific advice programme, other UN agencies (for example, the World Food Programme) are also requesting scientific advice, and outputs of the programme are also used directly by FAO and WHO members to strengthen their science-based decision making on food safety and nutrition issues at national and regional levels.

2.28. In FAO, the funds supporting activities and staff costs related to the provision of scientific advice originate from FAOs regular budget and through extra-budgetary resources. Key scientific advice meetings and consultations that support the standard setting work of Codex (such as JECFA, JEMRA, JMPR and JEMNU) are recognized as Corporate Technical Activities in FAOs Programme of Work and Budget which has ensured budgetary security for these activities in the current biennium.

2.29. In WHO the programme for Scientific Advice to Codex Alimentarius through the expert committees of JECFA, JMPR, JEMRA is entirely funded by voluntary contributions from a small number of Member States.[7] Both regular budget and extra-budgetary contributions to the scientific advice programme are gratefully acknowledged.

Indicator 2.3.2 Proportion of scientific advice provided within established timeframes

2.30. For several general subjects committees there are well-defined and well-established mechanism in place for obtaining scientific advice from FAO/WHO expert bodies; for CCFA and CCCF from JECFA, for CCPR from JMPR, for CCFH from JEMRA, and for CCNFSDU from JEMNU. The collaboration between the expert bodies and the relevant Codex committees is generally well coordinated, and the respective meetings scheduled to take into account the workflow between them. However, expert bodies may get more requests than they can respond to which may lead to a backlog of work. This became more evident during the pandemic when also the scheduling of meetings to ensure proper coordination between the expert bodies and the

[7] Full details on activities, budgets and financial matters of the Scientific Advice Programme are presented in CAC/45 INF/2

relevant Codex committees became more challenging. Prioritization mechanisms that are in place for general subject committees help to identify which work items are most urgent. Additional information on provision of scientific advice can be found in the critical review document.

Goal 3. Increase impact through the recognition and use of Codex standards

Objective 3.1 Raise the awareness of Codex standards

Outcome 3.1 Codex Members are proactively promoting the use of Codex standards

Indicator 3.1.1 Number of country contributions to the Codex regional and observer webpages reflecting events/activities that raise awareness on Codex standards

2.31. This dimension is included in the regional work plans. RCs report regularly on progress of their work plans. Information about these indicators is therefore found in the related progress report on regional work plans and regional communication plans. There has been an increase in the number of country contributions in last two years, compared to the previous biennium mainly driven by World Food Safety Day, and emphasis on CTF recipient countries to share information on the webpage on their activities.

Indicator 3.1.2 Number of activities in the Codex communications work plan that explicitly address the visibility of Codex standards and extent of implementation

2.32. Work on raising awareness of Codex standards can be assessed in three connected areas: Enhancing visibility of Codex; Accessibility and visibility of Codex texts; and Use of Codex texts. Relevant publications in the period that enhance visibility include the *Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products*[8]*, Compendium of Codex Standards* on AMR[9], and *Codex and the SDGs*[10].

2.33. The annual magazine, CODEX[11], website news[12] , podcasts[13] and social media also support visibility:

- The Codex Secretariat published over 400 web news stories including for World Food Safety Day where events were held in over 60 countries in 2020[14] and more than 90 countries in 2021.[15]
- Codex podcasts have been downloaded over 3 000 times.
- The Codex Twitter account achieved 9 million impressions, gained 4 900 followers and published more than 4 500 tweets in the reporting period.

2.34. To promote the accessibility and visibility of Codex texts extensive work is ongoing to revise and update the consistency of Codex core publications in the Codex Alimentarius in line with FAO Style including how texts are referenced. This extensive work will directly increase the ability of the Secretariat to monitor downloads and numbers of citations of Codex texts. The Codex Procedural Manual is being updated as part of the same project.

2.35. Different approaches are being explored to illustrate how Codex texts are being used. These included each Codex region submitting a story to the CODEX magazine in 2021, describing the use of a specific Codex text in the national context; the publication of *Hygienic food, healthy sales: HACCP implementation, Codex case study: Thailand*[16] as an example of how a Codex text can contribute to change in a country; and the development of a webpage of resources outlining the relevance of Codex texts in the context of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, including international best practices to ensure food hygiene and a transparent rules-based trading environment and reducing risks for those operating in the increasingly complex international trading system.

[8] FAO and WHO. 2020. Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products. Rome. https://doi.org/10.4060/cb0658en

[9] FAO and WHO. 2022. *Foodborne antimicrobial resistance: Compendium of Codex standards*. Rome. https://doi.org/10.4060/cb8554en

[10] FAO and WHO. 2020. *Codex and the SDGs – How participation in Codex Alimentarius supports the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Rome. https://doi.org/10.4060/cb0222en

[11] https://www.fao.org/3/cb1502en/CB1502EN.pdf and https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb7565en

[12] https://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/news-and-events/en/

[13] https://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/resources/multimedia/podcast/en/

[14] FAO and WHO. 2020. World Food Safety Day 2020 – Overview of an inspiring virtual celebration, 7 June 2020. Rome. https://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/CB0711EN

[15] FAO and WHO. 2021. *World Food Safety Day 2021 – An overview of festivity and creativity*. Rome. https://doi.org/10.4060/cb6125en

[16] https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb8770en

Objective 3.2 Support initiatives to enable the understanding and implementation/application of Codex standards

Outcome 3.2.1 Increased use of Codex standards in the development of national food standards and regulations.

Indicator 3.2.1 Proportion of Member countries participating in national or regional capacity development initiatives to encourage and facilitate practical use of Codex standards

2.36. This dimension is included in the regional work plans. RCs report regularly on progress of their work plans. Information about these indicators is therefore found in the related progress report on regional work plans. As RCCs did not meet in the 2020-21 biennium due to the COVID-19 pandemic, information on this indicator is contained in different reports provided by RCCs to the CCEXEC.

2.37. Capacity development initiatives were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Great efforts were made in the transition to virtual meetings. At the same time, several webinars to increase national capacities were organized during the biennium.[17]

Outcome 3.2.2 Increased use of Codex standards by the food trade

Indicator 3.2.2 Proportion of specified Codex standards adopted or used by Codex Members

2.38. The Secretariat is piloting a survey on use and impact of Codex texts. Based on the results of this survey, the Secretariat is providing a short narrative report to reflect progress against this indicator in a separate document, as an addendum to this report.

Indicator 3.2.3 Proportion of specified Codex standards adopted or used by relevant Codex Observers

2.39. Observers (UN, IGOs or INGOs) continue to play an important role in the Codex standard setting process. In addition to contributing to the standard setting work of Codex, the recent review of Observers also highlighted other ways in which observers are contributing to Codex such as through recognition and promotion of Codex texts in line with Goal 3 of the Codex Strategic Plan, but there is no mechanism currently in place to systematically monitor this.

2.40. This engagement and contributions are currently captured in an informal manner through stories on the Observer webpage[18], as well as through the information provided by Observers at Codex sessions (including meetings, EWGs, and comments to CLs) and Observer focussed events[19]. Based on this experience, and ongoing outreach to Observers, the Codex Secretariat, in consultation with the CAC Chairperson, have started to explore different ways to capture use of Codex standards by Observers. CCEXEC83 will also consider how this aspect of Observer engagement in Codex can be better captured in the Observer review. The Codex Secretariat will report on selected modalities and consequent results in 2023.

Objective 3.3 Recognise and promote the impact of Codex standards

Outcome 3.3.1 Having a mechanism/tool to measure the impact of Codex standards developed and piloted

Indicator 3.3.1 Progress on the development of a mechanism to measure impact of Codex standards

2.41. The Secretariat, in collaboration with FAO and WHO evaluation offices, started work on developing a mechanism to measure the use and impact of Codex standards in 2021. A monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework to provide data about the use and impact of Codex texts was developed with a view to obtaining information that can help Members and Observers better understand the impact, or potential for impact, of Codex texts. The first phase of the development of the mechanism focused on data gathering and analysis. A series of interviews and a focus group were conducted with key stakeholders, and a theory of change was

[17] CODEX AND THE PANDEMIC- PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF CAC43 AND CCEXEC80 AND ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION FOR 2022 https://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/sh-proxy/en/?lnk=1&url=https%253A%252F%252Fworkspace.fao.org%252Fsites%252Fcodex%252FMeetings%252FCX-702-81%252FWD%252Fex81_04e.pdf and Sub-committee on the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025 https://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/sh-proxy/en/?lnk=1&url=https%253A%252F%252Fworkspace.fao.org%252Fsites%252Fcodex%252FMeetings%252FCX-702-81%252FWD%252Fex81_05e.pdf

[18] https://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/about-codex/observers/observers/about/en/

[19] https://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/news-and-events/news-details/en/c/1440335/

drafted and validated by the stakeholders consulted to form a basis for the M&E framework. Of note is the fact that no existing data set was found to be readily available as an information source on the use and impact of Codex texts.

2.42. Following the data gathering and analysis step, several options to build the mechanism were analysed and the M&E framework was further refined. Based on the results of the analysis of the options, recommendations were made on the way forward to building the mechanism.

2.43. CCEXEC81 endorsed the proposed approach to building the mechanism, with the following recommendations:

- Noted the additional information provided by the Codex Secretariat on the analysis of options and development of the proposed approach.
- Recognized the benefits and challenges in monitoring the use and impact of Codex texts, and the importance of engagement as the process evolved and of periodic review.
- Endorsed the proposed approach for building the Codex M&E framework, noting that 2022 would be a pilot year for the re-designed survey approach and that the preliminary results would be reported at CCEXEC83 and CAC45.
- Supported the proposal to engage with the WTO Secretariat to explore a collaborative monitoring and reporting framework.
- Encouraged Members and Observers to identify potential resources to support data gathering for this work, particularly through case studies which should be selected according to a set of predefined criteria and be clear in terms of scope and context.

2.44. The need to assess the implementation of Codes of Practices (CoPs) has been identified by CCCF as relevant to support development and implementation of Maximum Levels (MLs) for contaminants in food and feed. Discussion on MLs for certain food/contaminant combinations may take longer than scheduled due to the difficulties in agreeing on lower MLs due to countries claiming high contamination of the produce leading to questions on the actual implementation of CoPs. The assessment should lead to identify whether the CoPs are being implemented or not, and in either of the scenarios what are the possible shortcomings in the CoP that (i) prevents it implementation or (ii) where it is being implemented, the difficulties in its implementation. Such an assessment will allow CCCF to take corrective measures as appropriate in order to develop CoPs that can be practically implemented by countries to assist them to reduce contamination with contaminants and to facilitate discussion on MLs for contaminants. Following discussion at CCCF13 (2019), CCCF14 (2021) agreed that the Codex Secretariat, in consultation with FAO and WHO, and also with the Host Country Secretariat, will continue looking at ways of taking this project forward in the context of monitoring the use of Codex texts.

Goal 4. All Codex members have the capacity to participate at all stages of the Standard setting process

Objective 4.1 Enable sustainable national Codex structures in all Codex Member countries

Outcome 4.1.1 Participation by all Codex Member countries in the work of Codex Committees and working groups

Indicator 4.1.1 Number of countries participating in Codex Meetings

2.45. To track progress towards this outcome, the Codex Secretariat is monitoring trends in Member Countries' registration in Codex meetings, comparing 2018-2019 data with 2020-2021 in the first instance. Registration to Codex meetings must be done by the Codex Contact Point, hence such registration reflects the presence of an active contact point and a degree of management of Codex work at the national level.

2.46. The analysis of Members attending Codex meetings showed an increased participation of Members in the biennium 2020-2021 both in terms of number of delegations as well as size of delegations. Considering as an example the Commission, the only meeting which held sessions regularly in the 2018-2019 – 2020-2021 biennia, the number of participating Members increased from 110 (average in 2018-2019) to 146 (average in 2020-2021).

2.47. This corresponded to an increase in the number of delegates, not only delegations, due to an increase in size of such delegations with more than 5 757 delegates attending Codex meetings in 2021 with a 107 percent increase compared to 2018 (2 782 delegates). In the same period, the share of delegations from low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) at Codex Committee meetings (including CAC) increased from 47

(average in 2018-2019) to 63 delegations (in 2020-21).[20]

2.48. This increase is largely attributable to the possibility of joining Codex sessions by virtual means and the opportunity it provided not only for more Members to attend Codex meetings but also to extend the opportunity of attendance to technical experts and others working in food safety at national levels that would not normally be able to join an in-person session. Thus, the shift of Codex committees and working groups to virtual platforms has significantly increased registration and feedback indicates a greater sense of engagement among some who are participating directly in Codex meetings for the first time.

Indicator 4.1.2 Sustainable resource allocation for the above, which may be reflected in national legislation and/or organization structures

2.49. This indicator would prove quite difficult to measure as Member Countries have different ways to fund Codex structures. It would also require reporting by Members which would be an additional burden. As agreed by CCEXEC81, the Secretariat suggested that monitoring trends in registration, proposed in indicator 4.1.1, sufficiently reflects Member's investment in Codex.

Indicator 4.1.3 Additional indicator for CTF recipient countries: Proportion of CTF2 recipient countries sustaining national Codex systems and related activities once the funding ends

2.50. As of 31 December 2021, all four CTF2 recipient countries (Ghana, Kyrgyzstan, Madagascar and Senegal) that have completed their projects have been able to sustain their national Codex systems and related activities.

2.51. A more detailed post-implementation review is foreseen for all countries and will include a re-assessment of their Codex systems through the Diagnostic Tool for assessing status of national Codex programmes. The post-implementation review will consider the utilization of CTF2 impact indicators included in the CTF2 monitoring and evaluation framework. Some of the indicators under this framework are expected to be modified following the ongoing CTF2 mid-term evaluation and its recommendations concerning sustainability of CTF2 support provided.

Objective 4.2 Increase sustainable and active participation of all Codex members

Outcome 4.2.1 Sustained, active participation in the work of Codex Committees and working groups

2.52. As agreed by CCEXEC81, to determine these trends the following two indicators are measured:

4.2.1a – Number of Member countries who participated in eWGs during the biennium (2020-21 biennium will be the first to be reported on, participation is defined as registration to at least in one eWG during the biennium).

2.53. In 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, only one session of CAC and its subsidiary bodies, namely CAC43, was held in addition to CCEXEC sessions. As a result, many working groups that had been established prior to the pandemic continued their work through to 2021 and hence, due to lack of EWG reporting, it was not possible to monitor participation of Members in EWGs in 2020. Nonetheless the percentage of Members participating in EWGs increased from 55 percent in 2019 to 60 percent in 2021. EWGs played a key role in ensuring that Codex work could still progress despite the postponement of all the technical Codex meetings in 2020.

4.2.1b - Number of Member countries that replied to CLs in the biennium (2020-2021 biennium will be the first to be reported on, a member will be counted if they replied to at least <u>two</u> CLs during the biennium)

2.54. The proportion of Members that sent comments in response to at least two Circular Letter (CLs) either via the Online Commenting System (OCS) or via email directly to the Codex Secretariat and/or to the Chairpersons of Codex Committees remained overall stable, at 54 percent (in 2020) and 51 percent (in 2021).

Objective 4.3 Reduce barriers to active participation by developing countries

Outcome 4.3.1 capacity building, partnering, and knowledge sharing activities are effective in building active participation by developing countries

[20] Further assessment of participation in virtual meetings is available in CX/EXEC 21/81/4

Indicator 4.3.1 Documented discussions from the regional coordinating committees or related meetings on barriers and potential solutions to participation by developing countries

2.55. As the RCCs did not meet in the 2020-2021 biennium due to the COVID-19 pandemic, information on this indicator is contained in the reports of the CCEXEC sub-committee on Codex and the Pandemic.[21]

Indicator 4.3.2 Increase in reports of mentorship and experience sharing on Codex issues between countries

2.56. This dimension is included in the regional work plans. Regional Coordinators report regularly on progress of their work plans. Information about these indicators is therefore found in the related progress report on regional work plans. As the RCCs did not meet in the 2020-2021 biennium due to the COVID-19 pandemic, information on this indicator is contained in the reports provided by RCCs to the CCEXEC sub-committee on the Strategic Plan.

Goal 5. Enhance work management systems and practices that support the efficient and effective achievement of all strategic plan goals

Objective 5.1 Develop and maintain efficient and effective work management practices and systems

Outcome 5.1.1 Codex work processes and procedures support the effective and efficient operation of Codex standard setting bodies

Indicator 5.1.1 Of the recommendations of regular review of Codex work management that are adopted by CAC, the proportion that are implemented

2.57. The Secretariat is reflecting progress against this indicator based on the review of the Codex work processes and procedures and the critical review exercise. The Secretariat also reports on delivery of the Codex budget during the biennium.

2.58. The critical review process has since the start of the implementation of the current Strategic Plan included comments from committee Chairpersons on the overall work of the committee as well as on the work of the specific work items. This has helped giving the Chairpersons a channel to voice their experiences and reflections about the meetings that have taken place recently.

2.59. The main challenge in this biennium was to rapidly adapt Codex working mechanisms to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and this was prioritised over all other work management processes. Regular consultations were held both informally through webinars and formally through CCEXEC and CAC to ensure that Codex work could continue. This included endorsement of virtual meetings of the commission and an interpretation of the relevant rules in the Codex Procedural Manual regarding place of session to include the virtual environment. These changes ensured that committees could once again meet to progress work. (see 5.2.1 for further details).

2.60. An additional indicator that can be used to monitor this section is related to Codex budget delivery. In the 2020-2021 biennium the delivery was 98%.

Outcome 5.1.2 The efficient design of agendas and use of time in meetings of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, its Executive Committee and Subsidiary bodies maximises the time allocated to the development of Codex texts

Indicator 5.1.2 Proportion of meeting documents distributed in a timely manner consistent with the Codex Procedural Manual or timeframes established by committees

2.61. The table below presents an analysis of the distribution of working documents (WDs) in English, French and Spanish prepared for the Commission and Committees held in 2018-2021. The analysis does not consider invitation letters, provisional agendas, circular letters, addendum papers, other comments papers including the replies to circular letters, and information documents. Table 2 shows the number of WDs that

[21] CODEX AND THE PANDEMIC- PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF CAC43 AND CCEXEC80 AND ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION FOR 2022 https://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/sh-proxy/en/?lnk=1&url=https%253A%252F%252Fworkspace.fao.org%252Fsites%252Fcodex%252FMeetings%252FCX-702-81%252FWD%252Fex81_04e.pdf and Sub-committee on the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025 https://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/sh-proxy/en/?lnk=1&url=https%253A%252F%252Fworkspace.fao.org%252Fsites%252Fcodex%252FMeetings%252FCX-702-81%252FWD%252Fex81_05e.pdf

were circulated at least two months prior to the start of the respective committee session and the corresponding percentage of the total WDs included. In the 2020-2021 biennium, there was an increase in the number of WDs available within the set deadlines, compared to the 2018-2019 biennium. However, this was most evident for 2020, a year when there were no technical Codex meetings held due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Commission took place in November 2020.

Table 2: Working Documents distributed on time by language, 2018-2021

	English		French		Spanish	
Year	N. of WDs on time	% of Total N. of WDs	N. of WDs on time	% of Total N. of WDs	N. of WDs on time	% of Total N. of WDs
2018	37	33%	25	22%	26	23%
2019	94	42%	34	15%	36	16%
2020	20	59%	18	53%	18	53%
2021	67	42%	45	29%	45	29%

Indicator 5.1.3 Proportion of sessions where all agenda items were covered within the allotted Committee meeting time and work was completed by the project deadline

2.62. Despite the challenges encountered by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the need to hold meetings virtually and thereby also having less time overall for discussions, the Codex meetings conducted in 2020-2021 have all been successful with the majority of agenda items covered. Agendas were adapted to the virtual environment and limited time. The pandemic and the postponement of meetings caused some delays in completion of a few work items by the project deadline, which was addressed by extension of relevant deadlines for a year or two. Important for the success of the Codex meetings held virtually have been the active use of virtual working group meetings and webinars prior to the formal sessions so as to progress the work beforehand, sort out outstanding issues, and prepare for consensus. CCEXEC78, held in February 2020, was the last meeting to be held physically before the pandemic. In 2020-2021, three CCEXEC sessions (CCEXEC79, 80, 81were held virtually, with efficient use of time and all agenda items covered. CAC43 (2020) and CAC44 (2021), both held virtually, finished their agendas effectively and adopted all Codex texts and work items on the agenda.

Objective 5.2 Enhance the capacities of committee and working group chairpersons, regional coordinators and host country secretariats to manage the work of Codex

Outcome 5.2.1 Subsidiary body meetings and working groups are effectively and efficiently chaired and conducted

Indicator 5.2.1 Proportion of chairs and host countries of subsidiary bodies and working groups taking part in training and/or in the development of tools and guidance.

2.63. When the pandemic caused physical Codex sessions to be suspended after CCEXEC in February 2020, the Codex Secretariat worked with Committee Host Secretariats to plan and deliver online technical workshops and webinars to guide participants in virtual participation and to explain and continue technical work. More than 17 committee sessions in the reporting period were accompanied by multiple outreach events of this type. These events together with 12 regional workshops on Codex and Codex web tools have contributed to the ways in which chairpersons of committees and electronic working groups now plan and manage online meetings. This was supplemented with guidance for delegates to support their participation in virtual meetings, which was made available in six languages and in both detailed and quick start formats.[22]

2.64. As short series of virtual workshops were also convened in the second half of 2020 with past and new regional coordinators to facilitate the transition and support continuity of work at the regional level. A technical panel met in Brussels in March 2020 to begin work on a guidance document for EWG chairpersons. Its completion was delayed due to the need to focus on how to adapt to the pandemic, but this will be updated to include the extensive lessons learned from working online during 2020-2021.

[22] Available at https://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/meetings/information-for-delegates/en/

Indicator 5.2.2 Satisfaction ratings on meeting efficiency, role of chairs and host and Codex secretariats

2.65. Satisfaction surveys were adapted in 2020-2021 to get feedback on the virtual working environment. The overall feedback was positive across all committees held in 2020-21. For most questions more than 90% of respondents indicated “agree/strongly agree” or “satisfied/very satisfied” with the organization and implementation of the meeting. Issues related to time of the meeting and time zone, length of time for agenda items, connectivity issues were raised. The feedback recognized the challenges faced by all and in particular chairpersons, host and Codex secretariats in adapting to the new virtual environment and even in those committees where there were very challenging discussions feedback remained generally positive.

CONCLUSIONS

2.66. The 2020-2021 biennium was atypical because of the COVID-19 pandemic rendering physical meetings, which had been the cornerstone of Codex work, impossible. Most 2020 meetings were postponed, and all meetings were virtual in 2021. Despite this, the implementation of the SP progressed satisfactory in the 2020-2021 biennium. Performance under most indicators scored well. Highlights from indicators include:

- Increased participation of developing countries thanks to virtual formal meetings and preparatory informal meetings. Compared to the previous biennium, in 2020-2021 more Members participated in Codex meetings with larger delegations showing that overall, the new ways of working have enhanced inclusiveness.
- Facing the challenge of not being able to meet physically, the Codex Secretariat together with the CVCs and Membership were able to adapt quickly to the new environment, finding innovative, creative and agile ways to progress and minimize disruption to Codex work. This was recognized by Members who overall expressed satisfaction for the organization and implementation of Codex meetings during the biennium.
- The provision of FAO and WHO scientific advice which is critical to Codex continued to be provided despite similar challenges as for Codex meetings. This allowed Codex committees to progress in their work.
- The Secretariat is facing ongoing challenges to monitoring the SP. Data collection is proving difficult for some indicators that rely more on qualitative information. Results for this type of indicators are also difficult to compare across biennia. Furthermore, the environment in which Codex is operating is continuously changing, imposing constant adaptation. This also presents a challenge for monitoring.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2.67. CCEXEC83 and CAC45 are recommended to:

- Consider whether the results of the activities are evolving in the right direction and provide comments and feedback on any areas that may require particular attention for the remaining period for implementation of the SP.
- In light of some of the challenges identifies in monitoring progress against the indicators consider requesting the secretariat to reduce the number of indicators to those where the most useful information can be collected.
- Consider the results of the recent survey (see Add 1) and the work undertaken by the Secretariat on building a mechanism to monitor the use and impact of Codex Texts when preparing the next SP.

ANNEX 1 – Standards development and prioritization processes in selected General Subject Committees

Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling (CCMAS)

The Committee continues to meet annually and in view of the decision to have a single reference for all methods of analysis, CCMAS is reviewing all methods contained in CXS 234-1999 to ensure that they remain 'fit for purpose' and have direct pertinence to provisions in Codex commodity standards. This work takes up 50% or more of the Committee's time in addition to endorsing methods submitted mainly by commodity committees. The work phased by commodity 'workable packages', according to a systematic approach developed for this purpose for internal use by the Committee. The package on dairy methods was completed within 3 years due to the extensive number of methods contained in CXS 234. The packages for fats and oils (set for completion in 2023), cereals, legumes and pulses; processed fruits and vegetables (new) are currently examined. As the review entails work between sessions requiring technical inputs from the method owners, the standards development organisations (SDOs) the time taken depends on the inputs from SDOs and members, the interaction with other Codex committees (commodity committees who establish the related commodity standards) and the number of methods per workable package. CCMAS continues to add new workable packages as work on current packages is completed.

Codex Committee on Food Additives (CCFA)

CCFA50 (2018) discussed a document entitled "Future Strategies for CCFA" which analysed the major challenges and barriers hindering the advancement of CCFA work and agreed on a series of recommendations for implementing a "One CCFA approach".

CCFA takes the following actions to prioritize emerging issues which can result in revised or new Codex food additive provisions:

(i) Codex Members and Observers can provide their replies in response to the Circular Letter titled "Request for information and comments on the priority list of substances proposed for evaluation by JECFA" if they think some substances should be evaluated or re-evaluated. CCFA will evaluate these requirements and rank them in order from highest to lowest priority; and

(ii) Codex Members and Observers can provide proposals for new and/or revision of food additive provisions of the GSFA. At each session, CCFA discusses the terms of reference relating to the development of GSFA, the alignment of the GSFA and the commodity standards and Revision to the Class Names and the International Numbering System for Food Additives.

Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods (CCRVDF)

The Committee currently meets every two years and bases its work management on the guidance provided in the Procedural Manual, in particular the Risk Analysis Principles applied by CCRVDF. Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) are established based on the safety risk assessment provided by JECFA. The establishment of the priority list of veterinary drugs for evaluation/re-evaluation by JECFA is a standing item on the agenda of the Committee. Once veterinary drugs are scheduled in the priority list, they will be evaluated by JECFA between two sessions of CCRVDF to allow CCRVDF work to progress timely. CCRVDF considers the JECFA MRL recommendations and in case of agreement forwards them to CAC for final adoption. In the ideal case, the consideration of the MRL by CCRVDF can take one session of the Committee.

Concerns over the proposed MRL are addressed through concern forms that can either be resolved in plenary with the explanation of the JECFA Secretariat or require a reassessment by JECFA.

In this case, the MRL could take two or more sessions of CCRVDF for finalization depending on the complexity of the concern and the capacity of JECFA to accommodate its consideration. Other texts developed by CCRVDF may take between two to three sessions for completion depending on the degree of consensus to advance the text in the Step Procedure.

Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues (CCPR)

The Committee continues to meet annually and bases its work management on the guidance provided in the Procedural Manual, in particular the Risk Analysis Principles applied by CCPR. MRLs are established based on the safety risk assessment provided by JMPR. The establishment of priority lists of pesticides for evaluation/re-evaluation by JMPR is a standing item on the agenda of the Committee. Once the pesticides are scheduled in the priority list, they will be evaluated by JMPR in the year following completion of the session of CCPR where the pesticides were scheduled for evaluation, which is known as the synchronization between CCPR and JMPR.

The MRL recommendations arising from JMPR are considered by CCPR and in case of agreement, they are forwarded directly for final adoption by CAC. Therefore, the consideration of the MRL by CCPR usually take one session of the Committee.

Concerns over the proposed MRL are addressed through concern forms that can either be resolved in plenary with the explanation of the JMPR Secretariat or require a reassessment by JMPR. Once JMPR has confirmed or revised its previous recommendation, the MRL is considered by CCPR for final adoption, a second concern form on the same issue is not allowed. In case of concerns, an MRL can take two or more sessions of CCPR for finalization depending on the complexity of the concern and the capacity of JMPR to accommodate its consideration.

Other standards developed by CCPR usually take between two to three sessions for completion depending on the degree of consensus to advance the text in the Step Procedure. Some documents are developed in phases due to their size and complexity, such as the revision of the Classification of Food and Feed which will come to an end in 2023 after more than 10 years' work.

Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods (CCCF)

The Committee continues to meet annually and bases its work management on the guidance provided in the Procedural Manual, in particular the Risk Analysis Principles applied by CCCF and the Preamble of the General Standards for Contaminants in Food and Feed (CXS 193-1995). MLs are established based on the safety risk assessment provided by JECFA or ad hoc expert meetings. The establishment of priority lists of contaminants for evaluation/re-evaluation by JECFA is a standing item on the agenda of the Committee. Once the contaminant is scheduled in the priority list, it will depend on JECFA when they can assess the contaminant which could usually takes one to two years from its inclusion in the priority list by CCCF.

The outcome of the evaluation is usually followed up in CCCF through the development of discussion papers to explore risk management options available based on a number of factors, e.g., sufficient data geographically available for the establishment of worldwide representative MLs or risk management measures which are readily available and proven to be effective and applicable worldwide, to decide on the establishment of MLs or a CoP or both.

Discussion papers can lead to project documents for new work submitted to CCEXEC/CAC initiating the consideration of the ML and/or COP in the Step Procedure. A contaminant led to several MLs for different combinations of contaminant/food. Depending on the nature of the issue and the degree of consensus, the ML or COP can be finalized in one or several sessions and in the case of MLs may take a further consultation with JECFA.

CCCF follows the Codex Step Procedure and may omit steps 6/7 to speed up finalization of an ML or a CoP. When an emergency food safety issue has been identified, CCCF has used the accelerated procedure and resolved issues in one or two meetings depending on the availability of scientific advice e.g., for the ML for melamine in food (including infant formulae) and feed. Usually, establishment of MLs takes longer than CoP which are less prescriptive than MLs.