

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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Agenda Item 3

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Eighty-fifth Session

FAO Headquarters Rome, Italy

20–24 November 2023

REQUEST FOR COMMENTS ON THE BLUEPRINT ON THE FUTURE OF CODEX FINAL REPORT FROM CCEXEC SUBCOMMITTEE

Comments in reply to CL 2023/82/OCS-EXEC

Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, Egypt, Guatemala, Indonesia, Iraq, Japan, Malaysia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Peru, Uruguay, USA and CropLife International, ENCA, ICBA, IFT, International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), International Special Dietary Food Industries (ISDI)

Background

1. This document compiles comments received through the Codex Online Commenting System (OCS) in response to CL 2023/82/OCS-EXEC issued in October 2023. Under the OCS, comments are compiled in the following order: general comments are listed first, followed by comments on specific sections.

Explanatory notes on the appendix

2. The comments submitted through the OCS are hereby attached as **Annex I** and are presented in table format.

GENERAL COMMENTS

COMMENT	MEMBER / OBSERVER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australia thanks the Codex Secretariat and CVCs for this work. • We think the most important thing for Codex to bear in mind at this point is the need to embed flexibility. • We should veer away from over-engineering any mechanisms for judging the efficacy and appropriateness of different meeting modalities and making generalisations, as this could have the impact of stifling the evolution of efficient work practices. • We should hold back from codifying rules until clear issues or benefits have been identified. At that point any gaps in procedural guidance can be considered. • We should ensure committees have access to the tools for a range of participation mechanisms to make most effective and efficient use of meetings and the time between sessions. • Codex should support a move towards more hybridisation, within budgetary constraints, and without additional costs being pushed unreasonably towards host countries, and without detracting unreasonably from the in-person experience. What is and isn't feasible will change over time, but it remains paramount that people are given the opportunity to come together face to face. • All committees, where there is active work, should continue to have clarity on their schedule. Depending on the agenda, the length and the format of a meeting could be adjusted from the general pre-pandemic approach of a 5-day in-person-only meeting. All of the new meeting modalities allow for the Codex core values to be enacted. Therefore, any change from the pre-pandemic approach should be done so to drive effectiveness and efficiency, while seeking to provide equitable participation. 	Australia
Agree	Iraq
<p>New Zealand (NZ) appreciates the opportunity to comment on CL 2023/82/OCS-EXEC the 'Request for comments on Future of Codex - Part 3 Model for Future Codex Work. NZ has the following comments in response:</p> <p>NZ is grateful for the work the CCEXEC sub-committee, in setting out a Codex Model for Future Codex Work. We agree, to remain relevant Codex must continue to adapt to changing world, new technology, and variations in circumstances.</p> <p>When developing the Model for Future Codex Work we should be cognisant of the relevance of at least three of the Codex Strategic Goals as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Address current and emerging issues in a timely manner. - Facilitate the participation of all Codex Members throughout the standard setting process. - Enhance work management systems and practices that support the efficient and effective achievement of all strategic plan goals. <p>A further overarching consideration in relation to the Model for Future Codex Work is of course the need to respect and adhere to the Commission's core values of collaboration, inclusiveness, consensus-building, and transparency. Therefore NZ considers that any proposals must be very much guided by these values.</p> <p>While Codex committees in the past have been typically in-person meetings, with virtual options now a reality, there is now a greater expectation of a virtual option. In-person meetings alone can limit inclusiveness (especially in comparison to hybrid options). Conversely, hybrid or virtual meetings can limit collaboration and consensus building including side discussions at meetings which can be very difficult with virtual meetings. Considering this, and in the light of continuing advances in technology, NZ is of the view that Codex must take a flexible approach to the various format options. Alternative mechanisms and platforms offer pragmatic options in specific situations and</p>	New Zealand

<p>circumstances and can be complementary and made to work for Codex. As such NZ considers flexible options must be a key priority going forward. To ensure the robustness of Codex into the future, meeting format options need to be extensive and enabling to allow for circumstances we may not be able to envisage now. The options may be enhanced by setting out some overarching principles to help guide the choice of a format appropriate to circumstances in each case.</p> <p>Finally, when considering the various format options available we would like to see the important role of new inter-session working mechanisms being acknowledged. Such mechanisms have already been found to provide a solid basis to support the work of Codex committee meetings. Additionally, this process does allow for wide participation and this participation may influence a decision to actively engage at the plenary. EWGs are now able to utilise virtual meetings between those leading the work as well as interested delegations and observers. Alongside this process are inter-session webinars with interactive presentations. All these strongly support the agenda for the plenary session, as the EWG reports reflect these wider discussion forums.</p>	
<p>The United States welcomes this opportunity to comment on the Future of Codex – Part 3 (Model for Future Codex Work) because we are not only a Member Country but also Host Country Secretariat to two active Codex committees—the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH) and the Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods (CCRVDF); and to two committees that are adjourned sine die - the Codex Committee on Cereals, Pulses and Legumes (CCCPL) and the Codex Committee on Processed Fruits and Vegetables (CCPFV).</p> <p>The United States believes that the four meeting formats currently under discussion provide greater flexibility, inclusivity, accessibility, and accountability than ever before and have helped Codex meet the demands of an ever-changing world. Technology, whether in a simple webcast or a more complicated hybrid session, has enabled Codex to work in ways that have promoted our core values of inclusiveness and transparency and are more accessible to Members and Observers. Before webcasting and virtual meetings, the only alternative to in-person meetings came by way of Committees Working by Correspondence or submission of written comments. These modalities are still in use (e.g., by the Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products, working by correspondence) and should be maintained. For committees with robust agendas, the United States believes that all four meeting formats are here to stay since they can each be used to accommodate a particular committee's needs and preferred meeting format within Codex and there is no “one size fits all” for all committees and issues.</p>	<p>USA</p>
<p>Regarding the 4 models in Table 1 ENCA favours the 4th Option - in-person and virtual participation - as the meeting format that is most effective in terms of not only time, cost and efficiency, environmental impact and transparency.</p> <p>Web-streaming: Codex meeting should be not only be virtual, but also web-streamed wherever possible and uploaded for public viewing after the meetings. This is important for many reasons, including as a historical record, for transparency, accountability and for public understanding and learning. Web-streaming will become increasingly important over time for the revision, revocation and starting of standards. The absence of such analyses in 1987, led to the adoption of the Formula Up Formula Standard – an example of a bad standard that fuelled the global market for unnecessary and harmful products and led to a weakening of essential laws to protect breastfeeding.</p> <p>Transparency in virtual participation. Participants must of course be properly and transparently registered. Once this is done, lead participants should be able to call on other members of the delegation to make interventions.</p> <p>The need for a One Health Approach. The 4th format is most likely to safeguard the original Codex mandate to protect public health as a priority while reducing harmful impact on the environment. As stated by Dr Tedros at the opening of CAC45, Codex must as a matter of urgency, follow an “integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals and ecosystems.” This means that a transformation of the global food system and the facilitation of trade for its own sake, must be considers very much a secondary objective</p>	<p>ENCA</p>

Reversing resource disparities. The 4th option should also increase the presence of poorly resourced countries who are less able to send as many people to in-person meetings. The powerful exporting nations and corporations and front groups that traditionally dominate in-person Codex meetings, profit from Codex standards that fail to protect health, yet are rarely held financially responsible for the harm these standards cause. Invariably, the 'costs' are externalized to importing countries and families. IBFAN, ENCA and IACFO have been assured many times that the Codex Trust Fund – that seeks to address resource disparities, will remain funded by Member States, rather than by private philanthropies and commercial entities. This is important and should be written into the Procedural Manual as a point of principle.

The need for stronger Conflict of Interest and transparency safeguards. As mentioned in IBFAN's comments on Part 1, Codex needs stronger Conflict of Interest and transparency safeguards if it is to ensure that all its meetings and decisions are based on relevant, convincing and credible evidence rather than on political or commercial expedience. Until this happens, in person Codex meetings will continue to be more problematic than virtual meetings because they are more likely to be dominated by corporations and their front groups, with deceptive names that hide their nature and commercial objectives. All too often commercial entities are also present on government delegations, sometimes even speaking for the governments. In the 2019 CCFSDU meeting 44% (164) of the 370 delegates represented the food and related industries, funding dinners, receptions and meetings, with 67 sitting government delegations. There were more industry than government delegates in the room. Following IBFAN ENCA and other exposures about this problem several countries have reduced commercial presence in their delegations and this has made an important difference in their statements. For true public interest observers such as IBFAN and ENCA who are not commercially financed and whose aim is purely to protect health, in person Codex meetings and the side event can be highly problematic. It is sometimes impossible to know who you are really talking to.

Rebalance government delegations. Aside from the presence of industry, government delegations typically contain few people from health ministries and no people from environmental ministries. Most government delegates are from Bureaux of Standards, trade and industry. This imbalance needs to be addressed if Codex is to meet today's challenges.

Observer statements must be reflected in the report. To impose a ruling that observer statements should only be reflected in CRDs would severely limit the visibility and power of observer comments - especially from those advocating greater public health safeguards. Observers are usually well aware of the need for concise statements and concise reports and the need to stay focused the specific topic being discussed. This constraint would unfairly impact on Public Health NGOs. Business front group rarely say anything of substance because their work is done before and behind the scenes, through sponsorship and funding of meetings.

Over the years, IBFAN, ENCA, IACFO have often been alone in bringing specific and critically important issues, such as how Codex texts and WHO recommendations are used at WTO, to the attention of the Commission and its Committees. While we totally support the chair's right to rule out of order and discourage interventions by any members or observers that serve to advance or protect commercial interests over health and fairness in trade that the Commission is mandated to advance. However, establishing obstacles to the participation of civil society organizations would be a backward step that will result in ill-informed policies, especially where public health and child protection are concerned.

If changes are to be made to minimize, the role of Observers, these should be proposed as amendments to the Procedural Manual and the impact of such changes on the legitimacy of Codex standards (according to the WTO requirements for openness, etc.) properly evaluated. Codex terminology should be consistent: Because of a lack of attention to COI safeguards and scientific rigour, the infant formula and follow-up formulas standards have four references to the meaningless term 'history of safe use' – a term that industry has used for decades to

<p>establish trust in their products and new ingredients.</p> <p>Tackling Ultra-Processed products. Following the One Health Approach, Codex will have to address the problem of Ultra-processed products, This will necessitate a fundamental shift in power and exercise extreme caution regarding the adoption of any standard relating to the safety, ingredients, labelling, marketing and global trade of these products.</p> <p>footnotes: 2023 Lancet Series on Breastfeeding. INTERVENTIONS AT WTO AND CODEX RELATED TO NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WHO INTERNATIONAL CODE OF MARKETING OF BREASTMILK SUBSTITUTES. Katheryn Russ*</p> <p>WTO publication WTO Agreements and Public Health, 2002 at https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/booksp_e/who_wto_e.pdf Page 34. One of the most relevant outcomes of the [WTO] review was the adoption of a "Decision of the Committee on Principles for the Development of International Standards, Guides and Recommendations." The Decision calls upon international standardizing bodies to observe a certain number of principles in their work, which include: transparency, openness, impartiality and consensus, effectiveness and relevance, and coherence. It also calls upon them to take the development dimension into account in the elaboration of their standards, guides and recommendations. International standardizing bodies that fulfil these criteria will be considered "international" within the meaning of the TBT Agreement. page 237. PRINCIPLES CONCERNING THE PARTICIPATION OF INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE WORK OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION. Purpose. The purpose of collaboration with International Non-Governmental Organizations is to secure for the Codex Alimentarius Commission, expert information, advice and assistance from International Non-Governmental Organizations and to enable organizations which represent important sections of public opinion and are authorities in their fields of professional and technical competence to express the views of their members and to play an appropriate role in ensuring the harmonizing of intersectoral interests among the various sectoral bodies concerned in a country, regional or global setting. Arrangements made with such organizations shall be designed to advance the purposes of the Codex Alimentarius Commission by securing maximum cooperation from International Non-Governmental Organizations in the execution of its programme. p. 239-240. 5.1 Privileges of International Non-Governmental Organizations in "Observer Status. An Organization in Observer Status: (a) shall be entitled to send an observer (without the right to vote) to sessions of the Commission, who may be accompanied by advisers; to receive from the Secretary of the Commission, in advance of the session, all working documents and discussion papers; to circulate to the Commission its views in writing, without abridgement; and to participate in discussions when invited by the Chairperson (51); (b) shall be entitled to send an observer (without the right to vote) to sessions of specified Subsidiary Bodies, who may be accompanied by advisers; to receive from the Secretaries of the Subsidiary Bodies, in advance of the session, all working documents and discussion papers; to circulate to these Bodies its views in writing, without abridgement; and to participate in discussions when invited by the Chairperson;</p>	
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SPECIFIC COMMENTS

QUESTION a): With regard to the four meeting formats presented in Table 1, are there any additional strengths or weaknesses of the meeting formats that should be highlighted.

We think the various matters are well covered in the table.

Australia

For “in-person with possibility of virtual interventions”, one additional weakness is that in situations where connectivity is lost to those participating virtually, there becomes an imbalance in inclusivity vs. those participating in-person. Perhaps it would be helpful to have some “best practices” guidance to participants, so that countries that participate remotely have a clear understanding on whether or not they would be able to comment on items that were discussed in the room during that period of time.

Canada

It is also important to note that although both “virtual” and “in-person with possibility of virtual interventions” list time zone issues, straight virtual meetings tend to be limited to 3 hours, whereas “in-person with possibility of virtual interventions” are full days. If the full day carries throughout the night for a number of participants, the time zone challenge is a larger one.

Para modalidad solo presencial: La accesibilidad depende de conseguir oportunamente los permisos nacionales y documentación de viaje necesaria como visas (considerar que en algunos casos puede significar un traslado a otro país), vacunas, etc.

Menor inclusividad:

Costo logístico elevado para el país hospedante, lo que puede desincentivar la presidencia de los Comités.

Costa Rica

- No hay oportunidades de interacción informal.

Comentarios: este inconveniente se puede solventar programando reuniones virtuales, previo a la reunión.

- Se tarda más en avanzar y puede ser necesario distribuir la reunión en más días.

Comentarios: esta afirmación puede ser subjetiva.

Durante el 2021 y 2022, luego de la pandemia por el COVID 19, las reuniones de los diferentes comités del Codex fueron celebradas en formato virtual y bajo dicha modalidad se alcanzaron importantes avances, incluso se logró terminar con un tema tan complejo como lo fue el TFAMR8.

Por lo expuesto Costa Rica no coincide con lo expresado en este texto.

<p>Presencial con transmisión en línea: Ventajas: Similar a las reuniones presenciales, con cierto aumento de la transparencia y de la inclusividad (al permitir el acceso a un mayor número de delegados expertos en los diferentes temas de la agenda que puedan apoyar a la delegación con participación presencial . Aumenta la transparencia, ya que todos los miembros y observadores pueden acceder a los debates. Comentarios: Costa Rica considera que hay un error y por ello, propone eliminar el siguiente texto en paréntesis: (al permitir la participación de delegaciones híbridas). Justificación: Las reuniones con transmisión webcast no permiten intervenciones de los delegados que participan en línea, son solamente espectadores</p>	
<p>There are no additional points for strengths and weaknesses. Egypt is considering the following recommendations: 1- The need to align the strengths and weaknesses of the meeting formats with the type of meeting, meeting criteria, and agenda in place (Codex committees, Executive Committees, Coordinating committees, ad hoc committees, Joint FAO/WHO Expert Meetings, and ad hoc cross-committee task forces). 2- Taking into account the results of the previous meetings' surveys and consultations with committee chairs, hosts, EWG chairs, and CCEXEC sub-committee (as summarized in Table 2), it is recommended to create a consolidated table that summarizes the impact of different meeting formats on achieving the core values of Codex (as listed in Table 2), along with the identified weaknesses and strengths (as presented in Table 1).</p>	Egypt
<p>Consideramos que se han tomado en cuenta todas las ventajas e inconvenientes con respecto a las modalidades de reunión.</p>	Guatemala
<p>Indonesia would like to express its gratitude to the CCEXEC Subcommittee for their efforts in identifying all possible strengths and weakness of every meeting format that Codex has conducted during and after Covid-19 pandemic as appears in Table 1 of this document. However, Indonesia is of the view that resource implications for host secretariats should be identified as the weakness point of all meeting format. It is an important information for those who are not served as host government.</p>	Indonesia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · With regard to weaknesses of in-person only format, Members not present may have limited inclusiveness as well as transparency compared to the other meeting formats. We suggest revising “Limited transparency for those not present (meeting report)” to “Limited inclusiveness and transparency for those not present (meeting report).” · With regard to weaknesses of in-person with webcast format, Members following webcast may have limited inclusiveness compared to the other meeting formats, as they cannot take part in decision making. We suggest adding “Limited inclusiveness for those who follow webcast.” · With regard to weaknesses of in-person with webcast format, it should be clearly stated that Members following webcast have limitations to follow informal discussions. We suggest adding “for those who follow webcast” to “Still some transparency limitations as cannot follow informal discussions.” · It should be noted that meeting using virtual tools may be interrupted by technical issues such as poor internet connectivity, audio or video issues. · With regard to virtual only format and in-person with possibility of virtual intervention format, some issues may need to be clear: how to confirm qualification of virtual participants (Members, Observers, or general public), how to consider quorum, and how to deal with voting. 	Japan

Table 1: Overview of strengths and weaknesses of different meeting formats	Netherlands
<p>Format Strengths Weaknesses</p> <p>In-person only Face to face interaction facilitates collaboration, informal interactions, network development, relationship building, ad hoc meetings and consensus building</p> <p>Faster work pace – more can be achieved</p> <p>All in same time zone so can work full days</p> <p>For all in-person meetings:</p> <p>*Experience Codex as a family</p> <p>*Enjoy social interactions during lunches and dinners in foreign countries</p> <p>*You do your homework and there is a social reward</p> <p>*A virtual Codex meeting is an entirely different experience in comparison to an in-person Codex. Any comparison is an unfair one.</p> <p>Accessibility is resource dependent, limited to those who have the resources to travel and are able to secure necessary travel documentation in a timely manner</p> <p>Limited transparency for those not present (meeting report)</p> <p>Increased carbon footprint</p> <p>Participation depends on travel conditions (delays, strikes, weather etc.)</p> <p>Reduced work capacity due to jet-lag and the inconvenience of staying in a foreign country / hotel</p> <p>Increased risk of illnesses for participants depending on the location</p> <p>Fatigue due to long working days</p> <p>Poor compromises due to time restrictions</p> <p>Time consuming in case of long journey to venue</p> <p>Virtual only Increased inclusivity as accessible to more members and observers</p> <p>Increased transparency as more accessible to all members</p> <p>Can proceed even when outside factors prevent physical meetings</p> <p>Decreased carbon footprint</p> <p>Cost effectiveness / less financially demanding for delegates</p> <p>Time otherwise used to travel can be used for work</p> <p>Ease of collaboration with other national experts Time zone challenges</p> <p>Limited work time per day</p> <p>No No Limited opportunity for informal interaction</p> <p>TMay Ttakes longer to make progress and may need to be spread over more days</p> <p>Little flexibility/ increased difficulties for the organization of in session working groups</p> <p>Challenges for delegates to join and participate virtually while also fulfilling expectations to undertake their daily work role/tasks</p> <p>You do all the homework, without social reward.</p> <p>In-person with webcast As for in-person with some increase in transparency and some increase in inclusivity (by allowing hybrid delegations)</p> <p>Increased transparency as all members/observers can access discussions</p> <p>Think about a hybrid delegation of e.g. one person that speaks, while the rest follows on-line and provides input. Limited inclusivity as in-person participation is still limited to those who have the resources to travel</p> <p>Time zone issues can make it challenging to follow live online</p> <p>Still some transparency limitations as cannot follow informal discussions</p>	

<p>No record in the list of participants for those who follow webcast Increased carbon footprint</p> <p>In-person with possibility of virtual interventions Increased inclusivity as more accessible to all members Increased transparency as more accessible to all members. Facilitates progress, networking and consensus building Delegates can still participate even if last minute issues (flight cancellations, weather etc.) prevent their travel Integration of participation of both in person and virtual participants is challenging. Challenging to match quality of online experience with the in-person experience (e.g. time zone issues). No opportunity for virtual participants to take part in informal discussions. Delegations who would wish to participate physically might not receive funding for travel if the meeting modality offers hybrid participation. Increased carbon footprint Gives Participants the choice of how to attend Although this format suggests otherwise, inequality between on-line and physical participation will remain. To improve equality, physical regional meetings at the venue could be abolished, as they could also be held online. This format will cause an extra burden in organising skills and personell, and extra financial challenges for host countries.</p>							
<p>While “In-Person” meetings have proven to be very effective, in particular when consensus has been difficult to achieve we consider that two meeting formats deserve further attention, namely</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the format “In-person with webcast”: for a rationale, see the pros listed in table 1, like face-to-face interaction, informal interaction, possibility of ad hoc working groups, same time zone; we also value the increased transparency compared to the in-person only meeting format; - the format “In-person with the possibility of virtual intervention”, especially for CAC, as this is the most inclusive, offering access to all members, enabling last-minute participation and saving high costs for long journeys. It is however very costly and challenging for host countries, as this comes down to organising a virtual and a physical meeting simultaneously (extra screens, cameras and operators). In terms of efficiency “Virtual only” meetings have their merits and should remain an option. They may be suitable especially when electronic workings groups have paved the way to a wide consensus before a meeting. Although virtual only meetings may need more days to complete their agenda due to differences in time zones they offer benefits such as a decreased carbon footprint and reduced/non-existing travel requirements (regarding expenses and safety) that should also be taken into account. <p>Table 1: Overview of strengths and weaknesses of different meeting formats</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Format</th> <th>Strengths</th> <th>Weaknesses</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>In-person only</td> <td>Face to face interaction facilitates collaboration, informal interactions, network development, relationship building, ad hoc meetings and consensus building Faster work pace – more can be achieved All in same time zone so can work full days</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>For all in-person meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Experience Codex as a family *Enjoy social interactions during lunches and dinners in foreign countries *You do your homework and there is a social reward *A virtual Codex meeting is an entirely different experience in comparison to an in-person Codex. Any comparison is is an unfair one. <p>Accessibility is resource dependent, limited to those who have the resources to travel and are able to secure necessary travel documentation</p>	Format	Strengths	Weaknesses	In-person only	Face to face interaction facilitates collaboration, informal interactions, network development, relationship building, ad hoc meetings and consensus building Faster work pace – more can be achieved All in same time zone so can work full days		
Format	Strengths	Weaknesses					
In-person only	Face to face interaction facilitates collaboration, informal interactions, network development, relationship building, ad hoc meetings and consensus building Faster work pace – more can be achieved All in same time zone so can work full days						

<p>in a timely manner</p> <p>Limited transparency for those not present (meeting report)</p> <p>Increased carbon footprint</p> <p>Participation depends on travel conditions (delays, strikes, weather etc.)</p> <p>Reduced work capacity due to jet-lag and the inconvenience of staying in a foreign country / hotel</p> <p>Increased risk of illnesses for participants depending on the location</p> <p>Fatigue due to long working days</p> <p>Poor compromises due to time restrictions</p> <p>Time consuming in case of long journey to venue</p> <p>Virtual only Increased inclusivity as accessible to more members and observers</p> <p>Increased transparency as more accessible to all members</p> <p>Can proceed even when outside factors prevent physical meetings</p> <p>Decreased carbon footprint</p> <p>Cost effectiveness / less financially demanding for delegates</p> <p>Time otherwise used to travel can be used for work</p> <p>Ease of collaboration with other national experts Time zone challenges</p> <p>Limited work time per day</p> <p>No opportunity for informal interaction</p> <p>Takes longer to make progress and may need to be spread over more days</p> <p>Little flexibility/ increased difficulties for the organization of in session working groups</p> <p>Challenges for delegates to join and participate virtually while also fulfilling expectations to undertake their daily work role/tasks</p> <p>You do all the homework, without social reward.</p> <p>In-person with webcast As for in-person with some increase in transparency and some increase in inclusivity (by allowing hybrid delegations)</p> <p>Increased transparency as all members/observers can access discussions</p> <p>Think about a hybrid delegation of e.g. one person that speaks, while the rest follows on-line and provides input. Limited inclusivity as in-person participation is still limited to those who have the resources to travel</p> <p>Time zone issues can make it challenging to follow live online</p> <p>Still some transparency limitations as cannot follow informal discussions</p> <p>No record in the list of participants for those who follow webcast</p> <p>Increased carbon footprint</p> <p>In-person with possibility of virtual interventions Increased inclusivity as more accessible to all members</p> <p>Increased transparency as more accessible to all members. Facilitates progress, networking and consensus building</p> <p>Delegates can still participate even if last minute issues (flight cancellations, weather etc.) prevent their travel Integration of participation of both in person and virtual participants is challenging.</p> <p>Challenging to match quality of online experience with the in-person experience (e.g. time zone issues).</p> <p>No opportunity for virtual participants to take part in informal discussions.</p> <p>Delegations who would wish to participate physically might not receive funding for travel if the meeting modality offers hybrid participation.</p> <p>Increased carbon footprint</p> <p>Gives Participants the choice of how to attend</p>	
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<p>Although this format suggests otherwise, inequality between on-line and physical participation will remain. To improve equality, physical regional meetings at the venue could be abolished, as they could also be held online.</p> <p>This format will cause an extra burden in organising skills and personell, and extra financial challenges for host countries.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in-person only – strengths – - agree with the strengths listed for in-person meetings however there could be stronger emphasis on some of the benefits compared to formats by the use of the pre-fix 'strongly' (i.e. strongly facilitates collaboration, better supports consensus building, informal interactions etc). In-person meetings, allow those attending to gain all the benefits identified. It can therefore be identified as the gold standard for full engagement by a delegation on meetings of priority interest to them. If a member country has a keen interest in progressing the work, attendance in person has always been the best option for them. - an additional strength of in-person meetings may be in the benefits of capacity building that can be enhanced by attendance (a consequential benefit of this may be greater engagement by member countries on the use of, and therefore the impact of Codex standards). – weaknesses – - less inclusivity/transparency as less accessible to all members. - has strong leaning to those that can afford to travel therefore disadvantaging less developed or smaller economies and giving an uneven level of influence to those able to physically attend the Committee meeting. - this leads to concerns and issues being raised later in the standards development process rather than earlier when positions are not so entrenched and a higher level of global consensus could have been achieved – this in turn contributes to what has often been extended delays in moving forward and/or relegation of matters preciously discussed. - assumes those with a high interest will be able to attend, which is not necessarily the case when looking at the entirety of Codex work. - Only those actually attending a meeting have the opportunity to gain the full range of benefits listed. • - virtual only - – strengths – - good format for where there are limited agenda items and the items are not complex. Workshops can also ease the process; similar working groups can have real time discussions rather than only be correspondence and could meet more frequently for shorter time periods (1 – 2 hours) to progress specific issues or a specific part of a whole draft standard or guideline. Setting an agenda with specific times to discuss each item and sticking to these times can be used to assist participants to manage their engagement when time zones conflict. – weaknesses – - different time zones can make attendance and participation challenging if timing is the middle of the night for some parties. - disadvantages those country delegations with two or more delegates that cannot be in the same room. This means it is difficult to have immediate discussions between delegates compared others all being in the same room as the time zone is in usual business hours. - virtual only does not always support the beneficial ad hoc or in session breakout discussions that occur when meeting in person. - scientific discussions part of the EWG work is limited, and decisions on EWG takes longer. - depending on the number of agenda items, the plenary meeting may take a week or longer. This for those attending during the night, is potentially a wellness issue and could risk missing important comments etc. - lack of good internet access, disadvantages participation from less developed or smaller economies. • - in-person with webcast – – strengths – - good where a delegation can save costs by having one person travel with others by webcast. A consequential benefit may be recognition of the need for better in country co-ordination and communication so that those attending are more fully briefed. Improvements overtime in 	<p>New Zealand</p>

<p>communication technology can also be expected to facilitate the direct communication between those attending and those listening.</p> <p>– weaknesses –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - could be a challenge for countries to decide on the delegation to attend in-person, the HD or the EWG Chair? - especially challenging for countries chairing multiple EWGs requiring different scientific expertise. - communication between in person and those attending virtually is difficult particularly where immediate discussions and decisions are necessary. • - in-person with possibility of virtual interventions – <p>– strengths –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - offers full range of options for all countries (provided there is a method for funding travel where justified, such as the Codex Trust Fund) and potentially assists the host country financially in terms of providing for virtual interventions (consideration could be given to allowing the Codex Trust Fund to also serve this function as an alternative to funding travel for individuals). Best options for those countries that are rarely able to attend Codex meetings or have been constrained in the number of delegates, allowing those attending a meeting to also be able to access expert advice / comment in real time. Improvements over time in technology can also be expected to facilitate the direct communication between those attending and those listening, including the ability to join ad hoc discussion. <p>– weaknesses –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - could be cost prohibitive for some host countries due to the funds and resourcing required for the set up of the physical meeting as well as the IT required to facilitate virtual interventions. - some limitations may still exist due to inability for virtual participants to join ad hoc or in session breakout discussions. Further, this presents challenges for those participating virtually depending on their time zone. 	
<p>We would like to add the following to table 1, understanding that the table represent the strength and weaknesses from delegates point of views and not hosts:</p> <p>In-person only</p> <p>Strengths: Maintains high levels of engagement and activity among members and observers. Increase the possibility for sharing knowledge and experience both on a technical level, but also between regions.</p> <p>Weaknesses: In our view resource dependence has been an issue since the foundation of Codex, it has however been a considerable increase in the number of participants over the years. Therefore, we question this as a specific weakness in this context now.</p> <p>Virtual only</p> <p>Strengths: The time schedule is arranged for virtual participation, all on equal foot when it comes to participation and discussion (compared to “in person with the possibility of virtual participation).</p> <p>Weaknesses: Cost-benefit will have to be considered at national level: Members lose the engagement and interest and many of the advantages/benefits gained when meeting colleagues physically, therefore the cost of time spent, and resources used in Codex meetings are lost when participating virtual only. We consider this aspect important, and it is lost in the overview.</p> <p>In-person with webcast</p> <p>Strengths: Webcasting facilitates training of new delegates. Those watching/listening do not need to prepare positions or speaking points, on the other hand this would result in less knowledge of and maybe less interest in the subjects.</p> <p>In-person with the possibility of virtual interventions</p> <p>Strengths: Add: “As for in-person”</p> <p>Weaknesses: It is important to consider the impact of the weaknesses described as they strongly challenge the core values of Codex.</p>	<p>Norway</p>

<p>Opción 1. Solo presencial: Ventajas: Trabajo multidisciplinario y enriquecedor por intercambio de experiencias. Desventajas: Un representante de la embajada en el país de reunión podría participar presencial; sin embargo, no en todas las ciudades hay representante nacional. En las reuniones informales no hay opción para traducción simultánea como en la reunión plenaria.</p> <p>Opción 2. Solo virtual: Desventaja: Inconvenientes en la conectividad a internet, por temas técnicos o porque el miembro realiza otras actividades no relacionadas a la reunión. Menor compromiso de participación debido a que está detrás de una cámara apagada.</p> <p>Opción 3. Presencial con transmisión en línea: Ventaja: La transmisión virtual permite que todos los miembros del CNC realicen seguimiento a la reunión. Desventaja: El seguimiento por una plataforma o red social permite a otros técnicos verificar los pronunciamientos; no obstante, no pueden participar.</p> <p>Opción 4. Presencial con posibilidad de realizar intervenciones virtuales Ventaja: Cuando un país hace participar presencial a un representante y mantiene virtual a todos sus técnicos la reunión es enriquecedora. Desventaja: La integración de la participación presencial con intervención virtual es complicada para el moderador porque pueden tomar la palabra presencial y virtual a la vez, generándose desorden, es sugerible establecer pautas de guiarse del representante que participa presencial quien deberá brindar la palabra a su delegación que requiere intervenir virtual. Si hubiera fallas de conectividad los que participan presencial continúan la reunión.</p>	Peru
<p>Es una fortaleza de las reuniones virtuales el poder descomponer el trabajo en una sucesión de reuniones más breves que se distribuyen a lo largo de un año, lo que es una opción imposible en las reuniones presenciales. Frecuentemente surgen problemas complejos en los cuales existen una serie de decisiones a definir, concatenadas, cada una de las cuales exige debate. Mientras las reuniones virtuales permiten dar a cada instancia el tiempo de intercambio requerido, esto no es posible en las reuniones presenciales. En las reuniones presenciales este tipo de problemas generan alguna de las siguientes desviaciones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Si los miembros quieren dar a cada fase el tratamiento adecuado el problema termina insumiendo muchos años, dado que las reuniones suelen ser anuales. En esta hipótesis el resultado final es exactamente el contrario del que se indica en el cuadro, donde dice: "Se tarda más en avanzar y puede ser necesario distribuir la reunión en más días". • Si existe urgencia en resolver el problema se termina dando un tratamiento superficial a varias de las fases, a efectos de dar una solución en un número limitado de reuniones del comité. <p>Con la debida organización en realidad es lo contrario. Las reuniones virtuales permiten infinidad de instancias de comunicación informal y la realización de reuniones preparatorias. La diferencia es que se exige aquí una intencionalidad, mientras que en las reuniones presenciales eso es fruto de los intercambios casuales en pausas de café, comidas u otras instancias de socialización.</p>	Uruguay
<p>The United States believes that each meeting format offers the following additional strengths and weaknesses:</p> <p>"In person only" Strengths: Side events; ability to cover full agenda; and full participation in terms of decision making Weaknesses: Lower participation and bigger carbon footprint</p> <p>"Virtual only" Strengths: -- Weaknesses: Limited agenda; not much more economical from host country perspective; and technical issues can result in cancellation</p>	USA

<p>"In-person with webcast" Strengths: Allows delegations to have extra experts follow along and provides best of both worlds that also keeps costs reasonable for host country Weaknesses: No interventions from those participating by webcast (although they can establish separate channels of communication with delegates who are in-person)</p> <p>"In-person with possibility of virtual interventions" Strengths: -- Weaknesses: Unpredictable in-person attendance for host country planning; higher meeting costs for host countries; possible technical problems at individual participant level and meeting level; and connectivity still an issue (if the physical meeting continues to move on while virtual participants attempt to re-gain access, it may cause discontent amongst Members who feel their views are being ignored)</p>	
<p>No, it is covered well in Table 1.</p>	<p>CropLife International</p>
<p>For virtual interventions, one additional weakness could be connectivity challenges/technical issues, with the potential result being delays in making timely interventions.</p>	<p>ICBA</p>
<p>In-person Only: Additional Strength: Pre/Post or In-session Working Group Meetings In-person Only: Additional Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less overall member/observer participation / input into meeting & decisions (number of participants is lower). • Under accessibility – it is also dependent on time availability (suggest actually spelling out what resources are meant – e.g., cost, time availability to travel too/from as well as be at the meeting). <p>Virtual Only: Additional Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation of multiple delegates from same member or organization (e.g., participation of teams easier). • The slower pace enables more opportunity for member/observer teams (IFT uses teams) <p>Virtual Only: Additional Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision making constrained by virtual format. • Greater challenge if there are technical communication difficulties with virtual, or internet reliability challenges for members/observers. <p>In-person with Webcast: Additional Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows for member/observer teams (e.g., inclusivity) to participate together with interventions by in-person head delegate with team input. (IFT has used this multiple times since 2021 where an IFT Codex team member participating virtually identified an issue the IFT head delegate – being in the midst of the meeting – missed and communicated the issue to them for a possible intervention. • Faster work-pace than virtual only or virtual with intervention <p>In-person with Webcast: Additional Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource constraints (e.g., cost/time availability to travel to/from host location, visa restrictions or travel concerns) could keep any in-person delegate from a member/observer organization from attending, thereby greatly restricting ability to input into meeting (e.g., intervention). 	<p>IFT</p>

<p>In-person with Virtual Intervention: Additional Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables Pre/Post & In-Session Working Groups or Ad Hoc meetings. • Can reduce cost impact for members/observers (e.g., send only head delegate and others participate virtually). <p>In-person with Virtual Intervention: Additional Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can slow down committee progress from time delays for virtual interventions or needing to repeat virtual communications for in-person participants • Technical communication issues can inhibit progress of in-person participants 	
<p>QUESTION b): From your perspective as a Member country or Observer is there a particular meeting format that is most effective in terms of time, cost and efficiency. Please provide the rationale for your answer noting that more than one option may be selected. Please also indicate the resource implications for you with regards with the four meeting formats, i.e. in-person only, virtual only, in-person with webcast, in-person with possibility of virtual interventions.</p>	
<p>We think the important point, and this is discussed at the appendix, is that a particular meeting format may be more or less time efficient, more or less cost effective, and more or less successful in progressing standard setting, depending on the agenda in question. So, we would caution away from making generalisations, as this could be detrimental to the effectiveness and efficiency of Codex.</p> <p>With regards to the resource implications, in terms of relative cost and other human resource and health and safety aspects, these are fairly well covered in the appendix. We would reiterate in particular the largely negative impact of time zone on our capacity to participate in virtual meetings. This has health, safety and wellbeing implications.</p>	<p>Australia</p>
<p>From the perspective of a participant, the most balanced modality is in-person with either webcast or option for virtual interventions. This allows the Head of Delegation to effectively participate in valuable discussions and progression of standards but also benefit from the broadcast so that additional delegates can participate virtually and support the Head of Delegation.</p> <p>Although travel costs are more with in-person attendance, effectiveness is also higher with delegates who are in the correct time zone and focused on the task at hand.</p>	<p>Canada</p>
<p>Comentario general:</p> <p>La efectividad de reunión no depende de la modalidad, sino que se ve afectadas por diversos factores, como la naturaleza específica del Comité, la disponibilidad de recursos y las necesidades específicas de los miembros u observadores, la complejidad de los temas a discutir durante la reunión, la habilidad del presidente para dirigir las discusiones y construir consenso, entre otras.</p> <p>Las reuniones virtuales al ser más inclusivas permiten lograr una mejor calidad de los textos y trabajos aprobados. Además, son más eficientes en términos de costos, tanto por gastos de traslados y manutención como por la logística de organización y hospedaje.</p> <p>Comentario específico:</p> <p>En el caso específico de Costa Rica, se enfrentas serios problemas en cuanto a disponibilidad de recursos para viaje. Por ello, se apoya en primera instancia las reuniones híbridas.</p> <p>Justificación: Las reuniones híbridas permiten un resultado más eficaz en términos de tiempo, costo, trámites legales y eficiencia.</p> <p>La experiencia de la 26ª sesión del CCFICS fue exitosa y a pesar de ser la prima en esta modalidad permitió alcanzar importantes avances. Si bien es cierto, hay aspectos a mejorar, quedó la evidencia de que el Codex puede innovar y demostrar sus valores básicos de inclusividad, colaboración, creación de consenso y transparencia.</p>	<p>Costa Rica</p>

<p>No obstante, Costa Rica reconoce que existen dificultades para los países hospedantes y que en algunos casos se pueden incrementar los costos. Adicionalmente, es consciente que cada comité maneja además diferencias y dificultad para alcanzar consenso aunado a la carga de temas en sus respectivas agendas. Por ello también comprende que debe analizarse caso por caso.</p>	
<p>Egypt is in a good position with flexibility when considering the meeting formats; with the main emphasis on supporting and prioritizing the “In-person with possibility of virtual interventions” to cope with challenges for delegates to join and participate in person.</p> <p>Rational:</p> <p>Referring to the CAC Procedural Manual; “Guidelines on the conduct of meetings of Codex committees and ad hoc intergovernmental task forces”, para. (32): “Only the chief delegates of Members, or of Observer countries or of International Organizations have the right to speak unless they authorize other members of their delegations to do so”. Moreover, considering Egypt's strategic objective in the involvement in the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Program through delegates’ participation in Codex sessions of the CAC's committees, proportioned to its objectives and interests. Early selection of Egypt's delegations is performed by the Codex Contact Point in Egypt, which is located under the Egyptian Organization for Standardization and Quality (EOS). The Head Delegates' early communication and coordination are exercised with other delegates before participating in the forthcoming Codex meetings, particularly to have early knowledge and promote Egypt's priority issues and objectives. Taking into account these rationales</p> <p>The provision of multimedia and ICT infrastructure services for virtual/online sessions (whether in virtual-only or hybrid formats) should involve the deployment of video cameras, microphones, screens, and other equipment connected to a video server, the meeting platform, and the internet. It is necessary also to organize a number of technical rehearsals before the meeting to ensure effective interaction with online committee members.</p>	Egypt
<p>Consideramos que las reuniones presenciales con posibilidad de intraversiones virtuales son las que presentan una mejor eficacia ya que no limita la participación si en caso se esté tomando en línea, en le caso no sea posible la participación presencial. Además de ampliar el numero de participantes por país.</p>	Guatemala
<p>Based on the four meeting formats that Indonesia has experienced, Indonesia believes that the "In-person with the possibility of virtual interventions" is the best meeting format, both in terms of effectiveness and in achieving Codex core values. For Indonesia as a member country, this meeting format provides us the opportunity to choose. If there is an agenda that is necessary and important for Indonesia to attend in person, then we can physically attend the meeting. However, if the agenda of the session is not particularly engaging for us, we can choose to attend it virtually. Regarding the impact on resources, we believe that the costs incurred to represent Indonesia's interests are reasonable, so we have no objection to this.</p>	Indonesia
<p>Generally, physical meetings are a time-effective meeting format, as discussions can proceed effectively through informal meetings. We believe that there may be cases where discussions that would not proceed otherwise than in person format can be advanced in physical meetings.</p> <p>In-person participation typically requires significant travel costs and long travel times for many delegations. However, despite such a burden, many delegations choose in-person participation due to the necessity of taking part in decision-making or the importance of face-to-face interaction with other delegations.</p> <p>We also note that virtual only format is often burdensome for us (delegates of Japan), as we need to participate in meetings that are held in the early morning or late at night while working in the daytime.</p>	Japan

<p>While “In-Person” meetings have proven to be very effective, in particular when consensus has been difficult to achieve we consider that two meeting formats deserve further attention, namely</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the format “In-person with webcast”: for a rationale, see the pros listed in table 1, like face-to-face interaction, informal interaction, possibility of ad hoc working groups, same time zone; we also value the increased transparency compared to the in-person only meeting format; - the format “In-person with the possibility of virtual intervention”, especially for CAC, as this is the most inclusive, offering access to all members, enabling last-minute participation and saving high costs for long journeys. It is however very costly and challenging for host countries, as this comes down to organising a virtual and a physical meeting simultaneously (extra screens, cameras and operators). <p>In terms of efficiency “Virtual only” meetings have their merits and should remain an option. They may be suitable especially when electronic workings groups have paved the way to a wide consensus before a meeting. Although virtual only meetings may need more days to complete their agenda due to differences in time zones they offer benefits such as a decreased carbon footprint and reduced/non-existing travel requirements (regarding expenses and safety) that should also be taken into account.</p> <p>Virtual meetings are transparent formats and comply in many ways with the core values of Codex. They also allow for additional delegates / observers to follow a meeting without great expenses instead of relying on the report only. However, for a meeting of CAC and considering the advance in technology, only the format “In-person with the possibility of virtual intervention” seems to fully address all core values of Codex. It is however very costly and challenging for host countries, as this comes down to organising a virtual and a physical meeting simultaneously (extra screens, cameras and operators). The other meeting formats may suffice depending on the type and length of a meeting. For example, virtual attention may be a good option for a one-day event but may not constitute a suitable option with respect to collaboration and consensus-building when it comes to longer meetings foreseeing work on Codex texts.</p>	Netherlands
<p>New Zealand agrees that the choice of a specific meeting format will depend upon the complexity of the issues to be discussed, and the extent to which a member country is intending to engage/influence the development of Codex text. For this reason, we are of the view that flexible options must be a key priority going forward. To ensure the robustness of Codex into the future meeting format options need to be enabling to allow for circumstances we may not be able to envisage now. The options may be enhanced by some overarching principles to guide the choice of format.</p> <p>While the cost of attending a meeting can be significant, the rewards in terms of the efficiency of time spent, and effective outcomes gained in terms of matters that are of high food safety and trade interest are likely to outweigh member costs. Further, in-person meetings allow for full day discussions and full rather than abridged agendas – this is not always possible with the virtual format due to different time zones for participating members.</p> <p>We acknowledge in-person meetings may (possibly depending upon the meeting) be the least inclusive for the Codex membership as a whole, for those not able to travel due to the cost – particularly in the case of developing countries and smaller economies. This is well recognised with the Codex Trust Fund which has a role in funding developing countries’ attendance at meetings. To reduce travel costs and time, the host country could consider the location of the venue that is near a major travel hub. Given the importance of inclusivity and the rising expectation of on-line options in an increasingly virtual world, consideration could also be given to allowing the Codex Trust Fund to support the facilities needed for hybrid meetings as an alternative to funding travel for individuals to attend – potentially a portion of funding could be ring-fenced for this purpose, particularly to support those committees chaired by less developed or smaller economies.</p> <p>Where countries have a general interest in a meeting but the agenda items are less critical to them, the option of joining an in-person meeting on-line is likely to be an effective option, provided the ability to make interventions is possible.</p>	New Zealand

<p>We expect virtual options are likely to become less costly over time with meeting premises increasingly recognising the need for such options to be incorporated into their systems.</p> <p>There will be some meetings where for example the level of complexity, and limited number of items on the agenda, lend themselves to a virtual only meeting. Such a format may be the most effective option in terms of time, cost and efficiency.</p> <p>We consider live streaming may be of limited value in countries with significant time zone variances to where the meeting is being hosted. If one cannot make interventions (unless a delegation member is at the meeting in-person) nocturnal meetings may be an inconvenience that is difficult to justify in the mix of other work commitments, work/life balance and impact on the wellbeing of participants.</p> <p>The set of criteria proposed for a 'needs based approach to scheduling a meeting' may also provide a good basis for considering in which format the meeting should occur, including the development of principles to help inform such decisions.</p>	
<p>In addition to what is already listed as strengths, we would like to highlight the importance of physical meetings when it comes to engagement, involvement, networking, discussions, consensus building and the overall interest in Codex standard development. When considering time, cost and efficiency this is the preferred option. Comparing the investment of resources in preparing for a meeting and the time allocated to participate we find that we benefit the most from physical attendance. On the other hand, we experience cuts in our travel budgets and therefore we would appreciate and acknowledge the benefit of having the possibility of participating virtually in Codex sessions. We therefore consider the possibility of sessions organized with physical and virtual meetings every other (or third) time a good alternative to physical meetings only. This would allow for continuity in networking and engagement in the committee work.</p> <p>Webcasting is not a meeting format, however an appreciated transparency activity. Webcasting is a possibility for staying informed but compared to resources spent (timewise) it is not a meeting option as it does not allow actual participation. We would like to underscore though that webcasting is an appreciated additional service which we would appreciate being provided for all meetings, also CCEXEC.</p>	Norway
<p>Eficaz (logro de objetivo), se considera eficaz las reuniones únicamente presenciales, pero consideramos más eficaz (logro de objetivo) con mejores resultados a la participación presencial con posibilidad a intervención virtual. Nuestro país preferiría que siempre participe como mínimo un representante presencial quien sería el jefe de delegación y acompañamiento virtual de delegación, pero con opción a intervención virtual cuando el delegado (presencial) brinde su autorización.</p> <p>Tiempo: Con una delegación con representante presencial y apoyo virtual con opción a intervención la reunión podría llegar a consenso más rápido.</p> <p>Costo: Disminuye el costo para asignar a más de un delegado para representación.</p> <p>Eficiencia: Se logra desarrollar la reunión con menores recursos (participación de más delegados virtual) y menor costo y tiempos de traslados.</p>	Peru
<p>Las reuniones virtuales permiten un ahorro de recursos que las hacen difícilmente comparables con las otras opciones. Desde el punto de vista de la sustentabilidad tampoco existen opciones comparables.</p> <p>Las otras opciones que permiten la participación en reuniones presenciales a distancia respetan la inclusividad. Sin perjuicio de ello los que participan virtualmente no están en un pie de igualdad con quienes participan presencialmente.</p>	Uruguay
<p>The document considers the Future of Codex more from a Member Country/Observer/Delegate perspective and does not factor in the strengths and weaknesses attributed to each of those meeting formats from a host country secretariat perspective.</p> <p>The United States as host country secretariat to the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH) and to the Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods (CCRVDF) conducted meetings in the virtual format for CCFH52 (February 2022) and CCRVDF25 (July 2021) with success during the COVID-19 pandemic. Work was able to continue in electronic Working Groups and Virtual Working Groups between sessions in both committees to keep the progress on track, while agendas for the actual committee sessions were formulated with some limitations due to the shorter</p>	USA

<p>time available in virtual sessions.</p> <p>Since the return to in-person meetings, the United States offered webcasting in English, French, and Spanish for CCFH53 (November 2022) and for CCRVDF26 (February 2023). From a host country perspective, the option of “in-person + webcast” is the preferred option for the United States as the additional costs for webcasting are still within our allocated budgets and help promote greater inclusivity and transparency.</p> <p>Unfortunately, at the present time, the added cost of organizing full hybrid sessions (“in-person with the possibility of virtual interventions”) for our hosted committees would dramatically increase our allocated budgets to the point where we would no longer be able to continue to support the committees in a host country role. The United States suspects this to be the case for many, if not all, the other host countries.</p> <p>If the Codex Secretariat were to find a central mechanism to support the hybrid aspect for each committee, then it is very possible that all host country secretariats would be open to operating in this modality.</p>	
<p>While in an ideal situation, we would support the extended inclusivity of fully hybrid meetings, the practical difficulties of organising these are fully understood and thus we’d strongly support face-to-face meetings with at least the possibility to stream the discussions for members who are unable to sustain the travel required for in-person attendance. It allows members and observers to send smaller delegations, thus allowing a decreased carbon footprint and more cost-effectiveness; but still allows delegations to allow subject matter expertise from delegates “back home.” This format is the best compromise to address the Codex’s core values of transparency, inclusiveness, collaboration, and consensus-building.</p>	CropLife International
<p>With respect to the time and efficiency of Committee meetings, we believe in-person meetings with a webcast option are the most effective format to facilitate the advancement of work and development and continuation of connections with other Codex participants. Due to challenges presented by time zone differences (e.g., very early starting times), we would recommend the webcasts be recorded and consistently available for a set period of time (e.g., 2 weeks) to enable a broader audience to watch the meeting proceedings.</p> <p>We also support continuing the virtual WG meetings prior to the Committee meetings to increase opportunities for Member and Observer participation and engagement and to help progress work between in-person Committee meetings, expediting the discussions at those meetings.</p>	ICBA
<p>IFT is a volunteer, member supported scientific organization, so funds are limited for travel to meetings for in-person sessions (e.g., limited available budget constraint). Therefore, at most, IFT can send one in-person head delegate to a meeting. IFT uses multi-person teams for Codex committee meetings, so live webcasting can work when we have an in-person delegate. However, due to travel cost for certain meetings in 2023 (e.g., CCFICS, CCPR), IFT was unable to attend in person and therefore, our contributions were much more limited. Therefore, IFT finds it beneficial to have a virtual component to the meetings, but is not in favor of only virtual. IFT favors the In-Person with possibility of Virtual Intervention as the optimal format for both IFT and has the most positives for all members and observers. All meetings being in-person would be very limiting to IFT contributions. IFT would like to propose a fifth option for CC-EXEC to consider (or some hybrid of this concept):</p> <p>Hold committee meetings in rotating locations year on year, hosted by Codex Regions vs. a host country in a centralized, reasonably easy to access location. For Europe, hold all meetings either at FAO HQ or in Geneva. For Asia, hold all the meetings in a highly accessible location such as Singapore. Let the regions decide the location and keep those consistent for ease of planning purposes year-on-year, but rotate the committees across those regions to enable delegates to attend in person on some frequency over the course of 2-3 years. Those locations could be more easily and efficiently set up for the In-Person with Virtual Intervention, vs. the varied host country approach currently being used. If the locations were UN regional offices, that would greatly facilitate the effectiveness, efficiency and accessibility for participants.</p>	IFT

QUESTION c): Are the core values of Codex values of Codex, transparency, inclusiveness, collaboration, and consensus-building guaranteed by the four meeting formats described. Do you have any concerns that would need to be addressed with regard to using a particular format for a Codex meeting?	
<p>Yes, they are. There will always be the potential for tension between these Codex values and the imperative of getting useful standards finalized so that we can fulfil our statutory purpose. There is wealth of guidance already available on the general approach to the work of codex that gives consideration to the values, such as the Chairperson's handbook, without the need for prescriptive rules on how to apply them in different meeting formats. Guidance for EWG chairpersons and a delegate's handbook will be useful additions.</p> <p>As has always been the case, within the limitations of the meeting format, and within the rules and principles of Codex, host secretariats, the Codex secretariat, and chairs, guided by members, will have to balance approaches that tend toward enacting one value over another, in order to successfully set standards.</p> <p>We come back to the principle of flexibility again. Different committees operate differently and have different needs. A good approach for enabling more experimentation with hybrid approaches would be to encourage committees to clearly set the rules for participation ahead of the respective meeting. Eg when the delegate information is published it could clearly articulate how the meeting would be run with respect to the hybrid nature. With physical meetings we tend to read the house rules to delegates at the opening of the session (and are not strictly codified in the PM). Perhaps these could be made available on the website in advance to allow members to make informed decisions about the value of travel for them. These house rules would no doubt evolve over time and we could use the post meeting surveys to collect specific feedback related to their efficacy and appropriateness.</p>	Australia
<p>While the meeting formats each have their own strengths and weaknesses, each upholds the Codex values of transparency, inclusiveness, collaboration and consensus-building to a varying degree.</p> <p>For virtual only formats, time zone challenges need to be taken into consideration so that specific time zones are not always disadvantaged by the scheduled meeting times.</p>	Canada
<p>No existe una modalidad de reunión única que garantice plenamente todos los valores fundamentales del Codex. Cada modalidad tiene ventajas y desafíos, y la elección debe realizarse considerando las necesidades y circunstancias específicas de la reunión, así como los esfuerzos para mitigar las posibles limitaciones.</p> <p>Es importante mantener o seguir considerando los formatos que permitan ampliar la participación especialmente de los delegados de países en desarrollo que tiene retos en materia de financiamiento para asistir a reuniones presenciales, aunque se reconoce que estas últimas son las que facilitan de mejor forma la interacción y el llegar a consensos.</p> <p>Vale la pena resaltar que, cualquier reunión que circunscriba presencialidad excluye tácitamente a los miembros que no están presentes de formar parte de la construcción del "consenso". En el mismo sentido, restringe la transparencia, dado que los informes no reflejan en su totalidad los debates generados en las sesiones.</p> <p>En cuanto a los valores fundamentales del Codex, cabe señalar:</p> <p>Transparencia: Las reuniones virtuales pueden ser transparentes si se garantiza el acceso a documentos y transmisiones en línea a todos los interesados. Sin embargo, debe garantizarse que las decisiones y procesos de toma de decisiones sean igual de transparentes que en las reuniones presenciales.</p> <p>Inclusividad: Las reuniones virtuales pueden aumentar la inclusión al eliminar las barreras geográficas y financieras.</p> <p>Colaboración: La colaboración puede lograrse en todas las modalidades si se establecen mecanismos efectivos para la comunicación y la interacción entre los participantes, tendiendo en consideración la calidad de las herramientas y procesos utilizados.</p> <p>Creación de consenso: la modalidad sólo virtual puede requerir un esfuerzo adicional para lograr un consenso completo debido a la falta de interacción en persona.</p>	Costa Rica

<p>Yes, the four core values of Codex are guaranteed by the four meeting formats. The "In-person only" and "In-person with the possibility of virtual interventions" meeting formats are in alignment with Codex's core values of transparency, inclusiveness, collaboration, and consensus building. It is important to ensure that virtual meetings provide equal opportunities for delegates to exercise their voting, commenting, and adoption rights for consensus building.</p>	Egypt
<p>La participación de los grupos de trabajo electrónico permite una mayor colaboración entre los países y crea un mejor consenso en reducción de tiempos y toma de decisiones.</p>	Guatemala
<p>Yes, as described in Table 2 of the document, the "in-person with the possibility of virtual interventions" format is the one that has the most positive impact on achieving Codex core values.</p> <p>While we consider this format to be the best meeting format, we have a concern about the terminology used for this format. As the current term used "possibility", it appears to differentiate between the opportunities for members attending meetings in person and those attending virtually. Therefore, Indonesia suggests this meeting format be changed to "in person with the option of virtual interventions". Furthermore, based on our experience in the 26th session of CCFICS when the meeting was convened in person with possibility of virtual intervention, there was a technical problem with the Zoom platform from host secretariat during the meeting which caused the participants who attended virtually cannot access the meeting. When it was reconnected, the session had already made decisions, and the Chair did not want to revert back the discussions during that time gap (around 30 minutes). In order to avoid any technical issues from the host government which have impact to all participants in the online platform, Indonesia proposes that the Codex Secretariat should prepare technical guidelines for conducting meetings in this format to ensure that every member has an equal opportunity.</p>	Indonesia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · We are of the view that a return to in-person only format or virtual only format should be avoided. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person only format was the only normal format for Codex meetings. We made efforts to ensure that the core values of Codex were guaranteed in this meeting format. Then, we experienced virtual only format during the pandemic and reaffirmed the advantages of in-person format. Consequently, now in-person with webcast has become mainstream. We are sure that through this process, the core values of Codex have further been guaranteed. · In-person with possibility of virtual interventions format could further guarantee the core values of Codex rather than current in-person with webcast format. However, considering resource implications for host secretariats and the complexity of the chairperson's proceedings, it would be better to adopt it depending on the situation. · With regard to in-person with webcast format, we would request to include the names of delegates following webcast in the participant list. They can be distinguished from general public by registering through ORS with the permission of the Head of Delegation. They can also be distinguished from in-person delegates by annotating the participant list with "webcast participants." 	Japan
<p>We believe all the four meeting formats do support Codex core values, but at different level. 'In-person with webcast' and 'In-person with possibility of virtual interventions' to our view provides better transparency and inclusiveness as opposed to solely in-person mode.</p> <p>For 'In-person with webcast' we observe that the different practices applied on the availability of web streaming record. The CAC45 web streaming record is still available until today but for some Committee such as CCGP the web streaming record was only available to be followed before the next day's session. We are of the view that the Codex meetings web streaming should be made available for some period, for example a week to allow the delegates to follow the discussion. Otherwise, the arrangement of the webcasting especially how long it will be available on the web should be clearly communicated to Codex members and observers to enable appropriate preparation to follow the web stream. It is particularly crucial for delegates</p>	Malaysia

<p>whose time zones differ significantly from the host country's. Codex should consider how webcast could be made more efficient and consistent across committees.</p> <p>For 'In-person with possibility of virtual interventions', there should be assurance of equal treatment for in-person and remote participants in following the proceedings uninterrupted, as well as opportunity to make interventions.</p>	
<p>Virtual meetings are transparent formats and comply in many ways with the core values of Codex. They also allow for additional delegates / observers to follow a meeting without great expenses instead of relying on the report only. However, for a meeting of CAC and considering the advance in technology, only the format "In-person with the possibility of virtual intervention" seems to fully address all core values of Codex. It is however very costly and challenging for host countries, as this comes down to organising a virtual and a physical meeting simultaneously (extra screens, cameras and operators). The other meeting formats may suffice depending on the type and length of a meeting. For example, virtual attention may be a good option for a one-day event but may not constitute a suitable option with respect to collaboration and consensus-building when it comes to longer meetings foreseeing work on Codex texts.</p>	Netherlands
<p>In-person only</p> <p>transparency - Limited (when considering the total membership) inclusiveness - Limited (when considering the total membership) collaboration - Strong consensus-building - Strong</p> <p>Virtual only</p> <p>transparency - Good (and equitable in terms of cost, but less so for those impacted by different time zones) inclusiveness - Strong (and equitable in terms of cost, but less so for those impacted by different time zones) collaboration - Limited (but improved by workshops) consensus-building - Limited (but improved by workshops)</p> <p>In-person with webcast</p> <p>transparency - Limited (but improved if part of delegation is in-person) inclusiveness - Limited (but improved if part of delegation is in-person) collaboration - Strong (but inequitable between members) consensus-building - Strong (but inequitable between members)</p> <p>In-person with possibility of virtual interventions.</p> <p>transparency - Strong inclusiveness - Strong collaboration - Strong consensus-building - Strong</p>	New Zealand

<p>Any concerns about a particular format in terms of the key values?</p> <p>We have some concern about the core values of inclusiveness and transparency for the in-person and in-person with webcast format options, where members are not able to travel due to financial circumstances. Inclusiveness and transparency issues are able to be addressed if funds are available for developing countries to attend meetings within which they have a particular interest, and/or the provision of funds to support the host country in the provision of a virtual option with interventions possible. The latter is perhaps an issue that could be raised with the Codex Trust Fund for consideration.</p>	
<p>Working by correspondence is, based on our experience, an unnecessarily time-consuming form of work and we would encourage arranging the working modality through a virtual session over a shorter period of time. This could be a possibility also for Codex sub-committees and Task Forces with limited agendas, to be “working by virtual means only”.</p>	Norway
<p>Consideramos que la opción 1: Reunión únicamente presencial, no garantiza el valor fundamental Codex de inclusividad. Consideramos que la opción 2: Reunión únicamente virtual, afectaría la creación de consenso. Consideramos que la opción 4: Reunión presencial con opción a intervenir virtual, cumple el valor fundamental de mejor y mayor colaboración, considerando que los especialistas técnicos pueden aportar en la reunión.</p>	Peru
<p>La consistencia en la estructura y funcionamiento de una organización con sus valores declarados no es algo absoluto ni inmutable. Cuando existe un cambio sustantivo en las circunstancias y en los medios con los que cuenta una organización, las estrategias a aplicar para el cumplimiento de los objetivos inspirados en esos valores deben adecuarse. Si un valor es fundamental para una organización entonces esta debe optar por emplear los medios a disposición en concordancia con la prioridad que se le ha asignado. Si bien en su momento las reuniones presenciales era la mejor opción para cumplir con este valor, el cambio tecnológico ha abierto opciones nuevas que permiten mejoras sustanciales en los niveles de participación.</p> <p>Las cuatro modalidades de reunión permiten cumplir con los valores, todas ellas con deficiencias. En las evaluaciones se plantea que las modalidades virtuales tienen un menor desempeño en el cumplimiento de los valores de la colaboración y la creación de consenso. Ya hemos comentado que esas supuestas deficiencias son fruto, en buena medida, de la falta de adaptación de la forma de trabajo a los requerimientos que las nuevas tecnologías plantean. Aún cuando dichas deficiencias no fueran totalmente subsanables, la alternativa presencial plantea las bondades de llegar a consensos y colaborar más, pero entre muchos menos. Creemos que la inclusividad y la transparencia tienen una especial jerarquía. Existe una natural tensión entre la inclusividad y los valores de colaboración y la creación de consenso en tanto estos últimos son más difíciles de alcanzar cuantos más participan. La tensión se resuelve con trabajo, no a expensas de la participación.</p>	Uruguay
<p>The core values of Codex are met by all four meeting formats but in varying degrees.</p> <p>With an “in-person + webcast” meeting format, a delegation cannot have the same level of collaboration with other delegations as those who are attending in person, since virtual delegates are not interacting with their fellow delegates in plenary or in the corridors at breaks for informal conversations. All delegates have access however to the same working documents, including conference room documents (CRDs).</p> <p>Delegations who do not have a delegate in-person representing their country or organization do not have the possibility to verbally intervene, they can only provide their comments in a CRD which will be noted by the chair at the beginning of the agenda item. Other delegations may also reference their CRDs in their interventions to highlight their position.</p> <p>From a host country perspective, the hybrid meeting presents venue planning challenges because of the difficulty in determining how many delegates will plan to participate in person versus online. Meeting rooms, accommodations, catering, etc. can vary greatly and in our view, this meeting format causes the greatest uncertainty in terms of what the host country should secure at the venue and associated costs. The United States is also</p>	USA

concerned that already decreased in-person participation will grow increasingly lower over time and the weaknesses attributed to “virtual only” meetings—less opportunity for informal interactions- will also worsen.	
Yes. We saw during COVID that things were able to be kept moving along through the use of virtual-only meetings, but it was not as efficient as the previous in-person ways of working. In-person with the possibility of virtual interventions sounds good but we feel it would be very difficult to implement effectively and would be very difficult to manage to allow everyone to have an equal voice.	CropLife International
ICBA recognizes physical plenary meetings are critical and we believe they are the best modality to drive Committee decisions forward. However, we also recognize that some Codex participants are not able to attend physically but can virtually monitor meetings if given the opportunity to do so. To facilitate discussions and ensure progress during the meetings, only the delegate physically in the room should provide interventions during plenary (or pWG) discussions. Finally, to provide opportunities for wider participation and to reconcile differences before the Committee convenes, we support the continued engagement and usage of existing mechanisms at the Committee disposal, such as eWGs, vWGs, pWGs.	ICBA
IFT believes the core values of inclusiveness and transparency are at risk with In-person only format. The Covid pandemic and use of 100% virtual meetings opened the awareness to the greater inclusiveness and transparency that virtual participation creates due to the cost and time availability issues for some member countries and observers and IFT believes that should not be lost going forward. The greatest challenge for virtual meetings is the continued change in location being used. If members could agree to use the same regional meeting locations (e.g., UN regional office) and the UN would enable those sites to host meetings, the In-person with virtual intervention would be much more effective and efficient.	IFT
QUESTION d): Are there other meeting formats that should be considered?	
Not at this stage.	Australia
Definitivamente si, el estudio y la exploración de otras modalidades de reunión pueden ayudar al Codex Alimentarius a adaptarse a las cambiantes circunstancias y necesidades de los miembros y observadores, mejorando la eficiencia, la inclusividad y la capacidad de lograr sus objetivos fundamentales. Esto podría implicar la consideración de tecnologías emergentes, la revisión de prácticas actuales y la adopción de enfoques más flexibles para la organización de las reuniones.	Costa Rica
No , The meeting formats outlined in this circular letter are all-inclusive.	Egypt
Consideramos que se han planteado las adecuadas para este tipo de reuniones.	Guatemala
No	Indonesia
We generally prefer the report adoption in the same format as the plenary and hope that the meeting be completed by Friday or Saturday in the same week as the way it was. We are concerned that the report adoption the week after in-person plenary meeting may take time to reach consensus when the plenary takes time for discussing difficult or controversial items. It should be avoided that report adoption period is extended like in CAC44 and CAC45.	Japan

<p>Working groups should be strengthened as they are essential to ensure successful outcomes of meetings. Delegations should be strongly encouraged to take part in working groups. Their inter-session work may be further facilitated by enabling virtual exchange in addition to several rounds of written comments. However, for the organization/setting-up of such an exchange, WG chairs may require some support, most likely from the Codex secretariat or, eventually, the host country secretariat. A handbook for eWGs would be of great value in this regard.</p> <p>As indicated below, changes to the Codex Online Commenting System should be considered with the aim to simplify access to it.</p>	Netherlands
<p>We believe a full tool kit of meeting formats should be made available for the Codex hosts and the Secretariat to draw upon. This should include Committees Working By Correspondence (CWBC) which have been found to be effective and less costly in the past.</p> <p>Another format that could be made available for the CCEXEC membership is virtual regional hubs where a region may form a regional virtual hub to participate in CCEXEC. This has been done in the past with good result in terms of collaboration and consensus building within a region.</p> <p>We believe Codex should avoid being too prescriptive in setting out the format options but rather provide an enabling environment where various formats can be chosen from a list, perhaps with the aid of some high level principles.</p>	New Zealand
<p>Por el momento consideramos que no, con el tiempo evaluar las nuevas tecnologías de información, para el uso correspondiente.</p>	Peru
<p>Hemos mencionado que un error metodológico ha sido evaluar a las reuniones virtuales e híbridas en términos de su capacidad de replicar las reuniones presenciales. Cada tipo de reunión tiene reglas óptimas que derivan de las opciones tecnológicas en las que descansan. En ese sentido lo que debería hacerse es un plan sistemático de experiencias pilotos con las modalidades virtual e híbrida, de forma de identificar cuáles son los lineamientos más adecuados para su eventual regulación.</p>	Uruguay
<p>Nothing to add.</p>	USA
<p>No.</p>	CropLife International
<p>Yes, see IFT suggestion in question b) on region-based consistent locations using UN offices and rotating location across regions for the various committees (e.g., CCFA moves from region-to-region year-on-year). This would tremendously help with planning each year on travel costs / time commitment from delegates. They could lay out a schedule of where meetings will be held for multiple years in advance with ease.</p>	IFT
<p>QUESTION e): How can we continue to improve inter-session working mechanisms to ensure they provide a good basis for the work of Codex committee meetings?</p>	
<p>Much of this is covered in the text in the appendix. However, some specific recommendations regarding the EWG platform are listed below. The EWG platform could be modernized with the following effect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Notifications could be more easily accessed, provide more information and be reliably managed. o It is easier to keep track of any new content that you have not yet read. o Message threads could more easily be started and contributed to deal with select topics that arise as members are developing their specific comments to a draft that has been circulated to the group. o The administrative process of hosting and applying to participate in an EWG could be made less burdensome. The current process is burdensome on EWG chairs – ie managing the verification of emails requesting access to the EWG, followed by verifying a request process in the forum, where usernames are not easily reconcilable with participants' names. Integrating a single workflow in the forum that could include a verification step to be done by a member's codex contact point could be useful. 	Australia

<p>o Consideration could be given to how a virtual meeting functionality could integrate into this to promote the use of virtual meetings to progress the work, without having to schedule these in advance within the Codex calendar. This may allow some more flexibility to use these mechanisms in response to issues as they arise.</p>	
<p>Advance notice as to when the next two Commission meetings will be scheduled will provide greater certainty to subsidiary bodies so that they can plan their EWG work appropriately to allow time for adequate consideration of issues within the EWG. Subsidiary bodies could further prioritize their intersessional work by staggering when their EWGs would report back to the Committee over a number of subsequent sessions.</p> <p>Canada is pleased to hear of the work on the handbook for EWGs and believe this will be useful for both EWG participants and EWG Chairs. Guidance to Chairs on how to use EWG outcomes in Committees could be helpful, as some EWG reports are taken by the Committee as a basis to start discussions and sometimes EWG reports are not depended on.</p> <p>If it is communicated to participants that the outcomes of physical/virtual working groups (immediately prior to plenary) and in-session working groups will be used as the basis for plenary discussions this could encourage fulsome participation. However, in order to ensure that Members are in a position to fully contribute to the EWGs, consideration needs to be given to the number of EWGs that are established. With limited resources, Members may not be in a position to contribute to all relevant inter-sessional mechanisms.</p>	Canada
<p>Costa Rica considera que, los webinarios informativos para seguimiento de temas de agenda y grupos de trabajo electrónicos se han convertido en una buena práctica y por ello, considera que deben mantenerse dado que brindan la oportunidad de debatir cuestiones técnicas y de esta manera se facilita el avance de los temas en sus diferentes trámites durante las sesiones oficiales.</p> <p>Adicionalmente, podría facilitarse a los miembros compartir información científica de manera efectiva en la plataforma en línea (forum), Finalmente, establecer los lineamientos con reglas claras para la celebración de las sesiones virtuales que no necesariamente son las mismas que para una reunión presencial tradicional.</p>	Costa Rica
<p>There is a need for additional work to ensure the virtual meeting mechanism will enable participants to effectively address, elaborate, and prioritize the specified technical issues, and promote the equity of participation and commenting during inter-session working groups. The impact of these working groups on the progress of the Codex committee meetings is significant.</p> <p>Egypt proposes to update the platform of the inter-session meetings (including the coordinating committees, ad hoc cross-committee task forces, and the Electronic Working Groups) in order to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) provide the Codex Focal Point in each member country with early information on the scope of the designated working groups, (2) obtain clearance from Codex for their participation, and (3) enable the Codex Focal point with access and privilege mechanism for following up the national participants in the working group(s) and their discussions, voting, and outputs to ensure the relevance with the working group objectives. 	Egypt
<p>De momento los mecanismos han sido adecuados ya que hemos estado trabajando en destinos grupos de trabajo electrónico como parte del seguimiento de las reuniones presenciales</p>	Guatemala
<p>The inter-session working group should be convened in the same mechanism/format with the plenary session. In addition, Indonesia suggests that the Chair of the Committee could identify which agenda items may require extra time for inter-session working group, thereby allowing the schedule to be communicated to the member countries before the session. It will allow member countries to anticipate their participation in the inter-session working group.</p>	Indonesia

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · EWG is still a useful working mechanism to work on during the period between sessions. However, we are concerned that the establishment of too many EWGs would increase burdens for Members and may prevent sufficient consideration. When considering the establishment of an EWG, the committees should carefully consider the necessity and the schedule, so that more interested Members can commit to the EWG. · VWG or PWG can provide interested Members with the opportunity to further consider the outcome of the EWG before the plenary. For difficult or controversial items, holding VWG or PWG with EWG should be planned where necessary to facilitate consensus. The Chair's Handbook may be useful for the EWG Chair to effectively manage the VWG or PWG. · Regardless of the meeting formats, the late availability of working documents reduces the efficiency of the plenary discussions. Inter-session working mechanisms should be improved so that working documents can be circulated well in advance of the plenary. 	Japan
<p>Virtual inter-session discussion by the EWG offers better interactive session and platform for exchange between interested member countries and observers. This should continue to be the option, however EWG should be limited to what is necessary to avoid overloaded work, taking into consideration ways to improve EWG work.</p>	Malaysia
<p>The use of the virtual platforms for intersession work, either through EWGs or through webinars. This provides for wide representation and discussion in online meetings. It also enables delegations that are not able to attend a plenary 'in-person' to actively contribute to the work that leads to the plenary discussion.</p>	New Zealand
<p>Consideramos que se debe mantener capacitación constante especialmente para aquellos miembros, puntos de contacto o coordinadores de las comisiones Codex en los que se observa cambios constantes. Sugerimos hacer una lista de los países miembros que participan en los comités y para aquellos países que no participan en comités activos es sugerible invitarlos a participar.</p>	Peru
<p>Tomar la inclusividad como punto de partida esencial del proceso y construir a partir de allí, trabajando en la mejora del desempeño de todos los otros valores del Codex, los cuales –en mayor o menor medida- son respetados por todas las modalidades de reunión.</p>	Uruguay
<p>Electronic Working Groups (EWGs) and Virtual Working Groups (VWGs) are excellent tools for inter-session work of the Committees. The challenge that often occurs in plenary is receiving comments from delegates who did not participate in the working groups and are unaware of the progress made in developing recommendations from the EWGs or VWGS. Having to rediscuss issues that were already discussed in detail in the inter-session WGs can be frustrating and diminishes the valuable work and time already spent by the WGs to resolve outstanding issues, which could prevent advancement of the work.</p> <p>More attention should be paid to facilitating WG participation by Members. In considering the establishment of multiple WG, Committees should take into account the demands placed on Members and prioritize work, so that participation by more Members is feasible and likely. This may mean that there will be fewer projects undertaken, but it may also lead to fewer delays in the work when it is considered in the committees and CAC. Many Members may not be able to devote the time required to attend multiple inter-session WGs. The number of Inter-session WGs should be reasonable, taking into account that some committees have several EWGs for agenda items which would result in many inter-session WG meetings to attend. Committees may also schedule physical working group meetings immediately prior to sessions. If so, this should be clearly communicated to Members in advance, so they can plan their travel and participation accordingly.</p>	USA

<p>Promoting registration by all Members in the EWGs and VWGs is recommended. By registering, Members can at least monitor the development of a document over the course of the inter-session period. Even though they may choose not to provide comments consistently to the working groups, they can “flag” issues of importance to them should such issues arise. To improve Codex work efficiency, Members may be encouraged to observe the progress of documents instead of waiting until the agenda papers are finalized and issued for the committee meeting.</p>	
<p>JMPR panel could benefit from virtual collaboration options (e.g. posting evaluation reports for the panel to consult before the meeting, electronic voting and commenting, etc, which will all contribute to expediting discussion and increasing the productivity of JMPR meetings).</p>	<p>CropLife International</p>
<p>Consistent use of technology format across all meetings – e.g., stipulate that all meetings going forward will be using format X, regardless of location. By centralizing locations as we recommend under item b, that will make consistency of format easier.</p>	<p>IFT</p>
<p>QUESTION f): Are there other key issues that need to be considered in developing the model for Codex work that will ensure its efficiency and effectiveness in the coming years?</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The contribution of timely independent scientific advice as a key determinant of Codex efficiently and effectively setting standards. • Codex Secretariat resourcing. • Encouraging and retaining new talent to ensure there are sufficient succession arrangements. 	<p>Australia</p>
<p>Evaluation of the effectiveness of meeting formats would be useful after more experience has been gained.</p>	<p>Canada</p>
<p>Como ya se indicó, deberían implementarse como práctica regular las reuniones virtuales previas de GT a fin de facilitar el avance en sus diferentes tramites durante la reunión oficial del Comité y de esta manera también, velar por el cumplimiento de los valores fundamentales del Codex, dado que a través del tiempo los miembros han manifestado sus preocupaciones por la celebración de los Grupos de trabajo físico previos a las reuniones de los Comités. Finalmente, garantizar el cumplimiento de los estatutos del manual de Procedimientos, la defensas al principio científico sustentado en los objetivos del Codex, velar porque sus miembros cuenten con las normas propuestas de acuerdo con sus necesidades en el tiempo establecido en su mandato.</p>	<p>Costa Rica</p>
<p>In addition to Egypt's reply (on CAC Letter Strategic Plan) Taking into consideration , special focus on “Reactivating specialized Commodity Committees that are dismissed for a period (adjourned sine die) or abolished, to develop/update standards for major strategic food commodities (such as cereals, pulses, and legumes commodity committee, and meat commodity committee)”.</p>	<p>Egypt</p>
<p>Creemos que en el avance de las reuniones y la aplicación de las modalidades se generaran datos que nos permitan acoplar o modificar los modelos de trabajo en Codex.</p>	<p>Guatemala</p>
<p>No</p>	<p>Indonesia</p>
<p>Seeking feedback from Members and Observers on a regular basis will likely be useful in identifying emerging issues and for ensuring that the work of Codex remains efficient and effective. Regarding point 3.3. on the registration of participants: The problem that it is difficult to foresee who will physically turn up in hybrid meetings, because people register, needs to be solved. It is costly for host countries and leads to food-waste. In physical meetings, those picking up their badges are counted as present. In hybrid sessions it is difficult to count participants, as they tend to join only part-time.</p>	<p>Netherlands</p>

<p>Regarding the last sentence of the document, to allow viewing of each others comments: Yes to making the OCS more user friendly. No to allowing the OCS to become a Forum. This will disadvantage countries that need expert advice outside their Codex Contact Point.</p> <p>Regarding table 3 about Resource implications:</p> <p>Table 3: Resource implications of different meeting formats</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Format</th> <th colspan="3">Resource implications for host secretariats</th> <th colspan="3">Resource implications for delegates</th> <th colspan="3">Resource implications for Codex secretariat</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>In-person only</td> <td>++</td> <td>++</td> <td>++</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Virtual only</td> <td>+</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>In-person with webcast</td> <td>+++</td> <td>+</td> <td>+</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>In-person with possibility of virtual interventions</td> <td>+++++</td> <td>-/+</td> <td>-/+</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Format	Resource implications for host secretariats			Resource implications for delegates			Resource implications for Codex secretariat			In-person only	++	++	++							Virtual only	+	-	-							In-person with webcast	+++	+	+							In-person with possibility of virtual interventions	+++++	-/+	-/+							
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<p>Technology may be and continue to be lacking for some countries where virtual meetings are being considered.</p> <p>Time zones are an on-going issue for virtual meetings.</p> <p>While time zones will always be a challenge there are ways that this can be somewhat mitigated - e.g. clear time-tabling that is adhered to so people know when to join and for how long; having shorter focused sessions over 2-3 days rather than one full day.</p> <p>Also the rate at which communication technology is advancing can be expected to continue and make this less of an issue across countries and regions.</p>	New Zealand																																																		
<p>Realizar talleres en los que los países compartan sus sistemas de gestión alimentaria con la finalidad de compartir experiencias de aplicación de las normas Codex y así los países puedan mejorar sus sistemas de inocuidad alimentaria.</p>	Peru																																																		
<p>Es necesario incorporar las nuevas herramientas de Inteligencia Artificial como un complemento que agilice el manejo de los diversos idiomas oficiales tanto en las comunicaciones escritas como en las reuniones.</p>	Uruguay																																																		
<p>Strictly adhering to the Codex mission and the Codex Procedural Manual (PM) will ensure efficiency and effectiveness of Codex work in the coming years. Every Committee Chair should undergo periodic training to refresh their understanding of the Codex Procedural Manual and the need to adhere to the established procedures. The Codex Secretariat should serve as a resource for committees and ensure respect for the PM at all sessions.</p>	USA																																																		
<p>Committee meetings are generally working well. Focusing on CCPR, the bottleneck in the process is the technical assessment of dossiers by JMPR, however, we believe this is out of the scope of this circular letter.</p> <p>Additional effectiveness gains can be obtained by timely publishing of Codex MRLs on the Codex website.</p> <p>Furthermore, as Codex is moved by so many people volunteering their time, it could benefit from updating the procedural manual to ensure motivational benefits and promote collaboration toward common goals.</p>	CropLife International																																																		
<p>ICBA recommends that any updates that are made to the Codex procedure due to changes in the virtual formats of working should be taken into account in future editions of the guidance for Chairs.</p>	ICBA																																																		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IFT believes it is critical that Codex utilize virtual technology going forward in some manner. In-person only meetings are too constraining on inclusivity and accessibility and travel costs are limiting. Virtual technology enables greater transparency. • IFT believes that for the In-person + Virtual combination, an improved tool for submitting interventions should be developed for Codex use. Instead of interventions only verbally over Zoom, why not have a Codex Meeting tool that the Secretariat can monitor live during meetings for virtual participants to write/type in their interventions (e.g., when a member/observer has an intervention and is not in-person, they can submit via the web tool - the tool should flag the committee chairs that there is an intervention from the web and they can pause the discussion at an appropriate time after it is flagged and then read the intervention and who submitted it. Any follow-up questions can then be addressed to the member/observer as needed (again, via written method if virtual intervention is not possible for that member/observer). 	<p>IFT</p>
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SPECIFIC COMMENTS ON SECTION 3

<p>Model for future Codex work – bullet points</p> <p>Bullet point 3 We would like to underscore that this is not a meeting modality, but simply a possibility to observe</p> <p>Bullet point 4 This matter is not discussed in this paper.</p> <p>Bullet point 5 This matter is not discussed in this paper.</p> <p>Bullet point 6 This matter is not discussed in this paper.</p>	<p>Norway</p>
<p>Third paragraph</p> <p>We would suggest including the need for updating the PM, to ensure that it describes routines and all meeting modalities available, in the summary (3.5.2 Issues/ideas for improvements).</p>	
<p><i>3.2.1 Experience of different meeting formats</i></p> <p>First paragraph</p> <p>This section might benefit from some further reflections considering the circumstances (Covid and total lock down). If possible, we would appreciate a more accurate analysis of the figures, before drawing any conclusions. It is also our experience that many registered for the meetings, however with the intent to watch and learn. At the same time, we also experienced from our side that many did not attend for many different reasons, workload, time zones etc.</p>	

<p>Second paragraph – last sentence</p> <p>This would also depend on a certain degree of previous acquaintances, meaning that delegates are coming from a physical setting where they know of each other, and moving into a virtual setting caused by extraordinary circumstances.</p>	
<p><i>3.2.1 Experience of different meeting formats</i></p> <p>Third paragraph – first sentence</p> <p>This is not especially important for transparency. There are excellent reports that tell us how decisions were arrived at. The Codex Secretariat goes to lengths to make and retain transcripts that can be referred to. Broadcasting however can be very useful for developing the expertise of future Codex delegates and may allow current delegation leaders to have access to a larger pool of experts to support their participation in real time. This may support more robust and globally representative standards.</p> <p>Third paragraph – Fourth sentence</p> <p>Providing webcast viewers other means to share their views could be problematic (depending on the committee) and would need to be done carefully. If people cannot participate in real time in the 'conversation' especially if it is a drafting discussion then it will create major hurdles for committee's in being able to move things forward. We risk committees being able to get less progress on standards in a session.</p> <p>Fourth paragraph - last sentence</p> <p>And this is fair enough - there are cost considerations with determining audiovisual approaches. These are constantly changing and being modernised. We are seeing this even with preparing for the next CCFICS. Codifying requirements would probably not be useful. If we did, it would likely quickly become obsolete. It would the minimum standard be that there is visual feed of the top table and audio feed from the microphone in operation?</p>	Australia
<p><i>3.2.1 Experience of different meeting formats</i></p> <p>Paragraph 4 – Third sentence</p> <p>While discussing meeting modalities webcasting can be looked at from at least two perspectives: hosts and delegates. Webcasting is, from our point of view as delegates, not an alternative to virtual participation. Codex core values should be the common base line for meeting modalities, and webcast is not a meeting modality but rather an observing modality only taking care of transparency (at its best), and in our view consequently considered from this perspective (as delegates).</p>	Norway
<p><i>3.2.1 Experience of different meeting formats</i></p> <p>Bullet points</p> <p>Bullet point 3 - This many not require codification. Different committees operate differently and have different needs. Principles for setting the committee rules of participation would suffice. Eg when the delegate information is published it could be clearly articulated how the meeting would be run with respect to the hybrid nature. With physical meetings it is standard practice for house rules to be provided to delegates at the opening of the</p>	Australia

<p>session. Perhaps these could be made available on the website in advance to allow members to make informed decisions about the value of travel for them. These house rules would no doubt evolve with time and we could use the post meeting surveys to collect specific information related to them.</p> <p>Bullet point 4 - This is a real issue and it can be an occupational health and safety issue too for people who are expected to attend a meeting overnight and also perform their usual day job. The point above could help members to justify their travel. We should not shy away from being upfront about the limitations of joining virtually. It is not a negative reflection on the host secretariats or the Chair. It is a reality and should be acknowledged as such prior to a meeting. Rather like we do when we say, if you are not in the room the meeting keeps going; or papers will not be distributed in hard copy etc. The latter certainly is not codified but we are transparent about it, and it has become accepted practice over time.</p>	
<p><i>3.2.2 Selection of meeting format</i></p> <p>Bullet point The example given above this statement here is really an administrative process matter than can be worked on collaboratively between the Codex Secretariat and host secretariats. We are generally both inclined to find the least administratively burdensome way to do things and can evolve our administrative practices/software over time to make it most streamlined. Also, it is not so much that there needs to be consistency in format, but rather that there needs to be consistency in the notice period given to members regarding the future format of the meeting. It is customary now to provide an idea of timing and if possible location of the next meeting at the end of the current meeting. Perhaps we could aim to provide advice on modality at the end of the current session? As per comments above, different committees operate differently as the nature of their work is different, so overengineering consistency may not be the best thing for the future of Codex.</p>	
<p>Bullet point ISDI supports the in-person with webcast possibility. The webcast allows experts and interested parties to follow the discussion remotely and interact with colleagues participating physically. It is transparent and inclusive.</p>	<p>International Special Dietary Food Industries</p>
<p>Table 1 Virtual only</p> <p>No hay oportunidades de interacción informal.</p> <p>La interacción informal se puede realizar de manera previa o bien mediante la utilización de herramientas digitales complementarias (ej: mensajerías)</p>	<p>Nicaragua</p>
<p><i>Accessibility</i></p> <p>Bullet point 1 In reality this will not be feasible for planning purposes. Venues must be booked well in advance of members deciding whether they will attend or not / having official approvals etc a. In fact, many people cannot get official approvals until after an invitation has been issued.</p> <p>Bullet point 5 Realistically this is almost impossible to be taken into account in a hybrid meeting. Ie the physical participants have travelled across the world to get work done and they need to work a full day. They cannot stay for 2 weeks and work half days. This would be the death of in-person participation and the result would be a Codex that is less able to act according to its values.</p>	<p>Australia</p>
<p><i>Meeting management</i> e.g.</p> <p>This is closely related to the sections above about 'meeting agenda and status of work', 'accessibility' and technology.</p>	

Table 2: Meeting formats and the core values of Codex	
<p>Is there is much value in such a table? Equity of participation will vary for different members for different meeting formats. Even when we look at physical meetings, equity of participation will vary depending on the location of the meeting and its cost impacts on some members relative to others for example. Within the limitations of each format, and within the rules and principles of Codex, host secretariats, the Codex secretariats, and chairs guided by members will have to attempt as best to balance the tension between the different values. This has always been the case and is no different now.</p> <p>It may be a distraction to assess different meeting management options within a meeting format against all of the values. Instead, judgement should be exercised in real time to give best and balanced effect.</p> <p>+/- The meeting format can have either a positive, negative or no impact on adherence to the core value compared to other formats.</p> <p>This is a good example of where this table will be misleading and not useful. To say that this meeting mode (in person with virtual intervention) negatively impacts adherence to the Codex value of collaboration compared to other formats is probably not right. It is true that not all participants will be able to partake in collaborative efforts outside of the plenary. Rather than reflecting on adherence to values it is of more practical benefit to focus our efforts on Table 1 which can clearly articulate considerations to be taken into account when planning meetings and attendance at meetings.</p>	
<p><i>3.2.3 Report format and adoption</i></p> <p>3.2.3.1 Report format</p> <p>Last sentence. Agreed.</p>	
<p>3.2.3.2 Report adoption</p> <p>Last paragraph</p> <p>This mixed format is not our preference as it will complicate the already very busy Codex calendar etc. In addition, long travel times for some countries prevent delegates returning home in time for report adoption.</p>	
<p>3.2.3.2 Report adoption</p> <p>Last paragraph</p> <p>Supported</p>	Norway
<p><i>3.3 Assessing the delivery of meetings</i></p> <p>Bullet points</p> <p>Bullet point 1 In our view there is a need to clarify the following: Does "number of xx participating", mean the presence of a delegate in a session? For example, if a delegate expresses the interest in participating/register to participate but fail to finalize registration on the platform/does not appear in a physical session – would consequently this member be counted as "participating", even though the member is not? For a physical meeting you would</p>	

<p>have to be there in person to be counted, how is this done for virtual meetings? Some delegates would register (physical and virtual) and not turn up during the session, others will follow a particular item (virtual) and not the whole session, so in our view there are different forms of participation, especially when it comes to virtual meetings.</p> <p>Bullet point 3 In our view there is a need to clarify the meaning of "registration" as this would be a two-step activity for EWGs working through the on-line platform. Our experience is that many delegates express the interest in participating (step 1) but fail to finalize registration on the platform (step 2). This member will not be able to submit comments. Would this member be counted as registered? In our view they should not, however this needs clarification.</p>	
<p><i>3.4 The schedule of meetings</i></p> <p>ISDI can support the needs-based approach to hold committee meetings as suggested. However, we note that the CCNFSDU and CCFL, as well as the CCCF and CCFA are being held closely to each other. This is not ideal in terms of preparation and interaction between those committees.</p> <p>Meeting documentation may arrive late which may lead to postpone a particular point on the agenda. We understand CCNFSDU and CCFL may move to a 18m meeting format but this means that every 3 years, the CCNFSDU and CCFL will coincide.</p> <p>From our perspective, ideally, the periodicity of Codex Committees that are linked together such as CCNFSDU & CCFL should be organized as much as possible, in such a way that in case for example of correspondence between these committees, answers can be addressed in the next session and not only 2 sessions later.</p>	<p>International Special Dietary Food Industries</p>
<p><i>3.4.2 Needs-based approach to meeting schedules</i></p> <p>First paragraph</p> <p>The next meeting date generally needs to be decided before the end of the current session of a committee. At that time it is not necessarily known how much progress a committee will make or how much new work might be proposed. Therefore in practice this is quite difficult to implement. Is this a new issue? Currently, if a committee has no work it decides not to meet. With limited work then perhaps it could meet virtually. But this really goes to the point above.</p> <p>Second paragraph</p> <p>Criteria are not required. Perhaps committees should be encouraged to provide a clear rationale for choosing to deviate from the norm of the 5-day meeting. This could be an overarching principle that could be adopted to allow flexibility that is well justified. The whole reason for this future of Codex work in the first place was that we were not able to meet physically. So perhaps this process could culminate in a few high level principles to assist with holding meetings that are not the traditional 5-day in-person only meeting. It would not be wise to codify these yet. But we could agree to trial them as part of the Codex strategic plan and include them as part of the monitoring framework somehow - ideally in a SMART way (as will be developed in parallel with the strategic plan)</p> <p>Thrid paragraph</p>	<p>Australia</p>

<p>Last sentence</p> <p>This is true. However, equally, this could be a decision that is taken in the context of the working group. This would essentially be a case of holding virtual meetings of the EWG. It would also encourage more members to actively participate in the work of the EWG between sessions. It would also allow more flexibility. Ie perhaps multiple sessions could be held. Again this could be a principle that we embrace - encouraging this kind of approach by EWGs.</p>	
<p><i>3.5 Inter session working mechanisms e.g. electronic working groups (EWGs) and other virtual informal and pre-meeting working mechanisms</i></p> <p>ISDI strongly supports an enforcement of mandates of EWG and the report of EWG (“agenda paper”). ISDI recalls that many points in the report of the EWG on the revision of the Follow-up formula standard were completely challenged during the committee. This has led to a strong delay in the revision of the Standard.</p>	<p>International Special Dietary Food Industries</p>
<p><i>3.5.2 Issues/ideas for improvements</i></p> <p>We would suggest including all three key areas for a new model in this paragraph:</p> <p>Meeting models</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Databased – collect data to inform decisions * The PM is the main source of information for members and should be updated when necessary to make sure it includes all work modalities and procedures. <p>Scheduling of Codex meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Agree on the criteria, predictability <p>Inter session working mechanisms</p> <p>Second paragraph</p> <p>Considering that just a limited number of countries are present during CCEXEC meetings, we would suggest that this matter is discussed broader amongst members.</p> <p>Last paragraph</p> <p>Strongly supported, needs updating.</p>	<p>Norway</p>

3.5.2 Issues/ideas for improvements

Second paragraph

In practice I suggest this kind of consideration (noting the number of EWGs is not necessarily a completely accurate reflection of the commitment required) would already happen, or it could be built more explicitly into a committee's prioritisation process.

Last paragraph

This may be less important than making the EWGs easier to engage in. ie the collaborative commenting and text-shaping process should occur throughout the year in the EWG. The comments from the membership on the EWG report would then just be the formalising of positions for transparency ahead of a meeting.

Australia