



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

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CODEx STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2031

REVIEW OF INTERSESSIONAL WORK AND NEXT STEPS

(Prepared by the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of the Codex Alimentarius Commission with the Codex Secretariat)

1. Introduction

1.1 The 84th Session of the Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CCEXEC84) agreed on the development of a Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031, including a monitoring framework and implementation work plans¹. In doing so, CCEXEC84 recognized the key role of CCEXEC in providing strategic direction to the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) and thus the importance of its involvement throughout the drafting of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031, while also recognizing the value of immediate and ongoing engagement with the Codex membership in this process using a range of modalities and with the support of the Regional Coordinators.

2. Structure and content of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031

2.1 CCEXEC84 agreed a structure for the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031 and provided its initial views on the content for the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031:

- Vision, mission and core values: As in the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025²;
- A narrative on drivers for change: To be based on Section 2, *Codex standards of the future – context and drivers*, of the draft blueprint on the future of Codex as agreed by CCEXEC84³ as the basis for the discussion on the narrative on drivers for change;
- How Codex works as part of the multilateral system on food and trade: Also drawing on Section 2, *Codex standards of the future – context and drivers*, of the draft blueprint on the future of Codex as agreed by CCEXEC84³, and also drawing on consultation with Codex Members and Observers;
- A high-level description of Codex ways of working: Retaining the goals set in the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025 as a means of describing the way in which Codex works;
- The strategic outcomes that Codex should aim to achieve, supported by a results chain: Taking advantage of the lessons learned in the implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025; and
- Implementation work plans: Maintaining current practice, whereby FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committees take the lead in implementation work planning following adoption of the remainder of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031, with Codex Members, Observers, and other stakeholders able to decide whether and how to contribute otherwise to the implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031.

3. Engagement of Codex Members and Observers

3.1 The schedule of work agreed by CCEXEC84 foresaw engagement with Members and Observers in the period between CCEXEC84 and CCEXEC85 that focused on the role of Codex in addressing the challenges and opportunities posed by drivers of change, to inform a statement in the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031 on how Codex works as part of the multilateral system on food and trade. In terms of the process for undertaking this engagement, CCEXEC84 agreed that CCEXEC Members should discuss informally and

¹ REP23/EXEC1, Paragraph 136

² <https://www.fao.org/3/ca5645en/CA5645EN.pdf>

³ REP23/EXEC1 Appendix II

should agree questions to be posed to Members and Observers and their framing. CCEXEC84 further agreed that the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of CAC (CVCs) should then lead engagement and discussion with Members and Observers.

3.2 The CVCs, circulated to CCEXEC members on 26 July 2023 a draft Circular Letter containing proposed introductory text and questions to Members and Observers. Comments were received from five CCEXEC Members by 11 August 2023; these comments reflected a high degree of alignment in the views of those who responded. The comments were reviewed by the CVCs and reflected in a revised Circular Letter⁴, which was issued to Members and Observers with a deadline for comment which was extended to 25 September 2023. These responses have been used to draft an initial text on how Codex works as part of the multilateral system on food and trade.

3.3 A side-event was convened in the margins of the 33rd Session of the Codex Committee on General Principles (CCGP33), led by a CAC Vice-Chairperson with support from the Codex Secretariat, to engage with delegates on issues related to the work of CCEXEC and its subcommittee on a blueprint for the future of Codex. This side-event incorporated a Mentimeter live survey, one question in which was “What would you like Codex to achieve in the next 6 years?”. These initial views, canvassed from CCGP33 delegates, together with the views expressed at CCEXEC84 and through the CL, have been used to inform the proposals in this document for further engagement with Members and Observers through 2024 on the strategic outcomes that Codex should aim to achieve in the forthcoming Strategic Plan period, while recognising that the views collected at CCGP33 may not be representative of all Codex Members and Observers.

4. Next steps

4.1 The timetable agreed by CCEXEC84 foresaw that, having reviewed the intersessional work that has been undertaken, CCEXEC85 should consider two substantive elements of the work to develop the content of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031.

4.2 First, that CCEXEC85 should develop a first draft of the following elements of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031: Vision; mission; core values; a narrative on drivers for change; the role of Codex; and a high-level description on Codex ways of working. A draft, drawing on the sources and engagement activity outlined above, is contained in Appendix I for discussion.

4.3 Following its consideration by CCEXEC85, the forward timetable envisages that the first draft of these elements of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031 should be circulated to Members and Observers in January 2024 for comments.

4.4 Second, that CCEXEC85 should discuss and agree questions to be used as a basis for initial engagement with Members and Observers on goals and outcomes for inclusion in the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031. Proposals are contained in Appendix II for discussion.

4.5 CCEXEC85 should also consider the timetable from January 2024 for development and adoption of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031.

5. Recommendations

5.1 CCEXEC85 is invited to:

- agree a first draft of the following elements of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031: vision; mission; core values; a narrative on drivers for change; the role of Codex; and a high-level description on Codex ways of working and that this first draft should be circulated to Members and Observers in January 2024 for comments;
- agree on questions and supporting material to be used as a basis for initial engagement with Members and Observers on goals and outcomes for inclusion in the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031; and
- reconfirm the timetable from 2024 for development and adoption of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031.

⁴ CL 2023/65/OCS-EXEC

APPENDIX I

In the draft below, sections that have been taken from existing texts either adopted by CAC (i.e. the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025 vision, mission, core values, drivers for change - paras 1 and 2, and a high level description of Codex ways of working) or agreed by CCEXEC (i.e. Section 2, Codex standards of the future – context and drivers, of the blueprint on the future of Codex) are in plain text. Editorial amendments to these sections are shown in strikethrough (for deletions) or underline (for additions). Proposed new text, including that developed in response to the recent engagement with Members and Observers, is highlighted.

FIRST DRAFT OF THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS OF THE CODEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2031: VISION; MISSION, CORE VALUES; A NARRATIVE ON DRIVERS FOR CHANGE; THE ROLE OF CODEX; HIGH-LEVEL DESCRIPTION OF CODEX WAYS OF WORKING***Vision***

“Where the world comes together to create food safety and quality standards to protect everyone everywhere.”

Mission

“Protect consumer health and promote fair practices in the food trade by setting international, science-based food safety and quality standards.”

Core values

The Codex Alimentarius Commission re-commits itself to the following core values, which will guide its work to fulfil its strategic vision:

- Inclusiveness
- Collaboration
- Consensus building⁵
- Transparency

Drivers for change

The Codex Alimentarius Commission was established by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1963. Today it has 188 Member Countries and one Member Organization. In addition, ~~229–235~~ intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations are accredited as Observers.

The Commission’s ~~main work is~~ statutory purpose⁶ remains the development of international food standards, guidelines and codes of practice to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade. With increased globalization and increases in the volumes of food traded internationally, the Commission must also be capable of responding in a timely manner to the impacts of emerging trends and challenges ~~on~~ to consumer health protection of fair practices in the food trade, ~~and~~ to the extent that steps to address those impacts are amenable to standardization.

The environment in which Codex operates continues to evolve. ~~Food and food ingredients are among the most traded commodities internationally.~~ Changes in the global feed and food supply chain system, resource optimization efforts, food security and safety concerns, innovations in food science and technology, climate change, water scarcity and consumer concerns relating to food safety and quality represent some of the drivers of change that may introduce new opportunities and challenges.

Both the FAO and WHO strategic directions on food safety acknowledge the importance of food safety systems, based on evidence and scientific advice, in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals SDGs. They also recognize the importance of food systems in responding to major global drivers ranging from environmental changes and digital advances to emerging hazards in the food chain and the approaches to mitigating these challenges, such as food system transformation and promotion of the One Health approach.

The One Health joint plan of action (2022-2026) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH, founded as OIE) quadripartite also highlights the importance of a One Health approach to food safety.

The World Trade Organization, at the 12th Ministerial Conference, also acknowledged the centrality of Codex standard setting in the multilateral system in the context of emerging global challenges. All these initiatives point to the importance of food safety for public health, food security and trade and the need to integrate foresight and preparedness for the emerging issues to come. They further highlight that food safety has a

⁵ Consensus should be based on the Measures to Facilitate Consensus included in the Procedural Manual.

⁶ Statutes of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, Article 1(a).

critical role in the successful transformation of the agrifood system in order to meet the needs of the world. Codex is uniquely positioned as an enabler for all these initiatives by answering to the global needs to protect the health of consumers and the enabling of fair practices in trade, ~~directly contributing to UN SDG goals 2 and 3.~~

The role of Codex

The Commission must maintain a steady focus on its ~~mandate~~ statutory purpose. It must be sufficiently capable of being proactive, flexible and responding in a timely manner to emerging issues that impact on food safety and quality⁷ with the aim of protecting consumer health and ensuring fair practices in the food trade.

The system for Codex standards elaboration has served well in the 60 years that Codex has been in existence. The system is anchored in the process described in the Procedural Manual with the product being Codex standards, guidelines and codes of practice, commonly referred to as Codex texts. They contain requirements for food aimed at ensuring for the consumer a safe, wholesome food product free from adulteration, correctly labelled and presented. The scientific basis that underpins Codex texts is fundamental to ensuring that Codex maintains its pre-eminence as the international reference for food safety and fair practices in food trade, as well as the primary source of science-based food standards for many countries and recognized by the World Trade Organization.

As we move into the future, Codex can **play a pivotal role in advancing global goals by developing international food standards that address potential issues for consumer health protection and fair-trade practice while supporting the uptake and implementation of policies and programmes to address the broader imperative to implement more sustainable food systems.** Collaboration across the multilateral system for trade and food, as advocated by the Quadripartite One Health Joint Plan of Action, offers Codex and its members numerous benefits, including enhanced food safety, strengthened partnerships, effective risk communication, regulatory harmonization, and the ability to address complex global challenges.

In the context of sustainability, at the national or regional level risk management allows for informed decisions to be made to ensure that food is safe for consumption, nutritional requirements are met, food loss and waste is reduced, and food is available for all. Different risk management approaches may be justified depending on how food is used and the extent and period of time for which it makes up part of the diet. It is recognized that Members may employ different approaches to achieve more sustainable food systems, each appropriately based for example on local or regional agricultural practices, climate, and culture, and that a singular methodology to achieving more sustainable food systems would not be applicable to all Members. Codex standards, guidelines and codes of practice can provide an enabling environment which facilitates the uptake and implementation of policies and programs to address the broader imperatives around climate change, environment and sustainability. **In doing so, Codex should also recognise that the inherent international diversity of food systems means that, different values or solutions may be relevant in different national or regional situations or contexts. Similarly, harmonisation efforts should not exclude or penalise any group of products without such claims or with different claims. In this way, Codex will remain relevant and up to date in developing food safety and quality standards to the benefit of all, ensuring food safety, leading to better nutrition, promoting reduction in food waste and supporting greater food security as agrifood systems evolve.**

A high-level description of Codex ways of working

The Codex Alimentarius Commission re-commits itself to the following ways of working, through which it will develop the standards, guidelines and codes of practice that will contribute to achievement of its goals:

Address current, emerging and critical issues in a timely manner

The focus and needs of Codex Members are evolving, as is the environment in which Codex operates. Codex will need to be proactive and flexible and to respond in a timely manner to the opportunities and challenges that result.

Develop standard based on science and Codex risk analysis principles

Members and those engaged in the food trade who use Codex standards value the strong scientific base of Codex, ~~which is currently threatened by unsustainable resourcing.~~ Codex must continue to prioritize the securing of independent, timely and high-quality scientific advice, ~~identifying the steps that each actor—Members, the FAO and WHO—can take to ensure, support and advocate for the delivery of timely scientific advice~~ to Codex through a fully and sustainably funded program.

~~Furthermore,~~ Globally representative data are needed for scientific advice to be comprehensive and for Codex standard to be relevant to the global food supply. This ~~will~~ requires, among other things, capacity building in

⁷ The consideration of other factors in the Codex standard setting process is governed by the *Statements of Principle Concerning the Role of Science in the Codex Decision-Making Process and the Extent to Which Other Factors are Taken into Account*. Consensus should be based on the *Measures to Facilitate Consensus* included in the Procedural Manual.

developing countries that is specific to robust data generation, scientific analysis, and overall increased capacity to conduct such work.

Increase impact through the recognition and use of Codex standards

Communications that drive greater awareness, understanding, and recognition of available, harmonized standards are essential to the effectiveness of Codex. Even in the absence of adoption of Codex standards into national legislation, the greater use of Codex standards by the food trade and other actors can contribute to consumer health protection and ensuring fair practices in the food trade.

Facilitate the participation of all Codex Members throughout the standard setting process

Members' abilities to participate actively in the development of Codex texts still varies widely and is dependent on the capacity and sustainability of national Codex systems. While the responsibility for these systems resides with Members, there is a role for support that will help to close gaps in capabilities ~~as much as possible over the life of this Strategic Plan~~. Sources of funding and a broad range of formal and informal capacity building, partnering and technical knowledge sharing activities ~~will~~ all play important roles in strengthening the capacity of Members for sustainable, active participation in Codex activities, supporting all Members in maintaining national systems and expanding the potential for co-hosting of committees, consistent with our value of inclusiveness.

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

Our ways of working are supported by the continuing review and improvement of Codex work management systems and practices. Improvements to workflows, proposal prioritisation and input/comment management will support participation by Members with significant resource constraints and enhance inclusiveness in the standard-setting process.

The Commission recognises that the effective development of Codex texts depends heavily on the resources contributed by host countries of subsidiary bodies and their working groups, particularly their chairpersons and secretariats, and thanks them for their contributions.

APPENDIX II**PROPOSALS REGARDING QUESTIONS TO BE USED AS A BASIS FOR INITIAL ENGAGEMENT WITH CODEX MEMBERS AND OBSERVERS ON GOALS AND OUTCOMES FOR INCLUSION IN THE CODEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2031*****Background***

CCEXEC84 noted that the proposed sections of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031 relating to a results chain and to the strategic goals to which Codex should aim to contribute by 2031 could be combined in the course of developing the strategic plan 2026-2031. This annex reviews the inputs available and makes proposals regarding these sections of the plan.

Members of the CCEXEC also noted their preference for simplifying these sections of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031, for example by focusing on two results levels (Goal and Outcome) and by focusing on a small number of goals.

CCEXEC has also made the point that the experiences in monitoring and evaluation of the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025, which has led to the streamlining of the monitoring framework for the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025 should be considered. One advance in the Codex monitoring and evaluation framework has been the development of a logic model for the use and impact of Codex texts and the identification of intermediate outcomes (reach, usefulness and use) that contribute to long-term outcomes.⁸ This approach is useful in helping to identify how Codex might contribute to the achievement of ambitious and multi-factorial goals.

Circular Letter Responses

Addendum 1⁹ to this document compiles comments received through the Codex Online Commenting System (OCS) in response to CL 2023/65/OCS-EXEC issued in August 2023.

Regarding the formulation of the Codex strategic plan 2026-31, from the responses gathered from Members and Observers to the CL, it would seem that there is convergence for Codex to concentrate on the following three macro areas to formulate its strategic goals: consumer protection, fair practices in trade and cross-cutting issues.

In addition, in responding to the specific questions posed in CL 2023/65/OCS-EXEC Members and Observers expressed range of views as follows:

- The inclusion of sustainability issues in the Codex strategic plan 2026-31, was deemed important by the majority of respondents. However, a few respondents recalled the primary importance of consumer protection and fair practices in trade, and that sustainability issues should not contradict or limit these.
- Other cross-cutting issues mentioned by Members that should be taken into account in the Codex strategic plan 2026-31 include food loss and waste; environmental protection; food security; and innovation.
- Regarding the One Health approach, respondents were of the opinion that Codex should better exploit the synergies with the One Health Joint Plan for Action, where a series of measures to improve food safety and hence the uptake of Codex texts were already present. In return, the uptake of Codex texts by Countries promotes a One Health approach.
- While some Members were of the opinion that Codex is equipped to address new food and new food sources, others considered it important that this aspect be taken into consideration in formulating the Codex strategic plan 2026-31.
- Collaboration with other Standard Setting Organizations (SSOs) was recalled by several respondents, requesting Codex to promote coordination among SSOs, improve coherence between the work of Codex and that of other SSOs and avoid overlap.

Initial engagement with Codex Members and Observers**Strategic Goals**

The initial engagement of Codex Members and Observers in the development of strategic goals for the period 2026- 2031 should aim to facilitate the development of a common understanding of what Codex might contribute to as part of the multilateral system for food and trade.

Based on discussions held at CCEXEC84 and comments received in response to CL 2023/65/OCS-EXEC, it would seem that there is convergence for Codex to concentrate on three macro areas: consumer protection,

⁸ Section 2 of CX/EXEC 22/82/8

⁹ CX/EXEC23/85/4 Add.1

fair practices in trade and cross-cutting issues. A few principles for the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031 are therefore proposed:

- Few, high-level, strategic goals should be formulated, in line with several Members suggestions to be more ambitious. The strategic goals should be aspirational. As such, Codex would only be contributing to these goals, not necessarily achieve them during the strategic plan cycle.
- The Strategic Goals should be related to higher Strategies and Plans in the United Nations and beyond, such as the SDGs and the UNFSS, as described in the revised narrative on “drivers for change” in Appendix I.
- The results chain of the Codex strategic plan 2026-31 would include Goals and Outcomes, while outputs and activities would be developed by Codex Regional Coordinating Committees (RCCs) as part of their work plans.
- The strategic goals and outcomes could be formulated along these three macro-issues/questions:
 - Codex develops standards that protect the health of consumers. Codex can have the greatest impact in this area in the period to 2031 by focusing on...
 - Codex develops standards that ensure fair practices in the food trade. Codex can have the greatest impact in this area in the period to 2031 by focusing on...
 - The work of Codex addresses cross-cutting issues such as sustainability, innovation, food security, one health and environmental protection. Codex can have the greatest impact in this area in the period to 2031 by focusing on...

It is worth noting that during the CCGP33 side event on the “Model for future Codex work - informal consultations” a live survey was administered to the participating Members. To the question “*What would you like Codex to achieve in the next six years?*” the above mentioned cross-cutting issues were mentioned several times, including sustainability, innovation and food security.

The results of the survey on use and impact of Codex texts could also inform this discussion, together with the logic model developed to underpin this work, including dimensions related to the reach, usefulness and use of Codex texts.

Monitoring Framework

The Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031 will include a monitoring framework with indicators to help measure progress towards the achievement of the outcomes. Strategic Goals being aspirational in nature, the way Codex work contributes to the Strategic Goals would be measured through the monitoring of outcomes; and monitoring of the outputs and activities included by RCCs in their respective work plans.

Relevant indicators from the monitoring framework of the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025 would be retained, in particular those more closely related to the ways of working. Additional dimensions could derive from the results of the survey on use and impact of Codex texts.

Modality of initial engagement with Codex Members and Observers

It is proposed that the initial engagement of Members and Observers in the development of strategic goals for the period 2026- 2031 be based on the above proposal, including comments from CCEXEC85. The proposed approach would encourage interaction, discussion, reflection and iteration. Virtual and/or informal regional meetings facilitated by the CVCs and Regional Coordinators are therefore proposed in the first instance. If these should identify areas of emerging consensus and/or follow-up questions, these might then be tested through a Circular Letter.