



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

2 0 2 0
C O D E X

PROTECTING HEALTH, FACILITATING TRADE

A large, glowing blue globe is the central focus, surrounded by a network of blue lines and dots, suggesting a global network or data flow. A black virus icon with spikes is positioned over the globe. The text 'What next for standards?' is written in a white, cursive font across the globe.

*What next
for standards?*

**PRIVATE SECTOR LOOKS
POST-COVID-19**

**Safe food
handling practices
as important as ever**

BUILDING ON EACH REGION'S UNIQUENESS

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What next for standards?



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What is Codex Alimentarius?

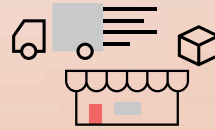
The Codex Alimentarius, or “Food Code”, is a collection of standards, guidelines and codes of practice that governments can adopt into national legislation to ensure food safety, quality and fair practices in food trade. Since 1963, Codex has developed hundreds of internationally recognized standards, guidelines and codes. It has defined thousands of permitted levels of additives, contaminants and chemical residues in food. The end goal: ensure food is safe for everyone, everywhere. Codex texts are an important reference point for the dispute settlement mechanism at the World Trade Organization.

The standards are adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, which currently comprises 188 Member Countries and 1 Member Organization (The European Union) and 237 Observers of which 58 are intergovernmental organizations, 163 non-governmental organizations and 16 United Nations agencies. The Commission, also known as CAC, was established in 1963 by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) to protect consumer health and promote fair practices in the food trade.



PROTECT
the health of consumers

Codex mandate



ENSURE fair practices
in food trade



PROMOTE coordination of all
food standards work

What next for standards?

The plan for this fourth edition of CODEX, like in previous years, was to showcase the work and achievements of the committees that develop the texts of the Codex Alimentarius since the last Commission (CAC42). But then COVID-19 struck.

Between CAC41 in July 2018 and CAC42 in July 2019, Codex technical committees held physical meetings on 66 days in 13 countries. Since CAC42 those numbers have been 20 days in 4 countries with the only session in 2020 the Executive Committee (CCEXEC), meeting for five days in Geneva, Switzerland.

However, CODEX this year celebrates some of the most successful regional meetings ever, that took place between September and November 2019, with commentary from FAO and WHO as well as from the longest-serving Regional Coordinators, keynote speakers and delegates from the six sessions.

The technical committees on both fresh and processed fruits and vegetables; food hygiene; nutrition and foods for special dietary uses, and the antimicrobial resistance task force all met before travel restrictions altered the Codex calendar and are presenting 17 new Codex texts for adoption and seven proposals for new work at the Commission.

Among them are the General Principles of Food Hygiene, which have been updated. The Codex Committee on Food Hygiene is also presenting a new code of practice on food allergen management for food business operators and proposing new work on the safe use and reuse of water in food production. Read the Chairperson's piece in this publication to see what we should all be doing to ensure safe food handling.



The nutrition committee held an extended session, saw a successful joint-chairperson strategy and a rigorous commitment to ensure every voice is heard. Science-led, member-driven and consensus built – the essence of Codex – this body continues to attract wide interest from Members, consumer groups and industry.

Equally innovative has been the work led tirelessly by the Chairperson of the processed fruits and vegetables committee. Unknown even to those involved, his approach of breaking down business into smaller agendas and spreading development of texts over more

than the traditional Codex week, has undoubtedly taught us much about what can work in 2021 to ensure standard setting moves forward.

At the time of writing there is still uncertainty as to when the next Codex meeting will take place and how it will be held. Imagination and a willingness to experiment have characterized the period since the CCEXEC closed on 14 February 2020, and that same intrepid spirit, combined with our collective determination to promote safe food and facilitate trade, will pave the way for what is next.



Codex community rises to the challenge

- *Guilherme Da Costa, Chairperson Codex Alimentarius Commission*

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llow me to begin my message to you by recognizing the vital work undertaken by the FAO/WHO Regional

Coordinating Committees (RCCs). All six RCCs are carefully defining and tackling the problems and needs of each region concerning food safety and fair practices in food trade with the support of the Codex structure, especially the Codex Secretariat.

The different regions also help each other precisely because of the wealth of different experiences they have in dealing with the tough issues, especially during this challenging “new normal”. By working collectively at the regional level, Member Countries are showing ever greater commitment to the Codex core values, and that food safety is everyone’s business.

The COVID-19 pandemic unquestionably presents an era-defining challenge to public health and the global economy. In a short space of time, the world has been turned upside down. When we look at our organization, we find many committees cancelling or postponing meetings. Despite this loss we have seen the incredible cooperation and partnership of the Chairpersons and the host countries of subsidiary bodies, demonstrating their commitment to Codex in the current situation and showing that we form a real community.

We have been forced by COVID-19 to change how we think about the way we work. It is also an undeniably challenging situation for the entire production chain: producers, transporters, industries, traders, wholesalers, retailers, safety authorities, and consumers, who are facing completely new work and routines due to the pandemic.

We really would like to have our meetings in person as we were used to doing until a few months ago and I strongly hope we can return to physical meetings in 2021. The Codex family is, nevertheless, showing itself during this challenging period to be a tremendous unit, and we can feel the contribution from all parts of the globe.

I want to pay tribute to the Codex community. It is proving more than ever its commitment to the enormous responsibility on food safety and fair practices in food trade that Codex Alimentarius represents now and for the future.

Achievements and challenges

A word from the Vice-Chairpersons



Steve Wearne

For me, the greatest achievement of Codex this year has been our use of virtual meeting tools to enrich discussions and bring us closer together. CCEXEC has created a sub-committee to consider how Codex can best use these tools to continue our work – a project that is key to our future resilience.

The biggest challenge now is using this experience to progress our core standard-setting work. The virtual CAC43 meeting will not be a normal Commission meeting. But with well over two-thirds of the Codex membership supporting the proposal for a virtual meeting, we will all be working hard to make it a success.

Mariam Eid

In my view the greatest achievement of Codex this year has been the continuous commitment by Members to keep working on Codex using all available means in these difficult circumstances.

The biggest challenge now is to fully respect Codex core values, whatever the means for working used. This can be achieved through the involvement of all Members in the process of identifying problems and solutions, taking into account the leading role of Codex at this time regarding food safety and fair practices in food trade.

CODEX

WWW.CODEXALIMENT



Purwiyatno Hariyadi

Codex has been successful in raising awareness about the importance of food safety this year with the celebration of World Food Safety Day involving many actors along the global food supply chain. This awareness also creates the motivation for Codex to continue standard development work, even in a pandemic situation. This was demonstrated, among other, by the successful organization of a virtual meeting for CCEXEC79 and endorsement by Members to hold the CAC43 virtually.

So, the challenge is how to manage this motivation, so that Codex can remain agile and effective in carrying out its mandate, protecting consumer health and ensuring fair practices in food trade.



Links to Codex key to food safety collaboration

● *Amina Benyahia, Soren Madsen, WHO*


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his year has turned out to be a productive year for food safety. One of the milestones is the endorsement of a new World Health Assembly resolution (WHA.75.3), “Strengthening efforts on food safety” by WHA73.

This resolution reaffirmed that food safety is a public health priority and it showed Member States’ commitment to strengthen national food safety systems and lower the burden of foodborne illnesses. It also sets the basis for WHO’s collaboration with FAO in food safety for coming years, including through Codex.

One of the prominent tasks mandated by Member States is to update the WHO Global Strategy for Food Safety, in coordination with FAO and in consultation with Member States and The World Organisation for Animal Health. It has already been ten years since WHA last adopted a food safety resolution and it is therefore timely to incorporate new ideas and approaches into the Global Strategy by taking account of the new challenges and innovative approaches identified by the International Food Safety Conference held in 2019.

We are living in a rapidly changing world, and this applies to food safety. In the past decade, food safety systems have been facing many emerging risks from a globalized agri-food supply chain, intensified agricultural food production systems, and a shift in disease transmission patterns influenced by environmental factors such as climate change. These challenges, all involving new technologies, such as blockchain for better



transparency and traceability, whole genome sequencing for the detection of foodborne and zoonotic pathogens, as well as biotechnology and nanotechnology used in food production, bring new insights into the management of food safety.

WHO envisioned that this strategy should be more Member State oriented and that countries should be able to fully embrace and implement it.

During the course of 2019, Codex Regional Committee meetings were used as an entry point for Member States to discuss how to take steps forward to raise food safety in the international political agenda. As a result, the WHA resolution came into being and was welcomed by all stakeholders. Now, as WHO is in the process of updating the strategy, Codex will also be one of the most important avenues for future consultations.

This year is also a challenging year for all and with the COVID-19 pandemic priorities will change on the global health agenda. However, with this new food safety resolution and continuing support from all partners, whatever the changes in store, governments and policymakers should never neglect the importance of food safety – as safe food is a necessity for everyone, at every time, in every society.



Use QR code to view
WHA resolution

A year of change

● Markus Lipp, FAO

The past several months have been a time of change. The impact of COVID-19 has been felt everywhere and by everyone. The pandemic fundamentally changed our ways. In our line of work, it has taught us not to take for granted our ability to travel, meet and discuss. The world needs now more than ever for all of us to come together. Together we can help ensure that everyone everywhere has sufficient access to safe and nutritious food. The work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission is key in this regard.



FAO/Alessandra Benedetti

On 7 June, across the regions we celebrated our second World Food Safety Day in a virtual and safe manner. The engagement and participation was simply overwhelming, and as Codex was the birthplace of the World Food Safety Day, this observance will forever be connected to it.

FAO and WHO have gone to great lengths to ensure that the scientific advice programme continues to deliver the requested risk assessments to Codex. FAO and WHO experts have heroically risen to the challenge – participating virtually with full energy and engagement despite the taxing meeting times in different time zones and other work demands. And yet, the experts delivered, and delivered well, a true feat and FAO is incredibly grateful for the commitment of our experts.



Until the time of this writing, not a single case of COVID-19 has been recorded where food was found to have transmitted the virus; direct human-to-human transmission continues to drive the pandemic. However, reactions to the pandemic have caused market disruptions, uncertainties and supply chain challenges. Our food supply is at risk, not because of food safety, but because of worker safety. When food workers are ill, food cannot reach the consumers. The situation is particularly difficult in informal settings, where no governmental help or insurance can aid in supplementing income to

provide sufficient incentives for sick workers to stay home and get better.

The current pandemic has raised awareness of how vulnerable our supply chains are, how vulnerable food security is, especially in low- and middle-income countries. It will depend on all FAO Members to help in the current crisis, to help make food safe everywhere and for everyone.

Today, more than ever, we know that food safety truly is everyone's business.



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What happens to standards in a black hole?

● *Tom Heilandt, Codex Secretary*




The year 2020 will not only be memorable for the first ever global lockdown but also as a period of amazing advances in exploration and science: Elon Musk's Space X successfully demonstrated that a public-private partnership can bring humans to space and they're also developing and testing their next generation "Starship" as part of their vision to make humans a "multi-planetary species". Meanwhile, the laws of quantum mechanics have been challenged by the first views of black holes.

Watching all this while coordinating an international Commission with 189 Members from home, I am reminded of the power of science to help us understand the world we live in and improve it. Science is powerful but its power comes from never being static, from continually seeking new boundaries, challenging itself, making mistakes, correcting them and discovering new paths. If we stop, we will stagnate; whatever the difficulties, we need to constantly adapt, learn and invent. Safe, nutritious, affordable and sustainably produced food is a pre-condition for humans to have the energy to advance science. Science in turn can contribute to getting food to every home.

That's why Codex and its standards cannot just disappear in a black hole. Since the global COVID-19 pandemic hit shortly after the Executive Committee meeting in February 2020 (our last face-to-face

session), Codex has been exploring the new landscape we find ourselves in and making its own discoveries. We have witnessed how, thanks to the creative endeavours and commitment of the Food Standards Officers, host governments and our worldwide community of experts, work is continuing and ideas for the way ahead emerging. I fully support the drive to engage more regularly on technical issues with our Members and Observers through seminars, expert meetings and training, to ensure that when we are able to adopt new standards they are of the highest possible quality. Another new opportunity I have witnessed is countries, who in the past may not have had the resources to travel to meetings, now actively participate in online sessions and, for some, their first Commission. I am mindful too of the power of our regional networks to bring countries together and demonstrate what is really needed at country level regarding food safety.

I was extremely proud of and moved by the overwhelmingly positive response we received with 147 endorsements from countries encouraging us to go ahead with this our first-ever virtual Commission in September and October. However, 2021 is just around the corner and after the Commission it is vital that we do not grind to a halt with our regular technical committee scheduling. We need to embrace all possible solutions and apply our imagination to find consensus and look boldly ahead.



Yes, I miss travelling too, and seeing all of you in “real life”. One of the amazing features of the “old” Codex was to bring us together in different places chosen by our host governments and learn from each other directly. For now, we may have to leave that behind and find the positive in a new kind of interaction. The past is gone but there is a lot of future to build. Will the “new” Codex be virtual, physical, hybrid, online or offline or a combination of all of these? We will have to experiment and find the best way and I am sure it won’t be a one-size-fits-all solution.

If science can help us explore new worlds, and robots use machine learning to produce human-like texts (and Codex reports!), what of our own temporary black hole? What, beyond space and time, will become meaningless to us? It is vital that we continue to work together in whatever form that may take, grounding our standards in evidence. This will ensure that in times of crisis we are prepared, whether through our hygiene or trade-related texts, to respond rapidly, collectively and conscientiously to the unknown challenges ahead.

Did you know?

In July 2020, the 164th session of the Council of FAO supported the establishment of a Joint FAO/WHO Centre (Codex Food Standards, Zoonotic Diseases, and AMR) as part of a new organizational structure in FAO. The independence of the Secretariat of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, together with resources and staff, will be maintained in this new organization working directly under Deputy Director General Maria Helena Semedo. The Centre is one of three created in FAO (also in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development) where the organization works in close collaboration with partners to increase joint efforts when facing critical and complex issues.

COVID-19, SPS measures and trade

● *Christiane Wolff, World Trade Organization*

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic highlights the challenges faced by governments in implementing measures to reduce the risks to human health, while facilitating safe trade. Overall, [WTO statistics](#) estimated an 18.5 percent decline in global merchandise trade in the second quarter of 2020 (as compared to the same period last year), and a 14 percent drop in global merchandise trade volume between the first and second quarters of this year.

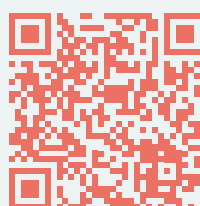
The WTO SPS Committee held a [COVID-19 information-sharing](#) session in June 2020, where WTO Members recognized the resilience of agricultural and food production systems, despite the challenges faced in recent months. Many Members underscored the need to respect the core principles of the SPS Agreement, such as transparency and scientific basis, in the design and implementation of COVID-19 measures, and the role of guidance from FAO/WHO and OIE. Codex, OIE and IPPC provided updates on their work.

With respect to transparency, out of the [224 WTO notifications of trade measures](#) related to COVID-19, 29 percent have been submitted pursuant to the SPS Agreement. At the onset of the crisis, emergency trade restrictions on the imports of animals and animal products from affected areas were the most common, however, since April 2020, most notifications and communications relate to measures taken to facilitate trade. Some trade-facilitating examples include the acceptance of electronic/scanned certificates and the identification of dedicated web sites to verify the validity of or to submit certificates.



In order to facilitate access to information and analysis in relation to COVID-19, the WTO Secretariat has put in place a [dedicated webpage](#) with information on all trade measures relating to goods, services and intellectual property adopted in the context of the pandemic.

The report of the session is available in document [G/SPS/R/98](#).



Use the QR code to view the news item on the session



The **WTO SPS AGREEMENT** came into effect in 1995.
Over these **25 years** the SPS Committee has worked
closely with Codex to ensure safe trade in food.

WHAT WERE THE MAIN CHALLENGES ON TRADE IN FOOD BACK IN 1995?
WHAT ARE THEY TODAY?
WHAT WILL THEY BE IN 2050?

Come and join the SPS@25 event on 2 November 2020,
to find out more on the role of the SPS Agreement and the work of the SPS Committee!
www.wto.org/sps #WTOsps #SPS@25

Sound science guiding CCFICS

● *Usha Sriram-Prasad, Australia*

In 2020 the work of Codex was forced to change as the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) struck the world. Codex meetings were cancelled or postponed, we saw the birth of virtual Codex meetings and Codex adapt its formal processes to enable work to continue.

COVID-19 also highlighted the value of Codex guidance for governments meeting the regulatory challenges thrown up by the pandemic and will no doubt lead to additional issues falling within the remit of some Codex committees. Of particular interest to the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS), the pandemic stressed the importance of fair trade in food to minimize food insecurity around the globe.

The principles and guidelines developed by CCFICS, based on sound scientific advice, are an important source of guidance to support the continuation of open trade of safe food during and post pandemic. Australia – as chair of CCFICS – has considered the progression of the current CCFICS agenda and what work can be done within CCFICS, using all available tools including virtual meetings of

electronic working group chairs and members, to both respond to COVID-19 and prepare for a future impacted by COVID-19.

This has included leading informal regulator discussions about how national food control systems have adapted to the challenges of maintaining trade during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The discussions have covered areas such as experiences of remote and virtual audit and verification activity, both as a domestic activity and as a result of being requested by trading partners. Another area is the increased interest in and uptake of electronic certification and paperless trade.







While CCFICS is already undertaking work on these regulatory tools, such as paperless trade, there are also elements, like food fraud and e-commerce, that could benefit from further overarching Codex guidance and could be translated into new work proposals for CCFICS. Amidst the continuing uncertainty, Australia is preparing for the next CCFICS meeting scheduled for March 2021 and seeks to progress and finalize existing work, as well as consider our forward agenda in the context of lessons learned from COVID-19.

South Sudan analyses readiness to engage in Codex

● *Liza Taban, South Sudan*

Our current participation is limited by a lack of infrastructure and personnel, overlapping responsibility for Codex in different authorities and poor knowledge of Codex work. To operate successfully we need sustainable programmes

in food safety, the funding to support capacity-building on Codex work procedures and technical support to learn how to adopt standards and integrate them into national legislation.

SOUTH SUDAN	
 Country	South Sudan
 Date of Membership	2015
 Codex Agency	South Sudan National Bureau of Standards
 Staff	Staffing is in progress
 Codex team background	The Codex national committee will be composed of representatives with a scientific background, related, for example, to food science and agriculture
 Priority Codex committees	Food Labelling; Fresh Fruits and Vegetables; Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification; Cereals, Pulses and Legumes; Methods of Analysis and Sampling

Challenges

- Inadequate food regulatory infrastructures due to limited resources and a multitude of agencies involved
- Inadequate capacity building for food regulatory bodies
- Lack of education programmes on food safety issues for producers and farmers
- Lack of strategic and sustainable national programmes in food safety
- Weak conformity assessment system and laboratory services
- Food safety on domestic market is constrained by inadequate infrastructure and facilities, resulting in contaminated foods
- Increasing incomes, urbanization and literacy and closer ties to global trends has resulted in domestic consumer-based concerns about food safety
- Insecurity and poor infrastructure to connect cities

Opportunities

- South Sudan is a member of regional and international standardization bodies
- Collaboration with neighbouring standardization institutions in, for example, as Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Uganda
- The South Sudan Bureau of Standards has central laboratories with modern testing devices
- Existence of legal framework to facilitate food safety programmes
- South Sudan has professionally qualified human resources with relevant scientific knowledge to implement food safety programmes
- Availability of standards for controlling the food safety inspection, testing and certification processes
- To support existing approaches in the food safety system involving all relevant agencies together

Combating food fraud

Interview with Paul Brereton, Director of Strategic Alliances, Institute for Global Food Security, Queen's University, Belfast



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elivering the keynote address at the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Europe, Paul Brereton said countries needed to develop a more proactive, preventative approach to combat food fraud and that transnational approaches were required to keep up with the fraudsters and protect the integrity of the food supply.

Why should we be concerned about food fraud?

Food fraud is a major national and international issue that has significant implications for consumer health and trust as well as undermining agri-food economies. Unlike food safety incidents which usually are accidental or occur through ignorance, food fraud is a deliberate criminal act. As such the perpetrators usually have no regard for consumer health and well-being with the result that major food safety incidents emanating from food fraud events continue to occur around the globe, e.g. melamine in milk, methanol in spirits.

Food fraud also has a major impact on agri-food economies at food business, sector, national and transnational levels, due to the reduction in consumer trust for products that are perceived to be fraudulent.

Is food fraud understood the same way globally?

Although food fraud has been with us since ancient times it is still poorly understood and perceived differently around the world. For example, in many countries consumers associate food fraud with a heightened food safety risk (substitution with gutter oil, melamine

in milk, methanol in counterfeit spirits). In other countries, particularly within Europe, food fraud is also commonly associated with quality issues and may impact in changes in consumer purchasing behaviour which may undermine the economy of businesses or sectors. A few years ago the horsemeat incident had few, if any, food safety implications but still had a major impact for the UK and Irish meat sectors.

Is the food industry the cause or victim of food fraud?

An interesting question. While clearly the end consumer is often the victim, they are not always the target of food fraudsters, often they are more like innocent bystanders. Most transactions in the food system are business to business, it is therefore logical that industry is a significant victim of food fraud. This is rarely mentioned or discussed - a major omission in my opinion in that this is the major issue that needs to be addressed if we are to really tackle food fraud. At the same time some food businesses are often the architects of food fraud - selling adulterated food to an unsuspecting consumer. So the answer to the question is that they are both.

Do national/international food systems attempt to stop food fraud or (inadvertently) actually promote it?

Clearly most systems promote it, albeit unintentionally. How else can we explain the ubiquitous nature of food fraud around the globe? Unease of stakeholders to discuss the subject, scarcity of resources allocated to



police it, few penalties of substance, the continual drive for cheaper food are just some of the ways that we help support food fraudsters. You have to ask yourselves if I am a small food business and I know my competitor is cutting corners to be more competitive, what am I to do? Will the authorities react quickly and protect me, and punish the perpetrators or will the continual, illegal, erosion of my margins put me out of business unless I also “cut corners”?

What is the role of governments in preventing and addressing food fraud?

Governments obviously have a huge, and pivotal role to play. They can set the agenda, formulate policy and regulation. A key milestone is when governments realize that food fraud actively undermines their nation's agri-food economy and on an enormous scale. Although there is no definitive figure, according to PwC, a professional services network, global estimates for food fraud of USD 30-40 billion per annum have been suggested. Governments need to develop robust and sustainable strategies and policies that protect all elements of society (including business) from the fraudsters.

Are there new developments/tools that can help us to better manage and reduce food fraud?

In terms of detecting food fraud, the main thrust is in identifying the problem before it gets to the consumer. This is a big change in that historically we have addressed the problem only after it has become an “incident”, normally when it has negatively impacted the consumer. New strategies and tools have been developed that seek to detect the problem further upstream in the supply chain, e.g. via rapid detection methods, improved traceability, smart packaging, improved audits, guidance documents, improved risk assessment and mitigation.

In addition, there are now resources available that attempt to predict future food fraud events and provide risk profiles for particular commodities. In reality most of these systems operate on the basis of identifying recent events that have happened nearby, i.e. in other countries, on similar products.

What needs to be done at the international level?

The most important aspect that can happen at an international level is to acknowledge, host and encourage the food fraud conversation. Why is this important? Because national governments, like food businesses are often reluctant to admit/discuss the problem. They are worried that their situation is unique, that only their agrifood economy is being affected or undermined. The biggest step is to admit and share the problem. It is important for countries to realize that all are impacted by food fraud, all have common problems and all can therefore access common solutions through shared experiences.

What in your view is the role of Codex in regard to food fraud?

Codex has a critical leadership and networking role in addressing this international issue that knows no boundaries, that impacts every country's economy, consumer trust as well as having global food safety implications. Codex has an opportunity to lay the building blocks of support, cooperation, transparency, standards and ultimately provide confidence that a global problem that affects every country on the planet will be addressed collaboratively rather than in isolation.

A final word of advice

My advice to a company, sector or government would be, as an essential, and relatively inexpensive first step, to set up some simple intelligence networks where you can discuss and share information and intelligence on food fraud in a safe and secure environment.

Learn more

- [Food Industry Intelligence Network](#)
- [Food Fraud Task Force](#)
- [Authent-net](#)
- [FoodIntegrity](#)
- [Food Authenticity Network](#)
- [The Institute for Global Food Security, Queen's University Belfast](#)
- [Michigan State Food Fraud Initiative](#)
- [Rapid Alert system for Food and feed](#)
- [Horizonscan*](#)
- [DIGICOMPLY*](#)

**Proprietary solutions*

Safe food handling practices as important as ever

- *Emilio Esteban, Chief Scientist, United States Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service Chairperson, Codex Committee on Food Hygiene*

M

uch of the world has changed since COVID-19 has had its grasp of the globe. The world that we all knew may not return for quite some time, but one thing that has not changed is the importance of

food safety. While we are not aware of any reports at this time of human illnesses that suggest COVID-19 can be transmitted by food or food packaging, it is always important to follow good hygiene practices when handling or preparing foods, especially now during the current public health crises. It is critical to follow the four key steps of food safety – clean, separate, cook, and chill. The same safety precautions that will protect you from foodborne illnesses will also help protect you against other pathogens that can cause other human illnesses.

You may be surprised by the number of people that will get sick from foodborne illness globally. WHO estimates there are about 600 million illnesses annually and diarrheal agents alone cause 230 000 deaths each year around the world. Following the four simple steps mentioned above can help keep your family safe from foodborne illness at home. While foodborne illness is always a concern, now is a good time to reinforce good hygiene habits and practices to protect us from both foodborne and non-foodborne illnesses.





Did you know?

The Codex General Principles on Food Hygiene was first adopted in 1969 and is one of the most widely used Codex texts. CAC43 will adopt the latest revision to this code of practice to ensure it is fit for purpose in today's world.

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The same basic food safety concepts that keep you safe from foodborne illness at home are applied to and followed in establishments that produce food for international trade. Coronaviruses are enveloped viruses, meaning they are one of the easiest types of viruses to kill with the appropriate disinfectant product.

The general food hygiene principles globally accepted and present in Codex Alimentarius guidelines, include sanitation Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), which are written procedures that an establishment develops and implements to prevent direct contamination or adulteration of product. It is the establishment's responsibility to implement the procedures as written in the sanitation SOPs. Competent Authorities in each country that regulate those establishments should make sure that the procedures are in place. The same sanitary procedures that establishments are already following to protect food will also help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses like COVID-19.

Meat, poultry, and egg products that come from regulated establishments are safe for domestic consumption and safely exported across the world because of one simple truth: the sanitation procedures and requirements work.

Private sector looks post-COVID-19

● *Christophe Leprêtre, Regulatory and Scientific Affairs Counsellor Keller and Heckman LLP*

The current 43rd session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission will be held on a virtual basis, as per the CCEXEC 79th session, which was also preceded by a successful online completion of the 21st FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (CCLAC) meeting. Electronic working groups from technical committees are continuing their work in preparation for the next in-person sessions on a case-by-case basis.

For the private sector the immediate challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic was to continue to produce food safely, while working under new conditions, reduced workforces, limited auxiliary services (transport, laboratories etc.) as well as dealing with the concerns that the virus might be transmitted by food. Some international guidance for the food industry came from FAO and WHO with WHO also providing advice aimed at worker protection. While questions remain regarding the source of the virus and its survival on certain foods, the need to work together as a sector and with the international community including through Codex is key to overcoming the ongoing challenge.

More concretely, the private sector will certainly support Codex Committee efforts in adapting existing texts such as the General Principles of Food Hygiene (CXC 1, 2020 version) or developing new texts on, for example, validated methods of analysis and sampling to detect the virus in and on foods, exchange of information in emergency

situations, adaptation of border control requirements on non-safety related parameters, remote and virtual audit and verification activity, and residues on foods resulting from virus-cleansing procedures with antiviral alcoholic, hypochlorite or other solutions.

Based on current science about this virus, WHO and FAO do not consider COVID-19 as likely to be transmitted through processed foods, beverages and potable drinking water. Maybe, based on the model of the Codex work on antimicrobial resistance, FAO, OIE-World Organisation for Animal Health and WHO should consider organizing one or more expert consultations in support of Codex new work on emerging virus risk assessment and Codex risk management adapted or new texts, if needs are expressed in that direction by the relevant Codex Alimentarius Committees or the Commission itself (e.g. a CAC43 statement).





Transition towards a post-COVID-19 world will certainly take many more months. Codex Alimentarius, including the private food sector, will continue its operations, as it did in the aftermath of the March 1986 Chernobyl nuclear power plant explosion, when Codex Alimentarius established limits for six radionuclides in foods. No doubt Codex Alimentarius will grasp this unprecedented COVID-19 outbreak and border-shattering event as an opportunity to produce new guidance on food safety and fair practices in food trade, while further modernizing its ways of working electronically and remotely.

How do you train a million farmers?

● *S Ayyappan, Chancellor Central Agricultural University Lamphel Pat, Manipur, India*

T

he diverse food sector in India relies heavily on small growers, transporters and traders to supply both domestic and export markets. Monitoring and upkeep of hygiene and other safety measures becomes difficult. Varieties of chemical, biological and physical hazards are also becoming the major causes of food safety problems.

Farmers and fishers are not bound to comply with the food standards specified under national regulations. Those standards are applicable only after produce leaves the farm and is sold as a product.



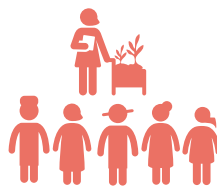
Throughout the entire food chain farmers and fishers have an important responsibility in food safety, and there is demand for greater attention.

What most farmers need right now is food safety education programmes to help them implement Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs). In order to increase understanding of the principles of GAPs and to facilitate implementation of food safety, farmer field training modules can be devised which can focus on pre-production, production, harvest and post-harvest on-farm.

Facilitators can help the farmer groups to identify food safety hazards and sources of contamination of food and select good farming practices applicable to a specific crop and location that are appropriate and locally feasible.



A training model for agricultural education and training in farming



Farmer training groups

Master trainers meet with groups of 20-30 farmers in their villages to provide instruction in a classroom style setting.



Field demonstrations

Master trainers provide practical, hands-on demonstrations to small groups of farmers.



Farmer to farmer training

After training is complete, farmers are encouraged to pass on what they have learned to other farmers in the community, both verbally and through printed leaflets.



Village meetings

Village meetings provide an opportunity for the whole community to listen and participate in farmer training groups.



Cultural shows

Cultural shows draw large crowds in villages, where song and dance becomes a vehicle for delivering important training messages to the community.



Message support

Informative posters and wall paintings are placed throughout villages to serve as reminders of what has been shared during farmer training groups, field demonstrations and cultural shows.

Enhancing food safety for pan-Africa trade

● *Martha Byanyima, Land O'Lakes Venture37, Nairobi, Kenya*



The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) entered into force on 7 July 2019, at a summit of the African Union in Niamey, Niger.

The pact aims at making Africa a common market for goods and services. Sixty percent of the world's arable land is on the African continent, making the AfCFTA a favorable investment climate for agricultural trade and investment. Whilst much progress has been made in driving down the time and cost components of transaction costs, there has been less advancement with reduction of sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) regulatory hurdles.

The World Trade Organization (SPS) Agreement remains key to unlocking high value markets. While East Africa Community partner states are signatories to the agreement, locally produced

goods do not always comply with food safety and other SPS requirements in the export destinations. In addition, export trade is still dominated by primary commodities with limited value addition. Developing the capacity of local African producers and processors to the scale required for market access has eluded the continent, despite expansion of supermarket chains and high-end retail stores. Local enterprises have not benefited from food safety training and certification schemes, which largely target the larger and more sophisticated companies.

Therefore, if the AfCFTA is expected to spur the transformation that will lift Africans out of poverty, the capacity of local producers and processors to produce quality, and safe value-added products must be enhanced. This would increase opportunities to access high value markets on the continent and beyond.

How can African food systems respond to this challenge, given the diversity of food systems across the continent?

Food safety is about continuous improvement, and mentoring of food businesses over a long period of time and there is need to shift from the “workshop” mode of delivering training, to a greater focus on institutional support and the use of technology to deliver training to scale.

The key to providing African small and medium-sized enterprises with an effective and affordable food safety program lies in marrying African food safety experts and local African food producers/processors with technology to create a program that can deliver the information and know-how in a manner that the target audience can understand, and at scale.



Three key features of effective training

- 1 Influencing global food safety certification schemes, particularly those benchmarked against Codex and the Global Food Safety Initiative, so that capacity issues related to compliance are understood, and can be translated into clear and concise standardized messages for local producers and processors across Africa.
- 2 Developing local African talent to handle the delivery of the training programmes at the grassroots.
- 3 Enlisting internet and technology to communicate using video, pictures, and instant messages via smartphones during the training, improving scalability and support and reducing costs.

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Building on each region's uniqueness

● Sarah Cahill, Codex Secretariat

The FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees met in the second half of 2019 after a three-year hiatus, with a harmonized agenda and an ongoing commitment to revitalization. These committees varied in their focus, from standard setting and core Codex business, to planning for implementation of the Codex Strategic plan 2020-2025 and discussing food safety issues and challenges relevant to the region. While the flavour and dynamics of each committee is different, the opportunity they provide for a region to rally around a certain topic, be it the harmonization of food safety standards in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area, or a collective commitment to work virtually as was needed in order to complete Latin America and the Caribbean, the potential of these committees to strengthen Codex is clear.

They can also be an effective voice for change. Topical issues concerning food safety such as climate change, primary production, and food fraud, all featured in different committees.

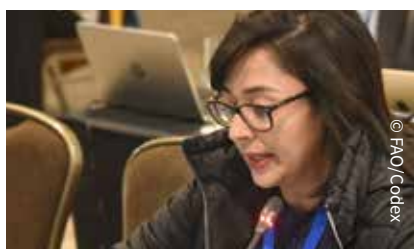
However further evolution to ensure the committees remain fit for purpose is essential. The format and the content should be adjusted to enhance engagement and facilitate follow-up actions. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the value of virtual working mechanisms for Coordinating Committees and provided a real opportunity to maintain the energy and dynamic discussions in each region between sessions.





Strong Coordinating Committees can also serve as a regional network to promote and strengthen the use of Codex standards and thereby contribute to enhanced food safety, and promote mutual recognition and harmonization of food safety systems.

With the 43rd Codex Alimentarius Commission expected to confirm new Regional Coordinators for most of the regions, this time of uncertainty presents a unique opportunity to further evolve the Coordinating Committees into resilient and effective mechanisms for action in line with each regions' unique needs and by promoting engagement of the wider food safety community.



We are all philosophers now

● *Kimutai Maritim, Kenya, Regional Coordinator*

Africa celebrates the achievements made in food safety standard development since the 42nd Session of CAC and looks forward to more sustainable outcomes while strengthening our cooperation in Codex. As a region, we have worked hard collectively on various fronts with our governments to ensure that food safety continues to remain a priority agenda in the region and globally.

CCAFRICA set the pace for the regions in holding the 23rd Session in September 2019. The meeting was well attended by Members from Africa and other regions. With the adoption of three regional standards, the session came at a time when the continent is focused on improving consumer health, fair trade practices in food and facilitating trade within the newly established Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA). This coupled with the UN declaration of 7th June as World Food Safety Day, emphasizes the role of all stakeholders in ensuring food safety as a consumer right and an important touchstone in the region.

This year, the world has been challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has adversely impacted the Codex calendar. This reminds us of a recent article in the Wall Street Journal by Eric Weiner, The Philosophy for a Time of Crisis. “From Socrates to Camus, thinkers have asked how to respond when

adversity turns our lives upside down.” Thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic fallout we are all philosophers now. The “slow cure”, as philosophy has been called is exactly what we need.

The region quickly took the new normal in its stride and exploited technology to progress Codex work. This enabled the commemoration of the second World Food Safety Day through a series of webinars across the region which demonstrated

CCAFRICA23

Total Member Countries in region	49
Regional Coordinator	Kenya
Session number	23
City	Nairobi
Country	Kenya
From (date)	02/09/19
To (date)	06/09/19
Member countries from the region attending	32
Other Members (country/organization)	6
Observer organizations	7
Total number of delegates	119





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The way forward is encouraging

- *Blaise Ouattara, FAO and Lusubilo Mwamakamba, WHO*

This meeting took place as the continent is showing renewed interest in food safety and a commitment to strengthening national food control systems including regulatory frameworks, inspection functions, laboratory systems for monitoring and surveillance, and interaction with national and international stakeholders.

As a follow-up to the outcome of the International Conference on Food Safety in Addis Ababa in 2019, and as we move toward the operationalization of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the work of the Codex Alimentarius in the continent, is seen as critical to ensure fair trade through development of appropriate food standards and harmonization of food control requirements.

This session also highlighted the joint effort by FAO and WHO to support the capacity development of African countries in Codex activities through the Codex Trust Fund. The way forward is encouraging for the region, as we see more awareness being created at high political level on the importance of food safety as well as the work of Codex.

commitment and desire to ensure that food safety is fully entrenched in the daily lives of us all.

Based on the gains we have made by working virtually, the region supports every effort that will incorporate new tools and pragmatic innovations in Codex procedures to overcome challenges in advancing Codex work. The region remains alive to the Codex Alimentarius mantra of “safe, good food for everyone – everywhere”.

Deputy President His Excellency William Ruto (centre) and Agriculture Cabinet Secretary Hon Mwangi Kiunjuri with officials of the FAO/WHO Regional Codex Coordinating Committee for Africa (CCAFRICA). The 23rd Session of the CCAFRICA in Nairobi



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Total Diet Study boosts action in food systems

● Catherine Bessy, Luc Ingenbleek and Blaise Ouattara, FAO

CCAfrICA23 had lively discussions on the regional total diet study (TDS) funded by the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) and implemented by FAO, over the period 2014-2018, together with Centre Pasteur du Cameroun and WHO in Benin, Cameroon, Mali and Nigeria.



TDSs allow the assessment of human dietary exposure to chemicals, and contribute to national risk analysis processes, as a sound scientific basis for multisectoral action in food systems. In this study the level of 872 chemicals including mycotoxins, pesticide residues, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH), heavy metals, and persistent organic pollutants in foods were assessed in the four countries.

During the discussions, countries noted the concerns raised in the study and provided concrete illustrations of the benefits of conducting a study. Action plans, as a follow-up on the findings shared by countries, include the integration of major hazards in the development of monitoring and surveillance plans, or into their strategic plans. Specific actions to address the concern of pesticide residues and PAHs detected in smoked fish in Mali have triggered a new technical assistance programme with the support of FAO and STDF.

Taking stock of the study's recommendations, concrete interventions to mitigate the identified risks are now being put into action.

Food is the main human exposure route for many chemicals that can cause non-communicable diseases. In July 2020 The Lancet Planetary Health published news of this study.



Use QR code to view Lancet article

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The ideal forum for regional discussions

● *Sunil Bakshi, Regional Coordinator (India)*

Held in the beautiful coastal capital city of Goa, the 21st session of CCASIA was nothing less than an engaging and exciting journey of detailed discussions, collaboration, experience sharing and community development. CCASIA21, apart from being a technical meeting which discussed among others, issues and best practices related to food safety in the primary production, managed to progress three new work proposals, successfully laid down a regional roadmap for implementation of the new strategic plan, had been a wonderful overall experience for delegates.

A noteworthy achievement of the Committee was the Standard operating procedure for the CCASIA region, and the recognition it received by all Members as well as FAO and WHO. The document offers a great opportunity to work together to strengthen both the Codex systems as well as our regional cooperation.

The candid and active informal interaction of the member delegates on the new work proposals which I chaired greatly facilitated smooth deliberations during the plenary and the committee was able to push ahead the agenda.

The new creative mechanism of a hands-on exercise, which pushed the countries to prioritize regional goals and relevant activities of the new strategic plan, in collaboration with other Members of the region was indeed very effective and fruitful and also created a close relation among the countries. I would like to recognize the extensive efforts made by the Members in developing the

two-year regional roadmap and the support provided by the Codex Secretariat team.

A communication strategy involving extensive use of social media channels, publicity and interaction with delegates during the event was another peculiar feature of the meeting, which also aptly underpinned the importance of one of the agenda items on the communications plan.

In the current situation, we have been successful in finding ways forward to progress work virtually, and being cost effective, while staying true to the principles of inclusiveness and transparency, pertinently addressing the vision shared by the CEO of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India during CCASIA21, for Codex to remain productive in the way it engages with national food safety authorities.





CCASIA21	
Total Member Countries in region	24
Regional Coordinator	India
Session number	21
City	Goa
Country	India
From (date)	23/09/19
To (date)	27/09/19
Member countries from the region attending	15
Other Members (country/organization)	4
Observer organizations	4
Total number of delegates	109
Country nominated as incoming coordinator	China

It was delightful to see a number of countries wanting to frankly express their views. They spoke of the importance of CCASIA for their nations in being a forum where they were able to easily discuss, openly and frankly, the issues, challenges and trade problems with regards to food safety standards and sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures that otherwise they may not be able to address in bigger Codex meetings.



Low attendance of growing concern

● *Gyanendra Gongal and Shashi Sareen, WHO*

The regional coordinating committee provides the best opportunity for countries to discuss common issues and work together on Codex standards. One of the major challenges, however, is the poor response to surveys and low attendance at the session itself. Only 15 out of 24 Member Countries (58 percent) were present in Goa which somewhat defeats the purpose of organizing the meeting and impacts on its importance in setting a regional Codex agenda.

The Regional Coordinator host country relies on FAO and WHO to encourage participation of low- and middle-income countries. These countries have limited technical capacity on Codex matters and are subject to frequent changes of government officials. The lack of moral and financial support from policymakers and decision makers has impacted Codex activities and participation in Codex meetings and the Codex standard setting process.

FAO and WHO have been involved in the process of setting the coordinating committee's agenda and organizing side events which are extremely useful for policy advocacy and capacity building activities. The event this year, for example, on group Codex Trust Fund projects was found to be very useful by all participants from countries in the region and generated good discussions.

There remains a need for policy advocacy and capacity building for Codex at the country level including motivation for improved participation in regional meetings and in the Codex standard setting process.

Improving engagement and communication across the region

● *Nailya Karsybekova, Regional Coordinator (Kazakhstan)*



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In 2017 at the 40th session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, Kazakhstan was unanimously elected as the new regional Coordinator of the FAO/WHO Coordinating committee for Europe (CCEURO).

Being, on the one hand, an ordinary event for the organization as a whole, it was still unusual for the region. For the first time in the long history of CCEURO, a country of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), moreover, a country from Central Asia, was chosen for such a responsible position.

It should be noted that the European region is not only the largest, but perhaps the most heterogeneous, both economically and in terms of the development of national food safety systems, which is one of the factors that affects the level of engagement in the work of the Commission.

Unfortunately, due to various objective and subjective factors, involvement of CIS countries in Codex is at a relatively low level. This can be explained by the low awareness of stakeholders in these countries about all the benefits of participating and here, Kazakhstan as the Regional Coordinator took on a responsible mission to fill this gap. And the countries themselves have readily responded.

CCEURO

Total Member Countries in region	52
Regional Coordinator	Kazakhstan
Session number	31
City	Almaty
Country	Kazakhstan
From (date)	30/09/19
To (date)	04/10/19
Member countries from the region attending	30
Other Members (country/organization)	3
Observer organizations	2
Total number of delegates	100
Country nominated as incoming coordinator	Germany

Some of the visits were accompanied by the National Codex Coordinator of the Netherlands, Marie-Ange Delen. As the former CCEURO Coordinator, the Netherlands' contribution was valuable and helpful. The Team is also planning to visit Georgia.

In 2018-2019, the Kazakhstan Codex Alimentarius Team embarked on business trips to almost all CIS countries: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, the Russian Federation, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. A similar visit was paid to the Codex observer organization, the Eurasian Economic Commission, which includes five of these countries (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation).

The seminars were attended by representatives of health, agriculture, standardization authorities, laboratory services, associations of both food producers and consumers, scientific and educational organizations.

Such an approach makes it possible to reach all participants of the food chain "from farm to fork". During the meetings and seminars, there were extensive discussions on the role, goals and objectives of the Codex Alimentarius Commission,

the mechanisms for developing and applying Codex texts, the criteria for selecting national experts, the roles and functions of the Codex contact points, the main directions of the work of the Codex committees, as well as the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals in the aspect of the Commission's activity. The audience was greatly interested in practical examples of the work and application of the standards in the Codex Alimentarius, as well as the national and regional experience of both Kazakhstan and the EU countries.

As a result of the actions taken by Kazakhstan, CIS countries, almost all of which were previously more passive in Codex, have started to express more interest in its work. Kazakhstan managed to establish close contact with people responsible for Codex in these countries, and now, the communication with them has much improved.



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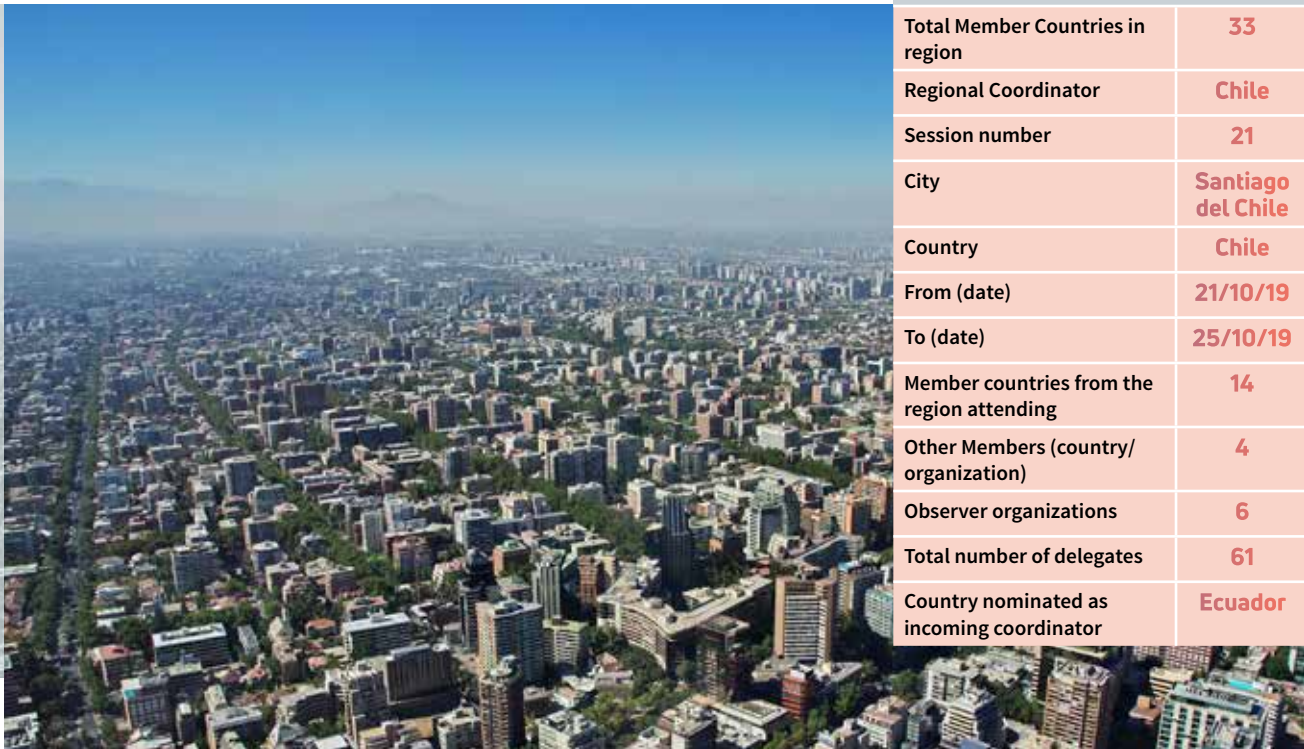
Kazakhstan shows strong leadership

- *Eleonora Dupouy and Mary Kenny* **FAO**,
Peter Hoejskov, **WHO**

Kazakhstan played a vital role in the successful outcome of the meeting. The Regional Coordinator is a strong advocate for Codex work and supported several Members to attend the session. This led to good attendance and active engagement. Specific attention was given to food fraud as an emerging food control issue, and the need for enhanced action and increased cooperation across sectors and countries to address this was highlighted. The committee also reaffirmed the need for raising the profile of food safety and for sustaining investments for food safety in the region.

An extraordinary but enlightening experience

● *Tandeka Barton, Guyana*



CCLAC21	
Total Member Countries in region	33
Regional Coordinator	Chile
Session number	21
City	Santiago del Chile
Country	Chile
From (date)	21/10/19
To (date)	25/10/19
Member countries from the region attending	14
Other Members (country/organization)	4
Observer organizations	6
Total number of delegates	61
Country nominated as incoming coordinator	Ecuador

CCLAC21 in Santiago, Chile is the international event I will always vividly remember. Amidst all the expectations and meeting plans, there were adjustments from the beginning due to the country's civil unrest. I didn't fully understand the enormity of the situation until I ventured outside my hotel to take the accompanied short walk

to the meeting venue. The streets were filled with clutter, protesters and lots of armed policemen while remnants of tear gas filled the air.

As a consequence, the plenary began a day late and it was then I experienced what it meant to be part of the CCLAC family. In spite of uncontrollable external disruption, internally Members performed in an exemplary fashion; deliberating and completing most of the agenda items in the one and a half days of physically meeting. It was refreshing to see the commitment of Members while presenting their country's position on select agenda items as well as supporting other delegates.

For me, what will remain with me is the warmth and depth with which the proceedings were executed despite the uproar that was heard emanating just outside the hotel perimeter. The CCLAC21 organizers, by ensuring all were safe and comfortable, showed strength, compassion, and the ability to lead and protect under unprecedented circumstances.



It did not go as planned

- *Diego Varela, Chile, Regional Coordinator Latin America and the Caribbean*

The 21st session of CCLAC, however, did not go as planned. It was cancelled after two days when we decided it was not possible to guarantee the safety of participants. We continued with the main points of the agenda on the Codex online platform for almost five months and we finally adopted the report on 11 May 2020.

Despite all the problems and the different scenarios which included a physical plenary session, online work and then a virtual Zoom meeting to adopt the report, we were able to agree on some very important issues. We nominated our next Coordinator, Ecuador! We agreed on the activities to support the implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan at the regional level and we also found common ground on some very important topics for the region such as the maximum levels for cadmium in chocolate and cocoa-derived products, provisions for the use of trisodium citrate in ultra-heat-treated (UHT) milk, and the role of science in Codex work, among others.

I would like to highlight the collaboration and positive spirit when facing such difficult circumstances that characterized the commitment of Codex Secretariat, the staff of the CCLAC Secretariat (and everyone from the Chilean Agency for Food safety and Quality, ACHIPIA) and all CCLAC members and attendees to CCLAC21. It was because of their willingness to adapt to unusual circumstances that we were able to come together, discuss the challenges ahead of us and agree on the way forward, which resulted in a very long meeting – the longest in Codex records – but also a very successful one.



“ We are only a few hours away from the opening ceremony of the 21st session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean, and we are gathered with the Codex Secretariat in a small meeting room on the 15th floor of the Crowne Plaza, our meeting venue in downtown Santiago. Looking out onto the streets below we can see lots of people marching; some small fires emerge and are quickly put out, and police officers run back and forth trying to bring some order to the chaos. We have serious doubts about the possibility of carrying on and hosting the meeting, but after reviewing the list of participants and checking they are all safe in their hotels and after discussing with the Secretariat the possibility of bending some procedures to adapt to an unprecedented situation for Codex meetings, we finally decide to go ahead and begin the meeting one day later than scheduled.”



“We were safe inside the hotel, but with doors locked to protect staff and guests from the protesters”



A lesson in risk management

● Marisa Caipo, FAO, Chile

The challenges at CCLAC21 were many under a situation of elevated stress. We were safe inside the hotel, but with doors locked to protect staff and guests from the protesters. The CCLAC hosts were wonderful in caring for the meeting participants, seeing that those who were lodged outside the venue, arrived safely to their hotels and arranging the necessary logistics so everyone returned safely to their countries.

Little did we know that just a few months later, we would all have to virtualize our work due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Having to carry out a full Codex meeting under unpredictable external issues has taught all of us lessons in risk management, in responsible leadership and forced us to learn new electronic skills.

From the practical side, these electronic tools have been lifesavers for our work. For Member Countries, these tools are a means of participating in Codex meetings, when travel is not a possibility. If the e-connections allow, every country can participate.

The downside is that the face-to-face discussions that occur during the breaks, side events, or socials do not happen as easily in the electronic environment. But some of these conversations take on different dynamics with a computer screen in between. Time periods for the discussions are also constraints, as sitting in front of a computer for more than two hours at a time is difficult.

The technical work continues, whether it is WFH (working from home) or as part of the responsibilities of essential workers in countries (health, agriculture, reference labs, etc). This pandemic has made us aware, more than ever, of the importance of Codex standards, food safety, risk analysis and the need to address the weaker links in the global food system.

World Food Safety Day

In 2020, the world came together for World Food Safety Day. Take a look at the report to see some of the creative and inspirational ways food safety was celebrated and join the 2021 campaign because there is no food security without food safety.

**Food safety,
everyone's
business**



Closer collaboration the path to success in the Near East region

● *Mohammad Hossein Shojee Aliabadi, CCNE coordinator*

Being a Codex regional coordinator has also opened up more opportunities for me to play my role to improve food safety at the global level while promoting fair practices in food trade.

We are all aware that each region has responsibilities to ensure that global decisions respond to national and regional needs and the regional coordination groups also serve as a forum for Member Countries to discuss the priorities and challenges of their food control infrastructures in a more harmonized manner.

In carrying out this duty, we were in constant communication with the region as well as with the Codex Secretariat to work together, sharing our experiences and supporting colleagues to accomplish their tasks within the Codex framework.

In response to the interests of Codex Members, the 10th session of our regional meeting highlighted the importance of food authenticity/integrity.

We welcomed the productive and constructive collaboration with a high level of engagement from countries and fruitful discussions on cross-cutting issues during the meetings, despite challenges in receiving input for the preparation of some of the meeting documents.

This region must work closer together and network better to have a stronger voice in order to remain relevant and be a leader in international food standard setting. So, an important aspect of the coordinator's role is to be a very pro-active, to look for answers, since establishing objectives depends on how far you want to get with the work.



The benefits of expertise

● *Eleonora Dupouy, FAO*

Competent authorities and food safety policymakers value the opportunities to exchange good practices and benefit from regional and international expertise. This meeting provided such a platform. Support for participation was integral to the FAO/UNIDO cooperation project “Enhancement

of regional trade capacities in food through a harmonized regional conformity assessment and food safety systems”. The committee made good progress in the development of regional standards and agreed on the next Regional Coordinator. Discussion at side events on food fraud, a matter of global concern, and on using the FAO and WHO Codex Diagnostic Tool consolidated the will for closer regional collaboration and coordination for standards setting.

CCNE

Total Member Countries in region	17
Regional Coordinator	Iran
Session number	10
City	Rome
Country	Italy
From (date)	11/11/19
To (date)	15/11/19
Member countries from the region attending	14
Other Members (country/organization)	6
Observer organizations	0
Total number of delegates	70
Country nominated as incoming coordinator	Saudia Arabia

Digital revolution and food safety: appetite for change

● Vincent Doumeizel – Director for Food Programme / Lloyd's Register Foundation



With the population set to reach 8.5 billion by 2030, food organisations worldwide are exploring new technologies and methods to ensure safe and sustainable supply chains.

It is clear that digital technologies have the potential to bring about major changes in food where there is still significant scope for the digitalisation and automation of processes.

These technologies, including IoT (internet of things), blockchain, big data, remote sensors, satellite monitoring, next genome sequencing and predictive analytics, have the potential to change the way we buy and sell, interact and verify the real time compliance of entire supply chains as well as the authenticity of everything from property titles to organic vegetables.

None of these technologies is the silver bullet by itself, but their convergence into a single digital ecosystem will give everyone a faster and safer way to verify the authenticity of the food we eat.

The underlying principle of collaborative working in the food supply chain is that the exchange of information can reduce uncertainty. Thus, a key priority for supply chain risk reduction has to be the creation of a supply chain community to enable the exchange of information. The aim here is to create a high level of 'supply chain intelligence', extremely automated, providing greater visibility of upstream and downstream risk profiles.

These innovations and the way they will be recorded will create not only a huge amount of data related to each food product but will also drive sustainable supply chains and the safety of our food.

The new visibility of risk profiles will enable a level of transparency that will ease the real time authentication of food fraud but will also provide solutions to mitigate against fraud and address its root causes. Indeed, we know that most fraudulent actions are coming from those who struggle to survive or are lacking the competences to abide by food regulations or food best practices. Digitalization will facilitate online training and other types of remote support to smallholders who are geographically out of reach without digital technologies.

Digital technologies have the potential to optimize processes and enable real time transparency in our supply chain and can make our generation the first one to feed everyone on the planet with safe and sustainable food!



Use the QR code to download the Lloyd's Register Foundation's Foresight Review on Food Safety

Time to rethink Codex texts?

● *Sridhar Dharmapuri, FAO and Hilde Kruse, Codex Secretariat*



The keynote speech at CCNASWP15 focused on the impact of climate change on food safety.

Climate change is having negative impacts on global agriculture production and thereby on supply chains and trade. It is influencing the time and place of occurrence of known hazards and introducing the threat of new ones. Geographic distribution and persistence of foodborne pathogens and parasites can vary with temperatures and precipitation.

Increasing seawater temperatures for example can increase the occurrence of pathogens (e.g. *Vibrio* spp.) and contaminants (e.g. ciguatera) in fish and seafood. Mycotoxins, for instance, could emerge in areas with no history of prior contamination and increased rates of antimicrobial resistance could be associated with rising temperatures.

Climate-induced variations in natural resources such as soil and water will influence the general package of practices in agriculture including the use of inputs including fertilizers, manure, pesticides and veterinary drugs. COVID-19 is continuously forcing the adoption of additional measures. These changes will challenge countries to remain compliant with the maximum limits and other measures set in Codex texts.

CCNASWP15

Total Member Countries in region	14
Regional Coordinator	Vanuatu
Session number	15
City	Port Vila
Country	Vanuatu
From (date)	16/09/19
To (date)	20/09/19
Member countries from the region attending	10
Other Members (country/organization)	1
Observer organizations	0
Total number of delegates	69
Country nominated as incoming coordinator	Fiji

Therefore, the need to rethink and redesign the Codex standards, guidelines and recommended codes of practice will arise. An accelerated standards formulation procedure rather than business as usual could be the way forward.

Standards and solidarity in the face of COVID-19

● *Timothy Tumukon, Vanuatu*

The years of membership and participating in Codex work are certainly a plus when one enters the complex world of the international food standards body. Attendance at Executive Committee meetings had prepared me enough to manage two regional meetings in 2016 and 2019, when Vanuatu assumed the role as Regional Coordinator and chairmanship of the Coordinating Committee.

As a region we have wrestled with two regional draft standards for over ten years and finally we are making headway in their development. We anticipate that CAC43 will endorse the Regional standard for kava products for use as a beverage when mixed with water and advance the Draft regional standard for fermented noni juice to Step 5.

As of 30 August 2020, seven of the fourteen Members of the region have not reported any case of the COVID-19 novel coronavirus. However, we stand in solidarity with one of our members, the United States of America, with its fight to manage the COVID-19 situation for its citizens. The impact of the virus is equally damaging for those seven member states which have not reported a case yet. Our food safety and security protocols are greatly challenged with international borders closed as many of our Members rely heavily on imported food items. Government and household financial resources are stretched to the limit. Our governments are redefining their policies to devise novel ways to improve national food security and food safety systems to cope with the impact of the virus.

Developing successful Codex Trust Fund applications in the region

● *Dirk Schulz, FAO*

Since the launch of the second round of the Codex Trust Fund (CTF) in 2016, none of the countries in the region had, up to 2019, managed a successful application. To address this issue FAO together with WHO facilitated an interactive working session on CTF projects. After outlining possible activities and explaining the characteristics of sound applications, a lively discussion ensued. Countries learned what a regional approach could look like and identified the potential benefits of working together, with more experienced neighbours mentoring smaller partners. Participants discussed the advantages of sharing a similar resource base and a more coordinated approach towards common areas of interest such as ongoing standards development. Delegates showed strong interest in submitting robust project applications and it was inspiring to see that the applications from Samoa and Tonga were awarded funding support in 2019, making them the first Members from the region to benefit.



©FAO/Sue Price

Codex calendar 2020 – 2021

The Codex Secretariat has been monitoring the COVID-19 epidemiological situation since the very beginning and has proactively addressed in a forward-looking approach its evolving impact on the organization of physical meetings, making sure that the momentum of Codex work has been maintained and ensuring work continuity in this unprecedented and challenging period of time.

This has only been possible thanks to excellent and constant collaboration with Committee Chair/Vice-Chairpersons and host secretariats as well as Chair/Vice-Chairpersons of Electronic Working Groups (EWGs). One subsidiary committee session after the other had to be cancelled this year and all the technical committee sessions were postponed

to 2021, while CCEXEC79 and the 43rd Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission could be held virtually.

But the standard setting work did not stop! Excellent and proactive work is ongoing in all committees, with active EWGs, preparing for the next committee session in 2021, that we hope can be held physically.

The overview below shows the sessions that have been held so far in 2020, the plan for the remainder of 2020 and for 2021. Immense uncertainties still remain, but we are committed to implementing the planned schedule through the most appropriate means available.

Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CCEXEC78)

Geneva, Switzerland // 10 – 14 February 2020

Codex Committee on Processed Fruits and Vegetables (CCPFV29)

Working by correspondence // 1 September 2019 – 19 June 2020

Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CCEXEC79)

Virtual // 13 – 20 July 2020

Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC43)

Virtual // 24 September – 19 October 2020

Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CCEXEC80)

Virtual // 13-21 January 2021 to be confirmed (TBC)

All dates provisional. Consult the Codex website for updates

Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods (CCRVDF25)

Cleveland, Ohio, USA // 25 – 29 January 2021

Codex Committee on General Principles (CCGP32)

Bordeaux, France // 8 – 12 February 2021

Codex Committee on Food Additives (CCFA52)

Venue to be arranged (TBA) // 8 – 12 March 2021

Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS25)

Venue TBA // 22 – 26 March 2021

Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues (CCPR52)

China // 12 – 17 April 2021

Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH5)

Kochi, Kerala, India // 26 – 30 April 2021

Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods (CCCF14)

Netherlands // 3 – 7 May 2021

Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling (CCMAS41)

Budapest, Hungary // 17 – 21 May 2021

Ad hoc Codex Intergovernmental Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance (TFAMR08)

Republic of Korea // 14 – 19 June 2021

Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC44)

Venue TBA // TBC

Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL46)

Quebec, Canada // 27 September – 1 October 2021 (TBC)

Codex Committee on Fats and Oils (CCF027)

Venue TBA // 18 – 22 October 2021

Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (CCNFSDU42)

Venue TBA // 22 – 26 November 2021

Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH52)

San Diego, California, USA // 29 November – 3 December 2021



List of Members

- Afghanistan
- Albania
- Algeria
- Angola
- Antigua and Barbuda
- Argentina
- Armenia
- Australia
- Austria
- Azerbaijan
- Bahamas
- Bahrain
- Bangladesh
- Barbados
- Belarus
- Belgium
- Belize
- Benin
- Bhutan
- Bolivia (Plurinational State of)
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Botswana
- Brazil
- Brunei Darussalam
- Bulgaria
- Burkina Faso
- Burundi
- Cabo Verde
- Cambodia
- Cameroon
- Canada
- Central African Republic
- Chad
- Chile
- China
- Colombia
- Comoros
- Congo
- Cook Islands
- Costa Rica
- Croatia
- Cuba
- Cyprus
- Czech Republic
- Côte d'Ivoire
- Democratic People's Republic of Korea
- Democratic Republic of Congo
- Denmark
- Djibouti
- Dominica
- Dominican Republic
- Ecuador
- Egypt
- El Salvador
- Equatorial Guinea
- Eritrea
- Estonia
- Eswatini (Kingdom of)
- Ethiopia
- European Union
- Fiji
- Finland
- France
- Gabon
- Gambia
- Georgia
- Germany
- Ghana
- Greece
- Grenada
- Guatemala
- Guinea
- Guinea-Bissau
- Guyana
- Haiti
- Honduras
- Hungary
- Iceland
- India
- Indonesia
- Iran (Islamic Republic of)
- Iraq
- Ireland
- Israel
- Italy
- Jamaica
- Japan
- Jordan
- Kazakhstan
- Kenya
- Kiribati
- Kuwait
- Kyrgyzstan
- Lao People's Democratic Republic
- Latvia
- Lebanon
- Lesotho



- Liberia
- Libya
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Madagascar
- Malawi
- Malaysia
- Maldives
- Mali
- Malta
- Mauritania
- Mauritius
- Mexico
- Micronesia (Federated States of)
- Mongolia
- Montenegro
- Morocco
- Mozambique
- Myanmar
- Namibia
- Nauru
- Nepal
- Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Nicaragua
- Niger
- Nigeria
- North Macedonia
- Norway
- Oman
- Pakistan
- Panama
- Papua New Guinea
- Paraguay
- Peru
- Philippines
- Poland
- Portugal
- Qatar
- Republic of Korea
- Republic of Moldova
- Romania
- Russian Federation
- Rwanda
- Saint Kitts and Nevis
- Saint Lucia
- Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
- Samoa
- San Marino
- Sao Tome and Principe
- Saudi Arabia
- Senegal
- Serbia
- Seychelles
- Sierra Leone
- Singapore
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Solomon Islands
- Somalia
- South Africa
- South Sudan
- Spain
- Sri Lanka
- Sudan
- Suriname
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Syrian Arab Republic
- Tajikistan
- Thailand
- Timor-Leste
- Togo
- Tonga
- Trinidad and Tobago
- Tunisia
- Turkey
- Turkmenistan
- Uganda
- Ukraine
- United Arab Emirates
- United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- United Republic of Tanzania
- United States of America
- Uruguay
- Uzbekistan
- Vanuatu
- Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
- Viet Nam
- Yemen
- Zambia
- Zimbabwe



Drafting standards remotely

Interview with Richard Boyd, United States, Chairperson Codex Committee on Processed Fruits and Vegetables (CCPFV)

CCPFV29, having worked by correspondence from January to July 2020, is recommending five draft standards for adoption at Step 5/8 by the 43rd Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC43). These include conversion of two regional standards to worldwide standards, revision of a current standard, and two general standards with annexes for numerous specific products, including products covered by five existing texts.

Why was the committee working by correspondence?

Several things converged that set the stage for this plenary meeting by correspondence.

In July 2019, CCPFV had seven Electronic Working Groups and CAC42 agreed that we could continue to work by correspondence. In an effort to increase participation in our meetings and use Codex resources efficiently, the Chair and Host Country Secretariat proposed that we post the EWG reports on the Online Commenting System (OCS) for comment, and then hold the 29th session by correspondence using the Codex online forum. CCPFV had previous experience meeting by correspondence using the Codex online forum when it successfully used this venue to prioritize its current work, develop a work plan and recommend EWGs to execute the work.

What worked well in the committee?

CCPFV29 successfully completed its work recommending five standards for final adoption by CAC 43 at Step 5/8, and providing responses to matters referred from other committees.

- Travel costs to participate were eliminated.
- Access to the meeting venue was available independent of delegates' physical location.
- Meeting by correspondence allowed the work to continue despite the unexpected COVID-19 pandemic.
- Mechanism of determining consensus based on "no objections" was successful for non-controversial issues.

What were the challenges?

- Using document translation in lieu of simultaneous interpretation lengthened the time required for the consultation process.
- Maintaining a systematic display of comments and postings for each agenda item that were easy to review by participants.
- Determining the level of participation by Members.
- Lacking the means for the full committee to have real-time interactive discussions or for smaller groups to identify solutions to individual issues.
- Transitioning from protocols used in physical meetings to the correspondence venue, which resulted in a heavy workload for the Chair and Secretariat.



What would you do differently?

- Improve the system for posting and organizing comments to facilitate review by participants.
- Encourage participants to use Codex online forum capabilities for automatic notifications when new postings are made.
- Take advantage of virtual-type meetings for small break-out discussions (replicating coffee breaks during a physical meeting) to facilitate discussion between involved parties, especially when issues need to be resolved.
- Develop and use a system for indicating progress/status of each agenda item to facilitate tracking by participants.
- Add more guidance for participants regarding how the forum site will be set up and used.

What will be the long-term effects of COVID-19 on the Codex system for developing standards?

The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted Codex to seek and use new approaches, including the expanded use of technology. While some of these new approaches may be essential only during a period of restricted travel, there may be aspects that will be beneficial for Codex after travel restrictions are lifted. I anticipate that Codex will emerge stronger, with more tools and enhanced flexibility as a result of the challenges presented by the current conditions.

What can other committees learn from your experience?

Meeting by correspondence can be a viable option for a committee and allow progress. I hope that the experience gained will be helpful as Codex continues to seek and develop the best strategies for meeting its range of needs. It is important to note that the decision for CCPFV to work this way was based on the nature of the work, and predated the COVID-19 pandemic. Not all issues are suited to working by correspondence. The Commission charged the Codex Committee on General Principles (CCGP) with developing criteria for assessing the types of work that appear likely to be appropriate for work by correspondence, and that draft guidance will be considered at CCGP's next session.

Connecting in the Twitterverse

T

he @FAOWHOCodex Twitter account is the heartbeat of daily communications in Codex. Fast-moving events,

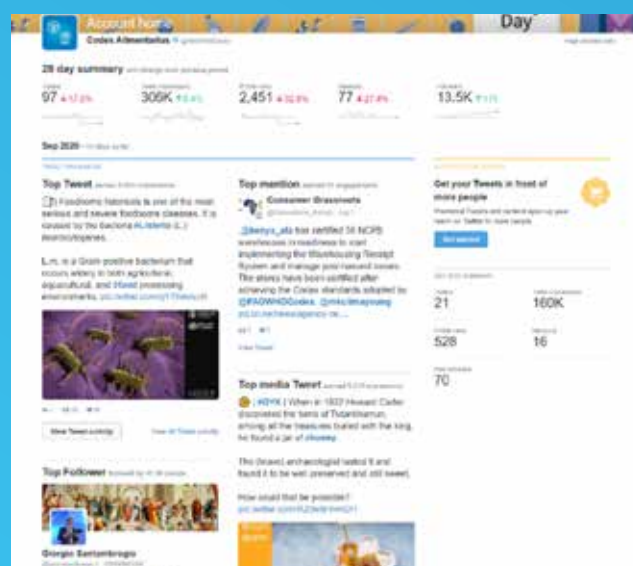
technological innovations and multi-

tasking audiences mean social media messaging evolves in real time – much quicker than other more traditional forms of communication more familiar perhaps to the Codex family. Having a channel to the constantly interacting global social media community is a huge advocacy opportunity for Codex and food safety, highlighted instantly when lockdown drove so many more users to the web.

From the Codex Secretariat where the account is managed, the twin Codex mandates of protecting consumer health and facilitating food trade guide the team in publishing specialist content, mindful of styles and visual trends on Twitter but also of the need to push out messages in easily digestible and engaging language.

Readers are encouraged to learn, read, see and say more about the work of Codex, showcasing as often as possible the perspectives of our Members and Observers.

Already with a significant following for such a specialized account on a single topic, @FAOWHOCodex can generate at peak times, such as during June, the month of World Food Safety Day, over half a million impressions (the total number of times a Tweet has been seen, including in followers' timelines and all the times it has appeared in a search or as a result of someone liking the Tweet). This is almost double the average monthly reach.



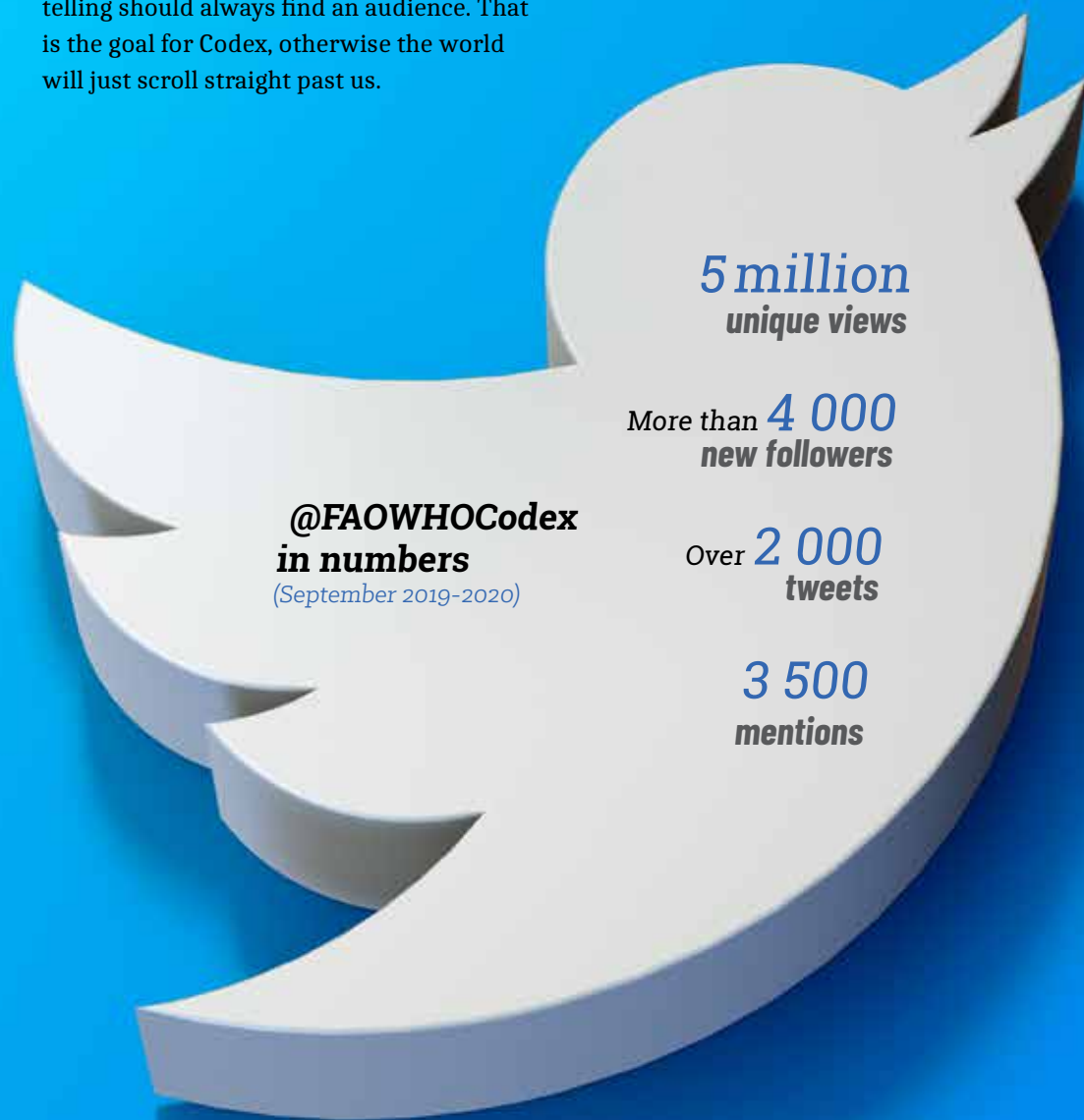
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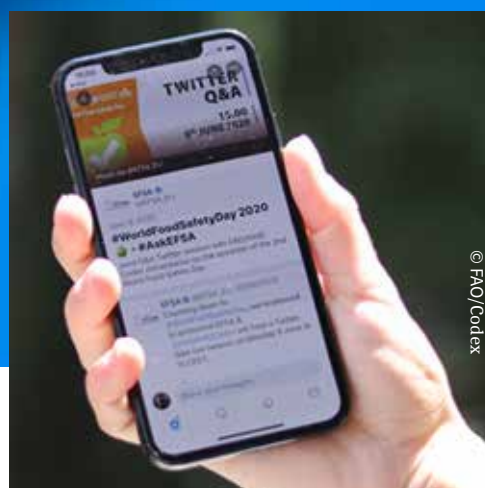
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With younger users defecting in ever decreasing circles to faster and faster forms of content on the internet, the progression, or reduction in attention spans, from YouTube, through Facebook and Instagram, to Twitter, WhatsApp and now TikTok is astounding.

Interesting, well written content and stories worth telling should always find an audience. That is the goal for Codex, otherwise the world will just scroll straight past us.



The best way to contact Codex is to open your own Twitter account and then tag us, DM (direct message) us, retweet our posts and follow typical hashtags like #CodexCAC43, #FoodSafety and #SafeFood

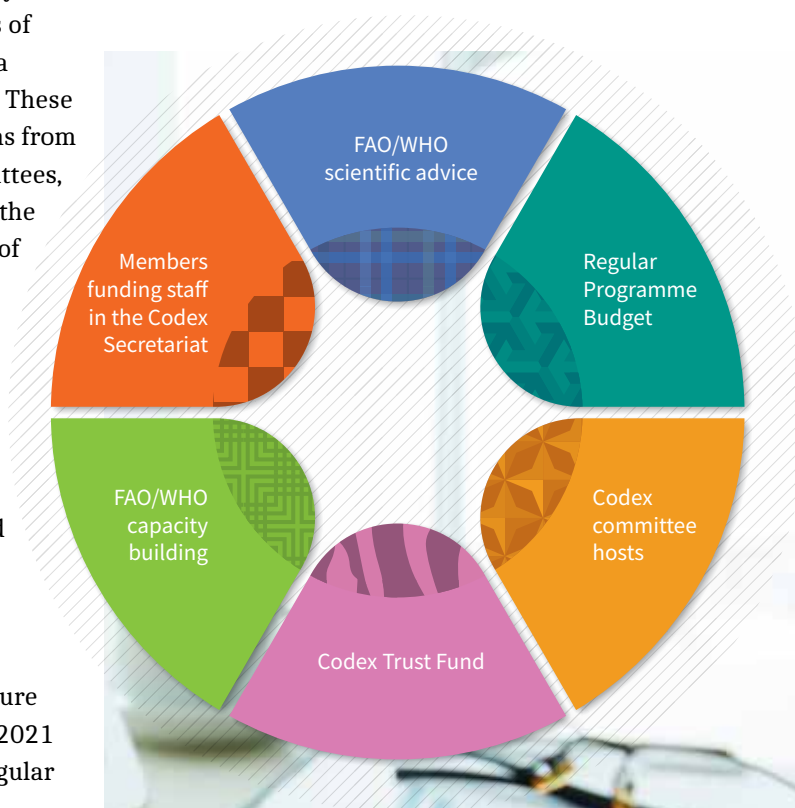


How is Codex funded?

The Codex system is funded by the regular programme budgets of FAO and WHO and through a series of additional sources. These include in-kind contributions from Member Countries who host Codex Committees, Task Forces and their working groups and the provision of scientific advice from experts of FAO and WHO.

The parent organizations also fund capacity building projects and events related to Codex at national and regional levels, while individual Codex Members provide extra-budgetary funding of staff in the Codex Secretariat either as seconded officers, or through schemes such as the Associate Professional Officer and loaned experts programmes.

As of 31 August 2020, the level of expenditure was USD 2.908 million out of a total 2020-2021 biennium budget of USD 8.802 million (Regular Programme Budget).



List of standards proposed for final approval by CAC43

Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH)

- Draft code of practice on food allergen management for food business operators
- Proposed draft revision of the General Principles of Food Hygiene (CXC 1-1969) and its HACCP annex

Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (CCNFSDU)

- Inclusion of xanthan gum (INS 415) and pectins (INS 440) in CXS 72-1981

Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (CCFFV)

- Draft standard for kiwifruit
- Draft standard for fresh garlic
- Draft standard for ware potatoes
- Proposed draft standard for yam

FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Africa (CCAFRICA)

- Draft standard for fermented cooked cassava-based products
- Draft standard for fresh leaves of *Gnetum* spp.

Codex Committee on Processed Fruits and Vegetables (CCPFV)

- Proposed draft standard for Gochujang
- Proposed draft standard for Chili Sauce
- Proposed draft revision to the Standard for Mango Chutney (CXS 160-1987)
- Proposed draft general standard for dried fruits
- Proposed draft general standard for canned mixed fruits
- Revision to the Standards for Pickled Cucumbers (CXS 115-1981), Canned Bamboo Shoots (CXS 241-2003) and Jams, Jellies and Marmalades (CXS 296-2009)
- Revision to the Annex on French fried potatoes of the Standard for Quick Frozen Vegetables (CXS 320-2015)

FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for North America and South West Pacific (CCNASWP)

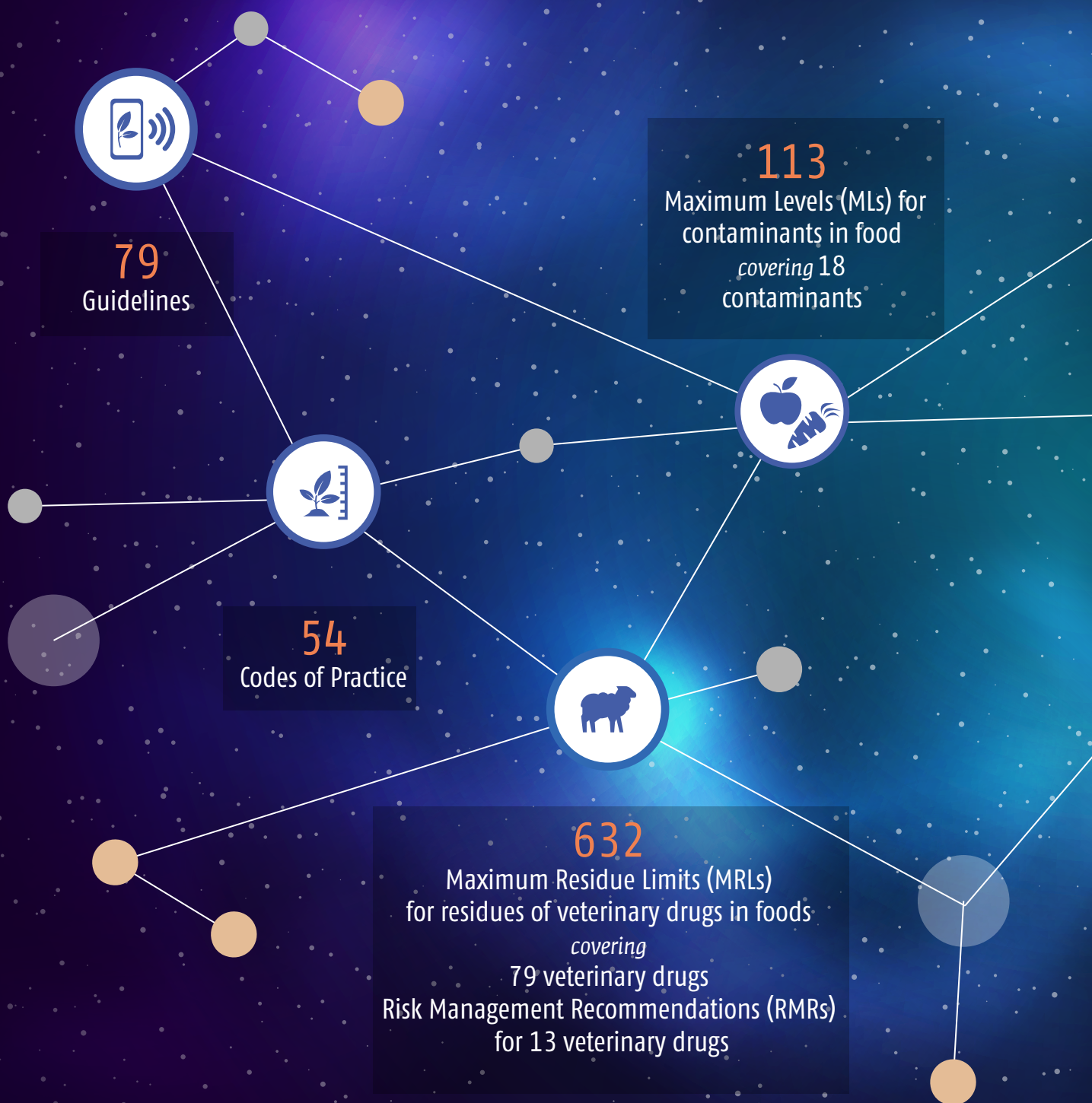
- Proposed draft regional standard for kava products for use as a beverage when mixed with water

FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Near East (CCNE)

- Draft regional standard for mixed zaatar

The Codex scorecard

(after 42nd session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, July 2019)





225
Standards
(of which)
11
General standards
214
Commodity standards



4 596
MLs
covering
376
food additives or groups
of food additives



5 663
Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs)
and 63 Extraneous Maximum
Residue Limits (EMRLs)
for pesticide residues
covering
231
Pesticides

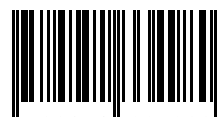
In a year characterized by unprecedented disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this publication records the steps the Codex Alimentarius has taken from July 2019 (CAC42) to September 2020 (CAC43) on the road to safe and quality food for everyone.

Over the course of the year, some Codex committees were able to meet as scheduled to discuss updates to international food standards, guidelines and codes of practice. Those meetings able to complete their work include the six FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees covering all regions of the globe. Meetings were suddenly halted in March 2020 and since then Codex has been breaking new ground with a first ever virtual Executive Committee meeting and this first virtual Commission. The "food code's" governing body, known as the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC), will make decisions on the committees' proposals during a series of virtual sessions held over nearly four weeks.

Since 1963, the Codex system has evolved in an open, transparent and inclusive way to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade. Codex has developed hundreds of internationally recognized standards, guidelines and codes as well as defined thousands of permitted levels of additives, contaminants and chemical residues in food. Its success lies in working together, building consensus and making decisions based on science.

Through an array of magazine-style articles, "Codex" shares the viewpoints and contributions of the diverse partnership, which includes 188 Member Countries and the European Union as well as over 220 Observers.

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