



**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR AFRICA
Twenty-third Session**

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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2014-2019

(Prepared by the Codex Secretariat and the Coordinator for Africa)

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. The Codex Alimentarius Commission at its thirty-sixth session (CAC36 in 2013) adopted the “Strategic Plan of the Codex Alimentarius Commission for 2014-2019” (the global Strategic Plan)¹ and implementation reports were presented annually at sessions of the Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CCEXEC) since 2015. The responsibility for implementing activities is shared between the Codex Secretariat, FAO and WHO, the Executive Committee, Chairs of CAC subsidiary bodies and CAC members.

1.2. During the last round of meetings of FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committees (RCCs) in 2016/17, three out of six RCCs decided to implement regional strategic plans in addition to the global Strategic Plan² and to report on progress at their subsequent meetings³. CCAFRICA22 noted:

- (i) the importance for CCAFRICA to continue the implementation of the regional Strategic Plan for CCAFRICA 2014-2019 and agreed to use the current regional strategic plan as well as comments provided at this session to provide inputs during the development of the new global Codex Strategic Plan (2020-2025);
- (ii) the implementation of the Strategic Plan was the responsibility of all Members of the Region;
- (iii) the importance to develop a data bank for experts and agreed that the Coordinator working closely with Codex Contact Points (CCPs) would reactivate the concept of developing a regional databank of experts;
- (iv) the need to encourage experts from Africa to take active participation in FAO/WHO scientific bodies;
- (v) that the Codex Secretariat would seek inputs from the Coordinator when preparing the working document on the monitoring of the Strategic Plan that would be considered by the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of the Codex Alimentarius Commission at CCEXEC73⁴.

1.3. This paper provides an overview and status report on activities under the global Strategic Plan for which the Codex Secretariat relies on Member feedback. Furthermore, the paper presents developments in relation to the regional strategic plan of CCAFRICA based on information received from the regional coordinator. The paper furthermore addresses the recommendation of CAC40 that the Codex Secretariat work with regional coordinators in examining barriers to active participation in Electronic Working Groups (EWGs) and identifying possible solutions⁵.

¹ <http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/publications/en/>

² These RCCs are: CCAFRICA, CCLAC and CCNE.

³ In January 2018, the meetings of the RCCs were postponed from the second half of 2018 to the second half of 2019 due to staff capacity constraints.

⁴ REP17/AFRICA, para. 62

⁵ See REP17/CAC para. 116 and CX/AFRICA 19/23/7

2. GLOBAL STRATEGIC PLAN ACTIVITIES REQUIRING MEMBER INFORMATION

2.1. The global Strategic Plan includes four goals, ten objectives, 32 activities and 61 indicators, many of which were deemed unmeasurable⁶. The Codex Secretariat has informed CCEXEC on several occasions that the collection of country specific information from Codex members with regards to certain strategic activities (e.g. networking, changes and robustness of national institutional arrangements, identification of priority committees) remains challenging⁷. Attempts to collect such information via surveys or an online platform embedded in the Codex website frequently resulted in low response rates and/or incomplete information.

2.2. While multiple data sources are used to monitor progress towards the global Strategic Plan, the focus of this paper is on information from members of CCAFRICA and challenges in obtaining such information for certain areas of Codex work.

Goal 1: Establish international food standards that address current and emerging food issues

2.3. The proactive identification of emerging issues and member needs to ensure relevance of food standards (Objective 1.2) currently relies on the initiative of members to flag a specific issue/need during meetings of CAC or a relevant subsidiary body. Neither the number of times a member raises a specific issue nor are follow-up actions on an emerging issue identified by a member are currently monitored in a systematic manner.

2.4. FAO and WHO encouraged countries to identifying food safety/quality issues through a survey sent out prior to RCC meetings. The analysis of survey replies from members of CCAFRICA is presented in CX/AFRICA 19/23/03.

Goal 2: Ensure the application of risk analysis principles in the development of Codex standards

2.5. In order to increase the scientific input from developing countries (objective 2.3), FAO/WHO provided support through several activities including training and projects aimed at enhancing laboratory capacity and data surveillance and reporting in the CCAFRICA region⁸. There is no long-term monitoring mechanism to assess the impact of such capacity building activities in developing countries and further efforts are needed to increase quantity and quality of scientific data in the CCAFRICA region.

2.6. The participation of technical and scientific experts from developing countries in Codex committees as well as the participation of developing countries in networks are further indicators related to objective 2.3 that require individual information or validation of data by members.

Goal 3: Facilitate the effective participation of all Codex Members

2.7. The share of developing country delegations out of the total number of Codex Member delegations at all Codex meetings held in a calendar year remained stable at an average of 30 percent since 2014. In the CCAFRICA region, no increase in participation in physical Codex meetings can be observed and CAC subsidiary body meetings between 2017 and June 2019 had on average eight delegations from the CCAFRICA region (i.e. 16% of the region). The only Committee sessions that were attended by more than one third of the CCAFRICA region in said period were: CCRVDF24 (in the USA), CCFFV20 (in Uganda) and CCFH49 (in the USA) (see Appendix I).

2.8. Under objective 3.1, members, in particular developing country members, shall be encouraged to develop sustainable national institutional arrangements in order to increase effective participation. The Codex Secretariat has created an online platform for information sharing on food safety control systems. In the CCAFRICA region, only around 20 percent of members have shared information. Document CX/AFRICA 19/23/05 addresses the matter in detail.

2.9. The Codex Trust Fund (CTF) provides support to individual and groups of countries to build strong, solid and sustainable national capacity to engage in Codex. In the CCAFRICA region, Ghana, Madagascar and Senegal were among the first countries to be supported and Benin, Rwanda, Cote D'Ivoire, Gambia, Malawi, Nigeria, as well as a group application from the East African region involving Burundi, Kenya, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda were approved for support in the third round of applications in 2018. All countries which apply to CTF have carried out an assessment of the Codex capacity using the FAO/WHO Diagnostic Tool for Assessing Status of National Codex Programmes. Countries/groups of countries are supported for a maximum three-year period after which time the Codex Diagnostic Tool can be re-administered to assess progress made in strengthening national Codex structures⁹.

⁶ See e.g. CX/EXEC 18/75/3 para. 3.

⁷ See e.g. CX/EXEC 17/73/5 Rev.1 para 4 and CX/EXEC 18/75/3 para. 4.

⁸ See CX/CAC 19/42/16 for capacity building activities implemented since CAC41 (July 2018)

⁹ A CTF side event will be held at CCAFRICA23 with the aim of sharing experience from first round of CTF.

Goal 4: Implement effective and efficient work management systems and practices

2.10. The 2017 regular review of Codex work management on EWGs¹⁰ made a number of recommendations to increase work effectiveness and efficiency when working in EWGs. Appendix II contains information to serve as a basis for discussing how members of CCAFRICA can participate more actively in Codex work via EWGs.

2.11. On the Codex website, new regional web pages have been designed to promote specific Codex activities taking place locally. In the case of CCAFRICA, there is healthy collaboration with FAO/WHO offices, however few news items have been received by Members in the region and the region is invited to share more local information to be promoted globally by the Codex Secretariat. Document CX/AFRICA 19/23/11 addresses the matter in more detail.

3. STATUS OF REGIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN ACTIVITIES

3.1 The implementation of the Strategic Plan 2014-2019 by FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for AFRICA (CAFRICA), has achieved tangible outcomes in several areas despite the challenges:

- (i) *Representation in Codex Governance structures* – During the period under review, the CCAFRICA region has been continuously been represented in all meetings of CCEXEC.
- (ii) *Harmonization of African countries positions on technical issues* - CCAFRICA continued to hold regular regional technical consultative meetings on Codex matters to generate positions that are shared with CCPs for consideration while coming up with individual national positions. In addition, CCAFRICA continued to hold CCAFRICA regional CCP meetings prior to CAC sessions to discuss and develop common positions on Codex standards and texts. These meetings were held in collaboration with African Union (AU).
- (iii) *Participation in Codex Committee meetings*: Delegates from the CCAFRICA region continued to participate in all Codex Committee meetings. Uganda co-hosted with Mexico CCFFV in 2017. Members from the CCAFRICA region also participated in the management of a number of EWGs either as Chairs or Co-Chairs (see Table 1 for examples). Despite these positive developments it is important to note that the level of participation of members into both physical meetings and EWGs remains rather low.

Table 1: Examples of EWGs with chairmanship of CCAFRICA members

Codex Committee or Task Force	EWG name and Chair(s)
Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (CCNFSDU)	EWG on Ready-to-Use Therapeutic foods (RUTF) co-Chaired by South Africa, Uganda and Senegal EWG on definition for Biofortification under CCNFSDU – co-Chaired by Zimbabwe and South Africa
Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH)	EWG on standard for Cloves and Dried Ginger – chaired by Nigeria EWG on standard for dehydrated and dried Ginger – chaired by Nigeria
Committee on Pesticide Residues in Food (CCPR)	EWG on development of IESTI equations – Co-Chaired by Uganda EWG on edible offal and other animal tissue definition – Co-chaired by Kenya
Ad hoc Codex Intergovernmental Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance (TFAMR)	EWG Revision of Code of practice on Prevention and containment of foodborne antimicrobial resistance under TFAMR – Co-Chaired by Kenya
Committee on Contaminants in Food (CCCF)	EWG on MLs for HCN in cassava and cassava-based products and COP for the reduction of mycotoxin contamination – Chaired by Nigeria EWG on Code of practice for the prevention and reduction of cadmium contamination in cocoa beans – Co-chaired by Ghana

- (iv) *Training on use of Codex web-tools*: CCAFRICA members participated in two regional technical workshops for CCPs in 2018. The first session held from 6-7 February 2018 in Nairobi Kenya for English speaking countries was attended by 23 members and 1 observer organization; and the second session was held from 28 February- 1 March 2018 in Dakar, Senegal for French speaking countries and 22 members and 2 observer organizations attended the training.

¹⁰ CX/EXEC 17/73/3

- (v) *Awareness at policy level* – There was effective involvement of political and administrative authorities at meetings of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and the food safety conference in Geneva, Switzerland and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia respectively.
 - (vi) *Elaboration of regional standards*: CCAFRICA21 agreed to start new work on four regional standards i.e. shea butter, *Gnetum spp* leaves, fermented cooked cassava based products and dried meats. CCAFRICA22 discussed and advanced three of the standards as follows i.e. Shea butter to Step 5/8; *Gnetum spp* leaves, fermented cooked cassava based products to Step 5. These were subsequently adopted at Step 5 by CAC40. The proposed draft standard for dried meat was returned for redrafting by an EWG.
- 3.2 On the following activities of the regional Strategic Plan no progressed was made so far:
- (i) Implementation of risk based approach by some member countries to food safety.
 - (ii) Submission of data to GEMS/FOOD website.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1. Codex Members share the responsibility for implementing the global Codex Strategic Plan together with the Codex Secretariat, FAO and WHO. As activities that cannot be measured and monitored can also not be managed and improved, it is indispensable that members agree on suitable mechanism through which they regularly report to the Codex Secretariat on progress made.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. CCAFRICA is requested to:

- (i) consider what progress has been made in the region with regards to the goals of the global and regional strategic plan 2014-2019;
- (ii) agree on suitable mechanisms through which members best communicate progress in relation to the global Strategic Plan activities that require member feedback (paras. 2.3-2.11) to inform the final status report for the period 2014-2019 which will be presented at CCEXEC79; and
- (iii) discuss how CCAFRICA member countries can participate more effectively in EWGs (Appendix II).

Appendix I – Physical participation in Codex meetings

Figure 1: Number of delegations and share of developing country delegations to all Codex meetings, 2014-2018

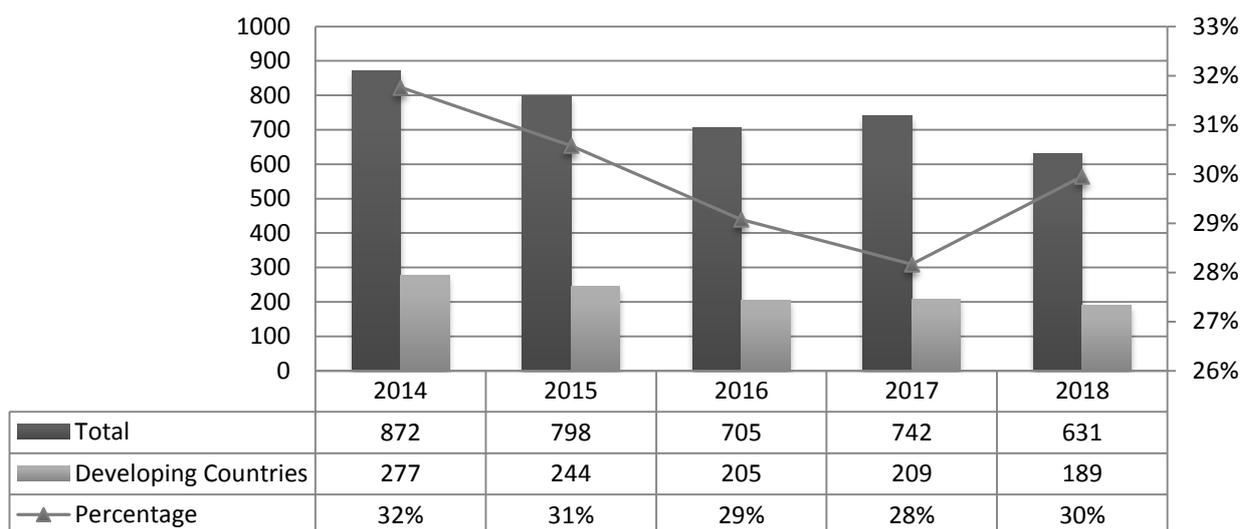
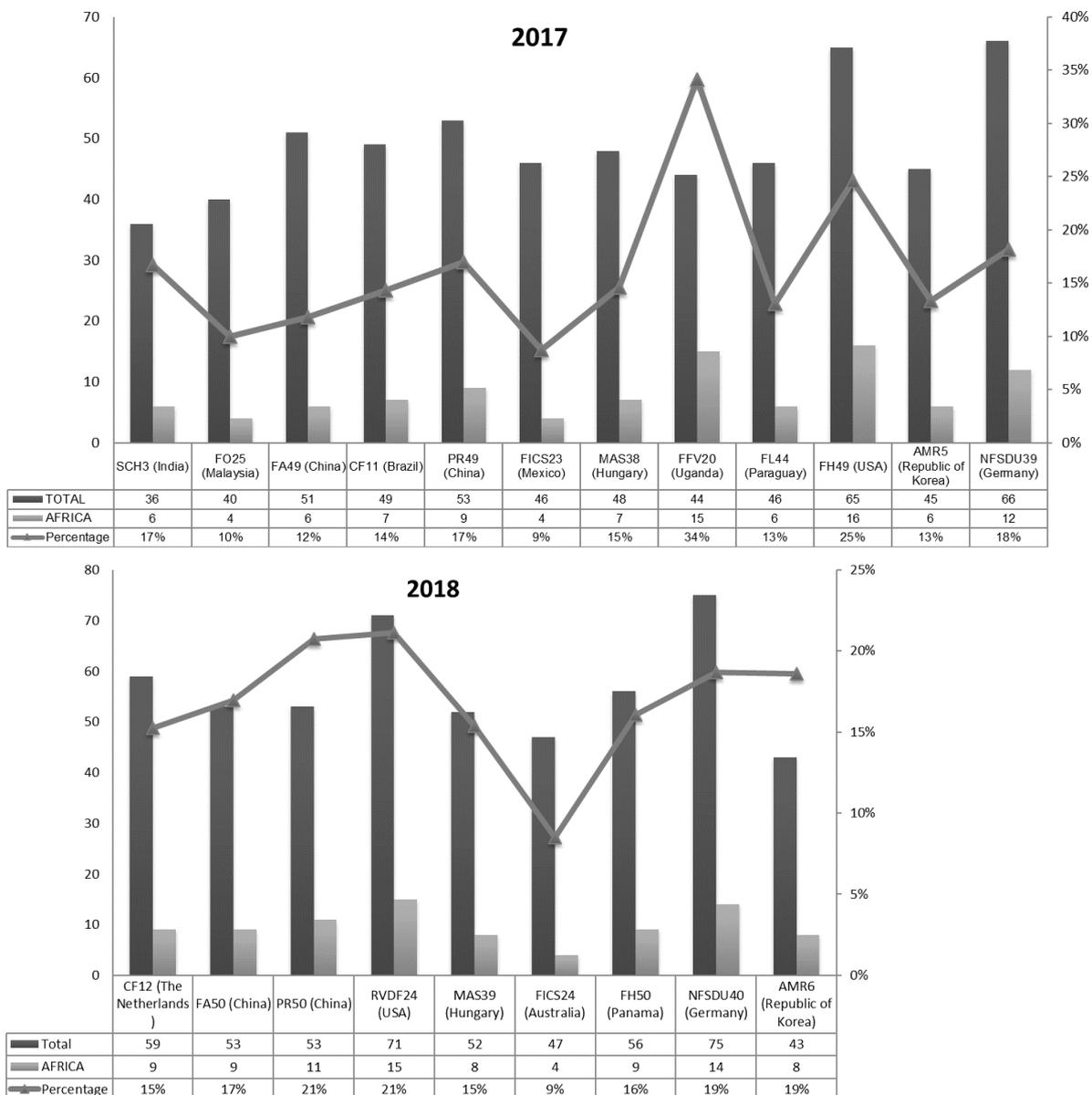


Figure 2: Number of total delegations and CCAFRICA delegations at meetings of CAC subsidiary bodies 2017, 2018 and January–June 2019



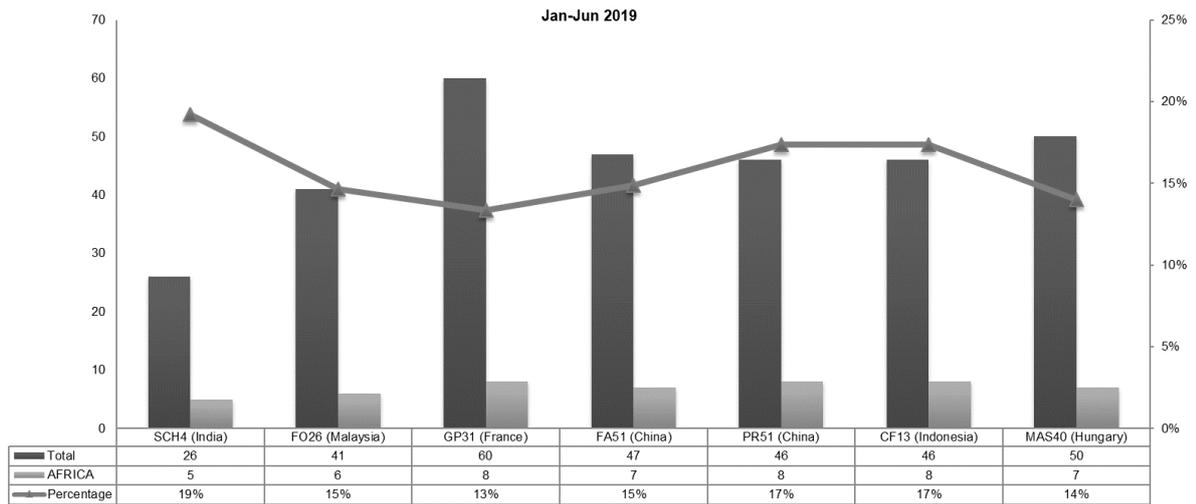
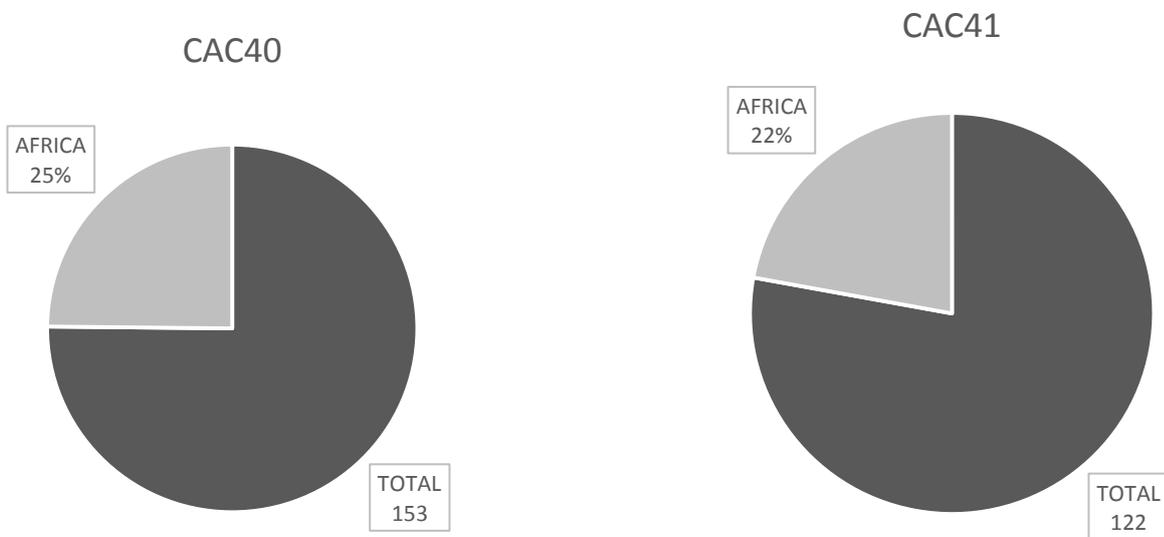


Figure 3: Total number of delegations and share (in %) of CCAFRICA delegations at meetings of CAC40 (2017) and CAC41 (2018)



Appendix II – Electronic Working Groups (EWGs)

Purpose of an EWG

EWGs are online working groups established on an *ad hoc* basis to accomplish a specific task of a CAC subsidiary body between its physical sessions rather than during a physical meeting of a CAC subsidiary body.

EWGs are also envisaged as a means of achieving greater involvement of all Members and more active participation of developing countries in the work of the CAC.

When to establish an EWG

EWGs should only be established where there is consensus in the Committee to do so and where other strategies to accomplish a specific task have been considered by the Committee and deemed unsuitable. Actively contributing to EWGs may have significant human-resources and cost implications for a Member, in particular for those with broad interest in Codex work. It is therefore preferable to establish EWGs selectively, primarily for items in the Step procedure, rather than for discussion papers, which can be developed more efficiently by one or more Members/Observers.

2017 EWG review findings related to participation

The 2017 review of Codex work management practices looked into several aspects of the functioning of Codex EWGs based on a sample of 41. With regards to participation, the review made several findings of which four are highlighted for the Committee's attention in the table below.

Table 1: 2017 work management review findings on EWG participation

Finding 4 Participant registration rates	The participant registration rates in EWGs established by General Subject Committees were higher than those of Commodity Committee EWGs both as regards members and observers. The average registration rate of developing countries was low and not representative of the membership of the Commission. Co-hosted EWGs did not show significantly higher registration rates of developing countries (i.e. less than 2 %) than EWGs that were led by only one member. The official language did also not appear to have any significant impact on participant registration rates.
Finding 5 Management of participant registrations	Members and observers frequently register late to EWGs. The great majority of EWG hosts however allowed them to join after expiry of the registration deadline without applying specific criteria in making this decision.
Finding 6 Participants' motivation	While most participants signed up to an EWG to provide technical input in the development process of a standard (guideline, code of practice etc.), a small group of participants (under 10 percent) stated that their main motivation was to stay informed on behalf of their country/organization, learn about or monitor Codex activities.
Finding 8 Inclusiveness	The majority (over 60%) of EWGs were very much or at least somewhat dependent on a small number of active participants meaning that comments were often received by far fewer EWG members than those that signed up to participate. Half of the participants that provided feedback felt that their contributions were adequately reflected in the final report of the respective EWG they participated in.

Statistics on EWG registrations

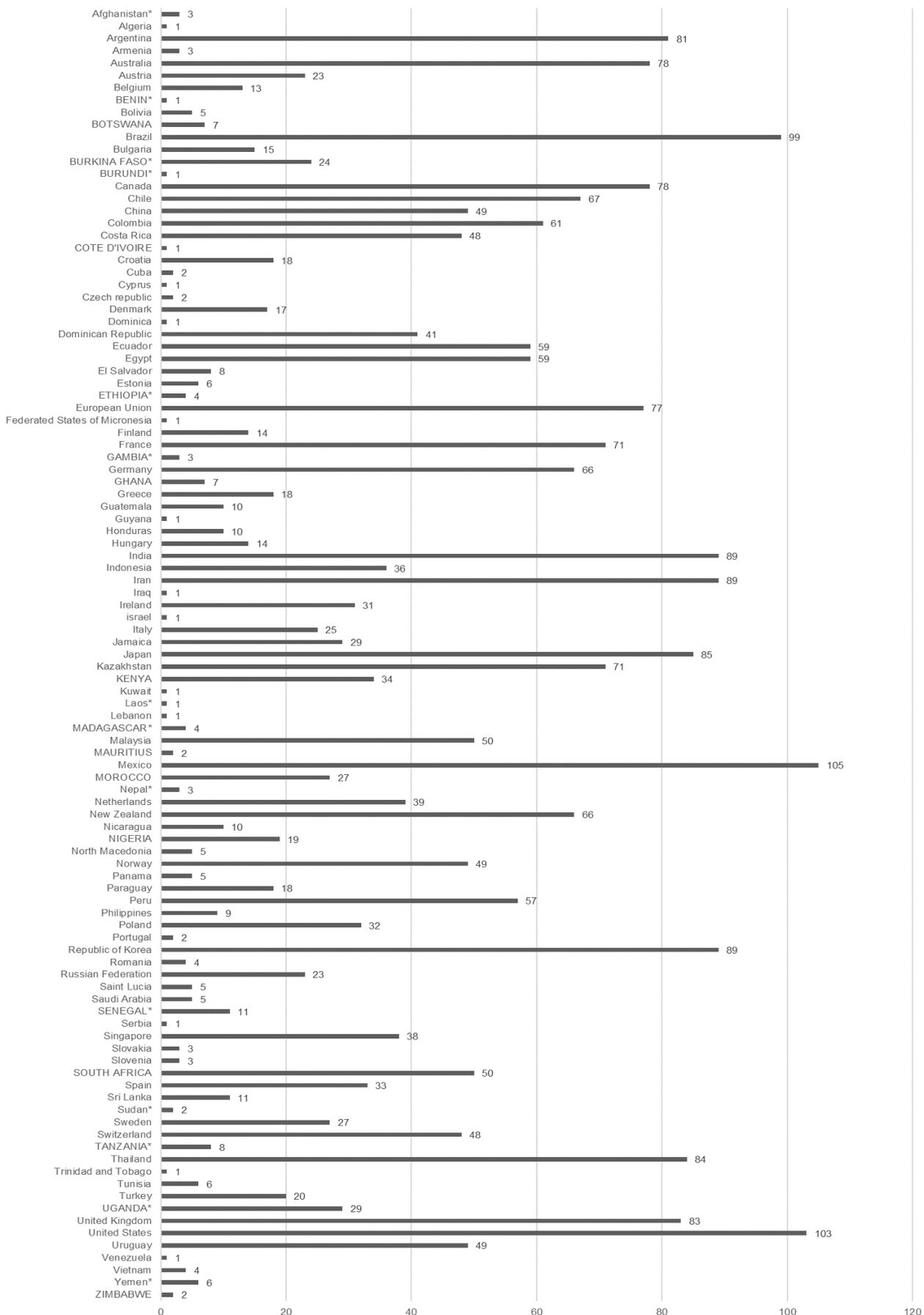
The management of and reporting on EWGs is the responsibility of the chair. The participation in EWGs has so far not been monitored by the Codex Secretariat. However, since 2017, data on more and more EWGs is becoming available as around 80 percent of CAC subsidiary bodies use the online discussion forum for their electronic group work between sessions.

The following statistics concern EWG registrations/ sign-up rates only and are derived from the Secretariat-managed online discussion forum. The data covers 107 EWGs established between January 2017 and June 2019 and has a 3 percent margin of error.

Figure 1 shows which Codex Members have registered in EWGs on the Codex discussion forum and the number of EWGs they are registered in. Least Developed Countries (LDCs) are marked with an asterisk.

In total 18 of the 49 CCAFRICA members (i.e. 37%) are part of the list and 7 countries (including 3 LDCs) have signed up to more than 10 EWGs in the reviewed period.

Figure 1: Codex Members registered in EWGs and number of EWGs they are registered in (CCAFRICA MEMBERS IN CAPS)



* Least Developed Countries as of December 2018 (Source: UN Committee for Development Policy)

Figure 2: Percentage of Codex Members registered in EWGs and breakdown of registrants by region

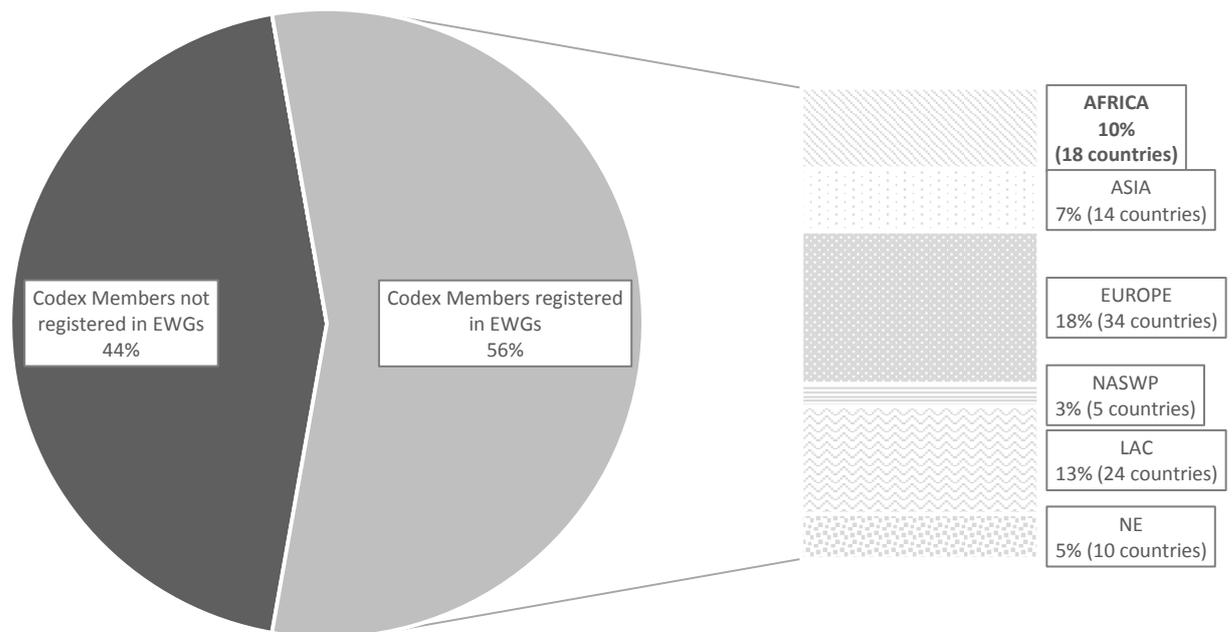


Figure 2 shows that more than half of Codex members (105 out of 189) are signed up to EWGs on the online discussion forum. In that group CCAFRICA members make up around 10%.

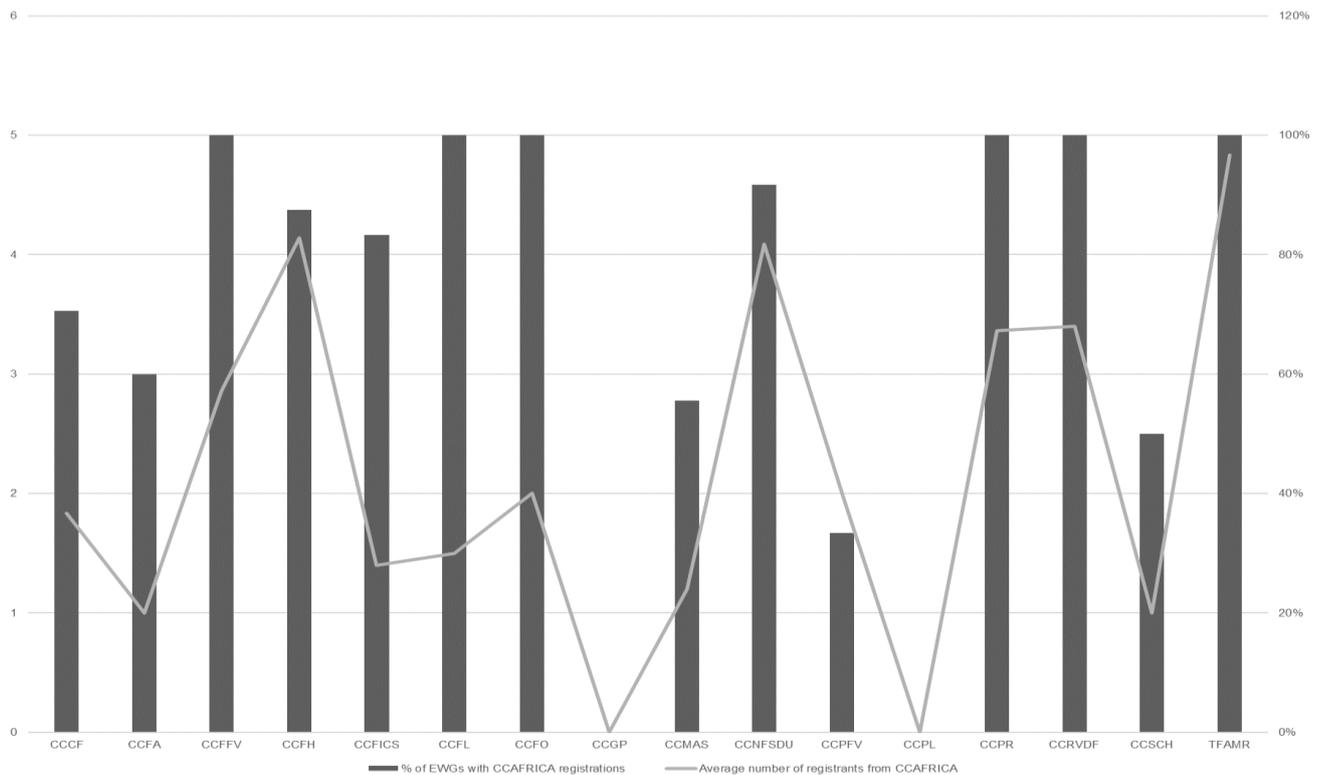
Figure 3: EWGs in which CCAFRICA members registered by CAC subsidiary body

Figure 3 shows that CCAFRICA members registered in one or more EWGs of all CAC subsidiary bodies except for CCGP and CCPL. Overall the average of CCAFRICA members in EWGs is only 2. CAC subsidiary bodies with EWGs that show a higher average number of CCAFRICA members: CCFV, CCFL, CCF, CCPR, CCRVDF and TFAMR.

Comparing this data to physical attendance of subsidiary body sessions (Appendix I), CCRVDF and CCFV stick out as committees with higher involvement of CCAFRICA member countries in Codex work both during and in-between committee sessions.

Questions for discussion

Based on the information and statistical data presented in Appendix II, CCAFRICA is invited to consider the following questions for discussion:

1. What are your criteria for selecting EWGs?
2. What is your strategy for monitoring which EWGs are established by CAC or its subsidiary bodies? How do you monitor new developments in EWGs you signed up to?
3. In which cases were you not able to participate in an EWG on a priority subject for your country? Why was this?
4. How are you organized internally for participating in an EWG (e.g. work flow, authorization, collaboration)?
5. How successful do you think your participation in EWGs is and why?
6. Which actions do you think are needed to enhance your participation in EWGs on priority subjects for your country?