



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

Sixty-seventh Session

FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy

26-29 June 2012

OTHER BUSINESS AND FUTURE WORK

**The Codex Alimentarius Commission: Fully committed to protecting the health of consumers
and ensuring fair practices in the food trade**

Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Codex Alimentarius Commission

(1st session, Rome, 25th June to 3rd July 1963)

DISCUSSION PAPER

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Codex Alimentarius Commission

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE FIRST SESSION OF THE CAC

The Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) held its first session in Rome from 25th June to 3rd July 1963. It is worth recalling the decision that had been taken prior to the first CAC session by the Joint FAO/WHO Conference on Food Standards (Geneva, 1st to 5th October 1962) to set up the Codex Alimentarius Commission as the principal organ of the FAO/WHO Programme on Food Standards. Furthermore, the Joint FAO/WHO Conference had suggested that “the Directors-General of FAO and WHO call the first session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission to meet at FAO headquarters in Rome commencing on Monday, 24 June 1963.”*

120 delegates including representatives from 30 countries and Observers from 16 International Organisations attended the first session of the CAC that was chaired by Dr J.L. Harvey (United States of America) and the Vice-chairs were Prof. M. J.L. Dols (The Netherlands); Mr H. Doyle (New Zealand); Dr. Z. Zaczekiewicz (Poland). Additionally, the following countries were elected members of the Codex Executive Committee: Argentina, Australia, Canada, India, Senegal and The United Kingdom.†

* Report of the Joint FAO/WHO Conference on Food Standards, Geneva, 1st to 5th October 1962. Available at <http://www.codexalimentarius.org/committees-task-forces/en/?provide=committeeDetail&idList=1>

† Commission Mixte FAO/OMS Codex Alimentarius, Rapport de la première session, Rome, 25 juin au 3 juillet 1963. Available at <http://www.codexalimentarius.net/web/archives.jsp?year=XX>

1.2 GLOBAL PARTICIPATION AT CAC SESSIONS

Participation at the CAC sessions has grown rapidly over the years following the global recognition of the important role played by the Codex Alimentarius in the field of food safety and quality. Comparing the participation at the “initial” 1st session of the CAC (120 delegates, 1963) with that at the 34th session of the CAC (Geneva, Switzerland, 2011) that was attended by 625 delegates from 145 Member countries and 1 Member Organisation and 34 International Governmental and Non-governmental Organisations including UN agencies.”[‡], we find an incredible increase of + **505 delegates**.

2. CELEBRATING THE FIRST CAC SESSION AND MARKING IMPORTANT CODEX MILESTONES

2.1 CELEBRATING THE FIRST CAC SESSION

50 years since its first session, the CAC remains fully committed to protecting the health of consumers and ensuring fair practices in the food trade. The CAC has established itself as the internationally-recognised food standards setting body and its membership has increased steadily over the past fifty years to the current number of 185 Members and 205 Observers[§]. Over the years, the CAC has remained true to its objectives of ensuring “safe good food for everyone, everywhere” and it has developed numerous international food standards, guidelines, codes of practice and other related texts to this end.

2.2 OTHER IMPORTANT MILESTONES

Several important milestones have been reached by the CAC over the past fifty years and it would certainly be worth recalling them all in a future document. Nevertheless, it seems appropriate to highlight at this stage **two** important “milestones” as they will also “celebrate” their anniversaries in 2013:

- **10 years after the 25th Extraordinary session of the CAC that met to review the results of the Joint FAO/WHO Evaluation of the Codex Alimentarius (Geneva, 13th to 15th February 2003)**
- **10 years after the official launching of the Codex Trust Fund (February 2003).**

3. PROPOSAL TO MARK THE 50th ANNIVERSARY OF THE CAC

3.1 OBJECTIVES OF MARKING THE 50th ANNIVERSARY

The 50th Anniversary of the CAC is an important event that should be celebrated both within the Codex system (including the Codex parent organisations FAO and WHO) and among Codex Members and Observers at regional and country levels.

Future challenges, Codex awareness campaigns, etc.

Recognising the global ownership of the CAC, it would indeed be desirable to have a general discussion on what the main objectives of marking the 50th anniversary should be. For example, should this be the occasion to celebrate the CAC’s key achievements since its foundation? Should it be the ideal opportunity to look ahead and consider the emerging issues and future challenges that Codex will be facing and envisage how the CAC could address them? Or should this be a unique opportunity to increase awareness about Codex and launch campaigns to make Codex better known to leaders, consumers, food producers and all relevant stakeholders world-wide?, etc. These are just a few thoughts. Undoubtedly, there could be several objectives and it would certainly be appropriate to discuss them and to identify the most important ones which would then be given the highest priority.

[‡] Report of the 34th session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, REP11/CAC Available at <http://www.codexalimentarius.org/meetings-reports/en/?sortingDate=012011>

[§] For the full list of the Codex Alimentarius Commission membership, please consult <http://www.codexalimentarius.org/members-observers/en/>

3.2 RESOURCES

Available resources and additional funding possibilities should be given due consideration during the planning phase of the 50th anniversary celebrations.

3.3 PROPOSED ACTIVITIES

Whilst fully acknowledging the fact that the activities related to marking this important anniversary should be undertaken in an inclusive, transparent and coordinated manner in order to ensure contributions from Codex Members from all regions, an attempt has been made to list, for consideration and in order to get the ball rolling, a few activities that could be undertaken in order to mark this special anniversary.

Please note that the list below has no official character whatsoever and that it is not at all exhaustive. Furthermore, the proposals have not been listed according to any given order of priority.

1. A **50th Anniversary Organising Committee** comprising representatives of the FAO and the WHO, the Codex Secretariat and the Executive Committee should be set up in order to coordinate the foreseen activities;
2. Celebrate the past 50 years of the CAC and prepare the next promising 50 years: **Set up an Expert panel with representation from all Codex regions, whose mandate could be to identify Codex/food safety and quality challenges of the 21st century and to also propose a set of recommendations on how Codex might address these challenges;**
3. The CAC could **commission a study/studies on (a) priority issue(s) relevant to the Codex dual mandate of protecting consumer health and ensuring fair practices in the food trade or related to the new Codex Strategic Plan 2014-2019.**
4. Present **case studies from Codex Members who have improved their national food safety systems through the implementation of Codex Standards, Guidelines and/or related texts.**
5. **50th Anniversary special publication:** This special publication could eventually be prepared by the Codex Secretariat with contributions from e.g. all Codex regions (via their Regional coordinators); countries that host Codex Committees and Task Forces; the Codex Chairperson and the 3 Vice-chairpersons; the FAO; the WHO, Codex Members and Observers, Codex personalities, etc.;
6. **Up-date the “Understanding Codex” publication** (the most recent version is the Third Edition, Rome, 2006);
7. **Create a 50th Anniversary Homepage** which could feature the CAC’s achievements and activities over the past 50 years; present an Agenda of global, regional, country-level events related to the Anniversary, feature a series “faces/personalities behind Codex” where various delegates from all regions could present themselves, their Codex-related activities, their achievements, challenges, goals, etc;
8. **Calendar/Agenda of the 50th Anniversary Events in 2013:** at the 36th session of the CAC, at the global, regional, country levels, in the parent organisations, etc.;
9. **50th Anniversary Activities and Side-Events during the 36th session of the CAC (2013):** These could include a presentation of CAC achievements including the **implementation of the recommendations of the Codex Evaluation** and a presentation of the **Codex Trust Fund**, etc.;
10. **Choose a special venue for the 36th session** (e.g. The Palais des Nations in Geneva);
11. **Invite the Director-General of the FAO and the Director-General of the WHO to attend the official opening ceremony;**
12. **Ministers from different Codex regions could also be specially invited to attend this 36th session.** Encourage Codex Members to request their Ministers to attend the 36th session of the CAC as the DGs of the FAO and the WHO would also be present.;
13. **Extend a special invitation to countries that are either Members of the FAO and/or the WHO but that are not yet Members of the CAC to attend the 36th session as Observers** (Mr Sanjay Dave, Codex Chairperson, could request the DGs of FAO and WHO to extend special invitations to these countries);
14. **50th Anniversary Gala:** Organise a “special” official gala reception at a different venue;
15. **Extend VIP invitations for the official reception:** Invite the DGs of WHO and FAO as well as high-level representatives of other relevant international organisations, etc to attend the official

- reception. **Other VIPs could include:** former Codex Chairs, Vice-Chairs and Secretaries, other personalities that have made important contributions to Codex work in the past, etc.;
16. Discussions regarding the development of a Codex logo are underway. Should the initiative have materialised by then, **the brand new Codex LOGO could be unveiled** during the official reception;
 17. **A series of University Lectures** could be given by prominent Codex personalities;
 18. **A 50th CAC Anniversary grant/scholarship** could be awarded to a junior government official or a university student to enable him/her to attend Codex sessions and thereby acquire in-depth knowledge about Codex, food safety and quality issues, and then write a scientific paper or dissertation related to Codex work.
 19. **50 years of Codex in photos:** A photo exhibition presenting “unique/special” Codex moments could be organised during the 36th session of the CAC;
 20. **Etc.**

4. RECOMMENDATION AND NEXT STEPS

Members of the Codex Executive Committee are requested to take note of the preceding information and to make recommendations regarding the next steps, as appropriate. In particular, CCEXEC members are requested to consider the setting up of a small 50th Anniversary Organising Committee that will comprise representatives of the FAO and the WHO, the Codex Secretariat and the Executive Committee. The Organising Committee could consider the proposed activities listed under 3.3 and take the necessary steps, as appropriate.