

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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Twenty-third Session

For Consideration under Agenda Item 5, “Codex Work Relevant to the Region”

OUTCOMES OF THE 2025 ASIA CODEX AND FOOD REGULATORY FORUM

(Prepared by the International Union of Food Science and Technology - IUFOST)

The objective of this Conference Room Document (CRD) is to present a summary of the proceedings and outcomes of the [2025 Asia Codex and Food Regulatory Forum](#) (Bangkok, 18–20 August 2025) and to provide recommendations for consideration by CCASIA23.

Background

The Forum brought together 85 participants from 18 CCASIA member countries, Codex Contact Points, observers, academia, industry, and consumer organizations. It was co-organized by the International Union of Food Science and Technology (IUFOST), a Codex Observer, through its disciplinary organization for food regulatory science, the Global Food Regulatory Science Society (GFoRSS), in collaboration with the Food Science and Technology Association of Thailand (FoSTAT), the Food Innovation and Regulation Network (FIRN), the Federation of the Institutes of Food Science and Technology in ASEAN (FIFSTA), and the National Bureau of Agricultural Commodity and Food Standards (ACFS), and convened under the leadership of the Chair of the FAO/WHO Codex Coordinating Committee for Asia (CCASIA).

The Forum reflects IUFOST’s commitment to strengthening meaningful participation in Codex, especially from developing countries, and to positioning Codex standards as the backbone of food regulatory transformation. As part of a regional series of multi-stakeholder events under the banner “Codex and Food Regulatory Forum,” it brings together Codex Contact Points, program representatives, and national authorities to align on regional priorities, coordinate input to Codex committees, and pursue work-sharing opportunities. The objectives pursued include fostering dialogue on capacity-building needs and strategies to develop modern, science-based regulatory frameworks—anchored in risk analysis, responsive to innovation, and designed to be agile, transparent, and future-ready.

The 2025 Asia Codex and Food Regulatory Forum provided an opportunity to review recent and upcoming Codex committee work, align regional positions, strengthen stakeholder engagement and explore emerging regulatory issues. The sessions were structured around three themes:

- Reviewing the Codex landscape and preparing for upcoming committees.
- Exploring regulatory approaches to food innovation.
- Addressing challenges related to Food Contact Materials (FCMs) and Ultra-Processed Foods (UPFs).

Key Learnings

The Forum emphasized Asia’s collective responsibility in playing a leading role in Codex by ensuring that international food standards remain science-based, fair, and inclusive. Asia reaffirmed its commitment to protecting consumers and supporting equitable trade.

Participants stressed the importance of closing critical data gaps, particularly on contaminants, pesticide residues, and food additives. Strengthening data generation and ensuring regionally representative submissions were seen as essential to make Codex standards more reflective of Asian realities.

The Forum highlighted the urgent need to reinforce laboratory capacity, risk assessment expertise, and regional infrastructure. These investments are required to enhance the scientific quality of inputs to Codex and to support effective national implementation of standards.

Codex was recognized as the central platform for advancing regulatory convergence on new food sources and production systems (NFPS), and food contact materials (FCMs). Delegates agreed that a harmonized approach is necessary to avoid fragmented national regulations and to prevent the creation of unnecessary trade barriers.

Participants stressed the importance of structured stakeholder engagement, proposing regional roundtables, online platforms, and multi-stakeholder advisory mechanisms to ensure the inclusivity of governments, SMEs, academia, industry, and consumers in Codex processes.

The Forum underscored that sustained commitment from Senior leadership of government organizations and adequate financial resources at the national level are indispensable to ensure long-term and meaningful participation of all Asian members in Codex activities.

Key Outputs

Reviewing the Codex Landscape

Forum discussions focused on reviewing recent Codex committee outcomes, preparing for upcoming sessions, and defining CCASIA priorities.

The discussions reaffirmed Asia's commitment to strengthen its collective role in Codex by investing in data, capacity, and coordination, while preparing for effective contributions to CCASIA23 and CAC48.

Participants reviewed the outcomes of CCEXEC88, CCGP34, CCCF18, and CCMAS44, with a strong emphasis on the importance of coordinated and representative regional data submission to support science-based decision-making in Codex.

Agreement was reached on the need to coordinate regional positions on allergen labelling, GSFA consistency, and spice standards to reduce fragmentation and strengthen Asia's collective influence.

Delegates also underscored the commitment to build laboratory infrastructure, enhance risk analysis capacity, and actively participate in electronic working groups (EWGs).

Support was expressed for hybrid and virtual modalities to enable broader and more inclusive participation across all CCASIA members, regardless of resource levels.

Food Innovation

Structured discussions were organized to address regulatory approaches to food innovation, with particular focus on new food sources and production systems (NFPS).

Asia was recognized as a hub of global food innovation but faces risks of regulatory fragmentation without convergence. Codex was reaffirmed as the central platform for harmonization, with CCASIA urged to take leadership through coordinated data generation, agile regulatory models, and proactive engagement in Codex processes.

Participants reached consensus on the need to develop harmonized definitions and guidelines for NFPS.

A proposal was made to establish a CCASIA-wide database of authorized novel foods and processes, complemented by pilot joint scientific reviews to enhance trust and efficiency. Delegates also committed to preparing Codex discussion papers on NFPS to position the region as a proactive contributor.

The discussions underscored the need to strengthen capacity through training on regulatory dossier submission, risk assessment, and biotechnology, with tailored support for SMEs to foster inclusive participation.

Agile regulatory models and flexible pathways were endorsed as essential tools to enable innovation while safeguarding consumer protection.

Participants encouraged stronger public–private partnerships and regional collaboration to co-develop safety data and foster a science-based, innovation-friendly regulatory environment.

Food Contact Materials (FCMs)

Targeted discussions examined emerging regulatory challenges related to food contact materials (FCMs) alongside the importance of structured stakeholder engagement.

Discussions reinforced the need for regional leadership in shaping Codex work on these issues, supported by stronger technical capacity, inclusive mechanisms, and phased pathways towards Codex guidance.

Participants agreed to work toward consensus on how Codex could provide guidance to promote more harmonized approaches for regulating Food Contact Materials (FCMs). One possible option discussed was the adoption of a phased approach by Codex to address FCMs: (1) preparation and circulation of a discussion paper supported by a Circular Letter (2025), (2) an FAO/WHO expert meeting to develop baseline testing methods and risk assessment approach for Non-Intentionally Added Substances (NIAS) (2026), and (3) the launch of an Ad Hoc Task Force (2027–2029) with the mandate to (a) develop general guidelines for FCMs (definitions; safety objectives; documentation; GMP; NIAS), (b) develop guidance on recycled materials

(feedstock/process criteria; verification), (c) propose an architecture and initial content for a Codex Harmonized List of Cleared FCM Applications (focusing on plastics and adhesives/coatings).

Key priorities for harmonized guidance were identified and included NIAS screening, harmonized migration testing, standardized documentation of compliance, and oversight of recycled materials.

Ultra-Processed Foods (UPFs)

Forum participants discussed the rising discourse on “ultra-processed foods” (UPFs), which is shaping public debate, influencing dietary guidelines in some countries, and attracting widespread media attention. They noted concerns that this narrative risks undermining recognition of the legitimate benefits of food processing, while diverting attention from the fundamental issues of nutritional value and safety—oversimplifying healthfulness to the degree of processing alone.

Consensus emerged that Codex should provide science-based guidance on food classification, anchored in measurable attributes such as nutrition, safety, sustainability, affordability, and cultural relevance, while avoiding oversimplified systems.

Recommendations to CCASIA23

CCASIA23 is invited to consider:

- Endorsing the recommendations of the Forum, included in this CRD including:
 - Advancing convergence on regulatory frameworks for NFPS, through the development of a proposal of new work on harmonized regional guidance for regulatory requirements associated with Novel Foods, Novel Ingredients and Processes.
 - Advancing a proposal to review the status of management of FCMs and the role of Codex in enabling better guidance on definitions, safety requirements, conditions of testing and management of associated hazards, such as NIASs.
- Including in CCASIA’s workplan, as part of the implementation of the 2026-2031 Codex Strategic Plan, activities striving to support:
 - strengthening generation and timely submission of data on contaminants, residues, additives, and allergens, supported by regional databases and online platforms.
 - promoting multi-stakeholder engagement by establishing regional roundtables, advisory mechanisms, and online platforms to ensure inclusive participation of governments, SMEs, academia, industry, and consumers
 - sustaining capacity building by investing in laboratory infrastructure, risk assessment expertise, regulatory science, and training in regulatory submissions, with targeted support for SMEs.