

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Forty-fourth Session

60th ANNIVERSARY OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION: 1963-2023

Codex standards: Science, policy and practice

for consumer health protection and fair practices in the food trade

Discussion Paper Prepared by Switzerland

Background

At the 32nd Session of the Codex Committee on General Principles (CCGP32), which took place virtually from 8th to 17th February 2021, Switzerland drew attention to the imminent 60th Anniversary of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex 60th Anniversary), which will be celebrated in 2023.

On that occasion, Switzerland noted that the Codex 60th Anniversary would be an excellent opportunity for Codex Members and Observers to undertake activities to promote the use of Codex standards and related texts and to raise awareness about food safety at national, regional and global levels. In this regard, Switzerland informed CCGP32 that she would prepare a Discussion Paper on the Codex 60th Anniversary for consideration by CCEXEC81 and CAC44 and update CCGP33 on progress made¹.

Switzerland is convinced that the Codex 60th Anniversary is a very important milestone in the existence of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) and it presents an excellent platform to raise global awareness about the importance of Codex standards and related texts in line with the dual mandate of the CAC.

The United Nations Food Systems Summit 2021², has highlighted the need to transform our food systems in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 and the Codex 60th Anniversary is an excellent opportunity to reinforce and strengthen the resolve of all governments and relevant stakeholders to ensure food safety along the entire food value chain from primary production to consumption. Furthermore, the Codex 60th Anniversary is a landmark to highlight the tremendous global, regional and national contributions that the CAC has made over the past sixty years towards protecting the health of consumers worldwide and ensuring fair practices in the food trade. Finally, the Codex 60th Anniversary is an exceptional occasion for all Codex Members, Observers and relevant stakeholders to engage in various activities in order to promote the efficient use of Codex standards and to raise awareness about the importance of Codex food safety, quality and nutrition standards for health, wealth and socio-economic growth.

Objectives of this Discussion Paper

The main objectives of this Discussion Paper are as follows:

1. To draw attention to the imminent important milestone of the Codex 60th Anniversary, which is due to be celebrated in less than two years' time (2023) so that preparatory activities, which will be deemed appropriate, can be undertaken by Codex Members, Observers and all relevant stakeholders in order to duly mark this important event.
2. To mobilise High-level political leaders and decision makers so that they can capitalise upon the Codex 60th Anniversary to renew their resolve and commitment towards the CAC and its activities and that they may reinforce their support towards the implementation of Codex standards and to ensuring food safety.

¹ [Report](#) of the 32nd session of the Codex Committee on General Principles, paragraph 47

² [UN Food Systems Summit 2021](#)

3. To begin the process of engagement by Codex Members, Observers and all relevant stakeholders involved in the food value chain by proposing some activities and initiatives, which could eventually be undertaken with a view to promoting Codex standards and food safety at local, national, regional and international levels.

Proposed Activities

1. High-level Ministerial Participation at CAC46 (2023)

The Codex 60th Anniversary is indeed a landmark event in the history of the CAC. In order to ensure that Codex and food safety are given a prominent place on the global political agenda, Switzerland proposes that the Directors-General of FAO and WHO invite Ministers from Codex Members as well as High-level representatives from specific Intergovernmental Organisations, to attend the 46th Session of the CAC in 2023. The Ministers should represent important food-related sectors e.g. health, agriculture, fisheries, trade, etc. A High-level Ministerial Segment could be organised as part of the celebrations at the beginning of the CAC session, where the dignitaries could share experiences and best practices. In addition, High-level Ministerial Panels could be organised at the Regional level to ensure a high impact, to generate action and to achieve positive results.

2. Compendium of Codex Achievements

The Codex 60th Anniversary presents a unique opportunity for the CAC to highlight the notable achievements it has made over the past sixty years by developing science-based internationally harmonised food standards to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade. Indeed, the effective implementation and of Codex standards and related texts contributes to global food security and nutrition. It is important to recall the fact that food safety is the bedrock of food security as there is no food security without safe food. The crucial role that Codex standards have played in international trade since 1963 should also be highlighted.

In order to capture all the remarkable achievements that Codex has made at the international, regional and national levels, Switzerland proposes the creation of a **Compendium of Codex Achievements from 1963 until 2023**. This Compendium should be developed in an inclusive manner and it could feature, among others:

- The major achievements of the CAC as regards the standards and related texts adopted since 1963,
- The importance of risk analysis and the central role played by the FAO/WHO independent scientific bodies as regards the risk assessment process,
- Contributions by all Codex general subject and commodity Committees, FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committees and *Ad Hoc* Intergovernmental Task Forces since 1963,
- Contributions by each Codex Member highlighting the impact of Codex at the national level,
- Contributions by Observers underlining the importance of Codex to their activities,
- A compilation of best practices in the field of food safety,
- A chapter on the importance of food safety as part of sustainable food systems,
- A chapter on the importance of food safety for food security and nutrition,
- A chapter on the importance of food safety and trade, employment and poverty alleviation,
- A chapter on the importance of partnerships for food safety
- Etc.

3. Food safety includes water safety

Unsafe food has a negative impact on health, welfare, prosperity and socio-economic development and it is one of the leading causes of preventable illness and death worldwide. The WHO FERG Report (2015)³ was the first comprehensive report on the global burden of foodborne diseases. It highlighted the fact that 600 million people – around 1 in 10 consumers from all over the world, fall ill every year following the consumption of food, which is contaminated with bacteria, viruses, parasites, toxins or chemical substances. Foodborne diseases also result in an estimated 420'000 deaths per year. Among these, it is estimated that 125'000 children under five years of age die every year due to contaminated food. This group thereby represents almost 30% of all unsafe food-related deaths.

The Codex definition for food includes water and indeed, the CAC has adopted standards on water as a commodity (developed by the Codex Committee on Natural Mineral Waters) as well as hygiene guidance in

³ WHO Estimates of the Global Burden of Foodborne Diseases, Available at [WHO FERG Report](#) (accessed, 6.10.2021)

various Codes of hygienic practice and Guidelines (developed by the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene). Recognising the fact that unsafe water could be a source of food contamination during the production, processing and preparation of food, the Codex 60th Anniversary could be an opportunity to draw attention to the importance of ensuring safe water to prevent food contamination. While we recognise that various food safety campaigns highlight the importance of using safe ingredients during the preparation of food, we believe that a special focus could be given to the prevention of foodborne diseases due to food being contaminated by unsafe water. In this regard, the relevant FAO/WHO independent scientific body could prepare a scientific paper linking both water safety and food safety for safe food, which could serve as a basis for food safety advocacy as part of the Codex 60th Anniversary celebrations.

4. Invest in the Youth for a Bright Codex Future

Looking ahead and with a view to ensuring the sustainability of all the efforts made by the CAC and its Members to date, it is important to recognise the fact that the future of Codex and food safety lies in the hands of the world's youth. Therefore, on the occasion of the Codex 60th Anniversary, it would be important to engage the youth. In this regard, it is proposed that each Codex Member would be invited to actively engage, as appropriate, with relevant youth organisations at the national level about Codex and food safety and that a report on these activities would be presented to the CAC as part of the 60th Anniversary programme. Furthermore, it is proposed that each Delegation attending the 46th Session of the CAC in 2023 would include one or two representatives of the youth as members of the Delegation. Indeed, the engagement and leadership of young women and men in Codex and food safety activities today will ensure a bright future for the CAC and the world at large. The Codex 60th Anniversary will be an occasion to sow the seed for a sustainable and resilient CAC as well as successful food safety activities at national, regional and global levels.

5. Partnerships for Codex and Food Safety

The Codex 60th Anniversary could be an excellent opportunity for Codex Members and Observers to exchange experiences and best practices, to learn from each other and to foster partnerships across regions, sectors, etc. for Codex and food safety.

Conclusion

This Discussion Paper is an attempt made by Switzerland to launch the process in view of the celebration of the Codex 60th Anniversary. Switzerland is convinced that Codex Members and Observers, the Codex Parent Organisations FAO, WHO and the Codex Secretariat will be fully engaged in the Codex 60th Anniversary preparations and that they will enrich the compilation of proposals in order to ensure an inclusive and successful celebration of the Codex 60th Anniversary.

The Codex 60th Anniversary will undoubtedly be a historic opportunity to garner support for Codex and food safety at the highest political level so that adequate resources are provided for Codex activities and the promotion of food safety. This important milestone will contribute to raising awareness at all levels about the importance of Codex standards and it should be an occasion to promote actions for food safety at local, national, regional and global levels. With less than two years left, it is crucial for the Codex Community to start preparing for this important milestone in order to ensure its success.