

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy - Tel: (+39) 06 57051 - E-mail: codex@fao.org - www.codexalimentarius.org

Agenda Item 8

CX/EXEC 22/82/9

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION Eighty-second Session Virtual

60th Anniversary of the Codex Alimentarius Commission: 1963-2023

(Prepared by the Codex Secretariat)

1. Introduction and background

1.1 The 44th session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC44) requested the Codex Secretariat to include the Codex 60th Anniversary (Codex@60) on the agenda of the upcoming sessions of the Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CCEXEC).

1.2 It further requested the Secretariat in cooperation with FAO, WHO, the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of the Commission and CCEXEC (including the Regional Coordinators) to reach out to all Members and Observers in their preparations for the Codex@60 celebrations and provide regular updates.

1.3 This paper provides the requested update, outlines proposed areas of activity and makes recommendations for the committee to consider.

1.4 The ongoing pandemic continues to make planning of physical events challenging. However, we have the opportunity to consolidate and deploy our learning from the past two years of virtual working into the design and delivery of an engaging series of engagements and supporting material that will enable an inclusive and far-reaching celebration of Codex@60 that considers its past, its future and the people in the Codex family.

2. Overall plan

2.1 The overall plan consists of a focus around several interlinked key themes; still essential at 60; the future of Codex; and the people of Codex; for the delivery of (i) landmark global events throughout 2023 which might serve as the focus of activity by the Secretariat, Members or Observers (ii) focused periods of regional and national activity which could be coordinated into a calendar of events, launches, webinars etc. and (iii) digital resources, including Codex's greatest achievements, case studies and a digital Codex Alimentarius catalogue, which can be launched through the above and amplified through social media and other channels. Each initiative will be mindful of the need to build awareness regarding Codex and to engage high-level political support.

3. Key themes

Essential at 60

3.1 At 60 Codex is as important as it has ever been. This is not just because of its impressive scorecard with hundreds of standards, guidelines and codes of practice and thousands of maximum limits but also because it has become and remains the only place where the world comes together to collaborate on making food safer and trade practices fairer. Improving visibility of and access to Codex outputs both celebrates these achievements and increases reach. The story of Codex thus is about the standards it produces; the processes and discussions that lead to standards being developed and the impact of adoption of Codex standards. Looking at each of these areas allows us to illustrate the engagement and

commitment required to grow Codex to where it is today and reflecting on the experiences provides valuable lessons and insights that will help steer Codex into the next 60 years.

The future of Codex

3.2 CCEXEC81 agreed to establish and lead a process to develop the blueprint for the future of Codex for consideration by CAC on its 60th anniversary in 2023. This will build upon the past experiences and consider the rapidly changing world and how we can continue to support food safety and quality globally moving forward. The milestones of June/July and November/December 2023 identified in paragraph 4.1 below could serve as natural launchpads for publication of a Codex white paper or policy document on this vision.

The people of Codex

3.3 Members and Observers of Codex are often referred to as the Codex family, recognizing the central role of many committed individuals to the goals of Codex. There is huge experience residing in the many delegates to Codex meetings but the future of Codex will involve the youth of today. Special attention will be given in all the different events, initiatives and activities planned by the Codex Secretariat to hear the voice of youth, whether from food production, science, technology and innovation, government, academia or civil society and how to foster their engagement in Codex and mentorship by the experienced Codex delegates. All those in the Codex family should consider youth participation in their activities and combine this with the experience the elders and leaders in Codex can offer.

4. Events/ activities and tools

Landmark global events

4.1 The 5th World Food Safety Day (7 June 2023) will have standards as its theme providing a natural celebration point in the calendar. CCEXEC84 in July 2023 and CCEXEC85 and CAC46, scheduled for November/December 2023, provide others.

4.2 These occasions can be the focus for physical/hybrid events in Rome and Geneva, which should aim to attract the widest possible interest and media attention and to hold ministerial level engagement and thought-provoking and challenging analysis of the work that has taken Codex forward 60 years and the vision that is required to extend its usefulness for the next 60.

Regional/ national activities

4.3 To maintain momentum for the celebration throughout 2023 and globally, each of the FAO/WHO regional coordinating committees (two of which are scheduled to meet in early 2023) could identify a month in which to hold events and select a theme of particular relevance around which to raise awareness about food safety at national and regional levels.

4.4 For Members and Observers, the dates indicated would be ideal milestones around which to plan national policy initiatives or actions of similar value and prestige.

Digital resources

4.5 The Codex Secretariat will make available a suite of assets (e.g. posters, video animation, and merchandise) with the visual identity of Codex@60 to support the efforts of Members and Observers.

4.6 This is in line with the CAC44 recommendation to encourage all Members and Observers to use the opportunity of the Codex 60th Anniversary to plan and implement activities to build awareness of Codex and to engage high level political support for Codex work,

Codex's greatest achievements

4.7 The Codex Secretariat has already begun to research and identify topics that could be considered "greatest achievements". A digital publication is planned that will in addition cover the history of each Codex committee through the eyes and memories of experts, delegates, chairpersons and host secretariats. The

publication will underline the value of Codex standards and related texts and act as a promotional vehicle for global awareness raising for a broad audience. The digital nature of the publication will allow for rich media content (video, stories, infographics etc.) bringing to life the wide spectrum, the realities and the effectiveness of Codex standard setting over the last 60 years.

Case studies

4.8 This short format publication is another valuable tool for advocacy and for showcasing how countries can harness the technical work carried out by Codex committees when designing and implementing their own legislation, or how industry can ensure it is aligned with international standards. A modest but inspiring start was made through the regional coordinators in the annual magazine *CODEX 2021 – a year of virtual reality*¹ and a more recent and longer case study was published in 2022 with a contribution from Thailand: *Hygienic food, healthy sales: HACCP implementation*².

4.9 As part of each region's celebrations the regional coordinators, and members are encouraged to identify a Codex text that has been integrated into national legislation, informed national standard-setting work, facilitated trade negotiations or in some way made a positive difference and tell the story of that journey and its outcomes for Codex@60.

4.10 Observers are also encouraged to develop short case studies and explain how they make use of Codex standards or contribute to their development. This could be from an industry perspective or through the eyes of the specialist networks and consumer groups who are recognized as observers in Codex.

4.11 The Codex Secretariat can provide support regarding concept, format, design, layout and final publication but the initiative, the subject and the details can only come from the front line with strong support and sponsorship from members and observers.

The Codex Alimentarius catalogue

4.12 Sixty years of international food safety standard setting has bequeathed a Codex Alimentarius catalogue of immense value. Work is already underway to present the full collection of Codex texts in time for Codex@60 with a completely revised format that will be attractive, useable and also stored digitally to deliver data regarding citations and other analytics.

5 Conclusions

5.1 The different plans outlined here are the direction the Codex Secretariat is planning to take to deliver a Codex 60th Anniversary to be proud of and that can inspire new generations to work within the Codex world. At the same time the plans are realistic and pragmatic, mindful of resources and the need for flexibility.

6 Recommendations

6.1 CCEXEC82 is invited to:

- i. note and support the main features of the planned celebrations;
- ii. encourage regional coordinators, Members and Observers to fully engage in early planning to identify their own contributions, and
- iii. commit to advocacy at all levels to ensure widest possible participation and promotion of the anniversary.

¹ FAO. 2021. *Codex – A year of virtual reality*. Rome, available at <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb7565en>

² <https://www.fao.org/3/cb8770en/cb8770en.pdf>