



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME  
FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR AFRICA

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USE OF CODEX STANDARDS IN THE REGION

(Prepared by the Codex Secretariat)

## 1. BACKGROUND

1.1. In the context of the revitalization of FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committees (RCCs) in 2016, the Codex Secretariat introduced a new survey based system to continuously collect data on use of Codex standards<sup>1</sup> for all six RCCs with the aim of gaining a better understanding of the relevance of Codex work.

1.2. While the first survey round started in July 2016 and focused on the use of Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) for pesticides in food and feed, three general subject standards and the General Principles of Food Hygiene, the second followed a similar structure, but focused on a different set of Codex standards. The 2019 survey covered:

- (i) MRLs veterinary drugs in foods;
- (ii) Two Codex texts on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) i.e. Guidelines for Risk Analysis of Foodborne AMR and the Code of Practice to Minimize and Contain AMR; and
- (iii) The Regional Guidelines for the Design of Control Measures for Street-Vended Foods.

1.3. The survey was conducted online using the software SurveyMonkey which allowed for easier data analysis and representation. A separate translation into French was also made available and members were given a period of one month to provide answers.

1.4. In addition, members were asked about difficulties related to the general use of Codex standards and were informed that other specific standards would be covered in future rounds to build up, over time, a representative data set on the use of Codex texts worldwide.

## 2. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION SURVEY RESULTS

2.1 The survey obtained a response rate of 63 percent (31 out of a possible 49 member countries) in the CCAFRICA region, which is the highest level achieved up to now in any survey on the subject. **Table 1** marks all respondents in the region in bold and underlined.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this document Codex standards refers to all Codex products including standards, guidelines, codes of practice, Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) etc.

**Table 1: Overview of respondents in CCAFRICA to the 2019 survey on use of Codex standards (in bold and underlined)**

Angola	<u>Eswatini</u>	Niger
<b><u>Benin</u></b>	<b><u>Gabon</u></b>	<b><u>Nigeria</u></b>
<b><u>Botswana</u></b>	<b><u>Gambia</u></b>	<b><u>Rwanda</u></b>
<b><u>Burkina Faso</u></b>	<b><u>Ghana</u></b>	Sao Tome and Principe
<b><u>Burundi</u></b>	Guinea	<b><u>Senegal</u></b>
<b><u>Cabo Verde</u></b>	<b><u>Guinea-Bissau</u></b>	<b><u>Seychelles</u></b>
<b><u>Cameroon</u></b>	<b><u>Kenya</u></b>	<b><u>Sierra Leone</u></b>
Central African Republic	Lesotho	Somalia
Chad	<b><u>Liberia</u></b>	<b><u>South Africa</u></b>
Comoros	<b><u>Madagascar</u></b>	<b><u>South Sudan</u></b>
Congo	<b><u>Malawi</u></b>	<b><u>Togo</u></b>
<b><u>Côte d'Ivoire</u></b>	<b><u>Mali</u></b>	<b><u>Uganda</u></b>
Democratic Republic of Congo	Mauritania	<b><u>United Republic of Tanzania</u></b>
Djibouti	<b><u>Mauritius</u></b>	<b><u>Zambia</u></b>
Equatorial Guinea	Morocco	<b><u>Zimbabwe</u></b>
Eritrea	<b><u>Mozambique</u></b>	
Ethiopia	Namibia	

2.2 The following is a summary of the survey results.<sup>2</sup>

- (i) *Alignment of MRLs for veterinary drugs in food*<sup>3</sup>: While more than half of the respondents (55%) stated MRLs for veterinary drugs in food that is sold nationally would align with Codex MRLs, around one quarter (26%) reported that they would partially align with Codex MRLs. Four countries mention limited capacity to perform tests to check for specific MRLs as reasons for partial alignment. Three countries (10%) stated to lack the national capacity and awareness by relevant authorities to implement any Codex MRLs for residues of veterinary drugs in food. The remaining three countries (10%) were unaware of the national level of alignment.
- (ii) *Use of the Guidelines for Risk Analysis of Foodborne Antimicrobial Resistance (CXG 77-2011)*: 42 percent of respondents indicated that the guidelines had been incorporated into national legislation, training materials or are utilized for reference by ministries. However, the majority of respondents (45%) stated that they had not yet made use the guidelines, mainly due to inexistence of national AMR surveillance plans or overall capacity in this area. Four countries (13%) were not aware of the level of use.
- (iii) *Use of the Code of Practice to Minimize and Contain Antimicrobial Resistance (CXC 61-2005)*: Similarly to the Guidelines, the AMR code of practice is fully adopted by 42 percent of respondents while 31 percent stated they have not adopted it. The remaining countries stated that they did not know if the code of practice was utilized in their country.
- (iv) *Use of Regional Guidelines for the Design of Control Measures for Street-Vended foods (CXG 22R 1999)*: The Guidelines have been adopted by 38 percent of countries in the region, while most (8 countries) cite the use of the guidelines to develop their own national guidelines and to prepare training and awareness raising materials, one country reported to be in the process of developing national guidelines. The remaining respondents either had not made use of the guidelines or did not know if they were being referenced in national texts or used differently.

Responses on why the guidelines were not used varied significantly; a couple of countries stated they had national guidelines in place that were however not followed. Other respondents stated that the illiteracy rate among the target group constituted a challenge, that street vending was generally prohibited by law or not common practice. Lastly, low national concern and capacity to implement the guidelines were also reasons given why their uptake had not happened. One country stated to reference the general Principles of Food Hygiene rather than the Regional Guidelines for street-vended foods due to the small quantity of street vendors and another country mentioned that national adoption took place but no reference to the

<sup>2</sup> The full survey results can be accessed in original language under this link:

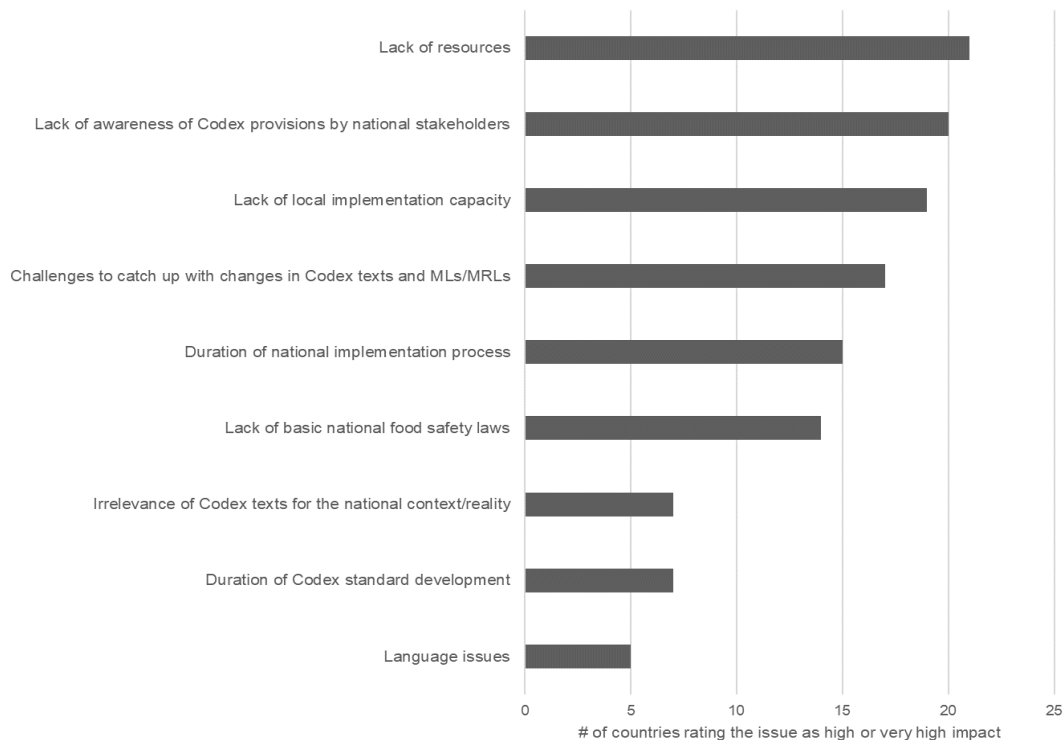
[http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/codexalimentarius/doc/ca23\\_6e-SURVEY\\_RESULTS.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/codexalimentarius/doc/ca23_6e-SURVEY_RESULTS.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> As of June 2019, Codex has 632 MRLs for residues of veterinary drugs in foods covering 66 veterinary drugs.

Codex guidelines were included in national standards on the subject.

- (v) *Difficulties with regards to the use of Codex provisions:* The issues with the highest negative impact on the use of Codex standards were: the lack of national resources; awareness of Codex provisions by national stakeholders; and local implementation capacity. Other difficulties to be considered of higher negative impact on the use of Codex standards are shown in **Figure 2**.

**Figure 2: Examples of difficulties with the use of Codex standards in the CCAFRICA region**



### 3. CONCLUSIONS

3.1 Overall, the survey on use of Codex standards obtained a high completion rate of 63 percent so that the information can be considered representative for the region.

3.2 There is a high level of alignment with Codex MRLs for veterinary drugs in food in the CCAFRICA region (higher than with Codex MRLs for pesticides that were surveyed in 2016<sup>4</sup>). Codex texts on AMR are still less used and capacity building in this area would be required to increase the uptake. The regional guidelines on street-vended foods show a very low level of use in the region and reasons for non-use greatly vary from country to country.

3.3 For many CCAFRICA member countries, difficulties regarding the use of Codex standards continue to relate resource constraints and a lack of awareness of Codex provision by national stakeholders. Many countries also continue to struggle with a lack of local implementation capacity.

### 4. RECOMMENDATION

4.1 CCAFRICA members are requested to take note of the outcome of the survey and examine how they can better utilise these results in the engagement of relevant stakeholders to seek support for food safety work and raise awareness of the importance of Codex standards in their respective countries.

4.2 CCAFRICA is further requested to provide inputs on the following questions that may guide future action by the Codex Secretariat in this area:

- *Scope of next survey:* Which areas of Codex work would you like to see covered in future surveys?
- *Evaluation of Codex standards:* How feasible do you consider responding to annual surveys on use of Codex standards? Which actions should be taken to increase survey response rates? Are there any national or regional efforts ongoing to assess the level of use of Codex standards?

<sup>4</sup> See CX/AFRICA 17/22/5