



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Twenty-second meeting

Virtual meeting, 24-28 October 2022

IMPLEMENTING THE CODEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025

(Prepared by the Regional Coordinator)

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) established the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, commonly known as the Codex Alimentarius, in 1963. The Codex Alimentarius Commission currently has 189 members and 243 observers, including intergovernmental organizations, international non-governmental organizations and UN agencies.
- 1.2 At its forty-second Session (held in June 2021), the Codex Alimentarius Commission adopted the "Codex Alimentarius Commission Strategic Plan 2020-2025" and annual implementation reports have been presented at the Commission's Executive Committee meetings ever since. The Codex Secretariat, FAO and the World Health Organization (WHO), the Executive Committee, the Chairs of Commission subsidiary bodies and Commission members share responsibility for implementing activities in line with the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025.
- 1.3 The Codex Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (CCLAC), in which every country is represented, is regional by definition. The "Regional Workshop for the popularization of Codex Alimentarius work in CCLAC Countries 2020-2022", which took place on 28-29 July and 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 August 2022 was therefore held in this spirit. The following countries participated: Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, St Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela. The following points were made:
 - the importance of implementing the Codex Alimentarius Commission's Strategic Plan 2020-2025 was stressed;
 - implementing the Strategic Plan is the responsibility of all regional members;
 - Strategic Plan implementation activities must provide evidence of the Plan's goals and objectives.
- 1.4 This document outlines each participating country's contributions to the Regional Workshop. It also provides an overview report on activities carried out in the regional framework. The Regional Workshop for the popularization of Codex Alimentarius work in CCLAC Countries 2020-2022 successfully informed participants about the various implementation processes. It examined obstacles to the effective implementation of the Strategic Plan and initiatives undertaken in each country – as well as identifying challenges and possible solutions.

2. ACTIVITIES OF THE REGIONAL WORKSHOP FOR THE POPULARIZATION OF CODEX ALIMENTARIUS WORK IN CCLAC COUNTRIES 2020-2022

- 2.1 First, the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 sets out the Commission's mission, vision, goals, objectives and measurable indicators. Second, it supports the high priority that FAO and WHO continue to attach to food safety and quality, and guides the Commission in carrying out its responsibilities and specific mandate to protect the health of consumers and to ensure fair practices in food trade. Third, it informs members, international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders about how the Commission intends to fulfil its mandate and meet the needs (including emerging issues) and expectations of its members during the 2020-2025 period. The Strategic Plan is supported by a more detailed workplan that includes activities and milestones intended to monitor progress towards achieving the goals, which are listed

below, and support activities set out in the Regional Workshop for the popularization of Codex Alimentarius work in CCLAC Countries 2020-2022.

- 2.2 Countries mention the importance of cohesive adaptation of the Strategic Plan together with a workplan tailored to country conditions, thus advancing objective 1.1 *Identify needs and emerging issues*. During the various opportunities to participate in Codex activities, a number of concerns, country positions and relevant comments have been raised. Participation within all international committees (cross-cutting, product-related and intergovernmental groups) has been important for their identification and formulation. Good participation in the various Codex committees, electronic working groups (eWGs) and responses to circular letters (CLs) during the years following the adaptation of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 made it possible to establish which outstanding and current issues should be the focus of work and planning.
- 2.3 Moving on to objective 1.2 *Prioritize needs and emerging issues*, the region was encouraged to pay attention to specific issues of relevance and issues shared by the region and to prioritize accordingly. Several countries shared their observations, comments and questions in this regard. All Member Country delegates belong to various working groups, which address the various Codex committees' outstanding and current issues, prioritizing the relevant needs in an orderly and effective manner. It has also been imperative for working group members to provide direct support to other working groups of which they are not directly part in order to clarify other concerns that are also relevant to the countries. The workshop revealed the commitment demonstrated by countries in the region to meeting time limits for finalizing revised or new Codex texts in order to meet delivery deadlines in order of relevance.
- 2.4 It was clear from the contributions of member delegates that the last two years have seen greater participation in colloquia, plenaries, pre-plenaries, post-plenaries, workshops and other meetings and a greater amount of documentation has been submitted on responses to circular letters, conference room documents (CRDs) and general reports. For example, one country in the region achieved 90 percent participation in electronic working groups (50), responses to circular consultations (130), as well as face-to-face participation on current and emerging issues of relevance to fulfilling Goal 1 of the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025.

Goal 2: Develop standards based on science and Codex risk-analysis principles.

- 2.5 Activities in line with the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 have also been added. These include the El Salvador-Guatemala Binational Project financed by the Codex Trust Fund. This promotes the implementation of Codex standards as well as appropriate recognition of issues of concern, application tools, future forms of financing, and participation of the various production sectors and authorities in drafting a strategic plan or national Codex programme. In this context, the achievement of Goal 2 was promoted by holding six workshops to obtain inputs for designing the above national strategic plan. Another workshop was held to validate the plan and the plan was officially approved at an in-person event.
- 2.6 In relation to objective 2.1 *Use scientific advice consistently in line with Codex risk analysis principles*, several countries expressed a strong interest in monitoring progress in developing and applying standards to national and regional needs. It was established that they had fostered the participation of government authorities, public sector, private sector, academia, non-profit institutions and stakeholders in order to implement scientific advice. Most countries also reported that they had set up technical committees to analyse data and address concerns with a view to encouraging the development of science-based standards.
- 2.7 Delegates of the countries participating in the regional workshop made comments and reported on their participation in international and national committees in relation to meeting objectives 2.2 and 2.3 of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 which seek to *promote the submission and use of globally representative data in developing and reviewing Codex standards* as well as to *promote sufficient and sustainable funding for expert bodies that deliver scientific advice*. However, under the latter point, most countries reported some disagreement and limitations due to lack of resources that prevented them from meeting the goal of developing standards from a specific viewpoint. Several countries mentioned that this situation is detrimental to the implementation of activities and to the development of standards, codes of practice, guidelines and other recommended measures to help achieve the aims of the Codex Alimentarius.

Goal 3: Increase impact through the recognition and use of Codex standards.

- 2.8 CCLAC Member Country contact points maintained a continuous presence on various committees of the commission or on all committees depending on the country, in order to implement the use of Codex standards

and the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025. Under the same participatory approach, delegates or contact points proactively promote the use of Codex standards at national level within ministries, chambers of commerce, food quality assessment institutes, customs, universities, industry, consumer service institutions and scientific institutions, and by the general public. Accordingly, objective 3.1 *Raise the awareness of Codex standards* and 3.3 *Recognize and promote the impact of Codex standards* are strengthened in all technical and executive channels.

- 2.9 The various coordinating bodies for the adoption, adaptation, updating and dissemination of Codex regulations and guidelines are also committed to measuring the effects of these regulations and guidelines. It was concluded that all members adhere to objective 3.2 *Support initiatives to enable the understanding and implementation/application of Codex standards*. The number of workshops and training sessions for the dissemination of Codex standards continues to increase year on year. Some countries even keep a tally of the number of people and entities trained on Codex-related topics and their Strategic Plan 2020-2025. The number of news items posted on national Codex websites, social media and representative locations has also been increased in order to facilitate understanding of Codex functions and objectives. Similarly, multiple food safety awareness and information events have had an impact on productivity and public health in the countries. One clear example was the celebration of World Food Safety Day. Nearly all the countries taking part in the awareness-raising workshop reported on the different ways they had celebrated it. Another example was the establishment of fora to discuss queries and analyse the use of Codex standards.

Goal 4: Facilitate the participation of all Codex Members throughout the standard setting process.

- 2.10 Regarding Codex, CCLAC members maintained a strictly participatory approach to its introduction, operation, technical regulation and evaluation, and to food safety and specific issues. The statistics reported in presentations at the information workshop refer to electronic working group (eWG) registration records, replies or comments to circular letters (CLs) and Codex committees that took part in online discussion fora managed by countries or the region.
- 2.11 In order to meet the objectives of Goal 4, some members worked on proposals (depending on the Codex adaptation time) to develop or update national regulations in line with the Codex Alimentarius. They had procedures in place to manage country positions and issue regular update notifications. These regulations have been updated several times since 2020 in connection with the issuance of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025. All workshop participants described the organization of the body delegated as the Codex representative in their respective countries. They therefore had sound national legislative structures in place with the possible exception of one of the Caribbean countries, which lacks a national committee body and one South American country which only operates through a Codex secretariat without a national structure.
- 2.12 We are therefore able to confirm that the delegates promote objectives 4.1 *Enable sustainable national Codex structures in all Codex Member Countries*, 4.2 *Increase sustainable and active participation of all Codex Members*, and 4.3 *Reduce barriers to active participation by developing Countries*. All delegates are committed to improving the distribution of committees for better participation in documents addressing issues of national and regional interest. In accordance with the Strategic Plan, greater emphasis was placed on promoting the participation of government, academia and industry. It was also mentioned that the financial support provided by the Codex Trust Fund for the binational project helped greatly towards establishing the national programme. Other members committed to applying Codex goals and objectives also made a key contribution.
- 2.13 Another member reported on their effective organization that capitalized on years of experience and improvement to establish a representative body involving the public and private sector, representatives of trade unions, food producers and manufacturers, consumer associations, academia, scientific and research organizations and natural or legal persons. The management of work-related activities was thus better distributed and allocated in line with the objectives of the Strategic Plan and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Goal 5: Enhance work management systems and practices that support the efficient and effective achievement of all strategic plan goals.

- 2.14 Despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, it proved possible to carry out almost all Codex activities established by using a virtual model. This meant interactions could be instantaneous and involve greater numbers. The cross-cutting issues identified seek to promote harmonized application of food standards in Member Countries, improve fair and equitable participation in meetings, and establish Codex structures and

processes for the generation and analysis of data on food-borne hazards and risks, thus working to improve existing and new food sources and production systems.

- 2.15 The definition of parameters for the implementation of quality standards led by each Member Country clearly reflected objective 5.1 *Develop and maintain efficient and effective work management practices and systems*. A procedure agreed on at the eighteenth CCLAC Meeting is now in place to provide guidance to Member Nations with a view to establishing regional positions on issues relevant to the region. This has helped to present a more coordinated approach and contribute to the goals and issues that are strategic for Latin America and the Caribbean. It has also improved the region's ability to establish strong and balanced positions at Codex meetings and efficiency in designing schedules under time pressure in meetings.
- 2.16 Finally yet importantly, 5.2 *Enhance the capacities of committee and working group chairpersons, regional coordinators and host country secretariats to support the work of Codex* has been of major importance. Following the twenty-first Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Codex working document for the region, prepared by the Secretariat, reported a clear correlation between members appointing Chairs for committees participating in proposed draft standards, possible new work and ongoing discussions. This increased the level of satisfaction with the role played by host country Chairs and Secretariats towards the efficiency and effectiveness of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025.

3. STATUS OF REGIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN ACTIVITIES

- 3.1 Following the twenty-first Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean, Chile (as Regional Coordinator) continued to work on strengthening Codex work in the region and worked to achieve the objectives of the regional Strategic Plan, which has five strategic objectives aligned with the global Strategic Plan.
- 3.2 In order to foster effective communication between members of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Regional Coordinator and the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee Secretariat have been in permanent contact with the Codex Contact Points in the region (via email, WhatsApp, videoconferences, etc.) and have done their best to support and strengthen them. For example, by directing them to relevant information on the Codex website, holding regional meetings prior to global committee meetings, chasing up Codex Contact Points who have not responded, and other activities. Communication prior to Codex committee meetings was further facilitated by coordinating activities with the Codex Secretariat to identify participants from the region planning to attend each meeting.
- 3.3 The coordination meetings that precede each Codex committee meeting are a useful tool to help members express their regional perspective on Codex work. There is thus a strong emphasis on maintaining such initiatives. Because the Regional Coordinator reaches out to delegates and Codex contact points who have registered, it is important to ensure the register is kept up to date. The Regional Coordinator facilitates this coordination by sending letters to all members approximately one month before Codex meetings, in order to ensure that members are able to participate in face-to-face coordination meetings just one day before Codex committee meetings. Since the twenty-first Meeting of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean, more than 34 face-to-face coordination meetings have been held, as well as approximately 215 virtual meetings (in English and Spanish, with the support of the interpretation teams of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture [IICA] and of the Agency for Regulation and Control of Plant and Animal Health of Ecuador). The importance of having been able to deploy teams of interpreters, in order to facilitate the participation of Spanish and English-speaking delegates, must be emphasized. These meetings helped regional members duly prepare for Codex meetings, find common ground on specific issues and discuss and agree on strategies, interventions and positions on relevant Codex work in order to reach joint positions and thus strengthen the region's participation.
- 3.4 The Strategic Plan provides clear guidance on how to promote the achievement of Codex goals and work in the region. It was concluded that all members support initiatives that enable the understanding, implementation and distribution of information on Codex standards. The number of training sessions for disseminating the standards continues to increase year on year, with some countries even keeping a tally of the number of people and entities trained in Codex-related issues and their Strategic Plan 2020-2025. Unfortunately, most countries face tough constraints, such as a lack of resources. This hinders their efforts to meet the goals and objectives of developing and implementing Codex standards at the national level, among other limitations.

4. BENEFITS OF REGIONAL PARTICIPATION FOR MEMBER COUNTRIES IN THE LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN REGION

- 4.1 Work done by Codex Member Countries to strengthen their active and effective participation in global committee meetings has been crucial for the adoption and adaptation of standards, guidelines and codes of practice at national level. The various governments place increasing value on Codex standards and activities while national food standards, control and/or other legislative systems give greater encouragement to the

analysis of data to ensure the output is more scientific. Nevertheless, CCLAC members are still calling for a special focus within Codex meetings on new food sources and production systems, the application of the Statements of Principle on the Role of Science, the extent to which other factors are taken into account and improving standard harmonization to enable greater market access, competitiveness and market position.

- 4.2 Other benefits include a better understanding of Codex texts by less active members, interactions at meetings such as in-depth discussions, the exchange of information and experiences, obtaining and distributing results of critical data analysis and reports from international risk assessment bodies such as the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA), the Joint FAO/WHO Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR), the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Meeting on Microbiological Risk Assessment (JEMRA) and the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Meeting on Nutrition (JEMNU). The availability of possible processes and/or solutions to barriers during data generation and reporting, especially through the use of new communication channels such as WhatsApp groups, also encouraged interaction.

5. MAIN BARRIERS OF MEMBER COUNTRIES IN THE LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN REGION

- 5.1 Some of the main barriers to participating in Codex activities reported by members are summarized below. In terms of data: the collection/centralization of data at national level, securing resources to obtain such data, lack of certified laboratories with access to necessary materials and supplies as well as relevant subject matter experts. In structural terms, some countries still do not maintain a Codex body, which makes it difficult to plan for Codex work.
- 5.2 Another major obstacle for eWGs within the region is that, although the leading countries seek to ensure that the documents they are working on are in Spanish, there is still very little participation from countries of the region when this language is used, meaning that members are forced to work predominantly in English. The high turnover of delegates and changing scenarios in the various countries slow down the discussion necessary to achieve consensus and above all lead to a lack of active and effective participation.
- 5.3 Lastly, the most frequently reported barrier is lack of resources, as some members are unable to meet the minimum requirements for data submission, participation in committees, discussion of comments and so on, either due to lack of time, operational capacity or resources required for Codex activities. This barrier makes it difficult for laboratories and academia to acquire, tabulate and analyse the data necessary to present research. Even access to the Internet is still a challenge in certain countries.

6. CURRENT AND EMERGING ISSUES IN MEMBER COUNTRIES OF THE LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN REGION

The following is a summary of some of the main current and emerging issues that have occurred in our region in the view of Member Countries:

- monitoring, generation and exchange of information on food-borne diseases;
- new food sources, new industrial technology and distribution channels;
- antimicrobial resistance (AMR), pesticide residues (PR);
- lack of trained staff, updating of new knowledge and best practices;
- access to safe food in urban, peri-urban and rural areas;
- lack of technical expertise and resources; and
- limited political support.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Implementing the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025

- 7.1 CCLAC members share responsibility for implementing the Codex Global Strategic Plan together with the Codex Secretariat, FAO and WHO. A greater commitment to the Plan can be observed because it lays down clear guidelines on how to promote the achievement of the goals. Despite the need for a range of resources, increased financial support, and ownership by all food safety stakeholders, various types of initiatives and activities have been carried out in order to strengthen the work of Codex as well as to adopt Codex standards.
- 7.2 Responsibility for implementing the Regional Strategic Plan has also fallen mainly to the Regional Coordinator, Ecuador, which is very grateful for the support received from Member Countries to this end. Matters of key importance have included fulfilling the CCLAC's mandate to identify regional problems and needs, coordinating work with the Codex Chair, Vice-Chairs and other Codex regions, fostering a mutual exchange of information on proposed Codex regulatory initiatives, advising the Commission on the development of global standards or their amendment, and supporting the implementation of various activities in line with regional objectives. These

efforts have facilitated more frequent and open discussions between members and enabled them to participate in the broader work of Codex in an increasingly cohesive manner. Members of the region are open to dialogue with other Codex members and observers in order to facilitate consensus, upholding science-based decision-making, adhering to the Procedural Manual, and continuing to strengthen their technical and negotiating capacities at national level, although there is a need for continued support in this area. Observers such as IICA also played a key role in implementing the regional strategic plan.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

The FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean is requested:

- i) to consider the importance of adhering to the Global Strategic Plan 2020-2025;
- ii) to review the progress that has been made in the region in achieving the objectives of the Global Strategic Plan 2020-2025 and whether a separate plan is really necessary to facilitate the implementation of activities related to regional priorities;
- iii) to agree on appropriate mechanisms to enable members to better communicate progress and obstacles related to Strategic Plan activities that require information from members (section 2.3-2.11) in order to obtain data for the final implementation status report for the period 2020-2025;
- iv) to continue developing initiatives to strengthen the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025; and
- v) to discuss how members of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean region can participate more effectively in the eWGs (Appendix I).

PARTICIPATION OF MEMBER COUNTRIES OF THE FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (CCLAC)

PAÍS MIEMBRO	2020				2021				2022			
	Participación Comités*	Totalidad de delegados	Número de Documents	Número GTEs	Participación Comités**	Totalidad de delegados	Número de Documents	Número GTEs	Participación Comités***	Totalidad de delegados	Número de Documents	Número GTEs
Antigua and Barbuda	1	2	0	0	4	8	0	1	0	0	0	0
Argentina	1	7	7	0	13	87	28	31	3	11	6	4
Bahamas	1	1	0	0	1	3	0	0	1	1	0	0
Barbados	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	2	0	0
Belice	1	1	0	0	3	9	0	0	3	5	0	0
Bolivia (Estado Plurinacional de)	1	4	0	0	5	24	1	2	2	6	1	0
Brasil	1	13	5	0	14	165	41	40	3	26	8	12
Chile	1	8	9	0	14	102	76	34	4	13	12	7
Colombia	1	5	12	0	14	45	56	12	3	9	8	3
Costa Rica	1	3	11	0	13	41	47	37	3	8	3	4
Cuba	1	5	10	0	12	41	63	6	3	8	13	1
Dominica	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
República Dominicana	1	8	9	0	10	38	33	12	3	19	5	1
Ecuador	1	3	13	0	13	52	77	21	3	19	12	4
El Salvador	1	3	4	0	9	15	24	7	1	2	2	3
Grenada	0	0	0	0	2	3	2	0	2	3	0	0
Guatemala	1	6	1	0	4	20	12	11	2	3	0	2
Guyana	1	3	0	0	9	15	9	0	2	9	0	0
Haiti	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Honduras	1	11	1	0	9	21	8	9	2	7	1	2
Jamaica	1	2	0	0	9	13	2	11	3	3	1	2
México	1	13	4	0	13	86	10	40	3	20	4	6
Nicaragua	1	4	1	0	1	3	4	6	0	0	0	2
Panamá	1	7	2	0	10	62	27	3	3	8	0	0
Paraguay	1	7	0	0	12	63	29	12	4	22	0	3
Perú	1	10	6	0	12	69	55	38	3	16	13	6
Saint Kitts and Nevis	0	0	1	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
Saint Lucia	1	1	0	0	5	9	0	0	0	0	0	0
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	1	1	0	0	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Surinam	0	0	0	0	5	6	0	1	1	1	0	0
Trinidad y Tobago	1	3	0	0	12	35	3	1	2	4	0	0
Uruguay	1	8	5	0	11	63	27	21	3	16	7	4
Venezuela (República Bolivariana)	1	6	0	0	13	65	13	1	3	14	0	0
Total	28	146	102	0	256	1170	648	357	67	255	96	66

Comités* 2020: CAC43

Comités** 2021: CCGP32, CCSC5, CCCF14, CCMAS41, CCFICS25, CCRVDF25, CCPR52, CCFAS2, CCFL46, TFAMR8, CCFPP35, CCF027, CCNSFDU42, CAC44

Comités*** 2022: CCFH52, CCFV22, CCF15, CCEURO32 (último hasta la fecha)