



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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

Agenda items 2, 3, 4.1, 4.2, 5, 6, 7 and 8

GP34/CRD13

Original Language Only

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX COMMITTEE ON GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Thirty-fourth Session

Lille, France

2–6 June 2025

COMMENTS OF PANAMA

Panama appreciates the work done and the opportunity to participate in this meeting. We value the effort and dedication of all members in preparing the documents and managing the topics discussed. We are committed to advancing regulations that impact the safety and quality of food products, and we hope this meeting will be an opportunity to strengthen our strategies and collaborate in the continuous improvement of international standards.

2. MATTERS REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER SUBSIDIARY BODIES

Panama reaffirms its support for the initiatives of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and emphasizes the importance of ensuring linguistic consistency in future editions of the Codex Procedural Manual. The systematic updating of this key document is essential to facilitate equitable participation by all members and optimize understanding of international food standards. Furthermore, the country welcomes the evolution of working mechanisms, considering the proposed model a valuable reference that will allow decision-making to adapt to new challenges and ensure the effectiveness of meetings. Regular reporting and monitoring of difficulties reflect a commitment to continuous improvement and transparency in Codex processes.

We deeply value the promotion of active and collaborative working groups, fostering the inclusion and leadership of their members in the development of food standards. The use of virtual tools to facilitate coordination and clearly differentiate meetings and webinars will strengthen the committees' effectiveness, optimizing knowledge sharing and the advancement of discussions. Adopting good management practices, establishing priorities, and avoiding excessive burdens on participants are key to ensuring effective and sustainable work. The development of new guidelines on work proposals represents a key opportunity to strategically structure the development of collective standards, promoting international trade and the harmonization of standards.

We support the implementation of mechanisms to monitor the use and effects of Codex texts, highlighting the usefulness of tools such as annual surveys and case studies in assessing their impact. Collaboration with the WTO and other related organizations strengthens the monitoring of regulatory compliance, facilitating the adaptation of standards to the dynamics of global trade. In line with its vision of sustainable development and food security, the country strongly supports the Codex Strategic Plan for 2026-2031 and is committed to actively participating in the formulation of policies that promote safer, more inclusive, and transparent food systems.

3. INFORMATION ON FAO AND WHO ACTIVITIES RELEVANT TO THE WORK OF THE CODEX COMMITTEE ON GENERAL PRINCIPLES.

Panama supports the implementation of indicators to measure the impact and application of activities in food control systems, recognizing their importance in evaluating and strengthening food safety strategies. Data updating by the Foodborne Disease Burden Epidemiology Reference Group (FERG) is key to improving

surveillance of foodborne illnesses. In this regard, the country supports the development of multisectoral collaboration mechanisms and the adoption of assessment tools to monitor progress and ensure food safety with precise technical criteria.

We recognize the value of the WHO Food Safety Alliance as a fundamental mechanism for strengthening international cooperation in food contamination surveillance and monitoring. Integrating the "One Health" approach into control strategies reinforces the commitment to public health protection and effective food risk management. Collaboration with the World Bank's International Finance Corporation to develop food safety roadmaps is a key initiative to help countries identify gaps and improve their national food control systems. Within this framework, the country reaffirms its support for the planning and implementation of progressive investment programs in food safety.

We consider the publication of studies such as Smart Investments to be timely, as they provide a detailed analysis of the economic and health impact of foodborne disease surveillance. The availability of strategic information is crucial for governments and donors to make informed decisions regarding food safety, optimizing resource allocation and strengthening national capacities. With this commitment, the country will continue to actively contribute to the development of safe, transparent, and resilient food systems, consolidating its role in building a healthier and more sustainable global environment.

4. CODEX PROCEDURAL MANUAL: REVIEW OF LANGUAGE INCONSISTENCIES AND OBSOLETE CONTENT.

4.1 CODEX PROCEDURAL MANUAL: REVIEW OF PROCEDURES PROVIDED FOR IN SECTION 3: GUIDELINES FOR SUBSIDIARY BODIES.

4.2 CODEX PROCEDURAL MANUAL: REVIEW OF INCONSISTENCIES IN LANGUAGE AND OBSOLETE CONTENT, EXCLUDING SECTION 3.

Panama strongly supports the update of the guidelines for electronic working groups (eWGs), ensuring that their structure and operation are efficient, inclusive, and adapted to technological advances. Precisely establishing the eWG's mandate will allow for clear management of objectives and timelines, optimizing member participation and activity planning. Defining responsibilities for host and co-host countries, including the assumption of costs related to translation and interpretation, will strengthen the equity and sustainability of these working groups.

Panama values the formalization of the registration and participation process in the EWGs, ensuring that all members and observers receive clear information on the operating procedures. The designation of official representatives and the electronic dissemination of contributions will ensure a structured exchange of information, allowing for a more fluid and effective discussion of the topics discussed. Furthermore, the host country's obligation to submit a progress report at each committee meeting strengthens accountability and transparency in the process.

The integration of these conclusions into the working documents of future meetings will allow delegates to conduct in-depth analyses and effectively contribute to the evolution of Codex regulations. With this commitment, the country reaffirms its active participation in strengthening the Codex Alimentarius, promoting a more efficient, inclusive, and technologically advanced global framework for food safety.

5. PROPOSED UPDATE OF THE GUIDE ON THE PROCEDURE FOR AMENDMENT AND REVISION OF CODEX STANDARDS AND RELATED TEXTS

Panama actively supports the formalization of clear procedures for amending Codex standards, ensuring that the processes are transparent, structured, and aligned with international best practices. Distinguishing between corrections, amendments, and new editions will allow for more precise and effective management of regulatory updates, avoiding ambiguous interpretations and ensuring consistency in decision-making.

Panama supports improved management of standards developed by inactive or sine die committees, ensuring that their updates are guided by clear technical and scientific criteria. Requiring the submission of working documents with detailed justifications will strengthen the traceability of changes and ensure that modifications are

adequately reviewed by Codex members. Furthermore, the proposal to reconvene committees sine die, using technological tools and virtual meetings, will allow for a more participatory evaluation of new editions without compromising the efficiency of the process.

Clarification of procedures for the submission and adoption of amendments, ensuring that members have the opportunity to express their comments before changes to standards are adopted. The streamlined workflow structure, with review and approval at the relevant stages, will contribute to more orderly and effective governance within Codex. With this commitment, the country reaffirms its support for the modernization of food regulations, promoting a transparent, accessible regulatory system aligned with the needs of international trade and global food security.

6. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE PRINCIPLES RELATING TO THE PARTICIPATION OF INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE WORK OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Panama actively supports the proposed amendment to the Principles Relating to the Participation of International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) in the Work of Codex, ensuring greater clarity and consistency in the application of the dual representation clause. The inclusion of a separate section on Relations between INGOs with observer status in Codex will help avoid misinterpretations and ensure uniform application of the principle of representation in Commission meetings.

Panama also values the review of INGO observation procedures, ensuring that the evaluation of applications for this status is transparent and aligned with Codex principles. Verification and approval by the Executive Committee and the Directors-General of FAO and WHO strengthens the credibility of the process, ensuring that INGO participation is representative and appropriate within the Commission's framework.

Panama supports the formalization of stricter criteria to avoid duplication of representation, ensuring that organizations with membership in larger entities are represented by their parent body. This measure will strengthen equity in access to Codex deliberations and prevent special interests from prevailing over global decision-making. With this stance, Panama reaffirms its commitment to Codex governance, promoting a clear and fair participatory framework aligned with the objectives of transparency and efficiency in the development of international food standards.

7. CODEX PROCEDURAL MANUAL: CONSIDERATION OF THE POSSIBILITY OF USING EXISTING PROVISIONS TO PROMOTE MORE EFFICIENT PRACTICES FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSALS FOR NEW WORK THAT DOES NOT FALL WITHIN THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ONE OF THE ACTIVE CODEX COMMITTEES.

Panama supports modernization and efficiency in the review of proposals for new work, ensuring that initiatives that do not fall within the mandate of active committees are evaluated with transparency and technical rigor. Using the current provisions of the Codex Procedural Manual will allow for more dynamic and accessible processes, optimizing resource allocation and avoiding unnecessary delays in decision-making.

Panama supports the implementation of advanced digital tools, promoting the strategic use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to facilitate the analysis and discussion of new work proposals. The organization of webinars and virtual events will allow for a more inclusive exchange of ideas, providing spaces where members and observers can actively contribute specialized technical perspectives. Furthermore, exploring innovative interpretation and translation models will help reduce costs and improve the accessibility of discussions.

Panama also values flexibility in the allocation of new work proposals, supporting the evaluation of initiatives by existing committees whose technical expertise is relevant to the topic at hand. The possibility of temporarily reactivating committees sine die, focusing on cost-effectiveness and the use of ICT, will ensure effective evaluation of proposals without compromising Codex's operational efficiency.

Panama emphasizes the importance of early communication and effective coordination among Codex members, ensuring that delegations are properly informed of the agenda items and prepared to participate in strategic discussions. Combining traditional mechanisms with innovative approaches will ensure a more efficient and equitable proposal review process tailored to the current needs of the Codex Alimentarius. With this stance,

Panama reaffirms its commitment to strengthening Codex governance and promoting more accessible and effective international food safety standards.

8. REVIEW OF THE APPLICATION OF CRITERIA AND PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES FOR CODEX COMMITTEES AND AD HOC INTERGOVERNMENTAL CODEX TASK FORCES WORKING BY CORRESPONDENCE.

Panama supports the prohibition of voting within Codex committees working by correspondence (CWBC), ensuring that differences are addressed through alternative mechanisms that encourage consensus-building. Eliminating the use of voting will preserve the integrity of the decision-making process and ensure that the conclusions are broadly supported by members.

We value the clear and objective structure for reporting to the Commission, ensuring that documents accurately reflect the discussions, conclusions, and recommendations of the CWBCs. The possibility for members to request reservations and objections will strengthen the transparency of the process and ensure equitable representation of all positions within the committee.

Panama also supports clarifying the procedures for the publication and review of reports, ensuring that documents are accessible to participants within reasonable timeframes. Requiring final reports to be distributed in at least three working languages will strengthen inclusiveness and facilitate member countries' understanding of the results.

Panama emphasizes the importance of ensuring that the reports of the Codex Alimentarius Committees (TCCPs) focus exclusively on the topics assigned by the Commission, avoiding the inclusion of observations outside the committee's mandate. With this position, Panama reaffirms its commitment to strengthening the Codex Alimentarius, promoting transparent, structured regulatory processes aligned with international best practices in food safety.