



Agenda Item 7

CX/NE 23/11/7

September 2023

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR NEAR EAST

Eleventh Session

Rome, Italy

18 September - 22 September 2023

Implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025

(Prepared by the Coordinator for Near East and the Codex Secretariat)

1. Introduction

1.1 The FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for the Near East at its 10th Session (CCNE10, 2019)¹ discussed the roadmap to implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan (2020-2025) and established an in-session working group (WG)², that agreed to prioritize objectives under Goals 2, 3 and 4 for 2020-2021 and identified a series of relevant activities for this scope. The Chairperson of the WG also proposed that the Committee closely review the table in order to ensure the proposed activities were aligned with such Goals and complemented by outputs and reporting mechanisms.

1.2 The WG prioritized activities under Goals 2, 3 and 4 for 2020-2022 for the Region including the following:

Goal 2: Develop standards based on science and Codex risk-based principles. The WG proposed that activities for the region in the period 2020-2021 should focus on the collection of recent scientific information on monitoring of contaminants (e.g. mycotoxins); and that an expert working group should be established to address critical and emerging issues discussed in Codex committees. Such a group could also facilitate more adequate preparation for Codex meetings by Members and increase submission of information to technical committees; to work with regional organizations to source funding to support expert meetings in the region to develop national and regional positions; and the expected outputs from the above activities would be reported to CCNE11.

Goal 3: Increase impact through the recognition and use of Codex standards. The WG considered it an important step towards the identification of the regional contribution to the implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025, noting the offer of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, who was nominated as the next Coordinator of the region, to provide resources to support implementation of the identified activities.

Goal 4: Facilitate the participation of all Codex Members throughout the standard setting process. Members added the use of available tools (FAO/WHO Diagnostic Tool) to assess national Codex structures as an activity to enable sustainable national Codex structures in all Codex Member countries (objective 4.1), and agreed that the expected output from this activity was the application of this tool by 25 percent of Members from the region by 2021. Holding a workshop with the support of the Codex Secretariat to build capability and enable effective participation in the Codex Alimentarius Commission of Member States, and a workshop to present information and guidance and applications to countries eligible for support from the Codex Trust Fund (CTF) were also identified as important activities.

1.3 CCNE10:

- expressed commitment to support the implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025;
- agreed that CCNE would focus on the implementation of activities aimed towards achieving Goals 2 (standards based on science and risk analysis), 3 (use of Codex standards) and 4 (participation) of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 over the next two years; and

¹ REP20/NE, paragraphs 63-70

² CX/NE 19/10/CRD10

- agreed to submit a list of activities and related information that would be undertaken by the region over the next two years to the CCEXEC sub-committee on strategic planning for inclusion in the overarching work plan of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025.

2. Progress in implementing the Regional Work plan for 2020-2022

2.1 Significant progress has been made under the leadership of the regional coordinator in the implementation of the work plan agreed by CCNE10 despite the challenges caused by the COVID19 pandemic which led to implementation delays. Among as the following:

- i. Updating of the contact list for each Member
- ii. Contributing to implementing the Regional Communications Work plan
- iii. Strengthening of the National Codex Committees (NCC) and increased participation of its members in various Codex meetings and activities, including the observance of World Food Safety Day, which was organized through the Regional Coordinator office.

2.2 CCNE Members continued to actively participate in and contribute to Codex work at the global level, using the possibilities the virtual platforms provided to the maximum extent. As such, the region has significantly contributed to the implementation of the Codex strategic plan at the global level, and major achievements are outlined in Annex I.

2.3 In addition a review of the progress made in implementing the Communications work plan agreed by CCNE10 has been undertaken by the Codex Secretariat (See Annex III). To complete the review of progress on communications all Members are invited to complete a short survey available [here](#). More information is provided in Annex III.

3. Next steps for the region

3.1 Progressing the implementation of the Codex strategic plan, and continued active participation of the region in all Codex meetings are key goals moving forward.

3.2 A series of roundtable meetings are set to be held to support members of the region to effectively participate in the future Codex meetings under the Codex capacity building initiative in the region.

3.3 Ongoing collaboration work between the National Codex Committees (NCCs) and Government Departments in ensuring National Food Safety Standards, for example, Saudi FDA has launched a Healthy Food Strategy (HFS) with a vision of "A healthy nutrition pattern contributes to the promotion of public health" is key to not only ensuring engagement in standard development but also in standard implementation.

3.4 With these aspects in mind an updates work plan has been developed by the Regional Coordinator and this is proposed for consideration by CCNE11 as a basis for strategic plan implementation in the region over the next two years.

4. Recommendations

CCNE11 is invited to consider the report and

- i. advise on any additional activities that may have been implemented to support the implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025 (Annex 1), for example use of the FAO/WHO diagnostic tool or data collection initiatives at the national level.
- ii. Review and revise as appropriate the work plan for 2023-2025
- iii. Consider the report on the communications work plan, provide any further information and review and revise the work plan

Annex I

Activities implemented and planned in the CCNE region to support the implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2024

Priority Goal	Priority objective	Regional activities for the period 2020-2021	Rationale for proposed activities	Responsible or lead party	Expected output by 2021	Overview of progress on planned activities
Goal 2 Develop standards based on science and Codex risk-based principles	2.1. Use scientific advice consistently in line with Codex risk analysis principles	<p>2.1.1 Collect recent scientific information on monitoring of contaminants in food in Member countries in the region e.g. mycotoxin</p> <p>2.1.2 Establish an expert working group to address critical and emerging issues discussed in Codex Committees</p> <p>2.1.3 Work with regional organizations to source funding to support expert meetings in the region to develop national and regional positions</p>	<p>The project documents, standards and comments should be based on scientific evidence and data from the Member countries</p>	<p>Member countries (CCPs), Regional Coordinator</p>	<p>Report on available data on specific contaminants in the region</p> <p>Technical advisory group to exchange scientific data from the region established</p>	<p>GEMS food workshop</p> <p>At least one country submitted data to GEMS food – information from other countries to be collected during CCNE11.</p> <p>A side event on monitoring of chemicals in food in being convened in the margins of CCNE11 to provide an example of a national monitoring programme and an update on GEMS food in the region. This side event also provides an opportunity to discuss next steps in the region an data collection.</p>

Priority Goal	Priority objective	Regional activities for the period 2020-2021	Rationale for proposed activities	Responsible or lead party	Expected output by 2021	Overview of progress on planned activities
<p>Goal 3</p> <p>Increase impact through the recognition and use of Codex standards</p>	<p>3.1 Raise the awareness of Codex standards</p>	<p>3.1.1. Organizing awareness raising programmes on the importance of Codex on a periodic basis targeting different levels from decision-makers to all stakeholders</p>	<p>Weak level of commitment and lack of knowledge among decision-makers and stakeholders</p> <p>Lack of knowledge of national Codex teams on the working mechanisms of the Codex Alimentarius</p>	<p>CCPs)National Codex Committees, FAO and WHO regional and country offices</p>	<p>Increase in level of participation and contribution in different Codex committees</p> <p>Achievement of a national commitment to Codex Alimentarius as a reference for food safety and quality standards Harmonization between national standards and regulations against Codex texts initiated</p>	<p>A series of events for members in the region organized by the regional coordinator to build awareness including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the occasion of World Food Safety Day members were invited to join in celebrating this day and share the role of their respective agencies in the field of food safety. • The involvement with Codex by guiding participation of Near East Members in the “Survey-use and impact of Codex texts” meeting.

Priority Goal	Priority objective	Regional activities for the period 2020-2021	Rationale for proposed activities	Responsible or lead party	Expected output by 2021	Overview of progress on planned activities
<p>Goal 4 Facilitate the participation of all Codex Members throughout the standard setting process</p>	<p>4.1. Enable sustainable national Codex structures in all Codex Member countries</p>	<p>4.1.1 Use available tools (FAO/WHO Diagnostic Tool) to assess national Codex structures</p> <p>4.1.2 Increase the number of and access to training sessions on the working procedures of the CAC and its subsidiary bodies, based on available guidelines and tools in Arabic</p>	<p>To ensure members know the working mechanisms in countries and have a strong Codex infrastructure in countries (i.e. to prepare national positions, develop national policies regarding Codex, have a strong and well-functioning CCP etc.)</p>	<p>FAO and WHO with the Regional Coordinator and Member countries</p>	<p>e</p>	<p>During CCNE11 Members are invited to provide information on the use of the FAO/WHO Diagnostic Tool or other tools to assess national codex structures.</p> <p>Capacity development: up to 10 virtual workshops aimed at building capacity for the countries of the region for more effective participation in coordination with the Codex Alimentarius Secretariat, experts from the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization to encourage sustainable national Codex structures in the NE were implemented.</p> <p>Virtual meetings were convened among Members in advance of all Codex sessions to raise countries' readiness to participate in official meetings and to increase their engagement.</p> <p>Workshops for the countries of the region</p>

Priority Goal	Priority objective	Regional activities for the period 2020-2021	Rationale for proposed activities	Responsible or lead party	Expected output by 2021	Overview of progress on planned activities
						<p>were implemented in order to transfer knowledge between countries and benefit from the experiences of the most experienced countries.</p> <p>Measuring the alignment of codex standards with national standards of the NE members by conducting a survey in 2021. Where country members were urged to increase the percentage of alignment.</p> <p>The RC provided Responding to inquiries and emerging issues received from member states regarding the matters of importance at the national and/or regional level.</p>

Priority Goal	Priority objective	Regional activities for the period 2020-2021	Rationale for proposed activities	Responsible or lead party	Expected output by 2021	Overview of progress on planned activities
	4.2 Reduce barriers to active participation by developing countries.	4.2.1 Establish a list of countries that have difficulties to participate in Codex work and try to identify some parties/organizations to support their participation (virtually and physically), and assist in related aspects such as facilitating the visa process.	Improve participation of developing countries, especially those facing particular challenges	Host country secretariats, Codex Secretariat, Other Members in the region, Regional Coordinator	List of countries requiring support, processes to assist in visa (e.g. requesting invitation letters). Workshop on virtual participation and possible funding sources to support physical participation identified	<p>Two events to provide more insight into the Codex Trust Fund and how it could support some countries in the region to enhance engagement in Codex work.</p> <p>Data indicate that 14 and 16 Members from the region have participated in at least one Codex meeting in 2020 and 2021 respectively. There is an increasing trend in contributions to Codex work vial electronic means (participation in EWG and response to Circular letters via the OCS) with 60% of Members having contributed through electronic means. There is also an increase in the extent of the contributions of each Member.</p>

ANNEX II

PROPOSED WORK PLAN FOR 2023-2025

Priority Goal	Priority objective	Activities for the period 2023-2025	Rationale for proposed activities	Responsible or lead party	Expected output by 2025	Reporting mechanism
1. Address current, emerging and critical issues in a timely manner	1.1 Identify emerging needs and issues.	Determine the current and emerging issues in the region, based on the discussion held at CCNE11 and on follow-up surveys/ meetings with the CCNE Members.	Focus on the necessities of the Region and better coordinate relevant activities	Regional Coordinator / Member countries	A series of workshops / webinars are held on these matters and needs / issues are addressed.	Report presented at CCNE12
	1.2 Prioritize needs and emerging issues.				Reports from Members of the region on results achieved and pending issues	
2. Develop standards based on science and Codex risk-based principles	2.1. Use scientific advice consistently in line with Codex risk analysis principles.	Organize in collaboration with the regional offices of FAO/WHO a series of capacity building activities. Organize with the Codex Secretariat ad hoc webinars /	The importance of developing science-based standards for the region; enhancing the contribution of CCNE Members to this goal.	Regional Coordinator / Member countries / FAO and WHO / Codex Secretariat	Increased participation of CCNE Members in data submission and in the standard setting process.	Report on the participation of CCNE Members in FAO/WHO scientific bodies (either via data submission or experts participation) Report on the participation of CCNE

	2.2 Promote the submission and use of globally representative data in developing and reviewing Codex standards	workshops on Codex standards and their possible applications. Participate in call for data / experts as requested by FAO/WHO scientific bodies. Monitoring program and participating in data entry.	CCNE Members to better understand and implement Codex standards and relevant FAO/WHO texts at national and regional level.			Members in standard setting activities carried out by CAC and its subsidiary bodies.
3. Increase impact through the recognition and use of Codex standards	3.1 Raise the awareness of Codex standards	3.1.1. Organize workshops / webinars and / or publish digital contents on Codex to further promote the use of Codex standards in the region. 3.1.2 Draft and share with the Codex Secretariat relevant stories related to Codex and activities carried out in the countries/region.	Coordinate efforts, to facilitate the adoption of Codex standards and to better promote trade.	Member Countries / Regional Coordinator / FAO/WHO / Codex Secretariat	A series of meetings are held to support Members of the region to effectively participate in future Codex meetings under the Codex capacity building initiative in the region.	Results and information posted on the CCNE page Report at CCNE12
	3.2 Support initiatives to enable the understanding and implementation/application of Codex standards	3.2.2 Organize national and regional events on Codex related activities	To promote use of Codex standards and raise awareness on benefits	Member Countries / Regional Coordinator	Increased recognition and understanding of Codex texts.	Report on results to be presented at CCNE12
	3.3 Recognize and promote the impact of Codex Standards	3.3.1. Webinars and other relevant activities (e.g. survey, meetings) to	Supporting Global survey on use and impact of Codex standards	Member Countries	More than 50% of the Members of the Region have	Report of the Survey

		<p>support participation in the Global survey on use and impact of Codex standards.</p> <p>3.3.2. Celebrating the 60th anniversary virtually in December</p>			submitted replies to the survey	
<p>4. Facilitate the participation of all codex members throughout the standard setting process</p>	<p>4.1 Enable sustainable national Codex structures in all Codex Member Countries</p>	<p>4.1.1 Eligible countries apply for CTF2.</p> <p>4.1.2 Countries support each other, and for sharing experience.</p>	<p>To support better participation in Codex related activities.</p>	<p>FAO/WHO / Member countries</p>	<p>Enhanced contribution of CCNE Members in Codex work.</p>	<p>Application of eligible CCNE Members to the CTF2.</p> <p>Reports of mentorship activities carried out in the region.</p>
	<p>4.2 Increase sustainable and active participation of all Codex Members</p>	<p>4.2.3 Implement and enhance National Codex Committees to better coordinate and increase participation in Codex work.</p>	<p>Better coordination at national and regional level on Codex work. Increase active participation of all countries.</p>	<p>Regional Coordinator / Member countries</p>	<p>Increased participation in EWGs, PWGs and response to circular letters.</p>	<p>LoP included in reports of Codex meetings, EWGs, PWGs</p> <p>Comments to CLs</p>

CODEX COMMUNICATIONS WORKPLAN – PROGRESS REPORT

(Prepared by the Codex Secretariat)

CODEX COMMUNICATION PLAN

1. INTRODUCTION:

1.1 CCNE10 acknowledged the importance of prioritizing regional Codex communications and adopted the regional communications work plan 2020-2025 with the objectives of establishing clear communication channels and communicating the value of Codex Standards in the region. This work plan was linked to the efforts of the region to support implementation of Strategic Goal 3 of the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025 “Increase impact through the recognition and use of Codex standards”; in particular objective 3.1 “Raise the awareness of Codex standards”. This paper highlights the progress made on implementation of the regional communications work plan and proposes that the region maintain such a work plan moving forward.

2. SUMMARY OF PROGRESS:

Objective 1: Establish clear, communication channels

2.1 The Coordinator has worked to continue communication among members in the region by means of WhatsApp, emails, telecommunications, and informal meetings.

2.2 It is also important that Members ensure that the official contact detail of their Codex Contact Point are up to date as this ensures that they receive formal communications from the Codex Secretariat. Updates can be provided directly to Codex@fao.org. It is essential that all requests to update the details of Codex Contact Points should be accompanied by a signed letter from the relevant government entity to ensure the authenticity of the request.

2.3 CCNE11 set a target that by CCNE11 75% of Members/Observers surveyed would indicate timeliness, accessibility and quality of Codex regional communications “excellent” or “good”. To facilitate receipt of information on this, a very short survey has been developed. Members are encouraged to complete this survey at:

<https://forms.office.com/e/apFqrpRzTT>

This will only take 2-3 minutes and the results will be provided during the discussion on Agenda Item 7

Objective 2: Communicate the value of Codex standards in the region

2.4 The proposed activities under this objective primarily related to sharing information related to success stories in the region, stories on food safety, standards work or capacity development initiatives in the region and activities undertaken under Codex Trust Fund (CTF) projects. There has been an effort in the region to document and communicate activities through the preparation of short web stories that have been subsequently published on the CCNE news page on the Codex website. This has been steadily increasing year on year.

2.5 Over the past 4 years, World Food Safety Day had provided a strong incentive to raise awareness on food safety and share information on national and regional initiatives. At least 12 countries³ in the region have shared stories since CCNE10, multiple stories coming from some countries⁴. In this context the region has

³ Tunisia, Yemen, Iraq, United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Iran, Jordan, Oman

⁴ Egypt, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Iran, Jordan, Oman

exceeded its target of 50% of countries contributing to news items and World Food Safety Day was the major driver. This year there was a strong focus on Codex standards on many of the activities and related news. The stories also covered some of the national initiatives in the area of food safety. This latter area is one where there is the opportunity for further expansion as it also provides valuable information about key achievements in the member countries on food safety issues, beyond awareness raising and training. There is also the opportunity for more countries in the region to share their experience. As there has been a year on year increase in the number of stories shared, the aim for the region can be to continue this upward trend and also to look for opportunities beyond WFSD to share their stories.

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

3.1 In general, the region has made good progress on communications since CCNE10 with approximately half the region engaged in communications. World Food Safety Day, and the efforts of the Regional Coordinator have been key to making this progress. As there has been a year on year increase in the number of stories shared, the aim for the region can be to continue this upward trend and also to look for opportunities beyond WFSD to share their stories. Moving forward efforts should be made to continue to build in communications to all initiatives and to engage other members in the region to share their experiences.

3.2 In this context, it is recommended that CCNE11:

- renew its commitment to the Communications work plan, as updated in Table 1;
- continue its efforts to enhance the regional communications network; and
- continue to communicate on and promote its food safety and standard setting efforts and successes.

Table 1: CCNE REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS WORK PLAN 2023-2024

The table shows the objectives, activities, targets and indicators for the CCNE Regional Communications Work plan. These elements derive from Strategic Goal 3 in the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025 “Increase impact through the recognition and use of Codex standards”; in particular objective 3.1 “Raise the awareness of Codex standards.

Objectives	Activities	Targets	Indicators
1. Reinforce and expand existing communication channels and establish clear additional channels as needed e.g. for specific work streams	1.1. Consolidate and improve information flow and exchange between countries and the Codex Secretariat (CS) 1.2. Expand and strengthen existing simple and rapid communications methods (e.g. Regional. WhatsApp communications group)	By CCNE12 80% of Members/Observers surveyed indicate timeliness, accessibility and quality of Codex regional communications “excellent” or “good”	Number of survey responses rating regional communications “excellent” or “good” Communicate the value of Codex standards in the region
2. Communicate the value of Codex engagement and use of standards in the region	2.1. Provide the CS with monthly drafts of web stories capturing food safety, standards work or capacity building initiatives in the region 2.2. Promote regional success stories and initiatives in conjunction with CS and FAO/WHO	By CCNE12 24 news items from countries in the region By CCNE12 50% of countries in the region have contributed to Codex news on the regional webpage	Number of CCNE news stories published Number of countries who have made a published contribution