



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Twenty-third Session

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CODEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2031: STATUS AND NEXT STEPS

I. Introduction

1. With the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025 being in its final stage of implementation, the initial development of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031 started in 2023 led by the Chairperson of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

2. CAC45¹ had noted that there would be benefit in undertaking the elaboration of the next strategic plan with the membership in parallel with the development of the monitoring framework led by the Codex Secretariat.

3. The purpose of this document is to provide the background for Members' reflection on the process undertaken and their further engagement in developing the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031.

II. CCEXEC84 deliberations

4. At CCEXEC84², the Chairperson presented a proposed structure and timetable for the Strategic Plan 2026-2031, with the goal of delivering a new strategic plan, a monitoring framework, and implementation work plans before 1 January 2026 (the date the Strategic Plan 2026-2031 will come into effect), and ensuring Member's engagement and ownership.

5. CCEXEC84³ welcomed the proposal and recognized the value of immediate and ongoing engagement with the Codex membership using a range of modalities and with the support of the Regional Coordinators.

6. CCEXEC84 further agreed:

- To keep the mission, vision and core values as in the Strategic Plan 2020-25.
- To include section 2 (Codex standards of the future – context and drivers) of the blueprint on the Future of Codex as agreed by CCEXEC84 as the basis for the discussion on the narrative on drivers for change and the role of Codex in addressing the challenges and opportunities posed by these drivers.
- To include a high-level description of Codex ways of working taking into consideration the Strategic Plan 2020-2025.
- That contributions to goals should be measurable, linked to the mission and vision, and that their monitoring should take into consideration the experience gained from assessing the Strategic Plan 2020-2025.
- That the Strategic Plan 2026-2031 will include two results levels: goal and outcome.

¹ REP22/CAC, paragraph 187(vi)

² CX/EXEC 23/84/5; REP23/EXEC1, paragraph 116

³ REP23/EXEC1, paragraph 136

III. CCEXEC85 deliberations

7. CCEXEC85⁴ reviewed the intersessional work, including comments in reply to CL 2023/65/OCS-EXEC and discussed next steps.

8. CCEXEC85 thoroughly discussed the following elements of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031: Vision; Mission; Core values; a narrative on Drivers for change; the Role of Codex; and High level description of Codex ways of working. CCEXEC Members expressed their desire that this part be more concise and focused.

9. CCEXEC85 agreed that the revised draft (Appendix I) would be circulated through a CL to Members and Observers to gather their comments on the first part of the Strategic Plan 2026-2031 (vision; mission; core values; drivers for change; the role of Codex; ways of working), and would be complemented by recommendations and questions to engage Members and Observers on goals and outcomes for the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031:

10. "Members and Observers will be invited to note the following recommendations for the drafting of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031:

- A few high-level, ambitious strategic goals should be formulated;
- The strategic goals should be aspirational. As such, Codex would only be contributing to these goals, not necessarily achieving them during the strategic plan cycle;
- The Strategic Goals should be within the Codex statutory purpose and should take into consideration the draft narrative on "drivers for change"; and
- A clear timeline for the engagement with Members and Observers.

11. The purpose of Codex is to develop standards that protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade. Members and Observers will also be invited to answer the following questions:

- What could Codex do to have the greatest impact on the protection of consumer health and promotion of fair practices in the food trade in the period to 2031?
- Consistent with its purpose, how can Codex respond to the food safety, nutrition and food quality implications of, and support efforts to address, the drivers for change that have been identified in the related draft section of the Strategic Plan 2026-2031?"

12. It was also agreed that the recommendations and questions contained in the CL would be used by the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CVCs) to hold informal consultations with the Regions through the Regional Coordinators and with Observers. CVCs would make their "best effort" to hold these informal consultations before the CL was issued and/or as soon as possible after its issuance. The purpose of the informal consultations would be to encourage interaction, discussion and reflection, and to support Members and Observers in responding to the CL. The results of the consultation would be reported to CCEXEC86.

13. The schedule to engage Members and Observers in the development of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031 was updated accordingly and is contained in Appendix II.

IV. CAC46 discussions

14. CAC46⁵ appreciated the process to develop the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031 so far and looked forward to the consultations foreseen on goals and outcomes' formulation.

V. Follow up to CCEXEC85

15. The CL as agreed by CCEXEC85 was issued in January 2024 (CL 2024/10-EXEC) with a deadline of 9 April 2024.

16. An informal consultation with CCLAC was held on 5 March 2024. Similar consultations are being held with all Codex Regions.

17. A document (CX/EXEC 24/86/4) summarizing comments received through the CL and information gathered from the informal consultations with the regions and will be presented at CCEXEC86 for further discussion and advancement in the formulation of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031, with the aim of having it approved by CAC47, as outlined in Appendix II.

⁴ CX/EXEC 23/85/4; CX/EXEC 23/85/4 Add.1

⁵ REP23/CAC, paragraph 9

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

18. CCLAC23 is invited to:

- i. Note the process for the formulation of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031; and
- ii. Actively engage in the further process for finalizing the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031.

APPENDIX I**FIRST DRAFT OF THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS OF THE CODEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2031: VISION; MISSION, CORE VALUES; A NARRATIVE ON DRIVERS FOR CHANGE; THE ROLE OF CODEX; HIGH-LEVEL DESCRIPTION OF CODEX WAYS OF WORKING****I. Vision**

1. “Where the world comes together to create food safety and quality standards to protect everyone everywhere.”

II. Mission

2. “Protect consumer health and promote fair practices in the food trade by setting international, science-based food safety and quality standards.”

III. Core values

3. The Codex Alimentarius Commission re-commits itself to the following core values, which will guide its work to fulfil its strategic vision:

- Inclusiveness
- Collaboration
- Consensus building⁶
- Transparency

IV. Introduction

4. The Codex Alimentarius Commission was established by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1963. Today it has 188 Member Countries and one Member Organization. In addition, 240 intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations are accredited as Observers.

5. The Commission’s statutory purpose⁷ is the development of international food standards, guidelines and codes of practice to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade. With increased globalization and increases in the volumes of food traded internationally, the Commission must also be capable of responding in a timely manner to the impacts of emerging trends and challenges to consumer health protection of fair practices in the food trade, to the extent that steps to address those impacts are amenable to standardization.

6. In conducting its work, the Commission takes into account, where appropriate, the relevant policies, strategies and guidelines of FAO and WHO, and of other intergovernmental organizations consistent with fulfilling its unique purpose to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade through the development of international food standards. Codex works closely on matters of common interest with such organizations, as appropriate.

7. [The objective of this strategic plan is to advance the statutory purpose of the Codex Alimentarius Commission during the period 2026-2031. This document does not supersede, extend, or contradict the Codex statutory purpose or provisions of the Procedural Manual.]

V. Drivers for change

8. The environment in which Codex operates continues to evolve. Changes in the global feed and food supply chain system, resource optimization efforts, reduction of food loss and waste, food security and safety concerns, malnutrition, demographic changes, innovations in food science and technology, food fraud, climate change, [loss of biodiversity,] pollution, and water scarcity may introduce new opportunities and challenges.

9. Both the FAO and WHO strategic directions on food safety acknowledge the importance of food control systems, based on scientific evidence, in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals. They also recognize the importance of agri-food systems in responding to major global drivers ranging from environmental changes and digital advances to emerging hazards in the food chain and the approaches to

⁶ Consensus should be based on the Measures to Facilitate Consensus included in the Procedural Manual.

⁷ Statutes of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, Article 1(a).

mitigating these challenges, such as food system transformation and promotion of the One Health approach.⁸

10. The One Health joint plan of action (2022-2026) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) quadripartite also highlights the importance of a One Health approach to food safety.

11. The World Trade Organization (WTO) acknowledges the centrality of Codex standard setting in the multilateral system in the context of emerging global challenges.

12. All these initiatives point to the important role food safety plays to support public health, food security and trade and the need to integrate foresight and preparedness for the emerging issues to come. They further highlight that food safety has a critical role in the successful transformation of the agrifood system in order to meet the needs of the world.

VI. The role of Codex

13. The Commission must maintain a steady focus on its statutory purpose. It must be sufficiently capable of being proactive, flexible and responding in a timely manner to emerging issues that impact on food safety and quality⁹ with the aim of protecting consumer health and ensuring fair practices in the food trade.

14. The system for Codex standards elaboration has served well in the 60 years that Codex has been in existence. The system is anchored in the process described in the Procedural Manual with the product being Codex standards, guidelines and codes of practice, commonly referred to as Codex texts. The Commission, as risk manager, establishes Codex texts that when incorporated into national legislation by Members contribute to ensuring that food is safe and can be traded. The scientific basis that underpins Codex texts is fundamental to ensuring that Codex maintains its pre-eminence as the international reference for food safety and fair practices in food trade, as well as the primary source of science-based food standards for many countries and recognized by the WTO.

15. As we move into the future, Codex can [continue playing a/strengthen its] pivotal role in supporting the advancement of global goals by developing international food standards. Collaboration across the multilateral system for trade and food, offers Codex and its members numerous benefits, including enhanced food safety, strengthened partnerships, effective risk communication, regulatory harmonization, and the ability to address complex global challenges.

16. Codex texts can provide an enabling environment which facilitates the uptake and implementation of policies and programmes to address global challenges around areas such as climate change, environment, sustainability, and trade. In doing so, Codex recognises that the inherent international diversity of food systems means that, different values or solutions may be relevant in different national or regional situations or contexts.

VII. A high-level description of Codex ways of working

17. The Codex Alimentarius Commission re-commits itself to the following ways of working, through which it will develop Codex texts that will contribute to achievement of its goals:

18. *Address current, emerging and critical issues in a timely manner*

19. The focus and needs of Codex Members are evolving, as is the environment in which Codex operates. Codex will need to be proactive and flexible and to respond in a timely manner to the opportunities and challenges that result.

20. *Develop standards based on science and Codex risk analysis principles*

21. Members and those engaged in the food trade who use Codex standards value the strong scientific base of Codex. Codex must continue to prioritize the securing of independent, timely and high-quality scientific advice to Codex through a fully and sustainably funded program.

22. Globally representative data are needed for scientific advice to be comprehensive and for Codex standard to be relevant to the global food supply. This requires, among other things, capacity building in developing countries that is specific to robust data generation, scientific analysis, and overall increased capacity to conduct such work.

⁸ FAO Strategic Framework 2022-2031, FAO Strategic Priorities for Food Safety within the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-2031 and WHO Global Strategy for Food Safety 2022-2030.

⁹ The consideration of other factors in the Codex standard setting process is governed by the *Statements of Principle Concerning the Role of Science in the Codex Decision-Making Process and the Extent to Which Other Factors are Taken into Account*. Consensus should be based on the *Measures to Facilitate Consensus* included in the Procedural Manual.

23. *Increase impact through the recognition and use of Codex standards*
24. Communications that drive greater awareness, understanding, and recognition of available, harmonized standards are essential to the effectiveness of Codex. Even in the absence of adoption of Codex standards into national legislation, the greater use of Codex standards by the food trade and other actors can contribute to consumer health protection and ensuring fair practices in the food trade.
25. *[Promote coordination of all food standards work]*
26. [Codex works closely on matters of common interest with other relevant international organizations to avoid duplication and development of contradictory standards.]
27. *Facilitate the participation of all Codex Members throughout the standard setting process*
28. Members' abilities to participate actively in the development of Codex texts still varies widely and is dependent on the capacity and sustainability of national Codex systems. While the responsibility for these systems resides with Members, there is a role for support that will help to close gaps in capabilities. Sources of funding and a broad range of formal and informal capacity building, partnering and technical knowledge sharing activities all play important roles in strengthening the capacity of Members for sustainable, active participation in Codex activities, supporting all Members in maintaining national systems and expanding the potential for co-hosting of committees, consistent with our value of inclusiveness.
29. *Enhance work management systems and practices that support the efficient and effective achievement of all strategic work plan goals*
30. Our ways of working are supported by the continuing review and improvement of Codex work management systems and practices. Improvements to workflows, proposal prioritisation and input/comment management will support participation by Members with significant resource constraints and enhance inclusiveness in the standard-setting process.
31. The Commission recognises that the effective development of Codex texts depends heavily on the resources contributed by host countries of subsidiary bodies and their working groups, particularly their chairpersons and secretariats, and thanks them for their contributions.

APPENDIX II**SCHEDULE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CODEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2031**

WHEN	WHAT	WHO
07/2023	Agree the timetable, process, governance and framework for the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031.	CCEXEC84
07/2023 – 11/2023	(i) Discuss informally and agree with CCEXEC Members questions and their framing to be used as a basis for initial engagement with Members and Observers (ii) CVCs lead engagement and discussion with Members and Observers on a clear statement on the role of Codex in addressing the challenges and opportunities posed by drivers of change	CVCs, CCEXEC, Codex Secretariat, Regional Coordinators
11/2023	Review the intersessional work undertaken by CVCs and the Codex Secretariat. Develop a first draft of the following elements of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031: vision; mission; core values; drivers for change; the role of Codex; ways of working. Discuss and agree questions to be used as a basis for engagement with Members and Observers on goals and outcomes. Adjust the schedule for the development of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031 as needed.	CCEXEC85
1/2024	Issue a Circular Letter (CL) with the following elements of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031 to Members and Observers for comment, following discussion and agreement by CCEXEC85: a draft first version of vision; mission; core values; drivers for change; the role of Codex; ways of working for review and comments, and; Recommendations on the drafting of the Strategic Plan and questions to gather comments from Members and Observers around possible goals and outcomes.	Codex Secretariat
01/2024 – 05/2024	Hold a round of informal consultations with regions through the Regional Coordinators and Observers to encourage interaction, discussion and reflection and support Members and Observers in responding to the CL. The CVCs will make their best efforts to hold these informal consultations before the CL is issued or as soon as possible after. The Codex Secretariat initiates work on a monitoring framework.	CVCs, Codex Secretariat
07/2024	Review the intersessional work undertaken by CVCs and the Codex Secretariat and adjusts the draft Strategic Plan as needed. Review the responses from Members and Observers on the first draft of the following elements of the strategic plan: vision; mission; core values; drivers for change; the role of Codex; ways of working, and the replies to the questions around goals and outcomes. Report back to CCEXEC86. To adjust the schedule for the development of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031 as needed.	CCEXEC86
07/2024 – 10/2024	Lead a second round of engagement and discussion with Members and Observers on outcomes that Codex should aim to achieve by 2031, in parallel with which the Codex Secretariat completes work on a monitoring framework.	CVCs, Codex Secretariat
11/2024	Review the intersessional work undertaken by CVCs and the Codex Secretariat and makes recommendations to CAC47.	CCEXEC87

11/2024	Discuss and adopt the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031 with its monitoring framework.	CAC47
Through 2025 and into 2026	Development of implementation work plans	FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees, Other actors
01/2026	Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031 comes into operation.	