

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



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 Item 6

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

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CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT FROM THE PHYSICAL MEETING OF THE THIRD STRATEGIC PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE

INTRODUCTION

A physical meeting of the third strategic planning sub-committee of CCEXEC was held on 9 February 2020 at Domaine des Penthes, Geneva, Switzerland and was open to all members of CCEXEC.

AGENDA

In order to progress work in line with the scope set out in the sub-committee's terms of reference, the sub-committee adopted the following agenda, in line with the proposal in section 2.2 of the interim report to CCEXEC78¹:

- i. reviewing the work plans developed by the Regional Co-ordinating Committees and, in particular, identifying activities that are common across more than one region and the potential for collaborative, inter-regional working;
- ii. discussing the commissioning of inputs from other Codex actors, including but not limited to: Members and Observers; parent organizations; and Chairpersons of subsidiary bodies;
- iii. reviewing proposals to be made by the Codex Secretariat on activities to be undertaken in 2020-2021 to support delivery of strategic goal 5, and determining the role that CCEXEC should take;
- iv. identifying remaining gaps and challenges in the development of a 2 year work plan for implementation of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025;
- v. proposing next steps for the completion of the work plan to be presented to CAC43.

The sub-committee agreed that the output from its meeting should be a summary of the sub-committee's discussion and any conclusions, to be drafted by the Chairperson and submitted as a CRD to CCEXEC78.

Reviewing the work plans developed by the regional co-ordinating committees

Each of the six FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee meetings, which took place between September and November 2019, aimed to develop prioritised work plans, setting out the activities that would be undertaken in the region in 2020-2021 to support implementation of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 adopted by CAC42, in each case using a common process as set out in CCEXEC 20/78/6. The sub-committee noted that four of the six Regional Co-ordinating Committees had completed their discussions and the outputs from these four committees are collated in Annex I. The two remaining regions were close to complete their discussions. The Codex Secretariat reminded the sub-committee that the guidance given to each of the Regional Co-ordinating Committees was to look at priority areas to address in the next two years, noting the inherent difficulties in planning for the full six-year period of the Strategic Plan and the finite resources at the disposal on member countries in each region. This was illustrated by the Regional Co-ordinator for Africa who noted that the region would be interested to undertake activities relating to strategic goal 2 but recognised that building awareness of Codex was a pre-requisite and should be the focus for initial action, to lay the groundwork for subsequent activities.

The Regional Co-ordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean noted that the in-session working group established at the Regional Co-ordinating Committee for that region had identified strategic goals 2 and 4 as an appropriate focus for activities in that region in 2020-2021, but had been unable to finish its work due to the

¹ CX/EXEC 20/78/6

suspension of the meeting. CCLAC21 has been reconvened, working by correspondence, in order to complete its agenda including finalisation of its activities to support implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025.

The Member for the South West Pacific, speaking on behalf of the Regional Co-ordinator for North America and the South West Pacific, noted that an electronic working group had been established by that Regional Co-ordinating Committee to consolidate the work undertaken in that committee. The Codex Secretariat noted that the members had prioritized Goals 1, 2 and 3; identified activities relating to objectives 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.3, 3.1 and 3.3 and that the work was near conclusion.

The Chairperson of the sub-committee circulated an initial analysis, which sought to identify priority activities that had been proposed by more than one region. The Chairperson of the Codex Alimentarius Commission suggested that although it was a good strategy to identify common activities and avoid duplication, it was important that any initiative for inter-regional collaboration on priority activities was owned by the regional co-ordinators and respected any relevant regional differences.

The Representative of WHO called attention to, and circulated details of, the food safety resolution that had been adopted by the WHO Executive Board. There had been no objections from any member countries and so this resolution was likely to be adopted unmodified by the World Health Assembly at its meeting in May 2020. The Representative of WHO noted that, in addition to actions for WHO, the resolution contained thirteen actions addressed to member countries, many of which are closely aligned with the activities set out in the work plans of the Codex regions. WHO will be due to report back on actions undertaken, including by member countries, to the 75th session of the World Health Assembly in 2022, which would follow the next session of each Regional Co-ordinating Committees at which activities undertaken at the regional level would be reviewed.

The sub-committee concluded that CCEXEC should:

- note the work plans (being) developed by each of the Regional Co-ordinating Committees and welcome the focus on priority activities to be undertaken in each region from now, through 2020 and 2021;
- note that it will be for Regional Co-ordinators to lead on the co-ordination of these activities, including activities that may benefit from inter-regional collaboration, where appropriate; and
- note the general alignment of activities proposed to support implementation of the Strategic Plan, with actions addressed to member countries within the food safety resolution that we anticipate will be adopted by the World Health Assembly.

Commissioning inputs from other Codex actors

Member and observers

The sub-committee noted that member countries have contributed to the process of elaborating regional work plans to support implementation of the Strategic Plan. The sub-committee took the view that capturing the other activities being undertaken by member countries and observers may provide a more complete picture of the range of activities that support delivery of Strategic Plan outcomes and facilitate new collaborations. The sub-committee also acknowledged that this would however be a challenging task for both the sub-committee and for member countries, given the significant number and range of activities taking part in ministries, countries, regions and with a range of donors.

The sub-committee concluded that CCEXEC should not attempt to seek and collate this information from member countries and observers, but noted that where member countries, observers or other Codex actors volunteered this information we should remain open to its inclusion in the work plan to support implementation of the Strategic Plan, where appropriate.

Parent organisations

The sub-committee noted that FAO and WHO undertake a range of activities that contribute directly or indirectly to the achievement of the outcomes set out in the strategic plan, and that these activities are set out, for example, in the regular reports of FAO and WHO on scientific support, capacity development and other matters arising to the Codex Alimentarius Commission and its subsidiary bodies. There was some support for more explicit cross-reference from these activities in FAO and WHO reports to the strategic goals or objectives in the Strategic Plan that they might support.

A member of the sub-committee noted the high level of engagement with parent organisations at headquarters level and asked how this could best be cascaded to regional and national offices. The Representative of WHO noted that current work to streamline messages, together with the WHO reorganisation and World Health Assembly resolution which provide a new focus for nutrition and food safety work, presented opportunities

which, in order to be realised, needed active engagement of health ministries at country level. The Representative of FAO noted that communication channels work reasonably well and that although capacity and expertise will always be an issue for FAO national offices, this may be mitigated where countries flag with headquarters the areas where they are seeking support from FAO national offices.

The sub-committee concluded that CCEXEC should:

- invite the chairperson of the sub-committee to work together with representatives of FAO and WHO with the aim of ensuring that, either in the reports from FAO and WHO to future sessions of CAC or by other means where appropriate, there are cross-references from activities in those reports to the strategic goals or objectives in the Strategic Plan that they might support;
- note that effective collaboration with FAO and WHO regional and national offices required active engagement of national agriculture and health ministries and a signal from the member country to FAO and/or WHO at the headquarters level regarding national activities for which support was sought.

Chairpersons of subsidiary bodies

The sub-committee noted that members of CCEXEC hold informal discussions with the chairpersons of subsidiary bodies, either collectively through ad hoc retreats and workshops, or through the regular meetings that the Chair and Vice-Chairperson of the Commission hold with the chairpersons of subsidiary bodies. The sub-committee noted that these demonstrate the valuable insights that the chairpersons have into the practical operation of Codex and how efficiency and effectiveness may be improved.

The sub-committee returned to this issue in its discussions below.

Activities to be led by the Codex Secretariat to support delivery of strategic goals 3 and 5

The Codex Secretariat presented a range of proposals, which would be subject to resource availability within the biennial budget, to the sub-committee for its consideration.

Strategic goal 3

The Codex Secretariat noted that the Codex-wide communications plan, which will be discussed by CCEXEC, and the communications plan adopted by Regional Co-ordinating Committees at their meeting in 2019 all support delivery of objective 3.1 and should be appropriately captured in the work plan to support implementation of the Strategic Plan. The sub-committee agreed, noting the important role of communications activities in increasing awareness and impact.

The Codex Secretariat noted that activities to support achievement of objective 3.3 in relation to recognising the impact of Codex standards requires further thought and planning. Noting the long-term ambition to be able to describe the impact that use of Codex standards have on outcomes such as reducing foodborne illness, but recognising the inherent complexity in such a task, the sub-committee recalled that the outcome we were aiming to deliver in the strategic plan was relatively modest. The sub-committee noted and welcomed the activity proposed by the Codex Secretariat for the next two years relating to development of several narrative stories that start to illustrate the impact of the use of Codex standards, with input from member countries as appropriate. The sub-committee also looked forward to the consideration of a discussion paper on monitoring the implementation of Codex standards by CCGP32 and noted this may also contribute to addressing this objective. Providing Members with opportunities to consider appropriate means to measure impact of Codex was noted as being important

Strategic goal 5

The Codex Secretariat proposed for discussion the following priority activities to support objective 5.1 relating to supporting the work of secretariats, host countries and chairs of subsidiary bodies:

- strengthening the critical review process, noting its importance;
- improving the efficiency and ease of use of IT infrastructure, noting the increasing use made of this infrastructure by electronic corking groups;
- exploring and piloting how machine translation and other technology may support the conduct of Codex business in a wider range of languages, noting that this would support effective participation of member countries;
- tracking Codex standards under active review and revision.

The sub-committee supported the prioritisation of the first three areas, and in particular the strengthening of the critical review process, and noted that work to track Codex standards under active review and revision would have a lower priority, unless the CCEXEC concluded in its forthcoming discussion of the periodic review of standards that it should be a higher priority.

The Codex Secretariat proposed that, to support objective 5.2, it would continue to build on activities undertaken in recent years, primarily through annual workshops, to commence in March 2020, alternating between meetings of host secretariats and meetings of chairpersons of subsidiary bodies. The Codex Secretariat noted that CAC43 will confirm new co-ordinators for five of the six Codex regions, and acknowledged the importance of facilitating the transition from the current co-ordinators to the new co-ordinators. The Codex Secretariat therefore intends to host a workshop for current and new co-ordinators following CAC43. The Codex Secretariat further proposes to work with host country secretariats to complete guidance for host country secretariats, and to continue to supplement the existing handbook for chairpersons of Codex committees. The sub-committee supported these proposals and, in relation to guidance for chairpersons of subsidiary bodies, welcomed the inclusion on the agenda for CCEXEC this week on a discussion on dealing with unexpected interruptions to Codex meetings.

The sub-committee also noted that the Codex Secretariat would shortly be completing the outstanding action from the Strategic Plan 2014-19 to produce guidance to support the work of chairs of electronic working groups. The Codex Secretariat will present this work to CCEXEC79, which may then consider whether further activities on this issue are a priority for 2020-2021.

Identifying gaps and challenges

The sub-committee noted the need to capture activities that may be undertaken by subsidiary bodies other than the Regional Co-ordinating Committees and agreed that the Chairperson of the sub-committee should canvass the chairpersons of these committees for input, where appropriate.

Next steps for the completion of the work of the sub-committee

The sub-committee agreed that it, and CCEXEC, should aim to complete this work in a timely manner, agreeing a report and forwarding it to the Codex Secretariat no less than two months before CAC43.

ACTIVITIES TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE CCAFRICA REGION IN 2020-2021 TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025

Priority Goal	Priority objective	Activities for the period 2020-2021	Rationale for proposed activities	Responsible or lead party	Expected output by 2021	Reporting mechanism
1. Address current, emerging and critical issues in a timely manner	1.1 Identify needs and emerging issues	Apply FAO/WHO food control system assessment tool to identify the needs and emerging issues within the member countries	A regional survey was conducted which identified emerging food safety issues as aflatoxins, pesticide residues in foods and AMR. The response was 47% and there is need to upscale.	National Codex Contact points CCAFRICA coordinator	Report of identified gaps according to the FAO/WHO survey tool Increased response	Annual report
	1.2 Prioritize needs and emerging issues.	Develop proposals for new work items on two top prioritized emerging issues Capacity development on food control systems at national level (strengthening surveillance/diagnosis) Creating awareness on identified issues e.g. Aflatoxin, pesticide residues, antimicrobial resistance (AMR)-CCAFRICA23 report	Need to emphasize the gaps and priorities through committees and their working groups. This will ensure a timely Codex response. Initiate activities at regional level through formulation of new work proposals	National Codex Contact Points CCAFRICA coordinator	New work items proposals Increased effective participation in Codex committees /meetings/EWG	Biennial reporting of events
3. Increase impact through the recognition and use of Codex standards	3.1 Raise the awareness of Codex standards	Identify relevant Codex standards for each member country Develop Information education and communication (IEC) materials; Posters, brochures, fliers Hold workshops/ seminars/ meetings/media to educate on standards e.g. industries, institutions, government officers	There is low application of Codex standards by stakeholders These activities will contribute to raising awareness on Codex standards, thus contributing to the global use of Codex standards by different stakeholders as a reference for food safety and fair practices in food trade.	National Codex Contact Points CCAFRICA coordinator	Increased awareness on Codex standards	Event reports

ACTIVITIES TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE CCASIA REGION IN 2020-2021 TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025

Priority Goal	Priority objective	Activities for the period 2020-2021	Rationale for proposed activities	Responsible or lead party	Expected output by 2021	Reporting mechanism
1. Address current, emerging and critical issues in a timely manner	1.1 Identify needs and emerging issues.	1.1.1 Collect information on country's current, emerging and critical issues and identify the needs.	To understand the needs and emerging issues of each member country	Regional Co-coordinator / FAO / WHO	Compiled list of issues and needs of Member countries	Survey questionnaires
	1.2 Prioritize needs and emerging issues.	1.2.1 Establish practical criteria taking into consideration prioritization criteria used in relevant Codex committees and the Codex Procedural Manual	The criteria for evaluating and prioritizing emerging issues could be used to assess and prioritize the proposal for new work in terms of the need and appropriateness for the region	CCASIA / Regional coordinator	Practical criteria will be established	Report of the coordinator (e.g. under the Agenda Item on Codex work relevant to the region)
		1.2.3 Prioritize the issues and needs at the regional level	To get an official Codex regional document	CCASIA	Needs and emerging issues prioritized	Plenary
2. Develop standards based on science and Codex risk based principles	2.1. Use scientific advice consistently in line with Codex risk analysis principles	2.1.1 Arrange capacity building programs to enhance understanding of all countries in the region on the use of scientific information and risk analysis principles	The activities will help improve understanding of all countries in the region on the scientific data needed for drafting standard and risk analysis to manage measures accordance with the risk assessment outcome.	FAO/WHO coordinating Committee/Member Countries/FAO/WHO	Enhanced awareness and knowledge of member countries on the use of scientific information and risk analysis principles	FAO/WHO reports on capacity development activities
		2.2 Promote the submission and use of globally representative data in developing and reviewing Codex standards	2.2.1 Assessment of total number of member countries responding to calls for data	Such an assessment will help provide a picture of member countries who have not been able to submit data.	FAO/WHO	Baseline information on countries responding to calls for data.
		2.2.2. Collate, analyze and share data on a specific product contaminant that is common to member countries.	Before embarking on generation of new data, this activity will assist in getting a picture of the existing data in the region and contribute to building capacity on data management and	FAO/WHO/ Member Countries	Increase in understanding of available and capacity to collate, manage and analyze data in the region	Report by FAO/WHO to CCASIA22

			analysis.			
	2.3 Promote sufficient and sustainable funding for expert bodies that deliver scientific advice.	2.3.1. Inform the RCCs of the annual discussions in CAC on sustainable funding for FAO/WHO scientific advice to Codex through its inclusion in the agenda item on Matters arising from CAC and its subsidiary bodies.	Not all Codex members have the opportunity to attend CAC but may be able to attend the RCCs and given the importance of this issue for Codex work, the RCCs provide an important opportunity to share this information.	FAO/WHO, Codex Secretariat	Raise the Member country's awareness about current situation	Matters arising document and meeting report
		2.3.2. Member countries encourage FAO/WHO governing bodies to allocate dedicated funding for scientific advice	This will help keep funding for scientific advice a high priority for FAO/WHO	Member Countries, FAO/WHO	Sustained funding for scientific advice ensured	
3. Increase impact through the recognition and use of Codex standards	3.1 Raise the awareness of Codex standards	3.1.1. Implement activities (e.g. seminar) to increase awareness of stakeholders on Codex matters	This will help to increase awareness on the impact of Codex standards on trade, facilitate adoption of Codex standards, and therefore facilitate trade.	Member Countries	Codex members are proactively promoting the use of Codex standards	Activity report to Codex Secretariat or CCASIA Coordinator
		3.1.2. Engagement of stakeholders for participation in Codex matters <i>[Subject to government's policy]</i>	Most stakeholders (industry, academia etc) may not be aware of Codex work.	Member Countries	Codex members are proactively promoting the use of Codex standards	Activity report to Codex Secretariat or CCASIA Coordinator
	3.2 Support initiatives to enable the understanding and implementation/application of Codex standards	3.2.1 Enhance understanding on the use of Codex standards as the guidance for development of national food standards by responding to the biannual survey on the use of Codex standards	Developing food standards based on Codex standards will help to facilitate international trade e.g. facilitate the setting up of MRAs and acceptance of equivalence as and when necessary	Member Countries	Increased knowledge on the use of Codex standards in the development of national food standards and regulations.	Report of the survey on Use of Codex standards
	3.3 Recognize and promote the impact of Codex Standards	3.3.1. Identify and report success stories on the use of Codex standards	Published success stories will provide inspiration for adoption of Codex standards on larger scale	Member Countries and Codex Secretariat	Increased awareness on the value of Codex standards	Published stories

ACTIVITIES TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE CCEURO REGION IN 2020-2021 TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025

Priority Goal	Priority objective	Activities for the period 2020-2021	Rationale for proposed activities	Responsible or lead party	Expected output by 2021	Reporting mechanism/
1. Address current, emerging and critical issues in a timely manner	1.1 Identify needs and emerging issues	1.1.1 Collect more specific information on country's current, emerging and critical issues using and refining existing mechanisms. 1.1.2 Create a repository of available information on food fraud, including contact details and explanatory guidelines on submission of information.	To understand the needs and emerging issues of each member country To make available to Codex stakeholders information on food fraud examples and on relevant authorities	Regional Coordinator/ FAO/ WHO/ Members/ Codex Secretariat	Compiled list of issues and needs of Member countries A functioning repository available on the Codex website (e.g. regional webpage)	Survey questionnaires Report on repository status (to relevant CAC subsidiary bodies)
	1.2 Prioritize needs and emerging issues	1.2.1 Use current prioritization information available from Codex committees.	Current procedures for evaluating and prioritizing emerging issues could be used (and enhanced by the RC as appropriate) to assess and prioritize needs of the region	Members/ Regional Coordinator	Prioritized needs will be established	Report of the coordinator (e.g. under the Agenda Item on Codex work relevant to the region)
2. Develop standards based on science and Codex risk based principles	2.2 Promote the submission and use of globally representative data in developing and reviewing Codex standards	2.2.1 To select from FAO and WHO scientific expert bodies' calls for data a topic for a pilot of a co-ordinated approach by the European region.	This will maximise the provision and use of data by the region of the selected topic. It will also allow the identification of problems and barriers to data submission that may exist in different countries of the region	Members/ Regional Coordinator/ FAO/ WHO	Shared learning on how to optimise future data submission	Report on the pilot to CCEURO32 with lessons learned
	2.3 Promote sufficient and sustainable funding for expert bodies that deliver scientific advice	2.3.1 To contribute to the drafting of a World Health Assembly resolution in 2020 on food safety, as proposed in the letter from Member States of the EU and others to DG WHO ² .	To incorporate within the World Health Assembly resolution a mechanism to ensure sufficient and sustainable funding for science from WHO	Members	A WHO commitment to sufficient and sustainable funding from its core budget	As part of the WHO report to CAC43 in July 2020

² CX/EURO 19/31/CRD4

		2.3.2 To communicate within countries and to Geneva-based missions to ensure adoption of a World Health Assembly resolution in 2020 on food safety.				
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ACTIVITIES TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE CCNE REGION IN 2020-2021 TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025

Priority Goal	Priority objective	Activities for the period 2020-2021	Rationale for proposed activities	Responsible or lead party	Expected output by 2021	Reporting mechanism
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 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>	The project documents, standards and comments should be based on scientific evidence and data from the Member countries	Member countries (CCPs), Regional Coordinator	<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>	Report of activities undertaken prepared by the Coordinator to CCNE11
3: Increase impact through the recognition and use of Codex standards	3.1 Raise the awareness of Codex standards	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>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>Codex Contact Points (CCPs)</p> <p>National Codex Committees</p> <p>FAO WHO regional and country offices</p>	<p>Increase in level of participation and contribution in different Codex committees</p> <p>Achieve a national commitment to Codex Alimentarius as a reference for food safety and quality standards</p> <p>Harmonization between national standards and</p>	Biannual survey reported to CCNE

Priority Goal	Priority objective	Activities for the period 2020-2021	Rationale for proposed activities	Responsible or lead party	Expected output by 2021	Reporting mechanism
					regulations against Codex texts initiated	
4: Facilitate the participation of all Codex Members throughout the standard setting process	4.1. Enable sustainable national Codex structures in all Codex Member countries	4.1.1 Use available tools (FAO/WHO Diagnostic Tool) to assess national Codex structures 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	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.)	FAO and WHO with the Regional Coordinator and Member countries	25% of Members from the region applied FAO/WHO Diagnostic Tool 10% increase in participation in Codex work by Members from the region by 2021	Reports on participation by the Codex Secretariat
	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	Statistics on EWG, OCS and Committee meeting participation