



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

Twelfth Session

Muscat, Oman

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CODEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2031: STATUS AND NEXT STEPS

Background¹

1. The Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) develops its periodic strategic plans with the objective of advancing its mandate to develop food safety and quality standards in line with its statutory purpose of protecting the health of consumers and ensuring fair practices in the food trade and promoting coordination of all food standards work undertaken by international governmental and non-governmental organizations. The strategic plan, which covers six years, serves to highlight the mission and vision of Codex in an ever-changing world and focus the work of CAC on the key needs and concerns of its Members, taking into consideration the prevailing global food safety and quality situation.
2. The development of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031 began in 2023 led by the Chairperson of the CAC with the Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CCEXEC) playing an important role. Codex Members and Observers were involved in the process through discussions in CAC and a series of Circular Letters and informal discussions at the regional level led by the Coordinators in coordination with the CAC Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons seeking input of Members and Observers at different stages of the development process.
3. Following extensive work by CCEXEC84 through to CCEXEC87, informed by input from Members and Observers, CCEXEC87² presented a draft of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031 and recommended that CAC47:
 - i. note the work undertaken on the development of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031, including the opportunities to provide input both formally and informally.
 - ii. adopt the draft Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031; and
 - iii. note that the Codex Secretariat would present a monitoring framework at CCEXEC88 for review, and that comments on the revised version of the monitoring framework would then be sought from Members and Observers through a CL with the aim of submitting a final version to CAC48 for
4. At CAC47³, Members expressed their appreciation for the efforts to develop the Strategic Plan 2026-2031, including the way in which it was developed and its clear and concise nature and forward-looking goals and outcomes. In this context CAC47:
 - i. noted the work undertaken to date on the development of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031, including the opportunities to provide input both formally and informally.
 - ii. adopted the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031⁴ as contained in Appendix I herein; and
 - iii. noted that the Codex Secretariat would present a monitoring framework at CCEXEC88 for review, and that comments on the revised version of the monitoring framework would then be sought from Members and Observers through a CL with the aim of submitting a final version to CAC48 for approval.

¹ REP23/EXEC1, paragraph 136; REP23/EXEC2, paragraphs 54(i) (a); REP23/CAC, paragraph 16

² REP24/EXEC2, paragraphs 108

³ REP24/CAC, paragraph 213

⁴ REP24/CAC, Appendix IX

5. CCEXEC88⁵ discussed the proposed monitoring framework as prepared by the Codex Secretariat and subsequently agreed upon a revised set of indicators for the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031, while asking the Codex Secretariat to further elaborate the means of verification and identify baseline information for the proposed indicators where possible. These proposed indicators have been circulated to all Codex Members and Observers via CL 2025/49-CCEXEC for comments, which CCEXEC89 will further consider during its next session, currently scheduled for November 2025.
6. In the timeline for the development of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031 elaborated by CCEXEC85⁶ and endorsed by CAC46, it was anticipated that workplans to support implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031 would be elaborated during 2025 and into 2026 by the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees and other relevant actors. In line with this schedule, it is appropriate for the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees meetings in 2025 to consider how they will support implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031.

Learning from the past

7. CCNE developed and worked towards implementation of an extensive range of activities under the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025, focusing on Goals 2, 3 and 4 of the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025, to build awareness of, and promote the work of Codex. Consideration was also given to how to better implement these activities at national and regional level, individuating priority areas, and noting related issues and requests that could be addressed in this context, such as data collection and emerging food safety challenges.
8. The Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031 is intended to guide the direction of the work of CAC and its Members and Observers. By examining the needs of Members in relation to standards development and implementation through the lens of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031, CCNE is encouraged to reflect on whether its work is in line with the goals and outcomes of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031.
9. Below are some examples, based on past and ongoing work of CCNE that would enable it to undertake its work in line with the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031 and would also allow CCNE to focus on its priorities in as resource and time efficient way as possible.
10. Regarding goal one on responding to Members' needs, CCNE12 may wish to consider how they can as a region address the challenges with data availability to support the scientific advice that underpins standard setting. Lack of geographic representative data is a recurring issue that needs to be addressed and consideration of what type of approaches the region could commit to address this even in relation to one priority issue for the region would be a significant step forward towards achieving the Goal 1 and outcome 1.2. Following up on conclusions reached at CCNE11 under the discussion of the Keynote address "Transformation of Food Systems"⁷, CCNE12 might consider how to actively engage in relevant Codex discussions *inter alia* those on trans-fatty acids carried out by the Codex Committee on Fats and Oils (CCFO) and the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL).
11. CCNE12 might consider looking more in depth at how existing texts could be used to address identified problems and issues as this could be more a time and resource effective approach compared to the process of developing a new Codex text. This would be in line with goal four and outcome 4.3.
12. The Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031 also highlights the importance of engagement with relevant organizations. This is also in line with a recent proposal from CCEXEC88⁸ to include on the agenda of FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees an item titled "Matters of interest to the region arising from regional and other international organizations" to further consider relevant information from these organizations. In this context, considerations could also be given on how to strengthen relationships to address certain problems and challenges that could be relevant to the region and in line with goal 3 of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031.

Next steps

13. CCNE12 is invited to:

- identify the priority goals/outcomes for the next 2 years (up to CCNE13), on which the region will focus its contributions to the implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031, taking into consideration the key needs of the region;
- draft a workplan which identifies the key activities to be undertaken under the identified priority goals/outcomes, promoting time and cost-effective working mechanisms; and

⁵ REP25/EXEC1 paras 63 ff., Appendix II

⁶ REP23/EXEC2 Appendix III

⁷ REP23/NE paras. 7 ff.

⁸ REP25/EXEC1 paras 11-13

- note the ongoing work on developing a framework for monitoring the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031 and encourage Members to actively participate in this work by responding to CL 2025/49-CCEXEC.

APPENDIX I**CODEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2031****Vision**

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

Mission

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

Core values

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 building⁹
- Transparency

Introduction

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.

The Commission’s statutory purpose¹⁰ 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.

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.

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.

Drivers for change

The environment in which Codex operates continues to evolve. 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 mitigating these challenges, such as food system transformation and promotion of the One Health approach.¹¹

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.

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

⁹ Consensus should be based on the Measures to Facilitate Consensus included in the Procedural Manual.

¹⁰ Statutes of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, Article 1(a).

¹¹ 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.

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.

The role of Codex

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 quality¹² with the aim of protecting consumer health and ensuring fair practices in the food trade.

The system for Codex standards elaboration has served well in the more than 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.

As we move into the future, Codex can strengthen the pivotal role it plays 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.

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 recognizes 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.

STRATEGIC GOALS AND OUTCOMES

The Codex Alimentarius Commission commits itself to work towards achievement of the following Strategic Goals and outcomes within the Codex purpose¹³:

Strategic Goal 1: Respond to Members' needs for protecting the health of consumers and ensuring fair practices in the food trade in an evolving global landscape by developing science-based standards and related texts

- 1.1 Foresight and horizon-scanning activities are used to support the identification of issues likely to impact food safety, quality and trade.
- 1.2 Scientific advice that addresses the needs identified by CAC and subsidiary bodies is primarily provided by FAO and WHO and their joint scientific advisory bodies, informed by globally representative data and appropriate international expertise and methodology.
- 1.3 Scientific advice is used by CAC and subsidiary bodies in line with Codex risk analysis principles.
- 1.4 Codex standards and related texts are developed, reviewed and adopted in a timely, transparent and inclusive manner.

Strategic Goal 2: Enhance Codex work management systems and practices that support the effective and efficient development of standards and related texts

- 2.1 Work management systems and practices are refined and enhanced, leveraging digital and other new technologies.
- 2.2 Mechanisms to prioritize proposals to develop new or revise existing standards and related texts are in place.
- 2.3 Chairpersons, coordinators, host secretariats, Codex Contact Points and delegates are supported in their respective roles and their capabilities are developed and enhanced.
- 2.4 Codex Members are enabled to participate actively and sustainably throughout the standard-setting process.

¹² 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.

¹³ Article 1, Statutes of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, Codex Procedural Manual

Strategic Goal 3: Strengthen relationships with relevant international organizations, promoting a coordinated approach to address global challenges

- 3.1 The mutual understanding of the roles of CAC and relevant international organizations in relation to global challenges is improved and is supported by ongoing consultation between the parties.
- 3.2 Gaps in approaches to addressing global challenges that Codex could contribute to are identified through targeted engagement with relevant international organizations.
- 3.3 The contribution of CAC to the transition towards sustainable and resilient food systems, is identified and considered.
- 3.4 Contributions from relevant international organizations throughout the development of Codex texts are encouraged.

Strategic Goal 4: Maximize the impact of Codex by increasing the visibility and use of standards

- 4.1 The profile and recognition of Codex as the international food standards setting body for protecting consumer health and ensuring fair practices in food trade is enhanced.
- 4.2 The use of Codex texts in the context of integrative approaches such as One Health is promoted.
- 4.3 Harmonization through the increased use of Codex texts in establishing national food control systems and regulations is advocated for.