



Food and Agriculture
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CODEX WORK RELEVANT TO THE REGION

(Prepared by the Former Coordinator for Asia (China) in collaboration with the Coordinator)

Background

1. This document merges findings from the 2023-2025 survey of member countries launched by the former Coordinator with analytical perspectives from Codex committee reports and related CCEXEC discussions. It reflects the region's priorities, participation patterns, capacity challenges, and emerging issues. The survey responses from 14 of 24 member countries provide specific insights into barriers, progress, and support needs, while committee reports highlight procedural and technical developments. Together, these perspectives offer a comprehensive overview of CCASIA's engagement in Codex.

Introduction

2. An online survey to assess members' engagement in Codex work over the past years (2023-2025 survey), focusing on priorities, participation, data submission, and strategic plan implementation sent to 24 CCASIA member countries, and 14 countries out of them responded. The analysis of these survey results has been combined with Codex reports to present an objective regional picture. This structure ensures both the depth of member perspectives and the balance of regional-level insights.
3. This document summarizes the responses received from member countries through the online questionnaire (Annex I) and the analysis of their participation in Codex meetings. Within the survey, member countries provided their opinions and comments in response to specific questions regarding Codex work.

Current engagement in Codex work

Electronic working groups (EWGs)

4. CCASIA members have demonstrated consistent leadership in electronic working groups (EWGs). According to the Codex webpage, eight CCASIA member countries have been chairing or co-chairing 34 EWGs since CCASIA22(2022), and more Members have become engaged recently. Survey results confirmed active engagement across committees such as the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC), and the Codex Committees on Contaminants in Food (CCCF), Methods of Analysis and Sampling (CCMAS), Food Hygiene (CCFH), Food Additives (CCFA), Pesticide Residues (CCPR), Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Food (CCRVDF), Food Import and Export Certification Systems (CCFICS), and Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (CCNFSDU), through in-person and virtual meetings. Members noted that EWGs were more accessible and less resource-intensive than physical meetings, allowing broader participation despite financial constraints. Still, technical capacity, language barriers, and resource limitation affect members' ability to contribute substantively to leading or participating in the EWGs.

Regional standards

5. Compared to other regional coordinating committees, CCASIA has seen more proposals for regional standards, and some Members valued regional standards as tools for trade and consumer protection. At CCEXEC85 (2023), criteria for regional standards were reaffirmed: maintaining cultural specificity while encouraging broader applicability and pragmatic grouping of related products, and emphasis on the value of a well-researched discussion paper together with a well-presented and complete project document. Survey inputs also revealed the challenges, including: limited data availability, diverse production systems, and differences in regulatory maturity. Despite these, regional standards remain a visible and important area of interest for CCASIA within Codex.

Priorities identified in CCASIA

6. In recent years, member countries have expressed a diverse and increasingly complex range of concerns and priorities regarding food safety and international trade. These included:
 - the need to identify as a priority for Codex, the control and management of food contaminants (in particular microplastics, perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), and the use of recycled materials as food contact materials);
 - food contamination testing technology, including the advancement of analytical methodologies and the validation of testing procedures;
 - the harmonization of international food safety standards;
 - establishing, maintaining, and enhancing national food control systems;
 - shifting from hazard-based to risk-based inspections;
 - the need for modernizing food control systems through digital technologies, artificial intelligence (AI), and other innovative applications; and
 - the need to improve import/export systems, sampling, and traceability.

Emerging issues identified in CCASIA

7. Emerging issues include New Food Sources and Production Systems (NFPS), specifically cell-based food, and their associated safety assessments. Microbiological priorities included antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and core CCFH topics like food hygiene, sanitation, and food-borne illnesses. Other noted issues encompass food additives, allergens, pesticide residues, veterinary drug residues, and database development for JMPR, JECFA, JEMRA, JEMNU, and biotechnology.

Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)

8. Survey respondents identified AMR as a persistent and urgent issue. Members called for Codex to strengthen monitoring systems, laboratory diagnostics, and multi-sectoral approaches. From 2023-2025, regional efforts focused on translating Codex AMR texts into practice, embedding prudent antimicrobial use principles into communication campaigns, and improving laboratory diagnostic capacities. While progress was noted in harmonizing methodologies and training, uneven national capacity and behavioral challenges remain significant.
9. Between 2023-2025, CCASIA members worked to:
 - translate Codex AMR-related texts into national monitoring and surveillance systems, often requiring updated legislation and laboratory procedures;
 - conduct multi-sectoral workshops and training on risk-based monitoring, prudent antimicrobial use, and diagnostic techniques;
 - incorporate AMR awareness into broader communication platforms, such as World Food Safety Day campaigns, to reach both technical stakeholders and the public; and
 - advance harmonization of methodologies for residue testing and AMR surveillance across the region.
10. According to the communication with member countries, the challenges for CCASIA members as follows:
 - **Uneven national capacities:** Some countries had advanced monitoring systems, while others lack even basic diagnostic infrastructure.
 - **Behavioral barriers:** Changing practices among producers and veterinarians remains difficult despite regulations.
 - **Financial and technical constraints:** Members highlighted reliance on FAO/WHO support for training and technical guidelines.
11. Overall, AMR work in CCASIA is viewed as both a public health imperative, and a trade necessity, ensuring that export products meet international requirements.

New food sources and production systems (NFPS)

12. Survey responses highlighted NFPS, particularly cell-based foods, as a priority requiring Codex attention to safety and regulatory frameworks. Members implied NFPS as not only a safety challenge but also an opportunity to diversify diets and potentially support sustainability. Members recognized the importance of ensuring that regulatory systems can evaluate these products while safeguarding consumer trust. In the

informal regional consultation organized by a non-governmental organization (NGO) recently, most CCASIA members believed cell-based foods required Codex guidance on risk assessment, culture media safety, and regulatory frameworks. The need for harmonized safety assessments to avoid fragmented national approaches that could create trade barriers has been highlighted.

Issues related to nutrition

13. The balance between food safety and nutrition has been emphasized. Nutrition-linked provisions, such as fortification, nutrient content, and labeling, were seen as critical to supporting consumer choice and dietary quality. Survey results implied that members increasingly seek Codex support in aligning commodity standards with nutrition objectives. Some key issues have been mentioned, including:
 - fortification of staple foods, to address micronutrient deficiencies;
 - nutrient content claims, to promote informed consumer choice; and
 - front-of-pack and other labeling requirements, to link food safety with public health objectives.
14. Together, NFPS and nutrition-related work illustrate the region's need for Codex guidance that bridges food safety and nutrition, ensuring that new technologies and products contribute positively to health while remaining safe and trade-compliant.

Participation, barriers, and capacity development

15. Members have reported varying levels of participation in Codex meetings, EWGs, and virtual working groups (VWGs), with some demonstrating active and consistent engagement in general subject committees. The involvement included both virtual and in-person attendance, submission of comments, and active engagement in working groups. The mode of participation has evolved; during the COVID-19 pandemic, remote participation facilitated broader engagement across countries. In contrast, in-person participation was noted to enhance understanding and decision-making processes but remains limited primarily due to budget constraints. EWGs were recognized as more accessible and less resource-intensive compared to physical meetings, with many members expressing willingness and interest to contribute.
16. The most frequently cited barriers to effective member engagement related to technical and capacity limitations. Members highlighted the lack of physical offices, shortages of laboratory instruments, tools, and equipment, and inadequate personnel and specialized technical staff as significant challenges. Financial and budget constraints further exacerbated these issues by restricting members' ability to attend international meetings and access to scientific databases necessary for informed participation. Additional challenges included unfamiliarity with the Codex mechanism, which limited the integration and adaptation of standards into national food control systems, and inadequate English language proficiency, which limited access to and interpretation of critical documents. Some members faced logistical hurdles such as difficulties obtaining invitation letters, visa approval delays.

Data submission and scientific contribution

17. All Codex food safety work relies on scientific advice from independent expert bodies under the auspices of FAO and WHO, necessitating contributions and data submissions from member states. While over half of the responding members reported having submitted data to bodies like JECFA, JMPR, within the recent years, even these engaged members identified significant barriers hindering their data submission, which revealed a spectrum of involvement, with some contributing actively, while others face numerous challenges.
18. The primary impediment to increased data submission and broader scientific engagement was due to inadequate targeted training and guidance, including a lack of expertise in the essential aspects of data gathering, analysis, processing, and filtration. This led to challenges in generating and submitting scientifically sound data according to FAO/WHO requirements. However, even for those submitting data, a range of limitations necessitated support, including further capacity-building requirements, budgetary constraints that affected research and data collection, and communication challenges for both national and international collaborations.

Support needs and collaboration

19. Member countries identified several specific aspects and areas for collaboration that require support to effectively implement the regional work plan. Regional workshops and training were most frequently illustrated by members who expected to conduct more targeted workshops on scientific data submission, risk-based food control systems and Codex standards for the improvement of capacity and the effectiveness of the adaptation and localization of international standards; some member countries also expect the expansion of participant number and the organization of dedicated workshop for specific committees to deepen the engagement. Technical assistance and capacity building was another broadly stated aspect that required specific support, which includes: training in modern laboratory testing technologies, risk analysis,

and implementation of international standards; support for translation from English to national languages to improve understanding; localization of Codex standards adaptively to national standards; and building of expertise in scientific data generation, analysis and submission for Codex bodies. Besides, members asked for assistance with the participation and representation in Codex working groups and EWGs, including funding support for active participation.

20. Financial support and project funding, particularly from the Codex Trust Fund (CTF), were regarded as highly in need of support. Regional and national training sessions, supporting study visits, and formal mentoring programs were crucial to the ongoing development of regional expertise. One member stated that the support for regionally significant projects such as those strengthening local capabilities in mycotoxin risk assessment (e.g. in rice, maize) was of high priority. Guidance and collaboration from international organizations were often referenced, particularly in relation to scientific assessments, food safety evaluations, and the development of national regulatory frameworks, such as Priority Assessment Lists (PAL). Countries sought expert advice to strengthen their food control systems, improve data evaluation, and design effective regulatory approaches to meet international standards and trade requirements. Additionally, some countries mentioned the need for digital transformation initiatives and support for micro, small and medium enterprise (MSME) development to modernize food inspection and certification systems, with an underscored importance of addressing challenges such as language barriers by localizing standards and overcoming restrictions that limit proposal submissions to funding schemes like the CTF.

Future of the region

21. Looking towards CCASIA24 in 2027, the Asia region is expected to build on progress achieved while addressing persistent capacity gaps and emerging challenges. Members will continue to prioritize strengthening food safety systems, enhancing data submission, and aligning national measures with Codex texts to support both consumer protection and fair trade.
22. Capacity development remains essential. While some members have advanced in establishing institutions and legislation, disparities in expertise, laboratory infrastructure, and financial resources remain significant. Targeted training, technical assistance, and effective use of the Codex Trust Fund will be critical to ensure broad and equitable participation in Codex work.
23. Emerging issues will shape the agenda over the coming years. AMR requires sustained efforts to embed Codex guidance into national monitoring and diagnostic systems. NFPS, such as cell-based foods, call for Codex guidance on safety assessments and regulatory oversight. Food Labeling-related issues, including nutrient content claims, and front-of-pack labeling, are expected to gain importance, linking food safety with wider public health objectives.
24. Regional cooperation will be central to overcoming challenges such as limited data availability, language barriers, and uneven participation in Codex processes. Joint workshops, shared databases, and expert exchanges can strengthen collective contributions to FAO/WHO expert bodies and ensure that Asia's diverse perspectives are reflected in Codex discussions.
25. In addition, the region may consider leveraging the expressed need of Members for the development of regional commodity standards that reflect shared priorities and production practices. And the same time, the preparation of practical guidance to assist members in interpreting and apply Codex standards, particularly general standards, would help strengthen national implementation, promote consistent understanding, and reduce barriers to effective use of Codex texts.

Conclusion

26. In general, the survey results demonstrated a strong commitment from member countries in the Asia region to actively participate in and benefit from the Codex work. However, while acknowledging the vital role of Codex in ensuring food safety and fair trade, the results also reflected challenges that member countries faced, which included capacity limitations and resource constraints, highlighting the need for strategic support. Through collaborative approaches, capacity building efforts, and strengthened support mechanisms, member countries in the region can lay the foundation for more effective and impactful food safety initiatives.

Recommendation

27. To maximize the effectiveness of Codex work, address the identified gaps, and promote further collaboration, CCASIA23 is invited to consider the following:
 - (i) Targeted capacity-building programs, focusing on risk analysis, scientific data generation, and modern laboratory techniques.
 - (ii) Enhanced resource allocation, through the Codex Trust Fund or other channels, for regional workshops, study visits, and mentorship opportunities.

- (iii) Strengthening of inter-institutional and international collaboration to share expertise and best practices.
- (iv) Active promotion of wider participation from underrepresented countries and stakeholders to foster inclusivity, ensuring regional challenges were fully addressed.

28. By focusing on these key areas, the Asia region can ensure that Codex standards were effectively implemented, fostering safer food systems and facilitating equitable trade within the region and globally.

Annex 1**Codex Work Relevant to the Region: Questionnaire (online)****Past and Current of the Region (Prepared by CCASIA Secretariat)**

1. **Priorities and Emerging Issues:** What are the top 3 current/emerging food safety or trade issues in your country requiring Codex attention (e.g., NFPS, e-commerce, AMR, food contaminants, etc)?
2. **Participation and Barriers:** Briefly describe your country's participation in Codex Commissions and committees, PWGs and EWGs since CCASIA22, and what barriers (technical, financial, capacity) hinder your effective engagement?
3. **Data Submission and Scientific Contribution:** Has your country submitted data to FAO/WHO scientific bodies (e.g., JMPR/JECFA/JEMRA/JEMNU) in the last 2 years? If not, what support is needed (e.g., training, infrastructure, etc) to generate/submit data
4. **Strategic Plan Implementation Progress:** Highlight 1–2 activities your country undertook (2022–2025) to advance the Codex Strategic Plan's Goals (e.g., adopting standards, capacity building, stakeholder awareness). What measurable impacts were observed
5. **Support Needs & Collaboration:** What specific supports (e.g., CTF, regional workshops, mentorship) have you identified as necessary to implement the regional work plan?

Future of the Region (Prepared by Codex Secretariat)

6. In the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031, what are the most prioritized goals and outcomes, taking into consideration the key needs of the region?
7. In the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031, which key activities should be undertaken in the region to achieve these goals and outcomes?
8. In the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031, what aspects should be considered to ensure the effective and successful implementation of these activities?