



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
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Organization

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Agenda Item 8

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR NORTH AMERICA AND THE SOUTH WEST PACIFIC

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Use and impact of Codex standards in the region

I. Introduction

1. The Codex Secretariat, in collaboration with FAO and WHO evaluation offices, started work in 2021 on developing a mechanism to measure the use and impact of Codex standards. A monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework to provide data about the use and impact of Codex texts was developed with a view to obtaining information that can help Members and Observers better understand the impact, or potential for impact, of Codex texts.

2. The eighty-first session of the Codex Executive Committee (CCEXEC81) and the forty-fourth session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC44) endorsed the proposed approach¹ to building the mechanism, and one recommendation was to undertake a pilot of a revamped Member survey in 2022 with the preliminary results being reported to CCEXEC83 and CAC45.

II. Codex surveys 2022 and 2023

3. The Codex survey on the use and impact of Codex texts has been developed with the intent to implement it on an annual basis. The survey is comprised of questions related to Codex texts in general, and questions related to specific Codex texts to facilitate a more in-depth analysis and identification of trends over time. The envisaged three-year cycle of standards to be surveyed will allow the use and impact of the same Codex texts to be measured over time.

4. The purpose of the Codex survey 2022 was to examine the reach, usefulness, and use of a sample of Codex texts as estimates for their impact. The survey targeted Codex Members and its scope included a selection of Codex texts adopted (including revisions or amendments) by CAC between 2015 and 2020.

5. The Codex texts selected in 2022 were:

- *General standard for contaminants and toxins in food and feed (CXS 193-1995);*
- *General principles of food hygiene (CXC 1-1969);*
- *General standard for the labelling of pre-packaged foods (CXS 1-1985); and*
- *General principles for the addition of essential nutrients to foods (CXG 9-1987).*

6. The Codex Secretariat informed CCEXEC84² that a detailed report of the pilot survey on the use and impact of Codex texts, which had been undertaken in 2022 in line with Strategic Goal 3, was now available.³

7. CCEXEC84 noted the report of the pilot survey on the use and impact of Codex texts and its recommendations to the Codex Secretariat, Codex Members, and FAO and WHO, and confirmed that the survey approach, piloted in 2022, should be used as part of the mechanism to monitor the use and impact of Codex texts, considering the lessons learnt to date.⁴

¹ CX/EXEC 22/82/8

² REP23/EXEC1, paragraph 103

³ EXEC84/INF1

⁴ REP23/EXEC1, paragraph 115(iii, iv)

8. In 2023, the four Codex texts selected were:
- *General standard for food additives* (CXS 192-1995);
 - *Guidelines on nutrition labelling* (CXG 2-1985);
 - *Recommended methods of analysis and sampling* (CXS 234-1999); and
 - *Guidelines on performance criteria for methods of analysis for the determination of pesticide residues in food and feed* (CXG 90-2017).
9. The detailed results of the 2022 and 2023 survey were published and are available on the Codex website.⁵ These reports also contain additional information on the survey methodology, approach and definitions.
10. The 2024 Codex survey was carried-out in September-October 2024 and included the following four Codex texts:
- *Principles and guidelines for national food control systems* (CXG 82-2013);
 - *Working principles for risk analysis for food safety for application by governments* (CXG 62-2007);
 - *Maximum residue limits (MRLs) and risk management recommendations (RMRs) for residues of veterinary drugs in foods* (CXM 2); and
 - *Code of practice to minimize and contain foodborne antimicrobial resistance* (CXC 61-2005).
11. The results of the 2024 survey will be published in 2025.

III. Responses to the Codex surveys 2022 and 2023 from Members in the North America and the South West Pacific (NASWP) region

12. Of the 14 Members in the NASWP region, 11 (79%) responded to the 2023 survey and 14 (100%) to the 2022 survey. Of the respondents in 2023, six were High-Income Countries (HICs) and five were Low and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs). CCNAWSP had a lower response rate in 2023 than in 2022, as opposed to the other Codex regions where an increase in responses was observed in 2023.
13. Based on an analysis of Codex Survey in 2022 and 2023, it is evident that Codex texts play a significant role in ensuring food safety and quality worldwide. The survey results show that the large majority of Codex Members (that replied to the survey) are satisfied with the reach, usefulness, and use of Codex texts. There were no significant regional differences related to satisfaction.
15. The survey also indicates that in LMICs, Codex texts have a greater use and impact, and are used more frequently to support legislation, policies, national food control systems (NFCS), university curricula, training, awareness raising, compared to HICs. In contrast, HICs generally have more established food control systems, greater resources, and advanced technical expertise. They often have the capacity to develop and enforce their own food safety regulations, tailored to their specific contexts. While they may still reference international standards, HICs have more autonomy and flexibility in designing and implementing their NFCS.
16. The survey also sought to quantify the extent that nine pre-selected barriers are impeding the use of Codex texts in each country. Below is a summary of identified barriers in the NASWP region in 2023, compared to 2022.

⁵ <https://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/publications/en/>

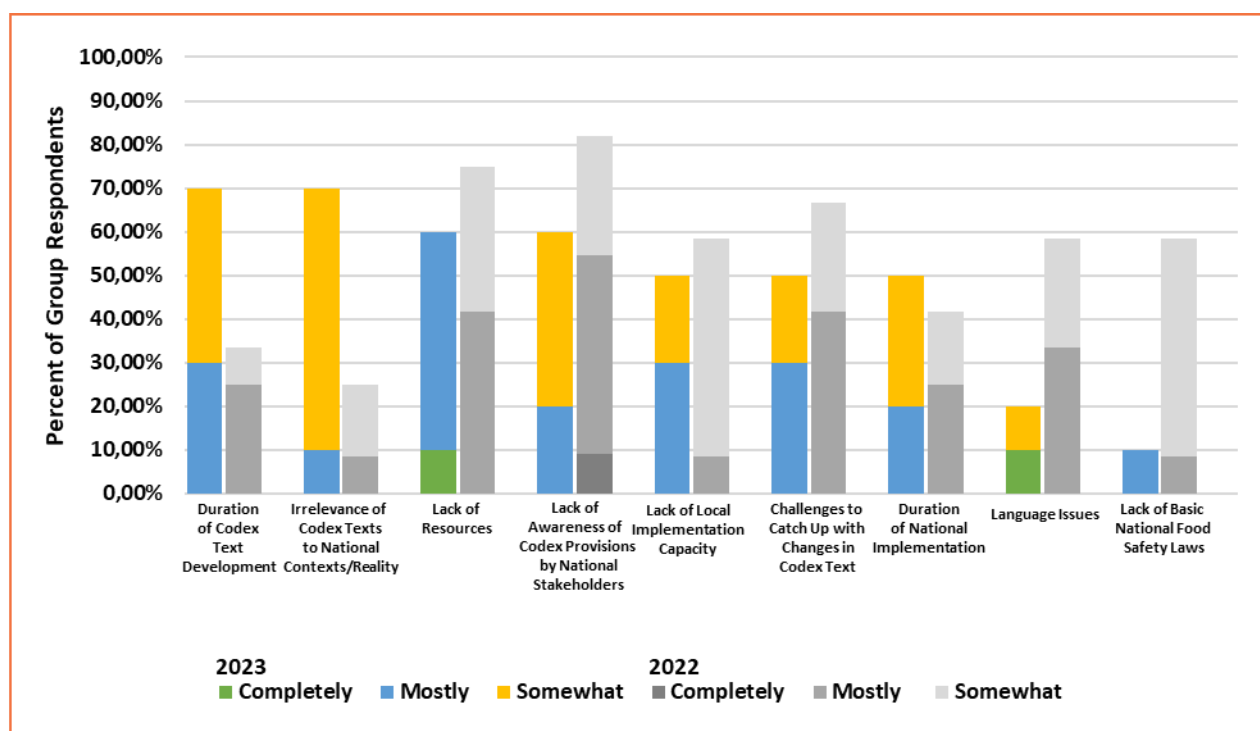


Figure 1 – 2022 and 2023 barriers comparison table based upon responses from Members in the North America and the South West Pacific region

17. In 2023, responses from Members in the NASWP region indicated that the duration of Codex texts development, irrelevance of Codex texts to national contexts/reality, lack of resources and lack of awareness of Codex provisions by national stakeholders were the main barriers impeding the use of Codex texts in the region. Lack of resources was the barrier that received the highest number of 'completely' and 'mostly' replies. On the other hand, language issues and lack of basic national food safety laws were the barriers that scored the lowest in the NASWP region.

18. In 2022, lack of awareness of Codex provisions by national stakeholders and lack of resources were the highest barriers, while the duration of Codex texts development, irrelevance of Codex texts to national contexts/reality were identified as less relevant barriers.

19. The changes between 2022 and 2023 may be due to several factors, including the decrease in the number of replies (from 14 to 11). General conclusions can only be drawn a few years after the survey is conducted, so that trends can be identified. However, insights on the difficulties faced by Members in the region in implementing Codex texts can be gained.

IV. Survey recommendations

20. In light of the overall findings of the 2022 and 2023 Codex surveys, the below general recommendations were proposed.

- (1) Enhance awareness and use of Codex texts: Targeted awareness-raising campaigns in regions where knowledge gaps are identified, to improve understanding and application of Codex texts would be beneficial. These campaigns could include multimedia materials, local workshops, and stakeholder meetings. It is important that Members, with relevant collaborators as needed e.g. the Codex Secretariat, FAO, and WHO, increase advocacy for use of Codex texts, aligning with Goal 3 of the *Codex Strategic Plan*⁶ to boost the recognition and use of standards.
- (2) Promote high-level commitment to food safety and quality: Given that lack of resources and implementation capacity were the key impediments to standard implementation in LMICs, the need for high-level political commitment to food safety and quality governance and standards adoption and implementation is key for many countries. High-level advocacy at national level and demonstration of the benefits of food control systems and standards implementation for consumer health and trade may help secure such support. Members could consider the tools, information and actions needed to achieve such support at national level reaching out to the wider Codex community.

⁶ FAO and WHO. 2020. Codex Strategic Plan 2020–2025. Codex Alimentarius Commission. Rome.

- (3) Strengthen capacity building and training: Members could request support from FAO and WHO for capacity-building programmes targeting the gaps and challenges identified in implementing Codex standards in LMICs.
- (4) Improve dissemination and accessibility: While the Codex Secretariat can continue to enhance the digitalization initiatives for Codex texts to ensure they are easily accessible and can be updated swiftly, a variety of channels are needed to ensure they reach a broad audience, including non-traditional stakeholders. This broader reach could be achieved through the efforts of multiple players including Member and Observer contact points, and FAO and WHO and looking for partners that could provide access to relevant stakeholders.
- (5) Facilitate communication and collaboration: With the support of the Codex Secretariat, Members could foster dialogue and exchange on best practices and dissemination of success stories, case studies, and lessons learned, including through the regional coordinating committees.
- (6) Increase resources and support: Members could continue advocating at the national and international level to support data collection to ensure Codex standards are relevant to Members needs and contexts; to support the activities of FAO and WHO in providing timely scientific advice that is based on broad range of contexts and supporting standards that are optimally reflective of Member needs. Enhanced support at the Member level could help overcome specific challenges such as timely country input into Codex text development and the updating of national food safety laws to align with international standards.
- (7) Implement M&E of Codex texts. The Codex Secretariat could continue with implementing a structured M&E framework to assess the impact of Codex texts on national and global food safety practices. In addition to continuing the annual surveys and case studies, the Codex Secretariat could strengthen partnerships with the WTO to provide additional insights on the trade impacts of Codex texts.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

21. CCNASWP17 is invited to:

- i. Note the overall results of the 2022 and 2023 Codex surveys on the use and impact of Codex text, in particular those relevant to the NASWP region;
- ii. Comment on the recommendations made and possible actions that could be undertaken in the NASWP to address them; and
- iii. Share some additional information on barriers to the use of Codex standards.