

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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OVERVIEW OF INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE FUTURE OF CODEX IN THE CONTEXT OF CODEX@60 CELEBRATIONS – SECRETARIAT REPORT

1. As part of the year-long celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex@60), there have been numerous occasions both outside and inside of Codex meetings when there have been reflections and/or discussions of the achievements of Codex and how it can move forward in a manner that will ensure it remains viable, vibrant, relevant and resilient. This paper aims to highlight some of the reflections shared in these various events, noting they have no formal status. Rather it serves to highlight the strong commitment to and need for Codex, and a great desire to ensure it remains relevant and useful moving forward and as new challenges continue to arise.

Global Forum on Food and Agriculture – Expert panel – Is the Codex system fit for the future? (20 January 2023)¹

2. The panelists included past Codex Chairpersons, delegates and Secretary, a representative of the World Trade Organization as well as the FAO Deputy Director General who reflected on Codex work to date and their own experiences, also highlighting issues that need to be considered for the future. Some of the concluding points of the discussions were as follows:
 - The need to continue to produce food standards that are clear in their objective and are useful for Members.
 - To acknowledge and engage in the debate on related issues but not to lose focus on core business.
 - To build the reputation of Codex so that it is synonymous with safe and healthy foods everywhere.
 - To be agile, flexible and continue to respond to the need for consumer protection as well as global challenges.
 - That Member Countries view Codex committees in such high esteem that they send their best scientists to take part in the work and strong delegates to engage in the Commission so that Codex is seen as a place/area that people aspire to be working in.
 - To continue to reflect (especially from the SDG and sustainability perspectives), recognizing the increasing demand for standards that constitute a whole package for safe and sustainable worlds.
 - Food safety is important, but it's just one of the pillars of food security and sustainability and there needs to be a way to connect with those other pillars.

¹ https://www.gffa-berlin.de/en/expert_panel/fao-who/

CCNASWP16 - Keynote address: lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic for improving food safety – seeding change in Codex

3. This keynote address² highlighted the global backdrop of different national food control legislation, capability and capacity, noting that against this, Codex must necessarily move gradually and incrementally in its progress and change so as to carry all parties along with it. The address emphasized that a vibrant growth mindset, fertilized by the recent experience of the COVID-19 pandemic will enable Codex to be far better prepared for the future. Some specific issues relevant for the NASWP region were also highlighted³.

Opening sessions of Codex subsidiary bodies

4. Opening sessions⁴ with contributions from the Chairperson or Vice-Chairpersons of the CAC, the Codex Secretary, as well as Ministers or heads of agencies in the various host countries were common across subsidiary bodies convened in 2023. Among the key points made at opening sessions were the following:
 - Codex is widely appreciated and the standards it develops are vital and ever relevant in food safety and quality, consumer protection and elimination of trade barriers in a globalized world.
 - Codex enhances understanding and trust in food safety work.
 - The scientific basis of Codex noting Codex has leveraged the best possible science and evidence to support international standard setting and a key attribute is the way it is using science to provide information to consumers about the true nature of the food as well as ensuring fair food trade.
 - The importance of collaboration between different sectors and the need for engagement of governments, industry, and NGOs in Codex. Closer collaboration and interactions between Codex and other global players is essential.
 - The importance of free and open global trade in accelerating sustainable agriculture production and the important role Codex standards play in this transition to protect the health of consumers and facilitate the economically and socially vital international trade in safe food.
 - The importance of public health values and objectives receiving due consideration and appropriate reflection within the Codex Alimentarius.
 - Today's rapid changes in trade, travel and commerce call for an international standards-setting system that can respond more quickly to new situations. Codex is adapting to changing circumstances as well as identifying new areas such as e-commerce as part of market access. etc.
 - With the challenges of food security and the importance of being good stewards of the resources and the environment, Codex serves an important role by providing a transparent forum where science-based standards can be developed.

Participation of Codex Secretariat, Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons in anniversary events.

5. In efforts to continue to build awareness of Codex and the role of Codex standards in this anniversary year, a preliminary list of some of the events that the Codex Secretariat, Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of the Commission have engaged in over the course of this year to date is available on the Codex60 webpage⁵. These highlighted the achievements of Codex thus far, areas where it was developing new work in response to new needs, and some of the challenges and changes to the context in which Codex works and adapts. Adaptation and change have been an important part of Codex since it began and with a sense that Codex standards are now needed as much if not more than 60 years ago, retirement is not on the horizon.

² [CX/NASWP 23/16/2 and https://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/news-and-events/news-details/en/c/1630021/](https://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/news-and-events/news-details/en/c/1630021/)

³ [REP23/NASWP](#)

⁴ Session reports and news stories published in association with the meetings of subsidiary bodies highlight some of the key points made during opening sessions

⁵ <https://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/about-codex/codex60/en/>