



**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR ASIA**

Twenty-second Session

Virtual

12, 13, 14, 17, 18 and 21 October 2022

**DISCUSSION PAPER ON THE REVISED DRAFT STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE (SOP)
FOR CCASIA**

(Prepared by India)

BACKGROUND

1. The FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Asia (CCASIA) is one of the six FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees established by the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC). CCASIA was established at the 11th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) held in Rome, Italy in July 1976. At present, the Committee members include 24 countries from the Asian Region. In line with the terms of reference of FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees as outlined in the Codex Procedural Manual (Section V), the main objective of CCASIA include, among others is the promotion of mutual communication among the Asian members as well as the development of regional standards for certain food products in line with the purpose of the Codex of protecting the health of consumers and ensuring fair practices in the food trade.

2. As per Rule XI-Subsidiary bodies, Para 1[b (ii)] of the Procedural manual, 27th Edition, Coordinating Committees for regions or groups of countries shall exercise general coordination in the preparation of standards relating to such regions or groups of countries and such other functions as may be entrusted to them.

3. During CCASIA20 (2016), discussions were held on the approaches to improve effectiveness of informal meetings of the CCASIA member countries on the sidelines of Codex meetings. Based on the discussions, the Committee agreed to the following:

“Ask the Coordinator (India) to develop a draft SOP (standard operating procedure) for sharing members’ positions, taking into account the SOP developed by CCLAC, for inputs by CCASIA members (the SOP would be informal and would not require adoption or agreement by CCASIA), while retaining the flexibility for country positions” (para 71, REP17/ASIA)

4. While developing the draft SOP for the primary purpose of developing members’ positions, the Coordinator considered it more purposeful if the draft SOP also took into account the terms of reference given in the procedural manual so as to cover all the responsibilities assigned to the Coordinating Committees and to address decisions of the committee with regard to supporting countries to generate data as per the prioritized needs of the region as well as to help other CCASIA members to prepare new work proposals (para 71, REP17/ASIA).

5. Accordingly, a draft SOP was prepared by the coordinator and was discussed during CCASIA21 (2019) under the agenda on “Codex work relevant to the region”.

6. During extensive discussions in the plenary, views expressed by some members included the following:

- i. More detailed information on undertaking activities included in the draft SOP would be required. The SOP should be made available on the Codex website in order to facilitate member’s collaboration on the implementation of the proposed activities;
- ii. Some new procedures such as co-chairing of CCASIA were included in the document, which should be further reviewed to ensure their consistency with the requirements in the Procedural Manual;

- iii. The lists of responsibilities needed to be carefully reviewed to ensure they were within the capacity of the Coordinator and Members (e.g. Section 3.iv) of the draft SOP; and
 - iv. The Coordinator (India) also clarified that the document was not intended to be a formal Codex text or part of the Procedural Manual but a living document that could be refined whenever needed.
7. Based on the discussions, CCASIA21 concluded as follows:
- i. Noted the usefulness of the document and agreed to start using the document internally;
 - ii. Strongly supported its further development; and
 - iii. Agreed to establish an EWG, chaired by India to prepare a revised SOP, based on comments received in this session as well as the experience gained in using the document and any further comments received from Members, for consideration at CCASIA22 under the same agenda item.
8. With respect to the co-chairing of sessions, it may be noted that the issue was extensively discussed in the CCASIA20 (2016) and based on the recommendations of the CCASIA20, India as the Regional Coordinator at that time presented the proposal of co-chairing of Codex Committees at the 74th Session of CCEXEC (2017). CCEXEC74 welcomed the proposal regarding co-chairing in the absence of co-hosting as a positive development, using the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees as an appropriate forum as suggested by CCASIA, and also noted that, since there was no applicable procedure or protocol in place, it was a matter for host countries to experiment with arrangements in this area, underscoring the significant responsibilities involved and preparation required, including consideration of issues such as technical support and the clear delineation of responsibilities. The Codex secretariat also confirmed that there were no procedural impediments to proceeding with this initiative.
9. Based on the recommendations of CCASIA21, the draft SOP has been revised with slight modifications (Annex I). Furthermore, it was noted that in reality the successor Coordinator (China) had applied the draft SOP in some extent.

Points of discussion for EWG members:

10. Regarding the draft SOP, EWG members¹ were requested to provide their views on the following:
- i. What difficulties, if any, could be faced by the member countries in undertaking the responsibilities underlined in the SOP?
 - ii. How could more details be included in the activities proposed in the SOP?
 - iii. In your opinion, are there any activities out of the proposed activities that fall outside the scope of the coordinator or the member country responsibilities?
 - iv. Are there any other activities that could be added to the draft SOP which may be of interest to the region and lead to increased mutual communication and coordination among the member countries?
11. With specific reference to Section 3.iv, of the draft SOP, i.e. "*To present a member country's written position in the plenary session in the absence of their physical participation in the concerned Codex meeting, if requested by the respective member country*", according to the Procedural Manual: (i) Chairpersons should also ensure that the written comments, received in a timely manner, of members and observers not present at the session are considered by the Committee and that all issues are put clearly to the Committee; and (ii) one function of the Coordinator is to assist and coordinate the work of the Codex Committees set up under Rule XI.1(b)(i) in their region or group of countries in the preparation of draft standards, guidelines and other recommendations for submission to the Commission. In the Codex Secretariat's point of view, although there are no clear rules on whether a Coordinator can present their member countries' written comments should there be a need neither are there any procedural impediments to doing so.

Participation and Methodology

12. A draft SOP was prepared by India and posted on EWG online forum for comments. In particular input was sought on the above-mentioned points in para. 10, while also keeping in mind the discussions held in CCASIA21.
13. In response, two members provided their comments (Japan and Thailand).

¹ List attached at Annex- II

14 Based on the first round of comments received, some revisions were made on the draft and posted on EWG online forum for second round of comments. In response, two members have provided their comments (Singapore and Malaysia), and the absence of comments from other Members was considered as agreement with the presented text.

Discussions

15 One member considered that the SOP should not include demanding requirements which may be beyond the provisions in the Procedural Manual and the work prioritizations made by Codex Committees should be also considered for generating data. It was also suggested some changes be made to the section “operating procedures” given in the document and mentioned that some activities fall outside the scope of the Coordinator or the member country responsibilities.

16 Another member mentioned that details about period of time should be included, such as the time to coordinate with all CCPs of the Asian region seeking to identify specific concerns on various agenda items of the Codex meeting. Also there should be an informal meeting by using an online system periodically, not only before a Codex meeting, in order to examine the concerned issues so that each country has enough time for internal consultation. Furthermore, CCASIA should develop communication channels among member countries, such as through regional forums or using social media tools such as WhatsApp.

17 One member expressed an opinion that some CCASIA members are not regarded as Least Developed Countries, but also do not have experience in Codex, especially in terms of chairing a session, and suggested broadening the scope from Least developed countries (LCD) to CCASIA members who are less experienced in Codex. In the second objective of Operating Procedures, it was proposed that a list of Willing Member Countries to be generated and published which would show the commitment of Willing Member Countries to help Concerned Member Countries, and also for Concerned Member Countries to easily reach out to the Willing Member Countries. This member also suggested to encourage Concerned Member Countries to be more proactive in seeking help from Willing Countries.

18 Another member suggested some minor changes in the document and in the section, “responsibilities of member countries”, to encourage active communication between CCASIA members, sharing of information relevant to Codex agenda, including specific concerns if there are any. There was a suggestion that under the section “Operating Procedures”, the outcome of an informal meeting held a week prior to or at the side-lines of a Codex meeting might not be the best option to identify or generate common CCASIA concerns/position as there was not sufficient time for member countries to consider the common regional position. Member countries should be encouraged to share their position/proposal for CCASIA members’ support at the earliest time possible. This could be done by correspondence with assistance from the Regional coordinator.

19 Given the low level of participation in the EWG (comments have been received from only four member countries), some revisions have been kept in square brackets for discussion.

20 The EWG chair has reviewed the proposed draft SOP as presented in CCASIA21 and made some revisions on the basis of two round of comments on the EWG forum; The revised draft SOP presented as Annex I to this document.

Recommendation

21 CCASIA22 is invited to consider the revised draft SOP for CCASIA (Annex I), in particular the text presented in square brackets and the revisions presented in strikethrough and bold & underlined.

The Revised Draft Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) For CCASIA

SCOPE AND OBJECTIVE

1. The Standard Operating Procedure lays down responsibilities and procedures for the Coordinator of CCASIA and member countries so as to promote mutual communication and enhance cooperation among member countries in order to facilitate active participation in Codex through the following objectives:

- To facilitate sharing members' positions in the region
- To help Asian member countries generate and/or submit data in line with the works prioritized ~~needs of~~ **by the Codex Commission and Committees or** the region and prepare new work proposals
- To facilitate and enhance effective involvement of Asian member countries in Codex work and other food safety related work in the region.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF REGIONAL COORDINATOR

2. In addition to the functions outlined in the Codex Procedural Manual, the Regional Coordinator ~~will be responsible for~~ **may address** the following:

- i. Facilitating intra-regional collaborations to serve specific work pertaining to the region;
- ii. Facilitating mutual communication among ~~Asian member~~ **CCASIA member countries** through informal meetings and other means;
- iii. Conducting informal meetings of Asian member countries including physical meetings on the side-lines of each Codex Committee meeting and video conferencing;
- iv. Presenting a member country's written position in the plenary session in the absence of their physical participation in the concerned Codex meeting, if requested by the respective member country;
- v. Encouraging member countries to provide support to other countries position;
- vi. Encouraging member countries to help other CCASIA members to prepare new work proposals and to generate and submit data;
- vii. Encouraging ~~least developed~~ countries **[with less experience in codex]** to co-chair CCASIA meetings;
- viii. Organising co-chairing of CCASIA sessions ~~[by an expert from]~~ with a country with less experience in Codex ~~[least developed country]~~;
- ix. Encouraging capacity building programs in food safety; and
- x. Maintaining **ing** and updating CCASIA website in collaboration with the Codex Secretariat.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBER COUNTRIES

3. Member countries ~~will be responsible for~~ **may address** the following:

- i. Communicating regularly with other member countries;
- ii. Sharing relevant information and ~~specific concerns on the~~ **country position on matters of interest including specific concerns on the Codex Committees** Agenda Items with Regional Coordinator;
- iii. Participating actively in informal CCASIA meetings so that the regional concerns are duly noted and could be raised in the plenary session of the Codex meetings;
- iv. Engaging actively in collaborative projects for joint monitoring of matters of interest such as contaminants or pesticide and veterinary drug residue levels in foods, which could augment submission of the data at the regional level in a more inclusive manner;
- v. Responding to the regional questionnaires circulated by the Regional Coordinator/Codex Secretariat/FAO and WHO;
- vi. **Submitting the position of the member country in written form and** formally requesting the Regional coordinator to raise their written position in the plenary session of a Codex Committee in the absence of their physical participation, as appropriate;
- vii. Sharing updated Codex Contact Point information with the Regional Coordinator and the Codex Secretariat;

- viii. ~~Sharing the experiences gained with respect to food safety emergency situations and~~ Identifying critical and emerging issues in the region including those that could possibly be brought forward for discussion in Codex;
- ix. Assisting each other in the preparation of new work proposals including sharing relevant data and scientific expert advice;
- x. Contributing to training/ workshop, organized or coordinated by the Regional Coordinator (For those members having wider experience in food safety or Codex); and
- xi. Confirming their willingness to help countries with lesser experience in Codex.

OPERATING PROCEDURES²

Objective 1: To facilitate sharing members' positions in the region		
Activities	Procedures	Responsible Party
1.1 Sharing relevant information and country position on matters of interest including specific concerns with all CCASIA members in respect of Codex agenda items	Coordinate with all CCPs of Asian region members seeking relevant information and country position on matters of interest including specific concerns members wish to share on various agenda items of the Codex meeting	RC (Regional Coordinator)
	Provide relevant information and country position on matters of interest including specific concern(s), if any	MC (Member country)
1.2 Agenda for the Informal meetings	Prepare agenda for the meeting based on the provisional agenda of the respective Codex committee meeting and concerns received from member countries	RC
	Circulate agenda to all member countries	RC
	Respond to the agenda- concerns/issues well in advance	MC
1.3 (a) Organising informal meetings through VC (Video conferencing)	Decide the date and time for the meeting taking into account the time zones, which should preferably be held at least one week prior to the Codex meeting	RC
	Send invitation to all member countries	RC
	Respond to the Regional Coordinator's invitation	MC
(b) Organising informal meeting on the sidelines of the Codex meeting	Arrange informal meetings on the side-lines of Codex Committee/ CAC meetings (Date and venue), Liaise with the host country of the respective Codex Committee for venue arrangements	RC
	Send out invitation to all member countries	RC
	Respond to the Regional coordinator's invitation	MC
	Prepare and circulate minutes of the meeting	RC

² The table below is closely linked with the implementation of the regional workplan on the Codex strategic plan 2020-2025.

Based on the discussions held during these informal meetings, common regional concern/position shall be formulated for deliberation together with support from each MC in the plenary session		
Objective 2: To help member countries to generate and submit data in line with the prioritized needs of the region and/ or to prepare new work proposal under various Codex committees		
Activities	Procedures	Responsible Party
2.1 Identification of specific concerns/issues (on which data needs to be generated) in the region	Coordinate with all CCPs of Asian region seeking specific areas of concern/interest on which data is required and new work proposals are required	RC
	Respond to the Regional coordinator's communication <u>call for specific areas of concern/ interest</u>	MC
	Prepare a list of <u>identified</u> areas of concern/interest <u>identified by the various member countries</u>	RC
2.2 To help member countries to generate/submit data	Seek willingness of <u>Generate a list of willing</u> member countries to help other member countries to generate and/or submit data on the identified specific area of concern/interest	RC/MC
	<u>Concerned member countries may seek help from Willing member countries</u> Willing member countries may also initiate help to other member countries	MC/willing countries
2.3 To help member countries to prepare new work proposal	Seek willingness of <u>Generate a list of willing</u> member countries to help other member countries in preparing new work proposals	RC
	Member countries may organise workshops, training programs, video conferencing etc. in collaboration, to enhance the capacity of other member countries for preparing new work proposals	MC/willing countries
Objective 3: To enhance effective involvement in Codex and other food safety related work to facilitate trade:		
Activities	Procedures	Responsible Party
3.1 Capacity building among the Asian countries to strengthen their National Codex structure	Organize/encourage members to participate in workshops/side events	RC
	Encourage member countries with stronger National Codex Structures and National Food Control System to conduct workshops either on their own or in collaboration with Codex Secretariat/FAO/WHO	RC/willing countries
	Participate in workshops organized for the member countries for capacity building	MC
	<u>Create a list of countries willing to help member countries with less developed Codex structures/member countries confirm their willingness</u>	<u>RC/MC</u>

3.2 Sub-regional groups having wider experience in food safety to proactively organise trainings/ workshops in other countries of the region	Member countries may seek support from sub-regional groups for capacity building in areas of concern	MC
	Seek willingness of sub-regional groups to help other member countries that need capacity building in identified areas	Willing sub-regional groups/ MC
	Willing sub-regional groups may initiate help to other member countries	Willing sub-regional groups/ MC
3.3 Harmonization with Codex Standards	Seek information from member countries who need support for harmonization of national standards with Codex	RC
	Seek willingness of Generate a list of willing member countries to help other member countries that need harmonization of national standards with Codex	RC/MC
	<u>Concerned member countries may seek help from Willing member countries</u> Willing member countries may initiate help to other member countries	MC/willing countries
3.4 Sharing of experiences in Food Safety emergency situations and identified critical and emerging issues	Request members to share information regarding incidents and experiences/learnings gained through food safety emergency situations <u>/suggestions/ experiences on the identified critical and emerging issues</u>	RC
	Members to share information/ suggestions/experiences on the identified critical and emerging issues to Regional Coordinator	Member country
	Template may be prepared in which information can be provided by members	RC
	Compilation and analysis of the information collected to provide a regional overview of commonalities and differences in respect of critical and emerging issues in the region	RC
	All information to be posted on CCASIA website	RC
3.5 Sharing of information to facilitate trade	Member countries to share information and links on relevant national legislation	MC
	All information to be posted on CCASIA website	RC

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

S. No.	EWG on Proposed Draft Standard for Fresh Dates
1	Chair P. Karthikeyan Joint Director Food Safety and Standards Authority of India Ministry of Health and Family Welfare India
2	Jeerajit Dissana Standards Officer National Bureau of Agricultural Commodity and Food Standards (ACFS), Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives Thailand
3	Natthakarn Nammakuna Standards Officer National Bureau of Agricultural Commodity and Food Standards (ACFS), Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives Thailand
4	Jieun Lee Ministry of Food and Drug Safety Republic of Korea
5	Nuurul Hidayah Sharipan Assistant Director Food Safety and Quality Division Ministry of Health Malaysia
6	Codexjapan FAO/WHO Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare Japan
7	Codex MAFF Japan
8	Jiang YiFan Observer Organization Head of Science & Regulatory Affairs Food Industry Asia (FIA)
9	Jing Yi Observer Organization Senior Advocacy and Regulatory Affairs Manager

	International Organization of the Flavor Industry (IOFI)
10	Teresa Lo Yee Yii Observer Organization Food Industry Asia Singapore
11	Simone Soo Hoo Observer Organization ICBA Director of Global Affairs International Council of Beverages Associations USA