

***VIEW FROM
THE HEAD
TABLE:
Chairpersons
Reflect on
50 Years
of Codex***

CODEX **5** 
ALIMENTARIUS 1963-2013

Dear Codex Colleagues,

The U.S. Codex Office is pleased to offer this booklet, in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC), with reflections from recent CAC Chairs, starting from Mr. Eddie Kimbrell, all the way to the current Chair, Mr. Sanjay Dave. Codex has changed and grown tremendously since its inception and this is reflected in their contributions. We have much to celebrate.

In the past 50 years, international trade in food has increased exponentially in terms of volume, value, and variety. Codex has contributed significantly to ensuring that growth in trade enhances food safety for consumers and promotes fair trade practices. Codex standards provide the harmonized, science-based approaches needed to ensure that foods are safe to eat, accurately labeled, and of standard quality to the benefit of consumers worldwide.

The United States commends the CAC for successfully carrying out its vital dual mission of protecting the health of consumers and ensuring fair practices in the international food trade. Many remarkable achievements are a direct result of the competence and dedication of the Codex Chairs throughout the years.

May future Chairs help Codex meet and surpass the challenges we will face in the next 50 years and beyond as we seek to meet the food security and food safety needs of a growing world.

Now, let's take a step back in time and reflect on the wisdom and insights of the Codex Chairs who have guided us thus far and contributed to this booklet...

Mary Frances Lowe
U.S. Manager for Codex Alimentarius

From 1961-63, there were a series of FAO and WHO conferences that :

- ➔ *Established the Codex Alimentarius*
- ➔ *Created an international food standards program jointly between FAO and WHO*
- ➔ *Established a Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC)*

CAC 1963



The 1st Session of the CAC took place in Rome, Italy, from June 25-July 3, 1963. There were 120 Delegates from 30 countries and Observers from 16 International Organisations. The first session of the CAC was chaired by Dr. J.L. Harvey of the United States of America.

CAC 2012

Fast forward to the 35th Session of the CAC, 49 years later (2012)... there were over 623 Delegates from 148 Members and Observers from 37 International Organisations. This session of the CAC was chaired by Mr. Sanjay Dave of India.



Mr. Sanjay DAVE
17th Codex Alimentarius Chair
Elected in 2011 (34th Session) & in 2012 (35th Session)
Current Chair

My journey with Codex began in 1999. Honestly speaking, initially my comments on texts mostly used to be of editorial nature. Later, as interaction with colleagues from members increased, my inputs improved. In my observation, this has been true of most new participants. A secret that I wish to share is that my hearsay knowledge about Codex that it was only a rich man's club dissipated within a short time and I started believing in Codex. And soon, Codex became my bread and butter. Over time, I saw value in the Codex process.



Since 2006, I started taking more responsibilities through CCFH and CCFV and later as a part of the CCEXEC, and eventually the CAC. Chairing the Commission in 2012 for the first time was like baptism by fire. But it was a very rewarding experience. Successful conduct of the session was possible because the members were extremely cooperative and calm.



An important point is that the Chair must be absolutely fair and there can be no compromise on this. He/she must inspire complete trust in the members.

My biggest learning from Codex is that the Chair must develop a thorough understanding of every aspect of the issue under discussion, be it scientific, trade, capacity to adopt a standard or any other matter. One has to read and read, and make notes to address the respective concerns in line with the mandate and procedure. Everyone may not be happy with a decision but each member should go satisfied that their concern was properly heard and addressed. An important point is that the Chair must be absolutely fair and there can be no compromise on this. He/she must inspire complete trust in the members.

Today, I am happy building capacity in India to harmonize India's standards with those of Codex. The day India is able to complete this process, it would be my proudest moment. The skills learned in Codex are very helpful. In my view, the Codex fraternity should consider providing an opportunity of becoming the Codex Chair or a Vice-Chair to officials from as many countries as possible. It provides a lot of sensitization about Codex to that country to take new initiatives in food safety.



Dr. Karen L. Hulebak
United States of America
16th Codex Alimentarius Chair
Elected in 2008 (31st Session), 2009 (32nd Session)
& in 2010 (33rd Session)



Codex has always insisted that science must be the foundation of its decision-making. As Vice Chair and Chair, my observation (shared by many others), was that Codex decision-making is increasingly shaped - and in some cases, distorted - by larger geopolitical, trade, and economic issues.

To ensure that its standards remain relevant and truly reflective of the views of all member countries, Codex must accommodate country-specific concerns without compromising its core principles.

Codex's fidelity to these principles - decision-making based on science, aided by decision-making tools crafted to serve the globally relevant interests and economic and technological realities of all member countries, regardless of the size of their economies - must be preserved. Codex has employed these principles to adopt thousands of new standards by consensus.

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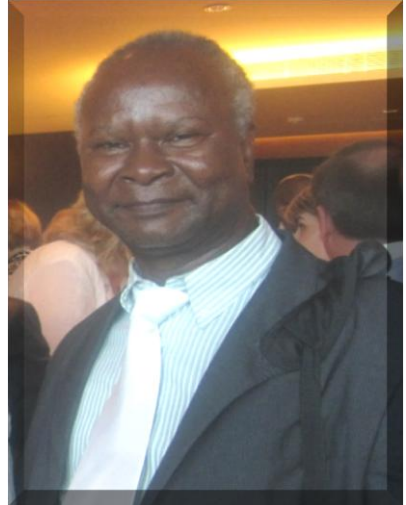


As Chair, I was honored to work with Codex member countries to establish principled negotiation - negotiation grounded in core Codex principles, and emphasizing more structured preparation -- as Codex standard operating procedure.

Such greater professionalism among delegates bodes well for Codex's future, especially in light of the admirable status Codex holds today: producing standards as fast as, or faster than, other normative bodies, while its processes remain open, transparent, and inclusive to a degree that no other international intergovernmental organization can match.

Dr. Claude J.S. Mosh
Tanzania
15th Codex Alimentarius Chair
Elected in 2005 (28th Session), 2006 (29th Session)
& in 2007 (30th Session)

Dr. Claude Mosh worked with the Tanzania Bureau of Standards as a Food Standards Officer from 1980, rising to Chief Food Standards Officer and Head of the Agriculture and Food Section in 1990. In the realm of Codex, Dr. Mosh served as the Africa Region Codex Representative and as Codex Vice-Chairperson under Sandy Slorach's tenure as Chair. In 2005, Dr. Mosh was elected as the first African Chair to the Codex Alimentarius Commission.



Following the 2006 CAC Session, Dr. Mosh remarked:

"Codex is one of the best examples where an international forum with parallel objectives of promoting public health and food trade can achieve win-win solutions through negotiations based on sound science and conducted in the spirit of cooperation."

Dr. Mosh has given several presentations in regional and international fora on food safety and quality management. He has also taken up several food safety and quality consultancies and assignments with the FAO and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).



While still Chair of the CAC, in January 2007, Dr. Moshia delivered remarks on Codex's future, and how it will depend on:

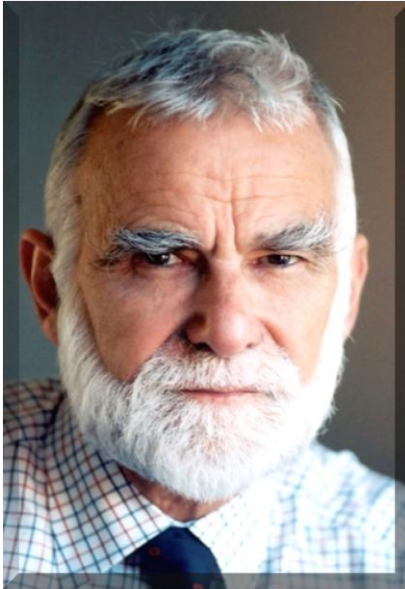
- Being able to meet expectations of members by being more efficient and faster as per the recommendations from the 2002 [Codex] Evaluation;
- Being able to respond timely to newly emerging food safety issues;
- Being able to adhere to the principles of transparency and inclusiveness in the Codex process. The Codex Trust Fund has enabled greater participation from developing countries in Codex activities, including the development and utilization of a Training Package for enhancing participation in Codex activities; and
- The determination and honesty by Codex members to continue valuing even more—the work and existence of Codex—then as seen by the founding fathers and mothers back in the early sixties by thinking and acting globally—as citizens of the world—as boundaries and borders for food safety issues and concerns are less defined or non-existent at our times than then.

Dr. Stuart “Sandy” SLORACH

Sweden

14th Codex Alimentarius Chair

Elected in 2003 (26th Session) & in 2004 (27th Session)



Participation in Codex activities for many years and knowing personally many of the people who represented Members and Observers was of great benefit to me in chairing Commission meetings, especially when dealing with controversial issues.

Two outstanding CAC Secretaries, Alan Randell and Kazuaki Miyagishima, and their dedicated, highly competent, overworked and friendly staff provided excellent briefing.

The experience gained working in my predecessor Tom Billy's team and support from the Vice-Chairs made my job much easier.

Codex has benefitted greatly from the increased active participation of developing countries, due in part to support from the Trust Fund, and made its perspective more global.

I welcome the increased focus on health protection and the closer cooperation with OIE to promote a whole food chain approach and I hope that FAO and WHO can find ways to increase the meagre resources allocated to Codex.

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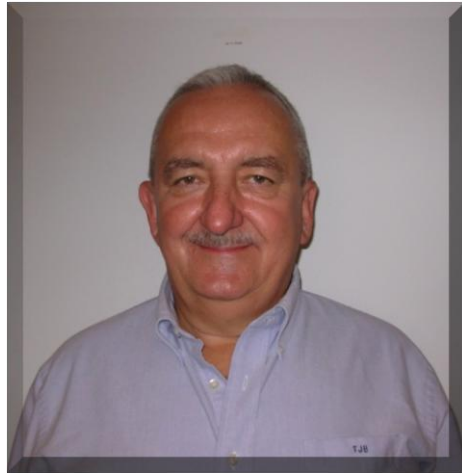


Experience in chairing Commission meetings and discussions with people from both developed and developing countries has been of great value to me in my work outside Codex, for example in chairing the Management Board of the European Food Safety Authority and the OIE Working Group on Animal Production Food Safety and in projects aimed at improving food safety in developing and in-transition countries.

Mr. Thomas BILLY

**United States of America
13th Codex Alimentarius Chair
Elected in 1999 (23rd Session) & in 2001 (24th Session)
Presided over the 2003 Extraordinary 25th Session**

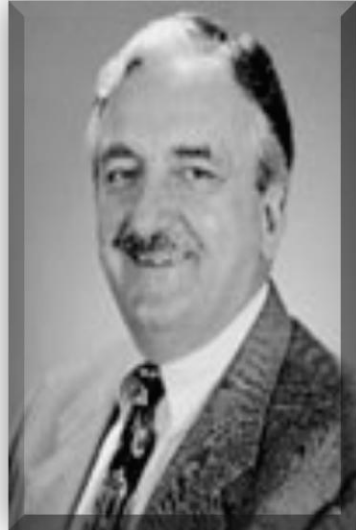
My involvement in Codex began in the early 1970's as a technical expert supporting the U.S. Delegation to the Fisheries Products Committee. My first participation in the meetings of the Committee and Commission occurred in the late 1970's.



I led the U.S. Delegation to the Fisheries Products Committee in the early 1990's. It was during this period I realized the real potential of Codex, particularly with respect to developing countries. As a result, I pursued a much greater involvement in the policies and future direction of Codex work.

I led the U.S. Delegation to the Commission meetings from 1994 - 1997, when I was elected a Vice Chairman of Codex. During this time I campaigned for improvements in the Codex process, the establishment of strategic planning, and greater participation of developing countries at both the Committee and Commission levels.

I led successful efforts to streamline the Codex procedures; provide for accelerated approval of standards; the development and approval of the first Codex Strategic Plan; annual Commission meetings; and, the establishment of the WHO/FAO Trust Fund...



I was elected Chairman of Codex in 1999 and served four years in that capacity. I led successful efforts to streamline the Codex procedures; provide for accelerated approval of standards; the development and approval of the first Codex Strategic Plan; annual Commission meetings; and, the establishment of the WHO/FAO Trust Fund for supporting the participation of qualified representatives from developing countries.

All in all, much has been accomplished by Codex over its first fifty years, and I am proud to have been given an opportunity to participate and provide leadership at a critical time in its history.

Prof. Dr. Pakdee POTHISIRI

Thailand

12th Codex Alimentarius Chair

Elected in 1995 (21st Session) & in 1997 (22nd Session)



I was elected Chairman of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex) [and presided over] 2 consecutive terms (22nd and 23rd sessions). It was indeed a great honor and pleasure to serve in this capacity not only for me but also for my country, Thailand, which has long been recognized for its continued support for food safety and fair practices in the international food trade.

As we all know, Codex is the international body responsible for establishing food standards, guidelines and recommendations which are benchmark standards of WTO - SPS and TBT for international trade in food commodities. Codex standards, guidelines and recommendations also serve as references to many countries around the world in developing their own standards and best practices in food safety.

During my terms as Chair, a score of Codex Standards, Guidelines and Recommendations were developed and adopted. Among these are two guidelines which I would like to highlight:

- 1) Guidelines for the Production, Processing, Labeling and Marketing of the Organically Production, Produced Foods; and

2) Guidelines for the Development of Equivalence regarding Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification System.

Both guidelines had significant impact on the promotion and advocacy of food safety and fair international trade in food.

I recall that while serving as Chair, it had been a great challenge for me to perform my tasks, having to strictly adhere to the principles of fairness and impartiality when engaging with delegations at the Commission's meetings, while at the same time trying to achieve all targets within an established timeframe. For any accomplishment during my tenure as Chair, I must give credit to all the members of the Codex Secretariat and national delegations to the Codex bodies.



Last but not least, I wish to reiterate that my close association with Codex has not only provided me many memorable and rewarding experiences, but also an impetus for Thailand to modernize its food safety system to be in compliance with Codex's Standards, Guidelines and Recommendations and risk analysis principles. I wish Codex every success in its important work and future endeavors.

Prof. Dr. Florentinus Gregorius WINARNO
Indonesia
11th Codex Alimentarius Chair
Elected in 1991 (19th Session) & in 1993 (20th Session)



I always appreciate having the honor of chairing the CAC for two terms (1991-1995). During that period of time, the world of food safety as well as international trade, were not as complex as today's conditions. However, it does mean that everything was easier to handle and overcome. As the proverb says, "Every face has a story. Every scar has a tale."

I should admit that I had a wonderful time during that time. Not because we could overcome many of the world's food safety problems, but because I had the opportunity to learn of the enormous complexity of the world's food safety and how by working together we can be united and strengthened, internationally.

It proved that Codex standards are indeed dynamic in nature. The Codex mechanism survived in meeting every challenge, and reached sustainable good growth from time to time. So many emerging factors that trigger updating of food safety regulations since that time, such as: global warming, GMO, free market and globalization, from tariff barriers to non tariff barriers.

New analytical technology development and advanced instrumentations considered as the leaping of technology, trigger revolution of regulation, including labeling and consumer's right to choose, such as organic, halal, veggie, allergens, etc.

The CAC has passed the torch of leadership from one generation to the next, coming along very smoothly. And it is nice to watch and witness that the quality of the new generation of leaders in the CAC continue to be much better, wiser, and more productive. As one journey of leadership ends, another begins, but since Codex is dynamic in nature, our journey is only just beginning.



May I, in this very important event of time of the CODEX GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY, wish you all CONGRATULATIONS, and may His love, grace, and care continue to be upon you in the year to come.

Ing. Eduardo Rafael MÉNDEZ RUBELLO
Mexico
10th Codex Alimentarius Chair
Elected in 1987 (17th Session) & in 1989 (18th Session)



Eduardo developed his technical expertise mainly through participation in the Mexican food industry, where he founded many different companies and built a strong reputation that eventually took him, as a representative of the Mexican government, to *Chair of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (FAO/WHO)* for two periods.

From very early in his professional life, Mendez was involved with professional and technical associations where he occupied important positions of responsibility. Amongst the most challenging was the founding of the Mexican Section of the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT); as well as work with the main body of the Institute in Chicago, where he participated as Chairperson of many committees and was a member of the Executive Committee.

Since 1966, Eduardo was involved as a representative of the Mexican government to the Codex Alimentarius Commission. He was appointed Coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean (CCLAC), then Vice-Chair for four periods, and

Chair from 1987 -1991. Later, he remained an advisor to Codex, and dedicated most of his efforts to assisting governments around the world and multinational corporations dealing with the intricacies of world trade and food legislation.

Eduardo left behind a legacy of contributions to the use of science in food. Also he was an example of how much a person can do by collaborating in organizations both nationally and internationally. He had the same entrepreneurial and youthful spirit until 2004, when he passed away, having attended still that year's session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (CCFFV). Incidentally, that Committee was assigned to Mexico (becoming the first developing country to Chair a Codex Committee) thanks to the work of Eduardo, among others... and is still hosted by Mexico to this day.



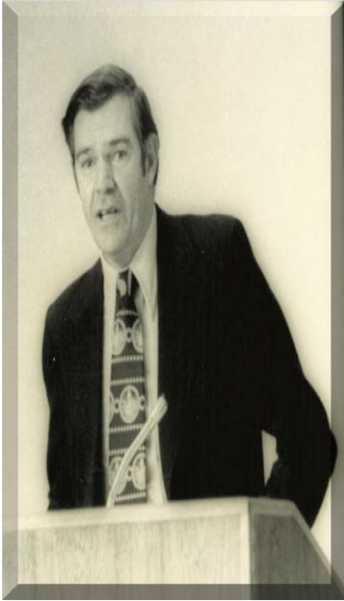
Eduardo always had a great sense of humor; he was always willing to learn something new and interesting and he loved Tequila. He worked hard for his country and the international community. He would have liked to be remembered with a smile.

“Arriba, abajo, al centro y p’adentro”

Eduardo’s famous Tequila toast (with the shot in his hand):
“Up, down, to the center and all in”

**A special thank you to Mr. Carlos R. Berzunza Sánchez, former CCFFV Chair, as well as to Mr. Alfonso Moncada and Mr. Carlos Lomelin for compiling this contribution on behalf of Eduardo Méndez.*

Mr. Eddie Kimbrell
United States of America
9th Codex Alimentarius Chair
Elected in 1983 (15th Session) & in 1985 (16th Session)



Codex affected my career greatly—Codex, like me, was very young when I started at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). After a year of training at Stanford University courtesy of the USDA, I was looking for something different in USDA...George Grange, Deputy Administrator of the Agricultural Commodity Service, was the U.S. representative to Codex at the time. He asked if I wanted to work with him on Codex, something I knew very little about, but it started me on a career where I eventually headed up the Codex Office.

Many changes over the years...Codex standards setting first started with the Acceptance Procedure which was not completely defined or tested. There were 3 categories: “Full Acceptance;” “Minor Deviation;” and “No Acceptance.” It didn’t work. I remember the United States accepted the Margarine Standard with the “Minor Deviation” of no fish oil, but this was problematic because to others, this was a major issue. This all eventually changed; more time was spent on discussing minor versus major deviation than was spent in developing the standard.

There were some very sharp guys before me who served as Chair. I have fond memories of Gerard Weill from France...we eventually became good friends. Our families visited each other; his son and daughter (twins) even came

to the States to spend one summer with my family. Ed Mendez, the CAC Chair after me, was a good friend also and did an excellent job as Chair. In fact, we collaborated to establish the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (CCFFV).

Consumer groups have done a good job overall...they have gone from being the “naysayers”—anti new technology, anti innovations— to working with Codex for the public good. I would like to give credit to the consumers groups for that. Biotechnology—boon to humans and to the food industry...as far as I know, there is no proof of harm to human health.



My proudest accomplishment came during the Tokyo Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) Negotiations, where I helped draft a White Paper on Codex as the cornerstone for food standards by allowing international trade, but with an enforcement mechanism. The challenge was that before, there was no enforcement mechanism for Codex Standards. This was the biggest boon since it ensured a mandatory system of recognizing Codex Standards in dispute settlement procedures. This was a major turnaround for Codex—it started being taken much more seriously, especially by developed countries.

The toughest job of any Chair is to convince delegates and delegations of the need to work toward the public good, because every country comes with its own agenda. This is tough, not just for chairs, but also for country representatives as well. And that is my advice to Chairs—look

always toward the public good...need to overcome country bias.

One additional thought...during my tenure, I chaired a meeting on establishing ground rules for what the FAO and WHO could do to promote Codex. It may be time for another meeting like this...the Budgetary and other Systems of the FAO and WHO are powerful and could benefit from another meeting such as this one held in 1991.

NOTES

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