

## PROCESS BY WHICH THE CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD HYGIENE (CCFH) WILL UNDERTAKE ITS WORK

### Purpose

1. The following guidelines are established to assist the CCFH to:
  - Identify, prioritize and efficiently carry out its work; and
  - Interact with FAO/WHO and their scientific bodies as the need arises.

### Scope

2. These guidelines apply to all work undertaken by the CCFH and encompass: guidelines and procedures for proposing new work (including the revision of existing codes of hygienic practice); criteria and procedures for considering the priorities for proposed and existing work; procedures for implementing new work; and a process by which CCFH will obtain scientific advice from FAO/WHO.

### Proposals for new work

3. Proposals for new work to be undertaken by CCFH should follow the process outline below. In addition to the provisions applying to proposals for new work in the *Procedural Manual*, the proposals for new work should include a Risk Profile<sup>1</sup>, as appropriate. The proposals for new work should indicate the specific nature or outcome of the new work being proposed (e.g. new or revised code of hygienic practice, risk management guidance document).

4. The proposals for new work will typically address a food hygiene issue of public health significance. It should describe in as much detail as possible, the scope and impact of the issue and the extent to which it impacts on international trade.

5. The proposal for new work may also:

- Address an issue that affects progress within CCFH or by other committees, provided it is consistent with the mandate of CCFH;
- Facilitate risk analysis activities; or
- Establish or revise general principles or guidance. The need to revise existing CCFH texts may be to reflect current knowledge and/or improve consistency with the *General Principles of Food Hygiene* (CXC 1-1969) or with other codes of practice.

### Criteria for evaluating and prioritizing new work

6. In addition to the provisions applying to the proposals for new work contained in the *Codex Procedural Manual*, the following criteria and associated weighting factors will be used in evaluating new work priorities to assist in determining the priority for new work to be undertaken by CCFH. Standards older than five years or those with duplication or inconsistency with existing codes should also be assessed by the criteria below to determine their need for revision.

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<sup>1</sup> Definition of a risk profile is “the description of the food safety problem and its context” (Codex Alimentarius Commission, *Procedural Manual*). The elements of a risk profile are provided in the *Principles and Guidelines for the Conduct of Microbiological Risk Management* (CXG 63-2007).

Criterion	Rating
Currency of Information – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there new information/data that would justify the need to review the existing code(s) or establish a new one?</li> <li>• Are there new technologies that would justify the need to review existing codes or establish a new one?</li> <li>• Is there duplication or inconsistency with existing codes that should be addressed?</li> </ul>	Yes/No
Positive impact of new work on public health – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would new work result in a document that could have a positive impact on public health?</li> <li>• How significant is the impact to public health, e.g. foodborne risk to public health?</li> </ul>	High 20 Medium 14 Low 8
Impact of trade due to the public health risk*	Global Trade Impact, High Consumption: 10 Regional Trade Impact, High Consumption: 5 Global Trade Impact, Low Consumption: 4 Regional Trade Impact, Low Consumption: 2 No trade impact: 0

\*Risk<sup>2</sup> is defined as a function of the probability of an adverse health effect and the severity of that effect, consequential to a hazard in food. The hazard may be a biological, chemical or physical agent in, or condition of, food that has the potential to cause an adverse health effect.

The criteria are applied in a stepwise manner.

Step 1:

Assess currency of information.

- Is there new information/data that would justify the need to review the existing code(s) or establish a new one?
- Are there new technologies that would justify the need to review existing codes or establish a new one?
- Is there duplication or inconsistency with existing codes that should be addressed?

If the answer is “yes” to any of these questions, proceed with Step 2. If the answer to all these questions is “No,” there is no justification for new work in the area at this time, and no need to apply the remaining criteria for prioritization. Standards older than five years for which there is no new information should be retained in the Forward Workplan (clearly separated within the table) for consideration at a later time.

Step 2:

Assess the public health impact:

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<sup>2</sup> Codex Procedural Manual

Would the proposed new code, or the revisions to an existing code to be revised, result in a document that could have a positive impact on public health? How significant is the public health risk, e.g. foodborne risk to public health? The public health risk should be based on documented convincing or probable scientific evidence of adverse health effects or potential adverse health effects including morbidity and/or mortality due to a biological, chemical or physical agent in, or condition of the food. The *Working Principles for Risk Analysis for Application in the Framework of the Codex Alimentarius*<sup>3</sup> should be referenced when determining the public health risk.

Apply rating points as follows:

20 – the proposed new code or the proposed revisions to an existing code are likely to have a high public health impact (e.g. the hazard presents a high risk of illness/outbreaks or the provisions to be incorporated are reasonably likely to mitigate the risk from a hazard)

14 – the proposed new code or the proposed revisions to an existing code are likely to have a medium public health impact (e.g. the hazard presents a medium risk (lower probability or severity than other hazards) or the provisions to be incorporated can reduce but not eliminate the risk from a hazard)

8 – the proposed new code or the proposed revisions to an existing code will have little or no impact on public health (e.g. the hazard presents a low risk (low probability and severity), the provisions to be incorporated have minimal impact on the risk from a hazard)

Step 3:

Assess the impact of the work on trade:

Is the food traded globally or only in particular regions? Is the food one that is frequently consumed or is consumption generally low?

In addition to ranking the project based on the criteria, the Forward Workplan should include information on whether the proposal contains a project document<sup>4</sup> or discussion paper (a project document must be submitted to the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) for approval of new work) and whether the project requires FAO/WHO assistance (see "Obtaining scientific advice"). The need for FAO/WHO assistance may impact the timing of taking on new work due to FAO/WHO resource constraints.

### **Process for considering proposals for new work**

7. To facilitate the process of managing the work of the Committee, CCFH may establish an ad hoc Working Group for the Establishment of CCFH Work Priorities ("ad hoc Working Group") at each Session, in accordance with the Guidelines on Physical Working Groups.

8. The Codex Committee on Food Hygiene will, normally, employ the following process for undertaking new work.

- i. A request for proposals for new work and/or revision of an existing standard will be issued in the form of a Codex circular letter, if required.
- ii. Proposals for new work received in response to the Codex Circular Letter will be transmitted to the Host of the ad hoc Working Group as well as the CCFH Host government and Codex Secretariats. Proposals should describe the new work and provide a rationale for taking up the new work. The proposal may include a project document to facilitate sending a request to the CAC for approval; the absence of a project document could delay approval of new work.
- iii. The Host of the ad hoc Working Group will collate the proposals for new work in a document that will be distributed by the Codex Secretariat to Codex Members and Observers for review and comment within a specified time frame.

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<sup>3</sup> Codex Alimentarius Commission, *Procedural Manual*.

<sup>4</sup> The elements of a project document are described in the Codex Alimentarius Commission, *Procedural Manual*.

- iv. The ad hoc Working Group will meet as decided by the Committee, normally on the day prior to the plenary session of CCFH, to develop recommendations for consideration by the Committee during the CCFH session. The ad hoc Working Group will review the proposals for new work along with comments submitted. It will verify the completeness and compliance with the prioritization criteria of the proposals for new work and make recommendations to the Committee on whether the proposals for new work should be accepted, denied, or returned for additional information.
- v. If accepted, a recommendation will be provided on the priority of the proposal for new work compared to pre-established priorities. The priority of the proposals for new work will be established using the guidelines presented above. Proposals for new work of lower priority may be delayed if resources are limiting. Proposals for new work of lower priority not recommended may be reconsidered at the next CCFH session. If the ad hoc Working Group recommends that a proposal for new work be “denied” or “returned for revision,” a justification for this recommendation will be provided.
- vi. At the CCFH session, the ad hoc Working Group Chair will introduce the recommendations of the ad hoc Working Group to the Committee. The CCFH will decide whether a proposal for new work and/or revision of an existing standard is accepted, returned for revision, or denied. If accepted, a project document, which may include amendments agreed upon by the Committee, will be prepared by the CCFH (or, if a project document was submitted with the proposed work, CCFH may recommend revisions) and submitted to the CAC with a request for approval of the proposed new work.
- vii. The CCFH Workplan (see below) will be updated at each meeting of the ad hoc Working Group in order to maintain continuity and a historical record of CCFH's consideration of new work.

### **CCFH Workplan**

9. CCFH will maintain a forward-looking Workplan that will include new work proposals and, for the purpose of review, existing codes. The Workplan will list work in priority order based upon decisions made by CCFH and using the criteria for evaluating and prioritizing work (see above). The Workplan will be reviewed by the ad hoc Working Group at each session of CCFH when prioritizing proposals for new work. CCFH will progressively work down the prioritized list of items contained in the Workplan. CCFH may reassess the priority of each item on the Workplan; where new data or other information is available relating to an item on the Workplan, such data may be submitted for consideration and the priority for the work item reconsidered. It is intended for the Workplan to continue from session to session, updated and revised as appropriate based on CCFH's criteria for undertaking new work. If items are moved forward as new work, each item will require a Project Document and a clear indication of how the work is to be progressed (e.g. nominated delegation to lead work, use of a working group process).

### **Obtaining scientific advice**

10. There are instances where progress on the work of the Committee will require an international risk assessment or other expert scientific advice. This advice will be typically be sought through FAO/WHO (e.g. through JEMRA, ad hoc expert consultations), though in certain instances such advice may be requested from other specialized international scientific bodies. When undertaking such work, the Committee should follow the structured approach given in the *Principles and Guidelines for the Conduct of Microbiological Risk Management* (CXG 63-2007) and the *Working Principles for Risk Analysis for Application in the Framework of the Codex Alimentarius*.

11. In seeking an international risk assessment to be conducted by FAO/WHO (e.g. through JEMRA), CCFH should consider and seek advice on whether:

- i. Sufficient scientific knowledge and data to conduct the needed risk assessment are available or obtainable in a timely manner. (An initial evaluation of available knowledge and data will typically be provided within the Risk Profile.)
- ii. There is a reasonable expectation that a risk assessment (if one is needed) will provide results that can assist in reaching risk management decisions related to control of the microbiological hazard without unduly delaying the adoption of the needed microbiological risk management guidance.
- iii. Risk assessments performed at the regional, national and multinational levels that can facilitate the conduct of an international risk assessment are available.

12. If the Committee decides to request that a microbiological risk assessment or other scientific advice be developed, the Committee will forward a specific request to FAO/WHO, the risk profile document (where available), a clear statement of the purpose and scope of the work to be undertaken, any time constraints facing the Committee that could impact the work, and, in the case of a risk assessment, the specific risk management questions to be addressed by the risk assessors. The Committee will, as appropriate, also provide FAO/WHO with information relating to the risk assessment policy for the specific risk assessment work to be undertaken. FAO/WHO will evaluate the request according to their criteria and subsequently inform the Committee of its decision on whether or not to carry out such work, together with a scope of work to be undertaken. If FAO/WHO responds favourably, the Committee will encourage its members to submit their relevant scientific data. If a decision is made by FAO/WHO not to perform the requested risk assessment, FAO/WHO will inform the Committee of this fact and the reasons for not undertaking the work (e.g. lack of data, lack of financial resources).

13. The Committee recognizes that an iterative process between risk managers and risk assessors is essential throughout the process described above and for the adequate undertaking of any microbiological risk assessment and the development of any microbiological risk management guidance document or other CCFH document(s).

14. The FAO/WHO will provide the results of the microbiological risk assessment(s) or other expert scientific advice to the Committee in a format and fashion to be determined jointly by the Committee and FAO/WHO. As needed, the FAO/WHO will provide scientific expertise to the Committee, as feasible, to provide guidance on the appropriate interpretation of the risk assessment.

15. Microbiological risk assessments carried out by FAO/WHO (JEMRA) will operate under the framework contained in the *Principles and Guidelines for the Conduct of Microbiological Risk Assessment* (CXG 30-1999).