



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



World Health  
Organization



# Codex Strategic Plan

2020–2025

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS

# Codex Strategic Plan 2020–2025

## VISION

“Where the world comes together to create food safety and quality standards to protect everyone everywhere.”

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# Introduction

The Codex Alimentarius Commission (the Commission) was established by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1963. Today, it has 188 Member Countries and 1 Member Organization. In addition, 229 inter-governmental and international non-governmental organizations are accredited as observers.

The Commission's main work is the development of international food standards, guidelines, and codes of practice to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade. The Commission also promotes the coordination of all food standards work undertaken by international governmental and non-governmental organizations.

For food safety and nutrition matters, the Commission, as risk manager, establishes its standards (this generic term includes guidelines, codes of practice and other texts) which may be used by Member Countries or used by the food trade. The Commission establishes these standards using the principles of risk analysis and bases its work on the scientific advice provided by the joint FAO/WHO expert bodies and consultations, for which there needs to be sufficient and sustainable funding. Codex standards may also address issues related to food quality and labelling.

With increased globalization and increases in the volumes of food traded internationally, the Commission must also be capable of responding in a timely manner to the impacts of emerging trends and challenges on consumer health protection or fair practices in food trade, and to the extent that steps to address those impacts are amenable to standardization.

In conducting its work, the Commission takes into account, where appropriate, the relevant policies, strategies and guidelines of FAO and WHO, and of other intergovernmental organizations such as the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), consistent with fulfilling its unique mandate to protect the health of consumers and promote fair practices in the food trade through the development of international food standards.

International food safety standards established by the Commission are explicitly recognized in the World Trade Organization's Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (WTO SPS Agreement). Codex standards also serve as references under the WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (WTO TBT Agreement). The purpose of this Strategic Plan is to advance the





mandate of the Codex Alimentarius Commission during the period 2020–2025. This document does not supersede, extend, or contradict the interpretation of the Codex mandate, standards or provisions of the *Procedural Manual* adopted or approved by the Commission.

The 2020–2025 Strategic Plan:

- Presents the mission, vision, goals, objectives and measurable indicators for the Commission.
- Underpins the high priority that continues to be placed on food safety and quality by FAO and WHO and guides the Commission in carrying out its responsibilities and unique mandate **to protect consumer health and ensure fair practices in the food trade.**
- Informs Members, inter-governmental and international non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders of how the Commission intends to fulfil its mandate and to meet the needs, including emerging issues, and expectations of its Members during the period 2020–2025.

This Strategic Plan will be supported by a more detailed work plan that includes activities and milestones that permit tracking of progress toward accomplishment of the goals. The relevant elements of the work plan will be developed and maintained by the responsible parties identified for each of the objectives. The Strategic Plan and its supporting work plan will be reviewed by the Commission in 2020 and then every two years subsequently through its six-year timespan, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the *Procedural Manual*.

This plan incorporates a new focus on promoting the relevance and use of Codex standards by governments and others to protect the health of consumers and as a reference for ensuring fair practices in the food trade, recognizing the extent to which Codex standards play a fundamental role in trade facilitation.

# Drivers of Change

The dynamics of the standard-setting activities undertaken by the Commission have changed dramatically since it was established. Not only has the number of Members increased significantly, Codex has also seen more active participation by its Members, in particular by developing Countries<sup>1</sup> engaged in the international food standard-setting process. Sitting alongside programmes for technical cooperation, broader inter- and intra-regional cooperation and the activities of regional economic communities, the FAO/WHO Codex Trust Fund (CTF1&2) is a key initiative in this regard. It supports Codex Members in building robust and sustainable national capacity to engage in Codex with the ultimate vision of all Countries engaging fully and effectively in Codex and benefitting fully from Codex standards.

1 • Although there is no established convention for the designation of "developed" and "developing" Countries or areas in the United Nations system, in 1996 this concept was introduced to the Standard country or area codes for statistical use (known as M49). From 2018, the M49 adopted the same definition as that used in the final report of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). See the list of Countries in developing regions at <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/>

2 • See <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>

The focus and needs of Codex Members are also evolving, for example, as they consider the voluntary United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by world leaders in September 2015<sup>2</sup>. Codex standards can assist Members in their implementation efforts with respect to the SDGs that are directly related to food safety and fair practices in the food trade. In particular, adoption of Codex standards can support the achievement of the following SDGs.



SDG <sup>3</sup>	SDG TARGET <sup>3</sup>	CONTRIBUTION OF CODEX
<b>SDG 2</b> <b>Ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture.</b>	Ensuring sustainable food production systems and implementing resilient agricultural practices.  Ensuring access by all people to safe, nutritious and sufficient food.	Promoting access to knowledge of good practices and new methods and technologies in agriculture, through Codex standards.  The adoption of food safety standards helps reduce risk of death and illness from food that may otherwise contain chemical or (micro)biological agents at levels higher than those provided for in the standards.
<b>SDG 3</b> <b>Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all, at all ages.</b>	Combatting communicable diseases.  Reducing by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment.  Substantially reducing the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals.	Codex also provides guidance on nutritional issues, including the development of Nutrient Reference Values (NRVs), product standards for foods for special dietary uses, and other technical information used in the development of labelling standards.
<b>SDG 12</b> <b>Ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns.</b>	Halving per capita global food waste at retail and consumer levels and reducing food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses.	Developing Countries are contributing more actively to the international food standard-setting process. CTF supports Countries to build strong, solid and sustainable national capacity to engage in Codex and reap the benefits of Codex standards. Codex texts also provide guidelines for Member Countries that can be used to build national capacity in risk analysis.
<b>SDG 17</b> <b>Revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development.</b>	Promoting a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system.	Codex standards also support fair practices in the food trade, which in turn supports food security and economic growth. The standards are considered by the WTO as the international reference for the safety and quality of food traded internationally.

<sup>3</sup> • A full description of the SDG goals and Targets is available at:  
<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

The environment in which Codex operates continues to evolve. Food and food ingredients are among the most traded commodities internationally. Changes in the global feed and food supply chain system, resource optimization efforts, food security and safety concerns, innovations in food science and technology, climate change, water scarcity, and consumer concerns relating to food safety and quality<sup>4</sup> represent some of the drivers of change that may introduce new opportunities and challenges. The Commission must maintain a steady focus on its mandate. It must be sufficiently capable of being proactive, flexible and responding in a timely manner to emerging issues that impact on food safety and quality with the aim of protecting consumer health and ensuring fair practices in the food trade.

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- 4 • The consideration of other factors in the Codex standard setting process is governed by the *Statements of Principle Concerning the Role of Science in the Codex Decision-Making Process and the Extent to Which Other Factors are Taken into Account*. Consensus should be based on the *Measures to Facilitate Consensus* included in the Procedural Manual.







# Vision and Mission

## VISION

“Where the world comes together to create food safety and quality standards to protect everyone everywhere.”

## MISSION

“Protect consumer health and promote fair practices in the food trade by setting international, science-based food safety and quality standards.”

# Core Values

The Codex Alimentarius Commission re-commits itself to the following core values, which will guide its work to fulfil its strategic vision;

## INCLUSIVENESS



## COLLABORATION



## CONSENSUS BUILDING<sup>5</sup>



## TRANSPARENCY



<sup>5</sup> Consensus should be based on the Measures to Facilitate Consensus included in the Procedural Manual.

# Goals and Objectives

The Codex Alimentarius Commission commits itself to work towards achievement of the following five goals:

## GOAL 1

Address current, emerging and critical issues in a timely manner.

## GOAL 2

Develop standards based on science and Codex risk-analysis principles.

## GOAL 3

Increase impact through the recognition and use of Codex standards.

## GOAL 4

Facilitate the participation of all Codex Members throughout the standard setting process.

## GOAL 5

Enhance work management systems and practices that support the efficient and effective achievement of all strategic plan goals.



# Goal 1 **Address current, emerging and critical issues in a timely manner**

The focus and needs of Codex Members are evolving, as is the environment in which Codex operates. Codex will need to be proactive and flexible and to respond in a timely manner to the opportunities and challenges that result.

**OBJECTIVES**

- 1.1 Identify needs and emerging issues.
- 1.2 Prioritize needs and emerging issues.

The primary responsibility for achieving these objectives lies with Codex subsidiary bodies and the Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

**MEASURING PROGRESS TOWARDS GOAL 1**

OBJECTIVE	OUTCOME	INDICATORS
1.1 Identify needs and emerging issues.	Improved ability of Codex to develop standards relevant to the needs of its members.	The number of emerging issues identified by subsidiary bodies. (Meeting reports). <sup>6</sup>
1.2 Prioritize needs and emerging issues.	Timely Codex response to emerging issues and the needs of members.	Proportion of identified, prioritized emerging issues that lead to proposals for new work (Meeting reports). <hr/> Time taken from the identification of new issues to the submission of proposals for new work to the Executive Committee (Meeting reports). <hr/> Time taken for prioritized emerging issues to result in revised or new Codex texts (Meeting reports). <hr/> Committees documenting their approach to work prioritization based on criteria for establishment of work priorities in the Procedural Manual.

<sup>6</sup> Potential data sources to facilitate measurement of progress against the indicators have been identified to the extent possible and are included in parenthesis after each of the indicators.



# Goal 2

## Develop standards based on science and Codex risk-analysis principles

Members and those engaged in the food trade who use Codex standards value the strong scientific basis of Codex, which is currently threatened by unsustainable resourcing. Codex must prioritize the securing of independent, timely and high-quality scientific advice, identifying the steps that each actor – Members, the FAO, and WHO – can take to ensure, support and advocate for the delivery of timely scientific advice to Codex through a fully and sustainably funded program. Furthermore, globally representative data are needed for scientific advice to be comprehensive and for Codex standards to be relevant to the global food supply. This will require, among other things, capacity building in developing Countries that is specific to robust data generation, scientific analysis, and overall increased capacity to conduct such work.

### OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 Use scientific advice consistently in line with Codex risk-analysis principles.
- 2.2 Promote the submission and use of globally representative data in developing and reviewing Codex standards.
- 2.3 Promote sufficient and sustainable funding for expert bodies that deliver scientific advice.

The primary responsibility for achieving objective 2.1 lies with Codex Subsidiary bodies. The responsibility for objective 2.2 is shared between Codex Subsidiary bodies and Codex Member Countries. The responsibility for objective 2.3 lies with the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the Executive Committee and Member Countries.



## MEASURING PROGRESS TOWARDS GOAL 2

OBJECTIVE	OUTCOME	INDICATORS
<b>2.1 Use scientific advice consistently in line with Codex risk analysis principles.</b>	Scientific advice is taken into account consistently and in line with Codex risk analysis principles by all relevant committees during the standard setting process.	Proportion of texts considered by CCEXEC, as part of its work to monitor the progress of standards development, for which reports by subsidiary body Chairs indicate how scientific advice was used and any other legitimate factors were considered in developing Codex texts. (Reports from Chairs of subsidiary bodies to CCEXEC).
<b>2.2 Promote the submission and use of globally representative data in developing and reviewing Codex standards.</b>	Codex standards are developed with reference to globally representative data.	Proportion and regional distribution of Codex Members who contribute to calls for data from working groups and Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committees/Meetings. (EWG forums, reports of pWGs and data from the expert committee secretariats).
<b>2.3 Promote sufficient and sustainable funding for expert bodies that deliver scientific advice.</b>	FAO and WHO expert bodies are providing scientific advice within time frames agreed between committees and FAO/WHO, and these time frames allow standard development to progress in a timely manner.	Extent of and any changes in sufficient core funding for scientific advice within FAO and WHO (Reports on budget from FAO and WHO).  Proportion of scientific advice provided within established timeframes (FAO/WHO papers on scientific advice and meeting reports).

# Goal 3

## Increase impact through the recognition and use of Codex standards

*Communications that drive greater awareness, understanding, and recognition of available, harmonized standards are essential to the effectiveness of Codex. Even in the absence of adoption of Codex standards into national legislation, the greater use of Codex standards by the food trade and other actors can contribute to consumer health protection and ensuring fair practices in the food trade.*

### **OBJECTIVES**

- 3.1** Raise the awareness of Codex standards.
- 3.2** Support initiatives to enable the understanding and implementation/application of Codex standards.
- 3.3** Recognise and promote the use and impact of Codex standards.

Raising awareness and promotion of the use of Codex standards is the responsibility of all Member Countries and Observers of Codex. The Codex Secretariat also has responsibility to raise awareness and assess the impact of Codex standards.





**MEASURING PROGRESS TOWARDS GOAL 3**

OBJECTIVE	OUTCOME	INDICATORS
<b>3.1 Raise the awareness of Codex standards.</b>	Codex Members are proactively promoting the use of Codex standards.	<p>Number of country contributions to the Codex regional and observer webpages reflecting events/ activities that raise awareness on Codex standards (<i>Codex regional and observer webpages</i>).</p> <p>Number of activities in the Codex communications work plan that explicitly address the visibility of Codex standards and extent of implementation (<i>Annual report to CCEXEC</i>).</p>
<b>3.2 Support initiatives to enable the understanding and implementation/application of Codex standards.</b>	Increased use of Codex standards in the development of national food standards and regulations.	Proportion of Member Countries participating in national or regional capacity development initiatives to encourage and facilitate practical use of Codex standards have been undertaken ( <i>Circular Letter or reports from Regional Co-ordinating Committees</i> ).
	Increased use of Codex standards by the food trade.	Proportion of specified Codex standards adopted or used by Codex Members ( <i>Biennial regional survey on use of specific Codex texts</i> ).
		Proportion of specified Codex standards adopted or used by relevant Codex Observers ( <i>Survey to observers</i> ).
<b>3.3 Recognise and promote the impact of Codex standards.</b>	Having a mechanism/tool to measure the impact of Codex standards developed and piloted.	Progress on the development of a mechanism to measure impact of Codex standards ( <i>Annual progress report</i> ).



# Goal 4

## Facilitate the participation of all Codex Members throughout the standard setting process

*Members' abilities to participate actively in the development of Codex texts still varies widely and is dependent on the capacity and sustainability of national Codex systems. While the responsibility for these systems resides with Members, there is a role for support that will help to close gaps in capabilities as much as possible over the life of this Strategic Plan. Sources of funding and a broad range of formal and informal capacity building, partnering, and technical knowledge sharing activities will all play important roles in strengthening the capacity of Members for sustainable, active participation in Codex activities, supporting all Members in maintaining national systems and expanding the potential for co-hosting of committees, consistent with our value of inclusiveness.*

### OBJECTIVES

- 4.1 Enable sustainable national Codex structures in all Codex Member Countries.
- 4.2 Increase sustainable and active participation of all Codex Members.
- 4.3 Reduce barriers to active participation by developing Countries.

FAO and WHO also are responsible for providing support to developing Countries and to facilitate their effective participation through the Codex Trust Fund and other funding sources. Member Countries supplement this through their support for, and participation in, formal and informal capacity building, partnering, and knowledge sharing activities.



**MEASURING PROGRESS TOWARDS GOAL 4**

OBJECTIVE	OUTCOME	INDICATORS
<p><b>4.1 Enable sustainable national Codex structures in all Codex Member Countries.</b></p>	<p>Participation by all Codex Member Countries in the work of Codex Committees and working groups.</p>	<p>Proportion of Countries with effective capacity in their:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Codex Contact Point, structure and processes.</li> <li>2. Consultation structures (e.g., national Codex Committees) and processes.</li> <li>3. Management of Codex work (Results of application of the Codex diagnostic tool by Members).</li> </ol> <hr/> <p>Sustainable resource allocation for the above, which may be reflected in national legislation and/or organization structures (Reports by Member Countries).</p> <hr/> <p>Additional indicator for CTF recipient Countries: Proportion of CTF2 recipient Countries sustaining national Codex systems and related activities once the funding ends (EWG forum and OCS).</p>
<p><b>4.2 Increase sustainable and active participation of all Codex Members.</b></p>	<p>Sustained, active participation in the work of Codex Committees and working groups.</p>	<p>Proportion of Countries with a sustained or increased:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribution to EWGs</li> <li>• Chairing of EWGs</li> <li>• Response to Circular Letters (EWG forum and OCS).</li> </ul>
<p><b>4.3 Reduce barriers to active participation by developing Countries.</b></p>	<p>Capacity building, partnering, and knowledge sharing activities are effective in building active participation by developing Countries.</p>	<p>Documented discussions from the regional coordinating committees (RCC) or related meetings on barriers and potential solutions to participation by developing Countries (Reports of RCCs and related meetings).</p> <hr/> <p>Increase in reports of mentorship and experience sharing on Codex issues between Countries (Reports by Members and/or RCC reports).</p>

# Goal 5

## Enhance work management systems and practices that support the efficient and effective achievement of all strategic plan goals

*The continuing review and improvement of Codex work management systems and practices will help align these to the achievement of all strategic plan goals. Improvements to work flows, proposal prioritization, and input/comment management will support participation by Members with significant resource constraints and enhance inclusiveness in the standard-setting process. The effective development of Codex texts depends heavily on the resources contributed by host Countries of subsidiary bodies and their working groups, particularly their chairpersons and secretariats. Enhancing and maintaining capacity is critical to the successful management of the work of Codex.*

### OBJECTIVES

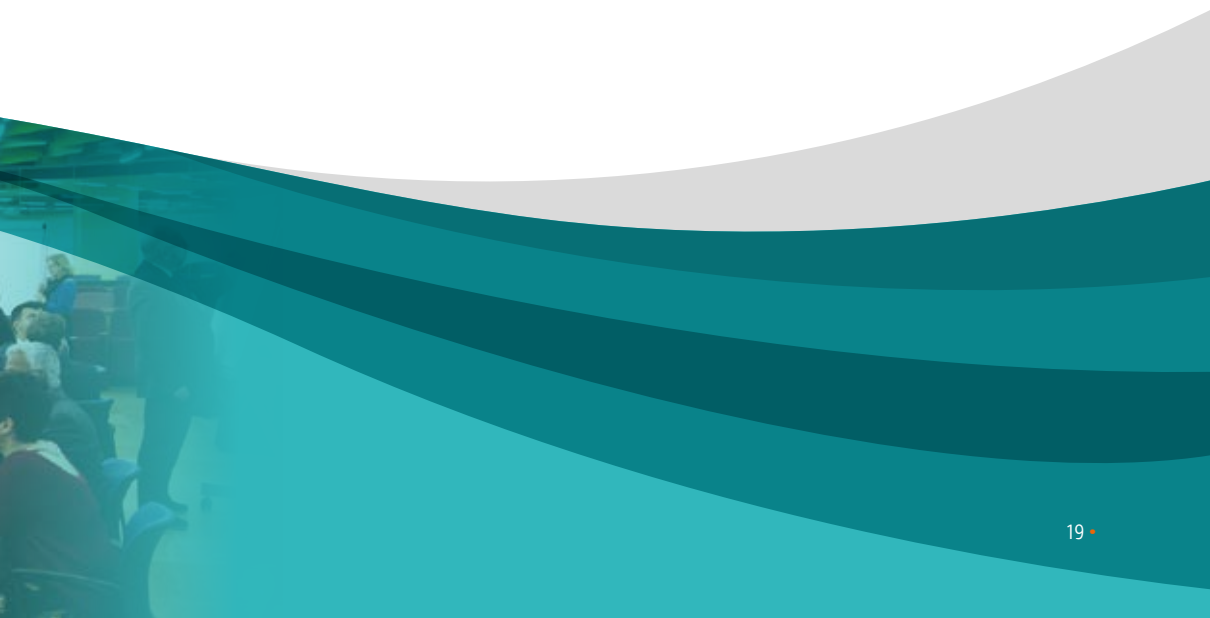
- 5.1 Develop and maintain efficient and effective work management practices and systems.
- 5.2 Enhance the capacities of committee and working group chairpersons, regional coordinators and host country secretariats to support the work of Codex.

The Codex Secretariat, host country secretariats, chairpersons of committees and working groups and regional coordinators have the primary responsibility to achieve these objectives.



**MEASURING PROGRESS TOWARDS GOAL 5**

OBJECTIVE	OUTCOME	INDICATORS
<p><b>5.1 Develop and maintain efficient and effective work management practices and systems.</b></p>	<p>Codex work processes and procedures support the effective and efficient operation of Codex standard setting bodies.</p>	<p>Of the recommendations of regular review of Codex work management that are adopted by CAC, the proportion that are implemented (<i>Annual reports to CCEXEC</i>).</p>
	<p>The efficient design of agendas and use of time in meetings of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, its Executive Committee and Subsidiary bodies maximises the time allocated to the development of Codex texts.</p>	<p>Proportion of meeting documents distributed in a timely manner consistent with the Codex Procedural Manual or timeframes established by committees (<i>Meeting webpages</i>).</p> <p>Proportion of sessions where all agenda items were covered within the allotted Committee meeting time and work was completed by the project deadline (<i>Agendas and meeting reports</i>).</p>
<p><b>5.2 Enhance the capacities of committee and working group chairpersons, regional coordinators and host country secretariats to support the work of Codex.</b></p>	<p>Subsidiary body meetings and working groups are effectively and efficiently chaired and conducted.</p>	<p>Proportion of chairs and host Countries of subsidiary bodies and working groups taking part in training and/or in the development of tools and guidance. (<i>Available guidance and workshop reports</i>).</p> <p>Satisfaction ratings on meeting efficiency, role of chairs and host and Codex secretariats (<i>Post meeting surveys</i>).</p>



# Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS

MISSION

“Protect consumer health and promote fair practices in the food trade by setting international, science-based food safety and quality standards.”

The **Codex Alimentarius Commission** (CAC) was established by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1963. Today, it has 189 Members, and more than 230 inter-governmental and international non-governmental organizations are accredited as observers.

The Codex Strategic Plan 2020–2025 was adopted by the 42<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

[www.codexalimentarius.org](http://www.codexalimentarius.org)



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