



- SUMMARY REPORT -

SECOND NORTH AMERICA SOUTH WEST PACIFIC CODEX COLLOQUIUM

FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR NORTH AMERICA AND THE SOUTH WEST PACIFIC MEMBERS

Supporting the Enhancement of Food Control Systems in the SWP Region

26 – 28 February 2024

Sofitel Fiji, Nadi, Fiji

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1. Background

The Second Codex Colloquium for North America and the South West Pacific was held in Fiji from 26-28 February 2024, with participation from **35 Contributors** representing **12 Codex Programs** from the North America and the South West Pacific regions.

This event follows-up on the commitments made during the side event organized on the margins of the 16th Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for North America and the Southwest Pacific (CCNASWP16) held in Fiji in 2023, which recommended continued capacity building efforts aiming to:

- ❖ Better structure and coordinate participation from countries in the region in Codex committees.
- ❖ Create pools of experts in various areas of food risk analysis, which may be called upon to support competent authorities in the region to prepare for Codex technical discussions and/or to adapt Codex standards in support of national / regional food regulatory decisions.
- ❖ Create a network of food laboratories in the region, to stimulate experience-sharing and collaborative efforts of data generation. This network could be connected to the AOAC INTERNATIONAL, the reference organization in food analytical standardization.
- ❖ Prioritize traditional / indigenous foods that can be candidates for the development of regional standards, with the identification of a pipeline for such products, with the relevant supportive research / data. The development of Codex regional standards for such products would help promote their marketability and availability in foreign markets.
- ❖ Develop synergies with capacity building programs funded through other initiatives and, in particular, the Codex Trust fund dedicated to countries of the region to maximize the impacts of the planned investments.

The Second Colloquium intended to gather all representatives from CCNASWP Codex programs to:

- ❖ Discuss opportunities to enhance engagement in Codex standard setting procedures.
- ❖ Better map roles and responsibilities of food competent authorities from the region.
- ❖ Enhance efforts of regional coordination in preparation for Codex processes.
- ❖ Deliver on select capacity building initiatives identified as a priority by food regulators in the region.
- ❖ Chart a path forward for the Codex South West Pacific Initiative to be further leveraged in order to enhance the performance of food regulatory programs in the NASWP region.

This summary report offers a succinct description of the outputs of this outreach event. It is to be read in conjunction with the documents and resources shared with participants, which were developed for this purpose, as well as, the documents generated as a result of the meeting deliberations.

2. Participants and Partners in the Organization of the Colloquium

#	Attendance	Country	Name	Title / Organization
1.	In Person	Australia	James Roberts	National Measurement Institute
2.	In Person	Australia	Richard Coghlan	National Measurement Institute of Australia
3.	In Person	Australia	Scott Mersch	Director - Codex, SAFEMEAT, PASE
4.	In Person	Canada	Alison Wereley	Senior Policy Analyst – Canadian Food Inspection Agency
5.	Online	Canada	Nancy Ing	Food Directorate, Health Canada
6.	In Person	Cook Islands	Ngatoko Ta Ngatoko	Director - Biosecurity Division and NCCP
7.	In Person	Cook Islands	Temarama Anguna-Kamana	Head of Ministry - Agriculture
8.	In Person	Fiji	Andrew Tukana	Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways
9.	In Person	Fiji	Bulou Merewai	Fiji Communications Team
10.	In Person	Fiji	Dekeseni Gagalia	Fiji Communications Team
11.	In Person	Fiji	Elisha Mala Buksh	Senior Economic Planning Officer, Commodity Development and Marketing, Ministry of Agriculture
12.	In Person	Fiji	Kemueli Tumalevu Seuseu	
13.	In Person	Fiji	Kuini Waqasavou	Fiji Communications Team
14.	In Person	Fiji	Masuwini Maravu	
15.	In Person	Fiji	Sanjeet Prasad	Food Unit, Ministry of Health and Medical Services of Fiji
16.	In Person	Fiji	Taina Rauvala	Food Safety Unit
17.	In Person	Fiji	Timoci Bogidua	
18.	In Person	Nauru	Hydn Duburiya	Enforcement Officer
19.	In Person	Nauru	Ivan Aingimea	Food Inspector, Nauru Public Health
20.	Online	New Zealand	Lisa Ralph	Senior Policy Analyst, Ministry for Primary Industries
21.	In Person	Papua New Guinea	Elias John	Chief Scientific Officer of Agro Food Safety and Codex PNG Unit, Department of Agriculture and Livestock
22.	In Person	Papua New Guinea	Geno Geno	Program Manager
23.	In Person	Papua New Guinea	Jacob Nongla	PNG National Trade Office
24.	In Person	Papua New Guinea	Kelo Yomapisi	PNG National Trade Office
25.	In Person	Samoa	Max Lee Lo	Principal Codex Officer, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour - Assistant Focal Point
26.	In Person	Samoa	Nofoaga Lisale	Technical Scientist of Chemistry, Scientific Research Organization of Samoa (SROS)
27.	In Person	Samoa	Roger Toleafoa	ACEO Codex Development, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour - Samoa Codex Focal Point
28.	In Person	Solomon Islands	Ethel Lano Mapolu	Deputy Director, Environmental Health
29.	In Person	Solomon Islands	Jacelyn Parsad	Laboratory Technician
30.	In Person	Tonga	Annelise Ida Halafihi	Senior Agricultural Officer, Ministry of Agriculture, Food, Forestry, and Fisheries
31.	In Person	Tonga	Losalina Fatafehi Mafile'o	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
32.	In Person	United States	Mary Frances Lowe	US Manager for Codex
33.	In Person	Vanuatu	Leyanii Livu	Vanuatu Bureau of Standards
34.	In Person	Vanuatu	Timothy Tumukon	Vanuatu Primary Producers Authority
35.	In Person	Vanuatu	Tina Soaki La'au	Vanuatu Bureau of Standards

The meeting was also attended by Ms. Heather Schommer, and Elizabeth Laferrière representing Land O'Lakes - Venture 37, a partner in the implementation of the South West Pacific Codex Initiative, and who supported various logistical aspects of the meeting organization and facilitation.

The meeting was moderated and facilitated by Dr. / Prof. Samuel Godefroy, Former Vice-Chair of Codex, President and COO, GForSS, Professor, Food Regulatory Science, Laval University, Quebec, QC. Canada.

This outreach event was implemented as part of the planned activities of the South-West Pacific Codex Initiative, a program funded by the US Codex Office (USCO) and implemented by the Global Food Regulatory Science Society (GForSS) and Lando'lakes Venture 37 and in partnership with the Governments of Australia and New-Zealand.

Several aspects of the meeting organization, including securing the venue and the travel and participation of the representatives of Codex programs from Southwest Pacific (SWP) nations was supported by the Government of Australia's Codex program, under the leadership of Mr. Scott Mersch, Codex Contact Point, Australia.

3. Webpage hosting material developed for and used during the Colloquium

All documents related to the Colloquium Agenda and discussions can be accessed through this link:

➤ https://gforss.org/2024/02/14/2024_naswpcodexcolloquium/

Documents available include:

- ❖ The meeting agenda.
- ❖ Presentations given during the meeting.
- ❖ Outputs stemming from meeting discussions.

4. Major Outputs of the Workshop

4.1 Discussion of Codex Priorities for the Region

A review of findings from previous discussions on Codex capacity in the region (stemming from the 2022 Colloquium) confirmed that the needs remain similar to what was identified at that time, in that:

- ❖ Codex Contact Points (CCPs) in the region (particularly in PICs) are generally **under capacitated**.
- ❖ Capacity building needs are important, in particular, regarding the improvement in **understanding the structure, operations of Codex work**, and more importantly, the benefits of Codex standards.
- ❖ The **scientific capacity in the region is limited** and would benefit from the creation of a **pool of resources**, mainly expertise that could be useful and accessible to various food control organizations, and in particular CCPs in the region.
- ❖ **Access to data is limited**, respecting support to scientific assessments and addressing the relevance of proposed standards for the region and its countries.

Some progress was however noted, including:

- ❖ Enhanced participation from the region to Codex meetings, facilitated by the organisation of virtual Codex committee meetings.
- ❖ The reliance on meetings of the Codex Roundtable for the South-West Pacific, which served as an opportunity to bring together Codex representatives from the region, in preparation for key Codex meetings.

- ❖ The development of some capacity from the region to address the technical preparation for key Codex committees, such as the Codex Committee on contaminants in food (CCCF).
- ❖ Successful coordination efforts prior to CAC46 and CAC47 between countries of the region.

4.2 Discussion of Regional Coordination Efforts

The moderated discussion on efforts of regional coordination concluded with the following recommendations:

- ❖ It is important to consider offering additional support to the regional coordinator with additional resources, such that they are able to fulfill the country's mandate under optimum conditions. This support may be envisaged through dedicating some resources, through the South West Pacific Codex Initiative.
- ❖ It is recommended to develop more dedicated guidance for activities related to regional coordination, such that it becomes a useful resource for regional coordinators, upon the rotation of this mandate.
- ❖ Organizing a Codex Colloquium for the region, between formal regional committees, offers the opportunity to maintain the momentum of regional coordination efforts.
- ❖ Maintaining the virtual Codex Roundtable meetings and ensuring greater participation to these meetings as avenues for continued collaboration between physical meeting events.
- ❖ Consider the development of regional positions, based on the precedent established by CCLAC and CCAFRICA and ensure discussion of this item at the upcoming CCNASWP17.

4.3 Prioritization of Participation in Upcoming Codex Committees

The prioritization of contribution to Codex committee work, through active contribution to electronic working groups (eWGs) and physical participation to committees was also discussed.

The application of the criteria related to:

- ❖ Relevance of the committee to the food safety, health, agriculture and trade policy agendas of the country.
- ❖ Relevance of the committee to the country's imports and exports.
- ❖ Availability of resources to carry out the work.

The discussion of the resources available for 2024 led to prioritize the following committees for possible participation by SWP delegations: **CCCF**, **CCFICS**, **CCPR** and **CCFL**.

Efforts will be made to accompany a better preparation of SWP delegations to the upcoming sessions of these committees.

4.4 Progress in the Development and Validation of a Quantitative Method for Scopoletin in Noni Juice

An update was provided on the progress made to develop and validate a quantitative method for Scopoletin in Noni Juice. A paper is planned for CCNASWP17 so that the committee can consider adding the method to CXS 356R-2023 and seek CCMAS endorsement.

This effort will be led by Samoa with the contribution of Australia, Fiji (Regional Coordinator), New-Zealand, Papua New-Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.

4.5 Collection and Analysis of Noni Juice Samples and submission to the GEMS Food Database

Continued efforts will be deployed to collect samples from the region and to carry out their analysis using the developed methodology. A report on progress of this effort will be made during the next CCNASWP meeting, along with ongoing efforts to submit data to JECFA for evaluation purposes.

This effort will be led by Samoa with the contribution of Australia, Fiji (Regional Coordinator), New-Zealand, Papua New-Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.

4.6 CCMAS Questions on Kava Related Methods

The need to align the SOP that CCMAS did not endorse with the specifications in the standard was discussed. It was agreed to create a Working Group (WG) led by Fiji, and supported by Australia, New-Zealand, Papua New-Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. The WG will consider next steps and develop a paper with recommendations for CCNASWP17.

4.7 Proposed New Standards for Consideration of Development

The discussion of development priorities for new regional standards resulted in the prioritization of two candidate standards:

- ❖ Regional Standard on Breadfruit Flour.
- ❖ Regional Standard on Galip Nut.

For each of these standards, project documents and proposed drafts will be developed through the creation of Working Groups:

- ❖ One led by Samoa (with participation from Australia and Tonga) for the Breadfruit Flour standard.
- ❖ The Second led by Papua New-Guinea (with participation from Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu) for the regional standard on Galip Nut.

4.8 Proposed Items for Discussion at CCNASWP17

Prioritization of areas of interest to food competent authorities and Codex programs in the region led to the identification of the following items for discussion at the CCNASWP17. Discussion papers will be prepared under the leadership of a country from the region with the contribution of a group of countries / Codex programs as outlined below:

- ❖ A discussion paper outlining a **proposal for the development of an International Standard on Fresh Turmeric** – under CCFFV.

This discussion paper would pave the way for submission to the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables (CCFFV), after receiving the support of CCNASWP countries. The development of this discussion paper will be led by Fiji, with co-leadership from Solomon Islands and Papua New-Guinea, including support from New-Zealand.

- ❖ A discussion paper on **Frozen Casava**.

Mapping activities under way to support addressing food safety and standardization efforts in the region, including ongoing current activities under the Pacific Quality Infrastructure Initiative (PQI). This discussion paper will be led by Vanuatu and co-led by Fiji.

- ❖ A discussion paper addressing the safety of **traditional methods of food preparation in the region (including underground cooking)**.

In the form of a fact-finding paper, mapping practices, including best practices and possible food safety challenges associated with this technique. This paper will be led by Vanuatu and will be supported by Cook Islands, Fiji, New-Zealand, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga.

Support will also be provided by the Global Food Regulatory Science Society, and the International Union of Food Science and Technology (IUFOST). This review will also link with the WHO /FAO food safety strategies and associated objectives in the region.

4.9 Proposed Agenda Items for CCNASWP17

The discussion of the CCNASWP17 agenda led to the identification of the following items for possible tabling at the upcoming meeting. Fiji, as Regional Coordinator, will review these items with the Codex Secretariat and suggest their tabling with the opportunity of the availability of the agenda as early as possible in the process.

The items introduced below are to be added to those identified in the form of discussion papers or proposed standards for consideration, upon their availability:

- ❖ Standing Item: Current and Emerging Food Safety and Quality Issues in the Region.

For this paper, it may be possible to take the lead in developing an initial draft paper, to be submitted for consideration by FAO/WHO. The paper would benefit from input of countries to map the priorities and emerging issues in food safety and quality in their respective jurisdictions. Fiji, as Regional Coordinator, will take the lead in developing the draft paper with input from all countries
- ❖ Discussion Point / Paper: Opportunity to Develop Regional Positions for Priority Agenda Items discussed in Codex Proceedings.
- ❖ Standing Item: Targeted updates on FAO/WHO activities in the region.
- ❖ Update on the Fermented Noni Juice Standard – Next steps.
 - Possibility of including LC Method into the standard / Other method needs?
- ❖ Discussion and Update related to Data Generation for Scopoletin, including the update on data availability and a possible update to be sought from FAO / WHO / JECFA on the Scientific Advice process related to Scopoletin.
- ❖ Review and Endorsement of the Response to CCMAS – on Kava related methods.
- ❖ Update from the Codex Trust Fund – Implementation and Plan Forward.
- ❖ Discussion Paper and a Project Document related to a Proposed Regional Standard on Breadfruit Flour.
- ❖ Discussion Paper and a Project Document related to a Proposed Regional Standard on Galip Nut.
- ❖ A Proposed Side Event was recommended in the form of a Workshop on How to Prepare a Successful Submission to the Codex Trust Fund.

5. Conclusion

The Second NASWP Codex Colloquium resulted in a series of tangible commitments for the development of several activities in the upcoming period, which will serve as items for discussion at the upcoming CCNASWP17.

It will be imperative that a robust follow-up approach be applied for the implementation of the activities, in the form of a project management approach, to measure progress for each of these activities. Similarly, the relevant support to countries that offered leadership to develop the various discussion papers need to be planned and to materialize, one possibility is through the implementation of the SWP Codex Initiative.