

FAO/WHO CODEX COORDINATING COMMITTEE

NEAR EAST



Report of the 43rd. Meeting of the Codex Contact Points of the Arab and Near East Countries –

Chaired by the Regional Coordinator for the Near East

Joint Analysis of the Agenda Items of the 48th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission

(CAC48) with Industry Representatives and Stakeholders

As part of the preparations for the 48th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, scheduled to be held in Rome from 10 to 14 November 2025, the 43rd Meeting of Arab Countries /CCNE Codex Contact, industry representatives, and stakeholders in the Near East Region was held virtually on Monday, 27 October 2025, chaired by the CCNE Coordinator and attended by representatives from the following countries :

1. Kingdom of Bahrain
2. Arab Republic of Egypt
3. Islamic Republic of Iran
4. Republic of Iraq
5. Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
6. State of Libya
7. Sultanate of Oman
8. State of Palestine
9. State of Qatar
10. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
11. Republic of the Sudan
12. Syrian Arab Republic
13. Republic of Tunisia
14. United Arab Emirates
15. Republic of Yemen

In addition, representatives of the following organizations:

- Stakeholders and relevant parties from the Near East region
- The Arab Codex Initiative – Arab Industrial Development, Standardization and Mining Organization (AIDSMO)
- The Gulf Standardization Organization (GSO)
- The Global Food Regulatory Science Society (GFoRSS)

Dr. Intisar Al-Gharibi, the Regional Coordinator for the Near East, opened the meeting with welcoming remarks in which she expressed her thanks and appreciation for responding to the invitation and participating in the 43rd Coordination Meeting of the Arab States and the Near East Region, which is being held as part of the preparations for the 48th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC48).

Dr. Al-Gharibi explained that this meeting comes as a continuation of the joint efforts launched during the Arab Codex Colloquium held in Muscat in April 2025, noting that it falls within the implementation of the new Work Plan adopted by the 12th Session of the Regional Coordinating Committee for the Near East for the period 2026–2027.

She affirmed that the objective of the meeting is to enhance communication and coordination with Codex Contact Points and stakeholders in the region, and to discuss the main topics included on the agenda of the upcoming Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC48), as well as to listen to different views on the best means of cooperation and coordination in this regard.

She also indicated that this meeting was coordinated in cooperation with both the Arab Organization for Industrial Development, Standardization and Mining (AIDSMO) and the GCC Standardization Organization (GSO), with the aim of establishing a more organized framework for consultation with the industrial sector, in a manner that ensures broader and more inclusive representation of the various relevant national sectors.

She added that building this institutional framework requires time and effort; however, this meeting constitutes an opportunity to exchange views on the region's priorities and the means of activating its role in the work of the Codex Alimentarius. She affirmed that the main objective of the meeting is to enable stakeholders to review the most prominent standards and topics that will be discussed during the upcoming session, and to benefit from their inputs in supporting the positions of Arab countries and enhancing their ability to propose new topics or identify future priorities, in a way that contributes to strengthening the model of cooperation between Codex Contact Points and stakeholders and ensuring stronger representation of the region within the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

Following that, Dr. Al-Gharibi gave the floor to Eng. Ahmed Eddouaicer, Coordinator of the Arab Codex Initiative, who began his remarks by expressing his thanks and welcoming all participants, conveying his pleasure at the participation of stakeholders in this meeting.

Eng. Eddouaicer highlighted the importance of this meeting in supporting the work of the technical committees, emphasizing the necessity of involving stakeholders including producers, consumers, regulatory and legislative bodies, and active organizations, in a way that contributes to achieving balance and ensuring the effective implementation of any standard that is issued. He also explained that the engagement of stakeholders in the process of developing standards and understanding their background and importance constitutes a key element in strengthening confidence in standards, whether national or international, and in ensuring that they result from collective consultations in line with scientific developments and modern practices in the field of food safety and international standards.

Eng. Eddouaicer concluded his remarks by reiterating his appreciation to all Codex Contact Points, stakeholders, experts, and everyone who contributed to the preparation of this meeting, wishing that it would be a fruitful one that achieves its objectives and strengthens joint cooperation among the countries of the region.

After that, Eng. Ahmed Al Bashah, Head of the Standards Department at the GCC Standardization Organization (GSO), conveyed his sincere appreciation to all attendees for participating in the preparatory coordination meeting for the 48th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, expressing his pleasure with the direction toward expanding participation and consultation among the various parties in order to unify positions on the issues included on the Commission's agenda.

Eng. Al Bashah affirmed that this approach will contribute to bridging gaps and unifying visions and positions, thereby enhancing the region's representation and ensuring the submission of topics that enjoy broad acceptance within the Codex Alimentarius Commission. He pointed out that this collaborative model serves as an example to be followed. He also conveyed the greetings of His Excellency the President of the GSO, who affirmed the Organization's interest and readiness to provide full support to ensure the success of the Committee's work and that of the region's countries in Codex projects.

He praised the important role of regional initiatives, appreciating the support of the United Arab Emirates on the camel milk standard, and stressed that the GSO accords the food, agriculture, and food safety sectors the highest priority within its plans and activities, in order to promote consumer health and food security in the region.

He concluded his remarks by expressing his hope that the meeting would yield fruitful results that contribute to unifying the efforts and future visions of the countries of the region.

Following that, the agenda of the meeting was reviewed and its items approved as follows:

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Remarques d'ouverture et adoption de l'ordre du jour <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinateur du CCNE • Coordinateur de l'Initiative Arabe du Codex 	Opening Remarks and adoption of Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCNE Coordinator • Arab Codex Initiative Coordinator 	كلمة افتتاحية واعتماد جدول الأعمال <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • المنسق الإقليمي للشرق الأدنى • منسق المبادرة العربية للدستور الغذائي 	البند الأول
Coordination sur les questions relatives à la 48^e session de la Commission du Codex Alimentarius avec les parties prenantes de la région arabe <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion entre les acteurs de l'industrie et les points de contact du Codex sous la direction du coordinateur régional pour le Proche-Orient 	Coordination on matters related to the 48th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission with stakeholders in the Arab region <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion between industry stakeholders and Codex Contact Points, moderated by the Regional Coordinator for the Near East 	التنسيق بشأن المسائل المتعلقة بالدورة الثامنة والأربعين لهيئة الدستور الغذائي المصلحة في المنطقة العربية <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • نقاش بين الجهات الصناعية وممثلي نقاط الاتصال بإدارة المنسق الإقليمي للشرق الأدنى 	البند الثاني

Item 2: Coordination on matters related to the 48th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission with stakeholders in the Arab region

The Secretariat of the Regional Coordinating Committee for the Near East (CCNEA) delivered a comprehensive presentation on the preparations for the 48th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC48). The presentation reviewed the main outcomes of the relevant technical committees, namely: the Codex Committee on Food Additives (CCFA55), the Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods (CCCF18), the Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues (CCPR56), and the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (CCFFV23), highlighting their implications for the work of the upcoming Codex Alimentarius Commission session.

The main topics covered in the presentation included:

- A brief overview of the key standards and texts to be submitted for adoption during CAC48.
- A review of the outcomes of the **Codex Committee on Food Additives (CCFA55)**, including the adoption of new specifications for substances such as Nisin A and INS 475, the update of the INS numbering system, and the confirmation of alignment between commodity standards and the GSFA database.

- A presentation of the results of the **Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods (CCCF18)**, including the updated lists of priority contaminants. Member countries were encouraged to join the working groups of this committee, particularly those co-chaired by Arab countries.
- A review of the outcomes of the **Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues (CCPR56)** related to updating the Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) for food and feed, the approval of priority lists for JMPR evaluation, and the update of procedures for unsupported compounds.
- A presentation of the outputs of the **Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (CCFFV23)** and its key recommendations to be submitted to CAC48, particularly the draft standard for Fresh Dates.
- Emphasis on the importance of active Arab participation in the technical committees to ensure the region's positions are represented in international texts and to enhance alignment between Arab standards and Codex standards.

The presentation concluded by emphasizing the importance of maintaining Arab and regional coordination during the pre-CAC48 phase to ensure unified positions and to support future Arab proposals in the areas of food additives, contaminants, pesticide residues, and commodity standards.

At the beginning of the meeting, stakeholders expressed their appreciation for convening this fruitful and constructive session, commending the region's efforts in strengthening communication and coordination among the various parties. The International Council of Dates, which was recently established and is headquartered in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, expressed its gratitude for the adoption of the dates standard and referred to the processed dates standard, particularly regarding the moisture content requirement among its technical specifications.

The Algerian Codex Contact Point emphasized the need to enhance coordination concerning the European Union's comments and requested clarification on the region's response to them.

Meanwhile, the Food and Beverage Group expressed its thanks and raised the topic of food additives, stressing the importance of supporting the work of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) through the submission of relevant scientific justifications and data.

In this context, one of the participating stakeholders requested the organization of a specialized training workshop on food additives to strengthen technical and scientific capacity building in this area.

Several other stakeholders also provided additional interventions addressing issues related to representation mechanisms, communication, and enhanced participation in committee work. Some proposed the appointment of an industry representative to act as a liaison conveying the voice of the industrial sector to regulatory bodies, thereby reinforcing the role of industry in committee work and contributing to greater integration between regulatory and practical aspects.

A proposal was also made to improve the electronic coordination mechanism to make it more inclusive and user-friendly, enabling participants to track their comments and see whether they have been considered, through enhanced continuous coordination among the relevant parties.

Eng. Ahmed Eddouaicer participated in this discussion, affirming the importance of these suggestions and comments, and calling for the facilitation of direct communication channels with stakeholders. Dr. Intisar Al-Gharibi also encouraged Codex Contact Points to maintain regular communication with stakeholders and to convey their proposals to the region, noting that the inputs received will be taken into consideration when developing the region's upcoming strategy.

Eng. Ahmed Al Bashah delivered an intervention in which he proposed holding a virtual meeting or introductory workshop following the 48th Session, during which issues of common interest could be discussed and stakeholders would be invited to share their views and proposals. The event would also highlight topics relevant to the region and priority projects, in addition to including new proposals in the future work agenda.

Dr. Intisar Al-Gharibi welcomed this proposal, explaining that coordination would take place to organize this meeting after the conclusion of the 48th Session and to develop a work plan aimed at familiarizing the concerned entities and related parties with the ongoing regional activities. She also informed participants that meeting reports are published on the Arab Codex Initiative platform, whether hosted by the Arab Industrial Development, Standardization and Mining Organization (AIDSMO) or the Global Food Regulatory Science Society (GFoRSS). These are regularly updated and accessible to all, including the presentations associated with the meetings.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Dr. Al-Gharibi encouraged participants to engage with the questionnaires circulated by the Codex Alimentarius, emphasizing that the comments and suggestions received will be taken into consideration when developing the Near East regional plan for the coming year. She also thanked all participants for their active engagement and contributions, noting that future meetings will witness greater collaboration with stakeholders and relevant parties.

Eng. Al Bashah concluded by thanking everyone, expressing his hope that these collective efforts will enrich the discussed topics and yield mutual benefit. Eng. Ahmed Eddouaicer also extended his gratitude to Dr. Al-Gharibi for her excellent moderation of the meeting, as well as to all participants, colleagues from the Global Food Regulatory Science Society (GFoRSS), experts, and technical staff, reaffirming the importance of maintaining active stakeholder participation in future committee activities.

The Regional Coordinator also urged members to register and participate in the electronic working groups (EWGs) of the Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods (CCCF) before the registration deadline of 31 October 2025, noting that the next session will be held in the Arab Republic of Egypt.

The following recommendations were adopted:

1. To include all scientific documents and presentations delivered during the meeting on the interactive platform of the Arab Codex Initiative: www.Arabcodex.com.
2. To also make them available on the Global Food Regulatory Science Society (GFoRSS) website: <https://gforss.org/networks/arabcodex/>.
3. To invite Codex Contact Points to maintain regular communication with stakeholders and incorporate their proposals into the regional priorities when developing the next regional strategy.
4. To emphasize the importance of appointing a representative from the industrial sector to act as a liaison channel conveying the voice of industry to regulatory bodies, thereby enhancing private sector participation in national Codex committee work.
5. To improve the electronic working mechanism to make it more inclusive and user-friendly, enabling participants to track their comments and see whether they have been considered.
6. To support the work of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) by providing the necessary scientific data and justifications from member countries.
7. To organize a specialized training workshop on food additives to strengthen technical and scientific capacities in this area.
8. To invite the Regional Coordinator to encourage member countries to register and participate in the Electronic Working Groups (EWGs) of the Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods (CCCF) before the registration deadline of 31 October 2025, noting that the meeting will be held in the Arab Republic of Egypt.
9. To enhance coordination among member countries regarding the European Union's comments on the draft standard for fresh dates, and to unify regional positions before submission to the Codex Alimentarius Commission.
10. To stress the importance of completing the questionnaire circulated by the Codex Secretariat on regional work priorities within the set deadlines, in order to ensure that the views of all member countries are represented in the development of the upcoming regional work plan.

