



## **Report of the 44th Meeting of Arab Countries Codex Contact Points - Chaired by the CCNE**

### **Coordinator**

As part of the launch of the new Codex season, the inaugural meeting to review the work plan of the Arab Food Codex Initiative for the period from February to June 2026 was held virtually on Monday, 26 January 2026. The meeting was chaired by the Regional Coordinator and attended by representatives from the following countries:

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

**In addition to representatives of the following organizations:**

- The Arab Codex Initiative – Arab Industrial Development, Standardization and Mining Organization (AIDSMO)
- The Global Food Regulatory Science Society (GFRSS)
- The Gulf Standardization Organization (GSO)

Dr. Intisar Al-Gharibi, Regional Coordinator for the Near East, opened the inaugural meeting of the Food Codex season for 2026 with a welcoming address to the participants. She outlined the objective of the meeting, which was to review the work plan of the Arab Food Codex Initiative for the period from February to June 2026. She noted that the new work plan is based on enhancing coordination among member countries.

Dr. Al-Gharibi emphasized that achieving the desired success can only be realized through joint work, proper planning, and continuous follow-up. She highlighted that this meeting represents an important milestone to review achievements, identify challenges, and set clear, achievable objectives aligned with the aspirations for the upcoming period.

She further explained that the goals for this year focus on improving performance quality and achieving a positive impact, drawing on the expertise of the participants. She concluded her remarks by expressing her gratitude to all attendees for their presence and constructive engagement.

Following this, Eng. Ahmed Al-Bashah, Head of the Standards Department at the Gulf Cooperation Council Standardization Organization, delivered an opening speech, welcoming the participants and stressing the importance of strengthening coordination and collaboration among member countries within the framework of Food Codex activities.

He expressed his appreciation for the efforts exerted in the context of the Near East Regional Coordination Committee and the Arab Food Codex Initiative, commending the active role and continuous support of the members for these meetings and the tasks entrusted to the Food Codex.

Eng. Al-Bashah also expressed his hope that this year would mark a strong start for activating Food Codex activities, contributing to highlighting the region's role in standardization projects developed by international Codex technical committees, both at the committee level and during the annual Codex Commission session.

He further stated that the GCC Standardization Organization has included, in its strategic plan for 2026–2030, a strategic project to support member countries and enhance their participation in Codex committee work at both regional and international levels.

He concluded his speech by renewing his thanks and appreciation to all participants for their attendance and active contributions.

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

Fr	En	Ar	رقم البند
Remarques d'ouverture et adoption de l'ordre du jour	Opening Remarks and adoption of the Agenda	كلمات افتتاحية واعتماد جدول الأعمال	البند الأول
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinateur du CCNE</li> <li>• Coordinateur de l'Initiative Arabe du Codex</li> <li>• Chef du département des normes, (GSO) / Ing. Ahmed Al-Bashah</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CCNE Coordinator</li> <li>• Arab Codex Initiative Coordinator</li> <li>• Head of the Standards (GSO)/ Eng. Ahmed Al-Bashah</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• المنسق الإقليمي للشرق الأدنى</li> <li>• منسق المبادرة العربية للدستور الغذائي</li> <li>• رئيس قسم المواصفات هيئة التقييس الخليجية/ المهندس احمد البشه</li> </ul>	

Présentation du projet de plan d'action de l'Initiative arabe du Codex Alimentarius (février–juin 2026)	Presentation of the Arab Codex Initiative Action Plan proposal (February–June 2026)	عرض مقترح خطة عمل المبادرة العربية للدستور الغذائي للفترة من فبراير إلى يونيو 2026	البند الثاني
Explorer les modalités optimales de coordination interrégionale et d'engagement de la région du Proche-Orient dans les colloques	Exploring optimal modalities for the Near East region's interregional coordination and engagement in colloquia	مناقشة النهج الأمثل لمشاركة إقليم الشرق الأدنى في الندوات الإقليمية والتنسيق بين الأقاليم	البند الثالث

### **Presentation of the Arab Codex Initiative Action Plan proposal (February–June 2026)**

Dr. Amine Kassouf, Scientific Director at the Global Organization for Food Regulatory Sciences (GForSS), presented the work plan of the Arab Food Codex Initiative for the period from February to June 2026. The plan was prepared in coordination with the Secretariat of the Codex Committee for the Near East Region and the Secretariat of the Arab Food Codex Initiative at the Arab Organization for Industrial Development and Mining Standards. This presentation was part of the follow-up on the implementation of the approved regional work plan of the Near East Regional Coordination Committee for 2026–2027.

The presentation addressed the overall framework of the plan and its objectives, particularly supporting the implementation of priority goals outlined in the Food Codex Strategic Plan 2026–2031, and enhancing the coordinated and effective participation of regional countries in Codex activities.

Dr. Kassouf also reviewed the main tasks of the work plan, as follows:

- Clarify the overall framework of the plan and its objectives, particularly supporting the implementation of priority goals in the Food Codex Strategic Plan 2026–2031 and enhancing the coordinated and effective participation of regional countries in Codex activities.
- Review the main tasks of the plan, which include following up on Codex activities, preparing for priority technical committee meetings, supporting the coordination of regional positions, and implementing capacity-building activities.
- Present a methodological framework for setting priorities for Codex committees and their agenda items, based on clear criteria including public health and food safety importance, regional impact, feasibility, and capacity-building considerations.
- Review the technical committees targeted during the first half of 2026 and the reasons for their prioritization, emphasizing the importance of systematic technical follow-up on their agenda items.
- Clarify the plan's implementation mechanism, including the formation of specialized working groups for each committee, coordination and follow-up procedures, and the role of supervisory bodies overseeing these groups.
- Present the proposed timeline for coordination meetings and relevant technical meetings during the period from February to June 2026.

- Highlight the proposed capacity-building activities, including e-learning courses and specialized workshops, aimed at enhancing member countries' readiness and supporting their effective participation in Codex work.

Dr. Kassouf noted that the plan serves as a practical tool to support systematic planning, enhance regional coordination, and ensure that regional activities are aligned with approved priorities, thereby strengthening the role of Arab countries and Near East region countries within the Food Codex framework.

He also presented two annexes, which form an integral part of the plan. Annex 1 provides a detailed methodology for evaluating and setting priorities for Codex committees and their agenda items, while Annex 2 presents a matrix aligning the proposed work plan with the Near East Regional Coordination Committee (CCNE) regional plan for 2026–2027. This alignment highlights the consistency of the proposed activities with approved regional priorities and supports systematic planning and follow-up.

#### **The following recommendations were adopted:**

- ❖ The possibility of including any additional committees that the region or member countries consider important for participation, based on regional priorities and needs. This includes the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (CCFFV), proposed by Eng. Al-Basha as part of next season's Food Codex activities, and the Codex Committee on Fish and Fish Products (CCFFP), proposed by the Kingdom of Morocco.
- ❖ Members emphasized the importance of holding regional coordination meetings well in advance of committee sessions, as this plays a key role in strengthening coordination among member countries, unifying regional positions, and supporting effective and coordinated participation in Codex committee work.
- ❖ The necessity to update the national contact points' information on the Codex website, ensuring accuracy and smooth communication, thereby enhancing effective coordination and information exchange between the Secretariat and member countries.
- ❖ All participants agreed to support the new plan and strengthen coordination among member countries in the Near East region (CCNE) regarding topics to be presented and discussed at the regional level, contributing to unified regional positions and enhancing the effectiveness of participation in Codex activities.

#### **Exploring optimal modalities for the Near East region's interregional coordination and engagement in colloquia**

**During the meeting proceedings,** Dr. Intisar Al-Gharibi, Regional Coordinator for the Near East (CCNE), presented the topic "Optimal Approach for the Near East Region's Participation in Inter-Regional Seminars and Coordination Between Regions."

She explained that the Near East Region (CCNE) has consistently participated in inter-regional seminars organized by several regional and international bodies, including the Arab Organization for Industrial Development and Mining Standards (AIDSMO), the African Union's Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR), the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Recognizing the importance of enhancing coordination with other regions, and given the need to align the level of participation with the region's capacities and priorities, a proposal was presented aimed at supporting more organized, prepared, and effective participation in inter-regional seminars and related discussions.

### Proposed Option:

- ❖ Hold bilateral **colloquiums** between the Near East Region and other regions, based on the strategic considerations of each relevant committee and its level of priority for the region. Participation in inter-regional **colloquiums** should be limited to priority committees agreed upon at the regional level, allowing for more effective coordination, enhancing consistency in technical positions, and guiding the efficient use of resources.

### Recommendation Adopted:

- ❖ The meeting recommended adopting the proposed approach for the Near East Region's participation in inter-regional **colloquiums**, to enhance the effectiveness of regional participation, achieve better coordination with other regions, ensure alignment of such participation with the region's priorities and capacities, and support its influential presence within the Food Codex framework. The region will continue to circulate invitations to meetings organized by relevant regional and international bodies.

