Role of Codex in international food standards
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What is Codex?

• International Food Standards body set up 1963 by FAO/WHO

• Statute and purpose
  – to promote international standards for health protection and fair practices in food trade

• Current membership
  – 189 (188 countries and 1 Member organization)

• 2023 marks 60th anniversary of Codex
Vision and Mission of Codex

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
Why is Codex important?

- Codex food safety standards international benchmarks under WTO Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures (the SPS Agreement)
- WTO members encouraged to harmonize with Codex standards;
- Minimising unjustified Technical barriers to trade remain is important to international food trade
- Food safety and quality standards essential for health protection and trade
What does Codex produce?

• **General Standards** for food hygiene, food labelling, inspection and certification, nutrition, food additives and contaminants, residues of vet drugs and pesticides and methods of analysis

• **Commodity standards** (eg fruits and vegetables, milk and milk products, processed fruits and vegetables, spices and culinary herbs, fats and oils, fish and fishery products, natural mineral waters)
Structure of Codex
• Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC)
  
  – high level decision making body
  – meets annually to adopt standards and approve work programme
  – Last meeting held in Rome in November 2022
Codex Alimentarius Commission

- Executive Committee
- General Subject Committees
- Commodity Committees
- ad hoc Intergovernmental Task Forces
- Regional Coordinating Committees

- Codex Secretariat
• General Subject Committees
  – 10 committees responsible for developing horizontal standards

- General Principles
- Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems
- Food Hygiene
- Food Additives
- Contaminants
- Methods of Analysis and Sampling
- Food Labelling
- Pesticides Residues
- Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Food
- Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary
- Commodity committees
  - 6 active committees
Codex Scorecard

Maximum Levels (MLs)

- 4130 MLs for food additives
- 106 MLs for contaminants in food
- 244 food additives
- 18 contaminants

Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs)

- 5231 MRLs for pesticide residues
- 623 MRLs for residues of veterinary drugs in foods
- 303 pesticides
- 63 veterinary drugs

52 Codes of Practice
78 Guidelines
221 Commodity Standards

Here you can see the total number of standards, guidelines and codes of practice in the Codex Alimentarius prior to the July 2018 session of the Commission.
Codex Standards development Process

• Codex standards development involves an 8 step process that covers the initial drafting, consultations and final adoption
• Provides for two rounds of comments (steps 3 and 5)
• Final draft submitted by Committees to the Codex Alimentarius Commission for final adoption at Step 8
Codex standards process

The step procedure for elaborating codex standards

Before a decision is made to undertake the development of a new standard or revise an existing one, a project proposal is prepared and discussed at Committee level.

1. The Commission approves a new work based on a Project Document and the recommendations of the Executive Committee.
2. The Codex Secretariat arranges for the preparation of a proposed draft standard.
3. The proposed draft text is circulated by the Codex Secretariat to Codex members and observers for comments.
4. Comments received are sent to the Codex Secretariat to be assigned to the body assigned the work for consideration. The proposed draft standard is amended.
5. The proposed draft standard is submitted to the Executive Committee for critical review and recommended to the Commission for adoption as a Codex standard. It is then published on the Codex website.

Steps 6-8:
- The draft text is circulated by the Codex Secretariat to Codex members and observers for another round of comments.
- The body assigned the work considers the comments and amends the draft standard.

Note: The diagram includes flowchart steps 1-5 and 6-8, illustrating the process from proposal to detailing the steps for refining the standard and submitting it for approval.
Role of Codex Committee on Methods of analysis and sampling (CCMAS)

- Providing leadership in methods of analysis and sampling based on science
- Leading the development of international standards and guidelines
- Working closely with international bodies such as IDF, AOAC, ISO and BIPM in the development of international standards
- Publication and endorsement of methods of analysis and sampling
- Host Country – Hungary and meets annually
Some key activities of CCMAS

• To endorse methods of analysis and sampling plans for provision in Codex standards to ensure food safety and to facilitate fair trade

• Internationally endorsed methods are important to verification of provisions in Codex standards

• Sampling plans and procedures to ensure fair and statistically valid sampling procedures are used when food is being tested for compliance with a particular commodity standard (product specifications)
Recent work on revision of Codex guidelines for sampling

- Sampling plans are important to assess compliance of lots for:
  - Commodity defects, e.g. blemishes in fruit
  - Net content (e.g. drained weight of canned peas, fruits etc) and
  - Compositional characteristics (e.g. fat/protein content of milk powders)
- Specify sampling plans for health related properties (e.g. microbiological parameters or chemical contaminants)
- New Zealand led and championed this work in CCMAS
Major outputs of CCMAS

• Principles for the use of Sampling and Testing in international food trade (2015)
• Guidelines on measurement uncertainty (2021)
• Guidelines on Analytical terminology (2009)
• Recommended methods of analysis and sampling (2021)
• General Methods of analysis for food additives and contaminants (2004)
Importance of international collaboration

• Observer organizations play a key role in international standards development by providing technical expertise and insights;
• Codex recognises and values such collaboration during the process of standards development
• ISO, IDF, AOAC and BIPM contribution to Codex work particularly in CCMAS very important to ensure Codex standards benefits from expert advice and are technically sound
Some key priorities for Codex

• Developing standards that address global interests in food safety and fair trade
• Sound science and risk assessment
• Consensus and collaboration
• Increasing impact through recognition and use of Codex standards (international harmonisation)
• Addressing future challenges
Thank You