
Section 3

Basics of national Codex activities

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{ Introduction

This section discusses the role and functions of the Codex Contact Point, and provides practical guidance on how countries can meet their obligations as Members of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and interact within the overall Codex process.

A primary responsibility of Codex Member countries is to conduct their international food standards activities in a transparent and consultative manner. Guidance is provided here on the steps that should be followed in developing national positions on Codex issues, and some suggestions are made for consideration when selecting a national delegation to a Codex session.

The main objective is to highlight key issues and activities that form the basis of national Codex activities. This should ensure that participation in Codex activities is as effective as possible, and that international Codex standards are used optimally as the basis for national standard-setting activities and contribute to strengthening the national food control programme.

Module 3.1

Functions of a national Codex Contact Point

When a country becomes a Member of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, it is required to designate an official as the “Codex Contact Point”. The success of a country’s Codex activities depends on the effective functioning of the Codex Contact Point. This module outlines the key functions to be undertaken by the Codex Contact Point when carrying out the responsibilities associated with the position. Additional guidance on the operation of Codex Contact Points can be found in documents produced by the FAO/WHO coordinating committees for Africa and Asia.

Where should the Codex Contact Point be placed?

The location of this official within a governmental entity varies from country to country. Regardless of where the official is located, it must be remembered that coordination and communication are two key functions that the official must ensure are carried out, in order to contribute to a country’s successful Codex programme. The importance of effective coordination, good communication, transparency and inclusiveness cannot be overstated.

The Codex Contact Point should be located in a ministry that has responsibility for food safety or food standard setting. As outlined in Section 1 (Module 1.2), the decision where best to locate the Codex Contact Point lies with the government – the location of the Codex Contact Point is not as important as the function it carries out. Irrespective of the location of the Codex Contact Point, whether it is in the ministry of health, within the agriculture portfolio or in the bureau of standards, it is important that the designated individual communicates with all interested stakeholders, and has sufficient support and resources to do the work. An inadequately resourced Codex Contact Point will result in an ineffective programme.

Examples of where some countries have located their Codex Contact Point include:

- Australia – Department of Agriculture, Fishery and Forestry
- Barbados – National Standards Institution
- Brazil – Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Canada – Department of Health
- Guatemala – Office of Standards and Regulations, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food
- India – Directorate General of Health Services
- Jordan – Directorate of Standards, Ministry of Industry and Trade
- Malaysia – Food Quality Control Division, Ministry of Health

- Nigeria – Standards Organization of Nigeria
- Spain – Inter-ministerial Commission for Food Issues, Ministry of Health and Consumer Affairs
- United States – Food Safety and Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture

Core functions of the Codex Contact Point

The core functions of the Codex Contact Point (included in the Codex Procedural Manual) can be summarized as follows:

1. Acts as the link between the Codex Secretariat and the member country.
2. Coordinates all relevant Codex activities within the country.
3. Receives all Codex final texts (standards, codes of practice, guidelines and other advisory texts) and working documents of Codex sessions and ensures that they are circulated to those concerned within the country.
4. Sends comments on Codex documents or proposals to the Codex Alimentarius Commission or its subsidiary bodies and/or the Codex Secretariat.
5. Works in close cooperation with the National Codex Committee, where such a committee has been established. The Codex Contact Point acts as the liaison with the food industry, consumers, traders and all others concerned to ensure that the government is provided with an appropriate balance of policy and technical advice upon which to base decisions relating to issues raised in the context of the Codex work.
6. Acts as a channel for the exchange of information and coordination of activities with other Codex Members.
7. Receives the invitations to Codex sessions and informs the relevant chairpersons and the Codex Secretariat of the members of the national delegation to attend the meeting.
8. Maintains a library of Codex final texts.
9. Promotes Codex activities throughout the country.
10. Is the focal point for the country's access to the Codex Trust Fund.

Minimum resources required for effective functioning of the Codex Contact Point
As outlined in Module 1.3, to maintain a minimum level of effective activity in Codex, countries should consider the provision of minimum staffing requirements as follows:

- one professional officer with a background in food science, veterinary science, food safety or equivalent to spend at least 25 percent of their time on Codex matters;
- one clerical support person for 25-30 percent of their time to provide administrative support to the programme.

In addition, when considering resources for the Codex Contact Point, countries should attempt, where possible, to provide a properly functioning Internet connection. Effective and rapid communication with the Codex Secretariat and other Codex Members is greatly facilitated through the e-mail system. Codex Contact Points should make efforts to register a “generic and institutional e-mail address” and avoid the use of a “personal e-mail address”, which may become outdated after job transfer, etc. A functioning e-mail has the added advantage that countries may receive documents up to a few

weeks before they receive hard copies. Furthermore, many information documents (other than official documents) are circulated by e-mail, which will not be issued in printed form. However, when it is not possible to communicate by e-mail, provision is made by the Secretariat to use other means.

Codex Trust Fund

FAO and WHO have established a Trust Fund to assist developing countries eligible for funding support to attend sessions of the Codex Alimentarius Commission or its subsidiary committees/task forces.

The goal of the fund is to further the improvement of global public health and food security by promoting the provision of safer and more nutritious food. This will be achieved by: (a) helping regulators and food experts from all areas of the world to participate in international standard-setting work in the framework of Codex; and (b) enhancing their capacity to help establish effective food safety and quality standards and fair practices in the food trade, both in the framework of the Codex Alimentarius and in their own countries.

In order to take advantage of the Codex Trust Fund (its full name is FAO/WHO Project and Fund for Enhanced Participation in Codex), countries seeking funding should establish a national Codex Contact Point. This is because the Codex Contact Point is the only officially recognized channel of communication between a country and the secretariat of the Trust Fund. When applying for funds, in addition to this basic requirement, countries are expected to demonstrate coordination among governmental entities.¹

Linkages

One of the key functions identified above is that a Codex Contact Point is a “link”. Therefore, it is important that once a Codex Contact Point has been established, the linkages identified below are fostered. These linkages, and information obtained through this network, play an essential role in developing country positions and in providing comments on draft standards and other matters under discussion in the Codex system.

Linkages with other government ministries

The work of Codex addresses all aspects of food – from farm and fisheries to the table of the consumer. Accordingly, ministries that may be involved in the national Codex programme include:

- Health – Human health/food safety
- Agriculture – Primary production
- Fisheries – Marine production
- Industry/commerce – Product development
- Science – Food safety factors and innovation
- Trade – Negotiations for trade
- Foreign affairs – WTO agreements

¹ Information on the Codex Trust Fund is available in six languages at the Web site <http://www.who.int/foodsafety/codex/trustfund/en/>, or by enquiring at codextrustfund@who.int. Further assistance can be sought from the representatives of FAO and/or WHO at country and regional level.

Linkages with non-governmental organizations

It is equally important to maintain strong linkages with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as consumer organizations and industry associations. Involving industry NGOs is particularly useful for those committees and task forces involved in establishing commodity standards or standards of identity. Frequently these organizations can be a source of technical expertise specific to processing and distribution issues, and may thus enhance the credibility of a country's national position.

Public meetings may also be convened to solicit views or discuss positions in preparation for Codex sessions. Public involvement in the development of a country's position on Codex issues will provide a greater pool of expertise upon which to draw and, importantly, raise awareness about food safety and quality at the national level.

Linkage to the Secretariat of the Codex Alimentarius Commission

The Codex Contact Point is the formal link between the Codex Alimentarius Commission and the national Codex programme. However, it is advantageous for a country if the Codex Contact Point can also maintain an informal link. The Codex Secretariat in Rome is a reservoir of knowledge on Codex procedures and historical aspects, and can thus be helpful to Codex Contact Points. The Contact Point should therefore maintain links with all officers of the Codex Secretariat. It is highly recommended that one of the first undertakings of a newly appointed Codex Contact Point is to establish communications with the Codex Secretariat, in order to facilitate information exchange.

Are there other linkages a Codex Contact Point should establish?

In Module 1.4, the concept of regional liaison was identified. As countries in a particular region often share common problems, they can also work together to find common solutions.

One of the core functions of a Codex Contact Point is to “act as a channel for the exchange of information and coordination of activities with other Codex Members”. All countries that are Members of Codex have Codex Contact Points. Therefore, these Codex Contact Points provide entry points into other member countries even on non-Codex issues. The Codex Contact Points provide a channel for initial communication among countries, and can facilitate linking of the appropriate ministries or individuals.

Reference material

FAO/WHO. 2004. Codex Alimentarius Commission – Procedural Manual. 14th edition, p. 99. Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, Rome. Codex Web site: www.codexalimentarius.net

Module 3.2

How to develop national positions on Codex issues

As stated previously, it is important to understand that participation in Codex means more than getting on an airplane and travelling to a meeting. It means committing time to reviewing the issues under discussion, preparing national positions and, if appropriate, submitting written comments to the Codex Secretariat in Rome.

This module outlines some steps and considerations to be taken into account in preparing country positions and ensuring full consultation in the process. The first step towards enhancing participation in Codex is developing national positions on Codex issues and, when appropriate, submitting written comments. This module also explains the National Codex Committee structure as one option for organizing a national Codex programme. Guidelines for preparing and promoting national positions at Codex sessions are included in Box 3.2.7 at the end of this module.

This module also includes two practical exercises whereby participants in the training course are able to develop a position on an issue relevant to one of the committees identified as a relevant priority (see Module 2.4). If there is sufficient time, and the Codex Contact Point is involved in the training, the outcome of this practical exercise can be finalized and submitted as written comments to the Codex Secretariat. The second practical exercise facilitates the development of a national consultation plan by participants.

Steps to develop a national position

In order to be effective Members of Codex, countries should establish processes for developing national positions on matters before Codex committees and task forces. These need not be complex, but should follow an administrative process that reflects good management procedures. Where a national delegation is to attend a Codex meeting, a head delegate should be designated. Where this is the case, it should be national policy for the head delegate to coordinate the preparation of national positions relevant to the committee concerned. Regardless of the exact mechanism a country has established, there are five common basic steps in the development of a national position:

1. circulate working documents;
2. solicit input from stakeholders;
3. draft a position;
4. obtain national endorsement of the position;
5. where appropriate, submit the position as written comments.

Circulate working documents

- The Codex Contact Point receives Codex working documents from the Codex Secretariat in Rome.
- The Codex Contact Point determines whether written comments are being requested and, if so, what time frame needs to be established in order for the country to adhere to the deadline for submission of comments. In other words, the deadline that the Codex Contact Point will establish for completion of the national position will not be the same as the deadline contained in the working papers. The date established by the Codex Contact Point is usually one to two weeks prior to the deadline in the working papers, to allow sufficient time for any formatting, spell checking and government endorsement.
- The Codex Contact Point circulates working documents for review and comment and refers comments received to the individual responsible for drafting the position (see Solicit input).
- The mechanism used for this consultation process will vary, depending on national Codex arrangements.

Solicit input

Consultation is a core function of the Codex Contact Point. The Codex Contact Point endeavours to establish communication with other ministries, industry, consumers, academia and public health professionals.

It should be understood that not all stakeholders will be interested in all the issues under consideration in Codex. Therefore, to facilitate consultation and avoid overwhelming stakeholders with unwanted documentation, Codex Contact Points should endeavour to identify which groups are interested in what issues. For example, a country may be actively participating in the work of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (CCFFV) and the Codex Committee on Meat Hygiene (CCMH). The types of issues considered by these two committees, however, are quite different. Those industry associations associated with the production, processing, exportation or importation of fresh fruits and vegetables might be very interested in receiving the Codex documents relevant to the CCFFV. However, it is unlikely they would be interested in documents relevant to the CCMH. Therefore, they should not be sent those documents unless they have asked for them. On the other hand, for the FAO/WHO coordinating committee, both the fresh fruit and vegetable industries and the meat industry might be interested in all the documentation. It is the responsibility of the Codex Contact Point to determine the relevant stakeholders for each Codex issue and the mechanism for consultation.

Significant effort by the Codex Contact Point is necessary to ensure that appropriate stakeholders are consulted in the development of positions for sessions of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and its subsidiary committees.

Consulting with stakeholders

Box 3.2.1 | Types of stakeholders to be consulted on Codex issues

The Codex Contact Point should consider soliciting opinions from the following groups:

- all relevant government ministries
- consumer groups
- food industry associations (producers and processors, importers, exporters)
- academia
- public health professionals.

It is up to national governments to determine the method or process that will enable them to consult with stakeholders on Codex issues. As the Codex Contact Point has a responsibility to circulate Codex working documents, in most countries responsibility for coordinating consultation is done by the Codex Contact Point. However, to facilitate this process and to ease some of the workload of the Codex Contact Point, many countries have established a National Codex Committee. Other countries address this need by ensuring that the Codex Contact Point has a number of professional and administrative officers available to deal with the consultation requirements. Countries are free to choose their own national mechanism to ensure an adequately coordinated and all-inclusive national Codex programme. This may or may not be a National Codex Committee. The important issue is to have a properly functioning coordination mechanism.

Regardless of the mechanism established, Box 3.2.1 outlines the various stakeholder groups that should be consulted on Codex issues.

The National Codex Committee

In order to facilitate communication among all interested stakeholders that are interested in Codex, many countries have established a National Codex Committee (NCC). They have discovered that the establishment of an NCC facilitates the functioning of not only the national Codex activities but also the Codex Contact Point itself. Therefore, if a country is considering establishing an NCC it should do so at the same time as it is establishing its Codex Contact Point.

There are no international guidelines for NCCs as they are usually established to facilitate the conduct of a country's Codex activities and hence tend to reflect national requirements. In this respect, the composition and organization of an NCC will vary. NCCs can also provide a forum for discussions and for the formulation of the national position(s) and of responses to Codex proposals or policy.

A good reference for NCCs can be found in the Regional Guidelines for National Codex Committees, developed by the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Africa (ALINORM 03/28, Appendix II), adopted by the Commission at its Twenty-sixth Session (July 2003) and those developed by the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Asia (ALINORM 99/11, Appendix II), adopted by the Twenty-third Session of the Commission (1999).

Composition of the National Codex Committee

Ideally, all government departments and organizations concerned with food safety,

food production and trade in food should be included in the National Codex Committee. Further, owing to the functions of the NCC, some scientific organizations such as public universities and research institutions and any other notable experts in

the relevant field, or with a keen interest and relevant expertise in Codex matters, could be co-opted to the NCC.

A typical NCC could include representatives from the following institutions:

1. Relevant ministries/government institutions such as:
 - ministry of health
 - ministry of agriculture, fisheries, etc.
 - ministry of trade, industry, etc.
 - ministry of consumer protection
 - national bureau of standards
 - government laboratories
2. Consumer organizations
3. Food industry: manufacturers (representatives from various sectors)
4. Food industry: producers (e.g. representatives of farmers' organizations)
5. Traders in food items (e.g. importers and exporters)
6. Universities, professional bodies
7. Leading research institutions
8. Recognized experts

The NCC should, however, not be so large as to make it unmanageable.

The NCC could elect a chairperson or decide that the country's Codex Contact Point should be the chairperson.

Appointment to the National Codex Committee

The procedure for nomination/inclusion into the NCC must be known, open and transparent. Whereas different countries could use different methods to select those to participate in the NCC, depending on resources and structures available, it is recommended that the Codex Contact Point identifies and lists all key stakeholders

and invites them to the inaugural meeting of the NCC. The participants at this meeting would then identify and invite (through the secretary) other additional members to the NCC.

Ideally, the intention to form the NCC should be advertised, and organizations requested to recommend nominees. The government agency responsible for establishing the NCC could form a small subcommittee to sort out the list of applicants and make a selection based on predetermined criteria for representation at the NCC. Possible criteria for selection could include:

- track record on food issues relevant in Codex Alimentarius;
- reasonable prospects of continuous participation;
- expertise;
- availability to attend meetings and comment on Codex documents.

Participation at NCC meetings should be reviewed annually, and new members appointed to replace members who have ceased to participate in

Box 3.2.2 | Example of a National Codex Committee – Brazil

Every year, by November, the schedule of the National Codex Committee (NCC) meetings is set up based on the schedule of sessions of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies. NCC meetings are planned one month before the session of a Codex subsidiary body, in order to review and approve the national position at that meeting.

The NCC has created technical groups to follow up the work of each Codex subsidiary body. These technical groups function as a mirror of the Codex subsidiary body. Before the Brazilian NCC meeting, the technical group responsible for the follow-up of the corresponding Codex subsidiary body organizes its meeting to prepare a draft position to submit to the National Codex Committee. During the NCC meeting, the position is approved. The composition and the

head of the delegation are also approved at the NCC meeting.

The NCC meets about ten times during the year. At these meetings, national positions are discussed, as well as many other Codex issues such as responses to circular letters and the dissemination of Codex information among stakeholders.

It is important to note that the NCC has developed and maintains a Web site, www.inmetro.gov.br/qualidade/comites/ccab. It is another tool to communicate with society and stakeholders, which provides information regarding the Codex programme, the NCC and the circular letters, a summary of the reports of the Codex committees, and relevant items of news.

national Codex activities.

Secretariat

As circumstances vary from country to country, there is no fixed rule regarding the NCC secretariat. It should be noted, however, that many countries have determined that the NCC functions more efficiently and effectively if the chairperson and the secretariat are from the same institution.

The Codex Contact Point normally serves as the secretariat to the National Codex Committee, although this is not an absolute requirement.

The duties of the secretariat will vary according to the specific composition and function of the NCC. However, some suggested duties include:

- taking minutes at NCC meetings;
- keeping all records relating to the activities of the NCC;
- drafting agendas and sending invitations to meetings in consultation with the chairperson;
- keeping an updated file of NCC members;
- disseminating information on food-related events among NCC members;
- drafting the annual schedule for the NCC;
- undertaking such other duties as may be prescribed by the NCC and/or the government.

Functions of the National Codex Committee

As in the case of the composition, the functions of an NCC may also vary, reflecting national priorities or circumstances. As a general guide, the following are some of the functions that can be performed by NCCs:

Box 3.2.3 | Codex coordination in the United Republic of Tanzania

The United Republic of Tanzania has established a Codex Contact Point and a National Codex Coordinating Committee, both of which are essential for the country's effective participation in the international food standard-setting process. The Codex Contact Point is located in the Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) and the Head of the Agriculture and Food Section of the TBS is the officer responsible for the national Codex Contact Point.

The establishment of the National Codex Committee has ensured that all ministries, non-governmental organizations, consumers and industry have ample opportunities to present their views on various Codex matters, including aspects related to food safety control. The National Codex Committee has representation from public and private institutions including academia, research and consumer organizations. The core functions of Tanzania's National Codex Committee include:

- advising the government on the implications of various food standardization and food control issues that may have arisen and that are related to the work undertaken by the Codex Alimentarius Commission;
 - proposing to the government the acceptance of Codex standards, and suggesting which organizations should take action;
 - serving as a national forum to assist the government in ensuring a supply of safe food to consumers, while at the same time maximizing the opportunities for industry development, and for the expansion of both domestic and international trade;
 - appointing the technical (sub)committees to assist in the study or consideration of technical matters;
 - studying Codex documents, collecting and revising all relevant information related to science, technology, economics, health and control systems, so as to be able to give supporting reasons in the preparation and acceptance of Codex standards;
 - cooperating with the Codex Alimentarius Commission and nominating delegates to Codex sessions; and
 - cooperating with other national and foreign organizations whose scope covers food standards.
- Formulate the country response to the proposals of the Codex Alimentarius Commission – i.e. agenda items under consideration by the various Codex committees. This may include coordinating consultation activities, depending on the practice in a particular country.
 - Nominate delegates to represent the country at Codex meetings.
 - Advise the government on the best possible decisions as regards Codex standards and their implementation (e.g. conducting and coordinating activities to harmonize national standards in food safety with international recommendations).
 - Appoint such technical subcommittees to address specific issues as may be needed for the country's effective participation in Codex. These subcommittees normally focus on specific technical issues or types of standards (e.g. fish and fishery products), and their work may be coordinated by either the national Codex coordinating structure or the Codex Contact Point.
 - Propose and implement an annual programme of work.
 - Present an annual report of its activities.

- Articulate with the national authorities the strengthening of Codex activities in the country.
- Undertake such other duties as may be advised by the government.
Box 3.2.2 explains how the National Codex Committee of Brazil functions.
Box 3.2.3 describes the structure for coordination of Codex activities which has been established in the United Republic of Tanzania.

National positions

National positions are prepared for two main purposes:

- to enable the country delegation to present the position of their country during the relevant Codex meeting;
- to form the basis of written comments that will be provided to the Codex Secretariat and/or host country secretariat in response to a request for written comments through a circular letter.

Who should prepare the national position?

Preparing a national position is a collaborative effort. The first step is to prepare a “first cut”, or initial draft. An individual with technical expertise on the issue under consideration normally prepares this position, and also usually serves as the head of delegation to the Codex session for which the position is being prepared.

In preparing the national position, input received as a result of the above consultation process is taken into consideration. However, it must be understood that the final decision as to the content of a national position rests with the government, so it would be up to the national government to determine how much and to what extent the input received will be reflected in a national position.

When developing a country position on Codex issues, the considerations to be taken into account are as varied as the issues that might be considered by the committee. However, the following are some general criteria that should be borne in mind:

- Drafting a position is not done in isolation – it should be done in consultation with all interested parties.
- Consideration of an issue is usually not a one-time matter: often the issue may be on the agenda for several sessions. There is a history to the evolution of each issue within the context of any Codex committee or task force. Attempts should be made to understand this history, so that developing a position would be done within context. The committee will generally not revisit comments or interventions on issues that it has already discussed, and on which it has taken a decision.
- When preparing comments, make sure they are scientifically sound, or supported by risk assessment data (including an economic impact statement).
- Positions promoted internationally should be consistent with a country’s national policies. Therefore, the country’s domestic policies (including any pertinent legislation) should be considered when developing a position. However, using domestic requirements as a rationale for promoting a particular position at the international level is not appropriate. For example, it

is not appropriate to state that “My country supports X because that is what is in our national legislation”, as national legislation tends to reflect national concerns. National positions that are promoted at the international level should be based on considerations with a global application, e.g. science.

Official endorsement of the national position

This draft may then be shared again with other interested parties (e.g. other members of the country’s delegation if applicable), who provide their final input. The final version should receive a final review at an appropriate level of government, so that it can be endorsed as an official country position. In some countries, the National Codex Committee can perform this function.

Due attention should be given to ensuring national agreement and support, as once submitted it is not common practice to withdraw a national position, and countries should avoid changing the national position unless it is absolutely necessary (e.g. new information is received).

Submitting written comments

Box 3.2.4 | Example of a format for preparing the national position

Agenda item No. (enter agenda item number)

C/ (enter reference number)

CODEX COMMITTEE ON (committee name)

Date and location of meeting

Agenda topic

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this section is to provide a brief chronology of events leading up to the current consideration. This should include major decisions, previous country support for, or opposition to, those decisions, etc. This section will serve to put into context the elaboration of the issues and subsequent country position/strategy. Keep it as short as possible.

ISSUES/DISCUSSION

In this section the key issues that will be discussed as part of the agenda item will be identified. The issues should be evaluated from a national perspective; the arguments for and against, the implications, etc. should be identified, as appropriate. Depending upon the circumstances, the “issues/discussion” section may be separated into two distinct sections if such a separation will enhance the clarity and understanding of the country position. The primary purpose of this section is to provide support clearly to the position promoted below. This is primarily for the use of domestic readers who may not be as involved in the issue as the head delegate.

POSITION

This section will outline the national position on the issue(s) under consideration. The position must also be supported by a rationale that should flow logically from the discussion/evaluation section.

As a general rule, it is important that a country submit written comments on those issues that have been identified as priority issues for the country. Working on the premise that a developing country, or a country with a small economy, is limiting its active participation to the FAO/WHO coordinating committee and two standard-setting committees, then normally it would submit comments on items being considered by those committees.

The advantage of submitting written comments is that the views of the country will be shared with all the other Members of Codex. This is helpful if a country cannot attend a meeting owing to resource limitations. The chairs of committees have a responsibility to ensure that the written comments submitted by countries not present at a session are taken into consideration by the committee. If a country is present at a session and has submitted written comments, the speaker can then

Box 3.2.5 | Example of a format for preparing written comments to the Codex Secretariat

Country (enter country name)
 Agenda item No. (enter agenda item number) CL/ (enter reference number)

CODEX COMMITTEE ON (committee name)
 Date and location of meeting

Agenda topic

POSITION
 This section will outline the national position on the issue(s) under consideration.

REASON
 This section will provide the rationale for the position outlined above.

Box 3.2.6 | Preparation of country positions in Brazil

In Brazil, documents received from the Codex Secretariat are sent to the technical group responsible for that issue. Whereas the National Codex Committee is limited to 14 members, the technical groups may have more members, in order to consider all the contributions of the sectors involved in food standards work. They are composed of academia, industry, professionals, experts, etc.

The coordinator of the technical group (TG) organizes meetings to study the working

documents and prepare a draft position to submit to the National Codex Committee.

The coordinator of the TG sends the draft position to the Secretary of the NCC, for distribution to all NCC members, prior to the committee meeting. During the NCC meeting, the draft position is reviewed and approved as a national position.

Where appropriate the endorsed position is submitted to the Codex Secretariat and the host country secretariat.

draw the attention of the committee to those comments.

It is the function of the Codex Contact Point to submit any written comments to the Codex Secretariat in Rome and/or the applicable host country secretariat (see Module 3.1 on core functions of the Codex Contact Point). It is not normally the function of the Codex Contact Point to draft the national position.

Format for written comments/national positions

Although there is no officially endorsed format for the provision of written comments, or for preparing national positions for use by delegations (even if they are not submitted as formal written comments), there are some basic components that need to be incorporated into the position:

- a) name of the committee and identification of the session;
- b) identification of the agenda item, number and reference documents;
- c) background information to enable the reader to put the position in context;
- d) issues and discussion;
- e) a statement of the national position;
- f) a rationale for the national position.

Box 3.2.4 suggests a format that might be used when preparing the national position.

The preparation of the national position in this way will assist the delegate presenting it at the Codex session to be more familiar with the issue in the context of Codex.

It is important to make a distinction between written positions intended to be submitted to the Codex Secretariat in Rome for consideration of a committee, and national positions that are intended to be used by the head

Box 3.2.7 | Checklist for preparing and promoting national positions at Codex sessions

The following points provide guidance to assist countries in following a structured approach to developing and promoting national positions at Codex sessions. It should be borne in mind that not all these provisions apply to all issues all the time. However, reviewing these points while developing positions should facilitate the developmental process.

- Make full use of all available resources in developing positions and strategies: members of the country delegation, Codex Contact Point, National Codex Committee, other ministries, industry/consumer bodies, etc.
- Consult broadly and as early as possible.
- Bring key or controversial issues to the attention of the Codex Contact Point and the National Codex Committee as early as possible.
- Country positions must be clearly stated and a

rationale provided for them. If appropriate, offer alternative text.

- Network: establish alliances with other countries. Also, establish a good working relationship with the Codex Secretariat.
- Liaise with head delegates of other delegations representing the country at different Codex sessions to ensure consistency among positions in the various Codex committees. Discuss issues early in the development of positions.
- If it is the intent to submit written comments, circulate the officially approved position as broadly as possible. The following considerations are offered for use by head delegates and others involved in preparing country positions. The list is not exhaustive, neither are all points applicable to all delegations all the time. However, they provide a useful checklist to which head delegates and

Continued

Box 3.2.7 (cont.) | Checklist for preparing and promoting national positions at Codex ses-

others can refer for guidance on Codex activities.

Activities in preparation of committee meetings

1. Review previous reports and positions taken by the country (they may still be fully or partially valid).
2. Identify the issues of significance to the country or the committee that are likely to be on the agenda.
3. Identify expertise/talent in the delegation: are the right people on the delegation to address the issues? Membership of delegations should extend beyond the duration of a Codex session (i.e. delegation members become resource persons).
4. Review the agenda: identify issues with a linkage between a circular letter (CL) and an agenda item.
5. Decide whether a response to a CL would provide a strategic opportunity to advance the country's position. Responses to CLs are collated by the Codex Secretariat in Rome and/or by the host country secretariat and circulated to all governments by means of the Codex Contact Points. Therefore, it is a good way to get the country's view circulated.
6. Consider possible SPS and TBT implications.
7. Consult as broadly as possible and do so early. The consultative process is normally coordinated by the Codex Contact Point. Liaise with the Codex Contact Point to ensure that all key stakeholders are included on the consultation list. If you receive comments submitted directly to you, ensure that a copy is provided to the Codex Contact Point.
8. Determine who should prepare the first draft of the response to a CL, or the draft position on an agenda item.
9. Circulate the draft(s) to all delegation members (if applicable), revise as necessary and submit the final draft to the Codex Contact Point and National Codex Committee.
10. Discuss with the National Codex Committee whether the country should be involved in any working/drafting groups that may be established (note resource implications).
11. Circulate, through the Codex Contact Point, the officially approved positions as broadly as possible.
12. Identify countries with whom to liaise and find out what their positions are on a particular subject. If

necessary, ask others in the delegation to review the comments/previous positions of other countries. This will help to identify potential allies. Identify those countries that have not yet chosen a position: focus on them as potential allies.

13. Make use of the Codex Contact Point and National Codex Committee.
14. State clearly the country's positions/responses to Codex issues, providing a strong rationale. Avoid references such as "this is not permitted in our regulations". The position should be based on scientific evidence that will contribute to consumer health protection, or to ensuring fair practices in the food trade.
15. Are there issues that have an impact on other Codex committees? Liaise with other head delegates from the country who are leading delegations to other Codex committees on issues of mutual interest.
16. Verify logistical/administrative arrangements with members of the delegation (e.g. hotels, embassy contacts, etc.). It is desirable that all members of the delegation stay at the same hotel (or at least in close proximity), to facilitate delegation meetings.

Activities during the committee session

1. Consider holding pre-session meetings with other countries where there are common views (e.g. other countries in the region, etc.).
2. Conduct meetings with your delegation as necessary to ensure that all members are aware of your strategies and to solicit their opinions on the dynamics of the session. These meetings can also be used to confirm an interpretation of the results of plenary sessions.
3. Make the delegation known to the chair of the committee (i.e. informally introduce yourself and other members of the delegation, if any, during coffee breaks, etc.).
4. Be prepared to make informal suggestions to the chair on strategies to achieve consensus, or to find a way around an impediment to the progress of the meeting.
5. In order to make an intervention, countries need to raise their country nameplate and wait their turn until

Continued

Box 3.2.7 (cont.) | Checklist for preparing and promoting national positions at Codex ses-

invited to speak by the chair. Make strategic interventions and observe protocol. Ensure that the delegation is using the most recent copy of the Codex Procedural Manual. Because interventions are being translated into a number of other languages, the delegate should speak slowly, use short sentences and eliminate sentences and thoughts that are unnecessary to make the point. Writing out an intervention before making it can help the delegate craft an effective intervention, but if interventions are written in advance, they must not be read too quickly for the interpreters to follow. Make sure interventions are clear, short and focused. If possible, make reference to written comments previously submitted. Remember that your words are being interpreted as you speak.

6. Be a positive contributor to consensus while ensuring that the country's position is not compromised. Where possible, try to bridge gaps between opposing/differing views.
7. If the delegation consists of more than one person, there should be one speaker per agenda item only. Determine in advance which member of the delegation will address the various issues. Establish an intervention strategy (i.e. intervene early or later in the discussion). As appropriate, coordinate interventions with other like-minded countries: this creates a "cascade effect". Remember, however, that sometimes silence is golden!
8. Liaise as appropriate with other countries by making use of all members of the delegation (while maintaining control). This is also an opportunity to follow up on networks established during pre-meeting activities.
9. Participation in working groups/drafting groups is an excellent way to express the country's position publicly for consideration by everyone present at the earliest opportunity. However, use discretion when volunteering for participation in working groups, particularly when such participation has not been discussed with the country's Codex Contact Point or National Codex Committee, owing to potential resource implications.
10. During the adoption of the report of a Codex session,

ensure that the draft final report clearly and accurately reflects the outcomes of deliberations during plenary. Make use of all available delegation members to review the draft report. The purpose of the report review/adoption process is to ensure that there are no errors or omissions. Typographical errors and other comments of an editorial nature should not be made. Such revisions will be made by the Codex Secretariat in Rome when the report is finalized for publication. In exceptional circumstances where the country has requested an objection to be noted in the report, ensure that the intervention is accurately recorded.

11. If intervening with a correction or for clarification during the adoption of the report, have alternative text ready, including a written copy to facilitate the work of the Secretariat.
12. Remember that once the report is adopted, it will not be changed. It becomes the historical record of that committee meeting.
13. When abroad, if there is a need for additional guidance from the relevant national government authorities, try to get this guidance as early as possible so that work can progress and is not delayed until the next session.

Activities after the session

1. Prepare the report of the head delegate. The first draft should be shared with delegation members for their input before finalizing and submission to the National Codex Committee. Debrief the Codex Contact Point and the National Codex Committee at the earliest opportunity, making sure to identify key issues.
2. Review the final report, and identify issues of significance to the country or the committee, as well as those that have implications for or make use of work done by other committees.
3. Discuss any issues with the Codex Contact Point or National Codex Committee.
4. Identify pertinent circular letters (if any) resulting from the meeting which will be sent out for comment. The final official copy of the committee report normally contains a CL. A response

Continued

Box 3.2.7 (cont.) | Checklist for preparing and promoting national positions at Codex ses-

- to this CL should be prepared in cases where such a response will advance the country's position.
5. Make use of all delegation members to start developing strategies for the next session.
 6. Is there a need to modify the delegation? Consistency in delegations is important. However, as issues evolve and the agenda changes, it may be necessary to review and change delegation members to ensure that the appropriate expertise is available.
 7. The post-session activities are really the start of the pre-session activities for the next meeting.
- What do I need to bring to a Codex session?
- Travel information (visa, airline tickets, hotel address, contact details of embassy, name and address of contact person at Codex Contact Point in host country), weather and currency information.
 - Official invitation letter to the government to attend the Codex session, and official letter sent from your country notifying the Codex and host country secretariats of the composition of the national delegation.
 - Report of the last committee session and report of the head of delegation.
 - A copy of the Codex Procedural Manual.
 - Country position on relevant agenda items and related comments.
 - Agenda of the session.
 - All related working documents, as these may not be available in sufficient quantity at the meeting.
 - All other relevant documents such as the report of the last Commission session and the SPS and TBT Agreements.

delegate attending a committee session and not intended to be shared. Written positions intended for submission to the Codex Secretariat would not normally include a “background” section or an “issues/discussion” section incorporated in the submitted document. They should be clear and concise in presentation, as all written comments submitted to the Codex Secretariat are translated prior to distribution. Countries are strongly encouraged to send the written comments by e-mail from the e-mail account officially registered with the Codex Secretariat, while fax and ordinary mail can be used as backup options.

Box 3.2.5 suggests a format that might be used when preparing the national position to be submitted as written comments to the Codex Secretariat. Some common items of information will be included in the national position as outlined above, which is more intended for internal use, by the Codex Contact Point and by the national delegation.

To illustrate the process of developing a national position further, Box 3.2.6 explains the procedure used in Brazil.

Why submit written comments and what happens to them?

Written comments are useful to enable adequate preparation at national level prior to the Codex meeting. This ensures that there is national consensus, and that the best national expertise is included in addressing the relevance of a draft standard or issue to the country. As written positions are circulated prior to the meeting, it also gives time for countries to see which other countries might form an alliance with them, as they have the same concerns/opinion.

Exercise 3.2.1 | Developing a national position

Objective

The purpose of this exercise is to develop a national position on issues stemming from the agenda of a committee of interest to participants for submission to the Codex Secretariat in Rome, or to prepare a discussion paper for consideration by the FAO/WHO coordinating committee.

Method

Participants will be divided into groups of five to six people each. The instructor will select an issue from one of the recent ALINORMS of a committee identified by the participants as a priority (see Exercise 2.4.1 in Module 2.4). Each group will develop a position on the selected item in accordance with the components identified in this module. Or
If the timing of the workshop is such that it is not possible to submit comments on an item stemming from a

committee meeting, the group may develop a discussion paper for consideration by the FAO/WHO coordinating committee using the same process.

Draft papers will be reviewed in plenary when the groups recombine, and be finalized as a draft.

Time allocation

The groups should be allocated 90 minutes to develop the paper, and a further 30 minutes of plenary time should be allocated to finalize the document.

Outcome

The trainees will gain experience in drafting a position (or discussion paper) that could be circulated to national stakeholders and/or the National Codex Committee for endorsement and submission to the Codex Secretariat, as appropriate.

Forming alliances before or in the initial stages of a meeting may assist in having one's views heard.

Written comments are also relevant when resources may not be adequate, or when the meeting is not considered as a priority for sending a delegation. At the meeting, other countries that are present and have the same position can refer to the written comments to promote the position of both countries. If comments have not been submitted, this will not be possible.

It is useful to have a checklist for the preparation and promotion of national positions at Codex sessions. With official endorsement, such a checklist would have status as well as ensure consistency in approach at both the administrative and technical levels. Box 3.2.7 is a proposed checklist for preparing and promoting national positions at Codex sessions. Not all items listed are applicable in all cases, but the checklist can serve as a useful aid for all those who work with or present positions as part of a delegation.

Reference material

- FAO/WHO. 1999. Report of the Eleventh Session of the Codex Coordinating Committee for Asia. Appendix II. (ALINORM 99/15). Rome.
- FAO/WHO. 1999. The application of risk communication to food standards and safety matters. Report of a Joint FAO/WHO expert consultation, 2–6 February 1998. Rome.
- FAO/WHO. 2003. Report of the Fifteenth Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Africa. Appendix II. (ALINORM 03/28). Rome.
- FAO/WHO. 2005. Understanding the Codex Alimentarius. Revised and updated, pp. 19, 21, 25, 30–31. Rome.

WHO. 2003. The Codex process – A reference manual for Pacific island countries,
pp. 38–40. Manila, WHO Western Pacific Region.
Codex Web site: www.codexalimentarius.net



Exercise 3.2.2 | Preparing a consultation plan¹

Objective

The purpose of this exercise is to give the participants practice in identifying key groups that should be consulted in developing national positions and developing mechanisms to ensure that these groups are included in the process.

Method

Participants will be divided into groups with five to six members in each group.

In Module 2.8, Exercise 2.8.1 is aimed at developing a standard for a commodity of significance to the country in which the training is being conducted. The present exercise requires participants to identify all the government departments and organizations that have a vested interest in that standard. Participants are requested to draft a consultative plan that will solicit the opinions of all stakeholders interested in the content of the standard developed during

Exercise 2.8.1.

Although there is no format for a consultation plan, participants should consider the following:

1. Who are the contacts? It is not sufficient to identify an organization or government department. An individual or a specific position within the organization or government department should be identified. If an individual/position cannot be identified, trainees should describe how they intend to determine to whom in the organization they should address their request.
2. What information are they looking for? They should prepare a draft letter indicating why the individual is

being solicited and on what.

3. How are they going to consult? Personal contact, e-mail, letter, etc.? How will the reference document be circulated? Which document would be the reference or working document?
4. What are the timelines? What is the deadline for comments? Is sufficient time being provided to allow the stakeholder to review and comment? There is also a need to provide time for the individual(s) responsible for drafting the official country position to review the comments provided and incorporate them into the country position to the extent appropriate.

Time allocation

The groups should be allowed one hour to discuss, and then 10 minutes per group to report and discuss in plenary.

Outcome

The result of this exercise should be that each group will develop a consultation plan that identifies: (1) with whom they intend to consult; (2) how they intend to carry out the consultation; and (3) a timeline indicating the key dates in the process.

¹ A national consultation plan should include a list of people who need to be consulted when preparing national positions on topics under discussion at Codex. Different sets of lists may be maintained for different topics to ensure that adequate technical expertise and stakeholder opinion are available.

Module 3.3

Considerations for selecting national delegations

Determining who should be on a national delegation is always a challenge, as there are a number of factors that may affect the selection process.

Recognizing that the process of selecting national delegations varies from country to country depending on the situation, this module offers some guidance on the process of putting together a national delegation to attend a Codex session, and outlines its responsibilities before, during and after a Codex meeting. For the purposes of this module, the criteria are broken down to help select a head delegate and other members of the delegation, and to provide some guidance regarding the selection and participation of non-governmental observers on the delegation. Often a country delegation will consist of one person only, owing to a lack of resources, and therefore they will assume the role of head delegate. In such circumstances, participation of non-governmental expert representatives on the delegation is unlikely. This makes the selection process even more critical. In addition, when only one person represents the country at a Codex session, preparation of the national position in advance of the meeting is even more important, to ensure a true reflection of the country's views or concerns on a given topic.

In selecting the right person for the task, there are two important facts to bear in mind. First, Codex is an intergovernmental organization; therefore the official delegate must be a government official or an individual contracted to represent the views of the government. Head delegates represent the views of their governments and not their own. Second, Codex is a food standard-setting organization. Whoever represents the country should have some food safety/food standard-setting experience.

The following points are offered for guidance, and it should be remembered that what works in one country may not work in another. Therefore, these should not be considered as fixed rules.

Process for selecting the head delegate

Heads of delegations representing a country at the various committees and task forces of the Codex Alimentarius Commission could be selected using the following process:

1. The Codex Contact Point solicits nominations from senior-level managers of departments or agencies active in the national Codex programme. Nominations are based on:
 - terms of reference of the Codex committee for which the head delegate is being selected;

- position held within a ministry/department with primary responsibility for the Codex committee;
 - technical expertise of nominee in the subject matter of the relevant Codex committee;
 - degree of experience or involvement in previous Codex activities (e.g. contributions to developing national positions);
 - other factors, such as level of position if appropriate.
2. The government endorses the nomination submitted by the applicable department/agency, taking into consideration the above criteria. The level at which the nomination is officially endorsed will depend on the management structure of the country's Codex activities – for example it could be the Codex Contact Point if the authority rests there, or it could be the National Codex Committee (or its equivalent).
 3. The nominee's appointment together with the delegate's obligations and funding arrangements may be confirmed in writing if desired. Adequate briefing of the delegate is always important, but even more critical when there is a new representative at Codex meetings.

As stated previously, these are only guidelines. They outline the steps that could be followed, and by whom. However, each country will use variations on the above procedure, depending on the circumstances.

Forming delegations to sessions of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, committees and task forces

If a country has adequate resources, it may choose to select people in addition to the head delegate to form a country delegation to attend the Codex session. One method of forming such a delegation is described here.

The Codex Contact Point circulates invitations and provisional agendas for upcoming Codex sessions to governmental and non-governmental organizations that have expressed an interest in the relevant Codex committee session. Replies to the invitation are received by the Codex Contact Point, and reviewed by the Codex Contact Point and the head delegate.

Delegations usually consist of a head delegate, government advisers and non-governmental observers. Members of delegations should be selected by the head delegate, in consultation with the Codex Contact Point, based on their expertise and experience relative to the issues being considered by the

Box 3.3.1 | Procedure used to form a delegation – example from Malaysia

In Malaysia, there is a national Codex fund for government agencies to attend Codex meetings managed by the National Codex Committee (NCC). The NCC is mandated to identify the Codex meetings to be attended. The Ministry of Health, as the secretariat of the NCC, acts on its behalf to identify these meetings. It also selects the delegations,

including the head delegate, in consultation with the secretariat of the technical subcommittees and task forces (which may be with various agencies), as well as the facilitators or representatives from the Ministry of Health in those technical subcommittees and task forces.

committee and their ability to contribute to the effectiveness of the delegation in promoting the country's interests. The following criteria may be applied for selection of members of delegations:

- expertise relevant to the items on the agenda;
- regard for an appropriate balance of expertise and skills within the delegation;
- assistance required by the head delegate for certain items on the agenda;
- representativity of the individuals, groups and organizations that have an interest in the items on the agenda;
- representativity of the individuals, groups and organizations that might be affected by standards to be considered;
- extent to which the individual contributed to the development of national positions for the session of the committee.

The final composition of all delegations should be reviewed by the National Codex Committee and subject to endorsement by the government.

Countries may use a variety of methods. Box 3.3.1 outlines the procedure used by Malaysia.

Proposed guidelines for the selection and participation of non-governmental organizations in delegations

It is recommended that the government should be encouraged to engage public participation in the activities of Codex to the greatest extent possible. To this end, the Codex Contact Point should maintain a list of people and organizations that have expressed an interest in activities of one or more committees, and regularly disseminate information to those interested parties about Codex activities, including invitations to participate as part of a delegation to Codex meetings.

Where feasible and practical, when selecting the national delegation for a Codex meeting, attempts should be made to achieve a balance of non-governmental delegates representing the various non-governmental sectors, e.g. consumer groups, industry associations and professional associations. As Codex committee sessions are normally open to the public, additional non-governmental representatives are free to attend plenary sessions of the committee as observers, provided space in the meeting room permits. These public observers do not sit in the meeting with the delegations and cannot make comments.

In all cases, non-governmental representatives, whether considered for official delegate status or not, may provide written comments (when preparing national positions) to the head delegate on the issues to be discussed at the committee session. Comments from stakeholders are solicited prior to the establishment of an official position on an issue, and copies of draft positions should be made available to stakeholders prior to any Codex committee meeting.

It is important that the selection process of representatives of non-governmental organizations on delegations is transparent and equitable. Countries are therefore encouraged to establish criteria for this process, and to make such criteria available to all interested parties.

Criteria for selection of non-government members of a delegation

In developing national criteria for the selection of non-government members of delegations to attend a Codex meeting, the NCC should take into account the following:

- Only those individuals and organizations listed with the Codex Contact Point and/or National Codex Committee (or its equivalent) should be considered as candidates for non-governmental representatives on delegations. It is the responsibility of an organization to submit nominations to the Codex Contact Point for consideration as potential delegates.
- Preference should be given to organizations that have national status and have indicated an interest in a broad spectrum of issues. Organizations with a more localized membership could be given consideration, particularly if such groups have expertise in the subject matter.
- Nominees for delegation membership should have knowledge of the issues on the committee's agenda. Preference should be given to nominees who have recognized credentials in the area of work related to the mandate of the Codex committee in which their participation is being considered.
- Organizations should act on behalf of their membership, and should be prepared to disclose information concerning their organization (e.g. membership, charter, process used to establish their position, develop comments and select their recommended nominee, etc.).
- Final composition of all delegations should be subject to endorsement by the National Codex Committee.

Responsibilities and obligations of delegations

- Delegations participate in Codex sessions in accordance with the Codex Procedural Manual, Guidelines for Codex committees and intergovernmental task forces, including Conduct of meetings. It is the responsibility of all delegates to become familiar with the contents of this Procedural Manual.
- Non-government delegates should advise the head delegate of the concerns of the organization they represent, and make every effort to contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of the delegation at Codex sessions.
- Delegates are expected to attend all plenary sessions and any meetings convened by the head delegate. With the concurrence of the head delegate, non-government delegates may also attend working group meetings held during the session.
- Generally, non-governmental observers should not negotiate on behalf of their country's government, and should only do so with the express permission of the head delegate.
- If, during informal discussions, non-governmental observers express views that differ from the official country position, they must clearly indicate that these views are their own, or those of the non-governmental organizations they represent, and not those of their country's government.
- Non-governmental observers should exercise discretion to ensure that their activities are not prejudicial to the effectiveness of the delegation. A non-governmental observer may be asked to withdraw from the delegation if

such activities occur.

- A delegate may not serve concurrently during a Codex committee session as a member of any other country's delegation, or on the delegation of an accredited observer organization to the Codex session.
- Members of the delegation are not immune from any laws or regulations of their country or the host country as a result of participation on a delegation.

Responsibilities of the head delegate at Codex committee sessions

The head delegate to each session of a committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, in consultation with the Codex Contact Point and National Codex Committee, is responsible as follows. The checklist for developing and promoting national positions at Codex sessions (Box 3.2.7) provides additional information. Again, it should be noted that the following points are intended as guidelines, and actual practices vary from country to country. The head delegate:

1. identifies a list of advisers with an interest in, and expertise relevant to, the terms of reference of the committee, as well as the specific items on the provisional agenda of a particular session. The advisers may be selected from representatives of the various government ministries or departments. Observers may also be identified from non-governmental organizations;
2. strives to ensure the formation of a delegation of government officials and non-governmental representatives with an interest in, and expertise relevant to, the items on the provisional agenda;
3. prepares draft positions for each agenda item, in consultation with the National Codex Committee (or its equivalent);
4. where appropriate, solicits comments by correspondence or electronic means, or at a public meeting, on the draft positions for each item on the provisional agenda. This consultative process may be conducted through the Codex Contact Point, and can be facilitated by the National Codex Committee if one exists;
5. where appropriate, conducts a discussion of the draft positions on each agenda item with officials from other countries that may share common views;
6. presents the draft positions for each agenda item to the National Codex Committee (or its equivalent) for review, amendment as necessary and endorsement. As positions reflect official national government opinion, it is important that the positions be endorsed by the appropriate government authority;
7. provides copies of the final draft positions to:
 - the Codex Contact Point
 - each member of the delegation
 - all interested stakeholder organizations
 - the designated contacts in other countries as appropriate
8. presents, defends and promotes the positions on each agenda item to the Codex committee, taking into account issues raised by other delegations while ensuring consistency with national policy. Where a particular agenda item falls within the mandate of a ministry represented by another

- member of the delegation, the head delegate should consider asking this delegate to speak on behalf of the country with respect to this item;
9. on return to the country, prepares a report on the outcome of the session for the Codex Contact Point and the National Codex Committee. Preparation of this report may be delegated to another member of the official delegation. All members of the delegation should, however, endorse the final delegation report. In some countries, it is standard practice to present this report orally to the National Codex Committee, where such a committee exists;
 10. continues to coordinate preparation of responses to circular letters issued with respect to the committee, with consultation as per items (4) and (5) above, as appropriate. The reply should be submitted to the Codex Secretariat via the Codex Contact Point, and presented to the National Codex Committee for information.

Reference material

FAO/WHO. 2004. Codex Alimentarius Commission – Procedural Manual. 14th edition, pp. 62–66. Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, Rome.

Codex Web site: www.codexalimentarius.net



Module 3.4

Organizing Codex documentation

The Codex system is notorious for the amount of documentation it can produce. It takes a very organized Codex Contact Point to keep all the ALINORMS, circular letters, information documents, discussion papers and numerous other working documents in some kind of order. Whether the documentation is received and maintained in electronic form or as a paper copy, it still amounts to an overwhelming amount of documentation. The question is, of course, what to do with all this documentation?

This module offers some suggestions on how to organize and keep track of the flow of documents. In addition, given the extreme importance of consultation in developing national positions on Codex issues, some guidance is provided on how to establish a consultative process.

One thing that must not be done is to let documentation accumulate, unattended, on the corner of the desk. This will limit the ability of a country to respond effectively to issues under consideration, as the individual with the necessary expertise may not receive the document. Even if eventually retrieved from the pile, if a document is circulated late there may not be sufficient time for it to be considered by all interested stakeholders, which could result in poorly constructed comments or missed deadlines.

How should a country organize its Codex files?

In principle, whatever works best. It is important that the system used is simple enough to allow managers to find the information without the assistance of busy clerks. As Codex work tends to revolve around committees (and task forces), many countries organize their electronic and paper files based on Codex committees. It should be noted that countries that may only be actively participating in two or three committees should still maintain information files on the activities of all the Codex committees.

The only deviation from this general approach is that some countries keep their circular letters (CLs) filed separately. This is because they are issued consecutively, and hence often relate to issues in various committees, so that CL No. 7 may be in one committee file, and No. 8 in another.

Ensuring access to Codex documentation to all interested stakeholders

An important function of the Codex Contact Point is to provide information on Codex activities and the outcome of Codex meetings, and to make available Codex documents to interested stakeholders. This is important for enabling

the development of national policy, further described below, and to ensure that those responsible for preparing national positions and selected as members of the national delegation have access to all relevant documentation.

When organizing Codex documentation, the CCP should consider how best to provide public access to this information. Due consideration should be given to making best use of the Codex Web site where the standards are available. The scope and numbering system of Codex documentation is discussed in Module 2.7.

Codex standards and national policies and legislation

Codex standards are developed to protect the health of consumers and to ensure fair practices in the food trade. It should be noted that there is no obligation for countries that are Members of Codex to adopt any of the standards elaborated by the Commission. Nevertheless, because of their scientific basis, many countries will review the Codex standards as part of their process for developing national policies and legislation. Those countries that are Members of WTO are required to base their national measures on the appropriate international standard (see Module 2.10).

When countries are developing national legislation to address food safety or quality issues to protect the health of consumers, the Codex Alimentarius provides a ready-made set of standards that can be adapted to suit a country's requirements. Countries can review the Codex standard to determine the level

Box 3.4.1 | Transforming a Codex standard into a national standard – example from Peru¹

Since the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the implementation of the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement, many developing countries continue to view the increasingly strict international agricultural health and food safety standards as non-tariff protectionist trade barriers, rather than legitimate safeguards for the protection of human, plant and animal health. However, there are those who have come to see international standards not as barriers to trade, but as tools to upgrade quality standards and secure market access.

The Peruvian asparagus industry is one successful example, in which industry leaders and government specialists realized that it was in the best interest of the industry and the country to adopt international and national standards, and have greatly benefited. Over the past decade, Peru has quickly risen to become one of the world's largest exporters of asparagus products, together with the United States of America and China. In 2003, earnings from asparagus products (f.o.b²) reached

US\$206 million, representing nearly 25 percent of Peru's total agricultural exports. This has earned valuable export dollars for the Peruvian economy, and generated more than 50 000 jobs, approximately 60 percent of which among women in Peru's coastal regions.

Owing to high transportation costs, Peru's exporters are unable to match prices with less expensive asparagus products from some other countries. Nonetheless, they have continued to increase exports and gain market share by making investments in modern technology and by applying norms to generate consistently higher quality, internationally certified products, leading to satisfied clients and consumers. By

¹ Summary of a case study prepared by Tim O'Brien of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and Alejandra Diez of the Peruvian Commission for Export Promotion (PROMPEX).

² Stands for "free on board". Describes a price that includes goods plus the services of loading those goods onto a vehicle or vessel at a named location (see: <http://economics.about.com/cs/economicsglossary/g/fob.htm>).

Continued

Box 3.4.1 (cont.) | Transforming a Codex standard into a national standard – example

producing products that meet international standards, Peruvian asparagus exporters have increased production and worker efficiency and generated client loyalty, while drastically reducing the industry's risk of trade disruptions owing to quality, food safety or phytosanitary issues.

Peru has been able to gain access to developed country markets for its asparagus products because the industry and government officials have worked together to market and maintain quality national products through the adoption and application of national and international standards. The most important efforts that have been made to address problems in and improve the asparagus production chain have been in the establishment of mechanisms of cooperation, governmental incentives and private sector initiative. Good public–private sector communication led to the formation of the two most important organizations for the asparagus industry, the Instituto Peruano del Espárrago y Hortalizas (IPEH) and the Frío Aéreo Sociedad Civil. These two non-profit organizations represent 80 percent of the industry, and provide the platform for producers, exporters and government officials to organize and join forces to ensure that sanitary and quality norms are enforced, to facilitate technology transfer and to promote the industry internationally.

Beginning in 1998, government officials with the Peruvian Commission for Export Promotion (PROMPEX), seeking to benefit the industry through the modernization of food control systems and the setting of minimum national standards for asparagus products based on international norms, facilitated the formation of a technical committee on asparagus standards. The technical committee, working under the national standard-setting body, was able to obtain the participation of all the various sectors. This included not only the producer associations, business representatives and certification laboratories, but also diverse government representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Health and the Commission for Export Promotion (PROMPEX). The inclusiveness, transparency and level of familiarity that the technical committee generated among the parties were significant factors in convincing the asparagus industry to implement voluntarily the Codex Recommended international code

of practice – General principles of food hygiene,³ not because it was the easiest but because it was the most necessary. PROMPEX specialists worked closely with industry leaders and production managers to ensure the proper and successful implementation of these good hygiene standards. As a result of better hygiene practices, the industry saw improved production methods, worker efficiency and product quality. This success created the confidence and expertise necessary for the industry to attempt to certify under the more advanced norms that clients were beginning to demand.

Peru's technical committee on asparagus also played an important role in establishing the Codex Alimentarius standard for fresh asparagus⁴ that governs international commerce. Having developed a national position based on input from both private and public sector experts and with political support, Peru sent a person from PROMPEX as the official representative to attend the Ninth Session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables, and proposed changes to the draft standard during the meeting. Two private-sector representatives, one from each of the exporter associations, also attended and provided valuable technical support to the country's representative during the meeting. At the Twenty-fourth Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, Peruvian representatives were again able to introduce effectively and gain support for changes that benefited the Peruvian asparagus industry and the industry as a whole. At the same time in Peru, government officials made extra efforts to work with a now organized and committed industry to explain openly the importance of standards, and together they developed the national technical standards for fresh asparagus based on the international standards established by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

Having included the private sector in the standard-setting process from the beginning, PROMPEX found industry leaders were committed to improving the quality of exports. Thus, when the national fresh asparagus standards were published in early 2001, because

³ Codex Alimentarius–Food hygiene basic texts. 3rd edition. (Includes Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point [HACCP] system and guidelines for its application.) FAO/WHO. 2003. Rome.

⁴ Codex Standard for Asparagus (Codex Stan 225-2001).

Continued

Box 3.4.1 (cont.) | Transforming a Codex standard into a national standard – example

industry was already familiar with them and understood their importance for the industry, producers quickly adopted them with few problems and little argument. The national standards established a quality and performance baseline for the industry that allowed many to generate the skills and expertise to certify under other new and increasingly stringent international food safety standards more rapidly. These included Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP), traceability systems, good agricultural practices (GAP) and even GAP certification from the Euro-Retailer Produce Working Group (EUREP).

The increasing demand for quality Peruvian asparagus has led to investments to expand cultivation and improve infrastructure, thus increasing local incomes and decreasing unemployment in some of Peru's poorest regions. Asparagus production has created more local jobs because it is a more labour-intensive crop than other traditional crops, and because processing facilities must be near the production fields. Peru now has the world's largest asparagus packing and freezing plants and the industry remains almost entirely Peruvian-owned. More jobs have also been created in the new secondary industry of frozen asparagus that developed to make use of the large amount of seconds that do not meet the national standards for fresh export. This secondary industry gives smaller producers an important alternative market when it becomes uneconomical for them to implement the changes needed to comply with the stricter export standards for fresh produce. Even though some small farmers have been excluded from exporting fresh asparagus, there are examples of small producers who have continued to export because they were able to find creative ways to adapt old technologies or create new methods using minimal materials and funds to comply with the new standards. The processing

infrastructure built to support asparagus exports has also generated new markets for local farmers by using its extra capacity and certified quality controls to process other products, such as Piquillo red peppers, artichokes and snap peas. This expansion has enabled several production facilities to expand, and they are now able to offer year-round instead of seasonal employment giving these rural agricultural families and communities greater financial and social stability.

On the dry coastal plains of Peru, the sun and soil provide the ideal growing conditions, but it has been the cooperation and leadership from both the private and public sectors that has allowed the various actors to develop the trust and common vision needed to identify and resolve the main problems facing the asparagus industry. Through these efforts, the industry is now able to compete and respond better to the changing dynamics in the international market. The Peruvian asparagus industry's growth and success can serve as an example for other industries on how government agencies, associations and producers can successfully work together to develop, adopt and benefit from the establishment of national and international standards, which can lead to both increased economic and social development.

of protection the standard would provide to their consumers, and decide whether that level is the level deemed appropriate for their country.

Similarly, when developing a national standard for a particular food commodity, the Codex Alimentarius provides a convenient source of ready-made standards of identity. Box 3.4.1 provides an example of how Peru made use of the Codex standard for asparagus in its national legislation, and the subsequent benefits it enjoyed as a result.

In order for a country to make effective use of Codex standards at the

national level, it is necessary for the process used to develop national policies and legislation to include an examination of the existing Codex standards. Some countries have established a formal step-by-step process to develop national legislation, and have incorporated a review of Codex standards as one of the steps. Other countries have a less formal approach. Regardless of the process used, it is important that the Codex Contact Point be linked to the process, so that countries are aware and can take advantage of existing international standards.

As noted previously, countries that have signed the WTO agreements are encouraged to harmonize their national standards with Codex standards, i.e. Codex standards are used as a basis for developing national standards; however, they do not need to be accepted word for word. Codex standards are not intended to replace national legislation, but rather to assist in establishing national policies and food regulations and/or standards. Countries should enact a national food law to provide the legal framework for administering national policies and regulations.



Module 3.5

What do FAO and/or WHO offer to help implement or make use of Codex standards?

In order to support countries that wish to harmonize their national standards with those of Codex and thereby comply with international trade regulations, FAO and WHO engage in a variety of capacity-building activities. The Codex Alimentarius Commission, being an independent intergovernmental body for the development of food standards, does not provide technical assistance for participation in the work of Codex or for implementing its outputs at national level.

However, in addition to its main role as an international standard-setting body, the Codex Alimentarius Commission provides member countries with an international focal point and forum for informed dialogue on food quality and safety issues. FAO and WHO, as the parent Organizations of Codex, follow closely the discussions and requests of Member States at Codex sessions, and take these into account when planning capacity-building programmes at national and regional levels. In turn, regular feedback on FAO/WHO capacity-building activities is provided to member countries through the Codex Alimentarius Commission and its subsidiary bodies.

Capacity building has been defined within the United Nations system as follows:

“Capacity building is the building of organizational and technical abilities, behaviours, relationships and values that enable individuals, groups and organizations to enhance their performance effectively and to achieve their development objectives over time.”

The purpose of this module is to provide brief information on the ongoing capacity-building programmes of FAO and WHO in the field of food safety and food regulation. While Module 1.1 explains why a country should be involved in Codex, this module focuses on other possibilities that may be available to developing countries wishing to enhance not only their involvement in Codex, but also to strengthen their national food safety systems.

The technical assistance provided aims to assist countries in strengthening their existing systems. National approaches within the food industry and government agencies are reinforced so that international Codex standards can be introduced and used. FAO and WHO provide tools and organize capacity-building activities for the benefit of developing countries.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

The quality and safety of food is at the centre of FAO's mandate. The World Food Summit Declaration (Rome, November 1996) reaffirms the right of

everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger. The Food and Nutrition Division (ESN) hosts the Joint FAO/WHO Secretariat of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, and the Food Quality and Standards Service responsible for the food safety capacity-building programme and the provision of scientific advice. Within FAO, the Agriculture and Fisheries Departments also contribute to improving the capacity of food safety and safety-related quality control systems at country level. FAO has a decentralized structure (five regional offices, five subregional offices, five liaison offices and over 120 country offices). These offices are increasingly involved in capacity-building activities through, in particular, the implementation of field projects that are supported by regional or subregional food and nutrition officers (eight in all, stationed in different parts of the world). Further information is available at the FAO homepage www.fao.org.

Food safety capacity building within FAO includes all activities undertaken in support of member countries wishing to strengthen their food control programmes and activities. This includes: policy advice on specific issues; institutional development and/or strengthening; review and updating of food legislation; harmonization of food regulations and standards with Codex and other international regulatory instruments; training of technical and managerial staff in a variety of disciplines related to food safety; and studies and applied research on specific food-related subjects. Capacity building also includes the organization of national and regional workshops and seminars on matters related to food safety and enhancing opportunities for international trade, and the development and dissemination of manuals, guidelines, training materials and other tools needed to support these programmes. Activities are undertaken by FAO headquarters in Rome and the FAO regional offices.

World Health Organization

WHO has a specific mandate for the protection of public health, which is “the attainment by all people of the highest possible level of health”. The WHO Global Strategy for Food Safety¹ states WHO’s goal in the area of food safety, namely “to reduce the health and social burden of food-borne disease”. This goal is to be achieved through a number of approaches, notably surveillance of food-borne diseases; improved (tools for) risk assessment, including assessment of safety of new technologies; promotion of increased involvement of the public health sector in the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission; improved risk communication; increased coordination in international cooperation, and capacity building.

The structure of WHO is such that in the area of food safety, as for most technical areas, normative functions are undertaken at the level of its headquarters in Geneva (through its Department of Food Safety, Zoonoses and Foodborne Diseases), mainly in close collaboration with FAO. These activities include the development of tools and guidelines and of a risk analysis framework, the performance of risk assessments and international standard-setting activities related to the Codex Alimentarius. Most of the

¹ WHO. 2002. WHO global strategy for food safety. Geneva.

activities related to technical cooperation, capacity building and country programmes are implemented by WHO's six regional offices through a network of country-based offices (office of the WHO Representative). Further information is available at the WHO homepage www.who.int/foodsafety.

Mechanisms for delivering technical assistance

In keeping with these mandates, FAO and WHO engage in their diverse capacity-building activities designed to assist developing countries to improve their food safety and plant and animal health systems. These various initiatives are often undertaken together with other international organizations, national governments, international and regional financial institutions and non-governmental organizations.

A variety of mechanisms are used by FAO and WHO to provide technical assistance in response to the needs of member countries. Owing to the different structures and mandates of the two Organizations, technical assistance activities may vary. Joint activities are undertaken wherever possible and appropriate.

Field projects

Projects aimed at building national capacity in developing member countries for the management and control of food quality and safety may be funded through the FAO Technical Cooperation Programme, or by other donors, or even by the country itself. The projects focus on the needs of both public sector institutions with responsibilities for food safety and those in the industry sector. Projects may deal with many aspects of official food control, industry food quality and safety programmes, and broad stakeholder participation in food quality and safety regulation.

Workshops, seminars and training courses

These activities are conducted to meet specific national, and in some cases regional, needs. They may cover a range of topics, including: support in strengthening national Codex programmes, developing tools for food-borne disease surveillance; improving the quality of street foods; food safety risk analysis; developing food safety strategies; ensuring the quality and safety of fresh fruits and vegetables; and enhancement of laboratory facilities and analysis capabilities.

Supporting tools

In support of these capacity-building activities, FAO and WHO are also engaged in the development of manuals, guidelines and training materials. Most of these materials are developed jointly, except for a few which are prepared under specific field projects operated either by FAO or WHO, or which relate to specific organizational mandates. Some examples of such materials are:

- Assuring food safety and quality – Guidelines for strengthening national food control systems. FAO Food and Nutrition Paper No. 76. Rome, FAO/WHO, 2003.
- Improving the quality and safety of fresh fruits and vegetables – A

practical approach. Rome, FAO, 2004.


- Food quality and safety systems: a training manual on food hygiene and the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system. Rome, FAO, 1998.
- Risk assessment of Salmonella in eggs and broiler chickens. Rome, FAO/WHO, 2002. (Microbiological Risk Assessment Series Nos 1 and 2.)
- Good hygiene practices for the preparation of street-vended foods: a training manual. (FAO publication in preparation.)
- Bringing food safety home: how to use the WHO 5 keys to safer food to create effective food safety training for specific target audiences. (WHO publication in preparation.)





Visual aids


Module 3.1



FAO/WHO CODEX TRAINING PACKAGE

**SECTION THREE
BASICS OF NATIONAL
CODEX ACTIVITIES**

Module 3.1
Functions of national Codex
Contact Points




**Core functions of
Codex Contact Points**

- Codex Contact Point is the national information point
- Effective functioning is essential
- Coordination and communication

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FAO/WHO Codex training package
Module 3.1




**Where to locate
the Codex Contact Point**

- Should be located in a ministry/department that has responsibility for food safety or food standard setting
- Key function of coordination and communication cannot be overstated
- Must be sufficiently supported and resourced, particularly with respect to time devoted to Codex work

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FAO/WHO Codex training package
Module 3.1




**Core functions of
the Codex Contact Point**

- Acts as the link between the Codex Secretariat and member countries
- Coordinates all relevant Codex activities at national level
- Receives all Codex final texts and working documents of Codex sessions and ensures that they are circulated to those concerned within their own country
- Sends comments on Codex documents or proposals to the Codex Alimentarius Commission or its subsidiary bodies and/or the Codex Secretariat

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FAO/WHO Codex training package
Module 3.1




**Core functions of
the Codex Contact Point (cont.)**

- Works in close cooperation with the National Codex Committee and acts as liaison point with all national stakeholders to ensure an appropriate balance of policy and technical advice upon which to base decisions relating to issues raised in the context of the Codex work
- Acts as a channel for the exchange of information and coordination of activities with other Codex Members
- Receives the invitation to Codex sessions and informs the relevant chairpersons and the Codex Secretariat of the names of participants on national delegation

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FAO/WHO Codex training package
Module 3.1



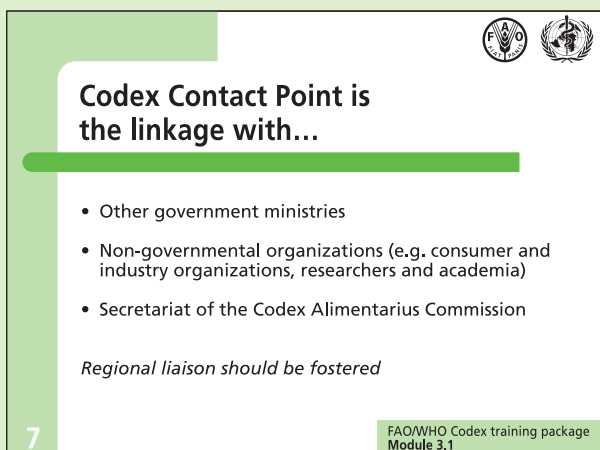
**Core functions of
the Codex Contact Point (cont.)**

- Maintains a library of Codex final texts
- Promotes Codex activities throughout their own countries
- Is the focal point for the country's access to the Codex Trust Fund

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FAO/WHO Codex training package
Module 3.1

Module 3.1 (cont.)



Slide 7 features a white background with a green L-shaped header element in the top-left corner. In the top-right corner, there are two circular logos: the FAO logo on the left and the WHO logo on the right. The main title, "Codex Contact Point is the linkage with...", is in bold black text. Below the title is a thick green horizontal bar. A bulleted list follows, containing three items: "Other government ministries", "Non-governmental organizations (e.g. consumer and industry organizations, researchers and academia)", and "Secretariat of the Codex Alimentarius Commission". Below the list, the text "Regional liaison should be fostered" is written in italics. The number "7" is in the bottom-left corner, and the footer "FAO/WHO Codex training package Module 3.1" is in the bottom-right corner.

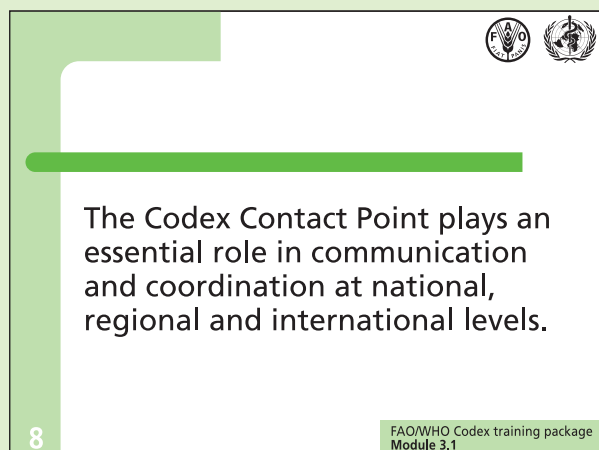
Codex Contact Point is the linkage with...

- Other government ministries
- Non-governmental organizations (e.g. consumer and industry organizations, researchers and academia)
- Secretariat of the Codex Alimentarius Commission

Regional liaison should be fostered

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Module 3.1




Slide 8 features a white background with a green L-shaped header element in the top-left corner. In the top-right corner, there are two circular logos: the FAO logo on the left and the WHO logo on the right. The main text, "The Codex Contact Point plays an essential role in communication and coordination at national, regional and international levels.", is in bold black text. The number "8" is in the bottom-left corner, and the footer "FAO/WHO Codex training package Module 3.1" is in the bottom-right corner.

The Codex Contact Point plays an essential role in communication and coordination at national, regional and international levels.

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FAO/WHO Codex training package
Module 3.1


Module 3.2



FAO/WHO CODEX TRAINING PACKAGE

SECTION THREE BASICS OF NATIONAL CODEX ACTIVITIES

Module 3.2 How to develop national positions on Codex issues




How to develop national positions on Codex issues

- Overview
- Developing national positions
- Ensuring adequate consultation
- Possible role of a National Codex Committee

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Module 3.2




Steps in developing a national position

1. Circulate working documents
2. Solicit input from interested stakeholders
3. Draft a position
4. Obtain national or official endorsement of the position
5. When appropriate, submit written comments

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Module 3.2




Solicit input

- Consultation is a core activity of the Codex Contact Point.
- To facilitate consultation and avoid overwhelming stakeholders, endeavour to identify which groups are interested in what issues.
- As the Codex Contact Point has a responsibility to circulate Codex working documents, in most countries responsibility for coordinating consultation is carried out by the Codex Contact Point.

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Module 3.2




National Codex Committees

- To facilitate the consultation process and to ease some of the workload of the Codex Contact Point, many countries have established a National Codex Committee or equivalent structure.
- There are no specific guidelines for these national organizations as they are usually established to facilitate the conduct of a country's Codex activities and hence tend to reflect national requirements.
- In this respect, the composition and organization of a National Codex Committee will vary.
- Ideally, all government departments and organizations concerned with food safety, food production and trade in food should be included.

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Module 3.2



Composition of the National Codex Committee


The following types of stakeholders are often represented on National Codex Committees or their equivalent:

- Relevant government departments/ministries
- Consumer organizations
- Industry – food manufacturers
- Industry – food producers
- Food importers and/or exporters
- Academia
- Leading research institutions
- Notable national experts

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Module 3.2

Module 3.2 (cont.)




Appointment to a National Codex Committee

When selecting a representative to serve on a National Codex Committee, the following criteria could be used:

- track record on food issues relevant in Codex Alimentarius
- reasonable prospects of continuous participation
- expertise
- availability to attend meetings and comment on Codex documents

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Module 3.2




Functions of a National Codex Committee (or equivalent) include:

- Formulating the country response to the proposals of the Codex Alimentarius Commission – i.e. agenda items under consideration by the various Codex committees. This may include coordinating consultation activities, depending on the practice in a particular country.
- Nominating delegates
- Advising government on best decisions regarding Codex standards and implementation
- Appointing technical subcommittees

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Module 3.2




Functions of a National Codex Committee (or equivalent) include (cont.):

- Circulating draft positions to the National Codex Committee or equivalent structure for review, and revision as necessary, through full consultation
- Endorsement as official national position by government or by National Codex Committee
- Where appropriate, the Codex Contact Point submits the endorsed position(s) to Rome and the host country secretariat. The positions may also be shared with other countries if requested by the head delegate.

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Module 3.2



Brazil's National Codex Committee – preparing a national position

In Brazil, the coordinator of the NCC receives all the documents and communications sent by the Codex Secretariat. The documents are received and sent to the technical group (TG) responsible for that issue.


The coordinator of the TG organizes meetings to study the working documents and prepare a draft position to submit to the National Codex Committee.

The coordinator of the TG sends the draft position to the Secretary of the NCC, for distribution to all Committee members prior to the Committee meeting. During the National Codex Committee meeting the draft position is reviewed and approved as the national position.

Where appropriate, the coordinator of the NCC submits the endorsed position to the Codex Secretariat and the host country secretariat.

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Module 3.2




Why submit written comments?

- To identify issues of priority for the country
- To share views with all Codex members
- To facilitate national intervention when unable to send a delegation to a Codex meeting

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Module 3.2




Format for country positions

- Name of Committee and reference session
- Agenda item, number and reference documents
- Background information
- Issues and discussion
- Statement of national position
- Rationale for national position

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Module 3.2

Module 3.2 (cont.)




Background – Format

- Brief chronology of events
- Context for the elaboration of the issues and subsequent country position/strategy – should be as short as possible

Note: where written comments are intended to be submitted to the Codex Secretariat in Rome, this section is not included.

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Module 3.2




Issues/Discussion – Format

- Key issues identified and evaluated from a national perspective
- The primary purpose of this section is to provide support clearly to the position promoted
- Primarily for the use of domestic readers who may not be as involved in the issue as the head delegate.

Note: when written comments are submitted to Rome, the Background and Issues/Discussion sections are normally omitted.

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Module 3.2




National position – Format

- Country position should be clearly stated
- Positions must be supported by a rationale

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Module 3.2




General considerations when preparing national positions

- Drafting a national position should not be carried out in isolation.
- Attempts should be made to understand the history of an agenda item so developing a position can be done within that context.
- When preparing comments, make sure they are scientifically sound, or supported by risk assessment data (including an economic impact statement).
- Positions promoted internationally should be consistent with a country's national policies.

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Module 3.2


Module 3.3



FAO/WHO CODEX TRAINING PACKAGE

**SECTION THREE
BASICS OF NATIONAL
CODEX ACTIVITIES**


Module 3.3
**Considerations for
selecting national delegations**



Considerations for selecting national delegations

- Process for selecting the heads of delegations
- Procedures for formation of delegations to sessions of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, committees and task forces
- Guidelines for the selection and participation of non-governmental organizations in national delegations
- Responsibilities of the head delegate at Codex committee sessions


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Module 3.3



Selecting heads of delegations

- The Codex Contact Point solicits nominations from senior-level managers. Nominations are based on:
 - terms of reference of Codex committee for which the head delegate is being selected;
 - primary ministerial/departmental responsibility for the Codex committee;
 - technical expertise and experience of nominee in the subject matter of the relevant Codex committee;
 - other factors, such as level of position are considered where appropriate.


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Module 3.3



Selecting heads of delegations (cont.)

- The government endorses the nomination submitted by the applicable department/agency, taking into consideration the above criteria.
- The nominee's appointment together with delegate's obligations and funding arrangements may be confirmed in writing if desired.


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Module 3.3



Guidelines for the formation of national delegations

- The Codex Contact Point circulates invitations and provisional agendas.
- Replies to the invitations are received and reviewed by the Codex Contact Point and the head delegate.
- Members of the delegation are selected based on selection criteria.

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Module 3.3




Selection criteria for members of the delegation

- Expertise relevant to the items on the agenda
- Appropriate balance of expertise and skills in the delegation
- Assistance, if necessary, to the head delegate for items on the agenda
- Representativity of the individuals, groups and organizations that have an interest in the items on the agenda

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Module 3.3

Module 3.3 (cont.)




Selection criteria for members of the delegation (cont.)

- Representativity of the individuals, groups, and organizations that might be affected by standards to be considered
- Extent to which the individual contributed to the development of national positions for the session of the Committee

Final composition of all delegations should be reviewed by the National Codex Committee and be subject to endorsement by the government

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Module 3.3




Criteria for the selection and participation of NGOs

- Only those individuals and organizations listed with the Codex Contact Point and/or National Codex Committee (or its equivalent) should be considered.
- Preference is given to organizations that have national status and have indicated an interest in a broad spectrum of issues.

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Module 3.3




Criteria for the selection and participation of NGOs (cont.)

- Nominees should have knowledge of the issues on the Committee's agenda. Preference should be given to nominees who have recognized credentials in the area of work related to the mandate of the Codex Committee.
- Organizations should act on behalf of their membership and should be prepared to disclose information concerning their organization.
- Final composition of all delegations should be subject to endorsement by the National Codex Committee.

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Module 3.3




Responsibilities and obligations of delegates

- Delegations participate in Codex Sessions in accordance with the *Codex Procedural Manual*.
- Non-government members of the delegation should advise the head delegate on the concerns of the organization they represent and make every effort to contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of delegation at Codex sessions.
- All members of the delegation are expected to attend all plenary sessions and any meetings convened by the head delegate.

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Module 3.3




Responsibilities and obligations of delegates (cont.)

- Generally, non-governmental observers should not negotiate on behalf of their country's government.
- If, during informal discussions, non-governmental observers express views that differ from the official country position, they must clearly indicate that these views are their own, or those of the non-governmental organizations they represent, and not those of their country's government.

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Module 3.3




Responsibilities and obligations of delegates (cont.)

- Non-governmental observers should exercise discretion to ensure their activities are not prejudicial to the effectiveness of the delegation. A non-governmental observer may be asked to withdraw from the delegation if such activities occur.
- A delegate may not serve concurrently during a Codex committee session as a member of any other country's delegation or on the delegation of an accredited observer to the Codex Session.
- Members of the delegation are not immune from any laws or regulations of their country or the host country as a result of participation on a delegation.

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FAO/WHO Codex training package
Module 3.3

Module 3.3 (cont.)




Responsibilities of the head delegate

- Identifies a list of advisers with an interest in, and expertise relevant to, the terms of reference of the committee, as well as the specific items on the provisional agenda of a particular session
- Strives to ensure the formation of a delegation of government officials and non-governmental representatives with an interest in, and expertise relevant to the items on the provisional agenda
- Prepares draft positions for each agenda item, in consultation with National Codex Committee representatives

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Module 3.3




Responsibilities of the head delegate (cont.)

- Where appropriate, solicits comments by correspondence or electronic means, or at a public meeting, on the draft positions for each item on the provisional agenda
- Where appropriate, conducts a discussion of the draft positions on each agenda item with officials from other countries that may share common views
- Presents the draft positions for each agenda item to the National Codex Committee (or its equivalent) for review, amendment as necessary and endorsement by the appropriate government authority

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Module 3.3




Responsibilities of the head delegate (cont.)

- Provides copies of the final draft positions to:
 - the Codex Contact Point
 - each member of the delegation
 - all interested stakeholder organizations
 - the designated contacts in other countries as appropriate

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Module 3.3




Responsibilities of the head delegate (cont.)

- Presents, defends and promotes the positions on each agenda item to the Codex committee, taking into account issues raised by other delegations while ensuring consistency with national policy
- Prepares a report on the outcome of the session for the Codex Contact Point and the National Codex Committee
- Prepares responses to circular letters issued as a result of the meeting

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Module 3.3




After Codex meetings, the Codex Contact Point should meet with the delegation and be briefed, and decide on follow-up action and experience of delegation to see if changes are necessary in preparing for the next Codex session.

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Module 3.3


Module 3.4



FAO/WHO CODEX TRAINING PACKAGE

SECTION THREE BASICS OF NATIONAL CODEX ACTIVITIES

Module 3.4 Organizing Codex documentation




How should a country organize its Codex files?

- Whatever works best
- Simple enough to enable everyone to find the information
- Many countries organize their electronic and paper files based on Codex committees
- Countries that may only be actively participating in two or three committees should still maintain information files on the activities of all the individual Codex Committees
- Some countries keep their circular letters (CLs) filed separately

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National use of Codex standards

- No obligation for countries that are Members of Codex to adopt any of the standards elaborated by the Commission
- Many countries will review the Codex standards as part of their process for developing national policies and legislation
- Countries that are members of the WTO are encouraged to harmonize their national measures with Codex standards
- The *Codex Alimentarius* provides a ready-made set of standards that can be adapted to suit a country's requirements

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National use of Codex standards (cont.)

- Some countries have established a formal step-by-step process to develop national legislation and have incorporated a review of Codex standards as one of the steps
- Important that the Codex Contact Point be linked to the process so that countries are aware and can take advantage of existing international standards

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Developing national food law

- Codex standards are not intended to replace national legislation but rather are intended to assist in establishing national policies
- Countries should enact a national food law to provide the legal framework for administering national policies and regulations

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Module 3.5



FAO/WHO CODEX TRAINING PACKAGE

**SECTION THREE
BASICS OF NATIONAL
CODEX ACTIVITIES**


Module 3.5
FAO/WHO
and technical assistance



FAO/WHO and technical assistance

- The Codex Alimentarius Commission is an independent body for the development of food standards and, as such, does not provide technical assistance for participation in the work of Codex or for implementing its outputs at national level.
- This assistance is available through the parent organizations, FAO and WHO.


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Linkage with Codex meetings

- Topics under discussion may result in capacity-building initiatives, e.g. risk analysis manual, workshops on HACCP.
- FAO/WHO brief member countries on capacity-building activities at Codex meetings.

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FAO/WHO capacity-building programmes

Build organizational and technical abilities on:

1. strengthening national food quality and safety systems
2. enhancing input to Codex

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FAO mandate

...the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger

The FAO Food and Nutrition Division hosts:

- Joint FAO/WHO Secretariat of the CAC
- Food Quality and Standards Service (ESNS)

www.fao.org

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Examples of FAO technical assistance

- Updating food legislation
- Harmonization of food standards
- Training technical and managerial staff
- Studies and applied research
- Food laboratory contaminant programmes
- International food trade and WTO requirements

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Module 3.5 (cont.)



WHO mandate


...the attainment by all people of the highest possible level of health

...to reduce the health and social burden of food-borne disease
(WHO Global Strategy for Food Safety)

Department of Food Safety,
Zoonoses and Foodborne Diseases:
www.who.int/foodsafety

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Examples of WHO capacity-building programmes

- Surveillance of food-borne disease
- Improved (tools for) risk assessment
- Promotion of increased involvement of public health sector
- Improved risk communication

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Mechanisms for delivering technical assistance

- Field projects
- Workshops, seminars, training courses
- Supporting tools (manuals, guidelines, training materials)

Joint FAO/WHO activities are undertaken wherever possible and appropriate.

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