CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION E

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

World Health Organization

Agenda Item 7.1

CX/ASIA 19/21/9
July 2019

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR ASIA

Twenty-first Session

Goa, India 23 - 27 September 2019

MONITORING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE

GLOBAL CODEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2014-2019

(Prepared by the Codex Secretariat)

1. BACKGROUND

1.1.   The Codex Alimentarius Commission at its thirty-sixth session (CAC36 in 2013) adopted the "Strategic Plan of the Codex Alimentarius Commission for 2014-2019" (the global Strategic Plan)[1] and implementation reports were presented annually at sessions of the Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CCEXEC) since 2015. The responsibility for implementing activities is shared between the Codex Secretariat, FAO and WHO, the Executive Committee, Chairs of CAC subsidiary bodies and CAC members.

1.2.   During the last round of meetings of FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committees (RCCs) in 2016/17, three out of six RCCs decided to implement regional strategic plans in addition to the global Strategic Plan[2] and to report on progress at their subsequent meetings[3]. CCASIA19[4] agreed to discontinue work on development of the Strategic Plan for CCASIA 2015-2020, and to replace it with the List of Activities of Interest to CCASIA. Further, CCASIA20:

- agreed to give due consideration to the feasibility of collecting the relevant information when developing the indicators for the new Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025; and

- requested the Coordinator to collect relevant information and report on the status of implementation of the activities of the Strategic Plan relevant to CCASIA at the next session[5].

1.3.   This paper provides an overview and status report on activities under the global Strategic Plan for which the Codex Secretariat relies on Member feedback and collects views from members on the progress of implementation of the global strategic plan as well as the mechanism to acquire more detailed information. Furthermore, the paper addresses the recommendation of CAC40 that the Codex Secretariat work with regional coordinators in examining barriers to active participation in Electronic Working Groups (EWGs) and identifying possible solutions[6].

2.   GLOBAL STRATEGIC PLAN ACTIVITIES REQUIRING MEMBER INFORMATION

2.1.   The global Strategic Plan includes four goals, ten objectives, 32 activities and 61 indicators, many of which were deemed unmeasurable[7]. The Codex Secretariat has informed CCEXEC on several occasions that the collection of country specific information from Codex members with regards to certain strategic activities (e.g. networking, changes and robustness of national institutional arrangements, identification of priority committees) remains challenging[8]. Attempts to collect such information via surveys or an online platform embedded in the Codex website frequently resulted in low response rates and/or incomplete information.

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[1] http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/publications/en/

[2] These RCCs are: CCAFRICA, CCLAC and CCNE.

[3] In January 2018, the meetings of the RCCs were postponed from the second half of 2018 to the second half of 2019 due to staff capacity constraints.

[4] REP15/ASIA para, 78 and Appendix V

[5] REP17/ASIA para. 76

[6] See REP17/CAC para. 116

[7] See e.g. CX/EXEC 18/75/3 para. 3.

[8] See e.g. CX/EXEC 17/73/5 Rev.1 para 4 and CX/EXEC 18/75/3 para. 4.

2.2.   While multiple data sources are used to monitor progress towards the global Strategic Plan, the focus of this paper is on information from members of CCASIA and challenges in obtaining such information for certain areas of Codex work.

Goal 1: Establish international food standards that address current and emerging food issues

2.3.   The proactive identification of emerging issues and member needs to ensure relevance of food standards (Objective 1.2) currently relies on the initiative of members to flag a specific issue/need during meetings of CAC or a relevant subsidiary body. Neither the number of times a member raises a specific issue nor are the follow-up actions on an emerging issue identified by a member are currently monitored in a systematic manner.

2.4.   FAO and WHO encouraged countries to identify food safety/quality issues through a survey sent out prior to RCC meetings. The analysis of survey replies from members of CCASIA is presented in CX/ASIA 19/21/3.

Goal 2: Ensure the application of risk analysis principles in the development of Codex standards

2.5.   In order to increase the scientific input from developing countries (objective 2.3), FAO/WHO provided support through several activities including training and projects aimed at enhancing capacity to respond to food safety incidents in the CCASIA region[9]. There is no long-term monitoring mechanism to assess the impact of such capacity building activities in developing countries and further efforts are needed to increase quantity and quality of scientific data in the CCASIA region.

2.6.   The participation of technical and scientific experts from developing countries in Codex committees as well as the participation of developing countries in networks are further indicators related to objective 2.3 that require individual information or validation of data by members.

Goal 3: Facilitate the effective participation of all Codex Members[10]

2.7.   The share of developing country delegations out of the total number of Codex Member delegations at all Codex meetings held in a calendar year remained stable at an average of 30 percent since 2014. As regards sessions of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, a decrease in the number of delegations, including delegations from the CCASIA region, can be observed in the period 2017-2019

2.8.   Furthermore, no increase in participation of Members from CCASIA in meetings of CAC subsidiary bodies can be noted. Codex meetings between January 2017 and June 2019 had on average nine delegations from the CCASIA region (i.e. 38% of the region). The only Committee meetings that were attended by more than half of the CCASIA region in said period were: CCNFSDU39 and CCNFSDU40.

2.9.   Under objective 3.1, members, in particular developing country members, shall be encouraged to develop sustainable national institutional arrangements in order to increase effective participation. The Codex Secretariat has created an online platform for information sharing on food safety control systems. In the CCASIA region, only around 30 percent of members have shared information. Document CX/ASIA 19/23/05 addresses the matter in detail.

Goal 4: Implement effective and efficient work management systems and practices

2.10.   The 2017 regular review of Codex work management on EWGs[11] made a number of recommendations to increase work effectiveness and efficiency when working in EWGs. Appendix II contains information to serve as a basis for discussing how Members from the CCASIA region can participate more actively in Codex work via EWGs.

2.11.   On the Codex website, new regional web pages have been designed to promote specific Codex activities taking place locally. In the case of CCASIA, several news items have been received from Members in the region and the region is invited to continue sharing more local information to be promoted globally by the Codex Secretariat. Document CX/ASIA 19/21/11 addresses the matter in more detail.

3.   CONCLUSION

3.1.   Codex Members share the responsibility for implementing the global Codex Strategic Plan together with the Codex Secretariat, FAO and WHO. As activities that cannot be measured and monitored can also not be managed and improved, it is indispensable that members agree on suitable mechanisms through which they regularly report to the Codex Secretariat on progress made.

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[9] See CX/CAC 19/42/16 for capacity building activities implemented since CAC41 (July 2018)
[10] See Appendix I
[11] CX/EXEC 17/73/3

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. CCASIA is requested to:

(i) consider what progress has been made in the region with regards to the goals of the global strategic plan 2014-2019;

(ii) agree on suitable mechanisms through which members best communicate progress and obstacles in relation to the global Strategic Plan activities that require member feedback (paras. 2.3-2.11) to inform the final status report for the period 2014-2019 which will be presented at CCEXEC79; and

(iii) discuss how Members from the CCASIA region can participate more effectively in EWGs (Appendix II).

Physical participation in Codex meetings

CCASIA comprises 24 Codex Member countries which corresponds to 13 percent of the global Codex membership. The following figures provide information on participation broken down by different categories such as developing countries and Members from CCASIA.

Figure 1: Number of total delegations and share of developing country delegations to all Codex meetings, 2014-2018[12]

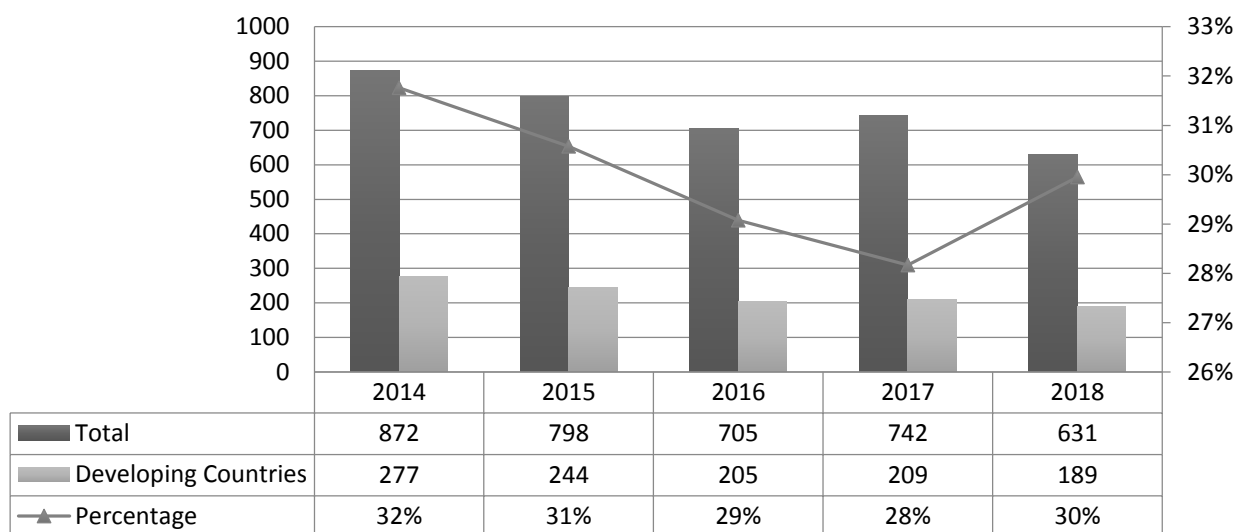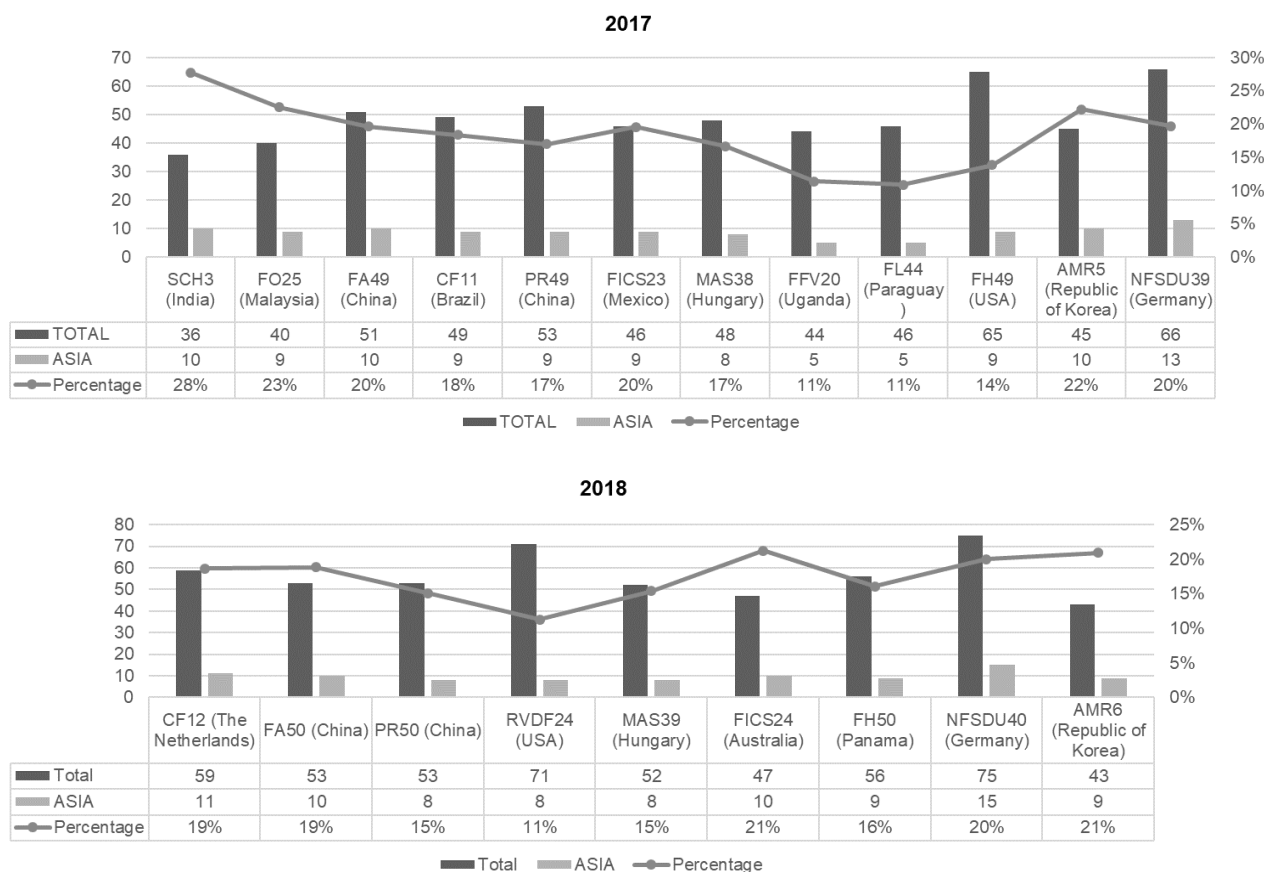|	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total	872	798	705	742	631
Developing Countries	277	244	205	209	189
Percentage	32%	31%	29%	28%	30%

Figure 2: Number of total delegations and number and share of CCASIA delegations at meetings of CAC subsidiary bodies 2017, 2018 and January–June 2019

2017

	SCH3 (India)	FO25 (Malaysia)	FA49 (China)	CF11 (Brazil)	PR49 (China)	FICS23 (Mexico)	MAS38 (Hungary)	FFV20 (Uganda)	FL44 (Paraguay)	FH49 (USA)	AMR5 (Republic of Korea)	NFSDU39 (Germany)
TOTAL	36	40	51	49	53	46	48	44	46	65	45	66
ASIA	10	9	10	9	9	9	8	5	5	9	10	13
Percentage	28%	23%	20%	18%	17%	20%	17%	11%	11%	14%	22%	20%

2018

	CF12 (The Netherlands)	FA50 (China)	PR50 (China)	RVDF24 (USA)	MAS39 (Hungary)	FICS24 (Australia)	FH50 (Panama)	NFSDU40 (Germany)	AMR6 (Republic of Korea)
Total	59	53	53	71	52	47	56	75	43
ASIA	11	10	8	8	8	10	9	15	9
Percentage	19%	19%	15%	11%	15%	21%	16%	20%	21%

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[12] As of July 2018, 9 out of 24 members from the CCASIA region are classified as developing countries (i.e. low or lower middle income countries according to the World Bank list of economies).
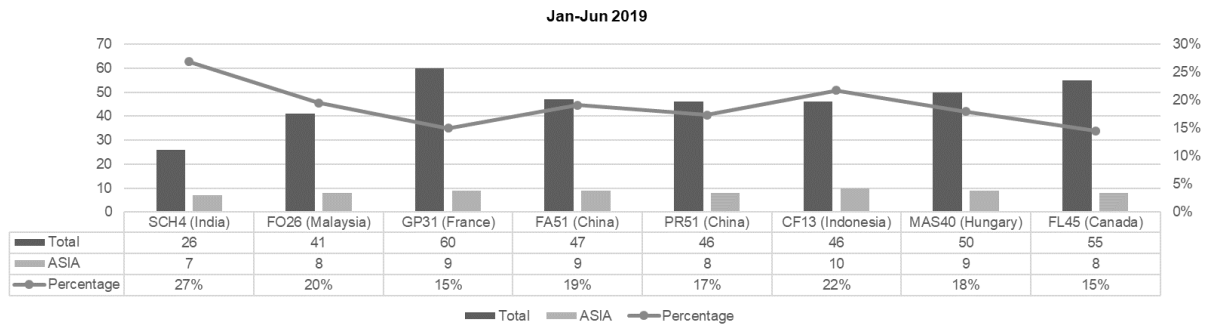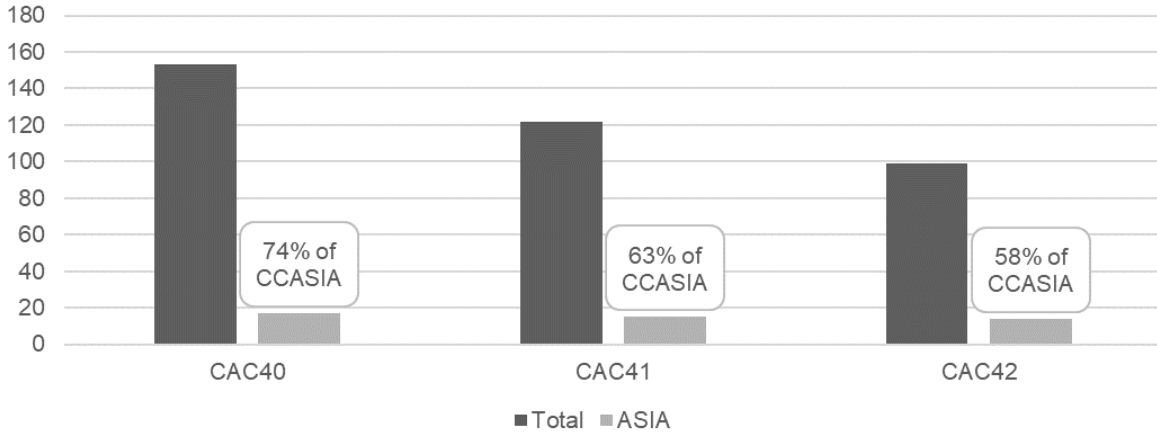
Jan-Jun 2019

	SCH4 (India)	FO26 (Malaysia)	GP31 (France)	FA51 (China)	PR51 (China)	CF13 (Indonesia)	MAS40 (Hungary)	FL45 (Canada)
Total	26	41	60	47	46	46	50	55
ASIA	7	8	9	9	8	10	9	8
Percentage	27%	20%	15%	19%	17%	22%	18%	15%

Figure 3: Total number of delegations and number of CCASIA delegations at meetings of CAC40 (2017), CAC41 (2018) and CAC42 (2019)

Electronic Working Groups (EWGs)

Purpose of an EWG

EWGs are online working groups established on an *ad hoc* basis to accomplish a specific task of a subsidiary body of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) between its physical sessions rather than during a physical meeting of a CAC subsidiary body.

EWGs are also envisaged as a means of achieving greater involvement of all Members and more active participation of developing countries in the work of the CAC.

When to establish an EWG

EWGs should only be established where there is consensus in the Committee to do so and where other strategies to accomplish a specific task have been considered by the Committee and deemed unsuitable. Actively contributing to EWGs may have significant human-resources and cost implications for a Member, in particular for those with broad interest in Codex work. It is therefore preferable to establish EWGs selectively, primarily for items in the Step procedure, rather than for discussion papers, which can be developed more efficiently by one or more Members/Observers.

2017 EWG review findings related to participation

The 2017 review of Codex work management practices looked into several aspects of the functioning of Codex EWGs based on a sample of 41. With regards to participation, the review made several findings of which four are highlighted for the Committee's attention in the table below.

Table 1: 2017 work management review findings on EWG participation

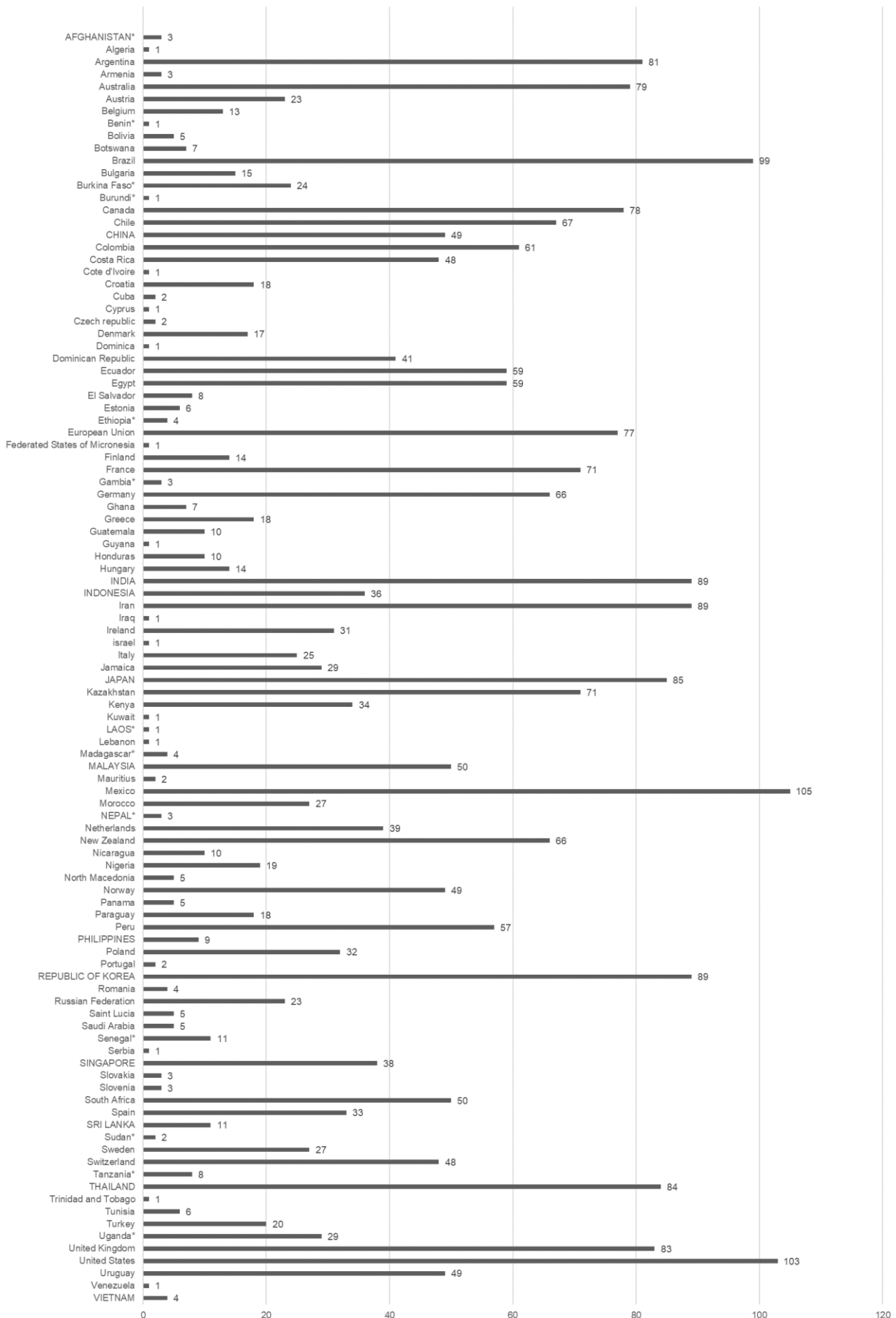| Finding 4 Participant registration rates	The participant registration rates in EWGs established by General Subject Committees were higher than those of Commodity Committee EWGs both as regards members and observers. The average registration rate of developing countries was low and not representative of the membership of the Commission. Co-hosted EWGs did not show significantly higher registration rates of developing countries (i.e. less than 2 %) than EWGs that were led by only one member. The official language did also not appear to have any significant impact on participant registration rates.
Finding 5 Management of participant registrations	Members and observers frequently register late to EWGs. The great majority of EWG hosts however allowed them to join after expiry of the registration deadline without applying specific criteria in making this decision.
Finding 6 Participants' motivation	While most participants signed up to an EWG to provide technical input in the development process of a standard (guideline, code of practice etc.), a small group of participants (under 10 percent) stated that their main motivation was to stay informed on behalf of their country/organization, learn about or monitor Codex activities.
Finding 8 Inclusiveness	The majority (over 60%) of EWGs were very much or at least somewhat dependent on a small number of active participants meaning that comments were often received by far fewer EWG members than those that signed up to participate. Half of the participants that provided feedback felt that their contributions were adequately reflected in the final report of the respective EWG they participated in.

Statistics on EWG registrations

The management of and reporting on EWGs is the responsibility of the chair. The participation in EWGs has so far not been monitored by the Codex Secretariat. However, since 2017, data on more and more EWGs is becoming available as around 80 percent of CAC subsidiary bodies use the online discussion forum for their electronic group work between sessions.

The following statistics concern <u>EWG registrations/ sign-up rates only</u> and are derived from the Secretariat-managed online discussion forum. The analysis does not include EWGs which have not started using the online platforms. The data covers 107 EWGs established between January 2017 and June 2019, excluding EWGs established by RCCs and CCEXEC, and has a 3 percent margin of error.

Figure 1 shows which Codex Members have registered in EWGs on the Codex discussion forum and the number of EWGs they are registered in. Least Developed Countries (LDCs) are marked with an asterisk.

In total 14 of the 24 members from the CCASIA region (i.e. 58%) are part of the list and 9 countries have signed up to more than 10 EWGs in the reviewed period.

Figure 1: Codex Members registered in EWGs and number of EWGs they are registered in (Members from the CCASIA region in caps)

Least Developed Countries as of December 2018 (Source: UN Committee for Development Policy)

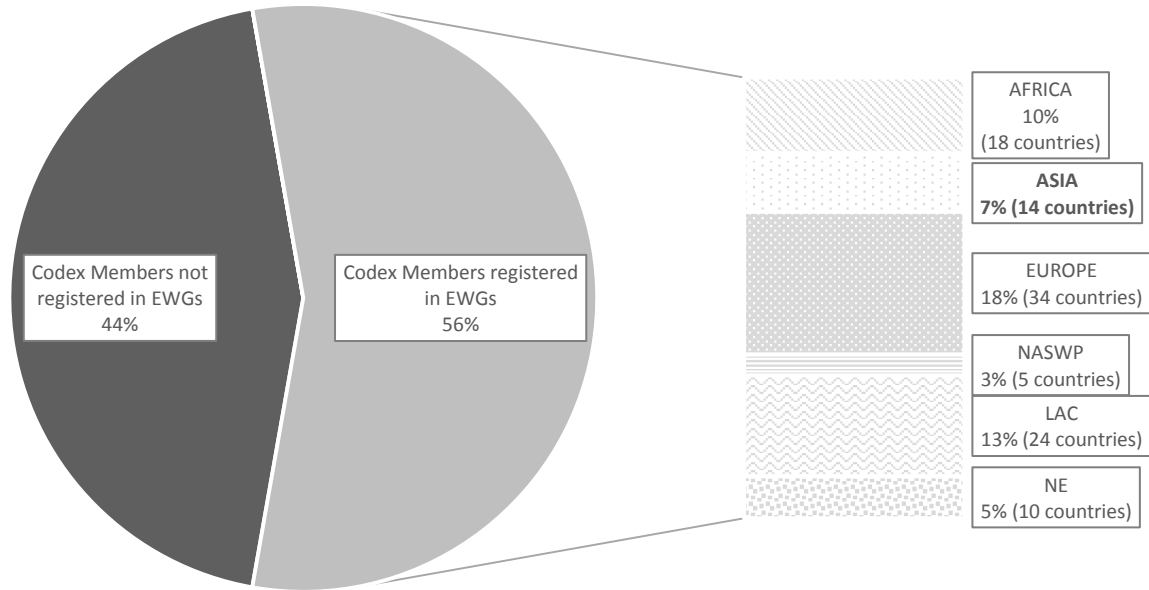**Figure 2:** Percentage of Codex Members registered in EWGs and breakdown of registrants by region

Figure 2 shows that more than half of Codex members (105 out of 189) are signed up to EWGs on the online discussion forum. In that group members from the CCASIA region make up 7% (i.e. 14 out of the 24 countries or 58% of the region).

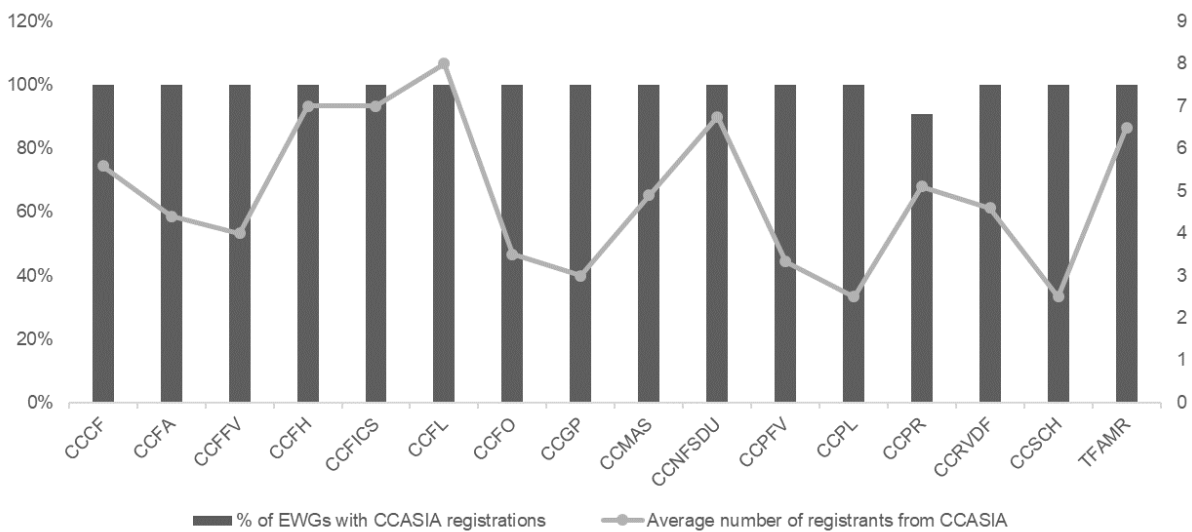**Figure 3:** EWGs in which CCASIA members registered by CAC subsidiary body

Figure 3 shows that one or more Members from the CCASIA region registered in EWGs of CAC subsidiary bodies using the Codex online discussion forum. Overall, the average number of Members from CCASIA registered in EWGs is 5. CAC subsidiary bodies with EWGs that show a higher average are: CCFL, CCNFSDU, TFAMR, CCFICS, and CCFH.

Comparing this data to physical attendance of subsidiary body sessions (Appendix I), CCNFSDU sticks out as s committee with high involvement of Members from the CCASIA region in Codex work both during and in-between committee sessions.

Questions for discussion

Based on the information and statistical data presented in Appendix II, CCASIA is invited to consider the following questions for discussion:

1. What are your criteria for selecting EWGs?

2. What is your strategy for monitoring which EWGs are established by CAC or its subsidiary bodies? How do you monitor new developments in EWGs you signed up to?

3. In which cases were you not able to participate in an EWG on a priority subject for your country? Why was this?

4. How are you organized internally for participating in an EWG (e.g. work flow, authorization, collaboration)?

5. How successful do you think your participation in EWGs is and why?

6. Which actions do you think are needed to enhance your participation in EWGs on priority subjects for your country?