



**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION**

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Seventy-seventh Session

REPORT OF THE SECOND STRATEGIC PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE

(Prepared by the Chairperson of the sub-committee)

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. CAC39 noted the recommendation of CCEXEC71 regarding the development of a Strategic Plan of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) for the period 2020-2025, which among other things should:

- take the current strategic plan 2014-2019 as its starting point;
- note the strategies/work programmes of FAO and WHO; and
- note the UN goals outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs).

1.2. CCEXEC73 convened a Drafting Team of the CAC Chair and Vice-Chairs who prepared a revised first draft based on comments submitted in response to CL 2017/50/OCS-EXEC and proposals made by CCEXEC73 and CAC40. This draft was reviewed by CCEXEC74 which convened a sub-committee to develop a revised draft for discussion at CCEXEC75. CCEXEC75 agreed a complete draft for circulation to the Codex membership for comment and deferred a decision on the timetable and process for finalization of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 until CCEXEC76.

1.3 CCEXEC76 agreed on its ambition to submit the draft strategic plan 2020-2025 to CAC42 for endorsement¹. CCEXEC76 also established and agreed terms of reference for a second strategic planning sub-committee of CCEXEC, open to all members of CCEXEC, with the purpose of developing revised drafts of the strategic plan 2020-2025 as needed, including a complete draft for endorsement by CAC42.²

2. APPROACH

2.1. Since CCEXEC76 the approach taken to the iterative development of the draft strategic plan 2020-2025 has followed the timeline that was agreed at that meeting, including mechanisms by which consultation with countries was promoted and supported.³ Throughout the process, the sub-committee and its chairperson have sought to maximise inclusiveness and participation, guided by the principles endorsed by CCEXEC76 that strategic planning is an evolutionary process and that regions and their members own the plan, which requires their active participation in its construction³.

3. PROGRESS

3.1. A physical meeting of the sub-committee was convened in FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy on 19-20 December 2018. The compiled comments submitted by 46 Member countries, 1 Member Organization and 5 Observers in response to CL 2018/67/OCS-CAC were shared in advance with meeting participants. The meeting also received oral reports from Regional Co-ordinators of the efforts made in their regions, including informal meetings held in five of the six Codex regions, to engage countries in discussion of the draft strategic plan 2020-2025.

3.2. The sub-committee agreed that the strategic plan itself would not include the activities and related elements, but rather that a workplan would be developed to support the implementation of the strategic plan, which would be reviewed and revised periodically to ensure it remained on track to achieve the objectives for 2020-2025.

¹ REP19/EXEC1 para. 5

² REP19/EXEC1 para. 6 and Appendix III

³ REP19/EXEC1 Appendix II

3.3. The sub-committee took a step back and agreed to review the text of the draft strategic plan 2020-2025 in a holistic manner in order to capture the spirit of the extensive range of comments received, rather than attempt a word-by-word revision. Key decisions were made by the sub-committee⁴ in relation to:

- the formulation of a simple and outward-looking Vision Statement, “Where the world comes together to create food-safety and -quality standards to protect everyone, everywhere”;
- the addition of a Mission Statement to capture the work of Codex, “Be the pre-eminent, global body that sets science-based food standards to protect consumer health and promote fair practices in food trade”;
- confirmation of the importance of each of the five strategic goals, which were the subject of editorial changes for clarity and impact, and the addition of a short narrative for to capture the rationale and intent for each of the goals;
- simplification and focusing of the objectives supporting each of the five strategic goals; and
- identification of responsible parties for each of the objectives, and of indicators appropriate to the goals and objectives.

3.4. The sub-committee noted the number of comments on core values and recognised that any changes to this section would require extensive discussion. As there was no agreement on any substantive changes, the sub-committee noted that this might need to be discussed more extensively in another forum.

3.5. A further draft of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 was issued as CL 2019/21/OCS-CAC, with a deadline for comment of 30 April 2019. Comments were received from 33 Member Countries, 1 Member Organization and 1 Observer.

3.6. In addition, informal meetings were held in the margins of the CCGP meeting on 14 March 2019⁵. The meetings were facilitated by the Regional Coordinators, or their alternates, with the support of the Chairperson and vice-Chairpersons of the Codex Alimentarius Commission(CAC), and the Codex Secretariat. The meetings enabled countries to request clarifications on the changes made, proposed next steps and to share their general comments on the revised draft Strategic Plan 2020-2025.

3.7. The comments received in response to the Circular Letter and the report of the informal meetings were considered by the chairperson of the CCEXEC sub-committee in the preparation of yet a further draft of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025, which was circulated to all members of the CCEXEC sub-committee in advance of discussion at CCEXEC77 and CAC42.

3.8. There was general support in the informal meetings, and from those Member Countries who made specific comments in their responses to the Circular Letter, for the revised structure of the draft Strategic Plan which was now more concise, readable and accessible as a result. One Member Country asked whether, in the light of this change, the document should be referred to as a Strategic Plan, or whether it now serves as a strategic framework for the elaboration of plans. The revised document includes the alternative titles “Strategic Plan” and “Strategy”.

3.9. There were requests from 4 Member Countries and 1 Member Organization for additional information on the process of workplan development to emphasize inclusivity and transparency. This is already alluded to us section 1.6 of the draft Strategic Plan 2020-2025. It is currently envisioned that, if the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 is adopted by CAC42, the FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committees (RCCs) would develop regional implementation plans at their 2019 meetings. The outputs from the RCCs’ discussions could then be compiled by CCEXEC78 in February 2020, together with any implementing actions to be undertaken by that Committee or by the Secretariat. The consolidated work plan could then be reviewed by CAC43, and the strategic plan with the work plan could be reviewed by the CAC every two years thereafter in line with the relevant provision of the Procedural Manual. This process would include a critical review of the indicators and may therefore lead to the development and/or revision of further activities and indicators. The regular review by CAC will be informed by the annual reviews of the implementation status of the strategic plan which are undertaken by the Secretariat and reported to CCEXEC.

3.10. The introductory text of the strategic plan has now been iterated with Codex Members and Observers several times. There was a significant number of comments, as in previous iterations, on the text reflecting the need for Codex to be responsive to changes in the external environment (sections 1.3 and 2.3 of the draft Strategic Plan) and core values. These are discussed further in sections 4.1 and 4.2 below, respectively.

⁴ The Chairperson’s summary of the physical meeting held 19-20 December 2018 is available [here](#)

⁵ Reflections and key points from the informal regional meetings on the revised draft Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025, Bordeaux, France available [here](#).

3.11. There was also a substantial number of comments on the proposed mission and vision, and on the objectives, outcomes and indicators, all of which had been subject to substantial revision by the CCEXEC sub-committee at its meeting in December 2018. These are discussed further at sections 4.3 et seq below.

3.12. The ambition remains to adopt the draft Strategic Plan 2020-2025 at CAC42. To this end, the CCEXEC sub-committee will meet for the final time immediately before CCEXEC77 to confirm their common understanding of the changes made and the issues which remain in square brackets, so they may engage with Codex Members and Observers in the margins of CAC42 as required.

4. REMARKS

4.1. Comments were made by 13 Member Countries, 1 Member Organization and 1 Observer on the text at sections 1.3 and 2.3 of the draft strategic plan which relates to the need for Codex to be responsive to changes in the external environment. In particular, concerns were expressed that reference to a wide range of trends, challenges and opportunities may cause us to act outside the mandate of Codex. The intention of section 2.3 is not to change the mandate of Codex. Instead it aims to identify a range of trends and changes, which are either carried forward from the text of the Strategic Plan 2014-2019 or drawn from the 2017 FAO publication "*The future of food and agriculture: trends and challenges*". Each of these may have impacts that provide challenges or opportunities that relate to consumer health protection or promotion of fair practices in food trade. One of the tests that CCEXEC and CAC might apply when considering priorities for standard development is the nature and materiality of any impacts of these emerging trends and challenges on consumer health protection or fair practices in food trade, and the extent that steps to address those impacts are amenable to standardization. Notwithstanding this rationale, it is clear from comments submitted that there are concerns around including an extensive list of trends and challenges in section 2.3. Comparing the proposed text to the text adopted in the Strategic Plan 2014-2019 allows us to identify just two trends and challenges (the effects of shifting populations and water scarcity) that were not referred to in the analogous section of the current Plan. The revised text therefore incorporates the option of removing these two trends and challenges and reverting to the text of the Strategic Plan 2014-2019.

4.2. Revisions to the core values were proposed by 5 Member Countries and 1 Member Organization, while 1 Member Country explicitly endorsed the current text. Some Members proposed changing "consensus building" to "consensus", others proposed the inclusion of a new value of "use of science" or "science-based". It is reasonable for any organization to review its core values from time to time, but it would be ambitious for Codex to review its core values to the timescale envisioned for adoption of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025. Recalling that the elaboration of the current core values was a deliberative process that took place over a number of years, it is therefore suggested that CAC42 may choose to commit itself to a review of the core values using an appropriately inclusive and transparent process during the period of this Strategic Plan. Text for a footnote to this effect is included in the revised draft of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025.

4.3. As described in section 3.3 above, the CCEXEC sub-committee proposed a simple and outward-looking Vision Statement and the addition of a Mission Statement. The Vision Statement aims to set out, in simple language, our vision of Codex in the future. The Mission Statement describes in more practical terms the work that Codex does and the purpose it serves. These statements were the subject of comments from 17 Member Countries, 1 Member Organization and 1 Observer. In recognition that this new text has not been the subject of discussion outside the CCEXEC sub-committee, the changes that have been proposed are reflected in square brackets in the new text for further reflection and discussion at CCEXEC77 and CAC42.

4.4. A range of proposals were received to make minor amendments to the descriptions of the goals, the majority of which focused on simplifying or clarifying the text, or on aiding understanding. The proposed amendments included deletion of the word "critical" from the title of strategic goal 1. This was discussed by the CCEXEC sub-committee, who concluded that the goal needed to include an element that highlighted that Codex also addressed issues that were of increased importance or critical. This reference to "critical" was therefore retained in the goal in the draft attached to CL 2019/21/OCS-CAC.

4.5. Among the comments received on the objectives that sit underneath the strategic goals, the following was identified as a possible new objective, for consideration by CAC:

encouraging observers to participate in the work of Codex and its subsidiary bodies, recognising that observers are responsible for generating standards used in food trade, such as Global GAP (strategic goal 1 or strategic goal 3);

4.6. A range of comments was received on the indicators proposed for the strategic goals and objectives and further input on the feasibility of data collection has also been provided by the Codex Secretariat. The general thrust of comments confirm that Member Countries do not anticipate a heavy burden of reporting. Several countries made a number of comments relating to baselines or targets. There are not currently any baselines or targets attached to the indicators. These will be elaborated through the process of developing a work plan and reviewed by CAC43, if the strategic plan is adopted by CAC42.

4.7. Some Members also proposed activities for several of the objectives. These have been captured and, along with comments on the activities proposed in earlier drafts of the strategic plan before it was simplified, they will be available to Members countries and Observers to inform the process of elaborating work plans, following adoption of the strategic plan.