



**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME**  
**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION**  
**Seventy-eighth Session**

**COMMUNICATIONS WORK PLAN 2017–2019: IMPLEMENTATION STATUS**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report is the final update on the Codex Communications Work Plan 2017-2019, which would ordinarily have been presented at CCEXEC77 (July 2019) to conclude the two-year cycle. The period in question is therefore 18 months (June 2018 to November 2019) and not 12.

**2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The Codex Secretariat is delivering each year more and more varied communications products.
- 2.2 The basic elements of communication in Codex including the website, social media and events such as Codex meetings and World Food Safety Day (WFSB), require additional resources and longer-term planning.
- 2.3 Workshops on Codex web-tools and strategic planning have proved to be valuable in both building technical capacity at the national level and ensuring engagement and inclusivity.
- 2.4 The Joint FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees (RCC) have potential to contribute to communications in Codex.
- 2.5 The work plan is necessary for prioritising, planning and reporting on communications activities.

**3. RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1. CCEXEC is invited to:
- (i) note the Codex Communications Work Plan implementation status report (Appendix I);
  - (ii) note that Codex Communications Work Plan 2020-2022 will be presented at CCEXEC79;
  - (iii) note the need for sufficient resources to be made available to continue delivering effective communications in Codex;
  - (iv) encourage all Members and Observers, especially through the recently adopted regional communications work plans, to continue to actively contribute to the promotion of Codex with all stakeholders.

## CODEX COMMUNICATIONS WORK PLAN 2017-2019: IMPLEMENTATION STATUS REPORT

### 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report provides a brief narrative on the highlights in communications as well as data and analysis on the indicators chosen to monitor the activities under the 2017-2019 work plan.

1.2 This update is focussed on the period June 2018 to November 2019.

### 2. HIGHLIGHTS

- The inaugural World Food Safety Day
- Continued growth in web site content
- Increase in social media traffic
- Codex web tools and strategic planning workshops (China, India, Kazakhstan, Vanuatu)
- New Codex publications
- Building closer ties with Regional Coordinating Committees (RCC)

#### World Food Safety Day

2.1 World Food Safety Day (WFSD) on 7 June 2019 was coordinated by the Codex Secretariat and with minimum preparation time due to the UN Resolution only being formalised in December 2018. Through FAO, WHO and an array of Codex stakeholders, over 30 countries held dedicated events that were reported on via the Codex website<sup>1</sup> where the WFSD pages are currently hosted. Many more Members and Observers signalled their activities via the Twitter hashtag #WorldFoodSafetyDay, which was viewed over 400 million times.

2.2 For future years, it is expected that the timeline for preparation will be developed to ensure earlier communication of themes and materials. FAO and WHO are currently alternating on leading the project each year with WFSD 2020 being coordinated by WHO.

#### Codex web site

2.3 In the reporting period of this document, the web site has been visited over 890 000 times, with over 6 million page views and an average time spent per page of 4 minutes. Thirty-five percent of the visitors use English on the Codex web site and 23 percent Spanish. The top three countries that connected to the web site were Mexico, the United States and Peru. After the home page, the most visited destinations on the web site were the lists of standards and the various databases<sup>2</sup>.

2.4 Over 140 news items were produced in the period under review. These include dedicated coverage of all Codex meetings with articles, stories, pictures<sup>3</sup> and social media content and videos.

2.5 Following a request from CCEXEC74<sup>4</sup> and an assessment of the contributions from the Codex regions, at the recent round of FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees (RCCs) held September to November 2019, specific focus was placed on the need to increase news from regional groups. The outcome of this initiative is that each RCC now has a communications work plan. The first interim report on these plans will be available at CCEXEC79.

#### Social media

2.6 Between June 2018 and December 2019, Codex tweeted 5 040 times. In total, Codex tweets were seen over 8 million times (impressions), and the @FAOWHOCodex profile received 85 503 visits, with a total of over 4 614 new followers. (11 600 total, a 65% increase in 18 months). Overall, analysis of the findings showed an increasing level of participation from Codex stakeholders (Members, e.g. Ministry accounts, Food Standard Organizations, Observers); UN organizations (FAO, WHO, ONU info, UN News, IAEA<sup>5</sup>), and the

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/news-and-events/news-details/en/c/1197349/>

<sup>2</sup> Source: <https://analytics.google.com/>

<sup>3</sup> All available online: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/142774905@N04/albums>

<sup>4</sup> REP18/EXEC1 para 16

<sup>5</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency

general public. These numbers have promoted @FAOWHOCodex into the top three 'handles' tweeting about food safety (currently ranked at number two)<sup>6</sup>.

#### Codex web tools and strategic planning workshops

2.7 Following workshops delivered in the previous reporting period in Kenya, Senegal and Paraguay, a series of workshops took place between September 2018 and November 2019 in China, India, Italy (prior to CCNE10), Kazakhstan and Vanuatu. Additional sessions were also held at the RCCs and at the Commission. The commitment from host countries and participants together with expert support from FAO/WHO ensured that capacity building on the web tools continued and also that countries were able to contribute directly to the finalisation of the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025. These interactive, participatory workshops provided an effective link to the work of the CCEXEC sub-committee workshop on the strategic plan that took place in Rome 19-20 December 2018<sup>7</sup>.

#### New Codex publications

2.8 Excluding standards, guidelines and codes of practice, the texts published in the reporting period were:

- July 2018 - [Annual Report: A world Full of Standards](#)
- September 2018 – [Understanding Codex 5th edition](#)
- October 2018 – [Food Hygiene at 50](#)
- February 2019 – [A drop of oil a tonne of value](#)
- July 2019 – [Annual Report: The year of food safety](#)
- September 2019 – [Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025](#)
- November 2019 – [Codex reference nutrient values](#)

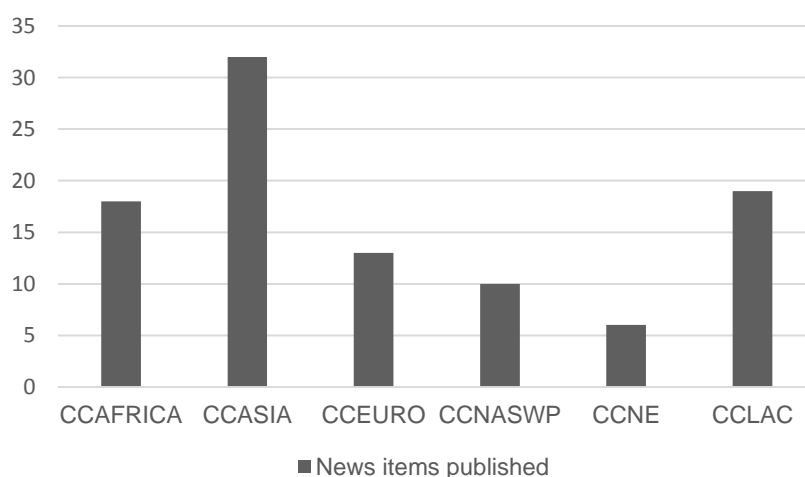
2.9 The current practice is to publish in English, French and Spanish. Understanding Codex and the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 are available in all six UN languages.

#### Regional Coordinating Committees

2.10 The Codex Secretariat presented a paper to each RCC outlining how regions can contribute to Goal 3 of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025, which aims to increase impact through the recognition and use of Codex standards, mindful that “communications that drive greater awareness, understanding, and recognition of available, harmonized standards are essential to the effectiveness of Codex”<sup>8</sup>.

2.11 Figure 1 presents the number of regional stories published on the website since its relaunch in December 2017<sup>9</sup>.

**Figure 1:** News items published on the Codex website by Codex region, December 2017 to July 2019



2.12 Each RCC communications work plan aims for consistent if modest output to ensure the number of news items published (Figure 1) increase and that no opportunity to capture recognition of Codex is lost. Close

<sup>6</sup> Source: Codex graph gallery, social media research foundation

<sup>7</sup> Photo gallery: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/142774905@N04/albums/72157703472369851>

<sup>8</sup> Strategic Plan 2020-2025

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/committees/codex-regions/en/>

relations with regional coordinators, FAO/WHO regional food safety officers and FAO/WHO regional communications staff will all contribute to countries reaching the targets and goals they have set themselves.

### 3. DATA AND ANALYSIS ON MONITORING INDICATORS

#### Objective 1

*Establish clear and transparent communication channels (internal and external) for the Codex Secretariat.*

#### Activities

- 1.1. Consolidate and improve document management, workflow and distribution policies and system;
- 1.2. Maintain an active and updated website
- 1.3. Maintain social media output

#### Indicators

- Publication of working documents and committee reports

Detailed reporting on this indicator is provided in the document *Codex Strategic Plan 2014-2019: Implementation Status*<sup>10</sup>.

- Website traffic (see highlights in paragraph 2.3)
- Social media statistics (see highlights in paragraph 2.6)

#### Conclusion

The Codex website remains the key access point for information on Codex both for Members/Observers and a wider audience. The needs of these audiences are different and maintaining a stable, reliable and secure web site with relevant and interesting content should remain a priority for Codex communications. An overhaul of the way standards are presented including versions, amendments and revisions would enhance the value of the Codex 'product'.

#### Objective 2

*Ensure that Codex Members receive regular, consistent, reliable, relevant and useful communications to strengthen their knowledge, build their capacity and promote their active participation in the work of setting international standards.*

#### Activities

- 2.1. Provide Codex Contact Points (CCPs) with effective and timely communications tools and support for reaching national stakeholders,
- 2.2. Work with CCPs on all communications initiatives,
- 2.3. Engage with FAO/WHO on their communications initiatives for members (including e-learning and Codex Trust Fund),

#### Indicators

- Percentage of electronic working groups (EWGs) online,  
Over 95% of EWGs are run over the platform, which has over 3 000 members.

- Percentage of Codex texts requesting comments using online tool,

The Online Commenting System (OCS) has managed 104/143 (73%) of the requests for comments in the period June 2018 – November 2019, almost a 50% increase on the previous period.

- Number of publications (see highlights in paragraph 2.8),

#### Conclusion

Both the EWG platform and OCS are key to participating in Codex. Feedback from Members and Observers has highlighted where modifications or improvements need to be made to facilitate the work of countries leading EWGs and of Codex Contact Points responsible for submitting comments via the OCS.

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<sup>10</sup> See CX/EXEC 18/75/3, Activities 4.1.4, page 15

With all communications from the Codex Secretariat currently sent via a single mailing list to CCPs and Observers (invitations, calls for experts, circular letters etc.) there is a risk that at certain times in the year when Codex traffic is heavy that not all high priority communications are caught by all recipients. Training with RCCs and individual members has focussed on the Codex website as the portal where all updated information is available, but the Codex-L mailing list system should be reviewed.

### **Objective 3**

*Enable Codex Committee Chairpersons and Codex host Governments to receive relevant and useful guidance to strengthen their knowledge, to streamline and harmonize the way committees function and to support their effective role in the work of setting international standards.*

#### Activities

- 3.1. Hold workshops for Chairpersons and Host Secretariats.
- 3.2. Regular communication with Host Secretariats to discuss common issues and identify best practices.
- 3.3. Develop a mini-communications work plan for each Codex meeting.
- 3.4. Pilot online webinar technology.
- 3.5. Publish guidelines for use of FAO/WHO logos and Codex visual identity.
- 3.6. Adopt a visual identity for each Codex meeting/event cycle.

#### Indicators

- Number of workshops held

A workshop for Chairpersons of Codex committees and members of CCEXEC was held in Bordeaux on 15-17 March 2019.

The Codex Secretariat met with host secretariats at CAC41 and CAC42.

- Number of pilot webinars held and degree of satisfaction expressed by users

There have been no further trials of webinar technology for Codex meetings. However, the Codex Secretariat has held online and face-to-face training with Australia, Bhutan, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Nicaragua, Sri Lanka, United Kingdom, and Vanuatu. India has also planned and led workshops for Codex Trust Fund projects on Codex web tools independently.

- Number of meetings held in accordance with guidelines on use of logos and visual identity

All committees are largely following the current guidelines on use of the FAO/WHO logos and the Codex Alimentarius visual identity.

- Number of news items linked to Codex meetings published, volume of social media output, etc.

See highlights for data (para 2.4)

#### Conclusion

When individual countries take part in training on Codex web tools, there is an immediate boost to their activities. This can mean commenting on an EWG text or submitting comments via the OCS for the first time, or exploiting the full potential of the OCS and managing sub-reviews with national experts and policy leads.

Communication with host secretariats and Chairpersons of committees continues to be a strength with all Codex teams making themselves available to cooperate on communications initiatives prior to and during the meetings they manage. We strongly recommend that host countries include a modest communications budget in planning their meetings to include an official photographer for at least the opening sessions of meetings when the Codex Secretariat is not present to cover the event.

Chairpersons and vice-Chairpersons of the Codex Alimentarius Commission should continue to liaise with the Codex Secretariat before accepting to speak in their Codex capacity at any engagement to ensure all key messaging is agreed.

### **Objective 4**

*Assist the parent Organizations, FAO and WHO, in advocacy and effective communication with Member States on matters pertaining to Codex and related activities.*

#### Activities

- 4.1 Liaise with FAO/WHO officers and communications departments to best promote Codex work at the national level;
- 4.2 Ensure Codex communications promote alignment with key objectives of parent Organizations (Sustainable Development Goals, antimicrobial resistance, international commemorative days, etc.), the Codex mandate and the Codex Strategic Plan.

#### Indicators

- Number of joint communications initiatives

WFSD communications were coordinated through the corporate communications divisions of FAO/WHO.

Codex collaborates with the Food Safety and Quality Unit in FAO and continues to liaise with WHO and the Codex Trust Fund Secretariat on all relevant issues, especially when there is a clear opportunity to promote the work of Codex. The CAC42 visual identity was designed in conjunction with the Office of Corporate Communication and in collaboration with WHO.

The Codex Secretariat provided two resources to coordinate with FAO and deliver the communications material for the Addis and Geneva events.

- Event held at high-level meeting

The Codex Secretariat organised the inaugural WFSD event at FAO HQ in Rome; provided communications support to the WFSD event held in New York 7 June 2019 at the UN hosted by Costa Rica, and supported a WFSD event organized by and held in WFP HQ, Rome.

#### Conclusion

Food safety is everyone's business and there are almost unlimited possibilities to connect the work of Codex to the activities of WHO and FAO. With the personnel currently available in the Codex Secretariat there is a limit to the Secretariat's capacity to lead or contribute to all possible events successfully.

#### **Objective 5**

*Engage Observers to support collaboration and cooperation in the development of Codex standards.*

#### Activities

- 5.1 Contact all Observers to assess opportunities for collaboration on communications
- 5.2 Develop meeting, workshop and panel discussion projects with Observers at Codex and third-party events

#### Indicators

- Number of joint communications initiatives with Observers

The Observers section of Codex website has been enhanced to report on relevant issues via a news section.

CAC41 and CAC42 saw observer thematic panel discussions replace the previous approach to reporting in plenary.

#### Conclusion

The CAC42 initiative for the observer side event with a more informal style was extremely well attended and allowed for greater dialogue and exchange outside plenary time that members have requested be dedicated to priority issues and standard setting business.

#### **Objective 6**

*Work with FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committees to identify, develop and implement effective communications initiatives.*

#### Activities

- 6.1 Develop a specific communications work plan with each RCC for each four-month regional focus
- 6.2 In conjunction with FAO/WHO regions, highlight regional Codex work
- 6.3 Promote regional success stories and initiatives through all Codex communications channels in conjunction with FAO/WHO

### Indicators

- Number of regional communications activities.

Each region has contributed to the regional web pages<sup>11</sup> and developed a work plan to enhance this practice (see para 2.7).

### **Budget and Resources**

The Codex Secretariat has operated with fewer human resources working on communications-related activities compared with the previous reporting period.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

4.1 The Codex Secretariat continues to dedicate enormous energy to ensuring that the web site is fully up to date both regarding information pertaining to meetings and Codex standards as well as communicating news about Codex activities. The products and services being maintained and delivered, whether on the web or through publications, require support if they are to be sustainable and before any major new projects such as an overhaul of the visibility of Codex texts online be undertaken.

4.2 WFSD requires sustainable timely resourcing and the support of FAO and WHO every year to ensure objectives are reached. Programming for each 7 June anniversary should begin in July of the previous year.

4.3 Regular workshops have proved successful in building capacity amongst Members on the specific activities of the Codex Secretariat. They also ensure that Members are able to take part in an inclusive and transparent environment regarding key matters such as strategic planning.

4.4 The RCCs should continue to adapt their agendas to allow for greater interaction in the sessions. An evaluation of whether some of the extremely relevant topics that are currently programmed as side events could form a more central part of the meeting would be timely. Such an approach would permit countries and FAO/WHO to report on success stories through the eyes of Members and stimulate less experienced countries to engage further in the work of Codex.

4.5 The work plan has proved to be a useful tool to provide a realistic focus to the coordination of communications in Codex.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/committees/codex-regions/en/>