

# CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



World Health  
Organization

Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy - Tel: (+39) 06 57051 - E-mail: [codex@fao.org](mailto:codex@fao.org) - [www.codexalimentarius.org](http://www.codexalimentarius.org)

CL 2022/12-FL

March 2022

**TO:** Codex Contact Points  
Contact Points of international organizations having observer status with Codex

**FROM:** Secretariat, Codex Alimentarius Commission,  
Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme

**SUBJECT: Request for information sustainability labelling**

**DEADLINE:** 15 July 2022

**REPLIES:** To: Codex contact point NZ Copy to: Phillippa Hawthorne &  
Kati Laitinen

Email: [codexnz@mpi.govt.nz](mailto:codexnz@mpi.govt.nz)

E-mail:

[Phillippa.hawthorne@mpi.govt.nz](mailto:Phillippa.hawthorne@mpi.govt.nz)

[Kati.laitinen@mpi.govt.nz](mailto:Kati.laitinen@mpi.govt.nz)

## Introduction

Increasing global awareness on sustainability, including the impacts of climate change and the need to preserve our natural resources, has resulted in a focus on providing consumers with greater information on the sustainability of food products. The conclusion of the UN Food Systems Summit in September 2021 reinforced the importance of sustainability and the need for consumers to be making purchases with a sustainability lens. There is also an increasing number of sustainability-based labels being developed for food products with varying criteria as the basis for the labels. This was raised at the Codex Committee for Food Labelling (CCFL) meeting in September 2021. As a result, it was agreed that New Zealand, assisted by the European Union, would draft a discussion paper to explore possible work on sustainability labelling within the mandate of CCFL.

The discussion paper will explore the current and planned use of sustainability labelling on food and whether there is any role for CCFL in providing global guidance in this area or whether such labelling is outside the mandate of CCFL. To inform the discussion paper, a stocktake of sustainability labelling being used or developed in participating countries will be undertaken. This circular letter aims to gather the information for that stocktake.

## Background

A number of definitions of sustainability exist. These are underpinned by various pillars/principles which cover different aspects. Most agree that sustainability is holistic and includes consideration of environmental, economic and social aspects. For the purposes of this stocktake it is intended to use the United Nations definition as a guide. The United Nations broadly defines sustainability as:

*“meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”*

Three pillars: environmental, economic and societal sustainability are considered to contribute to this broad definition.

- "Environmental sustainability" focuses on maintaining all the earth's environmental systems in balance with natural resources consumed only at a rate that they can be replenished.

- “Economic sustainability” aims to enable human communities across the globe to access the resources, financial and other, they need to meet their needs, such as secure sources of livelihood.
- “Social sustainability” focusses on ensuring universal human rights and basic needs are attainable by all people to keep their families and communities healthy. This includes labour and cultural rights.

### **Scope of stocktake**

The scope of this stocktake includes any elements on food labels or in labelling covering aspects/indicators of environmental sustainability, economic sustainability or social sustainability, or combinations thereof. It is not intended that the stocktake includes nutrition labelling, as the guidelines for front-of-pack-nutrition labelling already provide guidance in this regard. It is intended that the stocktake captures sustainability labelling both developed/implemented by governments or public organisations and by the private sector. Thus, both Codex members and observers are encouraged to respond to this circular letter. The stocktake is also intended to capture any regulatory frameworks being developed or used to guide the development of sustainability labelling.

### **Instructions for providing information**

For the purposes of this stocktake, sustainability labelling is considered to be any elements on food labels or in labelling that is based on any of the three pillars of sustainability (environmental, economic and social) described in the CL or on combinations of those. Regulatory frameworks in place to guide such labelling are also to be included. Nutrition labels are not to be included.

Please answer all applicable questions in the spreadsheet available [here](#).

**Codex Members:** please answer questions in the first tab titled ‘Codex members’

**Observer Organisations:** please answer questions in the second tab titled ‘Observers’

**All respondents:** please fill in the tables contained in tab 3 onwards titled ‘label’, using a separate tab for each different label/regulatory framework.

### **Notes:**

- Cells stating “select answer here” have drop down boxes with answer options which will appear when you click in the cell. Click to select the most appropriate answer. Where multiple answers are possible, multiple cells have been provided. Please select all applicable answers, each answer will require a new cell.
- Please provide information in English where possible. There is however limited ability to translate from French and Spanish where these languages are used to respond.