



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

Diagnostic tool

for assessing status
of National Codex
Programmes

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World Health Organization
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
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Every effort has been made to make this Tool as clear and practical as possible for a global audience. It is however expected that as countries use the Tool, useful experiences will result, including through the upcoming round of applications for the FAO/WHO Codex Trust Fund. We encourage and welcome your feedback and any suggestions for improvement. These will be taken into account as the Tool is further refined and revised in the future. Please send any comments to:

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1. Introduction

The Codex Alimentarius international food standards, guidelines and codes of practice contribute to the safety, quality and fairness of international food trade. Although voluntary in nature, they are referenced in the WTO Agreements as the benchmark standards in the event of a trade dispute. Codex texts are also an invaluable source of science-based standards readily available for countries to use to improve the quality and safety of all foods produced.

The Codex texts (standards, guidelines and codes of practice), are developed and adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, an inter-governmental body. Codex members and observers are invited to participate in Codex sessions to develop food standards and contribute to discussions on a broad range of issues. These issues can include food labelling, food hygiene, pesticide residues, methods of sampling and analysis, and commodity specific standards on fruits and vegetables, spices among others.

Effective engagement in the work of Codex is important for all countries to ensure that Codex texts take account of global needs, perspectives, and data. Being ready and prepared to effectively participate in Codex sessions requires a national Codex programme to be in place. This programme should include personnel with adequate knowledge of Codex work¹ and national food standards issues and clear mechanisms and processes to manage and provide input to Codex work. Furthermore, it should be adequately resourced (human and financial), include input from the private sector, consumers and the scientific and academic community and be an integral part of a well-functioning food control system. The Codex programme needs to be fit for purpose, address national interests and priorities and be adaptive to change and evolving needs.

This Diagnostic Tool has been developed for countries to take stock from time to time of their national Codex programme and to assess what is working well, and identify areas in need of improvement.

Once complete, the results of the assessment can be used to inform ongoing national workplans and/or form the basis of a request for technical assistance if external support is required to improve national capacities. One potential source of external support is the FAO/WHO Codex Trust Fund (CTF2).

¹ Codex work encompasses the results of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and its subsidiary bodies, the tasks and activities undertaken by all involved during the Codex sessions to develop the Codex texts, and the related preparatory work at the national level.

For countries eligible for support from the CTF2, carrying out an assessment of the national Codex programme is an obligatory first step in the process of applying for support. The results of the assessment assist countries to identify priority activities for which they are seeking support from CTF2, and to build the action plan that will be included with their application².

Box 1: Transitioning from CTF1 to CTF2

The FAO/WHO Project and Fund for Enhanced Participation in Codex (Codex Trust Fund) was launched in 2003 by the Directors-General of FAO and WHO to help developing countries and those with economies in transition to enhance their level of effective participation in the Codex Alimentarius Commission. Between 2004 and 2015, the FAO/WHO Project and Fund for Enhanced Participation in Codex (Codex Trust Fund or CTF1) supported 2359 participants from developing and transition economy countries to participate in the international standard development process, and provided FAO/WHO Codex training to over 1100 people to boost the effectiveness of their participation in the CAC. As such, it was very successful in achieving its primary aim of widening and strengthening participation of developing and transition economy countries in the work of Codex.

At the 38th session of the CAC there was overwhelming support for the establishment of a successor initiative to the Codex Trust Fund to build on the gains made over the last 12 years and to take the next step. The successor initiative (CTF2), which began in January 2016, will shift the primary focus from supporting physical participation, to helping to build strong, solid and sustainable national capacity to engage in Codex. Absence of sound structures and processes for managing Codex work at the national level has been and remains a significant constraint to full and effective engagement in the work of Codex, and efficient use of limited national resources to advance national food safety and trade objectives. Strengthened national structures and processes will also be important for

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