



23 March 2021

(21-2384)

Page: 1/3

Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

Original: English

INFORMATION ON ACTIVITIES

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION (CODEX)

The following communication, received on 22 March 2021, is being circulated at the request of the Codex secretariat.

1 CODEX MEETINGS HELD SINCE THE LAST SESSION OF THE SPS COMMITTEE (3-6 NOVEMBER 2020)

1.1. **80th Session of the Executive Committee** (CCEXEC80) was held virtually from 13 to 21 January 2021.

1.2. *Codex and the pandemic*: Based on the report of the CCEXEC sub-committee on Codex and the pandemic, CCEXEC80 recognized the progress made by Codex in 2020 and encouraged a pragmatic and engaged approach to move forward Codex standard-setting activities in 2021 including hosting virtual meetings of Codex subsidiary bodies despite continuing challenges caused by COVID-19.

1.3. The sub-committee encouraged to build resilience using modern tools and approaches consistent with Codex core values and to ensure that Codex was well placed to deal with similar events in the future. Recognizing the agreement of the 43rd Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC43) to convene meetings and sessions of Codex subsidiary bodies in 2021 virtually if needed, CCEXEC80 also recommended that for 2021, the alternative to physical sessions was virtual sessions together with the use of online written discussions and supporting informal mechanisms.

1.4. *Statements of principle*: CCEXEC80 provided comments to and extended the mandate of the CCEXEC sub-committee on the application of the statements of principle concerning the role of science which has the purpose to allow Codex to set standards that are needed by members and are based on science.

1.5. *Strategic planning*: CCEXEC80 re-established its sub-committee on strategic planning with new terms of reference including taking into consideration how Codex can contribute to and achieve recognition for its key food standards work in the actions of its members in relation to global and UN initiatives such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS). CCEXEC80 also encouraged Codex members to engage in the country dialogues on the UNFSS and encouraged FAO and WHO to engage the Codex secretariat, and the Chairperson and Vice-chairpersons as appropriate in the discussions leading up to the summit. Noting the recent publication by FAO of a report on harmonization of pesticide MRLs for rice with Codex standards (also presented at an SPS side event November 2022), CCEXEC80 encouraged further work demonstrating use and impact of Codex standards, consistent with the objective and implementation efforts towards achievement of Codex Strategic Goal 3.

1.6. *Other*: CCEXEC80 also highlighted the role of Codex standards in the context of maintaining food safety during the pandemic and the importance of using opportunities such as World Food

Safety Day¹ to re-energise commitment to food safety following the pandemic. The report of CCEXEC80 can be downloaded from the Codex [webpage](#).

1.7. **32nd Session of the Codex Committee on General Principles** (CCGP32) was held virtually from 8 to 17 February 2021.

1.8. *Guidance for working by correspondence*: CCGP32 with its mandate to deal with procedural and general matters as are referred to it by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, agreed to forward to the Commission "Criteria and procedural guidelines for Codex Committees and ad hoc Intergovernmental Task forces working by correspondence" for adoption and inclusion in the Procedural Manual.

1.9. *Amendments and revisions*: CCGP32 discussed the need for amendments to the *Guide to the Procedure for the Amendment and Revision of Codex Standards and Related Texts*, to ensure better clarity and supported that the secretariat prepare a document on this including examples for the different changes and workflows, and the version numbering and history for the next session of CAC for possible referral to CCGP.

1.10. *Digital Procedural Manual*: CCGP32 agreed that the Codex secretariat proceed with the development of a digital version of the Procedural Manual, which would be made available for testing and review by the members before being published online.

1.11. *Monitoring of use of Codex standards*: CCGP32 acknowledged the experience of other standard-setting organizations and encouraged further exchanges with them. Reference was made to the need to take into consideration existing data on the use of Codex standards, such as from the WTO Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Committees and identify main gaps.

1.12. *Codex and the SDGs*: CCGP32 also reaffirmed the importance of achieving the SDGs and discussed how Codex can contribute to the SDGs. The report of CCGP32 can be downloaded from the Codex [webpage](#).

2 OTHER CODEX EVENTS

2.1. Several virtual working group meetings and webinars in support of upcoming sessions of Codex subsidiary bodies were held to support delegations' preparations and facilitate discussions and consensus-building:

- CCMAS webinar series, 23-25 November 2020;
- Webinar on the proposed draft Guidelines on the Integrated Monitoring and Surveillance of Foodborne Antimicrobial Resistance, 18-19 January 2021;
- Webinar on FAO and WHO Activities to support monitoring and surveillance of antimicrobial resistance in the food and agriculture sectors, 16 March 2021;
- Webinar on the Joint FAO/WHO Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) work on cadmium in chocolates and cocoa-derived products;
- Virtual meeting of the CCFICS Working Group on Systems Equivalence, 23 March 2021;
- CCFICS Webinar on voluntary Third-Party Assurance (vTPA) programmes, 25 March 2021;
- FAO/WHO/CODEX webinar on Carryover in feed and transfer from feed to food of unavoidable and unintended residues of approved veterinary drugs, 25 March 2021.

3 FORTHCOMING CODEX MEETINGS

3.1. For the upcoming months, all sessions of Codex subsidiary bodies will be convened virtually:

- [5th Session of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs](#) (20-29 April 2021);
- [14th Session of the Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods](#) (3-13 May 2021);
- [41st Session of the Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling](#) (17-25 May 2021);

¹ For further information on World Food Safety day visit <http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/world-food-safety-day/wfsd-homepage/en/>.

- [25th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems](#) (31 May - 8 June 2021).

3.2. Regular updates on the status of work of these committees are published on their dedicated webpages on the [Codex website](#). For specific questions on the status of work in Codex committees of interest to SPS delegates please check the dedicated webpages or send an email to codex@fao.org.

3.3. The Codex secretariat in collaboration with host secretariats and working group leads are continuing to convene working group meetings and webinars in advance of Codex subsidiary sessions to support delegations' preparations and facilitate discussions and consensus-building. Further information is available on the Committee webpages and the Codex [calendar](#).
