

CODEX CAPSULE 5

The Organizational Structure of Codex

Slide 1

In this session, we will review again the overall structure of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC).

With the exception of the Codex Secretariat, the Commission, the Executive Committee and the Subsidiary Bodies – are made up of Codex Members (i.e. national delegations and representatives of “observers”), endeavouring to reflect stakeholder views as appropriate.

The Commission (CAC) is the **decision-making body** of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Program.

The Commission consists of member governments and international government and non-government organizations which have official observer status with the Commission.

At the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Commission, it was agreed that each session would decide on the timing of the next CAC.

The Commission presently meets annually, with meetings alternating between Rome where FAO Headquarters is located, and Geneva where WHO Headquarters is located.

The Executive Committee of the Commission (CCEXEC) acts as the **executive organ** of the Commission.

It is the body responsible for managing the standards development process, developing the draft strategic plan, reviewing applications for observer status and making other recommendations about the general direction of the Commission's work.

The executive officers include:

- A **chairperson**; and **three vice-chairpersons** elected among the delegates of the Members of the Commission.
- The Commission elects executive officers for a period commencing at the end of the session in which they were elected until the end of the following regular session.

The Chairperson and the Vice-Chairpersons can be re-elected to serve up to a maximum of 3 terms.

Let us review the Executive Committee again:

The CCEXEC is **geographically balanced**, with one member country elected from each of these 7 regions: Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Near East, North America and the South-West Pacific.

Members elected on a geographic basis are expected to act within the Executive Committee in the interest of the Commission as a whole.

The **Regional Coordinators** for the six regions (the regions of North America and of the South-West Pacific are combined into one Regional Coordinating Committee) are also Members of the Executive Committee.

The **role of the regional coordinators** is to coordinate the views of the region in the preparation of draft standards, guidelines and other recommendations for submission to the Commission. They also assist the Executive Committee and the Commission as required, by advising them of the views of their region on matters under discussion or of interest.

In principle, Coordinators are nominated at each session of the relevant Coordinating Committee and appointed at the following regular session of the Commission. They hold office from the end of the session where they are elected.

Coordinators may be re-appointed for a second term. The Commission shall make such arrangements as may be necessary in order to ensure continuity in the functions of the Coordinators.

In other words, when appointed, the duration of the term would depend on the needs of the region. In some regions the tendency is to have the office rotate every two years, in other regions every four years.

The CCEXEC is chaired by the **Chairperson of the CAC**.

The **total membership** of the CCEXEC is 17.

The Codex Secretariat assists the CAC in the **implementation of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme**, reporting to the Director-Generals of FAO and WHO.

The Secretary coordinates the work of the Secretariat.

The Secretariat is located at FAO headquarters in Rome.

The Secretariat organizes the meetings of the Commission and the Executive Committee, and facilitates the work of the subsidiary bodies in conjunction with the secretariats established by the host countries of Codex Committees.

This includes:

- compiling the documents required for the discussion of agenda items;
- supervising preparatory work (e.g. working papers) done by others;
- preparing and finalizing all meeting reports of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and its subsidiary bodies;
- publishing the Codex Alimentarius; and,
- representing the Commission in the meetings of other international organizations.

Under its Rules of Procedure, the Commission is empowered to establish four kinds of subsidiary bodies:

1. **General Subject Committees** (sometimes referred to as horizontal), which establish standards and guidelines applicable to all foods;
2. **Commodity Committees** (sometimes known as vertical), which prepare standards for specific commodities;
3. **FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees**, through which regions or groups of countries coordinate food standards activities in the region, including the development of regional standards;
4. **Ad hoc Intergovernmental Task Forces**, which are time-limited and prepare standards and guidelines on specific issues.

A feature of the committee system is that, with few exceptions, each committee is hosted by a member country, which is chiefly responsible for the cost of the committee's maintenance and administration, the provision of a chairperson and a host country Secretariat.

Hosting a committee places a considerable burden on the budget of the host country, and therefore only countries with sufficient resources are in a position to offer to host a committee. It should be noted however that host countries are encouraged to hold their committee in developing countries from time to time through co-hosting agreements

In 2024, CCFH hosted by the United States will be held in Kenya and CCCF hosted by the Netherlands will be held in Panama