

## CODEX CAPSULE 6

### *The Organizational Structure of Codex*

#### Slide 1

This session will be dedicated to discussing the Committee Structure of Codex

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

## Slide 2

General subject committees are so called because their work has relevance for all foods and, since this work applies to all foods, they are also referred to as “**horizontal committees**”. There are ten such committees:

- Codex Committee on Food Additives (CCFA) Hosted by China
- Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods (CCCF), Hosted by The Netherlands
- Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH) Hosted by the United States
- Codex Committee on Food Import & Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) hosted by Australia
- Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL) hosted by Canada

- Codex Committee on General Principles (CCGP) hosted by France,
- Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling CCMAS hosted by Hungary
- Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (CCNFSDU), hosted by Germany
- Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues (CCPR) hosted by China and
- The Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods (CCRVDF) hosted by the United States

Among other issues, the general subject committees have the following functions:

- develop all-embracing concepts and principles applying to foods in general, specific foods or groups of foods;
- endorse or review relevant provisions in Codex commodity standards; and
- based on the advice of expert scientific bodies, develop major recommendations pertaining to the health and safety of consumers
- The CCGP is responsible for dealing with procedural and general matters of the Commission.

Commodity committees have responsibility for developing standards for specific foods or classes of food.

In order to distinguish them from the “horizontal” committees and recognize their exclusive responsibilities, they are often referred to as **“vertical” committees**.

There are 11 such committees, of which several have been **adjourned sine die**, i.e. placed into recess.

Committees are adjourned sine die when work is accomplished and no other work is foreseen in the near future. If, and when Codex members identify new work, the Committee may be reactivated. A host country maintains the commitment for adjourned committees.

An example is the Codex Committee on Meat Hygiene which was established in 1971 with the mandate to elaborate world wide standards and/or codes of practices for meat hygiene. In its first round of meetings (1972-1974), the Committee elaborated a Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Meat.

The Committee reconvened in 1981, and worked until 1985, on a Code of Practice for Ante-Mortem and Post-Mortem Judgment of Slaughter Animals and Meat, and the Code of Hygienic Practice for Game. Subsequently, CCMH was once again reconvened in 1989 to revise the four Codes previously adopted and was adjourned sine die in 1993, having completed its task. Another round of CCMH was re-convened in 2000 to re-draft the codes on meat hygiene so they reflect contemporary developments.

It should be noted that on occasion sine die committees can undertake specific work by correspondence and advance some work of consensual nature. We have seen a few examples of that through the work by the Codex Committee on Natural Mineral Waters hosted by Switzerland and the Codex Committee on Sugars hosted by Colombia.

The full list of the Vertical committees is as follows:

- Codex Committee on Fats and Oils (CCFO)

- Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products (CCFFP)
- Codex Committee on Milk and Milk Products (CCMMP)
- Codex Committee on Processed Fruits and Vegetables (CCPFV)

- Codex Committee on Cereals, Pulses and Legumes (CCCPL)
- Codex Committee on Cocoa Products and Chocolate (CCCPC)
- Codex Committee on Natural Mineral Waters (CCNMW)
- Codex Committee on Sugars (CCS)
- Codex Committee on Vegetable Proteins (CCVP)
- Codex Committee on Meat Hygiene (CCMH)

Commodity committees convene as necessary and **go into recess or are abolished** when the Commission decides their work has been completed.

Meetings of Codex subsidiary bodies are held at intervals of between one and two years, according to need.

There are six coordinating committees, i.e. one for each for the following regions:

- Africa (CCAFRICA)
- Asia(CCASIA)
- Europe (CCEURO)
- Latin America and the Caribbean (CCLAC)
- Near East (CCNEA)
- North America and the Southwest Pacific (CCNASWP)

Unlike the General and Commodity Committees, Coordinating Committees have no standing host countries. These committees are hosted by one of the member countries in each region having been elected as regional coordinator. The meetings are held in the country of the coordinator or in cooperation with the coordinator in another country of the region.



The host country for a Regional Coordinating Committee tends to rotate amongst the members of the region.

Host countries should have the capacity to provide logistic and administrative support necessary when organizing an international meeting.

Coordinating Committees play an invaluable role in:

- ensuring that the work of the Commission is responsive to regional interests and to the concerns of developing countries; and,
- monitoring of the use/non-use of Codex standards and related texts at the national and regional level.

They normally meet at two-year intervals, with a good representation from the countries of their respective regions.

Codex members can only belong to one region, however, countries outside the region can attend a Coordinating Committee meeting as observers upon request. The country that chairs the Coordinating Committee is also the Regional Coordinator for the region concerned – attending the CCEXEC.

Some countries, especially developed countries, that undertake to become the Regional Coordinator, may be expected to pay part or all costs associated with hosting the meeting.

Ad hoc intergovernmental task forces are established with a specific mandate and for a **limited period of time, not normally exceeding four years.**

As in the case of the horizontal and vertical committees, Codex task forces are **hosted by a member country.**

Task forces are dissolved once their work has been completed, therefore the number of active task forces will vary. It should be noted that a task force may be re-activated if additional work is required.

### **WHY AD HOC TASK FORCES ARE CREATED**

In 1999, the Commission realized that its rather inflexible committee structure was not able to cope with the demand for standards and guidelines across an ever-widening range of subjects.

It decided to create another type of subsidiary body call a Codex Adhoc Intergovernmental Task Force, which is a Codex Committee with very limited terms of reference established for a fixed period of time.

Examples of ad hoc Intergovernmental Task Forces are the following:

- Task Force on Animal Feeding, 1999–2004.
- Task Force on Foods Derived from Biotechnology, 1999–2003 and 2005–2009.
- Task Force on Fruit and Vegetable Juices, 1999–2005.
- Taskforce on Antimicrobial Resistance.

Most developing countries and countries with small economies, **can't afford to participate in the work of all the Codex activities.**

Therefore, each country should **prioritize and focus** its resources to ensure that it is involved in discussing and developing standards of greatest national significance.

When determining where to focus their Codex resources, countries need to take a number of factors into consideration.

What are the country's significant food safety/health issues?

What are the issues most relevant to the consumer?

- What are the primary agrifood export industries contributing to the country's economy?
- What are the major agrifood imports?
- What are the agrifood priorities of most relevance to the domestic producers?
- Which Codex committees elaborate standards, guidelines or related texts pertaining to the areas of most interest
- What resources (e.g. time, money, etc.) are available to commit to the Codex programme?