

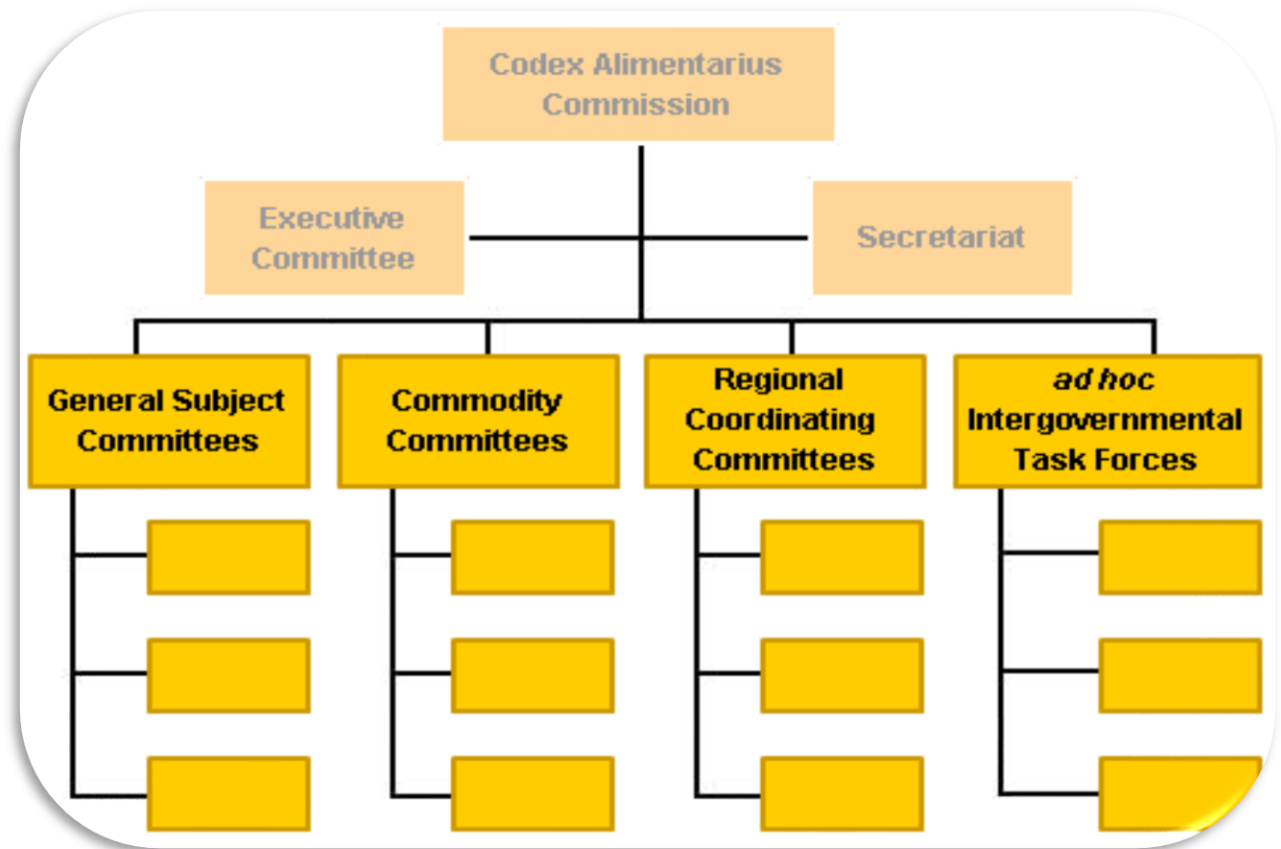


# THE FUNCTION OF CODEX COMMITTEES

# Introduction

This presentation describes the function of Codex committees from two perspectives:

- The function of Codex subsidiary bodies;
- The provision of guidance on how meetings are conducted.



# Function of the Subsidiary Bodies

Codex **subsidiary bodies** (except the Coordinating Committees) are expected to:

- ✓ Draw up a list of priorities among the subjects and products within their terms of reference.
- ✓ Consider the safety and quality elements to be covered.
- ✓ Consider the types and scope of products to be covered by standards.
- ✓ Prepare draft Codex standards (including guidelines and codes of practice).
- ✓ Report to each session of the Commission on the progress of their work.
- ✓ Review and revise existing standards and related texts periodically.

# Function of the Coordinating Committees

The main functions of **Coordinating Committees** are:

Promote **mutual exchange of information** on proposed regulatory initiatives and problems arising from food control;

Promote the use of Codex standards in the region, and monitor the use of adopted Codex texts; and

Exercise the general coordination in the preparation of standards related to the specific region or groups of countries.

# Composition of Codex Committees

All Codex committees consist of the following members:

- a chairperson;
- a body of members;
- observers who have speaking privileges but not voting right; and
- a secretariat and a host government (including Secretariat) that facilitates the work of the committee.

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS  
INTERNATIONAL FOOD STANDARDS



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



World Health  
Organization



# Chairperson

- ❖ The CAC designates as host country of a committee a member country which has declared to accept all the responsibilities associated with it.



The member country concerned is responsible for appointing the **chairperson** of the committee from among its own nationals.

# Members

- **Member of Codex committees** are members of the CAC who have responded to the invitation of the Director-General of FAO or WHO of participating in the Committee.
- Other Codex member countries may attend, as **observers**, meetings of coordinating committees other than those to which they are geographically allocated.
- Only committee Members can **make decisions** on issues under consideration.

# Observers

- International organizations with official **Observer Status in Codex** may also participate in meetings of the various Codex Committees and Task Forces as well as in working groups established.
- Observers may make interventions, submit written comments, etc, but **only Members (i.e. countries) make decisions.**
- Countries that are not members of the Commission, but are members of the UN, FAO or WHO may also attend Codex Committee meetings as observers.



# Secretariat

The principal secretariat is the **Codex Secretariat**, it is **international** and is based in Rome. Its tasks include:

- coordinating documentation for the meeting;
- advising the Chairperson of the Committee on technical and procedural matters;
- preparing the report of the meeting.

There's also a **host country secretariat (national)**, who assists the Codex Secretariat in coordinating documentation for the meeting and is mainly responsible for logistic aspects.

# Participation in Codex Using Codex Standards



Scheduling of meetings of Codex Committees is done by the **Codex Secretariat** in Rome in consultation with the **Codex Contact Point of the country hosting** the respective Codex committee.

The meetings are based on a **biennial planning cycle**.

# Meeting Documents

The secretariat has a responsibility for preparation and distribution of meeting documentation.

The main **meeting documents** consist of the following:

- ✓ **Invitation.**
- ✓ **Provisional Agenda.**
- ✓ **Working papers.**



# Meeting Attendance

Who may attend  
Codex meetings?

Participation is open to **delegations representing member countries** and **organizations with official observer status.**



Meetings of Codex committees and task forces are also **held in public** unless the committee decides otherwise.

# Meeting Format

## All Codex sessions follow the same format

- There may be an official or formal opening of the session.
- The chairperson proceeds to the adoption of the provisional agenda and invites observations from members of the committee concerning the provisional agenda.
- 3) Any member country may request the addition of additional items to the provisional agenda.

# Session Procedures

- ❑ Chairpersons of Codex committees are expected to ensure that **all comments on the standard being elaborated are fully discussed.**



- ❑ Chairpersons are also expected to ensure that the committee **considers the written comments** of Members not present at the session and that all issues are put clearly to the committee.



# Expressing Your Nation's View

## How can members express their country's views at a meeting?

- **Members and observers are permitted to intervene** on issues under consideration by the committee.
- Protocol states that Members speak before observers, and delegations speak only when acknowledged by the chairperson.



- Normally, it **is the head delegate who has the right to speak** but, with the chair's permission, another member of the delegation may speak on technical matters.

# Expressing Your Nation's View (2)



- There are no precise rules within Codex regarding the **number and duration of interventions.**
- The general practice is to intervene only once on any particular issue.

Interventions should be **as short and clear as possible** (2/3 minutes) and one should speak slowly enough to allow for good interpretation.

# Reaching Consensus

- The chairperson always tries to **arrive at a consensus**.
- If consensus cannot be reached, the usual practice is to:

1) Defer the issue for discussion at the next session.

2) Establish a working group to address those points where consensus cannot be reached.

3) Refer the issue to the Commission for guidance.

4) Recommend to the Commission that work on the issue be suspended or discontinued altogether

**Voting at the committee level is extremely rare.**

# Objection to a Committee Decision

What if my country disagrees with a decision taken by the committee?



Although "**consensus**" has not been defined by Codex, it is generally agreed that **it does not necessarily mean that everybody is in total agreement (unanimous decision).**

In case of disagreement on a decision a country may request that its objections be recorded in the report of the committee.

# Session Report

A draft report of the proceedings is prepared by the Codex Secretariat for consideration by the committee on the final day of the session.

The report is reviewed and adopted by the committee, paragraph by paragraph or section by section.

Once adopted, the draft **report becomes the official record of the committee session.**

**What has been said and decided cannot be revisited.** The review and adoption process is not an opportunity to reopen discussion on agenda items.



# Requesting an Amendment to the Report

When requesting an amendment to the draft report, it is important to **make a concrete proposal for changes** including the provision of alternative text if applicable.



Normally appendices below are attached to the report:

- a list of participants; and
- the complete text of draft standards.

It is common practice not to record country names, but instead to record as correctly as possible the point made.



# Working Groups – Use and Rules

The Committee **may establish a working group which will work between sessions**, either by **electronic means** or by **actually meeting** (i.e. a physical working group).



Working groups may also be established **during a committee session** to address specific points in an attempt to reach consensus.

**Participation on the working group is open to all Members and Observers of the Commission.**

# Working Groups – Setting Tasks

The Committee will designate a "**host**" **country for the working group**, which will not necessarily be the host country for the Committee.

The TOR of the working group shall clearly state:

- the objective(s) to be achieved;
- the language(s) to be used; and
- the time by which the work is expected to be completed.

The **conclusions** of the working group shall be presented to the Committee for consideration in the form of a **working group report** (usually a **Circular Letter**).

# Summary

- ✓ The main function of Codex subsidiary bodies is to develop standards, guidelines and recommendations relevant to their specific subject area.
- ✓ All Codex committees consist of: a chairperson, members who makes decisions on Codex issues, observers who have speaking privileges but not voting right, and a secretariat and a host government that facilitates the work of the committee.
- ✓ All Codex sessions follow the same format.
- ✓ The chairperson always tries to arrive at a consensus, which does not necessarily means unanimity.
- ✓ Normally a delegation should intervene only once on any particular issue and Interventions should be as short and clear as possible (maximum two or three minutes).
- ✓ At the end of each session a final report is drawn up, that becomes the official record of the committee session.
- ✓ When the workload is too extensive the Committee may establish a working group (either electronic or physical) which will work between sessions.



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