



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



## High Level Political Forum 2020

*"Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development "*

### Annex 7

#### **Inputs by Codex Alimentarius Commission**

The Codex Alimentarius Commission, hereafter Codex, is the central pillar of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme. Its purpose is to develop food safety and quality standards that protect the health of the consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade. It works to this end by promoting coordination of all food standards work undertaken by international governmental and non-governmental organizations and by determining priorities and initiating and guiding the preparation of draft standards through and with the aid of appropriate organizations.

Codex provides the global community with science-based standards that can help countries to meet a number of SDG targets especially across SDGs 2, 3 and 12. When countries participate fully and effectively in the development of Codex standards, they are better able to benefit from the economic development offered by access to international trade in food. This is particularly important as the economy of many of these countries is heavily reliant on agricultural production.

#### **I. Key policies and measures to ensure “accelerated action and transformative pathways” for realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development**

Everyone has the right to safe, nutritious and sufficient food. Still today, almost one in ten people in the world fall ill after eating contaminated food. When food is not safe, children cannot learn, adults cannot work. Human development cannot take place. Safe food is critical to promoting health and ending hunger, two of the 17 SDG goals.

**Unsafe food takes a huge toll on human health and the economy.** The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that more than 600 million fall ill and 420 000 die every year from eating food contaminated with bacteria, viruses, parasites, toxins or chemicals. WHO also estimated that 40 million of the 56 million global deaths in 2015 were due to noncommunicable diseases with unhealthy diets one of the main risk factors. As for the economic price tag, according to the World Bank, unsafe food costs low-and middle-income economies alone about

US\$ 95 billion in lost productivity annually and this does not even include the losses in sales to the farmers and downstream food companies, foregone trade income or the burden posed by food waste. Unsafe food also limits market access and trade.

The key **policies adopted by Codex** are formulated in its **2020-2025 Strategic Plan** which references SDGs 2, 3, 12 and 17, recognizing that “standards can assist Members in their implementation efforts with respect to the SDGs that are directly related to food safety and quality and fair practices in the food trade”.

**a. Critical gaps in implementing the 2030 Agenda within the area of responsibility of the intergovernmental body (bearing in mind interrelations with other goals and targets)**

Regional surveys have revealed: a **lack of awareness and limited uptake of Codex standards** by agri-food businesses; delays due to the duration of national implementation processes; the **lack of financial and human resources required to enact Codex standards** in domestic regulations, and the issue that some Codex standards are general in nature and therefore need to be adapted to specific national contexts.

These are reflective of the wider challenges that developing countries in particular face with regard to food safety and as indicated in the chairpersons summary of the FAO/WHO/AU International Food safety Conference held in Addis Ababa in 2019 there is a **need to integrate food safety into national and regional policies as a means to achieve the 2030 Agenda** for Sustainable Development. Other key gaps identified included the lack of a strong database on food safety issues in countries to guide context specific risk management.

**Low and lower-middle income countries** also often have a **fragmented national response** to food safety and hence lack the political understanding and will to implement Codex standards when responsibility and policy are spread across various competing sectors.

**b. Priority measures to: accelerate action, and ensure transformative pathways to realize the decade of action for achieving the 2030 Agenda.**

The Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025 has established Goal 3: “Increase impact through the recognition and use of Codex standards”, **to bridge the gap in the development of food safety standards and their adoption into national legislation** by Member Countries. The objectives of this goal are: raise the awareness of Codex standards; support initiatives to enable the understanding and implementation/application of Codex standards, and recognise and promote the use and impact of Codex standards.

Specific contributions from Codex to accelerate action include: **adopting standards to reduce the risk of death and illness from food** that may otherwise contain chemical or (micro)biological agents at levels higher than those provided for in the standards (SDG2, SDG3);

guidance on nutritional issues in the development of labelling standards (SDG3); ensuring healthy lives (SDG3) through more active participation from low and lower-middle income countries in the standard setting process; standards for the safe and effective production, preservation, inspection, certification and transport of food along the food chain (SDG12); supporting fair practices in the food trade which in turn supports food security and economic growth (SDG17).

**The Codex standards in themselves provide access to knowledge on good practices and new methods and technologies in agriculture.** Their subsequent adoption and implementation helps reduce risk of illness, malnutrition and death from food that may otherwise contain chemical or (micro)biological agents at unsafe levels higher than those provided for in the standards and therefore achievement of, for example, the SGD 2 target of ensuring access by all people to safe, nutritious and sufficient food.

## **II. Contribution of the intergovernmental body to accelerated action and transformative pathways and realizing the decade of action and delivery for achieving the 2030 Agenda within its area of responsibility**

Codex brings a **broad range of stakeholders together** from private and public sectors and this unique combination drives accelerated action on food safety, which is ultimately the enabler of development.

In 2003, **the Codex Trust Fund (CTF)** was established by FAO and WHO to ensure that developing and transition economy countries can participate fully and effectively in Codex. Funded by contributions from Codex member countries and organizations, the CTF **brings together all concerned stakeholders to generate the active engagement necessary to support countries to strengthen their national Codex structures and build their capacity** to participate more effectively in the development of international food standards.

Thanks to an initiative that began in Codex, every year on June 7, under the stewardship of FAO and WHO, **UN World Food Safety Day** recognizes the role Codex plays in protecting the health of consumers and in ensuring fair practices in the food trade, and the leading role of FAO and WHO in providing capacity-building to countries to implement food safety systems.

### **Selected recommendations for accelerating progress and moving on transformative pathways for realizing the decade of action, for possible use in drafting the HLPF declaration.**

**Enhancing collaboration** between relevant international organizations will strengthen Codex, facilitate implementation of Codex Standards and promote healthy food systems globally.