



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
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## High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable development (HLPF) 2023

10-19 July 2023

*“Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels”*

### ANNEX 5

#### **Inputs by the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC)**

The Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) is an intergovernmental body that develops and adopts international food standards to protect consumer health and promote fair practices in the food trade. Codex is a joint FAO/World Health Organization programme, with the Secretariat being hosted by FAO. CAC contributes directly to SDGs 1, 2, 3, 12, and 17 while contributing in a more indirect way to others such as SDG 5, 6, and 8.

- (a) Progress, experience, lessons learned, challenges and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of SDGs 6, 7, 9, 11 and 17 from the vantage point of your intergovernmental body, bearing in mind the three dimensions of sustainable development and the interlinkages across the SDGs and targets, including policy implications of their synergies and trade-offs.**

Of the highlighted SDGs, the work of Codex is most relevant to SDG 6 and SDG 17.

#### **SDG 6 - Clean water and sanitation**

In recognition of the role of water in food production and food hygiene in particular and the increasing challenges in terms of access to drinking water, CAC agreed to develop guidelines on the safe use and re-use of water in food production. The aim is to provide guidance on the different types and qualities of water that can be used in different parts of food production by ensuring the water is fit-for-purpose and its use will not compromise the safety of food. General guidelines and more specific guidelines in relation to water use and re-use in fresh fruits and vegetables have been completed and proposed for adoption by CAC in November 2023. Work will continue with the development of additional commodity specific guidance. This work is in line with target 6.4 to substantially increase water use efficiency. Several of the tools proposed in the guidance have been tested in a lower middle income setting to ensure that they are practical and feasible within such contexts.

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#### **SDG17 – Partnerships**

##### **Partnership for standards development and implementation**

Within the current Codex Strategic Plan (2020-2025) emphasis has been put on use and impact of Codex standards. Partnership is playing a key role in the establishment of mechanisms by which the use and impact

of Codex standards can be determined. Developing an overview of impact is key to broadening the uptake of Codex standards, which can facilitate economic gain through market access and strengthen consumer protection.

CAC celebrates its 60th anniversary in 2023. Since the beginning it has recognized the importance of engagement with intergovernmental (IGO) as well as non-governmental (NGO) organizations as observers to its work. This increases transparency of the work and facilitates expertise from the food industry, consumer groups and other stakeholders in standards development. Currently there are 235 observers to Codex; **60** IGOs, **159** NGOs and **16** UN organizations.

In 2022, a review of NGO observer engagement in Codex was undertaken which confirmed the important role Codex observers continue to play in Codex work. While previously this was focused on standards development, the review also highlighted the role observers play in standards implementation through awareness raising and information sharing on Codex standards and using these standards as reference standards in their efforts to gain market access, highlighting the relevance to the economic dimension of sustainable development.

**(b) Three key areas where transformative actions for accelerated progress have been successful, and three key areas where support is most urgently needed, with regard to the cluster of SDGs under review in July 2023.**

*Successes*

1. Engagement and inclusiveness: Across the board, adoption of digital technology, which has led to wider engagement and partnership, contributing to building a truly global Codex community and facilitating awareness raising on Codex standards.
2. Adaptation of working mechanisms to progress work and adopt critical standards in a timely manner despite the challenges posed by the pandemic.
3. Timely uptake of work on new and emerging issues e.g. water use and re-use and areas where climate change is contributing to increasing hazards in ocean waters such as the seafood sector to ensure standards remain relevant and effective

*Needs*

1. Science and data to support standard setting needs arising from food system transformation and the need to ensure all standards are relevant to new food sources
2. Support for implementation of new and upcoming standards such as those related to water use and re-use
3. Resources and approaches to sustain the increased inclusivity achieved due to the rapid uptake of digital technology during the pandemic as in-person meetings become feasible again. This could be achieved through enhancement and expansion of existing initiatives such as the Codex Trust fund.

**(c) Examples of specific actions taken to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic that also accelerate progress towards multiple SDG targets, including actions identified by your intergovernmental body, building on interlinkages and transformative pathways for achieving SDGs.**

- Discussions on the Future of Codex to ensure it remains fit for purpose and serves the priority needs of its Members as Codex celebrates its 60<sup>th</sup> birthday
- Revision of existing standards or development of new ones to address new emerging issues and challenges so that Members have the guidance and standards needed to address issues as they emerge and minimize any lag time in addressing issues which could lead to diverse approaches among Members. This also includes development of standards to enhance food trade and food control in times of crisis such as development of guidance on remote audit and verification and paperless exchange of certificates.

**(d) Assessment of the situation in the mid-point of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic and within the respective areas addressed by your intergovernmental body, and policy recommendations, commitments and cooperation measures for promoting a sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery from the pandemic while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda.**

The pandemic has driven the uptake of digital technology at a pace that was never imagined and provided a new set of tools with which to work together and also put a focus of developing standards that would embrace the use of such technology. These include standards that facilitate the use of electronic or paperless certification for food trade and new work on the Use of Remote Audit and Verification in Regulatory Frameworks. Such tools made it possible to minimize the downtime due to the pandemic and provide the basis for maintaining a high level of delivery moving forward.

However, a challenge remains in terms of effectively blending digital technology with in-person discussions, in particular for intergovernmental discussions and negotiations. Within Codex there is a view among members that the efficacy of digital technology can only be maintained when combined with in-person discussions. For other Members the resources required to engage in person are prohibitive and transparency and openness to all can only be achieved if virtual meetings are retained.

**(e) Key messages for inclusion into the Ministerial Declaration of the 2022 HLPF.**

Long established intergovernmental bodies such as the Codex Alimentarius Commission provide an invaluable forum for discussion and enhance policy coherence among Members. For optimal efficacy, this may require some change which is often challenging to achieve but needs to be embraced as something positive and essential. In highlighting the need to strengthen cross-sectoral collaboration in the transformation of food systems in line with the One Health approach, the 15<sup>th</sup> Berlin Agriculture Ministers Conference (2023), highlighted the critical role of science-based international standard-setting organizations, such as the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH). Continuing Ministerial level awareness raising of the role these international standards setting organizations can play in the context food system transformation and achievement of the 2030 agenda is needed as another avenue to support and enable Members in their efforts.