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United Nations



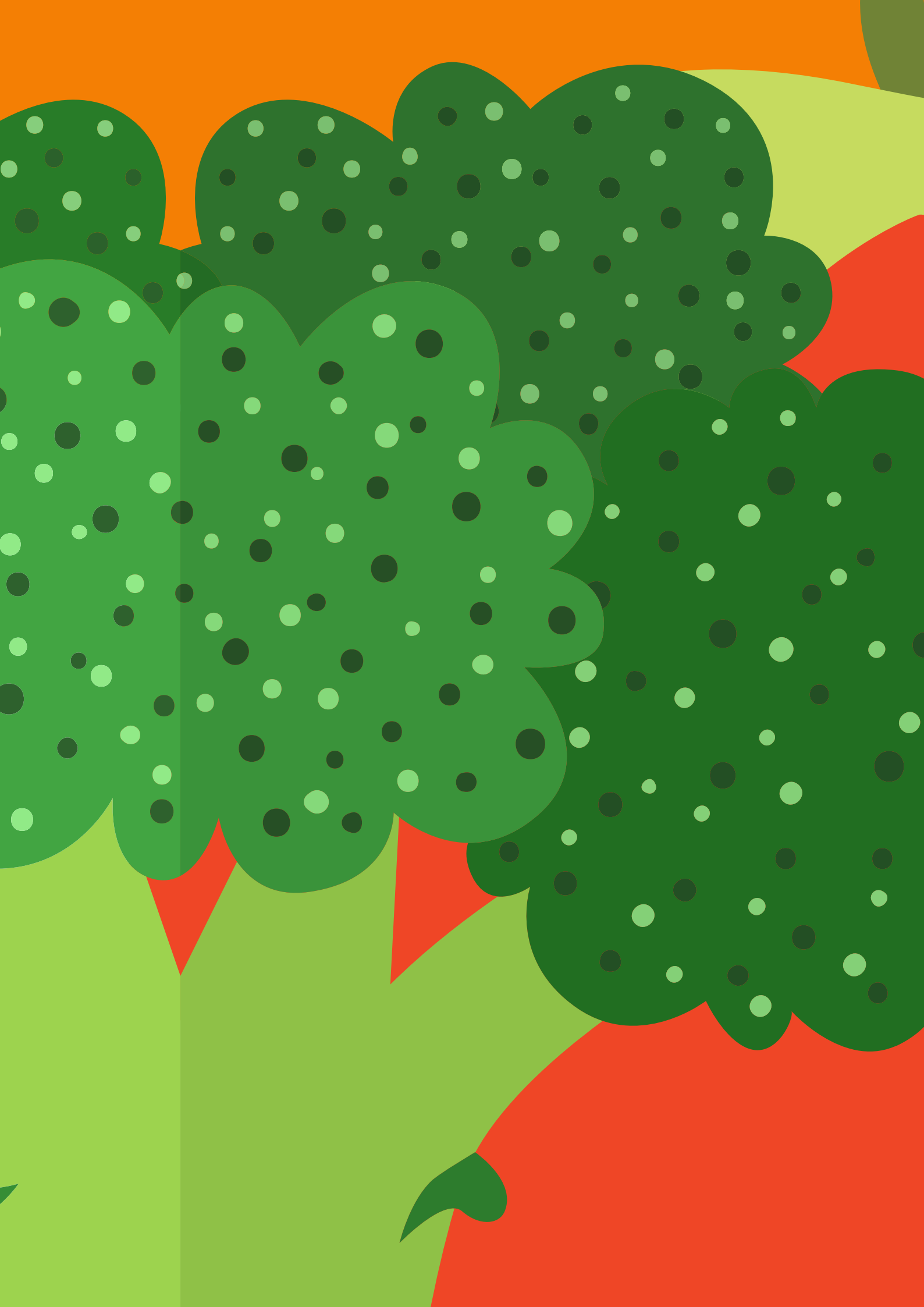
World Health
Organization

CODEX
ALIMENTARIUS
INTERNATIONAL FOOD STANDARDS

CODEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2014–2019 IMPLEMENTATION REPORT



CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION





CODEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2014–2019 IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

**Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
World Health Organization**
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Foreword

The Codex Strategic Plan 2014–2019 was adopted by the 36th session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) in 2013 following a comprehensive, inclusive and transparent drafting process. Over the past six years, the Strategic Vision Statement for Codex “to be the preeminent international food standards-setting body to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade” has been the guiding light that has led CAC to remarkable achievements in pursuing its four strategic goals.

In that time, CAC adopted numerous Codex texts. Today, standards continue to be developed with a view to addressing new and emerging food issues, in conformity with Codex’s rigorous risk analysis principles. The inclusive, transparent and consensus-building nature of the Codex decision-making process has been upheld by effective and efficient work management systems, aided by new information technologies and virtual activities.

This report is issued at a time when the entire world is grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic, which is presenting profound and far-reaching challenges, not least of which is the need to ensure food security. As there is no food security without food safety, Codex Members should seize this opportunity to remind their governments and relevant stakeholders about the importance of ensuring food safety along the entire food chain from primary production to consumption.

The proclamation by the UN General Assembly of a new World Food Safety Day on 7 June is a landmark achievement for CAC that will contribute to raising awareness about the importance of food safety for generations to come.

Congratulations to Codex on the successful implementation of the Strategic Plan 2014–2019. May the solid foundation laid by these accomplishments enable continued efficient and dynamic food standards-setting activities as work begins under the new Strategic Plan 2020–2025.



Mrs Awilo Ochieng Pernet
Former Chairperson of CAC
(2015 – 2017)



Mr Guilherme Antonio da Costa Jr
Chairperson of CAC
(2018 – current)

Abbreviations and acronyms

| | |
|------------------|---|
| CAC | Codex Alimentarius Commission |
| CCCF | Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods |
| CCCPL | Codex Committee on Cereals, Pulses and Legumes |
| CCEXEC | Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission |
| CCFA | Codex Committee on Food Additives |
| CCFH | Codex Committee on Food Hygiene |
| CCFL | Codex Committee on Food Labelling |
| CCFFP | Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products |
| CCFICS | Codex Committee on Import and Export Food Inspection and Certification Systems |
| CCMMP | Codex Committee on Milk and Milk Products |
| CCNFSDU | Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses |
| CCPR | Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues |
| CCP | Codex Contact Point |
| CCRVDF | Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods |
| CTF | Codex Trust Fund |
| EWG | Electronic working group |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations |
| GEMS/Food | Global Environment Monitoring System - Food Contamination Monitoring and Assessment Programme |
| GIFT | Global Individual Food consumption data Tool |
| IGO | Intergovernmental organization |
| IPPC | International Plant Protection Convention |

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| JECFA | Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives |
| JMPR | Joint FAO/WHO Meeting on Pesticide Residues |
| ML | Maximum level |
| MRL | Maximum residue limit |
| NGO | Non-governmental organization |
| OCS | Online Commenting System |
| PWG | Physical working group |
| RCC | FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committees |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SPS Agreement | Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures |
| TBT Agreement | Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade |
| TDS | Total Diet Study |
| TFAMR | Ad hoc Codex Intergovernmental Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance |
| WHO | World Health Organization |
| WTO | World Trade Organization |



Executive summary

The Codex Strategic Plan 2014–2019 was Codex’s third and - up to then - most ambitious plan. It was developed following the full integration of the Codex risk analysis principles and towards the end of Codex Trust Fund 1, which ran for 12 years (2004–2015). The plan provided principles for the monitoring, reporting and evaluation of Codex work.

Codex continued its important work to protect consumers’ health and facilitate fair practices in the food trade through work on:

- General subjects affecting all food commodities (contaminants, additives, hygiene, import and export inspection and certification systems, labelling, methods of analysis and sampling, nutrition and food for special dietary uses, pesticide residues, residues of veterinary drugs); and
- Food commodities including fish and fishery products (e.g. scallop products), milk and milk products (e.g. dairy permeate powders), fresh and processed fruits and vegetables (e.g. aubergines, canned fruits, frozen vegetables, ginseng products), cereals, pulses and legumes (e.g. quinoa), spices and culinary herbs (e.g. dried thyme, cumin, peppers, dried or dehydrated garlic) as well as oils (e.g. fish oils).

The FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committee (RCC) meetings were revitalized with a new agenda aimed at making them the main regional fora in which all food safety and quality-related issues should be discussed.

The Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products (CCFFP) was adjourned *sine die* in 2016 after 50 years of successful work under the leadership of Norway. Other Codex committees and a Task Force were reactivated, namely the Codex Committee on Milk and Milk Products (CCMMP) (reactivated in 2014 and adjourned in 2017), the Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance (TFAMR) (reactivated in 2017) and the Codex Committee on Cereals, Pulses and Legumes (CCCPL) (reactivated in 2015, to be adjourned in 2020).

Codex welcomed three new Member Countries (South Sudan, San Marino, and Timor-Leste) and 28 new Observer organizations¹ (24 non-governmental organizations, NGOs, and 4 intergovernmental organizations, IGOs)².

¹ Complete list of Codex Observer organizations: <http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/about-codex/observers/observers/obs-list/en/>

² 24 NGOs: AgroCare; AHPA (American Herbal Products Association); C4CCES (Center for Climate Change and Environmental Studies); CIDCE (Centre International de Droit Comparé de l'Environnement / International Centre of Comparative Environmental Law); DRC (Fruit and Vegetable Dispute Resolution Corporation); EFA (European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations); ESSNA (the European Specialist Sports Nutrition Alliance); EURO CARE (the European Alcohol Policy Alliance); Europat; FEPALE (La Federación Panamericana de Lechería / The Pan American Dairy Federation); FIA (Food Industry Asia); FSC (the Food Safety Consortium); FVE (Federation of Veterinarians of Europe); GOED (Global Organization for EPA and DHA Omega-3s); IFAAO (the International Food Authenticity Assurance Organization); IMACE (the European Margarine Association); IRUFA (International Ready To Use Foods Association); ISC (International Stevia Council); MoniQA Association; NPA (National Products Association); NSF (NSF International); OENOPPIA (Oenological Products and Practices International Association); THIE (Tea and Herbal Infusions Europe); and the World Obesity Federation.
4 IGOs: EAC (East African Community); EEC (Eurasian Economic Commission); INFOFISH (the Asia-Pacific Fishery Service Centre); South Centre.

“Digital” Codex continued to grow. Meeting documents are now made available electronically and are no longer printed, and the new Codex website is updated daily and contains new pages (for example on the regions), while providing access to online meeting registration. An online commenting system (OCS) and an electronic discussion forum, used by most electronic working groups, were also introduced.

More standards were translated into all official languages. All changes and additional pages have furthered Goals 3 and 4 of the plan, and this facilitates Members’ access to information in line with the Codex core values of transparency and inclusivity.

The work management and functioning of the Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CCEXEC) were reviewed in a series of smaller-scale Secretariat-led reviews that focused on electronic working groups (EWGs) (2016), collaboration with other international standard-setting organizations (2017), and the critical review function of CCEXEC (2018-2020).

Chairpersons learned from each other and improved their capacity to manage Codex meetings (through co-hosted Committees, co-chaired EWGs, Chairpersons’ workshops and a Chairperson’s handbook).

In 2018 the United Nations established a World Food Safety Day to be celebrated every year on 7 June. This followed an initiative of the Codex Chairperson that was first endorsed by the Commission and then the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) before it went to the United Nations General Assembly.

Nine publications were developed, bringing Codex to a broader audience and helping policy makers to better understand the environment in which Codex is operating. These are:

- [*The Science of Food Standards - The road from Codex Alimentarius Commission 39 to 40*](#) (FAO, WHO, 2017);
- [*Trade and Food Standards*](#) (FAO, WTO, 2017);
- [*Codex - a world full of standards*](#) (FAO, WHO, 2018a);
- [*Food Hygiene at 50*](#) (FAO, WHO, 2018b);
- [*The Codex Chairpersons’ Handbook*](#) (FAO, WHO, 2018c);
- [*Understanding Codex - Fifth edition*](#) (FAO, WHO, 2018d);
- [*A drop of oil, a tonne of value*](#) (FAO, WHO, 2019a);
- [*Codex 2019: The year of food safety*](#) (FAO, WHO, 2019b); and
- [*Codex nutrient reference values: especially for vitamins, minerals and protein*](#) (Lewis, 2019).

The timely distribution of meeting reports and adopted standards was improved, but challenges remained with the timely distribution of working documents.

While the overall speed of Codex work was progressing satisfactorily, it was recognized that work on commodity standards had the highest proportion of standards needing more than four years for their development. It was noted that the quality of new work proposals could be improved, including assessments of when new work proposals for regional standards should be converted into proposals for worldwide Codex standards. Furthermore, some topics were difficult to advance due to their sensitive nature, which challenged the attainment of consensus.







1. Introduction



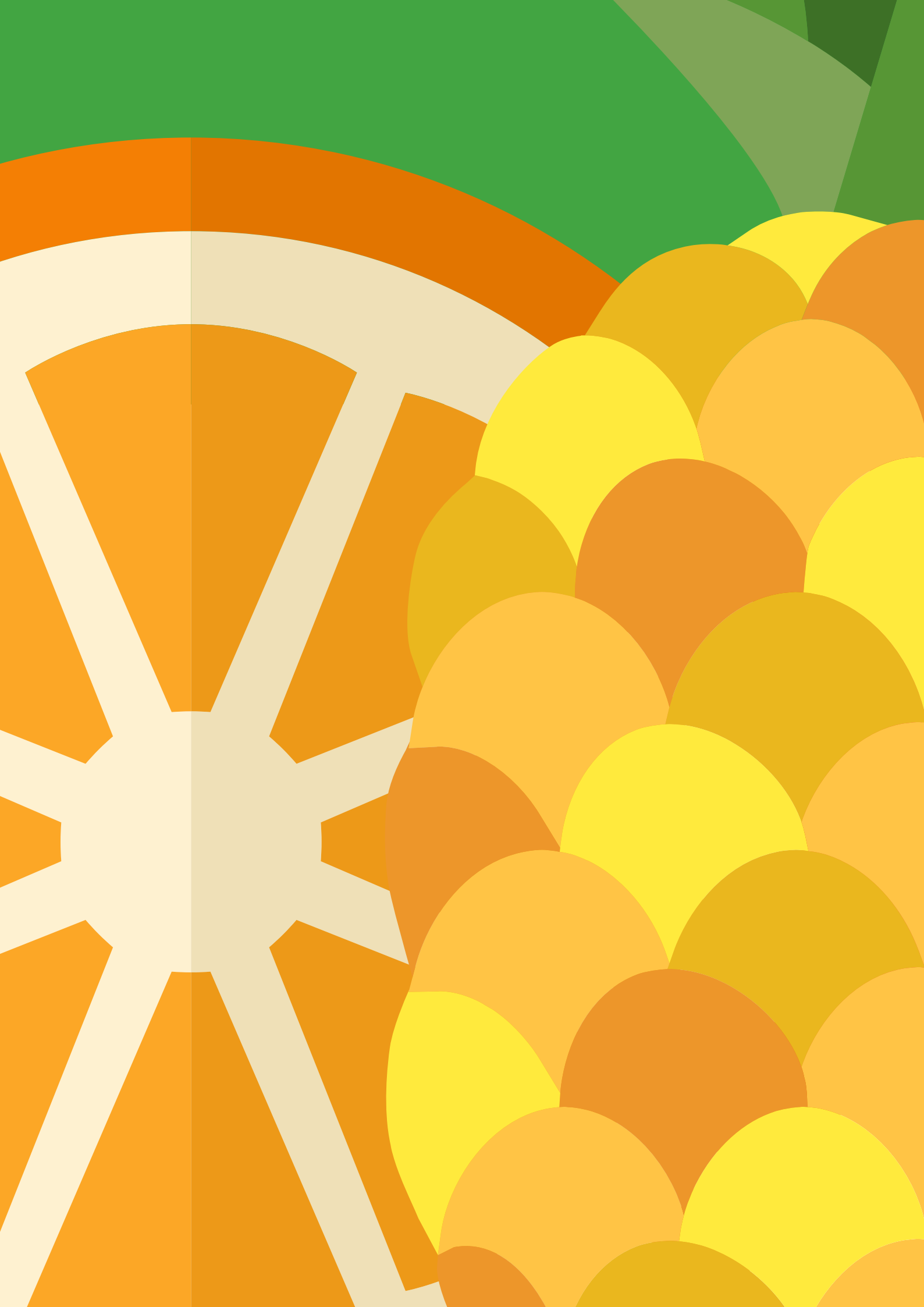
The third Codex Strategic Plan 2014–2019 was adopted by the 36th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (2013). At this stage, efforts to integrate the risk analysis paradigm into the work of the different technical committees of Codex had been completed. At the same time, the Codex Trust Fund 1 (CTF1) (2004–2015) was coming to the end of its 12-year period supporting the participation of developing and transition economy countries in Codex work.

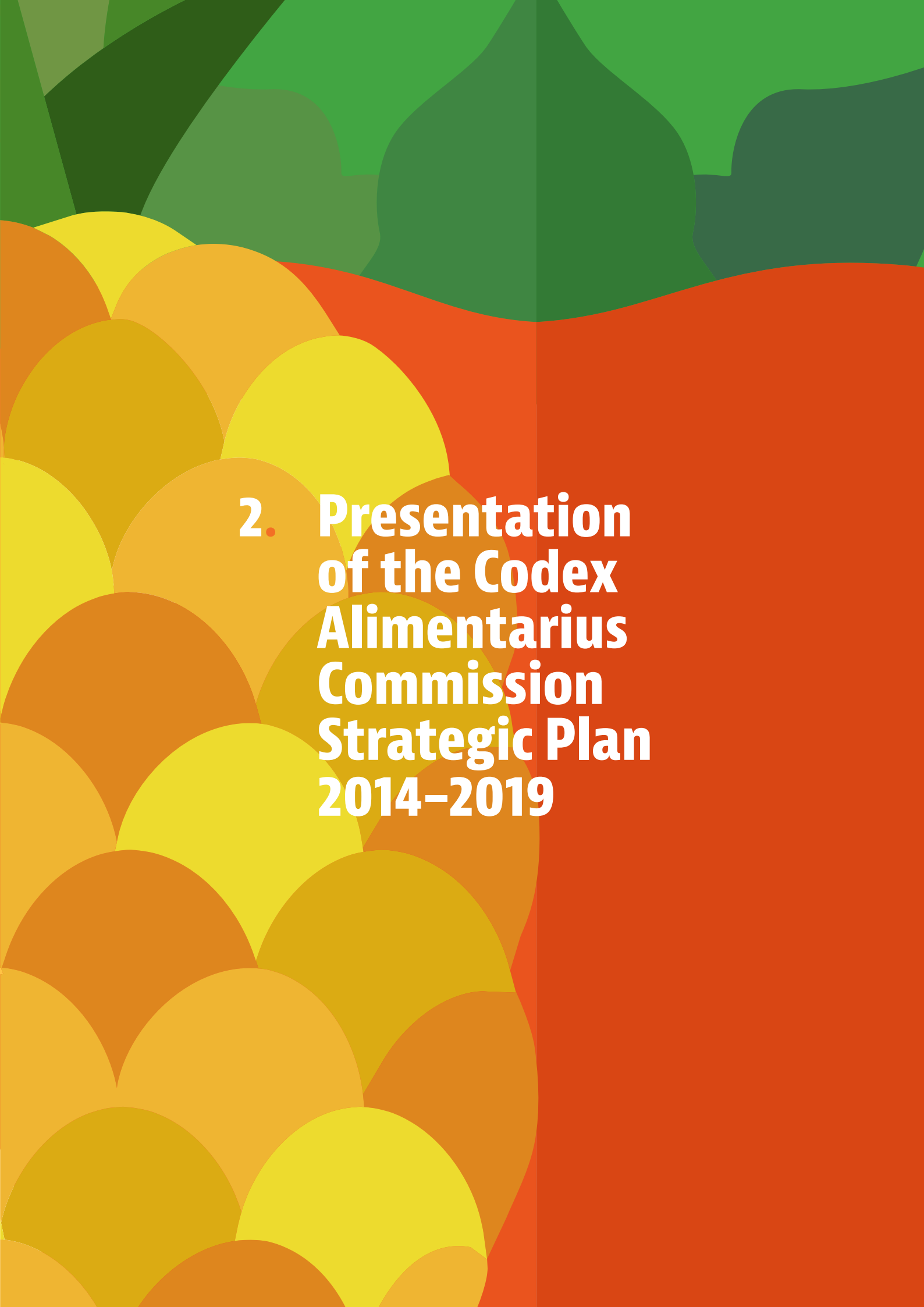
The vision of the Strategic Plan made strong reference to the fact that only the global adoption and implementation of Codex standards would bring the benefits in consumer protection and trade facilitation envisaged by Codex. The Codex aim to be “the preeminent international food standards-setting body to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade” acknowledges that food safety and quality standards should be immutable regardless of where a consumer lives.

This vision was underpinned by the Codex core values of collaboration, inclusivity, consensus building and transparency. Added to this were the four strategic goals for 2014–2019, each of which had specific objectives for the Commission and was supported by a work plan that included activities, expected outcomes, and indicators to track progress toward accomplishment of the goals.

The Strategic Plan 2014–2019 has provided transparent guidance and checkpoints to the whole Codex system on fulfilling its mandate and meeting the needs and expectations of its Members. Through its implementation, it has counted on and justified the continued high priority placed on food safety and quality by its founding organizations FAO and WHO.

The Codex Secretariat has been reporting annually on the implementation status of the Strategic Plan and this report summarizes the complete six-year period of 2014–2019, while a more detailed overview of the year-by-year progress can be found in the annual reports to CCEXEC.





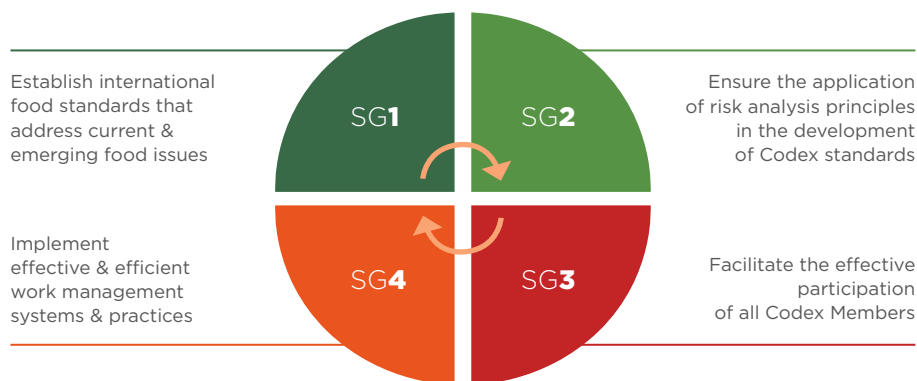
**2. Presentation
of the Codex
Alimentarius
Commission
Strategic Plan
2014–2019**



The plan was based on the strategic vision of Codex as the preeminent international food standards-setting body, mandated to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade. It was implemented by respecting the four core values of collaboration, inclusivity, consensus building and transparency.

Conceptually, the plan was divided into four mutually dependent strategic goals with 10 overall objectives (Figure 1). These involved a total of 32 activities, which were assigned to different parties. For monitoring purposes, 61 performance indicators were identified.

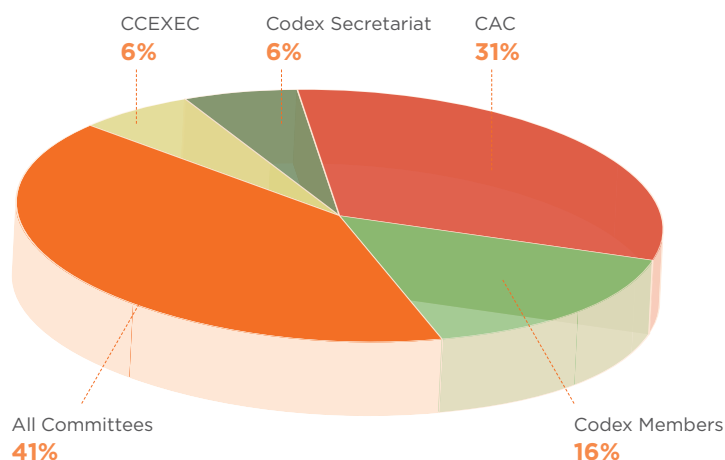
Figure 1
The architecture
of the Strategic Plan
2014-2019



| | GOAL 1 | GOAL 2 | GOAL 3 | GOAL 4 |
|----------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 10 OBJECTIVES | 3 Objectives | 3 Objectives | 2 Objectives | 2 Objectives |
| 32 ACTIVITIES | 6 Activities | 11 Activities | 8 Activities | 7 Activities |
| 61 INDICATORS | 12 Indicators | 18 Indicators | 14 Indicators | 17 Indicators |

Progress at activity level was monitored by the Codex Secretariat and reported annually to CCEXEC (FAO and WHO 2016, 2017, 2018e, 2019c). The majority of the activities identified by the plan were under the responsibility of the technical Codex committees and CAC. Activities under the responsibility of Codex Members were particularly hard to measure as they depended on Members' ability to regularly share information on new developments and feedback was often variable. Unmeasurable indicators³ were either replaced or excluded from annual progress reports.

Figure 2
Strategic plan activities
by responsible party



In 2016, CAC39 requested that as part of this Strategic Plan 2014-2019, the Codex Secretariat should regularly review Codex work management. While this regular review was not formally envisaged in the plan, it did cover aspects of particular importance in the development and review of international food standards (Goal 1) and the use of effective and efficient work management systems (Goal 4). Reviews implemented covered:

- In 2016: Electronic Working Groups (related to activities 4.1.2-4)
- In 2017: Collaboration between CAC and other standard-setting organizations (related to activity 1.3.2)
- In 2018/19: Critical review function of CCEXEC (related to activity 1.1.2)

In addition to the global strategic plan, three Codex regions (Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Near East) developed regional plans, but challenges regarding the implementation of these plans were noted in the respective coordinating committees.⁴

In the period covered by this report, the environment in which Codex

³ Around 40 percent of the indicators in the plan were identified as unmeasurable/unclear (e.g. under activities 2.1.2, 2.3.1, 2.3.4, 3.1.1, and 3.2.1) and either not reported on or replaced with new indicators (e.g. number of delegates and delegations attending Codex meetings and duration of standard development). In addition, an online platform set up for Members to report on the national implementation of Codex standards and national structures for food safety and quality control proved to be an unreliable tool to collect information directly from members.

⁴ [REP20/AFRICA](#) para 50-1; [REP20/NE](#) para 62 i); [REP20/LAC](#) part 2 para 31.





The background features a vibrant, abstract design. On the left, there are several overlapping, semi-transparent geometric shapes in shades of green and dark green. The rest of the page is dominated by a large, wavy shape in shades of orange and yellow. Scattered across this orange and yellow area are several semi-transparent circles of varying sizes, some of which appear to be floating or overlapping the other shapes.

3. Looking back on implementation



operates has changed considerably. Many of the challenges associated with these changes are addressed in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)⁵, adopted by world leaders in September 2015, which underline the ongoing need for international food safety standards to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in food trade.

In 2015, WHO provided estimates of the incidence, mortality and disease burden of 31 foodborne hazards, globally and regionally, and found that the global burden of foodborne diseases is comparable to that of the major infectious diseases, HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis (WHO, 2015). This important report underlines the need for international food safety standards as established by Codex and for improvements in national food safety systems as key measures to combat preventable foodborne disease. One outcome inspired by this report was the creation by the United Nations of a World Food Safety Day, which was co-sponsored by Codex and first observed in 2019.

⁵ [Subsequent to the Strategic Plan 2014–2019 implementation period, Codex has produced a document on Codex and the SDGs](#)

World Food Safety Day

The first World Food Safety Day on 7 June 2019 was coordinated by the Codex Secretariat following adoption of the UN Resolution in December 2018. Over 30 countries held dedicated events, while many more Members and Observers signalled their activities via the Twitter hashtag #WorldFoodSafetyDay, which was viewed over 400 million times.



In 2014, the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2014-2025) was launched. This is a commitment by UN Member States to undertake 10 years of sustained and coherent action to implement policies, programmes and increased investments with the aim of eliminating malnutrition in all its forms, everywhere, leaving no one behind.

The following report highlights outcome-level achievements under each of the four strategic goals and points to some non-accomplished objectives and remaining challenges.

Goal 1

Establish international food standards that address current and emerging food issues

During the period of this Strategic Plan, Codex continued to expand its catalogue of standards (including guidelines and codes of practice).

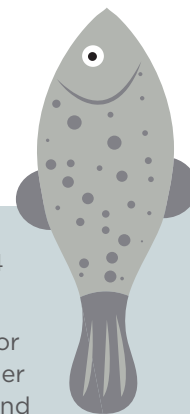
Committees

In 2016, after 50 years of work, CCFFP adjourned *sine die*, having successfully completed its revisions to the *Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products CXC 52-2003* (FAO, WHO, 2020). The committee had also developed new codes of practice and standards (for example, the *Code of Practice on Processing of Fish Sauce* - see Section 19 of the *Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products* - and the *Standard for Fresh and Quick-Frozen Raw Scallop Products CXS 315-2014*).

Current and emerging food issues also led to the reactivation of three previously adjourned Codex committees:

- CCMMP was reactivated in 2014 and again adjourned in 2017;
- CCCPL was reactivated in 2015 and is scheduled to adjourn in 2020; and
- TFAMR was reactivated in 2017 and continues work beyond 2020.

Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products (CCFFP)



Since its first session in 1966, CCFFP has convened 34 times, hosted by Norway.

CCFFP has elaborated worldwide standards for fresh, frozen (including quick-frozen) and other processed fish, crustaceans and molluscs and has developed a considerable number of important texts, including the *Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products CXC 52-2003* (now a Codex publication: FAO, WHO, 2020).

In 2003, the work of CCFFP led to the resolution of an important case on sardines, brought under the WTO's Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT).

CCFFP was adjourned at CAC39 (2016) and the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH) assumed CCFFP's new work on guidance for histamine control in the *Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products* and sampling plans for histamine in standards for fish and fishery products.

At CAC39, Norway, as host country, expressed its willingness to continue hosting the Committee in the future should the need arise.

Codex Committee on Milk and Milk Products (CCMMP)

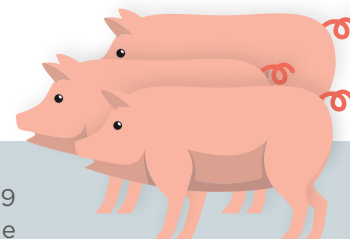


CCMMP was established in 1993 by CAC23 with a remit to elaborate international standards and codes of practice for milk and milk products within the framework of the Codex Alimentarius, subsuming the work of the Joint FAO/WHO Committee of Government Experts on the Code of Principles concerning Milk and Milk Products (CGECPMMP).

The CCMMP was adjourned *sine die* in 2010.

Reactivated in 2014 by CAC37 to work by correspondence, the CCMMP has developed one text, the *Standard for Dairy Permeate Powders CXS 331-2017*, while the work on a standard for processed cheese was discontinued by CAC40 (2017) as consensus could not be reached despite exhaustive efforts since 1994.

Ad hoc Codex Intergovernmental Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance (TFAMR)



TFAMR was re-established by CAC39 and met in 2017 in response to the increased global attention being given to antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and its effects on human health. The decision for TFAMR to reconvene was also a response to technical developments on combatting AMR and the Global Action Plan on AMR adopted by the World Health Assembly in 2015, which made explicit reference to ensuring that Codex standards remain relevant to this growing challenge.

TFAMR's new remit was to review and revise the *Code of Practice to Minimize and Contain Antimicrobial Resistance CXC 61-2005* and consider the development of guidance on integrated surveillance of foodborne AMR.

Standards established

During the implementation period, CAC started 80 projects, developing new or revising existing non-numerical standards,⁶ and adopted 63 non-numerical standards/revisions (Table 1).

The number of new work proposals on non-numerical standards approved during the period remained stable compared to the period of the previous strategic plan.

The total number of adopted Codex texts decreased by 29 compared to the period covered by the previous strategic plan (Table 1). However, progress is not defined by numbers alone and these statistical variations from one period to the next can be explained by various factors such as:

- the complexity and nature of texts (e.g. multiple aspects addressed in one text such as the *Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products*);
- timing (e.g. most of the work on the revision of the *General Principles of Food Hygiene* was undertaken in the period of the Strategic Plan, but only adopted by CAC43 in 2020);
- the postponement of RCC meetings from 2018 to 2019. This meant that issues were submitted for adoption and approval by CAC43 in 2020 rather than CAC42 in 2019; and
- difficulty in achieving consensus (e.g. maximum levels (MLs) for cadmium in certain cocoa-containing products).

Of the 63 standards adopted between 2014 and 2019, 86 percent were finalized in a timely manner (i.e. in less than five years).

⁶ Meaning other than those concerning maximum levels (MLs) and maximum residue limits (MRLs).

Table 1
Non-numerical standards
established during
2008-2013 versus 2014-2019

| | 2008-2013 | | 2014-2019 | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| | New texts | Revisions | New texts | Revisions |
| New work approved | 52 46% of these on commodities | 30 | 54 55% of these on commodities | 26 |
| Total | 82⁷ | | 80⁸ | |
| Adoptions | 53 49% of these on commodities | 39 | 34 59% of these on commodities | 29 |
| Total | 92 | | 63⁹ | |

CAC set standards to enhance the trade of numerous food commodities, covering:

- fish and fishery products (e.g. scallop products);
- fresh and processed fruits and vegetables (e.g. aubergines, canned fruits, frozen vegetables, ginseng products);
- milk and milk products (e.g. dairy permeate powders);
- spices and culinary herbs (e.g. cumin, dried thyme, peppers, dried or dehydrated garlic);
- fats and oils (e.g. fish oils); and
- cereals, pulses and legumes (e.g. quinoa).

Codex Committee on Cereals, Pulses and Legumes (CCCPL)

In 1995, CAC21 adjourned CCCPL *sine die*. It was reactivated in 2015, at CAC38, to work by correspondence on the development of an international *Standard for Quinoa*. This was successfully adopted in 2019 as [CXS 333-2019](#).

Quinoa is an ancient grain which contains more protein than most other plant foods and is cultivated in over 70 countries. FAO statistics show that the trade in quinoa has increased rapidly since 2008 and continues to expand due to growing global demand.

During this period, some historically difficult topics were discussed. These included MRLs for the growth promoting veterinary drug Zilpaterol, which led to a discussion about the statements of principle on the role of science in the Codex decision-making process and the extent to which other factors are or should be taken into account. This debate is ongoing.

⁷ Of which the following five were subsequently discontinued: organic aquaculture; a regional standard for ayran; the revision of the *Standard for Processed Cereal-Based Foods for Infants and Young Children*; a standard on non-centrifuged dehydrated sugar cane juice (panela); and a regional standard for labneh.

⁸ Of which the following two were subsequently discontinued: NRV-NCD for EPA and DHA long chain omega-3 fatty acids; and a standard for processed cheese.

⁹ Of which 13 were initiated before 2014.

A further example of controversy involved work on a standard for processed cheese, which was eventually discontinued due to a lack of progress.

Table 2
Existing numerical
Codex standards in 2019
versus 2015*

| | 2015 | 2019 |
|--|------|------|
| MLs for food additives | 3770 | 4596 |
| MLs for contaminants in food | 109 | 113 |
| MRLs for residues of veterinary drugs in foods | 599 | 632 |
| MRLs for pesticide residues in foods | 4613 | 5663 |

* to realistically reflect the start of the Strategic Plan implementation, periods were adjusted

CCEXEC Critical Review

As part of its critical review function, CCEXEC evaluates proposals to adopt standards at steps 5 and 8 and recommendations of new work. It also monitors the progress of standards development/revision. In assessing the impact of this Critical Review on decisions taken by CAC¹⁰, no considerable change could be observed between the Strategic Plan 2008–2013 and the Strategic Plan 2014–2019. In both periods, CAC followed CCEXEC recommendations regarding the final adoption of standards, the adoption of standards at Step 5, or approval of new work, in more than 97 percent of cases.

Statistics show that commodity standards represent the highest proportion of standards not finalized within five years. It was recognized that new work proposals for commodity standards could be improved and that greater attention could be paid to the question of converting proposals for regional commodity standards into proposals for worldwide Codex standards.

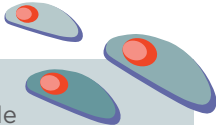
Food safety issues in the spotlight

During this Strategic Plan period, CAC initiated and finalized standards that addressed the following key food safety issues:

- Control of foodborne parasites (Guidelines), 2014–2016;
- Control of histamine in fish and fishery products (Revision of a Code of Practice), 2016–2018;
- MLs for methylmercury in certain fish species, 2017–2018;
- Control of nontyphoidal *Salmonella* spp. in beef and pork meat (Guidelines), 2014–2016;
- Prevention and reduction of arsenic contamination in rice (Code of Practice), 2014–2017; and
- Prevention and reduction of mycotoxin contamination in spices (Code of Practice), 2015–2017.

¹⁰ [CX/EXEC 20/78/4](#), Appendix I.

Foodborne parasites




Foodborne parasites affect the health of millions of people every year, infecting muscle tissues and organs, causing epilepsy, anaphylactic shock, amoebic dysentery and other problems. Some can persist in our bodies for decades.

In 2016, CAC adopted the *Guidelines on the Application of General Principles of Food Hygiene to the Control of Foodborne Parasites CXG 88-2016* as an extension of the Codex signature text on food hygiene. This text provides guidance on preventing, reducing, inactivating, or otherwise controlling foodborne parasite hazards that present a public health risk.

The guidelines provide science-based advice to governments, the food industry and consumers with the aim of protecting public health (FAO, WHO, 2014).

Inorganic arsenic



People are exposed to elevated levels of inorganic arsenic through drinking contaminated water, using contaminated water in food preparation and crop irrigation, industrial processes, eating contaminated food and smoking tobacco.

Long-term exposure to inorganic arsenic, mainly through drinking water and food, can lead to chronic arsenic poisoning. Skin lesions and skin cancer are the most characteristic effects. Arsenic is one of WHO's 10 chemicals of major public health concern.

In 2017, CAC adopted the *Code of Practice for the Prevention and Reduction of Arsenic Contamination in Rice CXC 77-2017* to provide relevant food control authorities, producers, manufacturers and other relevant bodies with guidance on preventing and reducing arsenic contamination in rice.

Surveys on emerging food safety issues

In 2016 and 2019, in preparation for the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee meetings in different regions, FAO and WHO surveyed views on current and emerging food safety issues amongst Codex Members with the aim of using the results to inform future standard-setting activities. The results were discussed by the relevant Coordinating Committees. Some of the issues identified were addressed as part of committees' work in the 2014–2019 period, while others will be addressed under the new Strategic Plan 2020–2025.

Both in 2016 and 2019, weaknesses in food control systems and related regulatory frameworks were identified by Codex Members as the top issue. In 2019, Members also identified the subject areas shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Top emerging food safety issues identified by Members in 2019 and related Codex work

| Emerging issue | No. of Members that raised the issue | Related Codex work |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|
| Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) | 36 | Growing global concern about AMR, its effects on human health and technical developments in managing it led to the re-establishment of TFAMR in 2017. The new Task Force was mandated to review and revise, where appropriate, the <i>Code of Practice to Minimize and Contain Antimicrobial Resistance CXC 61-2005</i> and develop guidance on integrated surveillance of AMR. |
| Chemical hazards (pesticide and veterinary drugs residues, food additives, and contaminants) | 36 | The Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues (CCPR), the Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods (CCRVDF) and the Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods (CCCF) have all been working for several decades to eliminate the dangers of persistent and new chemical hazards in food. Together with the scientific expert committees, the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) and the Joint FAO/WHO Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR), they have worked increasingly efficiently on these issues. |
| Climate change and food safety | 23 | Climate change and climate variability may affect the occurrence of food safety hazards at various stages of the food chain, from primary production to consumption. While no dedicated body exists to work on this issue, climate-related food safety issues were occasionally addressed. For example, changes in the distribution and proliferation of ciguatera-toxins make the occurrence of ciguatera fish poisoning less predictable. The matter was raised at a side event at CCCF in 2017. CCCF consequently asked JECFA to provide relevant risk assessment. |
| New food production methods and novel foods | 23 | Currently not the subject of new work in Codex. However, in 2019 the issue was discussed at a dedicated CAC side event organized by the Codex Secretariat and during the FAO/WHO/African Union Food Safety Conference. |
| Food fraud | 19 | Codex standards developed by the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL), the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) and other committees are crucial for ensuring information and claims about the safety and quality of foods are correct. However, food integrity and authenticity were raised as a concern by a Codex Member at the 2015 session of CAC. In 2017, CCFICS established the first EWG on the subject. In 2019, a follow-up EWG was created and was tasked to report to the next CCFICS session on the potential need for new Codex work on food fraud. |

Optimized collaboration and cooperation

Cooperation with other international organizations is essential for all Codex standard-setting work, to ensure it is well informed and coordinated in line with the Codex mandate. Governmental, non-governmental, public and private organizations alike play a vital role in ensuring Codex texts are of the highest quality and based on sound science.

The total number of Codex Observer organizations increased by 28 (24 NGOs¹¹ and 4 IGOs¹²), bringing the total number of Observer organizations to 237 by the end of 2019. This included 16 UN organizations, which underlines the continuing relevance of CAC's work to civil society and to other intergovernmental bodies.

The standard-setting areas with higher levels of participation by Observer organizations during the implementation period were nutrition and foods for special dietary uses (CCNFSDU), food additives (CCFA) and food labelling (CCFL).

Throughout the implementation period, Codex Secretariat staff regularly attended main events of the Codex sister organizations, the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), as well as the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) committees. Codex Secretariat staff also contributed to workshops organized by WTO, together with staff from the two other standard-setting organizations referenced in the WTO's SPS Agreement, OIE and IPPC.

In 2017, as part of its regular management, the Codex Secretariat conducted a review of the collaboration between CAC and other international standard-setting organizations with observer status in Codex, in order to identify potential synergies and areas of work management that might require improvement. The review concluded that the cooperation was generally good, but several areas of work management would benefit from further discussion and potential change within Codex. These included:

- more tailored communication;
- collaboration regarding the measurement and monitoring of the use of standards;
- clearer rules on referencing other standards in Codex texts; and
- more consistency and clarity regarding revisions of Codex standards.

All recommendations were reviewed in detail by CCEXEC and the Codex Secretariat was tasked with following up where necessary.

¹¹ AgroCare; AHPA; C4CCES; CIDCE; DRC; EFA; ESSNA; EURO CARE; Europatat; FEPALE; FIA; FSC; FVE; GOED; IFAAO; IMACE; IRUFA; ISC; MoniQA Association; NPA; NSF; OENOPPIA; THIE; and the World Obesity Federation.

¹² EAC; INFOFISH; Eurasian Economic Commission; South Centre.

Goal 2

Ensure the application of risk analysis principles in the development of Codex standards

The Working Principles for Risk Analysis contained in the Codex Procedural Manual are generally applied consistently and scientific advice is regularly requested by CAC subsidiary bodies from the joint FAO/WHO expert bodies¹³ when engaging in the development or revision of standards.

FAO Member Nations maintained sustained support at various FAO governance committees, which led to a USD 500 000 annual increase in FAO funding for the scientific advice programme as of 2019. These additional funds will allow FAO's scientific advice programme to increase its output.

Financial resources in WHO for the provision of scientific advice to Codex on food safety remained inadequate and entirely based on voluntary contributions. The voluntary contributions were sufficient to maintain the level of scientific advice activity from earlier biennia. However, new restrictions on certain expenditure categories (e.g. air travel) may lead to difficulties in future funding of the scientific expert bodies.

Data collection

No baseline is available to determine whether there has been an increase in responses by developing countries to requests for scientific data. The FAO/WHO Global Individual Food consumption data Tool (GIFT)¹⁴ platform, however, is providing a growing inventory of individual food consumption data, especially from developing countries, that is supporting the scientific advice programme. For pesticide residue data, ten developing countries have provided data for setting Codex MRLs.

¹³ JECFA, JEMRA (Joint FAO/WHO Meetings on Microbiological Risk Assessment), JEMNU (Joint FAO/WHO Meetings on Nutrition).

¹⁴ <http://www.fao.org/gift-individual-food-consumption/data-and-indicator/en/>

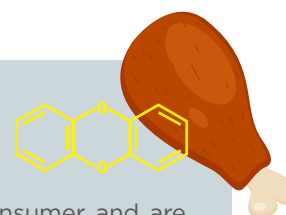
During the implementation period, FAO and WHO conducted several global studies to increase data collection from developing countries to support the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission:

- Study of mycotoxins in sorghum in four countries of sub-Saharan Africa;
- Total Diet Study (TDS) in sub-Saharan Africa;
- Food consumption survey in the Lao People's Democratic Republic; and
- Harmonization of food consumption data across countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Total Diet Study (TDS)

A Total Diet Study (TDS) is an instrument used to assess the dietary exposure of populations to specific chemical contaminants. It involves the analysis of food cooked and prepared as it would be by the consumer and are representative of the foods eaten by a particular local population. Total Diet Studies are complementary to other monitoring and surveillance programmes that measure contamination of specific commodities of food products at a specific point in the supply chain and are generally designed to assess compliance with regulatory limits.

The TDS in sub-Saharan Africa focused on Benin, Cameroon, Mali and Nigeria and looked at exposure to a range of chemicals including mycotoxins, dioxins, pesticides, and heavy metals. The data collected supported risk assessments within each of the countries and are now being used to guide risk management approaches.



FAO and WHO are collecting individual food consumption data from more than 40 countries in the FAO/WHO GIFT and the [FAO/WHO Chronic Individual Food Consumption database - Summary statistics](#)¹⁵. These data are used by JECFA and JMPR and are available to Member Nations.

More than 7 million results contained in more than 1800 'batches' on the occurrence and concentration of chemicals in food have also been collected in the [Global Environment Monitoring System - Food Contamination Monitoring and Assessment Programme \(GEMS/Food\) database](#).¹⁶ In particular, more than 1 million results in 2017 enabled CCPR to use a probabilistic approach to its assessment of acute exposure to pesticides. Also, more than 2 million results in 2019 contributed to CCCF's work on lead in food, cadmium in cocoa, methylmercury in fish and aflatoxins in cereals.

All this data has been submitted to FAO and WHO by more than 80 institutions, whether they were national food safety authorities, government ministries or from the private sector. The GEMS/Food programme is encouraging data submission by developing specific agreements within various sectors, in line with strict quality criteria for data uploaded into the platform. In 2017, WHO in collaboration with the Chulabhorn Research Institute in Thailand, developed and posted an [e-learning tool](#)¹⁷ to facilitate access to data.

¹⁵ <http://apps.who.int/foscollab>

¹⁶ <https://extranet.who.int/gemsfood/>

¹⁷ <http://203.151.20.206/who/>

Goal 3

Facilitate the effective participation of all Codex Members

Effective participation in the activities of Codex whether through physical attendance of meetings or electronic submission of comments on standards in the making, is paramount for ensuring both the relevance and ownership of Codex standards. In addition, countries may find other benefits in direct involvement in international food standards setting, such as early access to the basis of future legislation, greater understanding of the standards, and an ability to identify future trends. Further advantages include increased market access following the correct implementation of standards, or the creation of networks and contacts that may provide technical or financial resources.

Throughout the implementation period, different activities were carried out by FAO, WHO, the Codex Secretariat, the CTF, committee hosts and Members individually to enhance national Codex structures and encourage participation of all Members in standard-setting work. These included:

- meeting co-hosting arrangements;
- co-chairing of EWGs;
- interpretation and translation into different UN languages;
- assistance through the CTF;
- national capacity development initiatives; and
- side events at Codex meetings.

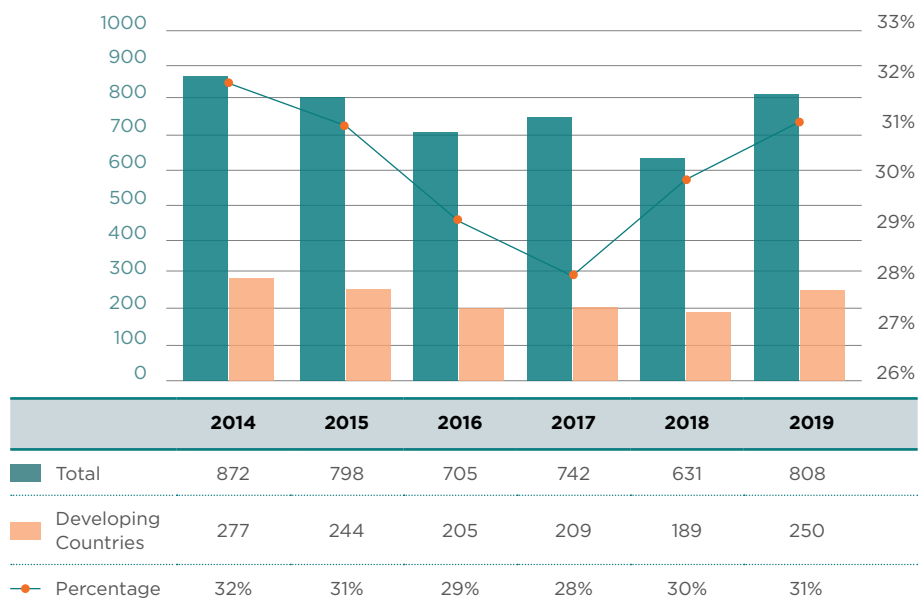
The Codex family also welcomed three new Member Countries, namely South Sudan in 2015, San Marino in 2016, and Timor-Leste in 2018. At the end of 2019, the Codex Alimentarius Commission had a membership of 188 countries, of which 41 percent were developing countries¹⁸, and 1 Member Organization (the European Union).

¹⁸ Developing Countries: Low-income economies and Lower-middle-income economies under classification provided by World Bank for each fiscal year (<http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-and-lending-groups>). As of June 2019, 79 Codex Members classify as developing countries.

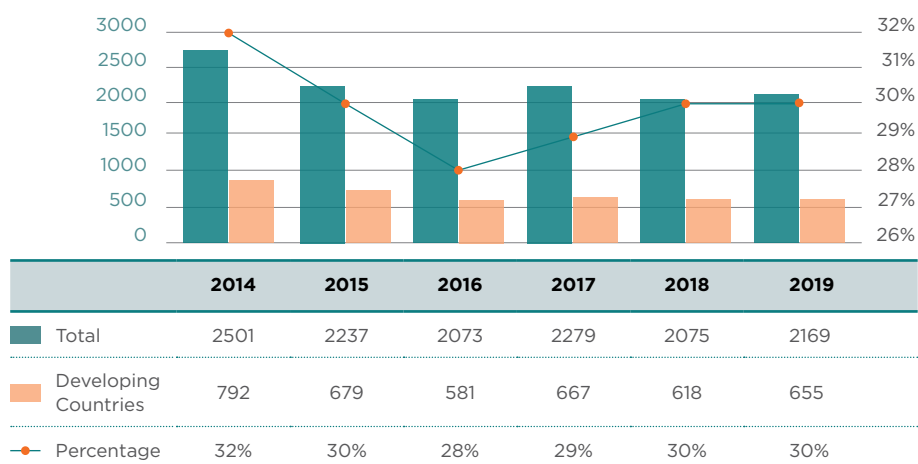
Participation in numbers

During the implementation period 2014-2019, no clear trend could be observed regarding participation of Codex Members in the 94 Codex sessions held (six of the Commission and 88 of subsidiary bodies. This number excludes CCEXEC and RCC meetings) (see Figure 3). The overall percentage of delegations and delegates from developing countries per year remained stable at around 30 percent.

Figure 3
Number of delegations and delegates at Codex meetings¹⁹, 2014-2019



Total number of delegations and number of developing country delegations



Total number of delegates and number of delegates from developing countries

¹⁹ including CAC, excluding RCC and CCEXEC meetings due to their restrictive membership.

Committees that have had a higher-than-average proportion of developing country delegations throughout the implementation period were CCFH, CCRVDF and CCNFSDU, suggesting that food hygiene, veterinary drug residues in food and nutrition are amongst the priority areas for developing-country Members.

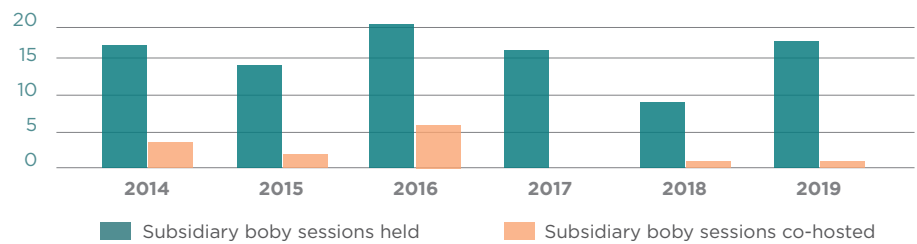
Generally, physical participation is very much dependent on the issues under discussion in committee sessions.

Participation at sessions of CAC can be influenced by whether elections for Chairperson and Vice-chairpersons are held or not. In 2014 and 2017, more than 60 developing country delegations attended CAC (of 170 Member Countries and one Member Organization in total), while the average number of developing countries participating in other years was 45 (of 134 Member Countries and one Member Organization in total).

Co-hosting and co-chairing

The co-hosting of committee sessions has become a common practice in Codex. Of the 88 Codex subsidiary body sessions held during the period 2014-2019, a total of 12 (14 percent) were co-hosted (see Figure 4), which frequently led to higher participation by developing countries.

Figure 4
Total number of CAC subsidiary body sessions held and number co-hosted, per year (2014–2019)



Host country secretariats had the opportunity of exchanging their experience by arranging co-hosted sessions in workshops and meetings facilitated by the Codex Secretariat.

Similarly, working groups whether physical or electronic, benefitted from co-hosting and co-chairing arrangements. In particular regarding EWGs, an increasing number of developing countries volunteered to co-chair (see Table 4).

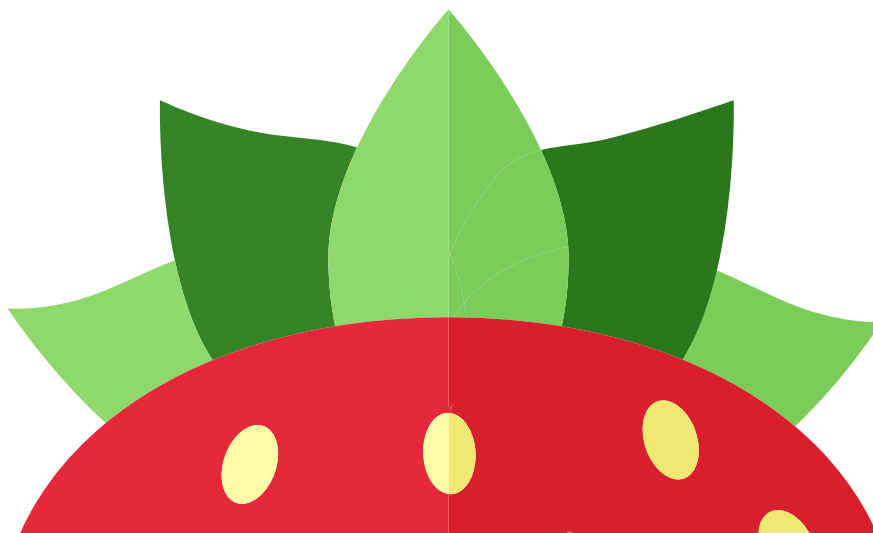


Table 4
Electronic Working Groups (EWGs) and Physical Working Groups (PWGs) established and co-hosted/co-chaired, 2014-2019

| | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 |
|-------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| EWGs established | 65 | 56 | 37 | 63 | 43 | 50 |
| EWGs co-chaired | 39 | 37 | 26 | 47 | 37 | 42 |
| Percentage of EWGs co-chaired | 60% | 66% | 70% | 75% | 86% | 84% |
| PWGs established | 12 | 14 | 8 | 10 | 7 | 12 |
| PWGs co-hosted | 4 | 6 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 9 |
| Percentage of PWGs co-hosted | 33% | 43% | 38% | 50% | 57% | 75% |

While the 2016 review of EWGs²⁰ found that co-chairing did not have considerable impact on registration numbers, it was still considered a useful practice as Members could gain experience and provide and receive alternative language support. Similarly, co-chairs were often able to help chairpersons by assuming some of their workload such as taking the lead on certain sections of a draft standard or proposal.

The Codex Trust Fund and other FAO/WHO capacity development initiatives

The FAO/WHO Project and Fund for Enhanced Participation in Codex (Codex Trust Fund, CTF) completed its 12-year lifespan in December 2015 (CTF1). The CTF was established with the aim of increasing the participation of developing and transition economy countries in Codex meetings.

The final evaluation of CTF work indicated that while the objective of widening participation in Codex meetings had been fully achieved, 30-35 percent of countries surveyed were at risk of not being able to maintain their participation in Codex without CTF or other external support. Thus, the objective of sustainably strengthening participation in Codex had only been partially successful.

One of the biggest challenges identified through analysis of CTF1 work was the need to move from providing support for physical participation in Codex meetings to ensuring full and effective participation of developing and transition economy countries in the Codex standard-setting process. This challenge was taken into consideration in the design and development of the CTF successor initiative, CTF2, which was launched in 2016.

CTF2 was designed to build on the achievements of CTF1 by focusing on tailored support for eligible countries to strengthen national Codex structures. A CTF [Year in Review](#) publication documents progress and lessons learned in 2018, when the first CTF2 projects were nearing completion.

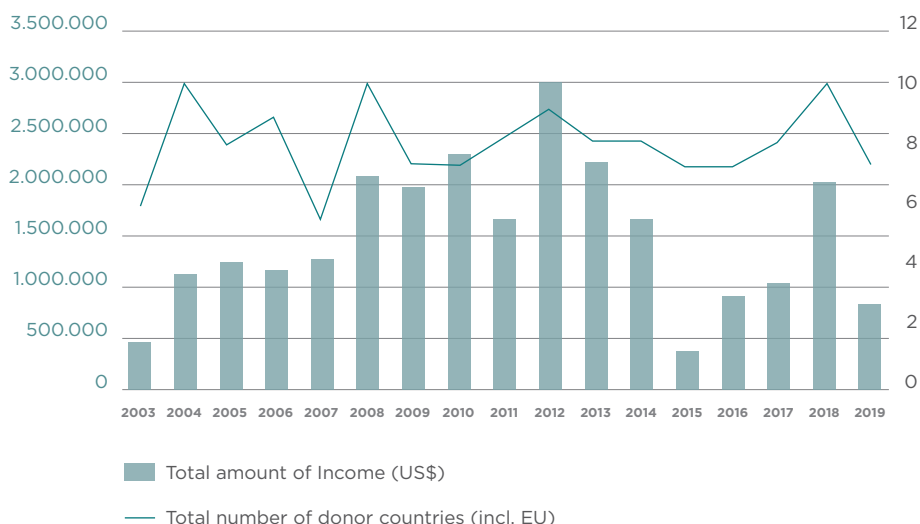
The FAO/WHO CTF secretariat is based at WHO headquarters.

²⁰ [CX/EXEC 17/73/3](#) Regular review of Codex work management: electronic working groups

CTF achievements by end 2019

- Out of 104 eligible countries, 27 had been accepted for support as either an individual or part of a group application;
- A total of 14 countries had started project implementation, of which 4 countries from the first round of applications were in their final months of implementation;
- Sufficient donor funding permitted a new application round every year from 2016 to 2019 and provided continual support to all countries whose applications had been successful (see Figure 5).

Figure 5
Financial contributions to CTF1 and CTF2, 2003-2019



In addition to the CTF, FAO and WHO implemented capacity-building initiatives in numerous Member Countries to help bolster national Codex structures. They did this individually, jointly or in collaboration with other partners. While some of these initiatives focused on preparing countries directly for active participation in Codex meetings, others concentrated on strengthening or assessing national food safety control systems, Codex Contact Points (CCPs) and National Codex Committees. Some of these initiatives also involved assistance in the formulation of food safety programmes and food safety management in priority food supply chains, using Codex standards.

FAO/WHO’s food control systems assessment tool (FAO, WHO, 2019c) has proved to be a powerful approach to generating a baseline upon which country-specific and evidence-driven capacity development can be effectively implemented with regard to the entire food control system (i.e. going beyond the national Codex infrastructure).

In addition, the Codex diagnostics tool provides a more focused and simpler instrument for analysing the capacity development needs of national Codex structures. Applying the Codex diagnostic tool is a pre-condition for requesting CTF support and helps foster fruitful relationships between the national Codex infrastructures or CCPs and the wider national food control system and competent authorities.

Projects funded through the CTF can help increase the capacity of developing and transition economy countries to engage effectively in Codex. However, as with all capacity development efforts, the sustainability of the gains achieved does require continued attention in order to ensure that new capacities and capabilities continue to be deployed beyond the duration of external support.

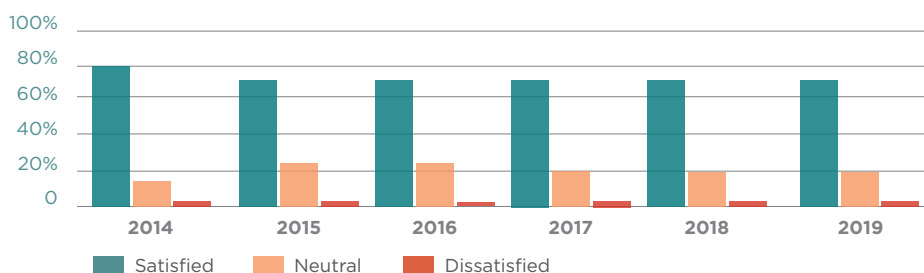
Translation and interpretation

Translations of Codex standards and reports helped more Members and Observers access critical information needed for active participation and the use of standards. At the end of 2019, 43 percent (155 out of 362) of Codex standards were available in all official UN languages.

With regards to both working documents and interpretation, all six official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish) were used in all CAC sessions and all official languages except Chinese²¹ were used in sessions of CCEXEC, depending on the makeup of the membership, during the implementation period.

In most CAC subsidiary bodies, English, French and Spanish were used, with some exceptions. Regarding the quality of translation and interpretation services, participants at CAC subsidiary bodies were generally satisfied (see Figure 6 and 7). Satisfaction survey data for meetings, collected between 2014 and 2019, showed satisfaction rates that fluctuated between 73 and 88 percent²².

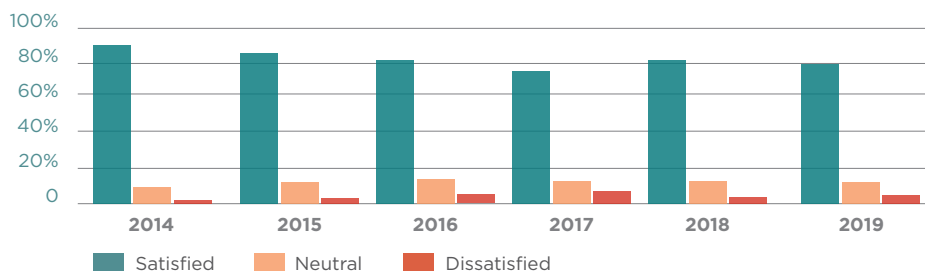
Figure 6
Quality of meeting
translation services,
2014-2019



²¹ There were no CCEXEC Members for whom Chinese was the official language during that period.

²² During the period 2014 - 2019, approximately 188 meeting satisfaction surveys were disseminated by the Codex Secretariat with an average completion rate of 61 percent. A total of 65 surveys were excluded from the analysis due to insufficiently representative response rates.

Figure 7
Quality of meeting interpretation services, 2014–2019



English was used in all EWGs established since 2014, while Spanish was used in 16 percent and French in 9 percent of EWGs. Russian and Arabic were only used in three EWGs each, and Chinese was not provided in any EWGs.

FAO/WHO coordinating committees

The biennial RCC sessions provide an opportunity for Codex Members to address food safety, food control and food trade issues relevant to their region. Within the Codex structure, RCCs provide the link between CAC, technical committees and the regions. They offer an opportunity to focus on issues of importance to the region by identifying priorities, discussing current and emerging food quality and food safety issues, addressing the use of Codex texts, and facilitating information exchange and coordination.

In 2016, FAO, WHO and the Codex Secretariat initiated efforts to revitalize the RCCs, with the intention of ensuring that maximum use is made of the time and resources invested in the regions. A harmonized agenda was also developed for the RCCs and applied to those committees meeting in 2019, with the objective of aligning the work of the regions and ensuring that these committees could achieve their broad mandate.

Four of the regions are currently working on standards development (Africa, Asia, North America and the South-West Pacific, and Near East) while the remaining RCCs can take advantage of opportunities for coordination on a range of Codex standard-setting work.

A greater focus was placed on communication. The Codex Secretariat uploaded webpages onto the Codex Alimentarius website for each of the RCCs and a communications plan was developed for each region. Communication between coordinators was improved in order to promote intra-regional awareness of each other’s issues and concerns.

However, engagement and participation in Codex both in general and at the regional level remain a challenge for some Members.

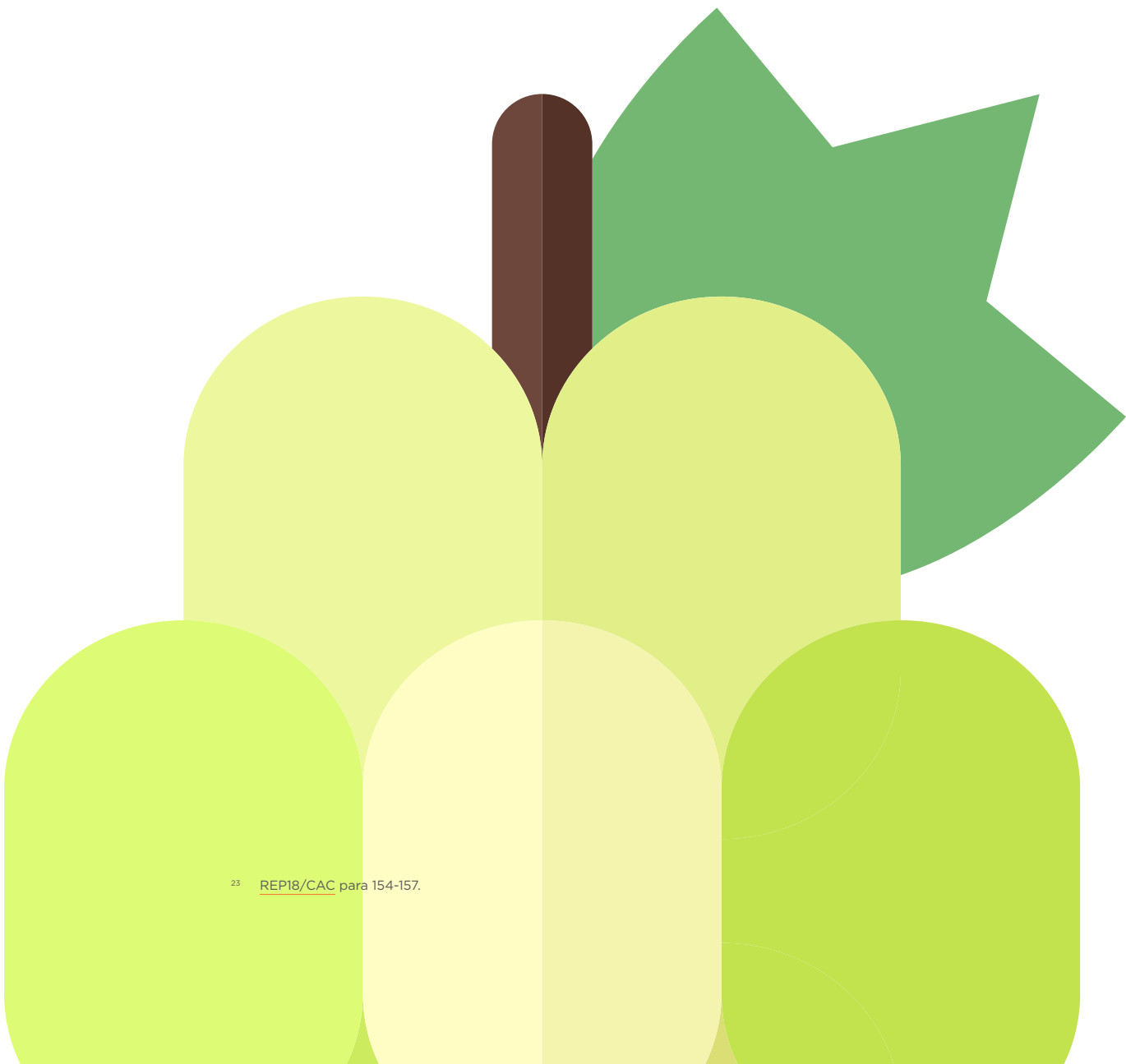
Several regions also developed their own regional strategic plans during this period, although in many cases these proved challenging to implement and to link to the Codex Strategic Plan 2014–2019.

Side events

Side events were held at 75 percent of Codex sessions, in order to maximize the resources used to conduct Codex meetings. These side events served different purposes. Some were designed to raise awareness and inform. These side events included subjects such as the CTF application process and use of relevant Codex web tools or the content of new publications such as the *WHO Estimates of the Global Burden of Foodborne Diseases* (WHO, 2015). Others were used to exchange experiences on certain subjects, such as the management of food additives at a national level.

More importantly, side events also frequently constituted a useful mechanism for receiving expert opinions and discussing emerging issues for which no dedicated standards exist. These subject areas included, for example, novel foods, e-commerce, food fraud, whole-genome sequencing, ciguatera toxins, and alcoholic beverages. While these can play an important role in awareness-raising and engagement, the need to balance the provision of side events with sufficient time to address the agenda of each Codex meeting has also been highlighted.²³

²³ [REPI8/CAC para 154-157.](#)



Goal 4

Implement effective and efficient work management systems and practices

Between 2014 and 2019, Codex experienced an important shift from analogue to digital to reduce its environmental footprint and allow more Members to participate in standard-setting activities without having to travel. All printing of meeting documents was suspended, the Codex website was updated and new tools for online commenting and discussions were introduced.

To assess the effectiveness and efficiency of certain work management systems and practices, the Codex Secretariat performed three detailed work management reviews, namely on:

- Electronic Working Groups (2016);
- collaboration with other international standard-setting organizations (2017); and
- the critical review function of CCEXEC (2018–2020).

Furthermore, Codex chairpersons and host country secretariats were brought together at workshops to exchange experiences and learn from each other. In addition, nine publications brought Codex to a much broader audience and helped policy makers understand the environment in which Codex operates.

The majority of standards were developed in less than five years, which is the maximum duration envisaged by the Procedural Manual. Reports of meetings were usually available in all languages within a month after the Committee meeting and updated standards were published on the Codex website within two months of the relevant CAC. However, the timely publication of meeting documents, in particular the non-English versions, remained a challenge throughout the implementation period and will require further efforts to increase efficiency in the coming years.

Updated technologies – faster communication

Various technology updates have been introduced since 2014, to facilitate and speed up the standard-setting process, management and administration.

The Codex website

The Codex website is the most important tool for Codex delegates as it provides open access to all standards, publications, procedural guidance and meeting documents. The end of 2017 saw the launch of a new website with a clean and clear user experience and a range of new features. Additions included new thematic areas and new sections on regional activities and Observer organizations, which were provided with dedicated sections to share Codex-related news stories.

In addition, Members were given the possibility of sharing information on their national food control systems and food safety and consumer protection laws (connected to the FAOLEX database) through a member platform embedded in the Codex website.

At the end of 2019, monthly visits to the website exceeded 70 000 users for the first time.

The Online Commenting System

The OCS was launched in July 2016 to provide Codex Members and Observers with a simple, efficient, user-friendly online system to insert, share, submit and compile comments on documents. The Codex Alimentarius Secretariat has joined forces with the IPPC Secretariat for the procurement of the system, strengthening collaboration with its sister organization.

At the end of the reporting period, around 200 reviews of Codex standards or related texts ran through the system and over 90 Members (48 percent of membership) participated at least once in a review. The new system was highly promoted by the Codex Secretariat through news articles, side events, webinars and workshops, and Members can seek support from a dedicated team of Secretariat staff or by using free online training materials.

Electronic Working Groups

EWGs are working groups established normally by CAC subsidiary bodies or, in exceptional cases, by the Commission itself, to advance work between sessions. EWGs do not make decisions, but only formulate recommendations and must work exclusively through electronic means. In Codex, they have become a popular and effective tool to not only advance work between physical meetings, but also to allow Members that may not have the possibility to attend meetings to follow and/or contribute to a particular work item.

The proportion of CAC subsidiary bodies establishing EWGs to facilitate their work increased from 70 to 95 percent during the reporting period, and an increasing proportion of hosts or co-hosts of EWGs were developing countries.

The Codex Secretariat started piloting an online discussion forum for EWGs in 2015 to facilitate communication and increase transparency when working electronically. In 2016, a minority of EWG hosts (less than 20 percent) were using the forum provided by Codex in addition to or instead of emails. At the end of the reporting period, all committees that established EWGs used the forum for at least some of their EWG work.

As a follow up to a review of the work management and functioning of EWGs conducted in 2016, the Secretariat developed a reporting template and a practical guidance document to provide Members with useful instructions and tips and tricks to take into account when establishing, implementing and closing an EWG.

Surveys

The Secretariat used surveys not only to receive feedback on meeting participant satisfaction, but also to replace circular letters with more structured and advanced surveys (using Survey Monkey) to gain insight into the use of certain Codex standards. The first round of surveys on the use of standards (2016/2017) obtained a response rate of 67 percent of the Codex membership and the second round (2019) achieved 68 percent, generating a reference for future assessments of the level of use of certain Codex standards.

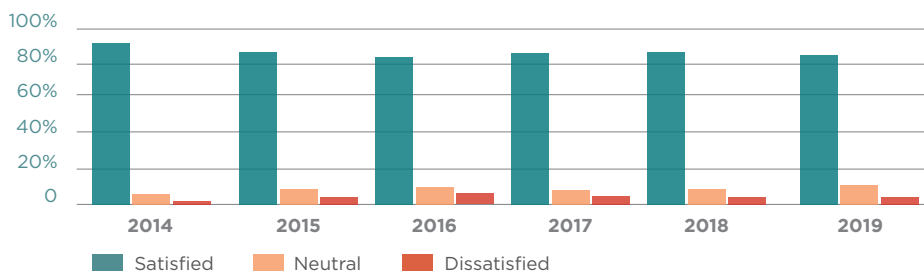
Learning in groups

One of the outcome objectives of strategic goal 4 is for Members and delegates to increase their awareness of the importance of consensus in the Codex standard-setting process.

Throughout the reporting period, several host secretariats organized seminars for first-time delegates prior to sessions to give them an understanding of Codex values and make newcomers aware of the proceedings of Codex technical meetings.

In addition, the Codex Secretariat organized four workshops for committee chairpersons on how to lead and facilitate committee meetings. Meeting satisfaction survey results collected during 2014–2019 indicated that generally delegates were satisfied with the chairpersons' ability to facilitate debate, summarize and conclude discussions (with expressions of dissatisfaction fluctuating between 2 and 4 percent). However, survey replies for individual meetings also indicated that dissatisfaction with the performance of chairpersons generally rose when chairpersons changed, which underlines the importance of creating opportunities for chairpersons to get together and learn from each other.

Figure 8
Chairperson of Codex committees – Ability to facilitate the debate, summarize and conclude the discussion, satisfaction survey data 2014-2019



Workshops were also organized for the members of the Executive Committee and host country secretariats.

Furthermore, the Codex Secretariat implemented seven regional/sub-regional workshops on Codex web tools in 2018 and 2019 (in Kenya, Senegal, Paraguay, India, Vanuatu, Kazakhstan, and, for the Near East region, in Italy). These workshops included training for CCPs in the use of the Online Commenting System (OCS), the EWG discussion forum and the Codex website including online registration and access to the FAO/WHO survey on food safety control systems.

Timeliness

Elaboration of Codex standards

Out of the 49 non-numerical standards adopted during the reporting period, 6 standards (12 percent) needed 5 years or longer to be finalized²⁴.

Out of the 80 new work items approved during the reporting period, 2 were discontinued (2.5 percent)²⁵ and 8 (10 percent)²⁶ will exceed a development duration of four years if adopted.

Publication of documents for Codex meetings

During 2014-2019, the average percentage of working documents distributed in English two months before the session has remained relatively stable at around 40 percent (Figure 9) with varying reasons for lateness.

As shown in Figure 9, timeliness did not depend on the overall number of documents. In 2019, for example, twice as many documents were published (226 vs 113) as in 2018, while the proportion of documents published on time was considerably higher. Continued monitoring and efforts to increase the timeliness of working documents are needed to allow delegates adequate preparation prior to Codex meetings.

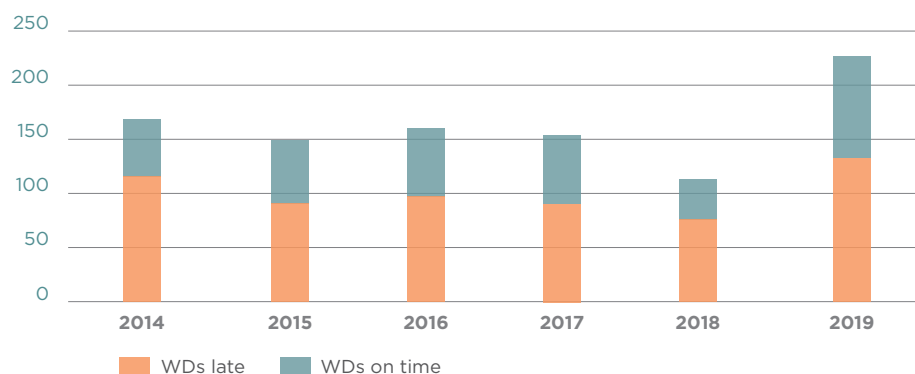
²⁴ Revision of Nutrient Reference Values of Vitamins and Minerals in the *Guidelines on Nutrition Labelling CXG 2-1985* (2008-2016); the *Standard for Fish Oils CXS 329-2017* (2011-2017); the *Regional Standard for Laver Products CXS 323R-2017* (2011-2016); the *Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products CXC 52-2003* (section on sturgeon caviar) (2011-2016); the *Regional Standard for Doogh CXS 332R-2018* (2011-2018); Review of the *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods CXS 1-1985*, to address the issue of date marking (2013-2018).

²⁵ Standard for Processed Cheese (started in 2014 and discontinued in 2017) and NRV-NCD for EPA and DHA long chain omega-3 fatty acids (started in 2015 and discontinued in 2019).

²⁶ Standard for Oregano (started in 2014); Standard for Ware Potato (started in 2014); Standard for Garlic (started in 2014); Standard for Kiwifruit (started in 2014); Guidance for Monitoring the Performance of National Food Control Systems (started in 2015); Definition for Biofortification (started in 2015); Regional Standard for Fermented Cooked Cassava-based Products (started in 2015); and Regional Standard for *Gnetum* spp. leaves (started in 2015).

Figure 9

Total numbers of working documents published late and on time, 2014–2019



Awareness raising

Between November 2014 and December 2019, Codex tweeted 12 000 times. In total, Codex tweets were seen over 15 994 000 times (impressions), and the @FAOWHOCodex profile received 200 000 visits, with a total of over 11 600 followers. Overall, analysis of these findings shows an increasing level of participation of Codex stakeholders (Members, e.g. Ministry accounts, Food Standard Organizations, Observers), UN organizations (FAO, WHO, ONU info, UN News, the International Atomic Energy Agency) and the general public, putting @FAOWHOCodex into the top three accounts tweeting about food safety (currently ranked at number two²⁷).

The Codex Secretariat produced or contributed significantly to nine publications:

- *The Science of Food Standards - The road from Codex Alimentarius Commission 39 to 40* (FAO, WHO, 2017);
- *Trade and Food Standards* (FAO, WTO, 2017);
- *Codex - a world full of standards* (FAO, WHO, 2018a);
- *Food Hygiene at 50* (FAO, WHO, 2018b);
- *The Codex Chairpersons' Handbook* (FAO, WHO, 2018c);
- *Understanding Codex - Fifth edition* (FAO, WHO, 2018d);
- *A drop of oil, a tonne of value* (FAO, WHO, 2019a);
- *Codex 2019: The year of food safety* (FAO, WHO, 2019b); and
- *Codex nutrient reference values: especially for vitamins, minerals and protein* (Lewis, 2019).

One of the highlights of the implementation period was the establishment of an annual World Food Safety Day on 7 June by the United Nations in 2018. This provides an annual opportunity for engagement of Members and Observers and for awareness raising about Codex standards and their use.

²⁷ Nodex graph gallery, social media research foundation.

The background features abstract, overlapping shapes in shades of orange, green, and maroon. A large maroon circle is prominent in the lower-left quadrant, partially overlapping the orange and green shapes. The text is centered within this maroon circle.

4. Concluding remarks and moving forward



Strategic Plan 2014–2019

The period 2014–2019 was a very active period for Codex and its work continued to garner increasing involvement, attention and visibility. A few of the key areas of progress as well as the lessons learned for the process are highlighted below with a particular focus on continuity through to the Strategic Plan 2020–2025.

Perhaps the biggest change over the period 2014–2019 was the impact of technology on the work of Codex and subsidiary committees, with digital documentation superseding print, new electronic systems introduced for the key aspects of Codex work such as commenting and working groups, and with a shift to almost all working groups being convened electronically. This had huge implications for the way Members and Observers participated in the work of Codex and it saw the rollout of a range of mechanisms to support Members on the use of these new tools, from online support, to face-to-face workshops. A number of committees also met by correspondence in the period of 2014–2019, with varying levels of success, but with such a degree of recognition for this approach that the Codex Committee on General Principles was tasked with developing relevant procedural guidance. Developments in technology and the ongoing work on procedures means that the way Codex will work going forward has been fundamentally changed. While not all Members are on board yet with these developments (just 48 percent of Members are using the online commenting system), efforts to ensure effective participation at all levels of Codex standard-setting work will continue to be prioritized.

Codex standard-setting work is Member driven, and the nature of Codex texts varies substantially. A numerical comparison on standards adopted, therefore, gives little insight into Codex work without some contextual information. The number of numerical standards (e.g. MLs and MRLs) continues to increase, but a backlog of work remains in some areas, such as pesticide residues. Standard setting in this area is closely related to the pace at which joint FAO/WHO expert bodies can provide the necessary advice. In recent years, good synchronization between the scientific expert committees and Codex and subsidiary bodies has facilitated the rapid uptake of scientific advice and proposal of standards for adoption with, for example, less than one year passing between expert evaluation (by JMPR) and the recommended maximum residue limit then being recommended to the Commission for adoption by CCPR. Such outcomes herald the way for continuous improvement on the timeliness of standard setting. Another success of the biennium, which was not reflected in numbers was the revision or completion of some key Codex texts such as: *Guidelines for the Control of Foodborne Parasites*, an area not covered by Codex previously; the revision of the *Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products* to address the issue of histamine; and the development of a *Code of Practice for Arsenic in Rice*, relevant to producers worldwide. This bigger picture of the use and impact of Codex standards is therefore an important consideration moving forward.

Communication is also a key part of Codex successes. In the course of this strategic plan, Codex became much more visible through social media and through the Codex Alimentarius website²⁸, which also hosted the observance of World Food Safety Day. This increase in a virtual presence is key to ensuring Codex connects with the upcoming generation of food safety and quality professionals. These strong communications tools will make future awareness raising about Codex standards easier to disseminate.

This report, together with the annual reports submitted to CCEXEC, demonstrates how the Codex Strategic Plan 2014–2019 helped drive forward progress in standard setting, applying a risk-based approach and ensuring participation and efficiency of process. There were challenges in monitoring that progress, as many of the indicators were not measurable and, indeed, they were so numerous that monitoring the progress of all indicators would have been too burdensome. An additional hindrance was an excessive focus on outputs over outcomes.

Strategic Plan 2020–2025

The Codex Strategic Plan 2020–2025 that was adopted by CAC42 (2019) built upon the experiences of and progress made during 2014–2019 and considered what could be further improved. The core values have been maintained, but the plan now distinguishes between an inspiring vision to be “the place where the world comes together to create food safety and quality standards that protect everyone everywhere” and a mission based on its original mandate. Both the vision and the mission recognize that it is only through the cooperation of all stakeholders that a global food safety and quality culture can be achieved.

As a body formed under the United Nations, it was also important that CAC should document its contribution to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Therefore, the sustainable development goals and a relevant section were included in the plan. This was timely as the new FAO Strategic Framework will be closely linked to the SDGs.

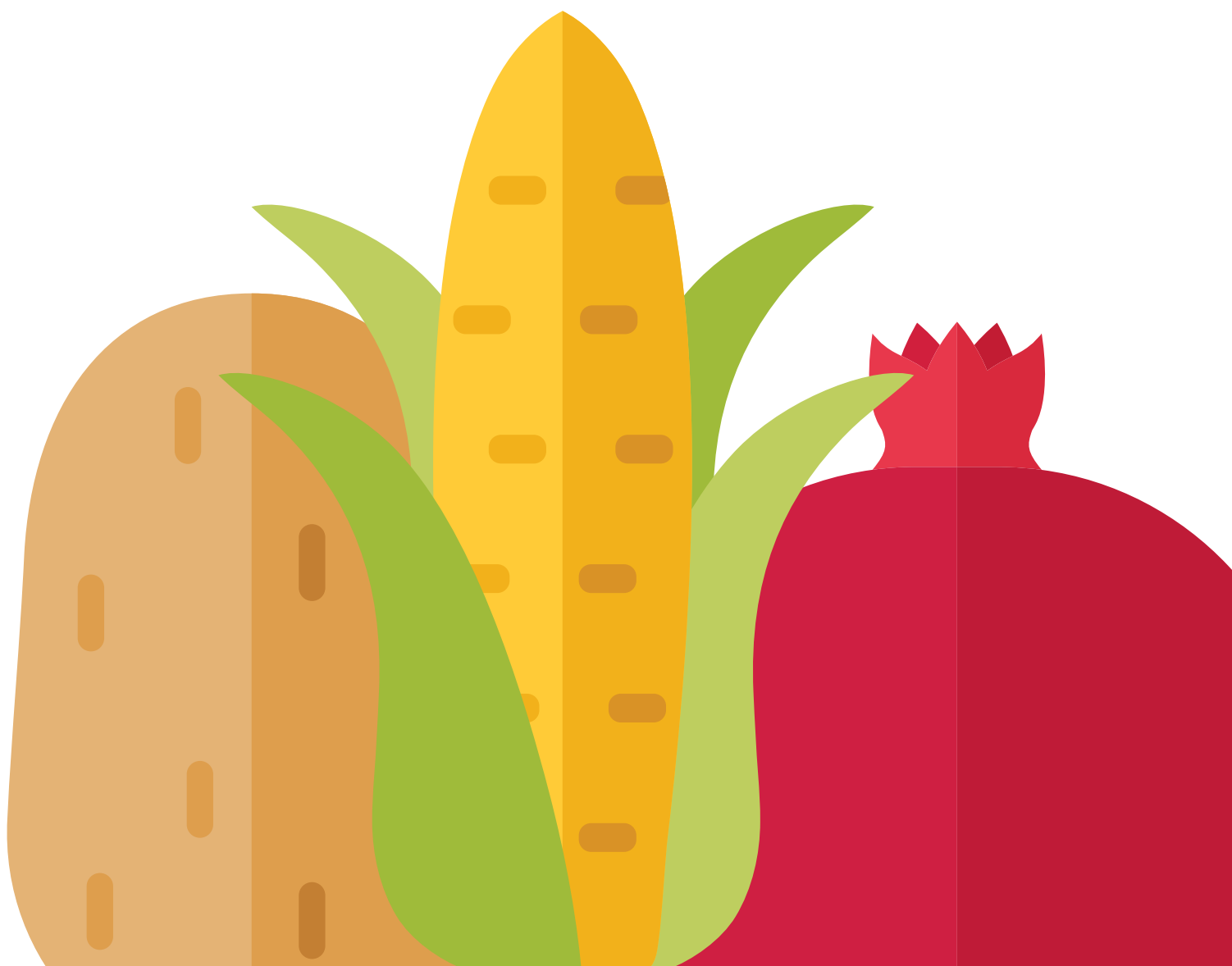
It was recognized that the four goals of the Strategic Plan 2014–2019 continued to be both useful and relevant. In addition, CAC recognized that there is a need to better understand the degree to which Codex standards are implemented and used and to measure and increase their impact, which as noted above, is important for achieving an overall understanding of the standard-setting work undertaken. The new plan, therefore, incorporates an ambitious new goal: “Increase impact through the recognition and use of Codex standards”.

²⁸ www.codexalimentarius.org

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND MOVING FORWARD

Considering that many indicators in the previous Strategic Plan were not measurable, the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 will be supported by a more flexible and detailed work plan, including activities and milestones that permit tracking of progress toward accomplishment of the goals. The relevant elements of the work plan will be developed and maintained by the responsible parties identified for each of the objectives. This will allow the adaptation of the measurement methods and activities as the plan unfolds.

Communication that drives greater awareness, understanding, and recognition of available, harmonized standards is essential to the effectiveness of Codex. Even when Codex standards are not adopted into national legislations, greater use of Codex standards by the food trade and other actors can contribute to consumer health protection and to ensuring fair practices in the food trade. Codex will continue improving its communication work through a regularly reviewed communications work plan that is associated to the Strategic Plan.





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Notes

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**CODEX
STRATEGIC PLAN
2014–2019
IMPLEMENTATION REPORT**

In 2013 the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) approved its most ambitious plan to date: the Codex Strategic Plan 2014–2019. Structured around four goals, the plan aimed to guide Codex work towards more effective communication and efficient practices that would promote robust, inclusive, transparent and collaborative food standards setting across continents, languages and disciplines. It aimed to ensure that Codex was fit for purpose in a fast-evolving world. Now, in 2020, the Codex network is equipped to progress with food standards-setting work despite the unprecedented challenges brought about by the global pandemic. It is the groundwork laid by the Strategic Plan 2014–2019 that has made this possible.

This report examines the achievements of the Strategic Plan 2014–2019. It is divided into sections that focus on the plan's four goals and with the aid of graphs and analysis, offers a summary of successes and identifies challenges that arose.

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