

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Forty-sixth Session

FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy

27 November - 2 December 2023

Opening remarks

Dr QU Dongyu, Director-General, FAO

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Welcome to the 46th session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.
2. This is a momentous occasion for the standard-setting body as it marks its 60-year anniversary.
3. Highlighting the rapidly growing importance of internationally accepted food standards as a means of protecting consumer and producers in all countries, whatever their stage of development and effectively reducing trade barriers, the 11th FAO Conference, held in 1961 passed a resolution to establish the Codex Alimentarius Commission.
4. Two years later the 16th World Health Assembly passed a similar resolution emphasizing their hope that the Codex Alimentarius Commission would give priority to the health aspects of its work.
5. Subsequently 30 Members attended the first session of the Commission in 1963. The Codex family has grown significantly and a lot has happened in these six decades. Today, there are 189 Members!
6. An impressive growth that shows the relevance of the Codex mission - to protect consumer health and facilitate fair practices in food trade.
7. We also have 240 Observer organizations who play a vital role in shaping the "Food Code".
8. The Codex scorecard shows how far we have come to create food safety and quality standards to protect everyone everywhere.
9. Over the years the Commission has adopted thousands of standards, guidelines and codes of practice.
10. The Codex Alimentarius has become a global reference point for the production, processing, storage, distribution and preparation of safe food throughout the world.
11. With the establishment of the World Trade Organization in 1995, the Codex Alimentarius became the benchmark for the safety of food traded internationally.
12. This relevance of Codex standards in trade was an important incentive to participation in the work of Codex
13. More than ever there was an emphasis on science and risk assessment as the basis for standards as we look to science to prevent food from becoming unsafe and to reduce the risk of foodborne illness,
14. It is the job of FAO and WHO to provide the scientific basis of Codex standards.
15. We have the good fortune to work with top scientists, who carefully analyse all available data and discuss specific microbiological or chemical hazards.
16. Deliberations focus on the protection of the most vulnerable - for example, children or pregnant women – as well as consider regional differences in food consumption.

17. Codex texts also define the quality of foods.
18. They provide guidance on hygiene, labelling, nutrition and the measurements and sampling techniques that attest to its safety.
19. When you open a text, any Codex text, you can see the attention to detail.
20. Governments, primary producers, food business operators, academia and experts can all operate from the same playbook – one that has been built on consensus over the course of 60 years.
21. And you can see systems thinking.
22. The production of safe food requires systems thinking from the start: the environment, the water, agricultural practices and all their inputs will determine the safety and quality of the food on our plates.
23. Today, the food chain has become long and complex, which again highlights the importance of systems thinking for prevention and control in food safety.
24. Food safety and quality applied through the systems lens are especially important as we transform agrifood systems to be more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable.
25. Sadly, hunger and acute food insecurity are on the rise. Today 828 million people suffer from hunger.
26. And over 3 billion people cannot afford a healthy diet.
27. At FAO we work to reverse these trends through Better Production, Better Nutrition, a Better Environment and a Better Life, leaving no one behind.

Friends,

28. Friends,
29. Bodies like the Codex Alimentarius Commission – where public and private sector work side-by-side –are well positioned to make a difference.
30. Research shows that having social support makes us perceive challenges as less daunting.
31. In a study, two groups of people looked at a hill and estimated how steep it is.
32. One group was with friends, the other without.
33. The participants who stood next to a friend found the hill to be less steep than the participants who were on their own.
34. Let this be a message on the importance of partnership. We can climb hills much easier with friends.
35. In this spirit of celebration, I wish to express thanks to all the Codex family, to all Members who invest precious resources to ensure the engagement of their delegates, who show trust in this Body, and to those countries who host or have hosted Codex Committees. My gratitude goes also to the current and former Chairs of Codex for their time and efforts in building consensus.
36. While we focus on setting international food standards, our work does not end there.
37. The standards are implemented at national level, are used for legislation and food control and serve as a guide for food producers.
38. In the spirit of SDG 17, the Codex Alimentarius Commission is indeed part of the global partnership for sustainable development.
39. As you work to adopt new Codex texts and approve new work, let us both reflect on 60 years of Codex – and look to its future.
40. What is the Codex we need to sustainably transform our agrifood systems?
41. Count on FAO support and commitment as we climb the next hill together.
42. Thank you.

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General, WHO

Director-General Qu Dongyu,

Chairperson Steve Wearne,

Excellencies, dear colleagues and friends,

Welcome to the 46th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, and to this special session to celebrate the 60th anniversary of Codex.

The challenges of addressing hunger, food insecurity, malnutrition and food safety keep on growing.

It is time to reimagine our food systems to transform the way we produce, distribute and consume food.

Our shared goal must be affordable, safe and healthy diets, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions, using land and water responsibly, and preventing the dispersal of toxic chemicals.

The Codex Alimentarius has an important role to play. Since it was established in 1963, it has provided international food standards to protect health and promote fair trade.

Moving forward, the Codex needs to help address the challenge of transforming food systems, based on rigorous science and inclusive discussions.

Thank you all for your continuing commitment to secure healthy, safe, and sustainable diets for all.

I thank you.

Mr Steve Wearne, CAC Chairperson

CHAIRPERSON'S OPENING COMMENTS FOR CAC46

[Reference to high-level representatives], distinguished representatives of FAO and WHO, distinguished delegates, colleagues and friends, I would like to add my own welcome to the 46th session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

This is our second meeting of the Commission, following our return to physical meetings with the option of virtual participation. With capacity restrictions lifted on the plenary hall this year, it is good to see here in the hall all delegates joining us physically. Hello and welcome to you all, physical and virtual delegates alike!

It is a pleasure and honour to chair our session this week, and as previously I'll be sharing the responsibility of chairing the agenda items with Vice-Chairpersons Allan Azegele, Diego Varela and Raj Rajasekar. As always, we have a packed agenda and we will need to be efficient in our discussions if we are to avoid the prospect of a night session on Wednesday.

I need to be efficient too, so without further ado, I declare the 46th session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission open.

CHAIRPERSON'S COMMENTS ON MANAGING OUR PROCEEDINGS

I would like to give you now some important information on how I intend to manage our proceedings:

Each intervention will be given only 2 minutes maximum.

The final report is a concise, written, summary of the meeting drafted by the Codex Secretariat. It captures the decisions made and how they were reached.

Delegations are encouraged to use the comments mechanism and conference room documents in advance of plenary discussions to express detailed positions which will be referenced but not repeated in the final report.

The report will not normally mention any "names of delegations". Names of Members will only be recorded in the case of reservations to a decision or conclusion of the committee. Only Members may make reservations.

Reservations from Members will only be reported in connection with the matter in which such a reservation has been expressed/made and will NOT be repeated in the conclusion (unless the reservation is related to the conclusion).

Next a few words of welcome to our Observer organisations, joining us back in the plenary hall this year. My thanks to you for all of your contributions to the work of Codex, including in our various committees and their working groups where you bring your technical knowledge and expertise to bear, to help ensure that the standards, guidelines and codes of practice we develop and adopt can be implemented across different sectors and different regions.

As always, I will give the floor to observers, once members have spoken, to comment and contribute. I'd like to draw your attention, and the attention of Members also, to the section of the FAO Conference Guide on the Conduct of Plenary Meetings which relates to Decorum of Meetings. This states that interventions must be confined to the question under discussion. Please bear this in mind when asking for the floor.

I understand that Observers may, on occasion, wish to make more general and declaratory statements. In the interests of time management, these should be submitted as CRDs, within the timeframe indicated by the Codex Secretary, to form part of the documentary record of this meeting. I will not grant requests from Observers to include extensive records of their statements in the report of the meeting where these could have been made as CRDs.

Before proceeding with the formal Agenda, I would like to make a short announcement. The European Union is participating in this meeting in accordance with paragraph 9 of Article II of the FAO Constitution and Rule II of the Rules of Procedure of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. I have been asked to inform you that the declaration made by the European Union and its Member States is contained in document CRD 1 "Division of competence between the European Union and its Member States according to Rule of procedure II Paragraph 5 of the Codex Alimentarius". I would like to draw the attention of the Session to this declaration.