

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION****European Union comments on****CL 2024/10-EXEC****Request for comments on the agreed first draft of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031 and replies to questions to initiate the discussion around goals and outcomes**

*Member States Competence  
Member States Vote*

The Member States of the European Union (MSEU) appreciate the opportunity to provide the following comments.

**1. Comments on first draft of the vision; mission; core values; drivers for change; the role of Codex; and a high-level description on Codex ways of working of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031 as contained in Appendix I**

The MSEU propose some concrete suggestions for text modifications that are provided in the Appendix I and highlighted in yellow.

1.a. Vision and mission

Since the adoption of the current Strategic Plan, the UN Food Systems Summit confirmed that the transformation of food systems is crucial for achieving the SDGs that are reaching their deadline in 2030. Sustainable food systems are now at the core of both FAO and WHO strategic priorities. To reflect that the Codex Alimentarius Commission, as the implementer of the Joint FAO/WHO food standards programme, aligns with these priorities we propose that the new Codex Vision and Mission reflect this major shift in global thinking.

We note that the scope of the Codex Alimentarius is not limited to safety and quality but also covers other aspects such as nutrition. We also note that the Procedural Manual refers to food standards. It is thus proposed to align the texts of the Vision and the Mission with Article 1 of the Procedural Manual and to refer to “food standards”.

1.b. Drivers for change

The MSEU are of the view that the triple planetary crisis is a major driver for change. As a consequence, climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss should be included in the text. Loss of biodiversity, that is currently missing in the draft, increasingly puts food security and nutrition at risks and affects global food trade. It also has to be taken into account as part of the One Health approach e.g. to address the risks derived from foodborne zoonotic diseases. The fact that we are off track to meet the targets of ending hunger (SDG Target 2.1) and all forms of malnutrition (SDG Target 2.2) with the resulting increase burden of non-communicable disease is also an important element to include in this section

In order to ensure that the section on Drivers for Change will be relevant at the time of adoption of the strategic plan, the MSEU suggest reviewing this section at a later stage and in light of the latest developments in international fora for climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss.

The MSEU propose to include digitalization as a new driver for change. Several recent standardization projects in Codex (e-commerce, remote audit, paperless certification, labelling) are already related to digitalization and it will increasingly impact food systems including food safety risk management.

### 1.c. The role of Codex

The MSEU note that the use of the terms “Codex statutory purpose” is unusual in Codex. It is our understanding that Article 1 of the Procedural manual describes the obligations of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

The MSEU are of the view that this section should include information on the expected contribution of Codex in the period 2026-2031. The drivers for change calls for an adaptation of Codex to the new international environment. For example, and since this text is currently in brackets, it would be appropriate to signal that Codex can “strengthen its” pivotal role in supporting the advancement of global goals by developing international food standards.

The MSEU are available to discuss additional modifications that would further outline the capacity of Codex to contribute to sustainable food systems.

### 1.d. A high-level description of Codex ways of working

The MSEU note that the section “Promote coordination of all food standards work” is currently in brackets. The MSEU are in favour of maintaining and possibly further expanding this section. Promoting the coordination of all food standards work is indicated in Article 1.b of the Procedural Manual as one of the purpose of Codex and discussions both at the level of the Executive Committee and the Codex Alimentarius Commission have in the past highlighted the need for further improvement in this area. The application of a One Health Approach further highlights the importance to coordinate food standards.

## **2. What could Codex do to have the greatest impact on the protection of consumer health and promotion of fair practices in the food trade in the period to 2031?**

The work of Codex should be supportive of the efforts at global, regional and national level on the transformation of food systems and on the application of the One Health Approach. In this perspective, Codex should gradually integrate the interfaces of agri-food systems and natural ecosystems in its risk analysis framework.

The impact of Codex standards primarily relies on the level of implementation by Codex members. Codex should thus pay due attention to the commitment of the membership to implement Codex standards. The high potential for consensus during the development of a standard as well as widespread interest across the regions should thus be a core determinant for the prioritization of Codex’ resources.

Emerging risks require timely reactions by Codex Members. Codex should seek to address risks and nutritional concerns arising from new trends in food consumption as well as livestock feeding in a timely and comprehensive manner.

In that aspect, Codex should aim to prioritize work that contributes to sustainable food systems.

Codex should also increase its efforts in the coordination of international food standards work. The development of more structured exchanges with other international organizations would be a positive development in this respect. For example, more systematic knowledge and data sharing with other organizations would allow to improve the identification and prioritization of Codex work according to scientific and technical developments. To better contribute to the facilitation of food trade, Codex should also pay more attention to already existing international standards. The approach followed by CCMAS is a good example in this area. It does allow to both ensure consistency amongst international standards and make efficient use of Codex resources.

**3. Consistent with its purpose, how can Codex respond to the food safety, nutrition and food quality implications of, and support efforts to address, the drivers for change that have been identified in the related draft section of the Strategic Plan 2026-2031?”**

The draft drivers for change imply that the Strategic goals of the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan should be updated. In line with the suggestion of the CVCs during the informal consultation of CCEURO, the MSEU would support the development of a few, ambitious strategic goals that would respond to these drivers.

To support the transformation towards sustainable food systems, Codex should seek to develop standards that contribute to the FAO and WHO activities on sustainable food systems. Codex members could also be invited to indicate whether a given proposal of new work would contribute to their national pathway towards sustainable food system.

In accordance with the One Health approach, Codex would prioritize the development of standards that have positive effects on the environment or on animal health in addition to public health. Similarly, Codex would de-prioritize or refrain to develop standards for which negative impacts for animals and the environment can be identified.

## **APPENDIX I**

### **FIRST DRAFT OF THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS OF THE CODEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2031: VISION; MISSION, CORE VALUES; A NARRATIVE ON DRIVERS FOR CHANGE; THE ROLE OF CODEX; HIGH-LEVEL DESCRIPTION OF CODEX WAYS OF WORKING**

#### ***Vision***

“Where the world comes together to create food safety and quality standards to protect everyone everywhere.”  
Or ““Building safer and more sustainable food systems through international food standards”

#### ***Mission***

“Protect consumer health and promote fair practices in the food trade by setting international, science-based food safety and quality standards contributing to sustainable food systems.”

#### ***Core values***

The Codex Alimentarius Commission re-commits itself to the following core values, which will guide its work to fulfil its strategic vision:

4. Inclusiveness
5. Collaboration
6. Consensus building<sup>2</sup>
7. Transparency

#### ***Introduction***

The Codex Alimentarius Commission was established by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1963. Today it has 188 Member Countries and one Member Organization. In addition, 240 intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations are accredited as Observers.

The Commission’s statutory purpose<sup>3</sup> is the development of international food standards, guidelines and codes of practice to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade. With increased globalization and increases in the volumes of food traded internationally, the Commission must also be capable of responding in a timely manner to the impacts of emerging trends and challenges to consumer health protection of fair practices in the food trade, to the extent that steps to address those impacts are amenable to standardization.

In conducting its work, the Commission takes into account, where appropriate, the relevant policies, strategies and guidelines of FAO and WHO, and of other intergovernmental organizations consistent with fulfilling its unique purpose to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade through the development of international food standards. Codex works closely on matters of common interest with such organizations, as appropriate.

[The objective of this strategic plan is to advance the statutory purpose of the Codex Alimentarius Commission during the period 2026-2031. This document does not supersede, extend, or contradict the Codex statutory purpose or provisions of the Procedural Manual.]

#### ***Drivers for change***

The environment in which Codex operates continues to evolve. Changes in the global feed and food supply chain system, resource optimization efforts, reduction of food loss and waste, food security and safety concerns, malnutrition, demographic changes, innovations in food science and technology, food fraud, climate change, loss of biodiversity, pollution, and water scarcity may introduce new opportunities and challenges.

Both the FAO and WHO strategic directions on food safety acknowledge the importance of food control systems, based on scientific evidence, in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals. They also recognize the importance of agri-food systems in responding to major global drivers ranging from environmental changes and digital advances to emerging hazards in the food chain and the approaches to mitigating these challenges, such as food system transformation and promotion of the One Health approach.<sup>4</sup>

The One Health joint plan of action (2022-2026) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) quadripartite also highlights the importance of a One Health approach to food safety.

<sup>2</sup> Consensus should be based on the Measures to Facilitate Consensus included in the Procedural Manual.

<sup>3</sup> Statutes of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, Article 1(a).

<sup>4</sup> FAO Strategic Framework 2022-2031, FAO Strategic Priorities for Food Safety within the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-2031 and WHO Global Strategy for Food Safety 2022-2030.

The World Trade Organization (WTO) acknowledges the centrality of Codex standard setting in the multilateral system in the context of emerging global challenges.

All these initiatives point to the important role food safety plays to support public health, food security and trade and the need to integrate foresight and preparedness for the emerging issues to come. They further highlight that food safety has a critical role in the successful transformation of the agrifood systems in order to meet the needs of the world.

### ***The role of Codex***

The Commission must maintain a steady focus on its statutory purpose. It must be sufficiently capable of being proactive, flexible and responding in a timely manner to emerging issues that impact on food safety and quality<sup>5</sup> with the aim of protecting consumer health and ensuring fair practices in the food trade.

The system for Codex standards elaboration has served well in the 60 years that Codex has been in existence. The system is anchored in the process described in the Procedural Manual with the product being Codex standards, guidelines and codes of practice, commonly referred to as Codex texts. The Commission, as risk manager, establishes Codex texts that when incorporated into national legislation by Members contribute to ensuring that food is safe and can be traded. The scientific basis that underpins Codex texts is fundamental to ensuring that Codex maintains its pre-eminence as the international reference for protecting the health of consumers food safety and fair practices in food trade, as well as the primary source of science-based food standards for many countries and recognized by the WTO.

As we move into the future, Codex can continue playing a/strengthen its pivotal role in supporting the advancement of global goals by prioritizing the development of developing international food standards that have a positive impact on the transformation towards sustainable food systems. Collaboration across the multilateral system for trade and food, offers Codex and its members numerous benefits, including enhanced food safety, strengthened partnerships, effective risk communication, regulatory harmonization, and the ability to address complex global challenges through the One Health approach.

Codex texts can provide an enabling environment which facilitates the uptake and implementation of policies and programmes to address global challenges around areas such as climate change, environment, sustainability, and trade. In doing so, Codex recognises that the inherent international diversity of food systems means that, different values or solutions may be relevant in different national or regional situations or contexts.

### ***A high-level description of Codex ways of working***

The Codex Alimentarius Commission re-commits itself to the following ways of working, through which it will develop Codex texts that will contribute to achievement of its goals:

*Address current, emerging and critical issues in a timely manner and in line with the One Health approach*

The focus and needs of Codex Members are evolving, as is the environment in which Codex operates. Codex will need to be proactive and flexible and to respond in a timely manner to the opportunities and challenges that result. Codex will also need to work in line with a One Health approach for the developments of its standards or the coordination of food standards developed by other international organisations.

*Develop standards based on science and Codex risk analysis principles*

Members and those engaged in the food trade who use Codex standards value the strong scientific base of Codex. Codex must continue to prioritize the securing of independent, timely and high-quality scientific advice to Codex through a fully and sustainably funded program.

Globally representative data are needed for scientific advice to be comprehensive and for Codex standard to be relevant to the global food supply. This requires, among other things, capacity building in developing countries that is specific to robust data generation, scientific analysis, and overall increased capacity to conduct such work.

*Increase impact through the recognition and use of Codex standards*

Communications that drive greater awareness, understanding, and recognition of available, harmonized standards are essential to the effectiveness of Codex. Even in the absence of adoption of Codex standards into national legislation, the greater use of Codex standards by the food trade and other actors can contribute to consumer health protection and ensuring fair practices in the food trade. Monitoring the adoption of Codex standards enables to assess their impact and to identify needs for their review.

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<sup>5</sup> The consideration of other factors in the Codex standard setting process is governed by the *Statements of Principle Concerning the Role of Science in the Codex Decision-Making Process and the Extent to Which Other Factors are Taken into Account*. Consensus should be based on the *Measures to Facilitate Consensus* included in the Procedural Manual.

*Promote coordination of all food standards work*

*Codex works closely on matters of common interest with other relevant international organizations to avoid duplication and development of contradictory standards and support the adoption of a One Health approach at international, regional and national level.*

*Facilitate the participation of all Codex Members throughout the standard setting process*

Members' abilities to participate actively in the development of Codex texts still varies widely and is dependent on the capacity and sustainability of national Codex systems. While the responsibility for these systems resides with Members, there is a role for support that will help to close gaps in capabilities. Sources of funding and a broad range of formal and informal capacity building, partnering and technical knowledge sharing activities all play important roles in strengthening the capacity of Members for sustainable, active participation in Codex activities, supporting all Members in maintaining national systems and expanding the potential for co-hosting of committees, consistent with our value of inclusiveness.

*Enhance work management systems and practices that support the efficient and effective achievement of all strategic work plan goals*

Our ways of working are supported by the continuing review and improvement of Codex work management systems and practices. Improvements to workflows, proposal prioritisation and input/comment management will support participation by Members with significant resource constraints and enhance inclusiveness in the standard-setting process.

The Commission recognises that the effective development of Codex texts depends heavily on the resources contributed by host countries of subsidiary bodies and their working groups, particularly their chairpersons and secretariats, and thanks them for their contributions.