



# THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION and THE UNITED STATES CODEX PROGRAM

## THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) established the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) in 1963. Today, the CAC is composed of 188 member countries, one member organization (the European Union) and more than 200 inter-governmental and international non-governmental observer organizations (food industry, professional, and consumer groups). Codex membership represents about 99% of the world's population.

The Codex Alimentarius, or "Food Code," is a collection of voluntary standards, guidelines and codes of practice adopted by the CAC, which convenes annually to review the work of its many specialized committees.

Codex bases its work on independent, international expert scientific advice from panels and consultations convened by FAO and WHO. The CAC is recognized as the international food safety standards organization in the World Trade Organization Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures. Codex work contributes to the safety, quality, and fairness of the international food trade and helps to ensure that food is safe and can be traded.

As of July 2018, Codex has established **221** commodity standards, **78** guidelines, **52** codes of practice, more than **5,900** maximum residue limits for pesticides and residues of veterinary drugs in foods, more than **4,100** provision levels for food additives, and more than **100** maximum levels for contaminants.

The science-based international standards set by Codex have directly or indirectly impacted nearly all of the **\$140.5 billion** U.S. agricultural exports in FY 2017.

## THE CODEX MANDATE

- ◆ Protect the health of consumers through the adoption of science-based food safety standards.
- ◆ Ensure fair practices in the food trade and foster harmonization of food standards worldwide.

## BENEFITS TO THE UNITED STATES

The work of the U.S. Codex Program supports development of harmonized science-based standards that safeguard public health and help ensure fair trade. This in turn benefits consumers, by providing greater assurance of the safety of imported foods. Trade organizations and agricultural producers also benefit, because Codex standards open markets to fair trade in safe food.

## COMMITTEES

### COMMODITY COMMITTEES

Develop standards for specific foods or classes of foods

- Cereals, Pulses, and Legumes (CCCPL)\*
- Fats and Oils (CCFO)
- Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (CCFFV)
- Processed Fruits and Vegetables (CCPFV)\*
- Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH)
- Sugars (CCS)

\*The United States chairs these committees

### GENERAL SUBJECT COMMITTEES

Develop standards with relevance for all commodity committees; also referred to as "horizontal committees"

- Contaminants in Foods (CCCF)
- Food Additives (CCFA)
- Food Hygiene (CCFH)\*
- Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS)
- Food Labeling (CCFL)
- General Principles (CCGP)
- Methods of Analysis and Sampling (CCMAS)
- Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (CCNFSDU)
- Pesticide Residues (CCPR)
- Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods (CCRVDF)\*
- Ad hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance (TFAMR)



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## THE U.S. CODEX PROGRAM

The U.S. Codex Program is a U.S. Government interagency partnership that engages stakeholders in advancing science-based international food standards to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade.

Two technical and policy steering committees guide the Program's work. U.S. Government representative activities include the following:

- Chairing or representing the United States on Codex committees
- Conducting international outreach and capacity building activities
- Coordinating on crosscutting issues, and staying up-to-date on emerging public health and trade policy trends
- Collaborating with the Codex Secretariat and committee chairs on document management and U.S. responses
- Facilitating and supporting public meetings, committee sessions, and working groups.

The U.S. Codex Office (USCO), housed in USDA's Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs mission area, acts as the national focal point for the U.S. Program. USCO manages the planning, support, policy development, and coordination of U.S. involvement in Codex, develops strategies to accomplish U.S. objectives, and serves as secretariat for U.S.-hosted committees. USCO staff help ensure that U.S. approaches are consistent across Codex committees. Funding supports the convening of U.S.-hosted Codex committees, outreach activities to engage with and build capacity of other Codex member countries, WHO/FAO scientific review activities, and other related work.



## ENGAGEMENT

The U.S. Codex Program engages both domestic stakeholders and international partners. To encourage transparency and inclusiveness, Program facilitates U.S. participation by conducting public meetings before committee and Commission meetings, regularly sharing information with interested stakeholders, and more. International outreach and capacity building activities promote broader and deeper engagement in Codex activities, and promote common interests. These activities include:

- Participating in or leading technical workshops focused on emerging issues or specific topics.
- Conducting country-specific capacity building activities
- Leading or participating in regional webinars, seminars, and colloquia such as recent gatherings in Ghana, Brazil, Thailand, Honduras, and Kenya.
- Conducting partnering programs to mentor and further develop other countries' rising leaders.

## PARTICIPATING AGENCIES

Several federal agencies participate in the U.S. Codex Program by providing senior staff and executive delegates to represent the United States on many CAC committees; they primarily come from regulatory agencies that set U.S. domestic food standards. Other U.S. agency officials participate in vital policy, coordination, and information dissemination activities relevant to their agency missions and interests.

- U.S. Department of Agriculture, including the Food Safety and Inspection Service, Agricultural Marketing Service, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Agricultural Research Service, Foreign Agricultural Service, and the U.S. Codex Office
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, including the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control
- U.S. Department of Commerce
- Office of the U.S. Trade Representative
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Pesticide Programs
- U.S. Department of State

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### CODEX NEWS

USCO issues a e-subscription newsletter with updates and reminders of events in Codex. Subscribe here: [www.usda.gov/codex](http://www.usda.gov/codex)