

# **Guideline for the work of the Codex Contact Point in Republic of North Macedonia**

## **Introduction**

This guidelines intent is to explain the working procedures established for Codex to you as food safety competent authorities and stakeholders in Republic of North Macedonia.

Participation of Republic of North Macedonia in the Codex work (e.g. follow the work of different Codex Committees, procedures for preparing national positions, submission of written comments, criteria and processes for selecting delegations to attend Codex meetings,) can only be effective if key elements at national level are established and functional.

A formal organization of a (Codex Structure) is a prerequisite for effective participation in the work of Codex. There is also a need for a clear policy on the engagement in Codex in order to ensure efficient and effective participation in Codex work.

## **Objective of the guideline**

The objectives of this guideline are to:

- Identify the responsibilities of the members of the National Codex Structure (NCS);
- Identify criteria needed for Republic of North Macedonia in order to prioritize active participation in Codex Committees;
- Establish Codex working groups (CWGs) to work with the relevant issues in the prioritised (relevant) Codex Committees;
- Decide on the delegation to represent Republic of North Macedonian at the plenary Codex meetings;
- Preparation of national positions, responses to CL;
- Participation in Codex Electronic Working Groups (EWGs);
- Establishing the processes for preparing the comments of Republic of North Macedonia and ensuring coordination of the representation at the national level.

## **Relevant documents when working with Codex issues**

The NCS shall take into consideration the following documents:

- Provisional agenda & invitation to attend Codex meetings (CXs)
- Committee working papers (CXs)
- Request for comments (CXs and CLs)
- Circular Letters (CLs)
- Conference Room Documents (CRDs)
- Information documents(INFs)
- Reports of meetings (REP)
- Preparatory documents from national delegates, working papers
- Reports from national delegates
- NCC and Sub-Committee agenda and minutes

## **Codex Working Groups (CWGs) working within the frame for prioritised Codex Committees**

### **Establishment**

As contact point for Codex Alimentarius and competent authority for coordination of the legislation and control systems with regard to the issues related to the food and feed safety in Republic of North Macedonia as well as for communication with the institutions of the European Union the Food and Veterinary Agency should establish Codex Working Groups corresponding to the relevant Codex Committees. Those CWGs work under the coordination of the CCP.

### **Terms of Reference for CWGs**

- To advise on the agenda and other documents for the respective Codex Committee.
- To consult with other relevant stakeholders for seeking comments and finalize North Macedonia's position on different agenda items. On request, to advise the concerned governmental bodies on matters relating to the special provisions of certain Codex standards under their competence.
- Any other work assigned by the CCP.

### **Responsibilities of the CWGs**

- to keep records of the Codex documents provided by CCP office, to provide comments on the relevant issues.
- To support the concerned governmental bodies when implement Codex Standards or otherwise.
- To participate in formulation of the national position with respect to the agenda for the forthcoming session / meeting of the Subsidiary Body of the CAC.
- National positions should be forwarded to the CCP.
- CCP prepare and recommend the final position to be taken during the plenary Codex meetings.
- The national position will be sent to the Codex Secretariat by CCP.

### **Composition of the Codex Working Groups (CWGs)**

Chosen representatives from the following institutions will be members of the CWGs:

- Food and Veterinary Agency
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water economy
- Faculty for Veterinary medicine
- Phytosanitary directorate
- Institute for Public Health
- State Phytosanitary Laboratory

Above mentioned institutions have been entitled to nominate members to represent their views in the CWG.

The **Codex Contact Point (CCP)** within the Food and Veterinary Agency is the link between the members of the NCS).

Taking into consideration the priorities of Republic of North Macedonia in Codex, the composition of the CWGs can vary. Representatives from other competent authorities and different stakeholders (i.e. industry, NGOs, consumer organizations etc.) can be included.

### **Participation in Codex plenary meetings**

Where a national delegation is nominated to attend a Codex meeting, the CCP office will coordinate the preparation of national positions relevant to the committee concerned.

Whether a delegation should attend a meeting shall be decided based on the North Macedonia's priorities as well as upon the available resources.

The members of the North Macedonia's delegation Codex sessions/meetings should be specialist in the respective fields but also familiar with the Codex procedures in the Procedural Manual.

The head of delegation shall submit a delegation report to the CCP within a period of 20 working days after the meeting.

The delegation report shall be circulated to the members of the NCS.

The CCP shall determine if follow-up actions are needed.

### **Preparation of national position, and response to Codex Circular Letters**

The CCP office in the Food and Veterinary Agency will coordinate the preparation of national positions relevant to the committee concerned.

National positions are going to be prepared for two main purposes:

- to enable the North Macedonia's delegation to present the position of the country during the relevant Codex meeting;
- and/or to provide written comments if in country's interest.

For the development of national position, the following steps should be followed:

#### **1. Circulation of working documents:**

The CCP has the responsibility to circulate following documents

- ✓ Committee working papers (CXs)
- ✓ Request for comments (CXs and CLs)
- ✓ Circular Letters (CLs)
- ✓ Information papers (INFs)
- ✓ Reports of meetings (REP)
- ✓ Working group papers
- ✓ Delegation reports
- ✓ NCC and Sub-Committee agenda and minutes

#### **2. Preparation of comments by the members of the relevant working group**

Written comments by the members of the NC shall be submitted to the CCP within 10 days after receipt of the working documents.

### 3. Setting up a meeting

The CCP office shall set a meeting at least 20 days prior of the Codex meeting, during which a national position will be drafted.

### 4. Drafting a position

The concerned working group shall be responsible for preparing North Macedonia's comments and national positions.

The CCP shall determine whether written comments are being requested and if so, time frame will be established for submission of North Macedonia's comments before the deadline.

### 5. Submit the position to the Codex Secretariat as written comments, where appropriate

The written comments shall be submitted to Codex Secretariat and its subsidiary committees on those issues which have been identified as North Macedonia's priorities.

The CCP shall submit the comments to the Codex Secretariat.

## Participation in Codex Electronic Working Groups

The search for worldwide consensus and for greater acceptability of Codex Standards requires the involvement and the active participation of all the Members of Codex. Special efforts are needed to enhance the participation of developing countries in Codex Committees, by increased use of communications in the work done between sessions of Committees.

Codex Committees, when deciding to undertake work between sessions without meeting physically, establish electronic working groups (EWGs).

The EWGs work through an online platform [forum.codex-alimentarius.net](http://forum.codex-alimentarius.net) which requires members to login. CCP notify the participants, thereafter, the new registered participants to the platform are provided with a link once their credentials have been verified by the working group leaders. The CCP in the Food and Veterinary Agency receives invitation for participation in EWG's.

- ✓ Depending on the subject or the concerned Codex Committee, the NCCP sends the invitation to the contact points within relevant institutions in order to nominate participants;
- ✓ Nominated participants send their contact details to the CCP;
- ✓ Applications are sent through the CCP in an email detailing: participant's name, official title or position, organization or country and email address;
- ✓ Only one expert can be official representative of the country to participate in the EWG;
- ✓ When more than one expert shows interest in the document covered under specific EWG, the official representative will coordinate the comments on the national level;
- ✓ Only the official representative is allowed to submit comments via online platform, which will reflect the position of North Macedonia;
- ✓ The CCP keeps an electronic library of EWG's where participants from North Macedonia take part;
- ✓ When making comments, participants in EWG's shall include the CCP in the communication;
- ✓ As soon as possible after the end of the work in an electronic working group, each participant in an EWG should send the conclusions to the CCP.

# Organizational structure of the Codex Alimentarius Commission

The Codex Alimentarius Commission consists of the following main organizational elements:

- a) the Commission
- b) the Executive Committee
- c) the Codex Secretariat
- d) Codex subsidiary bodies:
  - general subject committees (also known as horizontal committees)
  - commodity committees (also known as vertical committees)
  - FAO/WHO coordinating committees
  - ad hoc intergovernmental task forces.

With the exception of the Codex Secretariat, all these bodies are made up of Codex Member representatives, endeavouring to ensure geographical balance and to reflect stakeholder views as appropriate.

## **The Codex Alimentarius Commission**

The Commission is the decision-making body of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme.

## **The Executive Committee**

The Executive Committee of the Commission (CCEXEC) is responsible for making recommendations about the general direction of the Commission's work. The Executive Committee, which meets between Commission sessions, acts as the executive organ of the Commission, and is the body responsible for managing the standards development process.

## **The Codex Secretariat**

The Secretary of the Codex Alimentarius Commission is responsible for the implementation of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme. The Secretariat organizes the meetings of the Commission and the Executive Committee, and facilitates the work of the subsidiary bodies in conjunction with the secretariats established by the host countries of Codex. This includes the compilation of documents required for the discussion of agenda items, the supervision of preparatory work done by others, and the preparation and finalization of all meeting reports of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and its subsidiary bodies

## **Codex subsidiary bodies**

**General subject committees** - General subject committees are so called because their work has relevance for all commodity committees and, since this work applies across the board to all commodity standards, general subject committees are sometimes referred to as "horizontal committees".

**Commodity committees** - Commodity committees have responsibility for developing standards for specific foods or classes of food. In order to distinguish them from the "horizontal" committees and recognize their exclusive responsibilities, they are often referred to as "vertical" committees.

**FAO/WHO coordinating committees** - Coordinating committees have no standing host countries. These committees are hosted by one of the member countries in each region that has indicated to the committee their willingness to take on the responsibility. There are six coordinating committees, i.e. one each for the following regions:

- Africa (CCAFRICA)
- Asia (CCASIA)
- Europe (CCEURO)
- Latin America and the Caribbean (CCLAC)
- Near East (CCNEA)
- North America and the Southwest Pacific (CCNASWP).

Main functions of FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees are:

- To promote mutual exchange of information on proposed regulatory initiatives and problems arising from food control;
- To promote the use of Codex standards in the region, and monitor the use of adopted Codex texts; and
- To exercise the general coordination in the preparation of standards related to the specific region or groups of countries.

**Ad hoc intergovernmental task forces** - Ad hoc intergovernmental task forces are established with a specific mandate and for a limited period of time, not normally exceeding four years. As in the case of the horizontal and vertical committees, Codex task forces are hosted by a member country.

### **Abbreviations**

**CCP** – National Codex Contact Point

**NCS** - National Codex Structure

**FVA** - Food and Veterinary Agency

**CAC** - Codex Alimentarius Commission

**CCEXEC** - The Executive Committee of the Commission

**EWG** - Electronic Working Group

**CWG** - Codex Working Group