



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR ASIA

Twenty-first Session

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USE OF CODEX STANDARDS IN THE REGION

(Prepared by the Codex Secretariat)

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. In the context of the revitalization of FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committees (RCCs) in 2016, the Codex Secretariat introduced a new survey-based system to continuously collect data on use of Codex standards¹ for all six RCCs with the aim of gaining a better understanding of the relevance of Codex work.

1.2. While the first survey round started in July 2016 and focused on the use of Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) for pesticides in food and feed, three general subject standards and the General Principles of Food Hygiene, the second in 2019 focused on a different set of Codex standards, namely:

- (i) MRLs for veterinary drugs in foods;
- (ii) Two Codex texts on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) i.e. Guidelines for Risk Analysis of Foodborne AMR and the Code of Practice to Minimize and Contain AMR; and
- (iii) Regional Code of Hygienic Practice for Street-Vended Foods in Asia.

1.3. In addition, members were asked about difficulties related to the general use of Codex standards and were informed that other specific standards would be covered in future rounds to build up, over time, a representative data set on the use of Codex texts worldwide.

1.4. The term “use” was employed very broadly to include not only the incorporation of Codex standards into national legislation, but also other types of use such as support of training or extension programmes.

1.5. The survey was conducted online using the software SurveyMonkey which allowed for easier data analysis and representation. A separate translation into Chinese was also made available and members were given a period of one month to provide answers.

2. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION SURVEY RESULTS

2.1. The survey on the use of Codex standards obtained a response rate of 54 percent (13 out of a possible 24 member countries) in the ASIA region. **Table 1** highlights all respondents in the region in bold and marks low and lower middle income countries (according to the World Bank) with an asterisk².

2.2. The response rate dropped by one country compared to the previous survey round. Ten Members from the CCASIA region responded to both the survey conducted in 2016 and the survey in 2019, while four members that responded in 2016 did not react to the survey disseminated in 2019.

¹ Throughout this document Codex standards refers to all Codex products including standards, guidelines, codes of practice, Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) etc.

² Developing countries are defined as low and lower middle income countries according to the World Bank List of Economies (June 2019).

Table 1: Overview of respondents in CCASIA to the 2019 survey on use of Codex standards (in bold)

Afghanistan*	Korea, Dem. People's Rep.*	Philippines*
Bangladesh*	Korea, Rep.	Singapore
Bhutan*	Lao PDR*	Sri Lanka
Brunei Darussalam	Malaysia	Thailand
Cambodia*	Maldives	Timor-Leste*
China	Mongolia*	Viet Nam*
Indonesia*	Myanmar*	
India*	Pakistan*	
Japan	Nepal	

*Low and lower middle income countries (World Bank list of economies June 2019)

2.3 The following is a summary of the survey results:³

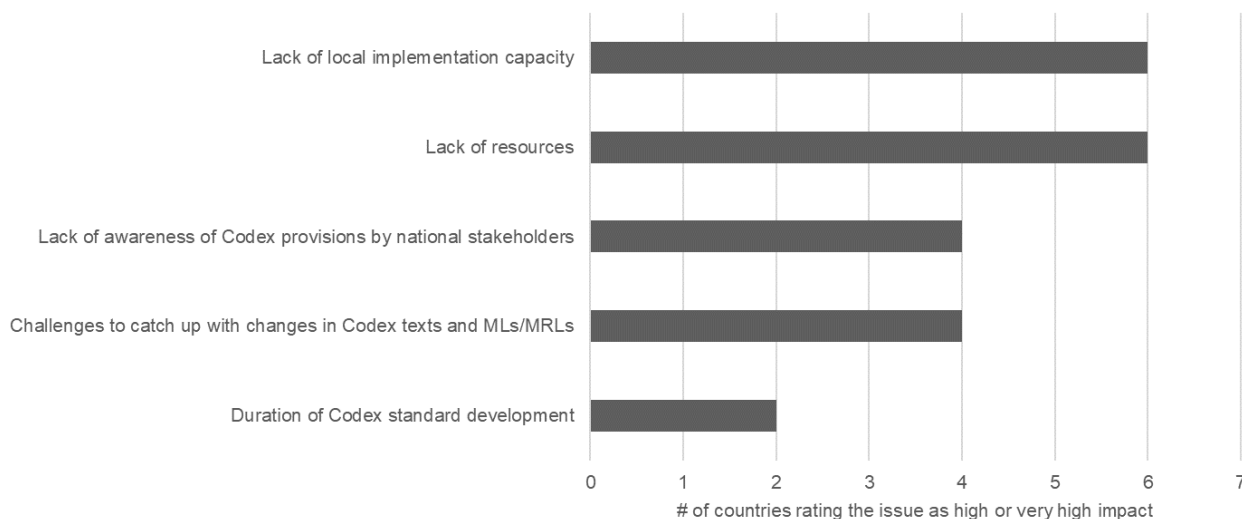
- (i) *Alignment of MRLs for veterinary drugs in food*⁴: Five countries (38%) stated that MRLs for veterinary drugs in food had been fully aligned with Codex MRLs, while another five countries (38%) reported that they had partially aligned with Codex MRLs. Reported reasons for deviations from Codex MRLs related to prohibition of certain veterinary drugs (e.g. ractopamine) due to specific national dietary patterns which include consumption of parts of the animal having been shown to increase risk of exposure to veterinary drugs. One country (8 %) stated that they had not at all aligned with Codex MRLs for veterinary drugs due to the absence of necessary testing facilities. The remaining two respondents (15%) were unaware of the national level of alignment.
- (ii) *Use of the Guidelines for Risk Analysis of Foodborne Antimicrobial Resistance (CXG 77-2011)*: More than half of the respondents (54%) indicated that the guidelines were either incorporated into national legislation/standards etc., used in support of training materials, extension programmes or as reference for national risk analysis procedures. Three countries (23%) stated that they would not yet make use of the guidelines, mainly due to inexistence of national AMR surveillance plans or overall capacity in this area. Three countries (23%) were not aware of the level of use.
- (iii) *Use of the Code of Practice to Minimize and Contain Antimicrobial Resistance (CXC 61-2005)*: According to the Member responses, the AMR code of practice is still less frequently used in the region (31%) which differs from previous Member information received in relation to the COP⁵ which shows a greater use compared to the risk analysis guidelines. Five Members (38%) stated they had not adopted it due to either resource limitations, staff capacity constraints in laboratories or ongoing work on national legislation and policy documents in the area. The remaining countries (23%) stated not knowing if the code of practice was utilized in their country.
- (iv) *Use of the Regional Code of Hygienic Practice for Street-Vended Foods in Asia (CXC 76R-2017)*: More than half of the respondents (54%) are using the regional code e.g. as part of national legislation and guidance documents or for awareness in support of training and programmes. Respondents indicating that they did not use the Code of Practice (46%) stated they found that the *Codex General Principles on Food Hygiene* (CXC 1-1969) already sufficiently covered the issue, that street-vended food was not regulated or that regulation in this area was still under development.
- (v) *Difficulties with regards to the use of Codex provisions*: The issues most frequently rated as high or very high negative impact on the use of Codex standards in the region were: lack of local implementation capacity and resources, which were needed for adequate testing, monitoring, interpretation and implementation of Codex standards.

2.4 **Figure 1** sums up further difficulties affecting the use of Codex standards that were faced by more than one country in the region. In addition, one country noted that it suffered from non-use of Codex standards by other importing countries and another country mentioned the issue of facing a lack of Codex standards for locally available food products.

³ The full survey results can be accessed in original language under this link: http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/sh-proxy/en/?lnk=1&url=https%253A%252F%252Fworkspace.fao.org%252Fsites%252Fcodex%252FMeetings%252FCX-727-21%252FWorking%2Bdocuments%252Fas21_6e_SURVEY_RESULTS.pdf

⁴ As of June 2019, Codex has 632 MRLs for veterinary drugs in foods covering 66 veterinary drugs.

⁵ See CX/CAC 16/39/12

Figure 1: Examples of difficulties with the use of Codex standards in the CCASIA region

3. CONCLUSIONS

3.1 Overall, the survey on use of Codex standards obtained a completion rate of 50 percent of the CCASIA region which will assist in establishing a baseline on the use of individual Codex standards in the region. Around 40 percent of Members from CCASIA showed continuity in providing responses to surveys of the Codex Secretariat on the subject of use of standards.

3.2 There is a high level of alignment with Codex MRLs for veterinary drugs in food in the CCASIA region (similar to Codex MRLs for pesticides that were surveyed in 2016). The Codex Guidelines on AMR appear to be more widely used than the Code of Practice. However, there is a high level of awareness of the existence of both AMR texts and their relevance was underlined by several respondents. The regional Code of Hygienic Practice for street-vended foods show a split picture. Approximately half of the respondents use the code irrespective of their economic development status. In other cases, the General Principles in Food Hygiene were considered sufficient. The 2016 survey indicated a high uptake of these principles.

3.3 For many Members from the CCASIA region, difficulties regarding the use of Codex standards continue to relate to resource constraints and a lack of local implementation capacity.

4. RECOMMENDATION

4.1 Codex Members from the CCASIA region are requested to take note of the results of the survey and use them in the engagement of relevant stakeholders to seek support for food safety work and raise awareness of the importance of Codex standards in their respective countries.

4.2 CCASIA is further requested to provide inputs on the following questions to guide future action by the Codex Secretariat in this area:

- *Next survey:* Would you like to see a continuation of the survey? If so, which areas of Codex work would you like to see covered in future surveys on the use of Codex standards?⁶
- *Evaluation of Codex standards:* How feasible do you consider responding to annual surveys on use of Codex standards? Which actions should be taken to increase survey response rates? Are there any national or regional efforts ongoing to assess the level of use of Codex standards?

⁶ Note: At CCASIA20 Members identified standards of CCNFSDU as a priority, which may still be valid.