

KENYA EXPERIENCE WITH CODEX

Introduction

Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) is an intergovernmental body with over 170 members, including Kenya. The Commission is charged with the task of protecting the health of consumers and ensuring fair practices in food trade. The Codex Alimentarius (Food Law) is the result of the Commission's work. The World Trade Organization (WTO) vide The Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (1988), has referenced the International Standards set by the Codex for global trade in food.

Kenya has been participating as a member in Codex Alimentarius Commission and Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS) is the codex contact point and consequently receives all the documents and writings related to the commission's activities.

Under KEBS falls the National Codex Committee entrusted with the task of corresponding to Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) affiliated to FAO and WHO. The committee is headed by MD KEBS. The committee gives policy formulations and direction and approves the working procedures of the National codex activities. It ratifies the national positions presented at all codex meetings.

It comprises of the following members institutions : Government chemist, Consumer information network, Ministry of Health, Pest Control Products Board, Department of Veterinary Services ,National Council for Science and Technology, Department of Fisheries, Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate services, Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Trade and industry, Kenya Agricultural Research Institute(KARI), Ministry of Agriculture, National Environment Management Authority(NEMA), WHO –Kenya, FAO-Kenya, Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS).

Lead institutions in liaison with the codex contact point coordinate different technical/ operating committees (General subject committees, Commodity committees and Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Task forces)

Kenya's situation

Kenyan food safety control systems (as well as other Africans member states) have been under unprecedented pressure in the recent past with issues on the use of food additives, presence of food contaminants amongst other food safety issues occupying the national agenda.

The National Codex Committee has continuously focused on food safety and quality standards as a means of boosting the competitiveness of food products and services. It has established close collaboration with World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Achievements

National

- Enhanced Kenyan participation in international Codex meetings – now has risen to 80 %. This is because in every Codex meeting (which is 25 per year internationally) you will find 1-5 delegates attending from Kenya.
- Support of participants in codex meetings through the Codex trust fund.
- Establishment of a Codex office at the codex focal point (KEBS) adequately staffed to disseminate information to stakeholders.
- Brochures have been developed stating the Mission and Vision of the National Codex Committee.
- Created Codex link on KEBS website and in the process of developing an independent Codex website.
- Placement of Standards and Codex related text for information at KEBS Standards information Resource Centre (SIRC).

Regional

- Improved and effective participation in regional Codex meetings such as CCAFRICA and contributing to the work of Codex by leading electronic Working Groups or by being members of working Groups. (Even though not all African states are at the same level).
- Many countries in the region are harmonizing their standards with those of Codex thus resulting in fair trade practices.
- Regionalization in food-standard-setting activities through African Union's Inter African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU/IBAR). Support for the coordination of African position on some Codex issues. Common African Positions have been developed and presented at the Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods, Pesticide Residues and Food Hygiene.

Challenges

- Lack of financial, human and technical resources and consequently lack of scientific data to support country positions at Codex meetings especially in regard to minor crops and local foods consumed and traded in the region.
- After weaning off/graduating from the codex trust fund most African member states failed to send delegates to Codex meetings, negating on earlier gains initiated by Codex.
- As much as increased participation in meetings has been experienced, scientific expert contributions from the region has been minimal.

Expectations

- Codex standards to supersede national standards, hence global acceptability leading to enhanced trade.
- African nations to play host to codex meetings, this will provide immense benefits to the host countries by influencing decision making in the continent and globally.