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# Codex Alimentarius and its Role

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## Abstract

**C**odex Alimentarius is a collection of international standards of foods, codes of practice, methodologies and other recommendations that are related to foods, food production and safety. It was developed and maintains by Codex Alimentarius Commission and was set up by Food and Agriculture Organization of the United States joined by the World Health Organization in June 1962. All kind of foods which are intended for human consumption are covered by Codex Alimentarius. The main aim of the commission is to maintain international standards of quality and consumer economic interest and to maintain fair trade practices in a fair ways. With this goal, different sectors have been worked under the control of Codex Alimentarius Commission. In near future, it is expected that various developing countries will involves and will upgrade the traditional committee structure into a newly designed codex committees. This upcoming newly designed committee will bring more and more achievement in the twenty-first century.

## Introduction

**T**he Codex Alimentarius developed and maintains by Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC). Food and Agriculture Organization of the the United States (FAO) joined by the World Health Organization (WHO) in June 1962 set up this commission in early November 1961 whose first session was held in Rome in October 1963. The main purpose of this body is to protect the health of consumers and to ensure fair food trade practices. Both the bodies also adopted the set of rules and Procedures for the Commission.

Upto 2012, 186 members were there in the CAC: along with 186 member countries one member organization, European Union is also there ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki/Codex\\_Alimentarius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki/Codex_Alimentarius)). There were 230 codex observers: 52 intergovernmental organizations, 162 non-governmental organizations and 16 United Nations organizations. Currently CAC cover 99% of the world's population, and over 200 observers such as international governmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations and United Nations agencies (Kojima and Tritscher, 2015). The publication of codex is for guiding and promoting the elaboration and establishment of various definitions and also requirements for foods in order to help their harmonization and to facilitate the international trade.

## Structure and Administration of Codex

**F**ollowing an open worldwide search for qualified candidates Director Generals of FAO and WHO jointly appoint the secretary of the CAC. The Secretariat is

established at FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy. The structure of the CAC is presented as flow chart in Figure 1. The CAC consists of the Commission, the Executive Committee and the subsidiary bodies in its structure (WHO, 2015). Rome and Geneva is the place of meeting of the commission every year for taking supreme decisions in the body and providing a discussion forum and debating on all issues of interest related to major food standards and safety. The Executive Committee of codex consists of a Chairman, three Vice Chairpersons and seven Regional Representatives (governments) and six Regional Coordinators (observers). Rules of procedure of the Codex, two kinds of subsidiary body- Codex Committees and Coordinating Committees are authorized for establishing. Codex Committees are engaged with draft standards preparation which is to be submitted to the Commission. Either General Subject Committees or Commodity Committees are the classification of the committees. Coordinating Committees are to organize activities related to food standard in the region or groups of countries, including the development of regional standards.

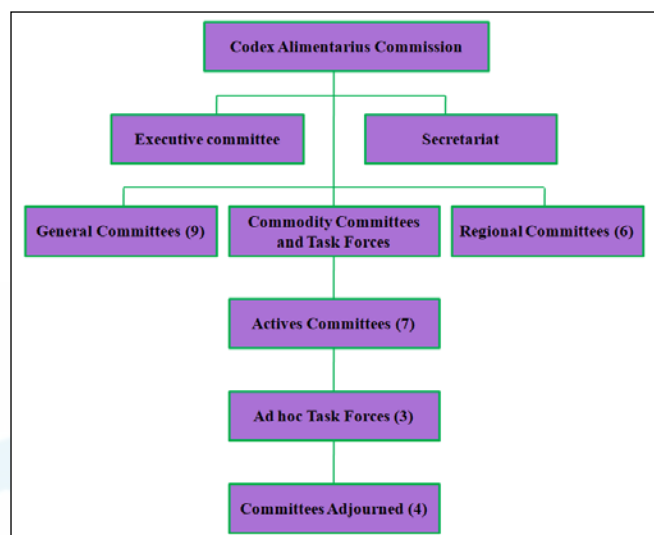


Figure 1: Structure of the Codex Alimentarius Commission

## Codex Objectives and Purpose

The main objectives of Codex Alimentarius are (1) to protect consumer health and economic interest, (2) to determine consumer priorities, (3) ensure that, all the practices in the food trade are fair, (4) to enhance international harmonization of food standards, (5) to publish the standard, (6) international food market and (7) to coordinate all work related to food standards. The Codex Alimentarius is an aggregation of internationally accepted standards of foods and texts related with codes of practices and recommendations related with it. These practices and guidelines ensure protection of health of consumers and their economic interest and aim to achieve trade practices in the food industries in a fair way.

## Foods under Codex

The Codex Alimentarius covers all food; it may be a processed or unprocessed food or raw, which is intended for human consumption. It also covers chewing gum, drink and any materials, being used in the preparation and treatment of foods. But it does not deal with the tobacco or other substances, which used solely as drugs. In addition to that the codex regulates food hygiene and quality, including microbiological standards, food additives, pesticides and residues of veterinary drugs, contaminants, food labelling and marketing. Other regulation of codex includes methods for sampling and hazard analysis, food import and export, certification system, etc. it also standardized the procedures for knowing the safety of foods produced by using modern biotechnology.

## Food Labeling Requirements

Under Codex Alimentarius the information that must be labeled on the products are (1) name of the food/product, (2) list of ingredients have to mention in descending order, (3) net content and drained weight of the product, (4) name and address of manufacturer/company, (5) country of origin, (6) lot identification/number, (7) manufacture date and storage instructions and (8) instructions for use of the product. The purpose of these leveling is to ensure that the consumers choosing the right product.

## Achievements

A lot of successful work has been achieved in different sectors to protect consumers' health and maintain the food trade in a fair way (Heilandt, 2007). Some of these are commodity standards (186), commodity related texts (46), food Labelling (9), food hygiene (5), food safety risk assessment (3), sampling and analysis (15), inspection and certification procedures (8), animal food production (6), contaminants in food (12) and food additives texts (7).

## Codex and its Future

Future activities of codex will be significantly different from its present activities. The application of biotechnology to the processing and production of food commodities is under control of the commission, which is regularly looking-for new concepts related to food quality, safety and consumer protection against health hazards. Day by day the codex system is changing, a lot. We can expect a huge change in the traditional committee structure in which much more involvement of the developing countries will be there. In the newly designed codex committees the developing countries will serve as host countries.

## Conclusion

The discussions of this article provide some idea about the direction in which the activities of the commission are likely to be taken in the future. The contribution of

Codex Alimentarius to the benefit of humankind is one of the most important and extraordinary achievements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And it can be expected more and finer achievement in the twenty-first.

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