



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

Diagnostic tool

for assessing status
of National Codex
Programmes

Diagnostic tool

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of National Codex
Programmes**

World Health Organization
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Rome, 2017

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Every effort has been made to make this Tool as clear and practical as possible for a global audience. It is however expected that as countries use the Tool, useful experiences will result, including through the upcoming round of applications for the FAO/WHO Codex Trust Fund. We encourage and welcome your feedback and any suggestions for improvement. These will be taken into account as the Tool is further refined and revised in the future. Please send any comments to:

Mary.Kenny@fao.org at FAO; and mulhollandc@who.int at WHO.

1. Introduction

The Codex Alimentarius international food standards, guidelines and codes of practice contribute to the safety, quality and fairness of international food trade. Although voluntary in nature, they are referenced in the WTO Agreements as the benchmark standards in the event of a trade dispute. Codex texts are also an invaluable source of science-based standards readily available for countries to use to improve the quality and safety of all foods produced.

The Codex texts (standards, guidelines and codes of practice), are developed and adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, an inter-governmental body. Codex members and observers are invited to participate in Codex sessions to develop food standards and contribute to discussions on a broad range of issues. These issues can include food labelling, food hygiene, pesticide residues, methods of sampling and analysis, and commodity specific standards on fruits and vegetables, spices among others.

Effective engagement in the work of Codex is important for all countries to ensure that Codex texts take account of global needs, perspectives, and data. Being ready and prepared to effectively participate in Codex sessions requires a national Codex programme to be in place. This programme should include personnel with adequate knowledge of Codex work¹ and national food standards issues and clear mechanisms and processes to manage and provide input to Codex work. Furthermore, it should be adequately resourced (human and financial), include input from the private sector, consumers and the scientific and academic community and be an integral part of a well-functioning food control system. The Codex programme needs to be fit for purpose, address national interests and priorities and be adaptive to change and evolving needs.

This Diagnostic Tool has been developed for countries to take stock from time to time of their national Codex programme and to assess what is working well, and identify areas in need of improvement.

Once complete, the results of the assessment can be used to inform ongoing national workplans and/or form the basis of a request for technical assistance if external support is required to improve national capacities. One potential source of external support is the FAO/WHO Codex Trust Fund (CTF2).

¹ Codex work encompasses the results of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and its subsidiary bodies, the tasks and activities undertaken by all involved during the Codex sessions to develop the Codex texts, and the related preparatory work at the national level.

For countries eligible for support from the CTF2, carrying out an assessment of the national Codex programme is an obligatory first step in the process of applying for support. The results of the assessment assist countries to identify priority activities for which they are seeking support from CTF2, and to build the action plan that will be included with their application².

Box 1: Transitioning from CTF1 to CTF2

The FAO/WHO Project and Fund for Enhanced Participation in Codex (Codex Trust Fund) was launched in 2003 by the Directors-General of FAO and WHO to help developing countries and those with economies in transition to enhance their level of effective participation in the Codex Alimentarius Commission. Between 2004 and 2015, the FAO/WHO Project and Fund for Enhanced Participation in Codex (Codex Trust Fund or CTF1) supported 2359 participants from developing and transition economy countries to participate in the international standard development process, and provided FAO/WHO Codex training to over 1100 people to boost the effectiveness of their participation in the CAC. As such, it was very successful in achieving its primary aim of widening and strengthening participation of developing and transition economy countries in the work of Codex.

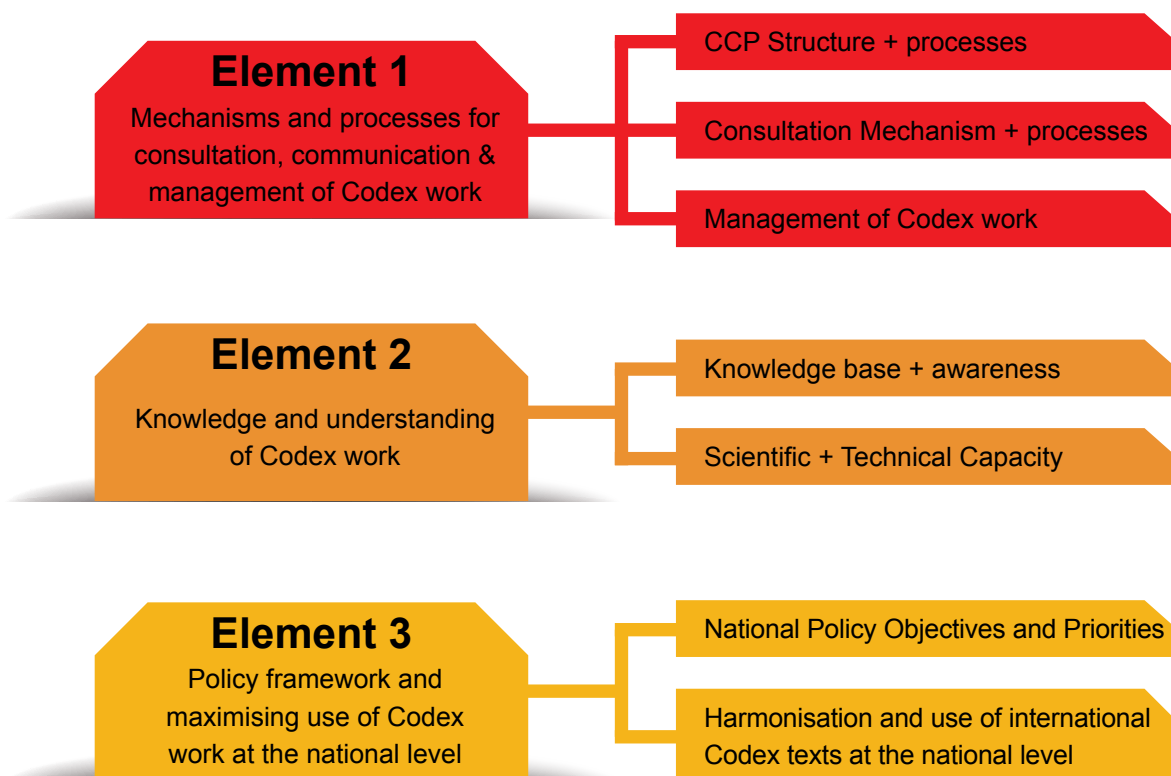
At the 38th session of the CAC there was overwhelming support for the establishment of a successor initiative to the Codex Trust Fund to build on the gains made over the last 12 years and to take the next step. The successor initiative (CTF2), which began in January 2016, will shift the primary focus from supporting physical participation, to helping to build strong, solid and sustainable national capacity to engage in Codex. Absence of sound structures and processes for managing Codex work at the national level has been and remains a significant constraint to full and effective engagement in the work of Codex, and efficient use of limited national resources to advance national food safety and trade objectives. Strengthened national structures and processes will also be important for effective utilisation of the knowledge and experience gained thus far from participation in Codex meetings.

² For more information on eligibility criteria, and on applying to the Codex Trust Fund, see http://www.who.int/foodsafety/areas_work/food-standard/codextrustfund/en/

2. Purpose of the Diagnostic Tool

The purpose of this Codex Diagnostic Tool is to provide a framework for countries to carry out a self-assessment of the current status of the national Codex programme³. It is an assessment of the collective capacity of the programme made up of individuals, processes and institutions. This includes assessing the capacity to effectively plan and participate in Codex sessions, to contribute scientific and technical input, to use Codex texts as a basis for national regulation and standards as appropriate, and to ensure Codex related activities and management of the programme are integral parts of the food safety control system. Upon completion, the results should assist in the identification of areas in need of strengthening and capacity development.

Figure 1: Overview of all the Elements and sub-elements to be assessed



³ Throughout this document, “national Codex programme” refers to the national programme of work implemented to ensure effective participation in Codex, and use of Codex texts. It is important to remember that it is a programme of work which should be aligned and integrated to the broader national food control system.

Box 2: The National Codex Programme

The Diagnostic Tool covers the three elements that form the national Codex programme.

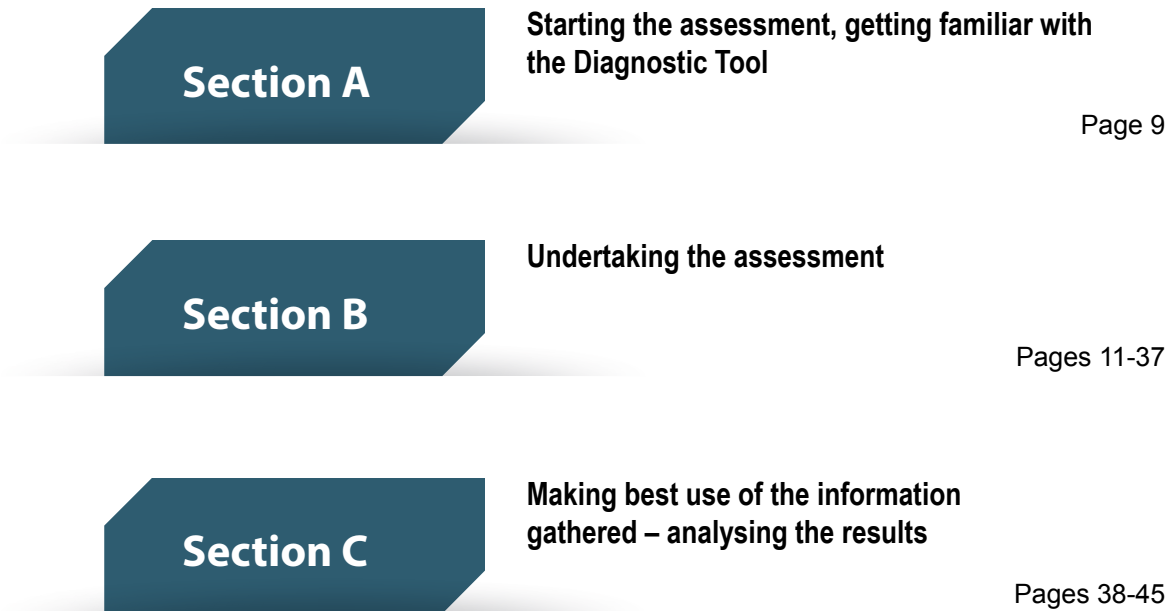
Typically these are as follows:

1. Institutional mechanisms for managing national Codex activities and effective processes for consultation, communication and management of Codex work;
2. Knowledge and understanding of Codex work;
3. Policy framework and maximising use of Codex work at the national level.

Within that, hallmarks of a well-established national Codex programme include the following:

- a. A national Codex office with clearly defined roles and responsibilities and provided with necessary resources for carrying out the core functions of the Codex Contact Point (CCP);
- b. Sound consultation structures and processes at the national level to encourage and facilitate involvement of stakeholders on Codex and related matters;
- c. Transparency, consultation and communication throughout the programme;
- d. Solid knowledge base and awareness of Codex and food safety matters among national professionals and stakeholders
- e. High level support and recognition for Codex programmes underpinned by a welldefined national policy framework setting out the country's priorities and interests in Codex;
- f. Strong links to national food control systems to promote involvement and participation of food regulatory professionals in the work of Codex and use of relevant Codex texts;
- g. Scientific and technical capabilities including ability to develop national food standards based on Codex/international norms
- h. Country positions and input when developing Codex texts underpinned by scientific and technical data;
- i. Adequate financial and technical resources to run the programme and planning to secure resources;
- j. Systematic monitoring and analysis of Codex activities and implementation of follow up actions, and planning for the future.

Figure 2: Stages of the assessment



3. Section A.

Starting the assessment, getting familiar with the Diagnostic Tool

The Diagnostic Tool has been designed to help countries to assess the current status of national Codex structures, processes and capacities and use this information to identify areas for improvement, training and capacity development. In other words, what is the current level of development of Codex activities? What are the strengths? What are weak areas or gaps? What may need to be improved?

Given that Codex work crosses a number of national jurisdictions and interests, it is highly recommended that all relevant government agencies and stakeholder groups be involved in conducting this self-assessment.

The Diagnostic Tool covers the three elements that form the national Codex programme (see Figure 1). Through the process of assessing these three elements, consideration will be given to whether the programme is really operating effectively, i.e. are the hallmarks achieved? Are the core requirements and best practices in place?

It is important for countries when using this Diagnostic Tool to plan and implement an assessment appropriate to their needs at a given time. The assessment may be undertaken in different ways. Some countries may involve a small team to complete the assessment, while others may choose to validate in a multi-stakeholder workshop, etc.

Some general guidance includes:

- Be clear on who is leading the assessment and the timeframe within which you want to complete it;
- Decide on individuals or different offices, that you consider important to consult on some or all of the specific elements;
- As a basic rule, make sure the process involves those directly responsible for managing Codex work in the Codex Contact Point (CCP) office, and involve some individuals attending Codex meetings, and other stakeholders who may contribute to the work;
- Keep it manageable and do not make the assessment overly complex.

Section B of the Tool includes a guide to carrying out the assessment – a series of tables outline good practices considered important to be in place for the sub-elements. Countries can self-assess the level of capacity by referring to the supporting assessment notes.

Once the assessment phase is complete, countries are supported in Section C with a number of templates to analyse the findings, determine priority actions and develop a preliminary work plan outlining an approach to address weaknesses and gaps identified in the national Codex programme.

4. Section B.

Undertaking the assessment

A series of assessment tables in this Section contain a brief description of a structure, function or process⁴ (relevant to each element) and the good practice(s) that underpin effective management and performance. Countries are expected to assess their level of capacity against each good practice as a guide/benchmark to assess where they are currently in respect of that structure, function or process.

The structure of each table is as follows:

Column 1 of the table describes the good practices for each structure, function or process. The good practices listed are what one can expect to see in countries that have well developed national Codex programmes. The good practices are intended to be used as benchmarks against which countries can assess their current level of development.

Columns 2-5 describe the stage of development at the national level using a scale of 1-4 where:

Level 1 (aspiring)	means the country is at the very initial stage and keen or aspiring to develop national capacity in the area described
Level 2 (emerging)	means the country is developing its national capacity in the area described, but is looking for more guidance and support to improve in the particular area
Level 3 (consolidating)	means the country is progressing well and consolidating national capacity in the area described but would benefit from more targeted guidance to help take it to the next level and
Level 4 (well-established)	means the country has good national capacity in the area described and is in a position to share knowledge and experience with others

⁴ For example, a structure = CCP, a function = dissemination of Codex documents by the CCP, a process = how written comments are prepared

The following is a stepwise guide to completing the diagnostic tables:

Step 1

Study the text at the beginning of each table describing the main element and sub-elements. Become familiar with the different good practices that make up each sub-element.

Step 2

Prepare to (✓) the box that best describes the country's current level (from 1 to 4) for each good practice. Consider the "**assessment notes**" accompanying each table. The questions provided in these assessment notes can be used by the assessors to help them reflect in depth where the country stands in relation to the good practice outlined in the table.⁵ Based on this in-depth consideration and discussion among assessors, a score of Level 1 to Level 4 will be assigned.

Step 3

Provide additional notes **explaining the rationale** for the level selected. This can include comments that may help explain the current situation/status of the country. Over time, these notes should prove very valuable to remind assessors why a particular level was assigned and what their assessment of strengths and weaknesses of their programme was at a given time. It is envisaged that a country will revisit and re-assess their programme and, when time has elapsed, there can be difficulty to remember the thinking and status of the previous assessment.

Step 4

Provide a brief conclusion of the current status of capacity for the sub-element based on your responses to each table by including **a summary of main strengths and weaknesses**. In doing so, you may use the location of the majority of responses (✓) to provide an overall assessment of your current level of development. For example, if the vast majority of the responses to the table are

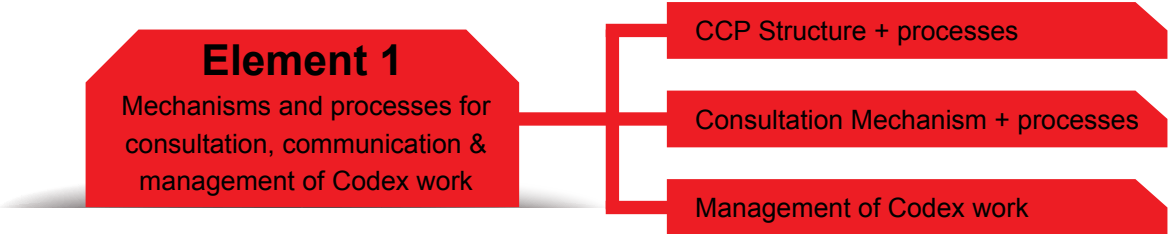
⁵ The assessment notes are intended to assist the assessor, but should not be seen as prescriptive. They are intended to be illustrative rather than exhaustive. It is recognised that there will be different ways in different countries to achieve the same outcome – so the emphasis should be on the result rather than the actual process implemented to achieve it. For example, an important element of a national Codex programme is effective national consultation on Codex matters. Some countries achieve this through setting up a national Codex Committee, while others through a different series of meetings and other communication channels. Both can work equally well, and one may be more appropriate to a country than the other.

in Level 2 (emerging), then the country might characterize itself as “emerging” for that sub-element. This can be interpreted to mean that Codex capacity overall is developing in the country but guidance and support is needed in a number of areas.

While the intention of this Tool is not to assign a total score upon completion of the assessment, it is recognised that as countries compare assessments over time, it may be helpful by comparing score to analyse whether the country is improving on certain good practices over time. It may also highlight disimprovement in the performance of certain good practices. In both cases, countries may reflect on why this may have happened.

4.1. Assessment Tables for Element 1: Core mechanisms and related processes for consultation and management of Codex work

This section is designed to obtain an assessment of the current development of national institutional structures and processes for their effective functioning, and managing Codex work at the national level. Specifically it covers the following:



Codex Contact Point (CCP) structure and processes

The CCP plays a central role in ensuring effective management and coordination of Codex activities at the national level. In addition to providing the link between the Secretariat of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and the member country, the CCP is usually responsible for the day to day management of Codex-related activities at the national level. These include: dissemination of documents, agendas, papers for Codex sessions, adopted Codex standards; managing official communication on Codex matters; and promoting Codex activities at the national level. The CCP needs to work closely with other relevant departments, ministries and agencies to exchange information, promote dialogue and facilitate development of national positions on Codex and related matters of interest to the country. The core functions of the CCP are defined in the Codex Procedural Manual (<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3243e.pdf>).

Core requirements and good practices for efficient management of the CCP functions include:

- Designated CCP with clearly defined responsibilities for carrying out the core functions;
- Effective management of the CCP and working processes;
- CCP with sound knowledge and awareness of Codex/international food standards matters;
- Resources to carry out the core functions and responsibilities

Assessment of sub-element Codex Contact Point (CCP) structure and processes

(Please ✓ the relevant box)

To facilitate completion, download the table files in word format at:
http://www.who.int/foodsafety/areas_work/food-standard/codextrustfund/en/index1.html

Please reflect on how and to what extent your country demonstrates each of the good practices. Please select the level that best reflects your current level of development. In the space below the table please provide any additional comments that may be pertinent to assessment of current capabilities and the level of development

Good Practices	Level 1 Aspiring- at the initial stage and keen to develop national capacity	Level 2 Emerging – developing national capacity but need more guidance and support	Level 3 Consolidating- progressing well and consolidating capacity but need more targeted guidance	Level 4 Well-established- has a good national capacity and in a position to share knowledge and experience with others
Designated CCP in place				
CCP responsibilities for managing Codex and related work are clearly defined				
Working procedures for management of the Codex Contact Point functions				
CCP has sound knowledge and awareness of Codex and food standards matters				
CCP provided with sufficient resources (both human and financial) to carry out core functions and responsibilities				

Assessment notes: countries may consider the following list of questions/considerations in preparing responses in the assessment tables, determining the current level of Codex capacity in the country for each good practice.

Codex Contact Point (CCP), structure and processes

- Is there a designated Codex Contact Point with a dedicated email address?
- Are the location and contact details of the CCP familiar to all relevant national agencies?
- Are the roles and responsibilities of the CCP clearly defined?
- Do those responsible for managing the CCP have adequate knowledge and understanding of Codex system (the Codex website, the Codex rules) and food standards matters?
- Does the CCP communicate with the Codex Secretariat, are they responsive?
- Does the CCP disseminate information in-country and provide information to stakeholders at national level as requested?
- Does the CCP communicate with Codex colleagues in other countries?
- Does the CCP actively receive, file and disseminate official Codex documents?
- Does the CCP have good links with other national regulatory agencies?
- Is the CCP provided with adequate resources (both human and financial) to carry out the core functions and responsibilities?

Additional notes explaining the rationale for the level selected

A brief conclusion of the overall assessment for this sub-element (strengths, weaknesses)

Consultation Mechanism and processes

Codex and food safety matters are of wide public interest. They involve multiple agencies and stakeholder groups. Sound mechanisms and processes for consultation are needed to share information with stakeholders and provide a forum for all interested parties to be involved in Codex and related food safety and standards development matters at the national level. Countries should establish the mechanism that best meets their requirements. A National Codex Committee (NCC) provides one possible model. Typically, the NCC or equivalent mechanism brings together key stakeholders from government, industry and nongovernmental groups, and is the principal forum for consultation and policy development on matters related to Codex and food regulation/standards development. Given its role, such a body is usually led by a senior official.

Core requirements and good practices for effective management of the consultation structure and process include:

- Established mechanism to facilitate consultation;
- Clear Terms of Reference;
- Effective procedures for consultation and communication;
- Clear procedures on determining how to use the input received through consultation.

Assessment of sub-element Consultation mechanism and processes

(Please ✓ the relevant box)

To facilitate completion, download the table files in word format at:

http://www.who.int/foodsafety/areas_work/food-standard/codextrustfund/en/index1.html

Please reflect on how and to what extent your country demonstrates each of the good practices. Please select the level that best reflects your current level of development. In the space below the table please provide any additional comments that may be pertinent to assessment of current capabilities and the level of development

Good Practices	Level 1 Aspiring- at the initial stage and keen to develop national capacity	Level 2 Emerging – developing national capacity but need more guidance and support	Level 3 Consolidating- progressing well and consolidating capacity but need more targeted guidance	Level 4 Well-established- has a good national capacity and in a position to share knowledge and experience with others
Established mechanism for consultation with key stakeholders on Codex and food safety/standards development matters (e.g. National Codex Committee or equivalent)				
Clearly defined terms of reference for the consultative mechanism				
Clear procedures in place for the actual consultation process involving all interested parties				
Clear procedures on how to use information received through the consultation processes				

Assessment notes: countries may consider the following list of questions/considerations in preparing responses in the assessment tables, determining the current level of Codex capacity in the country for each good practice.

Consultation mechanism and processes

- Is there a functioning structure/mechanism for consultation on Codex matters (e.g. National Codex Committee)?
- Does this body have high-level leadership and legal status if so required?
- Are all the key stakeholders included in the consultation body (e.g. other government agencies, industry, consumers, academia and scientific groups etc.)?
- Are there clear terms of reference and written procedures to guide its operation?
- Is it clear who should be consulted and when?
- Does this body meet at regular intervals?
- Does this body have adequate resources to carry out its functions and responsibilities (e.g. hold meetings)?
- Do different stakeholders provide input on Codex issues when requested?
- Are there specialised sub committees/consultation groups in place to facilitate consultation on specific topics covered by various Codex committees (e.g. food hygiene, food labelling, food additives, fruits and vegetables) and are the appropriate experts and stakeholders involved in these groups?
- Are there clear procedures on use of information through consultation processes – decision on how it should be used?

Additional notes explaining the rationale for the level selected

A brief conclusion of the overall assessment for this sub-element (strengths, weaknesses)

Management of Codex work

Sound, well-documented processes for management of Codex work at the national level are necessary to support the systematic management of Codex activities and strengthen participation at the international level. They also can contribute to more efficient work practices by providing clarity around roles and responsibilities (who does what, etc.).

These include:

- Agreed processes and procedures to be used at the national level for preparation and submission of written country comments on draft standards and issues under consideration in Codex Committees;
- Agreed criteria for the selection and participation of national delegations to Codex meetings (who should attend the meeting, what experience and qualifications might be needed, involvement of nongovernmental observers, what the responsibilities are of head of delegation and other members etc.); and
- Procedures for
 - Feedback on issues discussed at meeting, outcomes, participation of national delegation particularly in terms of contribution to discussions (sharing of experiences, lessons for future participation);
 - identification of issues that may require follow up actions at national level and assignment of responsibilities (who, what and by when);
 - monitoring of implementation of follow up actions including submission of written comments, participation in working groups and actions needed to strengthen future participation in Codex meetings.

Core requirements and good practices include:

- documented processes for developing and submitting written comments
- criteria and processes for selecting national Codex delegations
- procedures for preparing national positions, and making sure delegations are prepared for the Codex session
- procedures for follow-up to Codex sessions
- engagement as required with other country Codex delegations
- resources to support national Codex work, including funding participation at priority Codex sessions

Assessment of sub-element Processes for management of codex work at the national level

(Please ✓ the relevant box)

To facilitate completion, download the table files in word format at:
http://www.who.int/foodsafety/areas_work/food-standard/codextrustfund/en/index1.html

Please reflect on how and to what extent your country demonstrates each of the good practices. Please select the level that best reflects your current level of development. In the space below the table please provide any additional comments that may be pertinent to assessment of current capabilities and the level of development

Good Practices	Level 1 Aspiring- at the initial stage and keen to develop national capacity	Level 2 Emerging – developing national capacity but need more guidance and support	Level 3 Consolidating- progressing well and consolidating capacity but need more targeted guidance	Level 4 Well-established- has a good national capacity and in a position to share knowledge and experience with others
Guidelines and processes for development and submission of written comments				
Criteria and processes for selecting delegations to Codex meetings (who should attend, qualifications and experience, and involvement of industry and nongovernmental groups)				
Procedures for preparing national positions, and delegations attending Codex sessions				
Procedures for monitoring and analysis of outcomes of Codex meetings ensuring follow up and planning for the future				
Engagement when required with other Codex country delegations (within same region or in a different region)				
A budget line in the national budget to support national Codex activities, including physical participation in Codex sessions				

Assessment notes: countries may consider the following list of questions/considerations in preparing responses in the assessment tables, determining the current level of Codex capacity in the country for each good practice.

Processes for Management of Codex work at the national level

- Are there written procedures on how to prepare written comments on draft standards and responses to circular letters?
- Are records kept of written comments and the negotiation on priority Codex discussions (institutional memory)?
- Are there criteria and procedures for the selection of national representatives to Codex meetings and working groups (who should lead/represent? what qualifications and experience are required)?
- Are efforts made to ensure continuity of Codex delegates from one session to the next when important?
- Is there effective consultation with stakeholders in the preparation of country comments and national positions on Codex matters?
- Are there established mechanisms and procedures for reporting back on outcomes of meetings, identification of issues for follow up action, and planning for future meetings etc.?
- Is it established practice to hold a de-brief meeting when delegations return from a Codex meeting?
- Is there a system in place to monitor necessary follow up actions undertaken and achievements?
- Is there evidence of building positions and preparation for meetings from one session to the next?
- Is there communication with other country delegations when required to share information, build an understanding of common goals, interests in Codex work, etc.?
- Are adequate resources available to manage the Codex programme, including funding to attend Codex meetings?

Additional notes explaining the rationale for the level selected

A brief conclusion of the overall assessment for this sub-element (strengths, weaknesses)

4.2. Assessment Tables for Element 2: Knowledge and understanding of Codex work

This section is designed to obtain an assessment of the current knowledge and understanding by those contributing to Codex at international and national levels.

It includes those responsible for managing the national Codex programme, as well as those contributing to the programme activities.

Specifically it covers the following:



Knowledge base and awareness

Sound knowledge and awareness of Codex is an essential prerequisite and foundation for building national Codex capacity. Those involved in Codex work (e.g. CCP, delegates to Codex committees and other government officials) need to have good understanding and familiarity of Codex work and its relevance for food safety, health protection and trade. Similarly, improving knowledge and awareness of Codex among high level policy and decision-makers and all stakeholders is important to promote interest in food standards matters, and facilitate effective engagement of all interested parties in Codex-related activities. This will help the country to advance national food safety, standards development and trade objectives. Regular training programmes across the various subject areas of Codex are important to build the knowledge base and develop and maintain core national capacity for domestic standards development and participation at the international level.

Finally, knowledge sharing, communication and dialogue with consumers and public interest groups are important to build public confidence in food safety and public health issues and generate support for Codex activities.

Core requirements and good practices include:

- Understanding and awareness of the importance of Codex to advance national food safety, health protection and trade interests, among interested stakeholders i.e. high-level policy and decision-makers, industry and scientific community;
- Knowledge of Codex purpose, scope of work and processes among government officials;
- Ability by government officials, with input from industry and the scientific community, to analyse national technical data and information related to standards development and related discussions at the international level;
- Dissemination of information to raise awareness on the relevance of Codex to different stakeholders.

Assessment of sub-element Knowledge base and awareness

(Please ✓ the relevant box)

To facilitate completion, download the table files in word format at:
http://www.who.int/foodsafety/areas_work/food-standard/codextrustfund/en/index1.html

Please reflect on how and to what extent your country demonstrates each of the good practices. Please select the level that best reflects your current level of development. In the space below the table please provide any additional comments that may be pertinent to assessment of current capabilities and the level of development

Good Practices	Level 1 Aspiring- at the initial stage and keen to develop national capacity	Level 2 Emerging – developing national capacity but need more guidance and support	Level 3 Consolidating- progressing well and consolidating capacity but need more targeted guidance	Level 4 Well-established- has a good national capacity and in a position to share knowledge and experience with others
Sound knowledge and awareness of Codex/ food standards matters among all stakeholders (government, industry and public interest groups).				
Awareness and understanding by high level policy and decision-makers of Codex work and its importance to the country				
Implementation of regular training and capacity building programmes to enhance national capacities on Codex related matters for key stakeholders				
Information is disseminated to different stakeholder groups on the relevance of Codex to them				

Assessment notes: countries may consider the following list of questions/considerations in preparing responses in the assessment tables, determining the current level of Codex capacity in the country for each good practice.

Knowledge base, awareness

- Is there awareness among high-level policy and decision-makers on the role of Codex in setting international food standards, and how it may contribute to development goals related to health, food sector, trade opportunities?
- Have clear priorities on Codex been established and agreed with the highest level (e.g. ministerial level support)?
- Are efforts ongoing to engage high-level policy and decision-makers in Codex?
- Are they effective in gaining political support, interest and resources?
- When discussing national spending, are funds to support Codex work discussed as part of the national budget allocation?
- What is the current knowledge and capacity to identify issues of importance that could be addressed through Codex?
- What is the current level of knowledge and awareness of Codex among government officials and stakeholder groups (industry and non-governmental entities)?
- Have these officials and other stakeholders benefited from any training programmes aimed at spreading knowledge and awareness of Codex among the various stakeholders?
- Have targeted messages been developed on why Codex is relevant and important to different groups – industry, consumers, government ministries been developed?

Additional notes explaining the rationale for the level selected

A brief conclusion of the overall assessment for this sub-element (strengths, weaknesses)

Scientific and Technical capacity

Codex work covers a wide range of technical areas and the development of international standards calls for active contribution of members through participation at meetings and working groups and submission of comments and supporting data. Countries need to have sound understanding and familiarity of the range and breadth of data and scientific information generated by Codex and its parent bodies and how these are used to develop standards at international and national levels. Countries also need to have access to scientific and technical resources (from government, industry and academia) to support technical analysis and participate in international standards development activities. This includes, among others, contributing to technical discussions during Codex sessions, agreeing on what type of risk assessment or scientific advice is needed from FAO/WHO, contributing to more scientific discussion during working groups, and being able to contribute relevant information and data from the country.

Core requirements and good practices include:

- Knowledge of the Codex standard-setting step process and how to most effectively support the work at different stages;
- Knowledge of the process for developing the “scientific” basis of Codex standards, and how it is used in Codex Committees, e.g. scientific advice resulting from the FAO/WHO expert committees, i.e. Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA); Joint FAO/WHO Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR); Joint FAO/WHO Expert Meetings on Microbiological Risk Assessment (JEMRA);
- Preparedness to contribute the right level of information depending on the discussion. This may include providing: technical comments on your country’s context; feedback on the feasibility and reality of the standard for the relevant industry in the country; consumer views on a topic; data on hazards in food; food consumption data etc.;
- Knowledge and familiarity with technical data and scientific reports, including FAO/WHO scientific advice, and how to access such information to support Codex-related work;
- Technical capacity to identify gaps in existing standards and present case/project proposal for revision/development of new standards;
- Ability to undertake scientific work (including risk assessment) and contribute data (chemical and microbiological) and technical comments and participate in international standards development and associated scientific work in subject areas of priority interest.

Assessment of sub-element Scientific and technical capacity

(Please ✓ the relevant box)

To facilitate completion, download the table files in word format at:

http://www.who.int/foodsafety/areas_work/food-standard/codextrustfund/en/index1.html

Please reflect on how and to what extent your country demonstrates each of the good practices. Please select the level that best reflects your current level of development. In the space below the table please provide any additional comments that may be pertinent to assessment of current capabilities and the level of development

Good Practices	Level 1 Aspiring- at the initial stage and keen to develop national capacity	Level 2 Emerging – developing national capacity but need more guidance and support	Level 3 Consolidating- progressing well and consolidating capacity but need more targeted guidance	Level 4 Well-established- has a good national capacity and in a position to share knowledge and experience with others
Sound knowledge of the Codex standard development processes				
Sound knowledge of the scientific basis of Codex standards, including scientific advice (risk assessments) resulting from FAO/WHO expert committees, and their function in the Codex standard setting process				
Knowledge and capacity to propose new work and advance standards at the international level				
Access to a pool of scientific and technical human resources skilled to support analysis in areas related to Codex work and standards development				
Capacity to participate and contribute to international standards development through provision of scientific assessments, data and technical comments in areas of priority interest to the country				
Capacity to organize, collate existing information and data or generate new data if required				

Assessment notes: countries may consider the following list of questions/considerations in preparing responses in the assessment tables, determining the current level of Codex capacity in the country for each good practice.

Scientific and technical capacity

- Is there a good understanding among national Codex professionals about the Codex standards development procedure and what countries should consider at different stages of standards development?
- Does your country have the capacity to determine the relevance of different work in Codex to your country (important part of setting priorities)?
- Does the country have the scientific expertise and technical resources to participate in Codex committees and working groups of particular interest/importance to the country (is the country submitting data or comparable technical comments)?
- Is there awareness and understanding of the roles of the FAO/WHO expert committees that are tasked by Codex with providing scientific advice and undertaking risk assessments and their role in international standards development (i.e. JECFA, JMPR, and JEMRA)?
- Has the country responded to requests for provision of scientific data and/or proposing experts to participate in the FAO/WHO expert meetings?
- Does the country have access to scientific and technical resources to analyse FAO/WHO scientific reports/advice? Are these experts involved in the preparation of national comments on draft standards and providing technical support to national delegations to Codex meetings?
- Does the country have the capacity to generate data and scientific studies in support of standards development at national and international levels?
- Are national Codex professionals aware of how to propose new work in Codex and how to prepare a project document for new work?
- Has the country submitted, or considered submitting, a proposal for new work?
- Are government officials attending Codex sessions prepared to present the results of analysis of technical data & information relevant to standards development?

Additional notes explaining the rationale for the level selected

A brief conclusion of the overall assessment for this sub-element (strengths, weaknesses)

4.3. Assessment Tables for Element 3: Policy framework and maximising the use of Codex work at the national level

This section is designed to obtain an assessment of the current status of the policy framework and ability to provide a conducive environment for Codex work and the use of Codex texts at the national level.

Specifically it covers the following:



National Policy Objectives and Priorities

It is essential to understand the policy context within which Codex operates. Codex food safety standards have the status of international benchmarks under the WTO Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement. Codex non safety standards are covered by the WTO Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreement. Members of the WTO are encouraged to harmonise with international standards to the maximum extent possible. The WTO Agreements also require Codex texts and standards to be based on science. Understanding the broader context of Codex standards as “benchmark” standards for international food trade and a means to protect public health is essential to ensure the robustness of Codex work, but can also lead to greater political support and understanding of the contribution that Codex standards make to the achievement of national development objectives. At country level, it is important to have a clear policy and vision on Codex to ensure that there is an agreed “common” vision among stakeholders with both leadership and technical support roles to provide a solid basis for working on Codex related matters, and to make the best use of scarce resources. The modality of getting to a clear policy and vision (adoption, need for a decree, way it is written etc.) will vary from country to country.

A national policy statement on Codex typically covers the following:

- Why Codex is important to the country (e.g. to promote food safety and consumer health protection and facilitate access to international markets);
- Statement of national priorities for participation in Codex (committees and subject areas) and identification of any specific subject areas/ products of particular interest to the country for which international standards may be needed; and
- Identification of any priority areas for legislation/standards development (e.g. food hygiene, labelling, inspection and certification) at the national level based on international standards and guidelines.

A clear vision/statement of national policy objectives and priorities in Codex and standards development is helpful to:

- Secure high level recognition and support;
- Make the best use of limited national resources and focus on priority issues and programmes;
- Facilitate a common understanding and common approach;
- Promote transparency and stakeholder support;
- Secure resources for Codex-related programmes and activities.

Furthermore, it is important to remember that the national Codex programme is one important component of a national food control system, and therefore should not work in isolation. Codex work makes an important contribution to many goals of the food control system, and information, data and experts, essential to the national Codex programme are often supporting a range of functions in the food control system. The key is to tap in to these resources. To maximise success, the national Codex programme should be closely embedded in the national food control system, with multiple benefits to those contributing directly to Codex work, and to those responsible for other key areas of the food control system. Core requirements and good practices include:

- A clear policy and vision for Codex work, in a broader food control system;
- Knowledge and understanding of international agreements and obligations regarding harmonisation and use of international standards at the national level (familiarity and understanding of the WTO SPS and TBT Agreements);
- High level political support for Codex work.

Assessment of sub-element National Policy Objectives and Priorities

(Please ✓ the relevant box)

To facilitate completion, download the table files in word format at:
http://www.who.int/foodsafety/areas_work/food-standard/codextrustfund/en/index1.html

Please reflect on how and to what extent your country demonstrates each of the good practices. Please select the level that best reflects your current level of development. In the space below the table please provide any additional comments that may be pertinent to assessment of current capabilities and the level of development

Good Practices	Level 1 Aspiring- at the initial stage and keen to develop national capacity	Level 2 Emerging – developing national capacity but need more guidance and support	Level 3 Consolidating- progressing well and consolidating capacity but need more targeted guidance	Level 4 Well-established- has a good national capacity and in a position to share knowledge and experience with others
Existence of clear vision/ statement of national policy objectives in Codex and priorities for food safety and standards development				
Understanding of WTO SPS and TBT Agreements and relevance to Codex				
Codex work is linked to other dimensions of the food control system (e.g. flow of information, data, expertise)				

Assessment notes: countries may consider the following list of questions/considerations in preparing responses in the assessment tables, determining the current level of Codex capacity in the country for each good practice.

Context of Codex work and National Policy Objectives and Priorities

- Has the country developed a policy document setting out the country's policy objectives and priorities in Codex (e.g. priority areas for participation, important Codex standard development areas, or priority national standards)?
- Is there a good knowledge and understanding among officials of international agreements such as the WTO SPS and TBT Agreements and the provisions relating to harmonisation and use of international standards, and the need to base standards on science?
- Is there evidence that Codex work linked to other dimensions of the national food control systems – e.g. to facilitate use of information and expert input

Additional notes explaining the rationale for the level selected

A brief conclusion of the overall assessment for this sub-element (strengths, weaknesses)

Harmonisation and use of international Codex texts at the national level

Once adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, Codex standards provide the framework for use at the national level, both as a basis for national food standards, and to inform approaches and processes across the food control system e.g. texts on risk analysis, methodologies for risk assessment, methods of analysis, etc. Countries will have different ways of using Codex texts depending on a number of factors, such as the national food control system, the specific Codex text, the food production and trading patterns, food consumption, etc. Actual use of a Codex text may be demonstrated in different ways, e.g. a national standard setting a maximum residue level for a pesticide, agreed code of practice or guidance to industry, strengthened use of data and information as a basis for risk management decisions in line with risk analysis principles.

Core requirements and good practices include:

- Ability to consider and analyse when it is appropriate to use Codex texts (standards and guidelines) and how;
- Know-how and availability of technical and legal expertise relevant to drafting and development of national food standards and regulations based on Codex texts;
- Demonstrated use of Codex texts as a basis for national standards as appropriate.

Assessment of sub-element Harmonisation and use of international Codex texts at the national level

(Please ✓ the relevant box)

To facilitate completion, download the table files in word format at:
http://www.who.int/foodsafety/areas_work/food-standard/codextrustfund/en/index1.html

Please reflect on how and to what extent your country demonstrates each of the good practices. Please select the level that best reflects your current level of development. In the space below the table please provide any additional comments that may be pertinent to assessment of current capabilities and the level of development

Good Practices	Level 1 Aspiring- at the initial stage and keen to develop national capacity	Level 2 Emerging – developing national capacity but need more guidance and support	Level 3 Consolidating- progressing well and consolidating capacity but need more targeted guidance	Level 4 Well-established- has a good national capacity and in a position to share knowledge and experience with others
Solid analysis of decision-making on appropriate use of Codex texts (standards and guidelines)				
Well-developed know-how and technical capacity to develop national food standards and regulations based on Codex texts				
National food standards and regulations, and approaches to modernise food control system, are harmonised with relevant Codex texts (to the maximum extent possible).				

Assessment notes: countries may consider the following list of questions/considerations in preparing responses in the assessment tables, determining the current level of Codex capacity in the country for each good practice.

Harmonisation and use of international standards at the national level

- What is the current status of food legislation/food standards in the country? Are they up to date and based on international standards and guidelines?
- Is there evidence of the use of Codex texts to update national food standards and approaches in the food control system?
- Is there a process and know-how on how to determine if a Codex text (standards and guidelines) is appropriate to your country needs?
- What is the current level of know-how and understanding of how to develop national food standards and regulations based on Codex texts?
- An informed view of the needs and perspectives on food standards of key stakeholders, including food producers, industry and consumers, and are these views taken into account by government officials responsible for setting national food standards?

Additional notes explaining the rationale for the level selected

A brief conclusion of the overall assessment for this sub-element (strengths, weaknesses)

5. Section C.

Making best use of the information gathered – analysing the results

The responses to the Diagnostic Tool will provide an essential information base to:

- understand the status (level) at a given time of the described structure, function or process;
- assess national capacities and competencies to effectively carry out Codex work at national, regional and international levels; and
- identify priority areas for improvement and capacity development.

Carrying out an assessment of national Codex programme capacity can be useful to all countries and an effective tool for taking steps and prioritizing activities to improve capacity to engage fully and effectively in Codex at national, regional and global levels. An essential stage in the process is the analysis of the results to determine strengths, weaknesses and then prepare a valid “case” or “plan” for improvement. It is envisaged that you do this in two stages, using templates provided in this section.

The template in table 5.1 should help in summarising the information gathered in the assessment tables. The first step is to write a succinct paragraph on what the assessment tables have told you about your country’s current Codex capacity for each sub-element. This paragraph should highlight the overall situation with strengths, weaknesses and gaps, and identify the overarching priority actions that it may be important to address to consolidate strengths, and address weaknesses and gaps. Explain any linkages between issues to be addressed, and/or the need to address different aspects of elements in a sequence or in parallel.

Before proceeding to table 5.2 to continue the analysis of the results of the assessment in detail, it may be helpful to reflect on the national priorities and interests in the country as they can and do vary from country to country. For some the predominant interest might be to improve their knowledge and understanding of Codex standards and how to apply them at the national level to achieve better food safety and public health outcomes. For these countries, active engagement across a range of Codex committees at the international level may not be a major priority. Some other members may, on the contrary, have a greater level of interest in participation in meetings and contributing to international standards development by virtue of their trade interests. It is also feasible for countries to have both interests.

The final stage in the analysis of the assessment is to consider develop a preliminary workplan using the template in table 5.2.

By completing this template, you will need to identify what “actions” are needed to address the identified weakness and gaps, and specify what result is expected from the action being implemented. Actions will vary and may include: establishing an institutional (not personal) e-mail address for the CCP; organizing workshops for national professionals on Codex to improve understanding of Codex; provide on-the-job training for the CCP; provide training for government officials and experts on how to participate in Codex and contribute to international standards work.

Box 3: Reflecting on national priorities and interests in order to identify actions to improve the national Codex programme

An important part of the final analysis by the assessors is to be aware of and consider specific national priorities and interests when identifying actions that need to be taken in order to improve Codex capacity.

The following questions might be considered in this regard:

1. What are the country's main objectives for the food sector covering food production, trade, food safety and public health protection, and economic and social dimensions?
2. How can aspects of Codex work either impede or provide opportunities to achieve these objectives?
3. What is the country's agreed vision and priorities directly related to Codex work (e.g. promoting knowledge about Codex, priority Codex standards being developed, learning how to develop national food standards based on Codex)?
4. Which gaps or problems identified impede the country most in achieving both the overall objectives in food safety, trade and development, as well as the country's priorities in Codex?
5. Which are the most urgent problems to be addressed (e.g. due to political or stakeholder pressure and interest, known to severely impact on your country's engagement in Codex meetings)?

A recommended thought process is to consider where your country would like to be in two-three years' time. Some assessors may find it helpful to prepare one final overall summary which shows succinctly what are the priority weaknesses, and most important actions to be completed over a set timeframe.

Box 4 provides an example of a possible overall summary which describes the situation of a new member of Codex that is at an early stage of development. There is a brief summary of current status followed by an indication of priority areas for improvement over a specified period (e.g. two years) to help the country to move to the next level, and identification of specific areas of action that the country would need to take in order to achieve the outcomes identified.

Box 4: Example of overall summary of assessment of national Codex capacity

The country is at a very early stage of development of national Codex capacity. There is limited knowledge and awareness of Codex and food safety matters among all stakeholders and there are no clearly defined structures or processes for consultation on Codex matters. Codex does not have the high level recognition needed to secure resources, improve management of activities at the national level and participation at the international level. The country also has inadequate access to scientific and technical resources to support Codex-related work including participation in Codex Committees of major importance to the country, and provision of technical comments and data on draft standards under discussion.

The country's food legislation and standards are inadequate and need revision, but the country lacks the technical know-how and expertise to develop new standards and regulations based on Codex.

Over the next two years the country would like to:

- Promote wider knowledge and understanding of Codex at the national level among all stakeholders;
- Strengthen the national structures and processes for managing Codex activities at the national level and supporting participation at international level;
- Improve understanding of how to develop national food standards and regulations based on Codex;
- Secure high level recognition and support for Codex activities.

In order to get to these outcomes, the country needs to take the following actions:

- Organize workshops for high level officials and stakeholders to promote knowledge and understanding of Codex and its role in development of international food standards for health protection and trade and its relevance for the country;
- Develop guidance documents on management of Codex structures and processes (CCP, national consultation)
- Provide training (target groups to be identified) on how to develop national food standards and regulations based on Codex.

5.1. Template for identifying strengths/weaknesses and priorities

This template should be completed once the assessment tables in Section B are complete. The table below can be used to summarise the information gathered in the assessment tables.

Start by writing a succinct paragraph on what the assessment tables have told you about your country's current Codex capacity for each sub-element. This paragraph should highlight the overall situation with strengths, weaknesses and gaps and identify the overarching priority actions that it may be important to address to consolidate strengths and address weaknesses and gaps. Explain any linkages between issues to be addressed, and/or the need to address different aspects of elements in a sequence, or in parallel.

Element	Sub-element	Level assigned	Strengths/weaknesses identified in the assessment of the sub-element	Priority areas for action
Element 1: Mechanisms and processes for consultation and management of Codex work	CCP structure + processes		Strengths in the sub-element: Weaknesses in the sub-element: Gaps in the sub-element:	First priority Second priority Third priority
	Consultation mechanism + processes		Strengths in the sub-element: Weaknesses in the sub-element: Gaps in the sub-element:	First priority Second priority Third priority
	Management of Codex work		Strengths in the sub-element: Weaknesses in the sub-element: Gaps in the sub-element:	First priority Second priority Third priority
Element 2: Knowledge and understanding of Codex work	Knowledge base, awareness		Strengths in the sub-element: Weaknesses in the sub-element: Gaps in the sub-element:	First priority Second priority Third priority
	Scientific and technical capacity		Strengths in the sub-element: Weaknesses in the sub-element: Gaps in the sub-element:	First priority Second priority Third priority
Element 3: Policy framework and maximising the use of Codex work at the national level	National policy objectives and priorities		Strengths in the sub-element: Weaknesses in the sub-element: Gaps in the sub-element:	First priority Second priority Third priority
	Harmonisation and use of international Codex texts at the national level		Strengths in the sub-element: Weaknesses in the sub-element: Gaps in the sub-element:	First priority Second priority Third priority

5.2. Template for a preliminary workplan

Countries wishing to do so can take a further step in using the information gathered from the Codex Diagnostic Tool to develop a preliminary overview of a national plan of action. At a later stage this would need to be further developed using, for example, a log frame approach, and adding information on deliverables, expected outcomes, timelines, responsibilities and budgets⁶.

⁶ See for example the action plan template to be used to apply for Codex Trust Fund support

Weakness/gap to be addressed ⁷	Key actions to address the weakness/gap ⁸	Expected output of each action ⁹	Prioritization ¹⁰
<p>The CCP is using a web-based personal e-mail for Codex communication. The e-mail is not being checked when the CCP is out of the office.</p>	<p>CCP to convince the ministry or agency where the CCP is located to establish an institutional and non-personal e-mail address behind the firewall of the ministry/agency and procedures have been established for regular checking by authorized persons.</p>	<p>CCP in the country has an institutional e-mail. This has been communicated officially to the Codex Secretariat. The e-mail is being checked and action taken according to established procedures.</p>	<p>1 – this is the top priority</p>

⁷ These can be taken from the table completed in 5.1.

⁸ Make sure these are stated as very concrete and achievable actions.

⁹ What do you expect to see as a result of undertaking the activity? E.g. You decide to organize a national awareness-raising event on Codex for key stakeholders (action). The outputs or concrete deliverables that you might get from organizing this event are advocacy, information and communication materials that can be used by many people at national level in advocating for and raising awareness of the importance of Codex.

¹⁰ When prioritizing it is useful to keep in mind: 1) What can be done relatively easily and quickly using resources (human and financial) that are available? These are the “quick fixes” that can be used to show that action is being taken. 2) What are the important actions needed to address key weaknesses/gaps but may require more time to implement and/or require building political and economic support over a period of time?

Here is a checklist to help countries to confirm that all sections have been completed:

Box 5: Checklist upon completion of assessment

- Have you completed all the tables?
- Have you provided additional explanatory comments for each table?
- Have you completed the overall assessment section for each table?
- Have you completed a summary of your findings from the tables (template in 5.1)?
- Have you completed the final identification of needs to be addressed (template in 5.2)?

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