

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION



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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

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CODEX DOCUMENT DISTRIBUTION

BACKGROUND

1. The Codex Secretariat has since 2006 reduced paper distribution to the minimum necessary and increased the use of more cost-effective means of communication (electronic distribution lists, website, CD-ROMs) to compensate increasing costs and decreasing purchasing power of the Codex budget.
2. The experience obtained with the reduction of paper distribution has generally been positive. In particular, electronic distribution allows recipients to receive documents in a prompt manner and to enjoy longer periods of time to study documents and formulate comments. Other benefits of this approach, which is in line with the FAO-wide policy that encourages the use of modern methods of communication, include the ease of sharing documents with other parties and managing document archives.
3. This document summarises the present situation and outlines future measures.

PRESENT SITUATION

4. Paper distribution continues for:
 - Special Publications, Reports of the Commission and the Procedural Manual (Codex Contact Points)
 - Official Invitations (missions, ministries, Codex Contact Points and observers)

SPECIAL PUBLICATIONS 2008

5. Up to 2001, the Codex Alimentarius was regularly published in A4 volumes. Following the Joint FAO/WHO Evaluation of the Codex Alimentarius in 2002, and given the increased speed of adopting and revising Codex texts by the Commission, most Codex texts have been published on the Codex website only because Volumes would be quickly outdated. Responding to the need expressed by users, five collections of basic Codex texts (e.g. food hygiene, food labelling) have been published in special publications in A5 format and re-edited several times.

6. Using cost savings made in document distribution, and with a view to better meeting the need of member governments, the Codex Secretariat has started since January 2008 to publish a comprehensive re-edition of the Codex Alimentarius in special publications which collect texts according to themes, adopting a new format B5 and using modern publishing techniques to make texts easier to use. A number of these publications can be seen at the documentation desk during the Commission session.

7. Financial constraints will not allow re-publishing these books regularly; nor will these publications cover all the texts in the Codex Alimentarius.

FUTURE MEASURES AND PROJECTS

8. It is likely, pending further consultation within FAO that the sending of official paper invitations may be replaced by sending scanned invitations by electronic mail only.

9. The coverage of audio recordings may be extended beyond the Commission and the Executive Committee on an experimental basis in order to allow shorter reports while maintaining full transparency.

10. The Codex Secretariat will continue to work on improving the services offered by the Codex website and through the electronic mailing lists and the ftp server. The Codex website is undergoing an extensive overhaul incorporating features up to now only available on the CD-ROM such as viewing information by Committee and interactive features such as allowing Codex Contact Points and Observers to edit their contact data online and specify preferences for distribution of documents.

11. Codex texts and publications and databases (e.g. GSFA) will continue to be published on CD-ROM on a regular basis. Databases for pesticide residues and veterinary drugs may be included on this CD-ROM at a later stage. Codex information material (videos, presentations) will be published on an *ad hoc* basis.

12. Codex Members and Observers are welcome to submit at any time suggestions and proposals for improving document distribution and Codex publications.

ANNEX: CODEX ELECTRONIC INFORMATION RESOURCES

A. CODEX ELECTRONIC DISTRIBUTION LISTS

There are presently two Codex Electronic Distribution Lists: Codex-L and Codex-direct-L:

Codex-L	Links to the documents posted on the ftp server accessible through the Internet are distributed through this list. The Codex-L list has the advantage that the e-mails distributed are small in size and the problem of mailbox capacity limitations and full mailboxes is avoided. Subsequent file transfer (downloading) is required by the subscriber
Codex-direct-L	Messages have the same contents as those distributed through Codex-L but additionally the documents are attached to the message in PDF format.

Both lists distribute Codex Circular Letters, Invitations, Agendas of Codex meetings, and other working documents and papers related to Codex meetings as well as any other documentation and/or communication regarding Codex-related work (JMPR¹, JECFA², JEMRA³, Expert Consultations, etc.). Informal conference room documents are also distributed through the electronic distribution lists in a zip-file after the session.

The distribution lists are open to Codex Members through their Codex Contact Points and to international organizations with “Observer Status” in Codex as well as Chairpersons of Codex Committees and Task Forces. Most Codex documents that are distributed through the Codex Electronic Distribution Lists are also posted on the Codex website for downloading.

For all Codex members and observers, the subscription to one of the two electronic distribution lists is obligatory.

Subscription/Unsubscription from Codex Electronic Distribution Lists or change of e-mail address

1	Send an e-mail to codex@fao.org
2	The subject header should read: “ Codex Electronic Distribution ”.
3	The body of the e-mail should contain:
	For subscribing: “ subscribe Codex-L ” or “ subscribe Codex-direct-L ” e-mail address: [...] (the address where the messages should arrive) The name and full address, including e-mail address(es) of the Codex Contact Point or Observer
	For changing an e-mail address: “ unsubscribe Codex-L ” or “ unsubscribe Codex-direct-L ” Old e-mail address: [...]. New e-mail address: [...]”

¹ Joint FAO/WHO Meetings on Pesticide Residues

² Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives.

³ Joint FAO/WHO Meetings on Microbiological Risk Assessment.

	The name and full address, including e-mail address(es) of the Codex Contact Point or Observer
	For unsubscribing completely: “unsubscribe Codex-L” or “unsubscribe Codex-direct-L” e-mail address: [...] The name and full address, including e-mail address(es) of the Codex Contact Point or Observer

NOTES:

- Only **one list** (either Codex-L or Codex-direct-L) should be subscribed to by one member/observer. It is possible though, for each Member or Observer to register up to two e-mail addresses if required.
- The subscription to the Lists is free of charge.
- As much as possible, the e-mail address of the subscriber should be a generic address that is being used institutionally in a sustainable manner so that it is not affected by an eventual transfer of the officer in charge. The use of personal accounts is **strongly** discouraged.

B. CODEX WEBSITE (www.codexalimentarius.net)

The information currently available on the website includes:

- The schedule for forthcoming Codex committee meetings which in turn contains links to the agendas and their relevant working papers;
- Reports of the Commission (since 1963) and its subsidiary bodies (new – since 1963⁴);
- Audio recordings of recent meetings of the Commission and the Executive Committee
- Circular Letters;
- Codex standards and related texts;
- Codex special publications (e.g. combined texts on food hygiene, food labelling, and food import and export inspection and certification systems);
- Procedural Manual;
- Other relevant Codex publications (e.g. Understanding the Codex Alimentarius);
- Contact data on Codex Members (Codex Contact Points) and Observers.

Access to the Codex website does not require registration or password.

⁴ The reports of subsidiary bodies from the archive dating back to 1963 were OCR-scanned and placed on the Codex website after a thorough quality control for the English original version. The other language versions will be OCR-scanned and placed on the website with a note that the scans have not been quality controlled due to lack of funds and may contain scan errors.