



**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR ASIA**

Twentieth Session

New Delhi, India 26 - 30 September 2016

CODEX WORK RELEVANT TO THE REGION

(Prepared by the Coordinator)

INTRODUCTION

1. In the 16th session of CCASIA, it was agreed to add as an agenda, the discussion on “Issues Relevant to the Region” in order to facilitate the development of regional positions, and to request the regional coordinator to prepare a paper on this subject for consideration at the next session.
2. In the last session of CCASIA, Japan presented the paper on Codex issues related to the region (CX/ASIA 14/19/11), summarizing the replies received from Members in response to the Questionnaire circulated seeking information on (i) activity needed to increase the participation to the informal meeting of CCASIA and (ii) members’ interests and/or concerns related to Codex work.
3. To bring out the current status of the Codex activities in the Asian region and prepare the paper on relevant issues in the region, information was requested from the Asian member countries through a questionnaire (attached as **Annex I**). Replies were received from 9 countries, viz, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Japan, Mongolia, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore and Thailand.
4. The questionnaire specifically sought information on the following:
 - Participation of CCASIA member countries in Codex Meetings since 2014
 - New Work Proposals (2014-2016)
 - Issues related to the Codex work in the region
 - Availability of data in the Codex Committees (2014-2016)
5. Since the information received was not adequate enough to develop a comprehensive agenda document, additional information was sourced from the reports of respective Codex committees’ sessions held in between the 37th and 39th session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (2014 and 2016, respectively).
6. In order to bring out a clear picture in the document, an analysis of the consolidated information is detailed in 3 parts, as under, followed by summary of observations and points for discussion:
 - Implementation of the activities identified in the Agenda item CX/ASIA 14/19/11, Para 4 prepared by the Regional Coordinator in last session of CCASIA (CCASIA19)
 - Participation of the member countries in different Codex activities
 - Identification and analysis of the regional issues concerning Codex work.

IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIVITIES IDENTIFIED IN THE PREVIOUS SESSION OF CCASIA (CCASIA19)

7. Document CX/ASIA 14/19/11, presented by Japan, listed various activities to increase the participation of countries in the CCASIA informal meetings as suggested by the member countries.
8. Accordingly, India as the Regional Coordinator continued to organize informal meetings of CCASIA member countries on the sidelines of the Codex Committee sessions immediately before, or one day in advance of, the plenary session of the Committees. The members were informed about the venue and time of the meetings well in advance to facilitate participation of all delegations of the member countries.

9. Agenda for each meeting was tentatively prepared by analyzing the comments provided by the CCASIA member countries on various agenda items of the respective Codex Committee and identifying common concerns, if any, and the same was forwarded to member countries in advance for any further inputs to be included therein.

10. The deliberations of the CCASIA meeting, specifically on common issues and concerns, were sent to all the member countries to ensure that the members who could not attend the meeting were also aware of the discussion.

11. It was noted that a few countries only were able to send their concerns for inclusion in the agenda for the informal meetings. Therefore, such issues were generally difficult to be identified as issues of concern for the region or a majority of the countries in the region.

12. The participation of Asian region member countries in the CCASIA informal meetings during the period 2015-2016 was recorded by the Coordinator, as shown in the following Table 1. It is observed that only fewer member country delegations generally attended these meetings.

Table 1: Participation of member countries in the CCASIA Informal meetings held during July 2015- 2016

Name of the Codex Committee	Number of CCASIA delegations attending CCASIA informal meetings	
	Meeting held on the same day of the plenary session	Meeting held one day before the plenary session
CCSCH2 (14 to 18 September 2015)	8 (10)	-
CCFFV19 (05 to 09 October 2015)	-	3 (7)
CCFFP34 (19 Oct to 24 Oct 2015)	-	5 (8)
CCFH47 (09 Nov to 11 Nov 2015)	-	3 (9)
CCNFSDU37 (23 Nov to 27 Nov 2015)	-	7 (13)
CCFICS22 (06 to 12 February 2016)	6 (11)	-
CCMAS37 (22 Feb to 26 Feb 2016)	5 (7)	-
CCFA48 (14 to 18 March 2016)	8 (11)	-
CCCF10 (04 to 08 April 2016)	-	3 (8)
CCGP30 (11 April to 15 April 2016)	8 (11)	-
CCPR48 (25 to 30 April 2016)	7 (13)	-
CCFL43 (09 to 13 May 2016)	7	-
CAC39 (27 June to 01 July 2016)	10 (13)	-

(Note: Figure in bracket indicates the total number of delegation attending the plenary session of the respective committees.)

13. In respect of the other informal meetings of CCASIA member countries with USA and EU delegations, as per the latter's invitation, as the meetings were largely scheduled before the Asian members had their own meetings, the Asian members generally presented their individual positions, and not a consensus regional position, on various matters under discussion.

14. It was observed that many delegations/delegates were generally not able to attend the CCASIA informal meetings when organized a day before the plenary session. However, an increased participation was noted if the meetings were scheduled on the first day just before the plenary sessions started.

PARTICIPATION OF MEMBER COUNTRIES IN CODEX ACTIVITIES

15. This Section pertains to the involvement or participation of the CCASIA member countries in various Codex activities including participation in the Codex Committees' meetings; participation in, and chairing/co-chairing of, EWGs and PWGs; submission of new work proposals; and providing scientific data in various Codex committees.

i) Participation in CAC and Codex Committee meetings

16. The Figure I¹ below depicts participation of the member countries in the Codex committees (2014-2016) including CAC. The total number of committee meetings conducted during this period was 36 (excluding meetings of the CCEXEC and other RCCs),

17. Six countries (China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea and Thailand) showed maximum participation. Another four countries (Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam) have showed comparatively moderate participation, while the rest of the countries have shown either less or negligible participation.

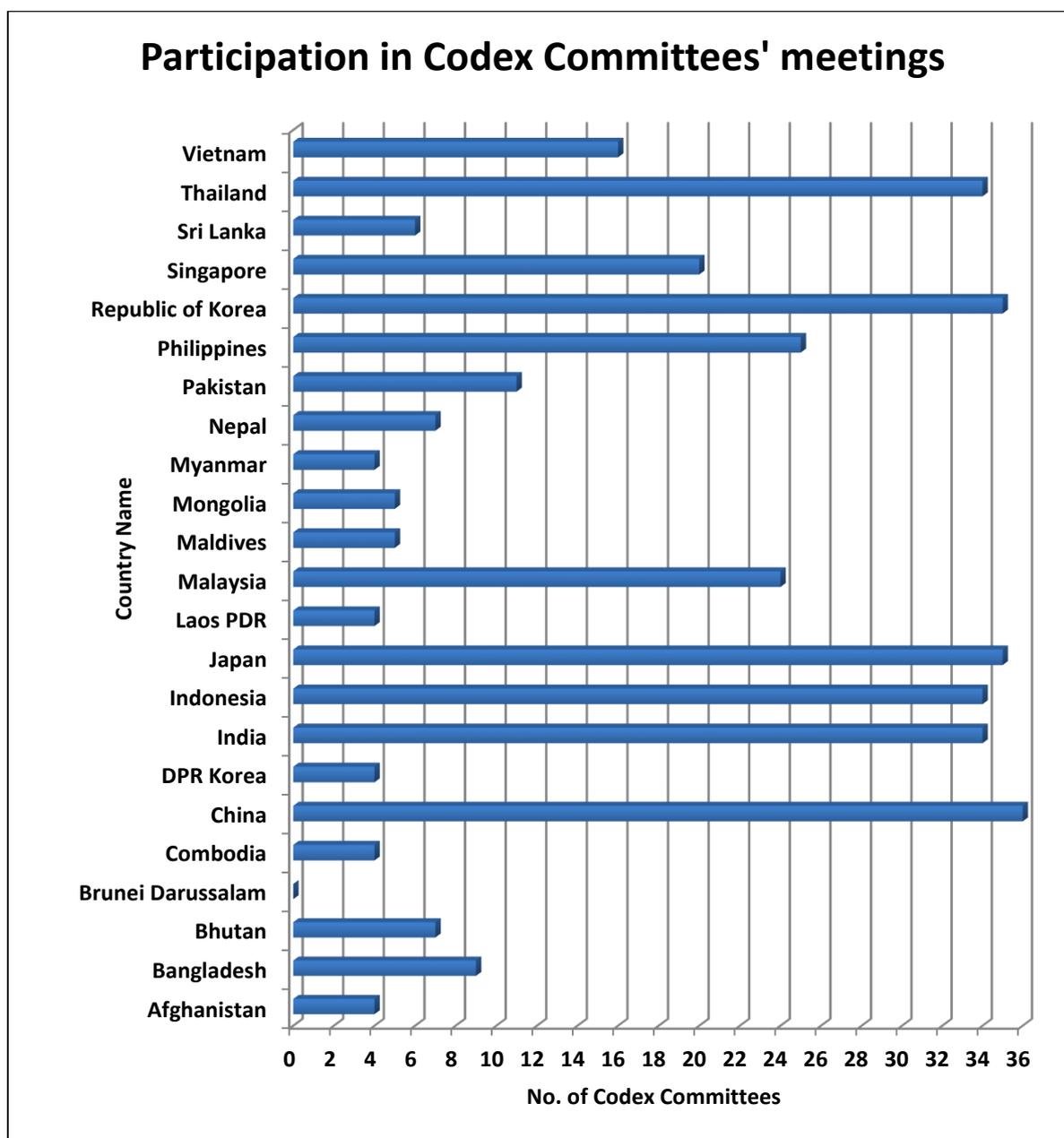


Figure I: Participation of CCASIA member countries in various Codex committees during 2014-2016.

¹ This figure has been prepared after collecting the information from the reports of the Codex committees in the year 2014-2016

ii) Participation in PWGs and EWGs

18. The Figure II presented below indicates the participation in Physical and Electronic Working Groups.

19. Japan and India have participated in a majority of the PWGs and EWGs. Thailand, Republic of Korea, Indonesia and China have participated in many of these working groups, while Singapore, Philippines and Malaysia have fairly participated in the PWGs and EWGs.

20. Whereas seven member countries (Vietnam, Pakistan, Mongolia, Lao PDR, DPR Korea, Cambodia and Bangladesh) have only minimal participation in the EWGs and no participation in PWGs, seven other member countries (Sri Lanka, Nepal, Myanmar, Maldives, Brunei, Bhutan and Afghanistan) did not participate in any of the EWGs and PWGs.

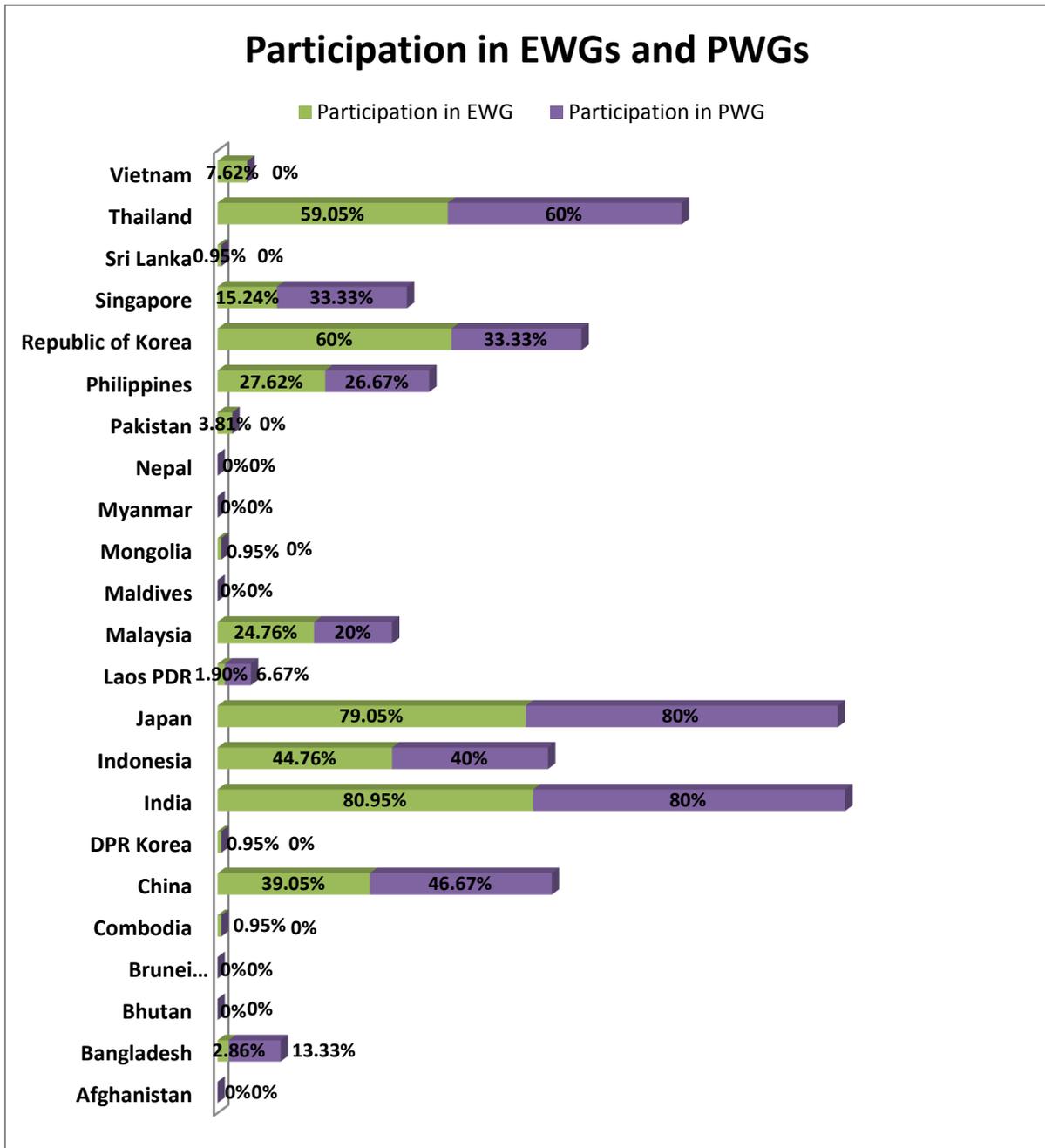


Figure II: Participation in the Electronic Working Groups and Physical Working Groups during 2014-2016

iii) Submission of New Work Proposals

21. The Figure III presented below indicates the quantum of new proposals for Codex work submitted by the Asian member countries and approved by the CAC during the period 2014 to 2016.

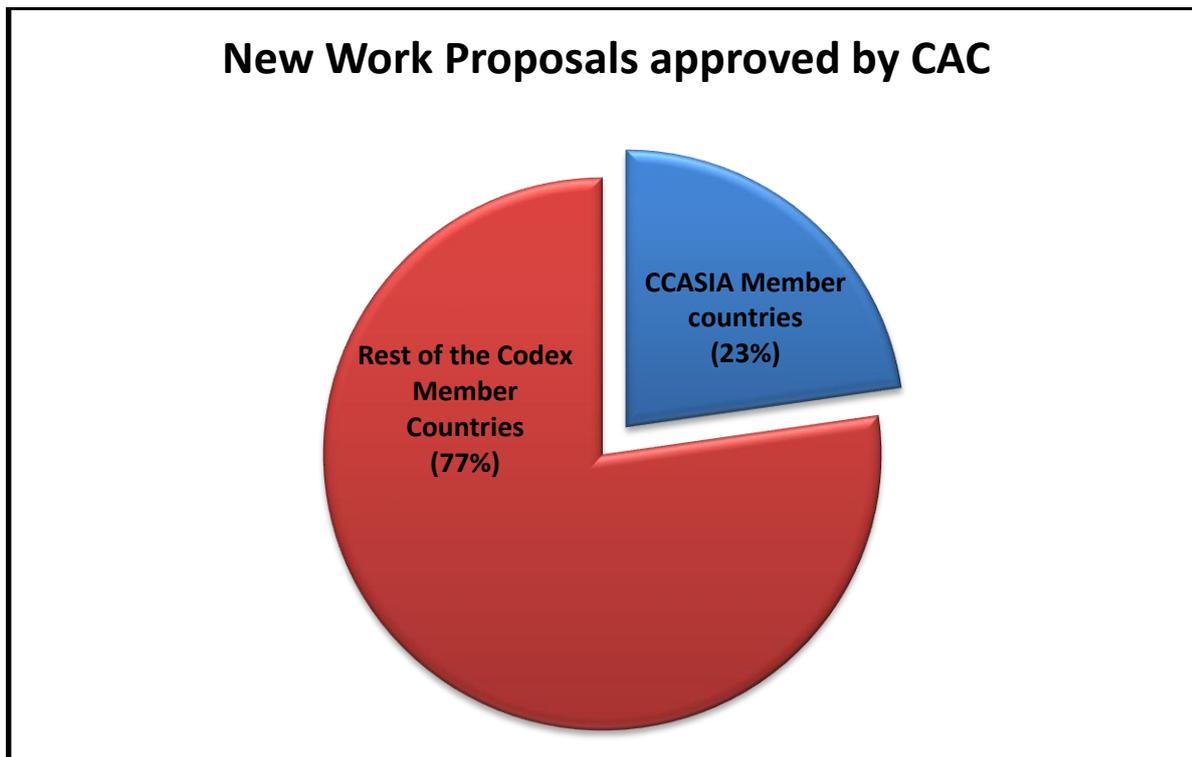


Figure III: New work proposals submitted by CCASIA members for elaboration of commodity standards.

22. Of the total new work undertaken in the Codex system, around 23% proposals originated from Asian region. However, such new work was proposed by a few countries in the region.

iv) Submission of scientific data in Codex Committees

23. Out of the nine member countries who responded to the questionnaire, seven countries have indicated submitting scientific data mainly in the Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods and the Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues.

IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS OF REGIONAL ISSUES CONCERNING CODEX WORK:

24. This section lists out the general and specific issues identified by the member countries who responded to the questionnaire and information taken out from respective Codex Committees' reports.

i) General issues related to the Codex work:

25. The table 2 below lists down issues identified based on the responses received from the questionnaire.

Table 2: General issues related to the Codex work

Issues	Country name	Remarks
Robust data collection and generation	Japan	Should improve our ability for quality assurance of the data and provide scientific data to the Codex in order to reflect the national and regional situations in Codex standards.
Discussion on Codex documents and formulating comments	Bangladesh	i) National Codex committee has been recently established which has 4 committees and has just begun to function ii) Stakeholders meetings are being organized but not frequently because the BSTI has 17 committees that are already developing food standards.
Participation in Codex committees	Mongolia	Participation in Codex sessions difficult due to financial constraints; difficulties in preparing and formulating national comments, such as interpretation, availability of scientific data and researches.
Formulating or preparing national comments		Lack of financial resources to support national activities in the area of Codex
Interpretation and translation of Codex documents		Lack of human resource
Preparation of new work proposals		Lack of experience
Submission of data	Philippines	Lack of research data in the particular area of interest
Preparation of new work proposals	Thailand	Proposal for elaborating a standard need to have the information of volume of production and consumption in individual countries and volume and pattern of trade between countries.
Preparation of country position/comments	Indonesia	Limited scientific data available for justification of comments
Understanding Codex documents		Some provisions in Codex documents are highly technical
Preparing new work proposals		Requires suitable experts, adequate funds, and adequate time.
Lack of integration of scientific data and its management	India	Lack of organized and integrated data generation and management system.

ii) **Specific issues related to the Codex committees:**

26. The specific issues listed in the table below are taken from the reports of the respective Codex Committees and as submitted by the member countries through the questionnaire.

Table 3: Specific concerns related to the region

No	Matters of interest	Codex Committee	Issue /concern to the region
1	COP for the prevention and reduction of arsenic contamination in rice	CCCF	Majority of the rice producing nations are in Asia. It is important to take into consideration the ground situation and practices followed in these countries; need to generate more occurrence data on arsenic contamination for a reasonable review of the ML.
2	Revision of maximum levels for lead in the GSCTFF namely: canned raspberries, canned strawberries, canned green beans and canned wax beans, canned green peas, jams (fruit preserves) and jellies, pickled cucumbers, mango chutney, preserved tomatoes, and table olives	CCCF	Any revision needs to take into consideration the occurrence data of these countries; Region needs to proactively generate scientific data to facilitate reasonable revision of the MLs.
3	Draft General Standard for Processed Cheese	CCMMP	The work on the General Standard for Processed Cheese needs to be continued as several countries in the region depend on the international standard for their own food regulatory system and also in dealing with imports of food products.
4	Proposed draft standard for dairy permeate powders	CCMMP	Appropriate product name and/or label description requirements need to be included in the standard to adequately inform the consumer about true nature of the product (i.e. being low in protein and lactose rich).
5	Revision of the <i>General Principles of Food Hygiene</i> (CAC/RCP 1 -1969) and its HACCP Annex	CCFH	GPFH and HAACP being a basic tool for ensuring food safety, it is important for the region to participate in the revision process to ensure that the revised documented is implementable in the ground situation prevalent in the member countries of the region.
6	Draft Guidance for monitoring the performance of national food control systems	CCFICS	Such guidance is specifically useful for countries in the Region where National Food Control System is still being set up or is evolving.
7	Guidance for the labeling of non-retail containers of food	CCFL	The proposed guidance is required to provide necessary flexibility and clarity in labelling provisions for non-retail containers for a uniform approach across the world and for ease of business-to-business trade in food.
8	Revision of <i>Guideline for the Production, Processing, Labelling and Marketing of Organically Produced Foods: Organic Aquaculture</i>	CCFL	The revision of Codex guidance, taking into consideration recent developments in this area, is necessary for organic aquaculture producers in the region for facilitation of fair trade internationally.
9	Standard for Aubergines (draft)	CCFFV	The issue pertaining to tolerances related provisions for different product classes in this standard need to be addressed suitably in order to avoid any impact on the product exports from the region.
10	Codex work on Anti-microbial resistance	TFAMR	Development of antimicrobial resistance is a universal phenomenon and it can have a seriously detrimental impact on developing countries where healthcare facilities are not adequate and grossly overburdened. Involvement of the Asian region in this work is very important given the fact that the Region is densely populated.

No	Matters of interest	Codex Committee	Issue /concern to the region
11	New work on guidance for histamine control in the <i>Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products</i> (CAC/RCP 52-2003) and sampling plans for histamine in standards for fish and fishery products	CCFFP	Histamine fish poisoning is among the most common toxicities related to fish ingestion and it would be prudent to have guidance for histamine control in CAC/RCP 52-2003
12	Mycotoxin in Spices	CCCF	Asian countries are major producers of spices and fixation of any unreasonable MLs of Mycotoxins in spices will have trade related implications

SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS:

27. Member countries' responses to the questionnaire and also the information taken out from the reports of CAC and Codex Committees (from CAC 2014-2016), have indicated minimal and in some cases negligible participation by a number of countries from the Asian region in the Codex Committees and work related to Codex activities (EWG, PWG, Chairing and co-chairing, Preparation of country comments, new work proposals etc.)

28. Some impediments for an effective involvement in Codex work, identified in this context, include, among others - lack of funding, non-availability of relevant experts, and underdeveloped National Codex Structures.

29. Difficulties in submitting scientific data to the Codex committees by the member countries due to lack of scientific experts, non-availability of data, and lack of mechanism for data integration and management has been identified as an issue.

30. There appears to be an impending need for establishing functional National Codex structures in several countries of the region such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Laos, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar and Nepal and strengthen already existing ones.

31. There are several items of importance currently under consideration of various Codex Committees. The region as a whole needs to effectively deal with such items of the Codex work.

32. The schedule of the informal meetings appears to have an impact on the level of participation and outcome of the meeting. The meetings held a day before have shown lesser level of participation, on the other hand meetings held on the same day of the plenary, have resulted in limited discussion on issues of the member countries and absence of a meaningful discussion due to time constraints.

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION:

33. The Committee may discuss the issues with the focus on the following points for identifying the way forward:

- i) Approaches to improve the effectiveness of informal meetings of the CCASIA member countries on the sidelines of Codex Committees' meetings and evolving an effective mechanism for prior discussions on the agenda items of Codex Committees' meetings in order to develop a consensus for regional positions
- ii) Identifying suitable ways for engagement of eligible countries of the region with Codex Trust Fund (CTF2) for their capacity building, including establishment of national level Codex structures; possibilities of submission of joint applications
- iii) Prioritizing work in the areas of identified specific concerns of the region and initiating regional collaboration for undertaking work on these. This may include joint monitoring of contaminants/residue levels in foods which, if acceptable to the members, could augment submission of contaminants/residue data of the region in a more inclusive manner thereby increasing the probability of standards being implementable by more members in the region.
- iv) Encouraging countries to jointly prepare and submit new work proposals of common interest; possibilities of information exchange amongst the countries of the region, including relevant data and scientific expert advice for preparing new work proposals.
- v) Encouraging more member countries to respond to the regional questionnaire(s) in future. Member countries may also discuss appropriateness of the questionnaire in Annex I with a view to improve its ability to gather relevant information.

Codex Work Relevant to the Region: Questionnaire

Name of the Country:

Please fill the information as per the questions below with respect to the year 2014-16.

1. Participation of CCASIA member countries in Codex Meetings since 2014

- Number of CAC Sessions attended
- Number of Codex committees' sessions attended
- Number of EWG and PWG attended
- Number of EWG and PWG chaired by your country
- Number of ASIA meetings attended by your country at the margins of CAC and its subsidiary bodies' sessions
- Difficulties faced in participation in the Codex meetings?

2. New Work Proposals (2014-2016)

- A. Number of new work proposed by your country in all the Codex Committees/ CAC
- B. Status of the new work proposals

Work Proposal	STATUS		Reason for Non-approval/ Delay; if any
	Approved by CAC (with current status in the Step procedure)	Not approved by CAC	

3. Issues related to Codex work in the region

Please fill in the general and specific issues related to Codex work in the tables provided below:

A. General issues related to the Codex work (include difficulties in accessing the Codex Website, understanding Codex documents, formulating comments, preparing new work proposals etc.)	
Issues	Reasons

B. Specific issues related to the Codex Committee work (issues/concerns that the country has currently raised or would like to discuss in the future under particular Codex Committee)		
Issue of Interest and/or concern	Codex Committee	Reason

4. Availability of Data in the Codex Committees (2014-2016)

A. Under which Codex Committees, scientific data has been furnished by your country:

Codex Committee	Agenda under which scientific data was submitted

B. Please identify barriers in generation and submission of data.