

## **World organizations for food governance**

At the global level, several organizations such as the United Nations (UN), Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), World Health Organization (WHO), the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) play a role in food governance through formulating and enforcing rules regarding production, manufacturing, trade and distribution. These rules are based on a variety of motives such as protecting human rights, promoting health, ensuring food safety, promoting fair or free trade, dealing with incidents and promoting economic development.

**UN** – The main tasks of the UN are to ensure international peace, security and respect for human rights.

**FAO** – The FAO's objective is to eradicate hunger and to make high quality food accessible to all. It aims to improve nutrition, raise agricultural production and contribute to the world economy.

**WHO** – To monitor global health trends, coordinate health care activities and promote health of the world's population.

**WTO** – It is a platform for negotiations on world trade. Regarding trade, it helps in resolving conflicts between different countries and territories. There are three major domains under WTO: trade in goods, trade in services and intellectual property rights. The most important domain is the trade in goods.

### **The Codex Alimentarius**

In 1961, the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) was established by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

The Codex Alimentarius refers to "A collection of internationally recognized standards, guidelines, codes of practice and recommendations related to foods, food production and food safety under the aim of consumer protection".

## **Goals of Codex Alimentarius Commission**

Major goals

- To protect the health of consumers and
- To ensure fair practices in the international food trade.

Regarding food safety and consumer protection, it is recognized by the WTO as an international reference point for the resolution of disputes.

The codex commission meets every 2 years alternatively in FAO head quarter in Rome & at WHO head quarter in Geneva. Under codex rules, there are two kinds of committees as:

1. Codex Committee: It prepares draft of standards for submission to the commission
2. Coordinating Committee: It coordinates food standard activities in the region.

## **Procedural Manual**

The 'constitution' of the Codex Alimentarius is the Procedural Manual. The Procedural Manual not only specifies the procedures and format for setting Codex standards and guidelines but also presents some general scientific principles and definitions.

## **Standards**

Food standards are established through an elaborate procedure of international negotiations. They address all principal foods, whether processed, semi-processed or raw. It includes general standards, like the General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods.

## **Codes**

In addition to formally accepted standards, the Codex includes recommended provisions called codes of practice or guidelines. These include, for example, a Code of Ethics for International Trade in Food and a set of hygiene codes like the Recommended International Code of Practice – General Principles of Food Hygiene and the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system and guidelines for its application.

## **Legal Enforcement**

The Codex standards are not legally binding norms and are of voluntary nature. Member states undertake to transform the Codex standards into national legislation.

## **General standards and codes**

- **Food labelling** (general standard, guidelines on nutrition labelling, guidelines on labelling claims)
- **Food additives** (general standard including authorized uses, specifications for food grade chemicals)
- **Contaminants** in foods (general standard, tolerances for specific contaminants including radionuclides (to kill parasites, to control ripening of stored fruits and vegetables), aflatoxins (toxins from fungus) etc)
- **Pesticide** and veterinary chemical residues in foods (maximum residual limits)
- **Risk assessment** procedures for determining the safety of foods derived from biotechnology (DNA-modified plants, DNA-modified micro-organisms)
- **Food hygiene** (general principles, codes of hygienic practice in specific industries or food handling establishments, guidelines for the use of the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system)
- **Methods of analysis and sampling**

## **Specific Standards regarding**

- Meat products (fresh, frozen, processed meats and poultry)
- Fish and fishery products (marine, fresh water and aquaculture)
- Milk and milk products
- Foods for special dietary uses (including infant formula and baby foods)
- Fresh and processed vegetables, fruits, and fruit juices
- Cereals and dried legumes
- Fats, oils and derived products such as margarine
- Miscellaneous food products (chocolate, sugar, honey, mineral water)