



United States Department of Agriculture

U.S. CODEX PROGRAM STRATEGIC PLAN 2019 - 2023



Message from the U.S. Codex Manager



On behalf of the U.S. Codex Program, I am pleased to share the new U.S. Codex Strategic Plan, covering fiscal years 2019-2023. The new plan was developed through a comprehensive, collaborative process involving input from all U.S. agencies with an interest in the international food standards work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, a broad array of external stakeholders, and the public. It provides a sound blueprint for greater progress in advancing the dual mandate of the Codex Alimentarius: protecting consumer health and ensuring fair practices in the food trade through the development of international, science-based standards.

The United States participates in Codex work because we value both aspects of the Codex mandate. As a major food importer, we benefit from the establishment and implementation of science-based global food safety standards that will protect American consumers by providing greater assurance of the safety of imported foods. As a major agricultural exporter, we benefit from implementation of harmonized standards that level the playing field and open markets to fair trade in safe food. As U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue has stated, “Food is a noble thing to trade.” Codex helps ensure that trade is fair, and that the food traded internationally is safe for consumers around the world.

The U.S. Codex Program 2019-2023 Strategic Plan encompasses a broad scope, leverages past achievements, reflects the collective interests of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, and takes into account emerging developments and challenges facing Codex Alimentarius. It aims to provide for increased stakeholder involvement, advance U.S. interests in Codex, increase the visibility and profile of the U.S. Codex Program, improve program integration and management, and enhance the leadership role of the United States in international Codex work. A fundamental premise of the plan is the critical need for Codex to remain true to its founding principles, including the fundamental principle that standards should be based on science and not driven by other factors that are outside of the Codex mandate. Several key objectives support this overarching principle, so essential to the establishment of sound international standards that protect consumers worldwide and ensure fair trade practices that promote economic growth and development. To implement the Plan, U.S. Codex must engage both domestic stakeholders and international partners to address emerging trends and collaborate effectively in the development of harmonized standards that safeguard public health and fair trade interests both in the United States and worldwide. We look forward to implementation of this new Strategic Plan, and invite all interested stakeholders to join with our interagency partnership in working to achieve the ambitious goals and objectives set forth in the following pages.



Mary Frances Lowe
U.S. Manager, Codex Alimentarius

Introduction



Ted McKinney
 USDA Under Secretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs
 Vice Chair of the U.S. Codex Policy Committee

"The U.S. Codex Program provides great value to our national and global communities. I am fully committed to its success and passionate that science-based food standards continue to be adopted at Codex Alimentarius."



Carmen Rottenberg
 USDA Acting Under Secretary for Food Safety
 Chair of the U.S. Codex Policy Committee

"The interagency U.S. Codex Program, in representing the United States' interests, is committed to Codex as the preeminent international food standards-setting body in establishing science-based food standards. We will continue our strong focus on protecting the health of consumers and promoting fair practices in the food trade."

Acronyms

AMS Agricultural Marketing Service
APHIS Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
CAC Codex Alimentarius Commission
DOS United States Department of State
EPA United States Environmental Protection Agency
FAO United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization
FAS Foreign Agricultural Service
FDA Food and Drug Administration
FSIS Food Safety and Inspection Service
HHS United States Department of Health and Human Services

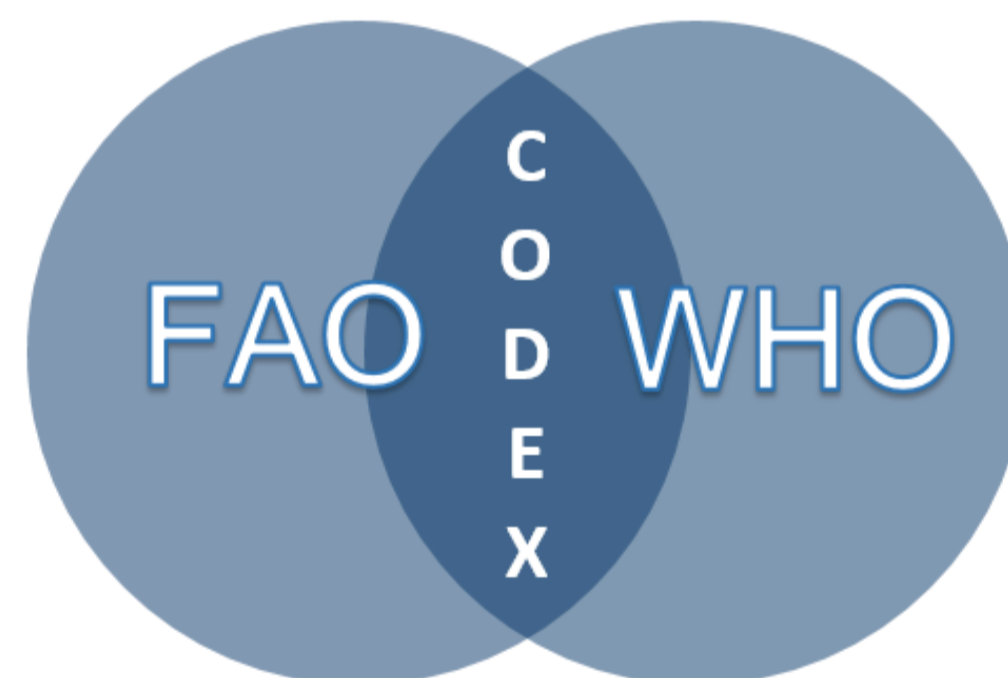
NGO Nongovernmental Organization
NOAA National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
OIE World Organisation for Animal Health
TFAA Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs (USDA mission area)
USCO United States Codex Office
USDA United States Department of Agriculture
USTR Office of the United States Trade Representative
WHO United Nations World Health Organization
WTO World Trade Organization

The U.S. Codex Program

The U.S. Codex Program is a U.S. Government interagency partnership that engages stakeholders in advancing science-based standards for food safety and quality. These standards protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade.

Through the U.S. Codex Program, the United States participates in the work of the international Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC), which was established in 1963 by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO)¹ with a mandate to protect consumer health and ensure fair trade practices through the development of international food standards that are based on science. The CAC is also charged with promoting international coordination and harmonization of food standards. The CAC bases its work on the advice of independent, international expert scientific bodies convened by FAO and WHO.

The CAC is recognized as the international food standards-setting body for food safety in the World Trade Organization Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (WTO SPS Agreement), which means that countries who use Codex standards as their national food standards enjoy a presumption that they meet WTO SPS Agreement obligations to base SPS measures on science and risk assessment. As a major agricultural importer and exporter, the United States benefits from our participation in Codex both in terms of protection for U.S. consumers and in opening markets to U.S. exports and enhancing acceptance of new technologies in the food arena. Codex standards help enable fair trade in safe food.



-  **PROTECT** the health of consumers
-  **ENSURE** fair practices in the food trade
-  **PROMOTE** coordination of all food standards

¹ The CAC is composed of 188 member countries, 1 Member Organization, and more than 200 intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations that have observer status. See http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/codexalimentarius/doc/CA0162-MX172_web.pdf.

Codex Alimentarius

The CAC conducts its work through a number of specialized subsidiary bodies—commodity and general subject committees, regional coordinating committees, task forces, and supporting working groups. (See Figure 2.) These subsidiary bodies are hosted (and chaired) by member countries who organize and bear the costs of meetings and provide host country secretariat services, including translation of documents and interpretation services.

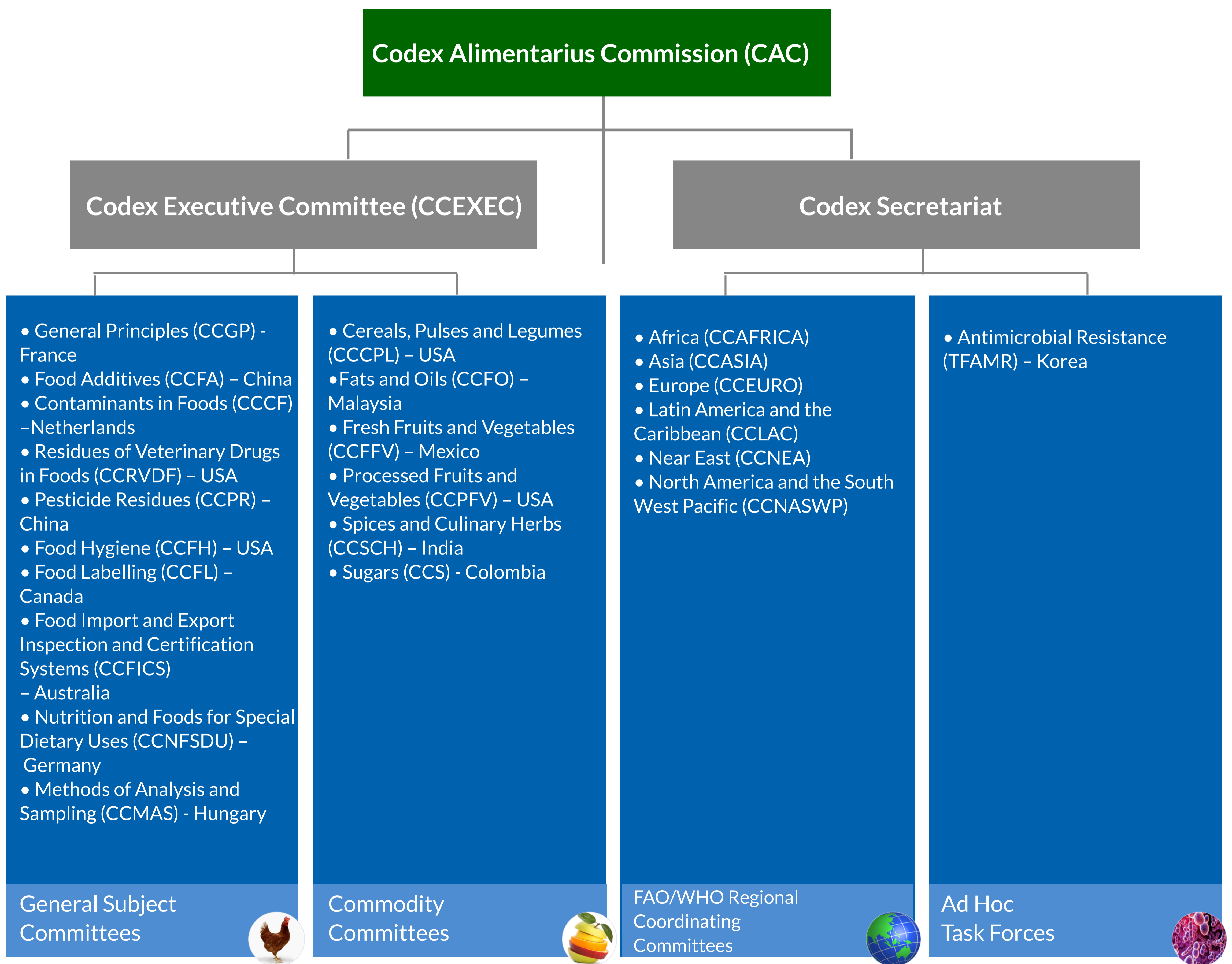


Figure 2. United Nations Codex Alimentarius committee structure and chair countries (as of November 2018).

Interagency Partners

Given the range of issues and expertise the work requires, several federal agencies participate in the U.S. Codex Program through providing delegates to represent the United States in the subsidiary bodies' meetings and at the annual CAC meeting. U.S. Delegates to Codex Committees come primarily from the agencies within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that are responsible for setting standards under U.S. law. Other U.S. agency officials also participate in policy and coordination activities, ensuring input from both food safety regulatory and trade perspectives.

U.S. Codex Program participating departments and agencies include:

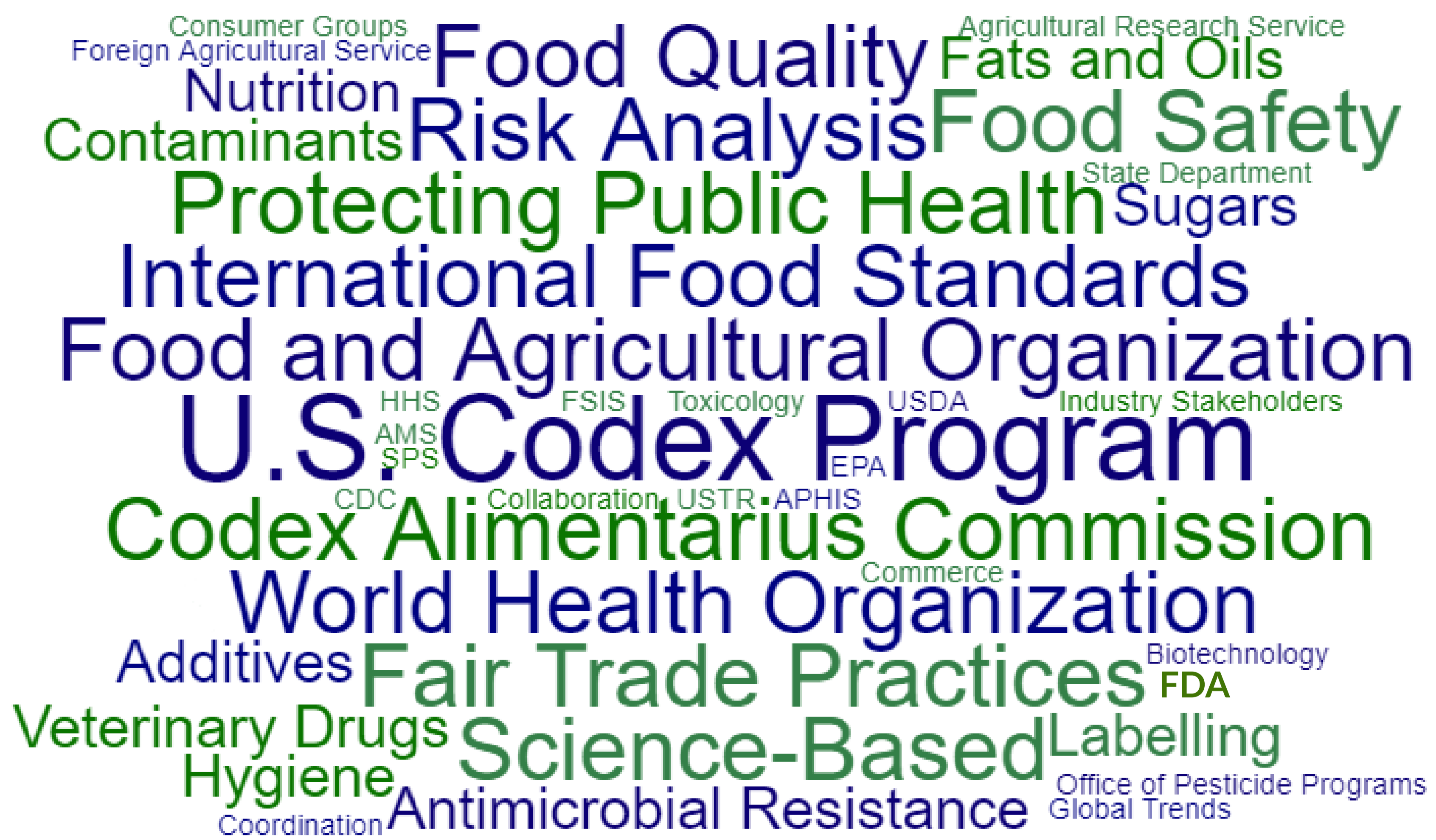
- USDA, including the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), Agricultural Research Service (ARS), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS), and U.S. Codex Office (USCO)
- HHS, including the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Office of Pesticide Programs
- U.S. Department of State
- U.S. Department of Commerce, including the International Trade Administration (ITA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
- Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR).



Governance

The U.S. Codex Office (USCO), housed in USDA’s Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs mission area, acts as the national focal point for the U.S. Codex Program. USCO manages planning, policy development, decision-making, implementation support, outreach and coordination for U.S. involvement with the Codex Alimentarius Commission and its subsidiary bodies. The USCO helps ensure that U.S. policy approaches and positions are consistent across Codex Committees. Program funding primarily supports convening Codex Committees that the United States hosts, collaborative outreach, WHO/FAO scientific review activities, and salaries. To encourage transparency and inclusiveness, the USCO facilitates public participation by scheduling public meetings before each major international Codex session, providing bi-weekly information related to Codex through a subscription newsletter service, and regularly engaging with stakeholders.

The Program obtains policy direction and governance from the senior leaders who serve on the interagency² Codex Policy Committee (chaired by the Under Secretary for Food Safety, with the Under Secretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs as vice chair), supported by an interagency Technical Committee composed of senior career officials from key regulatory and trade agencies.



² “Interagency” throughout this Plan means all agencies within and across Departments that are part of the U.S. Codex Program.

Strategic Framework

Background

The goals, objectives, strategies, and measures set forth in this FY2019-2023 U.S. Codex Program Strategic Plan (hereafter Plan or Strategic Plan) provide a framework for understanding how the U.S. Codex Program (hereafter Program) functions, and key areas of focus for fulfilling its mission.

Program activities contribute to several Departments' and agencies' missions, goals, outcomes, objectives, and strategies. For example, they generally align with the USDA FY2018-2022 Strategic Plan Goal 3, *Promote American Agricultural Products and Exports*, and Goal 7, *Provide All Americans Access to a Safe, Nutritious, and Secure Food Supply*;³ and HHS Strategic Plan Goal 2: *Protect the Health of Americans Where They Live, Learn, Work, and Play*,⁴ and other associated agendas and plans.⁵ In addition, U.S. Codex Program efforts align with key international Codex Alimentarius goals, objectives, activities, and expected outcomes as set forth in the 2014-2019 CAC Strategic Plan,⁶ and are intended to align with similar efforts in its 2020-2025 Strategic Plan.

Plan Development, Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation

The Program's strategic planning effort began with establishing an overall approach to plan development—obtaining early input from partners, identifying themes, and confirming strategic direction. After initial visioning and mapping of Program goals and those of the Codex Alimentarius, USCO conducted approximately 50 interviews with a large sample of involved parties, including U.S. delegates and alternate delegates, U.S. committee chairs, U.S. Codex Policy and Technical Committee members, U.S. Codex Office staff, other federal stakeholders, industry and consumer group stakeholders, and others involved in the Program and process. This approach included proposing and obtaining feedback on goals, objectives, strategies, actions, and measures as the Plan took shape; convening a public meeting; and confirming that key elements were sufficiently addressed in the Plan to reflect the combined intentions and commitments of the interagency partnership that is the U.S. Codex Program.

The Plan will be complemented by internal annual action plans to achieve Program goals and objectives. The Program, through the U.S. Codex Office, intends to put in place annual metrics that are outcome-based, to track progress—such as on priority activities that achieve favorable outcomes, and gauging feedback from key internal and external partners. The Office also plans to conduct a midpoint review to enable adjustments to objectives and strategies as necessary to achieve desired goals and outcomes.

³ USDA FY2018-2022 Strategic Plan.

⁴ HHS FY2018-2022 Strategic Plan.

⁵ See, for example, *The President's 2018 Trade Policy Agenda*, Section D (1)(b), p. 31.

⁶ Codex Alimentarius FY2014-2019 Strategic Plan.

Vision, Mission, Goals, and Values

Vision

Improve the lives of people worldwide through adoption of international food standards that protect the health of consumers and promote fair practices in the food trade.

Mission

Develop and advance science-based international food standards that benefit the United States and the worldwide community.

Goals

- 1) Develop and advance sound U.S. approaches that promote the adoption of science-based food standards by the Codex Alimentarius Commission and its members.
- 2) Strengthen U.S. leadership and broaden support for effective Codex Alimentarius decision-making and consensus-building.
- 3) Improve management, integration, and understanding of the U.S. Codex Program's activities and value to U.S. participants, stakeholders, the nation, and the global community.

Core Values

INTEGRITY: Holding ourselves accountable to the highest standards of personal and professional integrity as we work to promote science-based approaches that help ensure the integrity of food standards grounded in the principles of risk analysis, and uphold public health and fair trade ideals.

COLLABORATION: Leveraging the diverse expertise and resources of the Program and stakeholders to cultivate and maintain an environment that thrives on information sharing and transparency.

INNOVATION: Supporting cutting-edge, science-based technologies and their associated standards that enable sustainable agricultural production and increased food safety and food quality.

LEADERSHIP: Strategically providing continued, active, and visible leadership nationally and in Codex Alimentarius bodies

Goal 1

Develop and advance sound U.S. approaches that promote the adoption of science-based food standards by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

This Goal focuses on timely, sound, viable U.S. policy position development, U.S. government senior leadership engagement with foreign government and international organization counterparts on key U.S. priorities and issues, and vigorous promotion of science-based, rules-based decision making by Codex Alimentarius and its members.

OBJECTIVE 1.1

Develop priority U.S. positions in a timely and inclusive manner.



STRATEGY 1.1.1

Ensure efficient and effective interaction between and among delegates, industry and consumer stakeholders, and interagency senior leadership on priority U.S. positions and approaches.

OBJECTIVE 1.2

Extend and enhance engagement with key officials at international organizations and other countries



STRATEGY 1.2.1

Promote greater appreciation of the value of a science-based, rules-based Codex process to senior officials in other Codex member countries, and to the leadership of Codex Alimentarius, the WHO, the FAO, the World Organisation for Animal Health, and other key organizations.

STRATEGY 1.2.2

Leverage existing relationships and engagements of high-level U.S. government officials to advocate U.S. positions.

OBJECTIVE 1.3

Promote a science-based, rules-based, well-managed Codex Alimentarius.



STRATEGY 1.3.1

Actively support respect for the prioritization, authoritativeness, and use of Codex Alimentarius scientific bodies' expert advice.

STRATEGY 1.3.2

Provide support to scientific advice activities that fulfill high-priority needs.

STRATEGY 1.3.3

Strongly encourage cost-effective use of Codex Alimentarius resources to ensure the most beneficial returns on investments.

Goal 2

Strengthen U.S. leadership and broaden support for effective Codex Alimentarius decision-making and consensus-building.

This Goal focuses on building on the successes of existing collaboration with other Codex member countries to inform U.S. position development and implementation and to secure support for a strong and effective Codex standards development process. The Program will continue its outreach efforts to support and effectively partner with a broad range of member countries to enhance its own capacity and that of other countries, and to promote regular information exchange and dialogue.

OBJECTIVE 2.1

Maintain and expand regular regional and bilateral collaborations to identify and address emerging and current issues and trends for U.S. position development.

OBJECTIVE 2.2

Build Codex member countries' capacity to effectively engage in Codex activities.

OBJECTIVE 2.3

Leverage U.S. leadership presence in Codex Alimentarius, and interagency expertise and resources, to influence committee activities.



STRATEGY 2.1.1

Develop consensus-based positions that reflect U.S. interests, and are informed by meaningful engagement with other Codex members and international stakeholders.

STRATEGY 2.2.1

Enhance key member countries' subject matter expertise on Codex procedures and processes.

STRATEGY 2.3.1

Enable and ensure U.S. excellence in Codex committee participation and management.

STRATEGY 2.1.2

Better target the nature and emphasis of information sharing and support to the needs of Codex members.

STRATEGY 2.2.2

Assist countries in the adoption and implementation of Codex guidance and standards.

STRATEGY 2.3.2

Support effective U.S. participation and representation in Codex bodies and supporting activities.

STRATEGY 2.3.3

Maintain vigilance regarding cost-effective use of Codex Alimentarius resources to encourage the most beneficial returns on investments.

Goal 3

Improve management, integration, and understanding of the U.S. Codex Program’s activities and value to U.S. participants, stakeholders, the nation, and the global community.

This Goal focuses on ensuring that the U.S. Codex Program’s management practices and information sharing approaches enable smooth operations, enhanced communication, and greater public understanding of the value the Program delivers, nationally and internationally.

OBJECTIVE 3.1

Implement well-coordinated, timely, and viable committee-level approaches to achieve results beneficial to U.S. and Codex interests.



STRATEGY 3.1.1

Support delegates in developing positions and planning and executing strategies; integrating interagency views; and building consensus, in negotiations at the Codex committee, task force, and working group levels.

STRATEGY 3.1.2

Identify and deploy more effective engagement approaches with U.S. Codex Program Policy and Technical Committees.

OBJECTIVE 3.2

Increase the visibility and effectiveness of the U.S. Codex Program by enhancing external communications and internal program interactions.



STRATEGY 3.2.1

Expand communications and relationships with public health, trade, and other leaders within and across sectors and stakeholder groups.

STRATEGY 3.2.2

Enhance overall U.S. Codex Program management and governance.



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