



New Zealand's Strategic Objectives in Codex

2022–2026



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Strategic Statement and Overview

- This document is to guide New Zealand's participation in the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (commonly known as Codex) and to ensure that we advance our objectives in an efficient, systematic, and cost-effective manner.

New Zealand and Codex: Strategic context and drivers

- New Zealand is a founding member of Codex, the international food standards body that was established in 1963 by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations and the World Health Organization. We enjoy a strong profile and track record in terms of leadership and technical expertise in promoting the international food standards for health protection and trade. We take part in key Codex committees and have played a leading role in the development of international standards that reflect New Zealand interests in food hygiene, food additives, pesticide and veterinary drug residues, food labelling, health protection, nutrition, food inspection and certification systems, commodity standards, and methods of analysis and sampling.
- The MPI Strategic Vision and Goals emphasises visible leadership as key to advancing our strategic goals of prosperity, protection, and sustainability and helps inform the Codex Performance Framework for New Zealand's participation in Codex (refer Appendix 1). Visible leadership includes growing our partnership with Iwi and Māori to identify and promote initiatives in Codex relevant to advancing their trade, health protection/hauora, food safety, and economic interests.
- The Strategy for New Zealand Food Safety, Strategy Refresh 2022-2024 and Global Market Access Strategy 2019-2024 attach high priority to the work of Codex and call for New Zealand to continue its influential role in the organisation and continue to align our own regulatory frameworks and standards with those in global use. Fit for a Better World – Accelerating our Economic Potential, the primary sector's road map and vision for the future also recognises the importance of investing in international organisations to boost recognition of New Zealand's high primary production standards and 'front-foot' our international trade response. International food standards will be integral to realising the MPI goal of growing our primary exports by an additional \$44 billion by 2030. Our on-going investment in Codex work will be critical to minimising technical barriers to trade through the development of sound international standards and "rules-based" trade.
- As the lead agency for Codex in New Zealand, MPI has long recognised the importance of Codex to advance our food safety, health protection, nutrition, fair practices in food trade, and market access interests. MPI works closely with the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and other key government agencies in advancing our interests in Codex. MPI also engages actively with industry, consumer, and public interest groups to ensure that New Zealand positions on Codex issues take into account wider stakeholder interests. Engagement with Iwi/Māori aims to promote knowledge and awareness of Codex and explore opportunities to support and grow their economic aspirations in the international trade context.
- New Zealand contributes to Codex (and the other international standard setting bodies) so that the standards, guidelines, and recommendations are founded on sound principles, scientific evidence and reflect our own practices and operating environment.



- It is clear that there are significant consumer health and trade benefits derived from our contributions to Codex including risk-based health protection, nutrition, and food safety standards; reduced compliance costs to industry, importers and exporters; access to new markets by removing technical barriers; and creating growth opportunities.

The International framework

- New Zealand is a signatory to the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement) and the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT Agreement).
- The work of Codex is critical to advancing the objectives of these agreements, as one of the three recognised international standards setting bodies.
- Codex food safety standards are recognised as international benchmarks under the SPS Agreement.
- The SPS Agreement provides a strong rules-based framework for development of sound, science based international standards and encourages its members to harmonise with international standards, guidelines, and recommendations to the maximum extent possible.
- The TBT Agreement is also relevant to Codex given that many of the components of food standards relate to product description, labelling, consumer information and appropriate trade practices.



Strategic Objectives

Strategic Objective 1:

Influence standards relevant to New Zealand's food safety, health protection, nutrition, and trade interests by actively participating in Codex

Rationale

- As a trading country New Zealand has a strong interest in safe food, minimising technical barriers to trade and promoting the development of international food standards, guidelines and recommendations that strongly reflect our interests. New Zealand has a sound track record in initiating and leading the development of international standards across key areas of Codex. Through our hosting of the Codex Committees on Meat Hygiene (CCMH) and Milk and Milk Products (CCMMP). New Zealand has led the development of international food safety and suitability standards in two areas of major economic significance. Through leadership and participation in both general subject and commodity committees (refer to Appendix 2 - Structure of the Codex Alimentarius Commission). New Zealand is well positioned to contribute new thinking and promote the development of international standards essential to advancing our trade and market access interests.
- It is critical New Zealand prioritises Codex work both in terms of our leadership and our broader participation. This will be achieved through an active and transparent process that reflects wider New Zealand priorities and international trade realities.
- Codex is a consensus-based organisation that relies on strong collaborative relationships to achieve common goals and objectives. While traditional alliances remain important, the changing trade and membership dynamics in Codex call for strengthening links and collaboration with wider Member country groupings and observer organisations.
- Given the importance of risk assessment and expert scientific advice to development of sound international standards, New Zealand should continue to provide technical expertise to expert consultations and scientific panels.

Implementation strategies and actions

- Lead and participate in standard development in prioritised areas of importance to New Zealand.
- Strengthen strategic links and partnerships with key stakeholders and Codex members including those in the South West Pacific region to support development of standards, guidelines, and recommendations in areas of mutual interest.
- Ensure strong liaison and co-ordination within MPI on new and emerging trade issues and resourcing of the work programme.
- Provide New Zealand expertise and technical data to international scientific bodies and expert consultations.



- Engage actively with industry and other stakeholders (including government agencies as relevant) on Codex matters.
- Build strong relationships with key offshore regulatory agencies within Codex member countries.
- Engage with Māori/Iwi to understand their aspirations for international trade in food products, and how those aspirations can be supported through Codex.
- Support the food safety, health protection/hauora, trade and economic interests of Māori/Iwi in the work of Codex.

Outcomes

- New Zealand's priority consumer health and trade interests are reflected in Codex standards, guidelines, and recommendations.
- New Zealand is recognised as an important, principled, and expert contributor to Codex.
- The robustness of New Zealand's food safety and export assurance systems is recognised by Member countries.
- The views of Pacific Island countries in the South West Pacific region are taken into account in developing New Zealand positions.
- Māori/Iwi health protection/hauora, economic and trade interests, and perspectives, are taken into account in the New Zealand Codex work programme.
- Primary sector trade and economic interests and perspectives are taken into account in the New Zealand Codex work programme.

Performance indicators

- All New Zealand's priority food safety and trade interests as documented in the annual Codex work plan are reflected in the development of Codex standards, guidelines, and recommendations.
- New Zealand experts continue to be invited to participate in risk assessment bodies and expert panels.
- New Zealand's positions are consistent with the Crown's Treaty of Waitangi obligations.
- The views and interests of Pacific Island countries in the South West Pacific region are considered in the development of New Zealand positions on Codex issues.



Strategic Objective 2:

Ensure New Zealand's regulatory systems are informed by and aligned with Codex

Rationale

- As noted, New Zealand is a signatory to the WTO SPS and TBT Agreements. Therefore, we have a clear obligation to ensure that our food regulatory systems are informed by and aligned with Codex standards, guidelines, and recommendations.
- The alignment of our national regulatory system will be greatly improved by the active engagement of MPI policy and technical experts in all relevant aspects of Codex work and parallel engagement with counterpart competent authorities around the world.

Implementation strategies and actions

- Systematically evaluate and review New Zealand food legislation (including those in the joint trans-Tasman food system¹) to take account of Codex standards, guidelines, and recommendations.
- Facilitate active engagement and participation of New Zealand food regulatory professionals in the work of Codex committees of priority interest to New Zealand.

Outcomes

- New Zealand food regulatory systems and standards are aligned with Codex standards, guidelines, and recommendations as far as practicable.
- The technical competence of New Zealand regulatory professionals and their experience of international regulatory systems is enhanced.

Performance indicators

- Any divergence between New Zealand legislation and Codex standards, guidelines, and recommendations, as identified through market access issues, is understood, and justified on the basis of WTO SPS and TBT principles.
- New Zealand food legislation and interests are reflected in the development and progression of Codex standards, guidelines, and recommendations of priority interest.

¹ Noting New Zealand shares a joint food standard system with Australia. New Zealand is one of ten members including nine Australian States and Territories. Any changes need majority agreement.



Strategic Objective 3:

Promote a strong Codex system and advocate for global uptake and use of Codex standards, guidelines, and recommendations

Rationale

- There is renewed interest in Codex and its membership to advance global health protection, food safety, nutrition, and trade objectives through active advocacy and support for international harmonisation in line with the provisions of the WTO SPS and TBT Agreements. As a trading nation, New Zealand has a strategic imperative to support greater uptake and use of international food standards and to achieve improved and equitable health protection, food safety and trade outcomes.
- New Zealand is actively promoting approaches that strengthen Codex management and standard-setting processes to deal with current and emerging food safety, health protection, nutrition, and trade issues in a timely and efficient manner. The rapid growth in membership and changing membership dynamics call for new initiatives to promote consensus and timely advancement of standards.

Implementation strategies and Actions

- In cooperation with other relevant government agencies, continue to engage in strategic, policy and governance aspects of Codex where New Zealand expertise can contribute to efficiency gains and organisational improvements.
- Support consideration of and work on new and emerging issues.
- Promote the work of Codex in other fora as the opportunity arises.
- Support work improving the overall efficiency of Codex structures and processes for standards development particularly in the post COVID era.
- Actively contribute to international efforts to promote the uptake and use of Codex standards, guidelines, and recommendations.
- Contribute to bilateral and plurilateral trade initiatives that strengthen national capacities to apply international standards and related texts.
- Support initiatives to strengthen national capacities and systems supporting engagement in Codex in Pacific Island countries.

Outcomes

- Visible contribution of New Zealand to strengthening Codex.
- Increased international uptake and use of Codex standards, guidelines, and recommendations by countries with significant trade with New Zealand.
- Collaboration on Codex work of mutual interest with countries with whom New Zealand has established or is developing trade agreements.

Performance indicators

- Increased New Zealand access to international markets through the recognition and uptake of Codex standards, guidelines, and recommendations in regard to New Zealand foods and food products.
- Demonstrable use of New Zealand expertise in support of strengthening Codex capacities.
- New Zealand ideas for improving Codex organisational processes are successfully advanced through relevant Codex committees, including at the global leadership level.



Appendix 1:

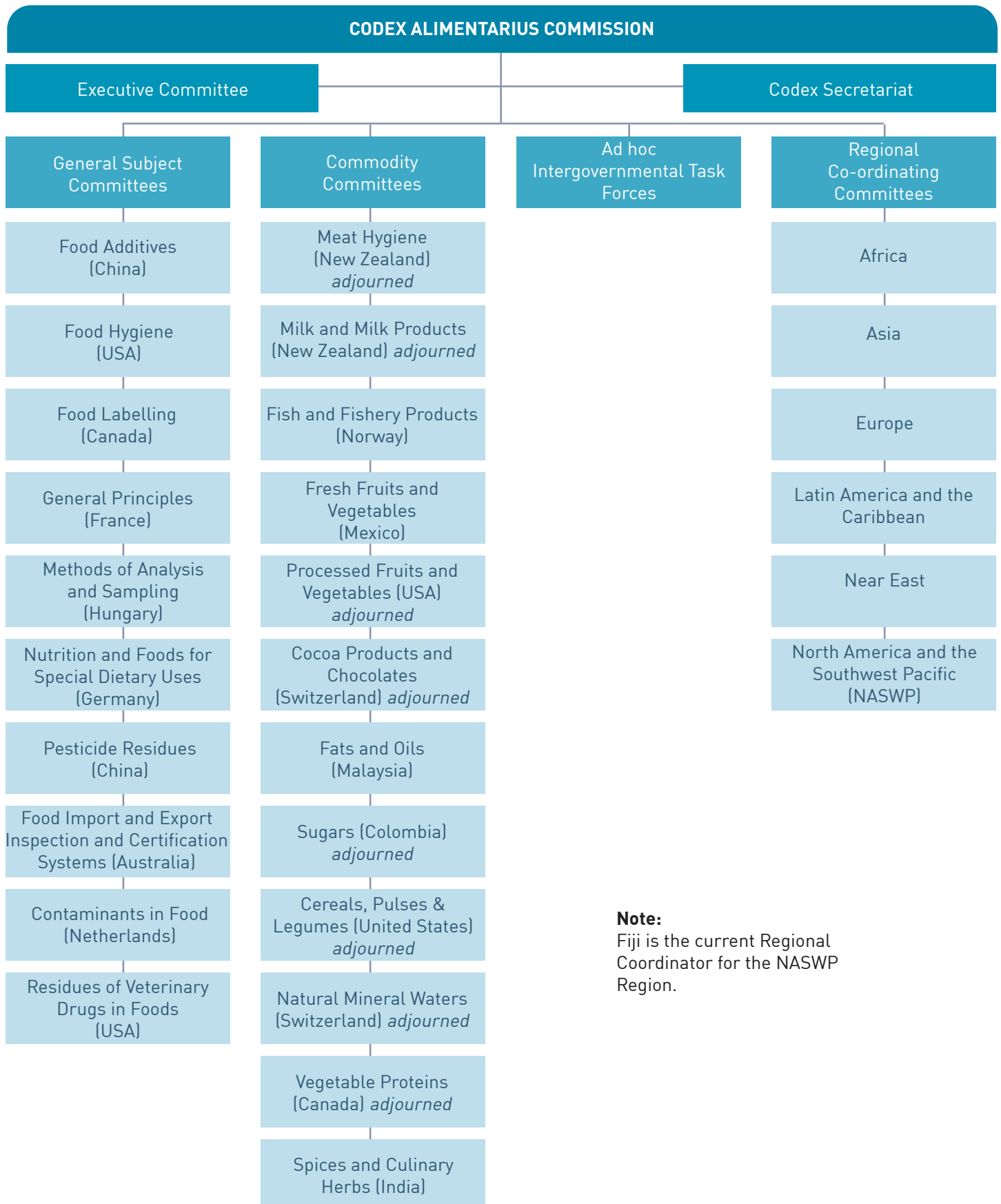
Codex Performance Framework for New Zealand's participation in Codex





Appendix 2:

Structure of the Codex Alimentarius Commission



Ministry for Primary Industries

Manatū Ahu Matua

PO Box 2526, Wellington 6140

New Zealand

0800 00 83 33

www.mpi.govt.nz