ROADMAP FOR CODEX CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT -

CODEX STRATEGY 2023-2026

People's Republic of Bangladesh

Contents

1. Introduction

This document presents a Roadmap for Codex Capacity Enhancement for the People's Republic of Bangladesh, covering the period 2023-26, which serves as a Codex Strategy for the same period.

Supported by Food and Agriculture Export Alliance (FAEA) and funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), a Codex Strategy 2023-2026 for Bangladesh resulted from a Codex Capacity Assessment Study carried out in early 2023, and a Codex stakeholder workshop gathering key government organizations involved in Codex and some industry organizations.

Both the study and the workshop reviewed the current Codex Program being delivered in Bangladesh, including the level of participation in Codex proceedings, and the way Codex activities were being organized. The study used the framework of the Codex Capacity Assessment tool developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO)[1].

This framework considered the following criteria for assessment:

- ❖ Codex resources.
- ❖ Institutional arrangements, if any.
- ❖ Governance structures.
- ❖ Stakeholder engagement.
- ❖ How Codex texts and standards are currently referenced in food regulatory decisions (food legislation and regulations of Bangladesh).

Meetings with representatives of food competent authorities and some industry organizations in Bangladesh, both virtual and in person allowed facilitated discussions on codex activities, capacities and limitations observed by these organizations in fulfilling their role as active members of the Codex community.

While several government organizations have the mandate to be involved in Codex activities, two (2) in particular:

- ❖ The Bangladesh Standards Testing Institute (BSTI), host of the Codex Standard and
- ❖ The Bangladesh Food Safety Authority (BFSA)

Have a mandate that position them to be the two key contributors in the delivery of the Codex Program in Bangladesh, while ensuring the broader participation of other competent authorities with relevant food regulatory oversight (e.g., Department of Livestock services in the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Health, Department of Fisheries) as well as the relevant stakeholders.

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[1] Diagnostic Tool for Assessing Status of National Codex Programmes, FAO/WHO, 2016, accessed in January 2023 through
https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241512800

In this document, the terminologies of "Roadmap for Codex Capacity Enhancement 2023-26 in Bangladesh" and "Codex Strategy 2023-26 for Bangladesh" will be used interchangeably.

2. Objectives of the Strategy

The Road Map for Codex Capacity Enhancement 2023-26 in Bangladesh aims to structure and guide future interventions of capacity development initiatives related to Codex in Bangladesh with the objective to:

❖ Structure Codex activities.

❖ Enhance the collaborative approach that needs to be followed to prepare for and participate in Codex meetings deemed a priority for Bangladesh.

❖ Promote effective participation of Bangladesh delegations to proceedings of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex), in a manner that is consistent with Codex values and principles, enabling consistent preparation for Codex committees and the provision of meaningful comments related to advancing key Codex standards in progression through the step process.

❖ Support the development of national expertise leading to sustaining and propagating best practices in the preparation for and contribution to Codex proceedings.

❖ Support the reliance on Codex standards in the development of national food regulatory decisions, in a systematic and consistent manner and with the application of risk analysis as the decision-making approach to adopt such measures (i.e., adopt or adapt codex standards as national standards with the relevant analysis).

3. Proposed Roadmap for Capacity Enhancement

The proposed Roadmap for Codex Capacity Enhancement is a direct result from the Codex Capacity Assessment whose recommendations are summarized in Annex 1.

The Codex Strategy for Bangladesh 2023-26 aims to address the limitations identified in the assessment and to comply with the requirements of operation of an effective Codex Program, as identified through the three elements of the Codex Capacity Assessment Tool:

❖ Mechanisms and processes for Codex work.

❖ Knowledge and understanding of Codex work.

❖ Policy framework, maximizing the impact of Codex work.

The design of the Roadmap for Capacity Enhancement followed an outcome-based approach and was geared to address the following logical framework:

3.1 Proposed Vision of the Codex Strategy 2023-26 for Bangladesh

The Codex Program in Bangladesh will act as a driver for food regulatory transformation enabling:

- Science and evidence-based decision-making.
- Inclusive, transparent operations maximizing the use of available resources and ultimately playing a leadership role regionally.

3.2 Proposed Strategic Goals

Figure 1 offers a schematic representation of the strategic direction envisaged by the Codex Strategy to drive the Codex Program to achieve the 2023-26 Vision.
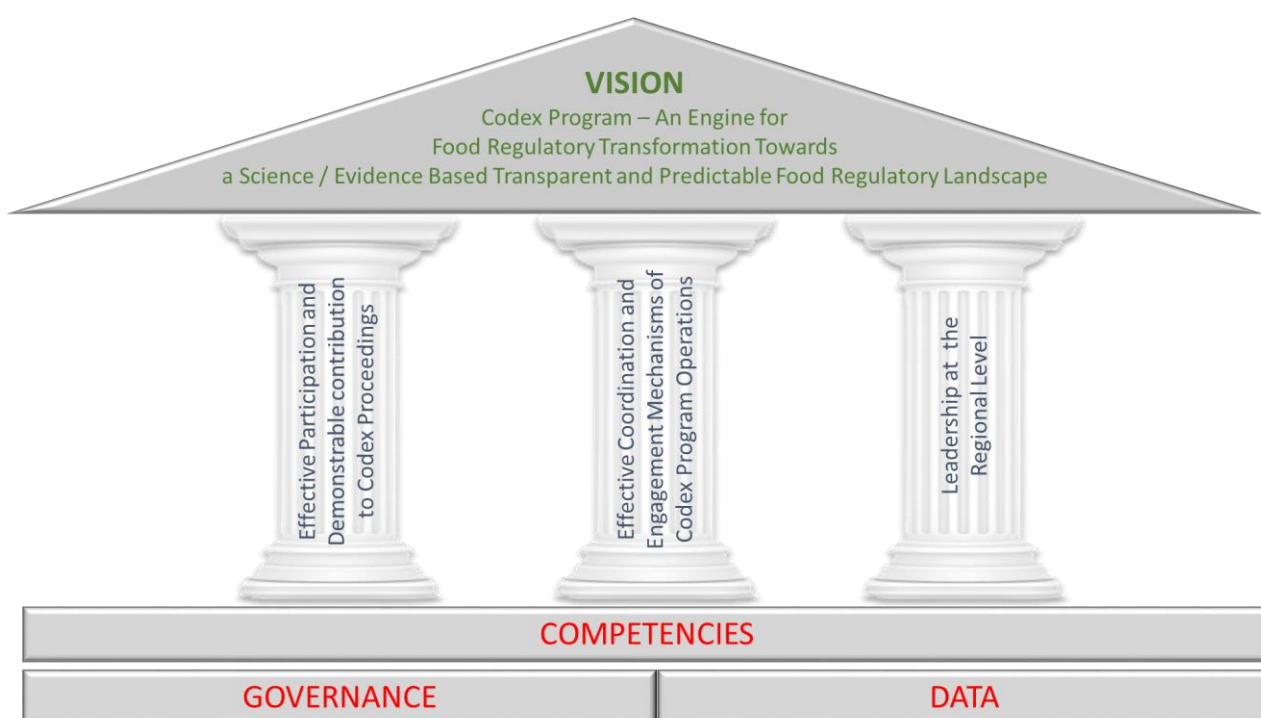

VISION
Codex Program – An Engine for
Food Regulatory Transformation Towards
a Science / Evidence Based Transparent and Predictable Food Regulatory Landscape

Effective Participation and Demonstrable contribution to Codex Proceedings

Effective Coordination and Engagement Mechanisms of Codex Program Operations

Leadership at the Regional Level

COMPETENCIES

GOVERNANCE

DATA

Figure 1: Vision, Strategic Goals and Enablers of the Codex Strategy for Bangladesh 2023-26.

The Codex Strategy will guide the development and enhancement of the Codex program in Bangladesh through the achievement of three Strategic Goals:

- *Strategic Goal I: Promote Effective Participation and Visible Contribution of Bangladesh Representatives to Codex Standards.*
- *Strategic Goal II: Enhance Effective Engagement and Coordination Mechanisms of Codex Program Operations.*
- *Strategic Goal III: Promote Incremental Leadership at the Regional Level.*

For the strategic goals to contribute to the achievement of the vision sought after, they need to be enabled by 3 areas of investment that are part of on-going efforts to strengthen food regulatory programs and capacity in Bangladesh:

❖ **Enhanced data collection and use:** This involves the development of a core set of data that support food regulatory activities and particularly the foundations of food risk analysis minimally, food occurrence data and food consumption information readily available and regularly updated,

❖ **Strengthened competencies:** This involves the availability and reliance on a core group of experts trained not only on the operations of Codex standard setting, but well equipped to understand the calls for data, to compile and analyze the needed information underpinning the development of Codex positions as well as to use Codex standards as a starting point for the development of national regulatory requirements, with the relevant analysis to ascertain their suitability to protect consumers and account for the national food production environment.

❖ **Strengthened Governance:** the effectiveness of the Codex program and its outputs is strongly enabled with effective inter-organizational communication and collaboration, between food regulatory bodies in Bangladesh, both in relation with Codex activities and beyond.

The following paragraphs aim to introduce the Strategic Goals retained for the Codex Strategy, along with their expected outcomes and the identification of early activities for implementation, which support the achievement of the Strategic Goals.

3.2.1 *Strategic Goal I: Promote Effective Participation and Visible Contribution of Bangladesh Representatives to Codex Standards*

The outcome of this strategic goal consists in a more consistent, documented, and visible contribution to Codex proceedings by Bangladesh Codex delegations, in priority Codex Committees, determined on the basis of clear prioritization criteria. It would also result in an effective preparation of such participation with the relevant analysis of Agenda Items, and development of substantiated National positions taking into account input from the various competent authorities and the involvement / participation of stakeholders.

This contribution to Codex meetings will be underpinned by an incremental food risk analysis capacity with the relevant food regulatory organizations, namely BSTI and BFSA. It will also be supported by effective coordination mechanisms and a robust governance, operationalized through the relevant Subcommittee and Expert Working Group structures.

This effective participation in Codex proceedings would be tied to the food regulatory review carried out under the "Standards Harmonization Strategy" initiated by BFSA in 2019, which aims to reflect Codex standards in Bangladesh food regulatory decisions in a systematic manner through adoption or adaptation of Codex standards. It would also be enabled through an incremental body of evidence supporting this effort: incrementally gathered data (e.g., food occurrence data, documented food production practices in Bangladesh) and tools / effective processes of operation.

The proposed activities under this goal are defined as follows:

a. **Activity 1: Review the current Priority of Codex Committees of Importance to Bangladesh and Re-Prioritize Based on Adopted Criteria**

This prioritization will be based on criteria of food regulatory priorities and on other parameters stemming from input of food regulatory partners, for example:

- Public health impacts.

- Economic relevance.

- Strategic crops for import or export.

This review and reprioritization shall be carried out for each Codex "season" using an update on the way the criteria are established and used. This re-prioritization will be entrusted to the Codex governance structure adopted by Bangladesh at the operational level.

o **Timing:** On-going – Updated each Codex Season.

o **Proposed Output(s):** Updated Priority Codex Committees for Bangladesh established according to set criteria.

b. **Activity 2: Assess and Address Training Needs for the BFSA / BSTI Expert Groups in Disciplines Pertaining to Food Risk Analysis and Design Multi-Month Program.**

This will address practical training needs regarding:

- Data management.

- Risk assessment.

- Evaluation and formulation of risk management options.

The training activities would be delivered according to an established capacity building program that complements other areas of competency development received by the same teams.

Training activities would be identified, delivered and assessed throughout the period of the implementation of the Strategy 2023-26, according to an established yearly plan, regularly updated.

o **Timing:** on-going.

o **Proposed Output(s):** Training needs identified and tailored training in food risk analysis delivered to key experts involved in Codex expert working groups in BFSA and BSTI.

c. **Activity 3: Deliver Coaching Programs to Select Expert Groups from the BFSA / BSTI teams to support the preparation for the de-briefing on participation to priority Codex Committees.**

o **Timing:** On-going.

o **Suggested Outputs:** Documented preparation for priority codex committees, with substantiated positions developed and delivered by expert working groups, coached throughout the year

3.2.2 *Strategic Goal II: Enhance Effective Engagement and Coordination Mechanisms of Codex Program Operations*

This Strategic Goal will result in an amendment and adaptation of the current Codex Coordination Structures, such that they become more agile and responsive, with a level of representation at the expert / officer and middle-manager level.

This outcome will also encompass achieving optimal engagement and consultation with the stakeholder community in the preparation of and prior to the adoption of Codex positions. In addition, this engagement will include exchange with international jurisdictions.

It is anticipated that the adoption of these values and principles of operations may have a spill-over effect on food regulatory decision-making by food competent authorities.

An effective coordination approach will also include the operationalization of the relevant expert groups and their operations. Additionally, it will identify and plan for the data requirements needed to conduct the analysis of the proposed standards and their impacts on Bangladesh.

d. **Activity 1: Set on-going Multi-Stakeholder Structure (Working Group or Committee) at the Operational Level, to Support Regular Engagement and Feed-Back on Bangladesh Contribution to Codex Committees**

This structure will be run in the through the organization of regular workshops to be integrated in the way the 2 key organizations leading Codex activities i.e., BSTI and BFSA interact with their government partners and industry stakeholders at the operational /working level on a regular basis and in particular in response to Codex calls for data and/or in response to Circular letters.

The objective of this structure will also encompass increased awareness about Codex programs, shared ownership and increased commitment to the Codex program and initiative(s).

o **Timing:** On-Going with regular schedule planned.

o **Proposed Output(s):** Feed-back and input into proposed Codex Positions, feed back on proposed/draft response to circular letters

e. **Activity 2: Review the Terms of Reference of the NCC and Suggest Possible Amendments to Reflect the Operational Nature of the Committee and Effective Coordination and Management of Codex Work Through the Committee.**

o **Timing:** Sept - Dec 2023.

o **Duration:** 2 months through multiple engagement sessions with the CCP and NCC.

- o **Suggested Output(s):** Updated terms of reference for the NCC and smooth operation of the committee with the required level of representation and an established agenda of meetings throughout the year.

f. **Activity 3: Establish a Codex Activity Calendar.**

To plan activities of the Expert Working Group supporting Codex work as well as meetings of the NCC.

- o **Timing:** Yearly.
- o **Proposed Output(s):** A Codex activity calendar, updated regularly and which includes training and capacity building, coaching initiatives and the holding of the various coordination meetings of expert working groups and the NCC.

g. **Activity 4: Operationalize a Unified Structure of Codex Expert Working Groups between BSTI and BFSA as the Scientific and Technical Backbone of the Codex Program.**

These EWGs are to be administered jointly by the BFSA and BSTI and to report to the NCC.

The operationalization will take stock of the existing structure and the capacity and expertise in both organizations, as well as the existing working group structure.

- o **Timing:** Sept 2023 – Aug 2024.
- o **Duration:** 12 months, until operational structure of EWG is achieved.
- o **Suggested Output(s):** Operationalized expert working groups, developing codex meeting analysis and involved in implementing the "Standards Harmonization Strategy"

h. **Activity 5: Review and Enhance All Codex Program Procedures and Protocols Through Documented SOPs, Informed by Best Practices**

- o **Timing:** December 2023 – Until completion.
- o **Duration:** until established structure is operationalized.
- o **Suggested Output(s):** Updated procedures and protocols, governing Codex activities, including the organization of codex preparatory meetings, holding the NCC and any subsidiary committee as well as the organization of scientific / technical meetings underpinning these (expert working groups). The procedures will also cover stakeholder engagement activities, participation in codex meetings (selecting and endorsing a delegation) and subsequent debriefing activities after attending a codex meeting.

3.2.3 *Strategic Goal III: Promote Incremental Leadership at the Regional Level*

This strategic goal will aim to enhance the international collaboration and engagement of the Bangladesh Codex program with international partners both at the regional level and globally.

This effort will also aim to support Bangladesh taking a leadership role on being involved in electronic working groups up to seeking to co-chair such Electronic Working Groups at select / priority Committees.

It can also materialize with Bangladesh seeking a co-hosting arrangement of a Committee deemed of importance to Bangladesh.

i. **Activity 1: Develop and Implement a Regional and International Engagement Program for Codex Bangladesh.**

This program should include a structured approach for:

▪ Consultations with CCPs at the regional and international level on select committee positions.

▪ Development of leadership opportunities such as: Leadership on Electronic Working Groups (co-chairing opportunities) and Possible committee co-hosting opportunities.

o **Proposed Output(s):** Proposed international engagement strategy developed, adopted and implemented.

j. **Activity 1: Support Bangladesh Codex Programs to Seek a Co-Hosting Opportunity for a Priority Committee (e.g. CCFH or CCRVDF) and Prepare for this Co-Hosting Opportunity**

▪ Aim to have a possible Co-Hosting for a priority committee in 2026.

o **Proposed Output(s):** Lead options for the possible organization of codex committee co-hosting initiatives.

4. Conclusion and Next Steps

The proposed Codex Strategy for Bangladesh 2023-26 is considered outcome-based and is designed to enable tangible upgrades of the capacity of the Codex Program, with investments planned in foundational areas, as well as the structure and management of Codex operations.

Upon its endorsement by the National Codex Committee of Bangladesh, the strategy will lead to the development of yearly business plans that will allow to envisage the effective implementation of the various activities, along with the development of the relevant performance indicators.

Yearly reviews of the plans and of the progress made to achieve the outcomes identified through each Strategic goals will allow regular updates of the plans and the direction taken by the Codex Program to achieve the vision identified for the period 2023-26.

Annex 1: Findings of the 2023 Codex Capacity Assessment and Recommendations

The review of the findings of the Codex Capacity Assessment in Bangladesh and the identified challenges in the operations of the Codex Program led to the following set of recommendations:

A. It is recommended that a Codex strategy for Bangladesh, be developed to guide Codex activities and Bangladesh contribution to the food International Standard Setting Processes.

B. It is recommended that the standard harmonization strategy initiated by BFSA in 2019 be further supported with a dedicated expert pool trained in various food risk analysis disciplines.

C. It is recommended that BFSA experts initiate the development and management of a food occurrence database that captures occurrence data information from the various food monitoring activities carried out by the various competent authorities and other research organizations in Bangladesh. This database will be instrumental to support the study of the possible impacts of proposed Codex standards on the food supply in Bangladesh.

D. It is recommended that a multistage training program be tailored and delivered to the various Codex partners:

❖ BSTI and BFSA Teams.

❖ Stakeholders, including industry organizations.

E. It is recommended that the National Codex Coordinating Committee be reactivated, including a set agenda of meetings set in line with the schedule of the 2023 Codex meetings and with the aim to review and endorse national Codex positions and delegations prior to participation in priority Codex Committees. **Terms of Reference of the Committee should be considered for update to reflect the operational nature of the Committee.**

F. It is recommended that the Expert Working Group / Subcommittee working under BSTI and BFSA be unified under a single structure and report to the National Codex Committee. These Expert Working Groups should be tasked with an encompassing mandate that includes:

▪ Analysis of agenda items of Codex committees and preparation of Codex positions.

▪ Consideration of adoption or adaptation of Codex standards as the basis for National standards, as part of the harmonization agenda.

G. It is recommended that the Codex Contact Point, upon advice and endorsement from the NCC, seeks co-hosting agreements with select countries / Codex Committee hosts based on priorities established by the NCC.

H. It is recommended that the Bangladesh Codex program considers a bid on the leadership of CCASIA after securing the level of support needed from international organizations.