Agricultural Policy and the WTO: Perspectives from Geneva, Ankara, and Washington

The Importance of Science-based Trade Standards

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- International standards-setting organizations referenced by the WTO provide standards and guidance that countries can use to meet their international trade obligations, improve public health, ensure fair practices in the food trade, and address food security needs.

Codex Alimentarius Commission

- United Nations organization founded in 1963
- 185 members, representing 99% of world population
- Voluntary international food standards, recommended codes of practice, and guidelines

Relationship to World Trade Organization (WTO)

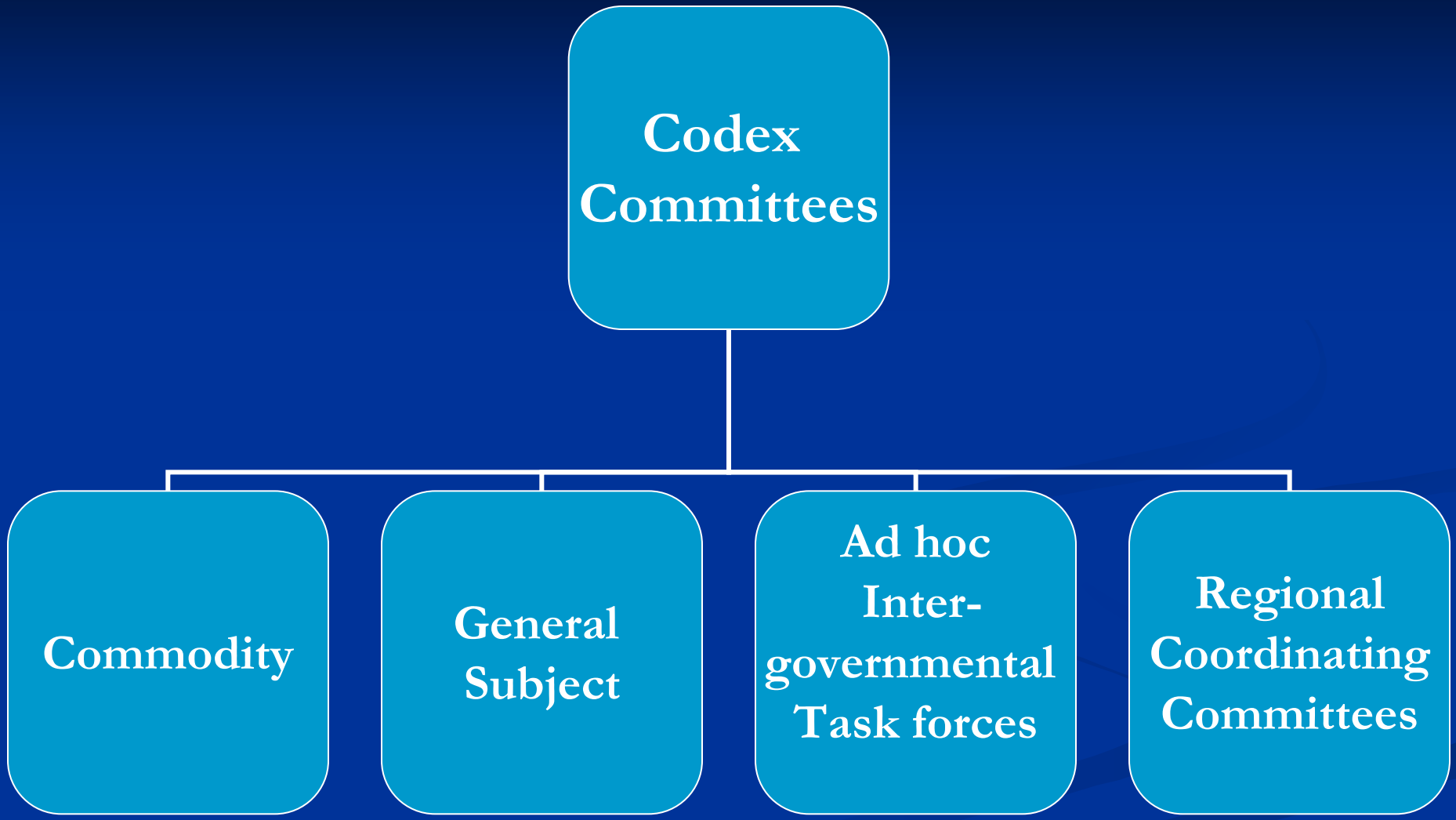
- WTO uses international standards from three organizations as benchmarks:
  - Codex Alimentarius Commission (food)
  - World Organization for Animal Health (OIE)
  - International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC/plant health)

Relationship to World Trade Organization

- Codex standards are referenced in the WTO SPS Agreement and in dispute settlement cases.
- *Member countries that adopt Codex, OIE, and IPPC standards meet the requirements of the WTO SPS and TBT Agreements.*
- Each country has an Enquiry Point.

Codex Mandate

- Protect the health of consumers
  - Science-based public health and food safety standards
- Ensure fair practices in the food trade
  - Harmonized food standards worldwide


Codex Committees
Commodity
General Subject
Ad hoc Inter-governmental Task forces
Regional Coordinating Committees

General Subject Committees

- Pesticide Residues-*China*
- Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods –*United States*
- Food Labeling-*Canada*
- Food *Hygiene-United States*
- Contaminants in Food-*Netherlands*
- Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems-*Australia*
- Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses-*Germany*
- Methods of Analysis and Sampling-*Hungary*
- Food Additives-*China*

Commodity Committees (Active)

- Fresh Fruits and Vegetables-*Mexico*
- Processed Fruits and Vegetables-*United States*
- Fats and Oils-*Malaysia*
- Fish and Fishery Products-*Norway*

Codex Committee Process

- Countries propose new work
  - Consistent with the Codex mandate
  - Diverse national legislation resulting in trade impediments
  - Subject is amenable to standardization
- Committees may approve or disapprove
- Codex Commission makes final determination to work on a new standard or guidance.

Regional Coordinating Committees

- Latin America and the Caribbean
- North America and the Southwest Pacific
- Asia
- Europe
- Near East
- Africa

Regional Codex Texts

- Criteria: documented evidence of significant intra-regional trade and no significant trade with other regions.
- Current work underway:
  - Date Paste, Doogh (Near East)
  - Ayran (Europe)
  - Durian, Tempe, Laver Products (Asia)

Importance of Science-Based Standards

- Codex documents are based on science
- WHO and FAO expert panels and ad hoc consultations provide scientific advice on:
  - Food Additives and Contaminants
  - Pesticide Residues
  - Veterinary Drugs
  - Risk Assessment

Expert Scientific Panels

- Joint Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA)
- Joint Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR)
- Joint Expert Meetings on Microbial Risk Assessment (JEMRA)
- Ad Hoc Expert Consultations (e.g., melamine, nanotechnology, acrylamide, risk benefit assessments)

Expert Scientific Panels

- FAO and WHO maintain a list of available experts who have applied to be on panels
- Panel members do not represent governments or regions
- Selected for scientific expertise and experience
- No conflict of interest

Process for Obtaining Risk Assessment Advice

- Issues and priorities from the CAC
- Call for data
- Selection of participants and preparation of working papers
- Meeting
- Reports and monographs

Science-based standards contribute to safer food… Safe food contributes to fair trade

- Science based decision-making allows Codex to adopt standards that are:
  - Technically sound
  - Global in scope
  - Free from national or regional influence

Examples of Codex Texts

- 3,000 Pesticide residue MRLs covering over 200 pesticides
- Nearly 450 MRLs for animal drug residues
- Nearly 1,500 guidelines for the use of over 300 food additives

Examples of Codex Texts

- Nearly 200 commodity standards
- Criteria for commodity standards:
  - Volume of production and consumption
  - Current or potential trade between countries
  - Diverse national legislation impeding trade
  - Amenable to standardization

Examples of Codex Texts

- Codes of Practice for safe production of various commodities--Fresh Fruits and Vegetables, Leafy Greens
- Code Of Practice for the Prevention and Reduction of Aflatoxin Contamination in Tree Nuts

Current Topics

- Veterinary Drug MRLs
- Guidelines for National Food Control Systems
- Principles for the use of Sampling and Testing in International Trade

Current Topics

- Revision of maximum levels for lead in fruit juices, milk and secondary milk products, infant formula, canned fruits and vegetables, fruits and cereal grains (except buckwheat, canihua, quinoa)
- Standards for okra and ware potatoes

How are Codex Standards and Guidance used?

- Standards are voluntary
- Adoption provides safe harbor from a WTO challenge.
- Countries can adopt Codex standards without conducting their own scientific risk assessments.
- Countries can use Codex standards as a benchmark for judging imported products.

Challenges to using standards

- Capacity Building
  - World Bank
  - FAO
  - WHO
  - Importing Countries

Resources in Turkey

- National Contact Points:
- IPPC: Nevzat Birisik
- Codex: Betul Vazgecer

  Ministry of Food Agriculture and Livestock

  General Directorate of Food and Control
- OIE: Chief Veterinary Officer

Resources in Turkey

- National Committee
- Delegates to meetings

Resources

- www.codexalimentarius.org
- www.oie.int
- www.ippc.int

International standards-setting organizations referenced by the WTO provide standards and guidance that countries can use to meet their international trade obligations, improve public health, ensure fair practices in the food trade, and address food security needs.

Those standards are sound and globally applicable because they are developed in a transparent process that follows internationally-accepted principles for risk analysis.