

CODEX PERSPECTIVE ON METHOD PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

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Scientifically appropriate methods of analysis and sampling are the essential elements for ensuring food safety. The Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) is an inter-governmental body specified in the WTO's Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures as the international standard setting body on food safety and consists of a number of subsidiary bodies. Its Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling (CCMAS) has been responsible to (a) define the criteria appropriate to Codex methods of analysis and sampling; (b) serve as a coordinating body for Codex with other international groups working in methods of analysis and sampling and quality assurance systems for laboratories; (c) specify, on the basis of final recommendations submitted to it by the other bodies, reference methods of analysis and sampling generally applicable to a number of foods; (d) consider, amend, if necessary, and endorse, as appropriate, methods of analysis and sampling proposed by Codex committees, (except methods of analysis and sampling for residues of pesticides or veterinary drugs in food, the assessment of microbiological quality and safety in food, and the assessment of specifications for food additives); (e) elaborate sampling plans and procedures; (f) consider specific sampling and analysis problems submitted to it by the CAC or its committees; and (g) define procedures, protocols, guidelines or related texts for the assessment of food laboratory proficiency, as well as quality assurance systems for laboratories.

Many recommendations of CCMAS for Codex members have been adopted by the CAC as Codex recommendations and available on the Codex website. They include, among others, the compilation of analytical methods and sampling for foods; and the guidelines on food laboratory management, sampling, measurement uncertainty, settling trade dispute on analytical results, and analytical terminology; and the principles for the use of sampling and testing in international food trade.

Some CCMAS recommendations developed and adopted for Codex committees, including use of the criteria approach, are included in the Codex Alimentarius Commission Procedural Manual, the must-have document for participants to Codex meetings.

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