

## **PROCEDURAL MANUAL FOR NATIONAL CODEX ACTIVITIES IN GUYANA**

### **OBJECTIVES**

1. To guide the Codex Contact Point and the National Codex Committee in its daily activities.
2. To provide guidance for the preparation of national response or national positions on Codex related matters and for participation in Codex meetings.
3. To transfer Codex information to stakeholders and solicit their responses.

### **GUYANA AND CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION**

Guyana became a member to Codex in 1970. The Guyana National Bureau of Standards (GNBS) serves as the National Codex Contact Point (NCCP). The Bureau has the responsibility for maintaining contact with the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC), exchange of information, responding to queries, ensure Guyana participate in Codex meetings and other activities related to Codex. Through the Bureau the National Codex Committee (NCC) was established. The Bureau serves as the Secretariat to the NCC. The National Codex Committee established various Sub-Committees of the NCC for reviewing the agenda of the CAC and its subsidiary committees.

The Ministry of Business which has an oversight for the GNBS has the responsibility for Codex. All correspondences from the Codex Alimentarius Secretariat are received by the NCCP, who will then forward it the NCC and various Sub-committees.

#### **Guyana recognizes the following:**

The CAC is an intergovernmental body within the framework of the joint Food Standards Programme established by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) to develop international food standards, guidelines, and other recommendations to protect the health of consumers and provide assurance of fair practices in food trade.

The WTO, in its Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement, recognizes the standards elaborated on by the CAC as the global reference standards for consumers, food producers, processors, National Food Control Agencies and all others involved in international food trade.

The Agreement on the Application of SPS Measures and the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT Agreement) also encourage international harmonization of food standards. As such, Codex Standards have become the benchmark against which national food control measures and regulations are evaluated under the relevant provisions of the WTO Agreements.

## ACRONYMS

The following acronyms shall be considered throughout this document:

CAC	Codex Alimentarius Commission
CCP	Codex Contact Point
CL	Circular Letter
CRD	Conference Room Document
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
GA-FDD	Government Analyst- Food and Drug Department
GLDA	Guyana Livestock Development Authority
GNBS	Guyana National Bureau of Standards
GRDB	Guyana Rice Development Board
GSA	Guyana School of Agriculture
NAREI	National Agriculture Research and Extension Institute
NCC	National Codex Committee
NCCP	National Codex Contact Point
NGMC	New Guyana Marketing Corporation
NPPO	National Plant Protection Organisation
PTCCB	Pesticides and Toxic Chemical Control Board
SC	Sub-Committee
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary
TBT	Technical Barriers for Trade
VPHU	Veterinary Public Health Unit
WTO	World Trade Organisation

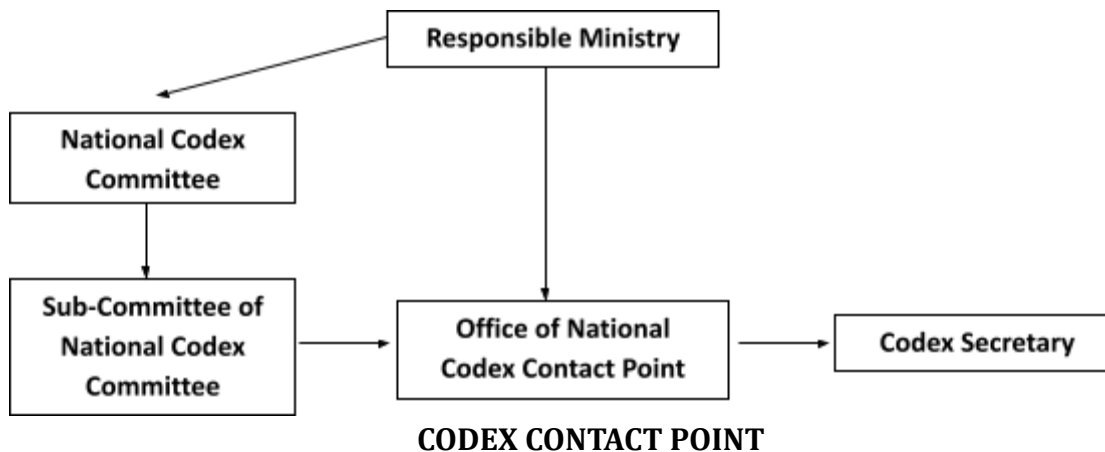
## SECTION I STRUCTURE

Based on the structure of Codex Guyana, the main components are the NCCP, the NCC and the SC of the NCC. The NCCP is the central coordinating point for all Codex activities within the Codex Member Country. It serves as the initial recipient of Codex documents and other documents, maintains an electronic library and initiates actions relating to Codex.

The Ministry with responsibility for Codex is the Ministry with responsibility for the Guyana National Bureau of Standards.

All correspondences from the Codex Secretariat will come to the NCCP, who will then forward it to the NCC and various Sub-committees.

The Secretariat of the NCCP will be located within the Offices of the Bureau. A discreet email address has been allocated for smooth and quick communication with stakeholders.



### **FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CODEX CONTACT POINT**

The Codex Contact Point shall perform the following functions:

1. Coordinate and promote all Codex activities throughout Guyana;
2. Mediate between the Codex Secretariat and the NCC and its Sub-Committees;
3. Host an active Codex email box and monitor it on a daily basis;
4. Receive all Codex texts (Draft Standards, Code of Practices, Guidelines and other texts) and working documents of Codex sessions and ensure that those are circulated;
5. Submit comments on Codex documents or proposals to the CAC or its subsidiary bodies and/or the Codex Secretariat within the specified time frame;
6. Maintain an electronic library of Codex information and any other documents and publications related to Codex;
7. Maintain a facebook page "National Codex Contact Point Guyana;"
8. Receive invitations to Codex Sessions and inform the Codex Secretariat or Host Country of the name(s) of participant(s) representing Guyana;
9. Receive invitations for funding/sponsorship for Guyana's participation to Codex Sessions;
10. Inform organizations that their agency was nominated by the NCC to attend Codex Sessions;

11. Maintain a library of Codex Standards, Codes of Practice, Guidelines and any other documents and publications on or related to Codex;
12. Disseminate information on food standards and food laws to relevant Government agencies, primary producers, manufacturers, exporters, consumers and concerned organizations;
14. Keep track of international food standards work and give comments and data to ensure that international food standards elaborated on are practical for local manufacturers and do not hinder exports of food;
15. Provide support to the NCC in encouraging food manufacturers to improve quality and hygiene management to meet requirements of international food standards.

### **SECTION III NATIONAL CODEX COMMITTEE**

The NCC shall act as a consultative body to review Codex Standards and related texts and make recommendation on Guyana's participation in Codex programmes.

#### **MEMBERSHIP OF THE NATIONAL CODEX COMMITTEE**

The membership of the NCC shall be constituted by the NCC. Individuals or organisations desirous of being a member of the NCC shall submit a written request to the Chairperson of the NCC of their desire to be considered as a member of the NCC.

Members of the National Codex Committee shall include representatives from:

1. Agencies of the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)
  - NAREI, NPPO, PTCCB, Fisheries, GLDA, NGMC, GSA, GRDB and any other agencies of the MOA
2. Departments of the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH)
  - GA-FDD, VPHU and any other agencies of MOPH
3. Ministry of Foreign Affairs
4. Guyana National Bureau of Standards
5. University of Guyana
  - Faculty of Natural Sciences, Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry
6. Guyana Manufacturers and Services Association
7. Guyana Consumers Association

8. Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)
9. Pan American Health Organization/ World Health Organization
10. Food and Agriculture Organization
11. Environmental Protection Agency
12. Institute of Applied Science and Technology
13. Private Sector Representatives
14. Technical Secretary/ Codex Coordinator
15. Other recognized academia and consumer bodies

#### **FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE NATIONAL CODEX COMMITTEE**

1. Advise the government on the best possible decisions regarding Codex standards and their implementation (for example conducting and coordinating activities to harmonize national standards in food safety with international recommendations.
2. Formulate Guyana's response to the proposals from the CAC; that is, agenda items under consideration by the various Codex Committees. This may include coordinating consultation activities.
3. Appoint Sub-committees to address specific issues for Guyana's effective participation in Codex.
4. These Sub-committees shall focus on specific technical issues or types of standards and their work shall be coordinated by the CCP.
5. Articulate with national authorities the strengthening of Codex activities in the country.
6. Propose and implement an annual work programme.
7. Undertake such other duties as may be advised by the CCP.
8. Build capacity in Guyana to effectively take up Codex work.
9. To advise on the composition of Guyana's Delegation to attend Codex related meetings.
10. To cooperate with other local/regional or international organizations dealing with activities related to food standardization.

## **CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE NATIONAL CODEX COMMITTEE**

The Chairperson of the NCC shall be a Senior Management from the Public Sector and a member of the National Codex Committee. Elections for this position shall be held biennially (every other year) and the responsibility as Chairperson shall not be held for more than four (4) consecutive years.

The Vice- Chairperson of the NCC shall be a member of the National Codex Committee. Elections for this position shall be held biennially and the responsibility as Vice-Chairperson shall not be held for more than four (4) consecutive years.

### **CRITERIA FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRPERSON & VICE CHAIRPERSON**

1. Familiarity with the system of Codex and its rules and regulations, have a minimum of five years' experience in the work of governmental and non-governmental organization at both the national and international levels.
2. Have demonstrated ability in chairing meetings with objectivity and impartiality, and in facilitating consensus building.
3. Ability to communicate orally.
4. Ability to serve in a continuing capacity as indicated by a letter of confirmation from the relevant Minister.

### **MEETINGS OF THE NATIONAL CODEX COMMITTEE**

National Codex Committee members shall take part in committee meetings. Any other attendees/guests desirous of attending NCC meetings shall do so when deemed appropriate by the NCC.

The NCC shall hold regular meetings and special meetings as required. The CCP shall consult with the Chairperson and/ NCC to organise the meetings. The CCP shall also send out notices at least one week in advance, distribute correspondences and an agenda specifying the points on which decisions are required.

To quorate an NCC at least 50% of the members, the Chairperson and/ Vice-chairperson is required.

## **SECTION IV**

### **SUB COMMITTEES OF THE NATIONAL CODEX COMMITTEE**

The NCC shall appoint when necessary SC on subject matters corresponding to the Codex Committees to assist the NCC in the study or consideration of technical matters. These SC shall exist for the life of the subject matter.

The SC shall be chaired by a member of the NCC with the relevant expertise in the subject area. These lists of experts may be reviewed from time to time to ensure that they meet the ongoing requirements of the NCC.

### **COMPOSITION OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE**

The composition of each SC shall vary depending on the available expertise in the relevant field. It shall include the relevant Government Ministries, Departments and Organizations concerned with food safety, food production and trade in food; some scientific organizations such as public universities and research institutions, private sector representatives and/or specific company representatives and any other expert in the relevant field with a keen interest and relevant expertise in Codex matters.

There may be no restriction on the number of representatives in each of the Sub-Committees; and that solely depends on the expertise required on the agenda items under discussion. Participation at the SC meetings shall be reviewed annually, and those members who have ceased to participate in the activities of the relevant SC may be replaced with new members in consultation with other members of the SC and NCC.

### **TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR SUB-COMMITTEES**

The Terms of Reference for all the ~~above-mentioned~~ Sub-Committees shall be as follows:

1. Review and advise the NCC on the agenda documents for Codex Committee meetings, the CAC and Codex Guidelines;
2. Coordinate with other Sub Committees and/or concerned Departments/ Agencies inviting comments with the intent to finalize if necessary and concerned Departments for seeking comments and finalize the national position on various agenda items under consideration;
3. Advise all relevant stakeholders on matters relating to Codex procedures and working processes for elaboration of Codex Standards, Codex Code of Practices and Codex Guidelines;
4. Partake in any other work assigned by the NCC.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE SUB-COMMITTEES**

1. Advise the NCC on the implications of various food standards, food quality and safety issues which have arisen and related to the work undertaken by the relevant Ministry/Agency/Business so that national economic interest is taken into account or considered when international standards are deliberated on by the relevant committee.
2. Advise the NCC on national positions on subject matter relevant to the country.
3. Study Codex documents, collect and review all relevant information relating to technology, economics, health and control systems so as to give supporting reasons to the Government in the acceptance of Codex Standards or otherwise.
4. Formulate national positions with respect to the agenda for the forthcoming session/meeting of the Subsidiary Body of the CAC and forward same to the NCCP for endorsement by the NCC and subsequent submission to Codex Secretariat after approval by Government.
5. Recommend to the NCC the position to be taken during the CAC and its subsidiary Committees with respect to agenda items.

## **ACTIVITIES IN PREPARATION OF SUB-COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

1. The Agenda may be reviewed to identify the issues of significance to the country. The agenda may also be reviewed to identify issues with a linkage between a Circular Letter (CL) and agenda items.
2. The SC meeting shall be organized and previous reports and positions taken by the country may be reviewed.
3. Consider possible SPS and TBT implications.
4. The draft national position may be prepared on the basis of a consultative process among all the members of the SC and if required any other stakeholder may also be involved.
5. The draft national position may be circulated to all delegation members, reviewed where necessary and the final draft submitted to the NCC.
6. It may be discussed in the SC whether the country should be involved in any working /drafting groups that may be established.



7. The countries may be identified with whom Guyana may liaise in order to be apprised of the country's position on a particular subject/issue. If necessary, the comments / previous positions of other countries may be reviewed. This may help to identify potential allies.
8. The country's positions/responses to Codex issues must be clearly stated and provide a strong rationale.
9. The position may be based on scientific evidence that will contribute to consumer health, protection, or to ensure fair practices in food trade.

### **MEETINGS OF THE SUB-COMMITTEES**

Sub-committee members shall take part in SC meetings. Any other attendees/guests desirous of attending SC meetings shall do so when deemed appropriate by the SC.

The SC shall hold regular meetings as required. The CCP shall consult with the Coordinator of the SC to organise the meetings. The CCP shall also send out notices at least one week in advance, distribute correspondences and an agenda specifying the points on which decisions are required.

To quorate an SC at least 50% of the members, the Coordinator is required.

1. The schedule of the meeting of the SC may be drawn up by the Chairperson of the respective SC in consultation with the NCC.
2. Any other expert who is not a regular member of the SC but competent to contribute to the subject under consideration because of his/her professional expertise, may also be requested to attend the meeting as an observer.
3. The minutes of the meeting of the SC duly approved by the Chairperson shall be forwarded to the members of the Committee by email/fax/ courier within a period of ten (10) working days. The members may offer their comments on the recording of the minutes within a period of three (3) working days from the date of receipt of the minutes. Otherwise it may be assumed that they have no comments to offer.

**SECTION V  
NATIONAL POSITION(S)**

**PREPARATION OF RESPONSE TO CODEX MATTERS**

The Delegate representing Guyana at Codex meetings shall work in collaboration with the NCC to commence the drafting of a national position. For the development of a national position five common basic steps may be followed:

- (a) Circulating of working documents
- (b) Soliciting input from stakeholders
- (c) Drafting a position
- (d) Obtaining national endorsement of the position
- (e) Submitting the position as written comments, where appropriate.

**CIRCULATION OF WORKING DOCUMENTS**

The NCCP receives Codex working documents from the CCP and forwards them to the relevant SC if necessary. The SC shall circulate the documents to all its members and any other relevant stakeholder.

The SC shall determine whether written comments are being requested and, if so, a time frame needs to be established for submission of Guyana's comments before the deadline. The date established by the SC may be three to four weeks prior to the deadline in the working papers, in order to allow sufficient time for any administrative work and Government's endorsement.

**SOLICIT INPUT FROM STAKEHOLDERS**

Consultation is a core function of the SC. The SC in collaboration with the NCCP shall establish communication with other ministries, industries, consumers, academia, research institutions and public health professionals.

The agenda and other relevant documents shall be circulated as widely as possible with the aim of encouraging participation from both the scientific and trade communities and any other relevant stakeholder. For speedy communication the documents shall be circulated for comments via email. The comments shall be specific and may be followed by scientific justification or rationale behind the opinion.

**CONSULTATIVE PROCESS**

On receipt of agenda documents from the Secretariat of the CAC or host country, the NCCP shall immediately communicate same to the Chair of the NCC and the Chair of the respective SC preferably by email, fax, or a special messenger. The Chairpersons of the SC may download the original agenda documents electronically from the Codex website. The

Chairs shall invite comments from the members of the SC on the agenda item as per format provided.

The SC, based on the decision in their meetings, shall formulate the Government of Guyana's position based on comments, national policy/ legislation and positions taken in the past. The same shall be forwarded to the NCC at least fifteen (15) working days in advance of the last date of receipt of comments by the Codex Secretariat or the host country.

The NCCP shall forward the same to the Codex Secretariat of the host country within the stipulated time frame after obtaining endorsement of the NCC and approval of Government.

### **FORMAT FOR SUBMISSION**

1. Name of the Codex Committee/Commission;
2. Agenda document number and relevant paragraphs numbers;
3. Issues in brief;
4. National position based on legislation and policy of the Government;
5. Impact of the proposed item/issue;
6. Technical/commercial or other relevant information/ data in support of the proposal or against;
7. Other considerations like names of countries likely to support or oppose based on past participation.

### **NATIONAL POSITIONS**

National positions may be prepared for two main purposes:

1. To enable the national delegate(s) to present the position of the country during the relevant codex session/meeting.
2. To provide the basis of written comments to the Codex Secretariat and/or Host Country Secretariat in response to a request for written comments through a CL or agenda item.

### **PROCESS FLOW FOR PREPARING A NATIONAL POSITION**

1. The first step for the preparation of the national position is the initial draft. The SC shall prepare the initial draft based on documents and comments received from various stakeholders which shall be circulated to all involved. Further discussions shall be initiated in the SC.

2. When developing a country position on Codex issues, the considerations to be taken into account are as varied as the issues that might be considered by the Committee. However, the following shall be kept in mind:
  - i. Drafting of the final position shall be done in consultation with the stakeholders;
  - ii. The consideration of an issue is usually not a one-time matter; often the issue may be on the agenda for several sessions. Attempts may be made to understand the history, so that developing a position would be done within the context. The Codex Committee may generally not revisit comments or interventions on issues that it has already discussed and on which it has taken a decision;
  - iii. The comments prepared shall be based on science and preferably supported by documented literature including risk analysis / risk assessment data.
  - iv. The positions proposed internationally shall be consistent with a country's national policies. Therefore, the country's domestic policies (including any pertinent legislation) shall be considered while developing a position.

The NCCP shall also establish contacts with Codex National Contact Points of Countries with similar concerns and network to mobilize support for national position.

### **DECISION BY CONSENSUS**

National Position(s) shall be prepared on the basis of the following:

- i. Inputs received as a result of the consultation process;
- ii. Available scientific evidence;
- iii. National interest; and
- iv. Impact on other country positions, in case they get accepted.

The final decision on the national position may be taken on the basis of consensus among the members of the relevant SC and views of the NCC.

### **OFFICIAL ENDORSEMENT OF THE NATIONAL POSITION**

National Positions shall be prepared by the relevant SC, approved and recommended by the NCC and ratified by the Government. The NCCP will then transmit document to the Codex Committee or Codex Secretariat for circulation to Member Countries or as a Conference Room Document (CRD).

## **SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN COMMENTS**

The written comments may be submitted to the Codex Secretariat and its subsidiary committees on those issues which have been identified as priority for the country.

### **FORMAT FOR WRITTEN COMMENTS/NATIONAL POSITION(S)**

Some basic components which may be incorporated into the position are:

- i. Name of the Committee and identification of the session;
- ii. Identification of the agenda items, number and reference documents;
- iii. Background information to enable the reader to put the position into context;
- iv. A statement of the national position;
- v. Rationale for the national position preferably supported by documented literature.

### **BUDGETARY PROVISION**

The GNBS shall maintain a regular budget provision to meet the running cost of the Codex activities at national level as well as to meet the expenditure for participation of the NCC in the meeting of Codex having relevance to Guyana. The GNBS may also consider seeking funding assistance from National or International Agencies for attending Codex and related meetings. Budgetary allocations towards capacity building exercises should also be planned.

### **SECTION VI MEETING DELEGATION**

The NCCP, immediately on receipt of working documents from the Codex Secretariat, of the session/ meetings of the CAC and its subsidiary bodies/regional coordinating committees/ task forces, shall communicate the same to the NCC. The NCC may appoint the relevant SC to start working on the probable agenda which may be adjudged from the reports of the previous session and other related reports of the meetings already held. The SC shall be responsible for preparing Guyana's comments.

The attendance of a delegate(s) to a meeting shall be based on the urgency and importance of the issues being considered, the need to make Guyana's position clear and the resources available for this purpose. The NCC shall nominate the national delegate(s) to attend the meeting.

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DELEGATES FOR CODEX MEETINGS AT INTERNATIONAL LEVEL**

- i. Expertise in the respective subject matter;

- ii. Ability to present nationally agreed position(s) based on the standard written, brief given by the NCCP on the basis of recommendations of the NCC. They shall be able to negotiate formally as well as informally with the delegates of other countries to seek their support on behalf of the country; and
- iii. Possess the ability to respond to unannounced/unforeseen issues that may arise during Codex meetings, thereby protecting the national interest.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DELEGATE**

1. Guyana's delegate(s) for Codex sessions/meetings should be specialists in the respective field and should also have consistently participated in the meetings of the NCC and/or Sub Committee at the national level in order to be fully aware of the deliberations at the national level for each of the Codex agenda items and the position to be taken at the international forum.
2. The intimation of the participation of Guyana's delegate shall be given in writing to the Codex Secretariat of the host country by the NCCP, a copy of which shall be endorsed to the NCC and the delegate who shall carry the same for the Codex session/meeting.
3. Guyana's delegate shall be assisted by the NCC during the Codex session/meetings.
4. Guyana's delegate shall be physically present throughout the entire deliberations of the Codex session/meetings. He/ She shall attentively note the submissions made by the delegates of other countries on any particular item so that the NCC could be briefed appropriately for timely intervention. In case it is decided to record opposition to any decision, irrespective of the fact as to whether the decision has been made by consensus or by vote, the Delegate may request the Chairperson of the respective Codex session/ meeting for a statement of Guyana's stand/position to be included in the report of the session/ meeting.

### **TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS AND EXPENSES**

1. The NCCP shall make travel arrangements for Guyana's delegate attending Codex sessions/meetings.
2. Where the meetings are sponsored, the NCCP shall be responsible to communicate with the Delegate nominated to attend the Codex meeting.
3. The Delegate shall have a valid passport and meet all the requirements for entry into the host country.

## **REPORTING**

1. The Delegate shall submit a report to the NCCP within a period of two (2) weeks after the meeting.
2. The report shall be as per format presented and shall essentially contain agenda items/notes tabled in the meeting-conference room documents/discussion papers circulated by other Member Countries, reports of the in-session Working Groups and a copy of the draft report as adopted in the meeting.
3. The delegate's report should include proposals for possible strategies for the next session.
4. The delegate's report shall be circulated to the members of the NCC.

## **PARTICIPATION REPORT FORMAT**

The Delegate shall submit a report to the NCCP in the following format, and may bear the signature with their name and designation:

1. Session/meeting of the Codex Committee;
2. Place of the session/meeting;
3. Date of the session/meeting;
  
4. Name and designation;
5. List of additional documents as tabled in the meeting, along with a copy of each document;
6. A copy of the draft report as adopted in the meeting;
7. A summary of salient recommendations/decisions arrived at in the meeting which have economic and trade implications on Guyana;
  
8. Delegation report should comprise of the following:
  - i. National position which was accepted at the Committee meeting,
  - ii. National position which was not accepted and need to be taken up further in the next meetings or to arrange for some other information to substantiate the national position, along with rationale,
  - iii. Compilation of endorsed and adopted standards and decisions which may be taken up by the Food Authority for possible harmonization of Codex Standards with the National Standards.

## **FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES**

1. The NCC should meet to follow up the deliberations with the delegate. The final report may be reviewed by the NCC and issues of significance to the country or the committee identified, as well as those that have implications for work done by the sub committees.
2. The NCC may identify pertinent CL, EWGs if any resulting from the meeting which may be sent out for comment. A response to this CL may be prepared in cases where such a response will advance the country's position.
3. The NCCP/NCC/Sub Committee may also approach the concerned industry/institutions/experts/ consumer organizations for data generation and subsequent follow-up action, if required. Studies may be initiated and resourced, where needed.