



**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME**

**CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION**

**39<sup>th</sup> Session**

**FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy, 27 June – 1 July 2016**

**THE ESSENTIAL NATURE OF SCIENCE AND PROCEDURES IN CODEX STANDARDS-SETTING**

*(Comments of Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Ghana, Somalia and the United States)*

Over the course of its 50 year history, Codex has achieved international recognition as the preeminent organization for developing harmonized food safety and quality standards. Countries and the food industry use these standards to ensure that the foods and feeds they regulate or produce are safe for consumption and can be fairly traded.

Key to the success of Codex, including its recognition by the WTO under both the SPS and TBT Agreements, is the use of science as the basis for its standards. Key also is the established policies and procedures that direct the work of Codex, including its standards-setting processes and governance. These procedures ensure transparency, inclusiveness, and careful deliberation in the development of Codex standards and provide guidance as to what should, and what should not, be considered as elements of Codex standards. Codex has worked hard over the course of its history, and particularly over the past 20 years, to develop these fundamental aspects of its work, and it is important to keep them in mind and close at hand as Members and Observers address the daily challenges that occur in the work carried out by Codex. The scientific basis for Codex standards and the procedures established for standards development and adoption help to provide the assurances needed that Codex standards are fit and effective for purpose and can be used globally to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade.

To safeguard the continued success of Codex, we suggest there are several key areas on which focus and attention are necessary.

- Providing a long-term solution to ensuring adequate funding for providing scientific support for the work of Codex, particularly the sustainable funding of JECFA, JEMRA and JMPR. Effective and sufficient scientific support for the work of Codex is essential to its success.
- Assuring that the Codex Secretariat is adequately staffed and that it provides strong and effective leadership in managing the Codex process and the application of provisions contained in the *Procedural Manual*.
- Assuring that key principles and procedures that Codex has developed and which form the basis on which Codex can effectively operate and develop its standards are acknowledged and used effectively. These include:
  - o The use of consensus in standards development, including Codex guidance on reaching consensus as well as guidance on resolving differences of views and alternatives when consensus does not appear to be achievable.
  - o Ensuring that the *Statements of Principle Concerning the Role of Science in the Codex Decision-Making Process and the Extent to Which Other Factors are Taken into Account* are observed in Codex deliberations, as these Statements provide essential guidance for the development of standards.
- The development of a pro-active effort to identify the need for new standards and update existing standards. Assuring that Codex meets the standards needs of its Members and stakeholders are essential to the continued success and relevancy of Codex.
- The adoption and use of modern approaches to communication and work management techniques and, in particular, means to assist in allowing for effective standards development outside of regular committee meetings by electronic working groups and means to provide for effective and timely document translation.
- Providing effective training for key persons involved in standards development and Codex governance, including Committee chairpersons and those being considered to serve Codex through its governing processes (officers, Executive Committee members).

While most, if not all, of these areas have been the subject of discussion within Codex over the past several years, we note that many of these areas continue to be areas of challenge for Codex. We encourage continued emphasis on these points and particularly encourage consideration of innovative solutions to the challenges (e.g., funding sources for support of providing scientific advice; use of a parliamentarian to assist with directing discussions on procedures).

We appreciate the significant efforts by the new Codex Secretary to initiate change (in particular in terms of strengthening communication with technology and enhancing skills through training and workshops for key persons). These efforts should continue and expand to address all of the issues mentioned above.

We can only reach our goals through constructive international cooperation and we invite the Codex leadership, as well as senior food safety officials in Member countries and the Directors General of FAO and WHO, to engage in dialogue to move Codex forward and ensure its effectiveness as the global food safety and quality standards-setting organization.