

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION



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ALINORM 01/28

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Twenty-fourth Session

Geneva, 2 - 7 July 2001

**REPORT OF THE FOURTEENTH SESSION OF THE
CODEX COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR AFRICA**

Kampala, Uganda, 27 - 30 November 2000

NOTE: This document includes Codex Circular Letter CL 2000/47-Africa

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CX 3/5.2

**CL 2000/47-AFRICA
December 2000**

TO: - Codex Contact Points
- Interested International Organizations

FROM: Secretary, Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, FAO, Viale, delle Terme di Caracalla, 00100 Rome, Italy.

SUBJECT: DISTRIBUTION OF THE REPORT OF THE 14TH SESSION OF THE CODEX COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR AFRICA (ALINORM 01/28)

The report of the 14th Session of the Codex Coordinating Committee for Africa will be considered by the Twenty-fourth Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Geneva, 2 - 7 July 2001).

PART B: REQUEST FOR COMMENTS AND INFORMATION

1. Progress reports on efforts on Harmonization of National/Regional Standards with Codex Standards, (para 37);
2. Progress report on the Establishment/Strengthening the National Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committees in the Region (para 67).

Governments are invited to submit information on the both above subject matters to the Secretary, Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, FAO, Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00100 Rome, Italy, (Fax: 39 06 570 54593, email: codex@fao.org) **not later than 15 March 2002.**

3. Proposed Draft Guidelines for National Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committees (African Regional Guidelines) at Step 1/2/3

Governments and interested international organizations are invited to provide their comment on the above subject matter and should do so in writing to the Secretary, Codex Alimentarius Commission, Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, FAO, Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00100 Rome, Italy (fax: +39 (06) 570.54593 or E-mail: codex@fao.org) **not later than 15 March 2002.**

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Fourteenth Session of the Codex Coordinating Committee for Africa reached the following conclusions:

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE COMMISSION

The Committee:

- agreed to request the Commission to:
 - approve the elaboration of African Regional Guidelines for National Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committees (para. 78), and
 - forward nominations of Uganda and Morocco to decide the next Coordinator for the Region, (paras. 90 - 98).

OTHER MATTERS OF INTEREST TO THE COMMISSION

The Committee:

- supported the idea of convening Pan-African Conference on Food Safety, Quality and Food Security, (para 10);
- appreciated FAO and WHO for their work, particularly for assistance in strengthening Codex Contact Points and the establishment and strengthening National Codex Committees and the implementation of regional training courses and emphasized the need for further training (para. 17);
- highlighted problems regarding dissemination of information and the need for improvement in this area (para. 18);
- noted progress in harmonizing food regulations in the Region and recognized that increased involvement of consumer associations in the harmonization process was of high priority (para. 38);
- urged countries to reactivate and strengthen National Codex structures (para 59);
- endorsed the recommendations of the Workshop on Risk Analysis - Exposure Assessment and reaffirmed the recommendations made by the 13th Session of the Committee (paras 81 and 82).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Paragraphs
INTRODUCTION.....	1
OPENING OF THE SESSION	2 - 3
ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA	4
MATTERS REFERRED BY THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER CODEX COMMITTEES.....	5-11
REPORT ON ACTIVITIES OF FAO AND WHO COMPLEMENTARY TO THE WORK OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION.....	12 - 18
HARMONIZATION AND COOPERATION IN FOOD LEGISLATION AND FOOD CONTROL ACTIVITIES IN THE REGION.....	19 - 38
REPORT ON ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE CODEX CONTACT POINTS AND NATIONAL CODEX COMMITTEES IN THE REGION	39 - 59
CONSUMERS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE WORK OF NATIONAL CODEX COMMITTEES AND NATIONAL CODEX CONTACT POINTS	60 - 78
RISK ANALYSIS ACTIVITIES AND APPLICATION IN THE REGION	79 - 89
NOMINATION OF COORDINATOR.....	90 - 98
OTHER BUSINESS AND FUTURE WORK	99
DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT SESSION	100

APPENDICES

	Pages
SUMMARY STATUS OF WORK.....	24
APPENDIX I: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS.....	25
APPENDIX II: PROPOSED DRAFT AFRICAN REGIONAL GUIDELINES FOR NATIONAL CODEX CONTACT POINTS AND NATIONAL CODEX COMMITTEES	32

INTRODUCTION

1. The Codex Coordinating Committee for Africa held its Fourteenth Session in Kampala, Uganda, from 27 to 30 November 2000, by courtesy of the Government of Uganda. The Session was chaired by the Coordinator of the Committee, Dr Eve Kasirye-Alemu, Executive Director, Uganda National Bureau of Standards. The Session was attended by 74 delegates, advisors and observers representing 18 Member Countries and 4 international organizations. A complete list of participants, including the Secretariat, is provided in Appendix I to this report.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

2. Dr Kasirye-Alemu, welcomed the delegates to Uganda and indicated that the 14th Session of the CCAFRICA was a milestone in the development of Uganda and in her strive to overcome poverty by addressing issues of food quality through the implementation of standards for both food for exports and local consumption. Welcoming statements were also made by:

Mr Qureshi , the FAO Representative in Uganda;

Dr Oladapo Walker, WHO Representative to Uganda

Dr. Abel Rwendeire, the Minister of State for Industry and Technology.

3. Prof. Edward Rugumayo, the Minister of Tourism, Trade and Industry on behalf of His Excellency the President of the Republic of Uganda, Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni opened the session and pointed out that the Codex world-wide process presented the forum for countries to participate in the elaboration of standards and that the implementation of standards allowed them to benefit from world trade.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (AGENDA ITEM 1)

4. The Committee **adopted** the Provisional Agenda presented in document CX/AFRICA 00/1 as the Agenda for the Session and agreed with the proposal made by the Observer from Consumers International to discuss the paper it had developed entitled “African Regional Guidelines for Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committees” under Agenda Item - 6.

MATTERS REFERRED BY THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER CODEX COMMITTEES (AGENDA ITEM 2)***Chairperson's Action Plan***

5. Mr. Thomas J. Billy, Administrator, Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA, and Chairperson of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, introduced the Chairperson's Action Plan. He indicated that as Chairperson of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) he would promote initiatives in the following major areas in order to progress the work of Codex:

- Increasing the efficiency of the Codex process by holding CAC meetings every year, forming a new committee consisting of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of the CAC, Chairpersons of the Codex Committees and the Codex Secretariat to assist the Chairperson and the Secretariat at the Commission's meetings; and converting the commodity committees to task forces with sunset provisions;
- further strengthening scientific support in the decision-making process by restructuring the scientific expert bodies and developing clear guidelines for their work;
- increasing the participation of developing countries by establishing a trust fund and by regularly holding Codex meetings in developing countries;
- increasing transparency and the participation of NGO's;
- increasing total support to Codex by the parent organizations by encouraging the World Health Organization (WHO) to match the level of support provided by FAO;
- increasing the use of new technologies, such as Internet web casts, home pages and chat rooms, in order to improve communication and support for Codex.

6. Mr Billy informed the Committee that the Action Plan, when finalized, would be sent to Member Governments for their input and be placed on the Provisional Agenda of the Executive Committee in 2001.

7. The Committee unanimously supported the draft Action Plan, especially the idea of encouraging and supporting the increased participation of developing countries through the establishment of trust fund well managed by FAO and WHO.

8. The Committee noted general matters of interest arising from the 23rd Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC), the 47th Session of the Executive Committee and the 14th Session of the Codex Committee on General Principles.

Pesticide Residues in Fish

9. The Committee had been reminded that during the last Session of the CCAFRICA some delegations expressed their concern regarding the existence of barriers to trade in fish between their countries and the European Union and that it had requested the Committee on Pesticide Residues (CCPR) to consider the problem of pesticide residues with a view to establishing EMRL's for fish. The Committee noted the reply from the CCPR that it was not in a position to take any action on that until the relevant data were submitted. However some delegations indicated that there had been some developments in this area in the interim and that it was possible now to submit the relevant data.

Pan-African Conference on Food Safety and Quality

10. The Committee noted that a similar conference is being organized in Europe and supported the possibility of convening a Pan-African Conference on Food Safety and Quality in the near future. The Observer from Consumers International requested that "food security" be also included.

Volume of International Trade in Bitter Cassava

11. The Committee noted the request of the Codex Committee on Processed Fruits and Vegetables (CCPFV) regarding the international trade in bitter cassava. It was indicated that bitter cassava was not consumed raw and that there was international trade between African countries of processed bitter cassava without any evident risk to consumers to date. However, it was unable to provide exact figures in trade at this time. The Committee invited Member countries to report those figures to the CCPFV or to the Codex Secretariat in Rome.

REPORT ON ACTIVITIES OF FAO AND WHO COMPLEMENTARY TO THE WORK OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION (AGENDA ITEM 3⁴)

12. The Representative from FAO informed the Committee of the organizations' technical assistance activities that had been implemented in the region over the previous two years. This assistance covered

ALINORM 99/24A, paras 15-17.

⁴ CX/AFRICA/00/3

both the provision of policy advice in the overall organization and management of food control services and the strengthening and establishment of specific components of the food control system.

13. The Committee was also informed of the regional activities that had been implemented. It was also pointed out that two new regional projects to provide training and enhance capacities in food quality and safety, primarily in West Africa, would be implemented over the next two years.

14. The WHO Representative presented the activities of WHO and noted that the World Health Assembly Resolution on food safety included several recommendations to Member States, including the need to allocate sufficient resources for food safety programmes. In addition, WHO undertook activities in several technical areas, including microbiological risk assessment, antimicrobial resistance, HACCP and food contamination monitoring.

15. Regarding regional activities, the WHO Representative noted that WHO efforts in Africa were being expanded and that two additional staff have been appointed, namely Mrs Elizabeth Morfaw, Regional Food Safety Focal Point and Dr Paul Tia, Technical Adviser for Environmental Risk Assessment.

16. The Representative of FAO brought the Committees' attention to the joint FAO/WHO activities on risk assessment of microbiological hazards in foods and the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on Foods Derived from Biotechnology.

17. The Committee expressed its appreciation to FAO and WHO for their work in the African region, particularly for assistance in strengthening Codex Contact Points, the establishment and strengthening of National Codex Committees and the implementation of regional training courses. However the need for further training was emphasized.

18. A number of delegations informed the Committee of the problems regarding dissemination of information and the need for improvement in this area was highlighted.

HARMONIZATION AND COOPERATION IN FOOD LEGISLATION AND FOOD CONTROL ACTIVITIES IN THE REGION (AGENDA ITEM 4)⁵

19. The Committee recalled that, at its 13th Session, it was agreed that progress reports on the harmonization of national and regional standards with Codex Standards would be discussed at the 14th Session. Many Delegations reported on the progress made by accepting Codex Standards and related texts with the view of harmonizing their national food legislation.

Uganda

20. The Delegation of Uganda informed the Committee that the Uganda National Bureau of Standards had developed 67 food standards, 46 of which were Codex based. The National Codex Committee developed their draft National Food Law based on the FAO/WHO Model Food Law. It was indicated that both the Ugandan and East African Standards on the Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods were based on the corresponding Codex Standard.

South Africa

21. The Delegation of South Africa informed the Committee that its main activities in relation to harmonization and co-operation in food legislation and food control in the sub-region were through its participation in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), which had 14 Member States. SADC has undertaken the Standardization Quality Assurance, Accreditation and Metrology (SQAM) initiative as a means to achieving harmonization among its members. This initiative encompasses standardisation, accreditation, certification, conformity assessment, testing, inspection, metrology and related matters, with the objective of progressively eliminating any technical barriers to trade among member states and between SADC and other regional and international trading blocks. It also promotes quality and the development of an infrastructure for quality in its member states. The Delegation also informed the Committee that a workshop on Harmonization and Implementation of the SPS/TBT Agreements had been held this year in Namibia for SADC Members.

22. The creation of an independent food control agency has been investigated as a means of addressing the fragmentation of South African food legislation. The Committee was also informed that the South African Meat Safety Act had been adopted in October 2000, in line with Codex standards and corresponding recommendations.

Morocco

23. The Delegation of Morocco highlighted the comprehensive revision of the national food legislation that was supported by a FAO technical assistance project during the last five years. Three main legal texts on Food Quality Control, Consumer Protection and Involvement, and the Principles of Ethics for Fair Trade Practices were being finalised. The implementation of those texts would reduce differences related to food safety between domestic and exported foods.

⁵ CX/AFRICA 00/4

Senegal

24. The Delegation of Senegal pointed out that the use of international Codex Standards by African countries was the most efficient means of achieving harmonisation in the region. However, countries would have to overcome several obstacles in achieving harmonisation:

- Countries would need to ensure that efforts made to produce high quality safe foods for export did not lead to the reduced availability of such products on the domestic markets as this could adversely affect consumer health.
- Training programmes and educational activities would need to be implemented to ensure good hygienic practices all along the food chain.
- Appropriate infrastructure to facilitate food imports and export inspection and certification systems would need to be established.

25. Therefore, the Delegation of Senegal invited the countries of the Region to adopt Codex Standards, Guidelines and Recommendations and highlighted the further need for FAO and WHO regional assistance in Senegal and its surrounding countries.

Tanzania

26. The Delegation of Tanzania recalled the long-standing food standardization process being undertaken by the Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) since 1976. As National Codex Contact Point and the Secretariat of the National Codex Committee and its subsidiary bodies, TBS was designated as the national body in charge of implementing Codex standards as national standards. The Delegation pointed out that Tanzania was also taking part in the work of the East African Standards Secretariat and the SADC Standards Committee in ensuring adaptation and adoption of Codex Standards.

Nigeria

27. The Delegation of Nigeria recalled that it had reported at the last Session of the Committee that four national food standards were directly derived from Codex Standards. It indicated that no significant changes had occurred in the interim and were unlikely to occur. It informed the Committee that Member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) free trade zone decided to adopt Codex Alimentarius Standards as their common food standards. Delegations of Benin, Niger, Senegal, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire reported their adhesion to this decision.

Swaziland

28. The Delegation of Swaziland informed the Committee that in Swaziland, the food legislation had been based on the FAO/WHO Model Food Law.

Kenya

29. The Delegation of Kenya indicated that a similar approach to that of Uganda was followed on Pre-packaged food but it pointed out that the distribution of food regulations over five legislative acts impeded their implementation. Therefore, FAO assistance to strengthen the national Codex Contact Point and food control system in Kenya was requested. The Delegation of Kenya informed the Committee that they harmonised food standards based on Codex adopted texts together with Tanzania and Uganda as East African Standards.

Mozambique

30. The Delegation of Mozambique informed the Committee that international support from FAO and WHO had enabled the training of inspectors in food safety control investigation. It also expressed the need for accreditation of national laboratories by internationally recognised organisations.

Benin

31. The Delegation of Benin recalled its participation, as an ECOWAS member, in the above-cited process of harmonizing national legislation with Codex. Benin has undertaken to set up national Codex-based standards, including those for manioc and other processed fruits, vegetables and cereals.

Ghana

32. The Delegation of Ghana indicated that the development of a bilateral approach with Nigeria had been initiated as the first step to broader harmonization among ECOWAS partners.

Côte d'Ivoire

33. The Delegation of Côte d'Ivoire indicated that a high priority was given to harmonization of national legislation through the establishment of a food regulation database in order to compare and combine existing legislation and food inspection systems. A programme for continued training of veterinary inspectors in food hygiene management had been carried out in French-speaking African countries⁶ through a regional project financed by France. It referred to the need for integration of this

⁶ Guinea Conakry, Togo, Senegal, Benin, Mali, Burkina-Faso, Mauritania, Cameroon and Madagascar.

project with other FAO and WHO regional activities in the area of HACCP, risk analysis and strengthening of National Codex infrastructures.

Guinea Conakry

34. The Delegation of Guinea Conakry informed the Committee of their efforts to co-ordinate activities with neighbouring countries in developing a better harmonization of food standards based on the application of food hygiene provisions, HACCP and ISO 9000:2000 in their national food industry.

Eritrea

35. The Delegation of Eritrea informed the Committee that the National Codex Contact Point was located in the Eritrea Standards Institute (ESI) and that ESI was an autonomous standardization body. The Standards Board constituted by eleven members from different Ministries and Institutions and that the Ministry of Trade and Industry was chairing the Board. The Institution promoted the activities of standardization, quality assurance and metrology throughout the country. Even though there was no single food legislation, ESI had been adopting Codex Standards at the national level, such as that for the iodine level in food grade salt. Most of Food and Agricultural Standards were published in the Eritrean Law Gazette. It also highlighted the need for training of trainers in the fisheries sector and the need for technical assistance from FAO and WHO in preparing comprehensive food legislation and in strengthening the role of Codex Contact Point and food quality control in the country.

Consumers International

36. The Observer from Consumers International (CI) expressed its concern that consumer organizations were not always involved at the sub-regional and regional level (e.g. SADC, ECOWAS, EAC, COMESA) during the harmonization process. However, the Observer recognised and acknowledged the efforts undertaken by many Codex Member Countries within the region to involve consumer organizations in Codex activities at the national level.

37. The Observer also informed the Committee that CI Regional Office for Africa proposed the establishment of a Rapid Alert System⁷ for Africa in order to protect consumers from food-related hazards. Furthermore, it proposed to conduct and publish the results of food market research and undertake survey projects in order to enhance the harmonization of food legislation on the continent.

⁷ Terminology and concept already in use at the European level

The Observer expressed the hope that Member Countries in the region would necessary measures to involve consumer organisations in the food legislation harmonization process at all levels.

38. The Committee noted that progress had been made since the last Session in harmonizing food regulations in the African region and encouraged all Members to continue reporting to the Committee on future developments in this area. It was also recognised that increased involvement of consumer associations in the harmonization process was of high priority.

REPORT OF THE ACTIVITIES RELATED TO CODEX CONTACT POINTS AND NATIONAL CODEX COMMITTEES IN THE REGION (AGENDA ITEM 5)⁸

39. The Committee was informed that during its 12th Session in 1995, the Committee endorsed recommendations to address obstacles identified by the participants who attended the pre-session Workshop. As a follow up, delegations were requested to relate the identified obstacles to situations in their respective countries and thereby draw up an Action Plan to establish/strengthen the country's Codex Contact Point/National Codex Committee, which should be circulated to policy makers, and other concerned authorities.

40. Moreover, it was agreed that progress made on the implementation of the Action Plan by countries in the Region should be included in the agenda of future sessions. In view of this, Circular Letter, CL 1998/39-AFRICA of November 1998 was issued with the report of the 13th Session, requesting progress reports on the implementation of National Action Plans to establish/strengthen the roles of Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committees in the Region. The Committee was informed that only Uganda, the host country for the 14th Session, responded to the CL. The Chairperson then invited the Delegation of Uganda to present its report, while other delegations were requested to present short written reports for inclusion in the report of the Session.

Uganda

41. The Delegation reported that, following the 2-day workshop sponsored by FAO, on the responsibilities and functions of National Codex Committees, (June 2000), the National Codex Committee was established comprising representatives from Government ministries, the industry and trade associations, academia, research institutions, and consumer organizations. The Codex Contact Point is located in the Uganda National Bureau of Standards, while the Chairmanship of the National Codex Committee resided in the Ministry of Health (MOH). The National Codex Committee had

⁸ CX/AFRICA 00/5

established the following Technical Committees: (a) General Purposes Committee, (b) Animal and Animal Products Committee, (c) Plant and Plant Products Committee and (d) Special Committee.

42. The Delegation reported further that, since the establishment of the National Codex Committee in June 2000, a Work Plan had been prepared and the National Codex Committee had undertaken the following major activities: (a) Reviewing of the Codex time-table with the view to identifying those Codex sessions of special interest to Uganda. Thus, Uganda attended the 33rd Session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene; and (b) Making adequate preparation and arrangements for the hosting of the 14th Session of this Committee.

Angola

43. The Codex Contact Point was located in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. Although there is no National Codex Committee in place, there was an inter-ministerial group to promote its creation in 2001. This group, which was coordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, was comprised of the Ministries of Health, Industry, Trade, Fisheries and Environment Affairs. The Committee was informed that technical committees were in the process of working on food safety and the harmonization of food legislation. The coordinator of the inter-ministerial group was also the Codex Contact Point.

Benin

44. The National Codex Committee was established in 1990 and efforts have been made to attend Codex meetings such as the Codex Committees on General Principles, Food Hygiene, Natural Mineral Waters, Cocoa Products and Chocolate. The Codex Contact Point was located in the Ministry of Rural Development in the Department of Food and Applied Nutrition (DANA) and served in dissemination of information and collation of responses. It also served as the secretariat of the National Codex Committee.

Ghana

45. The Codex Contact Point was located in the Ghana Standards Board. The Board receives and disseminates Codex texts to all interested bodies in the country. The National Codex Committee has been inactive for quite sometime, but steps were being taken to re-establish it. However, participation in Codex activities have continued, such as attendance at selected Codex sessions and related FAO/WHO activities. It was expected that the new National Codex Committee would be in place in 2001.

Guinea-Conakry

46. The National Standardization and Metrology Institute (INNM), which served as the National Codex Contact Point, was under the auspice of the Ministry of Trade and Industry and Small Scale Enterprises which has established an Intersectorial Technical Committee on foodstuffs which embodies the National Codex Committee. The Chairmanship of this Committee depended on the issues to be discussed. It had established several standards, of which three relate to coffee, one to pineapple and one to mangoes. Several workshops have been held on issues such as the HACCP, ISO 14027, ISO 9000:2000.

Kenya

47. The Codex Contact Point and the Secretariat of the National Codex Committee was in the Kenya Bureau of Standards. The National Codex Committee consists of government ministries, industries, consumers, Kenya Bureau of Standards, and other stakeholders. The Delegation reported that Kenya had identified some specific problems faced by some sectors, especially in particular areas where the country would have some competitive economic advantage. The National Codex Committee would like to play a leading role in streamlining and sustaining quality control in the fish, horticulture and coffee industries. The Delegation requested assistance to strengthen the roles of the National Codex Committee and Codex Contact Point in food quality control.

Morocco

48. The Codex Contact Point is located in the Fraud Tracking Division which belongs to the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development, Waters and Forests. This Division served also as the secretariat to the National Codex Committee, established in 1997. Since then it has been placed under the responsibility of a Permanent Interministerial Commission responsible for food control and fraud tracking.

Mozambique

49. The Codex Contact Point is in the Ministry of Health, Department of Environmental Health. The Codex Contact Point is responsible for distributing Codex texts, coordinating the activities of Codex within the country, and supporting the National Institute of Standardization and Quality in their work. In view of an earlier FAO TCP project to strengthen the food control system in the country and improve the capacity building in food control, the next step would be the creation of a National Codex

Committee with members from the Ministries of Agriculture, Trade and Fisheries and from consumer organizations.

Niger

50. The National Codex Committee was comprised of all concerned parties. It encourages decision-makers to rely on and adopt Codex standards as a means of increasing confidence in national export goods. The National Codex Committee has elaborated terms of reference that could facilitate the realization of its objectives. The National Codex Committee was located in the Ministry of Public Health and Reproduction in the Division of Nutrition.

Nigeria

51. The National Codex Committee that had been inactive was reconstituted and re-activated in August 2000, with representation of all identifiable stakeholders. Technical Sub-Committees have been set up for the effective realization of Codex objectives, and plans are being made to strengthen and empower the Codex Contact Point and the National Codex Committee for more effective performance of their respective roles.

Senegal

52. The National Codex Committee served as technical support to the Senegal Standardization Institute (ISN). To date, it has elaborated more than 50 food-related standards. The National Codex Committee was in the process of collating all Codex texts and distributing these in hard copies to members of the National Codex Committee who were concerned with the issue. To improve the system and enhance the performance there was the need for an electronic means of communication. Currently, the selection of technical staff to take part in various activities related to the work of Codex, including attendance at Sessions of Codex Committees, is being carried out taking into account their specialization. The Secretariat also responds to requests for information and comments on food standards. Decree No 83-1204 dated 24 November 1983, not only established the NCC, but also extended its membership to both consumers and the industry. The chairmanship of the National Codex Committee resided in the Ministry of Health and the secretariat was managed by the Ministries of Health, Trade and the ISN.

South Africa

53. The Codex Contact Point, which was located within the Department of Health, was responsible for distribution of Codex documents, coordination of attendance at Codex meetings, dissemination and

collation of comments on Codex texts, making responses to enquiries and convening of meetings of the National Codex Committee.

54. The Delegation indicated that the electronic distribution of documents by the Codex Secretariat has greatly facilitated the distribution of Codex documents within South Africa to many stakeholders who previously did not receive copies of documents. This has helped to create a much greater awareness of the work of Codex. The membership of the National Codex Committee included, but was not limited to Departments of Health and Foreign Affairs, the National Department of Agriculture, the South African Bureau of Standards and the National Consumer Forum. The National Codex Committee is mainly responsible for setting policy in relation to South Africa's Codex activities. The National Codex Committee has awarded local stewardship for each Codex Committee to an officer within one of the government departments, whose daily task is related to the objectives of the respective Codex Committees. The officers liaised very closely with the Codex Contact Point. Delegations from South Africa attended about 80% of all Codex meetings that were held over the previous two years.

55. A project was implemented under the FAO Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) to strengthen the National Codex Committee and to establish its working groups, thereby enhancing its position as the body to advise the government on Codex matters.

Swaziland

56. The active Codex Contact Point is in the Ministry of Agriculture. However, the Codex Procedural Manual, indicated the Ministry of Health as the Codex Contact Point. Members of the National Codex Committee included: Ministries of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Health and Social Welfare, Enterprises and Employment, Foreign Affairs, Trade and Justice. Others were the Local Government, University of Swaziland, the food industry and consumer associations. The National Codex Committee was currently assisting the National Coordinator in the implementation of a FAO TCP project to strengthen the national food control system in the country, and in the drafting of the National Food Law.

Tanzania

57. The Delegation reminded the Committee that in 1998, during the 13th Session of the Committee, it reported that in 1980, the National Codex Committee was established in the Tanzania Bureau of Standards (The Agriculture and Food Divisional Standards Committee – AFDC). Technical committees covering the work of the Codex committees were established and membership was limited to four. A

two-day national workshop was held in May 2000 in which 50 of the members of the National Codex Working Committees were briefed on Codex work.

Consumers International (CI)

58. The Observer from the Consumers' International commented that its organization had been monitoring closely the work of Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committees and the level of participation of Codex Member Countries from the region of Africa in Codex Committees. Some of the data collected by the organisation were, not encouraging as it portrayed very poor participation by African countries. It was on this basis that the Consumers' International Regional Office for Africa, prepared the *Draft Guidelines for Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committees - Africa Region*, as a contribution to enhancing effective participation of all stakeholders in the work of Codex in the region. (See also paras 60-77)

59. The Committee recognized the important roles of the Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committees in the work of Codex and agreed to continue discussing this agenda item at its 15th Session. The Delegation of Swaziland was requested to confirm the actual location of its Codex Contact Point to the Codex Secretariat. Moreover, those Delegations which were yet to establish their Codex Contact Points/National Codex Committees were encouraged to do so, while those with inactive Committees, were requested to reactivate and strengthen them.

CONSUMERS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE WORK OF NATIONAL CODEX COMMITTEES AND NATIONAL CODEX CONTACT POINTS (AGENDA ITEM 6)⁹

60. The Committee was informed that this item was placed on the Agenda at the request of the 23rd Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission¹⁰. In recognition of consumers' rights to express their interests in the Codex decision making process, the Commission urged member governments to continue to take the opportunity to provide a forum for the exchange of experiences on the ways and means of developing consumer inputs into National Codex Committees and Codex Contact Points. Based on this premise, the Commission requests to be informed of progress made by member governments in this direction¹¹. Furthermore, the Commission at its 23rd Session requested the Codex

⁹ CX/AFRICA 00/6; CX/AFRICA 00/6 –Add.1, CRD 2 (CI Draft Guidelines for Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committees – African Region)

¹⁰ ALINORM 99/37, para. 43, last bullet.

¹¹ CX/AFRICA 00/6, Page 3, Conclusion.

Committee on General Principles to develop a checklist of measurable objectives to assess consumer participation in Codex work at the national and international levels.

61. The Committee was invited to report on progress made to involve consumers in the work of their Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committees, and to provide information/comments on the *Proposed Draft Guidance on Measurable Objectives to Assess Consumer Participation in Codex.*

62. The Observer from Consumers' International (CI) acknowledged the efforts being made by the Codex Alimentarius Commission to enhance effective participation of all stakeholders, particularly consumers, in Codex activities. The Observer further acknowledged the steps being taken by several member countries to enhance effective consumer participation in Codex activities at the national level. The Observer however called for greater involvement of consumer representatives particularly in training workshops organised by member countries, FAO and WHO, which are related to Codex work and the inclusion of consumer representatives in national delegations to meetings of Codex committees.

63. The Observer presented the draft Guidelines for Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committees-African Region, noting that the document, when adopted would enhance effective participation of all stakeholders and also promote participation in the work of the Commission of Codex member countries in the region. Although the draft was adapted from the one prepared for the Codex Coordinating Committee for Asia, it differed in certain areas to make it applicable to the African Region. The Observer requested the Committee to consider and recommend the draft to the Commission for adoption.

64. The Secretariat pointed out that the draft document must be progressed through the stepwise procedure of the Commission and would have to be circulated to all member governments for comments.

Benin

65. The government recognised the three consumer organisations in Benin. However, the organisations encounter difficulties in attending meetings, because the government is unable to fund the participation of representatives of consumer organisations at Codex meetings. The Delegation appealed to Consumers' International to seek for extra funding to be able to provide assistance to the organisations.

Ghana

66. The Delegation informed the Committee that the Food and Drug Legislation required that the composition of the supervising Board should include two government appointed individuals who would represent consumers' interests in the activities of the Board. Other private individuals also served consumer interests on sub-committees in the development of national standards. However, all these individuals so appointed or co-opted did not represent or belong to any consumer association. Their representations were therefore informal.

67. There were currently four consumer associations in Ghana and it was hoped that the National Codex Committee, when activated, would be able to bring the consumer associations under one umbrella, which would effectively take part in Codex matters at the national and international levels.

Kenya

68. Consumer organisations participate in the development of national food standards. However, due to their limited resources, the Consumer Organisations have not effectively been able to participate in the development of international standards, such as Codex standards. Strengthening of the Consumer Organisations would improve their involvement in Codex work.

Mozambique

69. Consumer associations were yet to be involved in the activities of Codex. In fact, the National Codex Committee itself was yet to be inaugurated. The activities carried out so far have been devoted to capacity building for national food control. It was envisaged that following the establishment of the National Codex Committee, the consumer representation would be addressed. While some NGOs representing consumers had been formed in the country, they were yet to be recognised both by consumers and the government.

Senegal

70. The interest of consumers is paramount in the work of the Commission. The call for transparency in the development of food standards in Senegal is for the benefit of consumers. In Senegal, consumers are involved in food standardisation. The Delegation entreated all delegations to give support to the *Guidelines* prepared by the Consumers' International by using objective criteria of representation and legitimisation of consumer organizations at national level.

South Africa

71. In response to the *Proposed Draft Guidance on Measurable Objectives to Assess Consumer Participation in Codex*, the Delegation of South Africa provided the following information:

- South Africa has established a National Codex Contact Point.
- South Africa has established a National Codex Committee, with representation from the umbrella consumer organisation - the National Consumer Forum.
- South Africa does not hold public consultations when developing national positions for Codex meetings.
- In South Africa the National Consumer Forum is provided with Codex documents and is invited to submit comments. However, the Forum has not been invited to participate in Codex meetings because the government was not in a position to fund the Forum.
- In South Africa independent consumer NGOs have not participated in the actual development of national positions for Codex meetings.
- South Africa only deals directly with the one umbrella consumer NGO.

Swaziland

72. Members of consumer organizations were members of the National Codex Committee and are involved in the Codex decision-making processes. However, no consultations existed because currently there was no standards organisation in Swaziland.

Tanzania

73. The Delegation informed the Committee that the participation of consumers in the work of Codex was supported by the provisions of the standards preparation legislation which required the involvement of consumers and all other interested parties at all stages in the elaboration of standards. Weak structure of consumer organisations, coupled with the lack of the necessary expertise, limited the effectiveness of the organisations and their participation in Codex work. In an effort to overcome these problems, a Regional Consumer Sensitisation Workshop was held in Arusha (October 2000), in which five participants from Kenya, one from Uganda and fifteen from Tanzania participated.

Uganda

74. In Uganda, consumer organizations were represented both on the National Codex Committee and the Technical Committees responsible for the elaboration of standards at the Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS), which is the national body mandated to formulate Uganda standards. Furthermore, the UNBS which is also the Codex Contact Point and the consumer organizations exchange information at regular intervals as a way of improving communication and building trust between the two organisations.

Consumers International (CI)

75. In response to issues raised by delegations, the Observer from Consumers International highlighted actions which the organisation had undertaken and which were being contemplated to meet the identified challenges. The Committee was informed that over the last two years, Consumers International-Regional Office for Africa (CI-ROAF), had been supporting its members to work under national umbrella bodies in order to increase their effectiveness, credibility and representation. Some achievements in this regard included:

- The establishment of an umbrella body in Nigeria by regrouping eighteen consumer organisations under the name of *All Nigeria Consumers Movement Union (ANCOMU)*.
- The establishment of an umbrella body in Cote d'Ivoire, regrouping fifteen consumer organisations under the name of *Federation des Associations de Consommateurs Cote d'Ivoire (FAC-CI)*.
- Support was granted to the National Consumer Forum of South Africa, which represented twenty-five consumer organisations.
- The establishment in Senegal, of the *Conseil National des Associations de Consommateur (CONAC)* involving four consumer organisations.

76. The Committee was also informed of the lobbying efforts of CI to integrate Consumer Policy in the recently ratified Cotonou Development Convention between 71 African, Caribbean and Pacific and 15 European countries. The Observer encouraged governments to include consumer policy in their priority areas to be able to benefit from resources which may be made available under this convention.

77. The Observer from Consumers International reiterated the various capacity building activities it had undertaken to improve the expertise of consumer organizations, including the organisation of training workshops, sponsoring of delegates to participate in Codex meetings, providing publications such as the

manual *Codex Alimentarius for Consumers*. The Observer requested governments, FAO and WHO to continue involving consumer organisations in workshops organised by them.

78. Many the Delegations welcomed the document and in principle supported the draft guidelines. The Committee **agreed** to initiate work on the development of *Guidelines for Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committees – African Region*, subject to approval by the 24th Session of the Commission. The Committee also agreed to attach the document to this report (see Appendix II).

RISK ANALYSIS ACTIVITIES AND APPLICATION IN THE REGION (AGENDA ITEM 7¹²)

79. The Chairperson of the Committee introduced this Agenda Item and recalled that, during its 13th Session¹³, the Committee had endorsed a number of recommendations regarding the use of risk analysis in the development of national food standards. She also recalled the discussions on risk analysis that had taken place at the 23rd Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and reminded Delegates that they had been invited to report on the situation and experience in implementing risk analysis in their own countries.

80. The Committee noted that a two day Regional Workshop on Risk Analysis – Exposure Assessment for countries in the region had been organized and sponsored by FAO, WHO and ILSI. The general objectives of the Workshop were to acquaint participants with the principles of risk analysis and the methodologies for assessing exposure to foodborne hazards; to sensitize them to the risk assessment needs in the region; to provide guidance on the necessary data required for exposure assessment; and to encourage them to apply the acquired knowledge in risk analysis of foodborne hazards in the development of their food legislation. The report¹⁴ of the workshop was presented to the Committee.

81. The Committee endorsed the following recommendations made by the Workshop:

- Codex standards, guidelines and other recommendations should be adopted and used by all countries;
- Training in different aspects of risk analysis, and also on the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point System (HACCP) and Good Hygienic Practices (GHP) at regional, sub-regional or national levels for countries in the region should be continued by FAO and WHO;

¹² CX/AFRICA 00/7

¹³ ALINORM 99/28

¹⁴ CRD 1 (Report of the FAO/WHO/ILSI Regional Workshop on Risk Analysis – Exposure Assessment)

- Work necessary to gather data to do national risk assessments such as food consumption patterns, contaminant levels in food and incidence of foodborne disease should be strengthened;
- Government officials and decision makers should be sensitised to the necessity of performing risk assessments at the national/regional level;
- Areas where risk assessment needs to be done at the national level should be identified, clearly defined and prioritized;
- Co-operation and communication at national/regional level for various sectors should be emphasized;
- Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), and GHP's should be applied, as appropriate, as a first step in reducing foodborne risks;
- Products where the African region has competitive advantages and that would benefit by a risk assessment should be given higher priority in the allocation of resources to ensure consumer protection and facilitate trade;
- Research institutes and relevant faculties in universities in the region should consider focusing more of their research programmes on providing data necessary to carry out exposure assessment.

82. In addition the Workshop reaffirmed the recommendations made by the 13th Session¹⁵ of the Committee.

83. The Delegation of South Africa informed the Committee that risk analysis activities in the country were mainly conducted by the Departments of Agriculture and Health and focus on chemical hazards. When available, ADI's and MRL's established at the international level by JECFA and JMPR are accepted; otherwise these must be established locally. The GEMS/Food Regional Diets and JECFA food basket are used in estimating exposure but South Africa is currently undertaking a dietary intake survey for this purpose. Risk management decisions and practices are published and some monitoring of chemical hazards is carried out.

84. The Delegation of Morocco highlighted the lack of resources in its country for risk analysis activities but noted its plans to establish a scientific advisory body that would be responsible for these activities. The Delegations of Benin and Senegal also emphasized the difficulties encountered in implementing risk analysis and the need for technical support in this area.

¹⁵ ALINORM 99/28

85. The Delegation of Uganda expressed its appreciation for the inclusion of this subject in the agenda of the Committee and also highlighted its limited capacity and the need for assistance in this area, particularly in relation to training. The Delegation emphasised the importance of collaboration between countries in the region on data generation for risk analysis in the fisheries sector and also requested that *Escherichia coli* and *Staphylococcus aureus* be included in the Codex list of priorities for expert microbiological risk assessment advice.

86. The importance of co-ordination at both the national and regional levels, particularly in relation to data generation, was further stressed by the Delegation of Kenya. While Kenya had carried out some risk assessment work in relation to chemical hazards, the need to increase risk assessment activities in other areas such as coffee was stressed.

87. The Delegation of Tanzania informed the Committee that risk analysis activities in the country were carried out by the Ministries of Health, Agriculture and Natural Resources and Tourism (fisheries). While recognizing the importance of risk analysis, Tanzania was first focusing on more basic problems, such as the need for training in GAP, GHP, GMP and HACCP. Before embarking on risk analysis activities, the national policy was to first explore the available Codex Standards, guidelines and recommendations and use them where possible.

88. The Observer from Consumers International highlighted the need for elaboration of clear guidelines on how to carry out risk analysis and also pointed out the need to take consumer concerns into account when doing risk analysis.

89. In supporting the approach taken by Tanzania, the Codex Secretariat reminded the Committee that if Codex Standards were used, countries would be in compliance with the provisions of the SPS Agreement and would not need to carry out a risk assessment. However, if a country deviates from them, then a risk assessment would need to be undertaken.

NOMINATION OF COORDINATOR (AGENDA ITEM 8)¹⁶

90. The Committee recalled that the rules governing the nomination of the Coordinator had been amended by the 23rd Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and therefore the Committee had to nominate a member country as Coordinator for consideration for appointment by the 24th Session of the Commission.

¹⁶ CX/AFRICA 98/9

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91. The Secretariat informed the Committee that it had received two proposals in writing for the candidature of Coordinator: an intention from the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco to host the next session of the Committee and the decision of the Government of Uganda to renominate the country as Coordinator for Africa.
92. The Delegation of Tanzania supported by some other delegations pointed out that a new Near-East Committee with Morocco as one of the Member country had been established by the 23rd Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and questioned the eligibility of Morocco to become the next Coordinator for Africa.
93. Some Delegations indicated that traditionally the host countries in the Region of Africa served as Coordinators for two consecutive terms and that as Uganda had only held the Coordination for one term it was therefore eligible to hold it for another term. Some other Delegations while recognizing fact that Coordinating country could be renominated for the second term, were of the opinion that the overall term be reduced to two years (one single term for each country) as to enable the better information exchange among various countries, and thereby, renewed involvement of both political and administrative authorities in the sub-region.
94. Some Delegations pointed out that in the Procedural Manual, which provides official Guidance regarding Codex procedures, Morocco was listed under the Near East Region and therefore the country was not eligible for the nomination as Coordinator for the Region of Africa. Some Delegations drew the attention of the Committee to the fact that in the document CX/AFRICA 00/8 Morocco was listed as a member of the African Region and highlighted the need for clarity as to which region Morocco was affiliated and that the list contained some typos. Therefore, the delegations requested that the rules of the CAC be followed in order to avoid any misinterpretation on this matter.
95. The Secretariat informed the Committee that countries could participate in the work in both regions. However, they had to choose which region they belonged to as members and reminded the Committee that the decision regarding the appointment of Coordinator could only be taken by the next Session of the Commission.
96. Some delegations supported the renomination of Uganda, as the next Coordinator for CCAFRICA, while some other delegations were in favour of Morocco therefore the Committee was unable to reach consensus on this matter.
97. The Delegation of Morocco while complementing Uganda for excellent work drew the attention of the Committee to the fact that in its participation at Codex, Morocco always associated itself with the

African Region. The Delegation reminded the Committee that even at the 23rd Session of the Commission, it had expressed willingness to host the 15th Session of the Committee.

98. The Committee concluded that it had received two proposals for the nomination of the next Coordinator for CCAFRICA of Uganda and that of Morocco and decided to forward both nominations to the 24th Session of the Commission to decide the next Coordinator for the Region of Africa.

OTHER BUSINESS AND FUTURE WORK (AGENDA ITEM 9)

99. The Committee noted that there was no other business at this Session.

DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT SESSION (AGENDA ITEM 10)

100. The Committee was informed that the next (15th) Session was provisionally scheduled to be held in the year 2002. The exact dates and venue would be determined between the host country and the Codex Secretariat, subject to the appointment of a Coordinator by the 24th Session of the Commission.

SUMMARY STATUS OF WORK

Subject	Step	For Action by	Document Reference in ALINORM 01/28
Proposed Draft African Regional Guidelines for National Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committees	1/2/3	24 th CAC, Governments, 15 th Session of the CCAFRICA	Para. 78
Progress Report on Harmonization of National/Regional Standards with those of Codex		Governments and 15 th Session CCAFRICA	Para. 37
Progress report on the Establishment/Strengthening the National Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committees in the Region		Governments and 15 th Session CCAFRICA	Para. 67
Nomination of Coordinator		24 th Session of the CAC	Paras 90 - 98

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Appendix II**PROPOSED DRAFT AFRICAN REGIONAL GUIDELINES FOR CODEX CONTACT POINTS AND NATIONAL CODEX COMMITTEES****Table of Contents**

INTRODUCTION.....	33
CODEX CONTACT POINTS	33
DESCRIPTION	33
FUNCTIONS.....	34
LOCATION	35
REQUIREMENTS.....	35
NATIONAL CODEX COMMITTEE.....	36
FUNCTIONS.....	36
COMPOSITION AND STRUCTURE	37
NOMINATION TO THE NATIONAL CODEX COMMITTEE.....	38
FUNDING.....	39
CORE FUNCTIONS OF CODEX CONTACT POINTS	41

These guidelines serve as recommendations for the Codex member countries in Africa.

The operations of Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committees will differ from country to country depending on national legislation, government structures and practice.

INTRODUCTION

Codex Alimentarius Commission is a joint Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and World Health Organisation (WHO) programme responsible for compiling the standards, codes of practice, guidelines and recommendations that constitute the Codex Alimentarius. Its members consist of governments members of the United Nations organisation who subscribe to become its members.

Over the years, the Codex Alimentarius has become an important global reference point for consumers, food producers and processors, national food control agencies and all those involved in the international food trade. The code has had an enormous impact on the thinking of food producers and processors as well as on the awareness of the end users - the consumers. Its influence extends to every continent, and its contribution to the protection of public health and fair practices in the food trade is immeasurable.

The role of the Codex Alimentarius Commission has expanded with developments in food trade and the need for enhanced protection of public health. Codex standards are now reference standards in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and are also being adopted by many countries as minimum food standards. Several countries are now realising the need to actively participate in the activities of the Codex Alimentarius Commission to effectively protect the rights and interests of their consumers and their traders.

The activities of the Codex Alimentarius Commission is immense in itself as it needs a critical balance of the interests of all stakeholders involved, namely the consumers, policy makers and those in the food trade industry. Codex activities at the national level are equally intricate as the varying interests of all stakeholders need to be taken on board even as the country's response on the Codex proposals are being formulated.

Creating standards that at once protect consumers, ensure fair practices in food trade and facilitate trade is a process that involves several stakeholders including consumers, food producers and traders among others.

Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committees are amongst the essential organs of the Codex Alimentarius Commission that enhances the active involvement of various stakeholders at the national level which translates to effective participation of Codex member countries in the activities of the commission, results of which are a credible food code.

This document outlines basic guidelines for the establishment, structure, functions and organisation of an effective Codex Contact Point and National Codex Committee. Should there be an existing Codex Contact Point and National Codex Committee, then these guidelines could serve to further improve on their efficiency.

CODEX CONTACT POINTS

DESCRIPTION

In order to facilitate efficient and effective communication and working relationship between the Codex Alimentarius Commission and the government, the commission recommends the establishment of a Codex Contact Point in every Codex member country.

The Codex Contact Point shall serve as the official link between the Codex Alimentarius and the respective member country. In essence, the Codex Contact Point shall serve as the official national communication agent (for and on behalf of the member country) to the Commission. This implies that all communication from the member country to the commission and vice versa shall go through the Codex Contact Point.

This does not however mean that the national Codex Contact Point shall usurp the governments' role in the Codex Alimentarius Commission. Since the activities of the Codex Alimentarius Commission affect and should include all relevant stakeholders such as consumers, food industry etc, the principal objective of the Codex Contact Point shall be to facilitate the member country's active and effective participation in the activities of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

Just as the Codex Secretariat in Rome functions to facilitate the activities of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, so shall the Codex Contact Point operate as the national codex secretariat. The Codex Contact Point shall be headed by a competent and knowledgeable person in matters relating to Codex Alimentarius Commission objectives and functions. Additional staff can be engaged as per the needs and capability of each country. The person who heads the Codex Contact Point shall also serve as the secretary to the National Codex Committee.¹

FUNCTIONS

In order to meet her principal objective of facilitating the country's active and effective participation in the activities of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the functions of the national Codex Contact Point shall include the following among others²;

- a) receiving all Codex communications, documents and publications from the commission;
- b) studying the documents and initiating relevant action either directly or through the National Codex Committee and/or the relevant sub-committee(s) or institution;
- c) maintaining a library of all Codex standards, Codes of Practice, Guidelines and any other documents and publications on or related to Codex;
- d) distribution of Codex documents, publications and other information to all stakeholders;
- e) serving as the country's link to the Codex Secretariat and other Codex member countries;
- f) any other task that shall be recommended by the NCC and/or the government.

¹See page 7

² Other possible functions of the Codex Contact Point as outlined in the Codex Alimentarius Commission Procedural Manual eleventh edition are in the annex.

LOCATION

Upon carefully reading and understanding the role and functions of the national Codex Contact Point, the decision on where to locate the Codex Contact Point basically rests with the respective member country.

This decision could either be made by the government and/or through consultation with the relevant stakeholders at the national level.

It is however common practice that the government takes up the responsibility to host the national Codex Contact Points since;

- Codex is an intergovernmental body and it is governments who take decisions at the Codex Alimentarius Commission with the expectation that they would interpret and implement them accordingly at the national level, hence it is more convenient that the government coordinate Codex activities;
- Looking at the functions³ and the requirements⁴, it is in most cases the government that is better placed to effectively host the Codex Contact Point;
- There is a need for the very possible neutrality in terms of meeting the basic Codex objective of protecting the health of consumers and ensuring fair practices in the food trade and the government is seen to be able to provide this.

If it is agreeable that the government hosts the Codex Contact Point, then a relevant or suitable ministry such as the Ministry of Health or Agriculture or a suitable government department or institution such as the National Bureau of Standards or the Government Chemist could serve as a good host.

Whichever the location of the national Codex Contact Point, it is desirable that the location meets the following criteria;

- is as neutral as possible as regards to all interested parties' involvement in the Codex work;
- is capable of performing the functions of the Codex Contact Point;
- accessible to all parties interested and/or those involved in the activities of Codex.

REQUIREMENTS⁵

Noting the functions of the Codex Contact Point, it is imperative that the selected/established Codex Contact Point be fully equipped and facilitated to effectively perform these functions.

³ See page 4 on functions

⁴ See page 6 on requirements

⁵ These requirements are not mandatory and/or exclusive and will differ from country to country depending on the available resources and needs.

The basic requirements for a Codex Contact Point could be;

- committed staff;
- adequate office space;
- communication facilities e.g. telephone, fax, email, postal address etc;
- stationary;
- printing and photocopying equipment e.g. computer, printer, photocopier etc.

NATIONAL CODEX COMMITTEE

Recognising the fact that there are many stakeholders within any Codex member country whose interests and concerns need to be taken on board while taking decisions at the Codex Alimentarius Commission meetings, it is essential that a National Codex Committee (NCC) be established. Codex Alimentarius Commission in some of her publications encourages Codex member states to establish National Codex Committees due to their vital functions. NCC provides a forum for discussions and for the formulation of the national position(s) and responses to Codex proposals or policy.

NCC also enables stakeholders with no international affiliation or exposure to represent their interests, or those groups unable to attend the international meetings an opportunity to discuss the meetings' agenda with their national delegation.

The primary objective of the National Codex Committee is therefore to act as a consultative group to the government on matters related to Codex.

Representatives from all relevant national bodies, including consumers organisations, business associations etc should be invited to attend the National Codex Committee to put forward their views for consideration and inclusion in the national negotiating position.

FUNCTIONS⁶

The functions of the National Codex Committee will vary from country to country owing to a number of reasons. The primary functions could however be;

- g) formulating the country response to the proposals of the Codex Alimentarius Commission;
- h) nominating delegates to represent the country at various Codex meetings;
- i) advising the government on the best possible decisions as regards Codex standards and their implementation;
- j) appoint such technical sub-committees as may be necessary for the country's effective participation in Codex;

⁶ These functions are not obligatory and/or exclusive.

k) undertake such other duties as may be advised by the government.

COMPOSITION AND STRUCTURE

Ideally all government departments and organisations concerned with food safety, food production and trade in food should be included in the National Codex Committee. Further, owing to the functions of the NCC, some scientific organisations such as public universities and research institutions and any other notable experts in the relevant field and with keen interest in Codex matters could be co-opted to the NCC.

An example of a National Codex Committee could include representatives from the following institutions;

1. Relevant Ministries/Government institutions such as:
 - Ministry of Health;
 - Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries & Livestock;
 - Ministry of Trade and Industry;
 - Ministry of Consumer Protection,
 - National Bureau of Standards,
 - Government Chemist.
2. Consumers' Organisations;
3. Food Industry - Manufacturers [representatives from various sectors]
4. Traders in Food items e.g. importers and exporters;
5. University
6. Leading Research Institutions
7. Notable experts.

The NCC should however not be kept too large as to make it unmanageable. The NCC shall from amongst its membership elect a chairperson. The chairperson can be one representing any organisation or ministry. The position of the chairperson should be rotational may be on a two-year term. The responsibilities of the chairperson shall be decided by the NCC and may include conducting meetings of the NCC among others;

The person who serves as the head of the Codex Contact Point should also serve as the Secretary of the National Codex Committee. As a secretary to the NCC, his/her responsibilities shall be decided by the NCC and may include:-

-
- taking minutes at the NCC meetings;
 - keeping all records relating to the activities of the NCC;
 - drafting the agenda items and sending invitations to meetings in conjunction with the chairperson;
 - undertaking such other duties as may be prescribed by the NCC and/or the government.

The NCC shall agree amongst herself on the basic operational procedures including the quorum and the schedule and procedure at her meetings. It is however recommended that the quorum for any meeting include a representative from all the key stakeholders such as the industry and the consumers. The documents should also be circulated as widely as possible and with ample time to enable those that are not able to attend any particular NCC meeting to submit their inputs which should be considered at the NCC meeting.

All sub-committees appointed by the NCC shall report to the NCC. Decisions at the NCC shall be reached by consensus and implemented by and as agreed at respective NCC meeting. Communication between the government and the NCC is conducted through the Codex Contact Point.

NOMINATION TO THE NATIONAL CODEX COMMITTEE

As there are several interested parties who would want to be involved in and to represent their constituents at the NCC, the procedure for nomination/inclusion into the NCC must be known, open and transparent. Whereas different countries could use different methods to select those to sit at the NCC depending on resources and structures available, it is recommended that the Codex Contact Point identify and lists all key stakeholders and invite them to the inaugural meeting of the NCC. The participants at this meeting would then identify and invite [through the secretary] other members to the NCC.

Ideally the intention to form the NCC could be advertised in the media and organisations requested to recommend nominees. The sitting NCC could form a small subcommittee to sort out the list of applicants and make a selection based on a NCC predetermined criteria for representation at on the NCC. Possible criteria for selection could include:-

- track record on food issues relevant in Code Alimentarius;
- reasonable prospects of continuous existence;
- expertise;
- availability to attend meetings and comment on Codex documents.

Participation at the NCC meetings should be reviewed annually and new members appointed to replace dormant members.

FUNDING

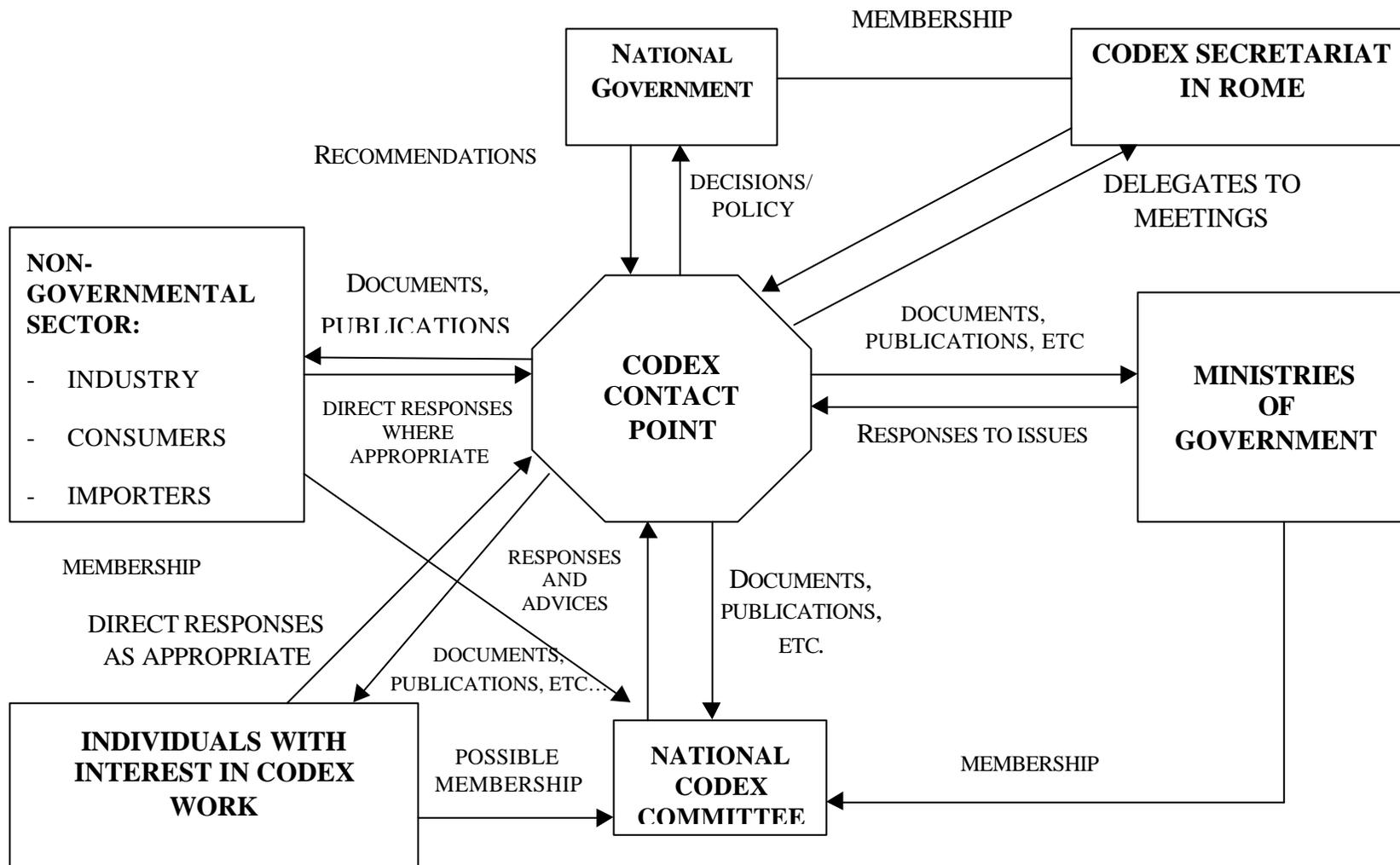
For the Codex Contact Point and the National Codex Committee to operate efficiently and effectively, there must be identified a sustainable source of funding for their activities. A secure source of funding for Codex work at the national level would enable prompt response/reactions on Codex proposals, timely and adequate preparation for Codex meetings, representation and effective participation at Codex meetings among other things.

The source of funding for running and/or for activities of the Codex Contact Point and the National Codex Committee must however be known to all members of the NCC. Any contributions must not be attached to any conditions so as to enable the two bodies operate effectively without fear or favour.

Besides the support from the government, the NCC could seek additional financial support for the activities of Codex through the Chairperson and/or the Codex Contact Point (Secretary) from well-wishers and stakeholders in the Codex work. Possible sources of support for the codex activities include;

- Central Government
- Foundations & Trust Funds
- Industry Levy
- UN Organisations e.g. WHO, FAO, UNDP
- International Organisations

Figure 1. Interrelationships within the Codex System



Core Functions of Codex Contact Points

The operation of Codex Contact Points will differ in each country depending on national legislation, government structures and practices.

1. Act as the link between the Codex Secretariat and Member countries;
2. Coordinate all relevant Codex activities within their own countries;
3. Receive all Codex final texts (standards, codes of practice, guidelines and other advisory texts) and working documents of Codex sessions and ensure that they are circulated to those concerned within their own countries;
4. Send comments on Codex documents or proposals to the Codex Alimentarius Commission or its subsidiary bodies and/or the Codex Secretariat;
5. Work in close cooperation with the National Codex Committee, where such has been established. The Codex Contact Point acts as the liaison point with the food industry, consumers, traders and all other concerned to ensure that the government is provided with the appropriate balance of policy and technical advice upon which to base decisions relating to issues raised in the context of the Codex work;
6. Act as a channel for the exchange of information and the coordination of activities within their own countries and with other Codex members;
7. Receive the invitations to Codex sessions and inform the relevant chairpersons and the Codex Secretariat of the names of participants from their own countries;
8. Maintain a library of Codex final texts; and
9. Promote Codex activities throughout their own countries.