

codex alimentarius commission

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD HEALTH
ORGANIZATION

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**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION**

*Twenty-second Session
Geneva, 23 - 28 June 1997*

**REPORT OF THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE
CODEX COORDINATING COMMITTEE
FOR NORTH AMERICA AND THE SOUTH-WEST PACIFIC**

Rotorua, New Zealand, 30 April - 3 May 1996

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The fourth session of the Codex Coordinating Committee for North America and the South West Pacific reached the following conclusions:

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND/OR COMMISSION:

- Suggested that consideration be given to a further consultation on **risk communication mechanisms and methodologies** (para. 65);
- Supported the current alignment of **Codex membership of the Region** and more active collaboration between **Codex and APEC** (para. 66 and 72);
- Nominated **Dr. Thomas Billy (United States)** for appointment as **Regional Coordinator** (para. 74), and;
- Agreed to bring concerns regarding the **length and procedures of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and the timely distribution of Codex documents** to the attention of the Executive Committee (paras. 79 and 80).

MATTERS OF INTEREST TO THE COMMISSION:

- Identified main objectives and priorities related to the identification of **Codex Standards and related texts which have a major impact in the Region** (paras. 16 - 19 and Appendix 2), and;
- Discussed papers on **Dietary Modelling** (para. 75) and **Guidelines for the Development of Agreements Regarding Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems** (para. 76).

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Fourth Session of the Codex Coordinating Committee for North America and the South-West Pacific (CCNASWP) was held from 30 April to 3 May 1996 in Rotorua, New Zealand by courtesy of the Government of New Zealand. The Session was chaired by Dr Peter O'Hara, Acting Director General, Ministry of Agriculture, New Zealand.

2. The Session was attended by representatives of Australia, Canada, the Federated States of Micronesia, New Zealand, and the United States of America as member countries of the North American and South West Pacific Region. Observers from Consumers International and the South Pacific Commission also attended the meeting. A List of Participants is attached as Appendix I to this report.

OPENING OF THE SESSION (Agenda Item 1)

3. The Session was opened by the Hon. Katherine O'Regan, Associate Minister of Health for New Zealand. The Minister welcomed participants on behalf of the Government of New Zealand and noted that, because of its cultural heritage, Rotorua was a very appropriate venue. New Zealand was a founding member of Codex and was active as host Government of two Committees, namely Milk and Milk Products and Meat Hygiene. The Minister expressed particular satisfaction in that this was the first Codex meeting ever held within New Zealand. The Minister noted that the work of Codex has gained new recognition and significance with the conclusion of the Uruguay Agreement on SPS issues. The Minister expressed pleasure at the December 1995 Treaty between Australia and New Zealand whereby the one organization, the Australia New Zealand Food Authority, would be responsible for developing joint food standards for both countries. She expressed hope that such a Treaty could be used as a model for other countries in the Region to combine resources in food standards activities.

4. Mr Anthony J. Whitehead, Acting Chief, Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, on behalf of the Directors-General of FAO and WHO, expressed appreciation to the New Zealand Government for hosting the meeting and stressed the importance of the Committee in terms of advising the Commission on the particular needs of the Region especially regarding increasing the membership, and Codex involvement in World Trade Organization (WTO) activities.

5. Dr Claudio Almeida, Regional Advisor for Food Safety, Pan American Health Organization of WHO, on behalf of the Director-General of WHO and the Director of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), welcomed participants to the meeting and requested member countries to increase their involvement in Codex, recognising its importance in a world where more and more foods are traded across national borders.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA¹ (Agenda Item 2)

6. The Committee adopted the Provisional Agenda with the addition of two further items under Item 10, Other Business and Future Work. The US proposed that consideration be given to the CCFICS Proposed Draft Guidelines for the Development of Agreements Regarding Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems. Australia proposed the issue of Dietary Modelling as an item for future work.

¹ CX/NASWP 96/1

MATTERS REFERRED FROM THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER CODEX COMMITTEES² (Agenda Item 3)

7. The Committee noted that most of the items in the paper were for information only or would be discussed elsewhere. In regard to the Rules of Procedure (Rule IV.6 - Quorum) and the Commission's request to "study mechanisms which might facilitate the expression of consensus", it was decided that the best contribution towards consensus would be greater participation by developing countries within the Region and that further attention be given to this matter under Agenda Item 8.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE AGREEMENTS ON THE APPLICATION OF SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES AND ON TECHNICAL BARRIERS TO TRADE TO COUNTRIES IN THE REGION³ (Agenda Item 4)

8. The Commission had requested Coordinating Committees to advise on those Codex Standards and related texts which have a major impact on trade especially in regard to SPS measures. In considering this item the Chair urged the Committee to keep in mind not only the need for Codex to respond to WTO requirements but also the need for Codex standards to remain relevant in the modern world.

9. The delegation of Australia advised that there were related activities proceeding within APEC. In February 1996 the APEC Sub-Committee on Standards and Conformance (SCSC) developed the following criteria for selection of priority areas for alignment with international standards:

- perceived value of alignment in terms of reducing costs and/or increasing regional trade flows;
- the significance of existing trade flows;
- interest among APEC member economies;
- the product groups are specific enough to be manageable yet broad enough to represent significant trade opportunities; and
- feasibility of alignment.

10. The Committee agreed on the need for both the Commission and the WTO to look more closely at acceptance systems to ensure practicality and prevent any duplication.

11. The Committee noted that the recent 10th Session of the Codex Coordinating Committee for Asia (March 1996) had identified the following criteria as a basis for deciding which Codex standards and related texts had major trade impact: (1) value of trade; (2) staple food; (3) potential for health concerns; (4) frequency of rejection; (5) standards rather than codes of practice; (6) relatively new or newly revised texts. On the basis of these criteria, the Committee identified 16 Codex standards relating to fish and fishery products, cereals and cereal products and milk products, as having major trade impact in the Region.⁴

12. The delegation of Canada proposed meat and meat products as a generic group of concern. The delegation of Australia identified MRLs for pesticides and veterinary drugs as a further generic group of Codex standards which had a major trade impact.

² CX/NASWP 96/2

³ CX/NASWP 96/3

⁴ ALINORM 97/15, paras 9-10

13. Regarding MRLs, the Committee noted that the Forty Second Session of the Executive Committee had agreed to consider, at its next session in 1996, a paper on the development and application of limits for residues of pesticides and veterinary drugs in foods, the presence of contaminants and the use of food additives. It was agreed that standards established in relation to such limits could, as a class and individually, have a major impact on trade. Trade impacts would be determined by a number of factors including not only the level at which standards were established but also by the way in which standards were applied and interpreted. The Committee therefore supported the examination by the Executive Committee of issues arising in this field and looked forward to the reference of particular elements to the relevant Codex Committees (e.g., CCPR, CCRVDF, CCFAC and CCFICS) for additional consideration and the development of appropriate work plans and recommendations.

14. Following discussion of these aspects of the topic, an ad hoc Working Group of representatives of the five countries present was appointed with Dr. Anne MacKenzie (Canada) as Convenor.

15. On the basis of the Working Group report, the Committee agreed that the simple listing of a limited number of Codex standards and related texts (as requested in CX/NASWP 96/3, para 16) was inadequate. It was considered important that solutions be sought rather than just identification of problems. It would be unrealistic to use valuable resources to review problems without the prospect of being able to identify solutions.

16. The main objectives were identified as follows:

- to monitor the adoption (or non-adoption) of Codex food standards;
- to assess the effectiveness of Codex standards to achieve individual countries' objectives for regulating food, protecting public health and safety, and facilitating international trade;
- to assess, within broad categories of regulation, the importance of the presence (or absence) of Codex standards in facilitating international trade; and
- to assure a procedure is in place which gives Codex the capacity to identify when there is a priority need to develop or modify food standards and assess their benefit to health and safety, and trade.

17. Priority should also be given, where possible, to those broad-based issues which represent groups of standards, new products or processes. These groups may reflect either out-dated standards or the absence of standards such as for new technologies. As a subfunction of the prioritization process, Codex should review broad-based Codex texts not currently considered standards, guidelines or recommendations.

18. Codex should also develop a responsive and effective mechanism to prioritize its work commensurate with the new challenges in the WTO context. Such a system should be based on empirical responses from Members as expressed and forwarded through the Regional Committees. Further, the Commission should develop the ability to move priority issues on a separate fasttrack in Committees.

19. In order to identify priorities the Working Group developed a table, an example of which is included in Appendix 2. The Committee agreed that each member country of the Region should be supplied with a uniform set of matrices for completion. Separate matrices would apply for each major product category such as grains, meats, seafoods, etc. Each standard in the matrix would be identified as to its creation date, last modification, anticipated future review, etc.

20. Because the Coordinating Committee will not convene again until early 1998, and the Commission requires a response to this issue for consideration at its Twenty Second Session in 1997, it was agreed that the Working Group would progress this work under the coordination of its convenor (Dr MacKenzie). On the basis of this work, the Group will prepare a submission to be tabled through a member country delegation with the Codex Committee on General Principles at its meeting in November 1996.

21. The Committee thanked Dr MacKenzie and the Working Group for the effort and vision shown in the approach being proposed.

REVIEW AND PROMOTION OF ACCEPTANCE OF CODEX STANDARDS AND CODEX MAXIMUM RESIDUE LIMITS FOR PESTICIDES BY COUNTRIES IN THE REGION⁵ (Agenda Item 5)

22. The Committee noted detailed agenda papers had been provided by Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States on acceptance of Codex standards and MRLs.

23. The Committee was informed that New Zealand was one of the few countries that has reported acceptance of all Codex pesticide MRLs either at the "full acceptance" level (where the Codex limit is compatible with New Zealand Good Agricultural Practice) or at the "free distribution" level (where the Codex MRL is not relevant to New Zealand conditions).

24. This ability to accept Codex MRLs is based on a provision in the New Zealand legislation that provides that any imported food may contain levels of pesticides and veterinary drugs not greater than those specified by Codex. New Zealand has given full acceptance to 433 MRLs involving 63 pesticides. Acceptance of all other pesticide MRLs is at the "free distribution" level.

25. The delegation of the United States advised that the US had recognised, through its strategic planning activities, that its acceptance of Codex Standards was a critical issue. The USA was currently expending most of its resources in revising the established standards as recommended by the 1991 Rome Conference and endorsed by the CAC in 1991. The U.S. was developing processes to systematically evaluate Codex standards using established US approaches to risk assessment.

26. The Committee was informed that Canada was currently reviewing the list of Codex MRLs against those established under its Food and Drug Regulations. A formal response on the degree of Canada's acceptance of Codex MRLs was expected to be prepared in May, 1996. The delegation of Canada noted that it would be a massive task for countries to review all current Codex standards and notify on the status of all provisions in these standards, plus all substantive deviations and the reasons for them. Consequently, countries would need to prioritize their responses. Since the various Committees of Codex were at present reviewing standards in order to transfer non-essential features to advisory documents or annexes, Canada would await the completion of this review before responding on possible acceptance.

27. The delegation of Australia reported that as part of its review of the Australian Food Standards Code, the National Food Authority was reviewing the Australian standards for residues in food, including an examination of the underlying principles for setting MRLs. The review had three phases:

1. A review of commodity and commodity group names to align with those in the Guide to Codex Recommendations Concerning Pesticide Residues Part 4 Codex Classification of Foods and Animal Feeds (WHO, 1989). This is nearing completion.

2. A review of toxicological groupings of chemicals and the concept of nil tolerance.
3. Consideration of the adoption of Codex MRLs for free distribution and facilitation of the harmonisation of the New Zealand and Australian MRLs.

INFORMATION AND REPORTS ON FOOD CONTROL, FOOD SAFETY AND FOOD STANDARDS ISSUES IN THE REGIONS⁶ (Agenda Item 6)

28. The Committee was provided with verbal reports by the various member countries and international organisations represented. These reports are summarized below.

United States of America

29. The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), US Department of Agriculture, is carrying out a strategy for change that addresses two areas in which major improvement is needed to protect public health and satisfy public expectations regarding the inspection program for meat and poultry. First, the current system did not deal adequately with the problem of pathogenic microorganisms, on raw meat and poultry products, that can cause foodborne illness. Second, the traditional deployment and utilization of FSIS resources was not optimal in light of the agency's current food safety priorities.

30. The FSIS strategy for change encompasses five major initiatives: (1) rulemaking on Pathogen Reduction and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP), (2) regulatory reform initiatives, (3) a reorganization plan, (4) pilot tests of new approaches to inspection, and (5) farm-to-table food safety activities. With implementation of this strategy, the United States will have a system of food safety protection for meat and poultry that will better ensure food safety and make better use of scarce resources.

31. Within the US FDA, the Food and Color Additive Petitions Reform Initiative is receiving considerable attention. The inability of FDA's food additive review program to act upon as many petitions as it receives each year has resulted in an inventory of approximately 300 pending petitions. Moreover, the statutory time frame of 6 months for review of a petition is often exceeded; petitions for major direct additives may take 4-6 years for final actions. These delays have been a source of frustration for the food industry, which contends that new product innovation is stifled and the public is denied the fruits of its research and development.

32. Improvements have been made within the organization which include allocation of substantial additional scientists, improvements in computing facilities and electronic transmissions, and use of outside contractors to assist in petition reviews. Further improvements to the program are anticipated which include: expanded programs to help petitioners submit complete, sufficient submissions; increased use of external expertise to expedite the review of pending petitions; reform of the GRAS regulatory process; expanded categorical exclusions from some of the traditional environmental assessments; development and issuance of a Threshold of Regulation approach for indirect additives that meet specific criteria, and other management improvements.

33. In addition to these considerations legislative proposals are being considered. As an example, the FDA Foods Reform Bill would have the following impact if enacted as currently drafted:

- Third party review of health claims, food and color additives, GMP inspections, color certification.

⁶ Conference Room Document 2

- Permit health claims to be based on materials published or distributed by federal health agencies.
- Prohibit labelling regarding method of production (aimed at irradiation), and ingredient labelling outside the ingredient listing.
- Shift the burden to the Agency to prove that a food additive is unsafe once a third party has recommended approval.
- Repeal the Delaney clause for food and color additives.
- Federal preemption of State regulation of food.

34. The Food and Drug Administration and The University of Maryland announced on 15 April 1996 the formation of a unique partnership program, the Joint Institute for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, dedicated to the advancement of food safety research and food and nutrition policy.

35. The collaborative research conducted by FDA and the University scientists in the Joint Institute will include studies on risk assessment, nutritional analyses, and other scientific investigations contributing to the four major elements of FDA's food program:

- Food security related to pathogens, contaminants, and toxins;
- Regulatory science applied to the review of food ingredients, international standards, and educational research;
- Nutrition and clinical studies related to nutrient quality, safety and labelling;
- Evaluation of technological innovations in the food industry and consumer behaviour.

Canada

36. The Government of Canada announced the creation of a single Food Inspection and Quarantine Agency in the March 1996 Budget. This announcement followed the 1995 Budget announcement to explore organisational options to approve the effectiveness and efficiency of the federal component of the Canadian food inspection. The Agency will assume responsibility for all inspection services currently delivered by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Health Canada, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada with respect to food safety, economic fraud, trade-related requirements and plant and animal health and quarantine.

37. Health Canada's mandate with respect to food safety policy, standard setting, risk assessment, analytical testing research and audit will be enhanced. Implementation is on a fast track with enabling legislation targeted for late in 1996 and the agency fully operational by early in 1997. Establishment of the Agency will facilitate the eventual creation of a national-federal-provincial-territorial food inspection and quarantine system.

38. Another structural change was the creation in 1995 of the Pest Management Regulatory Agency to consolidate all activities dealing with the regulation of pest control products. All three departments continue to explore and implement alternative delivery mechanisms such as cost recovery, privatization, accreditation, etc.

39. Canada is in the process of instituting Good Manufacturing Practices regulations and Common Inspection Standards designed to link the various HACCP-type programmes by establishing minimum health and safety standards for all food manufacturing establishments. Adoption of HACCP principles throughout the food chain remains a top priority of the government. Other inspection initiatives underway include the continued development and implementation of new cost-effective technologies and the streamlining of import inspection. Regulatory initiatives of note include regulations for the

production of organic foods; administrative penalties for non-compliance; warning labels for alcohol; bottled water; novel foods; herbs and botanicals; food labelling and advertising; and cheese manufacturing.

Australia

40. Australia (AQIS) reported that in the field of import and export food inspection and certification there had been no significant developments in institutional structures since the previous meeting. Public and governmental interest in food safety and food control issues continued to intensify under the stimulus of pesticide residue incidents, outbreaks of disease caused by food-borne verotoxigenic *E. coli*, the recent controversy surrounding Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), and similar issues. As a consequence, government and industry had made major efforts to develop and implement relevant strategies, for example in relation to microbiological contamination of foods and residues of pesticides and veterinary drugs. For the red meat production industry in particular, it had been decided in 1995 that all establishments would operate on the basis of HACCP principles by the end of 1996 and that full quality assurance systems would be implemented as soon as possible thereafter. All major industries producing raw foods had embarked on the development and implementation of industry-wide quality approach programmes, consistent with a paddock-to-plate approach.

41. The Australian National Food Authority is developing a new national hygiene regulatory scheme designed around HACCP principles and using the whole food chain approach (paddock to plate). In cooperation with the Commonwealth, States and Territories, the Authority is also coordinating a national surveillance and enforcement strategy to support more efficient and broad ranging surveillance and enforcement of food law and food safety in Australia. The strategy will also ensure consistency of application of standards.

42. As noted in the opening address by the Minister, a landmark Treaty was signed by the Governments of Australia and New Zealand in December 1995 to establish a joint food standards setting system for both countries.

New Zealand

43. Food safety accountabilities within New Zealand are divided between the Ministry of Agriculture (MAF) which has a predominant focus on exports and the Ministry of Health (MoH) with a predominantly domestic focus.

44. With the conclusion of the Uruguay Round Agreement on SPS Measures, MAF has had to make a number of internal changes to deal with the additional work load surrounding international trade. Work in standard setting and trade has seen a tighter focus on hazards and real food safety risks and the increased application of risk analysis in its widest sense. New Zealand has introduced changes to its meat inspection program on an ongoing basis. Key areas of focus include :

- Science based hygiene and inspection standards;
- Process control (HACCP); and
- Delivery of the program with devolution of on-line inspection functions.

45. Bilateral arrangements covering seafoods have been concluded with Canada and the United States. Good progress has been made on an agreement with the European Union covering all veterinary issues. New Zealand views this type of agreement/arrangement as an expression of the WTO/SPS agreement.

46. A Treaty has been concluded between Australia and New Zealand to establish a joint food standards setting system. The new system will be based on the current Australian system and the new organization will be known as the Australia New Zealand Food Authority (ANZFA). The current review of the Food Standards Code in Australia will form the basis for the development of the joint Code which should be completed by 1999.

Federated States of Micronesia

47. The delegation of the Federated States of Micronesia reported that the Federated States had recently adopted a National Food Safety Act to protect public health with regard to food, to protect against fraud, to establish minimum standards and to ensure the safety and marketability of food products for the domestic and export markets..

48. The National Government Department of Health has the responsibility to protect the public from imported foods that are adulterated or mislabelled, and to assist efforts by the States (Yap, Pohnpei, Kosrae and Chuuk) to accomplish this. It was also the policy of the National Government to ensure that food exported out of the Federated States of Micronesia was safe and of the highest quality. In this regard, the Government had adopted the Codex Code of Practice for Food Hygiene.

Food and Agriculture Organization

49. The Acting Chief, Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, Mr A.J Whitehead, reported on FAO food control, food safety and food standards activities. He reported that project funding by the FAO under the Technical Cooperation Programme was continuing to assist Members in implementing national Codex Coordinating Committees, strengthening food control procedures and infrastructures and providing technical assistance and guidance. In addition, technical papers, manuals, workshops and seminars, and training programmes were also being provided. Following up on recommendations made by an Expert Consultation on the Application of HACCP (Vancouver, December 1994) a HACCP Training-of-Trainers core curriculum was developed and pilot tested in Thailand with excellent results. This programme is to be implemented in other regions over the next 2 years, with training material to be published for general use.

50. Mr Whitehead reported on future activities to provide support to Codex which include three Expert Consultations on Biotechnology (1996), Risk Management (1997) and Food Consumption and Risk Assessment (1997), all to be jointly sponsored with WHO. He described the progress being made toward the establishment of the International Training Centre on Food and Pesticide Control in Seibersdorf, Austria, jointly with IAEA, and the development of short term training programmes curricular on various topics related to food control procedures and management. The Training Centre will also serve as a focal point for regional and national training in food quality, safety and pesticide control through cooperation and collaboration with existing regional and national training institutions.

51. In light of current budgetary constraints, FAO is strengthening its cooperation and collaboration with other UN agencies including WHO, WTO, IAEA, UNEA and UNDP in areas of food control, food quality and safety and food standards. Utilizing the Technical Cooperations amongst Developing Countries (TCDC) programme, cost saving mechanisms are in place without jeopardising the quality and number of activities being supported.

52. The Food and Nutrition Division is placing significant emphasis on activities, including workshops and seminars on international trading disciplines (SPS and TBT) of WTO, training in HACCP, Food Control Management, Import/Export Food Quality and Safety Control, Risk Analysis, Laboratory Quality Assurance, and assistance in follow-up activities to the ICN and National Plan of Action.

53. Mr Whitehead also reported on the recent activities of FAO related to BSE, including the preparation of a briefing document for Members, and the need for Animal Food Production and Feeding Practices Guidelines, perhaps from Codex, in the near future. An expert consultation is currently being considered on this topic

World Health Organization

54. The Regional Advisor for Food Safety for the Veterinary Public Health Program of the World Health Organization, Dr Claudio Almeida, reported that the Western Pacific Regional Office of WHO (WPRO) was assisting health authorities of the Region in their efforts to prevent contamination of food through the application of the HACCP system. A workshop on the use of the HACCP system in food safety was held for 18 participants from 16 Member States, including Micronesia, Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu (Kuala Lumpur, May 1995). The workshop reviewed the current status of the application of HACCP system principles to food safety, identified available resource materials and promoted a harmonized approach to HACCP system developments in the Region.

55. WHO has continued to promote the development of national contamination monitoring programmes and participation in the Global Environment Monitoring System food component (GEMS-Food). The Regional Environmental Health Centre of WHO distributed a Manual for the inspection of imported food, which proved valuable in facilitating trade in safe food in the Region.

56. A study of the microbiological and chemical contamination of shellfish has been carried out in Fiji. This provided valuable information on the safety of an important component of the diet and the level of faecal and chemical contamination of Fijian waters. It also enhanced the analytical capability of food microbiologists in the country. WHO has supported training in food safety in the Solomon Islands.

57. A training course on strengthening water and food analysis capabilities in Pacific island countries was attended by participants from Kiribati, Niue, Tuvalu, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu, Samoa and Fiji and contributed to ensuring food safety in these countries (Suva, May 1995).

58. WHO collaborated in the revision and development of the national legislation on food safety in the Cook Islands, Fiji and Solomon Islands. These activities resulted in the drafting of regulations in Cook Islands and Fiji.

59. Food safety legislation was strengthened in a number of Member States. Thus, most countries and areas in the Region have now established, or are in the process of establishing, modern legislative frameworks and infrastructures for administration of their food safety programmes. However, ensuring food safety in the Region remains a difficult task requiring the commitment of significant resources which, generally, are not directed to this area. WHO focused resources on two areas: integration of government food safety and nutrition policies and action plans in line with the recommendations of the 1992 ICN; and reorientation of inspection and education activities to address

the factors commonly contributing to foodborne disease through application of HACCP system principles. Activities in future will address greater efforts to direct governments' attention to food safety and a redefinition of the role of health authorities.

Consumers International (CI)

60. The observer from Consumers International reported that the organisation is extremely concerned about the representation of consumer organisations (especially those from developing countries) in the setting of food standards both at a national and Codex level. CI considered it vital that the food standard setting process reflected consumer concerns about food safety and the ability of consumers to make informed choices about what they eat.

61. One of the major difficulties for consumer organisations was funding, particularly for the developing countries. Other difficulties consumer organisations faced related to sufficient and timely information to enable preparation for the Codex meetings. The slow speed of establishing standards and monitoring systems for food safety was also of concern. CI believed that the protracted negotiation procedures used to set standards meant that consumers were exposed to unnecessary hazards and limitations on choice of foods for longer than desired.

NATIONAL REPORTS ON THE APPLICATION OF RISK MANAGEMENT AND RISK COMMUNICATION PRINCIPLES IN THE REGION⁷ (Agenda Item 7)

62. The Committee noted detailed national reports on risk management and risk communication prepared by Canada, New Zealand and the United States (two documents). In addition, Australia tabled a related document and Canada made available a further document on risk communication policy.

63. It was agreed that the extensive information provided in the documents was highly relevant and useful and that any comments or suggestions on them should be submitted to the author countries.

64. The Codex Secretariat advised that a Joint FAO/WHO Consultation on Risk Management was being planned for February 1997. The Committee welcomed this advice from the Codex Secretariat and stressed the need for this work to be undertaken as a matter of priority. The Committee recommended that the consultation focus on issues surrounding;

- linkages between risk assessment and risk management mechanisms and methodologies;
- mechanisms and methodologies for risk management decision making;
- the role of consultation with stakeholders and associated risk communication in risk management decision making;
- approaches to the communication of risks and risk management decisions; and

with the objective of producing a framework and set of principles that can be applied by Member countries when they carry out risk management.

65. Such a framework and set of principles would assist in ensuring transparency and consistency in risk management. The Committee also suggested that consideration be given to a further consultation on risk communication mechanisms and methodologies.

PROMOTION OF CODEX ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING MEMBERSHIP, IN THE REGIONS (Agenda Item 8)

66. The Third Session of CCNASWP (May 1994) had regretted the absence of developing countries and had expressed concern regarding the ability of the developing countries to attend the meeting. It was recognised that financial constraints contributed to their absence. It was agreed that possible rearrangement of the members of the Region be considered at the next meeting. However, there was general support for the retention of the present NASWP Region, as recommended in the discussion paper prepared by an FAO Consultant ⁸.

67. Some delegations questioned whether the agenda material under consideration by the Committee was of sufficient relevance and interest to the developing countries in the Region. The delegation of the Federated States of Micronesia noted that there was little choice in so far as its exports of fish and fishery products to developed countries, such as Japan and the US, and had to meet stringent standards of quality and safety. The delegation, supported by the observer from the South Pacific Commission (SPC), considered that the major problem was funding. Travel costs alone were considerable and even attending this meeting within the Region required travel via four countries.

68. The observer from the South Pacific Commission (SPC) made a very pertinent presentation on the food control and food safety problems and concerns of the twenty two SPC Member countries and territories of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia ⁹.

The SPC Member countries endured economic difficulties, were usually small and somewhat isolated islands and were multilingual and multicultural.

69. The Committee endorsed the proposal of the observer from the SPC on (a) the need for greater collaboration and assistance from FAO, WHO and the more developed countries in the area, and (b) the need for a sub-regional program to advise, promote, strengthen and develop food control and food safety programs in the sub-region.

70. A range of measures to assist the SPC and its Member countries in the South Pacific were discussed:

- FAO will shortly open a regional office in Samoa and this should increase awareness of Codex in the region and facilitate more targeted aid and assistance from FAO;
- Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the US all offered support in the form of advice and practical assistance;
- The Codex Secretariat advised that, while Codex was not a funding organization, both FAO and WHO could assist in attracting funds and could identify the needs of these countries for follow-up assistance.

71. The delegation of Australia provided a report on Australia's involvement in APEC food related standards and conformance matters ¹⁰. In regard to Codex activities, the APEC Sub-Committee on Standards and Conformance (SCSC) has made the following recommendations to APEC:

⁸ CX/NASWP 96/6 Part 1

⁹ CX/NASWP 96/6 Part 2

¹⁰ CX/NASWP 96/6 Part 3

1. APEC Members should participate actively in the development of international standards through technical cooperation in the context of APEC's work program on Technical Infrastructure Development.
2. That, in order to progress closer alignment of food standards generally and to ensure that the Codex standards are appropriate to APEC Member Economies,
 - APEC develop and implement strategies for encouraging input from the region to the Commission's activities; and
 - the FAO/WHO Codex Coordinating Committees be requested to give consideration to the development of appropriate strategies for encouraging APEC Member Economies to become active participants in the Codex system.

72. The Codex Secretariat noted that until the present Codex had not been involved in any APEC activities relating to food standards and Codex activities. It was suggested that in the interests of both Codex and APEC it would be worthwhile for the Codex Secretariat to be included in the APEC loop covering food related activities. It was agreed that those Member countries of Codex which are also members of APEC be called upon to ensure that the Codex Secretariat is kept informed of food standards work within APEC. In the future, it could also be beneficial to APEC for Codex to have a more active involvement.

NOMINATION OF COORDINATOR¹¹ (Agenda Item 9)

73. Dr Peter O'Hara, the present Regional Coordinator, advised that consistent with the decision taken by the Committee at its First Session it would be appropriate to nominate a new Coordinator for the next session to be held in about two years.

74. The Committee unanimously nominated Dr Thomas Billy, Associate Administrator, FSIS, USA as the proposed next Regional Coordinator. This nomination will be presented to the 22nd Session of the Commission in 1997.

OTHER BUSINESS AND FUTURE WORK (Agenda Item 10)

75. The delegation of Australia presented a paper on Dietary Modelling which highlighted the importance of dietary data as a basis for the application of consistent risk assessment and risk management practices.¹² WHO was proposing to hold an Expert Consultation in early 1997 to discuss the use of dietary data (food balance sheet data and national dietary surveys) in the risk assessment process used to develop Codex and national food standards. The Committee agreed that the members of the Region could assist this work by identifying major staple foods and model diets at the national level including large portion sizes causing acute dietary risks, and bringing this information to the attention of WHO. The Codex Secretariat informed the Committee that recent discussions with WHO had resulted in agreement that such a consultation would be jointly with FAO.

76. The delegations of the United States brought to the attention of the Committee the Proposed Draft Guidelines for the Development of Agreements regarding Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems which are being distributed at Step 3 for comment by the CCFICS.¹³ Because of the importance of this document to the work of CCFICS, it was hoped that members of the

¹¹ CX/NASWP 96/7

¹² CX/NASWP 96/8 Part 1

¹³ CX/NASWP 96/8 Part 2

Region could submit country comments within four to six weeks to enable a second round of comments before the next CCFICS meeting in early 1997. The Committee members agreed to submit comments within the time frame requested and commended the US on the quality and content of the draft.

77. The delegation of the United States referred to the problems experienced at the last Commission Session. As reported in the Report of that Commission meeting, the time allocated did not provide for adequate debate of all the significant issues, especially in the light of the new relevance of Codex Standards within the context of the WTO Agreements.¹⁴

78. During the last Commission meeting a number of problems had arisen such as insufficient time to consider adequately items brought up under "Other Business" such as the valuable paper prepared by Consumers International. The lack of introductory statements by the chairpersons of the various Committees also resulted in lack of understanding of the work under discussion and perhaps caused extended discussion and questioning.

79. It was agreed that the above concerns be brought to the attention of the forthcoming Executive Committee with a view to its giving full consideration to the length and procedures to be followed at the next Commission meeting.

80. The Committee also agreed that document distribution be considered by the forthcoming meeting of the Executive Committee. At the last Commission meeting Consumers International had identified difficulties with the timely distribution of Codex documents.¹⁵ Various suggestions for improving document distribution were made including that all Codex papers for official distribution should be submitted in electronic format and placed on the Internet as soon as they are received in Rome.

81. The delegation of Australia drew attention to the forthcoming CCFL meeting and it was the general consensus of the Committee that any labelling of biotechnology derived products be based on sound science.

DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING (Agenda Item 11)

82. The Committee noted that its next Session would most likely be held in the United States in early to mid 1998. The precise date and place will be determined by the Codex Secretariat and the Host Government.

¹⁴ ALINORM 95/37 para 93

¹⁵ CAC 21/INF-2

**CODEX COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR
NORTH AMERICA AND THE SOUTH-WEST PACIFIC**

SUMMARY STATUS OF WORK

SUBJECT MATTER	FOR ACTION BY	DOCUMENT REFERENCE
Implications of the Agreements on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and on Technical Barriers to Trade	Canada 12th CCGP 22nd CAC	ALINORM 97/32, paras. 8 - 21
Review and Promotion of Acceptance of Codex Standards and Codex Maximum Residue Limits for Pesticides by Countries in the Region	Governments 5th CCNASWP	ALINORM 97/32, paras. 22 - 27
Information and Reports on Food Control, Food Safety and Food Standards Issues in the Region	Governments 5th CCNASWP	ALINORM 97/32, paras. 28 - 61
Promotion of Codex Activities, Including Membership, in the Region	Governments 5th CCNASWP	ALINORM 97/32, paras. 66 - 72

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IDENTIFICATION OF PRIORITIES

Each member shall be supplied a uniform set of matrices for completion. The Regional Coordinating Committees would compile the regional data for aggregation into a single document. Separate matrices would apply for each major product category such as grains, meats, seafood, etc. Each standard in the matrix would be identified as to its creation date, last modification or anticipated future review date.

Commodity Group: Seafood

	Scope	Description	Essential Composition & Quality Factors	Food Additives	Contaminants	Hygiene	Weights and Measures	Labelling	Methods of Analysis and Sampling	Use/ Non-Use	Comment
Quick Frozen Shrimps or Prawns											
Quick Frozen Lobsters											
Quick Frozen Raw Squid											
Other Products without a Standard											

Criteria for establishing a numeric value in each cell: potential for health concerns; frequency of rejection; value and volume of trade affected; relative importance of trade to national economy; the extent to which the horizontal criteria (use or non-use) impacts trade; perceived value of alignment in terms of reducing costs.