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REPORT OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE
CODEX COMMITTEE ON DIETETIC FOODS
Freiburg i. Breisgau, May 2 to 5, 1966

The Codex Committee on Dietetic Foods held its first meeting from 2 to 5 May 1966 at Freiburg i. Breisgau under the chairmanship of Dr. h.c. Edmund Forschbach, and in the presence of Prof. M.J.L. Dols, Chairman of the Joint FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission.

There were eight countries and three international organizations represented by 30 delegates, advisers and observers (Annex I.) (omitted). A ninth country, Austria, was represented during the adoption of the report. Miss Hollingsworth (United Kingdom) and Mr. Ruffy (Switzerland) were elected as rapporteurs. The discussions were based on the working paper (Doc. Codex/DIET 66 - 4) prepared by the secretariat of the Codex Committee on Dietetic Foods.

The following subjects of the working paper were discussed and incorporated in the attached Annex II to this document, entitled "Guidelines for the Elaboration of Standards for Dietetic Foods".

1. Preamble

The Committee examined the text of the preamble and after discussion concluded that its provisions should be considered as the basic guiding principles for the elaboration of standards for dietetic foods. It was stressed that such standards - even with world-wide application - should take into account regional conditions.

2. Definition

A definition of the term "dietetic foods" was considered. It was decided that the text of the definition as adopted by the Third Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission be accepted with certain minor adjustments. The question was discussed whether the definition of dietetic foods should include the requirement for a medical justification. The Committee thought that such foods are foods and not medicines, but that their elaboration and purpose must be justified from the medical point of view.

3. Categories of dietetic foods

a) Foods for the healthy

The Committee examined the lists of dietetic foods with which the Committee should deal and which had been grouped in categories in the working paper. It was decided to incorporate a distinction in the category of foods for healthy by separating infants, pre- and post-natal foods, and foods for the aged in a Group A, and foods required in connection with extraordinary physical exertion or special external conditions, such as high altitude, in another Group B.

In relation to foods for infants the Committee considered that in addition to classes of foods based on

- I) cereals or carbohydrates;
- II) milk, milk products or milk constituents;
- III) vegetables, fruits, meat, including poultry meat, or fish, there should be a further class of foods based on
- IV) a mixture of some or all of the above foods.

One delegation, while agreeing to adopt these four categories of infant foods, made the point that there was no justification of a physiological nature to distinguish such classes.

In connection with infant foods the Committee stressed that all dietetic foods should be manufactured under the most stringent hygienic conditions and that they be of the greatest possible microbiological purity. As regards these requirements the Committee concluded that the relevant Codex Committees dealing with food hygiene and with pesticide residues, respectively, should be requested to examine what special precautions would be needed in the manufacture of dietetic foods, and, where possible, make available a report on their findings to the Codex Committee on Dietetic Foods.

The Committee also stressed that where foods had a milk or milk product base, such products should conform to the requirements of the Code of Principles concerning Milk and Milk Products, and should contain a minimum quantity of these products. In this connection the question of substitutes arose and it was stated that where such substances were used this fact should not lead to a deception of the consumer.

b) Foods for persons suffering from abnormal physiological conditions

The categories of foods for such persons were accepted by the Committee according to the list drawn up in the working paper with the exception of sugar substitutes, artificial sweeteners and table salt substitutes. It was considered that these substances should be dealt with separately. With regard to artificial sweeteners and table salt substitutes, this Committee should inform the Codex Committee on Food Additives on the technological necessity of these substances and supply the required relevant supporting facts and data. In this connection it was pointed out that it would be the task of the Codex Committee on Food Additives to draw up specifications for artificial sweeteners.

4. Labelling and Claims

The Committee accepted the recommendations contained in the working paper. The question of advertizing in connection with dietetic foods was discussed in general and it was emphasized that all statements and information should be scientifically sound and not misleading. It was thought necessary to draw particular attention to the use of testimonials and medical expert opinion, and it was suggested that such claims should not be used in advertizing directed to the general public. In practice, the control in the matter of claims to special effects of dietetic foods would depend on the legislation and regulations of individual countries. The subject of directions for use as part of labelling should be dealt with in connection with labelling requirements for individual foods. The Committee was of the opinion that the Codex Committee on Labelling should be asked to study the implications of the above special labelling requirements of dietetic foods.

5. Distribution of dietetic foods

The Committee confirmed the proposal made in the working paper that dietetic foods be distributed in packages or containers. Exceptions from this requirement should be kept to a minimum.

6. Miscellaneous

a) Work assignments

The Committee accepted with thanks the offer made by various delegations to prepare working papers on the individual projects, namely

- Foods for nursing mothers, infants and the aged: Federal Republic of Germany in collaboration with the United Kingdom and Switzerland
- Foods for diabetics including sugar substitutes: the Netherlands in collaboration with Poland
- Low-sodium Foods: France
- Starch-reduced foods: United Kingdom
- Gluten-free foods: United Kingdom
- Strengthening and body-building foods: Switzerland*

Several delegations indicated that they were anxious to cooperate in the work of those delegations who had accepted work assignments. The Committee was informed that contributions from all countries would be welcomed and that these should be directed to the responsible delegations. For the completion of the work the following dates were set: countries to send their national papers to the coordinating countries not later than October 31st, 1966, who, in turn, would forward their drafts to the secretariat of the Codex Committee on Dietetic Foods not later than 31st January 1967.

b) Fructose

On referral by the Codex Committee on Sugars the Committee discussed the need for preparing a standard for this commodity. The Committee decided that such a need did not exist at present.

* Subject to authorization by the Codex Alimentarius Commission at its next session to include such foods among those for which standards have to be elaborated.

Guidelines for the Elaboration of Standards on Dietetic Foods

I Preamble

- 1) Scientific and technical progress and an improved standard of living have provided conditions under which products, suitable for correct dietetic use, can be developed. Regulations concerning dietetic foods are, both internationally and regionally within Europe, at varying stages of development, and it is for this reason that legislation in the field of dietetic foods must be coordinated according to international criteria.
- 2) In the elaboration of world-wide standards it would be appropriate in view of varying dietary customs to consider also regional conditions.
- 3) The principle should be applied that dietetic foods are not medicines but by reason of their composition and character especially appropriate to meet the nutritive requirements resulting from special physiological conditions. Dietetic foods include foods for infants because the developing and changing metabolism of this age-group calls for special care and provision.
- 4) Dietetic foods should, as a general rule, comply with the provisions of national legislation for comparable ordinary foods; where Codex Standards for such foods already exist these standards should be followed except for such variations as are laid down by Codex Standards for dietetic foods.

II Definition

Dietetic foods are those foods which are distinguished from ordinary foods by their special composition and/or by their physical, chemical or biological modification resulting from processing, and which for this reason meet the particular nutritive need of persons whose normal power of assimilation is modified, or for whom a particular effect is to be obtained by a controlled intake of foods. They are foods and not medicines. They may be divided into the following main groups:

- a) Foods which meet a particular physiological need of healthy people. These needs may result from a particular age (infants, the aged) or as a consequence of pregnancy or breast-feeding.
- b) Foods, the use of which is connected with morbid conditions of human body (diabetes, obesity, abnormal emaciation, poor utilization of sodium, etc.)
- c) Supplementary nutrients, required by reason of unusual physical strain or as a result of a particular external condition or to improve or complete a normal diet.

III Categories of Foods

I

- A. Foods which meet the special nutritive physiological needs of healthy persons
1. Foods for infants, such as foods with a
 - a) cereal or carbohydrate base;
 - b) milk, milk product, or milk constituent base;
 - c) vegetable, fruit, meat including poultry meat, or fish base, or a mixture thereof;
 - d) base constituted of some or all of the above products.
 2. Foods for pregnant and breast-feeding mothers.
 3. Foods for the aged.
- B. Foods for special diets required by extraordinary physical exertion or special external conditions.

II

Foods for persons suffering from abnormal physiological conditions, such as

1. Foods for diabetics
2. Foods with low sodium content
3. Foods with low gluten content
4. Foods with low phenylalanine content
5. Foods with low calory content
6. Foods with low fat content.
7. Foods with low carbohydrate content

IV Labelling and Claims

- a) The labelling of a dietetic food should include a reference to
 - the dietetic purpose it is supposed to serve
 - the facts required to demonstrate the suitability of any food offered for a dietetic purpose;
- b) The word "diet" or any word derived from it should only be used in connection with dietetic foods as defined in these guidelines.
- c) Statements of testimonials or expert opinions should be scientifically sound and not misleading.

V Distribution of dietetic foods

Dietetic foods should only be distributed in packages or containers, with the exception of meat and cheese products when distributed to the ultimate consumer, and products which are to be consumed on the premises.