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CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Ninth Session, Rome

REPORT OF THE EIGHTH SESSION OF THE

COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR EUROPE

Vienna, 27 - 29 October 1971

INTRODUCTION

1. The Eighth Session of the Coordinating Committee for Europe was held in Vienna by courtesy of the Government of Austria. The meeting was opened by Dr. R. Wildner, Coordinator for Europe, and the participants were welcomed by Bundesminister für Land- und Forstwirtschaft, Dipl. Ing. Dr. O. Weihs and Vizekanzler, Bundesminister für soziale Verwaltung, Ing. R. Häuser, who stressed the importance of the work of the Coordinating Committee for Europe in the establishment of international standards for food and wished the Committee success in its activities. The meeting was attended by delegates from the following countries of the European Region: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Yugoslavia and observers from the following non-European countries: Mexico and the Syrian Arab Republic. Observers were also present from the European Economic Community. Dr. R. Wildner presided as Chairman of the session. Representatives of FAO and WHO were the Joint Secretaries of the meeting. The list of participants is attached as Appendix I.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

2. The provisional agenda was adopted by the Committee after some slight re-arrangement in the order of business.

METHODS OF ANALYSIS OF NATURAL MINERAL WATERS

3. The Committee had before it a paper prepared by Switzerland (CX/EURO 71/4) on the basis of a document which had been prepared by the Secretariat (CODEX/ANALYS/69/A/5) and government comments received on that paper. It also had before it a working document (CX/EURO 71/4 Add.1) containing comments from a number of governments on document CODEX/ANALYS/69/A/5.

4. The Committee considered a suggestion by the Secretariat that a small working group be set up to meet during the session to discuss the paper prepared by Switzerland and to make recommendations to the Coordinating Committee for Europe for appropriate methods of analysis of mineral waters. The Secretariat further suggested that Section II.A(ii) of

the draft European Standard for Natural Mineral Waters (Appendix V, ALINORM 70/19), referring to provisions for minimum contents of dissolved salts and free carbon dioxide, should be defined in terms of analytical methodology. The Committee decided not to set up a working group, but agreed with the suggestion of the Secretariat that Codex referee methods of analysis were needed to make the provisions for dissolved salts and free carbon dioxide more meaningful.

5. In introducing the paper, the delegation of Switzerland drew the Committee's attention to results of a number of analyses carried out in Switzerland using various methods, including a shortened method of determination of total mineral content. The latter method involved the measurement of dry residue and alkalinity and the calculation of decomposed bicarbonates. The delegation of Switzerland stressed the importance of determining the various individual components of natural mineral waters in the same chemical state as they are present in the water. This involved individual determinations of the various ions based on modern methodology. On the other hand, they pointed out that satisfactory results had been obtained using the shortened method of estimating total mineral content and that these results were in good agreement with the sum of all the individual ions (30 to 38) determined individually.

6. The Committee adopted the method proposed by Switzerland for the determination of total mineral content, given on page 2 of working paper CX/EURO 71/4 and the methods of determination of free carbon dioxide, given on page 3 of the same document. It was agreed that these methods be submitted to the Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling for endorsement. It was also agreed that it would be desirable to request further government comments on these methods and to convene a small informal group in conjunction with the next session of the Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling to further discuss the methods in the light of government comments received. It was agreed that the terms of reference of the informal group would be to express expert opinion on the methods of analysis for total mineral content and free carbon dioxide in the light of government comments and to inform the Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling of their conclusions. The following countries expressed interest in participating in this informal group: Austria, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Italy, Poland, Switzerland and Yugoslavia. It was understood that these countries would communicate the name of the respective participating expert to Professor Högl, who would organize the informal meeting. The representative of the European Economic Community expressed his willingness to be of assistance to the informal group.

EDIBLE ICES

7. The Committee had before it document CX/EURO 71/2 which contained a proposed draft European Regional Standard for Edible Ices, prepared by the delegation of Sweden. The Committee took note of the decision of the Commission at its seventh session (ALINORM 70/43, paragraph 210/4), where it had been agreed that the Coordinating Committee for Europe should consider and advise the Commission whether it would be profitable to proceed with the proposed draft standard as a European Regional Standard.

8. The majority of delegations were of the opinion that a standard for edible ices should be elaborated on a European regional basis. The hope was expressed by some delegations that the regional standard would be acceptable to members of the Commission other than those of the European region. Several delegations pointed out that, should work on a regional standard for edible ices be undertaken by the Commission, the standard drawn up by other international organizations, such as the European Economic Community, should also be taken into account; the European Economic Community's offer of cooperation was welcomed by the Committee.

9. The delegation of Sweden stated that, while it had previously offered to host a Codex Committee to elaborate a standard for edible ices on a world-wide basis, it was willing to host a Committee which would elaborate a European regional standard. The Committee agreed to recommend to the Commission that a standard should be elaborated on a European regional basis and expressed the opinion that the responsibility for the elaboration of that standard be entrusted to a Regional Codex Committee for Edible Ices with Sweden as the Host Government.

10. The delegations of Denmark and the United Kingdom, although not opposing the decision to recommend to the Commission the elaboration of a standard for edible ices on a European regional basis, expressed the view that, in principle, they preferred world-wide standards. In this connection, the delegation of the United Kingdom pointed out that the decision of the Seventh Session of the Commission not to proceed with the elaboration of a world-wide standard had been based on information concerning world trade which was no longer up-to-date. They, therefore, proposed that member countries should be asked to furnish the Ninth Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission with the latest information available on international trade so as to assist the Commission in discussing the proposal of the Coordinating Committee for Europe to commence work on a standard for edible ices on a regional basis.

RECONSIDERATION OF THE DRAFT STANDARD FOR NATURAL MINERAL WATERS

11. The Committee noted that the Codex Alimentarius Commission, at its Seventh Session, had referred the Draft European Regional Standard for Natural Mineral Waters to the Coordinating Committee for Europe for reconsideration at Step 7. The Commission had unanimously agreed that the above standard was not ready for advancement to Step 9 of the Codex Procedures. The main point at issue, which could not be resolved by the Commission, was the validity in an international standard of a reference to "properties favourable to health" and "favourable physiological properties". The Committee had before it the following working documents:

- a) Report of the Seventh Session of the Coordinating Committee for Europe, ALINORM 70/19;
- b) Document CL 1971/8 containing a summary of the information submitted by governments on the criteria for the recognition of waters as mineral waters having properties favourable to health or having favourable physiological properties; comments at Step 8 submitted to the Seventh Session of the Commission; the conclusions of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling; and a summary of the conclusions of a WHO Ad Hoc Consultation on Natural Mineral Waters, held in Geneva from 10 to 12 May 1971;
- c) Document CX/EURO 71/3 containing government comments in reply to CL 1971/8;
- d) The resolutions of an informal meeting of experts in the field of natural mineral waters organized by the Chairman of the Codex Committee on Natural Mineral Waters, which was held on the day preceding the session of the Coordinating Committee for Europe.

12. The delegation of Switzerland, in introducing the resolution of the informal meeting on natural mineral waters, pointed out that after thorough deliberation that meeting had not considered it desirable to amend the present text on the definition. On the other hand, the group had recommended that the scope of the standard should not include waters used for curative and medicinal purposes. The informal meeting had stressed the importance of establishing a standard for table mineral waters which, while not medicinal waters, had special characteristics which distinguished them from ordinary drinking waters. It had also been considered that it was important that the consumer be protected against imitations, which might be sold as natural table mineral waters.

13. As regards the amendment proposed by Norway and Poland, in their written comments, as well as the informal meeting that the scope of the standard should exclude waters used for medicinal or curative purposes, the Coordinating Committee agreed to add "used as beverages" after the words "natural mineral waters" in the first line of the Scope section. The delegation of France was of the opinion that there was no reason to differentiate between "medicinal" and "table" mineral waters, since both types of mineral water differed from ordinary drinking water in view of their special characteristics favourable to health.

14. After a thorough discussion on the definition of natural mineral water, opinion was divided on the desirability of retaining the reference to "properties favourable to health" and "favourable physiological properties". The delegation of the United Kingdom was in agreement with the WHO position that, before reference should be made to properties favourable health or favourable physiological properties, there was a need to define objective criteria on the basis of which these properties could be defined. The delegation of the Federal Republic of Germany was of the opinion that information was necessary on the criteria on which responsible authorities based their judgement as regards health claims. The WHO Representative expressed the view that the resolution of the informal group, which met prior to the session, did no more than re-state the claims which appeared in the original definition for natural mineral waters and which were objected to by WHO and the Seventh Session of the Commission. The resolution, therefore, would do little to advance the standard. Furthermore, he suggested that some natural mineral waters could be considered as unsafe for human ingestion and some examples were given. As a guide for further discussions on this matter, the summary findings of the Ad Hoc WHO Consultation on Natural Mineral Waters which met in Geneva from 10 to 12 May 1971 were read to the group.

15. The majority of the delegations, who spoke on the issue with reference to "properties favourable to health" and "favourable physiological properties", were in favour of leaving the definition of natural mineral waters unaltered. These delegations pointed out that natural mineral waters had a long history of use and that the properties in question had to be substantiated before they were recognized by the responsible authorities. This involved various disciplines including medical opinion provided by recognized bodies set up for that purpose. In their opinion it was necessary to refer to the favourable nature of these properties in order to safeguard the health of the consumer.

16. The Committee considered an amendment to the definition of natural mineral waters proposed by WHO (See Appendix II). The delegation of the Netherlands proposed that the definition be amended in such a way as to indicate that natural mineral waters "may have properties favourable to health" or "may have favourable physiological properties". The delegation of France suggested that the term "physiological properties" be replaced by "physiological effects". The delegation of the United Kingdom proposed a compromise amendment which took into account the various views expressed during the Session (Appendix III). A number of delegations considered that this amendment appeared to provide the best basis for bridging the gap between the different view points. The Committee could not come to an agreement on these proposed amendments and decided that they be included in the report and that governments be requested to send their comments on them to the Secretariat. The Secretariat was requested to produce a paper for the next Session of the Coordinating Committee for Europe. The Committee agreed with the proposal to amend the introductory sentence of the definition of natural mineral waters to exclude ordinary drinking waters. The adopted amendment is as follows: "Natural mineral water is bacteriologically sound water from a natural or drilled underground water source and which is clearly distinguishable from ordinary drinking water."

17. The delegation of the United Kingdom pointed out that the Commission, at its Seventh Session, had requested those countries which had recognized specific natural mineral waters as having properties favourable to health, to make available the criteria on which such recognition had been given. The Committee agreed that explanatory texts which would clarify the definition of natural mineral waters should be elaborated. In this regard it was agreed that it would be desirable to convene a Session of the Codex Committee on Natural Mineral Waters to meet early in 1972 and the Secretariat was requested to explore the possibilities of convening such a session.

18. As regards the optional declaration of "properties favourable to health" on the label, it was proposed that this be left to the national legislations which governed the declaration of properties favourable to health and medicinal claims (See Appendix III). The Committee did not reach any conclusions on this proposed amendment, but agreed that governments be requested to send their comments on the proposal to the Secretariat. The

Secretariat drew the Committee's attention to the decision of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling not to endorse this optional part of the labelling section and the suggestion of that Committee that it be deleted in its entirety, in view of the fact that Section 6 of the "Recommended International General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods", which had been attracted to the standard for natural mineral waters, already dealt with the question of optional labelling.

19. The Committee agreed that the standard on natural mineral waters was not ready to be advanced to Step 8 of the Codex Procedure and that it was desirable that the Coordinating Committee should be convened in 1972 in conjunction with the Ninth Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

METHODS OF ANALYSIS FOR EDIBLE FUNGI AND FUNGUS PRODUCTS AT STEP 9

20. The Committee had before it document CX/EURO 71/5 prepared by Switzerland containing methods of analysis endorsed by the Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling for the above products as well as some methods which had either not been endorsed or not considered by that Committee. The Committee adopted those methods which had been endorsed and agreed that they should be submitted to the Commission for publication as international referee methods. As regards those methods which had not been endorsed, the Committee requested governments which had experience in the use of these methods to submit available information to the Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling.

AMENDMENTS TO THE METHOD OF DETERMINATION OF DIASTASE ACTIVITY IN THE EUROPEAN REGIONAL STANDARD FOR HONEY AT STEP 9

21. The Committee had before it document CX/EURO 71/6 containing the amendments proposed by the Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling at its Fifth Session (See paragraphs 56-57, ALINORM 71/23). The Committee agreed to the editorial change proposed by the Netherlands to replace the word "water" by the word "moisture" in the last sentence of the section describing the determination of moisture content of soluble starch. The Committee further agreed that, as the changes proposed to the determination of diastase activity were of a non-substantive nature serving only to further specify a method already adopted at Step 8, there seemed to be no need to follow the Codex Procedure for the amendment of Codex standards. The Committee agreed to the proposed changes to the determination of diastase activity of honey and agreed that they be submitted to the Commission for final adoption.

NOMINATION OF A COORDINATOR FOR EUROPE

22. The Committee noted that the second term of office of the present Coordinator for Europe, Dr. R. Wildner would expire at the end of the Ninth Session of the Commission in 1972. Having served two consecutive terms, Dr. Wildner would, therefore, be ineligible for re-appointment. It was agreed that it was desirable that a new Coordinator for Europe be nominated by the Coordinating Committee for appointment by the Commission. In this connection, the delegation of Sweden proposed that Dr. H. Woidich (Austria) be nominated as the new Coordinator for Europe. The Committee unanimously agreed to submit the nomination of Dr. Woidich to the Commission for appointment as the new Coordinator for Europe and expressed its satisfaction that the Committee would continue to be hosted by Austria. The Committee also expressed its appreciation to Dr. Wildner for his excellent work and guidance in furthering the activities of the Committee. The Chairman announced that the Vice-Chancellor of Austria, Ing. R. Häuser, had declared that the Austrian government welcomed Dr. Woidich's nomination as Coordinator for Europe.

OTHER BUSINESS

Draft Proposal on a General Survey on Control Services and Inspection Systems

23. The delegation of Hungary referred to the draft proposal on a General Survey on Control Services and Inspection Systems responsible for ensuring compliance with provisions of food standards in the different countries of Europe, which it had previously submitted to the Coordinator for Europe and the Secretariat of the Commission.

The delegation stated that it had also prepared a draft proposal for a questionnaire in connection with control systems, which had been distributed to the Committee during the session. The delegation introduced and outlined the main points of this questionnaire and expressed the hope that it would be circulated for government comments. The Committee agreed that they had not had sufficient time to give proper consideration to this document and that it should be sent by Hungary to participants of the Coordinating Committee for comments as to the suitability of the questionnaire. These comments should be sent to Hungary with a copy to the FAO Secretariat. On the basis of the replies the delegation of Hungary would, if necessary, revise the questionnaire and contact the FAO Secretariat with the view to having it distributed to the member countries of the European region. The delegation of Hungary agreed to report on this problem at the next Session of the Coordinating Committee for Europe.

TRANSLATION OF STEP 9 CODEX STANDARDS INTO GERMAN

24. The delegation of Austria requested the Secretariat to enquire as to the possibilities of translation into German and subsequent publication of the Codex Standards at Step 9. As regards the financial aspects, these would be met by selling the documents at cost price. Although these would be unofficial versions of the Standards, they would, nevertheless, have a uniform translation into German. The Secretariat agreed to look into this matter with the responsible officers in FAO.

CLOSURE OF THE SESSION

25. Professor O. Högl, speaking on behalf of the Committee, expressed his deepest gratitude to Dr. Wildner for the excellent work he had done as a Coordinator for Europe.

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Proposed Amendments by WHO to the Draft Standard for Natural Mineral Waters

II. DESCRIPTION

A. Definition of Natural Mineral Water

Natural mineral water is bacteriologically safe water from a natural or drilled underground water source which

- (a) is clearly distinguished from ordinary drinking water by the nature or quantity of its mineral constituents, or by properties detectable by physical methods, or by physiological properties if and when proved by generally recognized modern methods

or

- (b) contains in 1 kg at its origin and after bottling at least 1.000 mg of dissolved salts or at least 250 mg of free carbon dioxide.

The recognition of water as a "natural mineral water" must be made in accordance with the above criteria.

VI. DESIGNATION AND LABELLING

A natural mineral water must be described according to its essential components and the physiological properties, if and when proved by generally recognized modern methods which distinguish it from ordinary drinking water, must be indicated on the label.

Proposed Amendments by the United Kingdom to the Draft Standard for Natural Mineral Waters

II. A. "Definition of Natural Mineral Water

Natural mineral water is bacteriologically sound water from a natural or drilled underground water source which is clearly distinguishable from ordinary drinking water.

It shall either

- i. contain, in one kg, at its origin and after bottling, at least 1000 mg of dissolved salts or at least 250 mg of free carbon dioxide;

or

- ii. have, because of its nature or mineral content, (favourable physiological effects/properties favourable to health) which have been established as the result of adequate pharmacological or clinical studies.

The recognition of a water as a natural mineral water in accordance with the above criteria is a matter for the competent authority in the country of origin."

Optional Labelling

- E. (d) "Claims for (properties favourable to health/favourable physiological effects) must be made in accordance with the legislation of the country in which the product is sold."