

# 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-sixth Session

Rome, Italy, 30 June - 5 July 2003

### **REPORT OF THE TWENTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR EUROPE**

Bratislava, Slovak Republic, 10-13 September 2002

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The summary and conclusions of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Europe are as follows:

**Matters for consideration by the Commission:**

The Committee:

- agreed to discontinue work on the revision of the Regional Standard for Mayonnaise and to propose that the Commission should revoke the current Standard (para. 9);
- agreed to nominate the Slovak Republic for appointment as Regional Coordinator by the 26<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission (para. 78).

**Other matters of interest to the Commission:**

The Committee:

- expressed its views concerning the elements to be considered in the Joint FAO/WHO Evaluation of the Codex Alimentarius and Other FAO and WHO Work on Food Standards (para. 14);
- recommended that traceability/product tracing should be applied for the purposes of food safety and for other legitimate objectives (para. 31);
- proposed some amendments to the Draft Medium-Term Plan 2003-2007 (paras. 17-29);
- expressed its appreciation to FAO and WHO for their technical assistance in the region and supported the strengthening of capacity-building activities, especially as a follow-up to the Pan-European Conference on Food Safety and Quality (paras. 33-56);
- reviewed the measures taken by governments to improve consumer participation (paras. 65-76).

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## APPENDICES

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1) The 23rd Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Europe was held in Bratislava from 10 to 13 September 2002 at the kind invitation of the Government of the Slovak Republic. The Session was chaired by Professor Ladislav Kabát, assisted by Dr. Milan Kováč, Coordinator, and attended by 53 delegates and observers representing 16 member countries and 4 international organizations. A complete list of participants is appended to the report as Appendix I. On 11 September 2002, the Committee observed a minute of silence in memory of the victims of the tragic events in the United States of America on 11 September 2001.

#### **OPENING**

2) The Session was opened by Mrs Maria Kadlecikova, Deputy Prime Minister, who welcomed participants and recalled that food safety was a high priority at the national and international level and that transparency was essential in order to ensure consumer confidence.

3) Mrs Kadlecikova pointed out that the Slovak Republic had harmonized most of its regulations with the EU legislation as part of the accession process. Noting that significant disparities still existed in the region, she stressed that FAO and WHO support was essential to improve participation of countries in transition in the Codex process and to establish efficient food safety systems at the national level. She highlighted the importance of the Coordinating Committee for the countries in the region and wished participants all success in their work.

#### **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Agenda Item 1)**

4) The Committee adopted the Provisional Agenda as presented in document CX/EURO 02/1. As proposed by the Delegation of Denmark, it was agreed to consider the current status of the Member for Europe under Agenda Item 11. Other Business and Future Work.

#### **MATTERS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER CODEX COMMITTEES (Agenda Item 2)<sup>1</sup>**

##### Risk Analysis Policies

5) The Delegation of Sweden referred to the statement adopted by the 24<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the action to be taken when scientific data were insufficient and pointed out that further clarification was needed on the interpretation and application of this statement. As already discussed in the 50<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Committee, additional guidance would be useful when considering proposals for new work or the adoption of standards and related texts. The Secretariat indicated that member countries could provide comments and proposals to address this issue in the framework of the *Draft Working Principles for Risk Analysis in the Framework of the Codex Alimentarius* under consideration in the Committee on General Principles.

##### Trust Fund for the Participation of Developing Countries in Codex Standard

6) The Representative of WHO provided some additional information concerning the proposal for a Trust Fund presented by WHO to the 50<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Committee. The terms of reference of the WHO/FAO Consultative Group were currently under consideration, and a consultant had been recruited to explore the possibilities of funding from member countries.

7) The Observer from Consumers International expressed the view that the objectives of the trust fund project should include the increased participation of consumer representatives in Codex activities at the national and international levels.

##### Lactoperoxydase

8) Following the recommendations of the Executive Committee, the Committee agreed that the Committee on Food Hygiene should consider the opportunity of revising the *Guidelines for the Preservation of Raw Milk by Use of the Lactoperoxydase System* (CAC/GL 13-1991), and that a new

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<sup>1</sup> CX/EURO 02/2, CRD 3 (comments of CI)

risk assessment should be undertaken by JECFA. The Committee agreed that the lactoperoxidase system should be applied only when refrigeration was not possible and that milk and milk products preserved with this system should not be used in international trade.

#### Regional Standard for Mayonnaise

9) The Committee, noting the recommendations of the 49<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Committee, agreed to discontinue work on the revision of the Regional Standard and to propose to the Commission to revoke the current Regional Standard for Mayonnaise.

#### **JOINT FAO/WHO EVALUATION OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER FAO AND WHO WORK ON FOOD STANDARDS (Agenda Item 3)<sup>2</sup>**

10) The Committee recalled that the 50<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Committee had discussed the Evaluation and had agreed that it should be considered by all Coordinating Committees. The Committee considered document CX/EURO 02/3 providing a report on the progress of the evaluation and noted that the final evaluation report would be issued in November 2002.

11) As regards the evaluation process, several delegations pointed out that there had not been enough time for member countries to reply to the questionnaire due to the short deadline, and this had not allowed for appropriate consultations at the national level. Some delegations expressed their concerns regarding the transparency of the process and especially as to how the replies of member countries would be integrated into the final conclusions. The Committee was of the view that the replies to the questionnaire should be collected and published.

12) After a detailed exchange of views on the main aspects that should be addressed in the evaluation process, the Committee agreed that the position of the Region should be summarised as follows.

13) The Committee welcomed the evaluation, and the evaluation report was awaited with great interest. In accordance with the planned procedure the European region would participate in the debate on the future of Codex on the basis of the evaluation report, and looked forward to an open and transparent process, with the participation of all stakeholders.

14) The Committee discussed the need for some general principles which should be central elements in future Codex work:

- It is the opinion of the Committee that the primary objective of the Codex Alimentarius Commission is to protect the consumer. In establishing standards to achieve this goal, consideration should also be given to ensuring fair practices in the food trade.
- Codex food safety work should be based on a transparent risk analysis process with its three components: risk assessment, risk management and risk communication.
- The Committee stressed that risk assessment must be carried out by independent scientists using reliable data.
- Risk management should be based on the outcome of the risk assessment, taking into account other legitimate factors, such as consumer concerns, and a precautionary approach.
- The Committee also emphasized that traceability / product tracing serves the dual purpose of ensuring food safety and/or other legitimate objectives, such as guaranteeing the authenticity of the information about the food.
- The Committee underlined the need to ensure that consumer involvement is integral to the Codex decision-making process and that mechanisms for consumer participation are developed.
- Concerning the working procedures of Codex the committee expressed full support for efforts to increase efficiency. It also agreed that consideration must be given to encouraging the participation of as many countries as possible in the decision making procedures. To achieve these

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<sup>2</sup> CX/EURO 02/3, CRD 6 (proposed recommendations)

goals, it is necessary to allow sufficient time to achieve consensus, and to encourage capacity building efforts undertaken by institutions and Member States. In this context, the Committee emphasized the need to make sufficient funds available to support countries with a severe lack of resources.

- Finally the committee stressed that Codex should remain an independent body to pursue its specific mandate. However, contact and cooperation with other relevant international organizations should be increased in order to avoid duplication of efforts and to achieve greater consistency of outputs

15) The Delegations of the Slovak Republic and France, respectively as Coordinator and as Member for Europe indicated that they would consult with the member countries in the region immediately after the issuance of the evaluation report, in order to collect their views and to allow the Region to present an informed position at the 25<sup>th</sup> (Extraordinary) Session of the Commission (February 2003).

#### **CONSIDERATION OF THE DRAFT MEDIUM-TERM PLAN 2003-2007 (Agenda Item 4)<sup>3</sup>**

16) The Executive Committee had agreed that the Draft Medium-Term Plan would be revised by the Secretariat in the light of its discussions and circulated for consideration by the Coordinating Committees, prior to its finalization by the 26<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission. The Committee considered the revised Draft Medium-Term Plan and made the following proposals and comments.

##### **Objective 1**

17) The Committee agreed that the reference to “tracing of food products” in Activity 22- Standards Development should be replaced with the terms traceability/product tracing in order to ensure consistency throughout Codex. Several delegations pointed out that although first consideration would be given to traceability/product tracing as a food safety risk management option, as agreed by the Executive Committee, this was a time issue and did not imply an order of priority. The Committee agreed that all applications of traceability/product tracing were equally important and that Codex work should not be limited to risk management aspects. The Committee therefore agreed that the last sentence should be deleted as it might create confusion concerning priorities.

18) The Committee also proposed to amend the date of completion for this activity, as some committees had only recently started work on traceability/product tracing and it was unlikely to be completed by 2005.

##### **Objective 2**

19) The Committee agreed with the proposal of the Delegation of Denmark, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the EU, to include as a specific activity the elaboration of risk analysis principles intended for governments, as this essential Codex text would be considered during the period 2003-2007.

##### **Objective 3**

20) The Committee generally supported strengthened cooperation with other intergovernmental organizations but stressed that the independence of the Codex Alimentarius Commission should not be compromised, and that it should work according to its specific mandate, objectives and membership, which might be different from those of other organizations or conventions.

21) As regards Activity 13, the Committee agreed that while coordination with the plant and animal health sectors should be encouraged, Codex risk analysis principles should not necessarily be aligned with those applied in other areas of biosecurity. In particular, the mandates and objectives of other standard-setting organizations were different and the relationship with the FAO Strategic Framework should be clarified. The Committee was also informed that an Expert Consultation on Biosecurity was currently being held in FAO and that its conclusions might be of interest for further discussions on this subject.

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22) Several delegations expressed their concerns with the review of the General Principles of Codex Alimentarius to take into account all multi-lateral Agreements and Conventions (Activity 32). The Delegation of Spain proposed to delete the reference to the SPS and TBT Agreements. The Delegation of France pointed out that the main task covered by this activity would be the revision of the Acceptance Procedure as it was not consistent with the provisions of the WTO Agreements. The Committee proposed that this activity should refer only to the revision of the Acceptance Procedure.

23) The Committee agreed that Codex texts should include references to relevant sections of the OIE Codes as required, and vice versa, as it would be useful in areas such as veterinary drugs or aquaculture. However, this did not entail the complete integration into the Codex Alimentarius of OIE standards and Activity 34 should be amended accordingly.

24) The Delegation of the Netherlands expressed the view that cooperation with other standard-setting organizations was essential to avoid duplication of work and to ensure the credibility of the work of international organizations.

#### **Objective 4**

25) In Activity 3, the Committee agreed that no time limit should be specified for the adoption of Codex texts as they should be developed by consensus and should be acceptable to member countries on a world-wide basis, which might require a long elaboration process. The Committee also expressed its objections to the systematic review procedures proposed in Activity 19, as the present procedures adequately provided for the revision of existing standards when necessary.

#### **Objective 5**

26) The Committee agreed that there was no need for additional guidelines for the consideration of written comments (Activity 37) as this was adequately addressed in the *Guidelines for Codex Committees*. The Committee supported Activity 38 concerning guidance for working groups in order to ensure consistency and transparency in their conduct and organization.

27) The Delegation of the Netherlands recalled that sessions of the Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants and the Committee on Pesticide Residues had already been held in developing countries, as recommended in Activity 14. However, such initiatives were *ad hoc* measures and efforts to increase participation should focus on long-term capacity building.

28) As regards the participation of NGOs in Activity 29, the Committee proposed to emphasize the need for participation of consumer NGOs at the national and international levels and to delete the target percentages as they would not reflect effective participation.

#### **Objective 6**

29) The Committee agreed that Activity 15 (consultation on Codex matters) was within the mandate of Codex as Coordinating Committees regularly considered this question. The Committee also proposed to retain Activities 16 (Codex website) and 31 (Availability of Codex standards) and to delete the other activities because they could not be carried out in the framework of Codex.

#### **CONSIDERATION OF “TRACEABILITY/PRODUCT TRACING“ (Agenda Item 5)<sup>4</sup>**

30) The Delegation of Switzerland, as Chair of the Working Group on Traceability/Product Tracing of the CCFICS, informed the Committee about the Working Group meeting held in Switzerland from 19-20 August 2002. The Working Group had prepared a discussion paper on traceability/product tracing within the Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS), subsequently circulated as CX/FICS 02/11/7. The Working Group had identified three elements: the ability to identify a food (product identification), how it was changed (if appropriate), where it came from and where it was sent (product information) and the linkages between product identification and product information. The Delegation also expressed the view that access to the information was another important element to take into account.

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<sup>4</sup> CX/EURO 02/5, CRD 4 (comments of CI)

31) The Committee agreed that traceability/product tracing could be used for the purposes of food safety or as another legitimate objective, for example to ensure the authenticity of the product. Both aspects were equally important and should be addressed in the framework of Codex, while ensuring coordination with other international organizations in this area, especially ISO. In the framework of Codex, the Committee on General Principles should provide overall guidance to Codex Committees on the definition and application of traceability/product tracing and the CCFICS should proceed with its work to develop further the main elements identified in the discussion paper.

32) The Observer from ISDC noted that industry considers food safety aspects as the main objective of traceability/product tracing. For other elements it needs to be discussed on a case-by-case basis to which extent traceability/product tracing might play a role.

**REPORT ON ACTIVITIES OF FAO AND WHO COMPLEMENTARY TO THE WORK OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION, INCLUDING THE PAN-EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY (Agenda Item 6)<sup>5</sup>**

**Acrylamide**

32) The Committee noted the information provided on acrylamide and welcomed the organization of an FAO/WHO Consultation on risk assessment of this substance in 2003. The Delegation of Sweden informed the Committee about ongoing studies in Sweden and other countries concerning the presence of acrylamide in foods, especially as regards the mechanisms of its formation. In addition, the industry was also considering how to reduce the levels of acrylamide in industrially processed foods. The Delegation also drew the attention of the Committee to the general problem of carcinogens in foods, and highlighted the need for a consistent approach in risk management throughout Codex. The Committee agreed that this question should be addressed more systematically in the framework of Codex. The Representative of WHO indicated that the FAO/WHO project under development to update and consolidate principles for the risk assessment of chemicals in foods included consideration of carcinogens.

**PAN EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY**

33) The Committee was informed of discussions and recommendations reached during the Pan European Conference which took place in Budapest, 25–28 February 2002 at the invitation of the Government of Hungary. The Conference was first proposed by The Netherlands during the 22<sup>nd</sup> FAO Regional Conference for Europe (Porto, July 2000) with the aim to strengthen and harmonize food safety and quality policies across the European region and to improve conditions for public health and international food trade. Forty-six European countries, the European Commission and observer organizations participated to discuss issues and concerns related to food safety and quality in Europe.

34) The Representative of FAO informed the Committee that all 42 recommendations of the Conference report were endorsed by the 23<sup>rd</sup> FAO Regional Conference for Europe (Cyprus, 29-31 May 2002) and the recommendations could also be introduced during the 52<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe (Copenhagen, 16-19 September 2002). In response to questions concerning WHO/EUROPE endorsement of the recommendations, the WHO Food Safety Regional Advisor for Europe informed the Committee that a resolution endorsing recommendations of the Pan European Conference related to public health had been prepared by the Secretariat of the Regional WHO Committee, distributed to delegations and would be presented during the WHO Regional Committee.

35) The Committee was informed that initial steps are presently being taken by FAO to carry out technical assistance projects focussing on reinforcement of food safety infrastructures, harmonization of legislation and control structures and capacity building assistance, in those transition countries that are not directly involved in the enlargement process of the European Union.

36) The Committee expressed its appreciation to the Governments of Hungary and The Netherlands for organizing the Conference and to the authors of the document on activities of FAO and WHO (CX/EURO 02/6).

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<sup>5</sup> CX/EURO 02/6

37) The Delegation of Sweden noted the many recommendations adopted by the Conference and the importance of following-up with concrete actions and noted the importance of looking at the whole of the region, including those countries having the greatest problems related to food safety and quality and the least resources to bring about change.

38) The Delegation of Denmark, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the European Union, noted the changes that are underway to expand the European Union and expressed the view that future activities should be built in an all inclusive manner to avoid any divisions within the region.

39) The Delegation of France emphasized the importance of close cooperation between FAO and WHO on initiatives related to food safety. In agreement with comments of the Chairman of the Committee on the importance of reliable statistical data on food safety, the Delegation of France noted the importance of the cooperation of Member Countries in data collection.

40) The Observer from Consumers International expressed appreciation to FAO and WHO for including consumer groups as observers in many meetings and for the publications and posters on food safety and quality made available by FAO and WHO during the present session.

### **WHO Activities**

41) The Representative of WHO indicated that the WHO Programme Global Environmental Monitoring System for Food in Europe (GEMS-Foods/Euro) had been re-established in 2001 and was being promoted as a network of networks to support the work of the CCFAC and JECFA, CCPR and JMPR, the Persistent Organic Pollutants Convention and the monitoring activities of the future European Food Safety Authority. Various institutions in more than 35 countries had expressed their interest in participating and the other countries in the region had been invited to join this network.

42) The Committee also noted that the WHO Surveillance Programme for Control of Foodborne Infections and Intoxications in Europe currently included 50 countries. A meeting of national contact points had been organized in the WHO Collaborative Centre in Berlin in April 2002 to revise the programme and determine new priorities. This would allow the use of epidemiological information collected on foodborne outbreaks to provide data for microbiological risk assessment in JEMRA. The meeting had also stressed the necessity to coordinate WHO surveillance activities with those of DG SANCO in the EC and possibly with the microbiological risk assessment activities of the future European Food Safety Authority.

### **CAPACITY BUILDING FOR FOOD STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS**

#### **(Agenda Item 7)<sup>6</sup>**

43) The Representative of FAO presented the discussion paper and drew attention to the need for capacity building in food standards and regulations to enable members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to carry out required harmonization of their domestic technical regulations and standards with standards developed by international standards-setting bodies, in the Joint FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission for food safety; the Office International des Epizooties (OIE) for animal health; and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) for plant health. Regulatory systems and infrastructures in many transition countries need to be strengthened to avoid competitive disadvantages in international trade.

44) The Committee noted that the 23<sup>rd</sup> session of the Codex Commission (July 1999) called upon FAO and WHO to assist developing and transition countries in improving their food safety and plant and animal health systems. Together with other international organizations, national governments, international and regional financial institutions and NGOs, various capacity building and technical assistance initiatives have been undertaken by FAO and WHO in support of those countries desiring to harmonize their national standards with those of Codex and comply fully with international trade regulations. Although various approaches and strategies have been taken, the overall objective has been to support and strengthen national food control systems to protect the health of consumers and promote fair trade practices. These activities have included review and analysis of food control systems, evaluation of the effectiveness and weaknesses of systems and formulating recommendations

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and proposals to establish technically sound food control systems harmonized with current international standards. Specific activities have included training for food control officials through workshops, seminars and study tours to improve the capacity of local governments to implement comprehensive food control systems and food laboratory capabilities. In some instances training manuals have been developed and National Codex Committees have been established or strengthened.

45) The Committee was informed of global activities that included international workshops such as the jointly convened Global Forum of Food Safety Regulators in Marrakech (January 2002); global projects, such as the FAO formulated and implemented series of sub-regional training courses, including two in Europe, on the Umbrella Programme for Training on Uruguay Round and Future Negotiations on Agriculture, co-financed by FAO, European Union and several other donors; and a global initiative to establish a FAO Trust Fund for Food Security and Food Safety to supplement present trust funds.

46) A brief Needs Assessment Questionnaire prepared by FAO was made available to Delegations to collect information on regional capacity building needs related to food safety.

47) The Committee was informed of regional WHO Food Safety Programme activities related to the development of National Food Safety Strategies within the framework of development of Food and Nutrition Policy and Action Plans in Europe integrating food safety, nutrition and sustainable food supply strategies. Several workshops were held in Europe on development of National Nutrition Action Plans in cooperation with FAO and the FAO Subregional Office for Central and Eastern Europe (SEUR). Regional training workshops were organized by WHO on Genetically Modified Organisms in foods and food safety risk management.

48) Regional projects undertaken included an FAO project on Sub-regional Training on Meat Inspection and Meat Technology for Albania, Croatia, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia that began in 2001 and a multi-country WHO public health initiative for training Food Safety Officers in Central Asian Republics. Codex basic texts and standards are also being translated into the Russian language to assist development of regional food safety legislation.

49) FAO projects on food control administration, import/export control, strengthening food quality and control systems and strengthening National Codex activities have been recently completed and additional projects have been requested covering a range of topics related to strengthening food control systems, improving food safety and providing training on epidemiological investigation of food borne outbreaks and microbiological/chemical risk assessment and communication.

50) The Delegation of the Slovak Republic informed the Committee that the FAO project carried out in that country to harmonize food legislation and strengthen the food control system had provided valuable assistance and experience that it now offers to other transition countries requiring assistance.

51) In response to an inquiry by the Delegation of The Netherlands, the Representative of FAO informed that preparations for follow-up to the Pan European Conference and the FAO Regional Conference for Europe are underway and that proposals for technical assistance projects, workshops and training courses on food safety have been drawn up, several of which are presently in the approval phase. It was explained that initial activities would include an assessment of food safety in countries in transition. It was further explained that external funding and cooperation with other international organizations are being sought in support of these activities.

52) The WHO Food Safety Advisor for Europe informed that capacity building projects of the WHO Food Safety Programme in Europe are the first steps to follow up the implementation of recommendations on capacity building of the Pan-European Conference by the WHO Regional Office for Europe within the development of a Food Safety Strategy in the framework of Food and Nutrition Policy and Action Plans in Europe. It was stressed that countries were also ready to follow-up these recommendations.

53) The Delegation of Denmark, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the European Union, expressed appreciation for the capacity building activities of FAO and WHO and encouraged continued efforts along with those of other international organizations and countries.

54) The Delegation of France drew attention to the Joint FAO/WHO/OIE/WTO/WB Framework for Capacity Building in SPS-related Matters launched to enhance the ability of developing countries to fully participate in the work of international standards setting bodies. The Delegation noted that synergy among these organizations is essential to accomplish what remains to be done in capacity building. The Committee noted that an Inter-Agency Meeting on Capacity Building, a follow-up to the DOHA Meeting, had taken place in FAO Headquarters during the same week as the CCEURO session.

55) The WHO Food Safety Advisor for Europe informed the Committee that several regional projects on capacity building in the Central Asian Republics and in countries of South Eastern Europe (Stability Pact), have been discussed with FAO Headquarters and the FAO Regional Office for Europe who have been invited to implement them jointly with the WHO Food Safety Programme of Europe.

56) The WHO Food Safety Advisor for Europe informed that a Total Diet Study workshop has been organized for accession countries in collaboration with the National Institute of Public Health in the Czech Republic, 24-28 November 2002, in Brno.

#### **FOOD LEGISLATION AND FOOD CONTROL ACTIVITIES IN THE REGION (AGENDA ITEM 8)<sup>7</sup>**

##### **1) Updated survey of national food legislation and food control systems, Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committees**

##### **2) Cooperation activities in food control and training**

57) The Committee recalled its earlier decision to collect information to update the survey of food legislation and food control in the region and to collect information on consumer participation in Codex work (Agenda item 9). The Committee noted that the delegation of Poland had submitted additional information in this area in CRD 5 and that the Delegation of the Netherlands had provided copies of a document on its national system for the information of delegates.

58) The Delegation of Denmark noted that a national reorganized food safety system had been developed. It was mentioned that the involvement of stakeholders in the decision making process is an integral part of the system throughout the food chain. Copies of an information brochure on food legislation and control services in Denmark were made available to delegates.

59) The Delegation of Belgium informed the Committee that several major changes are underway in that country to bring all areas of food safety in the food chain under the responsibility of the Minister of Health. The establishment of an independent Agency responsible for food safety monitoring throughout the food chain, reporting to the Minister of Health, is underway.

60) The Delegation of Italy, noting that changes are also underway in that country related to food control, informed the Committee on the functioning of the national system of expert committees which form the National Committee on Codex. The national committee provides a forum for discussion of Codex topics by all interested parties in the government, food industry, and consumer organizations.

61) The Delegation of Spain informed the Committee of the creation of the Spanish Food Safety Agency, an independent organism that reported to the Minister of Health and Consumer Affairs, and that coordination activities concerning Codex Alimentarius had been retained in that agency.

62) The Delegation of Switzerland informed the Committee that the National Codex Committee is made up of representatives of all stakeholders who are nominated by the Federal Council. The Head of the National Codex Committee is also Head of the Food Safety Unit. Coordination sessions of the National Committee take place prior to the participation of Switzerland in Codex Committee sessions to discuss and prepare national positions. Consumer representatives take part in the national committee sessions' discussions.

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<sup>7</sup> CL 2002/17-EURO; CX/EURO 02/8 (comments of of Finland, Ireland, Hungary, Poland, Slovak Republic and the European Community), CX/EURO 02/8-Add.1 (Sweden), CRD 1 (United Kingdom), CRD 2 (Germany), CRD 5 (additional information from Poland)

63) The Delegation of Germany drew attention to CRD 2 Consumer Protection: The German Perspective. The Committee was informed that legislation has been enacted to reorganize consumer health protection and food safety into two new institutions at the federal level to place responsibility for risk assessment in a scientific agency, the Federal Institute of Risk Assessment, and responsibility for risk management in the Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety.

64) The European Commission informed the Committee that DG IV (SANCO) is the main component of the European Union Food Safety Agency. Scientific work to be carried out by the Agency will begin in 2003 and attention was drawn to information that is available on the Food Safety Agency on several web pages.

### **CONSUMER PARTICIPATION IN CODEX WORK AND RELATED MATTERS (Agenda Item 9)<sup>8</sup>**

65) The Delegation of the Slovak Republic indicated that consumer representatives participated in the national Codex Committee and closely cooperated with the Ministries responsible for food legislation and the Food Research Institute. The Delegation noted that the regular increase in consumer activities would represent a new element in food legislation and control activities in countries in transition.

66) The Delegation of the United Kingdom pointed out that consumer protection was their highest priority and that consumer representatives were consulted on food legislation, food control and Codex activities. An advisory committee had been established to advise the Food Standards Agency on consumer issues with a particular emphasis on Codex for which independent consumer reports were commissioned and published regularly.

67) The Delegation of Italy noted that consumer participation was increasing as consumer associations were better organized and informed, although resources were still a limitation. In addition, a website had been created to facilitate the dissemination of information on Codex activities.

68) The Delegation of France explained how consumers' representatives participated in the National Codex Committee, how all Codex documents were distributed to them and how they were associated to the preparation of Codex Committee meetings. They were actively involved in the current evaluation of Codex and presented their concerns and proposals to enhance their participation in Codex work to the evaluation team during its visit in Paris (8-9 July 2002).

69) The Delegation of Denmark stressed that consumers were closely involved in the preparation of Codex meetings and that consumer consultation in the preparation of EC legislation was mandatory. The results of the consultation process were communicated to members of parliament and to the government, in order to ensure that consumer views were known at the political level.

70) The Delegation of Spain indicated that for all food legislation matters the consultation process was extensive with the participation of four consumers associations in the Interministerial Commission for Food Legislation. However, in practice, their participation in the process was not very active.

71) The Delegation of Germany indicated that the information provided in document CX/EURO 98/8 was still valid and that consumer representatives participated actively in Codex work, including in national delegations.

72) The Delegation of the Netherlands indicated that special emphasis was placed on communication. Therefore a Codex communication adviser had been appointed, who had created a specific website and was responsible for publications on Codex matters.

73) The Observer from the EC informed the Committee that a forum for consumers organizations, the Consumer Committee, provided its input to EC consumer policy, including food legislation. General principles and standards were under development for the consultation of interested parties, including consumer organizations.

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<sup>8</sup> CL 2002/17-EURO, CX/EURO 02/9 (comments of Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Slovak Republic, European Community, Consumers International)

74) The Observer from Consumers International welcomed the steps taken by the countries that had presented their national systems. However, a survey carried out in the region showed very limited participation, especially in countries in transition. The Observer proposed the following measures to improve the situation: involving consumers in national Codex Committees; providing feedback information following Codex meetings; and funding the participation of consumer representatives in national delegations. The CCEURO should develop guidelines for enhancing consumer participation of consumers and compile information on measurable objectives. FAO and WHO should identify the main obstacles to the participation of consumers and provide training and funding for their representatives.

75) The Secretariat recalled the recommendations of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Commission concerning FAO and WHO activities in order to facilitate consumer participation. In the framework of FAO and WHO programmes intended to strengthen national Codex structures, it was recommended to involve all stakeholders in the Codex process, and in particular consumer representatives. The Committee also noted that as recommended by the Commission and by the Executive Committee, the data on the measurable objectives collected in the Regional Committees would be compiled and presented to the Commission.

76) The Committee agreed that exchange of views and experience on consumer participation was an important item at the regional level and should be included in the Agenda of the next session.

#### **NOMINATION OF THE COORDINATOR (Agenda Item 10)<sup>9</sup>**

77) The Committee recalled that the Slovak Republic had been appointed as Coordinator for Europe by the 24<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission for its first term.

78) The Delegation of France, supported by all delegations, proposed to nominate the Slovak Republic for appointment as Coordinator for Europe by the 26<sup>th</sup> (regular) Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and until the end of the 27<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission. The Slovak Republic accepted the nomination and expressed its thanks to member countries and its wish to continue working with them on matters of common interest in the region.

79) The Committee expressed its appreciation to Dr Milan Kováč for his efforts to promote coordination in the region and to Dr Ladislav Kabát for his excellent chairmanship of the Committee.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS AND FUTURE WORK (Agenda Item 11)**

80) The Committee was informed that the term of France as Member for Europe in the Executive Committee would expire in 2003 and that Belgium was candidate to hold this office, with the support of the countries in the European Union. The Delegation of Denmark, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the EU, indicated that countries supporting the election of Belgium wished to make it known in advance of the Commission for the sake of transparency, while recognizing that it was not the role of the Coordinating Committee to consider the election of the Member for Europe.

#### **DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT SESSION (Agenda item 12)**

81) The Committee was informed that the 24<sup>th</sup> Session was tentatively scheduled to be held in Bratislava in September 2004, the exact date to be determined in consultation between the host country and the Codex Secretariat, subject to confirmation by the Commission.

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### SUMMARY STATUS OF WORK

<b>Subject Matter</b>	<b>Step</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Document Reference in ALINORM 03/19</b>
Proposed Draft Revised Regional Standard for Mayonnaise	3	26 <sup>th</sup> CAC	para. 9
Nomination of Coordinator		26 <sup>th</sup> CAC	para. 78
Joint FAO/WHO Evaluation of the Codex Alimentarius and Other FAO and WHO Work on Food Standards		25 <sup>th</sup> CAC	paras. 10-15
Draft Medium-Term Plan		26 <sup>th</sup> CAC	paras. 16-29
Consideration of Traceability/Product Tracing		CCFICS CCGP	para. 79
Exchange of information on Food Legislation and Food Control		Governments 24 <sup>th</sup> CCEURO	paras. 57-64
Consumer Participation		Governments 24 <sup>th</sup> CCEURO	paras. 65-76

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