



**Food and Agriculture
Organization of
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REP13/NASWP

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

*Thirty sixth Session
Rome, Italy, 1-5 July 2013*

REPORT OF THE TWELTH SESSION OF THE FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR NORTH AMERICA AND THE SOUTH WEST PACIFIC

*Madang, Papua New Guinea
19 -22 September 2012*

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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Twelfth Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for North America and the South West Pacific reached the following conclusions:

Matters for consideration by the 36th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission

The Coordinating Committee:

- Agreed that there was no need to establish either an international or a regional standard for processed cheese (para.11); and generally supported Codex work on standards for spices, aromatic herbs and their formulations, noting that prioritization would be necessary (para.16);
- Reviewed the draft Codex Strategic Plan 2014-2019 and provided inputs and recommendations for the further review by the sub-committee of the Executive Committee (paras 26, 30, 32, 41-42, 51-52, 59, 65-66);
- Agreed to start new work on the development of a regional Standard for fermented noni juices (paras 135-136);
- Unanimously agreed to recommend to the 36th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission that Papua New Guinea be re-appointed as Coordinator for North America and the South West Pacific (para. 153).

Other matters for information

The Coordinating Committee:

- Thanked FAO, WHO and other partners for the technical assistance and scientific advice provided to the countries of the region and acknowledged the support of the Codex Trust Fund, FAO, WHO and donor countries for their continued support (paras 72, 79);
- Reviewed the status of implementation of the current Strategic Plan for the CCNASWP and agreed to review and finalise the new draft Strategic Plan for the CCNASWP 2014-2019 at its next Session (paras 105, 107-108);
- Agreed to revise the proposal for the development of a regional standard for kava focusing on the dried product that can be used as a beverage when mixed with water and accepted the FAO and WHO's offer to assist in the review of scientific information and identification of gaps (paras 121-123);
- Agreed to discontinue consideration of the discussion paper on a harmonised approach to date marking (para. 146);
- Agreed that the CCNASWP should be used to facilitate regional action on diet related NCDs and VMDs and that these initiatives could benefit from a combined and harmonized approach across the Pacific (paras 151-152);
- Agreed to collect information identifying the products and the related food safety or trade issues that could be addressed by regional standards and develop mechanism to prioritise products of potential interest for the Region (para. 160).

INTRODUCTION

1. The FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for North America and the South West Pacific (CCNASWP) held its 12th Session in Madang, from 19 to 22 September 2012 at the kind invitation of the Government of Papua New Guinea. The Session was chaired by Dr Vele Pat Ila'ava, Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Livestock and attended by 53 delegates from 14 Member countries, two Member countries outside the Region, two international organisations and Representatives of FAO and WHO. A complete list of participants, including the Secretariats, is given in Appendix I to this report.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

2. Dr Fabian N Ndenzako, Officer in Charge of the WHO Representation in Papua New Guinea, on behalf of FAO and WHO, welcomed the participants and thanked the Codex Trust Fund donors, noting that the Fund helped delegates from ten countries to attend the Session. He congratulated the many countries in the Region that had recently strengthened their legislation for food safety despite limited resources. He emphasised the importance of food standards to solve some problems in the Pacific region, such as foodborne diseases, food contamination, undernutrition and diet-related Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs).

3. Hon Tommy Tomscoll, MP, Minister for Agriculture and Livestock, Papua New Guinea, opened the Session. The Minister highlighted that this session of CCNASWP was timely and critical to the development of Papua New Guinea. The Minister said that Papua New Guinea had developed a number of policies and legislation addressing food safety and food standards and had created a new unit called "Agro-food safety and Codex PNG". The Minister pointed out that a key challenge for Codex in the Region was how the reforms in legislation and policies were standardised to support and enhance regional compliance and regional trade in the food business.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Agenda Item 1)¹

4. The Coordinating Committee agreed to consider together Agenda Item 9 "Issues relevant to the Region" with Agenda Item 5a "Comments and information on national food control systems, consumer participation in food standards setting and the use of Codex standards at the national level" and to move Agenda Item 10 "Prevention of Non Communicable Diseases and micronutrient deficiencies in the CCNASWP region" after Agenda Item 4b "Codex Trust Fund Monitoring and Evaluation Framework".

5. The Coordinating Committee agreed that the Observer from IFPRI would provide information on biofortification by conventional breeding, under Agenda Item 12 "Other Business".

6. With these amendments, the Coordinating Committee adopted the Provisional Agenda as its Agenda for the Session.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER CODEX COMMITTEES AND TASK FORCES (Agenda Item 2)²

7. The Coordinating Committee noted that matter arising from the Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods (CCCF) on cyanogenic glycosides and from the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL) concerning the provisions on date marking were for information only.

8. The Coordinating Committee discussed the matters referred to it by the 35th Session of the Commission as follows.

Proposed draft Standard on Processed Cheese

9. The Coordinating Committee recalled that the 35th Session of the Commission had agreed to discontinue work on the development of a standard for processed cheese and requested the upcoming sessions of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees to discuss the need for a standard for processed cheese and document the scope of the work that might be needed in this area. The Coordinating Committee further recalled that at its last Session it had agreed to refer to the 34th Session of the Commission that there was no need to continue work on a standard for processed cheese³.

10. Delegations noted that the development of a standard for processed cheese was not possible because a wide variety of processed cheeses was in the market; the decision of the Commission had been guided by a detailed analysis of the issue; the continuous technological development of the products made

¹ CX/NASWP 12/12/1

² CX/NASWP 12/12/2

³ REP11/NASWP paras 20 – 24

the standardisation not amenable; and many standards existed at national level that could serve to other countries to develop their own standards.

Conclusion

11. The Coordinating Committee agreed that there was no need to establish either an international or a regional standard for processed cheese. The Coordinating Committee reiterated its previous conclusion that there was no need to continue work on the development of a global or regional standard for processed cheese. It noted the decision of the 35th Session of the Commission to discontinue work on processed cheese.

Proposal for the establishment of a subsidiary body of the Codex Alimentarius Commission

12. The Coordinating Committee recalled that the 35th Session of the Commission had considered a proposal of India to establish a new subsidiary body on spices, aromatic herbs and their formulations and had agreed to ask the Coordinating Committees for their views on the proposal.

13. The Delegation of India presented the proposal and explained that significant amount of spices, aromatic herbs and their formulations were internationally traded and that most producers, as well as many of consumers, were from developing countries. The Delegation explained that the absence of harmonised standards made the trading of these commodities complex and confusing because of multiple standards. He further said that the proposed Committee should develop quality standards for physical and chemical parameters of a wide range of spices, aromatic herbs and their formulations, noting that standards developed by general subject committees should cover safety aspects. He recalled that India was willing to host the Committee if established by the Commission.

14. The Delegation noted that these products were not within the scope of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (CCFFV) as most of them were dried before trading and that the Codex Committee on Processed Fruits and Vegetable (CCPFV) could not establish standards for these products because raw spices and herbs were processed and dried to develop and fix their flavour and aroma, as opposed to fruits and vegetable that were processed and dried to extend their shelf life and for convenience. He further highlighted that a time limited Task Force would not be able to complete the work, as there were more than 100 spices and aromatic herbs, each with many derivatives and forms.

15. Delegations generally supported work on spices and aromatic herbs. They noted that new work for these products should meet Codex criteria for new work; that, in line with the recommendations of the FAO/WHO Evaluation of Codex, the emphasis should be on the establishment of time-limited Task Forces rather than permanent committees; that a time-limited Task Force would be a more appropriate mechanism as an initial step and that the establishment of a permanent body should be considered at a later stage; that new work on standards for these products should be prioritized taking account of production and consumption in individual countries, volume and patterns of trade between countries, impediment in trade and availability of data and information; and that a general standard, covering general aspects, with several annexes on specific products, would be an appropriate approach to address the work proposed.

Conclusion

16. The Coordinating Committee generally supported Codex work on standards for spices, aromatic herbs and their formulations, noting that prioritization would be necessary. It was noted that the Commission would determine the mechanism for this work. The Coordinating Committee also noted the offer of India to host the subsidiary body.

Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Codex Alimentarius Commission

17. The Coordinating Committee recalled that the 35th Session of the Commission had agreed to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Commission. The Members of the Coordinating Committee were invited to share views on their ideas to celebrate the 50th Anniversary at national, regional and global level.

18. The Delegation of the United States of America said that they were planning to organise in conjunction with the next Session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH), (New Orleans, USA, 12-16 November 2012) an event, such as a round table discussion on the impact and successes of Codex over the past 50 years. The Delegation of Canada said that that they were considering organising a similar event in conjunction with the next Session of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (Charlottetown, PEI, Canada, 14-17 May 2013) and suggested that FAO, WHO and the Codex Secretariat could develop a standard presentation that could be used in such celebrations.

19. The Coordinating Committee noted that events at the national level would help to increase awareness of Codex their countries.

20. The Representative of FAO supported the suggestion that the 50th celebration presents an opportunity to focus on impact and successes of Codex over the past 50 years. She noted that Members were best placed to share information and specific progress made on Codex related work, but offered the support of FAO and WHO in this regard. Furthermore, it might be relevant to use events held under the 50th celebration to discuss priority issues, which might be challenging in certain countries, e.g. importance of national stakeholder input and consultation to Codex work.

DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION 2014-2019 (Agenda Item 3)⁴

21. Dr Samuel Godefroy, vice-Chairperson of the Commission, speaking as the Chairperson of the sub-Committee of the Executive Committee in charge of the preparation of the updated draft of the Codex Alimentarius Commission Strategic Plan 2014-2019, introduced this Agenda Item. He explained that the sub-Committee had revised the draft Strategic Plan to take into consideration the comments of the 67th Executive Committee and of the 35th Session of the Commission and other comments submitted to the Commission. The revised draft, prepared by the sub-Committee, also included a work plan, which for each activity described the responsible party, time line, expected outcome and measurable indicator(s). The vice-Chairperson further explained that the CCNASWP was asked to provide inputs on the entire document, available for the first time in its entire form (i.e. encompassing the work plan) and that this opportunity was the one and only instance CCNASWP would be providing such input on behalf of the region. Vice-Chair Godefroy also explained that the draft Strategic Plan would be further revised by the sub-Committee to take into consideration the comments and the outcome of the discussions at all six FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees. The resulting document would then be circulated for comments to all Codex Members and Observers, prior to its consideration at the next Session of the Executive Committee and its proposed adoption at the next Session of the Commission.

22. The vice-Chairperson further clarified that the sub-Committee had not made any changes to the four strategic goals and that most of the objectives were kept unchanged from the version reviewed by the 35th Session of the Commission. Some objectives and a number of activities were, however, amended to account for comments provided by members, to achieve more clarity enabling the identification of expected outcomes and measurable/concrete indicators and, in some instances, to avoid duplication.

23. The vice-Chairperson explained that the first two strategic goals were focusing on the core business of the Commission, which is to develop food standards, including the way this is undertaken, with emphasis on the risk analysis principles. The third strategic goal was more directed to support capacity building, recognising that Codex was not directly responsible for such initiatives. The fourth goal was focussed on improving the efficiency of Codex's work.

24. The vice-Chairperson explained that the sub-Committee was expecting the six FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees to provide their comments on the entire new draft, which, he recognised, was not yet a perfect document, as it contained a new part (i.e. the work plan) that was drafted only most recently and hence was not subject of discussion by the Executive Committee or the Commission. He further noted that a number of objectives, in particular those related to capacity building and the provision of scientific advice, were not areas under the direct responsibility of Codex, but rather delivered by the parent organisations, FAO and WHO. As such, wording related to these activities should be subject to a closer scrutiny, to ensure that the Codex Strategic Plan remains a plan for Codex to implement.

25. The vice-Chairperson further suggested that comments from the Coordinating Committee focus on suggestions and/or directions for the draft Strategic Plan rather than a closer attention to the specific wording, which would be subjected to a closer review, by the sub-Committee of the Executive Committee.

General Comments

26. The Coordinating Committee expressed overall support for the draft Strategic Plan as currently drafted, which had resulted in a more concise and better constructed text.

Specific Comments

27. The Coordinating Committee considered the draft Strategic Plan more in detail and made the following observations and comments.

⁴CX/NASWP 12/12/3; CX/NASWP 12/12/3 Add.1 (Compilation of comments provided to the 67th Session of the Executive Committee and the 25th Session of the Commission on the June 2012 version of the draft Strategic Plan of the Codex Alimentarius Commission 2014-2019).

Introduction and Drivers for Change

28. The vice-Chairperson explained that the sub-Committee had introduced a new section “Drivers for Change” in response to a number of comments on the need to clarify how the Strategic Plan and its objectives would be informed and better able to address emerging issues that affect food safety, quality and nutrition. He further highlighted that as directed by the Executive Committee, the updated Strategic Plan was meant to be used by Members as a succinct document to introduce Codex, its history, and its work to policy makers and other interested parties in the most succinct, yet effective manner.

29. Delegations expressed support for the two sections. It was recommended to make the section “Driver for Changes” more succinct and to highlight the contribution of all countries in the international food standard-setting process. It was also recommended to maintain an emphasis on developing countries as well as to include food security among the “drivers for changes”.

Conclusion

30. The Coordinating Committee generally supported the two sections and recommended that the new section “Drivers for Changes” include food security and that, while acknowledging the role of all countries in the work of Codex, emphasis to the increasing role of developing of countries should remain.

Strategic Vision and Codex Values

31. The Vice-Chairperson explained that, as discussed at the 67th Executive Committee, the Strategic Plan needed to have a vision on what Codex wants to be; and that the section on “Core Values” listed only some of the most important core values of Codex and that the list should not be read as exclusive of other important values and guiding principles.

Conclusion

32. The Coordinating Committee generally supported the sections as currently drafted.

Strategic Goal 1: Establish international food standards that address current and emerging issues

33. The vice-Chairperson explained that the Strategic Goal was not changed and included three objectives, focusing on: (1.1) the development of new standards and the need to have them updated in a timely and proactive basis, in a systematic fashion; (1.2) ensuring that the standards were relevant to all members and responsive to the evolving environment; and (1.3) appropriate cooperation between Codex and other relevant organizations. He explained that the sub-Committee had not changed the objectives as they had been thoroughly discussed at the 67th Executive Committee.

34. The vice-Chairperson continued to describe the activities under each of the three objectives; he explained that the sub-Committee had deleted two of the activities of Objective 1 of the previous draft (namely 1.1.3 “Ensure the concepts of public health, sound regulatory frameworks, and fair trade practices in the food trade into Codex standards development” and 1.1.4 “Promote the use of Codex standards in international trade and as a basis for domestic regulations”) as it had difficulties to identify measurable indicators and had felt that the activities were considered as guiding principles. He noted that the deletion of the activity also made the Strategic Plan tighter.

35. With regard to Objective 1.2, the vice-Chairperson recalled that the purpose of the objective was to ensure that Codex has a more systematic approach to address emerging issues, such as melamine contamination of foods or the management of radionuclides in the food supply, and revises/updates its standards on a regular basis, informed by the changing environment in which it operates. He explained that the sub-Committee had added a new activity to address Members’ implementation of Codex standards, i.e. Activity 1.2.3 “Develop a mechanism measuring the implementation of Codex standards by member governments”.

36. Delegations expressed some concerns on how the new Activity 1.2.3 could be measured in a pragmatic way and expressed doubts on whether this activity belonged to the Strategic Plan; it was noted that Codex had deleted the “acceptance procedures” from the Procedural Manual; that the WTO SPS Committee had a notification procedure in place; and that this activity could result in an additional burden for countries to notify/report on implementation of Codex standards.

37. In response to these comments, the vice-Chairperson noted that in identifying possible measurable indicators for the various activities, the sub-Committee should pay extra attention to ensure that data collection activities leverage existing data collection efforts, such as those that are conducted regularly by FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees, other committees or the Secretariat (e.g. CL 2012/6-NASWP requesting comments and information on national food control systems, consumer participation in food

standards setting and the use of standards at the national level) and not to create a new mechanism, to the extent possible.

38. With regard to Objective 1.3, the vice-Chairperson explained that the two activities of this Objective were aimed at strengthening Codex collaboration with OIE and IPPC (Activity 1.3.1) and other organizations (Activity 1.3.2) and at having a more systematic approach to this collaboration.

39. Delegations questioned the timeline indicated for Activity 1.3.1 and on who was accountable (i.e. responsible party) for this activity; that the Codex Secretariat should be more involved in the activities related to Objective 1.3; and that FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees should be part of the process.

40. It was also noted that “Responsible Party” did not clearly differentiate between who was accountable for the activity i.e. taking the lead, and who was contributing to it; and that there was a need to be more precise in this regard.

Conclusion

41. The Coordinating Committee questioned the relevance of the new Activity 1.2.3 and how it fitted with Objective 1. It was recommended that measures aimed at collecting data and information on the status of implementation of the Strategic Plan leverage existing data collection activities.

42. The Coordinating Committee recommended that the “Responsible Parties” of the Objective 1.3 be thoroughly scrutinised and to consider the role of the Codex Secretariat in liaising and coordinating with international organizations. It was further recommended to consider the inclusion of FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees in the delivery of these activities and to be more precise on the “Responsible Party” for the delivery of each activity.

Strategic Goal 2: Ensure the application of risk analysis principles in the development of Codex standards

43. The vice-Chairperson explained that Strategic Goal 2 focused on how Codex conducts its work with a particular emphasis on the application of Risk Analysis Principles. The Goal included three objectives focusing on: (2.1) scientific advice and application of risk analysis principles, including assessment, management and communication; (2.2) sustainability of the provision of scientific advice/risk assessment to Codex work; and (2.3) data representation from all Members in the context of risk assessment, to achieve a more global risk characterization and outcomes that are geographically unbiased. The Coordinating Committee noted that the sub-Committee had not changed any of the three objectives.

44. With regard to Objective 2.1, the vice-Chairperson explained that the sub-Committee had made some changes in the activities to reflect the comments of the Commission and the Executive Committee as follows:

- Activity 2.1.1 was aimed at better planning and use scientific advice in the context of standard setting;
- Activity 2.1.2 was aimed at increasing the representation of Members in the delivery of scientific advice and the data supporting such advice; it was also noted that there were some convergence between this activity and others included under Objective 2.3 (e.g. 2.3.3);
- Activity 2.1.3 was focusing on risk management and aimed at ensuring that documentation of all factors guiding risk management are identified and documented in a consistent manner, as part of Codex’s standard setting;
- Activity 2.1.4 was focusing on risk communication and mostly on ensuring the dissemination of Codex standards to support their increased uptake and implementation

45. The vice-Chairperson further noted that Activity 2.1.3 was included as the result of the discussion of the Executive Committee on the need to reflect under Goal 2 the three pillars of risk analysis and not to limit the activities to risk assessment.

46. Delegations noted that measurable indicators for these activities should capture the progress made and that the level of precision, such as that given by a quantitative indicator, was not necessary to make an evaluation of the progress made. It was also suggested to consider the inclusion of an additional column to indicate the source of data to measure the activity.

47. With regard to Objective 2.2, the Coordinating Committee noted that it aimed at ensuring the sustainability of scientific advice to Codex work and that the language of Activity 2.2.1 had been reworded to recognise that Codex was not directly responsible for the delivery of scientific advice and could therefore only “encourage” FAO and WHO in the delivery of the activity. The vice-Chairperson further noted that

Activity 2.2.2 aimed at encouraging Members' increased financial support for the provision of scientific advice and 2.2.3 at supporting other/ innovative ways of financial support to the scientific advice.

48. Delegations noted that Activity 2.2.1 was an important activity and that the real measure of success for this activity was that more funding is secured for the provision of scientific advice. It was also noted that there was not a clear justification to the timeline (i.e. December 2015) for activity 2.2.3.

49. With regard to Objective 2.3, the Coordinating Committee noted that it aimed at increasing the inputs from developing countries to the provision of scientific advice and that Codex was not the responsible party for this Objective but, similarly to Objective 2.2, Codex could influence the adoption of certain practices by both member governments and the parent organisations to further support the scientific advice, critical to the work of Codex. The Coordinating Committee further noted that Objective 2.3 aimed at ensuring that more data for scientific advice is submitted by developing countries and that there were some possibilities to reduce the number of activities by merging 2.3.3 and 2.3.4.

50. Delegations noted that the measurable indicator for Activity 2.3.4 should consider both developed and developing countries; that, in view of the time necessary to establish new networks, it was better to consider building on existing ones; that mentoring/twinning programmes could contribute to enhance the capabilities of developing countries to participate in risk assessment bodies.

Conclusion

51. The Coordinating Committee recommended to reduce the rigidity of quantitative indicators to measure the achievements/progress of Objective 2.1 and to reflect on the value of adding an additional column to indicate the source of data from which measurable indicators could be drawn. It was further recommended to consider changing the measurable indicator of Objective 2.2 with a measure of the increase of the financial resources allocated to the provision of scientific advice.

52. With regard to Objective 2.3 it was recommended to consider networks, including both developed and developing countries and twinning/mentoring programmes, to increase the contribution of experts from developing countries in the provision of scientific advice.

Strategic Goal 3: Facilitate the effective participation of all Codex Members

53. The vice-Chairperson explained that Goal 3 focused on how to increase (Objective 3.1) and promote (Objective 3.2) effective participation in Codex; similarly to Objective 2.2, the sub-Committee reworded the description of the activities associated with this objective to recognise that Codex was not directly responsible for the delivery of the capacity building activities and that Codex could, therefore, only "encourage" responsible parties to enhance their support to those areas benefiting Codex's work.

54. The Coordinating Committee noted that Objective 3.1 included four activities and that the main change made by the sub-Committee was in Activity 3.1.2, which was an amalgamation of a number of activities.

55. Delegations asked clarification with regard to the timeline of some activities (e.g. 3.1.2 and 3.1.3) and questioned whether the responsible party for Activity 3.1.3 should be FAO and WHO. It was also suggested to reconsider the order of listing for activities under Objective 3.1, e.g. by moving Activity 3.1.4 ahead of 3.1.3, and to modify the measurable indicator for Activity 3.1.4 to focus on the increase of contribution to the Codex Trust Fund, rather than the increase of number of countries contributing to it.

56. The Coordinating Committee noted that the specific text to be included in the Strategic Plan, including the timeline, needed to be revisited to take account of the planning of FAO and WHO related efforts to investigate a successor programme to the Codex Trust Fund as a basis for discussion with Members.

57. With regard to Objective 3.2 the vice-Chairperson clarified that the purpose of the objective was to influence FAO and WHO to deliver capacity building activity, which were beyond the scope of Codex, yet with a contribution to strengthening the food safety and nutrition systems. The Objective includes three activities focusing on: support to the existing Codex structure (Activity 3.2.1); what Members should do themselves (Activity 3.2.2); and leveraging Codex capacity to conduct effective capacity building activities (Activity 3.2.3).

58. Delegations noted that "Responsible Party" for Activity 3.2.1 should also include Members, as the Executive Committee might not have access to this information; that Activity 3.2.3 was directed to FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees; and that other donors also provided funding resources.

Conclusion

59. The Coordinating Committee recommended to revisit the language of Activity 3.1.3 taking into account the ongoing discussion in FAO and WHO on a possible successor programme of the Codex Trust Fund; to

reconsider the order of activities listed under Objective 3.1; and to review the entire timeline. The Coordinating Committee further recommended that the sub-Committee re-examine Objective 3.2 to introduce activities that leverage ongoing activities on strengthening food safety systems of members.

Strategic Goal 4: Implement effective and efficient work management systems and practices

60. The vice-Chairperson explained that Goal 4 focused on effective functioning of Codex (Objective 4.1) and the development of consensus (Objective 4.2); he further recalled that these Objectives had been extensively debated during the 67th Executive Committee.

61. Objective 4.1 included five activities addressing: periodical review of Codex work (Activity 4.1.1); use of other means to improve communication, work flow and management of activities (Activity 4.1.2); use of new technologies to improve participation (Activity 4.1.3); timely distribution of working documents (Activity 4.1.4); and leveraging committee meetings (Activity 4.1.5). The sub-Committee had not made substantial changes and focused on expected outcomes and measurable indicators.

62. Delegations suggested broadening Activities 4.1.2 and 4.1.3 to all new technologies and to consider the responsibility of the Codex Secretariat in implementing the activities related to Objective 4.1.

63. With regard to Objective 4.2, the vice-Chairperson noted that it included only two activities focusing on improving: knowledge to get consensus (Activity 4.2.1) and skills of Committee Chairs to support decisions made by consensus (Activity 4.2.2).

64. Delegations noted that sufficient guidance on consensus existed in the Procedural Manual (i.e. Measures to Facilitate Consensus) and that consideration could be given to include an activity to promote the application of such guidance.

Conclusion

65. The Coordinating Committee recommended to broaden Activities 4.1.2 and 4.1.3 to all technologies and to clarify the “Responsible party” in the activities of Objective 4.1, in particular those of the Committee on General Principles and of the Codex Secretariat. With regard to Objective 4.2, the Coordinating Committee recommended to reword the activities to clarify that their purpose was mainly to disseminate and revise the guidance on consensus that is included in the Procedural Manual, before considering additional guidance to be developed.

66. The Coordinating Committee concluded the discussion on this Agenda Item and thanked vice-Chair Godefroy for facilitating the discussion on the draft Strategic Plan.

ACTIVITIES OF FAO AND WHO COMPLEMENTARY TO THE WORK OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION RELEVANT TO THE REGION (Agenda Item 4a)⁵

67. The Representative of WHO provided, on behalf of FAO and WHO, an overview of the activities complementary to the work of Codex in the area of capacity building implemented by the two organizations since the 11th CCNASWP.

68. It was clarified that CX/NASWP 12/12/4, in addition to the summary of regional and national activities, outlined challenges observed in undertaking the capacity building, as well as a number of priorities for the coming year in the region. In doing so, it was highlighted that in response to significant progress on food legislation development, which continues, it was important to note the importance of ensuring that legislation is implemented effectively and the need to work together to find improved ways of building capacity and also ensuring adequate resources in this important area.

69. The Representative of WHO introduced CRD 3, which provided a summary of the FAO and WHO Technical Workshop on developments in Codex relevant to the Pacific Island Countries, which was funded by the Codex Trust Fund and held prior to the Session. She also acknowledged the support from a number of countries towards the capacity building activities in the region including the in-kind support from Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States of America.

70. . Delegations noted the importance of this assistance and highlighted a number of associated activities underway in their countries. It was also suggested that providing a forum to share best practices in food control between countries would be a useful initiative. They further noted the need to share best practices, local provincial level capacity building activities and the possible use of e-learning to assist with capacity building activities.

⁵ CX/NASWP 12/12/4

71. In response to a suggestion by FAO for countries to provide feedback on improving assistance, countries noted the importance of e-learning, as a useful means of capacity building. Noting the Codex e-learning course, which is available on the FAO and WHO websites⁶ it was suggested to consider a similar approach for other food safety issues, including an option of a certificate upon completion. The need for local provincial level capacity building in general was noted, as well as more specifically in the area of enforcing date marking concerns.

Conclusion

72. The Coordinating Committee thanked FAO, WHO and other partners for the technical assistance and scientific advice provided to the countries of the region.

CODEx TRUST FUND MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK (Agenda Item 4b)⁷

73. The Representative of FAO, on behalf of FAO and WHO, introduced CX/NASWP 12/12/5 on Codex Trust Fund (CTF) activities. The Coordinating Committee was reminded that the document included the information presented at the 35th Session of the Commission. The Representative of FAO thanked all donors to the CTF acknowledging the rich array of activities made possible through their generous support.

74. The Coordinating Committee was reminded of the creation of Group 4 in the CTF to provide additional support to Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States. These countries will be given support for an additional two years to attend the two priority Codex meetings for their country, with the obligation that the country must “match” this support by supporting two participations in the same calendar year using national or other sources of funding.

75. The Coordinating Committee was updated on the process to determine CTF-funded training activities carried out by FAO, WHO and the CTF Secretariat, involving colleagues in regional offices in close contact with country needs. Recent examples to support Pacific Island Countries (PICs) included the Workshop on utilising risk-based approaches in national food control systems in the Pacific (New Zealand, December 2011); the FAO and WHO Technical Workshop on developments in Codex relevant to the Pacific Island Countries, held prior to this Session (CRD 3); and an On the Job training for CCPs from Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, (New Zealand, March 2012).

76. The Coordinating Committee was reminded of the ongoing pilot mentoring initiative, which resulted from a request of the 43rd Session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH) to work on practical examples on the establishment and application of microbiological criteria for different purposes being developed within the work of Codex to adopt “Principles for the establishment and application of microbiological criteria for foods”. This specific approach could be replicated on specific Codex texts under development, where deemed useful, or mentoring initiatives on enhancing participation in Codex might benefit from many lessons learned and feedback on this initiative, which was very positive. Information is available from FAO and WHO.

77. Finally, the FAO Representative highlighted the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the Codex Trust Fund (M&E Framework), which had been developed in response to the recommendations of the Mid-term Review. The M&E Framework focuses on monitoring progress and evaluating outputs and outcomes during the second half of the CTF lifespan, and will collect data to monitor participation in Codex meetings, FAO and WHO capacity development activities and scientific data generation supported by the CTF. The M&E Framework will track the results of the CTF and show the extent to which the objectives have been reached, provide feedback on adequacy of management and design of the project, and inform the discussion on the kind of support required once the CTF ends.

78. CTF beneficiary countries were reminded that the Call for applications for support from the CTF has been issued and the deadline is 31 October 2012⁸.

Conclusion

79. The Coordinating Committee acknowledged the support of the Codex Trust Fund and thanked FAO, WHO and donor countries for their continued support.

⁶ <http://www.fao.org/food/food-safety-quality/capacity-development/participation-codex/en/> and <http://www.who.int/foodsafety/codex/en/>

⁷ CX/NASWP 12/12/5

⁸ <http://www.who.int/foodsafety/codex/trustfundapplication/en/index.html>

COMMENTS AND INFORMATION ON NATIONAL FOOD CONTROL SYSTEMS, CONSUMER PARTICIPATION IN FOOD STANDARDS SETTING AND THE USE OF CODEX STANDARDS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL (Replies to CL 2012/6-NASWP) (Agenda Item 5a)⁹

80. The Coordinating Committee recalled that since its 10th Session the Circular Letter requesting comments and information on national food control systems, consumer participation in food standards setting and the use of Codex standards at the national level had been issued in the form of a questionnaire to better link the information submitted to the objectives and activities of the Strategic Plan for the CCNASWP 2008-2013.

81. The Coordinating Committee also noted that some of the questions included in the Circular Letter were related to requests of the Commission to provide information on food legislation, food control, national Codex structures and consumers participation. Replies to questions 1, 2 and 6 provided information on status of implementation of activities 4.5 "Promote interdisciplinary coordination at the national and regional level" and 5.5 "Enhance participation of non-governmental organizations at international, regional and national levels" of the Codex Strategic Plan 2008-2013 in the region, whose implementation was under the responsibilities of the six FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees. It was further noted that replies to the questionnaire also provided measurable indicators of the status of implementation of the FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, in particular on the use of Codex standards and impediments to their use in the countries of the region.

82. The Coordinating Committee agreed with the following analysis of the replies submitted:

Question 1: Strengthening National Food Control Systems

83. In the CCNASWP region there are changes in the food control system related to both (i) reorganization of the food control system to cover the whole food chain; and (ii) updating and developing national legislation. Pacific Island Countries (PICs) are actively developing new legislation and regulations, and elements of their food control system to ensure " implementation" e.g. Imported food procedures, street food vendor guides, food safety emergency response plans. Several PICs have completed and enacted their "modern" Food Law.

Question 2: Strengthening Codex at the national level

84. Activities continue in the countries of the region to strengthen their Codex structure and capacity to communicate and liaise with all stakeholders. A range of activities, including seminars, workshops and on-the-job training has been held in the PICs to strengthen Codex at the national level. However, PICs continue to need support to strengthen their capacities, in particular, in areas related to submission of written comments and for data collection.

Question 3: Regional Strategic Plan - priority areas for implementation and related training needs

85. PICs continue to need assistance to enhance their capacity in food safety related areas and to strengthen their participation in Codex activities. Mentoring and twinning programmes, as well as strengthened coordination and communication with other countries in the region and international/ regional organizations, would contribute to enhance technical capacity of PICs. Quad countries continue to assist PICs in enhancing their food control systems.

Question 4: Codex standards – national priorities and interests

86. Some countries stressed the importance of adopting Codex standards that are risk-based and founded on science, and that overall food safety decision-making is based on science. Specific Codex texts of interest to PICs include standards on labelling and date marking and on products relevant to the region, such as on fish and fishery products and cassava; MRLs for pesticides and veterinary drugs and MLs for contaminants; codes of hygienic practice and guidance on food import food inspection and on risk analysis. Priority for setting national standards varies among the region and common interest is in the area of food labelling. Some countries in the region need training for the development of national legislation based on Codex standards; legislation in other countries makes specific reference to Codex standards as part of their national food regulations.

Question 5: Scientific activities and data collection activities

87. Quad countries are developing and implementing risk-based management strategies for the reduction of food risks and continue to collect data from research studies and surveillance and monitoring of hazards in

⁹ CX/NASWP 12/12/6 (Replies to CL 2012/6-NASWP of Australia, Canada, Papua New Guinea, United States of America and Vanuatu); CX/NASWP 12/12/6 Add.1 (Replies of New Zealand and Tonga); CX/NASWP 12/12/6 Add.2 (Replies of Fiji and Solomon Islands), CRD 1 (Replies of Cook Islands and Samoa); CRD 4 (Replies of Federated States of Micronesia)

food to rank food safety priorities, to determine appropriate control measures (including addressing incidents and food safety emergencies) and to strengthen their laboratories network. Some PICs have started activities in the area of microbiological and chemical risk assessment and to collect relevant data, while other PICs need support to start scientific activities, in particular to develop capacities to: undertake research on food safety; collect appropriate data; strengthen food laboratories; and develop network of experts.

Question 6: Cooperation with international / regional organizations

88. CCNASWP countries participate in some international and regional networks/ frameworks, including the Global Environment Monitoring System/Food Monitoring and Assessment Programme (GEMS/Food), International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN), network of Codex Contact Points and regional activities organised by FAO and WHO on food safety. The importance to develop networks and linkages with regional organizations, such as Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), and Pacific Islands Forum, is also highlighted.

Question 7: Any other matters

89. Communication among countries of the region and with the Coordinator should be strengthened. The Coordinator should play a more active role for the activities of Objective 1 “To improve the coordination and communication of the Region’s activities in Codex” and Objective 2 “To promote maximum participation of all member countries of the region in the activities of the regional coordinating committees and other Codex committees more generally” of the Strategic Plan for the CCNASWP. Technical assistance, including capacity building, is needed in the area of scientific advice and Codex procedures for standard development (Objectives 3 “To promote the development and enhancement of the capacities of national Codex Contact Points of the Pacific Island Countries, and their supporting infrastructures, to carry out their core functions” and 6 “To promote the development of standards for food products produced in the Pacific Island Countries”) and training government and industry personnel. Support from FAO, WHO and CTF should continue to help strengthening Codex structure and participation in Codex work.

Others

90. The Coordinating Committee also discussed the usefulness of the Circular Letter, the information submitted and ways to improve the current approach.

91. The FAO Representative, on behalf of FAO and WHO launched a proposal for discussion. Recognising that the replies to the Circular Letter serve a useful primary purpose of information exchange at CCNASWP, the Coordinating Committee was asked to consider means to capitalise on this information and to indicate their interest in doing so. It was proposed that a more systematic compilation of the information, e.g. as country profiles, would provide a single reference point for each country on the status of their food control systems. Some possible benefits could include continued update on progress of the implementation of the Strategic Plan, a more effective measurement of progress in strengthening national food control systems and the provision of baseline information and priority needs to better inform FAO and WHO capacity development programmes.

92. Delegations noted that the Circular Letter contributed to collect useful information and was a practical way to share information among countries; that it was important for countries to reply on time to the Circular Letter and thus facilitate a deeper analysis and the preparation of a document that could be tabled at the Session; that it would be useful to include performance indicators to better monitor changes; that summaries of the replies provided a good approach to capture trends in the region.

93. It was also noted that it would be useful to have a closer look at impediments to the use of Codex standards; that the development and/or update of country profiles could be valuable, but that this work should be based on available information and should not result in an additional burden for countries to provide data.

Conclusion

94. The Coordinating Committee supported the continuation of the use of the Circular Letter as a way to collect data and information relevant to Codex and on food control systems in the Region. However, it was noted that the questionnaire could be further improved and that specific questions on the food safety issues faced by the countries in the region could be added.

95. The Coordinating Committee further welcome the offer of FAO and WHO to use the information submitted in recent years to the Circular Letter and also information reported to FAO, WHO and other UN agencies to develop and/or update country profiles for the region and noted that, when developed, these can be shared with the Regional Coordinator, the CCNASWP Members and uploaded on the website for

CCNASWP (www.ccnaswp.org). Given the importance in the region, the profiles could also reflect nutrition information, including diet-related NCDs and Vitamin and Mineral Deficiencies (VMDs).

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE CCNASWP (STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AND DRAFT NEW STRATEGIC PLAN 2014-2018) (Agenda Item 5b)¹⁰

a) Status of implementation of the Strategic Plan

96. The Delegation of Papua New Guinea introduced the report on the status of implementation of the Strategic Plan for the CCNASWP 2008-2013, as presented in Annex 1 of CX/NASWP 12/12/6, and drew the attention of the Coordinating Committee on the progress of implementation of various activities, which were reported in the columns “Status” of the Annex.

97. The Coordinating Committee suggested the following changes:

- Activity 1.1 “Hold pre-session meetings with all NASWP Members” – to shorten the text of the Responsible Party;
- Activity 1.2 “Continue to promote the sharing of written comments on Circular letters and other working documents” – to change the status from “implemented” to “ongoing”;
- Activity 1.4 “Encourage information exchange among member countries through the use of electronic information systems” – to clarify that the CCNASWP Website had been transferred to Papua New Guinea and was accessible at: www.ccnaswp.org

98. With regard to Activity 1.4, it was suggested that the new Strategic Plan for CCNASWP could include an activity aimed at a more effective use of the CCNASWP website to improve communication and exchange among CCNASWP Members.

99. The Delegation of New Zealand introduced CRD 2 “Study of National Codex Systems in the NASWP Region - Summary and critical requirements for effective performance” which was relevant to Objective 3 “To promote the development and enhancement of the capacities of national Codex Contact Points of the Pacific Island Countries, and their supporting infrastructures, to carry out their core functions” of the Strategic Plan for the CCNASWP.

100. The FAO and WHO study was undertaken with funds from the CTF in response to discussions within the region on issues related to capacity building and how to target and strengthen future capacity building efforts. The Delegation of New Zealand, which assisted in the preparation of the study, highlighted the main conclusions and finding of the study. Some of the major weaknesses of national Codex systems in the region included: inadequate resourcing of Codex work; Inadequate high level recognition and support for Codex work; lack of clarity on policy priorities; weaknesses in national coordination mechanisms for managing Codex work; and absence of clear, well documented systems for monitoring and follow up.

101. The study highlighted the hallmarks of well-managed Codex systems to provide a benchmark for progress and development of capacity building initiatives. Critical elements of well managed national Codex systems include: dedicated and well resourced national administrative structures for managing Codex work at the national level; high-level support and recognition of Codex programmes underpinned by well defined national policy framework defining national priorities and interests; sound consultative structures to support consultation and policy development processes; and strong international linkages with wider membership to support collaboration and advancement of common interests.

102. The Delegation highlighted the specific areas for action identified, which included: ongoing strengthening of national Codex administrative structures; support for development of national policy framework and priorities for standards development; development of national action plans for strengthening national food laws and standards; support for strengthening national consultative structures and guidance on prioritization of issues for submission of written comments; and support for strengthening regional networking and information sharing

103. The Coordinating Committee did not have the opportunity to discuss the study conclusions but noted the priority areas for action.

104. The Representative of FAO reminded the Coordinating Committee that Members should be ready in due course to provide feedback on potential needs from a succession CTF to support more informed decision on the future of the CTF.

¹⁰ CX/NASWP 12/12/7; CRD 2 “Study of National Codex Systems in the NASWP Region - Summary and critical requirements for effective performance”

Conclusion

105. The Coordinating Committee noted that the Regional Coordinator would prepare an update of the status of implementation of the current Strategic Plan for consideration at its next Session.

b) New Draft Strategic Plan for the CCNASWP

106. With regard to the new draft Strategic Plan for the CCNASWP, the Chairperson noted that, in view of the status of preparation of the new Codex Strategic Plan 2014-2019 (see Agenda Item 3), it was premature to finalise the new draft Strategic Plan at the current session. Therefore, he proposed to defer discussion on this matter and to prepare a revised draft for consideration at the next Session.

Conclusion

107. The Coordinating Committee agreed with the proposal of the Regional Coordinator to establish an electronic Working Group, chaired by Papua New Guinea and open to all Members of the Region, to prepare a revised draft Strategic Plan for the CCNASWP 2014-2019, which would take into consideration the new Codex Strategic Plan and relevant discussion at the present Session, for circulation for comments. It was noted that the current Strategic Plan would remain in place until the new Strategic Plan would be finalised.

108. The Coordinating Committee further agreed to establish a physical Working Group, that would meet immediately prior to its next Session, open to all Members of the Region and Observers, that would (i) revise the draft Strategic Plan based on the comments submitted; (ii) consider the status of implementation of the current Strategic Plan; and (iii) prepare recommendations for the Plenary.

DISCUSSION PAPER ON KAVA (Agenda Item 6)¹¹

109. The Delegation of Tonga, as the Chair of the electronic Working Group, introduced the discussion paper and emphasized the importance of kava for PICs, as consumers and exporters. The Delegation recalled that the mandate of the Working Group was to revise the discussion paper and the project document, presented at the 11th CCNASWP, to: (i) provide more scientific evidence on the safety of kava products; (ii) clarify the nature of the products to be standardized; and (iii) clarify whether the proposal was for a regional or a worldwide standard¹².

110. The Delegation explained that data showing that kava was traded internationally mainly referred to the form of kava used by the pharmaceutical industry and that the trade of kava, as food, was mainly within the Region. The Delegation also highlighted that the section "Product definition" defined the species, varieties, plant parts and extraction methods of kava consumed in the Pacific. He also stated that scientific analytical methods could detect the use of (i) unsafe kava varieties; (ii) skin peels of stems; and (iii) leaves. He further highlighted that safety of the products was based on the long-term history of use of the traditional beverage in the Pacific and that most of the safety problems surrounding kava had arisen when the pharmaceutical industry started extraction from kava leaves and stems.

111. He further explained that the proposal was for the development of a regional standard, which would contribute to increase confidence in and knowledge of kava, as food.

112. The Delegation of Vanuatu, in supporting the development of a standard for kava, explained that according to recent studies, higher quality kava, called "noble kava", contained less flavokavin, especially flavokavin B, which might be a major contributor to the observed liver toxicity. The Delegation said that PICs were trading kava-derived products with various countries and noted the lack of international benchmarks to establish SPS measures against. The Delegation was of the view that a regional standard for kava with a limited scope on "noble kava", as described in the discussion paper, should be developed to ensure the safe use of these products. He further added that Vanuatu was developing guides on kava products that would define the quality parameters for these types of products.

113. A number of delegations intervened supporting the views expressed and the development of a regional standard for kava. They said that kava in certain PICs was a major crop, while in others was imported and consumed by part of the population; they noted that the development of a regional standard was an opportunity for the PICs and that the lack of such a standard might result in a risk to consumers, due to the potential risk of using unsafe varieties of kava.

114. Other delegations reiterated their concerns, expressed at previous CCNASWP sessions and in written comments submitted to the electronic Working Group, for the safety of kava and on whether kava could be classified as a food. They noted that the nature of the products to be standardized remained unclear; that

¹¹ CX/NASWP 12/12/8

¹² REP11/NASWP, para.95

there seemed to be some gaps in scientific information on the safety of kava; that more data for each species described and on toxicology of kava were required; and that the project document had some limitations and needed to be revised to meet the requirements of the Codex Critical Review; that an international standard would perhaps be better suited if the intent was to trade kava beyond the Region, to the European Union, China, India, Africa, etc. It was suggested to look more closely at the types of products to be standardized, noting that some countries legislation, while allowing the use of kava as a food (i.e. consumed as a beverage) do not allow its use as a food ingredient. It was also suggested to consider whether organizations, such as the International Kava Executive Council, could be a better venue for the development of this standard.

115. One delegation suggested that CCNASWP could commit to gathering the scientific data required, including consumption data, and solicit guidance from FAO and WHO on the adequacy of such information. Several delegations noted that they had additional data to contribute to this process.

116. The Representative of WHO in response to country requests for clarification on the applicability of the WHO report from 2007 on 'Assessment of the Risk of Hepatotoxicity of Kava Products' to kava as a food, noted that this report did not evaluate safety of kava for food use, but examined pharmacological properties of several substances in kava.

117. The Representative of WHO, on behalf on FAO and WHO, went on to note the significant importance of this product to the region and acknowledged the challenges discussed by the Coordinating Committee, including aspects of safety assessment. In light of these factors FAO and WHO, working with PICs and other interested countries, would be willing to assist in reviewing current food safety data and information on kava, including the identification of any data gaps. The Delegation of Canada expressed willingness to support this review.

118. The Representative pointed out that before this review could be undertaken, it was necessary to clarify the scope of the product and its use as a food. It was also noted that FAO and WHO were not able to commit to address any data gaps identified at this time and that there were mechanisms in place, which could be utilised to do this.

119. The Coordinating Committee noted that there was clearly an interest in the development of a regional standard and to address the gaps on the safety of kava and to prepare a robust project document for new work that could pass the scrutiny of the Codex Critical Review.

120. In response to a request from the Coordinating Committee to clarify potential support on a review of safety data and timelines, the Representative of FAO re-stressed the need to take a stepwise approach to this issue. The first important step was to review existing data on the safety of kava as a food, once the scope of the product was clarified. This would facilitate a better understanding of the safety of kava and identify any data gaps that might exist, but would not include a full toxicological assessment. A possible lead in time for this step could be 6-9 months, and information on findings could be available at the next CCNASWP. The results of this first step would inform on any required further steps.

Conclusion

121. The Coordinating Committee agreed to focus the proposal for the development of a regional standard for kava as the dried product that can be used as a beverage when mixed with water.

122. Regarding the safety of kava, the Coordinating Committee accepted FAO and WHO's offer to assist by:

- Reviewing existing scientific information on kava as the dried product that can be used as a beverage when mixed with water in the context of a safety assessment; and
- Identify data gaps (if they exist) and their impact on conducting a safety assessment.

123. The Coordinating Committee agreed to establish an electronic Working Group, chaired by Vanuatu and open to all Members of the Region and Observers, to revise the project document proposing a regional standard with emphasis on:

- Amending the scope and use to limit it to kava as the dried product that can be used as a beverage when mixed with water;
- Update trade and production data where available; and
- Reflect on the outcome of the FAO/WHO review of data in the relevant section of the project document.

124. The Coordinating Committee also noted that active participation in the electronic Working Group of all Members, as well as FAO and WHO, was necessary.

DISCUSSION PAPER ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A STANDARD FOR NONU (NONI) PRODUCTS (Agenda Item 7)¹³

125. The Delegation of Tonga, as the Chair of the electronic Working Group, introduced the discussion paper and recalled that a proposal for the development of a standard for nonu (noni) was first tabled at the 9th CCNASWP in 2006. He emphasized the importance to develop a standard for noni and noted that in the Working Group there was general support to develop a regional standard and that one Member suggested that more scientific evidence was needed on the safety of noni products.

126. He explained that the safety of noni products was based on the long-term history of use in the Pacific; and that the standard would cover three main products: (i) noni fruit puree; (ii) fermented noni fruit juice; and (iii) dried noni leaves. It was also noted that the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) approved some noni products as “novel foods”.

127. The Coordinating Committee noted that Section 1.2 of the project document (Annex to CX/NASWP 12/12/9) provided information on the safety of noni products, including the 2006 EFSA safety assessment¹⁴.

128. Tonga further explained that French Polynesia was the main producer of noni products (mainly noni fruit puree) and that a standard would contribute to enhance consumers' confidence and trade.

129. A number of delegations supported the development of a new standard for noni, which was an important product in many PICs and could become a potential trade commodity for the PICs. Other delegations were of the view that it was premature to consider the proposal for new work as the project document did not include all the requested information.

130. One Delegation expressed concern as to the safety of noni and referred to the poor compliance to the advice of the French study not to drink more than 30 mL of noni juice per day by certain consumers whose consumption was higher than 500 mL/day. The Delegation of Tonga clarified that the advice for consumers in European countries whereas in the PICs consumption was higher due to their knowledge on the long-term safe use of noni products.

131. In response to requests for scientific assistance, the Representative of WHO, on behalf of FAO and WHO, clarified that in light of limited resources, prioritisation was necessary and countries were reminded that the development of project documents, including the safety assessment, was the role of countries. In the case of kava, FAO and WHO offered to assist this work given the challenges and that this would also serve as a learning process applicable to other project document development.

132. The Coordinating Committee noted that WHO and FAO could provide guidelines on project document development to help assist in this process.

133. In view of the interest of the PICs to the development of a regional standard for noni, it was suggested to have an approach similar to the one used for the standard for kava and consider the standardisation of a narrower group of noni products. It was also noted that more experienced countries in the Region could assist in improving the project document appropriately.

134. After some discussion, the Coordinating Committee agreed to limit the scope of the standard to fermented noni fruit juice, which were mainly produced and traded within the PICs. It was noted that these noni fruit juices were fermented and thus outside the scope of the *General Standard for Fruit Juices and Nectars* (CODEX STAN 247-2005). It was noted that once the standard had been established, the Coordinating Committee might consider broadening to other types of noni products.

Conclusion

135. The Coordinating Committee agreed to start new work on the development of a regional Standard for fermented noni juices and that Tonga, with the assistance of Australia, would revise the project document for new work on the basis of the above discussion for submission to the 68th Session of the Executive Committee through the Codex Secretariat.

136. The Coordinating Committee agreed to establish an electronic Working Group, chaired by Tonga and open to all Members of the Region and Observers, that subject to approval of the new work by the 36th Session of the Commission, would prepare a proposed draft regional Standard for fermented noni juices, for circulation at Step 3 and consideration at its next Session.

¹³ CX/NASWP 12/12/9

¹⁴ European Food Safety Authority 2006. EFSA Journal, 376, 1-12

DISCUSSION PAPER ON A HARMONISED APPROACH TO DATE MARKING (Agenda Item 8)¹⁵

137. The Delegation of New Zealand introduced CX/NASWP 12/12/10 and explained that a proposed harmonized approach for date marking across the Pacific had been developed on the basis of the replies to a questionnaire sent out in December 2010 and outcomes of a workshop, held in Samoa in May 2011. The proposed approach and the discussion paper were further refined following discussions with PICs and feedback from WHO.

138. The discussion paper presented two options, which could be taken by PICs to progress work in this area:

- Option one: proposing a monitoring of date marks on all imported products for a period of time.
- Option two: proposing the running of a pilot or trial of a harmonized approach to date marking for a period of time.

139. The Delegation further explained that during the process of developing the paper, New Zealand had tabled a CRD¹⁶ at the 40th CCFL, which outlined the date marking issues being experienced in the PICs and proposed the development of a discussion document outlining potential issues with the current Codex provisions relating to date marking for consideration of the 41st CCFL (Charlottetown, PEI, Canada, 14-17 May 2013).

140. The Delegation recalled that the two options described above had been considered during the FAO and WHO Technical Workshop, held in conjunction with this Session (see CRD3). As a result of the discussions and the proposed new work at the CCFL, New Zealand recommended a two-step process involving PICs: (i) in the proposed new work of CCFL on date marking; and (ii) in the monitoring outlined in Option 1.

141. Data collected in this monitoring would strengthen the data and evidence of the CCFL document and help to ensure that PICs issues are addressed in the CCFL work. It was further noted that this would be a better approach due to the limited resources available in the region; and that PICs participation in the CCFL process would ensure that the issues being experienced by PICs are addressed in any review of current Codex texts related to date marking.

142. New Zealand acknowledged that some work would be required to set up a standard monitoring system and offered to help coordinate decisions on data requirements and the development of tools to collect the data and to report the data in a standardised way.

143. The Coordinating Committee welcomed the offer of New Zealand to coordinate the collection of PICs data such as: the date shipment arrives; type of date mark; product type; country of origin; and if product is fresh or frozen at time of import. A number of PICs delegations confirmed that some data were already available and could be collected – the development of a template by New Zealand in partnership with interested parties to ensure a standard approach to data collection was deemed helpful in this regard.

144. The Coordinating Committee agreed that New Zealand, responsible for preparing a CCFL Discussion Paper on date marking, should reflect the data from the PICs, which would form an important part of the evidence base and insights into specific challenges faced in the PICs and underpin the need for Codex work in this area. The Coordinating Committee noted that tackling date marking was a very important area of work for the PICs.

145. To support the development of this paper, New Zealand advised they would be in close e-mail contact with countries of the region, FAO and WHO. The Coordinating Committee raised issues of importance to be reflected in the Discussion Paper including unfair practices in food trade (products arriving at point of import after and near the expiry of date marking), when planning the data to be collected consider the main purpose of proposing this new work in CCFL, and to ensure that data collection provides a clear summary of the situation, including the estimate of overall percentage of products with defects on date marking.

Conclusion

146. The Coordinating Committee agreed to discontinue consideration of this discussion paper and noted that an update of the status of the CCFL discussion on this matter would be included in the Matter Referred document, prepared by the Codex Secretariat.

¹⁵ CX/NASWP 12/12/10

¹⁶ Proposal to develop a discussion paper for revision of Codex guidelines relating to date marking ftp://ftp.fao.org/codex/Meetings/CCFL/ccfl40/crd/fl40_CRD-5_NZ.doc

ISSUES RELEVANT TO THE REGION (Agenda Item 9)¹⁷

147. The Delegation of Papua New Guinea, speaking as Regional Coordinator, presented CX/NASWP 12/12/11, which identified several issues relevant to the region, including: development of regional risk analysis framework (need for capacity building in several areas related to risk analysis; assistance to generate data and updating information on food consumption); animal feed (need to ensure that animal feed is of proper quality; access to information on feed composition; training on feed production and formulation); kit methods (availability of ready to use kit for conducting analysis, e.g. for soil, for food quality and safety); and labelling of food (appropriate labelling in a language that can be understood in the countries where the food is imported and sold).

148. In response to the request of the Regional Coordinator to identify additional issues, one delegation pointed out that capacity building was a priority for many countries, which, because of the lack of financial means, had not the possibility to ensure the sustainability of their capacity building programme. The Representative of WHO recalled that the FAO and WHO Technical Workshop, held in conjunction with the present Session of CCNASWP, had identified a number of issues relevant to PICs, e.g. initiatives associated with prevention and control of diet-related Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs) and Vitamin and Mineral Deficiencies (VMDs), including standard development and enforcement capacity building in the area of enforcement of legislation; and initiatives associated with consumer education and behaviour change to prevent diet-related NCD's and micronutrient deficiencies (see CRD3). The Representative also noted the importance of behavioural changes in relation to diet-related NCDs and VMDs.

PREVENTION OF NONCOMMUNICABLE DISEASES (NCDs) AND MICRONUTRIENT DEFICIENCIES IN THE CCNASWP REGION (Agenda Item 10)¹⁸

149. The Representative of FAO, on behalf of FAO and WHO, introduced CX/NASWP 12/12/12, on the prevention and control of diet-related Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs) and Vitamin and Mineral Deficiencies (VMDs). He noted that NCDs remained at levels that posed a public health risk for most Pacific countries, as well as impacting on economic and social development of the region. The Representative pointed out that food regulation was seen as a key policy instrument to influence the composition of foods and labelling and the exposure to diet-related risk factors for NCDs such as fats, sodium, sugars and address VMDs.

150. The Coordinating Committee noted the importance of NCDs and VMDs in the region. With regard to the recommendations included in the document, discussions focused on what CCNASWP could do to address diet-related NCDs and VMDs in the region, particularly in relation to the work of the Codex Committees on Food Labelling (CCFL) and on Nutrition and Food for Special Dietary Uses (CCNFSDU).

Conclusion

151. Reflecting on how this forum had managed to initiate action within Codex on the date marking concern following the FAO and WHO held in conjunction with the 11th CCNASWP, the Coordinating Committee agreed that a similar approach should be taken to initiate regional action on diet related NCDs and VMDs, as appropriate, and that CCNASWP should be used to facilitate such approaches.

152. The Coordinating Committee further agreed that regulatory labelling efforts to address NCDs would need to be supported by appropriate education and behaviour change initiatives and embedded as part of a wider approach of complementary actions. These initiatives could benefit from a combined and harmonized approach across the Pacific. In addition to its role as an information sharing mechanism and discussion forum, CCNASWP could assist by giving consideration to regulatory issues related to control of NCDs and VMDs in future versions of the Circular Letter and/or the new Strategic Plan for CCNASWP.

NOMINATION OF THE COORDINATOR (Agenda Item 11)¹⁹

153. On the proposal of the Delegation of Federated States of Micronesia, supported by Solomon Islands and Nauru, the Coordinating Committee unanimously agreed to recommend to the 36th Session of the Commission that Papua New Guinea be reappointed for a second term as Coordinator for North America and the South West Pacific. The Delegation of Papua New Guinea thanked all the Countries for their support and accepted the nomination.

¹⁷ CX/NASWP 12/12/11

¹⁸ CX/NASWP 12/12/12

¹⁹ CX/NASWP 12/12/13

OTHER BUSINESS (Agenda Item 12)

DISCUSSION PAPER ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A STANDARD FOR GALIP NUT (Agenda Item 12a)²⁰

154. The Delegation of Papua New Guinea introduced CX/NASWP 12/12/14 and explained the nature of galip nut and its importance for the PICs.

155. Delegations, noting that the work might be necessary, were of the view that it was premature to propose a new work on galip nut because the document did not include a project document; some essential data and information were missing, such as trade data, food safety issues or impediment to trade had not been identified; and the discussion paper was submitted too late for members to consult with stakeholders.

156. Some delegations noted that the Coordinating Committee should prioritize its work to use its limited resources efficiently and effectively; that a mechanism to collect information and prioritise new work proposal should be considered; that an international standard might be more appropriate than a regional standard as galip nut was produced in other regions, such as Asia and Africa.

157. As a way forward, one Delegation proposed that the CCNASWP consider developing a priority list of products from the region that would benefit from development of a regional standard. The Regional Coordinator could collect information from members identifying the product and the related food safety or trade issue that would be addressed by a regional standard. The next Session of CCNASWP could discuss the issues and come up with a priority list for development of regional standards. This would facilitate the work of the Coordinating Committee and address the issue of new work proposals being submitted to the CCNASWP at short notice.

158. The Coordinating Committee noted that the Procedural Manual²¹ included sections on: Proposal to undertake New Work or to Revise a Standard; Criteria for the Establishment of Work Priorities; Guideline on the Application of the Criteria for the Establishment of Work Priorities, which provided guidance and information useful for the development of project documents for new work.

159. The Representative of FAO reiterated that FAO and WHO could address the need for capacity development in the preparation of project documents to be in line with the Codex Procedural Manual. Experiences from countries in the NASWP region, including Australia and Canada, through the work on revising the discussion paper and project document on Noni (through the mentoring experience) would be valuable.

Conclusion

160. The Coordinating Committee agreed that Papua New Guinea, as Regional Coordinator, would collect information from members identifying the products and the related food safety or trade issue that would be addressed by a regional standard and develop mechanism to prioritise products of potential interest for the Region, for consideration at the next Session of CCNASWP.

Information on Biofortification by Conventional Breeding

161. The Coordinating Committee noted the information provided by the Observer from IFPRI on biofortification by conventional breeding. The Delegation of Kiribati provided additional information on the effects of biofortification by conventional breeding, which was reported in the Journal of Nutrition²². One Delegation asked for clarification on whether CCFL would need to think about biofortification in relation to existing standards or if it related to the work underway in CCNFSDU on addition to nutrients to foods. The Observer from IFPRI noted that IFPRI could prepare a discussion paper on biofortification using conventional breeding, which would identify labelling issues related to processed foods and that a CRD entitled "The biofortification of staple food crops with essential vitamins and minerals by conventional breeding" would be made available at the upcoming 34th CCNFSDU.

DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE (Agenda Item 13)

162. The Coordinating Committee was informed that its 13th Session would be held in approximately two years time and that more detailed arrangements would be communicated to Members following the appointment of the Coordinator by the 36th Session of the Commission.

²⁰ CX/NASWP 12/12/14

²¹ ftp://ftp.fao.org/codex/Publications/ProcManuals/Manual_20e.pdf

²² Introduction of beta-Carotene-Rich Orange Sweet Potato in Rural Uganda Results in Increased Vitamin A Intakes among Children and Women and Improved Vitamin A Status among Children, First published ahead of print: August 8, 2012 as doi: 10:3945/jn.111.151829

SUMMARY STATUS OF WORK

SUBJECT MATTER	STEP	ACTION BY:	DOCUMENT REFERENCE (REP13/NASWP)
Discussion paper on the development of a standard for fermented Noni juices	1,2,3	36 th CAC, e-WG chaired by Tonga 13 th CCNASWP	paras 135-136
Status of implementation of Strategic Plan for the CCNASWP 2008-2013	-	The Coordinator p-WG chaired by the Coordinator 13 th CCNASWP	paras 105, 108
Draft Strategic Plan for the CCNASWP 2014-2019	-	e-WG and p-WG chaired by the Coordinator 13 th CCNASWP	paras 107 -108
Discussion paper on the development of a regional standard for kava product that can be used as a beverage when mixed with water	-	e-WG chaired by Vanuatu 13 th CCNASWP	para. 121-123
Discussion paper on products of the region that can be addressed by regional standards and mechanism for their prioritisation		The Coordinator 13 th CCNASWP	para. 160

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