

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION



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Agenda Item 11

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Thirtieth Session

FAO Headquarters, Rome (Italy), 2 - 7 July 2007

STRATEGIC PLANNING OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

BACKGROUND

1. The 28th Session of the Commission noted the recommendation of the 55th Session of the Executive Committee, as follows:

- A new Strategic Plan would comprise three parts; the first part (Part 1) broadly stating Commission-wide objectives, the second part (Part 2) listing achievable outputs covering the areas for priority action by subsidiary bodies and the third part (Part 3) setting out the working timetables by subsidiary bodies with the indication of a timeframe for each of the activities being undertaken, planned frequency of meetings of the subsidiary body as well as relevance to the outputs defined in Part 2.
- The third part of the Plan should be regularly updated with appropriate input from the subsidiary bodies and be organized in such way to facilitate the standards management function of the Executive Committee; and
- The draft Plan to be prepared by the Executive Committee be submitted, after review by Codex Committees and Coordinating Committees as appropriate, to the Commission for final adoption by 2007.

2. The Commission endorsed the proposed structure of and the timeline for the preparation of the Strategic Plan 2008-2013. It was also agreed that a working group comprising the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of the Commission would meet in September 2005 in order to prepare a preliminary draft Strategic Plan 2008-2013 to be presented to the 57th Session of the Executive Committee, taking into accounts the comments received from members and observers.¹

3. The 57th Session of the Executive Committee discussed the draft Strategic plan, paragraph by paragraph, and produced a revised draft Strategic Plan 2008-2013.

4. The Executive Committee agreed to circulate the draft Strategic Plan as revised by the Committee (Appendix II to ALINORM 06/29/3) for comments from members and observers. The Committee also agreed that the Chairperson and three Vice- Chairpersons would meet in Rome by end of May 2006, review comments

¹ ALINORM 05/28/41 paras112-117

received and forward recommendations on how to address the comments for discussion at the 58th Session of the Executive Committee.²

5. The Commission, at its 29th Session, considered the draft Strategic Plan of the Codex Alimentarius Commission 2008-2013 and agreed that:

- (i) The draft Strategic Plan 2008-2013 as presented in ALINORM 06/29/3A Appendix II be circulated to all Coordinating Committees for comments, prior to the final adoption by the Commission in July 2007; and
- (ii) The current format used by the Executive Committee for the Critical Review be replaced with Table 2, Part 3 of the draft Strategic Plan 2008-2013, as a new tracking mechanism for effective implementation of the Critical Review.

6. The Commission noted that the work to constantly update Tables in Part 3 of the draft Strategic Plan would require a high level input and support from host governments including the chairpersons of subsidiary bodies as well as the strengthening of the staff resources in the Codex Secretariat.³

7. Comments provided from the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees are reproduced in Annex to this document for the attention of the 59th Session of the Executive Committee and the 30th Session of the Commission. These comments should be reviewed in conjunction with the draft Strategic Plan 2008-2013 as presented in ALINORM 06/29/3A Appendix II.

² ALINORM 06/29/3 paras 5-36

³ ALINORM 06/29/41 paras 154-155

ANNEX***FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Africa (ALINORM07/30/28, paras 10-13)***

10. The Coordinating Committee recalled the recommendation made by the 58th Session of the Executive Committee, agreed by the 29th Session of the Commission, inviting the Coordinating Committee to comment on the draft Strategic Plan 2008-2013 of the Commission contained in ALINORM 06/29/3A, Appendix II.

11. The Coordinating Committee considered the draft Strategic Plan 2008-2013 and supported the adoption of the plan by the forthcoming session of the Commission in its entirety.

12. Clarification was sought on the budget for the implementation of the Plan as well as the lack of numerical indicators. It was clarified that adoption of the plan did not automatically indicate a Codex budget for its implementation and that Member Countries were urged to continue its work in the decision making bodies of FAO and WHO to stress the importance of the work of Codex and its need for adequate funding. With regard to indicators to monitor progress, the Committee noted that the checklists based on Part 3 of the Plan will contain a short narrative in terms of whether objectives had been achieved or not for periodic review by the Executive Committee.

13. The Committee further agreed that there needed to be synergy between the Codex-wide Strategic Plan, the one for the Coordination of CCAFRICA and the Strategic Plan for Food Safety in Africa adopted by the FAO/WHO Regional Conference on Food Safety for Africa (Harare, Zimbabwe, 3 – 6 October 2005).

FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Asia (ALINORM07/30/15, paras 6-15)

6. The Committee recalled that the 29th Session of the Commission had agreed to circulate the Draft Strategic Plan to all Coordinating Committees for comments prior to its final adoption by the Commission, and made the following proposals for amendments and comments.

Part 1

7. The Delegation of India expressed the view that Codex sessions should be distributed evenly across the year in order to facilitate effective participation of developing countries with limited human resources and proposed to amend paragraph 2 of the Introduction accordingly. The Delegation of Japan asked for some clarification as there were only a few months where Codex sessions were not held. The Secretariat pointed out that in the current schedule (2006-07) Codex sessions were held from September to December and from January to May and all available weeks were used. As the Commission was held in July a period of about six weeks before the Commission was left to allow for distribution of the report and comments following the committees held in May and a period of about two months after the Commission to allow comments and preparation of the first meetings held after the Commission session (September).

8. The Delegation of India, referring to paragraph 10 of the Codex Working Principles for Risk Analysis and to the need for data from developing countries in relation to scientific advice, proposed an amendment to Goal 2, paragraph 11, to the effect that until data from developing countries were not available the relevant limits should not be finalized. The Secretariat noted that the issue of lack of data from developing countries in relation to risk assessment was addressed specifically in paragraph 22 of the Working Principles for Risk Analysis.

9. Under Goal 5, the Delegation of India proposed that the Trust Fund should also provide financial support for participation in capacity building training programmes. The Representative of WHO recalled that the Trust Fund had been established as a separate funding mechanism in order to facilitate participation of developing countries in Codex work, and that some regional training activities to promote effective participation in the Codex process had also been funded by the Trust Fund. The Representative pointed out that other mechanisms existed to ensure training and capacity building through the programmes of FAO and WHO and informed the Committee that the Standard and Trade Development Facility (STDF) managed by the WTO that could also fund technical cooperation projects in the area of food safety. Member countries could submit their requests for technical assistance related to food safety to the STDF.

10. As a result of the above discussion, the Committee agreed to retain the current text of Part 1 of the Strategic Plan.

Part 2

11. In section 1.2, the Committee agreed that the text should read: “Responsible Parties: relevant Task Forces, Commodity Committees and FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees” as the terms of reference of Coordinating Committees allowed them to develop regional standards related to food quality.

12. The Committee agreed to amend Goal 1.5 to read “Responsible Parties: *ad hoc* Intergovernmental Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance” in order to reflect the decision of the 29th Session of the Commission.

13. In section 4.1, on the proposal of the Delegation of Thailand, the Committee agreed to clarify that “A summary of such activities relevant to Codex shall be reported to the Executive Committee and to the Commission annually for further action”, in order to ensure the follow-up related to the activities of other international organisations. A similar sentence was inserted at the end of section 4.2: “A summary of such activities shall be reported to the Executive Committee and the Commission for further action”.

14. In section 5.5 the Committee agreed that reference should be made to “subsidiary bodies” rather than “Coordinating Committees” as all the participation of NGOs was relevant for all Codex committees and task forces.

15. The Committee agreed that the above proposals would be forwarded to the Commission with a view to the finalisation of the Strategic Plan by the 30th Session of the Commission.

FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Europe (ALINORM07/30/19, paras 13-22)

13. The Coordinating Committee recalled the recommendation made by the 58th Session of the Executive Committee, agreed by the 29th Session of the Commission, inviting the Coordinating Committee to comment on the draft Strategic Plan 2008-2013 contained in ALINORM 06/29/3A, Appendix II.

14. The Coordinating Committee considered the draft Strategic Plan 2008-2013 and made the following general comment.

15. The Committee urged FAO and WHO to mobilise sufficient resources to allow the CAC to fulfil its mandate. In particular the Committee was very concerned that the option of cancelling the sessions of the Regional Coordinating Committees had been envisaged due to budgetary uncertainty.

Part 1

16. The Committee had no specific proposals to amend Part 1 of the draft Strategic Plan and endorsed it in its entirety.

17. Concerning Goal 4 the delegation of Germany, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the European Union, indicated that it was in favour of an improved cooperation with the OIE which was working on subjects directly related to Codex Standards and related texts. The delegation suggested that innovative approaches could be taken for that purpose such as joint working groups or task forces.

Part 2

18. The Committee, recalling the dual mandate of the Commission, recommended inserting into Activities 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4 after the words “not more trade restrictive than necessary” the new text “while respecting the basic objectives of the CAC;”.

19. The Committee, recognising the importance of the WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health and the work being carried out by CCFL and CCNFSDU, recommended inserting into Activity 1.3 after the words “technological developments” the new words “and the WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health;”.

20. As regards Goal 5: “Promoting Maximum and Effective Participation of Members” the Committee, while acknowledging the prerogative of Committees to establish working groups when necessary to advance texts between sessions of Committees and at the same time recognizing the financial burden on countries hosting such groups, expressed its concern at the proliferation of inter-sessional physical working groups and the fact that the business of these working groups was often conducted in English only. The Committee feared that both the increasing number of these meetings as well as language limitation could negatively affect inclusiveness and transparency in Codex standards development.

21. The Committee stressed that the Guidelines on Physical Working Groups should be fully respected and that on each occasion it should be considered whether there was a real need to create a physical working group or if an electronic working group could also accomplish the task. Whenever a physical working group was established all effort should be made to use, as much as possible, all languages of the Committee that established it, e.g. it could be considered to co-finance interpretation/translation costs by several members.

Part 3

22. The Coordinating Committee supported the recommendation of the 58th Executive Committee, agreed by the 29th Commission, on the replacement of the current format used by the Executive Committee for the Critical Review with Table 2, Part 3 of the draft Strategic Plan.

FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (ALINORM07/30/36, paras 10-20)

10. The Committee expressed specific considerations on the regional concern for pesticide residues and other more general considerations. However, because of the workload and time constraints, the Committee agreed that its comments were of a general nature and that it reserved the right to coordinate with its Members and emit further opinions on the restructuring of Codex and the Strategic Plan (e.g. at the forum of Codex Contact Points), which would be relayed to the Executive Committee and the Commission.

Goal 1 – Promoting sound regulatory frameworks

Item 1.6 – Exploring innovative risk management frameworks

11. The Committee fully supported the exploration of innovative frameworks to address the issue of establishing MRLs.

12. In this regard, the Committee agreed that the level of representation of the Region in the establishment of maximum residue limits was worrying and that the developing countries, including those of the CCLAC, required greater consideration of their regional diets in the establishment of MRLs.

13. In the specific case of pesticide residues, the Committee stressed the urgent need to review the status of the Committee on Pesticide Residues (CCPR) from the perspective of its practical impact on developing countries. The time that it took the CCPR to establish MRLs was unacceptable, as a MRL had become obsolete by the time it had been approved by the Codex. In other words, a Codex MRL very often had no practical benefit at the time of its approval.

Item 1.7 – Encouraging FAO/WHO to expand capacity building programmes

14. The Committee agreed that support was required for capacity building in this regard.

15. In this connection, the Committee expressed its concern that countries often lacked their own analytical studies and resorted to those of developed countries that did not always reflect prevailing circumstances in the Region.

Goal 2 – Promoting the widest and most consistent possible application of scientific principles and risk analysis

16. The Committee saw the need to include an additional item to strengthen the scientific advisory groups, to improve their efficiency and to equip them with the necessary resources. For example, resources should be prioritized for the Joint FAO/WHO Meetings on Pesticide Residues (JMPPR) and other approaches sought where such resources were not available.

Goal 3 – Strengthening Codex work management capabilities

Item 3.4 – Analyse work management approaches that facilitate the advancement of texts in the Codex step process

17. The Committee suggested that this item be extended to the scientific advisory bodies as these were closely involved in the work of the Commission subsidiary bodies.

18. In the specific case of pesticide residues, the Committee expressed its concern that all attempts to streamline the work had not progressed in the CCPR. Also, Codex pesticide MRLs should only be removed when there was scientific justification for such action and not when there was insufficient data to revalidate the MRL, which also created problems for developing countries.

19. The Committee suggested that the following innovative approaches could help in the specific case of establishing pesticide MRLs:

- holding more JMPR meetings and deferring CCPR meetings to achieve consensus on more items each time the CCPR was convened;
- employing other means of discussion among JMPR experts, apart from physical meetings which required considerable resources, such as telecommunication media;
- recommending that governments request the authorization of applicants for pesticide registration to forward the data to the JMPR under terms of confidentiality or that companies clearly demonstrate that they have submitted the full documentation (“dossier”) which should be a requisite for renewal of registration.

Other considerations concerning the draft Commission Strategic Plan:

20. The Committee:

- considered, on principle, that the Strategic Plan should not include items that were under examination by the Commission or its subsidiary bodies, e.g. Items 1.5 (Antimicrobial resistance) and 2.6 (Guidelines for risk analysis for application by governments);
- expressed its strong endorsement of item 5.2 (Effective use of written comments) as this allowed consideration of the views of Members that lacked the resources to participate in meetings, despite having reached national consensus to express a position and contribute to the work of the Codex;
- considered, in relation to item 5.3 (Effectiveness of meetings of Commission subsidiary bodies in developing countries), that there should be a mechanism to ensure fair geographical distribution in the location of Codex subsidiary bodies when countries from regions with limited or no representation were willing to host such bodies.

FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Near East (ALINORM07/30/40, paras 11-12)

11. The Coordinating Committee recalled the recommendation made by the 58th Session of the Executive Committee, agreed by the 29th Session of the Commission, inviting the Coordinating Committee to comment on the draft Strategic Plan 2008-2013 of the Commission contained in ALINORM 06/29/3A, Appendix II.

12. The Coordinating Committee noted that Part 3 of the draft Strategic Plan 2008-2013 aimed at assisting in the monitoring process of the implementation of the activities included in the strategic plan. The Committee supported the adoption of the draft Strategic Plan by the 30th Session of the Commission.

FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for North American and South West Pacific (ALINORM07/30/32, paras 7-14)

7. The Coordinating Committee recalled the recommendation made by the 58th Session of the Executive Committee, agreed by the 29th Session of the Commission, inviting the Coordinating Committee to comment on the draft Strategic Plan 2008-2013 contained in ALINORM 06/29/3A, Appendix II.

8. The Coordinating Committee considered the draft Strategic Plan 2008-2013 and made the following comments:

Part 1

9. The Committee had no specific comments on Part 1 of the draft Strategic Plan and endorsed it.

Part 2

10. The Coordinating Committee, recognising the ongoing discussion related to the implementation of the WHO Global Strategy and Diet, Physical Activity and Health, recommended the insertion of the following sentence after the current description of the Activity 1.3 in Goal 1: “taking into account the WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, develop standards and related texts relevant to nutrition with the objective of providing member governments with information relating to the nutritional quality and safety of foods”.

11. It also agreed to seek clarification on whether Activity 2.2 and its time frame should apply to the Codex Committee on Nutrition and Food for Special Dietary Uses (CCNFSDU) which currently does not have a risk management role in relation to expert bodies. As CCNFSDU is still in early stage on this work in relation to development of principles for risk analysis as it applies to nutrition, it is not likely that the timeframe in the draft Strategic Plan would be met by CCNFSDU by 2008.

12. The Coordinating Committee, noting that the Activities 1.7, 4.5 and 5.5 should also be implemented at the regional level, proposed to add a word “regional” in these activities as appropriate.

13. With regard to the Activity 5.1, the Coordinating Committee, noting the appreciation expressed by some delegations toward the contribution from donor countries to the Codex Trust Fund, also pointed out that budget sustainability should be maintained for effective participation of developing countries in the Codex standard setting work.

Part 3

14. The Coordinating Committee supported the recommendation of the 58th Executive Committee, agreed by the 29th Commission, on the replacement of the current format used by the Executive Committee for the Critical Review with Table 2, Part 3 of the draft Strategic Plan. It was also noted the importance of comments from chairpersons/host countries of Committees to enhance Committees’ accountabilities in the standards management process.