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codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
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WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION



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Agenda Item 13

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Thirty-first Session

International Conference Centre, Geneva, Switzerland, 30 June – 4 July 2008

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

BACKGROUND

1. In accordance with Rule IX.4 of the Rules of Procedure, the Directors-General of FAO or WHO may invite intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations to attend as observers sessions of the Commission and of its subsidiary bodies. Participation of international organizations in the work of the Commission, and the relations between the Commission and such organizations are governed by the relevant provisions of the Rules of Procedure of the Commission and of the Constitutions of FAO or WHO, as well as by the applicable regulations of FAO or WHO on relations with international organizations; such relations are handled by the Director-General of FAO or of WHO as appropriate.

A. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)

2. The 28th Session of the Commission endorsed the four recommendations of the 55th Session of the Executive Committee related to the collaboration between Codex and OIE:

- OIE be encouraged to continue to participate actively in the standard-setting work of the Commission, namely through the work of relevant subsidiary bodies of the Commission;
- OIE be invited to regularly submit, to relevant Codex subsidiary bodies, reports on its activities relevant to the work of these subsidiary bodies, while these subsidiary bodies continue to seek ways to improve cooperation with OIE in their respective area of work and inform the Executive Committee of their decisions/recommendations accordingly; and
- OIE be invited to submit a summary report to the regular sessions of the Commission on its activities of relevance to the work of the Commission, including the outcome of the OIE Working Group on Animal Production Food Safety.

3. The Commission also noted the recommendation of the Executive Committee that the effectiveness of cooperative arrangements being made between Codex and OIE in accordance with the four recommendations should be reviewed by the 30th Session of the Commission (2007) with a view to considering if further arrangements would be necessary or desirable, including those provisions mentioned in Paragraph 13 of the Guidelines on Cooperation between the Codex Alimentarius Commission and International Intergovernmental Organizations in the Elaboration on Standards and Related Texts.¹

4. Subsequently, the 30th Session of the Commission recommended that FAO and WHO study the possibility of reviewing or updating FAO and WHO Agreements with OIE, as might be required. It also requested the Codex Secretariat to identify, in cooperation with the Legal Offices of FAO and WHO, any practical problems affecting the cooperation between Codex and OIE that might need to be addressed in a pragmatic manner, and taking into account all relevant circumstances.²

5. In April 2008, OIE and WHO agreed to a modification to the text of the current OIE/WHO Agreement. This proposal would specifically include the insertion of a specific reference to the Codex Alimentarius Commission in this agreement; such reference being absent in previous versions of the agreement.

6. Since July 2007, the representatives of the OIE participated in:

- The 30th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission;
- The 17th Session of the Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods (September 2007). The OIE Observer provided an updated of the cooperation between the OIE and Codex; the activities of OIE and VICH (registration of veterinary medicinal products); antimicrobial resistance; and the OIE network of reference laboratories and collaborating centres;
- The 7th Session of the Codex *ad hoc* Intergovernmental Task Force on Food Derived from Biotechnology (September 2007). The OIE Observer informed the Task Force of the most recent work by the OIE *ad hoc* Group on Biotechnology on the development of Guideline *for Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer in Production Livestock and Horses*, and Guideline *for DNA Vaccines*. The Task Force was informed that the OIE would convene an expert meeting, jointly with FAO and WHO, probably in 2008, to consider the issues related to the animals with non-heritable recombinant-DNA constructs including recombinant-DNA vaccines;
- The First Session of the Codex *ad hoc* Intergovernmental Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance (October 2007). The OIE Observer, jointly with the representatives of FAO and WHO, provided a report of their work on antimicrobial resistance and contributed to the discussion and the development of proposals for new work on the development of guidance on risk assessment, risk management and risk profile;
- The 16th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (November 2007). The OIE Observer informed the Committee of their work on OIE model veterinary certificates for international trade in products of animal origin, on animal identification and traceability and on the development of a document on the role of veterinary services in food safety. The Committee was also informed of the OIE plan to hold in collaboration with Codex an international Conference on animal identification and traceability in 2009;
- The 8th Session of the Codex Committee on Milk and Milk Products (February 2008). The OIE submitted information on their activities relevant to the work of the Committee, in particular the development of OIE model veterinary certificates;
- The 29th Session of the Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products (February 2008). The OIE submitted information to the Committee on the status of work on aquatic animal feed.

7. Experts with knowledge and experiences in Codex and staff of the Codex Secretariat have continued to participate in the meetings of the OIE Working Group on Animal Production Food Safety (November 2007), the OIE *ad hoc* Groups on Identification and Traceability of Live Animals (January 2008), on Biotechnology (November 2007) and on the Revision of the OIE Model Certificates (January 2008). In addition, the representative of the Codex Alimentarius Commission has regularly been participating in the recent sessions of the International Committee of the OIE.

¹ ALINORM 05/28/41 paras 201-203

² ALINORM 07/30/REP paras 210-220

8. Information provided by the OIE Secretariat on activities relevant to Codex work will be presented in document CAC/31 INF/4.

World Trade Organization (WTO)

9. The Codex Secretariat regularly participated in the sessions of the SPS and TBT Committees of the WTO and informed the Committees, orally and in writing, of the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission relevant to the WTO. The Codex Secretariat also participated in, and provided support to selected regional or sub-regional workshops on the SPS or TBT Agreement organised by WTO. Representatives of WTO, in return, participated in selected meetings of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and its subsidiary bodies. Information provided by the WTO Secretariat on activities relevant to Codex work is contained in document CAC/31 INF/5.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

10. Representatives of FAO/IAEA participated in the 17th Session of Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods, in the Second Session of the Committee on Contaminants in Foods and in the 40th Session of the Committee on Pesticide Residues, where the IAEA chairs the Electronic Working Group on Estimation of Uncertainty of Results for the Determination of Pesticide Residues. Information provided by the IAEA Secretariat on activities relevant to Codex work is contained in document CAC/31 INF/6.

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

11. In accordance with its terms of reference, the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables carries out its work in cooperation with the *UNECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards* and its *Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables* and other selected international organizations such as the *OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruits and Vegetables*, to ensure harmonization of standards and avoid duplication of work, while following the same broad format. Existing UNECE standards for fresh fruits and vegetables continue to be taken into account when developing Codex standards for corresponding or similar products as recommended by the Commission.

12. In order to ensure cooperation between the organizations, the Codex Secretariat has regularly participated in meetings of both UNECE and OECD. In this regard, the last session of the UNECE Working Party (November 2007) encouraged the UNECE and Codex Secretariats to explore avenues for increasing cooperation in order to make a better, combined use of both Organizations' resources. To this aim, both Secretariats have been engaged in a number of activities which include, among others, alignment of the standard layouts, mapping of Codex and UNECE standards and other relevant texts for fruit and vegetable, information sharing on the meeting schedule of both bodies, with a view to better work programming, faster standard development and wider availability of information to facilitate members' participation in the work of both Organizations and their use of adopted standards³. The last session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (May 2008) agreed to support the ongoing dialogue between the Codex and UNECE Secretariats to further enhance cooperation between the two Organizations⁴.

³ ECE/TRADE/WP.7/2007/27 paras 19-20. UNECE documents are available for downloading at: <http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/welcome.htm>

⁴ ALINORM 08/31/35, para. 17.

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

Quality standards for fresh fruits and vegetables

13. In the OECD, a Council Decision C(2006)95 revising the *OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruits and Vegetables* was adopted in July 2006. As part of this revision, a reference to the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme was included so that also the relevant standards adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, once approved by the Plenary Meeting, shall be applied under the “Scheme” to the products specified in this Decision, at the export stage, when they enter into international trade between countries participating in the “Scheme”. The standards approved by the Plenary Meeting could be also used in the elaboration of explanatory brochures to facilitate inspection and other procedures for conformity to quality standards⁵.

Foods produced through biotechnology

14. In the area on the safety assessment of foods produced through biotechnology, relevant information on the regulatory approaches and other related aspects has regularly been exchanged at the Secretariats' level between Codex and the OECD. The Codex Secretariat has attended the meetings of the OECD Task Force for the Safety of Novel Foods and Feeds for the purpose of information exchange and supporting wide use of relevant Codex guidelines on food safety assessments. The representative of the OECD, in return, attended and contributed to the 6th and 7th Sessions of the Codex *ad hoc* Intergovernmental Task Forces on Foods Derived from Biotechnology.

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

15. The Codex Secretariat has regularly attended the meetings of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meetings of the Parties to the Biosafety Protocol (COP-MOP) for providing relevant information on the Codex work in biotechnology, including food safety assessment, food labelling, methods of detection, and traceability. The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) contributed through written submission to the 6th and 7th Sessions of the Codex *ad hoc* Intergovernmental Task Force on Foods Derived from Biotechnology to provide update information on ongoing discussion on the implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

Other Intergovernmental Organizations

16. The Codex Secretariat regularly attends sessions of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and cooperates with the IPPC Secretariat on matters of common interest to both bodies such as electronic certification. The Codex Secretariat will continue to liaise with the IPPC Secretariat as necessary in the areas of common interest.

17. Furthermore, the Codex Secretariat maintained contact with the secretariats of and/or participated in selected meetings convened by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)/International Trade Centre (ITC), the International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV), the International Bureau of Weights and Measures (BIPM), the International Coffee Organization (ICO), the International Organization of Legal Metrology (OIML) and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), among others, in order to improve inter-agency coordination of work and ensure widest possible use of Codex texts.

18. The Commission is **invited** to note the information above and provide any guidance deemed appropriate to further cooperation and coordination between the Commission and other intergovernmental organizations.

⁵ ALINORM 07/30/35 para. 8

B. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

19. In accordance with Article 6 of the *Principles Concerning the Participation of International Non-Governmental Organizations in the Work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission*, the Secretary reports to the Codex Alimentarius Commission on the relations between the Codex Alimentarius Commission and international non-governmental organizations established in accordance with the present procedures and provides a list of organizations granted Observer Status, with an indication of the membership that they represent.

20. The 30th Session of the Commission had adopted an amendment to the *Principles Concerning the Participation of International Non Governmental Organizations* (INGOs) which had provided the Executive Committee with a basis for reviewing the status of the current observers in the light of the present criteria set out in the *Principles*, instead of the conditions that applied at the time of their admission. Following a first review, the Executive Committee at its 60th Session recommended termination of observer status for 23 INGOs⁶.

21. A list of all international non-governmental organizations currently in observer status with the Codex Alimentarius Commission, a list of all applications for observer status considered since the 30th Session of the Commission and a list of non-governmental organizations for which the Executive Committee has recommended termination of observer status will be provided to the Commission for information (CAC/31 INF/2).

International Organization for Standardization (ISO)

22. At its 30th Session the Commission supported continued cooperation and coordination with ISO and agreed that the Codex Secretariat should maintain its contacts with ISO and continue to report regularly to the Commission on ISO activities of relevance to Codex work. The Commission also supported increased coordination and cooperation between the focal points of Codex and ISO at the national level.⁷

23. The Codex Secretariat participated in the 30th ISO General Assembly, and representatives of ISO participated in selected Codex meetings. Liaison status has been granted to the Codex Alimentarius Commission by the newly established ISO Technical Committee (ISO/TC) 234 "Fisheries and Aquaculture". Information provided by the ISO Central Secretariat on activities relevant to Codex work is contained in CAC/31 INF/7.

24. The Commission is **invited** to note the information provided, identify those areas where coordination of work between Codex and ISO should be maintained or strengthened and make proposals on practical modalities for implementing such coordination, as appropriate.

⁶ ALINORM 08/31/3, paras 78-81 and Appendix IV

⁷ ALINORM 07/30/REP, para. 234