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codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION



JOINT OFFICE: Viale delle Terme di Caracalla 00153 ROME Tel: 39 06 57051 www.codexalimentarius.net Email: codex@fao.org Facsimile: 39 06 5705 4593

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Thirty-second Session

FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy, 29th June – 4th July 2009

EXPLANATORY NOTE ON THE USE OF THE ELECTRONIC VOTING SYSTEM

Introduction to the System

1. The Plenary Hall of FAO is fitted with an electronic voting system. The system can be used: (a) to determine the number of Delegations present in the room (for the purpose of determining a quorum); (b) to carry out a voting without recording names (equivalent to vote by show of hands) and (c) to carry out a nominal vote (equivalent to vote by roll call) and provide afterwards a list of Delegations having votes “for”, “against” and “abstaining”. Secret ballots are conducted in accordance with the relevant legal provisions using tellers, ballot papers, voting booths, ballot boxes and a counting room; therefore the system is not used for secret ballots, including elections.

2. Two large electronic panels in the Plenary Hall show the result of each vote taken; in addition, a formal print out is provided to the Chairperson and the Elections Officer for certification of the results of the vote. The following types of votes are possible under the system:

- Nominal vote (equivalent to roll-call vote) – The names of the Members voting for or against the proposal and the name of the Members abstaining are recorded. The electronic panels show the vote cast; green for “Yes”, red for “No” and yellow for “Abstain”. The buttons at the voters’ desks remain illuminated. The print-out provided to the Chairperson and Elections Officer shows the names of Members voting for and against as well as the names of the Members abstaining. This is included in the report of the Session. The majority is calculated against the required majority for the vote (i.e., simple or two-thirds majority).
- Vote without recording names (equivalent to vote by show of hands) – The same as for a roll-call vote except that the names of the Members voting are not recorded. The print-out provided to the Chairperson and Elections Officer shows only the numbers of Members voting for and against as well as the numbers of Members abstaining. The majority is calculated against the required majority for the vote (i.e., simple or two-thirds majority).

3. In relation to a secret ballot, the system may be used for the purpose of determining the quorum.

Using the System

4. At the opening of the Session the voting buttons at the Head of Delegation seat in front of the Member country nameplate will be activated. Only one set of buttons will be activated for each registered Delegation. If Delegations move location in the Plenary Hall at any time during the Session, they should notify one of the Messengers in the room so that the technical staff can re-designate the voting place for the Delegation. This is very **important** to the successful use of the system.

5. When the Chairperson calls for a question to be put to the vote, he or she announces that the voting period is “open”. The illuminated boards in the Plenary Hall show that a vote is taking place.

6. The Head of Delegation (or Alternate) may then press one of the three coloured buttons: Green for “Yes”, Red for “No”, or Yellow for “Abstain”. The Delegation may decide not to vote. The light above the button pressed remains illuminated.

7. The Delegations may change their votes at any time during the voting period until the Chairperson closes the voting period.

8. The Chairperson then announces the closing of the voting period. All voting buttons become inactivated and the results of the vote are shown on the illuminated boards and tallied by computer. A print-out of the results is provided to the Chairperson and the Election Officer.

Calculation of Results

9. In accordance with the Rule XII of the General Rules of FAO¹, the expression "votes cast" shall mean affirmative and negative votes, and shall not include abstentions or defective ballots.

10. Attention is also drawn to Rule II.3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Commission, which reads as follows:

A Member Organization may exercise on matters within its competence, in any meetings of the Commission or any subsidiary body of the Commission in which it is entitled to participate in accordance with paragraph 2, a number of votes equal to the number of its Member States which are entitled to vote in such meetings and present at the time the vote is taken. Whenever a Member Organization exercises its right to vote, its Member States shall not exercise theirs, and conversely.

¹ See also Rule VIII.7 of the Rules of Procedure of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.