

# codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE  
ORGANIZATION  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS



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Agenda Item 2

CX/AFRICA 00/2

## JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME CODEX COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR AFRICA

Fourteenth Session

Kampala, Uganda, 27 – 30 November 2000

### MATTERS REFERRED BY THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER CODEX COMMITTEES

#### A. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE 23<sup>RD</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMISSION AND 47<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

##### 1. MEDIUM-TERM PLAN (ALINORM 99/37, PARAS 25-34, APPENDIX II)

The Commission discussed the Medium-Term Plan 1998-2002 and adopted a revised version of the document (ALINORM 99/37, paras 25-34, Appendix II). The Commission agreed that the preparation of the subsequent Medium-Term Plan (2003-2007) should be initiated rapidly and a Circular Letter to this effect was sent to governments (CL 2000/3-GEN), with a view to considering this matter in the next Session of the Executive Committee.

The 47<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Committee discussed the preparation of the Medium-Term Plan (ALINORM 01/3, paras. 36-41). The Executive Committee stressed that the development of the next Medium Term Plan should be based on the premise that certain issues would be concluded by the end of the current planning period. These included development of risk analysis principles, application of precautionary principles or approaches and other legitimate factors in risk management, and principles for microbiological risk assessment. **Elements that might be considered for further consideration included guidelines for risk communication, follow-up work on foods derived from biotechnology, traceability, health claims, meat hygiene and inspection.** Several Members expressed the view that the Medium Term-Plan should be developed as part of a broader vision of strategic planning.

The Executive Committee agreed that all these issues and areas should be considered as the basis for building Medium-Term Plan and invited a small group consisting of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons together with the Secretariat to prepare a draft of the Medium-Term plan 2003-2007 and to develop a strategic statement of the Commission's vision for the future, for consideration by the next session of the Commission. It also decided to request the opinions of the Regional Committees, therefore the CCAFRICA is invited to consider this question and provide comments on the above proposed elements.

##### 2. AMENDMENTS TO THE PROCEDURAL MANUAL OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

##### Amendments to the Rules of Procedure (paras 59-66, Appendix III)

The Commission agreed to amend the following Rules as proposed by the Committee on General Principles or as proposed at the Session:

- Rule II – Officers and Rule IX.7 and IX.10 (appointment of Regional Coordinators - see also CX/AFRICA 00/8);
- Rule X - Elaboration of Standards (to stress that every effort should be made to reach consensus); and Rule III.1 (concerning the membership of the Near East in the Executive Committee).

The Commission noted that the question of the majority was currently under consideration in the Committee on General Principles, where no conclusion had been reached so far, and agreed that the Committee should proceed with its work on this issue as a matter of priority.

The Commission noted the proposal of the Delegation of Republic of Korea to increase the membership of the Executive Committee and recalled that all relevant aspects pertaining to the composition and role of that Committee would be considered by the Committee on General Principles, as agreed earlier.

#### **Other amendments**

The Commission adopted the following texts for inclusion in the Procedural Manual:

- *Criteria for the Establishment of Work Priorities and Criteria for the Establishment of Subsidiary Bodies of the Codex Alimentarius Commission* (para. 67, Appendix IV)
- *Definitions for the Purpose of Codex: Definitions of Risk Analysis Terms Related to Food Safety (Risk Communication & Risk Management)* (para. 70, Appendix IV)
- *Principles Concerning the Participation of International Non-Governmental Organizations in the Work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission* (para. 71, Appendix IV)
- *Core Functions of Codex Contact Points* (para. 72, Appendix IV)

### **3. RISK ANALYSIS**

The Commission made a number of recommendations addressed to FAO and WHO, Codex and member governments (ALINORM 99/37, paras 56-58). The 47<sup>th</sup> Session of the CCEXEC considered how the recommendations applicable in the framework of Codex were being implemented and came to the following conclusions.

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Implementation</b>
Programmes that contribute to risk analysis should have high priority;	This should be taken up in the context of Agenda Item 6: Preparation of the Medium-Term Plan 2003-2007.
Relevant Codex Committees should continue to develop and to apply risk analysis principles and methodologies appropriate to their specific mandates within the framework of the Action Plan and report their progress to the Commission on a regular basis;	Noted:On-going.
Proposals for new or amended definitions for use within the framework of risk analysis, as appropriate, should be considered by the Codex Committee on General Principles;	Noted:On-going.
To overcome confusion about the usage of the terms “risk analysis” and “hazard analysis”, the Commission should reiterate its definitions for these concepts and explain how they apply in practice;	The Executive Committee referred this matter to the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene for a clear statement of the difference between the two terms and to the Committee on general Principles for subsequent action.
The Commission should continue and expand its efforts to increase the participation of those national governments and NGOs that are members or observers but that are not presently active participants in Codex matters;	The Executive Committee noted that the issue was relevant to all Codex work and not only to risk analysis and drew the attention of the countries concerned to the Commission’s recommendation.
Relevant Codex committees should consider developing quality criteria for data used for risk assessment. To the extent possible such criteria should be consistent with one another, taking into account the technical differences in the disciplines covered;	The Executive Committee referred these recommendations to the Committees concerned. (see also para. 42 of the report)

Recommendation	Implementation
Relevant Codex committees should consider the acute aspects of dietary exposure to chemicals in food;	
Recognizing that primary production in developing countries is largely through small and medium enterprises, risk assessment should be based on global data, including that from developing countries. This data should particularly include epidemiological surveillance data and exposure studies;	
Risk management should take into account the economic consequences and the feasibility of risk management options in developing countries. Risk Management should also recognize the need for flexibility in the establishment of standards, guidelines and other recommendations, consistent with the protection of consumers' health.	The Executive Committee referred this recommendation to the Codex Committee on General Principles for consideration in relation to the development of appropriate texts for inclusion in the Procedural Manual.

#### 4. CONSIDERATION OF STANDARDS AND RELATED TEXTS

##### Regional Coordinating Committee for Africa

The Commission adopted Draft Revised Guidelines for the Design of Control Measures for Street-Vended Foods in Africa as a final text as proposed.

#### 5. CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSALS TO ELABORATE NEW STANDARDS AND RELATED TEXTS

##### Regional Coordinating Committee for Africa

###### Codex Standard for Dried Figs

The Commission noted that the work on the Codex Standard for Dried Figs would be handled by the Committee on Processed Fruits and Vegetables.

#### 6. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FOOD TRADE BEYOND 2000: SCIENCE-BASED DECISIONS, HARMONIZATION, EQUIVALENCE AND MUTUAL RECOGNITION

The Executive Committee noted with satisfaction the Conference's appreciation of the work of the Commission and its fullest support to the current direction of its work. The Executive Committee further noted that the vast majority of the "General Recommendations" contained in Annex I were addressed to Member Governments and/or FAO and WHO. It noted that several of these recommendations would need to be considered in the development of the Medium Term Plan (Item 6). On recommendations 10 and 14, the Executive Committee recognised the importance of risk communication for Codex and the need to explore strategies to collect information from all regions of the world about consumer requirements, perceptions, beliefs, and motivations concerning food, nutrition and food safety. It agreed that the matter should be discussed at the Codex Regional Committees and that the Secretariat should explore ways of conducting a pilot study for generating such information. The Executive Committee noted that several countries and organizations have conducted studies in this field and suggested that a literature review be made on the subject by the Secretariat.

The Executive Committee strongly supported closely coordinated and early action by FAO and WHO and the Codex Alimentarius Commission on microbiological food safety issues within their respective areas of responsibility.

The Executive Committee noted that most of the recommendations in Annex II of the document were already being addressed by the relevant Codex Committees (Recommendations 1, 3, 5, 7, 10, 15, 20) or by FAO/WHO (Recommendations 2, 9, 13, 19). Others (Recommendations 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 21) would need to be examined in relation with the discussion of the Medium Term Plan (Agenda Item 6) and/or by the Codex Regional Coordinating Committees. The recommendations mentioned are attached in Annex 1. In relation to Recommendation 5, the Committee recommended that FAO/WHO consider holding special

workshops on the issue of "precaution" prior to the future sessions of the Codex Coordinating Committees to facilitate the debate on this subject at the Committee on General Principles.

The Executive Committee recognised the need to develop guidelines for determining equivalence of food control systems, covering not only safety but also quality and conformity (ALINORM 01/3, paras 23-26).

## **7. MEETINGS OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION**

The 47<sup>th</sup> Session of the CCEXEC had the following discussion on this subject.

There was general agreement that the Commission should meet on an annual basis, as provided for in the Rules of Procedure. Some Members questioned the proposal to divide the annual sessions between policy issues and standards issues, stating that the Commission should always give attention to the adoption of standards. The Executive Committee considered the fact that annual meetings of committees would pose additional burdens on developing countries and the costs and benefits of such a decision would have to be taken into account.

The Executive Committee noted that the question of the abolition of the Executive Committee was under discussion by the Committee on General Principles. It further noted that the status of the Executive Committee was guaranteed under Article 6 of the Statutes and its composition and function were governed by the Rules of Procedure. It recommended that the Secretariat in preparing its paper for the Committee on General Principles consider these facts as well as all available options in regard to abolition or possible changes in the composition and responsibilities of the Executive Committee should it be retained.

It was further proposed that the Chairpersons of Codex Committees and Task Forces and the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of the Commission should meet at the time of each Commission session to improve coordination between committees (ALINORM 01/3, paras. 64-66).

## **8. LANGUAGE POLICIES OF THE COMMISSION (ALINORM 99/37, paras 232-234)**

The Commission agreed as a first step that, subject to availability of resources, beginning with the biennium 2000/2001, future Sessions of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the Executive Committee and Regional Coordinating Committees as appropriate, would be held in Arabic, Chinese, English, French and Spanish. Working papers and reports for these Sessions, the Procedural Manual, information documents, and final Codex texts would also be made available in all five languages.

The Commission noted the view of the FAO Council that the availability of resources should not act as a restraint on the implementation of equal treatment of all languages in FAO and its statutory bodies, which included the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

## **B. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE COMMITTEES**

### **1. CODEX COMMITTEE ON GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

The 14<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on General Principles recommended an amendment of the Rules of procedure to clarify that the request for a roll-call vote was subject to Rule X.2 that refers to the adoption of standards by consensus (ALINORM 01/33, para. 73, Appendix II). The Committee also proposed practical measures to facilitate consensus (paras. 68-69).

The Committee considered the Proposed Draft Working Principles for Risk Analysis in detail and made a number of amendments to the text, which was returned to Step 3 for further comments. The section of the Principles covering the use of precaution in risk management will be redrafted in the light of the comments received by a drafting group for further consideration by the next session (April 2001). The Committee agreed that the concept of "food safety objectives" could be developed further by other relevant committees and that it was premature to generalize it with a specific definition at this stage.

The Committee agreed to consider further the following questions at its next session: the revision of the Code of Ethics for International Trade in Food (para. 108); the role of "other legitimate factors" in relation to risk analysis (para. 95); the composition of the Executive Committee and related matters, including an alternative proposal to hold the Commission on an annual basis (see also section 6. above).

## 2. COMMITTEE ON PESTICIDE RESIDUES (ALINORM 99/24A, PARAS 15-17)

### Establishment of MRLs for Fish<sup>1</sup>

The Committee noted the concern of the Codex Coordinating Committee for Africa regarding the difficulties experienced by the countries bordering Lake Victoria in exporting fish caught in this lake due to the presence of certain pesticides and its request to the CCPR to consider the problem of pesticide residues in fish with a view to establishing MRLs.

No data had been provided to the CCPR. Therefore, the Committee **concluded** that it was not in a position to take action until relevant data were submitted.

The Representative of WHO noted that the report<sup>2</sup> of an FAO/NACA<sup>3</sup>/WHO Study Group on the Food Safety Issues Associated with Products from Aquaculture became available. The Study Group had considered potential biological and chemical hazards that might be important for farmed finfish and crustaceans. Regarding the use of chemicals in aquaculture, the Study Group urged national governments to enforce a licensing system for chemicals, including pesticides, in aquaculture and to establish withdrawal times appropriate to environmental conditions and fish species. However, more information was required on pesticides and their conditions of uses to assure that residues in fish tissue were not harmful to health.

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<sup>1</sup> ALINORM 99/28, para. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Food Safety Issues Associated with Products from Aquaculture, Report of an FAO/NACA/WHO Study Group, Bangkok, Thailand, 22-26 July 1997, TRS 883 (WHO 1999).

<sup>3</sup> Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia and the Pacific.

## ANNEX I

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FOOD TRADE  
BEYOND 2000: SCIENCE-BASED DECISIONS, HARMONIZATION, EQUIVALENCE AND  
MUTUAL RECOGNITION**

**Import/Export Systems, Equivalence and Information Exchange:**

- 11) The Conference recommended that governments should make available, preferably by electronic means, information on food goods that had been detained or rejected at the point of import. This information should be made available for further follow-up by the exporting country and also to alert other countries of possible problems related to food imports.
- 12) The Conference recommended that FAO, WHO and Codex Alimentarius should study the need, feasibility and practical conditions of introducing an international system allowing exchanges of information about the existence of potentially hazardous foodstuffs in the international trade.
- 13) The Conference recognized the importance and urgency of developing Codex guidance on the judgement of equivalence, initially in a generic sense and subsequently in relation to specific topics such as equivalence of inspection and certification systems, and measures to ensure food hygiene.

**General Issues:**

- 14) The Codex Alimentarius Commission, whilst acknowledging that food safety standards cannot be compromised, should, when elaborating and deciding upon Codex standards and any related texts, take into consideration the special needs of developing countries including infrastructure, resources, technical and legal capabilities. Codex standards and related texts should not have the effect of creating unnecessary, unjustified or discriminatory obstacles to the exports of developing countries.
- 16) With the aim of more intensively pursuing the objectives of protecting the health of consumers, ensuring fair practices in the food trade and facilitating the international trade in food, the Codex Alimentarius Commission should continue to elaborate food standards providing for compositional, sensory and safety criteria, and examine and recommend ways to reduce problems of food quality and safety, reduce levels of detentions and rejections of food moving in international trade, and reduce levels of food adulteration.
- 17) The Conference stressed that Codex standards for food quality and safety, including labelling aspects, should be carefully prepared to ensure that they were not over-prescriptive and not more restrictive than necessary to meet the objectives of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme.
- 18) Codex Alimentarius should continue to work along these principles and promote the application of HACCP principles as laid down in the Codex General Principles of Food Hygiene. These principles should be applied to all foodstuffs, throughout the whole food chain and include feedingstuffs.

**Enhancing Participation:**

- 21) The Codex Alimentarius Commission should consider reaffirming the effectiveness of written comments, which should be fully discussed at Codex meetings, especially written comments from countries not able to be represented at meetings. Chairpersons should ensure that all written comments received before the meeting are systematically tabled for discussion at Codex meetings and decisions made should be recorded in the report accordingly.