

December 2004

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION



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Agenda Item 2 (a)

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Fifty-fifth Session, FAO Headquarters

Rome (Italy), 9 – 11 February 2005

STRATEGIC PLANNING OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

PREPARATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN 2008-2013

Background

1. The 27th Session of the Commission (July 2004) adopted the amendment to the Procedural Manual (Elaboration Procedure), which provides that:

- Taking into account the “Criteria for the Establishment of Work Priorities”, the strategic plan shall state broad priorities against which individual proposals for standards (and revision of standards) can be evaluated during the critical review process; and
- The strategic plan shall cover a six-year period and shall be renewed every two years on a rolling basis¹.

2. The Commission endorsed the decision of the 53rd Session of the Executive Committee to discontinue the elaboration of the Medium-Term Plan 2003-2007, with the understanding that its elements would be used as a basis for a list of programmes/activities to be incorporated into the new Strategic Plan 2008-2013. The Commission agreed to initiate the preparation of a new Strategic Plan for the period 2008-2013 and recommended that:

- The Executive Committee, at its 55th session, discuss the structure and format for a new Strategic Plan covering a six-year period of 2008-2013 as well as the ways to further proceed with the development of the Strategic Plan;
- The Strategic Plan state strategic objectives and priorities of the Commission and incorporate a list of programme areas/planned activities with a clearly defined timetable for each of the activities;

¹ ALINORM 04/27/41, Appendix II, Procedures for the Elaboration of Codex Standards and Related Texts, Part 1 - Strategic Planning Process.

- After requesting the views of Regional Coordinating Committees, the draft Plan be submitted to the Commission for adoption by 2007; and
- The Strategic Plan, once adopted, be renewed every two years on a rolling basis².

3. The proposed amendment to Rule V.2 of the Rules of Procedure, to be considered by the 28th Session of the Commission, reads: “the Executive Committee may make proposals to the Commission regarding general orientation, strategic planning, and programming of the work of the Commission, study special problems and shall assist in the management of the Commission’s programme of standards development, namely by conducting a critical review of proposals to undertake work and monitoring the progress of standards development³” (underline added).

4. From the above, it is considered that the Executive Committee should clearly play a lead role in the preparation of the Strategic Plan 2008-2013.

Structure and Format of the Strategic Plan

5. The preparation process of the Draft Medium Term Plan 2003-2007 has shown that the strategic planning in itself could be so resource intensive and time consuming a process that it might eventually draw a significant amount of energy and other resources from the Commission. Therefore, the Strategic Plan 2008-2013 should preferably be prepared in such structure and format that would not only serve its intended purpose (see paragraph 1 above) but allow for least cumbersome procedures when renewing it every two years on a rolling basis.

6. The structure and format of the Strategic Plan may possibly be based on a three-tier approach. In other words, the Strategic Plan may consist of three parts: the first part (Part 1) will include broadly stated Commission-wide objectives; the second part (Part 2) will comprise a list of achievable outputs covering the areas for priority action that may require work done by one subsidiary body or by more than one subsidiary bodies jointly; and the third part (Part 3) will set out the working timetables by subsidiary body⁴ that indicate 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. This third part may be presented in a manner that facilitates visual interpretation. It may also be used as one of the tools for monitoring the progress of standards development, if the Executive Committee so wishes. An example of the model format for Part 3 is attached to this document as Annex 1.

7. Provided that the Strategic Plan is to be reviewed/renewed every two years, the Executive Committee may decide to review Parts 1 and 2 of the Plan in the light of the views expressed by a round of Regional Coordinating Committee sessions and recommend changes, if necessary, to the Commission. For this purpose, this matter may become a standing agenda item in the regular sessions of Coordinating Committees. On an *ad hoc* basis, general-subject and commodity committees may also propose amendments particularly to Part 2 of the Plan for consideration by the Executive Committee. As regards Part 3, this part may be kept under continuous review by the Executive Committee and be reported to the Commission. It will be updated as and when necessary by the Executive Committee as part of its strategic planning function, taking account of the approval of new work and discontinuation of work, as well as the relevant information provided from the Codex Secretariat in consultation with the host government secretariats of the subsidiary bodies.

8. The **Executive Committee** is invited to consider what structure and format is desirable for the Strategic Plan 2008-2013 and formulate its recommendation to the Commission. In doing so, the Executive Committee may wish to consider the proposed structure and format as well as the proposed biennial review mechanism as set out above as a starting point for discussion.

Process and Timetable for Preparation of the Strategic Plan

9. In regard to the preparation of the Strategic Plan 2008-2013, the Executive Committee is encouraged to recommend to the Commission a resource effective and simple approach that will, at the same time,

² ALINORM 04/27/41 paras 120-123

³ ALINORM 04/27/5 Appendix II

⁴ The Codex committee structure at the time of 2008 is subject to the outcome of the ongoing review process.

ensure transparency and enable widest consultation of the membership of the Commission before its final adoption by the Commission in 2007.

10. It is recalled that when preparing the Strategic Framework 2003-2007, the Executive Committee established a working group, comprising the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of the Commission, which met two times in-between sessions to prepare the Strategic Framework and the Draft Medium-Term Plan for subsequent consideration by the Commission⁵. In view of the complex nature of the expected work and taking account of the strategic planning responsibility of the Executive Committee, the Committee may wish to consider the use of a similar approach, by way of a small working group, in order to advance the preparatory work for developing a draft Strategic Plan 2008-2013. Such small working group may be constituted by the Chairperson and three Vice Chairpersons of the Commission. In this case, it is understood that the preparatory work done by the working group will be presented to the Executive Committee for discussion, and the Executive Committee, in turn, will report to the Commission.

11. Consideration should also be given to the stage at which governments should be invited to provide comments within the process of developing the Strategic Plan. The time available before presenting the final draft Plan to the Commission in 2007 also needs to be taken into account. The indicative timeline, as shown in the Table below, presents a possible course of events with the assumption that the development of the draft Plan be carried out during a ten-month period (September 2005 - June 2006), including a request of government comments on the proposed draft Plan prepared by the Executive Committee. The Coordinating Committees will then be requested to provide their comments on the draft Plan. The **Executive Committee** is invited to recommend to the Commission how best to proceed with this matter.

12. Finally, the **Executive Committee** may wish to confirm that the current Strategic Framework as well as elements of the draft Medium-Term Plan 2003-2007 be used as a basis to the preparation of the Strategic Plan 2008-2013. The Strategic Framework 2003-2007 adopted by the 24th Session of the Commission is reproduced in Annex 2 for information⁶.

Target	Event
4 -9 July 2005	The Commission endorses the process for preparation of Strategic Plan 2008-2013
September-October 2005	The working group (Chairperson and three Vice Chairpersons of the Commission) identifies issues and needs for revision based on Strategic Framework 2003-2007
December 2005	The Executive Committee considers the report of the working group and prepares a proposed draft Plan
February-April 2006	A Circular Letter is issued and government comments are requested on the proposed draft Plan
June 2006	The Executive Committee considers the government comments and prepares a draft Plan
July 2006	The Commission reviews the draft Plan
September 2006 – March 2007	Request for comments by Coordinating Committees on the draft Plan
June 2007	The Executive Committee considers the Draft Plan in the light of the comments by Coordinating Committees
July 2007	The Commission considers and adopts the Strategic Plan 2008-2013

⁵ ALIRNORM 01/6, para. 2

⁶ ALINORM 01/41 Appendix II

ANNEX 1

PROPOSED TEMPLATE FOR PART 3 OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN 2008-2013

Example 1

<i>Codex Committee on xx</i>		Timeframe					
Text title	Job ID	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
sample 1	N03-2003						
sample 2	N04-2006						
sample 3	N05-2006						
sample 4	N04-2007						
<i>Number of concurrent jobs</i>		4	3	2	2	1	
<i>Sessions to be held</i>		1	1	0	1	0	1
<i>Relevant output codes</i>		• Reference made to Part 2 of the Plan					

Example 2

<i>Codex Task Force on yy</i>		Timeframe					
Text title	Job ID	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
sample 5	N01-2006			Task Force to be dissolved by 2009			
sample 6	N02-2006						
sample 7	N03-2006						
<i>Number of concurrent jobs</i>		3	2	-	-	-	-
<i>Sessions to be held</i>		1	0	-	-	-	-
<i>Relevant output codes</i>		Reference made to Part 2 of the Plan					

The right edge of a horizontal bar indicates the year of the final adoption of the text by the Commission.

ANNEX 2

**CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION
STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2003-2007****STRATEGIC VISION STATEMENT**

The Codex Alimentarius Commission envisages a world afforded the highest attainable levels of consumer protection, including food safety and quality. To this end, the Commission will develop internationally agreed standards and related texts for use in domestic regulation and international trade in food that are based on scientific principles and fulfil the objectives of consumer health protection and fair practices in food trade.

INTRODUCTION

1. This document sets out the strategic priorities for the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) and provides the basis for the elaboration of the Medium Term Plan for the period 2003-2007. The strategic vision and goals for Codex underpin the high priority attached to food safety by its parent organizations, the FAO and the WHO. The FAO Strategic framework for 2000-2015 accords high priority to promoting policy and regulatory frameworks for food at the international and national levels. Similarly the 53rd Session of the World Health Assembly recognized the need to highlight health considerations in international food trade and acknowledged the importance of the CAC for assuring the highest levels of consumer health protection. The resolution also urged WHO to work towards integrating food safety as one of its essential public health functions with the goal of developing sustainable, integrated food safety systems for the reduction of health risk along the entire food chain. The fundamental mandate of the CAC is to develop international standards and norms for consumer health protection and fair practices in the food trade.
2. The CAC has always operated in an environment of change and technological advancement. The growth in world food trade, advances in modern communication and increasing mobility of populations are all contributing to elevating the profile and significance of food safety and regulation. There is growing international concern related to a perceived emergence/increase in food-borne diseases. Consumers around the world are becoming more aware than ever about food safety issues and are seeking ever-greater assurances about the safety and quality of foods they eat. Innovation and the development of new processes (including modern biotechnology) are leading to the development of new products with specific medical, nutritional and functional attributes. In its endeavour to promote food safety and quality, the CAC needs to consider opportunities for strengthening partnerships with all stakeholders, in particular consumers and their representative organizations, at the global and national levels. A further development is the growing interest in organic foods, which are likely to capture a significant share of the international market in the future. It is also likely that developing countries will account for an increasing proportion of global food and agricultural trade. These developments, while exciting, also present new challenges (both safety and non safety) for the CAC and national governments.
3. The new recognition and status that Codex standards, guidelines and other recommendations acquired under the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (the SPS Agreement) also brought new challenges and responsibilities including the need to ensure that its standards and related texts are based on scientific principles and meet the needs and mandate of the organization. The WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade is also of great relevance given the significance of the provisions pertaining to product description, labelling, packaging and quality descriptors for consumer information and fair practices in trade. Although quality provisions are fundamentally driven by the market, the CAC has an important role in ensuring that provisions

relating to quality are sound and based on the criteria of essentiality and do not constitute disguised barriers to trade.

4. These developments have generated renewed interest in the work of the CAC and have resulted in a substantial growth in membership of the organization with developing countries now accounting for a majority of total membership. Given the importance that the WTO attaches to international harmonization, there is now an even greater imperative for CAC and its members to ensure that the Organization maintains its pre-eminent status as the internationally recognized body for food standards and its norms are applied to the widest extent possible by all members as a basis for domestic regulation and international trade.

DECISION-MAKING BASED ON SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE

5. The scientific basis of decision-making by the CAC is spelt out in the Statements of Principle on the Role of Science in the Codex Decision-Making and the Extent to which Other Factors are Taken into Account⁷. The CAC does not undertake scientific evaluations *per se* but relies on the opinions of scientific expert Committees or Consultations convened by FAO and WHO on specific issues. These expert bodies such as the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committees on Food Additives, the Joint FAO/WHO Meetings on Pesticide Residues and the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Meeting on Microbiological Risk Assessments are independent of the CAC and its subsidiary bodies and do not fall within the scope of the present Strategic Framework. The mandates, functions, composition and agendas of these bodies are established by FAO and WHO. Although the independence of the expert bodies is critical to the objectivity of their opinions, meetings of these bodies normally take into account the advice of the CAC as indicated in Article 1 of the Commission's Statutes. There is considerable synergy between the scientific panels of FAO and WHO and the intergovernmental bodies of the CAC in order to take decisions based on scientific evidence.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

6. The fundamental objective of the Codex Alimentarius Commission is to establish sound internationally agreed guidelines for national food control systems based on the criteria of consumer health protection and fair practices in trade and taking into account the needs and special concerns of all countries. All of the objectives listed below are considered to be equally important to the overall achievement of the strategic vision.

Objective 1: Promoting Sound Regulatory Framework

7. In many countries, effective food control is undermined by the existence of fragmented legislation, multiple jurisdictions and weaknesses in surveillance, monitoring and enforcement. Sound national food control and regulatory systems are essential to assuring the health and safety of domestic population as well as assuring the safety and quality of foods entering international trade. While the establishment of regulatory framework is fundamentally a national responsibility, the CAC and its parent bodies, the FAO and WHO, have a strong interest in promoting national regulatory systems that are based on international principles and guidelines and address all components of the food chain. The development of sound food control and regulatory infrastructure including human resources is particularly important for developing countries as they seek to achieve higher levels of food safety and nutrition and will require high level political and policy commitment as highlighted in the report of the 1999 Melbourne Conference on International Food Trade Beyond 2000.⁸ An effective food control system is critical in enabling all countries to assure the safety of their foods entering international trade and to ensure that imported foods conform to national requirements. Successful negotiation of bilateral mutual recognition and/or equivalence also depends on the ability of countries to assure each other of the integrity of national regulatory systems.
8. The priorities for the CAC in the development of international standards and related texts will be to:

⁷ Codex Alimentarius Commission, Procedural Manual, Eleventh Edition, p.180.

⁸ Report of the Conference on International Food Trade beyond 2000: Science based Decisions, Harmonization, Equivalence and Mutual Recognition, Melbourne, Australia, 11-15 October, 1999, Appendix 1, p.29.

- provide essential guidance for member countries through the continued development of international standards and guidelines relating to food safety and hygiene, nutrition, labelling and import/export inspection and certification systems and for the practical application of the concepts of equivalence and mutual recognition ; and
- promote the development of national food control systems based on international principles and criteria for the reduction of health risk along the entire food chain.

Objective 2: Promoting Widest and Consistent Application of Scientific Principles and Risk Analysis

9. The CAC will promote and further strengthen its capacity to include health considerations in its standards and guidelines through the widest possible application of risk analysis based on Codex principles. Risk analysis as it applies to food, is an emerging discipline and will require ongoing and sustained inputs from the Commission, its parent organizations and national governments to promote conceptual development and application at the international and national levels. Risk Communication will be vital to this process. The early implementation of the CAC Action Plan on Risk Analysis by the Commission and member governments is essential to:
 - promoting the consistent application of risk analysis principles throughout all of the work of Codex system;
 - achieve strengthened international capacity for risk assessment including those related to microbiological hazards and dealing with emerging pathogens;
 - improving understanding of risk analysis concepts, principles and application at the national level especially for developing countries through targeted technical assistance and cooperation,
 - promoting greater transparency of the whole risk analysis process;
 - improving understanding of how precaution and scientific uncertainty are factored and taken into account in the risk analysis process;
 - Strengthening risk communication; and
 - Promoting the collection of data from developing countries and from all regions of the world so that the risk analysis is based on global conditions and requirements.
10. The CAC will also need to accord high priority to ongoing development of concepts and principles and the establishment of sound working principles for the application of risk analysis both at international and national levels. It should also promote better understanding of risk analysis through technical assistance programmes. A strengthened expert scientific evaluation structure for addressing chemical, microbiological hazards and emerging pathogens will also be critical to support and underpin the Codex standards development processes.
11. Consistent with the Statements of Principle, adopted by CAC in 1995, the Commission will need to have due regard, where appropriate, to other legitimate factors relevant to health protection of consumers and for the promotion of fair practices in food trade when developing standards and guidelines. International consensus on the scope and application of other legitimate factors in Codex decision making will be essential for their sound and consistent application right across the Codex system.

Objective 3: Promoting Linkages/ between Codex and other Multilateral Regulatory Instruments and Conventions

12. The CAC does not and cannot operate in isolation. It needs to work closely with other relevant international standards setting and regulatory bodies to promote close cooperation and dialogue on matters of common interest. As the WTO-recognized international body for establishing food safety standards the Commission has a clear obligation to establish international food standards for the protection of consumers' health and ensuring fair practices in food trade, and these standards may be

used by Member countries in both domestic regulation and international trade. At the same time the Commission needs to interact closely with related international bodies, and take due account of international regulatory initiatives and developments thereby promoting coordination of all food standards work undertaken by international governmental and nongovernmental organizations. Such cooperation is also important to minimize duplication of effort. Food safety and issues such as biotechnology are of global interest and are the subjects of debate and discussion in a number of multilateral institutions. The CAC has, by virtue of its lead role in international food standards, a strategic interest in working closely with relevant multilateral institutions and conventions to provide its technical input and expertise and contribute to building international consensus on contemporary food standards and regulatory policy matters.

Objective 4: Enhance Capacity to Respond Effectively and Expeditiously to New Issues, Concerns and Developments in the Food Sector

13. With the rapid development of technology and emergence of food safety as a major issue of public policy, there is a need to enhance the capacity of Codex to respond to members' needs in a way that maintains confidence in its ability as the international organization for food standards. There are a number of important considerations in this context. A major issue for Codex is the length of time it takes to establish standards. Codex processes are too protracted and are not responsive to current expectations and public policy imperatives. Governments around the world are having to grapple with significant regulatory challenges and Codex, as the global food standards setting body, needs to be able to respond effectively and expeditiously through the development of internationally harmonized solutions to food safety and international trade matters. A refocusing of the manner in which the Commission and its subsidiary bodies produce outcomes must be a strategic priority. The key functions of a refocused Commission would be to:
 - provide strategic oversight, direction and cross coordination of the work programmes of all subsidiary bodies;
 - initiate new work and adopt standards and related texts against defined time frames;
 - provide a forum for discussion of selected contemporary food safety and regulatory policy issues;
 - make appropriate use of information technologies; and
 - promote consensus-based decision-making.
14. At the subsidiary body level, major improvements can be achieved through the establishment of time-limited procedures and through a review of the current step procedure. Timely development of standards will also require improved alignment of the timing and frequency of meetings of commodity and general subject committees.
15. As noted in the introductory sections, the parent bodies of the Commission accord high priority to food safety and international standards development programmes. Host governments also provide significant financial support. Ultimately, however, the ability of Codex to fulfil its mandate and respond to the growing needs and expectations of its members will depend on the availability of additional resources. Codex meetings and related activities already represent a heavy workload and further intensification of work will require additional financial and human resources.

Objective 5: Promoting Maximum Membership and Participation

16. Full participation by all Codex Members and other interested parties in the work of the CAC and its subsidiary bodies is now more important than ever. The participation of all members and relevant intergovernmental and non governmental organizations is critical to sound decision-making and ensuring that Codex standards and related texts take account of the full range of interest and viewpoints. Since the early nineties there has been a significant increase in the membership of Codex with developing countries now constituting a significant proportion of total membership. Notwithstanding this growth in membership many countries are still faced with serious financial and

human resource constraints to effective participation in Codex activities. Achieving the objective of maximum participation will require specific and ongoing action to address the following:

- **Resource constraints**- Early action is required to facilitate the effective participation of developing countries in Codex standards development activities, including financial assistance from extra-budgetary resources where possible;
 - **Capacity building** -There is a continuing need to invest in capacity building programmes, especially in developing countries aimed at strengthening national Codex administrative and consultative structures (e.g., Codex Contact Point and National Codex Committee) and provide for enhancing national capacity for technical analysis and participation in international standards development activities by all interest groups. This requires bilateral or multilateral technical assistance and should include training.
17. In addition to actions to promote participation of member countries, the CAC also needs to continue its efforts to promote and facilitate the participation of consumers and public interest groups in its processes at the international level and encourage governments to take action at the national level. Given the strong public interest in food safety and regulatory issues, the involvement and input of consumers and non governmental groups at the international and national levels is essential to build public confidence in international standards and assure the strong public input, acceptance and support for Codex standards, guidelines and recommendations as a basis for domestic regulation and trade.

Objective 6: Promoting Maximum Application of Codex Standards

18. As the pre-eminent international standards setting body for food, the CAC has a clear and strategic interest in promoting the maximum use of its standards both for domestic regulation and international trade. International harmonization based on Codex standards, guidelines and recommendations is essential to promoting a global approach to consumer health protection (including systems for the reduction of food-borne risks) and minimizing the negative effects of technical regulations on international trade. This will require sustained commitment and effort in the following key directions:
- The Statements of Principle on the Role of Science in the Codex Decision-Making and the Extent to which Other Factors are Taken into Account⁹ which provide the essential criteria for decision making in Codex, will require strong support and commitment by all countries if the statements are to become operationally effective both at international and national levels;
 - Codex must continue to promote the application of sound science and the principles of risk analysis on a consistent basis throughout its work as envisaged in the Commission's *Action Plan on Risk Analysis*¹⁰;
 - Codex processes must be inclusive and transparent and provide for participation and input from all interested groups both at the national and international level. This is particularly important given the interest and concern among Codex members to assure that Codex processes take due account of scientific uncertainties and the element of precaution. Transparency of the criteria and process of risk assessment and decision making will be paramount to achieving this objective;
 - The Commission must complete the strategic shift, first signalled at the 1991 FAO/WHO International Conference on Food Standards, Chemicals in Food and Food Trade, towards performance-based standards and guidelines for broad application across a range of commodities and focus on provisions essential for health protection of consumers and for the promotion of fair practices in food trade;
 - Codex must ensure that its standards and guidelines reflect the needs and special concerns of the developing world without compromising on the health of consumers;

⁹ Codex Alimentarius Commission, Procedural Manual, Eleventh Edition, p.180.

¹⁰ Codex Alimentarius Commission, Report of 23rd session, Rome, 28 June-3 July 1999, p.10-11.

- Codex decisions should be based on consensus to the maximum extent possible;
- 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; and
- Codex standards for food quality and safety, including labelling aspects, should be carefully prepared to ensure that they are not over-prescriptive and not more restrictive than necessary.

Implementation of the Strategic Vision and Objectives

19. The strategic objectives described in this document will require a plan of action and implementation strategy. These matters will be addressed within the framework of the Medium Term Plan for 2003-2007.