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codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
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HEALTH
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Agenda Item 6 (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

OTHER MATTERS ARISING FROM FAO AND WHO

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE FAO/WHO CONSULTATIVE PROCESS ON THE PROVISION OF SCIENTIFIC ADVICE TO CODEX AND MEMBER COUNTRIES

1. The review of the FAO/WHO programmes providing scientific advice to Codex and member countries is ongoing, as requested by the 24th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission¹ and in response to recommendations of the Joint Evaluation of the Codex Alimentarius and other FAO and WHO Food Standards Work².
2. Progress to date includes the completion of the two of the three planned steps in the review process, namely an electronic forum³ held in the second half of 2003, and an FAO/WHO Workshop on the Provision of Scientific Advice to Codex and Member Countries was held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 27-29 January, 2004⁴.
3. The Workshop resulted in a set of recommendations on 1) essential principles, definitions and scope governing the provision of scientific advice, 2) management issues and 3) procedures and mechanisms. Due regard was given to enhancing the participation of developing countries in the provision of scientific advice.
4. The executive summary and the recommendations of the Workshop report were circulated through the Codex Contact Points to member countries and international observer organizations in March 2004

¹ ALINORM 01/41, para. 61

² Report of the Evaluation of the Codex Alimentarius and other FAO and WHO Food Standards Work, Rome, 2002

³ The report of the e-forum can be found on this FAO webpage: http://www.fao.org/es/ESN/proscad/forum_en.stm.

⁴ The report of the Workshop is available on the websites of FAO (http://www.fao.org/es/ESN/proscad/index_en.stm) and WHO (<http://www.who.int/foodsafety/en/>).

soliciting official comments to be submitted to FAO and WHO. Comments received and steps undertaken by FAO and WHO since the implementation of the Workshop were made available at the 27th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (ref. CAC/27 INF 3A).

5. Activities prioritized by FAO/WHO to enable implementation of the workshop recommendations include the following:

- Elaborate a **Procedural Guideline** that would compile all written procedures followed by FAO and WHO in the provision of scientific advice;
- Establish an **Internal FAO/WHO Task Force** to review the management options for the provision of scientific advice and consider improved coordination;
- Prepare **Review Papers** to address procedures for the selection of experts, to consider factors associated with enhanced openness of meetings, and to improve procedures on use of data;
- Convene a **Workshop** (brain-storming session) to explore new approaches to enhance the participation of experts and use of data from developing countries in the international scientific advice activities.

6. A first draft of the Procedural Guideline is in preparation, and should be available in early 2005. This framework document will compile all written procedures followed by FAO and WHO in the provision of scientific advice. The scope of the Procedural Guidelines is the provision of scientific advice related to the mandate of Codex. Development of the Guidelines is proposed as a means to implement several of the recommendations of the Workshop, including the essential principles, and will enhance the transparency of the work of FAO and WHO on scientific advice. Through this process, gaps in procedures, or the need to improve existing procedures may be identified. Where this is the case, these issues will be addressed further.

7. It is planned that this Guideline can be used as a tool to facilitate internal harmonization with both FAO and WHO (where different units or departments provide scientific advice, and strengthen harmonization between FAO and WHO Joint Secretariats. It will also be a powerful tool to show FAO/WHO working methods in a transparent manner.

8. In addition to progress made on developing the Procedural Guideline, FAO and WHO are in the initial stages of planning the technical workshop to explore new approaches to enhance the participation of experts and use of data on a more global scale, with emphasis on input from developing countries.

Completion of the FAO/WHO review process on provision of scientific advice

9. FAO and WHO are planning to complete the Consultative Process on the Provision of Scientific Advice to Codex and Member Countries through the organization of an inter-governmental meeting to finalise/adopt the Procedural Guideline and new processes. Support of member countries is essential to assist FAO/WHO in enhancing the quality, quantity and timeliness of scientific advice. The inter-governmental meeting is the preferred option, rather than an independent expert consultation, as the improvement of the provision of scientific advice by FAO and WHO requires the support and involvement of Member Countries and in the longer term would require additional resources to meet the expectations of Codex and Member Countries.