

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION



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Agenda Item 9

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Sixtieth Session, FAO Headquarters, Rome, 4-7 December 2007

OTHER MATTERS ARISING FROM FAO AND WHO

Prepared by FAO and WHO

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NOTE: In an effort to improve dissemination of information, the webpage of the FAO Food Quality and Standards Service (AGNS) has been upgraded and reorganized for easy access. It can be found at: http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/index_en.stm

PART I: PARTNERSHIP FOR THE PROVISION OF SCIENTIFIC ADVICE: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE FOR FOOD-RELATED SCIENTIFIC ADVICE (GIFSA)

1. In an attempt to meet the growing demand for scientific advice, as challenges in the fields of food safety and nutrition continue to emerge, FAO and WHO established a Global Initiative for Food-related Scientific Advice (GIFSA). The initiative was launched at the 30th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, 2–7 July 2007, with the objective of contributing to the sustainable funding of the FAO/WHO Programme on the Provision of Scientific Advice to the Commission and Member countries.

2. Through this initiative, FAO and WHO will aim to build awareness in Member countries on the provision of scientific advice, actively seek financial and in-kind contributions from Member countries, strengthen collaboration in order to ensure the availability of national experts to contribute to scientific meetings, facilitate the secondment of qualified experts to work directly on scientific advice issues, and encourage submission of relevant scientific data to FAO and WHO as a basis for risk assessments and scientific opinion. GIFSA is considered to be an important mechanism to promote the timeliness and efficiency of scientific advice, while ensuring the continuation of the highest level of integrity and quality. Contributions will be accepted from governments, organizations and foundations in accordance with FAO and WHO rules. FAO and WHO have established separate accounts in each organization to facilitate the receipt of contributions. For more information please visit: http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/agns/advice_en.asp, or <http://www.who.int/foodsafety/codex/gifssa/en/index.html>

3. FAO and WHO are also establishing partnerships with other international organizations and national institutions to carry out activities needed to provide advice to Codex and Member countries during the next biennium. For example, FAO and WHO have partnered with OIE to organize an expert meeting on Critically Important Antimicrobials. The meeting will be held in November 2007 to consider the two lists of Critically Important Antimicrobials developed by WHO and OIE and to address any issues raised by the *Ad Hoc* Intergovernmental Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance. FAO and WHO have also received in-kind and financial support to organize other activities such as the Expert Meeting on Viruses in Food held in May 2007 and the Expert Meeting on Risk Assessment of Microbiological Hazards in Fresh Produce to be held in 2007-2008. Both meetings respond to requests for scientific advice from the Committee on Food Hygiene. FAO and WHO are currently seeking additional partners and support through the GIFSA initiative to implement activities on the health risks and health benefits associated with the consumption of fish and other seafood and activities on the safety assessment of the use of nanotechnology techniques in food production and food processing.

Action to be taken by the Executive Committee:

- Take note of the effort being made by FAO and WHO to provide Codex with the necessary scientific advice including through the new GIFSA mechanism, and recommend to the Commission to urge Member countries and Observers to contribute to the funding of this initiative.

PART II: USE OF SCIENTIFIC ADVICE BY CODEX

4. The use and impact of the scientific advice provided by FAO and WHO was one of the aspects considered during the consultative process on provision of scientific advice conducted by FAO and WHO during the last few years, at the request of Commission. Although the value and utility of the advice provided by JECFA, JMPR, JEMRA¹ and *ad hoc* expert meetings in the work of committees such as the CCFA, CCFC, CCPR, CCFH, CCRVDF, TFFBT², etc. was confirmed, FAO and WHO have noted that, on some occasions, the advice is received and noted by Codex and used partially for the development of guidelines, codes or standards, e.g., development of microbiological criteria for *E. sakazakii* in infant formula and *L. monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat foods. On other occasions, even when the advice is provided, a decision on a particular matter is sometimes postponed.

5. As an example, JECFA had expressed health concerns regarding the use of certain veterinary drugs in food producing animals. However, the Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods did not make use of such advice in developing risk management options as no agreement could be reached by the Committee, and decisions had repeatedly been postponed. This may give the impression that other factors are given more consideration over scientific evidence. As another example, the last session of this Committee requested JECFA to evaluate if the use of malachite green in food producing animals can be supported or not in light of its toxic properties. However, it is not clear what use the Committee will make of the advice to be provided.

6. Ensuring the efficient use of the scientific advice provided by FAO and WHO is important in order to maintain a sustainable programme for the provision of scientific advice.

Action to be taken by Executive Committee:

- Advise on procedures to ensure that FAO and WHO scientific advice is efficiently used and that requests for such advice include a clear indication of its expected use.

¹ Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA), Joint FAO/WHO Expert Meetings on Microbiological Risk Assessment (JEMRA) and Joint FAO/WHO Meetings on Pesticide Residues (JMPR).

² Committees on Food Additives (CCFA), Contaminants in Foods (CCCF), Food Hygiene (CCFH), Pesticide Residues (CCPR), Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods (CCRVDF), *Ad Hoc* Intergovernmental Task Force on Foods derived from Biotechnology (TFFBT).