

English only

Convening of Joint Working groups in Codex- the need for more flexible approach

Note from New Zealand

At the 60th session of the Executive Committee New Zealand raised the issue of Codex rules of procedure relating to convening of joint sessions of working groups to facilitate expeditious and more holistic consideration of issues that are under consideration simultaneously in more than one Committee. The question of providing for more flexible working arrangements has come up in the context of the current discussions in Codex on how to address the issues raised in the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health which is under concurrent consideration by the Codex Committees on Food Labelling and Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses.

It is our understanding that there was some interest in convening a joint working group under the auspices of the Codex Committees on Food Labelling and Nutrition and Foods for Special dietary uses but in the event such a meeting could not proceed because of apparent procedural constraints.

New Zealand believes that there are clear advantages in Committees finding ways to advance work proposals through joint working groups where the issues merit joint consideration. Joint working groups can help promote a more holistic consideration of issues and also facilitate more timely advancement of work through respective committees. Joint working groups are not uncommon and many international organizations use them to facilitate joint discussion of issues where a subject matter is of relevance and interest to more than one committee or group. It is our belief that committees with overlapping responsibilities should have the authority to convene, by mutual agreement, joint working groups in order to ensure a coordinated, holistic approach, and thereby more efficiently and effectively advance the work of both committees. If for any reason this proves impractical to decide at the Committee level, the Commission could be requested to sanction such joint efforts at the time a new work proposal is approved or subsequently if the need arises.

New Zealand would welcome the views of the Executive Committee on the matter raised in this note.