codex alimentarius commission

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION

Agenda Item 2

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD IMPORT AND EXPORT INSPECTION AND CERTIFICATION SYSTEMS

Twelfth Session

Brisbane, Australia, 1 – 5 December 2003

MATTERS REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER CODEX COMMITTEES

ISO STANDARD: FOOD SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM – REQUIREMENT SYSTEM (ISO 22000)

Background

The ISO Technical Committee (TC) 34, deals with issues including food safety systems for commercial certification purposes. Following a successful proposal for new work, ISO TC 34 set up a Working Group to prepare a standard titled "Food Safety Management Systems - Requirements". Denmark hosts the Working Group.

The first draft of the standard was circulated to interested members of ISO in late April 2002. The aim of the standard is to provide the international community with a certifiable food safety standard that incorporates the implementation of HACCP. The standard, when finalized could be implemented by business and certified by appropriately accredited certification bodies. Governments also could mandate the standard, as occurs with other ISO standards.

Link to CCFICS

There is a strong link of this ISO work to the role and function of CCFICS. CCFICS terms of reference includes:

(a)   to develop principles and guidelines for food import and export inspection and certification systems with a view to harmonising methods and procedures which protect the health of consumers, ensure fair trading practices and facilitate international trade in foodstuffs;

(b)   to develop principles and guidelines for the application of measures by the competent authorities of exporting and importing countries to provide assurance where necessary that foodstuffs comply with requirements, especially statutory health requirements;

(c)   to develop guidelines for the utilisation, as and when appropriate, of quality assurance systems to ensure that foodstuffs conform with requirements and to promote the recognition of these systems in facilitating trade in food products under bilateral/multilateral arrangements by countries;

(d)   ...

(e)   ...

(f)   .to consult as necessary with other international groups working on matters related to food inspection and certification systems;

It is relevant to CCFICS, as the ISO standard 22000, when finalised, could become a basis for certification for international trade purposes.

CODEX responsibility in cooperation with other international organizations

At the most recent meeting of CCGP, delegations discussed a document "Guidelines for Cooperation with intergovernmental organizations[1]". The paper noted :

"According to its Statutes, the Codex Alimentarius Commission is responsible for "promoting coordination of all food standards work undertaken by international governmental and non governmental organizations" (Article 1(b)). Objective 3 of the Strategic Framework recognizes that the CAC does not and cannot operate in isolation and states that 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."

Duplication of effort

At the last CCFICS meeting the Committee discontinue work on specific Guidelines relating to the assessment and recognition of Quality Assurance Systems. The Committee noted that the General Principles of Food Hygiene and HACCP provided adequate guidance to ensure the safety of food products and that existing Codex texts developed by CCFICS, such as Principles for Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification (CAC/GL 20-1995), Guidelines for the Design, Operation, Assessment and Accreditation of Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CAC/GL 26-1997) provided adequate guidance on quality assurance.

However, to enable the certification for commercial or other purposes, there is international demand for a single standard which incorporates HACCP, prerequisite programs and elements of management systems, compiled to deliver an efficient food safety management system standards. The ISO work will fill this gap.

ISO work to date

The current work on the draft standard includes harmonising terminology and concepts, particularly related to HACCP, that have been developed within Codex.

It is anticipated that the ISO draft should extend and promote HACCP in a positive way, and it is an opportunity to establish a sound text that provides for certification of HACCP programmes on a voluntary basis. The standard could become an international reference guideline that deals with the implementation of food safety systems incorporating HACCP.

The working group members are experts rather that representatives of countries or interest groups, however all are nominated by their country National Standardisation Bodies. Exceptions are those nominated by other international organisations, such as Codex and Global Food Safety Initiative. Participants in the ISO TC/34 WG 8 include Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, UK, Hungary, Malta, Poland, France, Canada, Japan, Ireland, Switzerland, Korea, USA and Australia. Other organisations represented were Codex and the Global Food Safety Initiative, ISO Quality Systems Committee (TC 176/SC2).

Relevance to WTO

While ISO mainly deals with standards for industry, its standards are also available for use by central government authorities. In terms of the TBT Agreement ISO standards (that are not sanitary measures) adopted by governments become "technical regulations". Where matters falling within the ambit of the SPS Agreement are not covered by Codex standards, but relevant ISO standards exist, these could have the status of relevant *international standards, guidelines and recommendations*" in terms of the SPS Agreement (subject to ISO being formally identified by the SPS Committee as source of such norms).

Recommendation

That Codex, through CCFICS continues to work with the ISO TC/34 Working Group to ensure the anticipated Standard provides a sound text that provides for certification of food safety management systems.

---

[1]   CX/GP 03/8