

Information for First Time Delegates to the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems

This document will assist those delegates who are attending a Codex meeting for the first time. It outlines some of the processes and procedures that are essential for the smooth operation of the Committee during its deliberations.

Registration

All delegates must register their attendance with the Australian and Philippine Secretariat. The registration desk will open from 2.00 – 4.00pm on Sunday 23 November and from 8.00am on Monday 24 November.

During registration delegates will be given a program which outlines the session times for each day.

Documentation

Provisional Agenda

A provisional agenda is prepared by the Codex Secretariat in consultation with the host country. Provisional agendas comprise three distinct groups of items: fixed items linked to procedure (adoption of the agenda, matters referred from other committees etc.); items stemming from previous sessions of the Committee (e.g. standards being elaborated); and other business.

The work of the committee and the length of the meeting are arranged so as to leave sufficient time at the end of the session for a report of the committee's discussions to be agreed. In most circumstances, there is no plenary session the day prior to the adoption of the report in order to provide sufficient time for the reports preparation, including translation.

Working Papers

Working papers (e.g. draft standards, country comment papers, discussion papers) for the committee session are normally distributed at least two months before the opening of the session. The task of preparing and distributing working papers is carried out by the Codex Secretariat, in conjunction with the host country secretariat. These working papers form the basis of discussion at the committee meeting, and distribution in advance enables member countries to consult and develop national positions on issues of importance to their country. Relevant papers are sent to the following:

- all Codex Contact Points;
- international governmental and non-governmental organisations with observer status in the Commission;
- other participants on the basis of registration to attend the session.

Codex Contact Points are responsible for ensuring that papers are circulated to those concerned within their own country and for ensuring that all necessary action is taken by the date specified as the deadline for comments.

You should make sure you get papers for this meeting from the Codex Contact Point before the meeting to enable you to familiarise yourself with the topics being discussed.

Documents received too late for circulation prior to the session will be distributed at the session itself. These are known as conference room documents (CRDs). The disadvantage of CRDs is that their distribution is limited to those Members and observers present at the session. In addition, Members and observers at the session may not have sufficient time or competence to consider the CRD fully or be able to seek a timely official position on the issues raised in the document.

Format of the Meeting

All Codex sessions follow the same format. First, there may be an official or formal opening of the session. If so, the country responsible for hosting the session decides who will officially open the session. This task is often delegated to a senior official of the host government or a minister of the parliament of the host country.

After the session is officially opened, the Chairperson proceeds to the adoption of the provisional agenda and invites observations from members of the committee concerning the provisional agenda and requests that the committee adopt the provisional agenda or amended agenda as the agenda for the session.

The Chairperson of the meeting will ensure that all questions are fully discussed, including comments on the possible economic implications of the standard being elaborated, when the committee considers the written comments of Members not present at the session and that all issues are put clearly to the committee.

At appropriate intervals during the discussion of each agenda item, the Chairperson summarises the discussion by stating what appears to be the generally acceptable view, and asking delegates whether they have any objection to it being recorded as the decision of the committee.

Expressing Your Countries Views at the Meeting

Making an Intervention

Members and observers are permitted to speak (make an intervention) on issues under consideration by the committee. Members and observers should indicate their desire to speak by placing their country or organisation sign in an upright position and leaving it there until such time as the Chairperson calls on you.

Protocol states that Members speak before observers, and delegates speak only when acknowledged by the Chairperson. Normally, it is the head delegate who has the right to speak, however with the Chairpersons permission, another member of the delegation may speak on technical matters. At all times comments are directed to the Chairperson, never directly to another delegation.

At the beginning of an intervention, the delegate should always acknowledge the Chairperson and conclude by thanking the Chairperson for the opportunity to speak.

Before making an intervention delegates should remove their headphones. Headphones should not be left to hang around the delegate's neck or be placed on the table near the microphone, as this can cause static and interfere with the sound reception of other delegates.

When making an intervention delegates should speak slowly. As the meeting is conducted in three languages (English, French and Spanish) interpreters need to be able to follow your speech accurately. If delegates are reading from written comments that have been submitted to the Secretariat and they appear in one of the meeting papers, please indicate at the beginning of your

intervention where the comments can be found. For example, if your written comments are in CX/FICS 05/14/3 Add.1 indicate this and allow a short pause for delegates to find the document. This will ensure that your intervention is understood completely by all delegates in the room and is particularly important if the Committee is editing text of a proposed guideline, standard or related text. If you are proposing changes to the text you must speak slowly so that the other delegates and the Secretariat can write down the proposed changes.

How often can you speak?

There are no precise rules within Codex regarding the number and duration of interventions. However, by convention the general practice is to intervene only once on any particular issue, although a second intervention may be permitted at the discretion of the Chairperson, to clarify a point or reply to a question raised by another delegation.

It is highly desirable for interventions to be as short and clear as possible (two or three minutes is a good average). It is difficult to follow lengthy interventions, and other delegations may lose their concentration, with the result that the point that was made may be missed, thus diminishing the effectiveness of the intervention. Delegates should also note that all interventions are interpreted simultaneously into three languages, with the result that lengthy interventions risk being misunderstood by those who do not comprehend the language of the speaker.

If there is a heavy agenda and time limitations, the Chairperson may ask speakers to keep their interventions as short as possible.

List of Participants

The Australian Secretariat puts together a full list of all participants. On Tuesday each delegation will receive a copy of the participants list and will be asked to check the details and provide any changes to the Australian Secretariat by the end of the day. Delegates should check all details including spelling, e-mail addresses, telephone and facsimile numbers.

Report of the Meeting

A draft report of the committee's proceedings is prepared by the Codex Secretariat for consideration by the committee on the final day of the session. This report will be available on Friday morning (the time will be confirmed on Wednesday before the close of the session). Delegates are given approximately one hour to read through the report and note any changes they may wish to make.

The Friday morning session of the meeting is set aside for the review and adoption of the report by the full committee. The Chairperson will lead delegates through the report paragraph by paragraph or section by section. The review and adoption process provides countries with an opportunity to ensure that the report is accurate. It is not an opportunity to reopen discussion on agenda items. What has been said and decided cannot be revisited. When requesting an amendment to the draft report, it is important to make a concrete proposal for changes such as the deletion or addition of words. The following points should be kept in mind:

- committee decisions in the report should be clearly stated;
- action taken in regard to economic impact statements should be fully recorded;
- all decisions on draft standards should be accompanied by an indication of the step in the procedure that the standards have reached;
- if action has to be taken before the next meeting of the committee, the nature of the action, who is to take it and when the action must be completed should be clearly stated;

- if the report is lengthy, an executive summary of points agreed and the action to be taken should be included at the beginning of the report. All reports contain a section at the end of the report showing clearly in summary form:
 - a) standards considered at the session and the steps they have reached;
 - b) standards at any step of the procedure, the consideration of which has been postponed or which are held in abeyance and the steps which they have reached;
 - c) new standards proposed for consideration, the probable time of their consideration at Step 2 and the responsibility for drawing up the first draft.

Please note that in an effort to keep the report short and precise, the Secretariat do not record every delegate's intervention and will use general language rather than specifics, unless it is seen as important in reflecting the discussion. In addition, during the adoption of the report, spelling and grammatical changes are not requested, these should be provided to the Codex Secretariat in writing at the beginning or the end of the session.

The adoption of the report generally takes around 3 – 4 hours and is conducted without a break in the proceedings.

The following appendixes are normally attached to the report:

- a) a list of participants with full postal and e-mail addresses, telephone numbers and fax numbers;
- b) the complete text of draft standards with an indication of the step in the procedure that has been reached.

Once adopted, the report becomes the official record of the committee session.

The Codex Secretariat makes every effort to ensure that, as soon as possible and in any event not later than one month after the end of the session; copies of the final report are sent to all Codex Contact Points.

Participants Supported by the Codex Trust Fund

The Codex Trust Fund Secretariat will contact the nominated participant and provide advice on travel and other support arrangements.

It is the responsibility of the participant to make their own travel and accommodation arrangements. The Codex Trust Fund will only pay the World Health Organization (WHO) Allowance Rates. Participants should therefore choose accommodation and meals that are within the WHO Allowance Rates, or be prepared to pay the extra costs themselves. Codex Contact Points have been provided with information on accommodation at the Gold Coast, including costs. Participants should consult this list prior to making bookings.

The Codex Trust Fund will notify participants of the payment process for their travel allowance (per diem) and advise when and where the travel allowance is available for collection. Participants should ensure that they have received their per diem prior to travel, as neither the Codex Secretariat nor the Australian Secretariat will take responsibility for paying accommodation accounts or providing funds to delegates.

Participants should also note that they are required to obtain a visa for travel to Australia. Visa applications should be initiated as soon as possible, as it can take up to 6 weeks for applications to be processed. Details for obtaining a visa are contained in the 'Information for Delegates' document, which has been distributed to Codex Contact Points.

If you have any questions or require further information regarding the Codex Trust Fund please email the Secretariat at codextrustfund@who.int , telephone +41 22 791 3080 or fax +41 22 791 4807.

Should delegates wish to seek clarification or require any other assistance prior or during the meeting, they should contact the Australian Secretariat.