

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION



JOINT OFFICE: Viale delle Terme di Caracalla 00100 ROME Tel: 39 06 57051 www.codexalimentarius.net Email: codex@fao.org Facsimile: 39 06 5705 4593

Agenda Item 2

CX/FL 01/2

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD LABELLING

Twenty-ninth Session

Ottawa, Canada, 1 - 4 May 2001

MATTERS REFERRED BY THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS AND OTHER CODEX COMMITTEES

1. COMMITTEE ON NUTRITION AND FOODS FOR SPECIAL DIETARY USES (22nd Session, June 2000)

Discussion Paper on the Scientific Criteria for Health Related Claims

The Committee recalled that following the request of the Committee on Food Labelling for advice concerning the scientific basis for health claims, it had been agreed that the Delegations of France and the United States, with the participation of other countries, would prepare a document considering scientific criteria for health related claims

The Delegation of France introduced the paper, the first part of which considered questions of principle related to health claims, as follows: the definition of health claims, the definition of scientific criteria relating to the safety and quality of the product, the effect claimed, the impact of the claim on the general population and specific groups, evaluation of the claimed effects, and periodic re-evaluation. The Delegation indicated that current scientific methodology allowed to evaluate the relationship between the food components and the health outcome. The second part of the document referred to experience of the United States with the regulation of health claims at the national level, and especially the scientific review of data for health claims.

The Committee expressed its appreciation to the Delegations of France, Denmark, Germany and the United States for their constructive work which provided both theoretical and practical approaches to this complex question. Several delegations stressed the importance of work in the area of health claims in order to prevent misleading the consumer; it was recalled that the CCFL had the main responsibility for discussing labelling issues.

The Delegation of the United States pointed out that the Committee on Food Labelling was still in the process of considering the definitions and requirements for the use of health claims, and that it would be premature to proceed further with the development of scientific criteria for health related claims as long as those recommendations were not finalized or further advanced. The Secretariat informed the Committee that the last session of the CCFL had revised the recommendations on the use of health claims, for integration into the *Guidelines for Use of Health and Nutrition Claims*, and that the text had been returned to Step 3 for further comments and consideration by the next session of the Committee (May 2001).

The Committee agreed to inform the Committee on Food Labelling that there was an agreement in principle on the possibility and opportunity of developing criteria on the scientific basis of health claims and that the Committee was prepared to proceed with this work when the definition of health claims had been further developed. The Committee noted that the work undertaken so far and reflected in the working document would be used as a basis for further work as necessary (ALINORM 01/26, paras. 116-120).

2. COMMITTEE ON FISH AND FISHERY PRODUCTS (24th Session, June 2000)

Labelling of Fish Sticks

The Committee recalled that the 23rd Session of the Commission had returned to Step 6 the Draft Amendment to the Standard for Quick Frozen Fish Sticks on the declaration of fish core, for consideration by the Committee on Food Labelling for labelling requirements and by the CCFFP for technical aspects. The Secretariat informed the Committee that the last session of the Committee on Food Labelling (May 2000) had agreed in principle that the declaration of fish content should be included in the labelling section and asked the CCFFP to consider a definition of “fish content” and the method for its determination, in order to allow for the finalization of the Draft Amendment.

The Delegation of the United Kingdom presented a discussion paper considering different issues related to the definition of fish content and proposed that it should be determined by chemical analysis based on nitrogen content. The Delegation also proposed that the Code of Practice should be amended to include GMP requirements necessary to diminish the loss of nitrogen and excessive uptake of water during fish processing.

Several delegations expressed the view that the determination of nitrogen content would create practical difficulties for regulatory agencies, and that even when GMP were followed in the production process, significant variations could be observed, due to natural differences in nitrogen content in species of fish. In addition, the application of a strict nitrogen limit would significantly limit the number of fish species which could be used for the production of fish sticks. It was also proposed to clarify the practical implications of the change from “fish core” to “fish content”, as related to consumer information.

The Observer from the EC expressed the view that other species should be included in the Tables proposed in the working paper, on the basis of the results obtained in the countries and that all important species for international trade should be listed.

The Committee agreed that a Working Group coordinated by the United Kingdom and including Canada, Germany, Norway, South Africa and the United States would proceed with work on the questions related to the declaration of fish content, in order to propose a definition and a method of analysis for consideration by the next session of the Committee (ALINORM 01/18, paras. 16-20).

3. COMMITTEE ON METHODS OF ANALYSIS AND SAMPLING (23rd Session, February 2001)

Biotechnology

The Committee recalled that the Committee on Food Labelling, while discussing the labelling provisions for foods derived from biotechnology, had asked the CCMAS to consider the methods of analysis for such foods. The first Session of the *Ad hoc* Intergovernmental Task Force on Foods Derived from Biotechnology had also agreed to initiate work on the methods and to ask for proposals in this area through CL 2000/29-FBT/MAS. The Committee noted that the document prepared for the Task Force (CX/FBT 01/8) had been available too late to allow for specific discussion of the methods proposed therein at the present session.

Several delegations supported the establishment of methods for foods derived from biotechnology in the CCMAS. The Delegation of the United Kingdom, supported by other delegations, pointed out that, under its terms of reference, the Committee had the possibility to examine specific analysis and sampling questions referred by other committees, when general guidance was required in areas of concern for all Codex committees. Some delegations and observers stressed the need to take into account the work of relevant international organizations, and to ask the Inter Agency Meeting (IAM) to encourage its members to initiate work on methodology in relevant areas even when no specific Codex provisions existed. The Secretariat indicated that international organizations received all Codex working documents and had the opportunity to submit proposals and relevant information in the framework of commodity Committees and general committees, in addition to CCMAS.

The Committee agreed that it should exercise a general coordinating role as regards methods for the detection or identification of foods derived from biotechnology and that it was ready to consider the proposals made by the Task Force at its next session, and the proposals which might originate from other Codex Committees in the future. The Committee also agreed that the work of relevant international organizations would be taken into account in the process and invited them to provide relevant information in this area (ALINORM 01/23, paras. 10-12)

Methods for the detection of irradiated foods

The Committee considered the proposal of the EC to endorse five methods of analysis for the detection of irradiated foods as general Codex methods, since the Codex General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods required mandatory labelling of irradiated foods and it was therefore necessary to establish methods for control purposes. The Committee discussed this question in detail and endorsed the five methods as proposed (ALINORM 01/23, paras. 100-106, Appendix IV).

4. COMMITTEE ON NATURAL MINERAL WATERS (7th Session, October 2000)

Proposed Draft Standard for Bottled/Packaged Waters (other than Natural Mineral Waters)

Fluoride

The Committee requested the Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (CCNFSDU) and the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL) to determine the criteria regarding the appropriate of fluoride content of packaged waters for dental hygiene and/or the criteria for mandatory declaration and permitted claims.

Waters Used for the Preparation of Infant Foods and Formulae

The Committee noted proposals for the introduction of provisions governing statements in relation to the acceptability of packaged waters for the preparation of infant foods and formulae. It was noted that this was a matter of general concern that had implications for quality and safety requirements of all types of waters. The Committee therefore requested the CCNFSDU to consider the matter in association with the CCFH and CCFL as appropriate, with the view to establishing guidance on the quality and safety criteria and on labelling requirements. Since the matter was considered to be of a general nature, the Committee was of the opinion that the guidance should be developed in the framework of the Codex Standards and Codes of Practice for foods for infants and children (ALINORM 01/20, paras. 25 and 31).

Note: The labelling section of the Proposed Draft Standard for Bottled/Packaged Waters (other than Natural Mineral Waters) will be considered under **Agenda Item 3**.