

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION



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Agenda Item 2

CX/FL 03/2-Add.1

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD LABELLING

Thirty-first Session

Ottawa, Canada, 28 April - 2 May 2003

MATTERS REFERRED BY THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER CODEX COMMITTEES

MATTERS REFERRED BY OTHER COMMITTEES

REGIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR ASIA

Discussion Paper on Functional Foods and Novel Foods (other than from Biotechnology)

The Delegation of Malaysia introduced the discussion paper (CX/ASIA 02/7) prepared in response to the 47th Session of the Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission following a proposal from the Region of Asia to commence work in the area of novel foods (other than from biotechnology), functional foods, and foods that also were considered to be at the food/drug interface.

The first part of paper considered the need to define the scope and concept of functional foods, a classification system and criteria, conditions for making health claims, and evaluation of the safety of functional foods including methods of analysis. The second part of document referred to need for a clear definition of novel foods (other than biotechnology), guidance including product information, safety assessment etc. In order to provide guidance on these issues, the Delegation recommended the convening of a Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on functional foods and novel foods to examine the need for an international standard to provide better regulatory control of these foods, benefiting the industry and the consumers worldwide

Many Delegations expressed their compliments to the Delegation of Malaysia for its work to summarize these complex matters. The Delegations of Thailand and Indonesia supported the organization of a Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation. However they recommended that first priority should be given to a Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on functional food. The Delegation of Japan stated that Japan had already been enforcing regulations that permitted approved health claims since 2001. However, the Delegation expressed its concern that these issues required careful consideration to avoid duplicating discussions in the CCFL and OECD.

The Secretariat introduced the report of the FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on Evaluation of Health and Nutritional Properties of Probiotics in Food including Powder Milk with Live Lactic Acid Bacteria, convened in October 2001 at the request of the Government of Argentina. This Consultation had considered the need for specific and substantiated health claims for probiotics, and its recommendations were particularly relevant with regard to the Proposed Draft Recommendations for Use of Health and Nutrition Claims. The Representatives of FAO and WHO pointed out that there was no plan at present to organize such an Expert Consultation. However, these would be considered future Expert Consultation if the feasibility and necessity of regional demand were crucial.

The Delegation of China informed the Coordinating Committee of the current status of functional food and novel food regulations in China covering aspects of historical use, legal aspects, labelling and functional evaluation. The Delegation also expressed the need for a Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation, because there were currently gaps in the perception of these foods according to the regional basis (or western or oriental).

The Delegation of Republic of Korea also informed the Committee of the current situation of functional foods in Korea. The Delegation indicated that recently Health Functional Food Act had been introduced to manage functional foods in Korea: detailed enforcement regulations were under development including those for Health Supplement products and Nutritional Supplement products which were regulated by the Food Sanitation Act. However, the Delegation noted that the Republic of Korea did not have the definition of novel food because most novel food claimed its own functionality and suggested the inclusion of novel foods in the category of functional foods.

The observer of IACFO supported the proposal to convene a Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on functional food and also expressed the view that experts that would communicate consumer interests or consumer views should participate in the Consultation. They stressed that the expert consultation should focus on food safety issues because labelling and claim issues were dealt with by CCFL.

Taking into consideration the above discussion, the Coordinating Committee recommended that FAO and WHO organize an Expert Consultation on functional foods and include Asian experts among those invited to participate. The Committee noted that there was an urgent need to initiate work on functional foods in the near future (ALINORM 03/15, paras. 86-93).

FAO and WHO are currently considering how to address the request of the Coordinating Committee for Asia.