

codex alimentarius commission

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD HEALTH
ORGANIZATION

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Agenda Item 3

CX/GP 00/4

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME CODEX COMMITTEE ON GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Fifteenth Session

Paris, France, 10 - 14 April 2000

RISK ANALYSIS : FOOD SAFETY OBJECTIVES

The 14th Session of the CCGP noted that the Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) had requested approval of the Commission to undertake the elaboration of *Guidelines for the Judgement of Equivalence of Sanitary Measures associated with Food Inspection and Certification Systems*.¹ The proposal included consideration of the concept of *Food Safety Objectives*.

Several Delegations were of the opinion that the concept of Food Safety Objectives and its linkage with the concept of the determination of the Appropriate Level of Protection were general matters that should be discussed by the CCGP and other relevant Codex Committees, for example the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene where work in the same area had also been initiated. Other Delegations pointed out that the Executive Committee had approved the idea that the concepts in this regard should first be developed by CCFICS in regard to food control for import and export. The CCFICS would also suggest how a systematic approach might be developed and the application of these concepts would then be taken up at an appropriate time by other relevant Committees including the CCGP.² It was also pointed out that the application of these concepts at a technical level would probably differ in the different fields covered by specialist Codex Committees.

The Committee agreed that the matter was one of importance to the work of all Codex Committees and agreed to consider the general aspects of the development and application of food safety objectives at its next session

The 23rd Session of the Commission considered the proposal to initiate new work on *Proposed Draft Guidelines for the Judgement of Equivalence of Sanitary Measures Associated with Food Inspection and Certification Systems*, and decided that the CCFICS should continue to study this question as a discussion paper.

The Codex Committee on Food Hygiene, at its 32nd Session, discussed the Proposed Draft Principles and Guidelines for the Conduct of Microbiological Risk Management, which included a section on food safety objectives. The Committee left the section unchanged as the question on food safety objective would be considered by the CCGP.³

In the light of the conclusion of the CCFICS, the Committee is invited to consider how it should proceed and whether there is a need to define "food safety objective" and consider it specifically in relation to risk analysis. The discussions and conclusions of the 8th Session of the CCFICS on the judgement of equivalence are reproduced below.

¹ ALINORM 99/30A, paras. 69-84.

² ALINORM 99/3, paras 35-36

³ ALINORM 01/13 para 91

8TH SESSION OF THE CCFICS (ALINORM 01/30)

DISCUSSION PAPER ON THE JUDGEMENT OF EQUIVALENCE OF SANITARY MEASURES ASSOCIATED WITH FOOD INSPECTION AND CERTIFICATION SYSTEM (Agenda Item 6)⁴

62. The 7th Session of the CCFICS⁵ requested the Commission to approve the elaboration of proposed draft *Guidelines on the Judgement of Equivalence of Sanitary Measures Associated with Food Inspection and Certification Systems* as new work. The 46th Session of the Executive Committee was of the opinion that priority should be given to the development of judgement of equivalence regarding matters of food safety, and proposed that a paper be prepared for the next Session of the CCFICS on the matter of judgement of equivalence systems for controlling the safety and quality of foods and outlining the issues involved.⁶ Noting this opinion, the 23rd Session of the Commission decided that the CCFICS should continue to consider this item as a discussion paper, and as concepts in this area fell within the mandates of other Codex committees, the discussion paper would need to be circulated to these committees for their comments.⁷ New Zealand prepared, in cooperation with Australia, Canada and the United States, a discussion paper which included a suggested framework for determining the equivalence of sanitary measures associated with food inspection and certification systems. The Committee thanked New Zealand and the other countries involved in the preparation of the Guidelines.

63. The Committee supported the development of Guidelines within the Codex step procedure. Most delegations supported the priority consideration of the judgement of equivalence of sanitary measures on a separate and if possible parallel track to the judgement of equivalence of technical regulations. Other delegations noted the difficulty in separating sanitary aspects from those related to technical matters, and suggested that the Committee might consider merging the two concepts at a later stage. It was also noted that the paper should take account of the work and definitions developed in other Codex committees, and should stress the primacy and importance of adhering to Codex texts and the mandate of the Commission when elaborating the Guidelines.

64. It was suggested that the flow chart for the determination of equivalence (figure 1), should refer to “objective basis for comparison” instead of “food safety objective”, to reflect the current text.

Status of the Discussion Paper on the Judgement of Equivalence of Sanitary Measures Associated with Food Inspection and Certification Systems

65. The Committee requested New Zealand, with assistance from Argentina, Australia, Canada, France, Japan, Morocco, the United States and the European Commission, to proceed with the development of Guidelines on the Judgement of Equivalence of Sanitary Measures Associated with Food Inspection and Certification Systems for circulation and comment at Step 3 prior to the 9th Session of the CCFICS. This decision was taken with the understanding that the development of the Guidelines would be subject to subsequent approval as new work by the 47th Session of the Executive Committee. The Committee also noted that its work in this area would be drawn to the attention of other Codex committees, including CCGP and CCFH.

⁴ CX/FICS 00/6

⁵ ALINORM 99/30A, paras 69-84

⁶ ALINORM 99/4, paras. 24-26

⁷ ALINORM 99/37, para. 203