

# codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE  
ORGANIZATION  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD  
HEALTH  
ORGANIZATION



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Agenda Item 9

CX/GP 09/25/9-Add.2

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

Twenty-fifth Session  
Paris, France, 30 March – 4 April 2009

### PARTICIPATION OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN THE WORK OF CODEX Discussion in the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees

1. The 31<sup>st</sup> Session of the Commission had considered the matters related to participation of developing countries in Codex meetings<sup>1</sup>.
2. The Commission agreed that the issue of participation of developing countries would be considered by the 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on General Principles on the basis of a document prepared by the Secretariat including the data on the participation of developing countries in Codex sessions, and proposals to improve the situation. The Commission also recommended that Coordinating Committees consider this issue and report their views to the next session of the Commission. The conclusions of the Committee on General Principles and Coordinating Committees would be presented to the 32<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Commission for further consideration. The Commission further agreed to include on the agenda of its 32<sup>nd</sup> Session a specific item on this issue.
3. This document contains the discussions held at the Coordinating Committees that will be reported to the 32<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Commission.

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<sup>1</sup> ALINORM 07/31/REP, paras 152-162

## **VIEWS EXPRESSED WITHIN THE COORDINATING COMMITTEES DURING THEIR SESSIONS IN 2008/2009 ON THE PARTICIPATION OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

### **Coordinating Committee for Europe, 26<sup>th</sup> Session (Warsaw, Poland, 7-10 October 2008)<sup>2</sup>:**

“11. The 31<sup>st</sup> Session of the Commission had recommended that Coordinating Committees consider the issue of participation of developing countries and report their views to the 32<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Commission where the subject would be discussed under a specific Agenda item<sup>3</sup>.”

12. The Chairperson recalled that the concern voiced at the Commission was that the current participation of developing countries in Codex was not inclusive enough and that existing means such as the Codex Trust Fund were not sufficient to remedy the situation. The Chairperson said further that in the CCEURO region the term “countries in transition” would be more appropriate instead of developing countries. It was mentioned that currently 22 CCEURO members including 7 members of the European Community were considered as countries in transition.

13. The Delegation of Georgia indicated that Georgia was in need of training and other support in many areas in order to be able to successfully participate in Codex work. The Codex Contact Point needed to be strengthened and a National Codex Committee established. Developed countries could provide very useful training about their methodologies and mechanisms.

14. The Representatives of FAO and WHO informed the delegates that they clearly recognized the need to continue to provide capacity building to ensure better preparation of delegates to Codex meetings and to strengthen Codex Contact Points and that quite a number of tools were available for this. As the CCEURO region was quite unique in the sense that many countries had a very developed Codex structure, twinning programmes could be envisaged. The Representative of WHO mentioned that WHO conducted capacity building through biannual cooperation agreements with countries and urged delegates to get in touch with their Ministry of Health, as necessary so that food safety could enter into such agreements.

15. The Delegation of the European Community informed the Committee that the EC was the largest contributor to the Trust Fund and that also its member states had organized a number of sessions on Codex related activities to which developing/transition countries had been invited. To ensure effective participation and contribution to Codex work a specific EC technical assistance project PAN-SPSO was approved in 2006. This 3.35 million EURO project will be implemented by the Nairobi based "African Union - Inter African Bureau for Animal Resources" (AU-IBAR) and will technically support the efficient participation of African countries in SPS standard setting organizations. The Delegation also indicated that three Codex Committees hosted by the EC member countries recently, are hosted by developing countries in another region now.

16. One member informed the Committee of a high level seminar organized by the Netherlands (The Hague, 9-12 June 2008) on setting food safety standards and their effects on international trade, particularly for developing countries. Amongst the attendees were 68 delegates from 33 developing countries whose attendance was sponsored by the Government of the Netherlands.

17. Some countries expressed the view that it was difficult for them to participate fully in Codex work due to language barriers or high travel costs.

18. The Delegation of Armenia proposed to consider a possibility of organizing a workshop on the strengthening of the work of the National Codex Contact Points.

19. The Coordinating Committee recognised that several Members in the European region whose economies are in transition were eligible for the Codex Trust Fund. The Committee acknowledged the important support given by the Codex Trust Fund in funding participation of these countries at Codex sessions but stressed that more capacity building was necessary in order to ensure that participation effective.

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<sup>2</sup> ALINORM 09/32/19, paras 11 – 19

<sup>3</sup> ALINORM 07/31/REP, paras 152-162

In this respect the Committee examined various capacity building alternatives and took note of different proposals:

- Development of partnerships (bilateral: twinning-type mentoring approach);
- Interdisciplinary, multisectoral and inter-ministerial activities;
- Hosting experts from other countries in Ministries (Health, Agriculture, etc.);
- The European Community Technical Assistance Mechanism;
- The Standards and Trade Development Facility (WTO);
- Providing guidance through electronic means, establishment of electronic working groups;
- Training courses on food control activities organised in host countries;
- Bilateral and multilateral visits, study visits, courses/training;
- Organisation of a Workshop specifically dedicated to the work of Codex Contact Points with participation from all countries in the region (developed countries, transition countries), practical exercises.”

**Coordinating Committee for North America and the South West Pacific**, 10<sup>th</sup> Session (Nuku’alofa, Tonga, 28-31 October 2008)<sup>4</sup>:

“6. The Coordinating Committee recalled that the Commission, at its 31<sup>st</sup> Session, had recommended that Coordinating committees consider the issue of participation of developing countries and report their views to the 32<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Commission<sup>5</sup>.

7. The Delegation of the United States of America, referring to their written statement in CRD 3, proposed to consider an appropriate approach to enhance participation of developing countries in Codex, noting the need among countries for more extensive engagement in the standard setting process.

8. The Coordinating Committee recognized the significant role and impact of the Codex Trust Fund to increase participation from developing countries in Codex. The Coordinating Committee noted the need to look beyond the life of the Trust Fund and consider future options for strengthening participation of developing countries in the work of Codex on a more sustainable basis. It pointed out that, in order to make effective use of Codex Trust Fund’s resources, countries should use appropriate criteria to prioritise their attendance to Codex committees and identify those where they could provide significant inputs.

9. Some delegations noted that the Strategic Plan for CCNASWP 2008-2013 (see Agenda Item 4) addressed the issues related to more effective preparation and participation in Codex work.”

**Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean**, 16<sup>th</sup> Session (Acapulco, Mexico, 10-14 November 2008)<sup>6</sup>:

“6. The Committee recalled that the Commission, at its 31<sup>st</sup> Session, had recommended that the Coordinating Committees consider the issue of participation of developing countries and report their views to the 32<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Commission<sup>7</sup>. The Committee noted that a document with data on the participation of developing countries in Codex sessions and proposals to improve the situation was under preparation by the Codex Secretariat, and would be presented to the 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on General Principles. The Secretariat was currently extracting information on country participation from the lists of participants attached to Codex meeting reports, for the purpose of preparing the said document, in accordance with the request made at the last session of the Commission. The Secretariat was also preparing a response to a request made by the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Committee) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) regarding the status of participation of developing countries in the work of the three standard setting bodies referred to in the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement).

<sup>4</sup> ALINORM 09/32/32, paras 6 – 9

<sup>5</sup> ALINORM 07/31/REP, paras 152-162

<sup>6</sup> ALINORM 09/32/36, paras 6 – 8

<sup>7</sup> ALINORM 07/31/REP, paras 152-162.

7. The Committee noted the indication of several delegations that the above-mentioned document should not only comprise statistics on participation but should also analyse the impact of the Codex Trust Fund on enhancing the participation of developing countries. The Codex Secretariat informed the Committee that the analysis on participation in the last 12 months was nearing completion and that this was being extended to previous years, the actual number of years of study depending on the human resources available to the Secretariat. The delegations expressed their dissatisfaction with this information, particularly regarding the current status of preparation of the study in relation to the human and material resources needed to complete the work in a satisfactory manner. The delegations also expressed their concern over the timeframe of the study which would be insufficient to analyse the participation of developing countries. They therefore emphasized that such a study should analyse the participation of those countries during a sufficiently long period of at least one to two years before the Codex Trust Fund was established. In addition, the study should be sent to countries sufficiently in advance before the next meeting of the Committee on General Principles. Many delegations expressed the view that equal participation of developed and developing countries in the standard-setting process was of utmost importance and that information on the participation of developing countries was essential in evaluating the current situation and identifying future actions to be taken.

8. Some delegations suggested that Codex members be invited to put forward proposals to improve the participation of developing countries. The Committee recalled that the Commission had requested the Codex Secretariat to prepare proposals to enhance the current situation and noted that this course of action agreed on by the Commission would, however, not prevent Codex members from presenting their proposals at the 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on General Principles.”

**Coordinating Committee for Asia**, 16<sup>th</sup> Session (Denpasar, Indonesia, 17 – 21 November 2008) <sup>8</sup>:

“13. The Coordinating Committee recalled that the Commission, at its 31<sup>st</sup> Session, had recommended that coordinating committees consider the issue of participation of developing countries and report their views to the 32<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Commission<sup>9</sup>.

14. The Coordinating Committee noted that countries of the region were already hosting four Codex Committees and Task Forces: Codex Committees on Food Additives and Pesticide Residues (China); on Fats and Oils (Malaysia); and the *ad hoc* Intergovernmental Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance (Republic of Korea). It was also pointed out that recent and upcoming sessions of the Codex Committees on Nutrition and Food for Special Dietary Uses, on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems and on Food Hygiene were held in developing countries, under co-hosting arrangements. The Coordinating Committee further noted that the increasing number of Codex sessions and working groups’ meetings were becoming a burden not only for developing but also for industrialised countries.

15. The Coordinating Committee did not discuss this issue any further noting that the Codex Committee on General Principles (CCGP) would consider this issue in detail at its 26<sup>th</sup> session (Paris, France, 30 March - 3 April 2009).”

**Coordinating Committee for the Near East**, 5<sup>th</sup> Session (Tunis, Tunisia, 26 – 29 January 2009)<sup>10</sup>:

“11. The Committee recalled that the Commission, at its 31<sup>st</sup> Session, had recommended that the Coordinating Committees consider the issue of participation of developing countries and report their views to the 32<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Commission<sup>11</sup>. The Committee noted that a document with data on the participation of developing countries in Codex sessions and proposals to improve the situation was under preparation by the Codex Secretariat, and would be presented to the 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on General Principles. The Secretariat was currently extracting information on country participation from lists of participants attached to Codex meeting reports, for the purpose of preparing the above document, in accordance with the request made at the last session of the Commission.

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<sup>8</sup> ALINORM 09/32/15, paras 13-15

<sup>9</sup> ALINORM 07/31/REP, paras 152-162

<sup>10</sup> ALINORM 09/32/40, paras 11-14

<sup>11</sup> ALINORM 07/31/REP, paras 152-162.

12. The Observer from Brazil stated that even though the number of developing country members of Codex was higher than that of developed countries, their participation had been lower and that this imbalance was compromising the function of Codex as one of the international standard setting bodies responsible under the WTO-SPS agreement. The Observer felt that it was important that countries stated their concern on this matter so that measures could be taken to turn Codex into an organization with better means and structure.

13. As a means to enhance the participation of developing countries, delegations pointed out the importance of the support given by the Codex Trust Fund and its possible extension, as well as holding more Codex committees in developing countries through co-hosting arrangements. In this regard, the Committee noted that the arrangement of co-hosting principally depended on the agreement between the host and co-hosting countries and that countries of the Region were encouraged to invite global committees to the Region.

14. The Committee noted the information given by the Secretariat that a review of the impact of co-hosting of Codex sessions in developing countries on the participation was currently undertaken by the Secretariat together with a review of replies to a questionnaire on experiences of countries with this practice.”

**Coordinating Committee for Africa, 18<sup>th</sup> Session (Accra, Ghana, 24-27 February 2009) <sup>12</sup>:**

“8. The Committee recalled that the Commission, at its 31<sup>st</sup> Session, had recommended that Coordinating Committees consider the issue of developing countries and report their views to the 32<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Commission. The Committee noted that the 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on General Principles would consider a document prepared by the Secretariat which would include data on the participation of developing countries in Codex sessions and proposals to improve the situation.

9. The Committee agreed that participation of developing countries in Codex was critical and that participation needed to be strengthened.

10. The Committee acknowledged the role of the Codex Trust Fund in financially assisting developing countries to participate in Codex and extended its appreciation to the Trust Fund. The Committee agreed that funding through the Trust Fund was not sustainable over the long-run and that countries should seek other sources of financial assistance. It was noted that awareness of Codex by political decision-makers was critical in this regard.

11. The Committee was of the view that improved participation in Codex by countries of the region could best be achieved through amongst others: strengthening national structures, such as Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committees; strengthening infrastructure and human resource capacity especially with regard to scientific data collection; and ensuring consistency of delegates to Codex meetings and that implementation of the Strategic Plan for the Coordination of CCAFRICA would contribute in achieving the aforementioned. The Committee further noted the importance of sensitizing the Africa Union (AU) and regional economic communities (RECs) to the work of Codex. The Secretariat informed the Committee that very few RECs currently had observer status in Codex and urged countries to encourage their RECs to gain observer status with Codex.”

12. The Observer from Brazil noted that although the Codex Trust Fund was an important instrument to assist countries to participate, that this was not the only question to enhance participation of developing countries, but that more importantly, the structure of Codex needed to be re-examined especially with regard to the dispersion of Codex meetings and the need for their centralization be considered.”

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<sup>12</sup> ALINORM 09/32/28, paras 8-12