

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION



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Agenda Item 2

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

12th Session

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 13 – 16 February 2001

MATTERS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER COMMITTEES

STATUS OF WORK AS OF NOVEMBER 2000

of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and FAO/WHO Expert Consultations
regarding Foods derived from Biotechnology

CODEX *AD HOC* INTERGOVERNMENTAL TASK FORCE ON FOODS DERIVED FROM BIOTECHNOLOGY

1. The 23rd Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission decided to establish an Intergovernmental Task Force on Foods Derived from Biotechnology to develop standards, guidelines or recommendations, as appropriate, for foods derived from biotechnology or traits introduced into foods by biotechnology. The Task Force shall complete its work within four years.
2. The First Session of the Task Force, held in Japan from 14 to 17 March 2000, set out a work programme including the development of “over-arching” general principles for risk analysis of GM foods. The Task Force will also prepare specific guidance on the risk assessment of GM foods for food safety and nutrition; the application of the concept of “substantial equivalence”; consideration of long-term health effects and non-intentional effects arising from genetic modification. First priority will be given to foods of plant origin, followed by micro-organisms used directly in foods and then foods of animal origin. An *Ad Hoc* Working Group to be chaired by Japan was established to draft texts mentioned above.
3. The Task Force also decided to establish a list of analytical methods for the detection of GMOs and established another *Ad Hoc* Working Group, to be chaired by Germany. The Working Group will meet immediately before the second session of the Task Force planned to be held in Chiba, Japan from 25 to 29 March 2001.
4. The Working Group for drafting has held two sessions in Tokyo, in July and October/November 2000 and has prepared the following texts for discussion:
 - Proposed Draft General Principles for the Risk Analysis of Foods Derived from Modern Biotechnology,
 - Proposed Draft Guideline for the Conduct of Safety Assessment of Foods Derived from Recombinant-DNA Plants.
5. The texts are being sent to the Codex member countries and relevant international organizations for comments and, at the same time, placed on the Codex website.

JOINT FAO/WHO EXPERT CONSULTATIONS ON FOODS DERIVED FROM BIOTECHNOLOGY

6. In 1990 and 1996 FAO and WHO organised joint expert consultations to consider the safety and nutritional aspects of GM foods. In 1999 FAO and WHO decided to organize, in parallel to the work of the Codex Task Force on Foods Derived from Biotechnology, a series of expert consultations on the safety of GM foods, recognizing the increasing interest in this issue among their member countries.

7. The Consultation held in Geneva from 29 May to 2 June 2000 dealt with scientific principles for the evaluation of safety and nutritional aspects of GM foods and concentrated on the notion of **substantial equivalence**. The Consultation prepared also replies to specific questions raised by the Codex Task Force on Foods Derived from Biotechnology at its first session. The report (published by WHO) is also available on the FAO Website. The Consultation concluded that substantial equivalence contributes to a robust safety assessment framework. The results of the Consultation were reflected in the work of drafting the texts mentioned above. It is planned to hold a second consultation of this kind to address specifically the question of **allergenicity of GM foods** in January 2001.