

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD
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ORGANIZATION



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Agenda Item 7

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**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR LATIN AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN**

16th Session

Acapulco, Mexico, 10 – 14 November 2008

ISSUES OF SIGNIFICANCE TO THE REGION

ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS TRUST FUND

PERIOD 2005-2007

ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION

(Prepared by Costa Rica)

Introduction

1. The Codex Alimentarius is the reference body for the World Trade Organization on legislation, international trade and safety relating to food. The international standards and other work that it produces are technical documents that serve as instruments for the standardization of national technical regulations on food and are mechanisms of vital importance for the harmonization of international trade, while watching out for consumer health and rights.
2. Although the Codex Alimentarius Commission currently has 175 member countries (according to the 17th edition of the Codex Procedural Manual), it is acknowledged that the developing countries and countries with economies in transition have not been able to fully participate in its work, mainly because of budgetary limitations at national level. In view of the above, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) introduced in 2003 an initiative aimed at remedying that inadequacy, the Project and Fund for Enhanced Participation in Codex (subsequently known as "the Codex Trust Fund or CTF or Fund"), which became operational in 2004.
3. The Codex Trust Fund (CTF) was set up to provide resources and to facilitate the participation of delegates of developing and transition countries in discussions and negotiations of the Codex Alimentarius Commission to formulate global standards on food safety and quality.
4. There is no doubt that the creation of the CTF has been of great benefit and support to the developing countries, and has in particular helped the Latin America and the Caribbean region to increase its participation in Codex meetings and consequently in the formulation and adoption of standards. Support from the fund has been beneficial and the region has responded in full with its matching requirements. However, there is concern over the reduced access of the region to the fund in recent years. There is a need to examine the underlying reasons for this in order to propose or reformulate criteria for funding allocation, so that support can continue to all the regions and CTF resources can be optimized among all eligible countries per region, for the general good.
5. Below is a brief account of the current situation for the allocation of CTF funds:

1. Criteria for country classification and distribution of resources

6. The CTF classification considered indicators that were purely economic and indicators of development, for which it used three official classifications: the list of Least Developed Countries (LDC) drawn up in 2000 by the United Nations Economic and Social Council; the World Bank classification of economies in the year 2004; and the Human Development Index (HDI) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for 2003.

7. Analysis of these classifications shows that while non-economic aspects were considered, in particular the HDI, per capita income carried more weight in deciding country placement in groups 1B, 2 and 3. The LDC indicator was the criterion used to place countries in group 1 A. By way of example for greater elucidation:

- Classification in group 1B was for World Bank low-income countries and those with a low HDI, but some countries, like India, Moldova, Mongolia, Vietnam, Ghana and Nicaragua, were placed in this category despite having a high HDI, indicating the importance of the per capita income variable.
- Also striking is the fact that some countries with middle income and also medium HDI were also placed in group 1B, such as Armenia, Georgia and Indonesia. The criteria for this classification are unclear.

8. Another important aspect is the distribution of funds per group and the participation of each region within each CTF group. An indicative distribution of financial resources revised in 2004 (see CX/ECEC 04/53/3), allocates 60% of resources to group 1, 30% to group 2 and 10% to group 3. The regional distribution per group works out as follows:

Table 1. Regional distribution of CTF groups

Region	Group 1		Group 2		Group 3		Total	
	N° of eligible countries	% proportion of eligible countries	N° of eligible countries	% proportion of eligible countries	N° of eligible countries	% proportion of eligible countries	N° of eligible countries	% proportion of eligible countries
Africa	36	59.0%	4	9.8%	4	12.9%	44	33.1%
Asia	12	19.7%	4	9.8%	1	3.2%	17	12.8%
Europe	3	4.9%	8	19.5%	8	25.8%	19	14.3%
Latin America and the Carib.	2	3.3%	14	34.1%	14	45.2%	30	22.6%
Near East	3	4.9%	7	17.1%	4	12.9%	14	10.5%
South-West Pacific	5	8.2%	4	9.8%	0	0.0%	9	6.8%
Total	61	100%	41	100%	31	100%	133	100%

Source: calculated by the author on the basis of data in Codex document CX/EXEC 04/53/3

9. It can be seen that group 1, which accounts for 60% of resources, is primarily composed of African countries (59%), followed by Asia (19.7%), South-West Pacific (8.2%), Europe and Near East (each with 4.9%) and lastly Latin America and the Caribbean with only 3.3%. It is important to note that the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and Near East are mainly in groups 2 and 3.

10. It can be deduced from this regional distribution per group that the distribution has favoured certain regions from the very outset, as Table 2 confirms. This does not necessarily correspond to the aim of the fund which is to “provide resources and help facilitate the participation of delegates of developing and transition countries in the deliberations and negotiations of the Codex Alimentarius Commission”. The aim refers to a general increase in participation of developing and transition countries.

Table 2. Regional distribution of the CTF

Group	Corresponding % of the CTF						Total
	Africa	Asia	Europe	LA and Caribbean	Near East	South-West Pacific	
1	35%	12%	3%	2%	3%	5%	60%
2	3%	3%	6%	10%	5%	3%	30%
3	1%	0,3%	3%	5%	1%	0%	10%
Total	40%	15%	11%	17%	9%	8%	100%

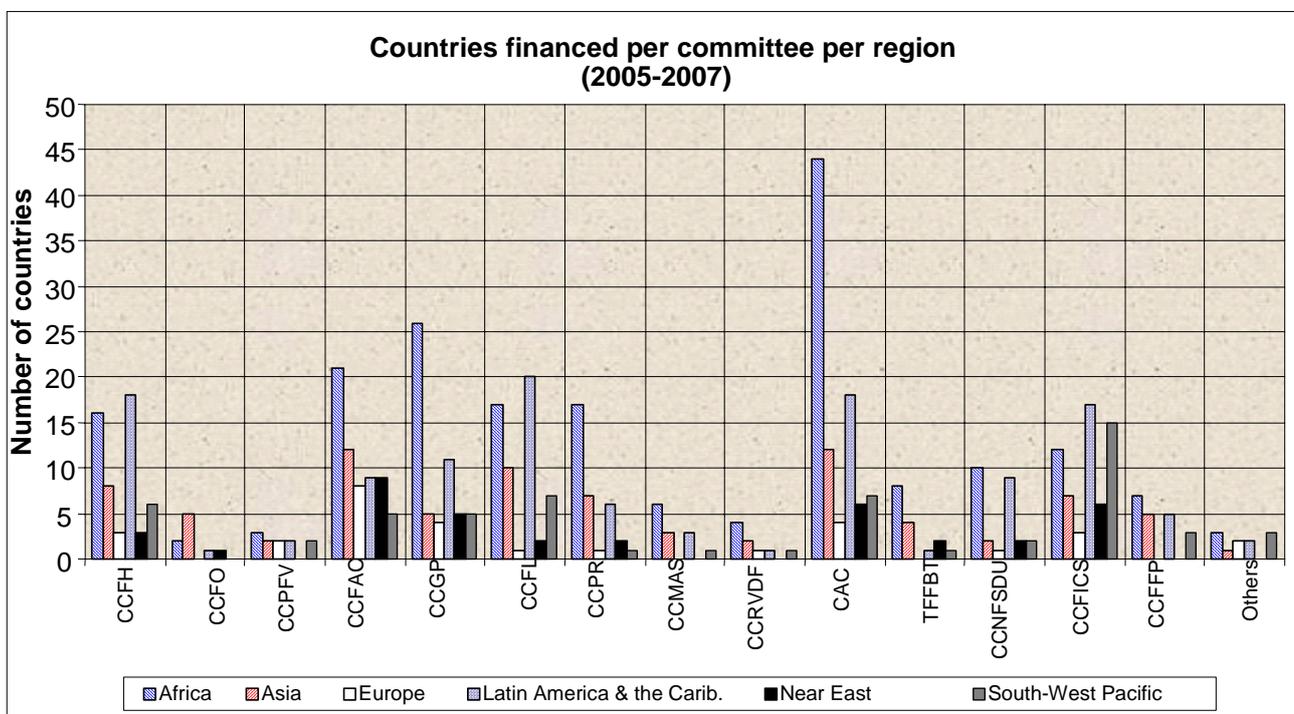
Source: prepared by the author on the basis of data from Codex document CX/EXEC 04/53/3

11. The participation of some regions, especially those that are mainly in groups 2 and 3, is further hampered by the limited duration of financial support for eligible countries. So those groups not only have access to a lower percentage of the fund, but also for a shorter period. In practice, group 3 only has access for three years, group 2 for five years and group 1 for 7 years.

2. Actual distribution of funds for the period 2005-2007.

12. Graph 1 indicates the number of countries that have been financed by the CTF for participation in selected meetings during the period 2005-2007. The meetings most attended were: Commission (CAC), General Principles (CCGP), Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS), Hygiene (CCFH) and Food Labelling (CCFL). It can also be seen that Africa was the region that received the most financial support, which was to be expected given the above information on fund distribution.

Graph 1. Countries per region in the period 2005-2007

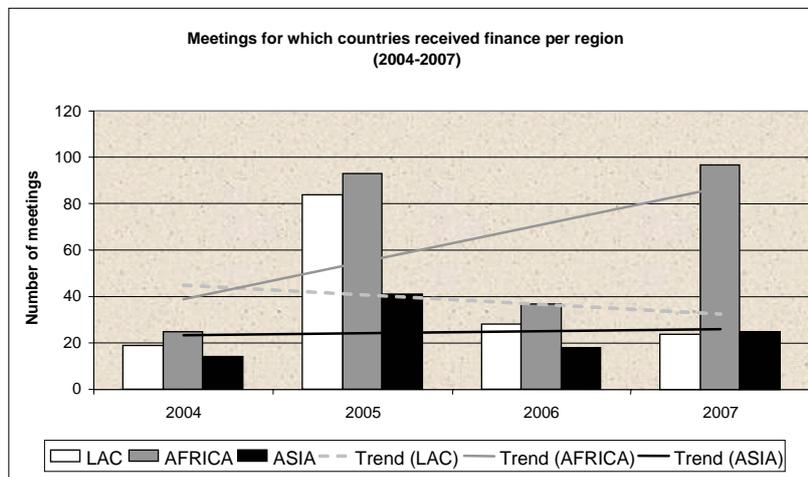


Source: prepared by the author on the basis of data from *FAO/WHO Project and Fund for Enhanced Participation in Codex*. Annual reports for 2005, 2006 and 2007.

13. It can also be seen that there are different priorities in each region. Africa’s participation was mainly for the CAC and the Committee on General Principles during the three years of the study, and Food Additives and Contaminants in 2007. Latin America and the Caribbean was mainly present for the CCFL, CAC and CCFH.

14. While Latin America and the Caribbean ranked second in support received to attend the above Committees, its participation has been declining over the years, in contrast to that of other regions such as Asia and the South-West Pacific, while Africa has maintained its comparative position. This situation is illustrated in graph 2 which shows the participatory trend of three regions, clearly indicating that the participation of Africa and Asia is increasing to the detriment of that of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Graph 2. Attendance per region financed by the CTF



Source: Information provided by the Codex Technical Secretariat in Argentina

15. The most worrying aspect for the region is that if the present situation continues, most of the countries will graduate from the fund in 2009 and as the Codex Secretariat in Argentina explains: *“If we consider that most countries of Latin America and the Caribbean are in groups 2 and 3 of the TF, we will find that, from the fourth year (2007) for the countries of group 3, and the sixth year (2009) for the countries of group 2, those countries will have “graduated”, which means that they will no longer receive support and will have to participate with their own funding, as stated in the commitments assumed when joining the TF”.*

16. This trend favouring certain regions affects country representativeness at meetings. It also affects the consensus reached in discussions of documents, in the sense that all regions should be represented at different meetings and decisions should be by consensus of all regions and not reflect the interests of just one region.

3. Conclusions

17. The above analysis leads to the following conclusions:

- Although other non-economic indicators are used for country classification under the CTF, the per capita income indicator carries most weight, not the Human Development Index, for groups 1B, 2 and 3B.
- This classification means that CTF distribution has always favoured the participation of certain regions.
- Over the years and given the matching requirements for each group, there has been growing participation of Africa and Asia to the detriment of Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Although CTF support is of great benefit to the developing countries, the fact that the duration of support differs between groups means that some regions participate more than others. This could affect decisions which would not be by consensus of the regions.
- Because the Latin America and the Caribbean region is predominantly in groups 2 and 3, it not only has access to fewer resources but also for a very short period. All the countries will soon have “graduated” from the CTF and will therefore not receive financial support for their participation. The region must therefore identify other forms of regional financing in addition to that currently provided by the fund.

4. Recommendations

- It is strongly recommended that future studies consider data on number of participants per country and the cost of that participation for each year with CTF financing, in order to evidence an equitable distribution of resources among regions and to ensure a balanced benefit.

- Where there is a year-end CTF credit, those resources should be allocated to the countries so they have the option of to participate in another Codex meeting, rather than being used for training in a particular area which might not be a country priority.

N.B. A document with more details on the current CTF allocation situation, together with proposed new criteria for allocation and other recommendations will be circulated in October so that these are known at the next session of the CCLAC, as decided at the workshop held in Antigua, Guatemala in June 2008.

**LENGTH AND CONTENT OF REPORTS OF MEETINGS OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND ITS
SUBSIDIARY BODIES**

(Prepared by Argentina)

18. Several countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have stated that, without exaggerating, the reports of Codex meetings should be sufficiently descriptive to provide Members and observers that have not participated in a meeting with a comprehensive insight into discussions at meetings of the Codex Commission and its subsidiary bodies.
19. Reports should clearly detail decisions taken. However, countries also need to know the opinions of the large blocs that form in support or opposition of specific decisions. This is fundamental in helping developing countries that do not participate in person at Codex meetings. It is also useful to name those countries that supported or opposed a position.
20. There is also tendency to shorten reports and to omit the names of countries or to mention only a few. There are special implications when the names of countries or representatives and coordinators are not mentioned in the reports of the Executive Committee, as participants act on behalf of their regions and those represented have no means of knowing whether their regional positions or viewpoints were defended or not.
21. With regard to the potential cost of producing longer reports, the provision of clearer details on positions held should not significantly increase the size of the report and therefore its cost. Transparency cannot be sacrificed on the grounds of budgetary savings when no-one is able to provide precise information on the number and cost of documents translated in FAO for Codex. In this regard, there is a need to consider that the host countries of Codex Committees usually cover this expenditure as well as the cost of printing.
22. With regard to delays that FAO and the Codex Secretariat would face in the translation of very long reports and their transmittal to the capitals, it is worthy of note that translation of a report takes place during the meeting, and that the revision done in Rome is basically less time-consuming and costly than translation, and is in some cases also covered by the country hosting the committee or task force in question.
23. In view of the above, it would be interesting for the Members of the region to compare the clarity of description of agenda items, discussions and decisions in the reports of three years ago with that of reports produced during the course of 2008.
24. In conclusion, transparency needs to be maintained and Members and observers that do not participate in Codex meetings must be able to clearly follow the discussions that take place at those meetings. With this in mind, if the budgetary restrictions are insuperable, we could look at the merit of redirecting resources currently used to audio-tape Commission and Executive Committee proceedings towards Commission and subsidiary body reports that better reflect discussions during meetings.