



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
FAO/WHO REGIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
18th Session
San José, Costa Rica, 19-23 November 2012
**MATTERS ARISING FROM THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND
OTHER CODEX COMMITTEES**

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

A. Proposed Draft Standard on Processed Cheese¹

1. The 35th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (July 2012) agreed to discontinue work on the development of a standard for processed cheese. The Commission further requested the Codex Secretariat to prepare a Circular Letter asking Members to identify the gaps in the safety and quality provisions of Codex texts that would justify new work on processed cheese and describe the scope of any new work to be considered to address such gaps. The Commission further agreed to request the upcoming sessions of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees to further discuss the need for a standard for processed cheese and document the scope of the work that might be needed in this area.

2. The Committee **is invited** to discuss the need for a standard for processed cheese as requested by the 35th Session of the Commission.

B. Proposal for establishment of a subsidiary body of the Codex Alimentarius Commission²

3. The 35th Session of the Commission considered a proposal of the Delegation of India to establish a new subsidiary body on spices, aromatic herbs and their formulations (see document CX/CAC 12/35/19³). Noting the merits and general support for this work, but also that further analysis was needed, the Commission agreed to request the Delegation of India to prepare a discussion paper for consideration at the next session of the Commission, taking into account comments made at the Session, in particular the need to better clarify the scope of work; an analysis of the gaps in terms of work in the Commission; and the mechanism to undertake this work. Interested delegations were invited to provide their contribution to India in the preparation of the paper. The Commission also agreed to ask the Coordinating Committees for their views on the proposal for the establishment of a Committee on spices, aromatic herbs and their formulations. The next Session of the Commission would further consider the proposal based on the abovementioned discussion paper as well as the views of the Coordinating Committees.

4. The Committee **is invited** to provide their view on the proposal for the establishment of a Committee on spices, aromatic herbs and their formulations. A summary of the proposal of the Delegation of India is presented in CX/LAC 12/28/2-Add.1.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE CODEX COMMITTEE ON GENERAL PRINCIPLES

C. Distribution of documents and length and content of reports

5. The 27th Session of the Codex Committee on General Principles (April 2012) recalled that the delegation of Chile had presented a discussion paper at the last session including recommendations on ways to approach the timely and simultaneous distribution of documents and the length and content of reports taking into account concerns raised at the Commission and from the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean. The 26th CCGP had briefly considered the document and agreed that the document would be discussed in the CCLAC and submitted for information to the other coordinating committees and the issue would continue to be discussed at the present session.

6. The delegations of Chile and Costa Rica (as CCLAC coordinator) introduced the discussion held at the last CCLAC session as contained in document CX/GP 12/27/2 and reiterated the concerns of many countries with the late availability of working documents and reports in all languages, which had been discussed repeatedly without reaching any adequate solution. Concerning reports the CCLAC had concluded that drafting of reports should follow the current practice i.e. a summary of the main aspects of the negotiation process or the relevant discussion points, including differing opinions (as well as minority opinions).

7. One delegation also requested clarification as to why language coverage of the Commission had recently been extended to Russian while availability of documents was not yet satisfactory in the other languages.

¹ REP12/CAC para. 163.

² CX/CAC 12/35/19 and REP12/CAC para. 278.

³ [ftp://ftp.fao.org/codex/Meetings/CAC/cac35/cac35_19x.pdf](http://ftp.fao.org/codex/Meetings/CAC/cac35/cac35_19x.pdf)

8. One delegation supporting the concerns voiced by the Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (CCLAC) said that they had for some time already promoted the use of machine translation to speed up the availability of translations and reduce costs. They recognized however there was still a lot of development in the area but in their opinion it was worthwhile to explore this possibility.
9. One delegation noted that simultaneous distribution of documents (i.e. distribution of documents only at a time when all language versions were available) was one option to ensure that all members had equal opportunity to prepare for the meetings.
10. It was observed that the draft reports of Codex meetings were available at the end of each session but that it took a long time for the final reports to be distributed, in case of the Commission it had taken several months.
11. The Codex Secretariat recalled that the majority of Codex delegations had to work in languages that were not their national language and thus depended on the early availability of at least one version of the documents. The Secretariat said further that the late availability of translations was less a problem of the capacity of the Codex Secretariat because only minor translations such as for invitations or agendas (which were distributed simultaneously) were done by the Secretariat. For all other translations the Secretariat relied on FAO/WHO services or the generous contributions from the host governments of Codex committees and task forces. The Secretariat said that part of the problem was also the annual session of the Commission at the beginning of July while committees were still held until end of May. This naturally led to the fact that some documents were late for the Commission.
12. The Secretariat said that as previously announced, the tables of preparation for Codex meetings including the responsibility for document preparation would be made available on the Codex ftp server. They said further that machine translation had been tried but had not yet delivered the expected results.
13. The Secretariat acknowledged that improving the processes in the Secretariat could lead to a quicker turnover of documents for example with the help of an online commenting system such as was used by the IPPC Secretariat.
14. The Secretariat also explained that the extension of language coverage was in line with the rules of FAO and there was a specific fund for Russian language within FAO.
15. Following a question about language coverage in CCAFRICA the Secretariat said that Portuguese had been used as language of interpretation in recent sessions of the CCAFRICA and this practice would be continued, however it was not yet possible to extend it to translations of documents.
16. The Chairperson concluded: that it was important that the vacant posts in the Codex Secretariat were filled as soon as possible; that the Secretariat would make available the table of preparation of documents for each meeting showing the dates of documents received and the responsibility for the documents; that the Secretariat should strictly enforce deadlines for comments; that while progress had been made with machine translation, the quality was not yet acceptable to serve as official translation without needing manual editing; and that drafting of reports should follow the current practice i.e. a summary of the main aspects of the negotiation process or the relevant discussion points, including differing opinions (as well as minority opinions).
17. The delegation of Lebanon speaking as coordinator for the Near East region said that it was important that all final products of Codex (standards, guidelines and codes of practice) were available in all six official UN languages and that all working documents were available on time in the languages of the Committees and the Commission. The delegation further proposed to review the languages used for interpretation in CCGP to evaluate if all six official languages could be used as the Committee dealt with issues of general interest to all members of the Commission.
18. The Codex Secretariat acknowledged that presently not all Codex texts had been translated or updated on the Codex website but that this was an ongoing project of the Codex Secretariat.⁴

⁴ REP12/GP, paras. 72-85.