

codex alimentarius commission E



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION



JOINT OFFICE: Viale delle Terme di Caracalla 00153 ROME Tel: 39 06 57051 www.codexalimentarius.net Email: codex@fao.org Facsimile: 39 06 5705 4593

Agenda Item 2.1

**CX/NASWP 08/10/3
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**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR NORTH AMERICA
AND THE SOUTH WEST PACIFIC**

Tenth session

Nuku'alofa, Tonga, 28-31 October 2008

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2008-2013

Replies to CL 2008/12-NASWP, Part C of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu,

(i) Mechanisms and evaluation criteria at country level to improve horizontal coordination and communication among national delegates to various food-standards-related international organizations (see Activity 4.5 of the Strategic Plan)

AUSTRALIA

Australia has strong linkages and established communication and consultative mechanisms between the agencies responsible for food safety issues i.e. the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) and its associated agency - the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS); the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) and its associated agency - Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ).

Australia has a documented strategic plan for its participation in Codex – 'Strategic Objectives for Australia's Participation in Codex 2006 – 2008' which reinforces the Australian Government's commitment to consumer health and safety and to a dynamic, diverse and internationally competitive food industry; and recognises that Australia's strategic objectives in Codex are also determined by market access and trade facilitation policies and programs delivered through relevant Australian Government agencies.

The strategic plan identifies the following key objectives for Australia's participation in Codex for the period 2006 – 2008:

1. Promote, within the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the development of food standards, guidelines and other recommendations based on the principle of sound scientific analysis and evidence, and involving a thorough review of all relevant information, so that the standards assure the food supply's safety and quality.
2. Promote the use of risk analysis, including risk assessment, risk management and risk communication in developing and applying international standards.
3. Support consensus based decision making in Codex forums.
4. Strengthen and promote relationships and strategic alliances with other Codex member countries.
5. Strengthen and promote linkages between Codex and other international organizations (i.e. OIE, IPPC, and WTO).
6. Extend the involvement of Australia's stakeholders, including government, industry and consumers, in the Codex process by ensuring Australia's activities in Codex are efficient and coordinated.

7. Facilitate and promote the work of the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS), in particular the ongoing development of principles and guidelines for food import and export inspection and certification systems, with a view to harmonising methods and procedures which protect the health of consumers and facilitate international trade in foodstuffs.

The 'Strategic Objectives for Australia's Participation in Codex 2006 – 2008' will be reviewed at the end of 2008.

A reference guide "*Guidelines and Responsibilities for Delegates Attending Meetings of Codex Committees and Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Forces*" has been developed by Codex Australia which provides information regarding roles and responsibilities of participants in Australia's Codex processes and in particular that of delegation members. In addition to this document, Australian delegates are required to familiarise themselves with the Codex Alimentarius Commission Procedural Manual and the FAO's Guide on Conduct of Plenary Meetings.

Codex Australia also holds an annual Delegation Leaders Workshop to discuss pertinent cross committee issues relating to Australia's involvement in the Codex fora.

CANADA

The Office of the Codex Contact Point for Canada has responsibility for day to day coordination of Canada's Codex activities. The Interdepartmental Committee for Codex (IDC/Codex) has responsibility for providing strategic direction to Canada's program and also endorses all Canadian positions on Codex matters. The IDC/Codex is comprised of officials from Health Canada (including the Pest Management Regulatory Agency of Canada), the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) and Industry Canada (IC). This interdepartmental structure ensures consistency and continuity of Canadian positions, not only to the various Codex sessions but also to other international fora, and is an effective mechanism for horizontal coordination and communication as identified in Activity 4.5 of the Strategic Plan. Canada's Strategic Framework builds on this theme as it identifies two strategic objectives (objectives 3.4 and 3.5) intended to enhance horizontal coordination and communication, namely, enhancing the IDC/Codex's role in the consideration of strategic issues and enhancing the awareness amongst Canadian delegations of cross cutting issues and their implications.

NEW ZEALAND

As previously noted NZFSA, as the lead agency for Codex in New Zealand, has sound processes for consultation both within the organization and with external interest groups. Consultation processes bring together all relevant people to ensure effective horizontal communication and coordination. The consultation processes are underpinned by a Strategic Policy framework setting out New Zealand's strategic objectives in Codex. NZFSA has also established systematic procedures for monitoring progress with implementation of New Zealand's Strategic objectives in Codex.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

The mechanism and evaluation criteria at the country level is required.

SAMOA

Samoa has very limited expertise in the scientific work of Codex. However, the promotion of consumer rights in food safety through the press and print media have assisted the SNCC in promoting and provoking the public assertiveness on national and regional food safety issues. There is no established special mechanism and evaluation criterion for horizontal coordination and communication. However, in preparing position papers, the members of the SNCC are encouraged as their obligation in the Committee to discuss and consult all its members on Codex Agenda items supplied. Samoa also sends members of its SNCC to international Codex Alimentarius Committee meetings for exposure, experience and to present our national positions.

SOLOMON ISLANDS

Solomon Islands is not actively involved in these as a means of an horizontal approach but more of a Ministerial approach at present at a National level. The National Codex Committee turns to play an active role in this area.

TONGA

The mechanism and evaluation criteria would be the promotion and the coordination of number of codex meetings, public consultations, responsive to food safety issues and degree of activity in the local and the international codex issues. Solidarity partnership between public and private sector in codex activities will also an evaluation criteria.

VANUATU

There is an increase in NCDs and there is a need to address these issues. Food fortification is slowly being introduced as way of addressing this. The need for more awareness in healthy eating.

(ii) Establishment of sound structures and processes for consultation on Codex matters to ensure effective involvement and participation of all interested parties, with a view to in particular non-governmental organizations to participate in Codex work at national, regional and international levels (see Activity 5.5 of the Strategic Plan).

AUSTRALIA

The Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry is responsible for Australia's input into Codex's work. Codex Australia's consultative processes provide the avenue for key stakeholders to consider policy and strategic issues relating to Australia's role in Codex.

Australia has a communications strategy designed to increase the involvement of the processed food industry and to improve the information flow between government and industry, providing improved and more effective stakeholder involvement in the Codex process.

As part of this strategy, Codex Australia developed a brochure 'Codex – Understanding International Food Standards' designed to provide stakeholders within the Australian food industry with information on Codex issues and Codex processes and to encourage the food industry to engage with Codex Australia in providing an increased level of input to the Codex consultative process. This brochure has been made available to members of the food industry (processors, importers, exporters, and producers); Australian Government agencies with an interest in food safety and regulation; consumer and public groups; and members of academia with an interest in the food industry and international food trade.

Codex Australia also has a dedicated website www.codexaustralia.gov.au which provides stakeholders with up-to-date information regarding the work of Codex Committees and allows them to subscribe to receive Codex papers and other relevant Codex information.

Registered stakeholders receive copies of all Codex documentation for the issues relevant to their interests and are able to comment on Codex discussion papers, provide input to Australian positions for meetings of Codex Advisory Panels and nominate representatives to attend meetings as part of Australian delegations.

Codex Australia publishes an electronic newsletter 'Setting the Standard' at regular intervals throughout the year to inform stakeholders of the progress of standards under development. The newsletter also includes outcomes of Codex Committee meetings and advises on upcoming meetings and important issues for the Australian agri-food industry.

Stakeholders subscribe to receive 'Setting the Standard' through the Codex Australia website www.codexaustralia.gov.au

Codex Australia also holds an annual Stakeholder Forum that focuses on the role and importance of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex) for Australia's agriculture-food industry, which engages a wide range of stakeholders from industry, state and territory governments and public interest groups in an effort to enhance the ability of food producing industries to contribute to Australia's input to the work of Codex and to identify measures that will assist government in representing the interests of industry across the work of Codex committees.

DAFF International Food Standards Programme

The International Food Standards Programme, located within the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, is an industry-government partnership aimed at enhancing international food market access for Australia's food industry.

In helping to increase Australian exports of food products, the programme provides opportunities for companies to maximise profitability, investment and employment prospects.

The main aim of the programme is to improve international competitiveness of Australia's food industry. Australia has an opportunity to capture the benefits of global trade by adapting to and influencing international food standards. Australia's participation in the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex), the international food standards body, is a key way of achieving this.

The key role of the programme is to facilitate increased industry input into Australia's positions on the development of food standards by Codex.

Consultation with industry and government agencies makes sure that the activities of the programme do not duplicate other work on Codex issues. This engagement also means that the potential impact on the food industry is considered in the development of Australian Codex positions.

The Australian Government is working to enhance the food industry's understanding of, and involvement in, Codex standard development process by building on existing consultation and communication activities. Activities undertaken include:

- delivering a range of information resources, e.g. summary papers on key issues;
- continued development of robust Australian positions for priority food industry issues;
- increasing the level of industry's technical and policy engagement in the development of Australian submissions, and
- prioritising Codex activities relating to the Australian food industry to better guide the application of government and industry effort.

Achievements from the industry/government collaborative approach to Codex include:

- greater participation in the preparation of effective positions in international food standards negotiations, based on sound science and policy, which are appropriate to Australian food industry practices;
- better representation of Australian food industry interests in the Codex standard setting process; and
- progress towards adoption of food standards that support access to overseas markets for the Australian processed food industry.

CANADA

The Office of the Codex Contact Point for Canada maintains a list of stakeholders who have expressed interest in Codex activities. This list includes all levels of government, industry associations, consumer groups, public health professionals and academia. When the Office of the Codex Contact Point for Canada receives a Codex document, it is emailed to the relevant stakeholders. Normal turn-around time from receipt of the document from Rome until it is circulated domestically is less than 24 hours. In addition, all Codex documents are also published on the Codex Canada website to facilitate and enhance the consultation process. Heads of Delegation are also expected to use their networks to ensure that relevant stakeholders are involved in the consultation process. Comments received from stakeholders are taken into consideration by the Head Delegate in the preparation of Canadian positions on Codex issues.

As mentioned above, objective 3.2 of this *Framework* reads as "promote the effective engagement of Canadian stakeholders, including consumers, industry, health professionals and Provincial and Territorial governments". A number of activities that can be implemented to achieve the objective are also suggested.

NEW ZEALAND

As noted above NZ encourages and supports the involvement of non governmental organizations in Codex work at the national level. Non governmental organizations have the opportunity to attend Codex meetings at the international level either as observer members of national delegations or as part of a recognized umbrella international organization with observer status in Codex

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

PNG is in the process of establishing a sound Codex structure through the FER (Functional Expenditure Review) to enable the involvement of NGOs and individual experts in food science to meaningfully participate.

SAMOA

Samoa's Codex Contact Point has created effective network of communication via email with all interested bodies nationally and regionally when it was appointed Regional Coordinator. However, among other things this work needs to be a stand-alone from all other duties and obligations attended to by Codex Contact Point. The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour has in place a website which further promotes the work of Codex in Samoa and its members as well as contacts and email addresses and telecommunications for the public to access.

SOLOMON ISLANDS

The National Codex Committee has an established structure and process available for consultation on Codex work, that also ensures effective involvement and participation of all interested parties at all levels. Emphasis is based on more training for the NCC in this area.

TONGA

With National Food Bill, a National Food Authority is designated to be the implementing agency in partnership with Ministries and Private sector. The Authority will also take the role of the National Codex Committee. Hence it will be the centre piece of the whole structure, responsible horizontal coordination and communication among national delegates in partnership as well. The members of the Executive Board are chosen from partner Ministries and Councils with the Minister of Food as the Chair. Co-opt members are chosen to advise the Executive on technical matters, etc.

VANUATU

Composition of the national codex committee to ensure most stakeholders are involved and informed. Regulation update through email network on issues of common interest.