



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR NORTH AMERICA AND THE SOUTH WEST PACIFIC

13th Session, Kokopo, Papua New Guinea

DISCUSSION PAPER ON PRODUCTS OF THE REGION THAT CAN BE ADDRESSED BY REGIONAL STANDARDS AND MECHANISM FOR THEIR PRIORITISATION

(prepared by Papua New Guinea with the assistance of Australia)

Background

1. The 12th session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for North America and the South West Pacific discussed a proposal for the development of a regional standard for galip nut. Delegations, noting that the work might be necessary, were of the view that it was premature to propose new work on galip nut because the document did not include a project document; some essential data and information were missing, such as trade data, food safety issues or impediment to trade had not been identified; and the discussion paper was submitted too late for members to consult with stakeholders.
2. During the discussion some delegations noted that the Coordinating Committee should prioritise its work to use its limited resources efficiently and effectively; that a mechanism to collect information and prioritise new work proposals should be considered. As a way forward it was proposed that CCNASWP consider developing a priority list of products from the region that would benefit from the development of a regional standard. The Regional Coordinator could collect information from members identifying the product and the related food safety or trade issue that would be addressed by a regional standard. The next Session of CCNASWP could discuss the issues and come up with a priority list for development of regional standards. This would facilitate the work of the Coordinating Committee and address the issue of new work proposals being submitted to the CCNASWP at short notice.
3. The Coordinating Committee noted that the Procedural Manual¹ included sections on: Proposal to undertake New Work or to Revise a Standard; Criteria for the Establishment of Work Priorities; Guideline on the Application of the Criteria for the Establishment of Work Priorities, which provided guidance and information useful for the development of project documents for new work.
4. The Coordinating Committee agreed that Papua New Guinea, as Regional Coordinator, would collect information from members identifying the products and the related food safety or trade issue that would be addressed by a regional standard and develop mechanism to prioritise products of potential interest for the Region, for consideration at the next Session of CCNASWP.
5. All Codex subsidiary bodies are required to determine their work programs are in line with the Codex Strategic Plan 2014-2019. Strategic goal 1 addresses the main work of Codex to establish international food standards that address current and emerging food issues based on the priorities of the CAC. Objectives 1 *Establish new and review existing Codex standards based on priorities of the CAC* and Objective 2 *Proactively identify emerging issues and Member needs and, where appropriate develop relevant food standards* are applicable to all Committees. *Clarifications are needed to determine if these two objectives are to be incorporated into Draft CCNASWP Strategic Plan or are they already part of Strategic Goal 1 of CAC.*
6. In this regard it is appropriate for CCNASWP to consider how it prioritises its work, in particular with regards to the standards setting needs of the region. This may be either in the form of international or regional standards.
7. For many members of the CCNASWP region a major barrier to the development of robust proposals for new work for either international, *regional* or national standards is a lack of capacity to undertake data collection that would support the need for a standard to address food safety hazards and/or barriers to trade *and it aligns to Agenda 9 Heading /Subject above.*

¹ ftp://ftp.fao.org/codex/Publications/ProcManuals/Manual_22e.pdf

8. The on-going critical review undertaken by the Executive committee prior to approval of new work by the Commission ensures that proposals for new work and draft standards submitted to the Commission for adoption continue to meet the strategic priorities of the Commission and can be developed within a reasonable period of time, taking into account the requirements and availability of scientific expert advice.

9. The critical review includes:

- examination of proposals for development/revision of standards, taking into account the "*Criteria for the Establishment of Work Priorities*", the strategic plan of the Commission and the required supporting work of independent risk assessment;
- identifying the standard setting needs of developing countries;
- *Identification criteria is essential for commodity standard development;*
- advice on establishment and dissolution of committees and task forces, including *ad hoc* cross-committee task forces (in areas where work falls within several committee mandates); and
- preliminary assessment of the need for expert scientific advice and
- the availability of such advice from FAO, WHO or other relevant expert bodies, and the prioritisation of that advice.

10. The Codex Procedure Manual² clearly outlines the process for the development of new work proposals as follows:

Part 2. Critical Review (Codex Procedural Manual)

Proposals to Undertake New Work or to Revise a Standard

1. Prior to approval for development, each proposal for new work or revision of a standard shall be accompanied by a project document, prepared by the Committee or Member proposing new work or revision of a standard, detailing:

- the purposes and the scope of the standard;
- its relevance and timeliness;
- the main aspects to be covered;
- an assessment against the *Criteria for the establishment of work priorities;*
- relevance to the Codex strategic objectives;
- information on the relation between the proposal and other existing Codex documents;
- identification of any requirement for and availability of expert scientific advice;
- identification of any need for technical input to the standard from external bodies so that this can be planned for;
- the proposed time-line for completion of the new work, including the start date, the proposed date for adoption at Step 5, and the proposed date for adoption by the Commission; the time frame for developing a standard should not normally exceed five years.

Recommendation

11. In order to assist members of the region in identifying priority areas for new work of interest to the region the committee might wish to consider the process outlined in **Attachment A**; and make any necessary amendments and/or agree to use this as a process for prioritising work of interest to the Region.

² Codex Procedural Manual – 22nd Edition pages 27 - 28

Attachment A

1. Proposals for new work to be undertaken by CCNASWP should follow the process outline below. In addition to the provisions applying to proposals for new work in the Procedural Manual.
2. The Codex Secretariat could issue a call through a circular letter prior to each session of CCNASWP inviting members to propose new work for consideration by the next session of the Committee (as is the case with the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene). With the assistance of the Secretariat the Regional Coordinator would collate the responses to the Circular Letter.
3. The proposals for new work should indicate the specific nature or outcome of the new work being proposed. The proposals for new work should include the description of the food safety problem and its context (Risk Profile³) or the specific trade problem as appropriate and whether the proposal is for a regional or international standard.
4. The proposals for new work will typically address a food hygiene issue of public health significance. It should describe in as much detail as possible, the scope and impact of the issue and the extent to which it impacts on international trade.
5. The proposal for new work may also be to address a problem in international trade such as a commodity specific to the region or one that is traded internationally but there is no existing Codex standard.
6. Proposals may also be to revise an existing Codex standard that may be outdated (there is new scientific evidence) or because some of the requirements or lack of requirements are causing a barrier to trade in a particular commodity.
7. The proposals would be submitted to the next session of CCNASWP for discussion. The proposal would be considered against the following:
 - a. the *Critical Review*
 - b. Is the proposal to address a significant food safety or human health/nutrition issue?
 - c. If the answer to b) is yes, and it is a problem for a significant number of members of the region, can it be addressed by a Codex international or regional standard?
 - d. Is there a need for scientific advice from the FAO/WHO and can we provide data to support the request for scientific advice?
 - e. In respect of commodity standards, is the proposal a priority for all members of the Region for example; is the commodity traded internationally or intra-regionally? And are others experiencing the same or similar trade problems? *Require clarifications on intra-regionally?*
8. Based on the outcome of the review undertaken by CCNASWP a decision of the committee would be made whether or not to proceed with the proposal for new work. The Committee could undertake any necessary amendments changes to the Project Document at its current session so that the Project Document could be appended to the Report and submitted to the next session of the Commission for approval as new work.

³ Definition of a risk profile is “the description of the food safety problem and its context” (Codex Alimentarius Commission, *Procedural Manual*). The elements of a risk profile are provided in the *Principles and Guidelines for the Conduct of Microbiological Risk Management* (CAC/GL 63-2007).