

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
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JOINT OFFICE: Viale delle Terme di Caracalla 00100 ROME Tel: 39 06 57051 www.codexalimentarius.net Email: codex@fao.org Facsimile: 39 06 5705 4593

Agenda Item 2 (a)

**CX/AF 03/2
February 2003**

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

***AD-HOC* INTERGOVERNMENTAL CODEX TASK FORCE ON ANIMAL FEEDING**

Fourth Session

Copenhagen, Denmark, 25 - 28 March 2003

MATTERS REFERRED BY THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER CODEX COMMITTEES

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE 50TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION (Rome, 26 – 28 June 2002)

PREPARATION OF THE MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR 2003-2007

1. The Revised Draft Medium-Term Plan and comments received in response to Circular Letter CL 2001/26-EXEC were considered at the Executive Committee (ALINORM 03/3A, paras 32-61). The Executive Committee noted that Regional Committees would have to opportunity to contribute to the development of the Medium-Term Plan, and that it would be subsequently considered by the next regular sessions of the Executive Committee and the Codex Alimentarius Commission. The Executive Committee noted that as a result of the Codex Evaluation, further changes might be required to the Medium-Term Plan and that this would have to be addressed prior to its finalization. It encouraged Regional Coordinating Committees to provide further input to the development of the Medium-Term Plan in view of its importance for Codex work.

2. The Executive Committee agreed that the Draft Medium-Term Plan should be revised by the Secretariat in the light of the comments made at the session, preferably by the end of July 2002. It would be circulated for consideration by the Regional Committees, as already agreed by the Commission, and for further consideration by the next (regular) session of the Executive Committee (to be held in June 2003). The Executive Committee re-emphasized that the Plan should be flexible enough to allow the introduction of new activities during its operational period.

AD HOC INTERGOVERNMENTAL TASK FORCE ON ANIMAL FEEDING

3. The 50th Session of the Executive Committee also noted that the Task Force on Animal Feeding, that had met from 17 to 20 June 2002, had made substantial progress on the Proposed Draft Code of Practice on Good Animal Feeding, with the exception of sections 6 and 7 that had not been considered due to time constraints and that would be redrafted for further consideration by the next session. The Proposed Draft Code had been returned to Step 3 as it was not possible to forward it to the Executive Committee at Step 5 due to the time schedule, with the understanding that all efforts should be made at the next session to advance it to Steps 5/8 for adoption by the 24th Session of the Commission. (ALINORM 03/3A, para. 91)

UPDATE OF THE DISCUSSIONS CONCERNING TRACEABILITY/PRODUCT TRACING IN 50TH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, CODEX COMMITTEES AND COORDINATING COMMITTEES

50TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

4. The 50th Session of the Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (June 2002) considered Activity 22 - Traceability of the Draft Medium Term Plan 2003-2007 and agreed to retain both aspects of traceability/product tracing without mentioning priorities and to indicate that first consideration should be given to the use of traceability/product tracing as a food safety risk management option as already agreed by the 49th Session (ALINORM 03/3A, para. 42) .

CODEX COMMITTEE ON GENERAL PRINCIPLES

5. The 17th Session of the Codex Committee on General Principles (April 2002) discussed the need to undertake work on traceability/product tracing in the light of the recommendations of the Executive Committee. The Committee discussed in particular whether it should be considered in the framework of risk management as a matter of priority or whether it should be used for other purposes, such as the authenticity of consumer information. The Committee agreed that the Secretariat should prepare a discussion paper for further consideration of this issue at its next session. During the discussion, it was agreed that the results of the discussion in Regional Coordinating Committees would be integrated in the document prepared for consideration by the Committee (ALINORM 03/33, paras. 5-13).

CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD LABELLING

6. The 30th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (May 2002) considered a background paper prepared by Canada presenting the status of current discussions in Codex Committees. Some delegations proposed to undertake new work on traceability as it was especially relevant for the purposes of labelling, while other delegations expressed the view that it was premature since work was already underway in other committees. Some delegations pointed out that product tracing should be considered primarily as a risk management measure and that further clarification was needed on its application for other purposes before undertaking new work. The Committee could not come to a consensus and agreed to circulate the background document prepared by Canada for comments and to discuss the matter further at its next session (ALINORM 03/22, paras. 4-9).

CODEX COMMITTEE ON FISH AND FISHERY PRODUCTS

7. The 25th Session of the Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products (June 2002) considered the Draft Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products, which includes general requirements and incorporates all current codes of practice for fish and fishery products, surimi and aquaculture. Section 3 of the Code describes the Pre-Requisite Programme based on good hygienic practice that should be established prior to the application of the HACCP system. The Committee agreed to include provisions for product tracing under Section 3.7 *Product Tracing and Recall*. The Section initially referred to "traceability" but the Committee agreed that the reference to product tracing was adequate for the purposes of the Code, taking into account the approach taken in the Intergovernmental Ad hoc Task Force on Foods Derived from Modern Biotechnology. The section refers to product tracing, lot identification and recall in order to allow an effective recall procedure and to address health hazards when applicable. The Draft Code (general sections and three specific sections) was advanced to Step 8 for adoption by the 25th Session of the Commission (ALINORM 03/18, para. 58 and Appendix II).

CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD IMPORT AND EXPORT CERTIFICATION AND INSPECTION SYSTEMS

8. The 11th CCFICS (December 2002) considered a Discussion Paper on Traceability / Product Tracing In the Context of Food Import and Export Inspection and Certifications Systems (CX/FICS 02/11/7, prepared by a

working group led by Switzerland on the basis of specific instructions provided by the 10th CCFICS and written comments submitted. It was noted that the elements identified by the Working Group related to traceability/product tracing were the ability to identify a food (product identification), how it was changed (if appropriate), where it came from and where it was sent (one step backward and one step forward) (product information) and the linkages between product identification and product information, while also noting that the applicability of these elements would depend on the objectives being pursued by the individual texts. In consideration that the Working Group had not had the opportunity to examine all of the CCFICS texts related to traceability/product tracing in detail, the Group also agreed on a specific framework for the continued examination of such texts for their adequacy and applicability within the CCFICS.

9. The Committee thanked the Working Group for their efforts, and generally supported the analysis and approach outlined in the Discussion Paper as a basis for continued discussions on traceability/product tracing within the CCFICS. However, it was felt that the elaboration of specific Guidelines at this stage was premature. The Committee also recognized that the primary responsibility for the development of a definition for traceability/product tracing rested with the Codex Committee on General Principles but that the CCFICS might wish to further expand on the elements required for such a definition.

10. The Committee reached general agreement with the opinion of the Executive Committee that any measures requiring traceability/product tracing should be justified as having a food safety objective as an SPS measure or having a legitimate objective as a TBT measure. However, some delegations were of the opinion that traceability/product tracing should focus on food safety measures only as a priority while other delegations felt that both food safety and other matters necessary for ensuring fair practices in the food trade, as covered by the mandate of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, should be examined at the same time. It was also stated that guidelines or principles related to traceability/product tracing would more than likely relate to both aspects regardless of efforts to theoretically separate the two concepts.

11. The Committee noted and agreed that:

- Responsibility for the development of a definition for traceability/product tracing rested with the CCGP;
- CCFICS was responsible for traceability/product tracing related to food inspection and certification systems, and;
- Existing Codex texts related to food inspection and certification as well as discussions in CCFICS and other Codex Committees and written comments submitted should be taken into account in the determination of the current adequacy and applicability of CCFICS texts related to traceability/product tracing and the need for further work in this area.

12. In order to carry out the above review and to complete the mandate assigned by the 10th CCFICS, the Committee decided to reconvene the Working Group on Traceability under the Chairmanship of Switzerland and with the participation of Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sweden, Thailand, United Kingdom, United States, BIO, EC, Greenpeace, ICGMA, IDF and WHO. The Chairman expressed the view that the analysis of existing CCFICS texts should be completed according to the Framework prior to the Working Group meeting so that the Working Group could review the results of this analysis at the meeting. The Working Group should take into account discussions on traceability/product tracing in other relevant Codex committees. The Working Group should prepare a discussion paper with a complete analysis of the issues involved for circulation, additional comment and further consideration at its next Session. It was reiterated that this review should analyze the appropriateness and need for CCFICS to develop specific guidance on the practical implementation of traceability/product tracing and how it is to be progressed. It was also agreed that the Committee's discussions on this issue would be forwarded to the Executive Committee and other Codex Committees for information and potential action (ALINORM 03/30A, paras 46-53).

CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD HYGIENE

13. The 35th Session of the Committee on Food Hygiene (February 2003) considered the Proposed Draft Principles and Guidelines for the Conduct of Microbiological Risk Management. In considering Section 6 “Guidelines for Implementation of Microbiological Risk Management Decisions” it was suggested that the section should be expanded to include other methods of control in relation to food control emergency situations and that the concept of traceability/product tracing was under the purview of other Codex committees. It was noted however that traceability was a risk management tool that might more logically be included in section 5.2.2. “Identification of available options” (ALINORM 03/13A, para. 96).

14. The Committee agreed that a drafting group led by France, and with the assistance of Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, India, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Singapore, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States, CI, EC, ICGMA, ICMSF, IDF, would revise the proposed draft principles and guidelines at Step 2 for circulation, comment and further consideration at its next Session (ALINORM 03/13A, para. 98).

COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR EUROPE

15. The 23rd Session of the Coordinating Committee for Europe (September 2002) agreed that traceability/product tracing could be used for the purposes of food safety or as another legitimate objective, for example to ensure the authenticity of the product. Both aspects were equally important and should be addressed in the framework of Codex, while ensuring coordination with other international organizations in this area, especially ISO. In the framework of Codex, the Codex Committee on General Principles should provide overall guidance to Codex Committees on the definition and application of traceability/product tracing and the CCFICS should proceed with its work to develop further the main elements identified in the their discussion paper (ALINORM 03/19, paras. 30-32).

COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR ASIA

16. The 13th Session of the Coordinating Committee for Asia (September 2002) expressed the view that comprehensive application of traceability would not serve the desired purposes and so it shall be applied strictly on a case-to-case basis after taking account all the following five criteria (ALINORM 03/15, paras. 75-85):

- The nature and extent of risk has to be determined on the basis of specific risk assessment and only after this assessment should a product be considered for traceability.
- It should be demonstrated that traceability was an effective management option for the identified risk and that there was no other more cost effective alternative to manage that risk.
- The extent of application of traceability in the food chain should be clearly listed out on the basis of the risk assessment, practical applicability and the cost effectiveness.
- The cost/benefit analysis should be worked out in advance before traceability is considered for a particular product.
- There should be a clear demonstration of the fact that traceability tracing will not be used as a technical barrier to trade.

COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR NORTH AMERICA AND THE SOUTH WEST PACIFIC

17. The 7th Session of the Coordinating Committee for North America and the South West Pacific (October 2002), as a result of its discussions, agreed (ALINORM 03/32, paras. 51-52) that the following should be brought forward with respect to product tracing to inform CCFICS, CCGP and other Codex committees, as appropriate, as they discuss the issue of product tracing relative to their particular responsibilities and mandates.

- a) That the term “product tracing” is the appropriate terminology to employ for the concept of the tracing of food products and/or their ingredients. The Codex Ad-Hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Foods Derived

from Biotechnology reached consensus on the use of this term and, subsequently, the term is gaining acceptance within Codex.

- b) In considering product tracing, Codex should give priority to considering its use as a tool with respect to risk management.
- c) That product tracing¹ can be considered to include the following possible elements:
- The ability to identify a food (product identification);
 - How the food product was changed, if appropriate; and, where the food product came from and to where it was sent - one step forward and one step backward (product information); and,
 - Linkages between product identification and product information.
- d) That the use of product tracing within a food control system be consistent with the provisions of the WTO SPS and TBT Agreements. In this regard, provisions relating to product tracing should, as appropriate to the application:
- Be science based.
 - Be consistent with fair trade practices criteria.
 - Be subject to equivalence determinations.
 - Be no more trade restrictive than necessary.
- e) That product tracing is not a stand-alone activity, i.e., it is a tool that may be applied within a broader food control system.
- f) That product tracing requirements must have clear justification with respect to food safety and/or ensuring fair practices in food trade.
- g) That the need for and scope of application and specifications regarding each element of product tracing should be considered on a case-by-case basis according to the objective(s) of the food control system within which product tracing is implemented. For example, whether product tracing should be applied within a specific portion of the food chain or whether such tracing may be required across two or more links in the food chain would be dependent on the objectives to be achieved by the food control system.
- h) That decisions on whether a mandatory product tracing system should be implemented should be based on whether such an approach is necessary to achieve the objectives of the food control system.
- i) That certain other considerations may apply to product tracing, including, for example, that product tracing be:
- Outcomes based;
 - Cost effective;
 - Practical; and,
 - Enforceable.

COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

18. The 13th CCLAC was of the opinion that it would be premature to consider the development of general guidelines or other texts for the application of traceability/product tracing even for food safety risk management until there was a better understanding of the issues involved, especially terminology. The development of

¹ CX/FICS 02/11/7, *Discussion Paper on Traceability/Product Tracing in the Context of Food Inspection and Certification Systems*, paragraph 7.

specific recommendations for risk management purposes, in the appropriate Codex Committees, should continue on a case-by-case basis as this would lead to a better understanding of the situation. (ALINORM 03/36, para. 63).

COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR THE NEAR EAST

19. The 2nd CCNEA had little to add to the current debate, but did stress the importance of traceability/product tracing as a food safety measure and for use in certain situations such as the verification of the origin of products, for example gelatine. (ALINORM 03/40, para. 53).

ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANT BACTERIA IN FOOD

20. The 35th CCFH thanked Consumers International for their information paper prepared on the Presence of Antimicrobial Resistant Pathogens in Chicken Sold at Retail: A Report on Tests by CI Members in Australia and the United States. Consumers International recommended that that risk assessments by FAO/WHO and risk management work by the Committee consider the additional risk issues raised by the presence of antimicrobial resistant bacteria, especially salmonella and campylobacter in poultry. The Committee noted that further action would depend on the results of the scientific advice provided by the FAO/WHO and OIE expert consultations (ALINORM 03/13A, para. 13).