

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION **E**



Food and Agriculture
Organization of
the United Nations



World Health
Organization

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CL 2012/6-NASWP
March 2012

TO: Codex Contact Points
Interested International Organizations

FROM: Secretary, Codex Alimentarius Commission

SUBJECT: **Request for comments and information national food control systems, consumer participation in food standards setting and the use of Codex standards at the national level (12th Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for North America and the South West Pacific, Madang, Papua New Guinea, 19-22 September 2012)**

DEADLINE: **30 June 2012**

COMMENTS:

<u>To:</u>	<u>With a copy to:</u>
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Codex Alimentarius Commission	PNG Codex Contact Point
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BACKGROUND

The 10th session of the Coordinating Committee for North America and the South West Pacific (CCNASWP) agreed to recommend a review of the circular letter used to facilitate discussion of issues relating to national food control systems, consumer participation in food standards setting and the use of Codex standards at the national level. The purpose of the review was to link the information on status of national food legislation, food control, Codex structure and consumer participation more directly to the objectives and implementation activities of the CCNASWP Regional Strategic Plan for 2008-2013 (see Appendix 1).

A questionnaire was developed for the 11th Session of the CCASWP to gather information on developments at the national level in various countries of the NASWP region with a view to providing a more systematic framework for monitoring and implementation of the Regional Strategic Plan and the replies¹ were considered at the 11th CCNASWP (see REP11/NASWP, paras 85-89²).

An improved questionnaire is attached to the present Circular Letter to continue gathering information that will provide useful information to: (i) the Regional Coordinator on the status of implementation of the Strategic Plan for CCNASWP; (ii) the Executive Committee on the status of implementation of specific activities of the Strategic Plan 2008-2013 of the Codex Alimentarius Commission for which Coordinating

¹ CX/NASWP 10/11/7 (Comments of Australia, New Zealand and Solomon Islands); CX/NASWP 10/11/7 Add. 1 (Comments of Canada, Cook Island and the United States of America); CRD 3 (Comments of Papua New Guinea); CRD 6 (Comments of Samoa); CRD 8 (Comments of Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Tonga and Vanuatu). These documents are available at: available at: <ftp://ftp.fao.org/codex/ccnaswp11/>

² http://www.codexalimentarius.net/download/report/745/REP11_NAe.pdf

Committees are responsible; and (iii) to NASWP member countries and to FAO/WHO on the status of food control systems development, current priorities and capacity development/training needs.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Countries of the CCNASWP region and relevant international organizations in Observer status with Codex are invited to update the information that they have provided to the seven questions attached questionnaire and to provide this information, as directed above, *preferably by e-mail*, not later than **30 June 2012**.

Questionnaire

In completing these questions, countries are encouraged to provide information on changes and new initiatives since the last session of CCNASWP.

Question 1: Strengthening National Food Control Systems

Please describe any significant developments/actions taken in your country to improve national food control systems. These may include actions relating to: National food law and regulations; food control management e.g. food administration structures, initiatives to improve multi-sectoral collaboration; inspection services; laboratory infrastructure and activities; information dissemination; training. Please also describe priority food safety issues to be addressed nationally and regionally.

Question 2: Strengthening Codex at the national level

Objective 3 of the Regional Strategic Plan aims to promote the development and enhancement of national capacities of Codex Contact Points and supporting infrastructures.

Please describe: i) any significant actions that your country has taken to strengthen Codex at the national level and to promote more effective participation in Codex; ii) any specific actions aimed at strengthening the Codex Contact Point, i.e. consultative structures and processes on Codex matters, including promoting increased involvement and participation of consumers and other stakeholders.

Question 3: Regional Strategic Plan- priority areas for implementation and related training needs

Of the activities listed in the Regional Strategic plan please describe: i) the priority areas for your country; And ii) what additional support through training and development is required to ensure their effective implementation.

Question 4: Codex Standards- national priorities and interests

Taking into account several CCNASWP Strategic Plan activities (2.5, 3.5, 4.4 and 6.2) please describe: i) which specific Codex standards and related texts (currently under development or already in existence) are of most importance and interest to your country; ii) what are the current priority areas for setting national standards; and iii) use and relevance of Codex standards at national level.

Question 5: Scientific activities and data collection activities

Related to Objective 4 in the Regional Strategic Plan, please describe: i) ongoing activities to determine food safety priorities and ensure the scientific basis of food safety decisions; ii) key data collection activities ongoing to determine key hazards and contaminants in the food supply; and iii) any significant activities related to food monitoring and collection of epidemiological data.

Question 6: Cooperation with relevant international regional organizations

Please provide information on initiatives at national and regional level to promote coordination of work on food standards with other international and regional organizations.

Question 7: Any other matters

Are there any other comments you would like to make in any of the areas covered by the Regional Strategic Plan?

Appendix 1**STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE CCNASWP
2008-2013****INTRODUCTION**

This document sets out the Strategic Plan for the FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committee for North America and South West Pacific for the period 2008-2013.

GOAL

The goal of this Strategic Plan is to enhance the effectiveness of the FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committee for North America and the South West Pacific in achieving its responsibilities to its Member countries and the Region's contribution to Codex Alimentarius Commission.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

This Strategic Plan identifies six strategic objectives of the region for the period 2008-2013. The Strategic Plan should be reviewed at each Session of the Coordinating Committee to determine the status of the Plan and the continued appropriateness of the identified objectives.

Objective 1: To improve the coordination and communication of the Region's activities in Codex

Rationale:

Meaningful consultation and coordination among relevant stakeholders is important to ensure effective operation of the region's activities within Codex. Advancement of issues of interest to the members of the Region is enhanced by coordination and communication amongst the members.

Implementation:

- ◆ 1.1 Hold pre-session meetings with all NASWP Members at Codex Committees, Task Forces and Working Groups.
- ◆ 1.2 Continue to promote the sharing of written comments on Circular Letters (CLs) and other working documents, and subsequent discussion of issues of mutual interest as may be appropriate, including coordinating of positions, where appropriate.
- ◆ 1.3 Prepare a checklist of responsibilities/actions to support seamless transition between regional Coordinators.
- ◆ 1.4 Encourage information exchange among member countries through the use of electronic information systems.
- ◆ 1.5 Focus CCNASWP agenda on Codex issues of particular interest to the region.
- ◆ 1.6 Develop a regional strategy on issues of mutual interest arising from regional discussion.

Objective 2: To promote maximum participation of all member countries of the region in the activities of the regional coordinating committee and other Codex Committees more generally

Rationale:

The participation of all member countries is critical to sound decision-making and ensuring issues identified as being significant to the region take account of the full range of interest and viewpoints.

Implementation:

- ◆ 2.1 PIC member countries to continue to avail of funding assistance under the FAO/WHO Project and Fund for Enhancing the Participation of Developing Countries in the Work of Codex.
- ◆ 2.2 Promote coordinated approach for assistance from the Trust Fund to maximise coverage of subject areas of interest to the region. PIC members to coordinate application to the Trust Fund to ensure, to the extent possible, that members benefit from participation from a wider range of committees.

- ◆ 2.3 Encourage all members to submit written comments on subjects of national and regional interest irrespective of whether members can physically attend meetings.
- ◆ 2.4 Ensure that the country comments from members of the including those not present at meetings are considered by the Committee.
- ◆ 2.5 Identify items arising from other Codex Committees and Task Forces that are of particular significance to the region to facilitate development of common position and advancement of regional interest in Codex.

Objective 3: To promote the development and enhancement of the capacities of national Codex Contact Points and their supporting infrastructures of the Pacific Island Country Members to carry out their core functions

Rationale:

In order for a country to participate effectively in the Codex process, it requires a functional Codex Contact Point including an effective support structure. Regional networking could greatly benefit the newer members of the region to improve their understanding of Codex and help enhance their participation in Codex.

Implementation:

- ◆ 3.1 Identify the capacity building needs of the Codex Contact Points to strengthen Codex structures at the national level and facilitate greater participation of Members in Codex work.
- ◆ 3.2 Conduct national and/or regional workshops on Codex for Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committee members.
- ◆ 3.3 Promote regional networking among Codex Contact Points to improve communication and share experiences on Codex and related issues.
- ◆ 3.4 On-the-job training for PIC CCPs through attachment to QUAD CCPS to observe the management of Codex work.
- ◆ 3.5 Develop a mentoring programme between the developed and developing countries of the region to enhance the PIC knowledge and understanding of Codex issues, structure and processes and promote more effective participation in international standards development.

Objective 4: To strengthen the exchange of scientific and technical expertise amongst the developed and developing member countries in the region

Rationale:

The Terms of Reference for CCNASWP specifies, amongst other things, that it “*promotes within the Committee contacts for the mutual exchange of information.....and stimulates the strengthening of food control infrastructures*”. As a fundamental element of food control systems is good science, the exchange of scientific and technical expertise will contribute to enhancing the scientific basis of the various food control infrastructures in the region.

Implementation:

- ◆ 4.1 Identify and prioritize regional issues where there is a need for scientific research/analysis.
- ◆ 4.2 Develop a list of specialists and institutions which can provide the required scientific/technical expertise in the region.
- ◆ 4.3 Foster the establishment of communication links amongst the technical experts in the countries of the region and promote the sharing of data and other research materials as appropriate.
- ◆ 4.4 Conduct workshops/training courses as appropriate to facilitate the development of technical capacity of the members of the region to address the identified issues.

Objective 5: To promote procedures to review Codex codes, standards, guidelines and recommendations to facilitate their use as the basis for national standards

Rationale:

Increased harmonization of regulatory standards, policies and practices related to food would contribute to public health protection and subsequently contribute to the facilitation of trade in foods, not only amongst members of the region, but also more broadly. Many of the Pacific Island countries are unfamiliar with the full range of Codex standards and it would be helpful to their standards development/revision process to identify those standards and guidelines that might be of greatest interest to them.

Implementation:

- ◆ 5.1 Support practical training on the importance of international harmonisation and the development of national standards and regulations based on Codex.
- ◆ 5.2 Compile a list of Codex standards of particular interest and relevance to members of the region.

Objective 6: To promote the development of standards for food products produced in the Pacific Island Countries.

Rationale:

To ensure PICs needs are taken into account in the development of worldwide and/or regional standards for products produced or traded in the region, input to the development of standards needs to be improved.

Implementation:

- ◆ 6.1 Establish national mechanisms for standard development process in the PICs.
- ◆ 6.2 Provide a mechanism for identifying standards development issues in Codex of interest to the PICs and establish sub-regional Working Group, as appropriate for PICs to address these issues.
- ◆ 6.3 Submit all proposals for new standards for products of interest to the PICs to CCNASWP for consideration prior to submission to the Commission or other Committees and Task Forces.
- ◆ 6.4 On-the-job training at appropriate institutions/ministries/departments in the developed member countries of CCNSWP.

Attachment A
MONITORING OF IMPLEMENTATION OF CCNASWP REGIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN

Activities	Responsible parties	Time frame	Output/measurable indicators	Status
Objective 1: To improve the coordination and communication of the region's activities in Codex				
1.1 Hold pre-session meetings with all NASWP Members at Codex Committees, Task Forces and Working Groups.	Quad countries in consultation with other members All members to share plans for attendance at Codex meetings	Immediate and ongoing	All CCNASWP countries at given meetings invited to participate Information on planned attendance shared among all Member countries of the region	Ongoing
1.2 Continue to promote the sharing of written comments on Circular Letters (CLs) and other working documents, and subsequent discussion of issues of mutual interest, including coordinating of positions, where appropriate.	All members	Ongoing	Comments shared on a routine basis among members	Implemented
1.3 Prepare a checklist of responsibilities/actions to support seamless transition between Regional Coordinators.	New and previous Regional Coordinators with assistance from Secretariat	Ongoing	Contact established and information/experience shared between current and previous coordinators	Checklist prepared for Regional Coordinator
1.4 Encourage information exchange among member countries through the use of electronic information systems.	All members	Ongoing	Increased contact among members and establishment of regional website to disseminate information and promote communication within the region.	Regional website established.
1.5 Focus CCNASWP agenda on Codex issues of particular interest to region	Regional Coordinator in consultation with FAO/WHO and members	Ongoing	Agenda for CCNASWP meeting strengthened	Ongoing
1.6 Develop a regional strategy on issues of mutual interest arising from regional discussions.	Regional Coordinator in consultation with FAO/WHO and members	Ongoing	A regional strategy agreed (linked to 1.5)	To be implemented
Objective 2: to promote maximum participation of all members of the region in the activities of the regional coordinating committee and other Codex				

Activities	Responsible parties	Time frame	Output/measurable indicators	Status
Committees more generally				
2.1 PIC members to continue to avail of funding assistance under the FAO/WHO Project and Fund for Enhancing Participation of Developing Countries in the Work of Codex.	All eligible PIC members	Ongoing	PICs increased attendance at Codex	Implemented
2.2 Promote coordinated approach for assistance from the Trust Fund to maximize coverage of subject areas of interest to the region. PIC members to coordinate application to the Trust Fund to ensure, to the extent possible, that members benefit from participation in a wider range of committees.	All eligible members and the regional coordinator	Ongoing	Key subject areas covered	To be implemented
2.3 Encourage all members to submit written comments on subjects of national and regional interest irrespective of whether members can attend meetings.	All members	Immediate and ongoing	PICs submit written comments on issues of interest to them. (<i>link to Objective 3: mentoring</i>) (<i>link to 1.2</i>)	Quad countries sharing their written comments with all members of the region to inform and assist them to formulate national positions/views
2.4 Ensure that the country comments from Members including those not present at meetings are considered by the Committee.	All members	Ongoing	Comments submitted by Members considered at meeting	To be implemented
2.5 Identify items arising from other Codex Committees and Task Forces that are of particular significance to the region to facilitate development of common position and advancement of regional interest in Codex.	Regional coordinator in conjunction with members	Ongoing	Issues of interest to the region identified	To be implemented
Objective 3: To promote the development and enhancement of the capacities of national Codex Contact Points and their supporting infrastructures of the PIC members to carry out their core functions				
3.1 Identify the capacity building needs of the Codex contact points to strengthen Codex structures at the national level and facilitate greater participation of members in Codex work	FAO/WHO, Regional coordinator and members	Ongoing	Regional/national level training programmes implemented	Implemented
3.2 Conduct national and/or regional workshops on Codex for Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committee members.	FAO/WHO and Quad member countries	Ongoing	Regional/national workshops conducted to strengthen national capacities	National/regional workshops implemented with further workshops planned around regional meetings.
3.3 Promote regional networking among Codex Contact Points to improve communication and share experiences on Codex and related issues.	Members with lead from Regional Coordinator	Ongoing	Improved networking of CCPs in the region	Network initiated with exchange of emails but more sustained action needed

Activities	Responsible parties	Time frame	Output/measurable indicators	Status
3.4 On-the-job training for PIC CCPs through attachment to QUAD CCPS to observe the management of Codex work.	Quad members	Ongoing	On the job training provided to PIC members	To be implemented
3.5 Develop a mentoring programme between the developed and developing countries of the region to enhance the PIC knowledge and understanding of Codex issues, structure and processes and promote more effective participation in international standards development.	Quad members in cooperation with Regional Coordinator	Ongoing	Guidance provided on Codex related matters on an ongoing basis	Initiated
Objective 4: to strengthen the exchange of scientific and technical expertise amongst the developed and developing members of the region³				
4.1 Identify and prioritize regional issues where there is a need for scientific research/analysis	Australia, FAO/WHO and all members	On going	Technical expertise and guidance provided by Quad countries to PIC members on critical areas of interest	Initiated in areas such as the revision of the Codex standard for Cassava
4.2 Develop a list of specialists and institutions which can provide the required scientific/technical expertise in the region.	FAO/WHO and 11 th CCNASWP	Ongoing	i) FAO/WHO to undertake specific work for PIC members ii) 11 th CCNASWP to consider expanding the list to all members	To be implemented
4.3 Foster the establishment of communication links amongst the technical experts in the countries of the region and promote the sharing of data and other research materials as appropriate.	Codex Contact Points and Members	On going	Codex Contact Points to provide or facilitate access to technical expertise	To be implemented
4.4 Conduct workshops/training courses as appropriate to facilitate the development of technical capacity of the members of the region to address the identified issues.	FAO/WHO and Quad members	On going	Workshops conducted on specific areas of interest	To be implemented
Objective 5: to promote procedures to review Codex codes, standards, guidelines and recommendations to facilitate their use as the basis for national standards				
5.1 Support practical training on the importance of international harmonisation and the development of national standards and regulations based on Codex.	FAO/WHO and Quad members	On going	Workshops conducted	Regional workshop conducted in New Zealand in September 2007 and further workshop planned in conjunction with 10 th CCNASWP and CCASIA
5.2 Compile a list of Codex standards of particular interest and relevance to members.	All members	On going	List compiled	To be implemented

³ Activities 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 are sequential.

Activities	Responsible parties	Time frame	Output/measurable indicators	Status
Objective 6: to promote the development of standards for food products produced in the Pacific island countries				
6.1 Establish national mechanisms for standards development process in the PICS.	All PICS	By 2008	National mechanisms established	To be implemented
6.2 Provide a mechanism for identifying standards development issues in Codex of interest to the PICS and establish sub-regional Working Group, as appropriate for PICS to address these issues.	Regional coordinator	By 2008	Electronic working group established for kava and noni juice	Continuing
6.3 Submit all proposals for new standards for products of interest to the PICS to CCNASWP for consideration prior to submission to the Commission or other Committees and Task Forces.	PICS	On going	Recommendation to the Commission and Codex Committees proposals for new work for development of regional standards	Continuing
6.4 On the job training at appropriate institutions / ministries / departments in the developed member countries of CCNASWP	All Members	On going	Appropriate training provided	To be implemented