

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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Agenda item 3

CAC/43 CRD17

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Forty-third Session

Comments from Uruguay, Costa Rica and Ecuador

INTERMEDIATE REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION - "CODEX AND THE PANDEMIC - STRATEGIC CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES" (REF: CX/CAC 20/43/2)

(Preparado por Uruguay, Costa Rica y Ecuador)

Ayudado por República Dominicana, Paraguay y Panamá

1. Introduction

As well stated in document CX / CAC 20/43/2, the covid-19 pandemic has had a serious impact on the organization of Codex meetings for 2020. All meetings of the technical committees were canceled, and the pandemic has highlighted the importance of using international standards to ensure food trade.

According to the World Trade Organization, the COVID-19 pandemic will have an unprecedented impact on global and regional trade and, it is now that Codex as a reference body in terms of standards and in order to meet its objectives must advance from a timely and effective manner while upholding the Codex core values of inclusion, collaboration, transparency and consensus building.

2. Problematic

The countries that sign the documents congratulate and appreciate the effort that the Secretariat has been making in this difficult task in order to ensure that the work of the Codex Alimentarius is not affected.

However, we see with great concern some points that are mentioned in the referenced document and that do not provide clarity on the impact that the current situation would generate in the meetings scheduled for next year, taking as a reference in the first instance what in this report it is mentioned "the subsequent work of the subcommittee (Phase 2) will lead to a final report that will be submitted to the CCEXEC80 review", which has no scheduled date of completion.

In paragraph 3.2.1, it is stated that it must be agreed WHO organizations, which would imply that until the next meeting of the Commission (44th session of the CAC) the issue could not be resolved. Virtual meeting of the Committees, with the serious consequences this has on the advancement of standards and the work of the next session of the Commission.

Due to what has been expressed in the previous paragraphs, it is concerned that a solution will not be achieved that allows the meetings of the Technical Committees scheduled for the first half of 2021 to be carried out.

3. Conclusion

Virtual meetings are an alternative solution to the health problem generated by COVID-19. Lowering barriers to participation is the path to greater collaboration.

Virtual meetings can be transparent, and we do not see consensus building in virtual meetings as a major problem.

In line with the above, the Executive Committee's mid-term report highlights that among the positive aspects that have been identified in the virtual meetings are greater participation in meetings, more focused and results- oriented meetings, and cost savings for travel reduction.

It is essential that CODEX resumes its activity. We cannot wait for the pandemic to end. Based on this, we suggest that the technical committees replace the originally planned face to face meetings with virtual meetings.

4. Recommendation

The methodology and experience of the Virtual Commission Session can be a starting point for holding meetings of the Technical Committees.

In order to prioritize the topics in them, the degree of progress of the topics could be considered, first addressing the topics that would be to go to step 8, 5/8 and 5, and then the new topics, prioritizing those that have greater Advance.

It is suggested to entrust the Executive Committee to establish general guidelines on the functioning of the committees in virtual form, based on its own experience and that arising from the next virtual session of the Commission, in line with the fundamental values of Codex of: transparency , inclusiveness and consensus and considering the progress of the CCGP on the subject of committees that work by correspondence.