

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Forty-third Session

Comments from Japan

INTERMEDIATE REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION - "CODEX AND THE PANDEMIC - STRATEGIC CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES"

Japan wishes to thank the initiative of the sub-committee of the CCEXEC for preparing the Intermediate Report "Codex and the Pandemic – Strategic Challenges and Opportunities," and also appreciates a lot of efforts made by the Codex Secretariat to continue Codex work in this ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Japan is of the view that physical meetings remain necessary for Codex members to discuss complex or technical matters in Codex work. However, Japan recognizes that Codex texts remain important for protecting of consumer health and ensuring fair practices in global food trade, even in unprecedented pandemic circumstances. Therefore, Codex should maintain the momentum of standard setting works. Based on this view, Japan supports an alternative mechanism with new technologies in case where physical meetings are not possible, and agrees with the actions proposed by the Codex Secretariat in CAC/43 CRD37.

CCEXEC78 and CAC43 showed a new possibility that Codex members can continue to work virtually. Japan would like to highlight that future virtual Codex Committees should be held based on the analysis of these virtual meetings. The analysis in terms of time differences, technical problems, opportunity of interventions, time management and the Codex core values, namely inclusiveness, transparency, collaboration and consensus building, is especially necessary. Japan would like to encourage all delegates of CAC43 to respond to the survey on the CAC43 and expects the sub-committee of the CCEXEC to consider the issues highlighted through the survey.

In concrete terms, Japan has significant concerns on hybrid meetings. Unlike the case where all members are physically or virtually assembled under the same condition, hybrid meetings might have particular challenges of inequality between members and/or regions: whether equal opportunity to make an intervention can be given to remotely participated delegates and physically participating delegates; how time differences are fairly considered for all regions; and how a consensus can be reached about complex issues. We also note that Codex has experiences with hybrid meetings only from the Physical Working Group of CCFICS. Japan believes that more experiences should be accumulated and that they should be analyzed.

Japan sincerely hopes that the holding of virtual Codex Committees will be proceeded with due consideration for these points. Holding a virtual Codex committee may be also challenging because the importance of agenda and the number of participants is quite different from ordinary virtual meetings. For successful meeting, the help from the Codex Secretariat is not only valuable but indispensable considering that host government may already be under heavy pressure to hold the meeting itself. In-advance training sessions may be needed so that all delegates can effectively participate in a virtual Committee meeting and the Chair can proceed with the meeting smoothly. Japan expects the sub-committee of the CCEXEC to continue the work with the aim of developing a proposal and necessary recommendations on a suite of tools/actions that Codex could use to progress work in 2021.