

codex alimentarius commission

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
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WORLD HEALTH
ORGANIZATION

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CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION
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REPORT OF

THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR LATIN AMERICA

Second Session

Montevideo, Uruguay
9 - 15 December 1980

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Second Session of the Coordinating Committee for Latin America was held in Montevideo from 9-15 December 1980 by the kind invitation of the Government of Uruguay.
2. The Session was attended by participants from the following countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama and Uruguay. Observers were present from Spain and from the following International Organizations: Pan-American Health Organization(PAHO), Pan-American Commission on Technical Standards(COPANT), Coordination of Food Products Industries(COPAL), the Latin American Free Trade Association(LAFTA/ALALC) and the International Bar Association.
3. The Coordinator for Latin America and Chairman of the Session, Dr. A.M. Dovat (Uruguay) introduced Mr. Carlos Conti, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Industry and Energy who opened the meeting and welcomed the delegates on behalf of the Government of Uruguay. He stressed the importance, under the economic burden presently imposed by industrial energy requirements, of achieving a balance which would not affect the foods available for national requirements. Common goals required common effort and more concentrated action was required to improve the national food supplies. At the same time, the Coordinating Committee for Latin America would play an important role by furthering the aims of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme in ensuring consumer protection and fair trade practices, both nationally and throughout the region in establishing international or national food standards and encouraging the harmonization of food legislation in the region. Uruguay, like some other countries of the region, had now established a committee to coordinate efforts in this field by keeping food standardization and food legislation under constant review and thus helping to eliminate non-tariff barriers which could arise by lack of agreed food regulations throughout the region. Although considerable progress had been made, increased joint action was required to reach the goal of harmonized regional food regulations.
4. The representative of the Ministry of Health, Dra. María Delia Zabala de Bartorelli, Assistant Director of the National Direction of Health (Ministry of Health) also welcomed the delegates. She stressed that the goals of the Codex Alimentarius in protecting the consumer against fraudulent practices such as food adulteration had important consequences for the health of the consumer. She also informed the Committee of the efforts that the Ministry of Health was directing to meeting the nutritional requirements of vulnerable groups and to providing nutrition education. In this respect, the cooperation of FAO and WHO was of great assistance.
5. Ing. E. Torrejón Straube, FAO Representative for Uruguay, speaking on behalf of the Directors General of FAO and WHO expressed his warm appreciation to the Government of Uruguay for their generosity in hosting the Second Session of the Coordinating Committee for Latin America in Uruguay. He was sure that this Session which was the first to be held in the region would reinforce the awareness of the aims of the Codex Alimentarius and increase action throughout the region in furthering those aims. He informed the participants that in Uruguay FAO was cooperating in several programmes related to the production and possible contamination of agricultural and fish food products.
6. Good quality, wholesome food must be assured and participation in the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and its subsidiary bodies, facilitated transfer of technical and legal information both regionally and internationally and assured the establishment of standards which adequately protected legitimate interests according to the principles of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT BY THE COORDINATOR FOR LATIN AMERICA

7. Before proceeding to the adoption of the Agenda of the Session, the Coordinator gave a brief outline of the history of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, its aims and its administrative structure. In particular, he referred to the work of the Coordinating Committees for Africa, Asia and Europe. He also drew attention to the conclusions of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Regional Conference for Latin America, held in Mexico City in September 1978. He also mentioned certain important congresses in the general area of food standards which had taken place in Uruguay in years gone by, which could be regarded as landmarks in this field, referring especially to the fact that the Codex Alimentarius for Latin America was proposed by Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay as long as fifty years ago.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

8. The delegation of Mexico proposed that the work of COPANT in the food standards field be considered as a separate and additional sub-item under item 9 of the Agenda, when work priorities for the Coordinating Committee for Latin America would be considered. It was pointed out that the work of the different regional organizations in the food standards and related fields would be dealt with under agenda item 8. It was agreed, therefore, that the work of COPANT would be considered under agenda item 8. The Committee adopted the provisional agenda without change.

MATTERS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM THE REPORTS OF THE COMMISSION AND OF OTHER CODEX COMMITTEES

Codex Alimentarius Commission (Thirteenth Session)

9. Acceptances

The Committee was informed that over 150 international food standards covering a wide range of commodity groups had been developed within the framework of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme and sent to governments for acceptance, as well as a very large number of international maximum limits for pesticide residues in foods, which had also been sent to governments for acceptance. The Committee was also informed that the Commission, at its Thirteenth Session, had agreed that the influence of Codex standards and recommendations was steadily increasing throughout the world and that considerable progress concerning acceptances had been made since the Commission's Twelfth Session, but that nevertheless, more responses were needed from governments concerning their positions in regard to acceptance of the Codex standards.

10. At the current Session, the delegation of Brazil stated that its country was studying the acceptance of a series of Codex standards and that although Brazil had not yet formally accepted any of the standards, several of them were being applied in its international trade for the majority of the products already covered by the standards. The delegation of Argentina indicated that Argentina had already accepted a large number of the Codex standards and that recently it had sent forward to the Secretariat its decisions concerning the Recommended International Code for Ante-Mortem and Post-Mortem Inspection of Slaughter Animals; the Code of Hygienic Practice for Egg Products; the Code of Hygienic Practice for Poultry Processing; the Standard for Raisins and the Fourth and the Fifth Series of Maximum Limits for Pesticide Residues.

The Secretariat indicated that the information furnished by Argentina concerning acceptances of standards and maximum limits for pesticide residues would be included in the next updating of the publication containing a summary of acceptances of Codex standards. The action taken by Argentina concerning the codes of practice mentioned would be brought to the attention of the next session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENTS

11. The Committee noted that at every major Step of the Procedure for the Elaboration of Codex Standards, provision had now been made for the consideration, both by Codex Commodity Committees and the Commission, of any statements that governments might wish to put forward concerning not only the technical aspects of the standards, but also the possible economic implications of the standards or of any of the provisions of the standards. In addition, the Commission decided that particular attention should be paid by Codex Committees to any economic impact statements that might be placed before them. The delegation of Brazil indicated that it strongly supported the principle behind the decision of the Commission in recognizing the importance of economic impact statements in relation to international food standards work. It might contribute greatly to the work of the reorientation of the Commission.

NUTRITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS IN CODEX WORK

12. The Secretariat referred to the discussions on this topic which had taken place at the Thirteenth Session of the Commission, when the Commission had before it for consideration certain proposals aimed at placing increased emphasis on nutritional considerations in the work of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies. The Commission agreed to include a review of the nutritional aspects of the Food Standards Programme as a standing item on the agenda of sessions of the Commission. The Commission also decided to request its subsidiary bodies to consider, as the need arose, nutritional aspects in drawing up standards for food, particularly foods having a significant role in the diets of developing countries. Also the Commission decided that a consultant should be recruited to carry out a study of the nutritional impact of the work of its subsidiary bodies.

13. The Secretariat also informed the Committee that it had sought the views of the Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission as to what should be the main points to be covered by the consultant's study, i.e. what should be the scope of work and terms of reference of the consultant. The Secretariat had also drawn the Executive Committee's attention to the fact that the Codex Committee on Foods for Special Dietary Uses had concluded at its most recent session, that it would be desirable for it to look into the nutritional aspects of Codex work, and that the Committee on Foods for Special Dietary Uses had suggested, therefore, that its terms of reference be amended accordingly.

14. The Committee at its current Session, was informed of the views of the Executive Committee at its Twenty-Seventh Session in October 1980, and of the terms of reference agreed upon by the Executive Committee for the above task.

It was noted that this information could be found in document ALINORM 81/3 paras 21-29. Amongst the suggestions put forward by the Executive Committee was the suggestion that the consultant might look into the question of nutrients lost during processing and handling and their possible replacement. The work on food labelling might also be looked at, to determine whether it was adequate, in terms of informing purchasers concerning the nutrient content of the food. The Executive Committee stressed that many foods moving in international trade were not necessarily of nutritional importance in themselves, but were of great economic importance to developing and developed countries and of importance from the standpoint of trade barriers that needed to be removed. It was also suggested that the consultant should look into the question of the need for standards for products of importance in the diets of peoples in developing countries.

15. The delegation of Brazil at the current Session, indicated that it agreed that there was a need to give increased attention to the nutrition aspects of Codex work,

but that the consultant should bear in mind that many foods traded were not of great value from a nutritional point of view, but were of great importance from an economic point of view to developing countries. The delegation of Chile stressed that the nutritional and the economic aspects were both important and that it was necessary to strike the right balance between the two considerations.

16. The delegation of Uruguay referred to certain measures and action programmes underway in Uruguay in the nutrition field. The Secretariat undertook to bring the statements of the delegation of Uruguay to the attention of other units in the Food Policy and Nutrition Division, in which the FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme Group was also located.

DEVELOPMENTS CONCERNING REORIENTATION OF THE WORK OF THE COMMISSION

17. The Secretariat outlined the major developments that had taken place since the Twelfth Session of the Commission, when the Commission decided to place increased emphasis on the needs and concerns of the developing countries. This reorientation in the work of the Commission had been fully endorsed by the World Health Assembly and by the FAO Conference, where the work of the Commission had been strongly supported and where it had been emphasized that it was of importance both to developing and to developed countries.

18. The new measures included the following:

- Provision had been made for full examination and consideration of the impact which Codex recommendations might have on the economic interests of Member Countries at all major steps of the Procedure for the Elaboration of Codex Standards.
- A consultant would be engaged to review nutritional questions in relation to food standards work (see also paras 13-15) and this would facilitate the Commission's consideration of a further area of interest to some Members of the Commission.
- In order to better meet the needs of all Governments - especially those which did not have adequate facilities or capabilities for the assessment of health risks arising from the presence of toxic chemicals or food-borne microorganisms in food - WHO and FAO were endeavouring to strengthen their food safety activities. An important initiative had been taken by WHO concerning the setting up of an international programme on chemical safety.
- Codex Coordinating Committees were increasingly meeting the needs of developing countries by giving greater attention - through direct requests by developing countries or by the Regional Coordinating Committees - to the development of standards for foods which were of economic and potential economic interest to developing countries, especially as regards their export trade.
- More and more standards were now being developed for tropical zone products.

19. The new measures also included new and widened terms of reference for the Regional Coordinating Committees, which enabled the Coordinating Committees to cover a wide range of topics and to be fora for the promotion of technical cooperation within the region, and for the promotion of food safety and food exports. Two new Codex Committees had been established - the Codex Committee on Cereals and Cereal Products and the Codex Committee on Vegetable Proteins - which were of special interest to developing countries from the point of view of trade and nutrition. A consultant was being recruited to prepare a study on the question of whether international standards should be elaborated for legumes and pulses, which formed part of the diet of millions of persons in all parts of the world and were important items in international trade. A special Working Party had been set up within the framework of the Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues to study pesticide residues questions in relation to developing countries. A code of ethics for international trade in food had been developed with the main aim of

achieving for countries which did not at present have adequate food control facilities some measure of protection against being the recipients of sub-standard foods, pending the establishment of adequate national food control facilities.

20. The delegation of Brazil at the current Session of the Committee, stated that it fully supported the reorientation of the work of the Commission. The delegation of Brazil considered, in connection with the reorientation of the work, that the trade relationship between developed and developing countries should be borne in mind, as well as the relevance of the GATT Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade.

CODE OF ETHICS FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN FOOD

21. The Committee was informed that this code had been adopted by the Commission at its Thirteenth Session and was currently with the printers. The delegation of Argentina stated that it viewed the Codex Code of Ethics for International Trade in food as being complementary to each other. The delegation of Brazil expressed its support for the development of the Code of Ethics.

CODEX COMMITTEE ON CEREALS AND CEREAL PRODUCTS (CXCCP)

22. The Committee noted that the above Committee had held its first Session in Washington D.C. in March 1980 and in order to establish its future work programme had reviewed cereals and cereal products at present produced for human consumption.

23. The Committee (CXCCP) had had available a background document which listed the cereals and their products currently traded and consumed. Among these which were considered were barley (whole grains and/or pearl barley) or other products.

24. The CXCCP had recognized that there was considerable trade in barley in Eastern Europe, Asia, Near East and, in particular, in the Middle East and in Northern Africa, although international trade in barley products was small. During the discussions, various points were raised concerning the adverse hygienic conditions and quality factors under which some products were traded.

25. Because international trade was small at present, the CXCCP had decided not to pursue work on standards or codes of practice for the moment but to seek information on the consumption and trade of barley products through the Regional Coordinating Committee.

26. The CXCCP had also considered whether or not to elaborate standards for oats and oat products. It had noted that the consumption of oat products was worldwide, but at a rather low level. There was some international trade in grain but little in its milled products; the most commonly consumed was probably in the form of rolled oats (flakes).

27. The CXCCP had decided that international trade did not at present warrant standardization of grains. It was noted however that rolled oats (flakes) had good nutritional value and had a potential role in the diets of developing countries. Bearing in mind that the Codex Alimentarius Commission (see ALINORM 79/38) had decided that committees should, where necessary, consider the nutritional aspect of foods, particularly those with a significant role in the diets of developing countries, it was decided to bring the potential value of the product to the notice of Coordinating Committees and ask whether regional consumption was enough to justify the development of a regional standard for rolled oats (flakes).

28. In the discussion that followed at the present Session, the delegation of Argentina reported that a large proportion of its national production of barley was used by the brewing industry and a further significant amount was used for forage. National standards for grain, barley and pearl barley had already been established in Argentina.

It agreed with the decision of the Codex Committee on Cereals and Cereal Products that, for the moment it was not necessary to elaborate standards and Codes of Practice for the above species and their processed products and that studies should be undertaken for this purpose, and should have a worldwide scope and should be channelled through the specific Commodity Committees.

29. The delegation of Brazil was of the opinion that because of the relatively low production and direct consumption of both barley and oat products there was no interest in developing regional standards at the present time, and supported the views expressed by the delegation of Argentina. In other regions such grains and their products were of more importance and these products should perhaps be dealt with on a worldwide basis.

30. The delegation of Chile stated that a standard for barley grains would be of interest to Chile.

31. The Coordinating Committee noted that detailed information on intra-regional production, trade and consumption of such products was not available from all countries of the region at this Session and agreed that before coming to a decision, a circular letter should be issued requesting countries of the region to give details on the national production, trade and consumption figures for barley, oats and their products for consideration at the next Session of the Commodity Committee.

DRAFT STANDARD FOR FOOD GRADE SALT

32. The Committee had before it document CX/LA 80/2-Add.1 concerning discussions which had taken place on the above topic at the Thirteenth Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and a copy of the purity specifications for food grade salt which had been elaborated by the Codex Committee on Food Additives (CCFA). The Commission had noted that the CCFA had recommended that a full standard rather than a purity specification should be elaborated. The Commission had agreed that a standard for Food Grade Salt should be elaborated by the CCFA and that such a standard should include provisions for labelling, methods of analysis and the appropriate requirements. It also decided that the draft standard should be referred to the Coordinating Committees for consideration and comments.

33. The Committee noted that the CCFA had held its Fourteenth Session in The Hague (24 November - 1 December 1980) and had made considerable changes to the text of the original document. Since the amended standard was available to delegates only after the beginning of the present Session, it was agreed to defer discussion on the subject until a later point of the agenda.

RECOMMENDED EUROPEAN REGIONAL STANDARD FOR HONEY

34. The question of whether the above standard required amendment had been considered by the Coordinating Committee for Europe at its last Session and also at the Thirteenth Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (ALINORM 79/38, paras 302-305). At its Twenty-Seventh Session (Geneva, 13-17 October 1980), the Executive Committee noted that analysis of replies from Governments concerning the standard did not provide a basis for deciding whether the standard required amendment. (see ALINORM 81/3).

35. In view of the opinions expressed by a number of delegations at the Thirteenth Session of the Commission that as honey was traded on a worldwide basis it should therefore be revised and converted into a worldwide standard, the Executive Committee decided that all the Regional Coordinating Committees should be asked:

1. Whether there is a need to amend the Standard;
2. Whether the Standard should be worldwide rather than a European regional standard; and

3. what should be the most appropriate body to develop a revised standard on a worldwide basis.

36. The views of the Coordinating Committees would be put before the Commission at its Fourteenth Session.

37. The Committee noted that CX/LA 80/2-Add.II which contained sections 1-5 of the present Recommended European Regional Standard for Honey had only been recently made available to delegates and agreed to discuss the Executive Committee's request later in the Session.

PROPOSED DRAFT STANDARD FOR MANGO JUICE

38. At its Fourteenth Session (9-13 June 1980), the Joint ECE/Codex Alimentarius Group of Experts on the Standardization of Fruit Juices had noted that most of the Government comments on the above standard concerned the denomination of the product, that is, whether it would be possible to sell a product under the description "mango juice" which consisted of not less than 50% mango pulp and of sugars and added water. Attention was drawn to a similar provision in the Proposed Draft Standard for Mango Nectar on which government comments had also been received. It was agreed to examine as a matter of principle whether a product containing fruit pulp, sugars and added water could be denominated juice or whether it would fall into the category of nectars, especially in the case of mango products which were not palatable to the consumer if they contained 100% of the fruit ingredient.

39. There had been considerable discussion in the Joint ECE/Codex Alimentarius Group of Experts on the Standardization of Fruit Juices on whether the name "mango juice" could be used for a product containing at least 50% of mango pulp. This, because of its composition, would normally be classified as a nectar, but it was noted that there was already a large trade in such a product under the name of mango juice.

40. The Group of Experts had thought that the product should not be standardized as a fruit juice but as a nectar with a labelling provision permitting the use of the name "mango juice" in countries where such nomenclature was traditional.

41. It was agreed by the Group of Experts that information on mango juice and nectars should be requested from the Coordinating Committees for Asia, Latin America and Africa.

42. A copy of the proposed draft standard was attached to CX/LA 80/2-Add.II. In order to give delegates the opportunity to study the document thoroughly, the Committee agreed that this item also should be discussed at a later stage in the Session.

REVIEW OF ACCEPTANCES OF THE RECOMMENDED INTERNATIONAL CODEX STANDARDS BY COUNTRIES IN THE REGION OF LATIN AMERICA

43. The Committee noted that the Commission, at its Thirteenth Session, had decided that acceptances of the Recommended International Codex Standards should be reviewed at the regional level by the Regional Coordinating Committees. The Committee was informed that the following countries in the Codex region of Latin America had notified acceptance of one or more of the Recommended International Codex Standards or Series of Recommended International Maximum Limits for Pesticide Residues: Argentina, Bahamas, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Trinidad and Tobago.

44. The Committee was also informed that the Commission had stressed that where a country was unable to give acceptance to a standard, it should give consideration to the possibility of permitting the importation and distribution in its national territory of products in conformity with Codex Standards.

45. The delegation of Chile indicated that Chile had accepted a few of the Codex Standards. The aim in Chile was to make as much use as possible of Codex standards for foods of interest. To apply fully the Codex standards it would be necessary, however, to strengthen existing national food control services.
46. The delegation of Uruguay stated that in Uruguay each province had its own legislation. At the moment, Uruguay did not have the legal framework to accept and apply Codex standards at the national level, but an inter-ministerial committee was studying this matter.
47. The delegation of Argentina indicated that Argentina had notified acceptance of a large number of the Codex standards and Codex maximum limits for pesticide residues and that many more Codex standards were under consideration with a view to acceptance. In addition, Argentina had notified its agreement with several Codex Codes of Practice. Argentina also had a national Food Code which included legislation for imported products. This Code and other national legislation covered all aspects of processing and marketing of foods. In general, there were no marked differences from Codex Alimentarius International Standards although, in some respects, national legislation was more strict. The Standing Commission for the amendment of the Argentinian Food Code is at present negotiating to obtain the required harmonization to avoid discrepancies which might cause problems in export or import trade.
48. The delegation of Mexico stated that in Mexico there was a hygiene code, published in the official journal in 1973 which covered the whole country. This code was in the process of being updated. In Mexico several of the Codex standards were being studied, with a view to possible acceptance in the future.
49. The delegation of Panama indicated that Panama was in the process of reviewing its food regulations, with a view to updating them. In the absence of a national standard with respect to a specific product, Panama used the Codex standards and the COPANT standards as a reference.
50. The observer from Spain indicated that Spain had decided to give acceptance to a number of the Codex maximum limits for pesticide residues, but that it had been decided not to forward notification of this acceptance to the Codex Secretariat since it would be necessary for Spain to coordinate its position concerning acceptance of Codex standards with the Member Countries of the European Economic Community.

FAC/WHO FOOD CONTROL STRATEGY

51. The Secretariat informed the Committee that the policy considerations and approaches on strategies discussed in document HCS/78.1 were based on the experience of FAO and WHO staff in developing countries and also on the specific advice received from several experts from developing countries.
52. It was noted that Governments were often not fully aware of the importance of an efficient national system for food quality control. Besides assuring the protection of the health of the consumer, the system could contribute towards several national economic development goals, as for example, reduction of food losses, promotion of food exports, stimulation of food industry and trade and prevention of "dumping" of sub-standard foods. Reference was made to the FAO/WHO "Guidelines for Developing and Effective National Food Control System". A national food control system must be based on a unified food law. Ideally, the implementation of such a law should rest with a single national agency. This was however not always possible. Many national systems had developed over a period of time and very frequently more than one Ministry or Department was engaged in implementing different food control activities. To ensure that the national system could in fact meet the health and economic goals, it was necessary to

have good coordination among the agencies involved in food control. It was also necessary that a coherent national strategy for food quality control be developed. Food control should be looked upon and implemented as a developmental tool rather than merely as a policy action.

53. Implementation of food control would call for an adequately trained inspectorate and laboratory staff. Private industry and public sectors had to make a contribution in the orderly development of a national food quality control system. These bodies should, therefore, be involved in the development of food standards, regulations, etc. Public education was considered of the highest priority. Besides educating the consumers, emphasis should also be given to training and education of food handlers and other food technicians.

54. Developing countries were at the present moment passing through different stages of economic development. It was often noticed that while, on the one hand, there were highly urbanized populations, on the other hand, there were vast rural areas and subsistence economies. In certain parts of a country the economy was well developed and foods were prepackaged and sold in supermarkets, while in certain other areas food was consumed in its most elementary form. The populations in such areas were denied the basic facilities of food hygiene, sanitation, safe water supply, etc. It was necessary that the food control system should be able to protect the entire population of a country, whether in urban or rural areas. In the development of a national strategy for food control, due note should be taken of these situations and appropriate priorities set up to meet them. In certain areas or situations mandatory control in the traditional sense would be necessary. In certain other situations, like those prevailing under subsistence economies, appropriate educational and extension programmes within the health and agricultural sectors would be called for. In this latter case, food control authorities should work closely with these other agencies.

55. To stress the possible health implications of unsafe food, special attention was drawn to the fact that in many parts of the world, including the countries of the Latin American Region, contaminated food (including drinking water) caused ill health and death to a vast number of people. The people suffering from this condition were mainly those who belonged to the low social economic groups of rural and urban populations. Food safety activities had in these cases to be combined with other health protecting measures, such as vaccination programmes, improvement of basic environmental hygiene, etc. Thus, a food control strategy should, therefore, not only be directed towards food in commerce but also to home-grown foods. In tailoring a food control strategy to the particular needs of a country more emphasis had also to be given to those foods actually consumed by the population at risk. Foods and conditions which were mainly responsible for food-borne illnesses should receive special attention. In this way, it should be possible to break the vicious cycle of food-borne diarrhoea leading to weight loss and malnutrition which, in turn, led to increased susceptibility to all sorts of diseases including food-borne infections and intoxications. It was estimated that annually 10 to 20 million children up to the age of 5-6 years were becoming victims of this vicious cycle. The Secretariat concluded by stating that since infant mortality was also high in some countries of Latin America, the Governments of this region should address themselves to this problem.

56. The delegation of Uruguay accepted the food control strategy as presented in the document. Information was provided on some of the activities being carried out in the country in this area. Specific mention was made of the training being provided to food handlers.

57. The delegation of Chile fully supported the approach presented in the document and the need to call the attention of the national authorities to greater emphasis on protection of foods. All the objectives of a well developed food control system were

necessary, i.e. health, prevention of fraud, development of food industry and trade. The strategy presented in the paper would provide response at national level and stimulate action in the right direction. Training was considered to be a matter of the highest priority and FAO/WHO should provide necessary assistance. The subject of education, though very important, was quite complex. Educational efforts had to reach the community.

58. The delegation of Brazil fully agreed with and supported the strategy.

Food control was a Governmental activity and could not be delegated. It had to be continuously developed in the interest of the protection of the consumer and the food and should meet the needs of developments in food technology. As an example, it was mentioned that to deal with foods of animal origin Brazil had more than 1800 veterinarians and over 5000 technical assistants at medium level. Since 1979 a national programme for control of biological contaminants had been introduced and it would be extended to other foods. In 1981 work would also start on control of hormones and antibiotics in foods of animal origin.

59. The delegation of Mexico welcomed the FAO/WHO approach. A reference was made to the Inter-Secretariat Committee on Environmental Health operating in Mexico since 1978.

60. The observer from Spain referred to the document as realistic and conforming to the views of many countries. The improvement in food handling practices and training was considered of high priority. An offer was made to provide training of functionaries in food control in Spain.

61. Referring specially to the problem of diarrhoea in children, the delegation of Chile pointed out that in his country this disease was frequently caused by unhygienic food prepared for children. His government had, therefore, passed appropriate regulations not only covering the nutritional composition but also hygienic minimum requirements as well as handling practices. Due to this approach, the morbidity of infant diarrhoea had been lowered in Chile.

62. In Uruguay, the infant mortality rate dropped from 43.3 to 38.9 per 1000 live births within the last five years. This reassuring result was achieved by the introduction of several measures such as intensive educational programmes aiming, inter-alia, at basic food hygienic precautions and nutrition complementation programmes for mothers and children. Besides this, the network for potable water had been extended to reach all communities with more than 300 inhabitants. In this way, 92% of the population have access to potable water. The water itself is regularly checked for chemical and biological contaminants.

63. The observer from Spain pointed out that in his opinion inspection of food and the availability of potable water were of great importance for the prevention of infant diarrhoea, while the delegation of Chile observed that educational activities should be directed towards hospital staff, kindergartens and schools.

64. In concluding this specific discussion on infant diarrhoea, the Secretariat drew attention to the importance of breast-feeding and the UN Water Decade Programme for preventing this disease and explained briefly WHO's, UNICEF's and FAO's activities to promote breast-feeding and the UN International Water Supply and Sanitation Decade.

65. After a brief further discussion, the meeting expressed the full support, in principle, to the strategy presented in the document. It was felt that it would be necessary to continue developing this strategy further and refining the approaches discussed. At the same time it was also quite obvious that each country should develop its own strategy for food control.

MODEL FOOD LAW

66. The Committee noted that between the first Session and the present one a Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Regional Conference had been held in Mexico City, 5-11 September 1978, and had considered the proposed Model Food Law which is to be found as an Annex (CX/Latin America 78/7) which in turn is contained in the Report of the Conference (CX/Latin America 78/12).

67. At the Conference, the Chairman had concluded that the Model Food Law could be accepted by the Conference and recommended to Member Countries for use in reviewing existing food laws. It had been proposed that at the present Second Session of the Coordinating Committee, the Model Food Law might be further considered by reviewing existing legislation in countries of the Region in comparison with the regulatory framework provided by the Model Food Law. Progress made in the adoption/adaptation of the Model Food Law to national legislation would be reported at the present Session. A Circular Letter was therefore issued in which countries of the region were asked to indicate to what extent the substance of their food laws conformed to the Model Food Law, and what steps were likely to be taken to adapt national laws to the Model Food Law.

68. The Committee noted that apart from the information already supplied at the Conference itself by Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Mexico and Venezuela, the Government of Venezuela had provided a detailed written response concerning the Model Food Law which was attached as an Appendix to the Spanish version of document CX/LA 80/4. The general conclusion resulting from a comparative analysis of the provisions proposed in the Model Food Law and the existing law in Venezuela showed that the Model Food Law did not contain any provision which could be considered contrary to the national law and that to an appreciable extent, the provisions of the Model Food Law corresponded to the provisions in force in Venezuela. It was, therefore, considered feasible for Venezuela to give its adherence to the Model Food Law, notwithstanding the fact that it would have a certain number of reservations and suggestions for adjusting the definitive version of the Model Food Law. The Committee noted that while some countries might find the Model Food Law suitable for adoption as it stood the intention was that it should serve more as a guide to provide for certain principles within such a legislation rather than a specific recommendation for adoption. It was, therefore, understood that in some cases the provisions of the Model Food Law would need to be suitably adjusted or reworded in conformity with the national legal system.

69. Several delegations gave reports on the situation in their countries concerning the comparison between the Model Food Law and national legislation.

70. The delegation of Brazil informed the Committee that there were not many discrepancies between the Model Food Law and the present legislation in Brazil. The delegation was of the opinion that well-defined food provisions should be established which would encourage both internal and external trade, taking into account the proposed objectives and differences between the industrial sectors in the countries of the region, the Model could provide valuable orientation for improving food legislation in the region. With regard to the contents of Part II under the title of "General Provisions" the delegation took the view that the subject should be more detailed. It would be preferable to make a specific chapter for each of the provisions listed under which could be collected other matters allowing fraud and adulteration of raw materials and processed and semi-processed products to be better studied. In the same way, Part III which deals with importations, guarantees and warranty should be more expanded, detailed and defined so as to guarantee complete certainty and efficiency over the control of imported foods. This part should be adequately aligned with regulations on national products so as to ensure equal treatment in the control of food products produced internally and externally. With regard to Part IV of the Model Food Law, the delegation took this to be the proper responsibility of the official organization of each Govern-

ment. Part V could be amended by substituting the present text with another which expressed the need to establish in a pre-determined time, commissions responsible for keeping the state of the regulations under constant review. Finally, Part VI was considered adequate and sufficient.

71. The delegation of Uruguay informed the Committee that an inter-ministerial Committee was at present drafting regulations on different aspects of food control. This would later on enable the drafting of a national food law. FAO and WHO publications including the Model Food Law were being taken into account when drafting regulations. The basic philosophy and aims of the Codex Alimentarius coincided with those of the Uruguayan Committee. The delegation gave detailed information on the format of the proposed regulations, some sections of which had already been submitted through the Ministry of Health for adoption by the Government. The delegation of Chile reported that certain provisions of the Model Food Law would be incorporated where possible into the Chilean Food Legislation. In general, the provisions were in agreement but there were still legal discussions on whether certain sections required amendment or could be adopted in their present form.

72. The delegation of Argentina expressed the opinion that the Model Food Law would make a very important contribution in countries which do not have legislation or which want to up-date their legislation. Although the Model Food Law had a different approach it was in general consistent with Argentine legislation; there were, however, some marked differences in such matters as definitions, processing, hygiene and marketing, hygiene/health conditions to be complied with by processing plants, provisions concerning marketing and steps to be followed for procedures and penalties. For these reasons, the Model Food Law as it stands at present cannot be accepted.

73. The Secretariat reminded the Committee that the Model Food Law was only a guide and provided a basic framework which could be utilized for the development of precise national legislation. It would be advisable to keep the food law as simple as possible enabling the Government to prepare detailed regulations as and when necessary. This was the approach taken in the Model Food Law. Attention was invited to Part IV of the Model which gave ample powers to the Government to draw any regulations of the type referred to in the discussions, e.g. import and export of foods, food additives, labeling, certification, etc. Keeping these regulations separate from the food law was a distinct advantage as the regulations could be brought up-to-date more easily in terms of technological development, etc. than the provisions in a food law.

74. The representative of the Inter-American Bar Association (IABA) informed the Committee of the discussions which had taken place at San Juan de Puerto Rico where this Association had discussed the Model Food Law. The general opinion had been that although this was a good starting point the Model Food Law was too inflexible and would tend to restrict new provisions especially with regard to the transfer of technology. The law was based on Anglo-Saxon legal structures which were not always amenable or adaptable to accommodate regulations which had been framed for example under the French system. As an example, the representative cited the provisions under "warranty". The manner in which new products were marketed differ considerably in the Anglo-Saxon system from that of the French system. He was of the opinion that many points of the Food Law required consideration by a consultative body comprising legal and technical specialists and that with regard to technical terminology some explanatory texts could be included in the Model Food Law.

75. The Secretariat pointed out that the manner of handling warranty was different not so much because of differences in approaches under the French and Anglo-Saxon systems but more because of differences in the approaches in inspection systems. In any case, any inspectional and warranty approaches could be adjusted under any national food law.

76. The Committee noted that the Model Food Law was, in fact, a guideline and, as already stated, various aspects of food control could be fitted into the basic format. The Committee agreed that the subject should be kept on the agenda for consideration at the next session of the Committee when more countries might have an opportunity to report on the developments of their national food legislation by comparison with the Model Food Law.

STRENGTHENING THE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR NATIONAL FOOD CONTROL SYSTEMS

(a) Information on existing and proposed projects

77. The Secretariat introduced document CX/LA 80/5. It was stated that FAO placed strong emphasis on its technical cooperation activities at country level in the field of food control. This involved advice and assistance in updating food laws and regulations, improvement of food inspection and analysis programmes, food quality control, etc. Training of food control personnel at various levels, was given very high priority. Several documents had been published on various aspects of food control, e.g. guidelines for food control systems, laboratory and inspection manuals, export inspection, mycotoxins.

78. A number of national, regional and international projects were being carried out which covered different aspects of food control and food contamination monitoring and control. FAO had supported national workshops at policy level to define food control strategies and approaches meeting the circumstances and needs of the country. Specific reference was made to a recent strategy workshop in Mexico. Concerning the work at a regional level, reference was made to the recently held regional Food Contamination Control Training Workshop in Mexico City in which several countries of the region participated. It was stated that close collaboration was maintained between FAO and WHO in carrying out several of these activities.

79. With regard to the WHO activities in the region, the Secretariat informed the Committee that most of these were, in fact, carried out by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) Washington. Explanations were given concerning the WHO/PAHO Food Safety activities. Specific reference was made to the work of the Unified Food Control Laboratory in Guatemala and to the Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute. The Institute of Nutrition of Central America and Panama (INCAP) was doing very useful work in epidemiological research on food-borne diseases in the region.

80. The delegation of Brazil informed the Committee that a System of Metrology and Standardization and Industrial Quality (SINMETRO) had been established with the aim of carrying out national policy in the sector. The System integrated both public and private organizations which were active in the field. The executive body of the System was the National Institute of Metrology, Standardization and Industrial Quality (INMETRO) which had begun standardization work in the areas of meat and meat products, milk and milk products, fish and fishery products, wine and vinegar, food additives and processed fruit and vegetables.

81. Different interested groups for industry, consumers, government institutions and departments were participating in this work. Recently, a national Codex Committee had been established which had met for the first time just prior to this Session.

82. The delegation of Uruguay referred to the support given by PAHO in providing fellowships in environmental health. It was further stated that the Latin American countries were concerned about the safety and wholesomeness of foods and would welcome assistance from international agencies. Within Uruguay, a technical committee was reviewing the development of draft food law. Work on several food regulations had already started. Attention was drawn to the role of the Food Control Service of the Montevideo Municipality which carried out registration and control of all foods in the Department.

Municipal laboratories had also been established in other Departments for the same purpose. The Animal Industries Division of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, through its Veterinary Services, was controlling, both at national and export level, the hygiene/health conditions in all establishments used for the handling and processing of animals and meat of the following species: beef, sheep, pigs, horses, poultry, rabbits and game. There was legislation concerning the production and control of milk. Pesticide residues, accumulative toxins and microbiological aspects were also examined. The Legal Control Division of the same Ministry controlled production of and offered guarantees on the quality of wines and fermented beverages, both national and imported. The Plant Health Division had responsibility for the registration and use of pesticides, fungicides, etc.

83. In the area of fisheries, the National Fishery Institute established in 1975 was responsible for the management of the entire fisheries sector. This included, among other matters, standardization and quality control aspects of fish and fishery products from the catch to the export point. For this purpose, the required controls were made in the Quality Control Laboratory after which a certificate of quality was issued. FAO has given important assistance to the National Fisheries Institute.

84. In the case of non-traditional foods, the work of the Uruguayan Technological Laboratory (LATU) was explained. LATU was a body functioning within the Ministry of Industry and Energy, which issued certificates of quality for such products which could not be exported unless they carried a certificate issued by LATU.

85. In trying to present the regional needs for technical assistance, the Uruguayan delegation suggested that some sort of an action plan might be developed within such an overall food policy framework, different activities such as updating of food laws and regulations, strengthening infrastructure, and exchange of information could be carried out. The Latin American region had several well-developed institutions and various programmes were being carried out in the subject area of food quality control. An overall action plan would be able to utilize these resources for the entire region. It was suggested that FAO/WHO should consider Latin America as a priority region for providing assistance, particularly for training in food control.

86. The delegation of Chile appreciated the activities carried out by FAO/PAHO in providing technical assistance to developing countries. According to the delegation, assistance in training should be given the highest priority.

87. Development of technical infrastructure for food control was considered necessary and important. The delegation brought to the attention some difficulties on timely information regarding the award of fellowships for training. It also suggested that each country could, in future, present a report on its activities in food control so that the information was available within the region.

88. The delegation of Argentina expressed appreciation of the assistance provided by FAO under the project Animal Health in the sub-tropical region of North-West Argentina.

89. The observer from Spain supported the work of the International Organizations in providing technical assistance to developing countries.

90. The Committee was informed about the FAO/RLAT Office initiative in the establishment of a network of cooperation among Latin American countries (RECLAIN). This network had been initiated for the purpose of promoting exchange of information, experiences and resources to improve research, training and promotion of agroindustries in the area. Within that structure, a Secretariat, sponsored by FAO and the Spanish "Instituto de Cooperación Iberoamericano", and several specialized working groups had been established in order to promote RECLAIN activities in specific topics. One group,

under the Presidency of Mr. Esteban Marchelli, from LATU, Uruguay, had been asked to seek the cooperation of national Latin American Institutions in the area of food quality control. Such a group could contribute to a wider and deeper analysis of specific problems in this area which could be hindering the development of markets, consumption and a better utilization of food quality control as a tool for agricultural and agroindustrial development.

91. The delegation of Mexico thanked FAO for its support to the national Food Quality Control Strategy Seminar recently organized in Mexico City. The Seminar had been very useful in identifying areas where inter-ministerial cooperation and coordination would be necessary and in bringing about a coherent programme in food quality control and contaminants. The Seminar would enable the government to further strengthen its food control activities. Among the recommendations made during the Seminar were those dealing with training of food inspectors and control of fresh fruits and vegetables, on a priority basis. Reference was also made to the Regional Food Contamination Control Training Workshop held in Mexico City in November 1980. The workshop was attended by participants from nine countries. It had also recommended a regional strategy for strengthening of food quality and safety activities in the region and had highlighted priorities for technical assistance.

(b) Food Control Needs

92. After extensive discussion, the Committee endorsed and supported the following proposals submitted by the delegation of Uruguay for further action within the region:

1. Pesticides

93. As regards the control and prevention of food contamination, there was a consensus that one of the areas that deserves special attention was that of the use of pesticides and their repercussion on human health through the food network.

94. This statement was based on the large use, both in quantity as well as in variety of pesticides; on the fact that agricultural practices sometimes did not respond to recommended techniques; on the lack of rules facilitating the effective control of all the aspects involved through all the food network, and on the shortage of both human and economic resources destined to these effects.

95. For this purpose, FAO and other International Organizations could offer valuable collaboration by giving technical and financial assistance by means of some pilot projects at the national level to find out the national realities on the use of pesticides and the existence of residues, directly on foods or on water and soil and to determine the most effective solutions. Likewise, they could endorse information and education programmes both at the level of food producers and manufacturers as well as at the level of consumers and training of professional and medium level technicians in the different fields: application and utilization of appropriate pesticides, analysis, inspection, etc..

2. Food and Nutrition

96. In the region of Latin America, several problems related to food and nutrition were causing increasing concern on the part of several National and International Organizations. They not only affected the health but also the economy of the countries.

97. Epidemiological studies on food-borne diseases indicated a variety of causes. Therefore, the search for solutions should also be multidisciplinary.

98. It is recommended that: National authorities of the region in the Ministries of Health, Agriculture, Education, Industry and Labour, should cooperate in order:

- (1) To carry out food consumption studies, including analysis of indicators which determined directly, or indirectly, the food situation.

- (2) To implement educational activities in the subject areas of food and nutrition as an integral part of health, agriculture and economy programmes with a view to:
 - 2.1 Achieving effective behavioural changes in consumers. This would be possible only if they became aware of the importance of food and its quality, microbiological and toxicological hazards and they had been warned about possible fraudulent practices like adulteration.
 - 2.2 Protecting vulnerable population groups, such as mothers, children and old people. It was advisable to use every available educational instance in all the phases of food during its biological cycle:
 - production
 - industrialization
 - marketing
 - consumption
 - humans
- (3) To take concerted measures for the improvement of basic sanitation and hygiene such as safe water supply, sewage, toilet facilities.
- (4) To deal with problems of infant morbidity and mortality, caused through diarrhoea from unhygienic foods and water sources:
 - develop promotion programmes on breastfeeding
 - incorporate programmes on continuous training to the staff dealing with children, food handling services and health, agriculture and education services.
- (5) To make concerted efforts to improve the nutritional status of those parts of the population which were at risk from food and water-borne infections and intoxications leading frequently to diarrhoea, malnutrition and death.

99. The delegation of Mexico brought to the attention of the Committee the recommendations made at the recently held FAO/Mexico Regional Food Contamination Control Training Workshop (Mexico City, 3-28 November 1980) which nine countries from the Region had already developed at the regional level after detailed and careful consideration. The delegation recommended that these be supported and endorsed by the Committee for further action within the region. After further discussion, the Committee supported and endorsed the following recommendations from the Mexican Regional Workshop:

I To National Governments.

As regards control and prevention of food contamination

1. Priorities and adequate resources should be in accordance with the growth and attainment of the necessary infrastructure and programmes, within the context of food safety and general development. The diagnosis and monitoring of the problem that assured that they were under control was an essential part of these programmes.
2. The effectiveness of the programmes and activities should be guaranteed by means of the definition and direction of the efforts of the authorities of an organization (inter-supra or extra-ministerial) that was responsible for safeguarding food

quality and safety according to standards and by means of periodic meetings (workshops/seminars) with persons related to these programmes and activities.

3. Limits for contaminants should be present in every regulation and standard which dealt with foodstuffs, specially those foods that were an important part of the diet of the population in general and vulnerable groups of infants and children, pregnant women and breastfed children, old people and low income families in particular.
4. Limits for contaminants should ideally be based on real data and formulation of diets, as well as on the ADI or "tolerable weekly intake", recommended values by FAO/WHO expert groups respectively in pesticide residues and in food additives, and food contaminants. When those national data or equivalent data for diets, in other countries of the region, did not exist, maximum limits of residues for pesticides and maximum limits for contaminants recommended by the Codex Alimentarius FAO/WHO Commission might be accepted on a temporary basis to be included in the standards and regulations.
5. As resources for programmes and activities were limited, priority attention should be given to staple foods and to contaminants potentially more harmful in these foodstuffs of local consumption. However, export foodstuffs, which were a basis for the sustenance of a great part of the population, also deserved special consideration.
6. In order to be able to attain effectiveness and efficiency wherever it is feasible, food control programmes (animal feeding) should be separated; e.g. not to combine medicinal drug programmes, health and labour safety, etc..
7. The participation in the work of the Codex Alimentarius FAO/WHO Commission should be increased and the attendance of personnel involved in quality control of foodstuffs should be promoted in meetings such as Codex Committees on pesticide residues and food additives, as well as in the Codex Coordinating Committee for Latin America.
8. Consumer organizations should be given guidelines to assure their support to safety objectives and high quality food supplies.
9. Information and education programmes should be established for agrarian and livestock producers, consumers and food industry. Assistance should be given to producers, processors, and suppliers to attain food quality control in their operations and to achieve a correct agrarian application and development of this industry.
10. Training and extension programmes should be established for personnel from other public and private sectors such as: doctors, paramedical staff, crop-spraying operators, factory

staff, domestic and industrial fumigators, as well as the organization of international or national systems for the treatment of intoxications.

11. The efforts of the following Regional Recommendations should be endorsed at the national level:
 - (a) To obtain data which could help to achieve a better decision on the numerical limits to be included in regulations and standards;
 - (b) To ensure quality control;
 - (c) To achieve uniformity and reliability of analytical and sampling methodology;
 - (d) To harmonize laws and regulations especially on contaminants;
 - (e) To establish and carry out exchange of information.
12. To hold meetings on contamination and food quality control to verify the advancement achieved as regards the recommendations of this bureau in each one of the participating countries.

II To FAO and other International Organizations.

GENERAL

13. The adequate control of food quality, including contamination in any region, depends on the effectiveness of quality control in each one of its countries. Consequently, prompt assistance must be given to any country in the Region which asks for help to remedy serious deficiencies in the infrastructure and food control operations.

SPECIFICALLY

FAO/WHO, the Codex Alimentarius Commission and/or other International Organizations should support the improvement of food quality in the countries of the Region, with special emphasis on the control and monitoring of contamination of foods for local consumption and export, by means of technical assistance to:

14. Update laws and rules in most of the countries, trying to attain harmonization.
15. Achieve harmonization of food standards, sampling procedures, methods of analysis and contaminant limits in foodstuffs.
16. Establish appropriate limits of food contaminants for the countries of the Region.
17. Increase the number of foods that are under control by means of more qualified inspectors and analysts, laboratories and equipment, including reference samples for analysis.
18. Strengthen inspection services and provide material and guidelines to help inspectors to optimize their activities.

19. As a priority task to develop and implement training programmes for inspectors.
20. Give preferential utilization to the institutions of the Region to train analysts.
21. Establish participation with the proposed network of Latin America cooperations in agricultural industries (RECLAIN), as appropriate, to favour a better quality control by the food industry.
22. Support the work of the laboratories in the Region to improve the quality of the results.
23. Improve and, whenever necessary, establish channels for the exchange of information on problems of food control, including contamination and solutions for prevention and control, for example, through workshops, seminars, courses and publications.
24. Support regional or national institutions in their efforts to develop and apply their capacity to provide technical assistance in the analysis and control of foodstuffs in the countries of the Region.

COOPERATION WITH LATIN AMERICAN ECONOMIC GROUPS AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL BODIES IN THE REGION OF LATIN AMERICA ENGAGED IN FOOD STANDARDS WORK

Review of Work carried out by the above Organizations in the Field of Food Standards

100. The Committee noted that the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Regional Conference for Latin America, held in Mexico City in September 1978, had considered a document ref. CX/LA 78/4 entitled "Cooperation with Latin American Groups". The document had made a detailed review of the activities of common market and free trade associations and other economic groups of the region which were interested in integration schemes in the region and had given details of regional work on harmonization of food regulations and standards.

101. The activities of international and regional agencies on standardization in Latin America were also reviewed, as well as the role of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, both actual and potential, as an instrument of regional food standardization and harmonization of existing regulations in the region. The document had concluded by stressing the need for what had been generally recognized throughout the region in treaties and agreements, namely, a harmonized approach to food legislation and to regional standardization. It pointed out that the influence of Codex standards on the harmonization and the coordination of the work on food standards of the various national bodies concerned could make a significant contribution to the process of integration of food standards in Latin America. The document contained several recommendations on this point (see CX/LA 80/6 para 5.).

102. The Committee noted that although there had been general agreement at the Conference with certain aspects of the conclusions and recommendations, it was thought that further clarification was required on how more harmonization of food standards work could be achieved in the region. It had been stressed that existing work on food standardization by regional and sub-regional bodies should be fully taken into account to avoid duplication of efforts. In the opinion of the Conference, the Coordinating Committee for Latin America, being an intergovernmental body which covered the whole

region including the Caribbean would be a very suitable forum in which harmonization in Latin America of food standards and related matters could be undertaken. It was decided that the question should be considered by this Committee at the present Session, and that the various international bodies in the Region should be invited to prepare an up-to-date summary of their work in the field of food standardization and to indicate the current status of their food standards.

103. Replies had been received from the following organizations: COPANT, ICAITI, INCAP, ITINTEC, LAFTA and PAHO and the information provided was summarized in CX/LA 80/6 paras 9 to 26.

Possible Ways and Means of Strengthening Cooperation with Latin American Regional Organizations and Avoiding Duplication of Efforts

104. The replies had allowed the following conclusions to be made:

105. The region was well aware of the need for harmonization of the efforts of individual standards organizations in order to achieve a uniform system of food standardization throughout the Latin American Region. Such organizations as COPANT and its 18 national members, and ICAITI - to give but two examples - had made good progress towards establishing food standards which appear to be acceptable throughout the Region. Both COPANT and ICAITI acknowledged the usefulness of the Codex Alimentarius Food Standards Programme in helping them to establish standards and codes with layout and provisions which are common both to Codex regional and international standards and which are offered for acceptance to 118 Member Countries, 22 of which belong to the Latin American Region.

106. Through its Coordinating Committees, the Codex Alimentarius Commission had already begun work on regional standardization of a number of products of interest to particular regions and moving in trade mainly within those regions. Also, the existing Codex Commodity Committees covered many products mentioned by the regional standardization organizations. Notable exceptions were standards for wines, beers and distilled liquors which had been elaborated by COPANT, PAHO and by ICAITI in collaboration with PAHO. There was already close cooperation between COPANT and ICAITI.

107. It had been suggested in the Secretariat paper that the harmonization influence of Codex could be greatly increased by a systematic approach to the harmonization exercise through a working group comprising interested parties within the region. The Secretariat paper had also suggested the following courses of action. A first task would be to examine regional and national standards, identify those for which Codex standards already existed and arrange them in a common Codex format (see Procedural Manual of the Commission, 4th Ed., page 47 of the English edition and page 49 of the Spanish edition). This would already be an important step forward since apparent rather than real differences arising from a different approach to the layout of standards, which could cause confusion and be an impediment to trade would be eliminated. At the same time, examination of the limits and provisions established by Codex General Subject Committees could also lead to the alignment and updating of provisions for food additives, pesticide residues, hygiene and labelling requirements. Such an exercise would not preclude the Coordinating Committee from undertaking standardization work on any commodities of importance in intra-regional trade for which standardization was judged to be urgent and necessary. It could, however, be the means of bringing national and regional standards together, harmonizing their contents and setting them in an international format.

108. In discussing the above conclusions, the delegations of Chile, Uruguay, Panama and Mexico gave information on the activities of their national standardization organizations within the framework of COPANT.

109. The delegation of Chile informed the Committee that a general labelling standard was being prepared in cooperation with the Ministry of Health which followed the guide-

lines established by the Codex Committee on Food Labelling. He agreed that this approach was the only way to obtain standards with common elements and to avoid the danger of the distortion of provision when standards were elaborated independently.

110. The delegation of Uruguay also agreed with the principle of the harmonization of regional standards with those established by Codex.

111. The delegation of Mexico informed the Committee that its Directorate General of Standards was also the official Codex Contact Point and maintained relationships with both regional and international standardization organizations. The delegation informed the Committee that regional standards were being elaborated, in collaboration with COPANT and international standards in collaboration with Codex. The delegation hoped for common standardization through the joint efforts of COPANT and the Codex Alimentarius.

112. The Secretary-General of COPANT (Pan American Commission on Technical Standards), Ing. B. Ghirelli de Ciaburri, informed the Committee that in addition to the Member Countries of COPANT listed in the working document (CX/LA 80/6) Trinidad and Tobago and the Dominican Republic were also members. She agreed with the principle that COPANT standards should be aligned with the corresponding Codex standards and informed the Committee that 50% of the institutes of the Member Countries of COPANT participated directly in Codex work.

113. The delegation of Brazil agreed with the proposal to establish a working group to study harmonization along the line suggested and regretted that there were not sufficient countries present at the session to enable a more general expression of opinion on this point.

114. The observer of Spain noted the difficulties which had been experienced through a scattering of effort with regard to the standardization and application of food regulations in many countries and strongly supported the proposal to harmonize regional standards.

115. The observer of LAFTA emphasized that duplication of standardization work should be avoided.

116. Several delegations, including the observer of LAFTA, stressed that political agreement was necessary to achieve acceptance of harmonized standards at national level. The Committee noted that there was general agreement on the need for harmonization of the efforts of individual standards organizations in order to achieve a uniform system of food standardization throughout the Latin American Region.

117. It noted that COPANT and its 22 national members were actively engaged in establishing regional food standards. Taking into account that the delegation which spoke on this subject had attached particular importance both to COPANT and Codex standards, the Secretariat proposed, as a first step in the direction of harmonization of standards in the region, that a preliminary study of the differences between COPANT and Codex standards should be made, especially with regard to the feasibility of adjusting the regional COPANT standards to the corresponding worldwide standards.

118. The Secretary-General of COPANT agreed to the Committee's request to prepare such a study for consideration by the Committee at its next Session. The Committee expressed its appreciation to the Secretary-General of COPANT for agreeing to undertake the study.

CONSIDERATION OF WORK PRIORITIES

119. The Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Regional Conference for Latin America, held in Mexico City, 5-11 September 1978, discussed a document (CX/Latin America 78/11) on the topic of foods of importance for the countries of the Codex region of Latin America, on the basis of data concerning food production, imports, exports and processing. Discussion turned on foods or aspects of foods which were of particular interest to countries of the region for standardization through the Codex Alimentarius Commission - those which might give rise to difficulties in international trade, those which were of social importance, and those which should be promoted because of their trade potential. Opinions were expressed that food hygiene and food microbiology, deficiencies which caused considerable food losses and serious food-borne diseases, were a high priority item in the region. The Conference had also noted opinions that more emphasis should be placed on ecological problems caused by pesticides and the pollution of food and water by industrial waste and that high priority should be given to developing food monitoring capabilities in countries of the region, so that maximum limits for contaminants could be continually controlled.

120. The document which had been prepared for the Conference (CX/Latin America 78/11), contained a list of food products produced and consumed in the region but time did not permit a detailed discussion of these. The Conference had noted opinions that both imported foods and foods for export should be considered for international standardization. The Conference had agreed that a questionnaire should be distributed to the Members of the Latin American Region asking for information on food products of interest or concern from a standardization point of view, as well as on subject matters of interest or concern. On the basis of the replies, which should also take into account the products listed in document CX/Latin America 78/11, the Coordinating Committee could develop its future work programme.

121. A detailed questionnaire was distributed in March 1979 as CL 1979/14 and was in three parts. A reminder was issued in March 1980 as CL 1980/19, since a number of replies received was much less than expected. Part I of the questionnaire listed various food quality and safety factors and asked countries to assign a national order of priority to them in relation to (a) health protection; (b) food exports; and (c) food imports. Part II of the questionnaire, asked for an indication of priority ratings on the need for standardization of a list of foods and food products of interest to the region. Part III of the questionnaire, requested Governments to state the type of work required on individual foods, i.e. whether standards or codes of practice on a worldwide or regional basis, bearing in mind that the Commission did not favour establishing regional Codex standards for food products moving in worldwide trade, but only for products moving exclusively or almost exclusively in trade in the region concerned.

122. Replies to the circular letter (CL 1979/14) were received from the following countries and International Organizations: Ecuador, Panama, Peru (ITINTEC), Venezuela, COPANT, ECLA, ICAITI, INCAP, LAFTA, PAHO. During the course of the Session, the delegation of Brazil made available to the delegates its response to the questionnaire.

123. The delegation of Mexico stated that Mexico had completed the questionnaire and had forwarded it to the Secretariat. The Secretariat indicated that the Mexican response to the questionnaire had not yet reached it and might have gone astray.

124. In introducing document CX/LA 80/7, the Secretariat drew the Committee's attention to the conclusions which had been reached in relation to each of the three Parts of the questionnaire. The Committee decided to consider first the conclusions regarding Parts II and III of the questionnaire relating to food products.

125. The Committee noted that most of the food products given a first or second priority rating for the purpose of standardization were already covered by existing Codex standards. Of the products given a first or second priority rating, only coffee beans and coffee products were not covered by existing Codex standards or Codex codes of practice. The Secretariat indicated that the question of the need for standards for coffee beans and coffee products had already been considered at the Tenth Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, on the basis of a comprehensive document (ALINORM 74/29 and an earlier paper ALINORM 72/9). The Commission had concluded, at that time, that the elaboration of a standard for green coffee should be left to ISO. The Commission had also concluded that (i) a Codex standard for green coffee was not necessary; and (ii) it was not possible to reach agreement as to whether standards for coffee products were necessary and, therefore, adjourned the discussions sine die, recognizing that it would be open to any Member of the Commission to suggest reconsiderations of the subject of standards for these products.

126. As regards coffee beans, the delegations of Argentina and Uruguay thought that it was desirable to establish a Codex standard for them. The delegation of Brazil considered that it would not be useful to discuss the need for a Codex standard for coffee beans in the absence of most of the countries of the region, including coffee producing countries. Moreover, it considered that the matter should be dealt with by a specific technical Committee. The delegation of Mexico supported the delegation of Brazil. The Committee decided to consider this matter further at its next session. Concerning coffee products, the Committee likewise agreed to defer consideration of the need for Codex standards for them until its next session.

127. The delegation of Uruguay indicated that it would be interested in seeing a Codex standard established for yerba maté. Uruguay was one of the main consumers of this product and a Codex standard for it would be in the interest of consumer protection and facilitation of international trade. The Committee noted the remarks of the delegation of Uruguay, but decided not to take any position regarding the Uruguayan proposal at this time.

128. Of the products not covered by existing Codex standards, oilseeds and oilseed cakes and meals had been given a third priority rating. The delegation of Chile stated that oilseeds were products of considerable importance and referred to the health aspects of rapeseeds, having a high erucic acid content. The Secretariat indicated that Codex standards had been established for a wide range of vegetable oils, including a standard for edible low erucic acid rapeseed oil. There was no proposal for the establishment of Codex standards for these products.

129. There had been a proposal from the Nutritional Institute of Central America at Panama (INCAP) that worldwide Codex standards be elaborated for carbonated soft drinks (Priority I) and alcoholic beverages (Priority II), which were commodities for which no Codex standards existed. The Secretariat indicated that at the last session of the Coordinating Committee for Asia the delegation of Pakistan had proposed that Codex standards be established for carbonated soft drinks. There had been some discussion on this proposal at the Thirteenth Session of the Commission. Reference had been made at the Commission's Thirteenth Session to an earlier decision of the Commission that international standards for these products were not necessary. In this connexion, attention had been drawn to the fact that there was in existence a Codex Advisory List of Additives approved for use in soft drinks. Having been informed that Pakistan was studying this matter, the Commission took no action at that time (ALINORM 79/38, para 287).

130. The delegation of Chile stressed the importance of quality of the water used in the manufacture of soft drinks. The Secretariat informed the Committee that a Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on Microbiological Specifications for Foods (EC/Microbiol/77/Report 2, p.12) had expressed some concern about the danger of microbiological contamination of soft drinks.

131. The delegation of Uruguay thought that as carbonated soft drinks were being consumed in large amounts by children, it would be desirable to establish both international standards and a code of practice for these products. The delegation of Uruguay added that it had been thinking of the desirability of the Commission establishing a Codex Committee on Non-Alcoholic Beverages. The delegation of Mexico pointed out the difficulty of taking a position on this subject in the absence of sufficient information. The Committee decided to consider this topic further at its next session. Concerning the question of whether there was a need to establish Codex standards for alcoholic beverages, the Committee agreed to consider this matter also at its next session.

132. The delegation of Argentina quoted production and trade figures for pulses, which were products of great importance to the region of Latin America. The delegation of Argentina drew attention to the discussions in the Executive Committee on this subject, at its Twenty-Seventh Session (ALINORM 81/3, paras 43-46), and stressed the need to establish worldwide Codex standards for these products.

133. As regards standards for baby foods, it was noted that Codex standards did exist for some classes of these products, that a code of hygienic practice for foods for infants and children had been adopted by the Commission at its Thirteenth Session, and that a code on the marketing of breast milk substitutes was being developed by WHO and UNICEF.

134. The Committee agreed that the general subject of foods for which it might be desirable to establish worldwide or regional Codex standards should be further reviewed at its next session.

135. The delegation of Panama, referring to the application of the standards, mentioned that in the absence of adequate food control and inspection facilities to verify the quality of imported food products, consideration should be given to the establishment of an acceptable certification.

136. As regards the question of subject matters in the area of food quality and safety, the Committee agreed that some of the major matters of importance and action to be taken regarding them had already been determined under other items of the agenda (see paras 77-99 and 137-144). The Committee agreed that the subject of priorities for the region should be an item of the agenda for the next session.

A SUMMARY OF INFORMATION CONCERNING ACTIVITIES OF FAO AND WHO RELATING TO FOOD CONTAMINATION

137. The information on the above subject was furnished in response to a request made during the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Regional Conference for Latin America in 1978. In introducing this subject, the Secretariat pointed out that only a few of the many activities carried out by FAO and WHO could be mentioned in this context. They were either major landmarks or more recently started activities, such as the following:

138. (1) The Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants and the Joint FAO/WHO Meeting of Experts on Pesticide Residues: both were long established programmes within the Organizations, going back to 1956 and 1961 respectively. The meetings of these Groups were held annually. For the budget period 1982-1983, appropriate funds had again been set aside. The work of these Expert Groups had found worldwide recognition. The establishment of acceptable daily intakes (ADIs) for food additives and pesticide residues and of provisional weekly tolerable intakes for contaminants such as lead, mercury and cadmium formed most of the technical background for the work of the Codex Committees on Food Additives and on Pesticide Residues.

(2) The Joint FAO/WHO Food and Animal Feed Contamination Monitoring Programme: This was a UNEP supported programme and represented one of the components of UNEP's

Global Environmental Monitoring System (GEMS). At present, 21 Member Countries were taking part in this programme. From the Latin American Region, Mexico, Guatemala and Brazil were taking part. In the framework of this programme, a publication had been prepared entitled "Guidelines for Establishing or Strengthening National Food Contamination Monitoring Programme". This should be of interest also to those countries which were not taking part in the programme since all countries should start as early as possible with monitoring of food and parts of the food chain for residues of agricultural chemicals, as well as for contaminants such as heavy metals, PCB's and others. This seemed to be specially important for countries with tropical and sub-tropical climates (for pesticides) and those with large urban settlements (for contaminants).

A brief reference was also made to three other monitoring programmes within the GEMS:

Biological Monitoring Programmes;
Air Pollution Monitoring Programmes;
Water Quality Monitoring Programmes.

(3) WHO Environmental Health Criteria Programme: This Programme, which operated also with UNEP support, was started in 1973 and the main objectives are as follows:

- Assessment of effects of pollutants in human health
- Identifying information gaps on the health effects of pollutants
- Stimulate research, where necessary
- Promote harmonization of toxicological and epidemiological methodology.

Under this programme, Environmental Health Criteria Documents were being prepared which encompass total human exposure to a given agent in the air, water, at work, at home or in food. This programme was of course, not only related to the intake via food but since food is for quite a large number of environmental pollutants, one of the most important vehicles in the transmission to humans, it should be of interest to people concerned with food safety. The documents so far produced under this programme and carrying information of significance related to food are on:

Mercury
PCB's and terphenyls
Lead
Nitrates, nitrites and N-nitroso compounds
DDT and its derivatives
Mycotoxins
Tin and organotin compounds

(4) The International Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS): This was a very recent programme which aimed at combining the concerted efforts of international agencies and member states to face the growing problems of chemicals in the environment. So far, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNEP had joined the programme and it was hoped that FAO would also join the programme, at least in the field of food chemicals; on the side of Member Countries, the Governments of Canada, Finland, Japan and USA had already signed Memoranda of Understanding and financial contributions had already been made by them, since the programme depended largely on extra-budgetary funds. At present, negotiations in this respect were going on with the Governments of the United Kingdom, Italy, USSR, Federal Republic of Germany, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and others.

139. The principal objectives of this new international programme on chemical safety are as follows:

- to carry out and disseminate evaluations of the effects of chemicals on human health and on the quality of the environment;
- to develop guidelines on exposure limits such as acceptable daily intakes and maximum permissible or desirable levels in air, water and food and in the working environment, for all types of chemicals;
- to develop guidelines on appropriate methods for toxicity testing, epidemiological and clinical studies and risk and hazard identification, quantification and evaluation;
- to coordinate laboratory testing and epidemiological studies where an international approach is appropriate; and to promote research on dose response relations and on mechanisms of biological actions of chemicals;
- to develop information for coping with chemical accidents and promote effective international cooperation in this field; promote technical cooperation with respect to specific issues concerning control of toxic substances in Member States; and promote training and development of manpower.

140. The Secretariat drew further attention to the fact that the Programme Advisory Committee of IPCS had set priorities with regard to chemicals to be dealt with. These were pesticides and food additives, household products and industrial chemicals. The Programme Advisory Committee also emphasized the role of the Expert Committee on Food Additives, as well as the Joint Meeting on Pesticide Residues, which would, in future, be operating from the WHO side within the framework of IPCS.

141. Considerable concern had been expressed at national and international levels with regard to problems of mycotoxins and their effect on the health and food supplies. As a response to this concern, an international conference on mycotoxins had been held in Nairobi in 1977, sponsored jointly by FAO/WHO and UNEP. Follow-up action was being carried out to implement the recommendations of this Conference.

142. Two publications, namely "Surveillance for Mycotoxins" and "Recommended Practices for the Prevention of Mycotoxins in Food, Feed and their Products" had been issued by FAO. Environmental Health Criteria on mycotoxins had been published by WHO. About 50 persons had been provided with specialized training in mycotoxin analysis by FAO. Mycotoxins also formed an important part of the Latin American Regional Training Workshop on Food Contamination Control just ended in Mexico City. As aflatoxins were one of the most ubiquitous toxins and affected various staple foods, like cereals and grains, they presented a serious hazard. It was, therefore, necessary that national authorities should take appropriate action to monitor and control these problems.

143. The delegation of Uruguay welcomed the actions taken by FAO/WHO in the area of food contamination control. Reference was invited to the drinking water standards prepared by Uruguay based on the International Recommendations.

Information was provided by the Secretariat to the delegation of Chile with regard to the criteria for the use of food additives and the possible hazards from aflatoxins to the low income populations living in rural and urban areas. The observer from Spain concurred with the assessment of hazards from mycotoxins, not only in tropical and subtropical parts of the world, but also in temperate zones.

144. Referring to another area, attention was drawn to the expert consultation on Paralytic Shellfish Poison held in Berlin.

The Committee noted with satisfaction the various activities of FAO and WHO in the subject area of food contamination.

Agenda Item 3 (continuation)

145. Recommended European Regional Standard for Honey

The Committee gave further consideration to the above Standard (see also paras 34-37 of this Report).

After some discussions, in which the delegations of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Uruguay expressed the view that as the product was traded on a worldwide scale, the present provisions of the regional standard required amendment to take account of the different types of honey on the market, it was agreed that the Standard should be developed in future on a worldwide basis. The Committee therefore decided to recommend to the Commission that the European Regional Standard for Honey should be developed as a worldwide standard.

146. Proposed Draft Standard for Mango Juice (see paras 38-42 of this Report)

The Committee agreed with the view of the Coordinating Committee for Asia that this product should, even though it contained 50% or more of mango pulp, be permitted to be traded under the name of "mango juice" which was the traditional name under which the product had been sold by the producing country which had initiated the development of the standard (India). The delegation of Brazil reserved its position on the discussion of the Standard, on this occasion, considering that the matter would more appropriately be considered by the specific Commodity Committee.

147. Proposed Draft Standard for Food Grade Salt

The Committee noted that at its Fourteenth Session, the Codex Committee on Food Additives had, in line with the decisions taken at the Thirteenth Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, converted the previous provisions for salt into the format necessary for future elaboration as a proposed draft standard (see also paras 32, 33 of this Report).

148. The Committee noted the observations of the delegation of Uruguay that food grade salt was often transported in bulk under inadequate hygienic conditions and agreed to bring this matter to the attention of the Codex Committee on Food Additives so that the hygiene provisions could be suitably amended.

149. The delegation of Argentina expressed the opinion that the list of anticaking agents was too extensive and could be considerably shortened without adversely affecting the free flowing characteristics of the product. In addition, a maximum percentage of humidity should be established.

150. The Committee further noted that the proposed draft standard was now at Step 6 of the Procedure and that Governments of the region would, therefore, have an opportunity to comment directly to the Codex Committee on Food Additives on the substance of the provisions.

151. The Committee expressed its general agreement to the future development of the provision for food grade salt in the form of a Codex standard.

152. Action taken by Governments and by FAO/WHO on the Resolution of the Latin American Food Standards Regional Conference

The Committee noted that the above Resolution, contained in CX/Latin America 78/12, Appendix IV, had been endorsed by the Codex Alimentarius Commission at its Thirteenth

Session. The Committee was informed by the Secretariat that, in liaison with the FAO Regional Office in Santiago, food control would continue to be given high priority in the Latin American Region.

153. Concerning the strengthening of the FAO Regional Office for Latin America, reference was made by the Secretariat to the appointment of Dr. Sizaret as Regional Nutrition Officer. Reference was also made to the assistance which would be forthcoming from Dr. Bacigalupo, Regional Agro-Industries Officer in the FAO Regional Office. The possibility of a recruitment of an associate expert for the FAO Regional Office was also mentioned.

154. The Committee was informed that the WHO Regional Office and PAHO carried out activities on Food Control through the technical branch of the division of environmental health which provided technical services to the Member Countries and also at the regional level. PAHO had in operation in each of the countries an environmental health programme under which fell food control activity. Therefore, Governments could request technical assistance which was provided by experts of the central offices or by short-term consultants.

155. The delegation of Chile stated that the whole subject of contaminants, including mycotoxins, was of great interest to the countries of the region. The delegation expressed the view that with the technical assistance being given by FAO and WHO good progress could be made in this area.

156. The Committee reaffirmed the validity of the Resolution and urged countries of the region to continue to follow those recommendations which were addressed to them. The Committee agreed that regional cooperation continued to be promoted. Concerning the strengthening of international activity with emphasis on the needs and concerns of developing countries, the Committee took note of the various measures which had been taken by the Commission in this respect (see paras 11-20 of this Report).

157. The Committee agreed that action should continue to be carried out on the recommendations and that progress should be reviewed at the Commission's next session.

158. Improving Participation by Members of the Region in Codex Work

The Committee noted that the problem of how to increase participation of members of this and other regions in Codex work had been raised frequently in recent years. Although the Latin American Region counted 22 members in the Codex Alimentarius Commission, only 9 were represented at the present Session. This could perhaps be attributed partly to the fact that this was the first time that the Committee, proper, had met in the region.

159. Several reasons had been advanced for lack of attendance of developing countries in Codex Committees in general. These were:

- financial constraints
- other commitments
- lack of information on the benefits to be derived from the activities of the Codex Alimentarius Commission
- agenda items which were not of interest to all countries
- insufficient numbers of trained or technical personnel to contribute effectively, especially to matters discussed at Codex Commodity Committees.

160. The Committee appreciated that the reasons would, obviously, vary from country to country and that an obvious requirement common to most was a need to improve communications both between countries and between Codex and its Member Countries. There were

cases where documentation for meetings had suffered postal delays or had not arrived to the proper national authorities dealing with the subject matter. The Committee noted that one system which worked well in some countries was the formation of national Codex Committees, working in close collaboration with Codex Contact Points. Such a system might partially overcome the difficulty experienced in some countries where lack of technical expertise did not allow constructive comments to be made at Session of Codex Committees. Producing countries should, in spite of difficulties, try to attend meetings of interest to them in order to be sure that the international standards were developed along lines acceptable to them.

161. The Secretariat informed the Committee that it had been suggested at the Thirteenth Session of the Commission that more Codex meetings should be held in developing countries and that the Secretariat had been instructed to write to host Governments enquiring whether they would be prepared to host sessions of their Committees in developing countries. The Committee noted that a document on the subject would be prepared and discussed at the next Session of the Commission.

162. The delegation of Brazil pointed out that this Committee had an extremely important role to play in considering and identifying the problems of the region of Latin America and in the protection of the interests of the countries of the region. It expressed regret that attendance at the present Session was less than it should be and suggested that one measure to achieve better attendance at meetings would be to organize sessions on related subjects in close proximity to one another, for example, sessions of the Codex Committee on Processed Fruits and Vegetables and the Joint ECE/Codex Alimentarius Group of Experts on Standardization of Fruit Juices, so that delegates might attend two meetings in the same travel period and so reduce travelling expenses. It also made the point that delegations should be adequately prepared for discussions when attending Codex meetings, and that working documents for sessions should be sent out more in advance of sessions than at present. These views were shared by other delegations.

163. The delegation of Uruguay was of the opinion that the measures taken to improve participation of the members of the region in the work of the Commission might be the following:

- strengthening of the Regional Coordinating Committees by financial assistance and the creation of a permanent Secretariat for the region;
- encourage the formation of sub-regional groups in countries with similar interests;
- strengthening the activities of Codex Contact Points in each country with the Codex.

164. The delegation of Uruguay added that to achieve these aims, the attention of the Governments of the Member Countries of the Region should be drawn to the necessity of political support so as to emphasize the importance of Codex standards and Codes of Practice, both to the health of the population and to regional trade.

The delegation of Brazil supported this point of view and also stressed the need for an effective appreciation and consideration by developed countries of existing standards concerning products which they exported to developing countries.

165. The delegation of COPANT expressed the hope that, through a unified approach to food standardization for Codex standards, all 22 countries represented in COPANT, as well as those of the Codex Region for Latin America, would be adequately protected.

166. The delegation of Mexico supported the points of view of the delegations of Uruguay and Brazil. It also pointed to some difficulties in communication in both directions between Codex and Member Countries.

167. The Secretariat informed the Committee that, officially, invitations, agenda and working documents for meetings, should be issued two months before Codex Committee Sessions but because of postal delays this might at times be insufficient. Efforts would be made to issue documents further in advance of Codex Sessions. The Secretariat also undertook to issue a circular letter asking countries to up-date the names and addresses of Codex Contact Points.

168. Place of Next Session and Nomination of Coordinator

Referring to the excellent facilities provided by the Government of Uruguay for the current Session, the Committee, on the proposal of the delegation of Argentina, expressed the strong hope that it would be possible for the Government of Uruguay to host the Third Session of the Committee in Uruguay. The Committee also, on the proposal of the delegation of Argentina, further expressed the hope that it would be possible for the Coordinator for Latin America, Dr. A. Dovat, whose current term of office expires at the end of the next (Fourteenth) Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission which will be held in Geneva from 29th June to 10 July 1981, to undertake a second term of Office as Coordinator for Latin America, from the end of the Fourteenth to the end of the Fifteenth Session of the Commission, and nominated him accordingly. Dr. Dovat thanked the Committee but explained that because of heavy commitments and for personal reasons, he could not accept the nomination to go forward for appointment as Coordinator for another term, that is, from the end of the Fourteenth to the end of the Fifteenth Session of the Commission.

169. The delegation of Uruguay expressed its appreciation of having been requested by the Committee to host the next session of the Committee in Uruguay and indicated that the Government of Uruguay would be pleased to do this. Concerning the appointment of a Coordinator for the Region, the Committee noted that this appointment should be made by the Codex Alimentarius Commission at its next Session.

170. The delegation of Uruguay inquired whether, in the case of a Coordinator not being able to complete his/her full term of office, it would be possible to appoint a substitute. The Secretariat indicated that Coordinators were appointed in their personal capacities but that the question posed by the delegation of Uruguay could be brought to the attention of the Commission at its next Session.

171. Other Business

None.

172. Date of the Next Session

The Secretariat indicated that the date of the Third Session would be fixed following consultation between the host Government of the Session and the Secretariat. It was expected that the Third Session of the Committee would be held around mid-1982.

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