

# codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE  
ORGANIZATION  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD  
HEALTH  
ORGANIZATION



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Agenda Item 4

October 2006

## JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

### FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

15<sup>th</sup> Session

Mar del Plata, Argentina, 13-17 November 2006

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FAO/WHO REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON FOOD SAFETY FOR THE AMERICAS AND THE CARIBBEAN – FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS –

#### *Introduction*

1. The FAO/WHO Regional Conference on Food Safety for the Americas and the Caribbean was held in San José, Costa Rica, from 6 to 9 December 2005 at the kind invitation of the Government of Costa Rica. This conference was the last in a series of regional conferences organized by FAO and WHO at the request of member countries to meet their needs for policy guidance and capacity building in food safety. Over 175 delegates from 32 member countries of the Americas and the Caribbean and observers from 14 international governmental and non-governmental organizations participated in the conference, which was designed to: i) Facilitate discussion on food safety issues important to all countries of the Americas and the Caribbean and identify practical and sustainable actions to address these issues; ii) Identify opportunities for improving regional cooperation in promoting food safety to protect human health and increase food trade opportunities, taking into account the prevailing conditions in agriculture, post-harvest operations, food processing, food trade, public health and consumer protection; iii) Promote the strengthening and/or the establishment of regional networks for the exchange of food safety-related information and experiences among all stakeholders; iv) Encourage public/private partnerships for consumer and industry awareness raising and capacity building in food safety; v) Promote improved interaction between academia, research organizations and other food safety officials.

2. The conference highlighted the value of adopting a food-chain approach to ensuring food safety, within a *Biosecurity* framework, addressing food safety, animal and plant health in an integrated manner. The conference further emphasized the need to adopt an integrated/coordinated institutional framework for food control systems. Within this context, the conference recommended a series of practical actions to strengthen food safety in the region, including the following:

- a) Conduct a regional follow-up study of national harmonization and adoption of Codex standards;
- b) Conduct pilot risk assessments/risk analyses in selected countries of the region, utilizing local intake levels and addressing products of interest to the region;
- c) Work to harmonize procedures and implement equivalence agreements between the countries of the region through the Codex process;
- d) Harmonize definitions used in the area of food safety;

- e) Identify a team to study factors that could contribute to a food-borne disease (FBD) outbreak and conduct a simulation exercise;
- f) Develop protocols to address specific FBDs occurring in the region;
- g) Work together amongst the countries of the region to provide technical assistance in the area of FBD surveillance; and
- h) Share work plans for modernizing national food control systems.

### ***Follow-up Actions***

3. FAO/WHO convened an informal meeting with delegates from the Americas and the Caribbean attending the 29<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Geneva, Switzerland, 3-7 July 2006) in order to discuss follow-up to the FAO/WHO Regional Conference on Food Safety for the Americas and the Caribbean, as well as current and future capacity building activities in the region. The following activities were discussed and agreed:

- Elaboration of a draft project to study the level of application/adoption of international standards (Codex) by countries, with the assistance of a consultant to be hired by FAO and terms of reference to be prepared by Chile and Brazil. The draft should be circulated by email to the CCLAC members and finalized during the current session for submission to possible donors (STDF, etc.) (*Recommendation a*));
- Conduct pilot studies on risk analysis using local data (Uruguay in *S.aureus* in home made cheeses; Argentina); continue and consolidate training in risk analysis (new FAO/WHO manual); submit data of the region for FAO/WHO expert consultations. Priority items for the region such as pesticide residues, mycotoxins, antimicrobials, traceability, equivalence, functional foods, inspection based on risk. were identified (*Recommendation b*));
- In response to *Recommendation c*) above, an FAO/WHO-PAHO Workshop on Determination of Equivalence of Sanitary Measures and Control Systems has been organized on 12 November 2006, immediately preceding this session.
- Further follow-up actions include: the submission of data on existing equivalence agreements in the region; organization of a seminar on traceability for Central America and the Caribbean in Costa Rica with material prepared for the seminar in Buenos Aires, adding local cases; circulating a request for the identification of a country which could offer to undertake a practical study on the application of traceability in a specific chain of foods;
- Continue harmonizing and clarifying the terms used in food safety (*Recommendation d*));
- Continue with training in epidemiological surveillance and simulation exercises carried out by PAHO (avian flu). Utilize capacities in local training (Argentina) (*Recommendations e-g*));
- Exchange information and practical examples of new achievements in modern/integrated systems of food control. This item could be included as a permanent item on the agenda of the CCLAC (*Recommendation h*));

4. Additional recommendations were also made by participants attending the briefing meeting such as using the new web page of the CCLAC as a discussion forum, for exchange of information and submission of the data mentioned in the previous items and also carrying out remote courses of interest to CCLAC using its web page and the materials elaborated by FAO such as participation in Codex, risk analysis, microbial risk analysis (MRA), evaluation of food control systems and risk-based inspection.

5. The full report of the FAO/WHO Regional Conference on Food Safety for the Americas and the Caribbean, including the conference papers and the Conference Room Documents, can be found at: <http://www.foodsafetyforum.org/americas/index.asp>.