

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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Opening

NASWP/14 CRD4

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR NORTH AMERICA AND THE SOUTH WEST PACIFIC

14th Session

Port Vila, Vanuatu, 19 - 22 September 2016

OPENING REMARK OF THE HONOURABLE JOE NATUMAN, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR TRADE, COMMERCE, TOURISM AND COOPERATIVES OF VANUATU

Hon. Minister of Agriculture of Papua New Guinea, Mr Tommy Tomscoll

Hon. Acting Minister of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fisheries and Biosecurity in Vanuatu, Mr Jotham Napat

Hon. Minister for Health in Vanuatu, Mr Toara Daniel

The Chairlady of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, Madame Awilo Ochieng Pernet

Members of the Diplomatic Corp

Distinguished Delegates from North America and the South West Pacific Region

Codex Secretariat from Rome, Italy

Ladies and Gentlemen

A very good morning to you all.

To all our visitors I formally welcome you all to the beautiful shores of our island country Vanuatu.

The Codex Alimentarius Commission was created in 1961. To date there are more than 180 nations who are members of the Codex family. The organization has developed approximately 350 food standards and safety procedures, over 2,000 Maximum Residue Limits or MRLs for veterinary drugs and pesticides. This is an incredible amount of work that has made the decision-making body, the Codex Alimentarius Commission extremely proud of its achievements.

Our region has the benefit of having four developed member nations in the group and ten Small Island Developing States or SIDS who are in varying stages of their development. Of grave concerns to the SIDS are issues of food borne diseases, appropriate level of protection which impact on their trading capabilities and the prevalence of non-communicable diseases or NCDs.

Addressing food borne diseases

The Codex body has done well to develop standards which countries are currently using to develop their national food safety standards. The challenge food borne diseases is not the development of the standards themselves; rather it is the enforcement of these standards. Nations in our region differ in how they allocate resources to enforce food safety standards. Many of our people are still getting sick and dying because they are eating tainted foods.

Addressing appropriate level of protection

Standards themselves can become a hindrance to trade if they are not pitched at the correct level. For example, Vanuatu exports its beef to almost every country in the Pacific Region including Japan, but it cannot export its meat to a certain country in Asia because that nation's food safety standards are set too high and restricting us from trading with them.

Addressing non-communicable diseases

Our region is becoming famous for the prevalence of non-communicable diseases. Our people are getting sick because of the changes in their diet. The questions the SIDS governments are asking is how can Codex work contribute to tackling NCDs? I am advised that maybe it falls outside of the Codex mandate, but we must not rest on our laurels and allow this killer to continue destroying the lives of our people.

This week marks a milestone for the Vanuatu in that it is given the opportunity to host the CCNASWP 14 meeting here in Port Vila. Please bear with us for where we have falter in our preparation, but I trust that the meeting and the agenda set before us will address some real issues that affect the lives of our people. I am reminded of the work that is being done on a noni standard, how the region wants this product recognised under a Codex standard. The region and the world are keen also to hear the outcome of the discussions on the kava paper.

Allowing the region to develop Codex standards for these two commodities, is, the region telling the world that we are fulfilling our obligations under Sustainable Development Goal number 1, to eliminate poverty, Sustainable Development Goal number 3, through good health and wellbeing, and Sustainable Development Goal number 8, where our people create decent jobs for themselves and our nations will prosper economically.

Further, we are pleased also that first the first time in the Codex process a new agenda item has been added; and that is to introduce a keynote speaker. The CCNASWP is the first of all the regions to have this item on its agenda. I commend my colleague from Papua New Guinea, Hon. Tommy Tomscoll, Minister for Agriculture and Livestock who is our keynote speaker and to raise the perspective of NASWP through this Codex platform.

None of the SIDS was successful to secure funding assistance under the Codex Trust Fund in the first round of proposals. I call upon the Codex network, our development partners and friends to help this region secure financial assistance to maintain the very good work Codex is doing in the region.

The Government of Vanuatu including those of the other CCNASWP region will be keen to hear the outcomes of this one week meeting. Distinguished delegates of the CCNASWP region you have a task before you this week, and we wish you well in your deliberations.

Last but not the least, I wish to acknowledge the kind assistance of Papua New Guinea, the PHAMA program, who provided funding to assist Vanuatu to host this important meeting this week. Delegates, your governments also have to be commended, for seeing the importance of Codex and to fund your trip here to attend this meeting.

On that note, I now have the pleasure to declare that the 14th session of the Coordinating Committee for North America and the South West Pacific is officially open.