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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

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FAO/WHO PROJECT AND TRUST FUND FOR ENHANCED PARTICIPATION IN CODEX

FAO/WHO MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

TO THE CODEX TRUST FUND MID-TERM REVIEW

Background

As specified in the Codex Alimentarius Commission Strategic Plan 2008-2013, a Mid-term Review (MTR) to assess the progress and sustainability of the Codex Trust Fund (CTF), was carried out between November 2009 and April 2010 by an independent external evaluator. The purpose of the Mid-term Review was to evaluate the progress of the CTF to date and provide recommendations that could be applied during the second half of the agreed CTF lifespan and possibly beyond to achieve better the targets and goals set out. The full terms of reference, key findings and recommendations of the MTR appear in CX/CAC 10/33/14. The recommendations pertaining to a shift in the use of resources on the different objectives were discussed at the 64th Session of the CCEXEC, the 33rd Session of the CAC and in FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committees. Summary of discussions and decisions can be found in the relevant reports of the CCEXEC, CAC and Regional Coordinating committees.

Through this Management Response FAO and WHO express their appreciation to all who have contributed to the MTR which has been a very detailed effort and which provides useful information to guide decisions on the next five years of the lifespan of the Codex Trust Fund

Overall response to the Mid-term Review

Through the Mid-term Review process, FAO and WHO have evaluated existing capacities and working arrangements to ensure that support to enhance countries participation in Codex is delivered in the most efficient ways and makes optimum use of available resources. The CTF is an important project within FAO and WHO. It is one element contributing to enhancing effective participation in the work of Codex and also to the improved understanding and use of Codex standards. The efficient use of CTF resources will complement and provide synergies with other key FAO and WHO programmes focussed on food safety capacity development.

FAO and WHO noted that, while many useful conclusions were drawn and updated information provided through the MTR, final solutions were not always presented. It is the task of FAO and WHO to present proposals and options for discussion and make final decisions on the ways forward, taking into account the discussions and decisions of the CCEXEC, CAC and Regional Coordinating Committees. The present document is meant to provide Codex Member States with the views of FAO and WHO on the recommendations of the Mid-term Review. Proposals and options for discussion will be tabled in a separate document at the 65th CCEXEC and the 34th CAC.

From the Mid-term Review results, as well as discussions and decisions taken in CCEXEC, CAC and the Regional Coordinating Committees, FAO and WHO have noted the following:

- there is still strong support and belief in the original intent and objectives of the Codex Trust Fund;
- there is still a need to invest more time and effort in supporting countries to ensure *effective* participation in Codex;
- there is a recognition that CTF often acts as a *catalyst* and, as such, makes an important contribution to enhancing participation in Codex

- It is also recognized that enhanced participation in Codex is the result of many initiatives taken by a number of actors. Enhanced participation was most often observed where physical participation supported by the CTF was accompanied by capacity development support from other programmes of FAO and/or WHO.

One clear message from the conclusions of the Mid-term Review that FAO and WHO agree with is that all three objectives of the Codex Trust Fund are still considered relevant and valid and that the Codex Trust Fund should ensure that activities are undertaken to address all three objectives. The MTR found that, to date, the vast majority of emphasis and resources had focused on achieving Objective 1 (widening participation in Codex) and that this should be redressed through some shift in resources to Objectives 2 (strengthening participation in Codex) and Objective 3 (enhancing technical and scientific input to Codex).

The comments on the importance of *effective* participation in Codex particularly resonate with FAO and WHO. For this reason high value is being placed on strengthening internal coordination between the Codex Trust Fund Secretariat, and related FAO and WHO programmes on capacity development to ensure that all synergies are being identified and exploited to achieve the common and overarching goal of effective participation in Codex.

One weakness that was noted in the MTR was the absence of an assessment of the quality of participation of CTF funded delegates/countries over time. While this was not addressed by the MTR, FAO and WHO believe that it should be considered for inclusion in the final CTF evaluation – some indicators that could be examined to assess quality of participation include interventions during meetings, provision of written comments, initiatives on hosting/co-hosting arrangements, knowledge management after meetings etc.

Recommendation 1: Focus on Outputs 2 and 3

FAO and WHO partially agree with this recommendation, but also note that supporting physical participation is a core function of the CTF and hence the need to continue to support Output 1. From the outset, it was deemed necessary to concentrate the actions of the Codex Trust Fund first and foremost on addressing Objective 1 - physical participation in Codex. The continuing dynamic of participation in Codex now demands that the action of the CTF continues to ensure both physical participation in Codex and the sustainability of this participation, while at the same time addressing more efforts and resources to ensure the quality of participation. Overall opinion from the regional coordinating committees has supported continued allocation of CTF resources to Output 1, with most regions supporting a concurrent shift of some resources to Outputs 2 and 3. Greater emphasis was given to Output 2 rather than Output 3. For FAO and WHO it makes sense that, as further CTF resources are invested in participation, there is a need to continue with activities aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of this participation where it is still weak. The parent bodies recognize that the CTF can play a role in this, but efforts should also be made to capitalize on/link to other capacity building activities and action is required by FAO and WHO in this regard. At the same time it is important to ensure that CTF beneficiary countries (both those still eligible and those who have "graduated") are able to make the best use of all resources and opportunities available to work towards effective and coordinated national involvement in Codex work.

The Secretariat of the Codex Trust Fund convened a physical meeting of the Consultative Group for the Trust Fund (CGTF) in March 2011 (19th meeting of the CGTF) to consider how the CTF could be re-positioned to put greater emphasis on and allocate additional resources to Outputs 2 and 3 while at the same time maintaining focus on ensuring the sustainability of participation (related to Output 1).

Recommendation 2: Allocate funds to countries most in need

There is general agreement in FAO and WHO with this recommendation. However the parent organizations recognize the difficulty in defining criteria that identify countries "most in need". FAO and WHO maintain that one of the major strengths of the Codex Trust Fund has been the objective and transparent criteria that have been used to define levels of support to countries for physical participation in Codex meetings, working groups and task forces. This strength was highlighted in the Mid-term Review.

It was decided at the 19th meeting of the CGTF held in March 2011 to undertake an examination of countries who are not meeting their 50% matched funding requirement and countries who have graduated from the Trust Fund but are not sustaining their participation in Codex, even at a minimal level. The most common profile that emerges is one of countries who share the common characteristics of least developed countries and/or small island developing states.

Based on this information, the Codex Trust Fund Secretariat will make proposals for ways of providing additional support, **if needed**, to countries sharing this common profile. At the same time the parent bodies note that the principles of the Codex Trust Fund must continue to be respected. These include the catalyst role of the CTF and the matched funding requirement. Additional support from the CTF cannot and should not replace national efforts to secure political will, economic support and to build national capacity. Only these efforts at national level will ensure that the funds are available to sustain participation in priority Codex meetings, and that capacity has been established to ensure effective participation in Codex.

Recommendation 3: Engage other countries in project activities

FAO and WHO agree with this recommendation. The parent organizations observe that there already exist a number of informal and more formal examples of transfer of knowledge and experience from one country to another, or one region to another. The ways in which both graduate countries, and countries who are still eligible for Codex Trust Fund support but who already have relatively well-developed Codex structures and activities at national level, can be engaged by the Codex Trust Fund in different capacity development activities is being examined based on tried and tested capacity development approaches by FAO and WHO. Options that FAO and WHO have requested the Codex Trust Fund Secretariat to explore further include twinning and/or mentoring within or between regions, partnering of Codex Contact Points, and increasing use of Codex Trust Fund countries (whether graduated or not) in Codex trainings and workshops to share experiences, information and ideas.

Recommendation 4: Apply stringent application procedures

FAO and WHO agree with this recommendation. Following the recommendations of the two assessments carried out on the Codex Trust Fund in 2007, the Codex Trust Fund Secretariat modified the application process and the review of applications that heightened the stringency of the application procedures. In addition to ensuring the quality of the application process, the aim was also to enable countries to use the application process to encourage good Codex practices at national level including:

- intersectoral consultation on food safety issues being addressed in Codex;
- prioritizing Codex committees of most importance to the country;
- identifying the most appropriate delegates to represent the country at Codex meetings;
- involvement of WHO and/or FAO for technical input and guidance, etc.

As the Codex Trust Fund shifts emphasis towards ensuring sustainable participation of eligible and graduate countries in Codex, the application process(es) will be further reviewed by the parent organizations to see how these may be used as an instrument to build further the capacity of countries to participate effectively in Codex, as well as to continue to ensure the most transparent and effective use of resources to support countries. In addition to FAO and WHO sharing information and building linkages between delegates proposed to attend Codex sessions, effective and transparent communication at national level among food safety professionals is a far more effective way of making real change towards enhancing effective participation in Codex and making best use of CTF resources.

Recommendation 5: Stay focused on participation

Reference is made here to the importance of CTF focusing on capacity building activities closely related to enhancing effective participation in Codex, rather than undertaking too wide a scope to build a broader national capacity in food safety and FAO and WHO agree with this recommendation.

The Mid-term Review team put forward some criteria that might be used in keeping the focus on participation in future capacity development activities while at the same time playing to the strengths of the Codex Trust Fund in the Codex arena. FAO and WHO have considered the MTR suggestions and have agreed on the following criteria for the scope of CTF funded capacity development activities: 1) continuing to focus on enhancing effective and sustainable participation in Codex; 2) giving priority to activities which can have a direct impact on how a delegation prepares for and/or performs in a meeting; 3) enhancing the understanding of Codex texts currently under development and the use of Codex standards in the national context; 4) supporting capacity development activities that benefit the greatest number of countries; 5) concentrating on cross-country capacity-development activities at regional or sub-regional level; 6) examining the value-added of supporting mentoring or similar programmes with a possible concentration on CCPs.

The Mid-term Review team has highlighted that a move towards more activities to achieve Outputs 2 and 3 will be "resource demanding" on the CTF Secretariat. It is recognized that an increase in support to Codex training and capacity building activities may require an adjustment of working procedures to maximize internal FAO and WHO expertise, competencies, networks etc. The parent organizations are looking at different options that will ensure that the strategic directions for and choice of activities to achieve Outputs 2 and 3 are:

- a) based on the best available knowledge and experience within FAO and WHO (with particular emphasis on linkages to existing capacity development programmes);
- b) linked to the strategic directions and results-based management of the parent organizations;
- c) coordinated by the Consultative Group for the Trust Fund and carried out in the most effective and efficient manner.

Recommendation 6: Strengthen collaboration with the most relevant actors

There is general agreement in FAO and WHO on this recommendation.

Analysis has been undertaken in the past and also recently to see who is doing what, where CTF fits in and where collaboration would be particularly beneficial. It is clear that close collaboration is needed with others who are supporting physical participation in Codex meetings to ensure that each organization knows what the other is doing, which countries/participants are being supported to which meetings etc. to guard against overlap and/or duplication which leads to unnecessary administrative work and poor use of resources. Ensuring close collaboration with national governments, Codex Contact Points and actors closely engaged with Codex is an integral part of strengthening collaboration.

The specific comments in the MTR concerning closer collaboration with the STDF Secretariat are noted. FAO and WHO as two of the founding members of STDF have procedures in place to ensure open and close dialogue with STDF covering the broad spectrum of food safety capacity development as well as other key programmes— issues related to enhancing participation in Codex and CTF issues are discussed in the STDF steering committee when necessary.

Recommendation 7: Strengthen monitoring and evaluation

FAO and WHO agree with this recommendation.

In 2007, with assistance from the United States of America, the Codex Trust Fund established DataBase 1 which provides full information on all participations supported by the CTF (name of delegate, country, ministry/organization, LDC or non-LDC, Codex region, gender, meeting attended, year). In light of the need to have an objective source of tracking participations of countries who are on 50% matched funding or who have graduated from the CTF, DataBase 2 was established in 2009 to provide information on all participations by countries in Codex meetings that are not supported by the Codex Trust Fund (i.e. with support from national governments or other sources). Both are updated on a regular basis through each calendar year and the two used separately or together provide a full picture of the participation of developing and transition economy countries in Codex. This information is of great value for the monitoring and evaluation of the Codex Trust Fund and also in informing activities of the parent organizations aimed at strengthening effective participation in Codex.

In addition to the established systems of data collection, analysis and reporting that the Mid-term Review team believe should be continued, a number of suggestions were made for the further development of the M&E system. FAO and WHO agree on the importance of having clear baselines, indicators and systems for measuring both process and impact of the Codex Trust Fund over the next five years and at the end of its lifespan. The CGTF is re-examining the current framework of key indicators to ensure that these are appropriate and relevant for the strategic shift and aligned with what the CTF seeks to achieve in the next five years.

FAO, WHO and the Codex Trust Fund Secretariat recognize that monitoring and evaluation is a specialized area of activity. Specialized assistance will, therefore, be needed to supplement the knowledge and skills of the CGTF and the Codex Trust Fund Secretariat in this area and this specialized assistance will be sought during the re-examination of the M&E system.