

# codex alimentarius commission

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE  
ORGANIZATION  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD HEALTH  
ORGANIZATION

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ALINORM 76/4

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION  
Eleventh Session, Rome, 29 March - 9 April 1976

REPORT OF THE TWENTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION  
Rome, 23-24 March 1976

## INTRODUCTION

1. The Executive Committee held its Twenty-Second Session at FAO Headquarters, Rome, on 23-24 March 1976. The Executive Committee was presided over by the Chairman of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, Dr. D.G. Chapman (Canada) and in the presence of the three Vice-Chairmen, Dr. E. Matthey (Switzerland), Dr. T. N'Doye (Senegal) and Dr. E. Méndez (Mexico). The following representatives from the geographic locations mentioned were present: for Africa, Ing. A. Amraoui from Tunisia; for Asia, Professor A. Bhumiratana from Thailand; for Europe, Dr. D. Eckert from the Federal Republic of Germany; for Latin America, Mr. B. de Azevedo Brito from Brazil; for North America, Dr. R. Weik from the United States of America; for the South-West Pacific, Mr. W.C.K. Hammer from Australia. The coordinator for Africa, Dr. R. Oteng (Ghana) was also present.

## Adoption of Agenda

2. The Executive Committee adopted the provisional agenda.

## Report on Financial Situation of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme for 1974/75 and 1976/77

3. The Executive Committee had before it document ALINORM 76/8 which was introduced by the Secretariat. The attention of the Executive Committee was drawn to a typing error in paragraph 12 of the document, where the figure for salaries and common staff costs in the 1976/77 budget of the Programme should have read "\$ 745,500" instead of "725,400".

4. As regards income and expenditure for 1974/75, the Executive Committee noted that, as a result of cost-of-living awards and increasing common staff costs, as well as a general inflationary situation affecting duty travel (increased air fares) and meeting costs (increased costs of hiring interpreters and translators), there would be an expected deficit of \$95,278. On the basis of the cost sharing arrangement between FAO and WHO, FAO's share of the expected deficit would be \$71,458 and WHO's share would be \$23,820. As soon as the FAO accounts for 1974/75 had been finalized, WHO would be requested to meet its share of the deficit.

5. As regards the budget of the Programme for 1976/77, the Executive Committee noted the circumstances, as described in document ALINORM 76/8, which had resulted in the re-drawing up of the budget on the base figure for 1974/75 and not, as had been recommended both by the Commission at its 10th Session and by the Executive Committee at its Twenty-First Session, and as had been approved by the FAO Conference in November 1975, on the base figure for 1976/77, which had included programme increases. The Executive Committee noted that the budget of the Programme for 1976/77, as had been set out in paragraph 12 of document ALINORM 76/8, was subject to final confirmation by the FAO Council as part of the FAO Revised Programme of Work and Budget for 1976/77.

6. The Executive Committee noted that the revised budget of the Programme had been restructured to some extent, to enable particular areas of emphasis to which the Commission attached importance to be catered for. In particular, the budget provided for 8 man-months of consultant services to increase technical input into the work of the Coordinating Committee for Africa, the work of the projected Coordinating Committee for Asia and the work to be undertaken for the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Conference for Latin America. In addition, the budget provided for 6 man-months of consultant services to enable a "drive" on acceptances to be instituted and replies on acceptances to be

W/H8407

registered, classified and conveyed to governments on a regular basis.

7. The Executive Committee noted that, as a consequence of Resolution 16/75 of the FAO Conference, certain of the Codex sessions which had been envisaged to be held in the current biennium had been placed in Category I (27 sessions) and others, which had also been envisaged to be held in the biennium, had been placed in Category II (14 sessions). The Executive Committee expressed concern that this reduction in the number of Codex sessions in this biennium would result in a loss of momentum in a Programme to which all Member Governments, both in the developing and developed regions of the world, attached a lot of importance and more especially at a time when positive results were demonstrably being achieved. The Executive Committee wished to emphasize that the work of the Programme was as important to the developing countries as it was to the developed countries. In expressing its concern, the Executive Committee wished to make the point that the costs of most Codex sessions were paid for by host governments. The Executive Committee, whilst appreciative of the existing difficult financial situation, nevertheless expressed the view that the reduction in the number of Codex sessions for 1976/77 should be regarded as an interim measure in response to that situation, but should not be regarded as the norm or pattern to be followed in the next and subsequent biennia.

8. As regards the 27 Codex sessions which had been placed in Category I, the Executive Committee did not take any position on the sessions listed, although it noted the view of the Secretariat that, on balance and in the circumstances, the choice of sessions, with one exception, represented probably the most satisfactory arrangement that could be made, from the point of view of the overall advancement of the work of the Programme. The exception concerned the Codex Committee on Food Labelling, for which a full session was not provided for in the biennium. In view of the important subject matters to be dealt with by this Committee and in view of its endorsing functions which affected all draft standards, the Executive Committee considered it imperative that a full session of this Committee be held in the biennium. In this connection, the Executive Committee requested that the Chief of the Programme, together with the Chairman of the Commission, should approach the Director-General of FAO before the 11th Session of the Commission to enquire whether he would approve the addition to the 27 sessions listed in Category I of a session of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling. If the Director-General were unable to see his way to acceding to this request, then the Executive Committee would propose, as an alternative, that a session of the Food Labelling Committee be held in substitution for one of the two sessions of the Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products. As regards this latter proposal, the Executive Committee noted that both the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene and the Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products would have two sessions in the biennium. In suggesting that a session of the Food Labelling Committee be substituted for a session of the Fish and Fishery Products Committee, the Executive Committee was conscious of the excellent progress which had been made in the development of standards by the Fish Committee, and of the fact that the Food Hygiene Committee had continuing endorsing functions and was working in a field which was of significance for all Members of the Commission throughout the world.

9. In line with its concern expressed above concerning the reduction in the number of Codex sessions for the current biennium, the Executive Committee also expressed concern at the fact that there would now be a period of two years elapsing between the 11th and 12th Sessions of the Commission. Several members of the Executive Committee drew attention to the need for ensuring no loss of momentum, more especially in the work of the Codex Committees on Pesticide Residues, Food Additives, Food Hygiene and Food Labelling.

10. Concern was expressed regarding the need for ensuring ways and means to render more effective, more especially from the point of view of participation, the regional meetings in the developing countries.

#### Provisional Timetable of Codex Sessions for 1976/77

11. The Executive Committee had before it document ALINORM 76/38. As regards the 18th Session of the Joint FAO/WHO Committee of Government Experts on the Code of Principles concerning Milk and Milk Products, the Executive Committee noted that negotiations were still in progress with the Government of Malta on the question of holding the session in Malta. It was hoped that information on this subject would be forthcoming from the Maltese authorities during the Commission's 11th Session. If the 18th Session of the Milk Committee were to be held in Rome, it would be held probably in early September 1976. The Executive Committee noted that the 12th Session of the Codex Committee on Cocoa Products and Chocolate would be held from 1-5 November 1976 in Biel (Fr: Bienne). Assuming that a session of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling would be held in the biennium, the session would follow the sessions of the Codex Committees on Processed

Fruits and Vegetables and on Food Hygiene, i.e. from 16-20 May 1977 in Canada. It was noted that the 11th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Additives would be held from 30 May to 6 June 1977. It was also noted that the dates of 7-11 November 1977 for the 9th Session of the Codex Committee on Fats and Oils were now firm. The Executive Committee also noted that it might be necessary to change the dates (10-14 January 1977) which had been put forward as tentative proposals for the 3rd Session of the Coordinating Committee for Africa in Accra.

12. In view of its earlier discussions on Category I meetings, the Executive Committee had no further comments to make on the meetings proposed for 1976/77, recognizing that these proposals would be discussed by the Commission.

Information on Current Developments and their likely implications for the Programme of Work of the FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme in 1978/79

13. Dr. B. Dieterich, Director of Environmental Health Division, WHO, outlined the thinking in WHO as it affected the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme. He indicated that WHO continued to attach the greatest importance to the work of the Programme but that, in view of WHO's priorities and areas of emphasis, together with the likelihood of continuing financial constraints, it would be less than realistic to think in terms of an increased WHO financial contribution for programme increases in the 1978/79 biennium. Preliminary estimates were now being drawn up in WHO for 1978 but no action concerning financial support to the Programme would be taken until after the 11th Session of the Commission. So far as FAO was concerned, it was explained that it was too early yet to state what the position would be concerning the FAO contribution to the Programme for 1978/79. As in the case of WHO, the question of what budgetary provisions ought to be drawn up for the Programme in 1978/79 would be looked into by FAO at the appropriate time following the Commission's 11th Session.

14. The Executive Committee wished to draw the attention of the Directors-General of both Organizations to the need for recommending, in the budgetary provisions for 1978/79, the necessary programme increases to enable the resumption of normal scheduling of sessions to recover lost momentum and to properly reflect the importance which all Member Governments attached to the Programme. It should be emphasized that the Executive Committee looked upon the curtailment of Codex sessions in the current biennium as a temporary measure dictated by special circumstances.

15. The Executive Committee requested the Secretariat to draw up a proposed list of Codex sessions for 1978/79 for consideration by the Commission at its 11th Session.

16. Dr. N'Doye, Vice-Chairman, drew attention to the need for WHO to ensure the harmonization of the activities of its Food Safety Programme with those of the FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme and the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

Proposed GATT Code of Conduct for Preventing Technical Barriers to Trade

17. The Executive Committee took note of a communication from GATT, summarizing developments concerning the Proposed GATT Code of Conduct for Preventing Technical Barriers to Trade. In March 1975 it was agreed that negotiations should commence initially on a range of non-tariff measures and in this regard the Sub-Group Technical Barriers to Trade was established to draw up general rules in the area, inter alia, of standards. The Sub-Group Technical Barriers to Trade had agreed that the proposed Code of Conduct for Preventing Technical Barriers to Trade should be used as the basis for its work. A great deal of work had been done on the text of the proposed code. This work, which also related to problems in the area of packaging and labelling, was continuing (for example, the Sub-Group had been examining specific drafting suggestions and had also examined the applicability to the proposed code of the definitions drawn up by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the International Organization for Standardization). So far the question of the applicability of this work to agricultural product standards had yet to be taken up by the relevant negotiating bodies established within the framework of the Multilateral Trade Negotiations to treat tariff and non-tariff measures relating to agricultural products.

18. The Executive Committee re-emphasized the need for the Secretariat to maintain the closest liaison with the GATT Secretariat and for the work in GATT on the proposed code and in other areas of possible interest to the Commission to be followed very closely. In this connection, the Executive Committee re-stressed the desirability that the Secretariat of the Codex Alimentarius Commission should be invited to attend these GATT meetings in an observer capacity. The Secretariat undertook, within the limits of its travel budget, to try and be represented at these meetings, assuming that they were not restricted meetings.

19. The Executive Committee also reiterated the view which it had expressed at its 21st Session that delegates attending sessions of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies should get in touch with their counterparts in other Ministries in their countries attending the GATT meetings on this subject, so that the representatives attending the GATT meetings might be more closely acquainted with the objectives and working procedures of the Commission in the matter of international food standards.

20. The Executive Committee noted that there would be an opportunity to discuss the proposed GATT code at the 11th Session of the Commission when a representative of GATT would be in attendance.

Role and Responsibility of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene with respect to (a) hygiene provisions in codes of practice being elaborated by Codex Commodity Committees and (b) microbiological specifications for food and associated methodology

21. The Codex Committee on Food Hygiene, at its 12th Session, expressed the view that all codes of practice containing hygiene provisions, except those for which specific hygiene Committees had been given complete responsibility, should be referred to it for endorsement of those provisions. It was also the view of the Hygiene Committee that it should provide the direct link between Codex Commodity Committees and meetings of experts on microbiological specifications.

22. In particular, the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene sought the advice of the Executive Committee on:

- (i) whether all hygiene provisions included in codes of practice being elaborated by Codex Commodity Committees should be referred to it for endorsement; and
- (ii) whether, in view of its increasing activity in the area of microbiological specifications, it should be the body to advise on and ultimately to endorse microbiological specifications for food and associated methodology.

23. The Executive Committee considered that even if it was not stated in specific terms that all codes containing hygiene provisions - except those for which complete responsibility had been given to other Codex Committees - should be referred to the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene for endorsement, there was no doubt that this was the proper course from the fact that (a) the Commission took a decision to exempt one Committee from the need to refer the code it was developing - the code of hygienic practice for processed meat products - to the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene and (b) the general view in Codex Commodity Committees, as shown by their actions, was that provisions on hygiene in codes of practice being developed by them should be referred to the Hygiene Committee.

24. As regards ultimate responsibility on the matter of microbiological specifications and associated methodology, the Executive Committee was of the view that the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene was the body responsible for endorsing microbiological specifications for food and associated methods, whether in standards or codes, from the fact that:

- (a) hygiene provisions in all standards have to be referred to the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene for endorsement and this is clearly stated in the Procedural Manual of the Commission;
- (b) it is clearly the intention, both from a decision of the Commission and the action of Codex Commodity Committees themselves, that hygiene matters in codes of practice should be referred to the Food Hygiene Committee; and
- (c) according to the guidelines for Codex Committees, microbiological methods of sampling and analysis have to be referred to the Food Hygiene Committee.

25. In order to remove any doubts concerning the role of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene, the Executive Committee recommended that the Terms of Reference of that Committee be amended as follows (words underlined added):

- "(a) to draft basic provisions on food hygiene applicable to all foods;
- (b) (i) to consider, amend if necessary, and endorse provisions on hygiene prepared by Codex Commodity Committees and contained in Codex Commodity Standards, and (ii) to consider, amend if necessary, and endorse provisions on hygiene prepared by Codex Commodity Committees and contained in Codex codes of practice unless, in specific cases, the Commission has decided otherwise, or (iii) to draft provisions on hygiene in respect of a particular food commodity within the terms of reference of a Codex commodity committee at the request of that Committee;
- (c) to draft, where necessary, provisions on hygiene in respect of any food not assigned to any Codex commodity committee;
- (d) to consider specific hygiene problems assigned to it by the Commission.

Note: The term "hygiene" includes, where necessary, microbiological specifications for food and associated methodology."

Consideration of the request of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene concerning the Draft Codes of Practice For Fresh Fish and Canned Fish

26. Hygiene provisions in the Draft Codes of Practice for Fresh Fish and Canned Fish had been reviewed and endorsed at Step 4 by the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene at its 12th Session. The Committee recommended, in agreement with the Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products that the codes be advanced to Step 5 and that Steps 6 and 7 be omitted.

27. It had also been suggested that hygiene and health recommendations for plant personnel in the Code of Practice for Fresh Meat should, when suitably adapted, replace the existing provisions taken from the General Principles of Food Hygiene. However, it was pointed out that the General Principles of Food Hygiene which were themselves under review would certainly draw on the Fresh Meat Code especially with regard to medical examination of personnel. A revised text was due for discussion at the next session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene. Any consequential amendments to the Codes of Practice for Fresh and Canned Fish would be made later.

28. The Codex Committee on Food Hygiene in the meantime agreed to bring the matter to the attention of the Executive Committee asking them to support their recommendations that such amendments should not delay the advancement of the Fish Codes especially since it had been pointed out that the early publication of the codes as they stood at present was important to countries developing their fisheries. The Executive Committee agreed to support this recommendation.

Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Regional Conference for Asia, Bangkok, 8-15 December 1975

29. The Executive Committee had before it document CX/ASIA 75/9, which was an advance copy of the body of the report of the above Conference, pending reproduction of the complete report, including the list of participants, country statements and other material. The report was introduced by the Secretariat which outlined the salient features of the report. The Executive Committee took note of the progress which had been made at the Conference, more especially the fact that the Conference had given general approval to the Model Food Law which had been prepared for its consideration. The attention of the Executive Committee was also directed to the Resolution in paragraph 112 of the report, which had been unanimously adopted by the Conference.

30. The Executive Committee was informed of the excellent arrangements for the Conference which had been made by the Government of Thailand.

31. As regards the First Session of the Coordinating Committee for Asia, it was noted that as only one session of the Committee had been approved for 1976/77, no more than a one day ad hoc meeting of representatives from Asian countries could be arranged in conjunction with the Eleventh Session of the Commission, in order to ensure a full session of the Coordinating Committee later in the biennium.

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