

codex alimentarius commission

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD HEALTH
ORGANIZATION

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ALINORM 89/4

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Eighteenth Session

Geneva, 3-12 July 1989

REPORT OF THE THIRTY-SIXTH SESSION

OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

WHO, Geneva, 29-30 June 1989

INTRODUCTION

1. The Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission held its thirty-sixth session at WHO Headquarters, Geneva, from 29 to 30 June 1989. The Executive Committee was presided over by the Chairman of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, Dr. E.R. Méndez (Mexico) in the presence of two of its three Vice-Chairmen, Dr. N.W. Tape (Canada) and Prof. F.G. Winarno (Indonesia). Representatives from the following geographic locations were present: Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, and South West Pacific. The Codex Coordinators for Africa, Asia and Europe attended as observers. A complete list of participants, including the secretariat, is given in Appendix I.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Item 1)

2. The Executive Committee adopted the Provisional Agenda for the session (CX/EXEC 89/36/1 and Addendum).

REPORT ON THE FINANCIAL SITUATION OF THE JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME FOR 1988/89 and 1990/91 (Item 2)

3. The Executive Committee had before it document ALINORM 89/6 which was introduced by the Chief of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme. Concerning the accounts for 1986/87, the Executive Committee was informed that there had been a total expenditure of US\$ 3 405 700, as against a budgeted figure of US\$ 3 128 000. This additional expenditure had been covered in part by the use of accumulated funds remaining as surplus from previous biennia (US\$ 73 500) and by an extraordinary contribution from FAO amounting to US\$ 204 500, which reflected the high priority accorded by FAO to the Food Standards Programme.

4. Regarding the budget for 1988/89, and proposed 1990/91 budgets, the Executive Committee was informed that they had been maintained at the same level, in real terms, as in previous biennia. In presenting the past, present and future biennial Codex budgets the Secretariat pointed out that total Codex costs (joint FAO/WHO budget at cost sharing 75% - 25% plus additional FAO contribution) were being shared at an actual level of 83% of costs paid by FAO and 17% by WHO and that some countries at the June 1989 FAO Council meeting had called for a more equitable sharing of Codex costs between FAO and WHO.

5. On behalf of the Executive Committee the Chairman expressed thanks to FAO for its extraordinary contribution to the 1986/87 Codex budget so that the biennium could end with a zero balance. The Chairman also complemented the Secretariat for efforts to bring under better control those costs associated with the translation, printing and distribution of documents for the Programme.

6. The Coordinator for Asia requested information concerning a possible Regional Conference on Food Protection for Asia and recalled that he had asked that Codex or other sources of funds could be utilized in this regard. The Secretariat provided information on a September 1990 Conference on Food Safety being planned by the Government of Malaysia, FAO, WHO and the International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI), and also mentioned a workshop on mycotoxins which would be held by FAO immediately prior to the next meeting of the Regional Codex Coordinating Committee (Thailand, 1990).

REPORT ON THE REVISED PUBLICATION OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS AND ON DISTRIBUTION ARRANGEMENTS (Item 3)

7. The Executive Committee had before it ALINORM 89/2, a paper prepared by the Secretariat for the consideration of the Commission. The paper was based on the discussions which took place during the 35th Session of the Executive Committee (ALINORM 89/3, paras 13-17), and described the presentation of a revised edition of the Codex Alimentarius in loose-leaf international A-4 format in 14 volumes, and a new abridged version in a single volume.

8. The Executive Committee welcomed and endorsed the proposals for the revision of the Codex Alimentarius along the lines presented in ALINORM 89/2. It welcomed the possibility of presenting these volumes as priced publications to be distributed through the world-wide sales network of FAO. Since Codex publications are Joint FAO/WHO documents the Executive Committee endorsed the proposal of the use of the WHO sales and promotion network as a way to increase Codex sales. The Executive Committee also recommended that arrangements be made whereby the revenues from sales of Codex Alimentarius documents be utilized to defray costs of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, including the offsetting of Codex publication costs in general.

9. Several members of the Executive Committee drew attention to the computerization of the Codex Alimentarius, the possibilities of its availability from readily accessible data bases, and the commercial implications of its availability in this form. The Chief of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme stated that these possibilities and their implications were under active consideration. A small expert group would be invited to advise the Secretariat on techniques available for storage and retrieval of the Codex texts on computer, and the contents of the Codex Alimentarius would be included (by title) in FAO's World Agricultural Information Centre (WAICENT).

10. In regard to the distribution of Codex working papers and reports, the regional Representative of Latin America and the Caribbean drew attention to the need to ensure the early distribution of documents so as to allow their study at the national level well in advance of Codex sessions. In reply to a question from the Regional Representative of Europe concerning the limitation of the number of documents distributed, the Secretariat explained that a flexible approach was being taken, and that all reasonable requests were being met. It was recognised that in cases where national inter-ministerial Codex Committees were established the distribution of a larger number of copies greatly facilitated the national coordinating role of these Committees.

CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSALS FOR ACTION IN RELATION TO RADIONUCLIDE
CONTAMINATION OF FOODS (Item 4)

11. The Executive Committee had before it ALINORM 89/11 and ALINORM 89/11 Addendum 1, which contained proposals to be submitted to the Commission for its consideration and the written comments of Austria, Canada and the United Kingdom on these proposals. It was noted that the proposals had been revised following the 35th Session of the Executive Committee, by the FAO/WHO Secretariat and then by the 21st Session of the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants.

12. The papers were introduced by Dr P. Waight (WHO), who described the background to the approaches used arriving at the proposed levels, and who stressed particularly the versatility of this systematic approach for determining maximum levels in the event of future nuclear accidents in which radionuclide patterns other than those observed in 1986 might occur.

13. The Executive Committee expressed its general support for the approach followed in determining the proposed levels, and recommended their adoption by the Commission. The Regional Representative for Asia, noting that several countries from that region represented at the 21st Session of the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants had expressed the opinion that the levels were too high, or were unacceptable to countries not exposed to direct contamination, requested that the Regional Coordinating Committees be invited to express their views on the matter. The Executive Committee agreed that further discussion and exchange of information at the regional level on how agreement to control contamination in foods in international trade could be achieved would be useful, and agreed that such matters should be discussed by the Regional Coordinating Committees. However, it would be for the Commission to decide on the adoption of the values proposed.

14. The Regional Representative of North America expressed reservations about making exceptions for certain classes of foods such as spices or products intended for dilution before consumption, stating that under most national food laws such exceptions could not be made without granting equal consideration to other foods consumed in small quantities. The Executive Committee, noting that the Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants had recommended that these particular matters should be reconsidered at a future date, and therefore recommended that the Commission indicate that paragraphs 29 and 30 of ALINORM 89/11 remain under review.

ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW REGIONAL CODEX COORDINATING COMMITTEES (Item 5)

15. The Secretariat introduced ALINORM 89/37 which summarized the current situation with regard to a new Regional Codex Coordinating Committee which would encompass the six Codex member countries which were not members of any other Regional Coordinating Committee (Australia, Canada, Fiji, New Zealand, Samoa and the United States of America) when the subject was raised in 1987. Since that time Papua New Guinea has joined the Commission and could become a member of the new Coordinating Committee for these countries if the Commission agrees to its creation.

16. The Secretariat pointed out that four of the six countries had responded positively to the proposal for the establishment of a Regional Coordinating Committee for North America and the South-West Pacific. The Secretariat also mentioned that there were no legal problems under the Codex rules for the establishment of the new Committee, and that no significant administrative or financial problems were envisaged. The uniform terms of reference for all Regional Coordinating Committees developed in response to the recommendations of the March 1989 meeting of the Codex Committee on General Principles were also drawn to the attention of the Executive Committee (Appendix II).

17. The Representatives for North America and for the South-West Pacific welcomed the positive responses for the creation of the new Coordinating Committee for the North America and South-West Pacific Regions. They expressed the hope that the Commission would approve the establishment of the new Committee and stated they could fully accept the new uniform terms of reference for such committees.

18. The Coordinator for Asia requested information concerning a previous proposal that a new Coordinating Committee for Western Asia might be considered. The Secretariat mentioned that no further requests for such a committee had been received in response to previous Executive Committee reports, and that no call for more consideration of this had been made at the December 1988 Cairo meeting of the Coordinating Committee for Africa which was attended by several Arabic-speaking countries. In view of the lack of response it was considered best to continue as at present with the Coordinating Committee for Asia covering all countries of this Codex region. The Secretariat mentioned some upcoming food control activities in the western Asian region and stated that efforts would continue through these events to stimulate more active participation in the Coordinating Committee for Asia.

19. The Representative for Latin America informed the Committee of the full support of Argentina for the uniform terms of reference for all Regional Coordinating Committees, and to the establishment of the new proposed Committee.

20. The Chairman, in summarizing, indicated that the Executive Committee recommended the approval by the Commission of the establishment of the new Coordinating Committee for North America and the South-West Pacific. The Executive Committee also recommended that the Commission approve the uniform terms of reference for all Regional Coordinating Committees.

IMPLICATIONS OF BIOTECHNOLOGY ON INTERNATIONAL FOOD STANDARDS AND CODES OF PRACTICE (Agenda Item 6)

21. The Secretariat introduced the working paper for this agenda item ALINORM 89/39 which had been prepared by two consultants to explore the implications of biotechnology on international food standards and codes of practice. The paper explored different aspects of plant and animal processed products which may be prepared through the use of biotechnological processes. This would include alteration of seeds or breeding stock or the use of processes such as fermentation where alterations have been made through current biotechnology techniques. The Secretariat pointed out that the paper recognized that products produced by new processes involving biotechnology should be judged through traditional food quality control and safety assessment processes, and that new products and processes should be kept under continued review and assessment.

22. In commenting on the paper Vice-Chairman Winarno informed the Executive Committee of a new joint IUFOST/IUNS Committee on food processing which will be giving further consideration to the use of biotechnology in food production and processing. He expressed the hope that this IUFOST/IUNS Committee would cooperate with the Codex system so that its work could be taken into account in future Codex consideration of biotechnology in foods produced by biotechnological processes. The Regional Representative of Europe also drew attention to a working paper on the evaluation of novel foods which had been discussed by the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants.

23. The Executive Committee took note of the paper prepared for the Commission session and welcomed the participation of the consultants who had prepared it in the 18th Session of the Codex Commission. The Executive Committee recommended that the Codex system keep developments in the area of biotechnology under continual review.

24. The Executive Committee was informed that consideration was being given by the two organizations to convene a Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation to consider aspects of the evaluation of food safety related to transgenic plants and animals. A preliminary meeting to plan for the Consultation would be held at the kind invitation of the US Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C., in October 1989, and the Consultation itself was likely to be held in 1990 or 1991. The Executive Committee welcomed these developments.

RELATIONS WITH THE GATT AND ITS COMMITTEE ON TECHNICAL BARRIERS TO TRADE AND THE NEGOTIATING GROUP ON AGRICULTURE (Item 7)

25. The Secretariat introduced ALINORM 89/10 Relations with the GATT and its Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade and the Negotiating Group on Agriculture. This document details the progress in cooperation between the Codex secretariat and GATT with regard to the GATT Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade and the GATT Working Group on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Relations and Barriers. The Executive Committee was informed of the increased level of contacts and cooperation between the Codex and GATT secretariats and of attendance by Codex secretariat personnel in recent GATT meetings of the Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade and of the Working Group on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Relations and Barriers. The Secretariat called attention to the discussions of the Codex Committee on General Principles (CCGP) in April 1989 and proposed amendments to the Codex Alimentarius Procedural Manual which were recommended by the CCGP. The Secretariat also called attention to the recommendations of the GATT Uruguay Round of High-Level Negotiations of the Trade Negotiations Committee which recommended use of the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission in harmonizing national sanitary and phytosanitary regulations. The work of the Codex and FAO/WHO expert groups was also considered by GATT as a means to provide sound scientific evidence in resolving any multilateral disputes which might occur with regard to sanitary barriers to trade. The Executive Committee was assured that the Codex secretariat would continue its active cooperation with GATT since the benefits of the GATT proposals to acceptance of Codex work would be highly beneficial with regard to uniform application of Codex work in international food trade.

26. Members of the Executive Committee welcomed the cooperation between the Codex secretariat and GATT and pointed out that this work would be very important to obtaining Codex goals, improvement of protection of the health of the consumers and promotion of international trade. The Representative of North America pointed out that the current free trade agreement currently being

implemented between the United States and Canada takes the work of Codex into account in work underway to harmonize the sanitary rules between the U.S. and Canada. The Representative of the Latin America and Caribbean Region stressed the need for countries to adopt Codex standards so as to assure fair treatment to all trading partners. The Representative reported that Argentina supported the proposed amendment to the Procedural Manual.

27. Some members of the Executive Committee commented on the proposed changes to the Codex Alimentarius Procedural Manual and felt that despite the great importance of strengthened cooperation between Codex and GATT that the changes in the Manual might be premature. The representative of the Legal Counsel of WHO pointed out that the proposed changes were intended simply to show the strengthened Codex/GATT relationship but did not otherwise change the relationship between these organizations since the current Step Procedure envisages the circulation of Codex work to member countries and interested international organizations for comment.

28. In response to a question concerning the implications of the GATT/Codex cooperation to the Codex programme of work, the Secretariat explained that current Codex priorities emphasizing the work of horizontal committees and coordinating committees would be very useful to eventual resolution of trading problems which might be addressed in GATT. It was pointed out that the majority of trading problems at present revolve around chemical and microbiological contaminants in foods, problems of filth and decomposition in certain foodstuffs and labelling problems, all of which can be addressed through the work of the Codex horizontal committees. The importance of the paper prepared for the 1989 session of the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants by a consultant, Dr. Howard Denner, with regard to continued emphasis on the horizontal committees as mentioned and the need for continued stress on the horizontal work by the Codex system was acknowledged.

29. The Executive Committee took note of the progress that has been made in cooperation between Codex and GATT and recognized the significance of these developments and their importance to the Codex programme. It recognized also that GATT recommendations made by the April Uruguay High-Level Talks of the Trade Negotiating Committee were consistent with Codex goals and expressed the hope that these would be translated into effective procedures to promote international food trade.

MATTERS ARISING FROM REPORTS OF CODEX COMMITTEES (Item 8)

30. The Executive Committee had before it document CX/EXEC 89/36/3 which outlined matters which had been referred to it for its consideration.

Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (ALINORM 89/36)

WORKING MECHANISMS OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

31. This matter was raised at the last session of the Commission and the session of the Executive Committee by the Regional Representative of Latin America and the Caribbean. The Executive Committee noted that the proposed "Work Programme" which followed the model of ISO, was not appropriate to the Codex programme. The Secretariat pointed out that the programme of each of the Codex Committees was adequately described in the "Status of work" attached to each report and that taken together, these constituted the Programme of work of the Commission. This system provided flexibility, as it was continually updated as each Codex Committee met. The Executive Committee requested the Regional Coordinating Committees to confirm whether the current procedures used by the Commission for the management of its work programme were adequate and agreed that only if there appeared to be a widespread problem in understanding the status of work would there be need for further action.

PROPOSED DRAFT STANDARD FOR RAW SUGAR

32. The Executive Committee confirmed that the principal responsibility for elaborating this standard should rest with the World Wide Committee on Sugars but in view of the special interest by countries of the region in this commodity, it agreed that the present draft standard should be returned to Step 2 and redrafted by the delegation of Cuba in consultation with the Secretariat of the Sugars Committee and recirculated at step 3 as the Coordinating Committee had proposed.

CODE OF HYGIENIC PRACTICE ON STREET FOODS

33. The Executive Committee noted that both this Coordinating Committee and the Regional Coordinating Committee for Asia had initiated work in this area. The proposed Code of Practice had been distributed for comments at Step 3. Noting that certain core elements of the code would be common to similar codes prepared by other regional coordinating committees, the Executive Committee recommended that these core elements should be examined by the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene and that the individual coordinating committees should add to this core material the information that was specifically relevant to regional practices. The Executive Committee congratulated the Regional Coordinating Committees for Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia for undertaking this important work.

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Membership of the Executive Committee

34. The Executive Committee noted that as requested by the Commission at its 17th Session, the Committee on General Principles had examined the membership of the Executive Committee particularly with reference to the regional representation. The Executive Committee noted that the Committee on General Principles had not recommended amendments to the rules of procedure in a way that the membership of the Executive Committee would need to be changed. However, the Committee had recommended that the current work practices of the Executive Committee whereby regional representatives may be accompanied by an advisor did enhance the effectiveness of the Executive Committee's work. The Executive Committee expressed its support for the proposals put forward in ALINORM 87/39 para. 17.

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF REGIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEES

35. The Executive Committee noted the opinion of the Committee on General Principles that the terms of reference for regional coordinating committees should be harmonized and referred to its earlier decision on this matter (see para. 16 and Appendix II).

DEFINITIONS OF THE TERMS MAXIMUM RESIDUE LIMITS/LEVELS WHEN USED FOR VETERINARY DRUGS AND FOR PESTICIDE RESIDUES

36. The Executive Committee noted the different approaches taken by the Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues and the Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Food in establishing maximum levels for limits for residues. It noted that these two approaches were in fact justified and, contrary to the opinion of the Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues, (ALINORM 89/24A para. 71) recommended that the two separate definitions be maintained. The Committee noted that the difference in terminology (maximum residue level/maximum residue limit) may possibly lead to confusion but that in practical terms this was unlikely provided that reference was made to the basic definitions.

PROPOSED DRAFT STANDARD FOR LABELLING OF AND CLAIMS FOR LOW ENERGY AND HIGH ENERGY FOOD

37. The Executive Committee noted that this standard had been under elaboration by the Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses. It had recently been referred to the Committee on Food Labelling for the endorsement of the labelling provisions. This latter Committee had requested the Executive Committee to determine which of the two committees should be entrusted with the future elaboration of the standard and emphasized that the Committee on Food Labelling held the primary responsibility for consideration of nutritional claims.

38. The Executive Committee noted a recommendation made by the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on Recommended Allowances for Nutrients for Food Labelling Purposes that terms such as "low", "reduced in" and "good source of" should be harmonized. It agreed that the Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses should retain the responsibility for advising the Committee on Food Labelling on what levels for reduction or increase of a nutritional component should qualify for the use of an appropriate nutrient descriptor. It also agreed that the final responsibility for labelling and types of claims should continue to be the responsibility of the Committee on Food Labelling. In regard to this specific case, the Executive Committee recommended that the current standard be broadened if possible to encompass descriptive terms other than Low- and reduced-energy, and that the Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses should examine this when considering the standard at Step 4. It should then be possible to transfer responsibility for elaboration of the standard to the Codex Committee on Food Labelling with a view to finalizing it by the 20th Session of the Commission (1993), if not before. The Executive Committee noted that there were four texts concerning labelling in general, nutrition labelling, general labelling claims, and labelling and claims for foods for special dietary uses currently contained in the Codex Alimentarius and requested the two committees concerned to give consideration to rationalizing these four documents.

39. The Coordinator for Asia (Prof. Winarno) drew attention to the continuing problem of the labelling of foods containing vegetable fats and oils. The Executive Committee was informed that as a result of one of the recommendations of the Consultation referred to above, FAO and WHO would convene a new Expert Committee or Consultation to examine the role of dietary fats and oils in human nutrition taking into account data that had become available since the last report on this subject. This information would be needed for an authoritative statement to be made in regard to labelling. The Executive Committee confirmed that the question of labelling of foods containing vegetable fats and oils would remain on the Commission's agenda.

ENDORSEMENT OF CERTAIN FOOD ADDITIVE PROVISIONS IN THE STANDARD FOR WHEAT FLOUR

40. The Executive Committee was informed that the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants at its 21st Session had decided not to endorse the use of certain flour improvers referred to in the Codex Standard for Wheat Flour. The Codex Committee on Cereals, Pulses and Legumes which had elaborated this standard had reconfirmed its view, at its 6th Session, that there was adequate technological justification for the use of these additives and that their use would be restricted to certain types of flour for specific technological purposes. It was also noted that the additives concerned had been examined by JECFA and accepted as safe for use in food.

41. The Executive Committee reaffirmed the responsibilities of commodity committees in determining the technological justification for the use of additives in the commodities for which they were responsible and that the real expertise on technology did indeed lie with the commodity committees. It also reaffirmed the responsibility of the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants to evaluate the technological justification in the light of the toxicological evaluation of JECFA and the General Principles for the use of Food Additives. However, the Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants should not, without good reason, decide to reject the justifications which were based on well established practices in many countries and which were consistent with the safety evaluation of JECFA. The Executive Committee recommended that the Commission endorse all the food additive provisions for wheat flour which have not yet been endorsed by CCFAC.

CONSIDERATION OF WATER TREATMENT AGENTS

42. The Executive Committee noted a request from the 21st Session of the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants for advice on whether or not water treatment agents used for food preparation purposes would fall within the terms of reference of the Commission and the Committee. It was noted that some delegations had proposed that these agents should be included in the Inventory of Processing Aids currently under elaboration by the Committee. The Committee had decided not to embark on work in this area, noting the related activities of WHO in this field.

43. Mr. S. Ozolins of WHO informed the Committee of the work in this area. WHO Guidelines for Drinking Water Quality last published in 1982 and now being reviewed and revised for publication in 1990(91) had not included specific evaluation of water treatment agents. Most of the information contained in the Guidelines which would be relevant to this topic concerned the by-products of certain disinfectant agents. The Guidelines concentrated on the residues of substances remaining in drinking water. Mr. Ozolins informed the Executive Committee that a collaborating centre was expected to be established as a clearing house for information on water treatment agents which would provide consultative services for developing countries.

44. The Executive Committee noted the activities of WHO in this area and confirmed that water treatment agents used in water for food preparation purposes would fall within the terms of reference of the Commission but that at the moment such work would appear to be of low priority.

Specifications for Food Additives

45. The Chief of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme informed the Executive Committee of arrangements which had been made for a comprehensive publication of all of the JECFA Specifications of Identity and Purity of Food Additives. He referred to recent recommendations of the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants which, if adopted, would lead to a delay in the publication of specifications, and in the worst case could lead to a duplication of work, and the publication of contradictory specifications. Mr. Lupien informed the Executive Committee that he had personally written to the delegations working in this area in the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants, explaining the different responsibilities of the Expert Committee and the Codex Committee, and that there should be no need for the elaboration and separate publication of Codex specifications. Most of the replies received supported this view.

46. The Executive Committee thanked Mr. Lupien for his comments on this subject.

ELABORATION OF GUIDELINES FOR FOOD IRRADIATION

47. During its 35th session (July 1988), the Executive Committee had considered a request by the International Consultative Group on Food Irradiation (ICGFI) to introduce a series of draft provisional guidelines for the irradiation of certain foods into the Codex system, with the final aim of having them published as part of the Codex Alimentarius. At that time, the Executive Committee had recommended to await the conclusions of the Joint FAO/IAEA/WHO/ITC-UNCTAD/GATT Conference on the Acceptance, Control of and Trade in Irradiated Food, Geneva, 12-16 December 1988 and to reconsider this subject at its next (36th) session. The WHO Secretary, who had been one of the Technical Secretaries of this Conference, reported to the Executive Committee that the Conference had been very successfully concluded with the adoption, by consensus, of a Document on Food Irradiation. This Document, inter alia, had recommended that consideration be given to the application of the food irradiation technology for public health benefits, for the reduction of post-harvest losses and for quarantine treatment of certain foods. The Committee was also informed that the Conference had recognised the concern of some consumer groups concerning the introduction of this technology and that WHO, under cover of a note verbale (C.L. 13 1989), had subsequently sent to its Member States a document entitled Consumer Concerns about the Safety of Irradiated Food - the WHO reply to questions raised by the International Organization of Consumer Unions (WHO/EHE/FOS/89.1).

48. The Executive Committee noted the positive outcome of the Conference. It felt that the ICGFI guidelines should not be introduced into the Codex system since it would take too long until they could be adopted by the Commission as final Codex recommendations since interested bodies, including governments, would need them rather rapidly. Therefore, the Executive Committee recommended that ICGFI itself might wish to publish them after their review by the sponsoring Organizations FAO, IAEA and WHO.

Elaboration of Standards for Coffee

49. The Executive Committee had before it document CX/EXEC/ 89/36/3 which provided an outline of the need for standards for coffee which had been prepared at the request of the 6th Session of the Coordinating Committee for Asia. It was noted that proposals for standardizing green coffee had been referred by the Secretariat to the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) which was already active in this area and that ISO had agreed to continue its current work particularly with reference to the establishment of an acceptable system for defect scoring. ISO had agreed to keep the Commission informed of progress. With regard to standards for other coffee products the Executive Committee noted that the Commission had previously discussed this matter but had adjourned its discussion sine die. It was considered opportune to re-open the discussion at this time.

50. The Executive Committee was of the opinion that the elaboration of standards for coffee and coffee products met the criteria of the Commission and that the Commission should consider either (i) the establishment of a Codex Commodity Committee which could be entrusted with the work on elaboration of standards for coffee and coffee products or (ii) assigning this work to an existing subsidiary body. The Secretariat proposed that such work could form the initial programme of an "omnibus" committee if such a committee could be

constituted. After some discussion the Executive Committee requested the Secretariat to prepare a draft outline for the terms of reference of such a Committee together with an indication of how the Committee might undertake the elaboration of standards for a variety of products on an ad hoc basis. The Regional Representative for Europe, confirming that standards for coffee should be prepared, questioned whether or not the establishment of a new committee or an "omnibus" committee would be possible particularly given the problems in determining adequate host country arrangements.

PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF FOODBORNE DISEASES

51. The WHO Joint Secretary informed the Committee that the last (42nd) World Health Assembly, during its discussion on WHO's proposed programme budget for 1990/91 in May 1989, had expressed concern over the increase of foodborne diseases, particularly Salmonellosis, in several Member States. As a result of these discussions, the Assembly adopted a resolution on the Prevention and Control of Salmonellosis (WHA 42.40). This resolution, inter-alia, acknowledges the work of the Commission, urges Member States to take into account the relevant Codex standards and codes of hygienic practice in the development and implementation of food safety programmes and requests WHO's Director-General to continue to assist Member States, in particular through the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, in the development of microbiological and hygiene standards for products of animal origin.

52. The Committee was pleased to take note of this information.

Use of the Spanish Language at Codex Sessions

53. The Regional Representative for Latin America and the Caribbean drew attention to the usefulness of the Spanish language as one of the working languages of the Commission and of its subsidiary bodies, but noted that not all subsidiary bodies made use of Spanish. The Representative recommended that in those committees where only two languages were used consideration might be given to using the Spanish language.

36TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

GENEVA, 29-30 JUNE 1989

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Mr. J. Lupien, Chief, Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme

Dr. F.K. Kiferstein, Manager, Food Safety Unit, WHO (Joint Secretary)

Dr. A. Randell, Senior Officer, Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme (Joint Secretary)

WHO

Dr. J.-P. Jardel, Assistant Director-General

Dr. Peter Waight, Prevention of Environmental Pollution, Division of Environmental Health

Mr. D. Thompson, Chief, Office of Publications

Dr. S. Shubber, Senior Legal Officer, Office of the Legal Counsel

Dr J. Herrman, International Programme on Chemical Safety, Division of Environmental Health

Mr S. Ozolins, Manager, Prevention of Environmental Pollution, Division of Environmental Health

Dr K. Bögel, Chief, Veterinary Public Health, Division of Communicable Diseases

PROPOSED COMMON TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR
FAO/WHO CODEX COORDINATING COMMITTEES

Functions

- (a) defines the problems and needs of regions concerning food standards and food control
- (b) promotes within the committee contacts for the mutual exchange of information on proposed regulatory initiatives and problems arising from food control and stimulates the strengthening of food control infrastructure
- (c) recommends to the Commission the development of world-wide standards for products of interest to the regions including products considered by the committee to have an international market potential in the future
- (d) develops regional standards for food products moving exclusively or almost exclusively in intra-regional trade
- (e) draws the attention of the Commission to any aspects of the Commission's work of particular significance to the regions
- (f) promotes coordination of all original food standards work undertaken by international governmental and non-governmental organizations within the regions
- (g) exercises a general coordinating role for the regions and such other functions as may be entrusted to it by the Commission.