



**Food and Agriculture  
Organization of  
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**World Health  
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**REP11/NASWP**

## **JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME**

### **CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION**

*Thirty fourth Session*

*Geneva, Switzerland, 4-9 July 2011*

### **REPORT OF THE ELEVENTH SESSION OF THE FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR NORTH AMERICA AND THE SOUTH WEST PACIFIC**

*Nuku'alofa, Tonga*

*28 September - 1 October 2010*

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## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Eleventh Session of the Codex Coordinating Committee for North America and the South West Pacific reached the following conclusions:

### **Matters for consideration by the 34<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission**

#### The Coordinating Committee:

- Noted the experiences and views of countries of the region with regard to problems and financial implications of meeting private standards and measures taken to overcome the problems and generally supported the proposal of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Commission with regard to the measures that Codex, FAO and WHO should take in the context of private standards (paras 9-19);
- Agreed that there was no need to continue work on a standard for processed cheese (para.24);
- Agreed that, at present, there was no need for further guidance on traceability / products tracing (para. 27);
- Reported on the status of implementation of activities 4.5 “Promote interdisciplinary coordination at the national and regional level” and 5.5 “Enhance participation of non-governmental organizations at international, regional and national level” of the Codex Strategic Plan 2008-2013 in the region (paras 30-31);
- Provided replies and information to the questionnaire seeking suggestions for the development of the new Codex Strategic Plan 2013-2018 (paras 32-39);
- Agreed that it was necessary to explore new ways to improve the efficiency of physical working groups and not to focus solely on limiting participation (para. 45);
- Expressed general support for shifting the emphasis of the Codex Trust Fund (CTF) from Objective 1 “Widen participation” to Objectives 2 and 3 “Strengthening overall participation” and “Enhance scientific / technical participation; and was of the view that the CTF should focus on building capacity of national structures to ensure countries’ effective participation in Codex. Generally agreed that there was a need to ensure that “graduate” countries continue to participate in Codex meetings and to consider the extension of the CTF at a later stage (paras 52-58);
- Unanimously agreed to recommend to the 34<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission that Papua New Guinea be appointed as Coordinator for North America and the South West Pacific (para. 96).

### **Other matters for information**

#### The Coordinating Committee:

- Reviewed the status of implementation of the current Strategic Plan for the CCNASWP and agreed on the process for preparing the new Strategic Plan 2014-2018 (paras 63-84);
- Agreed to prepare / revise discussion papers on: harmonised approach to date marking in the region (para. 81); kava (para. 95); and development of a standard for nonu (noni) products (para. 103) for consideration at its 12<sup>th</sup> Session.

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. The FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for North America and the South West Pacific (CCNASWP) held its 11<sup>th</sup> Session in Nuku'alofa from 28 September to 1 October 2010 at the kind invitation of the Government of the Kingdom of Tonga. The Session was chaired by Dr Viliami Manu, National Codex Contact Point and Acting Director for Agriculture and Food, Forests and Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Forests and Fisheries and attended by 25 delegates from 13 Member countries, one observer from one Member country outside the Region and representatives of FAO and WHO. A complete list of participants, including the Secretariat, is given in Appendix I to this report.

## **OPENING OF THE SESSION**

2. The Session was opened by Hon Lisiate 'Aloveita 'Akolo, Minister for Labour, Commerce and Industries, on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture, Food, Forests and Fisheries. In his keynote address, the Minister highlighted how the trend in climate change would affect trade and health and increase the importance of Codex in protecting the health of the consumers and in ensuring fair practice in food trade. He thanked the members for the unique opportunity for Tonga to serve as CCNASWP Coordinator for four years. The Minister also indicated that Tonga was looking to Codex as part of its strategy to ensure healthy, nutritious and safe food to its population.

3. Mr Wayne Anthony Antkowiak, WHO Country Liaison Officer for the Kingdom of Tonga, welcomed the participants on behalf of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). He informed the Coordinating Committee that the Food Secure Pacific Framework for Action was consistent with the goals of the Strategic Plan for the CCNASWP and with the joint FAO and WHO work to support Member States in strengthening regulatory frameworks.

## **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Agenda Item 1)<sup>1</sup>**

4. The Coordinating Committee agreed to consider, under Agenda Item 4 "Strategic Plan for the CCNASWP 2008-2013", the outcomes of the FAO/WHO technical workshop on "Food labelling and date marking", held on 27 September 2010 and the process to start the revision of the Strategic Plan for the CCNASWP.

5. On the proposal of the Coordinator (Tonga), the Coordinating Committee agreed to consider a discussion paper on the development of a Standard for Nonu (Noni) Products, under Agenda Item 7 "Other Business and Future Work".

6. With these amendments, the Coordinating Committee adopted the Provisional Agenda as its Agenda for the Session.

## **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER CODEX COMMITTEES (Agenda Item 2)<sup>2</sup>**

7. The Coordinating Committee noted that matters related to "Terms of reference of FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee" and "Timely availability of documents", referred to by the 32<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Commission and the 26<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on General Principles, respectively, were for information purposes.

8. The Coordinating Committee discussed the other matters referred to by the 32<sup>nd</sup> and 33<sup>rd</sup> Sessions of the Commission and the 64<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Committee as follows.

### **Consideration on the Impact of Private Standards**

9. The Coordinating Committee noted the conclusion of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Commission's discussion on the impact of private food safety standards (PFS) that legal trade implications of private standards were

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<sup>1</sup> CX/NASWP 10/11/1

<sup>2</sup> CX/NASWP 10/11/2; CX/NASWP 10/11/2 Add.1 (Comments of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and ICGMA); CX/NASWP 10/11/2 Add.2 (Comments of the United States of America); CRD 1 (Comments of IFT); CRD 4 (Comments of Solomon Islands)

best dealt with in WTO; and that Codex, FAO and WHO should engage with global private standard-setting bodies and encourage their participation in Codex as observers.

10. The Coordinating Committee further recalled that the Commission had agreed to refer the matter to coordinating committees to conduct further analysis of the problems encountered with private standards and to make recommendations for follow up by the next session of the Commission.

11. The Coordinating Committee considered the specific questions in CL 2010/33-NASWP (point iii) as follows:

Question 1: Have food producers/processors in your country experienced any problems in meeting private standards?

12. The Coordinating Committee noted that while some countries in their written comments had not reported specific problems experienced by food producers / processors in meeting private standards, others had indicated that: most problems associated with private standards stemmed out from lack of mutual recognition of standards by private standards holders; cost increases in the areas of compliance and certification; and lack of transparency and consultation in the development of private standards.

13. The Delegation of Solomon Islands reported on problems experienced by the fishing and coconut industries in meeting buyers' specifications. Specific food safety issues, experienced by the industries, included levels of histamine and heavy metals in fish products and the presence of aflatoxins in copra meals for animal feed.

14. The Coordinating Committee noted that many Pacific Island Countries (PICs) had limited experience in terms of compliance with private standards.

Question 2: What are the financial implications of meeting private standards, especially implications for SMEs?

15. The Coordinating Committee noted that financial implications of meeting private standards could be both positive and negative. Negative aspects were mainly linked to compliance costs for certification, which could act as a disincentive to farmers from developing countries to access international markets. Issues for some PICs were costs for: sending samples overseas to accredited laboratories; capacity building, including training activities; and upgrading of laboratory facilities.

16. It was also reported that, in general, larger producers were better able to meet private standards' requirements; and that some of the smaller producers, who were faced with higher entry costs arising from additional certification requirements, often chose to look for alternative market opportunities.

Question 3: What measures have been taken to overcome/ease the problems in implementing private standards?

17. The Coordinating Committee noted that in a number of countries, governments had not taken specific measures to assist industries in implementing private standards, because they were not aware of any particular problems and because the responsibilities for meeting private standards primarily lie with food producers / processors. Some of the measures suggested to help overcome the difficulties encountered by industries in implementing private standards included: regular exchange of information; encouraging those interested in setting private standards to refer to and apply international food safety standards; encouraging mutual recognition of standards by private standard holders; strengthening coordination of private standards setting bodies; and conducting analysis on the impact of compliance with private standards.

Question 4: What should the CAC/ FAO/WHO do in the context of private standards?

18. The Coordinating Committee generally supported the recommendation of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Commission and emphasized the importance that Codex: continue working closely with the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and the World Trade Organization's Committees on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (WTO/SPS) and Technical Barrier to Trade Committee (WTO/TBT) on issues of private standards; and further engage with global private standards setting bodies and encourage their participation in Codex work.

19. Delegations also recommended that relevant Codex committees give appropriate consideration to the development of more "end users' relevant" standards; that Codex promote greater awareness of its standards

and their status as international benchmarks; and that Members identify gaps in Codex standards and channel suggestions for new work through appropriate Codex committees.

### **Proposed draft Standard on Processed Cheese**

20. The Coordinating Committee recalled that the 33<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Commission had agreed to defer decision on the discontinuation of work on a standard for processed cheese until its 34<sup>th</sup> Session and to make its decision on the basis of the findings and recommendations of coordinating committees.<sup>3</sup>

21. The Coordinating Committee considered the replies to CL 2010/33-NASWP (point iii) requesting comments on: (i) the need for a standard on processed cheese and the rationale for such a standard i.e. whether there is a problem or potential problem in the trade of these products; and (ii) the scope of such a standard i.e. compositional aspects of the products to be covered by the standards.

22. Delegations intervened with the following arguments in support of discontinuing work of the development of a standard for processed cheese:

- The Committee on Milk and Milk Products (CCMMP), after more than 10 years of discussion, had been unable to resolve a number of fundamental issues, including cheese content and other compositional aspects of processed cheese;
- A great diversity existed in production methods, ingredients, food additives, composition, nomenclature and definition of processed cheese;
- Processed cheeses were traded freely and there were no known problems or potential impediments to international trade;
- A new standard was not likely to encompass the large variety of processed cheeses in commerce and thus could negatively impact on international trade; and
- Processed cheeses were produced and consumed globally and development of one or more regional standards was likely to impede their trade.

23. It was also observed that the development of multiple regional standards was likely to create confusion among consumers.

24. In concluding its discussion and in view of the above arguments, the Coordinating Committee supported the recommendation of the 11<sup>th</sup> Session of the CCMMP to discontinue this work and agreed to refer to the 34<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission that there was no need to continue work on a standard for processed cheese.

### **Development of Guidelines for Traceability/Product tracing**

25. The Coordinating Committee recalled that the 32<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Commission had endorsed the recommendation of the 18<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) to request coordinating committees to discuss whether there was a need for further guidance on traceability / product tracing.

26. Delegations, which intervened, were of the view that further guidance was not necessary because the definition of *Traceability/Product tracing* and the *Principles for Traceability / Product Tracing as a Tool Within a Food Inspection and Certification System* (CAC/GL 60-2006) provided countries with the context and the key elements for the application of traceability / product tracing. It was also noted that a number of initiatives, consistent with Codex work, were undertaken at the country level and by international organizations, such as ISO, to facilitate the implementation of traceability / product tracing and that it was important for Codex to continue monitoring these developments .

27. In view of the above discussion, the Coordinating Committee agreed that, at present, there was no need for further guidance on traceability / product tracing.

### **Implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan 2008-2013 - General Implementation Status**

28. It was recalled that coordinating committees had to report the status of activities for which they were responsible to the Executive Committee. In particular, Activities 4.5 “Promote interdisciplinary coordination at the national and regional level” and 5.5 “Enhance participation of non-governmental organizations at

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<sup>3</sup> ALINORM 10/33/REP paras 89-93

international, regional and national levels” of the Codex Strategic Plan 2008-2013. It was also recalled that the 64<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Committee, while noting that Activity 4.5 was completed in 2009, had recommended that it should be continued and that the questionnaire, sent in 2008 on interdisciplinary coordination at the national and regional level, should be circulated again for consideration by the forthcoming sessions of coordinating committees.

29. The Coordinating Committee considered replies to CL 2010/33-NASWP (point i), requesting comments and information on the following two activities.

#### Activity 4.5

30. The Coordinating Committee recognised that a number of countries had in place effective mechanisms to promote interdisciplinary coordination, including procedures for inclusion and participation of interested parties in Codex matters, and effective communication mechanisms to ensure whole of government positions were developed on Codex issues. It further noted that there was a need to improve coordination at the regional level.

#### Activity 5.5

31. The Coordinating Committee noted that a number of countries had already established mechanisms to involve stakeholders in national Codex processes, including the development of brochures, dedicated websites and consultation with stakeholders; and that there was a need for PICs, in particular, to foster involvement of consumers’ organizations.

### **Preparation of the new Codex Strategic Plan for 2013-2018**

32. The Coordinating Committee recalled that the 33<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Commission had agreed to seek suggestions from coordinating committees for the development of the next Codex Strategic Plan 2013-2018 and that, for this purpose, a questionnaire had been developed and circulated with CL 2010/41-NASWP (point 1).

33. The Coordinating Committee considered the specific questions of the questionnaire as follows.

#### Are the current five goals still relevant? What changes would you propose (if any)?

34. The Coordinating Committee agreed that all five goals of the Strategic Plan were still relevant.

#### The 2003-2007 Framework did not include measurable indicators, as does the current Strategic Plan. Should the next Strategic Plan include measurable indicators? Is the current “table” format useful or would you suggest changes? For example, is it useful to track “ongoing” activities?

35. The Coordinating Committee agreed that the “table” format of the Strategic Plan was useful to monitor progress of the plan’s implementation and to report to the Executive Committee and the Commission. It was suggested to include measurable indicators in the table, to ensure consistency with the budgetary / planning approach being used by FAO.

#### What are the most significant challenges facing Codex? What goals/activities should be included in the next plan to insure that these challenges get the necessary attention?

36. The Coordinating Committee noted several comments on significant challenges facing Codex, including: influence of non-science factors in the decision-making process; promoting effective participation of developing countries; strengthening management of Codex work; revision of criteria for prioritization of Codex work; efficiency of work of the Commission and Executive Committee; and considering separately food-safety standards from other type of standards.

#### Given the fact that developing country participation in the work of Codex is presently a major issue, what goals/activities should be included in the next plan to insure that this issue gets necessary attention in 2013-2018?

37. The Coordinating Committee identified that the participation of developing countries in Codex work would remain a critical and ongoing priority and encouraged the Commission to assist in the participation of developing countries in Codex work.

Do current Codex structures and procedures adequately meet present needs of members (i.e., various “step procedure” options, critical review by CCEXEC, etc.)? What changes might be considered?

38. The Coordinating Committee noted that the written comments emphasised that the critical issue was not the step procedure itself and that a pragmatic approach should be taken to promote timely and expeditious advancement of work. In these comments it was also suggested, as a way forward, that:

- Committees place greater emphasis on the preparation and discussion of “project documents” before recommending new work;
- The Commission continue to investigate and support opportunities to use web-based systems to facilitate participation of all interested countries; and.
- The Commission continue efforts to seek new approaches to promote consensus.

The Commission operates in an environment of change and technological advancement. Should issues such as the food safety consequences of climate change, and new production technologies such as nanotechnology, etc., be reflected in the new Strategic Plan? If so, how?

39. The Coordinating Committee agreed that the current Strategic Plan already provided an adequate framework for dealing with the challenges of scientific and technological developments and there was no need for additional amendments or revision of Codex procedures to address such changes and technological advancements.

### **New Options for Physical Working Groups**

40. The Coordinating Committee recalled that the 64<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Committee had agreed to consider new options for physical working groups (pWGs) and that the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson and other interested members of the Executive Committee would prepare, by electronic consultation, a discussion paper, which would take into account the discussions held in regional committees on the following options:

- Limiting the number of participants in pWGs by requiring that membership be restricted to two or three relevant experts from each of the Codex Regions;
- Develop a mechanism that would ensure Codex Trust Fund support for developing country representatives to working groups organised along these lines; and
- Develop a set of expected responsibilities that would apply to the expert representatives from the various regions to the countries in their region. For example, working group experts could be expected to circulate draft working group documents for comments to countries in their region.

41. As a general comment, one delegation expressed the view that there was a need to explore innovative ways for facilitating the work of pWG and that these ways should not be limited to those aiming at reducing the number of participants, but rather at improving the efficiency and quality of the pWGs’ work. Based on the experience of the Committee on Meat Hygiene (CCMH), the delegation suggested that attention could also be given to improving the quality of the basic documents discussed by the pWGs, e.g. through the use of consultants.

42. Another delegation noted that approaches aiming at limiting participation in pWGs could imply additional work, including the need to revisit the *Guidelines for physical Working Group* and to develop criteria to decide on which countries should participate in pWGs. The delegation suggested to explore other approaches, such as the one used by the electronic working group of the Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling (CCMAS), and not to look at limiting the size of pWGs in isolation.

43. Other delegations stated that consideration should be given to the advantages and disadvantages of limiting participation in pWGs. In this regard it was noted that the experience of the Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) had showed that broader participation allowed for fuller and more balanced discussion than smaller regionally diverse meetings would. It was also noted that open pWGs provided an opportunity for those new to Codex to gain experience as new delegates were less intimidated to work in pWG than in plenary.



44. Other interventions stressed that it was important for developing countries to interact with other countries; and that pWGs, organised back-to-back with Codex committees were an opportunity for developing countries to efficiently benefit from the Codex Trust Fund's support.

45. In concluding its discussion, the Coordinating Committee agreed that it was necessary to explore new ways to improve the efficiency of pWGs and not to focus solely on limiting participation; and that the matter deserved a more in depth discussion taking into account the experience of other committees.

#### **ACTIVITIES OF FAO AND WHO COMPLEMENTARY TO THE WORK OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION (Agenda Item 3a)<sup>4</sup>**

46. The Representative of WHO provided, on behalf of FAO and WHO, an overview of the activities complementary to the work of Codex in the areas of capacity building and provision of scientific advice implemented by the two organizations since the last Session of CCNASWP. In so doing it was noted that intensified capacity building by FAO and WHO in recent years had been made possible as a result of Australia and New Zealand aid funding of the Pacific Regional Trade Facilitation Programme, coordinated by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. In relation to scientific advice, the attention of the participants was drawn to current issues including the recently established Emergency Prevention System for Food Safety (EMPRES Food Safety), the Global Initiative for Food-related Scientific Advice (GIFSA) to attract extra-budgetary resources for FAO/WHO scientific advice and related activities.

47. Members of the region were invited to consider participating in pilot testing web-based tools to support: (i) decision making on the control of *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* in poultry; and (ii) assessment of the performance of microbiological sampling plans.

48. The Coordinating Committee thanked FAO and WHO for the technical assistance and scientific advice provided to the countries of the region. Delegations noted that significant progress had been achieved, in particular, in the development / updating of national legislation and regulations and that further assistance was needed to help countries in their enforcement. In response to a suggestion by FAO to identify priority areas in ongoing and future capacity development activities, specific areas mentioned were: strengthening countries' analytical capabilities to verify compliance of imported food; training of food inspectors; assisting small businesses in meeting export requirements for their products; and, educating consumers.

#### **OUTCOMES OF THE CODEX TRUST FUND MID TERM REVIEW (Agenda Item 3b)<sup>5</sup>**

49. The Coordinating Committee noted the findings and recommendations of the Mid-Term Review of Codex Trust Fund (CTF) and the conclusions reached during the discussion of the report at the 64<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Committee and the 33<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Commission, as presented in Annex 1 of CL 2010/41-NASWP.

50. The Coordinating Committee recalled that further to the decision of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Commission, five questions had been formulated as the basis for consideration of the CTF Mid-Term Review. It recognised that information and feedback from coordinating committees were important steps for guiding FAO and WHO in the strategic and operational implementation of the CTF for the next 6 year cycle.

51. The Coordinating Committee considered the questions as follows.

##### **Question 1: Should there be a shift in emphasis from Objective 1 to Objectives 2 and 3?**

52. The Coordinating Committee expressed general support for shifting the emphasis of the CTF from Objective 1 (Widen participation in Codex) to Objectives 2 (Strengthening overall participation in Codex) and 3 (Enhance scientific / technical participation in Codex). The majority of delegations were of the view that more focus should be placed on Objective 2 because of the different level of development among the countries of the region. It was also recognised that, in view of the economic situation of the Pacific Island Countries, there was still a need to support Objective 1.

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<sup>4</sup> CX/NASWP 10/11/3 Part 1 and Part 2

<sup>5</sup> CX/NASWP 10/11/4 (Comments of Australia, Canada and New Zealand); CX/NASWP 10/11/4 Add.1 (Comments of the United States of America)

**Question 2: If yes, what is the "niche" for the Codex Trust Fund?**

53. The Coordinating Committee was of the view that the CTF should focus on building capacity of national structures to ensure countries' effective participation in Codex. Specific areas of activities mentioned included: strengthening Codex awareness; and training in Codex operations.

**Question 3: Should there be a mechanism to continue support for physical participation for those who need it most (including graduates who cannot sustain participation)?**

54. The Coordinating Committee generally agreed that there was a need to ensure that "graduate" countries continue to participate in Codex meetings. Some delegations suggested considering partial CTF support for these "graduate" countries, and to use some flexibility in the application of the criteria for eligibility.

**Question 4: Should there be re-consideration of the criteria for allocation of support?**

55. Some delegations felt that CTF criteria for eligibility were still valid and their application should be flexible. These delegations suggested that: consideration should be given to the quality of participation and to develop indicators, such as preparation of position papers for this purpose; mechanisms could be further developed to facilitate sharing views and opinions among countries and, where possible, for delegations to present common views and positions at Codex meetings.

56. It was pointed out that support to capacity building activities, such as the technical workshop on "Food labelling and date marking", organised in conjunction with the 11<sup>th</sup> Session of CCNASWP, was a useful way to widen and strengthen participation in Codex.

57. With regard to the concern that "graduate" countries would no longer be eligible for CTF support, it was mentioned that those countries, which have inadequate or a lack of resources to support their participation in Codex, should not be ignored and that flexibility was needed when allocating support.

**Question 5: Should the lifespan of the Codex Trust Fund be extended?**

58. The Coordinating Committee generally felt that it was premature to make any recommendation on the future of the CTF and that this question should be considered at a later stage in the light of the implementation of the recommendations of the mid-term review and a more in depth analysis of countries' participation.

**ACTIVITIES OF OTHER INTERNATIONAL / REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS (Agenda Item 3c)<sup>6</sup>**

59. The Coordinating Committee noted information provided by the University of South Pacific (USP) as presented in document CX/NASWP 10/11/5. While appreciating the information provided, the Coordinating Committee suggested that this type of submission could also provide additional information on the context and findings of such work.

60. With regard to this agenda item, some delegations commented that it would be useful to get more information on Codex related work and food safety activities carried out by other international / regional organizations.

**STATUS OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE CCNASWP 2008-2013 (Agenda Item 4a)<sup>7</sup>**

61. The Delegation of Tonga briefly introduced the report on the status of implementation of the Strategic Plan for the CCNASWP 2008-2013, as presented in Annex 1 of document CX/NASWP 10/11/6 and drew the attention of the Coordinating Committee on the progress of implementation of various activities, which were reported in the columns "Status 2009/2010" and "Notes" of the Annex.

62. The Coordinating Committee reviewed the progress and made the following comments.

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<sup>6</sup> CX/NASWP 10/11/5

<sup>7</sup> CX/NASWP 10/11/6; CRD 7 (Report of the FAO/WHO Technical Workshop on "Food labelling and date marking")

**Objective 1: To improve the coordination and communication of the region's activities in Codex**Activity 1.1 "Hold pre-session meetings with all NASWP Members"

63. The Delegation of Australia recalled that Quad countries had continued to invite Pacific Island Countries (PICs) to coordinating meetings organised in conjunction with Codex sessions. The Delegation recommended that PICs, when travelling to Codex meetings, should include extra-time to be able to participate in such meetings as they offered a good opportunity to get information and share views on the agenda of Codex sessions. The Delegation also noted that CTF procedures allowed for extending travel duration to participate in such meetings.

64. The Coordinating Committee stressed the importance for PICs to better coordinate their participation in Codex sessions, e.g. by exchanging information on participants attending Codex session.

Activity 1.2 "Continue to promote the sharing of written comments on Circular letters and other working documents"

65. The Coordinating Committee noted that there was a need for many PICs to make greater efforts to prepare position papers and comments to Circular Letters (CLs) and other documents. It was suggested that PICs focus their attention on the CLs and requests for comments on working documents relevant to the Committee they were planning to attend; and that the Coordinator draw PICs' attention to specific CLs relevant to the region.

Activity 1.3 "Prepare a checklist of responsibilities /actions to support seamless transition between Regional Coordinators"

66. It was agreed to upload the checklist of responsibilities / action onto the CCNASWP website ([www.ccnaswp.org/](http://www.ccnaswp.org/)) and to amend: (i) the name of the activity to read: "Continue updating checklist of responsibilities /actions to support seamless transition between Regional Coordinators, as required"; and (ii) the status to "ongoing" to ensure smooth transition of responsibilities among coordinators.

Activity 1.4 "Encourage information exchange among member countries through the use of electronic information systems"

67. In recognising the difficulties of many Codex Contact Points to circulate working documents among stakeholders, it was suggested to upload them onto the CCNASWP website.

**Objective 2: To promote maximum participation of all members of the region in the activities of the regional committees and other Codex committees more generally**Activity 2.2 "Promote coordinated approach for assistance from the Trust Fund to maximize coverage of subject areas of interest to the region"

68. The Coordinating Committee recognised that it was important to share information among PICs on the meetings they were planning to participate and to maximise the use of CTF resources.

Activity 2.4 "Ensure that the country comments from Members of the region (not present at meetings) are considered by the Committee"

69. The Coordinating Committee recalled the obligation of Chairpersons to draw attention of the Committee to the comments of those countries which could not attend the session and recommended that NASWP members when attending Codex sessions ensure adequate attention to these comments.

**Objective 3: To promote the development and enhancement of the capacities of national Codex Contact Points and their supporting infrastructures of the PIC members to carry out their core functions**Activity 3.2 "Conduct national and regional workshops on Codex for Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committee members"

70. The Coordinating Committee noted a number of national and regional workshops organised with the support of FAO, WHO and Quad countries and that there could be some value in keeping a record of activities carried out by Quad countries, beside the activity report by FAO and WHO.

Activity 3.3 “Promote regional networking among Codex Contact Points to improve communication and share experiences on Codex and related issues”

71. The Coordinating Committee was informed that links to websites of Codex offices of Quad countries had been added to the CCNASWP website to facilitate networking and exchange of information.

Activity 3.4 “On the job training for PICs Codex Contact Points to Quad Codex Contact Points on management of Codex work”

72. It was clarified that this activity could also be supported by the CTF due to the shifting in emphasis of the CTF to Objective 2 (*see* Agenda Item 3b); and that it was possible to either conduct training in Quad countries or to invite Quad Codex Contact Points to conduct training in PICs.

Activity 3.5 “Develop a mentoring programme between the developed and developing countries of the region”

73. The title of the activity was amended to read “Develop a mentoring programme between countries of the region”. The Coordinating Committee recognised the need to develop a mechanism that could facilitate matching offers and requests for mentoring programmes in order to avoid the risk that this activity results in long lists of requests and offers.

74. The Coordinating Committee agreed that Australia and Canada would collaborate to develop a simple mechanism that would facilitate the implementation of activities 3.4 (on-the-job training) and 3.5 (mentoring programme). The Coordinating Committee noted that the development of this mechanism was aimed at enhancing the opportunities for mentoring and not at replacing direct bilateral contacts, i.e. one-to-one mentoring.

**Objective 4: To strengthen the exchange of scientific and technical expertise amongst the developed and developing members of the region**

Activity 4.1 “Identify and prioritize regional issues where there is a need for scientific research/analysis”

75. The Representative of FAO recalled that a contract had been established with the University of South Pacific (USP) to carry out a study of cyanide levels in cassava and its products (*see* document CX/NASWP 10/11/3 Part 1). The Coordinating Committee recommended that the study, when completed, be made available to members of the region through the CCNASWP website; and that there was a need to better document and establish links between relevant USP activities (*see* document CX/NASWP 10/11/5) and the Strategic Plan for the CCNASWP.

Activity 4.2 “Develop a list of specialists and institutions available in the region which can provide the required scientific/technical expertise”

76. The Representative of FAO advised the Coordinating Committee that the Pacific Food Safety and Quality Legislation Expert (PFSQLE) group was finalizing lists of (i) competent authorities in countries from which food was frequently exported to the Pacific; and (ii) laboratories in and around the region that could support countries with food analyses. In addition FAO and WHO, through the PFSQLE group, will assist in establishing a list of scientists and technologists in and around the region who would be available to provide expertise on matters relevant to food safety. The lists would be open to members for their use through the CCNASWP website and would be continuously updated by the Coordinator with inputs by members.

**Objective 5: To promote procedures to review Codex codes, standards, guidelines and recommendations to facilitate their use as the basis for national standards**

77. As agreed during the adoption of the agenda (*see* Agenda Item 1), the Representative of FAO briefly introduced the outcomes of the FAO/WHO Technical Workshop on “Food labelling and date marking”, as presented in CRD 7.

78. The Representative recalled that the objectives of the workshop were: (i) to familiarise delegates with Codex labelling provisions; (ii) to inform delegates on date marking requirements and other current food labelling issues in a range of trading partner countries; and (iii) to identify ways to better use Codex guidance on food labelling to facilitate harmonization of labelling requirements across the Pacific.

79. The Workshop concluded that despite the significant advancements recently made on food legislation in the Pacific, labelling of food remained an area in which governments had applied a diversity of approaches, particularly in relation to date marking and the sale of food after its expiry date and date of minimum durability. The Workshop made recommendations addressing three main areas:

- Enhancing understanding of food labelling among manufacturers, traders, retailers, consumers and regulators;
- Enhancing harmonisation of food labelling requirements across the Pacific; and
- Enhancing harmonisation of food standards more broadly across the Pacific.

80. The Delegation of New Zealand welcomed the FAO and WHO initiative in convening the Technical Workshop, which had highlighted the varied approaches to date marking within the Pacific region and noted the recommendation for a pilot study on harmonised approaches to date marking, based on Codex, and focusing on one or two products of major consumer interest in the region.

81. The Coordinating Committee agreed to the proposal of the Delegation of New Zealand to facilitate consideration of a harmonised approach to date marking in the region, through the development of a discussion paper, which would identify options for promoting such approaches for consideration at the next session of CCNASWP.

### **Objective 6: To promote the development of standards for food products produced in the Pacific Island Countries**

#### Activity 6.1 “Establish national mechanisms for standards development process in the PICs”

82. The Coordinating Committee agreed to update the status of implementation to recognise that national mechanisms for food standards development exist in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

#### **Revision of the Strategic Plan of the CCNASWP**

83. With regard to the decision to consider the process to start the revision of its Strategic Plan (*see* Agenda Item 1), the Coordinating Committee agreed to follow an approach similar to the one used by the Commission to prepare the new Codex Strategic Plan 2013-2018 (*see* Agenda Item 2) and to seek inputs and comments through a Circular Letter from Members of the region.

84. The Coordinating Committee further agreed that, based on the information and comments submitted, the next Coordinator (Papua New Guinea) would prepare a draft revised Strategic Plan for the CCNASWP for consideration at its 12<sup>th</sup> Session, tentatively scheduled in 2012. The Coordinating Committee noted that this schedule would allow the seamless transition from the current Strategic Plan to the new one for 2014-2018.

### **COMMENTS AND INFORMATION ON NATIONAL FOOD CONTROL SYSTEMS, CONSUMER PARTICIPATION IN FOOD STANDARDS SETTING AND THE USE OF CODEX STANDARDS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL (Agenda Item 4b)<sup>8</sup>**

85. The Coordinating Committee recalled that at its 10<sup>th</sup> Session it had been agreed that a Circular Letter would be issued in the form of a questionnaire to better link the information on national food control systems, consumer participation in food standards setting and the use of Codex standards at national level to the objectives and activities of the Strategic Plan for the CCNASWP 2008-2013.

86. The Coordinating Committee was informed of recent developments and current status of: national food control systems; Codex activities; training and capacity building activities; priority areas for implementation of Regional Strategic Plan; strategic priorities; use of Codex standards; and other issues, on the basis of the written information submitted in response to CL 2009/28-NASWP and written submissions prepared for the session.

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<sup>8</sup> CX/NASWP 10/11/7 (Comments of Australia, New Zealand and Solomon Islands); CX/NASWP 10/11/7 Add. 1 (Comments of Canada, Cook Island and the United States of America); CRD 3 (Comments of Papua New Guinea); CRD 6 (Comments of Samoa); CRD 8 (Comments of Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Tonga and Vanuatu)

87. Reports presented showed that significant advancements had been made in a number of PICs in enacting new / revised food legislation and regulations, while other countries were still in the development process; that several PICs had developed guidelines for strengthening import food control; that changes in the structure of food control systems were ongoing in some countries; that countries had taken steps to improve consultation with stakeholders on standards setting; and that more efforts were still necessary to better involve consumers groups.

88. The Coordinating Committee also noted that: a range of activities had been implemented to strengthen Codex activities with different areas of focus among countries; PICs had benefited from capacity building activities provided by Quad countries, FAO, WHO and other bilateral and multilateral organizations; and that training on Codex was still needed for governments officials due to the turn over in the public services, and for industry and other stakeholders.

89. It was noted that there was general support for the implementation of all the activities of the Strategic Plan for the CCNASWP and that a few countries had identified, as specific priorities, activities related to strengthening capacity of national Codex Contact Points, development of technical capabilities and development of national and international standards. Quad countries confirmed their commitment to assist PICs in enhancing their food control systems as well as in strengthening Codex Contact Points and national Codex Committees.

#### **DISCUSSION PAPER ON KAVA (Agenda Item 5)<sup>9</sup>**

90. The Coordinating Committee recalled that at its 10<sup>th</sup> Session it had generally agreed on the need for further scientific research to clarify a number of safety issues, prior to considering the standardization of kava for food; and to recommend FAO and WHO to assist countries to carry out research and studies; and that the Coordinator (Tonga), in consultation with the Pacific Island Countries, would prepare a paper, which should compile information on: (i) scope of kava products and evidence of the use of kava as food; (ii) processing methods; (iii) regulatory measures for safety control of these products by countries; and (iv) markets of export; and other relevant issues, for consideration at the present session.

91. The Delegation of Tonga briefly introduced the discussion paper, which also included a project document, as presented in CX/NASWP 10/11/8. The paper highlighted that kava was an important agricultural commodity, which could offer significant potential trade opportunities to Pacific Island Countries and recommended to request the Commission to initiate work on the development of a Codex standard for kava.

92. The Representative of WHO, referring to CRD 2 “WHO Response to Agenda Item 5”, advised the Coordinating Committee that the WHO position presented at the last session, as CX/NASWP 08/10/7, remained relevant. Given the diversity of kava and kava products across the Pacific and the uncertainty on safety, WHO remained not in a position to present its definitive view as to whether kava should be considered as a food within the meaning of the Codex definition. Furthermore, WHO, recognized the need for further research in the areas, which had been identified at the last session of CCNASWP, and noted that preliminary work to compile information on the scope of kava products, processing methods, current regulatory measures and export market barriers still needed to be done by members prior to FAO or WHO being able to assist, if Member States were to request assistance related to scientific advice.

93. Delegations, which intervened, pointed out that there were still difficulties in identifying the nature of the products to be standardized and that the different frameworks regulating kava in various countries within and outside the region, i.e. either as food, food supplement, medicinal products, etc., added further complexity to the proposal. It was further noted that coordinating committees could only develop regional standards or recommend to the Commission the development of worldwide standards for products of interest to the region; and that procedures had been established for conversion of a regional standard into a worldwide standard.

94. Other delegations pointed out that an effort had been made by Pacific Island Countries to prepare the discussion paper, as agreed by the 10<sup>th</sup> CCNASWP, and that assistance from FAO and WHO was needed on how to request and use scientific advice around the safety of kava. It was noted that the proposal for this work was consistent with Goal 6 “Promote the development of standards for food products in the Pacific

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<sup>9</sup> CX/NASWP 10/11/8; CRD 2 (Comments of WHO); CRD 3 (Comments of Papua New Guinea)

Island countries” and Activity 6.3 “Submit all proposals for new standards for products of interest to the PICs to CCNASWP for consideration prior to submission to the Commission or other Committees and Task Force”; that it was still necessary to discuss whether to develop a regional or a worldwide standard; and that assistance was necessary to prepare a proposal in line with Codex procedures.

95. In view of the need for more scientific evidence on the safety of kava products and more clarity on the nature of the products to be standardized and the need to decide whether the proposal was for a regional or a worldwide standard, the Coordinating Committee agreed to establish an electronic Working Group, led by Tonga, open to all members of the Region and Observers and working in English only, to revise the discussion paper, including the project document, on the basis of the above discussion for consideration at its next session.

#### **NOMINATION OF THE COORDINATOR (Agenda Item 6)<sup>10</sup>**

96. On the proposal of the Delegation of Samoa, the Coordinating Committee unanimously agreed to recommend to the 34<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission that Papua New Guinea be appointed as Coordinator for North America and the South West Pacific. The Delegation of Papua New Guinea thanked all the Countries for their support and accepted the nomination, subject to confirmation by the Government of Papua New Guinea.

97. The Delegation of Australia, while congratulating Papua New Guinea, offered to provide guidance and assistance that might be necessary to undertake this task.

98. The Coordinating Committee expressed its thanks to Tonga for the excellent work carried out as Coordinator for the NASWP region.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS AND FUTURE WORK (Agenda Item 7)**

##### **Discussion Paper on the development of a Standard for Nonu (Noni) Products<sup>11</sup>**

99. The Delegation of Tonga briefly introduced the discussion paper, as presented in CRD 5, on a proposal for new work on the development of a standard for nonu (noni) products, prepared by Tonga with the support of other members of the region.

100. The paper highlighted the increasing different sources of nonu and the diverging number of nonu products being traded internationally and recommended to consider the proposal for new work on the development of a standard for nonu products to ensure consumers’ safety and to forward the request to the Commission.

101. The Coordinating Committee acknowledged the work done to prepare the discussion paper and noted that more time was necessary to consider the proposal in detail, as it had been made available only at the session. The Coordinating Committee also noted that a quick review of the proposal indicated the need to better clarify the nature and intended use of the products; the relation between the proposal and other Codex standards, in particular the *General Standard for Fruit Juices and Nectars* (CODEX STAN 247-2005); and if additional studies were needed on the safety of nonu products.

102. In recalling the discussion about the development of worldwide and regional standard and the rigorous process of the critical review by the Executive Committee (*see* Agenda Item 5), it was recommended to revise the discussion paper to clarify if the proposal was for the development of a regional or an international standard and to provide ample evidence with respect to the justification of new work.

103. In view of the above discussion, the Coordinating Committee agreed to establish an electronic Working Group, led by Tonga, open to all members of the Region and Observers and working in English only, to revise the discussion paper, including the project document, for consideration at its next session.

#### **DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE (Agenda Item 8)**

104. The Coordinating Committee was informed that its 12<sup>th</sup> Session would be held in approximately two years time and that more detailed arrangements would be communicated to Members following the appointment of the Coordinator by the 34<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission.

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<sup>10</sup> CX/NASWP 10/11/9

<sup>11</sup> CRD 5 (Discussion paper on the development of a standard for Nonu (Noni))

**SUMMARY STATUS OF WORK**

<b>SUBJECT MATTER</b>	<b>STEP</b>	<b>ACTION BY:</b>	<b>DOCUMENT REFERENCE (REP11/NASWP)</b>
Draft Strategic Plan for the CCNASWP 2014-2018	-	Coordinator 12 <sup>th</sup> CCNASWP	para. 84
Discussion paper on kava	-	e-WG led by Tonga 12 <sup>th</sup> CCNASWP	para. 95
Discussion paper on the development of a standard for Nonu (Noni) products	-	e-WG led by Tonga 12 <sup>th</sup> CCNASWP	para. 103
Discussion paper on a harmonised approach to date marking	-	New Zealand 12 <sup>th</sup> CCNASWP	para. 81



Appendix I

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