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# codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE  
ORGANIZATION  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD  
HEALTH  
ORGANIZATION



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## Agenda Item 3

### JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

#### CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

*Twenty-fourth Session, 2-7 July 2001*  
*International Conference Centre, Geneva, Switzerland*

#### **REPORT OF THE FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION** *WHO Headquarters, Geneva, 28-29 June 2001*

### INTRODUCTION

1. The Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission held its Forty-eighth Session at WHO Headquarters, Geneva, from 28-29 June 2001. The Session was chaired by Mr. T. Billy (USA), Chairperson of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. A full list of participants, including members of the Secretariat, is given in Appendix I.

2. In her opening remarks, Ann Kern, Executive Director, Sustainable Development and Healthy Environments, WHO, stated that food safety had become recognized as an issue of major public health concern and that this concern had been given global dimensions by the increased globalization of the world food trade. As a result, food safety had been identified as one of the top priority areas of the WHO. She stated that food safety considerations were highly important where the health status of countries was at risk and noted the linkages between improved economic status and improved health status. In this regard, the ability of countries to improve their economic situation through food trade also served to improve health status. The critical issue was the development of effective regulatory processes that allowed both developments to occur and sustain each other. She noted that although it was important to focus on the impact of food safety on individuals, actions and regulatory approaches to food safety programmes needed to be evidence-based, and that this would lead to national, regional and global improvements for food safety, consumer protection and trade. Mrs Kern expressed WHO's support for the objectives to be achieved by the Chairperson's Action Plan and its general direction.

3. The Chairperson, in his response to the Executive Director, expressed appreciation for the in-principle support of WHO for the work of Codex and stated that the improving working relationships between FAO and WHO that were apparent in her statement, would be welcomed by all countries.

**ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA<sup>1</sup>**

4. The Executive Committee adopted the Provisional Agenda as the Agenda for the Session.

**REPORT ON THE FINANCIAL SITUATION OF THE JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME FOR 2000/01 AND 2002/03<sup>2</sup>**

5. The Secretariat presented its report on the financial situation for the previous biennium (1998/99), and the proposed budget for 2002/03 as is required by Rule XI.1 of the Commission's Rules of Procedure. A report on the budget and estimated expenditure of the current biennium was also provided. The Executive Committee noted that the proposed budget for 2002/03 envisaged a restructuring of the resources and that certain elements previously budgeted within the Codex programme would in future be included in the Regular Programme entities of FAO. It also noted the proposals that resources for the operations of the Secretariat in the coming biennium would be maintained at the same overall level as at present.

6. Several members of the Executive Committee drew attention to the proposed draft Medium-Term Plan and the Chairperson's Action Plan which, in their opinion, implied the need for additional resources if the activities identified were to be carried out. Some members noted that for the moment the cost implications of the proposals in the Medium Term Plan and the Chairperson's Action Plan (for example, annual meetings of the Commission) had not been quantified and proposed that this be done within a framework that would allow for effective monitoring and evaluation. It was noted, that the evaluation and monitoring process had certain resource implications.

7. The Executive Committee drew attention to the vulnerability of the current system due to the work-load and commitments of the permanent professional staff of the Secretariat. It commended the work and dedication of the Secretariat staff and also expressed its appreciation to those governments that had decided to support the Codex Secretariat directly through the FAO Associate Expert Programme and other means including support through the WHO Food Safety Programme. In this regard however, some members also drew attention to the fact that the Executive Committee at its previous session had called upon FAO and WHO to give serious consideration to increasing the number of permanent professional staff in the Secretariat (ALINORM 01/3, para. 16).

8. The Representatives of FAO and WHO stated that considerable increased resources had been planned in the area of food safety in the 2002/03 biennium, especially in the expert scientific support to the Codex programme. However, the Representative of WHO pointed out that the Members of WHO had not approved requests for budgetary increases in that Organization for many years. Therefore the increased resources in the food safety area represented a reallocation of funds from areas of lesser priority. She also pointed out that the Governing Bodies of WHO had expressly requested the Director-General of WHO to reduce staff levels, especially at Headquarters. As an alternative to increasing staff resources in the Secretariat, she proposed that consideration be given to exploring new methods of work that would make the best available use of currently available resources and minimize travel, staff and meeting costs.

9. The Executive Committee, recognizing that the opportunity existed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Codex, requested the Secretariat to prepare a detailed budget for its existing programmes and also to identify changes in resources that were implied in the Strategic Framework, the draft Medium-Term Plan and the Chairperson's Action Plan. This detailed budget, following review by the Executive Committee, should be transmitted to FAO and WHO for consideration in their budgetary processes for the future biennium. This budget, as may be modified in light of the budgeting process of the parent Organizations, should then be submitted to the Commission for its review.

10. The Executive Committee also invited the Secretariat to explore new methods to carry out the work of Codex that would make the best available use of currently available staff resources and that would deliver the Commission's approved programme.

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<sup>1</sup> CX/EXEC 01/48/1.

<sup>2</sup> ALINORM 01/5.

11. It noted that the final responsibility in deciding the level of support to the Programme was with the Member Governments of FAO and WHO meeting in the respective Governing Bodies of the Organizations. In this regard, it was noted that the FAO Programme of Work and Budget for 2002/03 had not been finalized and that FAO Council, meeting from 18 to 23 June had recommended a strengthening of support to the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme independently of the increased support to FAO's scientific safety assessment activities that had already been identified.

### **REPORT BY THE SECRETARIAT ON RELATIONS BETWEEN THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL INTER-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS<sup>3</sup>**

12. The Executive Committee noted that at its last session it had requested the Secretariat to report on the activities of other international intergovernmental organizations working in areas of interest to the Commission in addition to its report on the relationship with international non-governmental organizations (ALINORM 01/3, paras. 33, 34 and 57).

#### ***Relations with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the OECD Scheme for the Application of Standards for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables***

13. The Executive Committee noted the outcome of a meeting held to consider the suggestion that had been proposed by the OECD Scheme that a "single standards-setting body" should be established in relation to international commercial grade standards for fresh fruits and vegetables. It expressed its appreciation at the efforts that had been made to resolve the issues of duplication of work and ensuring coherence of the development of standards in this field and encouraged continued efforts particularly at the preparatory stage of elaborating the proposed draft standards. Nevertheless, some members questioned the proposal to amend the footnote (No. 17) of the Terms of Reference of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables, stating that the footnote contained clear guidance for avoiding duplication of work. Moreover, these members also stated that the proposals to adopt standards as "recommendations" for a trial period of two years would have serious implications for the Codex process and would undermine the value of adopted Codex standards. They drew attention to Part 3 of the Uniform Procedure for the Elaboration of Codex Standards and Related Texts dealing with the subsequent procedures concerning publication and acceptance of standards.

14. The Executive Committee emphasized the status of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables as the international body responsible for grade standards for these products, but also emphasized the need to draw upon and develop the experience and expertise of specialized bodies working in this field and ensure that the countries most concerned in individual standards were fully involved in their preparation.

#### ***On-going activities of the OECD in Response to the G-8 Consideration of Biotechnology and other Aspects of Food Safety***

15. The Executive Committee noted the developments in this area. It noted that the G-8 Okinawa Summit of July 2000 has given support to the work of the Commission and had also asked FAO and WHO to convene regular meetings of food safety regulators to advance the process of science-based public consultations. It further noted the response of FAO and WHO to convene Global Fora of Food Safety Regulators to promote the exchange of information on approaches and experiences in dealing with current food safety issues of potential importance to public health and international food trade, and that such a Forum would be convened in October 2001.

16. The Executive Committee was also informed of an international conference being organized by the Government of the United Kingdom and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in cooperation with FAO, WHO, UNEP, UNEP-CBD and the Government of Thailand on the topic *New Biotechnology Food and Crops: Science, Safety and Society* that will be held from 10 to 12 July 2001 in

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<sup>3</sup> ALINORM 01/8 Parts I and II; LIM-2 (Comments of EC).

Bangkok, Thailand, and an informal meeting of OECD food safety regulators that would take place on 12 July, also in Bangkok. It requested to be kept informed of the outcomes of these meetings.

***UNEP: Convention on Biological Diversity - Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety***

17. The Executive Committee encouraged further close linkages with the Secretariat of the CBD to ensure coherence between Codex and texts arising from the Cartagena Protocol dealing with such matters as traceability, labelling and identification of Living Modified Organisms used as food.

***Office International des Epizoöties (OIE)***

18. The Chairperson reported on discussions that had been undertaken with the Director-General of OIE on the complementarity of certain areas of the programmes of work of OIE and the Commission. The Executive Committee generally welcomed efforts to ensure complementarity of work with the OIE especially on questions of zoonoses and antimicrobial resistance and other areas including:

- consideration of equivalence;
- risk analysis;
- transparency;
- veterinary drugs;
- animal feeds;
- biotechnology.

19. The Executive Committee noted that relations between the Commission and other international intergovernmental organizations were conducted by the Directors-General of the parent Organizations, but noted that the standing agreements between the individual parent Organizations and OIE had been concluded before the establishment of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and therefore may not adequately take into account the Commission's acknowledged role as an international standards-setting body or the future possible need for cooperation and joint activities.

**CONSIDERATION OF THE DRAFT STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK, PROPOSED DRAFT MEDIUM-TERM PLAN AND CHAIRPERSON'S ACTION PLAN<sup>4</sup>**

20. The Chairperson reported on the sequence of meetings and consultations that had been held subsequent to the last session of the Executive Committee in order to elaborate a draft Strategic Framework and Medium-Term Plan in response to the Executive Committee's guidance in this matter (ALINORM 01/3, paras. 36-41). A working group, consisting of the Chairperson, the Vice-Chairpersons and the Secretariat had developed a structured model consisting of:

- i. a strategic vision statement;
- ii. a strategic framework described by objectives; and
- iii. a detailed medium-term plan described by specific activities.

21. The Executive Committee agreed to review the strategic vision statement and the strategic framework and noted that most of the comments that had been received had been positive and supportive of the approach taken. Under the circumstances, the Executive Committee was of the opinion that these documents were suitable, with some revision in the light of comments received, for submission to the Commission for adoption. The detailed Medium-Term Plan could then be reviewed and developed with the further input of the Regional Coordinating Committees, other Codex Committees and member governments and international organizations in time for adoption by the Commission session of 2003 as had been planned.

22. In this light, the Executive Committee revised the draft Strategic Vision Statement to take into account the concerns expressed that the ability to attain the "highest levels of consumer protection" could be construed

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<sup>4</sup> ALINORM 01/6; ALINORM 01/6 - Add.1 (Chairperson's Action Plan); ALINORM 01/6 - Add.3 (Comments of Malaysia; New Zealand; European Community; International Association of Consumer Food Organizations); CAC/LIM-1 (Comments of Consumers International); CAC/LIM-9 (Comments of India).

as a reason for establishing technical barriers to trade. Moreover, the Executive Committee was of the opinion that food quality should be explicitly mentioned as a goal of the Commission's strategic vision.

23. A number of changes were made to the text of the Strategic Framework. These are indicated in the revised version as shown in Appendix II to the present report. The Executive Committee noted in particular the concerns expressed in written comments about the proposal to delegate to Codex Committees the authority to advance proposed draft texts at Step 5 of the Codex Procedure and deleted this specific proposal. However, it agreed that consideration should be given to a review of the elaboration procedures to see in which manner they could be made more responsive and efficient and take into account modern information technologies for the exchange of views.

24. The Executive Committee also stressed the evidence-based nature of the Codex scientific decision-making process and made a number of changes to clarify this and to stress the need for transparency of the process and the use and understanding of precaution in the process.

25. More emphasis was also given to the needs of developing countries in terms of capacity-building and human resource development. In addition, the Executive Committee decided to include a specific commitment to consider opportunities for strengthening partnerships with all stakeholders, in particular consumers and their representative organizations, at the global and national levels.

### ***Status of the Revised Draft Strategic Framework***

26. The Executive Committee agreed to submit the revised Draft Strategic Framework as contained in Appendix II of this report to the Commission for adoption.

### ***Draft Medium-Term Plan***

27. The Executive Committee did not review in detail the draft Medium-Term plan for the reasons relating to its future development that are given in para. 21 above. It was suggested that a specific activity of "Developing guidelines for risk communication" should be included in the Plan.

### ***Chairperson's Action Plan***

28. The Chairperson introduced his revised Action Plan which had been developed from previous versions as a result of consultations with delegates and other interested parties. The Executive Committee generally welcomed the direction and thrust of the Action Plan and expressed its appreciation to the Chairperson for the work that had been undertaken.

29. The Executive Committee recommended that careful consideration should be given to the recommendation to establish a Chairman's Coordination and Advisory Group; several members felt that the role of such a group would need to be prescribed. In addition, many members expressed concern that such a group would be unbalanced geographically based on the present arrangements for the hosting of Codex Committees, although the Chairpersons of the Regional Coordinating Committees would also be part of the group. The Executive Committee advised that the terms of reference of such a group, if established, would have to be clearly defined so that its work would be separated from that of the Executive Committee and that it would not be a decision-making body.

30. In regard to the proposals to establish a system of co-chairing of Codex Committees and Task Forces and the convening of Committees and Task Forces in developing countries, it was suggested that a list of countries wishing to identify themselves as potential co-chairs or hosts should be established.

31. The Executive Committee noted that no decision had been taken in relation to proposals to either abolish or restructure the Executive Committee or to convene meetings of the Commission on an annual basis. Although there was support from many members for the holding of annual meetings of the Commission, one member warned that this would have significant financial implications for developing countries that would need to attend more frequent Commission meetings.

32. The Executive Committee noted the recommendations in the Action Plan concerning the transparency of the FAO/WHO expert committees and consultations. In regard to the establishment of a trust fund to enhance developing country participation in Codex meetings, several delegations stressed that one of the main issues that required priority attention was capacity building at the national level in order to ensure that such participation would be effective and durable.

33. The proposals to convert existing Codex commodity committees to task forces was welcomed by most members and agreement was reached in principle, but some members expressed reservations or were of the opinion that this should be seen as a gradual process that would respond to strategic work planning.

### ***Status of the Chairperson's Action Plan***

34. The Chairperson thanked the Executive Committee for its input and stated that he would take the advice of the Executive Committee into account in his presentation of the Action Plan to the Commission.

### **MATTERS ARISING FROM CODEX COMMITTEES AND TASK FORCES<sup>5</sup>**

35. The Executive Committee decided that it would consider only those matters where its advice might be useful in helping the Commission arrive at a conclusion on the various issues raised. In particular, the Executive Committee decided not to consider matters that were the direct responsibility of the Commission or that were likely to be the subject of a more general and fuller debate in the Commission.

### ***Antibiotics used on agricultural commodities and antimicrobial resistant bacteria in food***

36. The Executive Committee noted that the first of these matters had been raised by the Committee on Pesticide Residues (ALINORM 01/24A para. 122) and the second by the Committee on Food Hygiene (ALINORM 01/13A, paras 132-142). In relation to the first matter, the Executive Committee was of the opinion that the use of antimicrobials on agricultural commodities should be subject to evaluation within a risk analysis framework; the question was whether the normal process used for the evaluation of pesticides was the appropriate one. In the second case, the Executive Committee agreed that consideration should be given to the consideration of antimicrobial resistant micro-organisms in food within a risk analysis framework on a case-by-case basis as micro-organism/food combinations were being assessed.

37. The Executive Committee agreed however that the issues raised by these Committees required a more general and multidisciplinary and multi-agency response. It noted the on-going work of the Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods and the Task Force on Animal Feeding. Moreover, it was aware of the recommendations contained in the *WHO Global Principles for the Containment of Antimicrobial Resistance in Animals Intended for Food*<sup>6</sup> and the work of the OIE. It noted that in the past, attempts to coordinate work between Codex Committees with diverse mandates had not always been successful and that the establishment of new task forces to deal with these specific issues had helped to resolve the issues at hand. Without prejudice to the possibility of establishing a new Task Force, it recommended that FAO and WHO should give consideration to convening as soon as possible a multidisciplinary expert consultation in cooperation with OIE and if required the IPPC, to advise the Commission on possible directions to be taken including the establishment of a new task force if necessary. The consultation should consider all uses of antimicrobials in agriculture and veterinary use (including aquaculture) and take into account the role played by antimicrobials as essential human and veterinary medicines. It noted that the convening of an additional expert consultation in the forthcoming biennium would be subject to the availability of funds.

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<sup>5</sup> ALINORM 01/21, Part IV, Add.1; Add.2 and Add.3.

<sup>6</sup> WHO document WHO/CDS/CSR/APH/2000.4

***Proposed Draft Revised Standard for Processed Cereal-Based Foods for Infants and Young Children***

38. The Executive Committee noted that the 23rd Session of the CAC had returned the Proposed Draft Revised Standard for Processed Cereal-Based Foods for Infants and Young Children to Step 3 for further comments and consideration by the Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses. This Committee had recognized that it was not possible to reach consensus on the fundamental issue of the Scope (namely the age or age range of introduction of these foods to the diet) at this stage and that it would not be possible to make further progress on the revision.<sup>7</sup> However, the Executive Committee also noted that the Fifty-fourth World Health Assembly (Geneva, 14 to 22 May 2001) adopted a comprehensive resolution on infant and young child feeding<sup>8</sup>.

39. The Executive Committee recommended that the World Health Assembly Resolution should be taken into account by the Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses and that the Committee should proceed to a conclusion of the revised standard as quickly as possible in order to satisfy the need for an adequate standard ensuring the quality and safety of these products in international trade.

***Other matters arising from Codex Committees and Task Forces***

40. The Executive Committee was unable to complete its review of matters arising from Codex Committees and Task Forces due to lack of time.

***Other Business***

41. There was no other business.

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<sup>7</sup> ALINORM 01/26, paras. 88-102

<sup>8</sup> Resolution WHA 54/2, reproduced in document ALINORM 01/21, Part IV-Add.4.

## APPENDIX 1

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LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS  
LISTA DE PARTICIPANTES**

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## APPENDIX II

## REVISED DRAFT STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

**STRATEGIC VISION STATEMENT**

*The Codex Alimentarius Commission envisages a world afforded the highest attainable levels of consumer protection, including food safety and quality. To this end, the Commission will develop internationally agreed standards and related texts for use in domestic regulation and international trade in food that are based on scientific principles and fulfil the objectives of consumer health protection and fair practices in food trade.*

**INTRODUCTION**

1. This document sets out the strategic priorities for the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) and provides the basis for the elaboration of the Medium Term Plan for the period 2003-2007. The strategic vision and goals for Codex underpin the high priority attached to food safety by its parent organizations, the FAO and the WHO. The FAO Strategic framework for 2000-2015 accords high priority to promoting policy and regulatory frameworks for food at the international and national levels. Similarly the 53<sup>rd</sup> Session of the World Health Assembly recognized the need to highlight health considerations in international food trade and acknowledged the importance of the CAC for assuring the highest levels of consumer health protection. The resolution also urged WHO to work towards integrating food safety as one of its essential public health functions with the goal of developing sustainable, integrated food safety systems for the reduction of health risk along the entire food chain. The fundamental mandate of the CAC is to develop international standards and norms for consumer health protection and fair practices in the food trade.
2. The CAC has always operated in an environment of change and technological advancement. The growth in world food trade, advances in modern communication and increasing mobility of populations are all contributing to elevating the profile and significance of food safety and regulation. There is growing international concern related to a perceived emergence/increase in food-borne diseases. Consumers around the world are becoming more aware than ever about food safety issues and are seeking ever-greater assurances about the safety and quality of foods they eat. Innovation and the development of new processes (including modern biotechnology) are leading to the development of new products with specific medical, nutritional and functional attributes. In its endeavour to promote food safety and quality, the CAC needs to consider opportunities for strengthening partnerships with all stakeholders, in particular consumers and their representative organizations, at the global and national levels. A further development is the growing interest in organic foods, which are likely to capture a significant share of the international market in the future. It is also likely that developing countries will account for an increasing proportion of global food and agricultural trade. These developments, while exciting, also present new challenges (both safety and non safety) for the CAC and national governments.
3. The new recognition and status that Codex standards, guidelines and other recommendations acquired under the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (the SPS Agreement) also brought new challenges and responsibilities including the need to ensure that its standards and related texts are based on scientific principles and meet the needs and mandate of the organization. The WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade is also of great relevance given the significance of the provisions pertaining to product description, labelling, packaging and quality descriptors for consumer information and fair practices in trade. Although quality provisions are fundamentally driven by the market, the CAC has an important role in ensuring that provisions relating to quality are sound and based on the criteria of essentiality and do not constitute disguised barriers to trade.
4. These developments have generated renewed interest in the work of the CAC and have resulted in a substantial growth in membership of the organization with developing countries now accounting for a majority of total membership. Given the importance that the WTO attaches to international harmonization,

there is now an even greater imperative for CAC and its members to ensure that the Organization maintains its pre-eminent status as the internationally recognized body for food standards and its norms are applied to the widest extent possible by all members as a basis for domestic regulation and international trade.

## DECISION-MAKING BASED ON SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE

5. The scientific basis of decision-making by the CAC is spelt out in the Statements of Principle on the Role of Science in the Codex Decision-Making and the Extent to which Other Factors are Taken into Account<sup>1</sup>. The CAC does not undertake scientific evaluations *per se* but relies on the opinions of scientific expert Committees or Consultations convened by FAO and WHO on specific issues. These expert bodies such as the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committees on Food Additives and the Joint FAO/WHO Meetings on Pesticide Residues are independent of the CAC and its subsidiary bodies and do not fall within the scope of the present Strategic Framework. The mandates, functions, composition and agendas of these bodies are established by FAO and WHO. Although the independence of the expert bodies is critical to the objectivity of their opinions, meetings of these bodies normally take into account the advice of the CAC as indicated in Article 1 of the Commission's Statutes. There is considerable synergy between the scientific panels of FAO and WHO and the intergovernmental bodies of the CAC in order to take decisions based on scientific evidence.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

6. The fundamental objective of the Codex Alimentarius Commission is to establish sound internationally agreed guidelines for national food control systems based on the criteria of consumer health protection and fair practices in trade and taking into account the needs and special concerns of all countries. All of the objectives listed below are considered to be equally important to the overall achievement of the strategic vision.

### ***Objective 1: Promoting Sound Regulatory Framework***

7. In many countries, effective food control is undermined by the existence of fragmented legislation, multiple jurisdictions and weaknesses in surveillance, monitoring and enforcement. Sound national food control and regulatory systems are essential to assuring the health and safety of domestic population as well as assuring the safety and quality of foods entering international trade. While the establishment of regulatory framework is fundamentally a national responsibility, the CAC and its parent bodies, the FAO and WHO, have a strong interest in promoting national regulatory systems that are based on international principles and guidelines and address all components of the food chain. The development of sound food control and regulatory infrastructure including human resources is particularly important for developing countries as they seek to achieve higher levels of food safety and nutrition and will require high level political and policy commitment as highlighted in the report of the 1999 Melbourne Conference on International Food Trade Beyond 2000.<sup>2</sup> An effective food control system is critical in enabling all countries to assure the safety of their foods entering international trade and to ensure that imported foods conform to national requirements. Successful negotiation of bilateral mutual recognition and/or equivalence also depends on the ability of countries to assure each other of the integrity of national regulatory systems.
8. The priorities for the CAC will be to:
  - promote the development of national food control systems based on international principles and criteria for the reduction of health risk along the entire food chain; and
  - provide essential guidance for member countries through the continued development of international standards and guidelines relating to food safety and hygiene, nutrition, labelling

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<sup>1</sup> Codex Alimentarius Commission, Procedural Manual, Eleventh Edition, p.180.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the Conference on International Food Trade beyond 2000: Science based Decisions, Harmonization, Equivalence and Mutual Recognition, Melbourne, Australia, 11-15 October, 1999, Appendix 1, p.29.

and import/export inspection and certification systems and for the practical application of the concepts of equivalence and mutual recognition.

### ***Objective 2: Promoting Widest Application of Scientific Principles and Risk Analysis***

9. The CAC will promote and further strengthen its capacity to include health considerations in its standards and guidelines through the widest possible application of risk analysis based on Codex principles. Risk analysis as it applies to food, is an emerging discipline and will require ongoing and sustained inputs from the Commission, its parent organizations and national governments to promote conceptual development and application at the international and national levels. Risk Communication will be vital to this process. The early implementation of the CAC Action Plan on Risk Analysis by the Commission and member governments is essential to:
  - promoting the consistent application of risk analysis principles throughout all of the work of Codex system;
  - achieve strengthened international capacity for risk assessment including those related to microbiological hazards and dealing with emerging pathogens;
  - improving understanding of risk analysis concepts, principles and application at the national level through targeted technical assistance and cooperation,
  - promoting greater transparency of the whole risk analysis process; and
  - improving understanding of how precaution and scientific uncertainty are factored and taken into account in the risk analysis process.
10. The CAC will also need to accord high priority to ongoing development of concepts and principles and the establishment of sound working principles for the application of risk analysis both at international and national levels. It should also promote better understanding of risk analysis through technical assistance programmes. A strengthened expert scientific evaluation structure for addressing chemical, microbiological hazards and emerging pathogens will also be critical to support and underpin the Codex standards development processes.
11. Consistent with the Statements of Principle, adopted by CAC in 1995, the Commission will need to have due regard, where appropriate, to other legitimate factors relevant to health protection of consumers when developing standards and guidelines. International consensus on the scope and application of other legitimate factors in Codex decision making will be essential for their sound and consistent application right across the Codex system.

### ***Objective 3: Promoting Seamless Linkages/Interface between Codex and other Multilateral Regulatory Instruments and Conventions***

12. The CAC does not and cannot operate in isolation. It needs to work closely with other relevant international standards setting and regulatory bodies to promote close cooperation and dialogue on matters of common interest. As the WTO-recognized international body for establishing food safety standards the Commission has a clear obligation to establish international food standards for the protection of consumers' health and ensuring fair practices in food trade, and these standards may be used by Member countries in both domestic regulation and international trade. At the same time the Commission needs to interact closely with related international bodies and take due account of international regulatory initiatives and developments and ensure that its outputs are consistent with relevant international conventions and agreements. Such cooperation is also important to minimize duplication of effort. Food safety and issues such as biotechnology are of global interest and are the subjects of debate and discussion in a number of multilateral institutions. The CAC has, by virtue of its lead role in international food standards, a strategic interest in working closely with relevant multilateral institutions and conventions (OIE, WTO, OECD, CBD/Biosafety Protocol, UNECE, IPPC and others) to provide its technical input and expertise and contribute to building international consensus on contemporary food standards and regulatory policy matters.



***Objective 4: Enhance Capacity to Respond Effectively and Expeditiously to New Issues, Concerns and Developments in the Food Sector***

13. With the rapid development of technology and emergence of food safety as a major issue of public policy, there is a need to enhance the capacity of Codex to respond to members' needs in a way that maintains confidence in its ability as the international organization for food standards. There are a number of important considerations in this context. A major issue for Codex is the length of time it takes to establish standards. Codex processes are too protracted and are not responsive to current expectations and public policy imperatives. Governments around the world are having to grapple with significant regulatory challenges and Codex, as the global food standards setting body, needs to be able to respond effectively and expeditiously through the development of internationally harmonized solutions to food safety and international trade matters. A refocusing of the manner in which the Commission and its subsidiary bodies produce outcomes must be a strategic priority. The key functions of a refocused Commission would be to:
- provide strategic oversight, direction and cross coordination of the work programmes of all subsidiary bodies;
  - initiate new work and adopt standards and related texts against defined time frames;
  - provide a forum for discussion of selected contemporary food safety and regulatory policy issues;
  - make appropriate use of information technologies; and
  - promote consensus-based decision-making.
14. At the subsidiary body level, major improvements can be achieved through the establishment of time-limited procedures and through a review of the current step procedure. Timely development of standards will also require improved alignment of the timing and frequency of meetings of commodity and general subject committees.
15. As noted in the introductory sections, the parent bodies of the Commission accord high priority to food safety and international standards development programmes. Host governments also provide significant financial support. Ultimately, however, the ability of Codex to fulfil its mandate and respond to the growing needs and expectations of its members will depend on the availability of additional resources. Codex meetings and related activities already represent a heavy workload and further intensification of work will require additional financial and human resources.

***Objective 5: Promoting Maximum Membership and Participation***

16. Full participation by all Codex Members and other interested parties in the work of the CAC and its subsidiary bodies is now more important than ever. The participation of all members and relevant intergovernmental and non governmental organizations is critical to sound decision-making and ensuring that Codex standards and related texts take account of the full range of interest and viewpoints. Since the early nineties there has been a significant increase in the membership of Codex with developing countries now constituting a significant proportion of total membership. Notwithstanding this growth in membership many countries are still faced with serious financial and human resource constraints to effective participation in Codex activities. Achieving the objective of maximum participation will require specific and ongoing action to address the following:
- **Resource constraints**- Early action is required to facilitate the effective participation of developing countries in Codex standards development activities, including financial assistance from extrabudgetary resources where possible;
  - **Capacity building** -There is a continuing need to invest in capacity building programmes aimed at strengthening national Codex administrative and consultative structures (e.g., Codex Contact Point and National Codex Committee) and provide for enhancing national capacity for technical analysis and participation in international standards development activities. This requires bilateral or multilateral technical assistance and should include training.

17. In addition to actions to promote participation of member countries, the CAC also needs to continue its efforts to promote and facilitate the participation of consumers and public interest groups in its processes both at the international and national levels. Given the strong public interest in food safety and regulatory issues, the involvement and input of consumers and non governmental groups is essential to build public confidence in international standards and assure the strong public input, acceptance and support for Codex standards, guidelines and recommendations as a basis for domestic regulation and trade.

### ***Objective 6: Promoting Maximum Application of Codex Standards***

18. As the pre-eminent international standards setting body for food, the CAC has a clear and strategic interest in promoting the maximum use of its standards both for domestic regulation and international trade. International harmonization based on Codex standards, guidelines and recommendations is essential to promoting a global approach to consumer health protection (including systems for the reduction of food-borne risks) and minimizing the negative effects of technical regulations on international trade. This will require sustained commitment and effort in the following key directions:
- The Statements of Principle on the Role of Science in the Codex Decision-Making and the Extent to which Other Factors are Taken into Account<sup>3</sup> which provide the essential criteria for decision making in Codex, will require strong support and commitment by all countries if the statements are to become operationally effective both at international and national levels;
  - Codex must continue to promote the application of sound science and the principles of risk analysis on a consistent basis throughout its work as envisaged in the Commission's *Action Plan on Risk Analysis*<sup>4</sup>;
  - Codex processes must be inclusive and transparent and provide for participation and input from all interested groups both at the national and international level. This is particularly important given the interest and concern among Codex members to assure that Codex processes take due account of scientific uncertainties and the element of precaution. Transparency of the criteria and process of risk assessment and decision making will be paramount to achieving this objective;
  - The Commission must complete the strategic shift, first signaled at the 1991 FAO/WHO International Conference on Food Standards, Chemicals in Food and Food Trade, towards performance-based standards and guidelines for broad application across a range of commodities and focus on provisions essential for consumer health protection and facilitation of trade;
  - Codex must ensure that its standards and guidelines reflect the needs and special concerns of the developing world without compromising on the health of consumers; and
  - Codex decisions should be based on consensus to the maximum extent possible.

### **Implementation of the Strategic Vision and Objectives**

19. The strategic objectives described in this document will require a plan of action and implementation strategy. These matters will be addressed within the framework of the Medium Term Plan for 2003-2007.

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<sup>3</sup> Codex Alimentarius Commission, Procedural Manual, Eleventh Edition, p.180.

<sup>4</sup> Codex Alimentarius Commission, Report of 23rd session, Rome, 28 June-3 July 1999, p.10-11.