

codex alimentarius commission

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD HEALTH
ORGANIZATION

JOINT OFFICE: Via delle Terme di Caracalla 00100 ROME Tel.: 52251 Telex: 625825-625853 FAO I Cables: Foodagri Rome Facsimile: (6)5225.4593

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Twenty-second Session
Geneva, 23-28 June 1997

REPORT OF THE TENTH SESSION OF THE CODEX COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Montevideo, Uruguay
25-28 February 1997

Note: This document incorporates Codex Circular Letter 1997/7-LAC

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CX 3/15.2

CL 1997/7-LAC
April 1997

TO:

- Codex Contact Points
- Participants at the Tenth Session of the Codex Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean
- Interested International Organizations

FROM:

- Secretary, Codex Alimentarius Commission, Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, FAO, 00100 Rome, Italy

SUBJECT: Distribution of the Report of the Tenth Session of the Codex Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean

REQUEST FOR COMMENTS AND INFORMATION

1. Contamination by Salmonella and other pathogens (para. 65)

Governments are invited to provide information on their experience with *Salmonella spp.* and other emerging pathogens, including measures taken for the monitoring and control of contamination.

2. National Codex Committees and Codex Contact Points (para. 88)

Governments are invited to provide comments on the opportunity of establishing Guidelines for the work of National Codex Committee and Codex Contact Points in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Comments on the above subjects should be submitted in writing to the Secretary, Codex Alimentarius Commission, Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, via delle Terme di Caracalla, 00100 Rome, Italy, **before 1 December 1997.**

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The summary and conclusions of the Tenth Session of the Codex Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean are as follows:

Matters for approval by the Commission:

The Committee:

- agreed to nominate Dr. Galdos Ugarte (Uruguay) for appointment as Regional Coordinator by the 22nd Session of the Commission (para. 91)
- agreed to initiate the revision of the Regional Code of Practice for the Preparation and Sale of Street-Vended Foods (para. 12).

Other matters of interest to the Commission:

The Committee:

- agreed that the Draft Regional Guidelines for Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committees prepared by the CCASIA could not be adopted in the Region (para. 88)
- expressed the view that the questionnaire circulated by the Committee on Pesticide Residues was not adequate to identify problems related to pesticide residues in the Region (para. 37)
- endorsed the recommendations of the Workshop on the Harmonization of Food Law, including the revision of the model food law (para. 70)
- noted the progress of harmonization of food legislation and the extensive use of Codex standards and MRLs as reference in the framework of economic integration organizations and at the national level (paras. 38-43)
- exchanged information on consumer participation in Codex work and agreed to consider the matter again at its next session (para. 97)
- agreed to consider contamination by Salmonella and emerging pathogens in the Region, as well as food safety in touristic areas at its next session (paras. 65 and 97)

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Codex Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean held its Tenth Session in Montevideo, Uruguay, from 25-28 February 1997, by courtesy of the Government of Uruguay, under the Chairmanship of Dr. Galdos Ugarte, Coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean. The Session was attended by 154 delegates from 22 Member Countries and 8 international organizations. A complete list of participants is included as Appendix I to this report.

OPENING OF THE SESSION (Agenda item 1)

2. The session was opened by Dr. Julio Herrera, Minister of Industry, Energy and Mines, in his capacity as Chairman of the National Codex Committee, who welcomed all participants and pointed out the diversity of food production systems in the Region. In the changing environment created by the globalization of food trade, he pointed out that care should be taken to develop it in equitable conditions for all countries so as to cover the needs of large parts of mankind which had not sufficient access to food supplies. Similarly he stressed the importance of developing international standards on a scientific basis, and noted that all interested sectors, should be involved in the elaboration process especially research and technical institutes.

3. Dr. Alfredo Solari, Minister of Health, highlighted the importance of ensuring food security and the access to food of populations still suffering from hunger and malnutrition in the Region. He recalled the risks associated with foods and the vigilance required with respect to foodborne diseases, in order to strike a balance between food availability and food safety requirements, and stressed the role of Codex and CCLAC to provide guidance in this respect.

4. Dr. Carlos Gasparri, Minister of Agriculture recalled the active participation of Uruguay in the work of Codex and FAO/WHO Expert Groups at the international level, and the impetus given to such participation by the creation of the National Codex Committee. He stressed the necessity for Codex to meet the requirements of the WTO SPS and TBT Agreements and assist countries to meet their obligations. In this perspective, he highlighted the importance of the statements of principles adopted by the Commission to establish the scientific basis of the decision-making process. He expressed the wish that the Committee would contribute to the improvement and simplification of Codex work and promote larger participation from developing countries.

5. Dr. Gregory D. Orriss, Chief of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, welcomed all participants on behalf of the Directors-General of FAO and WHO and expressed his appreciation to the Government of Uruguay for hosting the Session, and for its continued support to the Codex programme. He recalled the objectives of Codex Alimentarius to protect consumers' health and facilitate international trade, and pointed out the specific relevance of Codex standards and related text in the framework of the SPS and TBT Agreements.

6. Dr. Jaime Estupiñan, Director of INPPAZ, welcomed participants on behalf of the Directors-General of WHO and PAHO, emphasizing the importance of the session of the Coordinating Committee to accompany the actions being developed at the national level to organize food safety programmes. He highlighted the factors which had contributed to the increase of such activities: the cholera epidemic in the region, subregional integration initiatives, and the establishment of WTO and its Agreements. He drew the attention of the Committee to high impact programmes such as the elimination of poliomyelitis and the eradication of foot-and-mouth disease in the countries of the *Cono Sur*.

7. Dr. Michel Négrin, FAO Representative in Uruguay, highlighted the importance of food production for the economy of countries in the Region, and the relevance of Codex standards and recommendations to promote international food trade. Since its creation in 1962 the Codex Alimentarius Commission had integrated the necessities of Member countries and the requirements of international agreements on food and nutrition. The International Conference on Nutrition, held in Rome in 1992, emphasized the importance of consumer protection and the safety and quality of the food supply. In the recently held World Food Summit, heads of state and

governments of approximately 200 countries agreed on the Rome Declaration, committing themselves to the implementation of the Plan of Action of the Summit in an ongoing effort to eliminate hunger and malnutrition. He stressed the importance of Codex in the perspective of the WTO Agreements and the role of the Coordinating Committee to promote the participation of countries in the Region in Codex work, in conjunction with the technical assistance provided by FAO to strengthen food control infrastructures. The Representative expressed his thanks to the Government of Uruguay for the organization of the present Session and wished participants all success in their work.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Agenda Item 2)

8. The Committee agreed to the suggestion of the Chairman to elect a Vice-Chairman. The Delegation of Peru proposed to elect as Vice-Chairman Dr. Alberto Marrero of Cuba and the Committee unanimously concurred with this proposal.

9. The Delegation of Peru proposed to discuss the possibility of holding a regional workshop on import/export matters (see also para. 93). The Delegation of Argentina proposed to consider: the feasibility of holding sessions of other Codex Committees in the Region; the availability of documents, especially on Internet; the Spanish version of the HACCP Guidelines. The Delegation of Uruguay proposed to consider its offer to host the next session of the Committee on Milk and Milk Products. The Committee agreed to consider these questions under Agenda Item 14 and adopted the Provisional Agenda as proposed in document CX/LAC 97/1.

MATTERS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER CODEX COMMITTEES (Agenda Item 3)¹

Street-Vended Foods

10. The Committee discussed the opportunity of revising the Regional Code of Hygienic Practice for the Preparation and Sale of Street Foods in the light of the recommendation of the Commission to incorporate the new approach reflected in the revised General Principles of Food Hygiene and the HACCP Guidelines.

11. Some delegations pointed out that the current Code was used as a basis for national programmes for the control of street foods, and integrated in national legislation. It was proposed that the Committee should consider the experiences of countries in the Region with the application of the Code, prior to undertaking a revision. Other delegations felt that the recommendation of the Commission should be carried out rapidly and noted that the HACCP approach was already used in their inspection systems. The Delegation of Brazil proposed to include an Annex on the application of the HACCP system and the training of vendors.

12. The Committee agreed to circulate the Code of Practice in a Circular Letter which would invite countries to present information on their experience and proposals for amendments to the current text. Subject to the approval of the Commission, the Secretariat would prepare a revised draft in the light of the comments received, in cooperation with interested countries, for consideration by the next session of the Committee. The Delegations of Peru, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil and Ecuador indicated their interest to participate in the revision.

Scientific Principles

13. With reference to the recommendation of the CCGP to include the four statements of principles in an Appendix to the Procedural Manual, several delegations pointed out that the Principles provided an essential orientation for the work of Codex as a whole, which was not reflected by their inclusion in an appendix. The Delegation of Chile expressed the view that in the future the CCGP working documents should be available to

¹ CX/LAC 97/2

the CCLAC in order to discuss such questions. While noting that the final decision on this question would be taken by the Commission, the Committee recommended that in view of the importance of the statements, they should be included in the General Principles of Codex in the body of the Procedural Manual.

Risk Analysis

14. The Observer from Consumers International stressed the importance of transparency and the necessity of active involvement of consumers in the decision-making process.

15. The Delegation of Argentina pointed out the problems of the Spanish translation of the definitions proposed by the Expert Consultation on Risk Analysis, especially regarding the meaning of risk and hazard (see para. 94).

Quorum

16. The Committee noted that the Commission had decided to retain the special quorum for the amendment of the Rules of Procedures and that the CCGP had agreed to review the elaboration and adoption procedures as a whole, including the normal quorum (adoption of texts). As the quorum had been reached at the last Commission session and participation was generally increasing, the Committee agreed that the quorum was not an issue in itself at this stage.

17. With reference to the request of the Commission concerning mechanisms facilitating the expression of consensus, the Delegation of Cuba pointed out that, in view of the difficulties met by a number of countries to attend Codex sessions, governments might do so through their diplomatic representations, but this was often difficult as not enough time was allowed to discuss the documents in detail and prepare comments in reply to Circular Letters. The Committee agreed that the late reception of documents was an obstacle to effective participation and recommended that they should be sent well ahead of the Committees' sessions.

Advisory Texts

18. In reply to a question of the Delegation of Argentina, the Secretariat recalled that CCGP had recommended to avoid the terms "advisory" and "mandatory" in Codex texts because they had no relevance under WTO; reference should be made to "essential" requirements as set out in the format of standards. Standards and related texts were mandatory only in the framework of national legislation regarding their application. The Chairman emphasized that under the SPS Agreement, Codex texts were a reference for international trade.

19. Regarding the recommendations of the CCGP concerning the status of advisory texts, the Delegation of Uruguay expressed the view that provisions on commercial quality should not be included in the standards, as these should address primarily the need of governments to regulate the food safety aspects and essential quality requirements. In the framework of WTO, reference was made to international standards in their entirety, irrespective of whether or not they covered commercial quality in specific sections.

20. The Delegation of Mexico felt that it was not possible to decide on the opportunity of retaining the appendices to commodity standards at this stage, as all the implications should be considered carefully; in particular, trade barriers might be created if no reference existed under Codex on non-essential commercial aspects.

21. As the statement proposed by CCGP on the application and status of non-essential quality criteria referred to the WTO Agreements, the Committee felt that clarification would be required on its implications under SPS and TBT and asked the Secretariat to seek the advice of WTO in this respect. The Committee agreed that further consideration of this issue would be required in the light of such advice and following the recommendations of the Commission on this issue.

REPORT ON FOOD SAFETY/FOOD CONTROL ACTIVITIES OF FAO AND WHO COMPLEMENTARY TO THE WORK OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION SINCE THE 9th SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE (Agenda Item 4)²

22. The Committee was informed that, in addition to the expert consultations listed in the document, a Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on Food Consumption and Exposure Assessment was held in Geneva from 10-14 February 1997.

FAO Activities

23. In addition to the activities listed in the document, the Committee noted that FAO had organized in collaboration with the University of Chile and LATINFOODS a Workshop on the production and management of data on food composition in Santiago de Chile in 1995, for countries of South America and Mexico. A similar Workshop was held with INCAP in Guatemala in 1996 for Central American countries. In addition, FAO provided support for a course on food composition in Jujuy, Argentina, and a course on carotenoids in Mexico in the National Nutrition Institute, in which several countries in the region participated under the TCDC programme.

24. The Delegation of Brazil expressed its thanks to FAO for its assistance in project TCP/BRA/4555 to strengthen the National Codex Committee, whereby several seminars and training courses had been held concerning HACCP in food control, risk analysis and pesticide residues, while a seminar on the application of Codex recommendations for inspection and certification would be held in April; diffusion of information on Codex had also been developed considerably and the participation of all concerned sectors had been strengthened.

WHO Activities

25. The Representative of WHO/PAHO indicated that guidelines had been prepared on "Application of the HACCP System for the Improvement of Food Safety"; "Street-Vended Foods: a HACCP-based Strategy"; and on emerging pathogens. The Global Environment Monitoring Systems/Foods project also continued the collection of information from 60 countries on food contaminants.

PAHO Activities

26. In the framework of the Regional Technical Cooperation Programme on Food Safety, the strengthening of institutions responsible for food safety was underway in 5 countries. An information system on food legislation was developed to facilitate the revision of food legislation at the national level. Priority was given to information systems and epidemiological surveillance on foodborne diseases, through regional seminars, diffusion of information, and the organization of national systems.

27. A study on street food contamination was conducted in 7 cities in 7 countries; training was provided in the identification of several emerging pathogens; and inter-laboratory testing was carried out in 19 laboratories in 10 countries for the analysis of organochlorines.

28. The Committee expressed its appreciation to FAO and PAHO/WHO for their technical assistance to countries in the Region in the improvement of food legislation and control infrastructures in order to meet their obligations under the WTO Agreements.

² CX/LAC 97/3

CONSEQUENCES FOR THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION ARISING FROM THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION AGREEMENTS ON SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES AND TECHNICAL BARRIERS TO TRADE (Agenda Item 5)³

Acceptance

29. The Committee had an exchange of views on the relevance of acceptance or notification systems as related to notification under WTO. The Secretariat indicated that a notification system would provide a comparative record of all Codex texts and food regulations in Member countries, for information purposes.

30. The Delegation of Uruguay expressed the view that present acceptance procedures were no longer relevant in the perspective of the WTO Agreements and although some delegations supported this position, the Committee could not come to a conclusion at this stage.

31. Following the proposal made by Chile, Mexico and Uruguay, the Committee recognized that countries in the region were aware of the new context created by the WTO SPS and TBT and agreed on the necessity to review the present acceptance procedure and to study a revised system of notification and/or acceptance, which should be simple and the least bureaucratic possible. The Committee therefore asked the Secretariat to distribute the proposals for consideration by CCGP well ahead of the 13th session of that Committee, so that countries in the region could consider them and establish their position accordingly.

Priorities

32. With reference to the request of the Commission for Coordinating Committees to identify Codex texts with major trade impact, some delegations indicated that they had not had sufficient time to consider this question in detail, and that further consideration of this issue was necessary at the regional level. It was noted that the decision to elaborate Codex standards and related texts generally corresponded to a need expressed by Member countries. The Delegation of Chile stressed the importance of receiving requests for comments well in advance to allow countries sufficient time to prepare their position.

33. The Delegation of Mexico stressed the need to identify areas where further standardization work was necessary to facilitate and promote trade in the region; trade problems specifically caused by existing standards would also require consideration.

34. The Committee agreed that further action in this area should be determined by the conclusions of the Commission and that additional information concerning the impact of standardization on trade might be required for consideration by the next session of the Committee, in the light of the Commission's recommendations.

REPORT ON ACCEPTANCES OF CODEX STANDARDS AND MAXIMUM RESIDUE LIMITS FOR PESTICIDES IN FOODS BY COUNTRIES IN THE REGION (Agenda Item 6)⁴

35. The Delegation of Costa Rica informed the Committee that standards on meat and milk products existed and a technical regulation taking into account Codex MRLs was being published and that the Ministry of Agriculture had developed a monitoring programme for residues, as well as training programmes for the use of pesticides. The Delegation of Jamaica stressed the difficulties related to the lack of laboratory capacity for pesticides analysis and noted that Codex MRLs were used as a reference for export control. The Delegation of Uruguay indicated that Codex MRLs were used as a basis for national legislation, although they were not formally accepted.

³ CX/LAC 97/4

⁴ CX/LAC 97/5, CRD 1 (comments of Argentina), CRD 2 (comments of Costa Rica)

36. The Delegation of Argentina indicated their monitoring system for pesticide residues integrated the interactions plant-pest-pesticide and in this context some MRLs corresponded to those of Codex while others were lower, national limits being applicable in any case, in view of the application of Good Agricultural Practice. Pesticide residues found in a number of commodities were lower than the Codex MRLs, due to the application of good agricultural practices and therefore Argentina did not apply the Codex MRLs.

37. The Committee expressed the view that the questionnaire circulated by the Committee on Pesticide Residues was not adequate to identify problems related to pesticide residues in the region; similarly, the document considered by the last CCPR session (CX/PR 96/11) was not comprehensive enough and did not include important commodities. The Committee therefore invited countries in the region to provide relevant information and comments to the CCPR in order to facilitate discussion of the issues identified during the present session.

REPORT ON ACTIVITIES RELATED TO ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AND HARMONIZATION OF FOOD LEGISLATION IN THE REGION (Agenda Item 7)⁵

MERCOSUR

38. The Delegation of Uruguay informed the Committee of the activities of Sub-Group 3. Technical Regulations concerning the elimination of technical barriers to trade and the achievement of regional integration. The support of FAO would be needed to carry out a project on conformity evaluation, in order to facilitate mutual recognition of national inspection systems. It was noted that FAO was currently considering the feasibility of a TCP in this area.

39. The Delegation of Brazil stressed the increase in commercial exchanges since the creation of MERCOSUR, and indicated that the harmonization of regulations in the region was largely based on Codex standards and recommendations.

40. The Delegation of Argentina informed the Committee of the activities of Sub-Group 8. Agriculture concerning zoo- and phytosanitary matters and indicated its wish to host a training course on Risk Analysis for countries in the Region with technical assistance from FAO.

41. The Observer from Consumers International stated that the objective of the Consumers Association of MERCOSUR (ACOM), created in 1994, was to achieve the improvement of consumer protection and that proposals for joint action in this area had been presented to the authorities of MERCOSUR.

CENTRAL AMERICA

42. The Delegation of Costa Rica indicated that in the framework of the project of "Training and assistance in the certification of non-traditional products in Central America, Belize and Panama" FAO and ILSI held a joint International Seminar/Workshop on Harmonization of Food Standards which identified the difficulties faced by Central America due to lack of resources. The following priorities were defined to facilitate regional integration: strengthening National Codex Committees; harmonization with Codex texts; promotion of industry participation; creation of a group of advisers to achieve the harmonization of standards.

CARICOM

43. The Delegation of Cuba referred to the harmonization process in the framework of CARICOM on the basis of Codex standards and indicated that the PanAmerican Commission on Technical Standards (COPANT) had also decided to adopt Codex standards in order to harmonize PanAmerican food standards.

⁵ CX/LAC 97/6

FOOD CERTIFICATION AND INSPECTION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (Agenda Item 8) ⁶

44. The Delegation of Costa Rica indicated that sanitary and phytosanitary inspection was carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture, while voluntary quality certification for exports of fruit and vegetables was implemented by a certification body (National Production Council, accredited by the National Accreditation Body (ENA). A training programme on quality systems was developed in 1996 in small and medium-sized industry in the sectors of fruit and vegetables and shellfish, with a specific orientation towards international trade (see also para. 41).

45. The Delegation of Argentina informed the Committee that the National Service of Food Safety and Quality (SENASA), a subsidiary body of the Secretariat of Agriculture, and the National Food Institute (INAL), a subsidiary body of the Secretariat of Health Policy were mainly responsible for food control. The Delegation presented its comprehensive inspection system of meat products for hygiene and residues, which integrated a risk-based approach in the definition of priorities.

46. The Delegation of the Dominican Republic stressed the efforts made to improve the educational level of food inspectors and upgrade its inspection system through a number of training courses focusing on priority areas: HACCP in the food industry, with the assistance of PAHO, street-vended foods, mass catering. The Delegation expressed its thanks to Argentina for the assistance provided in the food industry sector and pointed out that such bilateral programmes should be encouraged.

47. The Delegation of Brazil indicated that food control infrastructures had not been significantly modified since 1995, and that actions taken to comply with obligations under WTO were intensified. The application of the HACCP system was integrated into several training programmes. As regards import and export matters, the computerized Foreign Trade System (SISCOMEX) coordinated by the Ministry of Economy was created to facilitate the import and export processes, with direct access to the system through computer terminals.

48. With reference to the progress in inspection and certification systems since the last session, the Delegation of Uruguay indicated that the National Advisory Commission on Foodstuffs included all concerned official authorities and interested sectors and that the specialized technical committees in the National Codex Committee followed the structure of the Codex Committees. The HACCP system was applied in the fish and meat industries, which complied with the requirements established by the USA and the EC. Training courses for food inspectors and processors were organized regularly.

49. The Delegation of Peru indicated that the creation of a single sanitary authority was under consideration, and that a surveillance system on the health of the population was applied, with special emphasis on the involvement and information of consumers. The use of product registration was gradually being discontinued, while manufacturers registration and certification was implemented.

50. The Delegation of Cuba indicated that legislation was under review to meet the obligations arising from the WTO Agreements. The National System of Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification was in the process of been established on the basis of the CCFICS recommendations, with the participation of interested Ministries (Agriculture, Health, Fisheries, Food Industry, Foreign Trade through the National Standards Institute). This system had already initiated a number of actions such as the accreditation of laboratories and the application of the HACCP system in the fish industry with the cooperation of FAO.

51. The Delegation of Guatemala informed the Committee that a new legislation on food inspection and certification had been approved whereby the Ministry of Agriculture was responsible for unprocessed food and the Ministry of Health for processed food; the National Codex Committee involved all interested ministries and

⁶ CRD 1 (comments of Argentina), CRD 2 (Comments of Barbados), CRD 3 (Comments of Costa Rica)

sectors of the economy, with specialized sub-committees following the structure of the Codex Committees. A pesticides monitoring programme was developed with the assistance of FAO/WHO in the LUCAM laboratory (Ministry of Health). The Ministry of Economy was carrying out the approximation of national standards to Codex standards.

52. The Delegation of Nicaragua emphasized the importance given to the education of consumers as regards health and food safety in national food control programmes, as well as its efforts to modernize the inspection system.

53. The Delegation of El Salvador indicated that the establishment of national standards was underway, on the basis of international standards; an inventory of laboratories had been made and a laboratory accreditation Regulation already existed.

54. The Delegation of Mexico pointed out that the food control system had been revised to follow a risk-based approach, consequently the application of the HACCP system in food processing was mandatory in some cases; this was monitored by the responsible authorities, with external auditing. The review and updating of relevant standards was also ongoing.

55. The Delegation of Bolivia stated that the Secretariat of Health chaired the National Codex Committee, which included other ministries responsible for food control. Revised food legislation was being elaborated with the assistance of FAO.

56. The Delegation of Ecuador indicated that Codex standards were used as a basis for national standards, and officially endorsed as national standards in some cases.

57. The Delegation of Trinidad and Tobago informed the Committee that the Food and Drugs Act and Public Health Act were being reviewed with the assistance of PAHO, and that training in HACCP was being provided for public health and veterinary inspection.

58. The Delegation of Chile indicated that a national food control programme was in operation and included imported foods, with a request for sanitary certification in the exporting country and random controls *a posteriori*. The system was carried out at the national level through 19 food laboratories.

59. The Delegation of Panama indicated that product registration was gradually discontinued and replaced with plant certification, and that the Food Control Programme focused on the monitoring and control of emerging pathogens through random sampling.

60. The Delegation of Jamaica stated that food inspectors were being trained for the application of the HACCP system and increased control of street-vended foods; the veterinary laboratories had being upgraded in accordance with EC requirements and accreditation procedures were underway.

61. The Delegation of Guyana noted that responsibilities for food control were divided between several ministries, and a programme to rationalize the inspection system and to update the food law was underway with the assistance of PAHO.

62. The Representative of FAO expressed his appreciation of the positive results achieved in the region and encouraged the countries to use the opportunities offered by the TCDC programme in order to promote the exchange of experience in the area of food control.

**REPORT ON FOOD SAFETY MATTERS OF INTEREST TO THE REGION
(Agenda Item 9) ⁷**

Report on Contamination by Salmonella

63. The Delegation of Brazil introduced the document prepared as a basis for discussion, describing the major characteristics of *Salmonella enteritidis* and other Salmonella, and possible means of control. The Committee expressed its appreciation to Brazil for this interesting document and Brazil indicated its willingness to revise it if required and continue its work in this area.

64. The Representative of WHO informed the Committee that educational material including basic recommendations for the control of Salmonella in eggs had been prepared for the use of food handlers.

65. The Committee decided that further consideration should be given to this important subject and agreed that governments would be invited to provide information on their experience with Salmonella spp. and other emerging pathogens by Circular Letter.

b) Food safety in touristic areas

66. The Delegation of the Dominican Republic made a presentation of its experience with foodborne diseases in touristic areas, especially hotels and mass catering in general, stressing the economic and sanitary consequences. Difficulty of adequate training of food handlers were being solved, national texts on hygiene and food handling oriented towards the hotel industry had been developed. One of the difficulties in the touristic sector was the high consumption of imported foodstuffs. The International Congress on Foodborne Diseases in relation with tourism held (Trinidad and Tobago, 1996) had made specific recommendations in this area. Negotiations were underway with the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and a chain of hotels to establish a training centre for the hotel industry in the Caribbean. The Delegation proposed to set up a technical cooperation network on food safety and tourism in the Region, and this was supported by many delegations.

67. Some delegations informed the Committee of their experience with foodborne diseases related with tourism and stressed the importance of training programmes and specific measures to ensure the safety of the water supply. The Delegation of Brazil indicated that advanced training courses for the hotel industry were held at the national level.

68. The Observer from ILSI indicated that the first PanAmerican Conference on Food Safety and Nutrition, organized by ILSI in cooperation with FAO and PAHO, would be held in Mexico City from 8-12 September 1997 and would discuss strategies concerning food safety issues of relevance to the region, including aspects related to touristic areas, and invited interested countries to participate in this event.

REPORT OF THE WORKSHOP ON HARMONIZATION OF FOOD LAW AND REGULATIONS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (Agenda item 10) ⁸

69. Dr. Eduardo Mendez, FAO Consultant, recalled the recommendations of the FAO Meeting on Harmonization of the Basic Food Law/Regulations (San José, Costa Rica, 29-31 January 1997) and introduced the report of the Workshop held prior to the session on 23-24 February 1997 with the purpose of facilitating harmonization of food legislation in the Region.

⁷ CX /LAC 97/8

⁸ CRD 4

70. The Committee endorsed the recommendations of the Workshop, as follows:
- (i) The Latin American model food law should be reviewed and updated to take into account the obligations under the WTO, SPS and TBT Agreements.
 - (ii) Codex standards, guidelines and recommendations should be used in reviewing or establishing national food laws and regulations
 - (iii) Many countries recommended the gradual replacement of product registration with a system to monitor the application of good manufacturing practices throughout the food chain and the implementation of the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point System.
 - (iv) Information and surveillance systems on foodborne diseases and food safety and quality should be developed or strengthened as a means to establish effective food control programmes.
 - (v) Mechanisms of harmonization, equivalence and mutual recognition based on Codex standards, guidelines and recommendations should be developed further to assure consumer protection and promote food trade.
 - (vi) Additional technical assistance should be provided in the development of food legislation and effective food control programmes including strengthening food inspection and food analysis capabilities. Specifically, countries requested that FAO provide assistance in strengthening National Codex Committees to include input from all food control agencies, the food industry and consumer organizations in inputting into the Codex process and disseminating information on Codex standards, guidelines and recommendations to the appropriate food control and consumer protection organizations.
 - (vii) Food legislation should include appropriate penalties for violation of the legislation.
 - (viii) The PAHO/INPPAZ information system on food legislation should be incorporated by countries of the region in the framework of their integration activities. For this purpose, interested countries should designate a focal point, conduct training workshops and conduct periodical assessments of the project.
71. The Committee expressed its appreciation for the opportunity to participate in the Workshop and its support for the continued practice of holding such workshops prior to the Committee.

CONSUMER PARTICIPATION IN CODEX WORK AND RELATED MATTERS **(Agenda Item 11) ⁹**

72. The Delegation of Costa Rica indicated that representatives of consumers would participate in the National Codex Committee and that the creation of consumers associations was encouraged, as well as consumers education and information. The Consumer Protection Programme included the control of commercial quality, labelling and net weight control of prepackaged food. The National Consumers Commission received complaints and had the legal authority to sanction unfair practices detrimental to consumers.

73. The Delegation of Argentina pointed out that consumers participated in the Advisory Council of the National Food Commission, and food control programmes included the promotion of consumer education and participation.

⁹ CX/LAC 97/10

74. The Delegation of the Dominican Republic informed the Committee that consumers participated in the National Codex Committee and other committees responsible for the review of food legislation, and that consumer support was significant to facilitate government action in food control matters.

75. The Delegation of Brazil indicated that the National Codex Committee included two types of consumer representation: the Department of Consumer Protection and Defence (Ministry of Justice) and the Brazilian Institute of Consumer Defence (IDEC), a non-governmental organization affiliated with Consumers International.

76. The Delegation of El Salvador stated that consumers took part in the deliberations of the committees responsible for food legislation, in the framework of the National Council for Science and Technology.

77. The Delegation of Uruguay informed the Committee that the Directorate of Consumer Protection was part of the Ministry of Economy, which includes the National Codex Committee. The Delegation also pointed out the very active participation of consumers associations in the technical sub-committees of the NCC.

78. The Delegation of Peru indicated that the Department of Consumer Protection was responsible for consumer protection issues and that further participation of consumer associations should be encouraged.

79. The Delegation of Cuba noted that the legal basis for the protection of consumers was currently being established. The Delegation of Panama pointed out that consumers participated in the National Codex Committee, the National Commission for Food Safety and that consumer support had been significant in specific food control actions.

80. The Delegation of Guatemala indicated that consumers participated in the Multisectorial Food Commission, which orients national food policy and that it is intended to integrate consumers in the National Codex Committee.

81. The Delegation of Chile indicated that consumer protection was the responsibility of the Ministry of Economy, and that the Consumer Protection Law was in the process of adoption. It also highlighted the resolutions of the World Food Summit with respect to consumer education.

82. The Delegation of Mexico stressed the importance of consumer participation as a support for government action in food surveillance, and the necessity to promote larger and more effective consumer participation.

83. The Observer from Consumers International stressed the efforts made to ensure the high technical level of consumers representatives in Codex Committees and recalled the recommendation of the CCGP concerning the participation of consumers in National Codex Committees. The Observer highlighted the positive results achieved with such participation in Argentina, Brazil and El Salvador and expressed the view that extensive use should be made of modern means of communications, such as Internet, to facilitate and improve the efficiency of Codex work.

84. The Observer informed the Committee that the FAO/PAHO/CI Regional Workshop on the Integration of Consumers Interests in Food Production and Control (Quito, 1996) had made a number of recommendations for improved consumer participation in food standardization and food control activities.

ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE STRENGTHENING OF CODEX CONTACT POINTS AND NATIONAL CODEX COMMITTEES IN THE REGION (Agenda item 12) ¹⁰

85. The Representative of INCAP/PAHO presented the activities of this Institute in the area of food security, nutrition, including food fortification, nutrition and labelling, sanitary and toxicological protection. He pointed

¹⁰ CX/LAC 97/11

out the problems related to the organization of food control infrastructures and National Codex Committees in the region. He stressed the importance of strengthening NCCs and food inspection services in the Region so that they could operate effectively.

86. Several countries pointed out that their National Codex Committees and Codex Contact Points were operating effectively. Other countries stressed their difficulties to organize Codex work at the national level and the necessity for technical assistance in this area. The Committee noted that FAO had provided support to several countries in the Region through the organization of national or regional seminars or projects and that such activities would continue as a high priority.

87. As regard the Draft Regional Guidelines prepared by the Coordinating Committee for Asia and proposed for the consideration of other Coordinating Committees, several delegations expressed the view that they did not correspond to the situations in their countries and in the region as a whole. In accordance with the suggestion of Chile, they felt that such guidelines were not necessary as the situation differed significantly from one country to another and in many cases, national Codex Committees and Codex Contact Points were already operating satisfactorily.

88. Some delegations however suggested that specific guidelines could be developed in the region. The Committee concluded that the CCASIA Draft Guidelines could not be adopted in the region, and that a Circular Letter should request government comments on the opportunity of elaborating regional guidelines for Latin America and the Caribbean.

89. In relation with to facilitate Codex work, the Delegation of Chile proposed to promote the decentralization of Committees, to make a wider use of modern means of communication (electronic mail and Internet) and to strengthen the Codex Secretariat. The Committee concurred with these proposals.

NOMINATION OF THE COORDINATOR (Agenda Item 13) ¹¹

90. The Delegation of Nicaragua, supported by some delegations, proposed to nominate Dr. Persia Alvarez (Dominican Republic) as Coordinator. Dr. Alvarez, while thanking these countries for their support, declined the nomination as it was current practice to nominate the current Coordinator a second time, and in view of the general interest and cohesion of the Region. She however indicated the willingness of the Dominican Republic to host a future session of the CCLAC. The Committee expressed its thanks to the Dominican Republic and, as proposed by the Delegation of Costa Rica, agreed that alternance between the different subregions should be followed in the future.

91. The Delegation of Brazil, unanimously supported by the Committee, proposed to nominate Dr. Galdos Ugarte (Uruguay) for appointment as Coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean by the 22nd Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and until the end of the 23rd Session of the Commission. Dr. Galdos Ugarte expressed his thanks to the Committee and his intention to work with countries in the Region to strengthen Codex work at the regional and international level.

92. The Delegation of Brazil expressed its thanks to the authorities of Uruguay for providing interpretation into Portuguese during the meeting.

¹¹ CX/LAC 97/12

**OTHER BUSINESS, FUTURE WORK, AND DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT SESSION
(Agenda Item 14)**

Other business

93. The Delegation of Peru, referring to the discussions in the Workshop (see CRD 4), expressed its interest in hosting a regional workshop for import/export authorities, with the support of FAO.
94. The Delegation of Argentina proposed to circulate the Spanish version of the HACCP Guidelines to Spanish-speaking countries in order to determine the adequate terminology in this area.
95. The Committee expressed the view that more Codex meetings should be held in Latin America and the Caribbean in order to facilitate the participation of countries in the region. The Secretariat recalled that the Commission encouraged the practice of decentralizing Codex Committees in order to promote the participation of developing countries and that three committees had been held in the region.
96. The Delegation of Uruguay recalled that it had offered to hold the next session of the CCMMP in Uruguay and, while recognizing that such arrangements were subject to bilateral agreement, the Committee expressed its strong support for this proposal.

Future Work

97. The Committee agreed that in addition to standing items on the Agenda, the following matters would be considered by the next session:

- Street-vended foods
- Contamination by Salmonella and other pathogens
- Food Safety and Tourism
- Activities of National Codex Committees and Codex Contact Points
- Consumer Participation

Date and Place of Next Session

98. The Committee was informed that the next session would be held in Uruguay in December 1998.

SUMMARY STATUS OF WORK

Subject Matter	Step	Action by	Document Reference in ALINORM 97/36
Nomination of Coordinator		22nd CAC	para. 91
Revision of the Code of Practice on Street Foods		22nd CAC Governments 11th CCLAC	para. 12
Exchange of information on food legislation and food control		Governments 11th CCLAC	paras. 34-62
Progress report on activities of National Codex Committees		Governments 11th CCLAC	paras. 86-89
Follow-up of the Workshop on Harmonization of Food Law		Governments FAO/PAHO 11th CCLAC	para. 70
Consumer Participation		Governments 11th CCLAC	para. 97
Contamination by Salmonella and emerging pathogens		Governments Brazil 11th CCLAC	para. 63-65

**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS / LISTA DE PARTICIPANTES
LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS**

Presidente/Chairman/Président

Ing. Galdós Ugarte
Coordinador del Comité Regional del Codex
para América Latina y el Caribe
MGAP, Constituyente 1476 piso 3
Montevideo, Uruguay
Tel. (5982) 42 63 65 - Fax (5982) 42 63 31

Fax: (541) 349 2097
e.mail: codex@sagyp.mecon.ar

ARGENTINA/ARGENTINE

Alfredo Jorge Nader
Veterinario, SAGPyA
Paseo Colón 922 piso 2 of. 230
Buenos Aires, Argentina
Tel: (541) 349 2043 - Fax: (541) 349 2097

Susana Binotti
Médica Veterinaria
Jefa Microbiología
Laboratorio de Alimentos
SENASA
Fleming 1653 -Martínez
Buenos Aires, Argentina
Tel: (541) 792 0061 - Fax: (541) 792 0061

Carlos Camaño
Ingeniero Agrónomo
SENASA SAGPyA
Prolong. Av. Belgrano Dique II
Buenos Aires, Argentina
Tel: (541) 312 4015 - Fax: (541) 311 5645
e.mail: codex@sagyp.mecon.ar

Luis García Tezanos
Ministro
Jefe Sección Económica Embajada
Embajada Argentina
Andes 1365
Montevideo, Uruguay
Tel: (5982) 98 72 24
Fax: (5982) 98 71 54

Andrea Janin
Analista Químico Biológica
Asistente Técnica
Area Codex Alimentarius, SAGPyA
Av. Paseo Colón 922 piso 2 of. 232
Buenos Aires, Argentina
Tel: (541) 349 2044/2186

Mónica Malfitano
Ingeniera Agrónoma
Area Codex Alimentarius
SGAPy A
Paseo Colón 922 of. 232 p.2
Buenos Aires, Argentina
Tel: (541) 349 2044/2186
Fax: (541) 349 2097

Beatriz Nuñez Santiago
Doctora en Derecho
UNIVERSIDAD DE BS.AIRES
Pueyrredon 2096 1º.3
Buenos Aires, Argentina
Tel. (541) 806 3394 - Fax (541) 806.3394
E.mail: postmast@aibada.uba.ar

María Teresa Pennimpe
Doctora en Ciencias Veterinarias
Dirección Nal.Fiscalización Agroalimentaria
SENASA-SAGPyA
Paseo Colón 367 p.6
Buenos Aires, Argentina
Tel: (541) 342 2725
Fax: (541) 345 4110 Int. 1604
(541) 334 3207

Ma.Rosa Rabanal
Ingeniera Química
NESTLE Argentina S.A.
Carlos Pellegrini 887
Buenos Aires, Argentina
Tel. (541) 329 8100 - Fax (541) 329 8200

Jorge Alberto Rodríguez Toledo
Gerente Laboratorio - SENASA
Flemming 1653 Martínez
Buenos Aires, Argentina
Tel: (541) 792 4011 - Fax: (541) 798 4786

Adan Traverso
Ingeniero Agrónomo
Area Codex Alimentarius
SAGP y A
Paseo Colón 922 p.2 (1063)
Buenos Aires, Argentina
Tel: (541) 349 2044 - Fax: (541) 349 2097
e.mail: codex@sagyp.mecon.ar

BELIZE / BELICE

Helen Reynolds Arana
Director
Belize Bureau of Standards
P.O.Box 1647 - 53
Regent Street
Belize City, Belize
Tel. (501) 2 72314 / 77354-Fax (501)2 70939

BOLIVIA/BOLIVIE

José Andres Rivero
Sociólogo
Director Nacional de Nutrición
Secretaria Nacional de Salud
Calle Cap. Ravelo 299
La Paz, Bolivia
Tel: 379 891-92 - Fax: 392 032

BRAZIL / BRASIL/BRESIL

Carlos A. Ferreira Guimaraes
Diplomático
Embajada de Brasil
Via della Conciliazione 22/111
Roma 00193, Italia
Tel: (396) 687 5252
Fax: (396) 687 2540
E.mail: guima@iol.it

María Lennilza Albuquerque
Farmacéutica
Jefe de División de Alimentos
Ministerio de Salud
SQSW 304 Bloco F/ap.111
CEP 70.673-406
Sudoeste Brasília, Brasil
Tel. (55 61) 226 8536
Fax (55 61) 226 4954

Leo Bick
Director Técnico
Associacao Brasileira das Industrias da
Alimentacao
Av. Brig. Faria Lima No. 2003, 11°
CEP. 01451-001
San Pablo, Brasil
Tel: (55 11) 816 5733 - Fax: (55 11) 814 6688

Arlindo Bonifacio
Ingeniero Agrónomo
Ministerio de Agricultura y
de Abastecimiento
Esplanada dos Ministerios - Bloco D
Anexo A- Sala 350
CEP 70.043.900
Brasilia, Brasil
Tel. (061) 218 2445 - Fax (061) 225 5341

Regina Castro
Associacao Brasileira das Industrias da
Alimentacao
Av. Brig. Faria Lima 2003 11° Andar
San Pablo, Brasil
Tel: (55 11) 541 9166 - Fax: (55 11) 548 6000

Mónica De Lello Fonseca
Associacao Brasileira das Industrias da
Alimentacao
Praia de Botafogo 374
22.250-040-Río de Janeiro-RJ
Tel: (021) 226 7816 - Fax: (021) 559 1535

Marcia Donner Abreu
Diplomática
Embajada de Brasil en Uruguay
Bv. Artigas 1328
Montevideo, Uruguay
Tel. (5982) 77 21 15 - Fax: (5982) 77 20 86
e.mail: brasmont@adinet.com.uy

Ma. Cecilia Figueiredo Toledo
UNICAMP - Ministerio de Salud
Shigeo Mori 1232 - CEP 13084-341
Ciudad Universit. Campiñas
San Pablo, Brasil
Tel. (55 19) 239 8653 - Fax (55 19) 239 7890
e.mail: macecil@fea.unicamp.br

Dilma Scala Gelli
Microbiologista de Alimentos
Inst. Adolfo Lutz - CCAB
Av. Dr. Arnaldo 355 CEP: 01246-902
San Pablo, Brasil
Tel. (55 11) 3061-0111 Ext. 197
Fax (55 11) 853 3505

Edison Geromel
Director
Brazilian Assoc. of Food Industries (ABIA)
Av. Brig. Faria Lima 2003 piso 11
San Pablo, Brasil
Tel: (55 11) 816 5733 - Fax: (55 11) 814 6688

Ma. Aparecida Martinelli
 Coordinadora do Comit e
 Codex Alimentarius do Brasil
 INMETRO - SEPN 501 BI "B" 4º Andar
 CEP 70550-527, Brasilia D.F.
 Tel.(55 61) 340 2211 - Fax (55 61) 347 3284
 E.mail: mamartinelli@brasil.com.br

Jos e Mauro Moraes
 Associacao Brasileira das Industrias da
 Alimentacao
 P.R.Botafogo 374
 R o de Janeiro, Brasil
 Tel: (55 21) 559 1118 - Fax: (55 21) 559 1535

Mar a Ang lica Ribeiro Oliveira
 Coordinadora da Coordenacao de
 Fiscalizacao de Prod.Veterinarios
 Ministerio de Agricultura e do Abastecimento
 Esplanada Dos Ministerios Bloco D
 3º Andar 8/314 CP 70.043.900
 Brasilia, Brasil
 Tel. (55 61) 223 7073 - Fax (55 61) 323 5936

Pedro Simao
 Associacao Brasileira das Industrias da
 Alimentacao
 Av. das Nacoes Unidas 12-495
 CEP 045 78-902
 San Pablo, Brasil
 Tel: (55 11) 816 5733 - Fax: (55 11) 534 2403

CHILI / CHILE

Pedro Medrano
 Embajador
 Representante permanente ante FAO
 Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
 V a Po 23
 Roma, Italia
 Tel: (06) 841 7414

Jaime Jana
 Embajador
 Coordinador Diplom tico con el
 Ministerio de Agricultura
 Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
 Teatinos 40 9º piso
 Santiago, Chile
 Tel: (0562) 679 4670

Jaime Cornejo Catal n
 Encargado Programa Control de Alimentos
 Ministerio de Salud
 Monjitas 514
 Santiago, Chile
 Tel: (0562) 639 4001-750
 Fax: (0562) 639 7110

Jaime Moscoso
 Tercer Secretario
 Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
 Catedral 1159
 Santiago, Chile
 Tel. (562) 679 4352

Ricardo Marchant
 Analista Macrosectorial
 ODEPA - Ministerio Agricultura
 Teatinos 40 piso 8º
 Santiago, Chile
 Tel: (562) 6963241 - Fax: (562) 695 7795
 E.mail: rmarchan@minagri.gob.cl

Ma. Viviana Aranda
 Consultor
 Representante Empresa Alimenticia
 Quilin 4000
 Santiago, Chile
 Tel: (562) 280 8126 - Fax: (562) 221 0043

COLOMBIA/COLOMBIE

Luis Guillermo Bernal Calle
 Ingeniero Qu mico
 Representante C mara de la Industria
 Alimentos
 Asociacion Nacional de Industriales
 Cra 94 # 152 A-50 int. 4-302
 Bogot , Colombia
 Tel: (571) 254 0427 - Fax: (571) 211 4747
 E.mail: bernallg@colosat.net.co

COSTA RICA

Roger Irias Campos
 Coordinador del Cte. CODEX
 Oficina Nacional de Normas y
 Unidades de Medida (ONNUM)
 San Pedro de Montes de Oca
 San Jos , Apdo, 1736-2050
 Tel. (506) 283 6580 - Fax: (506) 283 5133

Jorge Arturo Jara
 Secretario Junta Directiva
 Camara Costarricense de
 la Industria Alimentaria
 Apartado Postal 2749 - 1000
 San Jos  - Costa Rica
 Tel: (506) 299 3250 - Fax: (506) 299 3337

Reynier Ram rez Arroyo
 Director de Plaguicidas
 Ministerio de Agricultura
 Apartado Postal 10094
 San Jos 
 Tel: (506) 260 8295 - Fax: (506) 260 8301

CUBA

Alberto Andrés Marrero Terrero
 Director Relaciones Internacionales
 Oficina nac.de Normalizacion
 Calle E 261 entre 11 y 13 vedado
 La Habana 10400 - Cuba
 Tel. (537) 30 00 22 - Fax (537) 33 80 48

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
REPUBLICA DOMINICANA
REPUBLIQUE DOMINICAINE

Persia Alvarez Rodríguez
 Abogada - Asesora
 Ministerio de Salud Publica
 Av. San Cristóbal esq. Tiradentes
 Republica Dominicana
 Tel. 541 3121

Gilberto Galvez
 Médico - Presidente
 Galmedical Internacional
 Villas del Mar 8, Villas del Mar
 República Dominicana
 Tel: (809) 526 2044 - Fax: (809) 526 1616

ECUADOR/EQUATEUR

Hipatia Navas
 Farmacéutica Bioquímica
 Jefe Depto de Microbiología
 INEN
 Baquerizo Moreno 449 y Almagro
 Quito, Ecuador
 Tel. (593 2) 501 885-90 - Fax: (593 2) 567 815

EL SALVADOR

Hazel Magaña de Palomares
 Ingeniero de Alimentos
 Presidente del Codex
 CONACYT
 Av. Juan Pablo II calle Guadalupe
 Plan Maestro - El Salvador
 Tel: (503) 221 3578 - Fax: (503) 221 3578
 e.mail: economia@es.com.sv

GUATEMALA

Héctor Herrera
 Ingeniero Químico
 Jefe Dpto. Normalización
 Comision Guatemalteca
 de Normas (COGUANOR)
 8ª. Av. 10-43 Zona 1
 Ciudad de Guatemala
 Tel: (502) 253 9640 - Fax: (502) 251 5055

Azucena Lizama de Zuñiga
 Jefe del Laboratorio Unificado de Control
 de Alimentos y Medicamentos (LUCAM)
 Ministerio de Salud
 31 Calle B 16-53 Z 11
 Las Chacras IV - Guatemala
 Tel. (502) 4717336/ 4723762 al 65 ext 457
 Fax (502) 4717 336

Carlos Marroquín Aldana
 Director Téc. Control Alimentos (MAGA)
 Ministerio de Agricultura
 Diagonal 6 No. 15-41 Zona 10
 Guatemala
 Tel. (502) 631 2014 al 631 2018
 Fax: (502) 631 2017

GUYANA

Marilyn Collins
 Director Food and Drug
 Government Analyst Food and Drug
 Mudlot Kingston Georgetown
 Guyana
 Tel. (592) 2 56482

JAMAICA/JAMAIQUE

Beverley Miller
 Deputy Group Director
 BUREAU OF STANDARDS
 6 Winchester Rd.
 Kingston 10
 Tel. (809) 968 2063-71
 Fax: (809) 929 4736

MEXICO/MEXIQUE

Lucía Gaxiola Rivera
 Secretaria Técnica
 Dirección Gral. Jurídica
 Secretaria de Agricultura
 Insurgentes Sur 476 piso 12
 Zona Sur
 Mexico D.F. Mexico
 Tel. 584 0151 - Fax. 574 4322

Elizabeth Barron Robles
 Subdirectora de Fomento Industrial
 Secretaria del Medio Ambiente,
 Recursos Naturales y Pesca
 Anillo Periférico Sur 4209
 Jardines de la Montaña, Delegación Tlalpan
 México D.F. 1420
 Tel. (525) 628 0746 - Fax: (525) 628 0739

Eduardo Cervantes
 Presidente Comité Técnico Nacional de
 Normalización de la Industria Alimentaria
 CANACINTRA
 Rúben Darío # 115, México, D.F. 11580
 Tel: (5) 262 2393 - Fax: (5) 262 2005

Luis F. Hernández Lezama
 Director Asuntos Internacionales
 DGN/SECOFI
 Avda. Puente de Tecamachalco No.6
 México D.F.
 Tel. (525) 729 9480 - Fax. (525) 729 9480
 E.mail: cidgn@secofi.gob.mx

Ma.del Rosario Hernández
 Abogado - Directora de Legislación
 Secretaria de Agricultura
 Marina Nac. No. 200 Edif. 6 Dep. 3
 México D.F.
 Tel. (5) 64 85 83

Rafael Núñez Domínguez
 Director de Servicios a la Producción
 Dirección Gral. de Ganadería - SAGAR
 Recreo No. 14
 Col. del Valle Actipan
 México, D.F. CP. 03100
 Tel. (5) 534 7712 - Fax (5) 534 9744

Eduardo Serrano Pérez
 Subdirector de Importaciones
 y Exportaciones
 Dirección General de Salud Animal - SAGAR
 Avda. Recreo 14 piso 12
 Col. del Valle Actipan
 03230 México, D.F.
 Tel.(525) 534 9496 - Fax: (525) 534 9496

Adolfo Treviño Ordorica
 Consejero Agropecuario
 Secretaria de Agricultura,
 Ganadería y Des.rural
 Andes 1365 p. 7
 Montevideo, Uruguay
 Tel. (5982) 92 07 91 - Fax. (5982) 92 12 32

NICARAGUA

Reyneris Toledo Hurtado
 Depto. Higiene y Control de Alimentos
 MINISTERIO DE SALUD
 Edificio Concepción Palacios Managua
 Tel. 289 4717 - Fax 289 4605

PANAMA

Rogelio Domínguez
 Director Control de Alimentos
 Ministerio de Salud
 572 , 2P 9ª
 Panamá
 Tel. 262 1619 - Fax 262 0809

PARAGUAY

Hugo Idoyaga
 Director, Laboratorio Control Residuos
 MAG
 Ruta Mcal. Estigarribia Km 10.5
 San Lorenzo , Paraguay
 Tel. 510 509 - Fax: 583 428

Miguel González Cañete
 Químico Industrial
 Instituto Nacional de
 Tecnología y Normalización
 Avda.Gral.Artigas y Gral. Roa
 Asunción, Paraguay.
 Tel. (595 21) 290 266 - Fax (595 21) 290 873

PERU/PEROU

Jorge Alberto Villena Chavez
 Director General
 Dirección General de Salud Ambiental
 Ministerio de Salud
 Las Amapolas 350 Lince
 Lima, Perú
 Tel. 5114 40 23 40 - Fax-5114 40 65 62
 e.mail: postmast@digesa.sld.pe

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO TRINIDAD Y TOBAGO TRINITE ET TOBAGO

Annette Lashley
 Chief Chemist and Director of
 Food and Drugs
 Ministry of Health
 115 Frederick Street
 Port of Spain
 Tel. (809)623 2476 - Fax: (809)623 9528

URUGUAY

Arturo Navarro
 Miembro del Comité Nacional
 del CODEX - Abogado
 Director General
 Ministerio de Industria, Energía y Minería
 Rincón y Ciudadela
 Tel: (5982) 90 85 33 - Fax: (5982) 91 02 91

Ana Ma. Berti
 Miembro del Comité Nacional del Codex
 Director Laboratorio de Análisis
 Ministerio de Ganadería, Agricultura y Pesca
 Millán 4703
 Montevideo, Uruguay
 Tel. (5982) 39 30 69 - Fax. (5982) 39 30 69

Ana Aber
 Miembro del Comité Nacional del Codex
 Ministerio De Vivienda,
 Ordenamiento Territorial Y Medio Ambiente
 25 de Mayo 402
 Montevideo, Uruguay
 Tel: (05982) 96 51 32 - Fax: (05982) 96 51 32

Delvey Anchieri
 Miembro del Comité Nacional del Codex
 Directora Departamento de
 Higiene de Alimentos
 Ministerio Salud Publica
 18 de Julio 1892 4º piso
 Montevideo, Uruguay
 Tel: (05982) 49 83 02 - Fax: (05982) 49 83 02

Raúl Boccone
 Miembro del Comité Nacional del Codex
 Coordinador Nacional
 SGT No.3 /GMC/MERCOSUR
 Laboratorio Tecnológico del Uruguay
 Av. Italia 6201
 Montevideo, Uruguay
 Tel: (5982) 61 37 24 - Fax: (5982) 60 22 90

Hugo Cayrús
 Miembro del Comité Nacional del Codex
 Primer Secretario del Servicio Exterior
 Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
 Colonia 1206
 Montevideo, Uruguay
 Tel: (5982) 92 06 18 - Fax: (5982) 91 74 13

Héctor Lazaneo
 Miembro del Comité Nacional del Codex
 Médico Veterinario PhD
 Director de Industria Animal
 MINISTERIO DE GANADERIA,
 AGRICULTURA Y PESCA
 Constituyente 1476 piso 2, Montevideo
 Tel: (5982) 42 63 46 - Fax: (5982) 42 63 17

Anahid Mekdjian
 Miembro del Comité Nacional del Codex
 Congreso de Intendentes
 Intendencia Municipal de Montevideo
 18 de Julio y Ejido, Montevideo
 Tel: (5982) 90 49 76 - Fax: (5982) 92 04 67

Beatriz Ramos Cabanellas
 Miembro del Comité Nacional del Codex
 Directora del Area Defensa del Consumidor
 Ministerio de Economía
 Colonia y Paraguay, Montevideo
 Tel.(5982) 90 41 06 - Fax: (5982) 92 10 43

Juan Angel Rodríguez Servetti
 Miembro del Comité Nacional del CODEX
 Secretario
 Laboratorio Tecnológico del Uruguay
 Moreno 2749 / 202, Montevideo
 Tel: (5982) 80 53 39 - Fax: (5982) 60 22 90
 E. mail: j.rodrig@latu.org.uy

Daniel Scarone
 Miembro del Comité Nacional del Codex
 Ingeniero Agrónomo
 Dir. de Comercio Exterior
 Ministerio de Economía y Finanzas
 Colonia 1016 piso 2, Montevideo
 Tel: (5982) 92 03 37 - Fax: (5982) 92 07 16

VENEZUELA

Douglas Yanes
 Dirección de Higiene de los Alimentos
 Ministerio de Sanidad y Asistencia Social
 Centro Simón Bolívar
 Edificio Sur 4º piso Torresair
 Caracas, Venezuela

Josefina Reyes
 Médico Veterinario
 Jefe Div.Insumo Animal
 Dirección del Servicio Autónomo de
 Sanidad Agropecuaria (SA.SA.)
 Ministerio de Agricultura y Cria
 Caracas, Venezuela
 Tel. 509 0464 - Fax: 509 0140

OBSERVADORES

Renata Antonaz
 Ministerio de Ganadería, Agricultura y Pesca
 Ruta 8 Km 17.500, Montevideo
 Tel: (5982) 22 10 63 - Fax: (5982) 22 11 57

Gonzalo Arocena
 Ingeniero Agrónomo
 Director Gral. de Serv.Agrícolas, MGAP
 Millán 4703, Montevideo
 Tel. (5982) 39 22 19 - Fax: (5982) 39 20 74

Julio Barozzi
 Médico Veterinario
 Director Técnico Servicios Ganaderos, MGAP

Susana Bragaña
 Nutricionista
 Instituto Nacional de Alimentación - MTSS
 Uruguay 878, Montevideo
 Tel. (5982) 90 36 46 - Fax. (5982) 90 12 72

Roberto Caffarena
 Profesor Académico - Facultad de Veterinaria
 Reyes 1336, Montevideo, Uruguay
 Tel. (05982) 36 34 73

Gastón Casaux
 Doctor en Derecho - Profesor
 Facultad de Derecho
 18 de Julio 1824 p. 1, Montevideo, Uruguay
 Fax: (5982) 48 24 86

Jorge Castro
 Jefe de Sector Lácteos, LATU
 Av. Italia 6201
 Montevideo, Uruguay
 Tel: (5982) 61 37 24 - Fax (5982) 61 85 54
 E.mail: jcastro@latu.org.uy

Luis Clavijo Xavier
 Sudirector General
 Ministerio de Industria, Energía y Minería
 Rincón 747, Montevideo, Uruguay
 Tel: (5982) 98 71 61 - Fax: (5982) 91 76 41

Priscila Davison
 Médico- Unidad de Alimentación
 Consejo de Educación Primaria - Codicen
 Juan Carlos Gómez 1318
 Montevideo, Uruguay
 Tel: (5982) 95 94 73 - Fax: (5982) 40 32 44

Oliva Delgado Bianchi
 Coordinador División Fiscal
 Ministerio de Ganadería Agricultura y Pesca
 Ituzaingó 430
 Rivera, Uruguay
 Tel. (5982) 39 87 20 - Fax. (5982) 39 87 20

Isabel Dol
 Directora Salud Ambiental
 Ministerio de Salud Pública
 18 de Julio 1892 4º piso, Montevideo
 Tel. (5982) 49 83 02 - Fax (5982) 49 83 02
 e.mail: idol@bilbo.edu.uy

Sandra Elena
 Veterinaria - Oficina de Asesoramientos y
 Gestión Tecnológica - Facultad de Química
 Av. Gral. Flores 2124
 CC 1157 CP 11800
 Montevideo
 Tel: (5982) 94 18 03 - Fax: (5982) 94 18 06

Silvia Fuentes
 Socióloga
 Propuestas Investigación
 Avda. Italia y Luis A. de Herrera
 Rocha, Uruguay
 Tel: (0472) 4178 - Fax: (0472) 4178

Mario Gandelman
 Asesor Asuntos Internacionales, MGAP
 Constituyente 1476 piso 3
 Montevideo, Uruguay
 Tel: (05982) 42 63 65 - Fax: (05982) 42 63 31

Leonardo Garagorry
 Director de Salubridad e Higiene
 Intendencia Municipal de Rivera
 Rivera, Uruguay
 Tel: (0622) 3282 - Fax: (0622) 9972

Antonia Gelabert
 Asesor Bromatológico
 Cámara Industrial Alimentos Envasados
 Garibaldi 2473
 Montevideo
 Tel: (05982) 80 56 52 - Fax: (05982) 90 36 76

Daniel Gómez Bono
 Cámara Mercantil
 Av. Rondeau 1908 piso 1
 Montevideo, Uruguay
 Tel: (5982) 94 06 44 - Fax: (5982) 94 06 73

Mauricio González Lucas
 Jefe Inspectores Bromatología
 Intendencia Municipal de Rivera
 Rivera, Uruguay
 Tel : (0622) 2568 - Fax: (0622) 9972

Susana Guarnerio
 Economista
 Unidad de Asuntos Internacionales - MGAP
 Constituyente 1476 piso 3, Montevideo
 Tel: (5982) 42 63 58 - Fax: (5982) 42 63 31

Juan Angel Holenwegger
 Veterinario - Docente
 Zum Felde 1585 ap. 303, Montevideo
 Tel. (5982) 69 21 69 - Fax (5982) 68 01 30

Aldo Ibarra
 CONAPROLE
 Magallanes 1871, Montevideo
 Tel: (5982) 94 25 17 - Fax (5982) 94 72 67

Martha Illa
Médico- Directora Departamento,
Alimentacion y Nutrición
Ministerio Salud Publica
18 de Julio 1892 piso 3, Montevideo
Tel: (5982) 40 90 22 - Fax: (5982) 40 90 22

Mónica Larrechart
Asesor Médico Veterinario, MGAP
Constituyente 1476 piso 2, Montevideo.
Tel: (5982) 42 63 69 - Fax: (5982) 42 63 04

María Lemos
Química - Asesora
Asociacion de Importadores
Piedras 454, Montevideo, Uruguay
Tel: (5982) 96 07 96 - Fax: (5982) 96 07 96

Hilda Lingeri Carneiro
Directora
Intendencia Municipal de Montevideo
Juan Lavalle 570 /04, Montevideo
Tel. (5982) 39 23 65 - Fax (5982) 31 96 39

Mirta Lozano González
Inspector Jefe Unidad Alimentación
CEP - ANEP - CODICEN
Juan Carlos Gómez 1318, Montevideo
Tel: (5982) 95 94 73

Ana Laura Maceira Ceol
Química Farmacéutica
Conciliación 3979
Montevideo, Uruguay
Tel: (5982) 38 12 07

Ana María Maquieira Rebollo
Subjefe Sector Microbiología, LATU
Avda. Italia 6201, Montevideo
Tel. (5982) 61 37 24 - Fax: (5982) 60 47 53
E.mail: amaqui@latu.org.uy

Jorge Marchese
San Miguel 128
Montevideo, Uruguay
Tel. (5982) 38 40 70 - Fax: (5982) 35 15 57

Edgardo Martínez Zimarioff
Investigador - LIVDECO
Mario Cassinoni 1157, Montevideo
Tel: (5982) 41 21 74 - Fax: (5982) 48 72 21

María Elena Masoller
Química Farmacéutica
Directora Servicios Laboratorio, MGAP
Av. Millán 4703
Montevideo, Uruguay
Tel: (5982) 39 31 80 - Fax: (5982) 39 30 68

Dinorah Medina
Médica Veterinaria
Jefe Dpto. Control de Calidad
Instituto Nacional de Pesca
Constituyente 1497, Montevideo
Tel: (5982) 40 46 89 - Fax: (5982) 41 32 16

Ricardo Mendez
Médico Veterinario
Subdirector División Protección Alimentos
MGAP
Ruta 8 km 17.500, Montevideo
Tel: (5982) 22 10 63 - Fax (5982) 22 11 57

José Ma. Monzillo
Juan M. Blanes 1129 ap. 501
Montevideo, Uruguay
Tel. (5982) 58 92 84 - Fax: (5982) 57 29 31

Elia Esther Muñoz
Directora de Control de
Productos Veterinarios, MGAP
Camino Maldonado km. 17.500, Montevideo
Tel. (5982) 22 10 63 - Fax. (5982) 22 11 57

Annamaría Narizano
Química Farmacéutica
Sub Jefe Sector Análisis Químico, LATU
Av. Italia 6201, Montevideo
Tel: (5982) 61 37 24 - Fax: (5982) 61 85 54
E.mail: anarizan@latu.org.uy

Raúl Olagüe
Director Administrador
Instituto Nacional de Alimentacion - MTSS
Uruguay 878, Montevideo
Tel: (5982) 98 75 63 - Fax: (5982) 90 12 72

Mary Olivera
Directora General
Departamento Asistencia Social
Intendencia M. De Rocha
Orosman de los Santos 230
Rocha, Uruguay
Tel: (047) 23971 - Fax: (047) 23100

Laura Paz
Directora Presidenta
Liga Uruguaya de Defensa del Consumidor
Mario Cassinoni 1157, Montevideo
Tel: (5982) 41 21 74 - Fax: (5982) 48 72 21

Raúl Pérez Sánchez
Encargado Centro Inform. al Consumidor
Int. Municipal de Montevideo
18 de Julio y Ejido, Montevideo
Tel: (5982) 90 35 55 - Fax: (5982) 92 04 67

Cecilia Pesce Muñoz
 Fac. de Veterinaria
 Montevideo, Uruguay
 Tel. (5982) 62 64 13

Maya Piñeiro
 Doctora - Jefe del Sector Micotoxinas
 Lab. Tecnológico del Uruguay
 Av. Italia 6201 CP 11500
 Montevideo, Uruguay
 Tel: (5982) 61 37 24 - Fax: (5982) 61 85 54
 E.mail: maya@latu.org.uy

Selva Pombo
 Químico Farmacéutica - COUSA
 Camino al Paso de la Arena 2460
 Montevideo, Uruguay
 Tel. (5982) 32 40 01 - Fax. (5982) 32 45 35

Daniela Porra
 Estudiante - Facultad de Derecho
 Bompland 632, Montevideo
 Tel. (5982) 70 07 02

Loreley Puertollano
 Doctora en Derecho y C.Sociales
 Instituto Nacional De Alimentacion- MTSS
 Uruguay 878, Montevideo
 Tel. (5982) 90 36 46 - Fax: (5982) 90 12 72

Katia Puchcariov
 Ministerio de Ganaderia Agricultura y Pesca
 Pastoriza 1308 ap. 1, Montevideo
 Tel: (05982) 35 13 33 - Fax: (05982) 39 30 68

Raquel Ramilo
 Centro De Fabricantes de Bebida
 Pilcomayo 4986, Montevideo
 Tel. (5982) 93 09 03 - Fax. (5982) 90 70 49

Beatriz Ruiz
 Contador Público - CEADU
 Canelones 1136, Montevideo
 Tel: (5982) 92 54 48 - Fax: (5982) 92 54 48
 E.mail: ceadu@chasque.apc.org

María del Luján Servillo
 Liga Uruguaya Defensa Consumidor
 Duvimioso Terra 1157, Montevideo
 Tel: (5982) 41 21 74 - Fax: (5982) 48 72 21

Nery Fabián Suárez Zapata
 Inspector Bromatología
 Intendencia Municipal De Rivera
 Rivera, Uruguay
 Tel: (0622) 2568 - Fax: (0622) 9972

Roberto Tenconi
 Ingeniero Químico
 Jefe de Sector Análisis Químicos, LATU
 Avda. Italia 6201, Montevideo
 Tel. (5982) 60 37 24 - Fax: (5982) 61 85 54

Hugo Tihista
 Ingeniero Agrónomo
 Subcomite Codex Higiene De Alimentos
 Daniel Fernández Crespo 2138, Montevideo
 Tel: (5982) 94 53 44 - Fax (5982) 9450 04

Alejandra Torre
 Ingeniera Química - LATU
 Avda. Italia 6201, Montevideo
 Tel. (5982) 61 37 24
 E.mail: atorre@latu.org

Graziella Verger
 Jefe Sector Microbiología, LATU
 Avda. Italia 6201, Montevideo
 Tel. (5982) 61 37 24 - Fax. (5982) 60 47 53
 E.mail: gverger@latu.org.uy

Susan Weissel
 Dirección Defensa del Consumidor
 Ministerio de Economía y Finanzas
 Montevideo, Uruguay

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS ORGANIZACIONES INTERNACIONALES

CONFEDERACION MUNDIAL DE LA SALUD ANIMAL (COMISA)

Ricardo Wyse
 Director - COMISA
 Hipólito Yrigoyen 850
 Buenos Aires, Argentina
 Tel: (541) 331 9896 - Fax: (541) 331 9896

Luiz Cramer
 COMISA
 P.O. Box 2000 WBD-200 A Rahway NJ
 USA 07065
 Tel: (908) 726 2858 - Fax: (908) 726 2940

FEDERACION LATINOAMERICANA DE LA INDUSTRIA PARA LA SALUD ANIMAL (FILASA)

Raúl Guerrero
 Representante - FILASA
 2001 West Main Street,
 Greenfield, IN 46140 - USA
 Tel. (01.317) 277 4434-Fax. (01.317) 277 755
 E.mail: rguerrero@hilly.com

CONSUMERS INTERNATIONAL

Mirta Crovetto
 Coordinadora Programa Alimentario para
 América Latina y el Caribe - Oficina Regional
 para América Latina y el Caribe
 Las Hortensias 2371
 Santiago, Chile
 Tel. (562) 335 1695 - Fax: (562) 231 0773
 e.mail: consint@entelchile.net
 Página web: <http://w.urw.consumersinternational.org>

Pablo Guidarelli
 Licenciado en Nutrición
 Consumers International
 René 1558 7° piso
 Buenos Aires, Argentina
 Tel: (541) 375 3733 - Fax: (541) 375 3737

Héctor Villaverde
 Lic. Comunicación Social
 Consumers International
 Canelones 1136
 Montevideo, Uruguay
 Tel: (05982) 92 54 48 - Fax: (05982) 92 54 48
 e.mail: ceadu@chasque.apc.org

Silvia Vignola
 Médico Veterinaria - Consumers International
 R.Cardoso de Almeida 1717
 San Pablo, Brasil
 Tel.(55 11) 62 4266 - Fax (55 11) 62 9844
 E.mail: idec@eu.ausp.br
 Home page: <http://eu.ausp.br/~idec>

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF GROCERY MANUFACTURES

Marilyn Schramm
 Director of Nutrition and Regulations
 for Kellogg Latin America
 1010 Winconstin Ave. N.Y. Suit 900
 Washington D.C. 20007 - USA
 Tel: (202) 337 9400 - Fax: (202) 337 4508

INSTITUTO INTERAMERICANO DE COOPERACION PARA LA AGRICULTURA (IICA)

Julio César Delgado Arce
 Especialista Regional en Sanidad Vegetal
 IICA - Oficina en Argentina
 Defensa 113 p.10 - (1065) Cap. Federal
 Buenos Aires, Argentina
 Tel. (541) 345 1209/1210; 331-8541/8542
 Fax: (541) 345 1208/1210
 E.mail: jdelgado@udiica.org.ar

INSTITUTO DE NUTRICION DE CENTRO AMERICA Y PANAMA (INCAP)

Omar Dary
 Jefe Unidad de Análisis y Protección de
 Alimentos - INCAP
 4 calle 7-30 Zona 1
 Guatemala
 Tel. (502) 471 9912 - Fax. (502) 473 6529
 E.mail: odary@incap.org.gt

FEDERACION PANAMERICANA DE LECHERIA (FEPALE)

Eduardo Fresco León
 Secretario General de FEPALE
 Ituzaingó 1324 esc. 503
 Montevideo, Uruguay
 Tel. (5982) 95 76 70 - Fax. (5982) 96 53 56
 E.mail: fepale@adinet.com.uy

INTERNATIONAL LIFE SCIENCES INSTITUTE (ILSI)

Maxime Buyckx
 Representative
 ILSI - USA
 Tel: (202) 659 0074 - Fax: (202) 659 3859

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS (FAO)

Michel Négrin
 Representante de FAO en Uruguay
 Julio Herrera y Obes 1292
 Montevideo, Uruguay
 Tel. (5982) 91 25 10 - Fax (5982) 91 26 12

Cecilio Morón
 Oficial Regional de Política Alimentaria y
 Nutrición
 Oficina Regional de la FAO para
 América Latina y el Caribe
 Casilla 10095 - Santiago, Chile
 Tel: (562) 699 1005 - Fax: (562) 696 1121
 e.mail: cecilio.moron@field.fao.org

Gabriel Rodríguez Marques
 Oficial de Programa
 FAO
 Julio Herrera y Obes 1292
 Montevideo, Uruguay
 Tel. (5982) 91 73 40 - Fax (5982) 92 12 03
 e.mail: fao.ury@field.fao.org

Horacio Brugnini
Relaciones Públicas
FAO
Julio Herrera y Obes 1292
Montevideo, Uruguay
Tel. (5982) 91 73 40 - Fax (5982) 92 12 03
e.mail: fao.ury@field.fao.org

Eduardo Méndez
FAO Consultant
Avda. San Jerónimo 1172
México D.F., México
Tel. (525) 687 4426 - Fax: (525) 543 9189
E.mail 104164.767@compuserve.com

Humberto Guerrero
FAO Consultant
2117 Plymouth Rock
Richardson, TX 75081 USA
Tel: (01.972) 669.0071-Fax: (01.214)748 6570

**PAN AMERICAN HEALTH
ORGANIZATION (PAHO)/
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
(WHO)**

Jaime Estupiñán
Director Instituto Panamericano
de Protección de Alimentos
PAHO/WHO - OPS/OMS
Talcahuano 1660 Martínez
Buenos Aires, Argentina
Tel: (541) 792 0599 - Fax: (541) 793 0927
e.mail: inppaz@internet.siscotel.com

Colette Kinnon
Miembro del Grupo Especial de la OMS
sobre Economía de la Salud
WHO/OMS Ginebra
CH 1211 Ginebra, Suiza
Tel. (41-2) 791 2465
e.mail: kinnonc@who.ch

Roberto Salvatella
Consultor PAHO/WHO - OPS/OMS
Av. Brasil 2697
Montevideo, Uruguay
Tel: (5982) 77 35 90 - Fax: (5982) 77 35 30
e.mail: ops.uru@adinet.com.uy

Norberto Moran
INPPAZ/PAHO/WHO - INPPAZ/OPS/OMS
Talcahuano 1660 CP 1640
Martínez
Buenos Aires, Argentina
Tel: (541) 793 0527 - Fax: (541) 793 0927

Lieven Uytterhaegen
Food Analyst
INPPAZ/PAHO/WHO - INPPAZ /OPS/OMS
Talcahuano 1660 CP 1640
Martínez, Prov. Buenos Aires
Argentina
Tel: (541) 792 0087 - Fax: (541) 793 0927
E.mail: inppaz@internet.siscotel.com

**CODEX SECRETARIAT
SECRETARIADO CODEX**

Gregory Orriss
Chief, Joint FAO/WHO
Food Standards Programme
FAO - Via delle Terme di Caracalla
00100 Roma, Italia
Tel: (39) 6 522 52042 - Fax: (39) 6 522 54593

Selma H. Doyran
Food Standards Officer
Joint FAO/WHO
Food Standards Programme
FAO - Via delle Terme di Caracalla
00100 Roma, Italia
Tel: (396) 522 55826 - Fax (396) 522 54523
e.mail: selma.doyran@fao.org

**URUGUAY SECRETARIAT
SECRETARIADO URUGUAY**

Adriana Guido
Comisión Organizadora
Dirección Adjunta -MGAP
Constituyente 1476 piso 3
Montevideo, Uruguay
Tel. (5982) 42 63 25 - Fax (5982) 48 30 37

Gustavo Blanco
Comisión Organizadora
Dirección Gral. de Servicios Agrícolas -
MGAP
Avda. Millán 4703
Montevideo, Uruguay
Tel. (5982) 39 79 24 - Fax (5982) 39 60 53

Cristina Vaz
Unidad de Asuntos Internacionales - MGAP
Constituyente 1476 piso 3
Tel. (5982) 42 63 58 - Fax. (5982) 42 63 31

Ma.del Rosario Molinari
Comisión Organizadora
Unidad de Asuntos Internacionales - MGAP
Constituyente 1476 piso 3
Tel. (5982) 42 63 58 - Fax. (5982) 42 63 31