



**Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations**



**World Health
Organization**

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE FAO/WHO TRAINING WORKSHOP ON

UNDERSTANDING REGIONAL STANDARDS

Tokyo, Japan, 4th November 2012



**FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR ASIA
*18th Session, Tokyo, Japan (5 – 9 November 2012)***

Introduction

In recognition of regional standards as important means for ensuring safe and fair food trade among countries in a given region, FAO and WHO, with the financial assistance of the Codex Trust Fund, organized a training workshop on “Understanding Regional Standards” on November 4th 2012 in Tokyo, Japan. This workshop was held prior to the 18th Session of CCASIA. Among the forty five participants that attended the workshop, thirty one participants from sixteen Asian countries were supported by the Codex Trust Fund.

A short summary of the workshop was prepared and made available to CCASIA participants as Conference Room Document 11 (CRD 11). CRD 11 is available at:

http://www.maff.go.jp/e/ccasia/18/pdf/as18_crd11e.pdf

Background and Objective

Regional standards are developed to reflect food safety/quality issues related to specific food products of particular relevance to a given region. While regional standards constitute an important part of FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committees’ work, it has been observed that CCASIA member countries are not fully aware of the procedures and the rationale to prepare and submit new proposals for regional standards that are soundly supported by adequate justification (including evidence/data) and aligned with regional interests.

The objective of the meeting was to strengthen participants’ understanding of Codex regional standards scope, procedures, and the rationale behind them.

Summary of Session I

The FAO and WHO representatives welcomed the participants and opened the meeting by introducing the workshop background and objective.

The participants subsequently received an overview on “Role of the FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committees”, in particular on:

- The organizational structure of Codex;
- The role of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees and their functions;
The importance and relevance of Codex regional standards and how they fit in the mandate of the Regional Coordinating Committees highlighting that **regional standards need to be based on regional interests**. They focus on the needs of the region concerning standards and control of food products traded exclusively, or almost exclusively, within the region

Session I concluded with a presentation that specifically focused on the Regional FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committee for ASIA (CCASIA), particularly the terms of reference for CCASIA and the regional strategic plan

Presentations of Session I are available on website of the regional coordinator for the Codex Aisan region at: <http://www.maff.go.jp/e/ccasia/18/workshop.html>

Summary of Session II

In the second session of the workshop, participants were trained on Codex procedures for preparing and submitting proposals for new work. To facilitate understanding of the Codex procedures and their implications, four practical examples were presented to the group as case studies outlining experiences and lessons learned in the development of regional standards (Soy sauce – Japan; Insects – Lao People’s Democratic Republic; Durian – Thailand; Ginseng – Republic of Korea).

Presentations of Session II, including the four case studies, are available on the website of the regional coordinator for the Codex Asian region at: <http://www.maff.go.jp/e/ccasia/18/workshop.html>

Summary of Session III

A working group exercise was held in Session III to identify topics of common interest which could be suitable for development of regional standards. These topics were used during the workshop as examples to support the discussion. Participants were encouraged to share experiences in challenges they faced with regional standard development and the training team facilitated discussions to identify solutions to those issues.

Among the subjects considered during the working group exercise, the following were identified and used to guide discussion and subsequently presented to the wider group.

- Turmeric powder (a rhizomatous herbaceous perennial plant of the ginger family)
 - Produced regionally but traded internationally. The group noted that development of an international standard might be more appropriate in this case. The group also noted the relevant ongoing discussion in the Commission to establish a subsidiary body on spices, aromatic herbs and their formulations whose terms of reference might encompass turmeric.
- Dried fish – “Maldivian fish” (traditional sun dried tuna from the Maldives)
 - This product is widely consumed in the southern part of Asia, both as food and as product to improve flavour. The group noted that a clear scope/product categorization would be needed.
 - The importance of referring to other relevant work done in Codex, and in particular by CCFPP, was also noted.
- Edible insects

- A discussion paper on edible crickets and their products is already on the CCASIA agenda.
 - The group noted the difficulty in obtaining trade data as these products are primarily traded informally.
 - There would also be a need to consider other relevant implications related to production systems (wild harvest vs farmed) and trade in live vs processed insects.
- Coconut gel/ nata de coco
 - This product is also produced regionally but traded internationally. There is a need to consider whether an international standard would be more appropriate than a regional standard for this product.
 - The group noted the need to consider the nature of the product and also to determine whether it is already covered by other relevant Codex texts.
 - The need to consider if other regions produce/trade this product was also noted.

Conclusions

Main conclusions and discussion points of the workshop are summarized below.

1 Codex Standard development and Regional Coordinating Committees

The workshop noted that:

- The Coordinating Committee provides a forum to identify priorities in the region and to facilitate collaboration between countries to progress these issues. Additionally, regional standards are an important part of regional committee work and are reflected in the CCASIA Strategic Plan.
- Prioritization is required to ensure the effective implementation of the CCASIA workplan.

2 Project document development

The workshop noted that:

- New work proposals need to follow Codex procedures and, in particular, the need to ensure that submissions are fully supported by adequate justification (including evidence/data) often compiled in a discussion paper and are **aligned with regional interests**.
- Members should consult with other countries and the Chair of the relevant Committee(s) when proposing new work.
- Trade limited to within the region (intra-regional trade), versus global trade is a key decision point for determining whether a standard should be regional or international and the Coordinating Committee can assist in this process. However, in practice, other factors

can also be considered in determining the appropriateness of developing a regional standard, such as the work load of relevant committees, type of commodity and expertise required.

- The scope of the proposed standard should reflect the interests of the countries where the commodity is produced. The scope also needs to be well-defined so the feasibility of standardization can be determined, to facilitate data collection and to ensure clear standard development.
- Food standards work undertaken by other bodies needs to be considered when considering new work.
- There is a significant resource investment in leading the development of project documents and initiatives to assist countries in undertaking this work need to be developed.
- The SPS Agreement references only global standards as baseline and not regional standards.

3 Data availability

The workshop noted that:

- Data availability is critical for development of proposals and collaboration between countries is needed. WGs are useful processes to help gain such data.
- Relevant data are necessary to undertake risk analysis work, when necessary.
- Data collection within countries is reliant on the input from many agencies.
- The absence of consumption and contamination data can be addressed in some instances by the GEMS regional food diets and Total Diet Studies.
- Improved linkages between regional standard development and the regional work of FAO and WHO may help assist in addressing data gaps.

Workshop Evaluation

At the end of the workshop, the participants were asked to fill in a workshop evaluation form. Participants were highly satisfied with the administrative and logistical organization of the meeting. Participants also expressed high appreciation for the topic and objectives of the training workshop, as very relevant to their work. Quality of the training as well as learning achievements were also highly scored.

Annex 1 – Workshop Agenda

FAO/WHO TRAINING WORKSHOP ON UNDERSTANDING REGIONAL STANDARDS

Tokyo, Japan, 4th November 2012

AGENDA

SESSION I: Introduction		
9.30	Welcome and Introduction	<i>FAO/WHO</i>
9.45	Role of the Coordinating Committees	<i>Codex Secretariat</i>
10.00	Coordinating Committee for Asia - Terms of Reference for CCASIA - The Regional Strategic Plan	<i>CCASIA Coordinator</i>
10.30	Coffee Break	
SESSION II: Regional Standards		
10.45	How to prepare and submit proposals for new work <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Procedures and steps• Existing criteria for consideration as a regional standard• Issues to consider when elaborating new proposals<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Regional priorities○ Data requirements for regional standards○ Volume of trade of the food product, market value, distribution, etc○ Others <p>Questions and answers</p>	<i>FAO/WHO and Codex Secretariat</i>
11.30	Open discussion (Facilitator – FAO/WHO) Examples of activities related to regional standards to guide the discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Soy sauce (presented by Japan)– Edible Insects (presented by Lao People’s Democratic Republic)– Durian (presented by Thailand)– Ginseng (presented by Republic of Korea)	<i>All</i>
13.00	LUNCH	

	SESSION III: Groups exercise	
14.00	Working group exercise to identify topics of common interest, that are suitable for development of regional standards	<i>4 groups</i>
15.00	Presentation to the plenary of the 4 groups discussions (8-10 min each) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanation/ justification of the selected topic 	
15.30	Coffee Break	
16.00	Open discussion (Facilitator – FAO/WHO) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of possible topics for regional standards • Identification of challenges in developing sound proposal on the identified topics • Identification of solutions to overcome these challenges (including possible collaborations among countries) 	<i>All</i>
17.00	Conclusions	<i>FAO/WHO</i>
17.30	End	

Annex 2 – List of Participants

FAO/WHO TRAINING WORKSHOP ON *UNDERSTANDING REGIONAL STANDARDS*

Tokyo, Japan, 4th November 2012

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