



منظمة الأغذية  
والزراعة  
للأمم المتحدة

联合国  
粮食及  
农业组织

Food  
and  
Agriculture  
Organization  
of  
the  
United  
Nations

Organisation  
des  
Nations  
Unies  
pour  
l'alimentation  
et  
l'agriculture

Продовольственная и  
сельскохозяйственная  
организация  
Объединенных  
Наций

Organización  
de las  
Naciones  
Unidas  
para la  
Agricultura  
y la  
Alimentación

## THIRTY-FIRST REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

**Panama City, Panama, 26-30 April 2010**

### REPORT ON CODEX ALIMENTARIUS AND FOOD SAFETY IN THE REGION

1. The Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) is an intergovernmental body with 182 member countries within the framework of the Joint Food Standards Programme established by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), with the purpose of protecting the health of consumers and ensuring fair practices in the food trade. The Commission also promotes the coordination of all work on food safety and quality standards undertaken by governmental and non-governmental international organizations.
2. The Codex Alimentarius<sup>1</sup> is the result of the Commission's work: a collection of internationally accepted food standards, guidelines and codes of practice that serve as point of reference for the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures.
3. There is growing international concern over the observed emergence or increase of food-borne diseases. Consumers around the world are seeking ever greater assurances about the safety and quality of the food they eat.
4. In its endeavour to promote food safety and quality, the CAC needs to ensure more effective participation of all its members in the setting of globally relevant standards. This will help members to become more aware of the importance of harmonizing food safety and quality standards on the international level and of improving control systems for food products to ensure their safety and quality. Since the early 1990s, there has been a considerable increase in CAC membership, with developing countries now accounting for a significant proportion of the total.

<sup>1</sup> Latin for food law or code.

## **I. Participation of Latin American and Caribbean countries in Codex meetings (2007-2009)**

### **A. Background**

5. All Codex members should be able to participate in all stages of the standards development process, including submission of written comments and physical presence at meetings. The only way to interact with other delegations and to take part in a dynamic process of decision-making is to actually participate in person, even though written comments made during Steps 3, 5, 6 and 8 are taken into consideration at the meetings.

6. Preparation of a proposed draft text at Step 2 does not require the participation of all members as the Commission's subsidiary bodies generally entrust the preparation of a proposed draft to one member/observer or to a working group of members and observers. Similarly, there is no need for travel if the drafting is done electronically. However, if the drafting takes place at a meeting requiring physical presence, the ability of members to travel will impact on the composition of the group doing the drafting.

7. As regards the critical review of the Executive Committee that intervenes prior to Step 1 (review of new work proposals) and prior to Steps 5 and 8 (review of texts for adoption by the Commission), the problem of physical participation does not arise as the travel expenses of developing country members of the Executive Committee are covered by the Codex budget (Rule XIII.3).<sup>2</sup>

### **Participation of developing countries in the work of Codex. Discussion in FAO/WHO Committees**

8. The Commission considered matters relating to the participation of developing countries in Codex meetings at its 31<sup>st</sup> Session. It agreed that this issue should be examined by the Committee on General Principles at its 25<sup>th</sup> Session on the basis of a document prepared by the Secretariat that would include data on developing country participation in Codex meetings and proposals to improve the situation. The Commission also recommended that the Coordinating Committees should consider the matter and should report their views to its next session. Their respective conclusions would be presented to the 32<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Commission for further consideration. The Commission also agreed to include a specific item on this matter in its agenda for the 32<sup>nd</sup> Session.

9. This document reports the discussions held in the committees and the 32<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Commission.

### **Opinions on developing country participation expressed at Codex Committee and Commission sessions in 2008/2009**

#### ***Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (CCLAC), 16<sup>th</sup> Session (Acapulco, Mexico, 10 to 14 November 2008)***<sup>3</sup>

10. The Coordinating Committee recalled that the Commission, at its 31<sup>st</sup> Session, had recommended that the Coordinating Committees consider the matter of developing country participation and that they communicate their views to the 32<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Commission. In response, the Codex Secretariat was gathering information for a document on this subject and

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<sup>2</sup> Procedural Manual of the Codex Alimentarius Commission:  
[http://www.codexalimentarius.net/web/procedural\\_manual.jsp](http://www.codexalimentarius.net/web/procedural_manual.jsp)

<sup>3</sup> Codex Alimentarius Commission, 32<sup>nd</sup> Session (Rome, 2009). Report of the 16<sup>th</sup> Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (Acapulco, Mexico, 2008) ALINORM 09/32/36, paras 6-8 and 33-40.  
<http://www.codexalimentarius.net/web/archives.jsp?year=09>

for a request from the WTO Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Committee) regarding the status of participation of developing countries in the work of the three standard-setting bodies.

11. Several delegations stated that the document should not only comprise statistics on participation but should also analyse the impact of the Codex Trust Fund on broadening the participation of developing countries. The Secretariat announced that the analysis of participation in the last 12 months was nearing completion. The delegations expressed their concern over the time frame for the study which would be insufficient to analyse the participation of developing countries. They therefore emphasized that such a study should analyse participation during a sufficiently long period of at least one to two years before the Codex Trust Fund was established. In addition, the study should be sent to countries sufficiently in advance of the next meeting of the Codex Committee on General Principles (CCGP).

12. The Delegation of Costa Rica<sup>4</sup>, on behalf of the working group on the Trust Fund, gave a presentation in which it highlighted the salient points of the document, including concern over the bias that had existed since the Fund's inception in favour of other regions and to the detriment of Latin America and the Caribbean, given the indicators and classification of developing countries. As an increasing number of countries of the region were ceasing to be eligible to the Fund in terms of the access criteria, even though continuing to be developing countries, the support given to the region was declining. The current situation was undermining the legitimacy of Codex standards, as those with universal application could only be adopted with equal participation of Codex members in the standards development process. Based on these observations, the Delegation presented the conclusions, requirements and proposals of the working group on new criteria for the allocation of funds from the Trust Fund.

13. The Committee expressed its full support for the conclusions, requirements and proposals put forward in the document. Many delegations requested that FAO and WHO review and revise the current criteria for classification and distribution of funds, as retention of the present system of classification by FAO and WHO could jeopardize the principle of neutrality that should govern both organizations in their role as administrators of third party funds. The following specific comments were made:

- the effective participation of developing countries should be taken into account;
- the current criteria of classification and fund distribution and the employment of country grouping were not justified and discriminated against Latin America and the Caribbean in relation to other regions, as they violated the principle of neutrality in an important intergovernmental negotiating forum such as Codex;
- the repeated and documented delays in final approval of travel authorizations resulted in a doubling of airfare, with a consequent waste of resources from the Trust Fund. Furthermore, the limited availability of staff at the Trust Fund Secretariat in Geneva hampered effective and timely communication between countries and the Secretariat. Clear and precise logistic procedures were needed to handle the administrative steps efficiently and within a reasonable time frame, including the timely dispatch of air tickets and daily allowances to attend a given meeting;
- the Trust Fund should not cover expenses for capacity building but should concentrate on helping countries participate in Codex meetings;
- administrative costs and decision-making in the management of the Trust Fund lacked the transparency intended at its creation;

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<sup>4</sup> FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean, 16<sup>th</sup> Session (Acapulco, Mexico, 2008). Issues of significance to the Region. CX/LAC 08/16/9. [http://ftp.fao.org/codex/cclac16/la16\\_09e.pdf](http://ftp.fao.org/codex/cclac16/la16_09e.pdf)

- the new criteria for the Trust Fund should take into account the measures adopted by beneficiary countries to align their national regulations with Codex standards.

14. The Representative of FAO recalled that the Trust Fund had been established to ensure neutrality and objectivity in managing contributions from donors to help developing countries participate in the Codex process. While the criteria for eligibility and allocation of funds reflected the desire and priorities of donors to focus their assistance on countries in greatest need, especially countries that would otherwise not be able to participate, the indicators that were currently used to determine the classification of beneficiary countries could be reviewed and improved, possibly under the forthcoming mid-term review of the Trust Fund. In view of the importance of the issue, FAO presented to the Thirtieth FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean (April 2008) an information document analysing the participation of developing countries in Codex meetings in the period 2005-2007.

15. By way of conclusion, the Committee agreed to request the Secretariat of the Trust Fund to pay due attention to the proposals set out in Appendix II of the report and requested that FAO and WHO facilitate dialogue between donor and beneficiary countries so that identified concerns and proposals for improvement could be openly discussed.

#### **Codex Committee on General Principles<sup>5</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> Session (Paris, 30 March to 3 April 2009)<sup>6</sup>**

16. The subject of the Trust Fund was addressed at the 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the CCGP during its examination of the participation of developing countries in the work of Codex. The Committee recalled that the plan of action for greater participation of developing countries in the work of the Codex featured under Goal 5 of the Codex Strategic Plan 2008-2013. In this connection, the Committee pointed out that there were other appropriate mechanisms for promoting the participation of developing countries, such as mentoring, cooperation between Codex Contact Points, the co-hosting of Codex sessions, the organization of national and regional seminars/workshops and South-South cooperation. The Committee acknowledged that stimulating capacity building in developing countries was an undertaking of vital importance to ensure the enhanced participation of developing countries in the work of Codex.

17. Some members stated that earlier distribution of Codex working documents, especially in languages other than English, would also facilitate effective participation of Codex members. Several delegations stressed that the level of developing country participation in the work of Codex continued to be insufficient, in spite of efforts made through the Codex Trust Fund to rectify inequalities in participation between industrialized countries and developing countries. In their opinion, the problem was related to the Codex structure, to the way its meetings were organized, to the difficulties in obtaining visas, and to the availability of documents in French and Spanish, and there was an urgent need to remedy the situation to ensure legitimacy and transparency of process. Reference was also made to the number of working groups that operated on the basis of in-person meetings, at which developing country presence was even lower than at the more formal meetings.

#### **Codex Alimentarius Commission, 32<sup>nd</sup> Session (Rome, 29 June to 4 July 2009)<sup>7</sup>**

18. The Representative of WHO, on behalf of FAO and WHO, informed the Commission that a mid-term evaluation of the project was planned to assess its achievements and provide

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<sup>5</sup> CCGP

<sup>6</sup> Report of the 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Committee on General Principles (Paris, France, March/April 2009) ALINORM 09/32/33 paras. 118-140. See <http://www.codexalimentarius.net/web/archives.jsp?year=09>

<sup>7</sup> Codex Alimentarius Commission, 32<sup>nd</sup> Session (Rome, 2009) ALINORM 09/32/REP paras. 272-295. See <http://www.codexalimentarius.net/web/archives.jsp?year=09>

strategic direction for the second half of the project, as well as for its possible extension beyond the 12-year period, and drew the attention of the Commission to the draft proposal.

19. Noting the critical role of the Trust Fund in ensuring the participation of developing countries in the Codex process, some delegations suggested that resources be increased by seeking new ways of obtaining extrabudgetary contributions from donors, including South-South cooperation, thus extending the duration of the project beyond 12 years. These delegations noted that transparency, efficiency and equity in the distribution of the Fund was crucial and suggested that the allocation criteria for the Fund be reviewed to better reflect the socio-economic situation of individual countries. Some delegations suggested that the creation of regional funds should also be considered as an alternative mechanism.

20. As regards the distribution of the Fund, Mexico, speaking as Coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean, expressed the concern of the region that the current allocation did not fully reflect country needs.

21. With regard to the concerns expressed by delegations about transparency in Fund allocation to different country groups, the WHO Representative reminded the Commission that at the project's inception it had been agreed to allocate 60% of the Fund to Group 1 (least developed countries and other low-income countries), 30% to Group 2 (lower middle-income countries) and 10% to Group 3 (upper middle-income countries), with a support period of 7, 5 and 3 or 4 years respectively, and that each country's status had been reviewed every year on the basis of the report of the relevant UN agencies. The Representative also noted that the donors had contributed to the Trust Fund in support of these criteria and that the need for and implications of modifying the allocation criteria would be considered at the mid-term review.

22. The Commission supported the conclusions of the Chair that the main solutions to the problems of participation were to strengthen the Trust Fund and to concentrate on FAO and WHO capacity-building activities in the developing countries; to encourage co-hosting of Codex sessions; to employ mentoring mechanisms through intraregional cooperation and the exchange of experiences, especially among Codex Contact Points; South-South cooperation; and to ensure the timely distribution of documents in the official languages. The Commission agreed that these measures would contribute towards implementing Goal 5 of the Strategic Plan 2008-2013, and noted that they could be considered in conjunction with the Mid-Term Evaluation of the Trust Fund.

## **B. Tables of participation of LAC countries in Codex meetings (July 2007-July 2009)**

23. **Scope.** Participation was examined on the basis of physical presence of Codex member countries at meetings of the Commission and its Committees from July 2007 to July 2009. The compiled data relate to 38 Codex meetings.

24. **Method.** The data on attendance of member countries were taken from the lists of participants in Codex meeting reports. The presence of each member country was noted manually, without consideration of the size of delegation.

25. **Results.** The results per subregion and meeting are given in Tables 1 and 2 respectively. The tables indicate that Committee meetings with highest LAC participation (12 or more countries) during this period were those of the Committee on Food Hygiene (November 2007 and December 2008), the Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (May 2008), and the Committee on Food Labelling (May 2008 and May 2009).

26. There was a much higher participation of LAC countries in the 16<sup>th</sup> Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (Mexico, November 2008) with 76% of the LAC total attending, against 64% in the 15<sup>th</sup> Session of the

Coordinating Committee (Argentina, November 2006), as reported to the FAO Regional Conference in 2008.<sup>8</sup>

27. The participation of LAC countries in Codex Alimentarius Commission sessions (67% for July 2008 and 58% for July 2009) remained similar to the participation reported for the previous biennium (58% for July 2006 and 61% for July 2007) to the FAO Regional Conference in 2008. Mexico is the only LAC country that formally hosts a committee: the Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables. Guatemala hosted the Committee on Food Hygiene for 2008 only.

28. Graphs 1, 2 and 3 track country attendance of Codex Committee and Commission meetings during this period. Graph 1 shows that Cuba has by far the highest participation among the Caribbean countries (19/38); Graph 2 shows that Mexico (24/38) and Costa Rica (22/38) top participation of the Central America and Mexico subregion; while Graph 3 identifies Brazil as the leading South American participant (35/38), followed by Argentina (26/38) and Chile (22/38).

29. Table 3 provides information on the level of participation of countries with Trust Fund (TF) support for 2008 by Codex region.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> 30<sup>th</sup> FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean (LARC/08/INF/7) <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/meeting/013/k1757e.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> *FAO/WHO Project and Trust Fund for Enhanced Participation in Codex*. June 2009. ALINORM 09/32/9E. <ftp://ftp.fao.org/codex/CAC/CAC32/al3209Ee.pdf>

**Table 1: Meetings of Codex Alimentarius Committees and Commission for the period July 2007 to July 2008**

COUNTRIES	7 <sup>th</sup> Session of the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Food Derived from Biotechnology (Japan, Sept. 07)	17 <sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods (USA, Sept 07)	1 <sup>st</sup> Session of the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance (Korea, October 07)	16 <sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (Australia, Nov 2007)	29 <sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (Germany Nov 07)	39 <sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Food Hygiene (India, Nov 07)	60 <sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Italy, Dec 07))	4 <sup>st</sup> Session of the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on the Processing and Handling of Quick Frozen Foods (Thailand, Feb 08)	29 <sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Fish and Fishery Products (Norway, Feb 08)	8 <sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Natural Mineral Waters (Switzerland, Feb 08)	8 <sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Milk and Milk Products (New Zealand, Feb 08)	29 <sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling (Hungry, March 08)	40 <sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Food Additives (China, Apr 08)	40 <sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Pesticide Residues (China, Apr 08)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Session of the Committee on Contaminants in Foods (Netherlands, Apr 08)	14 <sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (Mexico, May 08)	36 <sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Food Labelling (Canada, May 08)	61 <sup>st</sup> Session of the Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Geneva, Jun 08)	31 <sup>st</sup> Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Switzerland, Jul 08)
CARIBBEAN	1	1	0	2	1	3	0	0	1	2	0	2	1	1	2	4	4	0	5
CENTRAL AMERICA & MEXICO	3	3	2	2	2	5	1	1	1	0	1	0	2	2	1	3	3	1	8
SOUTH AMERICA	4	4	2	4	4	4	1	1	2	2	3	4	3	5	2	5	6	2	9
Total participation of LAC countries per meeting	8	8	4	8	7	12	2	2	4	4	4	6	6	8	5	12	13	3	22
% participation of LAC countries per meeting *	24	24	12	24	21	36	6	6	12	12	12	18	18	24	15	36	39	9	67

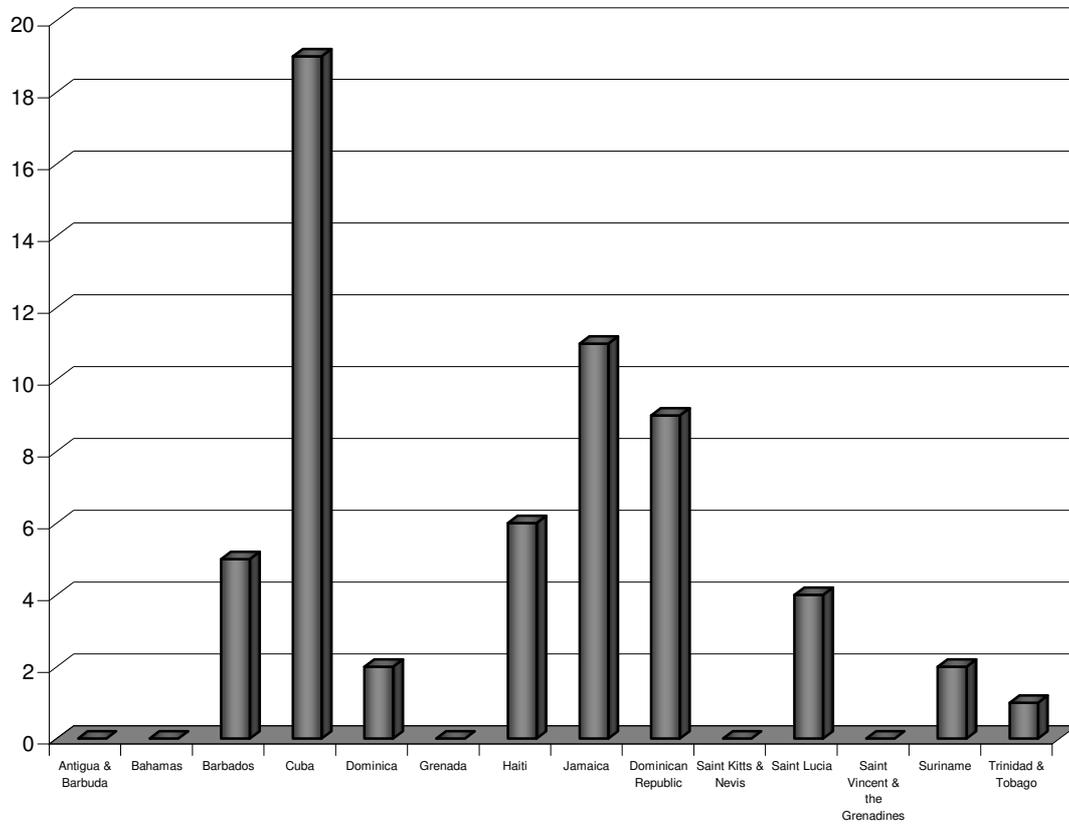
\* % of LAC countries participating out of total number of LAC countries

**Table 2: Meetings of Codex Alimentarius Committees and Commission for the period July 2008 to July 2009**

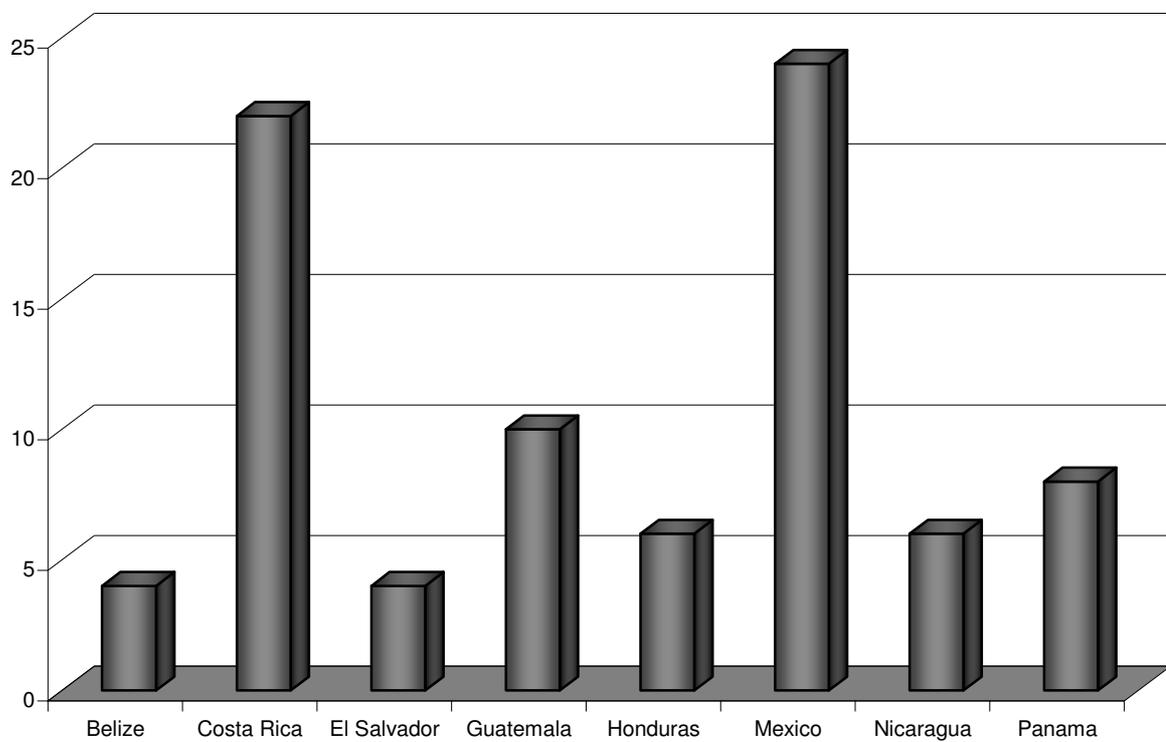
<b>COUNTRIES</b>	24 <sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Processed Fruits and Vegetables (USA, Sept 08)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Session of the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance (Korea, Oct 08)	26 <sup>th</sup> Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Europe (Poland, Oct 08)	17 <sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (Philippines, Nov 08)	16 <sup>th</sup> Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (Mexico, Nov 08)	30 <sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (South Africa, Nov 08)	40 <sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Food Hygiene (Guatemala, Dec 08)	5 <sup>th</sup> Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Near East (Tunisia, Jan 09)	18 <sup>th</sup> Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Africa (Ghana, Feb 09)	21 <sup>st</sup> Session of the Committee on Fats and Oils (Malaysia, Feb 09)	3 <sup>rd</sup> Session of the Committee on Contaminants in Foods (Netherlands, Mar 09)	41 <sup>st</sup> Session of the Committee on Food Additives (China, Mar 09)	30 <sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling (Hungary, Mar 09)	25 <sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on General Principles (France, April 09)	41 <sup>st</sup> Session of the Committee on Pesticide Residues (China, Apr 09)	37 <sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Food Labelling (Canada, May 09)	62 <sup>nd</sup> Session of the Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Italy, Jun 09)	18 <sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods (Italy, Jul 09)	32 <sup>nd</sup> Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Italy, July 09)
<b>CARIBBEAN</b>	1	0	0	2	8	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	5	0	1	4
<b>CENTRAL AMERICA &amp; MEXICO</b>	1	1	0	3	8	1	7	0	0	1	2	1	0	3	1	4	1	3	6
<b>SOUTH AMERICA</b>	3	1	1	3	9	4	4	1	1	4	3	4	3	6	4	3	2	4	9
<b>Total participation of LAC countries per meeting</b>	5	2	1	8	25	5	14	1	1	5	5	5	4	11	7	12	3	8	19
<b>% participation of LAC countries per meeting</b>	15	6	3	24	76	15	42	3	3	15	15	15	12	33	21	36	9	24	58

\* % of LAC countries participating out of total number of LAC countries

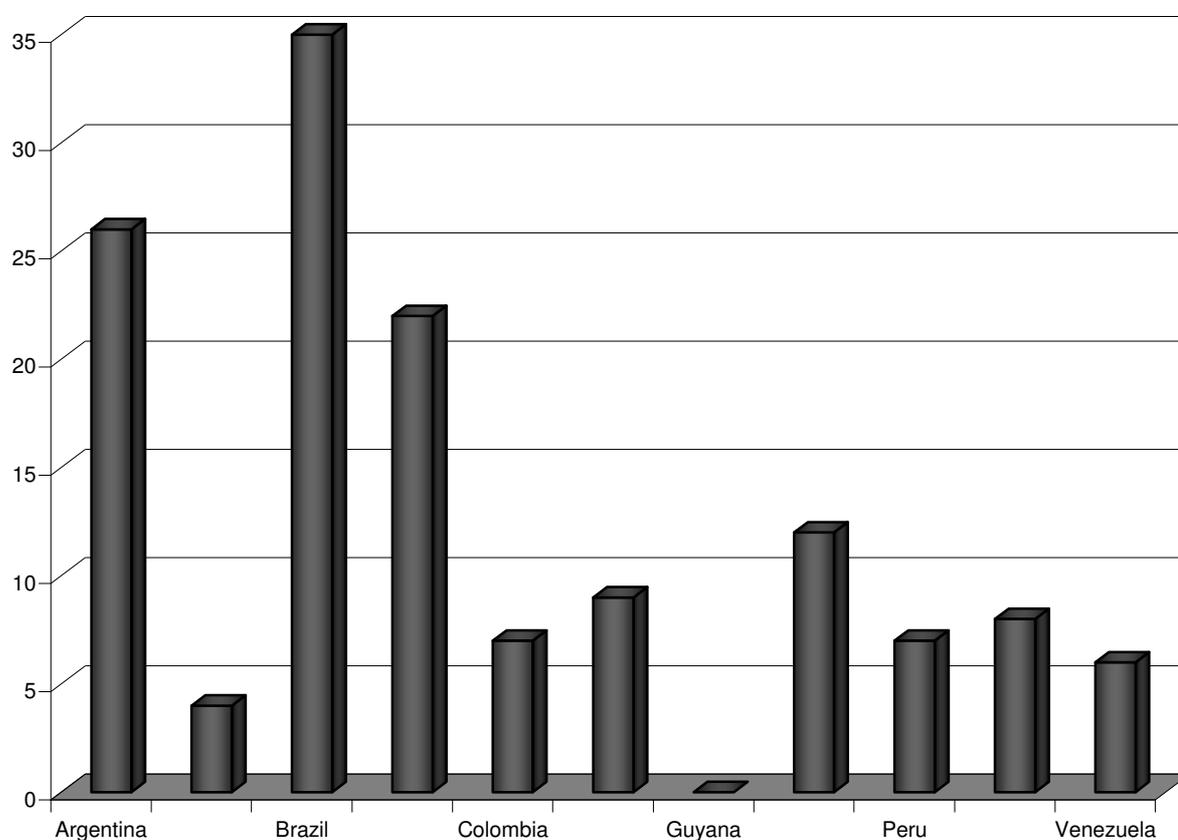
**Graph 1: Level of participation of Caribbean countries in CODEX meetings.  
Number of meetings attended 2007 – 2009**



**Graph 2: Level of participation of countries of Central America and Mexico in CODEX meetings. Number of meetings attended 2007-2009**



**Graph 3: Level of participation of countries of South America in CODEX meetings.  
Number of meetings attended 2007-2009**



**Table 3: Level of country participation in Codex meetings 2008 with Trust Fund support, by Region**

<b>Codex Region</b>	<b>N° of eligible countries</b>	<b>N° of countries with TF support</b>	<b>% participation with support</b>
Africa	44	30	68%
Asia	19	17	89%
Europe	22	12	55%
Latin America and the Caribbean	29	18	62%
Near East	12	6	50%
Southwest Pacific	9	7	78%
<b>Total for 2008</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>67%</b>

## II. Food Safety. FAO activities in LAC in 2008-2009

30. During 2008 and 2009, FAO undertook numerous regional activities on common priority issues (workshops/seminars/training courses) in support of technical capacity building in the countries of the region, both to improve their participation in the formulation of standards and to facilitate their implementation of those standards.

31. It provided financial support for delegates of all the countries of the region to participate in the Codex Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (CCLAC 2008) and the prior training workshop on risk-based food inspection.

32. Training activities included: risk analysis; design of policies and strategies for systems of food safety control; risk-based inspection; HACCP (hazards analysis and critical control points) for small and medium enterprises; assistance in effective systems of food safety control and plant protection and animal health to meet the requirements of the international SPS standard; strengthening of institutional management (legislation, inspection, laboratories, management, communication) for implementation of science-based regulations; safety assessments of microbiological hazards; good hygienic practices for food handlers; regional network and database on risk assessment of *Vibrio* spp in seafood; biosafety of genetically modified foods; risk analysis of food contaminants; safety of feed and rations; determination of equivalence in SPS measures and systems; private standards of plant protection, animal health and food safety; sampling for microtoxins; food quality linked to origin and traditions. More than 20 specific Codex courses were given: Enhancing participation in Codex activities; Codex new electronic tools; the Codex process and You; support to Codex Contact Points and Committees in the region; Codex for inspectors; Codex for food producers.

33. The following materials were produced in Spanish, English and French to support capacity-building activities in the region: Manual on good hygienic practices in the preparation and sale of streetfood in Latin America and the Caribbean – training package with local examples, case studies and CD-Rom; manual on GM food safety assessment; analysis of risks relating to food safety - guide for national authorities on food safety; guidelines for application of HACCP in small and/or less developed enterprises; and a risk-based food inspection manual

34. Technical cooperation projects are under implementation (TCP,TF), with or without direct technical assistance, on food safety and Codex Alimentarius in the following countries: in Guatemala and Honduras, improvement at national level of safety and quality in the food chain and Codex guidelines; in Guatemala, evaluation of capacity and support to the national food control system; in Haiti, Belize and El Salvador, strengthening of the biosafety framework and case studies of national policies; in Cuba, capacity building in analysis of food risk; in Chile, risk analysis and preparation of electronic course on risk assessment for *Vibrio*; in Panama, strengthening of sanitary, phytosanitary and food safety systems; in Dominican Republic, strengthening of competitiveness of agrifood sector and ensuring of laboratory quality; in Trinidad and Tobago strengthening of national system of food safety, plant protection and animal health; in Jamaica, establishment of the National Codex Committee; in Haiti, rehabilitation of the food laboratory; in Barbados and the eastern Caribbean, HACCP-based inspection of streetfood. Direct technical assistance was provided to the new food safety agencies/systems of Panama, Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, Belize and Chile, while technical support was given to the food safety network in Mexico. Two regional projects are under way: assistance in designing and/or strengthening food safety policies; and food quality linked to origin and traditions in Latin America.

35. A number of dissemination and communication activities were conducted on Codex and issues related to food safety and quality: more than ten FAO/WHO electronic

courses “Enhancing participation in Codex activities”, available on CD-Rom in Spanish and English<sup>10</sup>. Two FAO/RLC electronic courses were designed and are regularly given on the hygienic handling of food, providing tools to ensure food safety and information on Codex basic codes of hygiene<sup>11</sup>, and an electronic course on systems of food safety control outlining general concepts of food control systems and reviewing their components, Codex international standards, case studies and good practices.<sup>11</sup> The FAO/RLC communication campaign *Eat Safely* was launched in the LAC countries to prevent food-borne diseases, with information in English, Spanish and French on good practices for food safety and healthy eating, including food handling and preparation in the home following Codex guidelines.<sup>12</sup>

36. Information exchange mechanisms have been strengthened through the input of data and regional contents to the International Portal on Food Safety, Animal and Plant Health (<http://www.ipfsaph.org/Es/default.jsp>) and the International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN). The Emergency Prevention System for Transboundary Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases and the EMPRES Food Safety Programme have been expanded.

## Conclusions

37. In view of the importance of the Codex Alimentarius as an international consensus body serving to protect public health and regulate world food trade, while acting as WTO reference on food safety and quality, the actual participation of LAC countries in Codex activities needs to be strengthened in the formulation of global standards (current participation of LAC countries in Commission sessions: 67% and 58% [Table 1 and 2] for the sessions of 2008 and 2009 respectively).

38. The Member Countries are invited to consider the options listed below for improving the current situation (but these options are not exclusive) and to express their opinion at the next Codex meetings. The following proposals are some of those put forward by Member Countries at recent meetings of the Codex Committees and Commission during 2008-2009 aimed at boosting their participation at such meetings. Some of the options can be combined:

- make best use of written comments at steps 3 and 6;<sup>13</sup>
- foster dynamic exchange of opinions/comments outside physical meetings;
- reduce the number of Codex sessions per year and biennium;<sup>14</sup>
- concentrate all Codex sessions in Rome or Geneva;<sup>15</sup>
- introduce video-conferencing for Codex sessions;
- extend the Codex Trust Fund to all Codex members and sessions;<sup>16</sup>

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/agns/capacity\\_cleaning\\_codex\\_en.asp](http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/agns/capacity_cleaning_codex_en.asp)

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.rlc.fao.org/nucleo/>

<sup>12</sup> The campaign materials are available from <http://www.rlc.fao.org/es/prioridades/sanidad/comesano.htm>

<sup>13</sup> ALINORM 09/32/REP, para. 284, the Commission agreed that, in accordance with the *Guidelines to Chairpersons of Codex Committees and Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Forces*, the Chairpersons of Codex Committees should consider written comments.

<sup>14</sup> ALINORM 09/32/REP, para. 287, the Commission noted that the Committee on General Principles had not supported this proposal as the number of sessions depended on the workload of Codex subsidiary bodies.

<sup>15</sup> ALINORM 09/32/REP, para. 291, the Secretariat recalled that the Codex system relied on host countries for Codex sessions other than the Commission and Coordinating Committees and informed the Commission that holding sessions in Rome or Geneva would result in an additional cost of approximately 200 000 USD, which might create serious difficulties for host countries; para. 294, the Commission also supported the conclusion of the Chairperson that, when more experience was gained with the application of these measures, further consideration could be given to the proposal for the gradual concentration of sessions in Rome or Geneva.

<sup>16</sup> ALINORM 09/32/33, para. 131, the Committee considered that Proposal G (Extend the Codex Trust Fund to all Codex members and all Codex sessions) was desirable. Nevertheless, the implementation of Proposal G remained a big challenge given the current funding situation of the Codex Trust Fund.

- revise the criterion of Trust Fund distribution to better reflect the socioeconomic situation of countries;
- introduce remote voting in the Elaboration Procedure, limited to Step 1;<sup>17</sup>
- emphasize FAO and WHO capacity building activities in developing countries, including regional workshops and projects;
- strengthen co-hosted Codex sessions;
- encourage the use of mentoring mechanisms through intraregional cooperation and the exchange of experiences, especially between Codex Contact Points;
- Encourage South-South cooperation;
- Arrange for the timely distribution of documents in the official languages;
- Create regional funds as an alternative mechanism;
- Restrict the membership of Codex committees and task forces.

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<sup>17</sup> ALINORM 09/32/33, para. 132, some delegations expressed their support for further studying Proposal H (Introduce remote voting in the Elaboration Procedure at Step 1), as a means of engaging the whole Codex membership in the initial decision-making in the standards development process without delaying the Codex work. The Delegation of Malaysia expressed its opposition to pursuing this proposal. The Committee noted that there was no strong support for this proposal.