

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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Agenda Item 8

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**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR EUROPE**

**30th Session, 3 – 7 October 2016
Astana, Kazakhstan**

**LANGUAGE POLICY IN CCEURO
(Prepared by the Coordinator
with the assistance of the Codex Secretariat)**

Introduction

1. Upon adoption of the Provisional Agenda, CCEURO29 (October 2014) agreed to include the consideration of language regime in CCEURO under *Other Business*. This request came from the Coordinator who proposed that CCEURO consider using Russian as a working language of the Committee.
2. The Committee noted that Russian is used as an official language in more than 10 countries of the Region. The inclusion of Russian as a working language of CCEURO is essential for the smooth preparation and running of sessions of the Committee. The Coordinator therefore proposed to request the Commission to consider the possibility to finance translation and interpretation services in Russian for the operation of CCEURO.¹
3. When considering matters referred to the Commission by subsidiary bodies, CAC38 (July 2015) noted the language regime discussion in CCEURO and agreed that the Coordinator in collaboration with the Codex Secretariat would prepare a paper in order to assist CCEURO in its deliberation on ways to accommodate Russian as a working language in CCEURO.²

Working Languages of CAC and RCCs

4. The official languages of CAC are Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.
5. Since 2011, interpretation into Russian language has been regularly included in sessions of CAC. Translation services are provided for a limited number of working documents of direct pertinence to the work of CAC including the report of the Commission to take into account the growing number of Russian-speaking Member countries of CAC, which in turn are all members of CCEURO.
6. There are currently six regional coordinating committees established by CAC under Rule XI.1(b)(ii): Africa (CCAFRICA), Asia (CCASIA), Europe (CCEURO), Latin America and the Caribbean (CCLAC), Near East (CCNE) and North America and South West Pacific (CCNASWP).
7. The language regime in these RCCs can be summarized as follows: CCAFRICA (English/French), CCASIA (English/Chinese), CCEURO (English/French/Spanish), CCLAC (English/Spanish), CCNE (Arabic/English/French), and CCNASWP (English).
8. Translation and interpretation services in these languages are provided by the Codex Secretariat. Translation services apply to working documents and the report of the session. The Secretariat ensures that the report of the sessions of RCCs is always translated in English, French and Spanish in addition to one of the other three official languages of CAC which constitute the working language of the RCC e.g. Arabic or Chinese.

Use of Russian Language in the CCEURO Region

9. The CCEURO is made up of 51 Codex Member countries of which several Member countries use Russian as a language of communication within the Region³ including: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, etc.

¹ REP15/EURO, paras 80-86

² REP15/CAC, paras 12-127

³ The Region covering CCEURO applies to East and West Europe and Central-Asia.

10. French is an official language in several countries and Spanish in one country. Other countries of the region whose official language is none of the official languages of the UN mainly use English as means of communication in Codex and CCEURO.

Languages and subsidiary bodies of the Commission

12. The Procedural Manual of the Codex Alimentarius Commission states under point (4) of Rule XIV – Languages, that the languages of subsidiary bodies set up under Rule XI.1(b), which include coordinating committees, shall include at least two of the languages of the Commission. In addition, Rule XIII – Budget and Expenses states in point (2) that the estimate of expenditures shall make provisions for the operating expenses of the Commission and the subsidiary bodies of the Commission established under Rule XI.1(b)(ii), which correspond to coordinating committees.

13. In compliance with the above requirements, the Codex Secretariat does cover the cost of translation and interpretation services for three official languages of the Commission namely English, French and Spanish as working languages of CCEURO. Besides, Netherlands, as Coordinator of CCEURO, has taken responsibility for providing translation and interpretation services of an additional official language of the Commission i.e. Russian.

14. With regard to the possibility to include a fourth official language, i.e. Russian, considering that the Codex Secretariat already provides three (i.e. English, French and Spanish) as opposed to the minimum of two languages for the operation of CCEURO, and as demonstrated by the fact that the Host Country was providing extra-funding to make available an additional working language (i.e. Russian), the Codex Secretariat is not in a position to sustainably provide more resources for translation and/or interpretation services for a fourth working language in CCEURO (i.e. Russian).

Considerations

15. Over the past 15 years many Russian-speaking countries have become members of CAC and because of their geographic location and preference (Central-Asia and Eastern Europe), also members of CCEURO. Russian has become an official language of CAC and been used in CCEURO thanks to the generous contribution of coordinators. With this increased new membership, Russian is now probably the most widely spoken language in the Region after which English follows as the *lingua franca* followed by French

16. One of the objectives of CCEURO as an RCC is to achieve more cohesion between ‘old’ and ‘new’ Member countries and bridging gaps between the sub-regions comprising the Region, in particular the East and the West. Furthermore, one of the key objectives of RCCs, especially within the new revitalization⁴ approach stresses on it to be a regional forum to exchange information on food quality and safety issues of interest to the Region and to identify needs and concerns in this area that could be addressed in the context of Codex work or through the capacity development programs of FAO and WHO.

17. For a large number of participants and interested parties from newer members, including Russian as a working language has allowed for greater involvement, inclusiveness and transparency in the discussion held and recommendations made in CCEURO thanks to the Coordinators (e.g. Poland, the Netherlands) who generously have arranged translation and interpretation in Russian language. However, facilitating an extra language may not be financially sustainable in the long term for coordinators. Furthermore, this obligation may prevent interested countries of the Region from becoming Coordinators of CCEURO.

18. In terms of rationalisation of resources to better serve Codex Members’ needs and meet the goals of Codex, spending funds on interpretation and translation services to maintain one language spoken by one or very few countries with the addition of a fourth language widely spoken by several countries may not be seen as the best way to utilize resources. The Codex secretariat cannot commit to sustainably include a fourth working language in CCEURO.

19. The report of CCEURO sessions will in any case be translated into English, French, Russian and Spanish to promote worldwide accessibility.

Recommendation

20. Considering the changes in the CCEURO Membership since its establishment in 1965, and in particular over the past 15 years, the inclusion of Russian as an official language of CAC, the need to bring together Members of the Region to actively participate in CCEURO and Codex work to better accomplish the goals of revitalization of RCCs, the need to rationalize resources to better address CCEURO Members’ needs in relation to Codex work and FAO/WHO capacity development programs on food quality and safety, there is merit in reconsidering the current working language regime in CCEURO to accommodate the use of Russian language in CCEURO and therefore to recommend that:

The Codex Alimentarius Commission agree that working languages for CCEURO should be English, French and Russian.

⁴ [REP15/EXEC](#) paras 56-67; [REP15/CAC](#) paras 107-118