

# codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE  
ORGANIZATION  
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**Agenda Item 6**

**CX/AFRICA 02/6  
September 2002**

## **JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME**

### **FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR AFRICA**

*Fifteenth Session  
Kampala, Uganda, 26-29 November 2002*

#### **EVALUATION OF THE JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME**

*(Note prepared by the Secretariat)*

#### **PART I: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

1. The evaluation of the Codex Alimentarius and other FAO and WHO work in food standards began in April 2002. It is undertaken by an independent evaluation team complemented by an independent expert panel. The evaluation covers the work of the Codex Alimentarius and its committees; the expert advice to Codex and for food standards by FAO and WHO and the related capacity building activities of FAO and WHO in developing and transition countries.

2. The 49th Session of the Executive Committee (September 2001) was informed that FAO and WHO had agreed in principle to the need and scope for a comprehensive review of the Codex programme (ALINORM 01/4, para. 38), including an external component in the review. FAO Conference (November 2001) also welcomed the recommendation that the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme should be evaluated.<sup>1</sup>

3. Following extensive discussions between FAO and WHO on the modalities and terms of reference for the evaluation, evaluation work commenced in April 2002 and is planned to be completed by November 2002. As a result of these discussions additional efforts were made to ensure the regional balance in the independent expert panel and to ensure that a wide sample of countries were visited.

4. The evaluation was further discussed by the Codex Executive Committee at its 50<sup>th</sup> Session in June 2002. The Executive Committee considered a progress report presented by the representative of the Evaluation Service of FAO on behalf of the evaluation units of both FAO and WHO, and had an extensive discussion on this subject (ALINORM 03/3A, paras. 7-19 Annexed for ease of reference). In welcoming the evaluation and making a considerable number of suggestions, members of the Executive Committee also expressed various concerns, including that the evaluation should give adequate attention to managerial aspects and not become diverted by an examination of broad issues in standard setting. The Executive Committee also emphasised the need for adequate time for Members to review and analyse the Evaluation

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the 31<sup>st</sup> Session of FAO Conference, Rome, 2-13 November 2001; C/2001 REP, para. 84. The recommendation was made by the 86<sup>th</sup> Session of the Programme Committee of FAO (September 2001) and is contained in its report CL 121/3, para. 37.

Report prior to its consideration by the Governing Bodies of the Organizations. In addition to consideration of the Evaluation report by the Executive Committee at a special session, it was proposed to have a plenary meeting of the Codex Alimentarius Commission to allow the Member countries to express their views on the outcome of the evaluation before the recommendations go to the Governing Bodies.

5. The Representative of WHO noted that for the World Health Assembly in May 2003 to take a definitive decision, the Commission's recommendations would have to be known by the end of February 2003; while initial budgetary provisions would still need to be considered by the WHO Executive Board's meeting in January 2003. It was noted that FAO's main cycle of programme and budgetary meetings for 2004-2005 would commence in May 2003 and that they also had a March deadline on documentation. On this basis, the Executive Committee requested the Directors-General to convene a special 3-day session of the Commission in mid-February 2003 for the purpose of considering the Evaluation report; the session to be preceded by a meeting of the Executive Committee as provided for in Rule III.4 of the Commission's Rules of Procedure.

6. The Executive Committee agreed that the Evaluation should be included on the Provisional Agendas of all Regional Coordinating Committees, although it noted that in some cases it would only be possible to provide a report on the progress of the evaluation rather than a review of its recommendations. In these cases, the Executive Committee recommended that the Regional Coordinators and the Members elected on a regional basis should consult with the Member countries in their respective regions immediately after the issuance of the Evaluation report with a view to ensuring a fully informed debate at the special Commission session.

7. The Coordinating Committee is invited to consider the present document and to provide its views on the Joint FAO/WHO Evaluation, particularly on points which it would like to be considered for the findings and recommendations of the evaluation.

## **PART II. TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE JOINT FAO/WHO EVALUATION OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS AND OTHER FAO AND WHO WORK ON FOOD STANDARDS**

### **A. Background**

1. The Codex Alimentarius Commission was established by FAO and WHO to implement the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme. The Programme's importance has gradually shifted from providing a basis for national standards, to providing the point of reference in standards, guidelines and codes of practice for international trade. The final act of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations includes two agreements designed to limit the impact of non-tariff barriers to trade and to subject such barriers to the disciplines of GATT and now the WTO. These are the broad WTO Agreements on Technical Barriers to Trade and the more specific WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement<sup>2</sup>). Domestic food safety measures which conform to the Codex standards, guidelines or other recommendations are presumed to be consistent with the SPS Agreement<sup>3</sup> and with the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (1994).

2. The Codex Alimentarius Commission is a joint intergovernmental body of FAO and WHO with statutes and rules of procedure provided for in the structure of subsidiary bodies of the two organizations. It is open to all members of FAO and WHO and currently has 165 members. There are 29 subsidiary bodies of the Commission including regional, commodity and general committees, of which 24 are currently active.

3. The work of the Commission is supported by a small secretariat housed in FAO and funded jointly by FAO and WHO. The cost of individual commodity and general committees are met in whole or in part by host countries. Members bear the costs of their own participation in meetings. FAO and WHO also support, and bear the cost of, expert committees to provide advice in such areas as food safety risk assessment.

4. A number of issues have already been identified as being of importance in recent years and will be further examined in the evaluation. These include:

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<sup>2</sup> Annex A, paragraph 3 (a)

<sup>3</sup> Article 3.2

- a) Consumer concerns related to health, environment and culture have become of increasing political importance, especially in the developed countries. This has contributed to a growing demand for additional or alternative arrangements to Codex for setting food standards. Although such a development was explicitly rejected by the Group of 8 at its meeting in Okinawa (2000), which supported Codex, the underlying concerns are growing, fuelled by crises such as BSE;
- b) Related to the above, Codex has also been responding to demands to reflect ethical (or non-science based considerations) in food standards;
- c) Concerns that growing demands for food safety and consumer demands on consistency in labelling etc. are meaning Codex ways of working and possibly the whole approach to the establishment of standards and guidelines are:
  - i) making it almost impossible for developing countries, and increasingly difficult for developed countries, to participate and this is slowing processes further;
  - ii) leading to problems of adequate financing for the capacity of the small secretariat, expert advice and the work of individual committees;
- d) Inadequacy of funding to support developing countries in developing national capacity to implement Codex standards and guidelines; and
- e) Concerns that Codex bodies may not always be entirely independent and free from conflict of interest or vested interest.

## **B. Purpose of the Evaluation**

5. The Codex Alimentarius Commission, WHO and FAO secretariats and the FAO and WHO Governing Bodies have now all called from varying perspectives for an in-depth independent evaluation of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and the FAO-WHO work for the establishment of international food standards, guidelines and codes of practice. FAO is committed, at the request of the Programme Committee, to providing an independent evaluation of the Organization's work in food standards (conducted in line with the Organization's standard evaluation practices) to its Governing Bodies for May 2003. WHO is committed, at the request of the World Health Assembly 2000, to examine the FAO/WHO working relations with a view to increase WHO involvement in Codex, as well as support the inclusion of health considerations in international food trade. At its Forty-ninth (extraordinary) session in September 2001, the Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission stated para. 42 "The Executive Committee welcomed this initiative (comprehensive review of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme), including the proposal for an external component to the review process."

6. The evaluation is thus designed to provide an input into decision making on future policy, strategy and management at the level of the FAO and WHO Governing Bodies and their respective secretariats and to the joint FAO-WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission. The evaluation will address, in all their dimensions, the global requirement for food standards for the protection of consumer health, development of international<sup>4</sup> and domestic trade and related ethical considerations. In so doing the evaluation will examine the respective requirements of producers, industry, traders, consumers and regulators.

7. The evaluation will provide recommendations and considerations for the future on the relevance of standards or alternative approaches in meeting the overall objectives in consumer protection, in particular for health risks and in ensuring fair practices for food trade. It will also provide alternatives for consideration in meeting future world requirements for food standards which provide the desired benefits in adequately satisfying the needs of both developing and developed countries and food importers and exporters at reasonable direct and indirect cost. The evaluation is thus formative, basing considerations for the future on an examination of past performance, current and emerging challenges and innovative ideas.

## **C. Coverage of the Evaluation**

8. The evaluation will examine issues including, but not restricted to:
- a) The evolving context and challenges, including:
    - i) the relevance and adequacy of standards as instruments for:

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<sup>4</sup> including concessional transactions

- prevention of foodborne diseases and other health risks;
  - food safety risk management;
  - consumer protection;
  - trade and economic development;
  - production practice.
- ii) the expectations of different groups of countries, at official government level, as to standards in imports and exports and for domestic trade, particularly as regards the validity and acceptability of standards:
- science base;
  - level of risk and inclusion of precautionary approaches;
  - ease of verification and clarity as a reference point in trade;
  - labelling and comparability of descriptors (e.g. in organic food);
  - ethical and cultural considerations; and
  - comprehensivity and degree of generalisation.
- iii) the expectations of different groups of countries, at official government level, as to institutional mechanisms for standard setting including:
- the structure and procedures of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and its subsidiary bodies
  - the technical and administrative support given to the work of the Commission by FAO and WHO, including secretariat and expert committees;
  - possibilities and limitations for participation in the decision making processes;
  - direct and indirect costs and ways of covering them.
- iv) the particular interests of developing countries, as regards:
- assistance to implement standards;
  - participation in the standard setting process.
- v) the expectations of producers, industry and civil society and their likely impact on international standard setting; and
- vi) the institutional relationships between related standard-setting bodies such as the IPPC, and OIE.
- b)** The effectiveness of the existing arrangements in meeting the requirements identified above. Efforts will be made to bench-mark and compare the methods of work and approaches with those of other standard setting bodies<sup>5</sup>. Areas to be covered include the overall adequacy of the:
- i) response by FAO and WHO;
  - ii) existing standards and significant lacuna in the architecture for international trade (quality, coverage, ease of application, etc.);
  - iii) adequacy of standards as a model for national standard setting for domestic commerce;
  - iv) the adequacy of institutional arrangements, including an examination of independence, conflict of interest and responsiveness to members, and:
    - 1) the structure of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and its subsidiary bodies;
    - 2) the methods of work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (including authority to propose changes in the statutes, rules and traditions of procedure);
    - 3) the structure and management of the Codex Secretariat;
    - 4) the structure of advisory committees and panels;

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<sup>5</sup> Other standard setting bodies include: ISO, OIE, FAO-IPPC and WHO-Drugs

- 5) whether the same arrangements can adequately and efficiently satisfy the needs of standards for trade and the needs of developing countries in establishing domestic standards;
  - 6) participation of countries in the process;
  - 7) participation of non-governmental stakeholders;
  - 8) efficiency and effectiveness with respect to all aspects (science, communication, ethics, policy, governance and politics) of the committee structures, procedures and secretariat arrangements;
  - 9) assistance to developing countries by FAO, WHO and through other partners;
  - 10) relationships to other international bodies setting standards and responsible for regulatory frameworks and to the WTO.
- c) Issues for the future based on the above analysis, innovative forward thinking and also examining any potential advantages from:
- i) potentially quite different approaches to those at present in place for:
    - consumer protection (especially for health) and economic development through clarity in international and domestic trade;
    - standard setting at both domestic and international levels; and
    - alternative institutional and/or funding arrangements.
  - ii) the implications for developing countries if food standards setting for international trade were allowed to become the preserve of the developed countries and main trading nations;
  - iii) mobilisation of adequate support for developing country capacity building and participation in the standard setting processes.

#### **D. Arrangements for Management and Conduct of the Evaluation**

9. **Management of the evaluation:** To ensure its independence, the evaluation will be managed jointly by the evaluation units of FAO and WHO. They will consult with the concerned technical units in WHO and FAO on all substantive matters, including selection of evaluation consultants and the Independent Expert Panel members. The technical units of FAO and WHO will also be used by the evaluation managers for technical inputs and can communicate concerns, ideas and questions to the Evaluation Team and the Independent Expert Panel through the evaluation managers.

10. **The Evaluation team:** The evaluation team will carry out the core work of the evaluation in line with the terms of reference and will consist of a core of five persons who can draw flexibly on technical resource persons (subject to budget):

- a) a senior fully independent team leader with a policy background and firm understanding of the issues agreed by FAO and WHO;
- b) two independent technical consultants, representative of major stakeholders in foods standards - appointed one by FAO and one by WHO; and
- c) one senior representative of the FAO Evaluation Service and one senior representative of WHO evaluation.

11. **Independent Expert Panel:** The Independent Expert Panel will review terms of reference and the initial work plan for the evaluation, suggesting any changes it considers desirable and raising questions and issues which it considers should receive particular attention in the evaluation. The expert panel will in particular be looked to for innovative and divergent ideas which can be examined during the course of the evaluation. The Independent Expert Panel will reconvene and together with other peer reviewers consider and make comments on the preliminary report of the Evaluation Team. The Evaluation Team will then make whatever adjustments they consider desirable. The Expert Panel will also prepare its own report commenting on the findings of the evaluation and making such additional or divergent recommendations as it see fit. During the course of the evaluation the expert panel will be informed of progress and the evaluation team may refer any queries they wish to the panel. The panel through its chairman and the FAO/WHO evaluation

management may refer additional ideas to the team during the course of the evaluation through virtual discussion.

12. The Independent Expert Panel will have a fully independent chairman selected in agreement between FAO and WHO. The panel membership will additionally include ten external and independent experts selected for their knowledge in areas relevant to food standards and their ability to think innovatively on the future role of food standards and Codex in the global food system. The ten independent members will be nominated five each by FAO and WHO based on agreed criteria. The composition of the Panel will be multi-disciplinary, geographically representative, gender-balanced and diverse in view point including the following: food safety control; public health; international food trade; food standards; consumer rights; food safety research; risk communication; and international collaboration and development.

13. Other consultation and review: The evaluation management will refer the terms of reference and the draft report of the evaluation to wider group for comment. This group which may also be used as a resource for information and consultation by the evaluation team will include the Chairman and three vice-chairpersons of Codex.

14. **Reporting:** The preliminary draft report of the evaluation will be submitted to the Secretariats of WHO and FAO, to the Independent Expert Panel and to a wider group of peer reviewers as indicated above for their comments. In the light of these comments the evaluation team will make whatever changes it sees fit. The findings of the Independent Expert Panel and any additional recommendations they wish to make will be submitted together with the report of the Evaluation Team to the Directors-General of FAO and WHO and will be presented together with the Evaluation Team report and the two Secretariat responses to the Governing Bodies of FAO and WHO offices and to the Codex Alimentarius Commission in 2003.

### **PART III: PROGRESS REPORT ON THE EVALUATION (JULY 2002)**

#### **Country visits**

Country visits are designed to provide more in-depth information than is available from country questionnaires responses and to:

- obtain the views of countries which may not fully complete the questionnaire (usually developing countries);
- discuss with national non-governmental stakeholders (agricultural and fisheries producers, food processors, agricultural input supply business, consumers);
- provide the opportunity to explore a wider range of issues that may arise impromptu and have not been foreseen in the questionnaire;
- understand the nuances underlying national positions;
- review any FAO or WHO capacity building activities; and also
- hold discussions with FAO and WHO Offices.

The initial country visits provided the opportunity to discuss issues which might be included in the questionnaire to countries and observers.

A formalised set of criteria was used to select countries to be visited. By the end of August the evaluation team will have held discussions in :

- Africa: Côte d'Ivoire, Mozambique, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania;
- The Americas: Argentina, Canada, Costa Rica, Mexico, USA;
- Asia and Pacific: Australia, Bangladesh, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, Philippines, Thailand;
- Europe: EU, France, Netherlands, Hungary, Switzerland; and
- Near East: Egypt, Jordan.

#### **Questionnaires and the Public Call for Comments**

- The initial public call for comments elicited some 60 replies from individuals and organizations which have been supplied to the evaluation team and expert panel. This is now being followed-up with a questionnaire addressed specifically to national organizations, which is being made available for

completion on the Web. National organizations are being alerted by Codex Contact points and international NGO Codex observer organizations;

- Formal questionnaires have been sent to all Codex member countries and to FAO and WHO member countries which are not in membership of Codex. They have also been sent to all Codex observers. Replies will be received and analysed in July.

### **Discussions with Other Organizations Concerned with Standards and Trade**

In addition to the parent organizations (FAO and WHO), the evaluation team are holding discussions with IICA, ISO, OECD, OIE, IPPC, UNCTAD, UN- ECE and WTO.

### **Preparation of the evaluation report**

The evaluation team will prepare a comprehensive report working in close consultation with the expert panel. The report will be submitted together with the comments and any additional consideration raised by the expert panel and those of FAO and WHO management. The findings and recommendations will be based on the country visits and other discussions and questionnaires outlined above; the study of published and other written materials; a number of mini-case studies of individual standards; and information compiled on FAO and WHO capacity building activities. The report is expected to be finalised in November 2002.

## **PART IV: UPDATED TIMETABLE OF THE EVALUATION**

The evaluation will follow the following steps, including discussion of the Evaluation Report by Member countries of Codex, FAO and WHO :

- Establishment of the evaluation team and initiation of country visits (April 2002);
- Formation of Independent Expert Panel and first Panel Meeting (May 2002);
- Enquiry to governments and other stakeholders on their requirements and views with respect to food standard setting and their satisfaction with the existing arrangements (April-July 2002);
- Discussion between the evaluation team and independent expert panel on findings and recommendations September 2002
- Preparation of a consultative report on findings, issues and possible recommendations by the evaluation team (September 2002);
- Discussion of the report with the Independent Expert Panel, Chair and Vice Chairs of Codex and the WHO and FAO Secretariats (October 2002);
- Finalisation of the evaluation report by the evaluation team October 2002
- Examination of the report by the Independent Expert Panel in a meeting and preparation of the Expert Panel Report (November 2002);
- Consideration of possible budgetary implications for WHO by the Programme Development Committee of the Executive Board of WHO (January 2003)
- Presentation of the report of the evaluation and of the expert panel together with the responses of FAO and WHO Directors-General to the Executive Committee and Codex Alimentarius Commission (February 2002)
- Consideration of the report of the evaluation and the comments of the Codex Alimentarius Commission by the World Health Assembly and the FAO Programme Committee (May 2003);
- FAO Council discussion of the Programme Committee Report (June 2003) and FAO Conference discussion of the Council Report (November 2003)

## ANNEX

**50<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (ALINORM 03/3A, paras. 7-19)****JOINT FAO/WHO EVALUATION OF CODEX ALIMENTARIUS AND OTHER FAO AND WHO WORK ON FOOD STANDARDS<sup>6</sup> (Agenda Item 2)**

7. The representative of the Evaluation Service of FAO introduced the agenda item on behalf of the evaluation units of both FAO and WHO. He noted that the evaluation was unique in many respects, not the least of which being that it was a joint evaluation of a joint programme. Moreover, the programmes in question were of major importance to all countries, dealt with issues that were very much in the public eye, and at the most fundamental level dealt with questions of human health and the opportunities for economic development to tackle poverty a root cause of malnutrition and ill-health. The representative pointed out that the evaluation had been called for first and foremost by the governing bodies of FAO and WHO, but that it was also designed to serve the needs of the Commission and its members.

8. The principles upon which FAO and WHO were undertaking the evaluation were those with which the Organisations were required by their governing bodies to carry out evaluations of their programmes, in particular a review of the conformity with organisational priorities, usefulness and cost-effectiveness, independence of the evaluation process, and comprehensiveness. In common with other evaluations, the Evaluation was expected to be forward-looking and provide recommendations that could be realistically implemented by the Organizations.

9. In addition to the review announced at the 49<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Committee of the management, structures and procedures of Codex itself, FAO and WHO would evaluate the capacity-building needs of Member countries to protect the health of their people, to facilitate their exports by meeting the requirements of importing countries, and to be able to participate in the Codex process. They would also examine the effectiveness of the expert bodies which provide much of the scientific support to Codex decision-making, and the relationship with other standardizing bodies such as the OIE, IPPC and ISO.

10. The representative noted the concerns expressed by member countries in FAO's Programme Committee and elsewhere concerning the transparency of the evaluation procedure, including the establishment of the Terms of Reference, and the adequacy of regional representation in the process, in particular the Independent Expert Panel. He indicated that regional balance had been strengthened and every effort was being made to pursue the evaluation with a transparent process.

11. Prof. Bruce Traill, Leader of the Evaluation Team, provided the Executive Committee with a status report of the evaluation to date, and outlined the approaches being taken by the Evaluation Team to gather information from all sources in order to arrive at a comprehensive and useful evaluation. Prof. Ken Buckle, Acting Chairman of the Independent Expert Panel, provided a report on the Panel's activities and expectations. They described the linkages between the work of the Team and the Independent Panel to provide a forward-looking, evidence-based report to the parent Organizations.

12. The Executive Committee welcomed the evaluation and the assurance that it would be addressing specific needs for strengthening of Codex. Several Members of the Executive Committee raised concerns about the Evaluation process as it had proceeded to date. All Members of the Executive Committee raised issues that would contribute to the progress of the Evaluation and its potential outcome. In general, the Executive Committee welcomed the responses made by the parent Organizations to the problem of ensuring adequate regional representation in the Independent Expert Panel. The Executive Committee was of the opinion that the process used for determining the terms of reference of the evaluation had not been as transparent as it could have been.

13. All of the Members of the Executive Committee that spoke expressed the view that the main core of Codex work, the science-based Codex standards, guidelines and recommendations for food safety should be maintained. Many Members expressed concern that the major aims of the Evaluation should not be sidelined

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<sup>6</sup> CX/EXEC 02/50/2; CX/EXEC 02/50/2: Addendum 1. The title of the Item indicated in the Provisional Agenda was "Review of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme".



by the consideration of other issues, including cultural and ethical issues; however, one Observer was of the opinion that cultural and ethical issues should not be overlooked.

14. 8. Some Members stated that Codex should continue to work within its current mandate and that the Evaluation should concentrate on management issues including establishment of priorities, increasing the participation and influence of developing countries in the decision-making process, providing adequate resources for the expert scientific bodies and the Codex Secretariat itself, and the increased participation of WHO in the work of Codex. It was also noted that the linkages with the WTO/SPS Agreement required the strengthening of scientific risk analysis within the guidelines set out in the Codex Strategic Framework.

15. It was pointed out by one Member, that Codex needed to respond to two parallel mandates; the protection of consumers' health and the assurance of fair practices in the food trade. In this regard, it was pointed out that this second mandate needed to be based on adequate and appropriate criteria if Codex standards were to maintain their credibility in the international market-place; a balance between these two aspects of the Codex mandate needed to be established.

16. The Executive Committee noted that the time-frame for the Evaluation was extremely short given the scope of the Evaluation, and in particular the need for adequate time for Members to review and analyse the Evaluation Report prior to its consideration by the Governing Bodies of the Organizations. There was also a general feeling that the outcome of the evaluation should be discussed within the framework of Codex, overall and at a regional level. It was foreseen that the Evaluation Report would be available at the end of November 2002. It was proposed that in addition to consideration of the Evaluation report by the Executive Committee at a special session (as was foreseen in the Terms of Reference), it would be preferable to have a plenary meeting of the Codex Alimentarius Commission to allow the Member countries to express their views on the outcome of the evaluation before the recommendations go to the governing bodies. This would help to increase the level of participation and transparency in the consultation process. It would allow for equal treatment of the Commission's views by the Governing bodies of the two parent Organizations and would facilitate the Commission taking account of the evaluation in its medium-term planning. The Executive Committee noted however the financial implications that holding an additional session of the Commission would have for remote developing countries.

17. The Representative of WHO noted that such a proposal would be possible within the framework of the WHO's budgeting cycle for the biennium 2004-2005. For the World Health Assembly in May 2003 to take a definitive decision, the Commission's recommendations would have to be known by the end of February 2003; while initial budgetary provisions would still need to be considered by the WHO Executive Board's meeting in January 2003. It was noted that FAO's main cycle of programme and budgetary meetings for 2004-2005 would commence in May 2003 and that they also had a March deadline on documentation.

18. The Executive Committee welcomed the opportunity for additional time to consider the Evaluation. On this basis, it requested the Directors-General to convene a special 3-day session of the Commission in mid-February 2003 for the purpose of considering the Evaluation report; the session to be preceded by a meeting of the Executive Committee as provided for in Rule III.4 of the Commission's Rules of Procedure. It also requested the Secretariat to re-arrange the time-table of Codex meetings to ensure that all Regional Coordinating Committee meetings will have met prior to this special session of the Commission. Furthermore, the Executive Committee agreed that the Evaluation should be included on the Provisional Agendas of all Regional Coordinating Committees, although it noted that in some cases it would only be possible to provide a report on the progress of the evaluation rather than a review of its recommendations. In these cases, the Executive Committee recommended that the Regional Coordinators and the Members elected on a regional basis should consult with the Member countries in their respective regions immediately after the issuance of the Evaluation report with a view to ensuring a fully informed debate at the special Commission session.

19. The Executive Committee expressed its appreciation to Professors Traill and Buckle for their valuable contribution to the present debate and to the evaluation units of FAO and WHO for the information provided.