

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION



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Agenda Item 2(a)

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME CODEX COMMITTEE ON FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

*10th Session,
Mexico City, Mexico, 10-14 June 2002*

MATTERS OF INTEREST TO THE COMMITTEE ARISING FROM THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER CODEX COMMITTEES

24TH SESSION OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION (Geneva, Switzerland, 2-7 July 2001)

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK (including the STRATEGIC VISION STATEMENT), THE CHAIRPERSON'S ACTION PLAN AND THE MEDIUM-TERM PLAN 2003-2007¹

1. The Commission adopted the Draft Strategic Framework, including the Strategic Vision Statement. It agreed that the Draft Medium-Term Plan should be revised by the Codex Secretariat in the light of the Strategic Framework, the Commission's discussion and the written comments received and should incorporate the elements of the Chairperson's Action Plan agreed to by the Commission. The revised Draft Medium-Term Plan would then be circulated for the inputs of the Codex Coordinating Committees, other Codex Committees, Member governments and international organizations for further consideration by the 50th and 51st Sessions of the Executive Committee and finalization by the 25th Session of the Commission.

STATEMENTS OF PRINCIPLE ON THE ROLE OF SCIENCE IN THE CODEX DECISION- MAKING PROCESS AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH OTHER FACTORS ARE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT: CRITERIA²

2. The Commission adopted the Criteria for the Consideration of Other Factors proposed by the Codex Committee on General Principles with some amendments, for inclusion in the Procedural Manual.

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD): International Standards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables³

3. At its 47th Session, the Executive Committee noted the proposal being discussed by the OECD Scheme "that one single international grade standards setting body" be established in relation to commercial quality standards for fresh fruits and vegetables and requested to be kept informed of developments in this area. An informal meeting of the Codex, OECD and UN/ECE Secretariats had been held in Paris on 20 April 2001⁴ and had outlined suggestions to minimize duplication of work between the three organizations. The conclusions of this meeting were reported in the Working paper before the Commission.

4. The representative of the UN/ECE Secretariat stressed the need to avoid any duplication of work between the UN/ECE Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables and the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables. He supported the proposal to circulate UN/ECE standards for comments at Step 3 of the Codex procedure when the Committee decided to elaborate a Codex Standard for which there was already an UN/ECE Standard.

¹ ALINORM 01/41 paras. 68-69

² ALINORM 01/41 paras. 93-98

³ ALINORM 01/41 paras. 19-23

⁴ ALINORM 01/8-Part I para. 6

5. The Delegation of Belgium, speaking on behalf of the European Community, stated that the Terms of Reference of the Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables clearly established measures to avoid overlapping or duplication of work between the two bodies concerned, but that recent developments in the Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables indicated that the Committee had not been making proper use of these measures. The Delegation called for a wider debate on these issues, with a view to progressing towards a satisfactory and consensual solution on the basis of the recommendation of the 48th session of the Executive Committee to take account of the experience and expertise of specialized bodies working in this field and ensure that the countries most concerned in individual standards were fully involved in their preparation⁵. This view was supported by several other delegations who also referred to the participation of countries beyond the region of Europe in the work of the UN/ECE and stressed the need to rationalize resources by using the experience and expertise of the UN/ECE.

6. The Delegation of Malaysia, supported by many delegations⁶, expressed its concern about the conclusions of the informal meeting especially in regard to the direct circulation of UN/ECE standards at Step 3 and the amendment of footnote 17 to the Terms of Reference of the Committee. It was noted that UN/ECE standards could be used as a reference for Codex standards when like products were being considered and suggested that fresh produce standards developed by other recognized organizations could be also used as a starting point. However, the Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables remained the lead body in elaborating world-wide grade standards for fresh fruits and vegetables. Many of these Delegations also expressed their disagreement with the introduction of trial periods for recommendations in the work of the Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables or other Codex committees stating that the Codex procedure allowed for the standards to be exhaustively discussed and it adequately provided for their revisions when necessary. It was also stated that this practice might lead to confusion in international trade.

7. The Commission noted that there was no consensus on the conclusions of the informal meeting and therefore, no change would be made to the Terms of Reference of the Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables. It also agreed that this issue need not be included on the agenda of the next session of the Committee since it had been already discussed widely at different sessions of the Commission (including the present Session) and at the Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables. The Commission endorsed the view of the Executive Committee concerning the status of the Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables as the international body responsible for drafting grade standards for these products. It also emphasized the need to draw upon and develop the experience and expertise of specialized bodies working in this field and ensure that the countries most concerned in individual standards were fully involved in their preparation. It also noted that in the final analysis the responsibility for the development and adoption of standards for these products rested with the Commission itself.

CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT STANDARDS AND RELATED TEXTS AT STEP 8

Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables⁷

8. The 24th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission adopted the following Draft Codex Standards for fresh fruits and vegetables at Step 8 as proposed:

- Draft Codex Standard for Tannia
- Draft Codex Standard for Papaya
- Draft Codex Standard for Cape Gooseberry

9. The Commission adopted the **Draft Codex Standard for Asparagus** at Step 8 with the following amendments:

- Section 2 - Minimum Requirements was amended to read “*free of damage caused by unsuitable washing or soaking*” since the excessive soaking of asparagus might result in a fraudulent increase of weight and loss of quality due to the absorption of excess water.
- Section 3.2 - Sizing by Diameter was amended to refer to one single point of measurement for the diameter of asparagus by stating that “*The diameter of the shoots shall be measured 2.5 cm from the cut end*” since the coexistence of two different ways of measuring the diameter of asparagus could cause confusion in international trade.

⁵ ALINORM 01/4 para. 14

⁶ Argentina, Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Egypt, India, Japan, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Tanzania, Thailand, Uganda, Uruguay and the United States of America.

⁷ ALINORM 01/41 paras. 170-172

10. The Commission adopted the Draft Minimum Juice Content for the **Codex Standard for Limes** at Step 8 as proposed.

Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Certification and Inspection Systems⁸

11. The Commission adopted Draft Guidelines for Generic Official Certificate Formats and the production and Issuance of Certificates at Step 8 as proposed by the CCFICS.

OTHER CODEX COMMITTEES

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

48th Session of the Executive Committee (Geneva, Switzerland, 28-29 June 2001)

Relations with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE) and the OECD Scheme for the Application of Standards for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables⁹ (see also paras. 3-7 above)

12. The 48th Session of the Executive Committee noted the outcome of a meeting held to consider the suggestion that had been proposed by the OECD Scheme that a "single standards-setting body" should be established in relation to international commercial grade standards for fresh fruits and vegetables. It expressed its appreciation at the efforts that had been made to resolve the issues of duplication of work and ensuring coherence of the development of standards in this field and encouraged continued efforts particularly at the preparatory stage of elaborating the proposed draft standards. Nevertheless, some members questioned the proposal to amend the footnote (No. 17) of the Terms of Reference of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables, stating that the footnote contained clear guidance for avoiding duplication of work. Moreover, these members also stated that the proposals to adopt standards as "recommendations" for a trial period of two years would have serious implications for the Codex process and would undermine the value of adopted Codex standards. They drew attention to Part 3 of the Uniform Procedure for the Elaboration of Codex Standards and Related Texts dealing with the subsequent procedures concerning publication and acceptance of standards.

13. The Executive Committee emphasized the status of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables as the international body responsible for grade standards for these products, but also emphasized the need to draw upon and develop the experience and expertise of specialized bodies working in this field and ensure that the countries most concerned in individual standards were fully involved in their preparation.

49th (Extraordinary) Session of the Executive Committee (Geneva, Switzerland, 26-27 September 2001)

Consideration of Proposed Draft Standards and Related Texts at Step 5¹⁰

14. The 49th (Extraordinary) Session of the Executive Committee adopted the Proposed Draft Codex Standard for Cassava at Step 5, advancing it to Step 6. In doing so, the Executive Committee noted the concern expressed by the Representatives of Asia and Europe that the inclusion of bitter varieties of cassava in the Proposed Draft Codex Standard for Cassava could lead to excessive intake of cyanogenic glycosides and asked the Committee on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables to take this into account. It proposed that if bitter varieties were to be included in the Standard a level for cyanogenic glycosides would need to be proposed for endorsement by the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants; this would need to be done on the basis of a JECFA evaluation.

CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD HYGIENE

Proposed Draft Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables¹¹

15. At its 33rd Session, the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene agreed to merge the Draft Code for Primary Production, Harvesting and Packaging of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables and its Annex on Sprout Production with the Draft Code for Pre-Cut Fruits and Vegetables account being taken of the many links between them.

16. In view of the above, the 34th Session of the CCFFV agreed to change the title of the combined codes to "Draft Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables". The Committee further agreed to advance the Draft Code to the 25th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission for adoption at Step 8.

CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD IMPORT AND EXPORT INSPECTION AND CERTIFICATION SYSTEMS

17. The 10th Session of CCFICS submitted the *Draft Guidelines for Food Import Control Systems* to the 25th session of the Commission for final adoption at Step 8.¹²

⁸ ALINORM 01/41 para. 143

⁹ ALINORM 01/4 paras. 13-14

¹⁰ ALINORM 03/3 paras. 5-6 & 13

¹¹ ALINORM 03/13, paras. 19-65 & App. II

18. The Committee returned the *Proposed Draft Guidelines for the Utilization and Promotion of Quality Assurance Systems to Meet Requirements in Relation to Food* for redrafting in order to reflect appropriate principles for circulation, comment and discussion at its next meeting.¹³

19. The Committee agreed to defer for the time being further drafting of the *Proposed Guidelines on the Judgement of Equivalence of Technical Regulations Associated with Food Inspection and Certification Systems* within the context of the Codex step procedure and agreed a discussion paper on the need for the further elaboration of the Guidelines would be prepared for circulation, comment and consideration at its next meeting.¹⁴

¹² ALINORM 03/30 para. 30 & App. II

¹³ ALINORM 03/30 para. 84

¹⁴ ALINORM 03/30 paras. 73-75