

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION



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Agenda Item 2

**CX/FH 04/2
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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD HYGIENE

*Thirty sixth Session,
Washington DC, United States of America, 29 March – 3 April 2004*

MATTERS REFERRED BY THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND/OR OTHER CODEX COMMITTEES TO THE FOOD HYGIENE COMMITTEE

26th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission had considered different issues that are relevant to the work of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme. For details of consideration see ALINORM 03/41 which is available from:

ftp://ftp.fao.org/codex/alinorm03/al03_41e.pdf

1. GENERAL DECISIONS OF THE 26TH SESSION OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION (Rome, Italy, 30 June - 7 July 2003)

1.1 AMENDMENTS TO THE PROCEDURAL MANUAL

Clarification of Rule VI.4 (Voting and Procedures)

1. The Commission amended Rule VI.4 on Voting and Procedures to include a reference to Rule X.2 related to the adoption or amendments of Codex standards by consensus¹.

Membership of Regional Economic Integration Organizations

2. The Commission amended Rule I on Membership by adding a new Rule 1.3 (current Rule 1.3 renumbered as Rule 1.4). The Commission also added a new Rule II (subsequent Rules renumbered accordingly) to allow regional economic integration organizations to exercise rights of membership within the Codex Alimentarius Commission and its subsidiary bodies².

Measures to Facilitate Consensus

3. The Commission adopted the *Measures to Facilitate Consensus* for inclusion in the Procedural Manual as a general decision of the Commission³.

1.2 JOINT FAO/WHO EVALUATION OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS AND OTHER FAO AND WHO WORK ON FOOD STANDARDS

¹ ALINORM 03/41, paras. 15-18 and Appendix II.

² ALINORM 03/41, paras. 19-24 and Appendix II.

³ ALINORM 03/41, paras. 28-31 and Appendix III.

4. The Commission approved most of the proposals submitted by the Codex Secretariat for the implementation of the recommendations of the Joint FAO/WHO Evaluation of Codex Alimentarius, enacting some immediately and requesting the Codex Committee on General Principles to act in special sessions to draft the Rules required to implement others. Some selected decisions are summarized below. Further details on this matter can be found in the report of the 26th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (ALINORM 03/41, paras. 149-183).

1.2.1 General Aspects

Annual meetings of the Commission

5. The Commission agreed to meet annually for the next two years, but that in future each session would consider the timing for the following session and the general nature of the agenda in order to achieve the appropriate balance between standards issues, general direction of work and policy matters, and taking into account the resources available for adequate participation.

Implementation of the Evaluation

6. The Commission decided that the responsibility for following up and monitoring progress in the implementation of the recommendations from the Evaluation Report would be entrusted to the Executive Committee. Twice-yearly sessions of the Committee would be scheduled in order to absorb the additional workload.

Priorities for implementation

7. The Commission decided that the priorities should be:

- (a) Processes for standards management, with due regard to the special needs of developing countries.
- (b) Functions and composition of the Executive Committee, including the participation of observers in the Executive Committee and Executive Committee procedures.
- (c) Review of the Committee structures and mandates (including Regional Committees).
- (d) Review of Rules and Procedures including guidelines for Codex Committees.

The Commission concluded that all four priorities were of equal importance, and that the ranking was made on the grounds of speed of potential progress.

1.2.2 Review of Codex Committee Structure and Mandates of Codex Committees and Task Forces, including Regional Committees

8. The Commission decided that all the Committees and Task Forces would be reviewed together bearing in mind the objective of reducing the number of meetings while also keeping them short and focused. The Commission endorsed the recommendation made by the Executive Committee concerning the selection of consultants that would be entrusted with the review,⁴ and stressed the critical importance of transparency in the process.

1.2.3 Improved Processes for Standards Management

Critical review of proposals to undertake work and monitoring progress of standards development

9. The Commission decided to endorse the critical review process, including the preparation of project documents for major standards as well as the closely related proposal to revise the **CRITERIA FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF WORK PRIORITIES** in order to ensure the relevance of Codex standards at the international level.

Standards management responsibility

⁴ ALINORM 03/4, para. 23.

10. The Commission decided that the Executive Committee be the body to undertake the critical review of new work. The Commission did not favour the replacement of the Executive Committee with an Executive Board.

Time-bound decision-making

11. The Commission decided that the body responsible for standards management (i.e. the Executive Committee) should review the status of development of draft standards at the end of a specified time-frame, normally not more than five years, and report its findings to the Commission. The time-frame could be less than five years, where this was appropriate or had been established during the critical review process for new work.

Simplified procedures for standards development

12. The Commission decided to retain the 8-Step process, with the existing mechanisms to accelerate the process when necessary.

Use of facilitators and Establishment of electronic and/or physical working groups

13. The Commission agreed in principle to all three proposals but decided that the modalities would require clarification by the body responsible for reviewing the Procedural Manual. With respect to electronic working groups, the Commission noted that these were an avenue for exchanging views and not for decision making. Physical working groups should be ad hoc, open to all members, take account the problems of developing country participation and only be established where there is consensus in the Committee to do so and other strategies have been considered.

Adoption of Standards

14. The Commission decided that adoption of standards with a limited amendment should be allowed, provided that the draft standard had been forwarded to the Commission on the basis of consensus, based on the recommendation of the Executive Committee.

1.2.4 Review of the Rules of Procedure and Other Procedural Matters

Responsibility for the Procedural Review

15. The Commission decided that the procedural review would be undertaken by the Codex Committee on General Principles, at special sessions and under a limited time-frame. The Commission agreed that the Committee would need clear instructions, terms of reference from the Commission and support from the Codex Secretariat.

Amendment of the Codex Mandate

16. The Commission decided that the current Codex Mandate as expressed in Article 1 of the Statutes of the Commission, should be retained but that it might be discussed in the future.

Criteria for the establishment of work priorities

17. The Commission requested the Codex Committee on General Principles to redraft the *Criteria for Work Priorities* to reflect the current priorities of the Commission and in a manner that would provide explicit judgment tools for assessing work proposals against priorities.

1.3 RISK ANALYSIS⁵

18. While considering the Risk Analysis Policies of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (for details see ALINIORM 03/41, paras 142-148) it adopted the Draft Working Principles for Risk Analysis for Application in the Framework of the Codex Alimentarius elaborated by the Committee on General Principles and **requested that relevant Codex Committees** develop or complete specific guidelines on risk analysis in their respective areas, for inclusion in the Procedural Manual, as recommended in the Action Plan mentioned

⁵ ALINORM 03/26/6, ALINORM 03/33A Appendix IV.

above. The Commission noted that these texts would be submitted to the Committee on General Principles in order to ensure coordination of work and consistency with the overarching Working Principles.

19. The Committee is therefore invited to consider what work in this regard is necessary in addition to one already done by the Committee.

1.4 FAO/WHO TRUST FUND⁶

20. The Commission welcomed the progress made on the FAO/WHO Trust Fund for Participation of Developing Countries in Codex Standard Setting Procedures and expressed hope that it would achieve the desirable threshold before the end of 2003, so that it would be operational by the time of the next Session of the Commission.

1.5 PROPOSALS TO ELABORATE NEW STANDARDS AND RELATED TEXTS

21. While considering the above matter, the Delegation of the United States expressed the view that the work on the development of a Code of Practice for the safe use of active chlorine by the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants should take into account the public health benefit of the use of active chlorine as means of controlling of pathogens. It was noted that risk assessment on the use of chlorine compounds and/or its reaction by-products should be performed jointly by JECFA and JEMRA or alternatively by a joint FAO/WHO expert consultation and that there would also be a need for expert advice concerning the use of chlorine for food hygiene purposes. The Commission agreed to commence the new work with the understanding that recommendations on the safe use of active chlorine would require close collaboration with other Codex committees such as the Committee on Food Hygiene.

1.6 OTHER MATTERS ARISING FROM FAO/WHO

Scientific advice

22. The Commission welcomed the progress made by FAO and WHO in the preparation of the Consultative Study on the Provision of Scientific Advice and expressed appreciation on the progress already made. The Commission indicated the need to involve in the process all stakeholders and the importance to ensure adequate interaction between risk assessors and risk managers. It was suggested that the process should also consider mechanisms to avoid duplication of efforts.

23. The Commission noted the efforts of FAO and WHO in improving transparency in the selection of experts and in working procedures and the enhanced timeliness and quality of scientific advice provided to Codex.

24. The Commission acknowledged the large amount of requests for scientific advice raised through the Codex system. It recognized the need for Codex to prioritize its requests in coordination with the Secretariats of the FAO/WHO Scientific Committees and of the *ad hoc* Expert Consultations, considering also the needs of scientific advice of developing countries.

25. The Commission noted the need for Member Countries to provide appropriate data, experts and other necessary resources to facilitate the timely provision of the advice requested. It stressed the importance of considering data from developing countries. In this regard it pointed out that FAO/WHO should help developing countries to generate data required to set international standards. It welcomed the resolution of the World Health Assembly in this regard and the efforts already made by FAO and WHO.

FAO/WHO Workshop on the provision of scientific advice to Codex and member countries, 27 - 29 January 2004

26. FAO and WHO are implementing a consultative process on means to improve the provision of scientific advice to Codex and to FAO/WHO Member Countries. The study will review issues related to the independence, transparency, timeliness, efficiency, integrity, sustainability and quality of the advice. FAO and WHO are committed to carrying out the review process in an open and transparent manner and intend to harness all available opinions and viewpoints from interested parties.

⁶ For details of consideration see ALINORM 03/41, paras 184-189.

27. The steps in the consultative process have been agreed upon by FAO and WHO and consist of a Planning Meeting, an Electronic Forum, a Workshop and an Expert Consultation, which are scheduled to take place over the next year.

28. The forthcoming Workshop is the second step in the FAO/WHO consultative process. During the workshop experts will be asked to agree upon a set of priority issues, which if addressed, would significantly improve the management and working procedures of FAO and WHO in the provision of scientific advice.

29. Background information for the Workshop includes the background papers prepared for the e-forum and the analysis of the comments received from participants to the forum.

30. There will be an up-dated information from FAO/WHO on this issue during the meeting.

2. DECISIONS OF THE COMMISSION CONCERNING THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

Draft Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

31. The Commission **adopted** the Draft Guidelines at Step 8 with an amendment to the wording in Section 3.2.3 related to “personnel health” by deleting the reference to indirect contact of personnel with fresh fruits and vegetables. The Delegations of Canada⁷ and Finland expressed their reservations regarding this amendment⁷.

Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point System and Guidelines for its Application: Draft Revision

32. The Commission **adopted** the revised Guidelines at Step 8 as proposed. In doing so, it noted the importance of the document on the “*Obstacles to the Application of the HACCP, Particularly in Small and Less Developed Businesses and Approaches to Overcome Them*” being developed by FAO and WHO for future reference in the guidelines. The Commission encouraged the FAO and WHO to finalize plans for a project that will produce a report for government policy makers and small and/or less developed business based on above paper as soon as possible and agreed to report on the progress made on this project at the next session of the Commission.

*Expert Consultation on Enterobacter Genus*⁸

33. The Commission noted the necessity to address concerns with pathogens that may be present in infant formula and **agreed** that an expert consultation on the Enterobacter genus, including *Enterobacter sakazakii*, and *Clostridium botulinum* should be added to the list of requests for scientific advice from FAO and WHO for consideration and prioritization by the Executive Committee.

*Guidelines for the Preservation of Raw Milk by Use of the Lactoperoxidase System (CAC/GL 13-1991)*⁹

34. The Commission recalled the request to examine the use of Lactoperoxidase system for the preservation of raw milk for products intended for international trade originating from the Committee on Milk and Milk Products¹⁰ and the request of an expert FAO group to examine amendments to the Guidelines. The Commission noted clarification provided by the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (ALINORM 03/13A, paras. 9-12) and **endorsed** its views as follows:

- the system should continue to be restricted to use in countries where appropriate refrigeration facilities were not available and not for international trade purposes;
- microbiological data were not clear in order to determine how effective this system was for the control of food borne pathogens and what the microbiological consequences would be of its long-term use;
- concluded that the current restrictions excluding the use of the lactoperoxidase system for products intended for international trade should continue to be applied;

⁷ ALINORM 03/42, para. 59 and Appendix V.

⁸ ALINORM 03/13A, paras 167-173.

⁹ ALINORM 03/13, paras 9-12.

¹⁰ ALINORM 03/11, paras 11-13.

- there was no need for the revision of the existing Guidelines and that a JECFA review was not needed.

35. The Commission also noted that future consideration of this matter would depend on the availability of adequate microbiological and chemical risk assessments of process.

3. MATTERS FROM OTHER CODEX COMMITTEES

3.1 Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products

Microbiological Risk Assessment on Vibrio spp

36. Following the request of the Committee on Food Hygiene to examine the discussion paper on the Risk Management Strategies for *Vibrio* spp. in Seafood and in order to better utilize the outcome of the above document in the preparation of the Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products (Agenda Item 6) and the proposed draft Standard for Live and Processed Bivalve Molluscs (Agenda Item 7), the Committee formed an *Ad Hoc* Working Group.

37. The Committee noted the report of the *Ad Hoc* Working Group presented by Dr G. P. Hoskin prepared in reply to the request of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene. It expressed appreciation to the Working Group and to the FAO/WHO Expert Consultation for their excellent response to the CCFFP questions and agreed to the following.

38. The codes and standards developed by the Committee on Fish and Fishery Products address hazards in standards and provide guidance on their controls in codes. The codes typically emphasize the need to avoid hazards as well as provide some information on mitigation. This information tends to be general in nature due to the variability and complexity of the products and their movement from harvest through to final product production. However the development of the Code of Practice for Bivalve Molluscs and the Standard for Bivalve Molluscs makes use of information in vibrios newly available from risk profiles and risk assessments. In particular, the four risk management questions posed by the CCFFP to the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation as well as the information in the risk profile from the Committee on Food Hygiene are of great value to the Committee and will be further considered by the Committee during its work on the Code and Standard for bivalve molluscan shellfish. There will be further discussion in the Committee with respect to reducing the risk in raw molluscs from pathogens not controlled by the traditional harvest water criteria and traditional use of post-growing water treatment by relaying or depuration.

39. The Committee noted that the Risk Management document addresses *V. parahaemolyticus* in depth, but does not explore other marine vibrios that may be pathogenic.

40. The Committee further noted that questions facing risk managers include the effectiveness of mitigation procedures, the need to find and adopt the most relevant testing methods, the need for risk managers to establish tolerances, and the need to know which products present significant hazards from any particular source.

Examples include:

- Do *V. parahaemolyticus* from tropical latitudes include pathogenic strains such as the notably pathogenic O3:K6 strain in temperate marine populations?
- Should products from open ocean fisheries be examined at import for *V. parahaemolyticus* or *V. cholerae*? The risk profile did cite cases from products apparently from open ocean fisheries such as tuna.
- What is the risk from naturally occurring *V. cholerae* in tropical latitudes?
- What is the risk from *V. parahaemolyticus*, and other marine vibrios, on products intended for further processing, including cooking, compared with products intended for raw, or lightly cooked, consumption? Could or should risk managers set a different tolerance to be applied to each product based on its intended use?
- More information is needed by risk managers if they are to use total limits for vibrios (e.g., use of a tolerance of 0, 100, or 1000 cfu/g *V. parahaemolyticus*) to control the risk from pathogenic strains, such as *tdh* + strains. Would the risk be different for products from tropical latitudes compared with temperate latitudes?

- How effective is the use of disinfected potable water wash or chlorinated water wash on fish/shrimp and other non-bivalve molluscan species of seafood in reducing bacterial loads?
- How do these processes, that are intended to reduce bacterial loads, compare to temperature control processes intended to prevent increases in bacterial numbers?

41. The Committee agreed that further specific advice and cooperation might be required from the Committee on Food Hygiene on risk management questions in the future.

36. The Committee is therefore invited to consider the information provided.

Endorsement of Hygiene Provisions

42. The request to endorse hygiene provisions in the Proposed Draft Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products: Section 2.2 and 2.6 of Definitions, Section 6 – Aquaculture and Section 10 – Processing of Quick Frozen Coated Fish Products at Step 5/8 (ALINORM 04/27/18, Appendix V) and Draft Standard for Salted Atlantic Herring and Salted Sprat at Step 8 (ALINORM 04/27/18, Appendix II) would be considered on Agenda Item 3.

3.2 Codex Committee on Meat Hygiene

43. The Committee noted matters arising from the 35th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH)¹¹ related to their consideration of discussion papers on Risk Management Strategies for *Salmonella* spp in Poultry and on Risk Management Strategies for *Campylobacter* spp. in Poultry (Broiler chicken) and the proposed concepts and definitions for Food Safety Objectives (FSO) and Appropriate Level Of Protection (ALOP) in the proposed draft *Principles and Guidelines for the Conduct of Microbiological Risk Management*.

44. The Committee noted that CCFH discussions on the proposed concepts and definitions for Food Safety Objectives (FSO) and Appropriate Level of Protection (ALOP) in the context of their consideration of the proposed draft Principles and Guidelines for the Conduct of Microbiological Risk Management¹² had already been considered by the CCMPH when elaborating the proposed draft Code of Hygienic Practice for Meat.

45. In regard to the continued elaboration of discussion papers on Risk Management Strategies for *Salmonella* spp in Poultry¹³ and on Risk Management Strategies for *Campylobacter* spp. in Poultry (Broiler chicken)¹⁴ under the CCFH, the Committee accepted the offer of the Codex Secretariat to provide an update on these subjects at the next 10th Session of the CCMPH, especially as related to the future consideration of the proposed draft Code of Hygienic Practice for Meat. The Codex Secretariat agreed to facilitate communication between CCMPH and CCFH and vice-versa.

4. OTHER MATTERS

Joint WHO/FAO/OIE Expert Workshop on Non-human Antimicrobial Usage and Antimicrobial Resistanc, Geneva, 1 – 5 December 2003

46. This consultation was convened by FAO, OIE and WHO to perform a scientific assessment of resistance risks arising from the usage of antimicrobials in animals (including aquaculture) and plants and to formulate recommendations and options for future risk management actions to be considered by the Codex Alimentarius Commission and OIE.

47. The expert workshop concluded that surveillance of non-human usage of antimicrobials and antimicrobial resistance in food and animals is important for the identification of resistance problems and as a basis for choosing interventions to limit the development and spread of resistance at all levels.

¹¹ CX/MPH 03/2-Add.1

¹² ALINORM 03/13A, paras. 82-90.

¹³ ALINORM 03/13A, paras. 42-48.

¹⁴ ALINORM 03/13A, paras. 49-54.

48. Several recent attempts to quantify the magnitude of related health impacts in the human population have been made. Estimates vary widely from small to large, depending on the organism and antimicrobial of interest, and are accompanied by considerable uncertainty.

49. The workshop concluded that residues of antimicrobials in foods, under present regulatory regimes, represents a significantly less important human health risk than the risk related to antimicrobial resistant bacteria in food.

50. Risk assessment approaches that adequately address the broad range of potential human health impacts need to be further developed with a view towards enabling efficient risk management of antimicrobial resistance in the international arena. OIE is invited to continue its work on risk analysis in coordination with FAO and WHO.

51. The Workshop recommended that the Codex Alimentarius Commission, where appropriate in collaboration with OIE, takes coordinated steps towards managing these risks focusing on the microbiological nature of the hazards.