

# codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE  
ORGANIZATION  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD  
HEALTH  
ORGANIZATION



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**Agenda Item 2**

**CX/GP 02/2**

**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME  
CODEX COMMITTEE ON GENERAL PRINCIPLES  
Seventeenth Session  
Paris, France, 15 - 19 April 2002**

**MATTERS REFERRED BY THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION  
AND OTHER CODEX COMMITTEES, INCLUDING TRACEABILITY**

**A. DECISIONS OF THE COMMISSION CONCERNING THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

**Amendments to the Rules of Procedure**

As the quorum specified in Rule VI.6 for the amendment of the Rules of Procedure was not constituted, the Commission was unable to adopt the amendment of Rule VI.4 - Voting and Procedures proposed by the Committee on General Principles and agreed that it would be considered again at the next session.

The Commission also decided to defer consideration of the *Proposed Amendments to the Rules of Procedure - Membership of Regional Integration Organizations* and to request the Committee on General Principles to consider them thoroughly. This question will be considered under **Agenda Item 6**.

**Other Sections**

The Commission agreed with the amendments proposed to reflect the criteria approach for methods of analysis in the following sections : *Principles for the Establishment of Methods of Analysis and Relations between Commodity Committees and General Committees*.

The Commission adopted the revised Terms of Reference proposed for the Committee on Food Hygiene.

**Statements of Principle on the Role of Science and the Extent to which Other Factors are Taken into Account**

The Commission adopted the Criteria for the Consideration of Other Factors proposed by the CCGP with some amendments, for inclusion in the Procedural Manual (ALINORM 01/41, paras 86-98).

**B. GENERAL DECISIONS OF THE COMMISSION**

**Strategic Framework and Medium-Term Plan 2003-2007**

The Commission discussed and finally adopted the draft Strategic Framework, including the Strategic Vision Statement. It agreed that the draft Medium-Term Plan should be revised by the 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 Codex Coordinating Committees, other Codex Committees, member governments and international organizations, further consideration by the 50<sup>th</sup> and 51<sup>st</sup> Sessions of the Executive Committee and finalization at the 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission.

**Codex Process and Consensus Building**

Many delegations supported the holding of annual meetings of the Commission beginning in 2004. On the other hand, many other delegations stated that the holding of annual meetings would have serious implications for their ability to continue to participate effectively, primarily because of problems of cost and infrastructure.

It was therefore decided that a decision on this issue and on the related issue of the future of the Executive Committee would not be taken until the 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission in 2003. The Commission recognized that means to correct resource constraints on developing country participation and on the Secretariat's ability to service annual meetings would be important factors on the Commission's decision in this regard. The Delegation of Chile also pointed out that the future of the Regional Coordinating Committees should be addressed in this regard.

In relation to the proposed conversion of most Commodity Committees to *ad hoc* Task Forces, the Commission agreed that the *Criteria for the Establishment of Work Priorities*, if properly applied, were sufficient to assist in the adjournment or abolition of Codex committees and noted that the Criteria gave preference to the establishment of Task Forces when new work was required.

In regard to the Chairperson's Coordination and Advisory Group to facilitate more efficient consideration and finalization of draft standards, the Commission noted that Chairpersons of Codex Committees and Task Forces had been meeting on an informal basis in the margins of some Codex meetings. The Commission agreed that this group should continue to meet, as required, on an informal basis to provide a coordinating role but without the power to take decisions or make recommendations to the Commission.

### **Risk Analysis Policies of the Codex Alimentarius Commission**

The Commission considered a progress report on risk analysis in the work of Codex and the questions put forward by the Committee on General Principles concerning the development of the Working Principles for Risk Analysis (ALINORM 01/41, paras. 71-85). The Commission adopted the following position concerning precaution in the framework of Codex:

*“When there is evidence that a risk to human health exists but scientific data are insufficient or incomplete, the Commission should not proceed to elaborate a standard but should consider elaborating a related text, such as a code of practice, provided that such a text would be supported by the available scientific evidence”.*

The matters related to risk analysis will be considered under **Agenda Item 3**.

## **C. TRACEABILITY**

### **Executive Committee**

The 49<sup>th</sup> (Extraordinary) Session of the Executive Committee (October 2001) discussed how to address the general issue of traceability in the framework of Codex on the basis of a document prepared by the Codex Secretariat. The Executive Committee recommended that the Committee on General Principles consider the following aspects of traceability: as a food safety objective (i.e., as an SPS measure); and as a legitimate objective as a TBT measure. However, the Executive Committee was of the opinion that the first consideration should be given to the use of traceability as a risk management option in the Working Principles for Risk Analysis and also noted that the role of Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems. The Executive Committee agreed that the Committees concerned (including the Committees on General Principles, Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems, Food Hygiene and Labelling) should undertake work as they deemed appropriate, within their respective mandates (ALINORM 03/3, paras. 29-33).

The Committee is invited to consider how to proceed as regards the issue of traceability in the framework of risk analysis.

### **Committee on Food Hygiene**

The 34<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Food Hygiene (October 2001) recalled its previous decision that traceability would be considered in the context of its work on the proposed draft *Principles and Guidelines for the Conduct of Microbiological Risk Management*. However, the Committee was of the opinion that specific work on traceability as related to food hygiene was premature. The Committee therefore reiterated its request to the drafting group that the concept of traceability should be taken into account in the further elaboration of the above Principles and Guidelines (ALINORM 03/13, paras. 170-171).

### **Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems**

The 10<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee (February 2002) considered the information paper on Traceability in the Context of Inspection and Certification Systems prepared by the Australian Secretariat and had an extensive

debate on the application of traceability in the framework of food inspection and certification systems. Considering the relevance of this issue for the CCFICS and the mandate provided by the CCEXEC, the Committee decided that a working group would draft a discussion paper for circulation, comment and further consideration at its next meeting (ALINORM 03/31, references to be finalized).

### ***Ad hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Foods Derived from Biotechnology***

The Third Session of the Task Force (March 2002) considered the issue of traceability in the framework of the *Draft Principles for the Risk Analysis of Foods Derived from Modern Biotechnology* (Section III - Principles - Risk Management).

The Task Force was of the opinion that the resolution of this issue was important in order to reach a final conclusion on the text of the Draft Principles. It noted that the addition of a new paragraph after paragraph 20 concerning tools for the implementation and enforcement of risk management measures made it possible to place the question of traceability into context as a one of these tools, leaving aside its use for other purposes. On this basis a compromise text was drafted and accepted by the Task Force. In drafting this compromise text, the Task Force recognized that there were applications of product tracing (traceability) other than the risk management of foods derived from biotechnology, and that these applications be consistent with the provisions of the SPS and TBT Agreements. The representative of 49<sup>th</sup> Parallel noted that such applications would also need to be consistent with the provisions of the Cartagena Protocol after its entry into force. The Task Force noted that further consideration of these broader issues would continue within Codex (ALINORM 01/34, paras. 22-28).

The following paragraphs were therefore included in the *Draft Principles for the Risk Analysis of Foods Derived from Modern Biotechnology*:

*20. Post-market monitoring may be an appropriate risk management measure in specific circumstances. Its need and utility should be considered, on a case-by-case basis, during risk assessment and its practicability should be considered during risk management. Post-market monitoring may be undertaken for the purpose of:*

- a) verifying conclusions about the absence or the possible occurrence, impact and significance of potential consumer health effects; and*
- b) monitoring changes in nutrient intake levels, associated with the introduction of foods likely to significantly alter nutritional status, to determine their human health impact.*

*21. Specific tools may be needed to facilitate the implementation and enforcement of risk management measures. These may include appropriate analytical methods; reference materials; and, the tracing of products<sup>1</sup> for the purpose of facilitating withdrawal from the market when a risk to human health has been identified or to support post-market monitoring in circumstances as indicated in paragraph 20.*

The Task Force finalized the *Draft Principles for the Risk Analysis of Foods Derived from Modern Biotechnology* and the *Draft Guideline for the Conduct of Food Safety Risk Assessment of Foods Derived from Recombinant-DNA Plants* and advanced them to Step 8 for adoption by the 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

## **D. MATTERS REFERRED BY OTHER COMMITTEES**

### **COMMITTEE ON MEAT AND POULTRY HYGIENE**

#### **Name and Terms of reference**

In view of technical and editorial problems associated with use of the terms “poultry” and “poultry meat”, and in recognition that the Committee covers numerous types of meat in addition to poultry meat, the Committee requested the Commission to amend the Name of the Committee to the Codex Committee on Meat Hygiene. The Committee also requested the Commission to revise its Terms of Reference to be consistent with the name of the Committee, i.e., “To elaborate worldwide standards and/or codes of practice as appropriate for meat hygiene” (ALINORM 03/16, para 80-83).

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<sup>1</sup> It is recognised that there are other applications of product tracing. These applications should be consistent with the provisions of the SPS and TBT Agreements. The application of product tracing to the areas covered by both Agreements is under consideration within Codex on the basis of the decisions of 49th Session of the Executive Committee.