

# codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE  
ORGANIZATION  
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JOINT OFFICE: Viale delle Terme di Caracalla 00100 ROME Tel: 39 06 57051 www.codexalimentarius.net Email: codex@fao.org Facsimile: 39 06 5705 4593

Agenda Item 5

CX/GP 04/20/5-Add.2

## JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME CODEX COMMITTEE ON GENERAL PRINCIPLES Twentieth Session

Paris, France, 3 - 7 May 2004

### PROPOSED DRAFT REVISED CODE OF ETHICS FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN FOODS

#### DEFINITION OF FOOD

The 18<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on General Principles, while considering the revision of the Code of Ethics for International Trade in Foods discussed the definition of food. The Committee recalled that the definition of "food" in Article 3 of the Code was identical to the Codex definition in the Procedural Manual. However, several delegations indicated that further consideration was required to address the following questions: a scientific basis for the definition; the clarification of the term "human consumption" taking into account translation difficulties; the specific inclusion of "chewing gum" in the definition; the reference to substances that were obviously not covered (ALINORM 04/27/33, paras. 54-55).

The Committee agreed that the definition could not be amended at this stage only for the purposes of the Code, but that it should be considered more generally for the purposes of Codex. However, it should not delay consideration of the Code. The Committee therefore agreed that, in conjunction with the further revision of the Proposed Draft Code, the Secretariat would prepare a discussion paper considering the issues relating to the definition, if possible taking into account other existing definitions at the international level.

At this stage it has not been possible to find another definition of food at the international level, whether in FAO, WHO, WTO, OIE or ISO<sup>1</sup>. In the framework of the World Customs Organizations (WCO) there are definitions of different classes of products but no definition of "food" as such. As regards national regulations, the approach differs and in some countries a general definition is used while in other countries the substances excluded are listed specifically.

As regards a scientific basis for the definition, no records have been found of a discussion of this specific definition in FAO/WHO expert consultations, and it appears that the Codex definition has been generally used. For example the *Expert Consultation on the Application of Risk Analysis to Food standards Issues* (1995) refers to the Codex definition. Similarly there is no definition of the term "human consumption" and if the Committee so wish, this question could be further considered by FAO and WHO in relation to current activities on risk assessment..

During the discussion in the CCGP some aspects of the definition were questioned, especially the inclusion of chewing gum and the reference to substances that were obviously not covered. The Committee may therefore consider a limited revision of the definition to address these questions, as follows:

"Food" means any substance, whether processed, semi-processed or raw which is intended for human consumption and includes drink ~~chewing gum~~ and any substance which has been used in the manufacture, preparation or treatment of "food" ~~but does not include cosmetics or tobacco or substances used only as drugs."~~

If the Committee is of the view that this issue should be further considered, the current definition could also be circulated for comments with a view to its amendment at the next session in the light of the comments received.

<sup>1</sup> to be confirmed as regards ISO