

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD
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ORGANIZATION



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Agenda Item 4

CX/GP 06/23/4

**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
CODEX COMMITTEE ON GENERAL PRINCIPLES
Twenty-third Session
Paris, France, 10 – 14 April 2006**

PROPOSED DRAFT REVISED CODE OF ETHICS FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN FOODS

Background

The Committee on General Principles considered the revision of the Code of Ethics for International Trade in Food at its 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th and 20th Sessions. The 20th Session of the Committee on General Principles (2004) agreed to seek the advice of the 27th Session of the Commission (2004) as regards the need to revise the Code of Ethics.

The 27th Session of the Commission had an extensive discussion on this question and agreed to address the following questions to the Committee on General Principles in order to clarify the issues involved.:

- Whether there is a clear need for a Code of Ethics for International Trade in Food;
- If so, whether the primary problem to be addressed by such a Code is the subsequent export of food, whether imported or produced domestically, that had been found to be unsafe or otherwise does not meet the safety standards of the exporting country;
- Whether the Code has other objectives;
- To what extent other Codex texts, developed since the last revision of the Code in 1985, have addressed the objective(s) of the existing Code. Of particular relevance are the texts developed by the Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems;
- Whether the texts developed by other multilateral bodies (e.g. FAO, WHO, WTO) have contributed to addressing the problems the Code is meant to resolve; and
- Given the existence of these Codex and other texts, what, if any, aspects of the problem remain unaddressed and whether these aspects were within the mandate of the Committee.

These questions were circulated for comments in Circular Letter CL 2004/57-GP. In addition, all FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees were invited to discuss this issue. The 22nd Session of the Committee on General Principles considered the comments received and had an extensive discussion on the revision of the Code (ALINORM 05/28/33, paras.55-73).

The Committee agreed to ask the Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) to consider whether it could provide recommendations to address the question of “the subsequent export of food, whether imported or produced domestically, that had been found to be unsafe or unsuitable or otherwise did not meet the safety standards of the exporting country”, within its terms of reference, and also consider whether further guidance could be provided to remedy the problems faced by countries with insufficient capacity to conduct import food control. The Committee requested the CCFICS to review, where necessary, the comments included in the working documents considered by the CCGP at its 22nd Session.

The Committee agreed to suspend consideration of the Proposed Draft Revised Code of Ethics, currently at Steps 3/4, until its next session pending the reply from the CCFICS.

Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems

The 14th Session of the CCFICS agreed to establish an electronic Working Group, led by Canada to develop a discussion paper for consideration at its 15th Session. The discussion paper should:

- Review CCFICS terms of reference and advise if the request from CCGP falls within its mandate;
- Assess the existing CCFICS texts to determine if they respond to the question and, where appropriate, identify gaps where further guidance may be useful;
- Determine if the existing texts respond to the problems faced by countries with insufficient capacity to carry out imported food controls; indicate whether other organisations or agencies are better situated to address the problem; and
- Identify any other issues of relevance to the matter referred, where appropriate.

The Committee further agreed that in developing the discussion paper the electronic Working Group would take into consideration the comments included in the working document considered by the 22nd Session of the Codex Committee on General Principles and other relevant guidance (ALINORM 06/29/30, paras. 8-9).

Discussion

The Committee on General Principles is invited to consider how to proceed further in the revision of the Code of Ethics and in particular whether to delay consideration of this matter.

The Committee on General Principles may wish to consider the following possibilities:

- to defer any action until its next session, with the understanding that if no reply is forthcoming from CCFICS the Committee will take a decision at its next session;
- to resume consideration of the Proposed Draft Revised Code in its latest version (ALINORM 04/27/33A, Appendix V);
- to discontinue work on the revision of the Code.