

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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ORGANIZATION



JOINT OFFICE: Viale delle Terme di Caracalla 00153 ROME Tel: 39 06 57051 www.codexalimentarius.net Email: codex@fao.org Facsimile: 39 06 5705 4593

Agenda Item 10

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**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMITTEE ON GENERAL PRINCIPLES
Twenty-sixth Session
Paris, France, 12 -16 April 2010**

**Timely and simultaneous distribution of documents/length and content of reports
Chile's Preliminary Proposal**

Background

At the thirty-second session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the timely and simultaneous distribution of documents and the length and content of reports was discussed. The detail can be found in paragraphs 187 to 194 of the report of the above-mentioned session.

Chile's proposal, which is mentioned in the report conclusions, was to be presented first at the meeting of the Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean and then at the next session of the Committee on General Principles. As it was included on the Agenda of the twenty-sixth session of the Committee, we are submitting this preliminary document.

The main reason for dealing with this issue is to respond proactively to repeated concerns that various countries have raised at different Codex sessions, to the effect that the documents submitted for their analysis are usually available in English and later in the other languages. As a result, for countries where English is not the mother tongue, working on the documents is harder and national involvement in the examination process is reduced. The non-availability of the documents in a timely manner creates a disadvantage; an issue that has been raised mainly by Spanish speaking countries.

Proposal

Discussions could focus on two areas that, albeit related, could be worked on separately for the purpose of discussion, as the distribution of documents concerns the analysis documents that are required for the Committees' work and discussions while the reports deal with the outcome of the meetings.

Concerning the simultaneous distribution of the documents, we propose discussing the following topics:

Increasing translation services: this point is directly related to financing as well to a possible increase of the Secretariat's workload.

Among the different sources of financing that could be explored, the Codex Trust Fund should be considered, in terms of fostering increased Member participation in the Codex standard-setting process, and thus meeting some of its objectives.

Strengthening the Codex Secretariat is another aspect of the discussion; it has been examined and everyone has acknowledged that it would be an efficient move. In this particular matter, strengthening the Secretariat would concern the review of the documents to distribute, according to Codex principles. This work is needed to improve the quality of the translations. The contribution of donor countries to this work could also be examined, as they usually provide reinforcements to the Secretariat by accomplishing this task.

Another means of funding could be to submit a project to entities such as the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) of the WTO, considering that the issue is directly related to the improvement of the standard-setting process and would foster a greater participation of the countries, and especially their National Committees.

The work results of the group that will be examining the topic of electronic translations should also be considered.

Concerning the length and content of the reports, we propose to discuss the following:

It should be considered that the reports may be very useful for the countries that could not attend the meetings. These countries are not only interested in the results of the meetings, but also in the related discussions and negotiation process. We raise this point because at its thirty-first session the Commission agreed to issue reports focused on results.

Considering the advances in drafting the reports since the thirty-first session of the Commission, and for the purpose of responding to concerns raised at the thirty-second session of the Commission, the main objective, i.e., reporting results, could be maintained. In addition, a summary of the main aspects of the negotiation process, or the relevant discussion points, including differing opinions (as well as minority opinions) could be included. In short, the proposal is to have a report that, in terms of length and content, is halfway between the different types of reports that have been drafted before and after the thirty-first session of the Commission.

Another possibility would be to keep a report focused on results as was agreed at the thirty-first session of the Commission and append a more detailed account of the content of the negotiation process with the positions of the countries, to the report on the agreements that were reached at the meeting.

A third possibility would be to maintain a succinct report focused on results, as agreed at the thirty-first session of the Commission, and provide expedited access to the recordings of Members' contributions to the negotiation process of the relevant session, to those countries who so request. For this purpose, the interpreters' translations of the contributions into the official languages have to be recorded and the recordings have to be available.