



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX COMMITTEE ON GENERAL PRINCIPLES

**Twenty-seventh Session
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DEVELOPMENT OF JOINT CODEX/OIE STANDARDS

Replies to CL 2010/22-GP

(Australia, Brazil, Colombia, European Union, New Zealand, Philippines and United States)

Australia

Australia supports continued cooperation between Codex and the OIE in the development of international standards and can see some advantages in joint standards between the two organisations. In recognising these advantages we also consider that it would be impracticable to implement due to the significantly different processes for the development of standards of both organisations.

Australia notes that the existing mechanism for cooperation as contained in the Procedural Manual has worked well in the past and has resulted in a number of texts that have been developed in cooperation with the OIE.

Australia considers that strengthening the cooperation and coordination between national Codex and OIE representatives could be more valuable and achievable. This could lead to complementary positions of a countries delegation at both the OIE and relevant Codex Committee which would avoid duplication and information gaps in the development of standards. We would also recommend consideration be given to developing stronger linkages between the OIE Animal Production Food Safety Working Group and Codex by including the chairs of Codex Committees that the OIE has interest in. In addition, in order to improve transparency and to avoid duplication the OIE should continue to report to Codex Committees on its activities of relevance.

Australia supports continued cooperation between the two organisations within their respective structures and supports continued discussion to explore collaboration further.

Brazil

Brazil considers that the cooperation between Codex and OIE is fundamental for a fruitful work in both organizations. Nevertheless, considering the structures and nature of these organizations and also their procedures for elaboration of standards which differ significantly, Brazil is of the opinion that the conditions for developing joint standards between Codex and OIE are not favourable. Brazil suggests that the arrangements currently used between Codex and OIE in order do collaborate in the elaboration of standards should be maintained.

Colombia

Colombia supports the development of Joint CODEX/OIE Standards which permit to avoid duplication and contradictions, and for this purpose, considers it important to maintain a substantial cooperation in the initial stages of the preparation of a standard or related text and in this sense, states the importance of establishing some technical criteria and guidelines that help to achieve an efficient outcome of the work between the two organizations.

European Union

The Member States of the European Union (MSEU) continue to support close cooperation with the OIE to avoid gaps, contradictions and duplication in areas where the mandates of Codex and the OIE interface, such as antimicrobial resistance, zoonoses and certification. This cooperation has proven to be quite successful, the most recent example being the development of the *Guidelines for the Control of Salmonella and Campylobacter in Chicken Meat*.

In principle, the MSEU see the value in Codex/OIE joint standards as they would provide a seamless coverage of the entire "farm to fork" continuum. However, there are still important obstacles for the development of such standards stemming from the different procedures applied by Codex and the OIE, in particular concerning the adoption of standards.

The proposed "Procedure for the development of joint standards" described in the discussion paper attached to CL 2010/22-GP would not fully resolve those obstacles. There is a non-negligible risk to create an additional cumbersome procedure for setting "joint bodies" which would cause extra costs, organisational work and delays in the development of standards. This would not be in line with our global aim of achieving efficiency gains in international organisations by strengthening existing rather than creating new bodies and institutions.

The MSEU note that the current pragmatic arrangements laid down in the *Guidelines on Cooperation between Codex Alimentarius and International Intergovernmental Organizations in the Elaboration of Standards and related Texts*¹ provide a well functioning basis for the cooperation with other international organizations, including the OIE.

The MSEU however believe that there could be some merit in considering an experimental trial on a relevant topic. The MSEU propose to make this experiment by developing a joint Codex/OIE standard on the control of specific zoonotic parasites in meat (*Trichinella spiralis* and *Cysticercus bovis*) which is a new work proposed by CCFH and (to be) approved by the 34th session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. This experiment should be conducted using the lightest procedure possible respecting the established Codex decision making procedures.

In a longer term approach, the MSEU would not object going into a global reflection aiming at harmonising the working procedures applied by the three standard setting organisations (Codex, IPPC, OIE) with a view to facilitate the development of joint standards in full respect of their respective mandates.

New Zealand

The issue of development of joint Codex/OIE standards has been the subject of much debate and discussion in various Codex bodies over a number of years. Without doubt there is strong support and commitment among Codex members for close collaboration between Codex and OIE to ensure that international food standards address risks across the whole food chain.

In principle there is merit in the idea of Joint OIE/Codex standards but the reality is that OIE and Codex operate under very different rules and structures. These differences are clearly spelt out in Section 4 of the discussion paper attached to CL 2010/22-GP. As long as these differences remain it is impractical to consider more formal structures for development of joint OIE/Codex standards. It is for this reason that the Commission's Guidelines on Cooperation between Codex and International Intergovernmental Organizations in the elaboration of standards and related texts places emphasis on

- Cooperation in the initial drafting stages of a Codex standard or related text; and
- Cooperation through mutual exchange of information and participation in meetings.

New Zealand believes that there is already evidence of strong collaboration between Codex and the OIE in many areas of work as is noted in the discussion paper. More recently there was strong collaboration between Codex and the OIE in the work of the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task force on antimicrobial Resistance. Looking ahead there is opportunity to strengthen this collaborative effort in the recently initiated CCFH work on developing Guidelines for the control of specific zoonotic parasites in Meat: *Trichinella spiralis* and *Cysticercus bovis*.

Both organizations have the opportunity to pursue and strengthen their cooperative relationships in the context of upcoming new work in the reactivated Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Animal Feeding.

¹ Procedural Manual, 19th Edition, p.172

This will be important to ensure that the outputs are aligned, address the risks across the whole food chain and efforts are not duplicated.

In addition to collaboration at the international level the Commission has also recognized the importance of closer inter disciplinary coordination at national and regional level between food safety and veterinary public health officials. New Zealand supports this objective and the recent reintegration of the New Zealand Food Safety Authority and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry into a single entity underlines our interest and commitment to promoting closer communication and coordination on food safety and veterinary public health matters.

In summary, New Zealand supports the current emphasis on promoting close collaboration between Codex and the OIE in the development of international food standards in line with their respective structures and processes. We do however believe that the issue of more formal collaboration should be kept under review in the light of progress towards more harmonized structures and processes.

Philippines

The Philippines recognizes the efforts of the Committee to consider the proposal of the OIE to develop Joint Codex/OIE Standards as a way of coordinating and harmonizing approaches to risk management in the entire food production continuum.

However, we believe the Codex document on “Guidelines on Cooperation Between the Codex Alimentarius Commission and International Intergovernmental Organizations in the Elaboration of Standards and Related Texts” (Codex Procedural Manual 19th Edition, page 172 to 173) already contains clear guidelines for the development of Codex standards that contain the needed technical inputs from the OIE (Codex Procedural Manual 19th Edition, page 172 to 173). This document reportedly works well and has already resulted in a number of texts developed at Codex in cooperation with the OIE. We also anticipate that the proposed procedure for the development of joint standards indicated in the circular letter will entail added cost for meetings.

United States

The United States appreciates the opportunity to respond to CL 2010/22-GP: Request for comments concerning the development of joint Codex/OIE standards.

We believe that a strong working relationship between Codex and OIE is critical to our respective organizations being able to fulfill their mandates. To that end, we appreciate the participation of OIE in the work of Codex through its observer status, and the invitation from OIE for participation of the Chair of the Codex Commission in OIE meetings.

Throughout discussion of joint Codex/OIE standards over the last several years, the United States has expressed concern about the difference in mission, priorities, and operating procedures between the two organizations, particularly with respect to transparency and inclusiveness. We continue to believe that such differences would make it difficult to develop joint standards in an efficient manner because of the potential to embroil each organization in the other’s policies, procedures, and processes.

Nonetheless, opportunities exist for collaboration. If each organization works to coordinate work products, when appropriate, Codex and OIE can maximize their unique individual roles and expertise, build on their mutual interests, and avoid duplication while promoting safe food for consumers.

The current working relationship supports such collaboration: OIE can actively engage in the work of Codex through its observer status; the two Secretariats maintain on-going discussions; and the two organizations exchange reports on their activities. This approach has worked well. OIE’s input into pertinent Codex standards has been significant, and we believe that both Codex and OIE’s interests have been adequately and appropriately served.

In order for this collaboration to remain successful, it is important that each organization respects the mission and responsibilities of the other and works within its respective confines; i.e., OIE develops on-farm standards and recommendations and determines and maintains the health status of animal populations, and Codex develops standards related to safe food.