



Agenda Item 7

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

Twenty-eighth Session

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Report of the Electronic Working Group on Codex-OIE Cooperation

Prepared by Canada

1. The 27th session of the Codex Committee on General Principles (CCGP) agreed to establish an electronic working group (EWG)¹ chaired by Canada and working in English only, open to all members and observers with the following mandate:

Reaffirming the commitment to collaboration in the development of standards of mutual interest, respecting the mandates and procedures of Codex Alimentarius and OIE, including a commitment to an open, transparent and inclusive process, the working group will propose guidance to better take into account relevant work that has been undertaken or is in progress by each organization and identify means to consistently reference each other's standards and guidance, as appropriate.

2. On September 12, 2012, the chair circulated an invitation via the Codex Secretariat requesting member governments and observers to submit contact particulars if they were interested in participating in the electronic working group (eWG). The deadline for submission of participants' names was October 19, 2012. The eWG participants list is attached as Annex A.
3. On November 19, 2012, a table identifying a number of Codex documents that reference the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) document was circulated. A request for comments on the following questions was also circulated:
 - a) Are there additional texts relevant to both the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) and OIE that could be included in the table?
 - b) Is there current work in progress by the CAC that would be relevant to both organizations?
 - c) In your opinion, do the current work arrangements enable both organizations to engage effectively on work relevant to them?
 - d) Do you have any recommendations for improving (a) work procedures; and (b) consistent cross-referencing to each other's standards, where relevant?
4. The deadline for submission of input was January 04, 2013. Comments were subsequently received from 17 member governments and five observer organizations. The input identified additional Codex Committee references, texts which may be relevant to OIE and OIE documents that reference Codex which were used to update a comprehensive list of cross-referencing documents.
5. Taking into account input provided, proposed recommendations were identified and broadly categorized under three proposed themes:
 - a) Adoption of formal structure for collaboration to increase consistency
 - b) Increased transparency through improved communication
 - c) Strengthen collaboration at national level

¹ REP12/GP Paragraphs 70 - 71

6. On February 20, 2013, the updated table and proposed themes and recommendations were circulated to the eWG participants with a deadline for comments by March 13, 2013. Comments on the proposed themes and recommendations were received from 14 member governments and 4 observer organizations.
7. Based on these comments received, a first draft of the proposed guidance document was prepared and circulated to the eWG participants on April 24, 2013 with a deadline for comments by May 17, 2013. Comments were received from nine member governments and four observer organizations.
8. On July 19, 2013, based on comments received, a second draft of the proposed guidance document was circulated with a deadline for comments by September 18, 2013. Comments were received from nine member governments and four observer organizations.
9. A third draft of the proposed guidance document was subsequently developed for forwarding to Rome for circulation to all Codex members and observers which takes into account comments received.
10. A compilation of all written comments from the four rounds is being circulated as a separate document.
11. The eWG members noted that the “farm-to-fork” approach, as well as the concept of “One Health” is imperative in development of standards relevant to the entire food production chain. Thus, collaboration between OIE and CAC is critical since developing on-farm standards and maintaining the health status of animal populations (OIE mandate) and developing standards related to safe foods (CAC mandate), would result in a higher level of consumer protection.
12. The eWG noted that the current guidelines provide a framework for effective collaboration and communication between Codex and OIE. They include:
 - Guideline on Cooperation between the Codex Alimentarius Commission and Intergovernmental Organizations in the Elaboration of Standards and Related Texts (*CAC Procedural Manual Section I*)
 - Criteria for Establishment of Standards and Related Texts (*CAC Procedural Manual Section II*)
 - Procedures for the Elaboration of Codex Standards and Related Texts – Part 2. Critical Review
13. Although the eWG members recognized the existence of current guidelines, which provide a basis for collaboration, the eWG noted the need for enhancing the effectiveness of the existing guidelines and identifying practical measures which promote cooperation between Codex and OIE, within the respective rules and procedures of both organizations.
14. The eWG noted that the differences in the mandates, priorities and operating procedures between the two organizations would make it difficult to develop joint standards in an efficient manner; however, stronger coordination on work undertaken by the two organizations, increased consistency and transparency through various measures, would result in enhanced effectiveness of collaboration between the CAC and the OIE.
15. As a result, the eWG has:
 - Identified a number of documents that reference Codex and/or OIE and developed a comprehensive list of cross-referencing documents. This list is being circulated as a separate document.
 - Developed a guidance document (Annex B) that contains recommended measures that may be utilized to foster on-going collaboration between the two organizations focusing on three key themes:
 - Theme A: Adoption of systematic procedures for cross-referencing to increase consistency
 - Theme B: Enhancing processes to identify joint priorities in areas of common interests and improving transparency through information sharing and recognition of best practices in communications and collaboration
 - Theme C: Strengthen collaboration at the national and regional level.
16. Attached as Annex B is the Proposed Draft Guidance Document for Codex/OIE Cooperation for consideration at a physical working group meeting by the 28th Session of the CCGP.

ANNEX A

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ANNEX B

Proposed Draft Guidance Document for Codex/OIE Cooperation

Recommended measures to promote collaboration between the Codex Alimentarius Commission and World Organization for Animal Health

Introduction

The members of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) recognize the need for continuous collaboration with each other as both organizations address areas of mutual interest relating to food safety along the farm to fork/food production continuum. These guidelines establish mechanisms that may be utilized to foster on-going collaboration between the two organizations and their members at the national and regional level. This guidance should be read in conjunction with the “Agreements between the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)/the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Office International des Épizooties (OIE)”, the “Guidelines on Cooperation between the Codex Alimentarius Commission and International Intergovernmental Organizations in the Elaboration of Standards and Related Texts and the Organic Rules of the Office International des Épizooties”.

Recommended Measures

The following measures are recommended to promote collaboration between the CAC and OIE. The measures have been grouped under three themes. Once implemented and maintained, these measures should support strengthened collaboration between the two organizations.

Theme A – Adoption of Systematic Procedures for Cross-Referencing to Increase Consistency

1. CAC and OIE should adopt a consistent systematic cross-referencing process for relevant Codex/OIE texts which involves referencing formats and regular updates as necessary.

Recommended Referencing Format:

- a. Codex Documents:

CAC Reference Number. *Title of the standard/guideline/text.*

Example: CAC/GL 78-2011. *Guidelines for the Control of Campylobacter and Salmonella in Chicken Meat.*

Example: CAC/RCP 58-2005. *Code of Hygienic Practice Meat.*

- b. OIE Documents:

For OIE Codes: *Title of the Code (Year).* Chapter Number. Chapter Title. and Article Number and Title (where relevant).

Example: *Terrestrial Animal Health Code (2012).* Chapter 5.3. OIE procedures relevant to the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures of the World Trade Organization. Article 5.3.2. Introduction on the judgement of the equivalence of sanitary measures.

For OIE Manuals: *Title of the Manual (Year).* Chapter Number. Chapter Title.

Example: *Manual of Diagnostic Tests for Aquatic Animal (2012).* Chapter 2.3.5. Infectious Salmon Anaemia.

2. CAC and OIE should post a list of areas of mutual interest (e.g. standards, guidelines and texts) on their respective websites.

Theme B – Enhancing Processes to Identify Joint Priorities in Areas of Common Interest and Improving Transparency through Information Sharing and Recognition of Best Practices in Communication and Collaboration

3. CAC and OIE will continue information sharing exchanges to identify areas of mutual interest and share work program priorities. CAC and OIE are encouraged to:
 - a. Hold joint meetings annually, between the Chairperson of the CAC and the Director General of OIE, or their respective designate, to consult each other on the identification and maintenance of a list of:
 - i. common priorities and work plans and common respective definitions, as appropriate, in relation to proposed new work for the respective organizations that would require collaboration/consultation; and
 - ii. standards, guidelines and texts of mutual interest which may require input from the other organization.
 - b. Continue to hold joint-secretariat meetings annually to:
 - i. share information (i.e. reports on issues of interest to the other organization, standards and recommendations);
 - ii. provide input, based on the role and technical expertise from the respective organizations, on agenda items where subjects of common interest require a coordinated approach; and
 - iii. provide updates of activities undertaken by each organization as part of a standing agenda item at meetings at all levels.
 - c. Ensure each organization reviews the other's work on common or interrelated issues to ensure that standards of common interest are developed in consultation with each other, where appropriate.
 - i. Encourage the Chairs of subsidiary bodies to identify and seek input on identified areas of mutual interest.
 - d. Make reports available from one organization to the other organization through circulation at respective meetings and links to each other's websites.
 - e. Host workshops/joint sessions in conjunction with meetings of the CAC, its subsidiary bodies or as opportunities arise, when requested by Codex or OIE members, on educating members on issues such as priorities, mandate and working procedures of the organizations.
 - f. Develop criteria for selecting representatives to attend each other's meetings.
 - g. Include joint representation of CAC and OIE experts, along with the WTO SPS Secretariat, at capacity building workshops, where appropriate.

Theme C – Strengthen Collaboration at the National and Regional Level

4. The CAC and OIE encourage member governments to strengthen collaboration at the national and regional level by promoting dialogue between their Codex Contact Point and the appropriate OIE focal point in their jurisdiction and through national and regional level working groups/subcommittee meetings. This will enable enhanced understanding and collaboration on the management of risks for the farm to fork/food production continuum approach.
5. Member governments are also encouraged to share information and coordinate and align national positions on issues of common interest (e.g. relevant texts under development by each organization) between national and regional Codex and OIE representatives through deliberate dialogue (e.g. joint meetings and forums).