



Agenda Item 10

CX/GP 14/28/9

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

Twenty-eighth Session

Paris, France, 7–11 April 2014

Discussion Paper on the Cooperation between General Subject Committees and Commodity Committees and the Need for Amendments of the Procedural Manual

Prepared by Norway

Background

1. At CCGPs 27th session the delegation of Norway indicated that general subject committees sometimes develop standards and related texts with elements that are already included in commodity standards without referring to the commodity committees concerned and that in order to work more efficiently and avoid duplications, this issue should be addressed through the amendment to relevant sections of the Procedural Manual: Requirements for project documents and criteria applicable to general subjects.
2. Further one delegation pointed out that improved communication between committees required the cooperation of all involved but did not necessarily require procedural amendments. Some delegations expressed the view that this question was important, but that no decision could be taken at this stage as the proposals for amendment were presented at the session, and would require some further consideration. The Committee therefore agreed that the Delegation of Norway would prepare a discussion paper on the cooperation between general subject committees and commodity committees for further consideration at the next session.

Discussion

3. The Procedural Manual (PM) describes the practical functioning of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies. Knowledge of the content of the PM is essential for Codex delegates to participate effectively in the work of developing Codex standards and related texts. It is the experience of Norway that in regard to “cooperation between committees”: i) in some cases the PM is not followed and ii) in some cases the PM is not clear enough.
4. Examples on where the PM is not followed and where it is not clear enough regarding PM “*Proposal to undertake new work*”:
 - a) According to the PM the project document shall contain information on the relation between the proposal and other existing Codex documents (PM page 29). Unfortunately the PM is not always followed at this point.
 - b) The project document shall be subject to a critical review conducted by CCEXEC, taking into account the criteria for the establishment of work priorities (PM page 40 and 41). In these criteria it is not clear enough that it is the task of CCEXEC to ensure that committees are not duplicating their work and are not starting new work on a topic that has already been elaborated by another committee, i.e. that the project document as presented contains information on work already undertaken by Codex.
 - c) The consideration on which committee should be responsible, would in most cases result in the same committee, however in some cases the topic might fit better under the terms of reference of another committee. Again in other cases it might be a need to consider cooperation between committees and describe how this is to be done.

5. Cooperation and coordination at national level between delegates to different Codex meetings is essential to the effectiveness of Codex. To facilitate this national cooperation, it is important that the PM clearly expresses the need for cooperation between different committees and the need to know the terms of reference of the different committees.
6. Examples on where the PM is not clear enough in regard cooperation between commodity committees and general subject committees.
 - a) In the Procedural Manual (PM¹), section II *Relations between Commodity Committees and General Subject Committees* (page 44) there are provisions concerning “due referral between commodity committees and general subject committees during the elaboration of Codex commodity standards”. We understand that this text is aimed to address one-way consultation, i.e. how commodity committees should consult general subject committees and not both ways, as would be equally beneficial for the work.
 - b) We cannot find any general provisions concerning due referral between general subject committees and commodity committees during elaboration of Codex general subject standards. The only reference we find is in section II *Elaboration of Codex Texts* in the PM *Procedures for consideration of the entry and review of food additive provisions in the GSFA* (page 58), where CCFA, if the food additive is used in standardized food, is required to ask the relevant commodity committee to consider the functional class of the food additives and their technical justification, when developing food additive provisions for standardized foods.
 - c) It is our opinion that due referral should work both ways between general subject committees and commodity committees when developing standards. This should be included in the information given on ways forward when adopting new work.
7. Norway would also like to note that it might be useful to consider whether or not it could be beneficial to do a full review of the PM to make sure that it is up to date with necessary procedures, is in line with the new strategic plan, has a functional layout and structure and finally includes an index. Unfortunately we are not able to discuss a more general approach in this background paper, as this document focus on the cooperation between committees and new work proposals.

Recommendation

8. The following recommendations are provided to the Committee for its consideration

Revise the Procedural Manual to better describe the cooperation and reciprocal referral between general subject committees and commodity committees and avoiding “double” work and overlapping documents by amending section II *Elaboration of Codex Texts*:

- a) Page 29: *Provisions concerning the content of the project document*. In the sixth bullet point the relation between the proposal and other existing Codex documents is mentioned. To be clearer on what should be discussed and how, we suggest inserting a sentence after the comma: **and the need to update and cross check with other existing documents to ensure consistency of information with other committees and how to cooperate with another committee.**
- b) Further to the critical review conducted by CCEXEC and the examination of proposals for development/revision of standards, taking into account the “*Criteria for the establishment of Work Priorities*”. Page 40: *Provisions concerning criteria applicable to general subjects and to commodities*. There is no reference to evaluation of work already undertaken by Codex. We would therefore suggest inserting a two paragraphs “x” and “xx” after paragraph (b) and (f) **x) and xx) Work already undertaken by Codex Alimentarius commodity committees or general subject committees.**

¹ All references are to the PM edition 21, English version