



Agenda Item 11

CX/GP 14/28/10

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX COMMITTEE ON GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Twenty-eighth Session

Paris, France, 7–11 April 2014

Discussion paper on Codex work management

Prepared by Japan

Background

1. The Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex) was established by FAO and WHO in 1963 to develop harmonized international food standards, guidelines and codes of practice. Currently, Codex has more than 180 Members, and more than 200 inter-governmental and international non-governmental organizations are granted as observers.
2. The objectives of Codex are to protect the health of consumers and to ensure fair practices in the food trade. While the objectives of Codex remain important, the environment in which Codex operates has evolved. As stated in the “Strategic Plan of the Codex Alimentarius Commission 2014-2019”, Codex must adapt to this evolving environment and be capable of proactively responding in a timely manner to emerging food safety, quality and nutrition issues with the aim to protect consumer’s health and ensure fair practices in food trade.
3. In 2002, the Joint FAO/WHO Evaluation of the Codex Alimentarius and other FAO and WHO Work on Food Standards reviewed the work of Codex, and produced a total of 42 recommendations to enhance the efficacy and transparency of Codex¹. The Codex Alimentarius Commission carefully examined and adopted them through intensive discussions. Since then, Codex work was enhanced particularly adopting use of time-limited task forces in lieu of committees and reorganization of some committees.
4. At the 36th session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, while recognizing the need of standards for spices, several delegations “expressed concerns with the cost implications associated with establishment of a new Committee”². A delegation “expressed concern with the extent of the proposed work on spices, which should be prioritized with a clear work plan, and noted that the establishment of a new Committee, such as the one proposed, should be considered in the broader context of Codex work management. The Delegation noted that ten years had passed since the Joint Evaluation of Codex and there was a need to review Codex committee work management, and that a discussion paper would be prepared on this subject for consideration at the next session of the Committee on General Principles”³.
5. Meanwhile, the 68th Executive Committee had “noted concern about the management of additional Committees or Task Forces and increasing workload, which would require more Codex resources. This was also considered in the context of the 2002 Evaluation of Codex.”⁴
6. Accordingly, Japan has prepared this discussion paper in order to facilitate discussion on this subject.

¹ http://www.who.int/foodsafety/codex/en/codex_eval_report_en.pdf
and CL 2005/12-CAC

² REP13/CAC para 153

³ REP13/CAC para 154

⁴ REP13/EXEC para 152

Possible approaches to consider the Codex work management

7. The TOR of CCGP is “to deal with such procedural and general matters as are referred to it by the Codex Alimentarius Commission”. Therefore it may be appropriate to consider general matters and procedural matters separately for convenience. The following are possible examples:
- (i) General matters
- Evaluation of the current practice of Codex Alimentarius after ten years of implementation of the Evaluation’s recommendations in the light of the four core concerns originally identified:
- Greater speed in Codex and expert scientific advice;
 - Increased inclusion of developing member countries in the Codex standard development process, including risk assessment;
 - Codex standards, which are of greater usefulness to Member Nations in terms of relevance to their needs and timeliness; and
 - More effective capacity building for development of national food control systems
- (ii) Procedural matters, for example:
- More explicit description on establishment of new committees: While the procedural manual explicitly says “first consideration should be given to the establishment of an ad hoc Intergovernmental Task Force under Rule XI.1(b)(i) of the Commission’s Rules of Procedure ...”, it is silent on the establishment of a new committee.
8. The above are just examples, and there may be more important matters that members may wish to discuss.
9. The present optional proposal is in principle to examine the current Codex practice in the light of the original intent of the 2002 Codex Evaluation. The review will be particularly important to see whether the practice implemented by the Codex is really working well or not, and is satisfying developing countries in their effective participation in the code making.

Recommendations

10. The Committee is invited to consider the following two points:
- Whether there is need of reviewing the current Codex practice and any need of discussing some provisions in the current Procedural Manual.
 - Whether the implementation of the recommendations by the 2002 Codex Evaluation is reviewed by FAO/WHO or a group of knowledgeable independents persons (same as “2002 Codex Evaluation”) in 2014-2015 subject to the availability of budget and the review will be submitted at the next CCGP for consideration.