

# CODEx ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



**Food and Agriculture  
Organization of  
the United Nations**



**World Health  
Organization**

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**Agenda Item 6**

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**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME**

**CODEx COMMITTEE ON GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

**Twenty-ninth Session**

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**CODEx WORK MANAGEMENT AND FUNCTIONING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**FAO/WHO Update on Progress in Response to the Recommendations of the Evaluation on the Provision of Scientific Advice**

<b>Recommendation 32:</b> JEMRA to be ratified as a permanent committee. <i>(Primary Responsibility: FAO/WHO)</i>	
<b>FAO Management Response / Comments by DG in WHO DG Report to EB (ALINORM 03/25/3-Add.1)</b>	<b>Subsequent actions taken by FAO and WHO</b>
<b>RISK ASSESSMENT AND EXPERT ADVICE</b>	
<p>FAO Management agrees that the Joint Expert Meeting on Microbiological Risk Assessment (JEMRA) be ratified as a permanent committee (Rec. 32) and is willing to implement this in consultation with WHO. Operational steps would include the definition of JEMRA's terms of reference and the creation of a post of Joint Secretary to JEMRA in FAO (para 20)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2003: After internal discussions FAO and WHO recognized the importance of having a well functioning but also flexible body which could quickly adjust and adapt to the ever evolving needs and developments in the area of microbiological food safety and risk assessment. It was considered more important that resources would be placed on enhancing the functionality and technical capacities of JEMRA, to meet the immediate needs of Codex, rather than investing in ratification of JEMRA as a permanent committee, which would involve the governing bodies of both organizations.</li> <li>• In line with the agreement to focus on the operational aspects of JEMRA, FAO, in 2002, created a new staff post to support the work of JEMRA, also at WHO one staff is dedicated to this work.</li> <li>• A joint FAO/WHO publications series was established in 2003 to disseminate the work of JEMRA, also guidelines for microbiological risk assessment were published in 2003, 2008 and 2009</li> <li>• JEMRA activities continue to be subject to the same standards of excellence, integrity, independence, transparency, objectivity, fairness and inclusiveness as those of other Joint FAO/WHO expert committees (FAO/WHO, 2007<sup>1</sup>).</li> <li>• Microbiological food safety and risk assessment has made rapid advancement since the establishment of JEMRA and the type of work has changed substantially over the last 10 years to meet the needs of Codex. FAO and WHO are currently in the process of updating the methodology used by JEMRA, to ensure it continues to produce high quality products. Not having status as a permanent body does not seem to have had any negative impact on the functioning of JEMRA. Key challenges revolve around the resources to support its work.</li> </ul> <p><b>Status: Improvement of the working mechanisms of JEMRA and all the scientific advice committees is an ongoing activity led by the Joint FAO/WHO Secretariat.</b></p>
<b>Recommendation 33:</b> There should be a clear budget and human resource allocation for scientific advice and risk assessment. A small proportion of the budget should be retained for use by FAO and WHO to meet their own needs and the remainder clearly available for work on the priorities of Codex. FAO and WHO should make proposals for discussion at the July 2003 Commission session. <i>(Primary Responsibility: FAO/WHO)</i>	
<p>FAO Management agrees that there should be a clear budget and human resource allocation for scientific advice and risk assessment (Rec. 33) and agrees that</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since 2006 FAO and WHO have been providing to CAC increasingly detailed overviews of its budget for the provision of scientific advice, as well as an overview of the requests for scientific advice and the estimated costs. This has high-lighted the overall critical financial situations within both organizations</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> FAO/WHO, 2007. Framework for the Provision of Scientific Advice, <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/010/a1296e/a1296e00.pdf>

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prioritization is necessary, even though the situation is not the same for all three committees. FAO will examine the feasibility of making relevant proposals to the July 2003 Session of the Commission, in consultation with WHO.(para 21)	<p>for scientific advice activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The requests for scientific advice are currently prioritized using the criteria proposed by Codex (ALINORM 05/28/3, para 75<sup>2</sup>), taking also into account requests from Member Countries and from FAO and WHO programs, and availability of resources. The requests are prioritized to ensure that regular scientific advice is provided to all requesting Codex Committees and in order to address a cross-cutting range of food safety hazards.</li> <li>• Within FAO the resource allocation for the Scientific Advice Programme from the Regular Programme has been protected over the last several biennia . While efforts have been made to secure more funding from external sources (e.g. GIFSA – see Rec 34), this presents a number of challenges. Many of the aspects related to FAO and WHO budgeting for scientific advice have been provided in a paper presented to the CAC in 2014<sup>3</sup>, including the issues of securing external or extra-budgetary resources for the scientific advice work.</li> </ul> <p><b>Status: FAO and WHO continue to address this in their biennial work planning. Regular reporting to Codex on the budget for scientific advice and implementation for the program will continue.</b></p>
<b>Recommendation 34:</b> The increased funding of risk assessment is a top priority. <i>(Primary Responsibility: FAO/WHO)</i>	
FAO Management agrees with Recommendation 34 that increased funding for risk assessment is a top priority. (para 22)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The need to attract additional financial and human resources in the area of scientific advice has been an issue of discussion in both organizations.</li> <li>• Recognizing the need for extra budgetary resources to support the scientific advice work, the Global Initiative for Food-related Scientific Advice (GIFSA) was established in 2007. In 2009, FAO launched “Science for Safe Food: FAO strategy for the provision of Scientific Advice for Food Safety 2010-2013” to Support GIFSA. FAO and WHO are now in the process of working on new strategies for funding on scientific advice following the discussion on this issue in the 69<sup>th</sup> CCEXEC and 37<sup>th</sup> CAC and update on this will be provided to the 38<sup>th</sup> CAC.</li> </ul> <p><b>Status: Ongoing. Resources continue to be a top priority and FAO and WHO are continuing their</b></p>

<sup>2</sup> The CCEXEC5 (ALINORM 05/28/3, para. 75) agreed the following set of criteria for the prioritization of requests from Codex for scientific advice:

- Relevance in relation to the strategic objectives and priorities as defined in the Strategic Plan;
- Clear definition of the scope and objective of the request as well as clear indication of the way in which the advice will be used in the work of Codex;
- Significance and urgency to the development or advancement of Codex texts taking into account public health and/or food trade relevance of the issue and the needs of developing countries;
- Availability of scientific knowledge and data required to conduct the risk assessment or to elaborate the scientific advice;
- High priority assigned by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

<sup>3</sup> [ftp://ftp.fao.org/codex/meetings/cac/cac37/cac37\\_12e\\_Add2.pdf](ftp://ftp.fao.org/codex/meetings/cac/cac37/cac37_12e_Add2.pdf)

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	<i>efforts in this area and to find new donors to support this work.</i>
<b>Recommendation 35:</b> FAO and WHO should support the collection of data covering a wider range of diets and production processes. <i>(Primary Responsibility: FAO/WHO)</i>	
<p>FAO Management agrees that the quality of scientific advice is highly dependent upon the adequacy of the data (Rec. 35) and that, although generally sound, improvements in the database could be achieved through greater coverage from developing countries. This applies particularly to data on dietary intake and on production and processing practices. (para 23)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A number of initiatives to address data availability and quality have been undertaken: i) focussed data collection efforts in specified countries on hazards and issues which are priorities for discussion within Codex ii) support to countries in the development of their capacities to undertake total diet studies and iii) development of the global databases on food consumption data. Examples of some of these initiatives are highlighted below.</li> <li>• Launch of the GEMS Food website in 2011 to allow Member States to submit data on a user-friendly interface. To date more than 2.5 million analytical results have been submitted and are regularly used by CCCF and JECFA. In parallel to the promotion of the web-platform for data submission, ongoing efforts aim to promote good practices for using data with a particular focus on CCCF working groups and JECFA experts.</li> <li>• Mycotoxin in sorghum – An FAO/WHO project supported by the Codex Trust Fund (with funds from the EC) implemented in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mali, and Sudan will provide occurrence data on mycotoxins in sorghum together with value chain studies in each country outlining current production, processing and use patterns for sorghum. The results will be discussed by CCCF) to decide on the need for MLs.</li> <li>• Total Diet Studies – Efforts have primarily focussed on providing support at a regional or sub-regional level. Support has been provided to ASEAN countries who are working towards the harmonized use of existing individual food consumption data for risk assessment purposes. A 3-year project has just started in Benin, Cameroon, Mali and Nigeria to implement a regional Total Diet Study to assess food chemical contamination of interest (e.g. mycotoxins, heavy metals, persistent organic pollutants, pesticides residues and veterinary drugs) in their national diets. This project will enable these countries to provide reliable data for risk assessments and standard setting processes at international level. The project is funded by the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF).</li> <li>• Global food consumption databases – Efforts focus on collection of chronic individual food consumption data to address the needs of stakeholders in the field of nutrition and food safety. The objective is to collect, harmonize and disseminate individual food consumption data available all over the world at national and sub national level.</li> <li>• Ad hoc activities: some small as hoc studies have been undertaken in developing countries to address</li> </ul>

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	<p>data gaps and to get a snapshot of the contamination situation there. Despite the limited use for the risk assessments, they provided insight into the relevance of existing data to these countries. Examples include data collection on microbiological hazards in poultry in Uganda, <i>Vibrio</i> spp in seafood in India, microbiological hazards and AMR in foods of animal origin Kenya and Cambodia.</p> <p>In addition, it should be noted that through the FAO and WHO capacity development programmes, emphasis is given to data and evidence being available and central to decision-making at country level. This includes the development of a range of tools for application at country level.</p> <p><b>Status: FAO and WHO have been very active in this area and continue to support efforts according to available resources.</b></p>
<b>Recommendation 36:</b> Budgetary provision should be made to pay independent experts undertaking risk assessments. At the same time, strict deadlines and quality requirements should be put in place. <i>(Primary Responsibility: FAO/WHO)</i>	
<p>FAO Management supports the emphasis on the independence of experts (para.189). It agrees in principle with the payment of fees to experts (Rec. 36) but proposes that such fees should be paid in relation to the preparatory work done by experts and not be linked to their attendance at expert meetings, and, as experts are normally drawn from government risk assessment agencies, any payment should be cleared with the agency concerned. (para 24)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While acknowledging the intent of this recommendation, the practical implications are prohibitive. FAO and WHO have considered ways to acknowledge the in-kind contribution that institutions and experts provide to the organizations, e.g. by acknowledging individual authors. Full recognition of their contribution is made in the reports of the meetings and appreciation letters have also been sent to experts and on certain occasions their institutions. There is an increasing effort in working with experts to also publish some of the work of the expert committees in the peer reviewed literature, which contributes to the recognition of the work of experts in contributing to the scientific advice programme. This is in line with the recommendation of the FAO/WHO workshop on provision of scientific advice that was held in Geneva in 2004</li> <li>• In the interests of independence and in order to maintain the equal status of all experts FAO/WHO does not pay any experts for their time associated with participation in expert meetings. Only their expenses are covered. Resources permitting and if a very extensive amount of work is needed, experts may be contracted to undertake preparatory work in advance of a meeting. However the status of these experts in a meeting is that of a resource person rather than an expert member of the committee.</li> </ul> <p><b>Status: FAO and WHO have recognised the need for reward and appreciation for the time and expertise devoted to the FAO/WHO scientific advice programme by independent experts, and continue to improve non-monetary means of achieving this.</b></p>
<b>Recommendation 37:</b> Building on the findings of this evaluation, a consultancy study should be immediately undertaken of expert advice and risk assessment and this should be followed by an expert consultation and discussion in Codex. <i>(Primary Responsibility: FAO/WHO)</i>	
FAO Management agrees with the proposals for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The “Consultative Process” began in 2003. This was in response to the 'FAO/WHO evaluation of</li> </ul>

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<p>improving quality, quantity and timeliness of scientific advice to Codex. With regard to Recommendation 37, it agrees that consultancy studies on expert advice and risk assessment should be undertaken. However, due to the many elements to be considered, including emerging issues, the process would require time and substantial additional resources.(para 25)</p> <p>WHO-DG</p> <p>The Director-General fully supports the recommendation to move forward expeditiously with the implementation of the agreed recommendations through the establishment of a joint task force. She will work with FAO to convene a consultation urgently to review the status and procedures of the expert bodies in order to improve the quality, quantity and timeliness of scientific advice, as requested by the Codex Alimentarius Commission at its Twenty-fourth session in July 2001. (para 20)</p>	<p>Codex Alimentarius work and other FAO and WHO work on food standards' and an earlier request of the 24<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission held in July 2001, which recommended that FAO and WHO carry out "a review of the status and procedures of the expert bodies in order to improve the quality, quantity and timeliness of scientific advice" (ALINORM 01/41, para 61).</p> <p>The "Consultative Process" was overseen and managed by a joint FAO/WHO Secretariat. The process, activities undertaken and results achieved were regularly reported to the Codex membership, and opportunity provided for any feedback and suggestions.</p> <p>The conclusions and recommendations of the "Consultative Process" led to three main outputs.</p> <p><b>a) FAO/WHO Framework on the Provision of Scientific Advice</b></p> <p>FAO/WHO management of the overall system for the provision of scientific advice was enhanced through the harmonization of scientific approaches and operating procedures followed by both organizations in the provision of advice requested by Codex and FAO/WHO Member Countries.</p> <p>To continue strengthening the independence, transparency and quality of FAO/WHO scientific advice, the Framework was developed to document the principles, practices and procedures currently applied by FAO and WHO for the provision of scientific advice. As science and societal needs evolve the procedures will be updated.</p> <p><b>b) Clear identification of needs (from Codex and member countries) for FAO/WHO scientific advice and criteria for the prioritization of the requests</b></p> <p>Refer to recommendation 33 for a description of the prioritization process.</p> <p><b>c) Definition of new approaches to enhance the participation of experts and the use of data from developing countries in the elaboration of international scientific advice</b></p> <p>The meeting, <i>Enhancing developing country participation in FAO/WHO scientific advice activities</i> provided a range of recommendations to FAO and WHO in three main areas: to continue for enhancing: greater inclusion of data from developing countries (Data issues are addressed under Rec 35); enhancement of the potential for experts from developing countries to be selected as members and have an effective participation in these meetings; and means to enhance the enabling environment at national, regional and international levels.</p> <p>FAO and WHO now use a wide range of professional networks through which to communicate their work as well as more systematically using their regional and sub regional offices to communicate on scientific advice issues. Greater awareness and information on the expert committees and their work is also increasingly achieved through incorporation of these in to training and capacity development activities in</p>

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	<p>the areas of risk analysis. However challenges in identifying expertise from developing countries remain and more work is needed in this area</p> <p><b>Status: The consultative process is complete. Appropriate follow up continues.</b></p>
<b>Recommendation 38:</b> Establish a Scientific Committee to support expert advice and risk assessment ( <i>Primary Responsibility: FAO/WHO</i> )	
<p>FAO Management supports in principle the establishment of a Scientific Committee (Rec. 38). However, it considers that its rationale needs further elaboration while the composition of the Committee, its terms of reference, its interaction with the relevant Codex Committees and FAO and WHO and reporting arrangements need to be clarified. FAO Management is of the opinion that the establishment of a Scientific Committee and related issues could be addressed within the framework of activities reflected under Recommendation 37.(para 26)</p>	<p>This issue was considered as part of the consultative process which assessed the recommendation and highlighted the positive and negative implications of such an approach (ref 2004 report). Following the discussions the workshop recommended that the primary focus for FAO and WHO should be on improving the management of scientific advice, including 1) enhancing scientific approaches 2) improving coordination and prioritization and 3) facilitating communication, interaction and transparency.</p> <p>As a result, FAO and WHO each appointed a coordinator within their organization for the provision of scientific advice to Codex with the objective of working together to ensure a more streamlined management of the work. This increased the communication greatly between both organizations on scientific advice and led to regular planning meetings of the work. In addition in 2007 FAO and WHO established regular high level management meetings to address the overarching issues and direction of scientific advice programme as well as other food safety work.</p> <p><b>Status: A scientific advisory committee has not been established. Initial focus has been on enhancing internal mechanisms for coordination. This aspect will be further considered.</b></p>
<b>Recommendation 39:</b> Establish a joint Coordinator for FAO and WHO scientific advisory activities. ( <i>Primary Responsibility: FAO/WHO</i> )	
<p>FAO Management supports the enhancement of a coordinating function among the scientific expert committees. With regard to the creation of a post of Joint Coordinator (Rec. 39) it considers that the rationale for the proposed Coordinator would need to be further substantiated and the terms of reference discussed and carefully revised to avoid duplication and conflicts of authority. In particular, the interaction with the Joint Secretaries of the expert committees would need clarification. FAO Management is willing to discuss these issues further with WHO. The proposed posting of the Joint Coordinator at WHO is noted. Procedures to ensure effective interaction with the Codex Secretariat and modalities of joint funding would</p>	<p>This recommendation has not been implemented. Rather as mentioned under Rec 38 each organization has appointed a coordinator for scientific advice to facilitate coordination between the two organizations.</p> <p>The joint coordination mechanism, overseen by regular high level FAO/WHO management meetings, is providing an effective means of coordinating the scientific advice activities, thus replacing the role of a single coordinator.</p>

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need to be elaborated. (para 27)	
<b>Recommendation 40:</b> FAO and, in particular, WHO are recommended to markedly increase their contribution to health risk assessment and expert advice to feed into Codex. ( <i>Primary Responsibility: FAO/WHO</i> )	
FAO Management agrees with Recommendation 40, that FAO and, in particular, WHO markedly increase their contributions to health risk assessment and expert advice to contribute to Codex. The suggested distribution of work, which would be “in addition to the immediate direct resource requirements”, needs to be carefully considered further by both agencies. (para 28)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As well as the regular meetings of JECFA, JMPR and JEMRA, FAO and WHO have implemented a number of ad hoc expert meeting to address the specific scientific advice needs of Codex since the evaluation was undertaken. Annual reports have been provided to the CAC. In addition JEMNU has been established to provide scientific advice on nutrition issues although it has not yet been activated by the CCNFSDU.</li> </ul>
<b>CAPACITY BUILDING</b>	
<b>Recommendation 41:</b> The two Organizations should agree on principles for coordination and delineation of responsibilities with regard to capacity building and report to the Commission in July 2003. ( <i>Primary Responsibility: FAO/WHO</i> )	
FAO Management welcomes the recommendation to enhance coordination between FAO and WHO at country level aimed at more effective use of FAO/WHO resources and avoiding overlaps and inconsistencies (Rec. 41). However, it is of the opinion that a formal <i>a priori</i> delineation of responsibilities and division of work is impractical as capacity building often involves joint and individual activities determined on a case-by-case basis. On the other hand, FAO agrees that FAO and WHO inform the Commission regularly of their capacity building activities. (para 30)	<p>FAO and WHO work closely on many activities to improve food safety capacities at national and regional level – this includes development of global tools, training and guidance materials, implementing training courses and workshops, and joint implementation of national projects. We do this as we recognise the complementary nature of our work, and the importance of ensuring multi-disciplinary work across health, agriculture, standards, trade sectors. This does not prevent both Organizations undertaking work singularly – within their respective mandates and to meet country requests. As two sister UN agencies, information is shared regularly on our work programmes, and both Organizations report annually to the CAC on our work to strengthen food safety capacities.</p> <p><b>Status: The FAO Management response is still valid.</b></p>
<b>Recommendation 42:</b> Expand the existing FAO/WHO Codex trust fund in line with its wider objectives into a major multi-donor trust fund, with flexible arrangements.. ( <i>Primary Responsibility: FAO/WHO</i> )	
FAO Management affirms its support to mobilizing donor funding for capacity building in food safety (Rec. 42), as well as its commitment to promote complementarities and consistency between the existing and planned trust funds and projects. (para 31)  DG-WHO	The FAO/WHO Project and Fund for Enhanced Participation in Codex (Codex Trust Fund) will end in December 2015. During its 12 years of operation the Codex Trust Fund has raised over US\$ 21million and has used these contributions to play an important catalytic role in exposing developing and transition economy countries to the international food standard-setting process and to the importance of participating effectively in Codex to realize health and economic gains for their countries. As per its second objective, the Codex Trust Fund has expanded beyond supporting only physical participation in Codex meetings from eligible countries, to supporting joint, and strategically planned FAO/WHO Codex capacity-building



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Capacity-building in developing countries, which should enable them to represent their interests effectively in the Codex Alimentarius Commission and in WTO negotiations, should benefit from the proposed 12-year FAO/WHO trust fund supported in 2002 by the Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. The integration of food safety, food standards, food production and food trade considerations in relation to an agreed focus on sustainable development would represent a significant step forward for developing economies. (para 19)	<p>activities aimed at enhancing effective participation of developing and transition economy countries in Codex. These activities have been successful but need to be maintained and strengthened in the successor initiative which is under development and will become operational in 2016. In support of its third objective, the Codex Trust Fund has supported one activity aimed at generating scientific data on mycotoxins in sorghum in 4 countries to feed into the Codex process, and further funds are expected in 2016 for a second activity. This remains an important area of concern and FAO/WHO are looking at ways to further strengthen the scientific and technical input of developing and transition economy countries in the Codex process. The mid-term review carried out in 2009 highlighted the strengths and successes of the Trust Fund and called attention to areas for improvement which lead to a strategic re-positioning of the Trust Fund which is an indicator of the dynamic nature of the Trust Fund to respond to the changing needs of countries throughout the lifespan of the Trust Fund. Results of the final project evaluation will be taken into consideration in the design and development of the successor initiative to further support countries to develop their capacity for effective participation in Codex.</p> <p><b>Status: Codex Trust Fund successfully implemented, and successor initiative under development.</b></p>