

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION



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Agenda Item 2

CX/NASWP 00/2

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR NORTH AMERICA AND THE SOUTH WEST PACIFIC

Sixth Session

Perth, Australia, 5 - 8 December 2000

MATTERS REFERRED FROM THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER CODEX COMMITTEES

MEDIUM-TERM PLAN

1. The 23rd Session of the Commission (July 1999) discussed the Medium-Term Plan 1998-2002 and adopted a revised version of the document (ALINORM 99/37, paras 25-34, Appendix II). The Commission agreed that the preparation of the subsequent Medium-Term Plan (2003-2007) should be initiated rapidly and a Circular Letter to this effect was sent to governments (CL 2000/3-GEN), with a view to considering this matter in the next Session of the Executive Committee.

2. The 47th Session of the Executive Committee (June 2000) discussed the preparation of the Medium-Term Plan and invited a small group consisting of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons together with the Secretariat to prepare a draft of the Medium-Term plan 2003-2007 and to develop a strategic statement of the Commission's vision for the future, for consideration by the next session of the Commission. It also decided to request the opinions of the Regional Committees (ALINORM 01/3, paras. 36-41). The CCNASWP is invited to consider this question.

AMENDMENTS TO THE PROCEDURAL MANUAL OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Amendments to the Rules of Procedure (paras 59-66, Appendix III)

3. The Commission agreed to amend the following Rules as proposed by the Committee on General Principles or as proposed at the Session:

- Rule II – Officers and Rule IX.7 and IX.10 (appointment of Regional Coordinators);
- Rule X - Elaboration of Standards (to stress that every effort should be made to reach consensus); and
- Rule III.1 (concerning the membership of the Near East in the Executive Committee).

4. The Commission noted that the question of the majority was currently under consideration in the Committee on General Principles, where no conclusion had been reached so far, and agreed that the Committee should proceed with its work on this issue as a matter of priority.

Other amendments

5. The Commission adopted the following texts for inclusion in the Procedural Manual:

- *Criteria for the Establishment of Work Priorities and Criteria for the Establishment of Subsidiary Bodies of the Codex Alimentarius Commission* (para. 67, Appendix IV)

- *Definitions for the Purpose of Codex: Definitions of Risk Analysis Terms Related to Food Safety (Risk Communication & Risk Management)* (para. 70, Appendix IV)
- *Principles Concerning the Participation of International Non-Governmental Organizations in the Work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission* (para. 71, Appendix IV)
- *Core Functions of Codex Contact Points* (para. 72, Appendix IV)

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FOOD TRADE BEYOND 2000: SCIENCE-BASED DECISIONS, HARMONIZATION, EQUIVALENCE AND MUTUAL RECOGNITION (ALINORM 01/3, PARAS. 22-26)

6. The 47th Session of the Executive Committee noted with satisfaction the Conference's appreciation of the work of the Commission and its fullest support to the current direction of its work. The Executive Committee further noted that the vast majority of the "General Recommendations" contained in Annex I were addressed to Member Governments and/or FAO and WHO. It noted that several of these recommendations would need to be considered in the development of the Medium Term Plan (Item 6). On recommendations 10 and 14, the Executive Committee recognised the importance of risk communication for Codex and the need to explore strategies to collect information from all regions of the world about consumer requirements, perceptions, beliefs, and motivations concerning food, nutrition and food safety. It agreed that the matter should be discussed at the Codex Regional Committees and that the Secretariat should explore ways of conducting a pilot study for generating such information. The Executive Committee noted that several countries and organizations have conducted studies in this field and suggested that a literature review be made on the subject by the Secretariat.

7. The Executive Committee strongly supported closely coordinated and early action by FAO and WHO and the Codex Alimentarius Commission on microbiological food safety issues within their respective areas of responsibility.

8. The Executive Committee noted that most of the recommendations in Annex II of the document were already being addressed by the relevant Codex Committees (Recommendations 1, 3, 5, 7, 10, 15, 20) or by FAO/WHO (Recommendations 2, 9, 13, 19). Others (Recommendations 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 21) would need to be examined in relation with the discussion of the Medium Term Plan (Agenda Item 6) and/or by the Codex Regional Coordinating Committees. The recommendations mentioned are attached in Annex 1. In relation to Recommendation 5, the Committee recommended that FAO/WHO consider holding special workshops on the issue of "precaution" prior to the future sessions of the Codex Coordinating Committees to facilitate the debate on this subject at the Committee on General Principles.

MEETINGS OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION (ALINORM 01/3, PARAS. 64-66)

The 47th Session of the Executive Committee had the following discussion on this subject.

9. There was general agreement that the Commission should meet on an annual basis, as provided for in the Rules of Procedure. Some Members questioned the proposal to divide the annual sessions between policy issues and standards issues, stating that the Commission should always give attention to the adoption of standards. The Executive Committee considered the fact that annual meetings of committees would pose additional burdens on developing countries and the costs and benefits of such a decision would have to be taken into account.

10. The Executive Committee noted that the question of the abolition of the Executive Committee was under discussion by the Committee on General Principles. It further noted that the status of the Executive Committee was guaranteed under Article 6 of the Statutes and its composition and function were governed by the Rules of Procedure. It recommended that the Secretariat in preparing its paper for the Committee on General Principles consider these facts as well as all available options in regard to abolition or possible changes in the composition and responsibilities of the Executive Committee should it be retained.

11. It was further proposed that the Chairpersons of Codex Committees and Task Forces and the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of the Commission should meet at the time of each Commission session to improve coordination between committees (ALINORM 01/3, paras. 64-66).

**COORDINATION BETWEEN COMMITTEES: HANDLING OF WORK IN A SEQUENTIAL MANNER
(ALINORM 01/3, PARAS. 60-61)**

12. The Representative of North America raised the problem of the progression of work in one committee when consultation with another committee was required and the frequency of meetings of these committees was different. The work being undertaken on certain high priority items by the Committee on Food Labelling and the Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses was cited as an example. In this case, the former Committee met on an annual basis and the latter met at 18 month or longer intervals.

13. The Executive Committee recommended that in this particular case, consideration should be given to annual meetings of both Committees, with reasonable intervals between meetings so as to allow consideration of the information that was being exchanged between the two Committees. This could be followed at least until such time as the common work was concluded. The Committees might give consideration, if required, to a special joint session to discuss specific issues.

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FOOD TRADE
BEYOND 2000: SCIENCE-BASED DECISIONS, HARMONIZATION, EQUIVALENCE AND
MUTUAL RECOGNITION**

Import/Export Systems, Equivalence and Information Exchange:

11) The Conference recommended that governments should make available, preferably by electronic means, information on food goods that had been detained or rejected at the point of import. This information should be made available for further follow-up by the exporting country and also to alert other countries of possible problems related to food imports.

12) The Conference recommended that FAO, WHO and Codex Alimentarius should study the need, feasibility and practical conditions of introducing an international system allowing exchanges of information about the existence of potentially hazardous foodstuffs in the international trade.

13) The Conference recognized the importance and urgency of developing Codex guidance on the judgement of equivalence, initially in a generic sense and subsequently in relation to specific topics such as equivalence of inspection and certification systems, and measures to ensure food hygiene.

General Issues:

14) The Codex Alimentarius Commission, whilst acknowledging that food safety standards cannot be compromised, should, when elaborating and deciding upon Codex standards and any related texts, take into consideration the special needs of developing countries including infrastructure, resources, technical and legal capabilities. Codex standards and related texts should not have the effect of creating unnecessary, unjustified or discriminatory obstacles to the exports of developing countries.

16) With the aim of more intensively pursuing the objectives of protecting the health of consumers, ensuring fair practices in the food trade and facilitating the international trade in food, the Codex Alimentarius Commission should continue to elaborate food standards providing for compositional, sensory and safety criteria, and examine and recommend ways to reduce problems of food quality and safety, reduce levels of detentions and rejections of food moving in international trade, and reduce levels of food adulteration.

17) The Conference stressed that Codex standards for food quality and safety, including labelling aspects, should be carefully prepared to ensure that they were not over-prescriptive and not more restrictive than necessary to meet the objectives of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme.

18) Codex Alimentarius should continue to work along these principles and promote the application of HACCP principles as laid down in the Codex General Principles of Food Hygiene. These principles should be applied to all foodstuffs, throughout the whole food chain and include feedingstuffs.

Enhancing Participation:

21) The Codex Alimentarius Commission should consider reaffirming the effectiveness of written comments, which should be fully discussed at Codex meetings, especially written comments from countries not able to be represented at meetings. Chairpersons should ensure that all written comments received before the meeting are systematically tabled for discussion at Codex meetings and decisions made should be recorded in the report accordingly.