

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION



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Agenda Item 2

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR NORTH AMERICA AND THE SOUTH WEST PACIFIC

Eighth Session, Apia, Samoa, 19-22 October 2004

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER CODEX COMMITTEES AND TASK FORCES

Comments received in response to CL 2004/29- NASWP from: Australia

AUSTRALIA

Role of Regional Coordinating Committees in furthering the objectives of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (the Terms of Reference can be found at Attachment 1)

It is Australia's view that Regional Coordinating Committees, and specifically CCNASWP, have been largely a forum for exchange of information between members. Whilst Australia acknowledges that there has been a lot of capacity building in the South West Pacific Region, there is clearly a need for stronger coordination of this type of work. Australia welcomes the initiatives being taken in respect of the development of the Strategic Plan and considers that this will go towards furthering the objectives of Codex in the Region and will strengthen the linkages between members of the Region and thus the effectiveness of the Regional Coordinating Committee.

Membership of Regional Coordinating Committees, including their current geographic coverage;

Australia considers that the current geographic coverage of the NASWP region should be maintained. The NASWP committee is still in the early stages of becoming a truly Regional representative committee. The current membership provides the Region with a diverse membership, which, in turn, provides for a diverse participation in the Executive Committee. The status quo should be maintained in this committee to give, in particular, the Pacific Island member countries more time to enhance their participation at the national and international level in Codex. Australian Government policy is to enhance partnerships in the South West Pacific Region through the NASWP committee. We will therefore endeavour to become more involved in the regional capacity-building activities related to Codex.

Terms of reference of the Regional Coordinating Committees as set out in the Procedural Manual, including the relevance of developing regional standards; (Current Terms of Reference are at Attachment 1)

The existing Terms of Reference seem adequate but may need to be strengthened in light of the development of the NASWP Strategic Plan.

Effectiveness of Regional Coordinating Committees in respect of country participation record and of venues and meeting intervals (currently every two years);

The first CCNASWP meeting was held in the US in 1990. Since that time, the Committee has generally met every two years with the US, Canada and Australia each hosting two sessions and New Zealand and Samoa hosting one session (including the forthcoming session). This has been adequate over the years as the ability of the Pacific Island countries to attend has been severely limited due to lack of adequate funding. The Trust Fund may help to alleviate some of the burden on the Pacific Island countries provided they seek funding to attend the Regional Coordinating committee.

If the implementation of the Strategic Plan is to have a positive effect on participation in Codex, then more regular attendance by the Pacific Island countries at CCNASWP is essential.

In terms of overall participation, there needs to be a strengthened role of the Regional Representatives and Regional Coordinators to ensure effective participation at the Executive Committee level. This could also be done through the implementation activities identified in the NASWP Strategic Plan.

Strengthened support from the FAO and WHO Regional Offices would also help in increasing the effective participation at the Regional level.

Respective roles of the Regional Coordinator as *ex officio* Chairperson of the Regional Coordinating Committee and the Member(s) of the Executive Committee elected on a geographic basis, particularly within the framework of the Executive Committee;

There is a definite need for a more clearly defined role for the Regional Coordinator. In taking on the role of Chair of the Regional Coordinating Committee, the Regional Coordinator should play a proactive role in coordination of Codex work in the Region. Effective coordination at the regional level, as demonstrated by Argentina in its current capacity as Regional Coordinator for CCLAC, can enhance the capacity of developing countries to participate in Codex, particularly through the submission of written comments. In order for the Regional Coordinator to be effective, the country that takes on the role must have the full support (including financial) of its government and, if necessary, the FAO and WHO Sub-Regional Offices. The Regional Coordinator and Regional Representative should work closely together at the Regional level and in the Executive Committee.