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# codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE  
ORGANIZATION  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD  
HEALTH  
ORGANIZATION



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## Agenda Item 4

### 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*

#### STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE CCNASWP

#### Report of the Electronic Working Group Established to Prepare a Draft Strategic Plan for the Regions of North America and the South-West Pacific

##### Background

1. The 7<sup>th</sup> Session of the FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committee for North America and the South-West Pacific (CCNASWP) considered a proposal to develop a strategic plan for the region. The Committee endorsed the proposals contained in the paper, but stressed that the development of a regional strategic plan should take into account the outcome of the Joint FAO/WHO Evaluation of Codex in addition to the Codex Strategic Framework. In particular, the Coordinating Committee agreed that:

- ! The views of all Members of the Coordinating Committee would need to be taken into account in developing the plan;
- ! An electronic drafting group should be established to develop the plan;
- ! The plan would encompass activities of interest to all countries of the Regions and should identify a subset of activities related to capacity building; implementation of the Trust Fund for developing countries in the regions; and strengthening of Codex work at the national and regional levels by the countries of the regions and include consumer and other stakeholder involvement; and
- ! The initial plan should be of a limited duration, perhaps 3 B 5 years, and should be subject to evaluation and review at each subsequent session of the Coordinating Committee.

2. The Coordinating Committee invited Canada to lead the first stage of the development of the strategic plan by contacting all Member countries of the regions. It was agreed, however, that the first stage of drafting of the plan should await the outcome of the Codex Evaluation. It was also suggested that the initial work being undertaken by the Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean should also be taken into account.

3. In keeping with the decisions of CCNASWP, and in view of the release of the Report of the Joint FAO/WHO Evaluation of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and Other FAO and WHO Food Standards Work, Canada, in collaboration with Samoa as the Regional Coordinator, circulated a request for CCNASWP Members to submit names of representatives to participate in the electronic working group. Appendix I to this report identifies the members of the working group.

### **Strategic Plan Criteria**

4. The first task of the working group was to agree on basic criteria that the Regional Strategic Plan would need to satisfy. After an exchange of emails, the working group agreed to the following criteria:

- The plan will be limited to a three to five year span; therefore the number of strategic objectives would be limited to no more than five or six.
- The strategic objectives must be consistent with the strategic objectives identified in the Codex Strategic Framework.
- Each of the objectives will include a rationale which will demonstrate how the achievement of the objective will benefit the Members of the region.
- The objectives will contain a performance measurement mechanism to enable the Committee to determine the degree to which the strategic objectives are achieved.
- A number of actions will be identified, along with appropriate milestones, which will be undertaken to achieve each objective.

### **Strategic Objectives**

5. Using the above criteria, Canada and Samoa prepared a draft plan which was circulated to all members of the working group for their review and input. The draft was then revised taking into account the comments received and circulated for a final round of comments. Attached as Appendix II to this report is the final version of the *Draft Strategic Plan for the Regional Coordinating Committee of North America and the South-West Pacific 2004 – 2009*.

6. The Regional strategy has two major themes or “thrusts”; one is focussed on enhancing the overall effectiveness of the Region’s activities in Codex work (Objectives 1, 2 and 3) while the other is focussed on enhancing the capacities of the Pacific Island Countries (Objectives 4, 5 and 6) to develop food regulations based on Codex texts. The working group agreed to the following strategic objectives:

*Objective 1:* To improve the coordination and communication of the Region’s activities in Codex.

*Objective 2:* To promote maximum participation of all member countries of the region in the activities of the regional coordinating committee.

*Objective 3:* To promote the development and enhancement of the capacities of national Codex Contact Points and their supporting infrastructures of the Pacific Island Country (PICs) members to carry out their core functions.

*Objective 4:* To strengthen the exchange of scientific and technical expertise amongst the developed and developing member countries in the region.

*Objective 5:* (Option 1) To promote the use of Codex codes, standards, guidelines and recommendations as a basis for national standards.

*Objective 5:* (Option 2) To promote procedures to review Codex codes, standards, guidelines and recommendations to facilitate their use as the basis for national standards.

*Objective 6:* To promote the development of standards of food products produced in the PICs.

7. There are two proposed texts for Option 5. Some expressed the view that Option 2 provides more flexibility taking into consideration that this plan would also apply to developed countries which already have standard setting mechanisms in place to take into account Codex standards.

8. The Draft Strategic Plan contained in Appendix II outlines the rationale behind these identified objectives as well as suggested implementation activities. It is understood that each session of the Committee will review the objectives to determine their continued applicability and implementation progress. It is suggested that once the Plan is endorsed by the Committee, the Regional Coordinator should be responsible for coordinating its implementation and preparing the relevant report to the sessions of the Committee on the achievement of the objectives.

**Other Relevant Issues**

9. In developing the strategic objectives and implementation activities, a number of related issues were identified which it is felt need to be considered by the Committee.

10. Overall, the objectives imply that the Quad countries need to improve their communication with the other CCNASWP members. There is also, however, a need for the PIC members to be proactive in setting out the type of food safety issues they are faced with and determine how they may be addressed within the Codex context. This will enable Quads members to gain a greater appreciation of the relative priority and importance of these issues.

11. The suggestions proposed for implementation of the various objectives, while clearly constructive, would require considerable resources. Careful consideration will need to be given to where these resources, including funding, will originate. During the Committee's consideration of the identified implementation activities, the working group believes that the Committee should also engage in a discussion of implementation time tables (when are the various action items going to be implemented?) in addition to the associated costs. Consideration could be given as whether it is possible to strategically leverage the FAO/WHO Trust Fund for participation in Codex to further the coordination within the region. Also, there may be some FAO funds that could be accessed through capacity building projects. It was also suggested the Region could even discuss the possibility of a CCNASWP "mini Trust Fund".

**Actions for the Coordinating Committee**

12. In considering the report of the Electronic Working Group, the CCNASWP is invited to:

- a. Review and endorse the Strategic Plan attached as Appendix II to this report, including selecting a preferred text for Objective 5;
- b. Confirm whether or not the responsibility for coordinating the implementation of the Strategic Plan should rest with the Regional Coordinator as suggested in paragraph #7 above or should some other mechanism be used;
- c. Consider how implementation of the various identified activities can be resourced;
- d. Determine time-lines for the implementation of the various identified activities. This could also include a discussion on the frequency of CCNASWP sessions which will influence the timing of some of the identified actions.

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## Appendix II

**FAO/WHO REGIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE  
FOR NORTH AMERICA AND THE SOUTH-WEST PACIFIC****DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN****2004 - 2007****INTRODUCTION**

The 7<sup>th</sup> Session (Vancouver, Canada - November 2002) of the FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committee for North America and the South-West Pacific agreed to the development of a regional strategic plan.<sup>1</sup>

**GOAL:**

The goal of this Strategic Plan is to enhance the effectiveness of the FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committee for North America and the South West Pacific in achieving its responsibilities to its Member countries and the Region's contribution to Codex Alimentarius Commission.

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

This Strategic Plan identifies six strategic objectives of the region for the period 2004 – 2007. The Strategic Plan should be reviewed at each Session of the Coordinating Committee to determine the status of the Plan and the continued appropriateness of the identified objectives.

*Objective 1:* To improve the coordination and communication of the Region's activities in Codex

**Rationale:**

Meaningful consultation and coordination among relevant stakeholders is important to ensure effective operation of the region's activities within Codex. Advancement of issues of interest to the members of the Region is enhanced by coordination and communication amongst the members.

**Implementation:**

- ◆ The current practice of the QUAD countries pre-session meetings at Codex Committee and Task Force meetings could be expanded to include all CCNASWP member countries present at the meeting.
- ◆ Increased sharing of written comments on Circular Letters (CLs) and other working documents.
- ◆ The establishment of mechanisms for the transfer of information during the transition of Coordinators to enhance continuity.
- ◆ encourage the exchange among member countries through the use of electronic information systems.
- ◆ strengthening the agenda of CCNASWP sessions by placing on the agenda discussions of specific Codex issues of regional concern and discussions of major Codex issues with the aim of developing a regional strategy on issues of mutual interest.

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<sup>1</sup> ALINORM 03/32 Report of the 7<sup>th</sup> Session of the FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committee for North America and the South-West Pacific.

*Objective 2:* To promote maximum participation of all member countries of the region in the activities of the regional coordinating committee.

Rationale:

The participation of all member countries is critical to sound decision-making and ensuring issues identified as being significant to the region take account of the full range of interest and viewpoints. Based on the premise that participation is more than merely attendance, countries are encouraged to develop and submit written comments even if members cannot physically attend meetings.

Implementation:

- ◆ PIC member countries are to be encouraged to apply for funding assistance under the FAO/WHO Project and Fund for Enhancing the Participation of Developing Countries in the Work of Codex.
- ◆ Strengthen the capacity of member countries (in particular Codex members from the Pacific) to formulate and submit country positions on matters of relevance to the region. Where appropriate, members of the region who are in attendance should be encouraged to ensure that the Committee's attention is drawn to those written comments.

*Objective 3:* To promote the development and enhancement of the capacities of national Codex Contact Points and their supporting infrastructures of the Pacific Island Country Members to carry out their core functions.

Rationale:

In order for a country to participate effectively in the Codex process, it requires a functional Codex Contact Point including an effective support structure. Regional networking could greatly benefit the newer members of the region to improve their understanding of Codex and help enhance their participation in Codex.

Implementation:

- ◆ Identify the capacity building needs of the Codex Contact Points to facilitate and strengthen the implementation and participation in Codex work.
- ◆ Conduct national and/or regional workshops on Codex for Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committee members.
- ◆ Promote regional networking among Codex Contact Points to improve communication and share experiences on Codex and related issues.
- ◆ On-the-job training attachment of Codex Contact Points of the PICs to the Codex Contact Points of QUAD member countries to observe structural work programme and implementation processes.
- ◆ Develop a mentoring programme between the developed and developing countries of the region.

*Objective 4:* To strengthen the exchange of scientific and technical expertise amongst the developed and developing member countries in the region.

Rationale:

The Terms of Reference for CCNASWP specifies, amongst other things, that it “*promotes within the Committee contacts for the mutual exchange of information.....and stimulates the strengthening of food control infrastructures*”. As a fundamental element of food control systems is good science, the exchange of scientific and technical expertise will contribute to enhancing the scientific basis of the various food control infrastructures in the region.

Implementation:

- ◆ Identify and prioritize regional issues where there is a need for scientific research/analysis.
- ◆ Develop a list of specialists and institutions available in the region which can provide the required scientific/technical expertise.
- ◆ Conduct workshops/training courses as appropriate to facilitate the development of the technical capacity of the members of the region to address the identified issues.
- ◆ Foster the establishment of communication links amongst the technical experts in the countries of the region.

*Objective 5:* (Option 1) To promote the use of Codex codes, standards, guidelines and recommendations as a basis for national standards.

or

*Objective 5:* (Option 2) To promote the use of Codex codes, standards, guidelines and recommendations as a basis for national standards.

Rationale:

Increased harmonization of regulatory standards, policies and practices related to food would contribute to public health protection and subsequently contribute to the facilitation of trade in foods, not only amongst members of the region, but also more broadly. Many of the island countries are unfamiliar with the full range of Codex standards and it would be helpful to their standards development/revision process to identify those standards and guidelines that might be of greatest interest to them.

Implementation:

- ◆ Training of technical specialists and policy makers responsible for the elaboration of food policy (including regulations) on the significance of and need to consider Codex texts.
- ◆ Developing guidance on formalized processes to ensure Codex texts are considered.
- ◆ Compile a list of Codex standards of particular interest and relevance to members of the region.

*Objective 6:* To promote the development of standards for food products produced in the Pacific Island Countries.

Rationale:

In order for the Pacific Island countries to be pro-active in the development of food products produced in the PICs, which are currently traded in the region and/or other international markets and to effectively participate in the development of such standards, if initiated by country outside the PIC sub-region, capacity development in the area of standard setting must be improved in the PICs.

Implementation:

- ◆ Establish national mechanisms for standard development process in the PICs;
- ◆ Establish sub-regional Standard Working Group for PICs to address common issues in Codex work and be pro-active in standard development of PICs food products;
- ◆ Identification and consideration by CCNSWP of all proposals for a new standard for a food product produced in the PICs so that the PICs would have a more effective input/participation before submission to the Commission;
- ◆ Identify specific food products of PICs that requires standards to be developed in order to facilitate trade; and
- ◆ On-the-job training at appropriate institutions/ministries/departments in the developed member countries of CCNSWP.