

October 2004

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION



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Agenda Item 7

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

CONSUMER PARTICIPATION IN FOOD STANDARDS SETTING AT THE CODEX AND NATIONAL LEVEL

Information submitted in reply to CL 2004/14-NASWP by: Australia, Canada, Fiji, New Zealand, Samoa, Tonga and United States of America

AUSTRALIA

- (i) Australia has an established National Codex Contact Point.
- (ii) Australia has an established National Codex Committee (NCC) whose role is to provide high-level advice on the priorities for Australia's input to the work of Codex.

The National Codex Committee is currently adjourned as we explore new ways of engaging a wider range of stakeholders from industry, academia, state and territory governments and public interest groups in an effort to make Australia's input to the work of Codex more relevant to all sectors not just industry.

As a first step in this process we will be holding a National Stakeholder Forum in Sydney on the 1st of September this year. Key components of the Forum have been designed to provide an overview of:

- Codex committee processes and the Codex consultation processes that exist within Australia and on an international level including how Codex standards are developed, debated and endorsed and when and how industry and others can contribute to them;
 - How Codex standards may affect industry, as well as other stakeholders and how they can play a part in influencing the direction of Codex standards;
 - The Forum will review the 2003/2004 Codex outcomes: including outcomes of the 27th Session of Codex Alimentarius Commission meeting held in June/July 2004;
 - There will be discussion on priority/key issues for Codex in 2004/2005 with a view to these forming the basis of our direction in the year to come.
- (iii) As noted above Australia is reviewing its national consultative mechanisms.
 - (iv) Australia has a number of independent consumer NGOs identified on its stakeholder register and invites the submission of written comments.
 - (v) Australia routinely invites the participation of independent consumer NGOs to participate in the development of national positions for Codex meetings. Due to the unavailability of funding these invitations are rarely accepted.
 - (vi) As stated above, Australia invites the participation at the national level, but lack of funds and inadequate resources often prevents the effective participation of independent consumer NGO's.

Comments in relation to the “measurable objectives”

Australia whilst supporting the participation at the national and international level of independent consumer NGO's is of the view that these “measurable objectives” fail to give a true indication of the level of participation. In our experience many consumer organisations have resource limitations that mean that their participation is more effective through their international affiliations.

At a national level, effectively involving stakeholders is viewed as a critical component in the development of standards. The importance of this area of work was recognized and highlighted by the strategic review of FSANZ undertaken in 2003 (see previous reference).

There has been a focus on developing improved participation mechanisms as part of the standard development process. A number of initiatives have been introduced to broaden input and opportunity for stakeholders to comment. These include; the establishment of Standard Development Advisory Committees for major projects such as the development of standards for Primary Production and Processing and Nutrition and Health Related Claims. These committees are made up of representatives from industry, consumers, public health and enforcement agencies. Working collaboratively in this way has improved transparency and the understanding of stakeholders about how work is undertaken and has ensured wide input from a broad number of perspectives.

In addition to these committees expert advisory groups are regularly established to provide expert input into review processes and the development of the technical aspects of work being undertaken.

CANADA

Canada continues to encourage its non-governmental organizations, including consumers, to participate in the Codex process. It is Canada's opinion that input from a broad spectrum of civil society permits the development of positions for Codex meetings which are more balanced and which have strong domestic support.

The current approach used by Canada in managing and coordinating Codex activities is through the Office of the Codex Contact Point for Canada (OCCPC) and an interdepartmental committee established to review and endorse Canadian participation on Codex initiatives. The OCCPC acts as the main focal point for ensuring transparency and encouraging broad participation of federal and provincial/territorial governments, consumers, industry and special interest groups in the development of the Codex programme and input into Canadian positions.

Comments on measurable objectives on consumer participation in Codex

With respect to the “Checklist of Measurable Objectives to Assess Consumer Participation in Codex”¹ and in line with the recommendations of the 49th Session of the CCEXEC, Canada offers the following comments:

- i. Canada has a National Codex Contact Point located in the Food Directorate, Health Canada.
- ii. The management of Canada's Codex program is conducted through an Interdepartmental Committee for Codex which consists of senior officials representing Health Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, International Trade Canada, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Industry Canada.
- iii. Canada holds broad consultations when developing national positions for Codex meetings. In developing positions for some Codex meetings, such as the Codex Committee on Food Labelling which is hosted by Canada, these consultations can include a public meeting for discussion and direct input into Canada's position on agenda items.
- iv. Canada has an established list of NGOs which it actively engages in the Codex Consultation process of Circular Letters, Alinorm reports, and background papers for relevant Codex Committees of interest to Canada. The list includes approximately 34 consumer groups/individuals who have expressed to the Canadian Codex Contact Point an interest in being consulted/informed on issues under elaboration/development by the Codex Alimentarius.

¹ ALINORM 03/3, paragraph 36

- v. Consumer groups in Canada are active in providing input to assist in the development of Canadian positions for Codex meetings.
- vi. As indicated in (4) above, there are a number of consumer groups/individuals who are involved in the Codex process at the national level. However, with the exception of the CCFL, which normally takes place in Canada, participation of consumer groups on delegations at Codex meetings is rare. Although all consumer groups have the opportunity to contribute to the development of Canadian positions, attendance at Codex meetings outside of Canada is often beyond the financial capabilities of most consumer groups/individuals.

The Government of Canada has initiated a “Government on Line” project which is intended to facilitate public participation in government decision-making. Within the Health Products and Food Branch, the Office of Consumer and Public Involvement (OCAPI) has been established to promote and coordinate public involvement in the development of domestic food safety and nutrition policies and standards. The OCAPI website maintains a link to the Codex Canada website so that the broadest possible exposure is given to Codex documents. The Office of the Codex Contact Point for Canada is currently exploring mechanisms to enhance stakeholder involvement in the development of Canadian positions on Codex issues.

Reference Websites:

Health Canada, Food Program: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/food-aliment/e_index.html

Canadian Food Inspection Agency (food safety): www.inspection.gc.ca/english/index/fssae.shtml

Codex Canada: www.healthcanada.ca/codexcanada (English language site)

www.santecanada.ca/codexcanada (French language site)

FIJI

Consumer Participation

Fiji has an established NCCP (CEO-Ministry of Agriculture, Sugar and land Resettlement). We have also established a NCC which consists of the following:

1. Ministry of Agriculture - CEO -Mr. Luke Ratuvuki
2. Ministry of Health- Chief Health Inspector - Mr. Waisale Delai
3. Ministry of Commerce -Deputy Secretary - Mr. Ken Cokanasiga
4. Ministry of Fishery and Forest - Director Fishery - Mr. S. Tuilaulala
5. Department of Quarantine- a/Director -Mr. H. Foraete
6. Department of Research- Director - Mr. Kumar
7. Balthan Int (Representative from Private Sector) - Mr. Graham Thorpe.
8. Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Chief Assistant Secretary - Mr. Jone Draunimasi
9. Consumer Council - Director CCF- Mr. Ilaitia Labati
10. Institute of Applied Science -Admin and Training Officer - Ms. Cegumalua.
11. Secretariat to NCC.

The Fiji National Codex committee currently holds its meeting on a monthly basis, with assistance from its secretariat.

Consumer Council of Fiji has been very active on issues concerning CODEX matters nationally and internationally.

NEW ZEALAND

The New Zealand Codex Contact Point is located within the New Zealand Food Safety Authority and is responsible for carrying out all of the functions set out in the Codex Procedural Manual.

New Zealand does not have a National Codex Committee and instead has well established processes for consultation and communication with other government agencies, consumers, industry and stakeholders generally. The process involves:

- Dissemination of Codex documents to organizations and persons known to be interested in or affected by the work of CAC and its various committees;
- Holding of public pre-meeting consultations and post-meeting debriefings with interested groups for all relevant Codex Committees and Ad Hoc Task Forces;
- Additional public consultations in main centres on matters of significant public interest(e.g. the Codex work on foods derived from biotechnology);
- Use of the internet to publicise and disseminate information on Codex activities and interests(New Zealand Codex website address is as follows: www.nzfsa.govt.nz/policy-law/codex/ ; and
- Invitations to representative New Zealand consumer organisations, industry and other public interest groups to attend Codex meetings as observers.

New Zealand has taken a proactive approach to promoting consultation with interest groups on Codex matters. In addition to taking active steps to encourage interest groups to participate in consultative processes, New Zealand has an ongoing interest in promoting greater involvement of Maori and Pacific peoples in Codex processes at the national level with a view to informing and seeking input on issues of particular interest to these communities. The Consumer Forum that was established in 2002 as a consultative forum, has also proved to be a valuable mechanism to engage consumers and public interest groups on Codex and broader international standards issues.

In addition to the above processes, New Zealand has a published strategy that sets out our strategic priorities in Codex. The strategy was published in June 2001 after having been developed through extensive consultation with all interested groups. The strategy provides a sound framework for policy development and advocacy of New Zealand interests in Codex. The strategy is currently under review with the objective of ensuring that the strategic objectives for New Zealand's involvement in Codex remain consistent with New Zealand's broad strategic direction for food safety and suitability in the future. The review is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2005.

Comments on measurable objectives on consumer participation in Codex:

- i. New Zealand **has** a National Codex Contact Point
- ii. New Zealand **does not** have a National Codex Committee;
- iii. New Zealand **holds** public consultations when developing national positions for Codex meetings;
- iv. New Zealand **has identified** independent consumer NGOs and invited them to participate in Codex meetings and to submit written comments;
- v. New Zealand **has involved** independent consumer NGOs in developing positions for Codex meetings;
- vi. New Zealand **has some 6** consumer NGOs that participate in Codex processes at various times.

SAMOA

Members of the Executive Committee for Samoa National Codex Committee (SNCC)

- Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour – Chairperson & Codex Contact Point
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Meteorology
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
- Samoa Water Authority Corporation
- Samoa Association of Manufacturers and Exporters
- Women In Business Development
- Samoa Consumer Association
- Observer Members – FAO & WHO

Samoa Consumer Association is represented in the Executive Committee of the Samoa National Codex Committee (SNCC). They actively contributed comments to Codex papers; discussions and decisions made in the SNCC.

The SNCC has yet to establish subsidiary bodies but their establishment in the future will be subject to priority needs of Samoa.

TONGA

(i) National Codex Contact Point

Tonga appointed its first national Codex Contact Point in 1999.

(ii) National Codex Committee

The National Codex Alimentarius Committee of Tonga was established in June 1999. The Minister of Agriculture, Forestry & Food Chairs the Committee with the line ministries in food namely Health, Trade & Commerce, Agricultural & Food and Fisheries are members. Two representatives from the Tonga Chambers of Commerce & Industries and the Tonga Association for Non-government Organizations are also members of the Committee.

(iii) Public Consultation When developing Country National Positions for Codex meetings

Given Tonga have not participated in Codex meetings actively, until the 20th Session of the Codex Committee on General Principles held in Paris in May 2004, public consultations have not been convened to assist in developing of national positions. However, given now that Tonga's National Codex Alimentarius Committee is more active, it is intended that public participations in the Committee's work will increase through public consultations on national positions for Codex meetings.

(iv) Independent Consumer NGOs Participating in Developing National Positions for Codex meetings

Tonga has not invited any Consumer NGOs to participate in developing national positions for Codex meetings given that Tonga has not participated in Codex meetings before until the 20th Session of the Codex Committee on General Principles. A public consultation was held in September to prepare national positions on Codex matters of interest to Tonga. Consumer groups were invited to participate in the public consultations.

(v) No. of Consumer NGOs that participated in the Codex Process at the National Level

One Consumer NGO, Tonga Association for Non-government Organization, is represented in the National Codex Alimentarius Committee and has participated in the little work in Codex matters that the Committee has implemented to date. It is envisaged that participation of consumers and the food industries in Tonga in the Codex work will be increased through more public consultations in the Codex work where appropriate, now that the National Codex Alimentarius Committee is intending to be more active in the Codex work which are of interest to Tonga.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The United States encourages broad participation of its non-governmental organizations, including consumers to participate in the Codex process.

The United States' Codex Activities are coordinated and managed through the U.S. Codex Office and an interagency policy and technical steering committee to endorse and guide U.S. participation in Codex. The U.S. Codex Office is committed to ensuring transparency and encouraging participation of federal government, consumers, industry and special interest groups in the development of U.S. comments to the Codex programme.

Measurable objectives on consumer participation in Codex

- (i) The U.S. Codex Office is located in the U.S. Department of Agriculture under the Office of the Under-Secretary for Food Safety.

- (ii) The Codex Steering Committee consists of senior federal officials representing the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Food and Drug Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of State, the Department of Commerce.
- (iii) The U.S. holds broad consultations when developing positions for the various Codex Sessions. The consultations include delegation meetings and in most cases public meetings for discussion and direct input from industry and consumers.
- (iv) The U.S. has an established list of NGOs, which actively engage in the Codex consultation process of developing U.S. positions. The list includes approximately 10 consumer groups/individuals being informed on issues under elaboration/development by the Codex Alimentarius.
- (v) Consumer Groups in the U.S. are actively engaged in the Codex Process and provide input at the national level.
- (vi) The participation of consumer groups on U.S. Delegations is mostly limited to the horizontal committees.