



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



**World Health
Organization**

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REP13/LAC

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

**36th Session
Rome
1–5 July 2013**

REPORT ON THE 18th SESSION OF THE FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

**San José, Costa Rica
19–23 November 2012**

NOTE: This report includes the Codex Circular Letter CL 2012/38-LAC.

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

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TO: - Codex contact points

- Interested international organizations

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SUBJECT: DISTRIBUTION OF THE REPORT OF THE 18TH SESSION OF THE FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (REP13/LAC)

The report of the 18th Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean will be reviewed at the 36th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Rome, 1-5 July 2013).

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Matters of importance for the region

Governments wishing to present topics of regional interest to be considered at the next session of the Committee (including a summary of the topic of interest, the background, the problem or concern for the region, a recommendation or proposed conclusion for the Committee's consideration) should do so in writing, sending it to the address given above, **preferably by e-mail, before 30 June 2014.**

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The 18th Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean

reached the following conclusions:

MATTERS TO BE SUBMITTED FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF THE 36TH SESSION OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Matters for approval by the Commission

The Committee:

- agreed unanimously to recommend that the Commission reappoint Costa Rica for a second term as Coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean (para. 177);
- agreed to seek the Commission's approval for new work on a Codex regional standard for yacon (para. 203 and Appendix III).

TOPICS OF INTEREST TO THE CODEX ALIMANTARIUS COMMISSION

The Committee:

- made recommendations on the following questions coming from the Commission and its subsidiary bodies: supported development of an international standard for processed cheese; agreed on the importance of Codex work on spices, aromatic herbs and their formulations, but reached no agreement on the mechanism for accomplishing this work; recommended actions to improve the timely distribution of Codex documents in the official languages of the Commission, including submission of a proposed follow-up framework to monitor Codex documents for consideration by the Commission (paras. 22, 33-34, 41 and Appendix II);
- examined the draft Strategic Plan 2014-2019 of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and made various comments and proposals (paras. 42-77);
- made recommendations on Objectives 2 and 3 of the Trust Fund and expressed concern over the criterion used to identify the various groups eligible to apply to the Fund (para. 89);
- exchanged information and identified capacity-building needs with regard to: national food control systems, national structures for Codex matters and consumer participation in setting food standards; the use of Codex standards; nutritional issues; and participation in Codex work and in FAO/WHO activities on scientific advice (paras. 90-124);
- agreed on a procedure for adopting regional positions in the CCLAC and coordinating positions between CCLAC meetings for the internal use of the Committee (para. 133);
- exchanged views on various topics of regional interest and took regional positions on some of them for consideration by the Commission and/or the relevant subsidiary body (paras. 135, 141, 158, 159, 161, 170, 173, 176);
- agreed that the Coordinator, in collaboration with the Codex Secretariat, should evaluate the best place to host the CCLAC website (para. 188);
- agreed to support the Regional Strategic Plan 2013–2019 for the CCLAC (para. 201);
- supported new work on an Amazonian aquatic species in the Committee on Fish and Fishery Products (para. 213).

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INTRODUCTION

1) The 18th Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean was held in San José from 19 to 23 November 2012, at the kind invitation of the Government of Costa Rica. The session was chaired by Ms Isabel Cristina Araya, Director of the Directorate of Regulatory Improvement and Technical Regulation of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, and was attended by 29 member countries, 2 member countries from outside the region, 1 regional organization and 5 international organizations. The list of participants is provided in Appendix I to this report.

Opening of the session

2) The Food Safety Regional Adviser of the Pan American Health Organization of the World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO), Ms Cristina Tirado, welcomed the participants on behalf of PAHO/WHO and thanked the Government of Costa Rica for hosting the meeting. She stressed the fact that food safety is a global problem particularly affecting poor and more vulnerable people. The development of regulations and standards is a way of improving food safety and nutrition, and reducing micronutrient deficiency and diet-related non-communicable diseases. This work should be supported by capacity-building and education to contribute to a comprehensive framework to address public health issues and facilitate trade in healthy, safe food. The CCLAC and the broader work of Codex are critical in helping to address issues of food safety, nutrition and diet-related non-communicable diseases.

3) The Representative of FAO in Costa Rica, Mr José Emilio Suadi, welcomed the participants on behalf of FAO. He noted that the Codex Alimentarius Commission was created with two main objectives: to ensure food safety and promote fair trade among countries. He also noted that the Latin America and the Caribbean region is one of the world's most important food production regions and that it has been particularly active in Codex, despite economic challenges. He further noted that this session would provide further input to the global processes of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and the region as a whole.

4) The Minister of Agriculture and Livestock, Ms Gloria Abrahams, noted that from the perspective of the primary production sector, the work of the Codex Alimentarius is invaluable, not only because it offers a compendium of standards and related texts that can be easily adapted to the situation of the country, but also because, when dealing with risk analysis, it gives countries a unique opportunity to have scientific evidence to support their technical measures, a foundation that the country would be hard pressed to generate for itself, given the high costs and the length of scientific assessment and research processes.

5) The Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, Ms Mayi Antillón, noted that Costa Rica has tried to play a more active role in Codex Alimentarius issues, inasmuch as the Commission plays an important role in protecting consumers' health and ensuring fair practices in the food trade. The existence of scientifically based international food standards prevents importers from setting up unnecessary barriers to trade, facilitates exports and improves the country's competitiveness, thereby encouraging greater economic growth and well-being. The 16 months that Costa Rica has served as Coordinator of the CCLAC have generated satisfaction not only for the achievements obtained through collaboration in the region, but also for the improvement in coordination within the country. The minister thanked the food industry for its active participation and ongoing support in the development of activities, including the present meeting. She also thanked the Codex Trust Fund, FAO, WHO, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and the private sector, without whose valuable support it would not have been possible to hold the meeting.

6) The Vice-President of Costa Rica, Mr Alfio Piva, opened the session and welcomed the delegates and observers to the 18th Session of the CCLAC. He noted that working together in such international fora as the Codex Alimentarius is important with a view to defending food safety and quality, as well as fair practices in international trade, while also promoting food security and enhancing the nutritional status of the local population. Such cooperation allows positions to be combined, experiences and concerns to be shared, synergies between countries to be developed, public policies to be defined and strategies on these important issues to be formulated.

ADOPTION OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA (Agenda Item 1)¹

7) The Committee agreed to consider the following matters in addition to those scheduled for discussion in the provisional agenda:

Agenda Item 10 – Issues relevant to the region:

- Format for Codex standards for fresh fruits and vegetables;
- Review of the Terms of Reference of the Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables;
- Proposal for a new Codex standard for ware potato in the Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables.

Agenda Item 12 – Other business and future work:

- Proposal for new work on a Codex standard for an Amazonian aquatic species "*pirarucú*";
- Biofortification through conventional breeding;
- Activities undertaken with regard to the 50th anniversary of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

¹ CX/LAC 12/18/1.

8) The Committee also agreed to discuss Item 4(b) (FAO/WHO Project and Trust Fund for Enhanced Participation in Codex) before Item 4(a) (Activities of FAO and WHO complementary to the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission relevant to the region), since the following items related to various capacity-building activities promoted by FAO and WHO.

9) The Committee adopted the provisional agenda as its agenda for the session together with the above proposals, on the understanding that discussion of matters under Item 12 would be subject to time availability.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND CODEX COMMITTEES (Agenda Item 2)²

10) The Committee considered matters referred by the Codex Alimentarius Commission as follows:

Processed cheese

11) The Committee noted that the 35th Session of the Commission agreed to discontinue work on the development of a standard for processed cheese. The Commission further agreed to request the FAO/WHO coordinating committees to discuss in greater detail the need for a standard for processed cheese and its scope. The Committee also noted that CL 2012/24-CAC was distributed by the Codex Secretariat in line with the decision of the Commission to request members to identify lacunae in the safety and quality provisions of Codex texts that would justify new work on processed cheese and to describe the scope of any new work to be considered in order to address such lacunae. The analysis of the replies to the circular letter, along with input from FAO/WHO coordinating committees, will be presented at the next session of the Commission, which will decide if new work in this area is necessary and, if so, what its scope and work mechanisms should be.

12) The Committee was thus invited to provide its views on the need for an international standard for processed cheese and, if so, to provide the rationale for such work and the scope of the standard.

13) One delegation said that it was vitally important to have an international standard for processed cheese that would defend the genuineness of the product and list cheese and dairy products as the main ingredient(s). Such products should be clearly differentiated from those where the dairy content is low or has been replaced by non-dairy ingredients that could confuse consumers.

14) Several delegations noted that there are problems inside and outside the region with the trade of processed cheese due to the variety of national and regional regulations, especially as regards the identity, composition and labelling of this product. In their opinion, the absence of an international standard covering these three parameters and the existence of multiple technical regulations have led to unfair trade practices with regard to the authenticity of the product.

15) One delegation noted that the need for an international standard was even greater because the previously existing Codex standards for “processed cheese and “spreadable processed cheese” (CODEX STAN 286-1978), “processed cheese preparations” (“processed cheese food” and “processed cheese spread”) (CODEX STAN 287-1978) and “variety processed cheese and spreadable processed cheese” (CODEX STAN 285-1978), have been revoked, whereas they could have continued to be used in the absence of a new Codex standard for processed cheese.

16) Another delegation noted that two standards could be developed to address the relevant parameters to ensure authenticity of the product: one for “processed cheese” made from cheese (with or without the addition of other dairy products) and one for “processed cheese-like products” made with a low or reduced content of cheese and/or dairy products or in which these basic ingredients have been partially replaced by non-dairy products.

17) Several delegations expressed concern over the safety and nutritional issues involved when using surrogates for the preparation of “processed cheese-like products”, for example various food additives, particularly since this product is consumed especially by children. It was thus necessary to have an internationally agreed standard defining the minimum cheese content.

18) One delegation proposed that misleading practices could be addressed in the Committee on Food Labelling as the Committee on Milk and Milk Products had been adjourned *sine die*. However, it was noted that labelling was closely linked to the identity and composition of the product, so that a specific standard addressing the above-mentioned issues was necessary.

19) It was also proposed that, if an international standard was not feasible at this time, the development of a regional standard within the Committee could be an intermediate solution to this matter. However, several delegations indicated that processed cheese was produced and traded throughout the world, which meant that if a standard was to be set within Codex, it should be a worldwide standard. It was also noted, however, that this matter had been discussed for several years in the Committee on Milk and Milk Products without reaching any consensus on the main issues – identity, composition, etc. – and it was therefore unlikely that the CCMMP would be reconvened to continue working on the development of an international standard for processed cheese. In this regard, the Delegation of Uruguay said that it could host the CCMMP specifically to lead work on the development of a standard for processed cheese if it was done by correspondence, similarly to the procedure adopted for development of the standard for *panela*, led by Colombia in the Committee on Sugars.

20) The Delegation of Mexico stated that, in its view, it was not necessary to continue work on an international standard for processed cheese, seeing that the many efforts over the years to bring together the views of the various countries and regions have not been successful and no technical barriers to trade have to date been identified to justify work on such a standard.

² CX/LAC 12/18/2; CX/LAC 12/18/2-Add.1; CRD 5 (Costa Rica); CRD 11 (Uruguay); CRD 24 (Chile); CRD 27 (Presentation of India regarding spices, aromatic herbs and their formulations).

21) The Chairperson summarized the discussion, noting that processed cheese was an international commodity and it was therefore unlikely that the Commission would approve new work on a regional standard for this product. The Chairperson further noted that processed cheese using non-dairy ingredients could mislead consumers on the true nature of the product and pose nutritional and safety threats. It was therefore the overall view of the Committee that an international standard for processed cheese is necessary.

Conclusion

22) The Committee, noting the reservation of the Delegation of Mexico, supported the development of an international standard for processed cheese, covering identity, composition and labelling, with a view to fair trade practices regarding this product.

Establishment of a Codex committee on spices, aromatic herbs and their formulations

23) The Committee noted that the 35th Session of the Commission had considered a proposal of the Delegation of India to establish a new subsidiary body on spices, aromatic herbs and their formulations. The Commission also agreed to request the views of FAO/WHO coordinating committees on the proposal to establish a committee on spices, aromatic herbs and their formulations. The next session of the Commission will consider this proposal again on the basis of a discussion paper to be prepared by India, together with the views of coordinating committees.

24) The Delegation of India introduced the rationale for the establishment of a Codex committee on spices, aromatic herbs and their formulations: a range of widely differing national standards exists for these products; the lack of harmonized standards could result in barriers to trade; trade in these products is growing fast; and developing countries are the main producers, exporters and consumers. The standards will cover various forms of presentation (fresh, processed, whole, mixtures, etc.) and essential composition and quality factors, i.e. physico-chemical characteristics, while safety aspects will be cross-referenced to relevant Codex texts.

25) The delegation explained that, in its view, these products could not be addressed in the Committees on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables and on Processed Fruits and Vegetables, inasmuch as spices and aromatic herbs, although of plant origin, could not be considered as fresh or processed fruits or vegetables, since raw spices and herbs were ingredients providing flavour or aroma to food and were processed to develop or fix their flavour and aroma, unlike fruit and vegetables that were processed to extend their shelf life and for convenience.

26) The delegation also explained that a permanent committee should be established, rather than a time-limited task force, since work on the wide range of products to be standardized was too extensive to allow its completion by a time-limited task force. The delegation also explained that the benefits of having these products standardized within Codex as opposed to other organizations is that Codex is the only relevant international intergovernmental body having the broad participation of governments and interested stakeholders, which will allow comprehensive harmonization of quality and safety aspects of these products in a transparent and inclusive way in order to protect consumers' health and ensure fair trade practices. Work already carried out by other relevant organizations such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) will be taken into account in preparation of the standards.

27) The Committee broadly agreed that it is important that Codex work on spices, aromatic herbs and their formulations, because they are an important export product for countries of the region with a high growth rate. The Committee also agreed that there are trade issues in the region associated with the various existing standards, so that work on these products will be useful.

28) However, the Committee noted differing views on the mechanisms to carry out such work. Concerns were expressed over the cost implications of participating in the work of a new subsidiary body, especially in view of the interest of many countries of the region in this work, most of them developing countries that no longer benefit from the Codex Trust Fund and still lack the resources to attend other relevant Codex meetings. Support will therefore be required to help countries of the region to participate in this work, while greater use of electronic working groups should be encouraged. The capacity and cost implications for the Codex Secretariat of serving a growing number of Codex meetings should also be considered when deciding on the establishment of a new subsidiary body.

29) Some delegations questioned whether it was possible to allocate the work to the existing committees on fresh and/or processed fruits and vegetables or to adopt an approach similar to that adopted for revision of the standards for fruit juices, in which, after work on several standards had been completed, the mandate of the task force was transferred to the Committee on Processed Fruits and Vegetables to continue work in this area. The possibility of co-hosting meetings was noted as an alternative in order to facilitate countries' attendance of meetings of the new subsidiary body.

30) It was noted that standards for ginger, chilli peppers, etc. had been completed in the Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables and that products such as garlic and fennel could also be standardized by this Committee, since the difference lay more in the culinary use of spices and aromatic herbs, i.e. as seasonings or ingredients, as opposed to fresh or processed fruits that can be consumed as foods in themselves.

31) It was also noted that while recognizing the economic implications of this new work for the countries of the region, Codex should be responsive to emerging issues that may affect consumers' health and fair trade practices in order to remain the pre-eminent international food standard-setting body to protect consumers' health and guarantee fair practices in the food trade, which was the vision of the draft Strategic Plan 2014-2019. It was further noted that the main issue in allocating work to the existing committees was not that of whether they have the technical expertise or mandate to carry out such work, but rather that of whether they could systematically incorporate new work on spices, aromatic herbs and their formulations into their work schedules.

32) It was also indicated that new work on these products should meet the *Criteria for the Establishment of Work Priorities* concerning diversification of legislation and resulting or potential impediments to international trade, that the establishment of a subsidiary body should follow the *Criteria for the Establishment of a Subsidiary Body by the Codex Alimentarius Commission*, according to which first consideration should be given to the establishment of an ad hoc intergovernmental task force, and that preference should be given to the development of general standards in line with the current trend in Codex of identifying common provisions in the body of the standard and specific provisions in annexes in order to facilitate the updating of standards, as has already successfully been done in the cases of several standards and codes of practice for fresh and processed fruits and vegetables.

Conclusion

33) The Chairperson summarized the discussion, noting that the Committee was in agreement that work on spices, aromatic herbs and their formulations is important for the countries of the region and Codex in general. However, the Committee could not reach consensus on the mechanism to carry out such work within Codex, namely by existing committees or through the establishment of a new subsidiary body, either a time-limited task force or a permanent committee.

34) If the same discussion fails to lead to a consensus at the next session of the Commission, the Committee recommends the establishment of an electronic working group by the Commission to define the scope and extent of the new work clearly and examine the available options with a view to undertaking this work, namely by existing committees, by a task force or by a new Codex committee.

Simultaneous and timely distribution of Codex documents in the official languages of the Codex Alimentarius Commission

35) The Committee noted the conclusions of the 27th Session of the Committee on General Principles as found in paragraph 16 of CX/LAC 12/18/2. The Committee further noted that this matter was extensively discussed at several sessions of the Committee, the Committee on General Principles, the Executive Committee and the Commission. The Committee recalled its position that Codex documents should be distributed in a timely manner and simultaneously in the official languages of the Commission to allow Codex members to prepare themselves better for participation in the work of Codex committees.

36) It was noted that some progress had been made to improve the availability of Codex documents in English, French and Spanish and to shorten the time lag between distribution of the original version (usually in English) and the corresponding Spanish or French versions. However, more efforts should be made to improve the situation still further, and to this end, the Committee considered a table of distribution of work/responsibilities between the Codex and host country secretariats concerning the translation and distribution of documents.

37) The Codex Secretariat reiterated that the translation of Codex documents is the responsibility of the host country secretariats of committees and task forces, with the exception of the Commission, the Executive Committee and the FAO/WHO coordinating committees. Some delays in the distribution of documents for the Executive Committee or the Commission are linked to the brevity of the gap between the annual sessions of the Commission (usually in July) and the meetings of Codex committees in late April and early May. Moreover, the Codex Secretariat is obliged by FAO rules to rely on FAO translation services and cannot directly out-source the translation of Codex documents.

38) The Codex Secretariat further explained that the deadlines for submission of working papers are closely monitored by the secretariats of Codex and of host countries. However, due to a variety of factors such as the complexity of the matter under examination or the lack of active participation of members of the working groups, lead countries of working groups may incur some delays in meeting deadlines for completion and submission of the final draft to the Codex Secretariat.

39) The Delegation of Mexico, speaking as Chair of the Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables, noted the growing number of comments received late, which have to be reproduced as CRDs and thus distributed only in the original language. It encouraged delegations to submit working papers and comments in time in order to ensure their timely translation and distribution in the working languages of the committee.

40) The Committee noted that the proposed table has the aim of identifying the critical points in the development of Codex documents and could thus help in identifying problems and corresponding solutions to facilitate the timely distribution of Codex documents in the official languages of the Commission. The Committee agreed to make slight amendments to the table presented in the Annex to CRD 5 in order to identify the delays between the expected date of completion, the language of the document and the actual date of receipt by the Codex Secretariat.

Conclusion

41) Based on the above considerations, the Committee concurred with the following conclusions of the Chair:

- Members of the region are encouraged to send their comments in time in order to facilitate translation and timely distribution of comment papers, to ensure the greater transparency and inclusiveness of the work of Codex;
- The Codex Secretariat should use the amended table to follow up work of the next session of the Committee;
- The amended table should be forwarded to the next session of the Commission for consideration of whether it could be applied to all Codex bodies for one year, to allow the Codex Secretariat to analyse the main issues related to the timely translation and distribution of Codex documents in the official languages of the Commission. This analysis could also be examined by the Committee on General Principles and/or the Executive Committee (Appendix II).

DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION 2014-2019 (Agenda Item 3)³

42) The Codex Secretariat informed the Committee that a revised draft of the Strategic Plan was considered by the 67th Session of the Executive Committee and the 35th Session of the Commission, and that the 67th Session of the Executive Committee had agreed to establish a subcommittee, chaired by Dr Samuel Godefroy of Canada, Vice-Chairperson of the Commission, with the mandate to:

- complete the draft Strategic Plan 2014-2019, taking into account the discussion at the 35th Session of the Commission (including performance indicators and a work plan) (by the end of July 2012);
- send the draft to the FAO/WHO coordinating committees for discussion and input;
- finalize the Strategic Plan 2014-2019 on the basis of input from the FAO/WHO coordinating committees (by mid-March 2013) for circulation and comments, and subsequent consideration and adoption by the 68th Session of the Executive Committee and the 36th Session of the Commission respectively.

43) The Codex Secretariat also informed the Committee that the draft Strategic Plan was now presented in its entire form and that input from the Committee, in particular on the draft work plan, would be very useful, since this would be the only opportunity to provide comments on behalf of the Latin America and the Caribbean region.

44) Vice-Chairperson Dr Samuel Godefroy introduced the revised draft, which includes a work plan in which the responsible party, the time line, the anticipated result and measurable indicators are indicated for each activity. He also explained that the subcommittee had not made any changes in the four strategic goals and that most of the objectives were also unchanged from the version examined by the 35th Session of the Commission. Some objectives and a number of activities had been amended to take comments into account in order to identify expected outcomes and measurable concrete indicators more clearly and to avoid duplication.

45) The Vice-Chairperson explained that the first strategic goal focuses on the core business of the Commission – to develop food standards – and the second on how this is undertaken, with emphasis on risk analysis principles. The third strategic goal relates to support to capacity-building, recognizing that FAO and WHO, rather than Codex, are directly responsible for this task. The fourth strategic objective is “inward-looking”, focusing on improving the efficiency of the work of Codex.

46) The Vice-Chairperson proposed that comments should focus on suggestions and/or guidelines for the draft Strategic Plan rather than on specific wording, since the subcommittee will continue working on it.

47) The Committee examined the draft text in terms of objectives and activities, and made comments or proposed amendments as follows.

Codex core values

48) The Committee agreed to add a footnote to the “consensus building” core value, making reference to the *Measures to facilitate consensus* as contained in the Procedural Manual.

Activity 1.2.1: Develop a process for proactively identifying emerging issues related to food safety, nutrition and fair practices in the food trade

49) Several members were concerned over the explicit mention of “nutrition” in this activity, inasmuch as they did not see its purpose, since nutrition was already part of the responsibility of Codex through the work of the Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses and the Committee on Food Labelling, so that it is not clear what new work this mention of nutrition would entail, or what would change if it were deleted from the activity.

50) The Vice-Chairperson explained that there was no intention to change the mandate of Codex but that nutrition-related items are part of the core work of Codex and that nutrition is also mentioned in the introduction. He further noted that it had been included in Activity 1.2.1 as part of the issues with regard to which Codex needs to be capable of identifying and reacting to emerging issues.

51) Other delegations were of the opinion that, as nutrition was an important aspect of Codex work, it should be mentioned in this activity. It was also mentioned that it had been highlighted at the 35th Session of the Commission that nutrition should be more prominently included in the Strategic Plan (REP12/CAC, para. 138).

³ CX/LAC 12/18/3; CX/LAC 12/18/3-Add.1; CRD 2 (Brazil); CRD 6 (Costa Rica); CRD 20 (Bolivia); CRD 24 (Chile).

52) Because of the ongoing concern over the prominent mention of nutrition, while recognizing the importance of nutrition for Codex, the Committee decided to reformulate the activity in a way that would avoid mentioning any particular issue and stress only the need for proactive identification of issues:

“1.2.1 Develop a proactive process for identifying emerging issues related to the mandate of Codex.”

Activity 1.2.3: Develop a mechanism measuring the implementation of Codex standards by member governments

53) Some delegations requested clarification regarding this activity, particularly because the application of standards was up to Codex members and difficult to measure and because under the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) Agreement, the World Trade Organization (WTO) already had a monitoring function.

54) Other delegations were of the opinion that the activity should remain as a way of measuring the effectiveness of Codex standards, as their main objective is that Codex members adopt them in their legislation. It was also mentioned that the SPS Committee had not been effective in this task, as it was not easy to identify when Codex standards were the basis of an SPS notification. It was proposed that the activity be included under Strategic Goal 3 or listed as an independent strategic goal.

55) Following an explanation on the structure of the Strategic Plan, the Committee decided to leave the activity unchanged.

Objective 1.3: Strengthen coordination and cooperation with other international standards-setting organizations seeking to avoid duplication of efforts and optimize opportunities

56) One delegation noted that, when taking the standards of other international organizations into account as a reference, Codex should make sure that the other organizations had working principles for standards-setting and a transparent decision-making process that are equivalent to those used by Codex.

57) The Committee agreed to amend the text of the objective as follows:

“1.3 Strengthen coordination and cooperation with other international standards-setting organizations when they have equivalent working procedures for the establishment of standards and practices that guarantee transparency for taking decisions, seeking to avoid duplication of efforts and optimize opportunities.”

58) Another delegation proposed the inclusion of a new activity as follows:

“1.3.3 Encourage private standard-setting bodies to become observers in Codex.”

59) The rationale was that it should be made explicit in the Strategic Plan that it would be beneficial to bring these bodies into the Codex process so that problems with private standards can be more easily addressed and avoided.

60) The Committee agreed not to add a new activity, as the inclusion of private standard-setting bodies as observers is implicitly covered by Activity 1.3.2, but noted that this proposal will be included under the expected outcomes and indicators for this activity.

Activity 2.1.2: Encourage engagement of scientific and technical expertise of member countries and their representatives in the development of Codex standards

61) The Committee agreed to add at the end of the activity the words “lending greater support to developing countries”.

62) One delegation noted that while encouraging the engagement of members in this work, care should be taken to ensure that all had the required level of scientific knowledge.

Activity 2.1.3: Ensure that all relevant factors are fully considered in exploring risk management measures in the context of Codex standard development

63) Several delegations were concerned with the term “all relevant factors”, as it was not clear what is meant with this term, and noted that it was important to stay within the mandate of Codex.

64) The Vice-Chairperson explained that this is not meant to reopen discussions on “other legitimate factors”, which are dealt with in the Procedural Manual but is meant to ensure that there is proper documentation concerning risk management, showing what factors have been taken into account when considering options.

65) Following this clarification, the Committee agreed to amend Activity 2.1.3 as follows:

“Ensure that only legitimate and relevant factors for protecting the health of consumers and ensuring fair practices in the food trade are fully considered in exploring risk management options in the context of developing Codex standards.”

Objective 2.3: Increase scientific input from developing countries

66) The Committee discussed various ways of ensuring under this objective that there was sufficient funding for FAO/WHO scientific advice to developing countries.

67) The Committee therefore agreed to add a new activity to this objective as follows:

“2.3.5 Explore other adequate funding sources in addition to those provided by FAO/WHO so that developing countries can obtain scientific advice.” The responsible parties should be “all relevant committees”, the timeline should be “continuous” and the anticipated result should be “Explore funding sources that are better and more sustainable for the provision of FAO/WHO scientific advice.”

Objective 3.1: Increase the effective participation of developing countries in Codex

68) Under this item, the Committee discussed the possibility of increasing the participation of developing countries in Codex work through virtual meetings as well as the use of all the working languages of the Committee/Commission in electronic working groups and the reduction of physical meetings.

69) The Committee therefore agreed to add a new Activity 3.1.5, to read as follows:

“Promote use of the official languages of the Commission in electronic working groups.”

70) There was also a proposal to set up regional electronic or virtual working groups to discuss specific topics with the objective of establishing a consensus among the widest number of countries. However, the Committee considered that this could be included in the strategic plan for the region.

Activity 4.1.4: Ensure timely distribution of all Codex working documents

71) The Committee agreed to add at the end of the activity the words “in the working languages of the Committee/Commission”.

Activity 4.1.5: Increase the scheduling of working group meetings in conjunction with Committee meetings

72) The Committee discussed how this activity could be clarified to facilitate the participation of all members in working groups, while realizing that in some cases physical meetings were beneficial in order to achieve a consensus among members.

73) The Committee therefore agreed to amend the activity to read as follows:

“To ensure that electronic working groups are the first choice when deciding to undertake work between sessions, and if the committee considers it necessary to establish a physical working group, this should be held in conjunction with committee meetings and in the official languages of the Committee.”

Activities 4.1.6 and 4.1.7: Proposals for new activities related to virtual meetings

74) The Committee discussed possible ways of facilitating the participation of all members of Codex in the standard-setting process through modern technology. The Committee noted that Codex meetings had varying levels of formality: electronic and physical working groups and official meetings of Codex subsidiary bodies (committees and task forces) and the Commission.

75) The Codex Secretariat pointed out with regard to working groups that it should first be noted that their organization was the responsibility of the lead country of the group in question. For electronic working groups, the Secretariat was currently exploring the possibility of extending and adapting the electronic commenting system for this purpose. With regard to the possibilities of virtual meetings of working groups, the Secretariat is in touch with the Secretariat of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), which regularly uses commercially available tools to facilitate such meetings. The Secretariat also indicated that when exploring the possibility of allowing the virtual participation of delegations in official meetings of Codex subsidiary bodies and the Commission, there were not only technical concerns but also legal concerns due to the official character of these meetings. It would therefore be necessary to obtain the legal advice of the parent organizations on these issues.

76) The Committee discussed the various possibilities and agreed that in a strategic plan it was appropriate to explore any new options that would facilitate the work and participation of members and that in a stepwise approach virtual meetings could first be used for informal meetings and meetings of working groups and, if this is successful, their extension to official meetings could be explored at a later stage.

77) The Committee therefore agreed to add two new activities as follows:

“4.1.6 Encourage the host countries of working groups to utilize an electronic platform that permits virtual participation in the meetings.”

“4.1.7 Request the Codex Secretariat to develop a technological platform for Codex, which will permit the virtual participation of countries in working group meetings and at the same time explore the feasibility and legal implications of extending the use of the platform to meetings of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies.”

ACTIVITIES OF FAO AND WHO COMPLEMENTARY TO THE WORK OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND RELEVANT TO THE REGION (Agenda Item 4a)⁴

78) The Representative of FAO informed the Committee that the document CX/LAC 12/18/4 succinctly presented the activities of FAO within the region and that she would not repeat these but rather highlight some of the more recent orientations of FAO's food safety capacity-building programme. She briefly outlined recent and upcoming work on food safety early warning and rapid alert systems. She described ongoing work to develop a “risk analysis tool kit” that builds on previous FAO/WHO guidelines to continue supporting countries in applying the risk analysis framework in the context of planning and implementing food control programmes. She also provided information on FAO work to promote awareness of the impact of food safety decisions on food security. Lastly, she stressed FAO's commitment to working in effective and efficient collaboration with partner agencies – PAHO/WHO, IICA and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) – with a view to serving the interests of the member countries of the region as well as possible.

⁴ CX/LAC 12/18/4; CRD 14 (Report of the 6th Meeting of the Pan American Commission on Food Safety); CRD 15 (Results of the 16th Inter-American Meeting at Ministerial Level on Health and Agriculture); CRD 24 (Chile).

79) The Representative of PAHO/WHO informed the Committee that it will continue its collaboration with member states and such partners as FAO, IICA, the Regional International Organization for Plant Protection and Animal Health (OIRSA), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other institutions in the implementation of the capacity-building activities presented in CX/LAC 12/18/4 and relevant CRDs. At regional level, there are plans to continue with the Global Foodborne Infections Network (GFN), the Inter-American Network of Food Analysis Laboratories (INFAL) and other regional and subregional initiatives in Latin America and the Caribbean. At national level, PAHO/WHO, in collaboration with its partners, will continue to support members in boosting capacities and services with regard to food safety, nutrition and veterinary public health in the areas highlighted in document CX/LAC 12/18/4 and relevant CRDs and in line with the biannual work plan agreed with members, which ends in 2013. In coordination with various programmes, PAHO/WHO is preparing a new Regional Food Safety Strategy 2013-2018 in line with the recommendations of the 6th Meeting of the Pan American Commission on Food Safety (COPAIA 6) and the 16th Inter-American Meeting at Ministerial Level on Health and Agriculture (RIMSA 16). In this context, member countries will be invited to contribute and respond to the recommendation of COPAIA 6 and RIMSA 16 on developing a regional- and national-level agriculture and health policy and actions plans for the next five years.

FAO/WHO PROJECT AND TRUST FUND FOR ENHANCED PARTICIPATION IN CODEX (Agenda Item 4b)⁵

80) The Administrator of the FAO/WHO Codex Trust Fund introduced document CX/LAC 12/18/5, containing the Codex Trust Fund Annual Report 2011, the 16th Progress Report (including the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework), the 1st Transitional Monitoring Report and the document on the pilot project to increase participation in the initial phases of developing Codex texts and promote exchanges among countries with varying degrees of experience.

81) Within these documents, delegates' attention was called to:

- The creation of the new Group 4 aimed at providing additional support to Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States which had completed their normal course of support from the Codex Trust Fund.
- The work carried out to develop a monitoring and evaluation framework and use of the latter to provide annual monitoring reports to Codex member states.
- The full list of Codex training activities supported by the Codex Trust Fund in 2011 and planned for 2012. Support had been provided by the Codex Trust Fund to 29 participants from 23 countries to attend the pre-CCLAC workshop on "Risk management to reduce food safety and quality problems within national food control systems" and to allow these participants to attend the full week of the CCLAC meeting. A CRD was being prepared on the workshop for the information of Committee members.
- The promising results, experience and knowledge that FAO and WHO will obtain from the pilot project to increase participation in the initial phases of developing Codex texts and promote exchange among countries with varying degrees of experience.

82) Comments were invited on any elements of the Codex Trust Fund documentation before the Committee or any other issues that members of the Committee would like to raise concerning the Codex Trust Fund.

83) The Chairperson invited comments first on the areas highlighted by the Administrator of the Trust Fund. One member made a specific proposal regarding areas that could receive support from the Codex Trust Fund. The first related to Objective 2 (Strengthening participation in Codex) and concerned the preparation of a regional "twinning" plan whereby more developed countries in the region could assist less developed countries to build their capacity for more effective participation in Codex with assistance from the Codex Trust Fund. The second proposal related to Objective 3 (Enhancing scientific/technical input to Codex) and a mechanism for obtaining assistance for data generation in the region to be used in establishing maximum levels and maximum residue limits. These proposals were supported by a number of countries.

84) The Administrator of the Codex Trust Fund welcomed the proposal on "twinning" and highlighted the fact that this was an area that the parent bodies and the Codex Trust Fund had been exploring and using on a small scale over the past two or three years. Consideration of such a proposal in a planned way and on a larger scale would have to be based on a work plan developed and discussed within the region, which would include clear budgetary implications. With regard to the proposal on Objective 3, delegates were informed that the Codex Trust Fund faced a certain number of constraints when providing support for data generation, including: (1) the lack of additional funds earmarked for support to data generation; (2) the high cost of supporting data generation in countries; and (3) the relatively long time lines for data generation activities in light of the short time left until the end of the Codex Trust Fund.

⁵ CX/LAC 12/18/5; CRD 16 (Uruguay); CRD 24 (Chile); CRD 28 (Summary of the workshop on risk management to reduce problems of food safety and quality within national food control systems).

85) The Representative of FAO reminded delegates of the roles of FAO and WHO in supporting the generation of data that could be used in establishing MLs and/or MRLs in Codex. Mention was made of work currently under way in three regions to generate data with a view to setting global standards on pesticide residues in minor crops. The regional projects in Africa and Asia are being funded by the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), while work in Latin America is being funded by the IADB and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). In response to one member who highlighted the importance of information sharing among these projects, given the global interest in the issue, the FAO Representative noted that the involvement of the Secretariat of the Joint FAO/WHO Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR) in all three projects was intended to ensure coordination, data sharing and consistency of methods of data generation with the requirements of JMPR.

86) With reference to the proposal on Objective 3, one member referred to the support needed by the countries of the region and that could be obtained from the Trust Fund in order to implement a regional project that would provide the necessary data for establishing maximum levels of cadmium in cocoa beans and cocoa products, an issue to be discussed further under Agenda Item 8. Two members highlighted the fact that support for data generation could be requested from other sources, including FAO and WHO, and this was perhaps not the most important area for support from the Trust Fund. The Representative of WHO answered that, while WHO did not have funds to support data generation, it could assist countries in looking for funds.

87) The Chairperson invited general comments on the Codex Trust Fund. One delegation commented on the criteria used to evaluate the eligibility of countries to gain access to the fund stating that the criteria should include the per capita burden that participating in Codex represented for countries with small economies and the economic cost of maintaining active participation in Codex after ceasing to benefit from the Trust Fund. Another member raised the issue of continuing problems over timely receipt of per diem payments from the Codex Trust Fund prior to participation in Codex meetings.

88) The Administrator of the Trust Fund thanked the delegations for bringing these issues to the fore. The burden of participating in Codex for countries with small economies was recognized. In establishing the new Group 4 at the end of 2011, FAO/WHO and the Codex Trust Fund had examined the features common to countries that did not participate regularly in Codex or were at risk of being unable to maintain their participation. These features included the size of the economy, but also such other factors as the remoteness of the country and its economic dependence on exports and/or imports of food products, which are important areas addressed by Codex standards. This examination led to a decision to include Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States in the new Group 4 in order to address these needs, while recognizing that other countries also face specific needs that may hamper their ability to participate in Codex. This issue may perhaps need to be discussed further in the next round of the FAO/WHO coordinating committees, when proposals will be considered regarding the mechanism that might succeed the Codex Trust Fund after 2015. The specific problem of timely receipt of per diems faced by one country was acknowledged. The Administrator of the Trust Fund explained how per diem payments were made in the WHO system and undertook to investigate the matter together with the relevant persons to see if a solution could be found to the specific problem.

89) The Chairperson formulated the following conclusions, which were supported by the Committee:

- As regards Objective 2, the region should prepare a regional work plan for a “twinning” strategy whereby more developed countries in the region can assist less developed countries to build their capacity for more effective participation in Codex with assistance from the Trust Fund.
- As regards Objective 3, the region should make a proposal to FAO and WHO to assess the possibility of obtaining assistance from the Trust Fund in order to carry out studies concerning maximum levels for food additives and contaminants and maximum residue limits for pesticides and veterinary drugs.
- The CCLAC expressed concern over the criteria used to identify the groups in the Codex Trust Fund that had not benefited in the allocation of resources.
- The CCLAC encouraged the countries of the region to use the Trust Fund in view of the new Group 4, into which 11 countries of the region have been incorporated.

NATIONAL FOOD CONTROL SYSTEMS, NATIONAL STRUCTURES FOR CODEX MATTERS, AND CONSUMER PARTICIPATION IN FOOD STANDARDS SETTING (Agenda Item 5)⁶

90) The Chairperson introduced the agenda item and noted that it provided an overview of the situation of national food control systems in the region, thus allowing identification of the main strengths and weaknesses, together with the support and cooperation needed. She also explained that CRD 18 is a compilation of replies to the circular letter CL 2012/20-LAC (5 countries), replies to the circular letter distributed prior to the 17th Session (CL 2010/18-LAC) (12 countries) and replies to a questionnaire distributed by the Coordinator (25 countries).

91) The Chairperson asked delegations to mention any information and concerns to be transmitted to FAO and WHO that had not already been included in the working document (CX/LAC 12/18/6) in reply to CL 2012/20-LAC.

92) The Committee noted the following interventions:

⁶ CL 2012/20-LAC; CX/LAC 12/18/6 (Observations of Chile, Colombia and Costa Rica); CRD 13 (Brazil); CRD 17 (Mexico); CRD 18 (Costa Rica); CRD 21 (Jamaica); CRD 24 (Chile).

- 93) **Argentina** is working on a system to withdraw food from markets in case of an emergency and is trying to increase the percentage of food that can be recalled from regions far from the capital, where information may be lost due to the existence of informal supply chains.
- 94) It noted that, when requesting data from governments, it should be made clear what is expected of them, in order to avoid creating statistics without any concrete purpose, and also to avoid frustration in the industry that is to provide the data. It further noted that work was currently being carried out with the provinces and regions in greatest need of training and coordination. For this purpose, FAO and WHO should draw up clear guidelines on the data that the parties concerned should supply to the FAO and WHO bodies of scientific experts.
- 95) It also noted that in order to obtain a more realistic overview of the situation, it was necessary to take into account the varying levels of informality in the countries and look not only at food safety but also at social structures beyond food safety. On this basis, more appropriate tools could then be used.
- 96) It proposed that FAO and WHO should help in establishing some economic indicators for certain aspects of food safety such as (1) the costs of withdrawing a pesticide, together with the costs of treating diseases and the advantages obtained from using the pesticide, and (2) assistance with practical exercises such as simulations of product recalls.
- 97) **Barbados** is implementing a programme with funds from the IADB and counterpart funds from the Government of Barbados to improve its national agricultural health and food control system, bringing it into line with international safety standards. The two main components of the programme are development of the legal and institutional framework of the system and upgrading of the national laboratories supporting the system.
- 98) **Belize** identified the following regional needs: although risk analysis covers three main areas, in many instances the main focus is on risk assessment, while the other two areas (risk management and risk communication) are overlooked. In food safety, risk communication is a very important area, but is rarely addressed, and Belize would therefore like to ensure that when risk analysis is being carried out, it is addressed in its entirety.
- 99) **Brazil** has established two food control networks: the Network for Food Alert Risk Communication, which involves various stakeholders in the food control system with the aim of publicizing cases of food quality deviation, and the Network for Health Surveillance Communication, intended to investigate food-borne outbreaks. Brazil has also been drawing up legislation on food recall.
- 100) **Costa Rica** stressed the need to boost quality assurance and information systems. It also proposed that the content of the circular letter to request information from members be simplified so that it could be digitalized and also that closed questions be preferred in order to facilitate statistical analysis. As national systems were increasingly stable with fewer changes to report, the possibility could be considered of stressing a specific subject each time.
- 101) **Chile** requested that risk analysis be included among training subjects and considered that support for the assessment and reformulation of public food safety policies is important, so that the various sectors can understand the relevance of this subject.
- 102) **Colombia** requested support to implement the action plans developed under an FAO project in which 13 countries participated.
- 103) **Cuba** and **Ecuador** requested support for capacity-building concerning traceability in their respective countries.
- 104) **Jamaica** informed the Committee that in October 2001 its cabinet had approved a National Quality Policy with the aim of establishing a "single safety agency". The initiative currently under execution was the establishment of a National Food Safety Council, which would also coordinate work concerned with Codex and be equipped with premises and staff to assist in coordinating Codex matters in the country. The cabinet had approved the National Food Safety Policy, and the draft implementation plan was being revised for final approval. In October 2012 the evaluation of the Jamaican National Accreditation Agency was successfully completed. This was a major step toward signing of the Mutual Recognition Arrangement of the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC), which would facilitate the process of laboratory accreditation. Jamaica was embarking on a large-scale plan to adopt Codex standards, including finalization of pesticide regulations, which would lead to the adoption of Codex maximum residue limits for pesticides. The country was also working on issues relating to market withdrawals. The delegation noted the need for consumer organizations to participate in national Codex committees and pointed out that it was important to increase consumers' participation regarding matters connected with Codex.
- 105) **Guatemala** stressed the need to exchange experiences with the food industry on all food safety matters in order to involve them in the process.
- 106) **Panama** informed the Committee about activities to strengthen its food control system, such as a draft law on agricultural traceability, the creation of a national biosecurity commission and subcommissions on agriculture and health, the accreditation of laboratories, and agreements on trade facilitation with the European Union and the Secretariat for Central American Economic Integration (SIECA).
- 107) **Trinidad and Tobago** indicated the need to develop a strategy or policy for effective communication on food safety matters.

108) The Representative of FAO noted that it was very important to know how FAO can better serve members on food safety issues and admitted that the valuable information extracted from the replies to circular letters had not been sufficiently used to date. She agreed that the possibility should be evaluated of modifying the form of requests for information so as to make it simpler for countries to reply and easier to use the results.

Conclusion

109) The Committee agreed to submit the following matters to FAO and WHO with the objective of asking for support, cooperation and capacity-building: risk analysis; risk-based inspection; participation in Codex; formulation of country positions; development of guidelines for obtaining data for risk analysis; traceability; support for the boosting of quality assurance systems; development of food control systems, including alert and product recall systems in case of emergency situations; boosting of the human resources of laboratories; assistance to key stakeholders regarding effective communication strategies and policies on food safety matters; support for awareness-raising and education of consumers on Codex work; support to countries in the design and reformulation of public food safety policies; and support to countries to ensure continuity with already completed food safety projects.

110) The Committee also agreed to propose to FAO and WHO that they simplify requests for information through the use of closed questions and establish electronic means through which countries can supply and update information.

USE OF CODEX STANDARDS AND RELATED TEXTS AT NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL (Agenda Item 6)⁷

111) The Committee noted the summary of the Chair on the compilation of information supplied by countries (replies to CL 2012/20-LAC, CL 2010/18-LAC and the questionnaire sent by the Coordinator to members of the region) on the use of Codex standards and related texts at national and regional levels as contained in CRD 18.

112) The main issues identified in relation to the incorporation and implementation of Codex standards at national and regional levels are as follows: availability of Codex standards in the official languages of the Commission or the official language of the member country; the translation of Codex standards may not be clear enough or may not be consistent with other versions; provisions in Codex standards may be hard to comply with for small and medium-scale producers and industry, and also for national inspection or certification bodies, due to limitations in the capacity of the food control system to enforce the provisions; and the lack of Codex standards for products of interest to the region or one or more countries in the region may lead to compliance with other standards, such as private standards, with more stringent requirements lacking a technical or scientific basis, particularly in the case of maximum residue limits for pesticides and veterinary drugs (see also Items 4b, 5 and 8).

NUTRITIONAL ISSUES AT NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL (Agenda Item 7)⁸

113) The Committee noted the summary of the Chair on the compilation of information supplied by countries (replies to CL 2012/20-LAC, CL 2010/18-LAC and a questionnaire sent by the Coordinator to members of the region) on nutrition issues at national and regional levels as contained in CRD 18. The main issues identified in relation to nutrition are as follows: the establishment of a database of experts to participate in relevant scientific expert committees and/or ad hoc expert consultations; the establishment of a database on the nutritional composition of food; assistance in data generation concerning consumption patterns; the updating of nutrition legislation; the updating of food supplement and fortification programmes; the strengthening of nutrition education for consumers; and capacity-building on nutrition issues for the industry. The Committee agreed to request support from FAO and WHO on the aforesaid matters.

114) The Representative of PAHO/WHO noted that the organization plans to boost the work relationship with the Pan American Alliance for Nutrition and Development to support the Hunger-Free Latin America and the Caribbean Initiative. In connection with the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States Summit in Chile in January 2013, it is planned to develop a joint FAO/WHO document with recommendations on public policies to promote nutrition, food and nutritional security, and human development. Key aspects of this document will be: (i) obesity and other forms of malnutrition, (ii) food security, nutritional security and food safety, and (iii) the life course approach in relation to food and nutritional security. PAHO/WHO and FAO will continue their support to the Latin American Parliament and national parliaments to address the issues of healthy diets for children, the regulation of advertising and food security, and they undertake to promote these initiatives in a joint manner to ensure integration and coherence. The 16th Ministerial Conference on Agriculture and Health (RIMSA 16) and the 6th Meeting of the Pan American Commission on Food Safety (COPAIA 6), both held in Chile, recommended developing policies and action plans for agriculture and health, in which nutrition is central, and which will provide the framework for the development of the PAHO/WHO food safety strategy for the next five years. With regard to the International Conference on Nutrition (ICN+21), it would be important to explore the possibility of proposing a joint event with members states, PAHO/WHO and FAO to present the regional strategies on agriculture and health.

⁷ CL 2012/20-LAC; CX/LAC 12/18/7 (Observations of Chile, Colombia and Costa Rica); CRD 13 (Brazil); CRD 17 (Mexico); CRD 18 (Costa Rica); CRD 21 (Jamaica); CRD 24 (Chile).

⁸ CL 2012/20-LAC; CX/LAC 12/18/8 (Observations of Chile, Colombia and Costa Rica); CRD 13 (Brazil); CRD 17 (Mexico); CRD 18 (Costa Rica); CRD 21 (Jamaica); CRD 24 (Chile).

115) The Representative of FAO informed the Committee of the upcoming International Conference on Nutrition (ICN+21), jointly organized by FAO and WHO, to be held in Rome in November 2013. This conference will analyse the world's nutrition problems in the twenty-first century, thus allowing stock to be taken of the achievements of recent global initiatives. It will bring together food, agriculture and health stakeholders to reach a consensus on a multisectoral nutrition framework indicating concrete steps for improving nutrition for all. The FAO Representative noted that ICN+21 will be preceded by a series of regional and national meetings supported by FAO and WHO. Country strategy papers will be prepared, detailing the food, agriculture, health and nutrition situation, dietary trends, the policy environment and other issues of relevance to food and nutritional security. These country papers will be used in the preparation of background papers for the conference.

PARTICIPATION IN CODEX WORK AND IN FAO/WHO ACTIVITIES ON SCIENTIFIC ADVICE (Agenda Item 8)⁹

116) The Committee noted the summary of the Chairperson on the compilation of information provided by countries (replies to CL 2012/20-LAC, CL 2010/18-LAC and a questionnaire sent by the Coordinator to members of the region) on activities related to Codex matters and scientific advice as contained in CRD 18. The main issues identified in this area are as follows: an increase in advice to countries to improve their participation in Codex work in the public and private sectors; the development of projects involving the generation of a scientific basis for products of regional interest; the fact that scientific advice has budgetary implications; the need for improved laboratory capacity and capacity-building for local health surveillance authorities; the need to establish a network of experts in the region; the fact that the region has experts who could participate in this network, although there are difficulties regarding the capacity to generate and submit official data; the need for training of the academic sector in order to increase their participation in FAO/WHO work on scientific advice; the possibility that the countries of the region can provide experts to less-developed countries and share their experience; and the need for policy-makers to be aware of the importance of participating in Codex meetings.

117) The Committee noted two issues of vital importance for the provision of scientific advice, namely data generation and/or its submission for the establishment of Codex maximum residue limits for pesticides in minor crops of interest to the region and maximum levels for cadmium in cocoa and cocoa products.

118) As regards minor crops, the Committee noted the ongoing work in the Committee on Pesticide Residues regarding the determination of the minimum number of field trials necessary to support the establishment of MRLs for minor crops and facilitate data submission to the Joint FAO/WHO Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR) for the estimation of residue levels in these crops. The Committee noted that training was needed to help members of the region in the task of identifying minor/speciality crops and the generation and/or submission of data to JMPR.

119) In view of the concern of Ecuador and 19 other countries in the region over the lack of maximum cadmium levels for cocoa and cocoa products, several delegations expressed the need for assistance from FAO, WHO and the Trust Fund in order to generate and/or submit data to the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) so that the Committee on Contaminants in Foods can establish maximum levels for cadmium in cocoa and cocoa products. These delegations indicated that no maximum levels for cadmium have been established in their national legislation, so that the availability of data for submission to JECFA should be checked. Many countries expressed their interest in participating in a regional pilot project run with the assistance of FAO, WHO and the Trust Fund so that the CCCF can establish worldwide representative maximum levels for cadmium in these products.

120) The Committee noted that the region is one of the main producers of cocoa, accounting for more than 12 percent of the total world production of cocoa and more than 90 percent of the production of fine cocoa. The Committee encouraged delegations to look for available data in their countries and if possible to share this information with other interested countries in the region in order to facilitate submission of data to JECFA.

121) The Codex Secretariat informed the Committee that the 6th Session of the CCCF had agreed to include cadmium in the priority list of contaminants for evaluation by JECFA in order to assess exposure to cadmium in cocoa and cocoa products. The deadline for submitting this information to the JECFA Secretariat for consideration by the 77th Meeting of JECFA in June 2013 is 17 December 2012.

122) The Committee noted the possible implementation of a regional pilot project on cadmium contamination in cocoa and cocoa products.

123) The interested countries in the region present at the meeting therefore agreed to work together to assemble the available information in order to submit it to JECFA by the deadline. They also agreed to request clarification from JECFA regarding the information requested and to make a forceful request for more time so that they can make a greater contribution in terms of data, inasmuch as they are the world's main cocoa producers.

Conclusion

124) The Committee agreed to request FAO and WHO to assist countries of the region in the generation of data with the objective of conducting risk assessments to establish maximum residue limits for pesticides and veterinary drugs and maximum levels for contaminants and food additives. For such purposes, the region proposed to develop a regional pilot project in the areas of minor crops and cadmium contamination in cocoa and cocoa products.

⁹ CL 2012/20-LAC; CX/LAC 12/18/9 (Observations of Chile, Colombia and Costa Rica); CRD 10 (Costa Rica); CRD 13 (Brazil); CRD 17 (Mexico); CRD 18 (Costa Rica); CRD 23 (Ecuador); CRD 24 (Chile).

DISCUSSION PAPER ON PROCEDURES TO ADOPT REGIONAL POSITIONS IN COORDINATING COMMITTEES (Agenda Item 9)¹⁰

125) The Chairperson explained the background to the discussion paper, recalling that in response to a question from the CCLAC, the Committee on General Principles had concluded that “full freedom was given under the current Terms of Reference of FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees to issue regional opinions on all themes under discussion in Codex of strategic importance to the region concerned and to promote the adoption of regional positions on strategic subjects.”¹¹ The 17th Session of the CCLAC had agreed to establish an electronic working group, led by Costa Rica, to prepare a discussion paper on proposed procedures for drawing up regional positions, elements that need to be considered, the scope of regional positions and allied issues for consideration at the next session of the Committee.

126) The Delegation of Costa Rica introduced the report of the working group and its recommendations. Two main proposals were made in the document: (2.1) How to establish and present regional positions (at plenary sessions of the CCLAC); and (2.2) how to support issues of interest (between sessions of the CCLAC).

127) The Delegation of Chile proposed clarification of the procedure for presenting regional positions by adding two subparagraphs in point 2.1, one to explain the procedure to be applied in the relevant Codex committee and the other to encourage attendance of the relevant Codex meeting by a country’s diplomatic representation if it could not otherwise participate.

128) The Committee discussed situations that could arise if countries had not been present when the decision was taken in the CCLAC or if there was a reservation from a country.

129) One delegation mentioned that countries should be encouraged to participate in videoconferences to prepare regional agreements.

130) Another delegation noted that it was important, if regional positions were adopted at a CCLAC session, that delegates present at the meeting should inform their national colleagues who would be attending other Codex committee meetings.

131) The Committee was of the opinion that it would be a good practice for each CCLAC delegate to inform all relevant parties in their country of any matters of interest to them. However, as countries were organized in different ways and it was an internal matter, this need not be mentioned in the procedure.

132) The Codex Secretariat had proposed amendments to points 2.2(c) and (d) to simplify the procedure and bring it into line with Codex procedures by explaining that a document could be submitted by one member on behalf of the group that had worked on it and would support it, and that the document should be introduced by one of the delegations named in it. The Secretariat had also explained that if comments were requested (either in a circular letter or in reaction to a working document), each delegation should submit them independently to the Codex Secretariat.

Conclusion

133) The Committee agreed to the following procedures for its internal use, noting that the full text including sections 2.1 and 2.3 will be available on the CCLAC website in English and Spanish.

“2. Achievement of agreements

The CCLAC Coordinator will identify those cross-cutting issues or matters of interest to countries as follows:

2.1 Procedure to reach and present regional positions

In accordance with the Procedural Manual (Section I, Basic Texts and Definitions, Rules of Procedure of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, Rule IV Coordinators, point 3 (c)) and the Terms of Reference of Codex Coordinating Committees (Section V, Structure and Sessions, Terms of Reference of FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees, point (g)), regional positions will be considered only those agreements which have been taken in plenary (official) sessions of the CCLAC and must be clearly recorded in the report of the session, indicating the number of countries present at the session. The following should be complied with to achieve and present regional positions:

- a) Initially, the Regional Coordinator reports to member countries of the region on those issues identified as being of regional interest and verifies if they are on the agenda, if the matter of interest is not included in the agenda, the Regional Coordinator will provide for their inclusion in the agenda of the next CCLAC session under the heading “Issues relevant to the region”.
- b) The proponent countries will develop a document providing the basis for discussion by member countries present at the CCLAC session in order to reach a regional agreement by consensus.
- c) This agreement represents the position of the CCLAC taken by consensus among members of the region present at the plenary session of this Committee.

¹⁰ CX/LAC 12/18/10; CRD 22 (Codex Secretariat); CRD 24 (Chile).

¹¹ ALINORM 09/32/33, paras. 102-103.

- d) The agreement, once taken, will be presented by the Regional Coordinator to the respective Codex subsidiary body together with any reservation presented by any country regarding this agreement. If the Coordinator cannot attend the meeting, a country submitting the agreement should be designated.
- e) Once the position has been introduced in the meeting of the relevant Codex committee by the country named in point 2.1(d), the other countries of the CCLAC that have supported the position in the CCLAC meeting should support the position in the meeting of the relevant Codex committee. Countries of the CCLAC that were not present at the meeting may also support this position.
- f) A CCLAC member that cannot participate in the meeting of the relevant Codex committee should make an effort to have a representative of their embassy participate in the meeting to support the regional position.

2.2 Procedure for support on issues of interest

At any time or close to a meeting of interest, countries sharing a matter of interest will proceed as follows:

- a) Develop a document, which will be enriched by electronic means in order to harmonize it.
- b) Circulate the document to all members of the CCLAC through the CCLAC Coordinator with a deadline for comments in order to finalize the document.
- c) One country submits the document to the Codex Secretariat, listing in the title the countries that participated in its elaboration therefore supporting the views or position expressed in the document.
- d) The agreement, once taken, can be presented by one of the drafting countries to the respective Codex subsidiary body.

This procedure applies to documents like CRDs, discussion papers, or any other document for discussion on topics of interest. In the case of responses to documents sent by the Codex Secretariat requesting comments at different steps in the Codex procedure, comments should be sent by each country concerned.”

ISSUES RELEVANT TO THE REGION (Agenda Item 10)¹²

Prioritized list of hazards in feed

134) The Delegation of Argentina expressed its concern over certain aspects of the work of the special intergovernmental Codex Task Force on Animal Feed. It referred particularly to the list of hazards that is being negotiated, which is broader than that included in the report of the FAO/WHO expert consultation. It also called attention to the need for the document under negotiation to make a clear distinction between hazards found in animal feed and those found in food of animal origin for human consumption, inasmuch as many hazards are reduced or disappear as a result of the processing of animal feed or the digestive process of the animals. The delegation therefore requested that the consistency between the texts being negotiated and other related Codex texts be reviewed. In addition, it suggested that references to texts “not negotiated” in the Codex framework should be eliminated from the documents of the Task Force, since their juridical implications are unclear in relation to WTO agreements that take Codex as an international benchmark. The delegation lastly drew the attention of FAO and WHO to the need for capacity-building to assist countries in the application of Codex texts relating to animal feed.

Conclusion

135) The Committee reiterated the importance of developing standards with a scientific basis, taking into account the differences between hazards in animal feed and those in food of animal origin for human consumption, and also the fact that the processing that feed undergoes and the physiological processes in the animal can modify the hazard. The CCLAC recommended that consistency be maintained among relevant Codex texts and that capacity-building activities be undertaken on this matter through FAO and WHO.

Use of note 161 in the General Standard for Food Additives (GSFA)

136) The Chairperson recalled that the CCLAC had already taken a position on this matter at its last session, as noted in paragraph 141 of the Report of the 17th Session of the Committee (REP11/LAC).

137) The Committee noted that, although the discussion on this matter had been suspended at the 44th Session of the Committee on Food Additives, it has been reintroduced into the agenda for its 45th Session to be held in Beijing in March 2013.

138) The Committee also noted that note 161 had not been used since its last session. However, there was still concern over the existing notes that allowed countries to define their own maximum levels.

139) One delegation noted that the existence of the note reflects a lack of consensus concerning certain maximum levels, often related to sweeteners and colours. The delegation suggested that all maximum levels for which the note had been introduced should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis with the objective of gradually eliminating use of the note.

¹² CL 2010/54-LAC; CX/LAC 12/18/11 (Observations of Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica and Dominican Republic); CRD 1 (Argentina); CRD 3 (Brazil); CRD 4 (Costa Rica); CRD 7 (Costa Rica); CRD 8 (Costa Rica); CRD 9 (Uruguay); CRD 12 (Costa Rica); CRD 24 (Chile).

140) Some delegations did not favour examining all maximum levels in the General Standard for Food Additives on a case-by-case basis as this would take too much time. If the elimination of the note were to be done on a case-by-case basis, a time limit should be set for completion of the process. It was noted that, since the CCFA agenda is very full, it would be best to leave the setting of such a time limit to the CCFA.

Conclusion

141) The Committee agreed to recommend to the CCFA that (a) it should evaluate all uses of note 161 on a case-by-case basis and set a time limit for its elimination from the GSFA, and (b) it should not use this note in drawing up new maximum levels in the GSFA.

Annual Report of the Coordinator

142) The Chairperson informed the Committee that the Coordinator is not currently required to report to the CCLAC on the activities carried out during its term in office.

143) The Chairperson further noted that CRD 7 summarizes the matter at hand and proposed that the country responsible for coordination of the Committee should present a report on the activities carried out to the country members of the region during the CCLAC session corresponding to its term in office. The Committee concurred with this proposal.

144) The Chairperson explained that this procedure applied only to coordinators, inasmuch as the members of the Executive Committee elected on a geographical basis do not report to coordinating committees but act in the general interest of the Commission.

Defence of scientific principles

145) The delegation of Costa Rica introduced the issue. When the Procedural Manual is properly implemented, all decisions are based on scientific principles to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in food trade. Many countries use Codex standards as the basis for national legislation because of their scientific basis. Having legislation based on Codex standards helps them to market their products, gain access to international markets and provide tools to the food production sector so that it can be more competitive. Given the importance for Codex member countries of the issuing of Codex standards, guidelines or codes of practice, because of the diversity of national legislations and resultant or potential impediments to international trade, any delay in approval processes based on non-scientific factors could have a negative impact on the international trade in food and on global food security. A delay in the approval of a standard that has complied with every step of the Codex process and is based on scientific recommendations can cause problems and undermine the credibility of Codex.

146) The delegation had prepared six proposals in CRD 4 to help avoid delays in developing standards and ensure proper application of the Codex procedure.

147) The following amendments and comments were made concerning proposals 1, 2 and 3:

148) The Committee agreed to modify point 3 inasmuch as this information should also be examined by the maximum body of Codex.

149) In this connection, one delegation said that it was unclear what should be done with the evaluation and what the consequences were.

150) The Committee supported proposals 1 and 2 as proposed in CRD 4 and proposal 3 as amended, that is:

- 1) There is no need to develop additional guidelines for chairpersons in the Codex Procedural Manual to achieve consensus and ensure the progress of documents. The Procedural Manual provides a full, clear process for developing standards and related texts.
- 2) Training and support for chairpersons should be provided so that they implement the available guidelines consistently in all committees and know how to make decisions and facilitate consensus, understanding that voting is only the last resort.
- 3) It is proposed that the existing evaluation of the performance of chairpersons of subsidiary bodies of the Commission be used, that the Codex Secretariat make this evaluation available to the members by the due date and that it then be provided to the Executive Committee and the Commission for information.

151) The following comments were made concerning proposals 4 and 5:

- 4) The revision of voting rules should not be supported because voting would thus be preferred over the seeking of consensus.
- 5) With regard to the power of the Commission to retain standards at Step 8, support should be given to the amendment of paragraph 5 of the "Procedure for the Elaboration of Codex Standards and Related Texts" in the Procedural Manual, adding after the last sentence ("The Commission may also decide that the draft be held at Step 8"): "... where there are legitimate factors relevant to the health of consumers."

152) There was a long discussion on proposal 5 and various suggestions were made to amend it. Some delegations proposed that there should be a time limit (five years) for how long a standard could be retained before action was taken. Others felt that it would be dangerous to force a vote automatically after five years.

153) One delegation proposed to add “or fair practices in the food trade” at the end in order to recognize that this too was part of the Codex mandate. Others felt that this would broaden the scope too much and voiced the same concerns over the words “other legitimate factors”.

154) One delegation stated that the text as proposed with “other legitimate factors” and the addition of the “fair practices in the food trade” was already contained in the Appendix to the Procedural Manual on general decisions of the Commission.

155) The following comments were made concerning proposal 6:

156) One delegation said that the purpose of a concern form like that mentioned was not to retain standards in the initial steps but to facilitate consensus. The Committee agreed to delete the following words from proposal 6: “to be used for document retention in early stages of discussion in committees”.

157) The Committee supported proposal 6 as amended, that is:

“6. Introduce the use of a form for expressing concerns based on scientific justification, in order to avoid a standard’s being retained at Step 8, in final stages. Implementing this measure in the Codex committees that have indicated that its application is feasible for them, according to the results of the survey that the Codex Secretariat conducted in accordance with what was agreed at the 35th Session of the Committee on General Principles, reflected in the report REP12/GP, paragraph 29. For its preparation, the example could be taken of the form used by the CCPR and the procedure laid down in the annex: List of risk management policies applied by the CCPR in the second bullet of paragraph 23 of the Procedural Manual of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, 20th edition.”

Conclusion

158) The Committee supported proposals 1, 2, 3 (amended), 4 and 6 (amended) as regional positions.

159) The Committee supported proposal 5, but no consensus was achieved as to its exact wording.

160) One delegation noted that the title of the proposal should be changed as it went beyond the defence of scientific principles.

161) The Committee thus agreed that the title should be: “Proposal of the CCLAC to improve the management of the normative process of Codex Alimentarius in the Commission and subsidiary bodies.”

Private standards

162) The Delegation of Uruguay introduced CRD 9 in which a proposal for a regional position on private standards was made. In addition, it suggested taking concrete measures through labelling.

163) Several delegations expressed their support for the measures proposed in CRD 9 but not the additional measure concerning labelling mentioned by Uruguay.

164) The Delegation of Belize informed the Committee that in applying the Multicriteria Decision Analysis Framework in its country between January and October 2012, it was discovered that all the products exported by Belize are subject to private standards. It cited a specific case where a product that was being exported required phytosanitary certification from the regulatory body, but also required certification from three different private standards bodies in order to gain access to the market.

165) The Delegation of Chile noted the importance of having concrete information on private standards affecting trade, and also the desirability of including the bodies generating these standards in Codex, inviting them to be observers, since they would gain in transparency and scientific basis by using Codex standards, while Codex would gain in broader implementation of its standards.

166) The Codex Secretariat gave an overview of the activities undertaken by the Commission on this topic: two papers had been prepared and discussed in the Commission. One of the results had been that there are many kinds of private standard, ranging from some that are mere descriptions of how to apply Codex standards to others that demand stricter maximum residue levels than those laid down in Codex standards. In line with requests from the Commission, the Codex Secretariat had contacted some private standard-setting organizations to encourage them to become Codex observers. The Secretariat is also in constant contact with the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and the WTO SPS Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures of the World Trade Organization on this matter.

167) One delegation said that without specific information it was hard to take any action and thus urged countries to send the relevant information to the Codex Secretariat.

168) One delegation mentioned that even within a country there are some large companies that profit from private standards, having no problems in implementing these, whereas smaller enterprises usually cannot obtain certification and are therefore unable to compete.

169) The Representative of FAO welcomed the comments of Colombia and Belize concerning the need for countries of the region to collect information on the difficulties caused by private food safety standards and to supply this to FAO and WHO. She recalled the request from the Commission that FAO and WHO interact with private standards-setting bodies and private-sector coalitions involved with private standards so as to represent the interests of Codex member countries and promote the consistency of private standards with those of Codex. In keeping with this, FAO has initiated engagement with the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI). She noted, however, that this and other future engagements will not be productive unless member countries provide clear information on their concerns about private standards, such as the nature of the inconsistency with Codex, examples of the unnecessarily prescriptive nature of these standards, problems with auditing and enforcement procedures, and the existence of multiple certification requirements.

Conclusion

170) The Committee agreed to transmit the following conclusions to the Commission: (1) to express concern over the negative effects of private standards in developing countries and in international trade, and over the misleading of consumers; (2) to reaffirm that Codex standards are the guarantee to protect consumers' health and that the stricter requirements of private standards do not ensure "greater protection"; (3) to reaffirm the need for a scientific basis for requirements regarding food; (4) to coordinate with other relevant international organizations (for example OIE); (5) to initiate a constructive dialogue with the non-governmental organizations imposing compliance with private standards; (6) to provide information and guidance to its members on this subject; (7) to propose to the Commission that it monitor the private standards that cause problems for exports from developing countries, and also establish an information system so that the causes of the problems can be quantified; and (8) to urge private standards-setting bodies to participate in Codex as observers.

Revision of risk analysis principles applied by the Committee on Pesticide Residues

171) The Delegation of Brazil referred to the ongoing revision of the risk analysis principles applied by the CCPR, in particular the Periodic Review Procedure and the deletion of Codex maximum residue levels for pesticides if they are no longer supported by the manufacturer but are still used in some countries, thus limiting the availability of pesticides for use on agricultural products of interest to the region.

172) The Delegation of Costa Rica summarized the information presented in CRD 3 concerning the Periodic Review Procedure, the decisions taken on this matter by the CCPR and the alternative proposals that are being discussed in the electronic working group chaired by Argentina and co-chaired by Costa Rica, which should be further considered by the next session of the CCPR.

Conclusion

173) The Committee expressed concern over the revocation without scientific basis of Codex MRLs for pesticides and encouraged members of the region to participate actively in the electronic working group of the Committee on Pesticide Residues on the revision of the risk analysis principles applied by this committee.

Activities of the Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

174) The Delegation of Mexico requested support from the countries of the region, asking that they consider and support the informative appendix containing the glossary of terms used in Codex standards for fresh fruits and vegetables, which Mexico presented at the 17th Session of the Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables for inclusion in the general layout for Codex standards for fresh fruits and vegetables, the review of the Terms of Reference of the CCFFV, and the proposal of new work on a Codex standard for ware potato. The delegation encouraged members of the region to participate actively in the electronic working groups established to consider these matters.

175) Some delegations expressed their interest in the standardization of ware potato and indicated that the scope of application should be clearly defined, since there are many varieties worldwide and it is an important commodity for several countries in the region.

Conclusion

176) The Committee encouraged the countries of the region to participate actively in the work of the CCFFV, especially on the matters indicated above. It also recommended that the next session of the CCFFV give priority to discussion on the review of its Terms of Reference.

NOMINATION OF THE COORDINATOR (Agenda Item 11)¹³

177) On the proposal of the Delegation of Brazil, the Committee unanimously agreed to recommend to the 36th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission that Costa Rica be nominated for a second term as Coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean. The Delegation of Costa Rica accepted the nomination.

178) Many delegations thanked Costa Rica for successfully increasing the participation of the members of the region and improving communication among them, leading to greater collaboration among them. Several delegations also thanked Costa Rica for its efforts to increase the participation of English-speaking Caribbean countries in the work of the CCLAC.

¹³ CX/LAC 12/18/12; CRD 24 (Chile).

179) The Chairperson thanked all delegations for their support and encouraged them to combine their efforts to improve the integration of the region, so as to be in a better position to identify and address cross-cutting issues relevant to the region. She also encouraged the delegations to participate actively in the work of the Committee by formulating proposals for new work or developing work plans or joint strategies on matters of importance for the region.

OTHER BUSINESS AND FUTURE WORK (Agenda Item 12)

CCLAC website (Agenda Item 12a)¹⁴

180) The Delegation of Costa Rica introduced the document that had been prepared to describe the problem of ensuring the regular functioning of the CCLAC website. The delegation thanked Argentina for its excellent work in maintaining the website over the past seven years, which has greatly improved communication in the region.

181) The Delegation of Argentina regretted that for various technical and organizational reasons, it was not at present in a position to run the site. The delegation recalled that the name of the domain was in the name of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries of Argentina. The delegation advised that whatever decision was taken for the website, it should remain independent and directly accessible through the existing address (<http://www.cclac.org/>). The Coordinator should have the freedom to post content relevant to the region and also have additional possibilities available, such as chat rooms and videoconferences.

182) The Chairperson recognized that the country hosting the CCLAC Secretariat should be responsible for maintaining and updating the page.

183) The Chairperson noted that, in collaboration with the Codex Secretariat, various options were being explored regarding the hosting of the site: FAO headquarters in Rome; the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, with headquarters in Chile; and the Pan American Health Organization, with headquarters in the United States.

184) The Chairperson thanked IICA, with headquarters in Costa Rica, for its kind offer to host the webpage.

185) The Codex Secretariat confirmed that for regional websites the content should be provided by the Coordinator. However, experience from other regions had shown that, as coordinators change regularly, there may be a lack of continuity between the terms of one coordinator and another, depending on how the site is hosted. The Codex Secretariat thanked the organizations that had offered to host the CCLAC site and will examine the various options together with the Coordinator.

186) The representative of the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean noted that their offer to host the site had been confirmed in a formal letter. The site would reside with the servers of the regional office, be administered with a content management system and could maintain the same address and independence.

187) A number of delegations indicated that, as the Codex programme is implemented under the umbrella of FAO and WHO, the CCLAC website should remain within one of the parent organizations.

Conclusion

188) The Coordinator, in collaboration with the Codex Secretariat, will evaluate the best place for hosting the CCLAC website, taking into account the comments made at the session.

Proposed strategic plan for the CCLAC (Agenda Item 12(b))¹⁵

189) The Chairperson recalled that the Committee had developed a strategic plan based on action plans drawn up in accordance with the Strategic Plan of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. She also stated that it is important to develop a strategic plan to guide the actions of the Committee.

190) The Delegation of Costa Rica briefly introduced the proposed Regional Strategic Plan contained in document CX/LAC 12/18/14. The delegation explained that promoting communication, improving the exchange of information, developing standards, promoting the revision of standards and ensuring the continuity, development and sustainability of the Committee's tasks were key elements in the proposed plan, in line with the draft Strategic Plan of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

191) In this regard, the proposed CCLAC Strategic Plan contains the following strategic objectives:

- 1) To foster effective communication among CCLAC members and with other regions and members of Codex, the Codex Secretariat and relevant organizations.
- 2) To bring about the active and effective participation of all countries in the region in the Codex Alimentarius Commission and its subsidiary bodies, especially the CCLAC.
- 3) To promote the development and strengthening of the capacities of the national committees and/or the Codex contact points of CCLAC member countries.
- 4) To leverage existing technical and scientific capacities in CCLAC member countries.
- 5) To ensure the continuity, development and sustainability of the Committee's tasks.

¹⁴ CX/LAC 12/18/13; CRD 24 (Chile).

¹⁵ CX/LAC 12/18/14; CRD 19 (Bolivia); CRD 24 (Chile).

192) The Chairperson submitted the proposed plan for consideration and asked delegations to state (a) if they agree to have a plan and (b) whether they agree with the proposal of Costa Rica or if they have other concerns.

193) One delegation welcomed the document prepared by Costa Rica and suggested adding an activity 1.2.6: "To promote communication among the chairpersons of the national committees of the region, so that they have a forum to discuss issues of interest."

194) Some delegations noted that communication should take place through the national Codex contact points and not through the chairpersons of national Codex committees. It was also noted that not all countries have the same structure or the same mode of operation.

195) The Committee agreed to include a new activity 1.2.6 as follows: "To improve the communication of national Codex committees of the CCLAC and their chairpersons through the national Codex contact points."

196) The desirability was noted of a mid-term review of implementation of the plan, where any difficulties would be highlighted. The parallel nature of the strategic plans of the CCLAC and the CAC should be reflected. It was also suggested that the following topics should be added: capacity-building for contact points, capacity-building and risk analysis, and work on the nutritional composition of food and advertising.

197) It was noted that there was currently no mention of regional standard-setting in the plan, so that a new specific objective, "To improve the capacity of countries in the region to establish regional standards that are relevant to the CCLAC region", could be included in line with the CCLAC mandate, together with a corresponding activity entitled "To request support programmes from FAO and WHO to boost the capacity of CCLAC countries to develop new standards of importance to the region."

198) It was proposed that exchanges on the successful experience of countries in the region with regard to raising private-sector awareness on Codex issues should be promoted, and ways should be found of increasing the involvement of the industry in national Codex committees and in standard-setting.

199) The importance was also noted of including an activity in the Strategic Plan to promote the formation of regional electronic working groups in order to facilitate the sharing of views and advice from countries with more knowledge than others on certain topics.

200) The Chairperson noted that there had already been progress on a regional information system being developed by Codex in Costa Rica, which would allow exchanges on positions and include alerts on topics of interest.

Conclusion

201) The Committee agreed to support the Strategic Plan submitted by Costa Rica, with the additions identified by members. The plan will be available on the CCLAC website in English and Spanish.

Proposal for new work on a Codex regional standard for "yacón" (Agenda Item 12c)¹⁶

202) The Delegation of Argentina presented a proposal for new work on a Codex regional standard for "yacón" (*Smallanthus sonchifolius* [Poeppig & Endlicher] H. Robinson). The delegation summarized the information presented in the project document, concerning the area of production, the volume of trade, the nutritional and physico-chemical characteristics of the product, etc. The following matters were particularly highlighted: "yacón" is a high-yield crop and its cultivation has developed from a marginal activity into an excellent income-generating alternative for farmers, especially family farmers, which in turn fosters development of the household economies of producers in the Andean and adjacent regions; it can be consumed fresh or processed; and its properties make it an ideal food for diabetics and people on diets, since it is constituted for the most part of water and carbohydrates, mainly inulina and oligofructose, making it very low in calories and thus contributing to a healthy diet to reduce the incidence of non-communicable diseases.

Conclusion

203) The Committee supported the development of a Codex regional standard for "yacón" (*Smallanthus sonchifolius* [Poeppig & Endlicher] H. Robinson) as new work for the CCLAC.

204) The Committee also agreed to establish an electronic working group, led by Argentina and working in English and Spanish, to prepare a draft standard for consideration at the next session of the Committee, subject to approval as new work by the 36th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

Marking the 50th anniversary of the Codex Alimentarius Commission

205) The Vice-Chairperson of the Commission, Ms Awilo Ochieng-Pernet, speaking in her capacity as Chairperson of the organizing committee for preparation of the 50th anniversary celebrations of the Commission, informed the Committee about the relative preparations. She said that 50 years after its first session, the Commission is still fully committed to protecting the health of consumers and ensuring fair practices in the food trade, and has established itself as the internationally recognized food standard-setting body, with a membership that has increased steadily from 30 in 1963 to 186 in 2012.

¹⁶ CX/LAC 12/18/15.

206) The Vice-Chairperson noted that the proposed objectives of marking the 50th anniversary are: to celebrate the Commission's key achievements since its foundation; to consider new problems and future challenges that Codex will face and to envisage how the Codex Alimentarius Commission could address them; and to increase knowledge about Codex. Apart from the official ceremony in Rome during the 36th Session of the Commission in July 2013, the Codex community (members, observers, interested parties) and all regions are invited to undertake initiatives to celebrate the event throughout 2013; for example, the United States of America organized a successful side event during the last session of the Committee on Food Hygiene, entitled "Codex at 50: past accomplishments and future challenges."

207) The Vice-Chairperson further noted that the event is a unique opportunity for Codex members and observers to raise awareness amongst policy-makers and other stakeholders about the importance of Codex work on food safety and quality, as well as its major contribution to world food security and nutrition, as the Director-General of FAO, Mr José Graziano da Silva, specifically stressed in his opening statement to the 35th Session of the Commission. The Vice-Chairperson requested that the CCLAC Coordinator and/or individual countries of the region inform the organizing committee of any activities undertaken, as it is planned to compile all these in a special 50th anniversary publication.

Conclusion

208) The Committee recognized that the 50th anniversary of Codex was an important event to raise awareness about Codex work and the opportunity should be taken to plan activities throughout the anniversary year.

Proposal for new work on an Amazonian aquatic species, "*pirarucú*" (*Arapaima gigas* [Schinz, 1822])¹⁷

209) The Delegation of Colombia proposed that support be given to work to be presented in the Committee on Fish and Fishery Products with regard to the Amazonian aquatic species commonly known as the "*pirarucú*", and gave a brief presentation providing the rationale for this proposal in terms of the production area, volume of trade and physico-chemical characteristics of the product. The delegation noted that this aquatic species had been introduced in other regions of the world, but that the particular characteristics of the Amazon basin give it particular sensory, physico-chemical and nutritional characteristics not found in the same or similar species in other regions. Thus, the specificity of the "*pirarucú*" should be preserved in order to ensure fair trade practices especially with regard to the nutritional properties related to the content of omega 3 and 6 fatty acids.

210) One delegation noted that the CCFFP had procedures to identify "similar species" and that international standards should be inclusive; in other words, they should not discriminate between the same or similar species on the basis of physico-chemical characteristics such as fatty acid content because they grow under different environmental conditions or because of methodology.

211) The Delegation of Colombia indicated that there are ongoing studies in relation to this matter and other properties of the "*pirarucú*" and that the intention is not to discriminate amongst equal or similar species but to find the best way of addressing the characteristics of this species either in a separate standard or within an existing standard. The delegation further noted that the presentation highlighted the main aspects related to the preliminary findings of the ongoing study and more information to support the proposal will probably be available in time for the next session of the CCFFP.

212) The Delegation of Brazil stated that it did not oppose the proposal, but that relevant consultations should be carried out with the ministries of agriculture and fisheries.

Conclusion

213) The Committee supported new work on the Amazonian aquatic species "*pirarucú*" (*Arapaima gigas* [Schinz, 1822]) to be presented to the Committee on Fish and Fishery Products.

Information on biofortification through conventional breeding¹⁸

214) The observer from the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) informed the Committee about biofortification through conventional breeding and its proposal for work on this matter in the Committee on Food Labelling with a view to providing guidance on how food derived from conventional breeding should be labelled. The observer also informed the Committee that IFPRI was planning to present its work on biofortification to the next session of the Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses with a view to the development of standards relating to biofortification. The observer indicated that it would appreciate the CCLAC's consideration of biofortification through conventional breeding, bearing in mind that there are no Codex standards on this matter.

215) A number of delegations expressed their support for Codex work on biofortification through conventional breeding and suggested that close coordination among the relevant Codex committees, especially the CCFL and the CCNFSU, but also others, be maintained, inasmuch as this was a cross-cutting issue that could also entail work in other Codex committees. In view of this, the scope of the work should be clearly defined in order to keep it within the Codex boundaries. These delegations concurred that the CCLAC did not have the expertise to address this issue, which encompasses a number of different technical fields. They also indicated that they need to consult their national experts.

¹⁷ CRD 25 (Colombia).

¹⁸ CRD 26 (IFPRI).

Conclusion

216) The Committee thanked the observer of IFPRI for the information provided and noted the interest and support expressed by some members, but also noted that the Committee lacked sufficient expertise on this matter to make a recommendation.

DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT SESSION (Agenda Item 13)

217) The Chairperson thanked the Delegation of Brazil for its interest in the work of the Committee and its kind offer to host the next session of the CCLAC. She also stated her country's readiness to look into this possibility and to hold further discussions with the relevant authorities of both governments on this matter.

218) The Committee was informed that the 19th Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean was tentatively scheduled to be held in approximately 24 months. The exact time and venue would be decided by the host government in consultation with the Codex Secretariat.

STATUS OF WORK

TOPIC	STEP	ACTION BY:	REFERENCE IN DOCUMENT REP11/LAC
Proposed framework for monitoring the work of subsidiary bodies of the Codex Alimentarius Commission	---	36 th Session of the CAC	para. 41 and Appendix II
Proposal for new work on a Codex regional standard for “yacón”	1/2/3	36 th Session of the CAC Electronic Working Group (Argentina) Governments 19 th Session of the CCLAC	para. 203 and Appendix III

APPENDIX I

**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS
LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS
LISTA DE PARTICIPANTES**

**CHAIRPERSON /
PRÉSIDENTE /
PRESIDENTE**

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PROJECT DOCUMENT

PROPOSAL FOR NEW WORK ON A CODEX REGIONAL STANDARD FOR YACON
(*Smallanthus sonchifolius* [Poeppig & Endlicher] H. Robinson)*Presented by Argentina***1. The purposes and scope of the standard**

This document advocates the development of a standard for the tuberous roots (as reserves or for storage) of the yacon plant (*Smallanthus sonchifolius* [Poeppig & Endlicher] H. Robinson) of the Asteraceae (Compositae) family, which are supplied fresh to consumers after appropriate preparation.

The standard has the objective of assessing the characteristics of yacon roots to be consumed fresh in the countries of the region.

2. Its relevance and timeliness

In view of the ongoing increase in the production of and trade in yacon in the region, standards need to be established to regulate identity and quality in all their aspects, i.e. the nutritional value, safety, health and hygiene of this tuber crop, and constitute an agreed frame of reference for a regional consensus among the main countries producing and trading it. Moreover, the development of a Codex standard for yacon will help to protect consumer health and promote fair trade practices in line with current international agreements.

Yacon is a plant domesticated in the Andes and it is thought that it spread northwards and southwards from the humid mountains of Peru and Bolivia along the moist Andean slopes and dry inter-Andean valleys and the Peruvian coast. There are plant-like drawings from the Nazca culture (500–1200 A.D.), which are found on textiles and ceramics and are thought to be yacon.

Yacon has been cultivated since pre-Inca times in many scattered places throughout the Andes, from Ecuador to northwestern Argentina (Salta and Jujuy Provinces). Until recently, it was mainly grown for household consumption and only seldom for the market. In the past 30 years, yacon cultivation has spread to other continents: thus, it was introduced into New Zealand in 1982, and from there to Japan in 1985. It is currently grown in Brazil, Korea, the Czech Republic, Russia, Taiwan and some places in the United States.

In New Zealand, Japan, Korea and Brazil, yacon has already appeared on supermarket shelves as an innovative dietary food. Its presence has also been reported in the Czech Republic, and for some years in the United Kingdom, with positive results in terms of marketing.

So far as the countries of the region are concerned, the crop is grown and used in Argentina, with a production area corresponding mainly to the temperate valleys of Salta and Jujuy Provinces and the extreme south of the Humahuaca Ravine, inasmuch as a major agroindustry has developed in Chorrillos-Barcelona in the south of the ravine, based on the rehabilitation and optimization of this plant.

It is therefore felt that yacon has a promising future in regional and international trade.

It is a high-yield crop (producing an average of 30 tonnes per hectare), and its cultivation has developed from a marginal activity into an excellent income-generating alternative for farmers, especially family farmers, which in turn fosters development of the household economies of producers in the Andean and adjacent regions.

Yacon can be consumed fresh, in juices, extracts or capsules, and in cooked dishes. **The properties of yacon** make it a perfect food for diabetics and people on diets.

It is constituted for the most part of water and carbohydrates. The body cannot absorb the sugars it contains, which are called inulina and oligofructose, and are **very low in calories**, which means that it can contribute to a healthy diet in line with the World Health Organization's Recommendations regarding Nutrition, Physical Activity and Health, with a view to reducing the incidence of non-communicable diseases.

3. The main aspects to be covered

The standard will cover aspects connected with identity, quality in all its aspects (i.e. nutritional value, safety, health and hygiene), size and labelling, with a view to supplying a product with acceptable characteristics and protecting consumer health. To this end, the standard will focus on:

- establishing minimum requirements for the tubers, including parameters for quality categories and other conditions;
- defining categories to classify yacon tubers according to their characteristics;
- establishing quality tolerances;
- establishing provisions that must be taken into account with regard to standardization of the packaged product and the containers used;

- establishing provisions concerning the labelling and tagging of the product in line with the General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods;
- establishing provisions on contaminants, which will refer to the General Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Foods;
- establishing hygiene provisions, which will refer to the Recommended International Code of Practice–General Principles of Food Hygiene.

4. An assessment against the *Criteria for the establishment of work priorities*

General criterion

Protection of the consumer in terms of health and the prevention of fraudulent practices. The quality of the product must meet the consumer's needs and the minimum requirements regarding food safety. Development of the standard for yacon should be of benefit to developing countries in the Andean region in particular, inasmuch as they are the main producers, exporters and consumers.

Criteria applicable to commodities

a) Volume of production and consumption in individual countries and pattern of trade between countries

The precise production and consumption volumes in the individual countries are not known, although it is assumed that estimates of these points will be incorporated as the project progresses.

It is known that in Argentina yacon is grown at altitudes of between 1 000 and 2 500¹ metres in the northwest of the country, with a production area corresponding to the temperate valleys of Salta and Jujuy Provinces and the extreme south of the Humahuaca Ravine, inasmuch as a major agroindustry has developed in Chorrillos-Barcelona in the south of the ravine, based on the rehabilitation and optimization of the plant.

It is a more important crop in Bolivia than Argentina, but there is also a lack of information on the areas under cultivation and the volumes produced.

It is widespread in Peru, adapting easily to coastal environments, but also to inter-Andean valleys and high-altitude forest up to 3 200 metres above sea-level. The zones with the greatest tradition of its cultivation are found in the north (Cajamarca, Amazonas, Piura and Ancash) and also in the south (Cuzco, Apurimac, Ayacucho and Puno). The area under cultivation for commercial purposes was estimated at 600 hectares in 2002.

In recent years, its cultivation has developed from a marginal activity into an excellent income-generating alternative for farmers. Its presence in large quantities on Peru's domestic market is a result of various factors, including the spread of information on the nutritional benefits of the dietetic sugars present in considerable quantities in this tuber, and also the perception that it is a useful food for diabetics. It is therefore anticipated that in the years ahead, the industry will absorb more of the fresh tubers in order to produce honey, syrup, flakes, flour etc., and more leaves to produce infusions. This non-traditional use of yacon has considerably increased its importance as a commercial crop.

A work published in 2007 indicated that there were almost 250 hectares under yacon in Peru.

b) Diversification of national legislations and apparent resultant or potential impediments to international trade

No regional impediments are currently known, given the small volume of trade in this tuber. However, this work would provide specific recognized standards with a view to boosting international trade in a typical South American product.

The interest of entrepreneurs and countries as expressed during various seminars and other events, and the greater knowledge of this food, its pleasant, sweet taste and its nutritional and health benefits, all indicate that its consumption and trade are bound to increase.

Moreover, importing countries require application of good practices with regard to all plant products supplied to them from third countries.

Given that no international standard exists for yacon and no work in this regard is being undertaken by other organizations, it is considered necessary and timely that a Codex standard be established in order to combine the criteria into a single internationally acceptable regional standard.

In this way, possible impediments to trade will be reduced and a full juridical framework will be provided, stipulating the minimum acceptable standards for yacon at the regional and international levels.

c) International or regional market potential

An increase in trade on international markets has been observed over recent years. Peru in particular has considerably developed the production and processing of yacon-based products, as can be seen from the tables and diagrams below.

¹ Metres above the sea level.

Peru: evolution in yacon exports

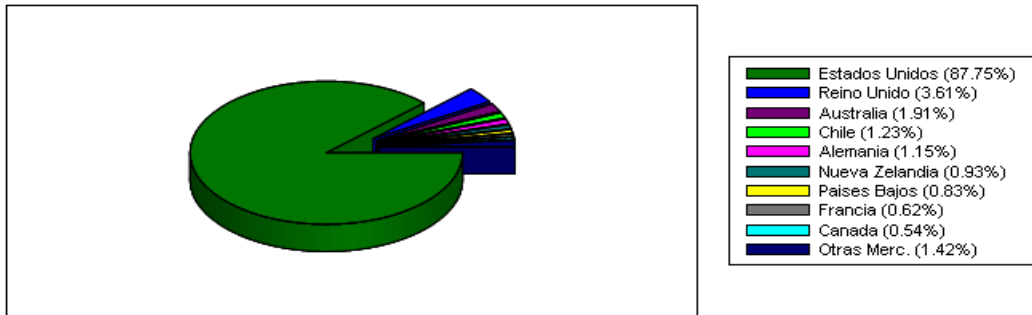
Year	FOB value US\$	Gross volume kg	Average unit value US\$/kg	Percentage variation FOB value	Percentage variation gross volume kg
2001	20 386.10	3 771.87	5.40		
2002	151 918.30	19 764.96	7.69	645.21	424.01
2003	33 525.37	2 847.62	11.77	-77.93	-85.59
2004	99 656.01	11 936.79	8.35	197.26	319.18
2005	81 113.77	7 266.08	11.16	-18.61	-39.13
2006	160 411.05	19 341.11	8.29	97.76	166.18
2007	196 749.45	18 384.90	10.70	22.65	-4.94
2008	331 367.64	30 557.06	10.84	68.42	66.21
2009	351 089.22	25 094.08	13.99	5.95	-17.88
2010	628 572.52	40 810.52	15.40	79.03	62.63
2011	1 094 835.56	59 985.55	18.25	74.18	46.99
2012	827 713.93	44 217.23	18.72	-24.40	-26.29
	3 977 347.92	283 977.77	14.01		

*Note: June 2012. The information shown is a rough preliminary version produced in June, but subject to updating.

Source: SUNAT.

Developed by PROMPERU.

Peru: exports of yacon to its main markets in 2011

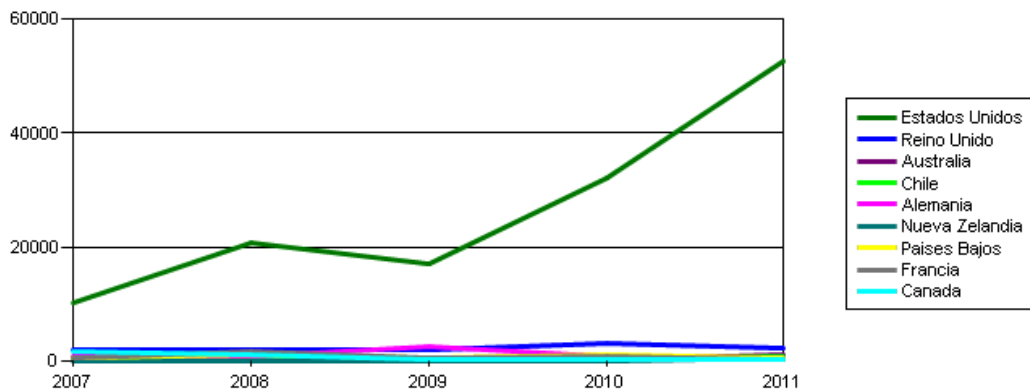


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ELABORADO POR PROMPERU

United States (87.75%)
 United Kingdom (3.61%)
 Australia (1.91%)
 Chile (1.23%)
 Germany (1.15%)
 New Zealand (0.93%)
 Netherlands (0.83%)
 France (0.62%)
 Canada (0.54%)
 Other markets (1.42%)

Source: SUNAT
 Developed by PROMPERU

Peru: evolution in yacon exports to its main markets 2007–2011



* Sólo se consideran las presentaciones que hayan registrado exportaciones en el 2011

FUENTE SUNAT
 ELABORADO POR PROMPERU

United States
 United Kingdom
 Australia
 Chile
 Germany
 New Zealand
 Netherlands
 France
 Canada

*Only reports that recorded exports in 2011 are considered.
 Source: SUNAT.
 Developed by PROMPERU

Peru: evolution in yacon exports to its main markets 2007–2012

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
United States	10 163.16	20 872.04	16 957.37	32 034.27	52 635.36	40 641.71
United Kingdom	2 027.83	2 087.87	1 983.22	3 163.65	2 164.48	914.71
Australia	634.20	444.00	251.91	262.69	1 147.78	426.04
Chile	212.00	318.00	346.42	334.73	738.13	399.58
Germany	809.68	802.24	2 616.52	972.63	691.51	178.04
New Zealand	8.58	0.86	0.00	0.00	556.00	0.00
Netherlands	629.45	1 094.25	696.78	1 231.13	500.77	35.13
France	584.83	1 702.31	720.85	783.53	371.08	11.74
Canada	1 757.75	1 185.66	166.87	315.34	326.34	116.88
Czech Republic	29.81	238.24	44.73	292.93	185.84	457.15
Sweden	0.00	0.00	78.29	119.01	166.27	0.00
Norway	0.00	0.00	46.78	374.19	106.52	243.00
Argentina	0.00	26.09	0.00	25.50	99.57	152.67
Spain	31.30	0.00	205.38	54.37	71.42	0.00
South Africa	0.00	20.00	0.00	109.25	54.19	0.00
Mexico	0.00	0.00	65.00	60.82	53.52	0.00
Switzerland	151.00	0.01	32.70	9.57	49.16	11.46
Japan	1 187.08	1 003.03	760.06	212.36	45.84	177.00
Italy	78.98	62.85	0.00	0.00	21.70	0.00
Slovenia	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.07	276.90
Costa Rica	0.00	0.00	0.00	143.67	0.00	3.65
South Korea	0.00	6.10	25.60	0.00	0.00	0.00
Belgium	21.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Aruba	0.00	0.00	0.00	10.50	0.00	0.00
Austria	50.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Poland	0.00	0.00	0.00	103.39	0.00	0.00
Portugal	0.00	0.00	26.90	0.00	0.00	0.00
El Salvador	0.00	6.97	5.16	0.00	0.00	0.00

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Taiwan	0.00	0.15	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Netherlands Antilles	0.00	0.00	7.42	0.00	0.00	11.65
Venezuela	0.00	0.00	0.00	13.64	0.00	0.00
British Virgin Islands	7.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Israel	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.33
Ireland	0.26	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	159.60
Hong Kong	0.00	0.00	1.25	0.00	0.00	0.00
Guatemala	0.00	684.24	52.84	0.00	0.00	0.00
Ghana	0.00	1.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

5 years Every year

d) *Amenability of the commodity to standardization*

The characteristics of yacon from sowing through to harvesting, the characteristics of the tuber, varieties of cultivar, composition, quality and packaging would support the establishment of appropriate parameters with a view to standardizing the product. Some characteristics are summarized below, such as the botanical definition and the environmental conditions for yacon production.

Yacon (*Smallanthus sonchifolius* [Poeppig & Endlicher] H. Robinson), syn. *Polymnia sonchifolia* Poeppig & Endlicher, tribe Millierieae, subfamily Asteroideae, family Asteraceae (Compositae) is a perennial plant, growing to a height of 1.5 to 3 metres, with a root system composed of 4 to 20 fleshy tuberous storage roots that are generally fusiform and can reach a length of 25 centimetres and a diameter of 10 centimetres, and also an extensive system of thin fibrous roots.

There are various forms of tuber, for example white, orange and purple, with a wide variation within each of these.

Yacon is an erect, herbaceous plant that can reach heights of between 0.7 and 2.0 metres, with a few or many branches. It has two types of root, the main ones being tuberous, swollen, fusiform or ovate, which store sugars in the form of fructooligosaccharides. These are the parts of the plant of economic interest and they have a cream-coloured, whitish or purple exterior. The colour of the pulp depends on the cultivar and can be white, orange, cream or purplish. The number of roots per plant ranges from 3 to 35, with an average of 12. The plant also produces some thin, fibrous, unswollen roots that have a fixation and absorption function.

As harvest-time approaches, the plant forms an irregular mass of parenchymatous storage tissue between the stems and the roots, with numerous buds that give rise to sprouts known as "stock". This organ provides the "seed" or traditional propagation material in the form of portions of the stock that are propagules for planting; in other words, propagation of yacon is mainly vegetative.

The stems are cylindrical, somewhat hollow like canes, hairy, and green or stained with purple. Depending on the cultivar, there are between 4 and 12 stems. The plant may have branches from the base of the stem or only in the upper part. The leaves are simple and petiolate with a generally serrate edge. The blade is triangular, with a hastate, truncate or cordate base, and has hairs on its surface. Each stem produces 13 to 16 pairs of leaves before flowering, and as the plant reaches harvest-time, the leaves become smaller and fewer. The flowers are arranged in capitula, in which the female flowers are ligulate and are positioned on the edges; there are 12 to 16 of these and they are bright yellow or pale orange in colour. The male flowers are tubular and are found in the centre of the capitulum. Each male flower is made up of a bundle of stamens. They produce seeds in small quantities and with a low germinative power (15 to 25 percent). The fruit is an achene.

Fresh yacon roots contain 69 to 83 percent water, 0.4 to 2 percent proteins and 20 percent sugars, especially inulin (fructose polymer).

The dry roots contain 4 to 7 percent ash, 6 to 7 percent proteins and 65 percent sugars and potassium.

The dry leaves contain chlorogenic acid, tryptophan and various phenols derived from caffeic acid.

Yacon roots have traditionally been used to quench thirst. There are reports that *chasquis* (Inca-era messengers) would carry the root in their knapsacks to meet their needs for water and certain electrolytes, and this makes sense, considering that the root contains a high percentage of water, sugars and vitamin K.

The leaves have hypoglycaemic properties (helping to lower glucose levels in the blood) and also lipolytic properties (helping to lower cholesterol levels in the blood). They also have a moderate hypotensive effect, so that they are often used as a supplement in treating patients with type II diabetes and/or dyslipidemia and hypertension.

e) Coverage of the main consumer protection and trade issues by existing or proposed general standards

There is no general product standard regarding yacon. The new work will boost consumer protection and facilitate trade in yacon by establishing an internationally recognized regional quality standard.

f) Number of commodities that would need separate standards, indicating whether raw, semi-processed or processed

A single standard for yacon will cover all the varieties marketed in the world.

g) Work already undertaken by other international organizations in this field and/or suggested by the relevant international intergovernmental body(ies)

No national standards have been drawn up for yacon.

5. Relevance to the Codex strategic objectives

Development of a Codex standard for yacon is in line with the strategic objective of promoting the widest application of Codex standards by countries in their national legislation, and also facilitating international trade. The present proposal is based on scientific considerations and will help in stipulating minimum quality requirements for yacon intended for human consumption with a view to protecting consumer health and ensuring fair practices in the food trade. The proposal corresponds to Activity 1.2 of the Strategic Plan 2008–2013 (Review and develop Codex standards and related texts for food quality).

6. Information on the relation between the proposal and other existing Codex documents

The proposal refers to a new regional standard and has no relation to any other existing Codex text on this subject. However, the standard will refer to relevant related standards and texts drawn up by General Subject Committees. There is no comparable standard for yacon drawn up by any world body.

7. Identification of any requirement for and availability of expert scientific advice

Information generated by the national research working group responsible for producing a detailed description of yacon was used as reference material in drawing up the present document. If any further information is needed while the standard is being defined, this group or other groups of experts can therefore be consulted.

8. Identification of any need for technical input to the standard from external bodies, so that this can be planned for

No need for technical input on the subject from external bodies is anticipated.

9. The proposed time-line

<i>DATE</i>	<i>PROGRESS AND STEPS</i>
36 th CAC (July 2013)	The Commission approves development of a standard for yacon, as a new work.
19 th CCLAC (2014)	Work at Steps 3/4. An electronic working group open to the countries, working in 2 languages. Proposal for adoption at Step 5 or, if there is agreement on the contents, its accelerated treatment 5/8 would be recommended in the Commission in 2015.
20 th CCLAC (2016)	2 nd stage if necessary. Work at Steps 6/7. Electronic working group open to countries, working in 2 languages.
40 th CAC (2017)	Adoption at Step 8 by the 40 th CAC.