

# codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE  
ORGANIZATION  
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HEALTH  
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**ALINORM 05/28/32**

**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME**

**CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION**

*Twenty-eighth Session  
Rome, Italy, 4-9 July 2005*

**REPORT OF THE EIGHTH SESSION OF THE FAO/WHO COORDINATING  
COMMITTEE FOR NORTH AMERICA AND THE SOUTH WEST PACIFIC**

*Apia, Samoa  
19 – 22 October 2004*



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## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Eighth Session of the Codex Coordinating Committee for North America and the South West Pacific reached the following conclusions:

- Expressed appreciation to FAO and WHO for their effort to maintain the adequate **budgetary level for Codex** and for the measures taken for further cost savings (para. 5);
- Generally supported the current role, geographic distribution and terms of reference of the **Coordinating Committee for North America and the South West Pacific** (para. 7);
- Encouraged Countries of the region to consider and respond to the questions referred to the Codex Committee on General Principles by the 27<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission regarding the **Code of Ethics for International Trade in Food** (para. 9);
- Endorsed the **Strategic Plan for the CCNASWP** and agreed that a progress report, including a needs assessment, would be presented at the next Session for its evaluation with a view for its revision at the following Session of the Committee (paras 30-31 and Appendix II);
- Acknowledged the **technical assistance on food standards and regulations provided by FAO and WHO** at the global and regional level (para. 46);
- Noted **issues related to food legislation**, especially in the perspective of economic integration, food control systems, export/import matters and relevant training activities, from countries in the Region (paras 47-67);
- Noted issues and exchanged experiences on the means of developing **consumer input into National Codex Committees and Contact Points** from countries and observers in the Region (paras 68-80);
- Agreed that there was no need for further elaboration of the provisions related to the **country of origin labelling** in the *Codex General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods*, which were considered sufficient to provide adequate information to the consumers (para.84);
- Reiterated its general support to the **enlargement of the Executive Committee** to include Regional Coordinators as full Members. It was further agreed that, in view of the changed composition and new function of the Executive Committee, there was a need to **clarify the respective roles of the Regional Coordinators and the members elected on a geographic basis** and to refer this matter to the Codex Committee on General Principles at its 21<sup>st</sup> Session (para. 89);
- Reiterated the full support to the **Trust Fund** and emphasized the need for reviewing the criteria used for the distribution of funds in view of increasing the benefit to the recipients and for reviewing the effectiveness of the Trust Fund with respect to its objectives (para. 94);
- Unanimously agreed to recommend to the 28<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission that **Samoa be reappointed for a second term as Regional Coordinator** for the North America and the South West Pacific (para. 95);
- Supported the development of a new **Standard on Parmesan cheese** and encouraged the Commission to adopt the amendment of the **Codex Standard for Canned Sardines and Sardine-Type Products** (para. 105);
- Recommended that the Delegations of Fiji and Tonga present the proposal for the amendment of the **Codex Standard on Sweet Cassava** to the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (para. 109);
- Recommended that the Delegation of Fiji submit the proposal for the elaboration of a **Codex Standard for Kava** to the appropriate Committee (para. 110);
- Recommended that Fiji should contribute its **study on mercury in fish** for the preparation of the working document on the possible need to revise the Codex Guideline Level for Methylmercury in fish that will be considered by the 37<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants and by joining the working group mentioned above (para. 113).

## OPENING OF THE SESSION

1. The 8<sup>th</sup> Session of the FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committee for North America and the South West Pacific was held from 19 to 22 October 2004 in Apia, at the kind invitation of the Government of Samoa. The Session was chaired by Mr. Lemalu Tate Simi, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour. The Session was attended by delegates from eleven Member Countries of the Region and one international non-governmental organizations. The list of participants is attached to this report as Appendix I.

2. The Session was opened by the Hon. Hans Joachim Keil, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Labour. The participants were also welcomed by Dr. Vili A. Fuavao, FAO Sub-Regional Representative for the Pacific Islands and by Dr. Giovanni Deodato, WHO Country Representative.

## ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Agenda item 1)<sup>1</sup>

3. The Coordinating Committee adopted the provisional agenda as the agenda for this Session. It agreed that the following items would be considered under Agenda item 10 "Other Business and Future Work":

- Codex Standard for Parmesan Cheese (proposed by United States of America)
- Amendment to the Codex Standard for Sweet Cassava; Cyanide in Cassava (proposed by Tonga and Fiji);
- Codex Standard for Kava (proposed by Fiji);
- Mercury in Fish (proposed by Fiji);
- Cadmium Levels in Dalo/Taro (proposed by Fiji).

## MATTERS ARISING FROM THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER CODEX COMMITTEES AND TASK FORCES (Agenda item 2)<sup>2</sup>

4. The Coordinating Committee was informed of key decisions and other outcomes of the Sessions of the Codex Alimentarius Commission that were held subsequent to the last Session of the Coordinating Committee, as summarized in the working document. These included: Amendments to the Procedural Manual; Financial and Budgetary Matters; Strategic Plan of the Codex Alimentarius Commission; Implementation of the Joint FAO/WHO Evaluation; Proposed Draft Code of Ethics for International Trade; Relations between the Codex Alimentarius Commission and other International Organizations; FAO/WHO Trust Fund; and Other Matters arising from FAO and WHO.

### *Financial and Budgetary Matters*

5. The Coordinating Committee expressed appreciation to FAO and WHO for their effort to maintain the adequate budgetary level for Codex and for the measures taken for further cost savings. It was recognized that, when possible, electronic distribution of documents represented an effective cost saving measure. In this regard, responses to Circular Letter CL 2004/38-GEN "Requests for Subscription to Codex Electronic Distribution List and for Reply to the Questionnaire on Distribution of Codex Documentation" were solicited from those countries which had not yet replied.

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<sup>1</sup> CX/NASWP 04/8/1.

<sup>2</sup> CX/NASWP 04/8/2 and comments submitted in response to CL 2004/29-NASWP from Samoa (CX/NASWP 04/8/2-Add.1), Australia (CX/NASWP 04/8/2-Add.2 and CRD 1), United States of America (CRD 2) and Tonga (CRD 4).

### *Implementation of the Joint FAO/WHO Evaluation*

#### **Review of the Mandates of Codex Committees and Task Forces**

6. The Delegations of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and United States of America strongly supported this review and encouraged countries of the region to provide comments to the Circular Letter requesting their views on the review of the mandates of Committees and Task Forces. In this regard, the Coordinating Committee was informed that the Circular Letter would be issued in March 2005, after the 55<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Committee (February 2005) has considered a preliminary report and recommendations of the team of consultants.

#### **Review of the Regional Coordinating Committees**

7. The Coordinating Committee generally supported the current role, geographic distribution and terms of reference of the Coordinating Committee for North America and the South West Pacific. It was noted that the current terms of reference might be strengthened in the light of the development of the Strategic Plan for the Region (see paras 19-31). It also noted that the discussion on the role of the Region Coordinator was included under Agenda Item 8 “Issues of Significance for the Region” (see paras 85-90).

#### ***Proposed Draft Code of Ethics for International Trade in Food***

8. The value of the Code of Ethics for developing countries, was pointed out. The Delegation of Tonga stated that Pacific Island Countries, which are mostly in the low and middle income classes, were often characterized together with the high income class developing countries. The Delegate informed the Coordinating Committee that most of the Pacific Island Countries have inadequate or no food control system in place and limited financial resources. The Delegate stated that Tonga’s main health concern was the increased rate of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) resulting from the changes in dietary habits of the population from eating minimally processed local foods to increased intakes of imported food with inferior nutritional value. The need for a Code of Ethics that would meet the requirements of developing countries without any food control system in place was highlighted.

9. The Coordinating Committee noted that the revision of the Codex Code of Ethics had not been underway since 1995. Some delegations pointed out that discussions had not clearly identified whether the primary problem to be addressed was the export of unsafe food or whether there were other objectives. It was noted that there were different levels of development of food control systems in developing countries and it was particularly important that developing countries provide input into the identification of the objectives of the Code. Countries of the region were encouraged to consider and respond the questions referred to the Codex Committee on General Principles by the 27<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission<sup>3</sup>, which will be circulated prior to the next Session of the Codex Committee on General Principles. It was also noted that Codex was not the only avenue to address unethical behaviours in food trade. It was observed that since the development of the current Code, the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems had developed a number of guidelines which addressed some of the issues raised during the discussion on the Code related to the import and export of unsafe food. Concern was also expressed that the current revision of the Code could result in a cumbersome text, while a “principles-based” and concise document would be of better use.

#### **REPORT ON ACTIVITIES OF FAO AND WHO COMPLEMENTARY TO THE WORK OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION (Agenda Item 3)<sup>4</sup>**

10. The Representative of WHO presented a summary of the FAO/WHO activities relating to the provision of scientific advice to Codex and member countries implemented since the 7<sup>th</sup> Session of the Coordinating Committee.

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<sup>3</sup> ALINORM 04/27/41, para. 159.

<sup>4</sup> CX/NASWP 04/8/3.

11. The Coordinating Committee noted that the review of the FAO/WHO programs providing scientific advice to Codex and member countries was ongoing, as requested by the Codex Alimentarius Commission and in response to recommendations of the Codex Evaluation. Progress included an electronic forum and a workshop. The findings and recommendations of the Workshop and subsequent comments that were received and steps undertaken by FAO and WHO had been made available at the 27<sup>th</sup> Session of CAC. Thus, FAO and WHO were developing guidelines on scientific advice; establishing an internal task force; addressing procedures for selecting experts and having brain-storming sessions aiming to increase participation of developing countries' experts.

12. The Committee noted that the current FAO/WHO budget available for the provision of scientific advice would not allow for a timely response to all requests. Extra budgetary sources would need to be secured to ensure the provision of scientific advice in a more sustainable manner. To prioritize, FAO and WHO would continue planning expert meetings and consultations considering the following criteria: i) clear scope of the advice requested; ii) urgency of the advice requested, iii) availability of required data or commitment of countries to provide such data; and iv) availability of financial resources.

13. The Coordinating Committee was informed that risk assessments on *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat foods, *Vibrio* spp. in seafood and *Campylobacter* spp. in broiler chickens, had been completed. Addressing the potential problem of *Enterobacter sakazakii* and other microorganisms in powdered infant formula, scientific advice to Codex was to facilitate revision processes of the Code of Hygienic Practice for Foods for Infants and Children in the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene. FAO and WHO had also issued a new call for data specifically related to aspects of the manufacture, preparation and use of powdered infant formula as well as data on the characteristics of potential consumers.

14. The Coordinating Committee noted that an FAO/IOC/WHO workshop (Ireland , 22-24 March 2004) and a joint FAO/IOC/WHO Expert Consultation (Norway, 27 September-1 October 2004) on biotoxins in mollusks had been held.

15. A joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation indicated that safety assessment of foods derived from genetically modified animals and derived products could be performed on a case-by-case basis.

16. The Coordinating Committee noted that FAO/WHO had established an electronic working group to contribute to the guidance document on obstacles to the application of HACCP, particularly in Small and Less Developed Businesses (SLDBs) and approaches to overcome them, which would be available for the next Session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene. FAO had also supported four case studies on the application of HACCP in Brazil, Chile, India and Thailand.

17. The Coordinating Committee was informed that FAO had established a network of technical experts on preparedness for response to nuclear emergencies in relation to food and agriculture and that WHO's Radiation and Environmental Health Programme (RAD) had established a network of collaborating centers on Radiation Emergency Medical Preparedness and Assistance.

18. The Coordinating Committee further noted that FAO was developing guidelines for Good Agricultural Practices along the food-chain in the context of Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development.

**STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE CCNASWP (Agenda Item 4)<sup>5</sup>**

19. The Coordinating Committee recalled the decision of its 7<sup>th</sup> Session related to the development of a Strategic Plan for the Region and that Canada in collaboration with Samoa, as the Regional Coordinator, had circulated a request for the CCNASWP Members to submit names of their representatives to participate in an electronic Working Group as a first phase of the preparation of the Strategic Plan. It further noted that the Working Group<sup>6</sup>, as a first step, had agreed on the criteria that the Regional Strategic Plan would have to satisfy.

20. The Coordinating Committee noted that Samoa and Canada, using the agreed criteria, had developed a draft plan which was circulated to all Members of the Working Group for their review and input. The draft was then revised taking into account the comments received and circulated for a final round of comments.

21. The Strategic Plan consisted of six main objectives focused on two major themes: i) enhancement of the overall effectiveness of the Region's activities in Codex Work (Objectives 1, 2 and 3) and ii) enhancement of the capacities in food control of the Pacific Island Countries (Objectives 4, 5 and 6).

22. The Committee considered Objective 1 *"To improve coordination of communication of the regional activities in Codex"* very important. In order to achieve this objective, it was noted that convening of pre-Codex Session meetings of those Members of the Region present would be extremely useful. In addition, it was suggested to share written comments on Codex documents as this would offer the benefit of a preliminary analysis of the issue under consideration to those countries new to Codex. It was also noted that the sharing of written comments could improve the capacity of those countries, which are often unable to attend several Codex meetings, to provide their comments and contribute to Codex work.

23. With regard to Objective 2 *"To promote maximum participation of all member countries of the region in the activities of the Regional Coordinating Committee"* it was noted that the Trust Fund would ensure a good start to the implementation of this objective.

24. The Delegations of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and United States of America expressed their commitment to continue their support to the implementation of Objective 3 *"To promote the development and enhancement of the capacities of National Codex Contact Point and their supporting infrastructures of the Pacific Islands Countries Members to carry out their core functions"*.

25. It was noted that Objective 4 *"To strengthen the exchange of scientific and technical expertise amongst the developed and developing countries in the region"* was an excellent objective, however, more work to identify gaps and areas for further development, such as the generation of scientific data from the region, was required. In this regard, the Delegation of Papua New Guinea indicated that they were preparing a roster of experts in the country that would allow the identification of their needs for technical expertise.

26. The Coordinating Committee considered the two options proposed for Objective 5 and, while noting that they did not greatly differ, opted for the Objective in Option 2 *"To promote procedures to review Codex Codes, standards, guidelines and recommendations to facilitate their use as the basis for national standards"*.

27. The Coordinating Committee recognized the collective responsibility of the Members of the region in the implementation of the Strategic Plan and agreed that the Regional Coordinator should coordinate the process. It was also indicated that adequate resources would be required to support the coordination process, particularly when the coordination was provided by a Pacific Island Country.

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<sup>5</sup> CX/NASWP 04/8/4.

<sup>6</sup> Composed by Australia, Canada, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, United States of America, FAO and WHO.

28. With regard to the implementation of the Strategic Plan, it was stressed that there was a need to have quantifiable objectives and that Members of the Region communicate among themselves on the progress made in a continuous way between sessions. In this regard, it was agreed that a Working Group, led by the Regional Coordinator and consisting of the Codex Contact Points, could facilitate the communication and coordination process.

29. With regard to funding the implementation of the activities identified in the Strategic Plan, it was recommended to identify and prioritize the needs of the Region, particularly for Objective 4, as this would allow due consideration by Australia, Canada, New Zealand and United States of America as well as other organizations, e.g. FAO and WHO. The Working Group would also coordinate the needs assessment and prioritization of these needs for consideration at its next Session.

30. The Coordinating Committee agreed that the Plan would be based on a 4-year term and that a progress report, including a needs assessment, would be presented at the next Session for its evaluation with a view for its revision at the following Session of the Committee.

31. The Coordinating Committee endorsed the Strategic Plan and agreed to append it to the report of its Session (see Appendix II). It was suggested that the Strategic Plan could be used by Countries in the Region for advocacy purposes.

### **CAPACITY BUILDING FOR FOOD STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS (Agenda Item 5)<sup>7</sup>**

32. The Representative of FAO informed the Coordinating Committee of the capacity building activities for food standards and regulations at the global and regional level.

33. It was highlighted that the need for capacity building in the region had increased through the new international food and agriculture trade environment that emerged as a result of the completion of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations.

34. The Coordinating Committee was informed that several relevant international events had taken place recently, most notably the Second Global Forum of Food Safety Regulators held in Bangkok, Thailand from 12-14 October 2004, as well as several workshops and seminars on a range of topics including acrylamide in food and detection of protein and/or DNA in foods derived from Modern Biotechnology.

35. The Delegates were advised that several global initiatives had been initiated, amongst these were the establishment of a Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), established jointly by FAO, WHO, OIE (World Organization for Animal Health), WTO (World Trade Organization) and the World Bank. An FAO/WHO project to assist the low income countries of Asia and the Pacific in Developing Food Standards within a Risk Analysis Framework was approved for funding from this facility in early 2004 and would be implemented in late 2004.

36. The Representative of FAO noted that FAO and WHO had launched the Trust Fund to increase the participation of developing countries and countries in transition in the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. The Trust Fund had become fully operational in early 2004, allowing several Pacific Island Countries, including Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu, to benefit through attendance of Codex committee meetings.

37. The Committee was further informed that in early 2004 FAO and the OIE launched a joint initiative entitled a "Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases" (GF-TADs). Furthermore, in response to resolutions of the World Health Assembly calling for enhanced communication between WHO and its Member States on matters of food safety, WHO, in collaboration with FAO, was now establishing an official International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN) to be used for targeted and rapid distribution of a variety of information for the protection of public health.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> CX/NASWP 04/8/5.

<sup>8</sup> CRD 6.

38. The Delegates were advised that FAO and WHO have developed a range of technical tools and guidance materials in the area of food safety and quality to be used by implementing agencies. This included a series of Expert Consultations including Safety Assessment of Foods Derived from Genetically Modified Animals, Non-human Antimicrobial Usage and Resistance, the Use of a Good Agricultural Practice Approach and Pathogens of Concern in Powdered Infant Formula.

39. Attention of the Coordinating Committee was also drawn to the recently developed guidelines and documents on Microbiological Risk Assessment, Guidelines for Strengthening National Food Control Systems, a Model Food Law, and training manuals on HACCP, Street Food, Food Inspection, and Safety and Quality of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables. Other relevant publications included a Guide to Good Dairy Farming Practice and a Manual on Good Practices for the Meat Industry and a monthly electronic newsletter "Food Safety and Quality Update".

40. The Coordinating Committee was informed of the launch of the International Portal on Food Safety, Animal and Plant Health that allows users to access complete information on international standards, national regulations, scientific evaluations, and other supporting official information on sanitary and phytosanitary measures from a single source. The portal also allows users to focus on the definitive official sources across the three main disciplines of food safety, animal health and plant health.

41. Delegates were advised that FAO and WHO are currently developing a training manual on Improving Participation in the Work of Codex, which has been used in the conduct of several training sessions in the Pacific and elsewhere.

42. The Representative of FAO explained that several capacity building activities have also been held at the Regional level, notably the Conference on Food Safety for Asia and the Pacific held in Seremban, Malaysia back to back with a Meeting on Future Action on Food Safety in the Pacific.

43. The delegates were informed that at the sub-regional level, FAO had implemented several technical cooperation projects (TCPs) in the area of food safety. These included a project to strengthen Food Analytical Capabilities, which resulted *inter alia* in the international accreditation of the Food Laboratory of the Institute of Applied Science at the University of the South Pacific. A technical cooperation programme project to build capacities in Codex, Food Regulation and International Food Standards Harmonization was also being implemented. This sub-regional project involving Cook Islands, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu had held three training courses on Food Regulation and Standards: Food Control and Quality Assurance, Import/Export Inspection and Certification and most recently Management of Codex Contact Point and National Codex System using the above mentioned Codex training manual.

44. As part of the process of enhancing the sharing of food legislation information in the Western Pacific, the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific had collected the legislation of several Pacific island countries and collated these on a website and trained inspection and health personnel from eight Pacific Island Countries in the use of the web-based database and on import inspection planning and practices.

45. Furthermore, a range of activities were supported at country level, including the development of a food safety legislation for Fiji, training of food inspectors from Fiji, Kiribati, Commonwealth of Mariana Islands and Republic of Marshall Islands and technical assistance to review the food control structures in Tonga.

46. The Coordinating Committee acknowledged the technical assistance provided by FAO and WHO. It was also noted that members of the WTO submitted, on an annual basis, a report on their technical assistance activities to the SPS Committee, which might provide useful additional information on capacity building initiatives.

**INFORMATION AND REPORTS ON FOOD CONTROL AND FOOD SAFETY ISSUES INCLUDING CODEX STANDARDS (Agenda Item 6)<sup>9</sup>**

47. The Coordinating Committee was informed of the recent development and current status on food control and food safety issues in countries in the region. The following is a summary of individual statement made. Many of the countries provided information in written form, either in the formal working paper or as Conference Room Documents. These documents would be made available from the Codex website<sup>10</sup>.

***Australia***

48. Food Safety issues are managed at the national level by the Australian Government Departments of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry; Health and Ageing and Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ). Australia has implemented a communication strategy designed to increase the involvement of the processed food industry and to improve the information flow to and from the food industry, providing improved and more effective stakeholder involvement in the Codex process. These initiatives include enhancing the Codex Australia website ([www.codexaustralia.gov.au](http://www.codexaustralia.gov.au)), development of a “plain English” brochure, “Lifting the Lid on World Food Standards”, and an E-bulletin, “Setting the Standard”. In terms of food legislation, a number of policy guidelines have been endorsed by the Australia New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council over the past two years including: Novel Foods; Country of Origin Labeling; Food Safety Management in Australia’s Food Safety Programs; and Nutrition, Health and Related Claims.

49. Major areas of new work have been in the area of primary production and processing standards and the commencement of the development of standards in accordance with the policy guidelines mentioned above. Australia, through FSANZ, has developed a training calendar for 2004-2005 (available at [www.foodstandards.gov.au](http://www.foodstandards.gov.au)) to provide training opportunities for countries in both Asia and the Pacific Regions. Members of the Region are encouraged to contact FSANZ to obtain further information or to suggest specific training objectives that need to be addressed.

***Canada***

50. In referencing its written comments contained in CX/NASWP 04/8/6, Canada highlighted several key initiatives. In particular, it noted the creation of the Public Health Agency of Canada and the proposed Canada Health Protection Act. It further noted the creation of the Canada Border Services Agency, the introduction of mandatory HACCP for meat and the Good Importing Practices for food (GIP) guidelines.

***Cook Islands***

51. In Cook Islands there are currently four agencies that have some responsibility for Food Control and Food Safety, which include the Ministries of: i) Health, ii) Agriculture, iii) Marine Resources and iv) Internal Affairs/Consumer Affairs. The Ministries are aware of short-comings in carrying out their responsibilities due to constraints of available resources such as manpower, expertise, budget etc. The Cook Islands has had assistance from New Zealand in the past in various areas in food control. Technical assistance has also been received from FAO, WHO, Secretariat of the Pacific Community and the Pacific Island Forum.

52. A review of the Food Act has found it deficient in the adoption and development of Food Standards. There are proposed amendments to the Act, which have been drafted and are ready for submission to the new incoming Government and included a provision for adopting Codex Standards.

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<sup>9</sup> Comments submitted in response to CL 2004/14-NASWP from Australia, Canada, Fiji, New Zealand, Samoa, Tonga, United States of America (CX/NASWP 04/8/6), Fiji (CRD 3) and Cook Islands (CRD 5).

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.codexalimentarius.net>.

### ***Federated States of Micronesia***

53. In Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), the National Food Safety Program within the FSM Department of Health, Education and Social Affairs manages food safety issues at the national level. The National Food Safety Program was established under the National Food Safety Act of 1992. Six subsidiary Regulations were promulgated under the National Food Safety Act covering food hygiene, licensing, acidified food products, frozen fish products, food labelling, and powers and duties of National Food Inspectors.

54. The main food safety issues include imported of foods of inferior quality, lack of food testing lab, and difficulties in meeting food standards and requirements of importing countries. Thus, developing an effective food import control program, enhancing core competencies of food inspectors and food analysts, and establishing or supporting a food-testing lab in the Northern Pacific sub-region are key needs that could remedy these food safety issues and challenges. Capacity building is also needed in these areas.

### ***Fiji***

55. Major developments in food safety in Fiji include i) the adoption of a Food Safety Act; ii) the drafting of food recall guidelines; iii) the initiation of a food contaminant monitoring programme addressing chloropropanols in soy sauce products and mercury in fish; iv) evaluation of a risk assessment process for salmonellosis and eggs; and v) the planning of a laboratory-based Salmonella surveillance programme. In addition, health authorities continue to look at how best to empower industry to introduce GMP and HACCP systems. Fiji's Pure Food Act 1978 addresses food safety and has a number of accompanying mandatory hygiene and safety standards. These are under review with the endorsement in 2003 of the new Food Safety Act. There are 14 other legislation with food safety components that are being used in Fiji. Fiji's food legislation and much of the laws addressing food safety are outdated.

56. Fiji would have to find means of strengthening laws, regulations and standards in accordance with Codex guidelines and harmonizing all the existing laws that are related to food safety. Fiji will have to seek technical assistance from relevant agencies (FAO, WHO, etc.) for the updating and harmonization of the legislations.

### ***New Zealand***

57. The New Zealand Food Safety Authority (NZFSA) was formed just over two years ago as a semi-autonomous body attached to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. The NZFSA brought together the food regulatory functions of the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

58. Two significant reviews are currently underway. The domestic food review is the first major review in 25 years of food controls in New Zealand. Four papers have been released for public consultation: i) Introduction And Context; ii) Regulatory Roles, Responsibilities and Structures; iii) Food Control Plans ('Food Control Plans' will be the basic core component of New Zealand's food regulatory programme, which incorporate Good Operating Practice and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point - HACCP principles); and iv) Implementation of Food Control Plans. The imported food review is being undertaken by independent contractors. Discussion papers and other information on both reviews are available on the NZFSA website [www.nzfsa.govt.nz](http://www.nzfsa.govt.nz).

59. The New Zealand Total Diet Survey which assesses the health implications of, and estimates the potential dietary exposure to selected pesticides, contaminants and nutrient elements in the New Zealand food supply.

### ***Papua New Guinea***

60. Papua New Guinea (PNG) has a Codex policy, developed Food Safety Plans of Action and Terms of Reference for Codex Contact Point and National Codex Committee, and a Codex Secretariat was formed in the Department of Agriculture.

61. Codex PNG requested assistance to build capacity through the development of human resources and training, infrastructure, coordination and linkages to relevant international and regional Codex and related establishments, including stakeholders in Papua New Guinea.

### ***Samoa***

62. Food control and safety issues in Samoa are supported by several legislations administered by the Ministries of Health; Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries; and Commerce, Industry and Labour. Currently there are no general food standards in place, except for industry approved standards introduced in 2002 for fish exports, which is Samoa's main foreign exchange earner. Cabinet endorsed the establishment of the Samoa National Codex Committee (SNCC) at the end of 2002. Its first meeting was convened in November 2003. The lengthy period in between was due to the major Public Service restructuring in May 2003. Preliminary discussions have taken place for the development of a work programme for the Committee, which includes prioritizing its mandate and the development of standards.

### ***Solomon Islands***

63. The Solomon Islands has just established its National Codex Committee at the beginning of year 2004. The Solomon Islands Government has appointed the Environmental Health Division as its Competent Authority in food. The Solomon Island Competent Authority has initiated and formulated three pieces of food legislation, two of which are not yet gazetted: i) Pure Food Act 96, ii) Food Hygiene Regulations, and iii) Pure Food Fisheries Regulations. Solomon Islands have also set up an Inspection and Certification Unit, responsible for the HACCP programme carried out in the food industry. The Competent Authority is currently developing its capabilities in food analysis in its national laboratory.

64. The Solomon Islands along with Papua New Guinea and other Countries requested FAO assistance for capacity building in Codex.

### ***Tonga***

65. In Tonga four government ministries namely the Ministry of Health; Ministry of Labour, Commerce and Industries; Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food; and Ministry of Fisheries have developed seven different legislations related to food safety control activities. These legislations often overlap creating duplications of food safety inspections activities. In its effort to alleviate these problems, Tonga drafted an integrated National Food Control and Quality Assurance System and a 3-year National Plan of Action with the assistance of FAO and WHO. The main thrust of the proposed national food control system is to consolidate all food control activities under one umbrella, the National Food Authority. Other activities of the National Plan of Action include: drafting food legislation, improving the inspection services, surveillance and analytical laboratory services.

### ***United States of America***

66. In the United States of America a number of agencies are working cooperatively to assure food safety within the country. A report from the Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS), entitled "Fulfilling the Vision" details the implementation and maintenance of strategies that have led to significant and measurable advances in the protection of public health.

67. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) oversees the safety of the US food supply, with the exception of meat, poultry and egg products, which fall under the US Department of Agriculture. In addition to the recent BSE regulations, issued in concert with USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service, FDA is currently in the process of revising its food Good Manufacturing Practices for the first time since 1986 and developing rules on labelling for food allergens. Much of FDA's energies over the past two years have been devoted to development of food-related bioterrorism rules designed to give FDA the tools it needs to prevent and mitigate the possibility of foods being used as a vehicle or target for terrorist activities. FDA also provided its website address ([www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov)) to obtain more information.

**CONSUMER PARTICIPATION IN FOOD STANDARD SETTING AT THE CODEX AND NATIONAL LEVEL (Agenda Item 7)<sup>11</sup>**

68. The following is a summary of the reports made by the delegations.

***Australia***

69. Australia's national Codex consultative process includes consumer and other public interest groups. Many of these organizations often have limited resources to take advantage of the opportunities provided for their participation in Codex at the national and international levels. At the national level, effectively involving all stakeholders, including Consumers NGOs, is viewed as a critical component in the development of standards - this, however, is not always possible. Barriers to consumer participation include lack of resources, the volume of papers and the highly technical content of many Codex papers. In an effort to better engage consumer and public interest groups in Codex consultative processes, Australia will be looking at holding a forum in which consumer and public interest NGOs can express their views as a separate stakeholder group.

***Canada***

70. Canada has a broad consultative process to solicit input from all stakeholders, including consumers. However, similar to other countries, the broader engagement of consumers in the Codex process continues to be a challenge.

***Cook Islands***

71. An interim National Codex Committee is being formed. The Cook Islands is at the early stages of development of their food regulatory structure and no cooperative activities with consumers have taken place.

***Federated States of Micronesia***

72. In the Federated States of Micronesia consumers have not been involved in the process of food standards-setting due to the early stages of development of the food regulatory structure.

***Fiji***

73. The Fiji National Codex Committee includes the Consumer Council of Fiji, which has been very active on issues concerning Codex matters nationally and internationally.

***New Zealand***

74. New Zealand considers important the involvement of consumers in Codex matters at the national level and various steps have been taken to engage consumer interests, including preparatory meetings and consultations on significant issues.

75. New Zealand is moving towards a risk management framework for food safety administration. Preliminary risk management activities include the development of a library of risk profiles on important hazard/food commodity combinations. A formal process is being developed for inclusion of consumers in ranking and prioritising these food safety issues for further action. In addition, the New Zealand Food Safety Authority's science budget includes funding for research and investigation of specific issues that might be identified by consumer groups and other stakeholders that are of special interest to them.

***Papua New Guinea***

76. The National Codex Committee in Papua New Guinea includes a consumer organization.

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<sup>11</sup> Comments submitted in response to CL 2004/14-NASWP from Australia, Canada, Fiji, New Zealand, Samoa, Tonga and United States of America (CX/NASWP 04/8/7).

***Samoa***

77. The Samoan Government recognizes the importance of Consumer participation in standards setting at the national level. This is reflected in its endorsement of the Consumers Association representation on the recently established Samoan National Codex Committee as well as its endorsement of the celebration annually of the World Consumer Rights Day in Samoa. The consumer NGO plays an active role in food safety and quality surveillance and works side by side in assisting the Ministries responsible in resolving disputes between traders and consumers relating to expiry dates of food products. All Codex proposals are distributed electronically to members of the Samoa National Codex Committee (SNCC) and consumers are encouraged to contribute. Participation, though, is not at a maximum effective level due to the lack of expertise in the NGO to provide analysis of technical papers.

***Solomon Islands***

78. No cooperative activities with consumers have taken place, due to the early stages of development of food regulatory system in the country.

***Tonga***

79. Tonga appointed its first Codex Contact Point and established its National Codex Alimentarius Committee in 1999. The NCAC comprises of the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Food (Chair); Minister of Health (Deputy Chair); Heads of Departments of Agriculture, Fisheries, Commerce and Trade, Planning; and two representatives from the Tonga Chambers of Commerce and Industries and the Tonga Association for Non-Government Organizations. Tonga has convened its first public consultation to prepare national position on issues to be discussed at the current meeting.

***United States of America***

80. The United States of America encourage broad participation of non-governmental organizations, including consumers groups, in order to ensure transparency throughout the Codex process, as well as in the national standard setting process.

**ISSUES OF SIGNIFICANCE TO THE REGION (Agenda Item 8)<sup>12</sup>*****Country of Origin Labelling***

81. The Coordinating Committee considered the issue of country of origin labelling that was discussed during the 27<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. It was noted that the issue was important for the Pacific Island Countries, which have a developing food industry, and that new country of origin requirements for labelling would entail additional costs, would have important implications on international food trade and would create a burden for national authorities responsible for the inspection of food import/exports.

82. The Delegations expressed several views: that the current provisions were sufficient and adequate and did not pose problems of interpretation; that additional requirements would imply additional barriers in trade, in particular for processed foods; and, that the safety of a product was not linked to its country of origin.

83. The Coordinating Committee was reminded that at the 27<sup>th</sup> Session, the Codex Alimentarius Commission agreed to forward questions for consideration by the Codex Committee on Food Labelling as to whether current provisions were adequate to address Members' needs for country of origin labelling and whether countries had encountered difficulties with the interpretation of those provisions. Countries of the region were encouraged to respond to these questions.

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<sup>12</sup> CX/NASWP 04/8/8.

84. The Coordinating Committee concluded the discussion on this matter by unanimously agreeing that there was no need for further elaboration of the provisions related to the country of origin labelling in the *Codex General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods*, which were considered sufficient to provide adequate information to the consumers.

#### ***Role of the Regional Coordinators/Members***

85. The Delegation of the United States of America recognized that this matter was extremely important for the region in view of the enlargement of the Executive Committee to include Regional Coordinators and in regard to the new responsibilities of the Executive Committee. The Delegate pointed out that, once the enlargement of the Executive Committee would become effective, there would be a definite need to clarify the role of the Regional Coordinator and the role of the member elected on a geographic basis. In this regard, it was noted that the Codex Rules of Procedure were largely silent on the role and responsibilities of “members elected on a geographic basis” (Rule IV. 1). The role of these members should not be to advocate as their primary concern their country specific interests, rather they should have the overall successful operation of Codex as their primary goal.

86. The Delegate mentioned that that the Regional Coordinators should have a responsibility to represent the views of Countries of the region and should solicit their views on issues and attempt to arrive at a regional consensus position before coming to the Executive Committee. To fully represent the views of the region, the Regional Coordinators should be permitted to be accompanied by advisers (limited to two) from other countries in the region.

87. The Delegate said that with Regional Coordinators as members of the Executive Committee, there appeared to be less reason for Members elected on a geographic basis to be accompanied by advisers.

88. The Coordinating Committee generally supported the enlargement of the Executive Committee to include Regional Coordinators. It agreed that this was a very important issue for the region and there was a need to clarify the respective role and responsibilities of Regional Coordinators and of “members elected on a geographic basis” especially in view of the expansion and changed function of the Executive Committee as a Strategic and Standards Management Body. However, many Delegations were of the opinion that more time and reflection were needed to develop a clear position on this matter and, for this purpose, proposed to develop a coordinated mechanism to share views. The peculiarity of the North America and South West Pacific Regions within Codex with one Regional Coordinator and two members elected on a geographic basis, i.e. one for North America and one for the South West Pacific, was also pointed out as well as the different level of development of the Countries of the region.

89. The Coordinating Committee, in concluding the discussion on this matter, reiterated its general support to the enlargement of the Executive Committee to include Regional Coordinators as full Members. It was further agreed that, in view of the changed composition and new function of the Executive Committee, there was a need to clarify the respective roles of the Regional Coordinators and the members elected on a geographic basis and to refer this matter to the Codex Committee on General Principles at its 21<sup>st</sup> Session.

90. In order to facilitate the development of national positions on this issue, the Coordinating Committee agreed that the Members would start sharing their views on this issue by working through electronic means and that the Delegation of the United States of America would prepare an initial document to facilitate the discussion.

#### ***Trust Fund***

91. The Coordinating Committee acknowledged the importance of the FAO/WHO Trust Fund to the region given its relative isolation and the difficulties faced by many of its developing Members in attending Codex meetings. The new contributions to the Trust Fund of Australia, Canada and United States of America were also acknowledged. The Delegation of New Zealand advised the meeting that New Zealand was giving consideration to the question of contributing to the Trust Fund.

92. The Trust Fund donor countries emphasized the need for careful review of the Trust Fund to ensure the “effective participation” of recipients and to have a stronger focus on its accountability and sustainability.

93. It was suggested that Pacific Island Countries should take steps to not rely entirely on the Trust Fund to allow their participation in Codex work; to increase coordination among Pacific Island Countries to maximize the use of the Trust Fund in order to improve overall regional participation and development; and, to give consideration of a “mini-Trust Fund” for the region. In this regard, the Coordinating Committee noted the potential adverse implications of establishing regional “mini trust funds” to the contributions towards the global Trust Fund.

94. The Coordinating Committee concluded the discussion reiterating the full support to the Trust Fund and the recipients countries expressed their appreciation for the assistance received. The need for reviewing the criteria used for the distribution of funds in view of increasing the benefit to the recipients and for reviewing the effectiveness of the Trust Fund with respect to its objectives was also emphasized.

### **NOMINATION OF THE COORDINATOR (Agenda Item 9)<sup>13</sup>**

95. On the proposal of the Delegation of Papua New Guinea, the Coordinating Committee unanimously agreed to recommend to the 28<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission that Samoa be reappointed for a second term as Regional Coordinator for the North America and the South West Pacific. The Delegation of Samoa thanked all the Countries for their support and accepted the nomination, subject to the confirmation by the Government of Samoa.

### **OTHER BUSINESS AND FUTURE WORK (Agenda Item 10)<sup>14</sup>**

#### ***Codex Standard for Parmesan Cheese<sup>15</sup>***

96. The Delegation of the United States of America, in introducing this item, recalled that the Codex Committee on Milk and Milk Products had adopted criteria for the development and/or revision of the standards for cheese products and that the Committee, in applying these criteria, had proposed to the Commission the withdrawal of a number of Codex Standards for Cheese. The Delegate informed the Coordinating Committee that the proposal to elaborate a Standard for Parmesan Cheese, which satisfied the criteria set out by the Committee on Milk and Milk Products and those for the establishment of work priorities, put forward to the Codex Committee on Milk and Milk Products, had been objected to by a number of countries on the grounds of geographical indication. As there was insufficient agreement, the Committee decided to seek the guidance from the Codex Alimentarius Commission by preparing specific questions so that direction could be provided on application of criteria for agreeing to new work in Codex commodity committees. He further recalled the opinion of the legal offices of FAO and WHO, which was provided to the Commission, that the protected designation of origin would not preclude the Codex Alimentarius Commission from deciding to elaborate a Codex Standard for Parmesan cheese, if applicable criteria for new work had been met.

97. The Coordinating Committee further noted that the Commission agreed to defer its decision on the development of a Standard on Parmesan cheese until its 28<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission in 2005.

98. The Delegation of the United States of America expressed the opinion that the issue was important for Coordinating Committees as Codex is a rules-based organization and there was a need to protect its integrity. The Committee was reminded that a decision in this regard would have severe implications on the future work of the Commission. The Delegate, therefore, asked the Coordinating Committee to recommend that the Commission approve new work for the Codex Committee on Milk and Milk Products to elaborate a Standard for Parmesan cheese.

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<sup>13</sup> CX/NASWP 04/8/9.

<sup>14</sup> CX/NASWP 04/8/5.

<sup>15</sup> CRD 2 (United States of America).

99. The Delegation of Canada stressed the importance of this issue for the work of the Commission. The Delegate mentioned that Parmesan was not the only example and recalled the pending decision of the Commission regarding the inclusion of a new species of sardine (i.e. *Clupea benticki*) in the Codex Standard for Canned Sardines and Sardine-Type Products. The Delegate noted that the proposal for inclusion of the new species had been judged to fully meet the criteria adopted by the Commission for inclusion of new species.

100. The Delegation of Canada expressed the view that full compliance with the criteria must be judged as an obligation to adopt the inclusion of the new species and that the Commission at its 28<sup>th</sup> Session should proceed in this regard.

101. The Delegate further stressed that resolving the two issues would reaffirm that the Commission operates through rules-based and evidence-based procedures and agreed with the recommendation of the Delegation of the United States of America that the Coordinating Committee should express its strong view on this issue.

102. The Delegation of Australia supported the interventions made by the Delegations of the United States of America and Canada and stressed the importance of Codex adhering to the principle of a rules-based approach to the development of standards and guidelines. The Delegate concurred with the view that the Coordinating Committee for North America and the South West Pacific should make a strong statement on the need for Codex to follow the rules and procedures in its deliberations on Parmesan cheese and supported the suggestion put forward by the Delegation of Canada of a similar statement being made in respect of the work being undertaken in the Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products on sardines.

103. The Delegation of New Zealand, in supporting the comments of the delegations of United States of America, Canada and Australia, pointed out that the Parmesan issue raised some broader issues of principles for Codex. The Delegate noted that it was essential that Codex, as a rules-based organization, adheres to its rules and procedures for decision making.

104. The Delegation of Samoa, in supporting the comments made by the other delegations, agreed to the elaboration of a new standard for Parmesan cheese and to the adoption of the amendments to the Codex Standard for Canned Sardines and Sardine-Type Products.

105. In acknowledging the above issues, the Committee emphasized that Codex, as a rules-based organization, should adhere to its established criteria, rules and procedures. Therefore, the Committee supported the development of a new Standard on Parmesan cheese and encouraged the Commission to adopt the amendment of the Codex Standard for Canned Sardines and Sardine-Type Products.

#### ***Amendment to the Codex Standard for Sweet Cassava; Cyanide in Cassava<sup>16</sup>***

106. The Delegations of Fiji and Tonga introduced this item. The Committee noted that the Codex Standard for Sweet Cassava, adopted by the Commission in July 2003, defined sweet cassava as having a hydrogen cyanide content of less than 50 mg/kg fresh weight, thus excluding the varieties of cassava grown in Fiji and in other Pacific Islands, which had a hydrogen cyanide content higher than 50 mg/kg and have been consumed regularly for many years by a large segment of the population. The Coordinating Committee was informed that there had been no cases of adverse health effects reported in Fiji and Tonga associated with the consumption of these cassava varieties due to their cyanide content. It was also noted that the exportation of cassava to Australia, New Zealand and United States of America had been an important source of income for the Pacific Island Countries for many years and that the application of the current Codex Standard for Sweet Cassava could result in important economic losses for the Pacific Island Countries. Therefore, the two Delegations requested the support of the Committee for the amendment of the Codex Standard for Sweet Cassava to allow for the inclusion of the Pacific varieties of sweet cassava with levels of hydrogen cyanide higher than 50 mg/kg.

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<sup>16</sup> CRD 3 (Fiji) and CRD 4 (Tonga).

107. The Committee recalled the new procedures for the submission of proposal for new work<sup>17</sup>, adopted by the 27<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission, which required that proposals for new /revision work, be submitted in the form of a project document. It further noted that the next Session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables was scheduled in Mexico City from 16 to 20 May 2005.

108. Clarification on the scientific basis for the determination of the maximum level of hydrogen cyanide content in the Codex Standard was requested and it was enquired whether this level had been determined taking into account the levels of hydrogen cyanide in varieties of cassava grown in the Pacific. It was noted that these data were contained in CRD 3 and CRD 4.

109. The Coordinating Committee recommended that the Delegations of Fiji and Tonga should present the proposal for the amendment of the Codex Standard on Sweet Cassava to the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables. It was also suggested that prior to presenting the proposal to the Committee, the scientific data used for the determination of the hydrogen cyanide content in the current Codex Standard for Sweet Cassava should be verified and the scientific justifications for proposing a new value provided.

#### ***Codex Standard for Kava***<sup>18</sup>

110. The Delegation of Fiji presented a proposal for the development of a Codex Standard for Kava, which was supported by some Countries of the region. In noting that kava was an important commodity for the Pacific Island Countries, the Committee recommended that the proposal be submitted to the appropriate Committee, according to the new Codex procedures for the submission of new work. It was noted that the determination of whether kava was considered a “food” or “dietary supplement” would guide the selection of the appropriate Committee.

#### ***Mercury in Fish***<sup>19</sup>

111. The Delegation of Fiji informed the Committee of the results of a study, which aimed at measuring the total mercury content in several types of seafood, commonly consumed in the Fiji Islands, including various coastal and pelagic fish species, shellfish, and canned fish, in view of determining the presence of a significant health risk related to mercury arising from fish consumption.

112. Although a limited amount of analysis was conducted on some fish species, the study showed that there was a clear health risk, particularly to pregnant women, from consuming relatively small quantities (<1 – 2 portions per week) of a number of large fish species. However, more data on mercury levels in the larger species of fish and human body mercury levels were needed to better assess the health risk.

113. The Codex Secretariat informed the Coordinating Committee that JECFA had recently concluded a re-evaluation of methylmercury in fish and that the 36<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants had established a working group, under the leadership of the European Community, to prepare a discussion paper on the possible need to revise the Codex Guideline Level for Methylmercury in fish, including the examination of other possible management options for circulation, comments and consideration at its 37<sup>th</sup> Session<sup>20</sup> (the Hague, the Netherlands, 25-29 April 2005). It was recommended that Fiji should contribute its study for the preparation of the working document and by joining the working group mentioned above.

114. Several Delegations expressed their support for the paper presented by Fiji and encouraged the countries in the Region to join the study by providing data available in their countries.

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<sup>17</sup> ALINORM 04/27/41, para. 13 and Appendix II.

<sup>18</sup> CRD 3 (Fiji).

<sup>19</sup> CRD 3 (Fiji).

<sup>20</sup> ALINORM 04/27/12, para. 218.

***Cadmium Levels in Dalo/Taro***<sup>21</sup>.

115. The Delegation of Fiji, in introducing this item, informed the Delegates of a study carried out following the detection of a content of cadmium higher than 0.1 mg/kg in a consignment of dalo/taro to Australia. The study recommended that a Codex maximum level for cadmium in dalo/taro be established in the light of scientific evidence.

116. The Codex Secretariat informed the Committee that the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants was considering maximum levels for cadmium in various commodities, including a maximum level for cadmium of 0.1 mg/kg in stem and root vegetables. The maximum level for cadmium in root vegetables had been adopted at Step 5 by the 27<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission. The Committee was also informed that cadmium was in the list of contaminants to be considered by the 64<sup>th</sup> meeting of JECFA (Rome, Italy, 9-17 February 2005) and that, although the call for data was already expired, the JECFA Secretariats could consider additional data if they were submitted not later than the end of October 2004.

**DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE (Agenda Item 11)**

117. The Coordinating Committee was informed that arrangements for the next Session would be communicated to Members following the appointment of the Coordinator by the 28<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

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<sup>21</sup> CRD 3 (Fiji).

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## Appendix II

**STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE CCNASWP  
2004 - 2007****INTRODUCTION**

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

**GOAL**

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

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

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

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

**Rationale:**

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

**Implementation:**

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

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

**Rationale:**

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

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

Implementation:

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

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

Rationale:

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

Implementation:

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

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

Rationale:

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

Implementation:

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

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

Rationale:

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

Implementation:

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

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

Rationale:

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

Implementation:

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