



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

39th Session

FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy, 27 June - 1 July 2016

VISA ISSUE FOR ATTENDANCE AT CODEX MEETINGS

Background

This subject was proposed by Cameroon and flagged under “Other Business (Agenda Item 13)” during CAC38, but it was not discussed due to time constraints. The Commission noted that this agenda item could be discussed at the next session and that CCEXEC70 had provided guidance on some follow-up action that could be taken before CAC39 on some relevant items.

In preparation of the 39th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the Codex Secretariat requested information on visa issuance problems that Members might have encountered while attending Codex Meetings. A message was sent to the Codex Contact Points, responsible for the registration of delegates, asking for notification on any experienced problems regarding visa issuance that have made regular participation to Codex Meetings difficult or impossible in the last five years.

Ten replies from CCPs¹ were received by the Codex Secretariat, five from host countries and five from participant countries. Overall the number of replies received is too low to draw conclusions on the magnitude of the issue.

Survey results and discussion

Among the replies, the recurrent issue faced by the delegates seems to be the inexistence on their national territory of an embassy of the country hosting the Codex meeting. As the visa application requires candidates to get in contact with the host country embassies, delegates usually have to communicate with or physically present themselves at the consular offices of the host government in another country in the region. This process is costly, time-consuming and may present logistical challenges

Several replies also indicated that there are often considerable delays in the issuance of visas from some host countries. In relation to this, one host country replied that delegates often request visa assistance too close to the meetings, and as the visa application process can take considerable time, may not receive the visa before the meeting. To prevent this from happening, delegates must ensure they are allocating enough time when submitting the visa application.

Recommendation

The Commission is invited to take note of this matter and consider the possibility to appeal to host countries to grant visas on arrival at the airport to delegates from countries where there is no diplomatic representation of the meeting host.

It is also important that appropriate host government departments upon request promptly provide delegates with visa facilitation letters to assist them in the visa application process.

¹ Australia, Burundi, Canada, Czech Republic, Greece, Guyana, the Netherlands, Norway, Paraguay and United Kingdom.