

codex alimentarius commission

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD HEALTH
ORGANIZATION

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Eighteenth Session
Geneva, 3-14 July 1989

REPORT OF THE THIRTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION WHO, Geneva, 4-8 July 1988

INTRODUCTION

1. The Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission held its thirty-fifth session at WHO Headquarters, Geneva, from 4 to 8 July 1988. The Executive Committee was presided over by the Chairman of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, Dr E.R. Méndez (Mexico) in the presence of two of its three Vice-Chairmen, Dr N.W. Tape (Canada) and Prof. F.G. Winarno (Indonesia). Representatives from the geographic locations were present: Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, and South-West Pacific. Present as observers were the Coordinators for Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean. A complete list of participants, including the secretariat, is given in Appendix I.

OPENING ADDRESS

2. The session was opened by Dr B.J. Cooper, Acting Assistant Director-General, WHO, who welcomed the members of the Executive Committee on behalf of the Directors-General of FAO and WHO.

3. Dr Cooper pointed to the constantly increasing participation of developing countries in the work of the Commission and felt it noteworthy that, for the first time in the 26 years of the Commission, a chairman from a developing country had been elected. Dr Cooper reminded the Committee that the World Health Assembly recognized the importance of the contribution made by the Commission to WHO's social goal of Health for All by the Year 2000 by helping to improve the safety and nutritional quality of the food supply and by facilitating trade in food. He felt, however, that more efforts were needed by Member States to fully utilize the recommendations of the Commission for the promotion of food safety and the international food trade. He assured the Committee of the continuous support by the two parent Organizations, in spite of the financial difficulties which they were facing at present. In this context, Dr Cooper referred to several recent technical activities within FAO and WHO outside their normal involvement with the Commission, which, nevertheless, were of immediate benefit to the work of the Commission. These activities related to the radionuclide contamination of the food, the contamination of food with *Listeria* organisms and the health surveillance of food handling personnel.

4. The Chairman, in reply, expressed his appreciation of the strong support of FAO and WHO to the Programme, and the assurance that the activities of the Codex Alimentarius Commission would be maintained. He noted the importance of the Commission's work to its 133 member countries, more than two-thirds of which were developing countries which depended greatly on its recommendations. He called upon FAO and WHO to strengthen their contacts, through their regional and representative offices in developing countries, with the different ministries responsible for the application of Codex standards, especially in countries which have, to date, not participated actively in the work of the Commission. The Chairman also referred to the interest shown by GATT in Codex standards, as being important elements in facilitating international trade. He called for better procedures which would encourage and speed-up the number of acceptances, and emphasized the need to use the resources of the Joint Programme wisely and well.

5. Finally, he noted that for the first time, a Codex Committee had been established and hosted by a developing country, which emphasized the importance of the Programme to producer and exporting countries particularly.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Item 1)

6. The Executive Committee adopted the Provisional Agenda for the session (CX/EXEC 88/35/1 and Addendum).

REPORT ON THE ACCOUNTS OF THE JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME 1986/87, AND THE APPROVED BUDGET FOR 1988/89 (Item 2)

7. The Executive Committee had before it document CX/EXEC 88/35/2 which was introduced by the Secretariat. Concerning the accounts for 1986/87, the Executive Committee noted the total expenditure of US\$ 3 405 700, as against a budgeted figure of US\$ 3 128 000. This additional expenditure had been covered in part by the use of accumulated funds remaining as surplus from previous biennia (US\$ 73 500), and by an extraordinary contribution from FAO amounting to US\$ 204 500, which reflected the high priority accorded by FAO to the Food Standards Programme.

8. Regarding the budget for 1988/89, the Executive Committee noted that it had been maintained at the same level, in real terms, as in previous biennia. The Executive Committee supported the sentiments of the Representative for Latin America and the Caribbean in expressing the gratitude of the member countries of the Region for the continued support given by FAO and WHO to the work of the Commission so that its activities would be properly maintained.

9. The Executive Committee expressed its concern that increased costs associated with the translation, printing and distribution of documents would have on the Programme. It drew attention for the need to review the expenditures of the Programme and to optimize the use of resources. It was suggested that the increased use of word processor facilities by host governments for preparing draft reports would result in improved efficiencies. Also, arrangements for hosting the FAO/WHO Committee of Government Experts on the Code of Principles Concerning Milk and Milk Products should be examined, rather than convening the meetings of this Committee exclusively at the expense of the Codex budget.

10. The Executive Committee also noted that over the years the Programme had accepted greater and greater responsibilities, especially in regard to the preparation, translation and distribution of working papers and reports. The Executive Committee instructed the Secretariat to discuss with each host country as to how the Rules governing the arrangements for hosting Codex Committees could be more uniformly applied and how savings to the Codex budget could be made. The need for the timely distribution of documents by host governments was also stressed.

REPORT ON THE TWENTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE FAO CONFERENCE AND OTHER MATTERS ARISING FROM FAO AND WHO RELATED TO THE WORK OF THE COMMISSION (Item 3)

11. The Committee was informed of the strong support given by the November 1988 FAO Conference to the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the FAO/WHO work on food control programmes, food irradiation, and food contamination with radionuclides. The Committee was also informed of FAO and WHO work on food quality and safety carried out since the 17th Session of the Commission in June-July 1981, including work on food additives, pesticide residues, mycotoxins, health requirements for food handling personnel, food borne listeriosis, and certain aspects of primary health care. In response to specific comments and questions by members of the Executive Committee, the Session was informed of progress of work on specific contaminants such as tin, on general advisory lists for food additives, and activities to strengthen food control capabilities of developing countries so that Codex work could be more effectively utilized.

12. The Executive Committee observed, that despite current economic problems, that Codex and FAO/WHO advice on a large number of food control matters was constantly sought and highly regarded. It congratulated the Organizations on their work in this area. In summarizing the discussions, the Chairman called particularly on the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene to examine current codes of hygienic practices to determine if revisions were needed based on the recent WHO report on Health Surveillance and Management Procedures for Food Handling Personnel.

REVISED PUBLICATION OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS (Item 4)

13. The Executive Committee had before it document CX/EXEC 88/35/3 which drew attention to the need to prepare a revised publication of the Codex Alimentarius in view of the many recent amendments to many of the Codex Standards, and the adoption of certain texts, such as the Revised General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods, which required a general re-printing of all existing standards. The Executive Committee endorsed the secretariat's proposals relating to the contents of the revised volumes of the Codex Alimentarius, and drew attention to the need to improve the usability and accessibility of Codex documents.

14. In regard to the format, or presentation, of such a revised publication, the Executive Committee stated that if frequent revisions to the Codex Alimentarius were foreseen, then a loose-leaf system of publication would be essential. If amendments were to be on a biennial basis, for example, following each session of the Commission, then bound volumes with regular supplements would be acceptable. The Executive Committee requested the secretariat to examine the various merits of both systems, and the advantages of publishing in A-4 size rather than A-5.

15. The Executive Committee endorsed the proposal of the Representative of North America that a careful study should be made of the transfer of the Codex Alimentarius in machine-readable form, and proposed that an informal meeting of invited experts knowledgeable in the storage, maintenance and retrieval of electronic data should be convened, in conjunction with a future Codex session, to make recommendations on the technical aspects of this. The Executive Committee stressed the need for such a system to be accessible to all users without the need for unusually sophisticated hardware or software requirements.

16. It was pointed out that the distribution arrangements for the new Codex Alimentarius should ensure that the current free distribution to Codex Contact Points would be maintained, although it was further agreed that Contact Points which currently receive a very large number of documents should be requested to review their requirements.

17. In reference to the distribution of working documents, the Representative of the Region of Latin America and the Caribbean drew attention to the problem of the late arrival of many documents, and that because of this it was difficult for delegations to prepare themselves properly. The Committee asked the Secretariat to make all efforts to ensure that host governments responsible for the preparation and distribution of documents were aware of the problems that the late arrival of documents caused to most countries, and request them to take steps to minimize these problems in the future.

**PROPOSALS FOR ACTION BY THE COMMISSION IN RELATION TO RADIONUCLIDE
CONTAMINATION OF FOODS (Item 5)**

18. The Secretariat provided an introduction to this item, including a summary of the salient points of CX/EXEC 88/35/4, the paper prepared by FAO, WHO and IAEA at an intersecretariat meeting held in Rome from 9-11 March, 1988. It was pointed out that the paper made specific FAO/WHO recommendations for use in control of accidental radionuclide contamination in foods moving in international trade. The Secretariat pointed out that the contamination levels recommended were intended to be uniform, simple to use, and were based on conservative assumptions which were applied to existing ICRP WHO and IAEA radiation safety recommendations. In addition to the information provided in the CX/EXEC 88/35/4, summary comments were given on the health-related approaches for monitoring and control of actual intake of radionuclides in foods which were recommended by WHO on the basis of its September 1987 Expert Consultation on this matter. The Executive Committee noted that the approaches proposed in CX/EXEC 88/35/4 for controlling radionuclide contamination in foods in international trade and the health related approaches recommended by WHO were fully complementary. Implemented, these approaches would enable countries to exercise adequate control of radionuclide contamination of foods moving in trade, and in addition would also enable national food control health authorities to monitor and control actual levels of radionuclide contamination in foods for specific population groups.

19. The Executive Committee requested clarification on a number of points concerning document CX/EXEC 88/35/40, and at the same time it supported the need for unambiguous approaches which should be used by food control, customs and other regulatory personal to control of radionuclide

contamination of foods moving in trade. Following responses to specific points, the Executive Committee discussed further approaches to obtaining final agreement by the Commission, on the levels of radionuclide contamination recommended in CX/EXEC 88/35/4, and decided that further Codex review of the matter was needed by the Codex Committee for Food Additives and Contaminants in early 1989 before final consideration by the 18th Session of the CAC. Some Executive Committee members requested further amplification of specific points in CX/EXEC 88/35/4, while others expressed reservations about acceptance of the recommended FAO/WHO levels by all countries of the region which they represented. The Committee acknowledged that the recommended levels were above background levels, but were safe based on the advice of radiation protection and safety experts, and if accepted would lead to reasonable Codex limits.

20. The Executive Committee decided to request the FAO/WHO Secretariat to revise CX/EXEC 88/35/4 to include further explanatory material on the basis for the recommended levels; to send the revised paper to Codex Contact Points for further comments; to refer the revised paper and comments to the CCFAC for review by an ad hoc working group of government representatives if necessary; and to refer the revised paper, comments and CCFAC report to the 18th Session of the CAC in July 1989 for final review and acceptance.

STATUS OF CODEX REGIONAL STANDARDS AND THEIR APPLICATION (Item 6)

21. The Secretariat introduced document CX/EXEC 88/35/5, which had been prepared in response to the Commission's decision to refer problems relating to regional standards to the Executive Committee and the Committee on General Principles.

22. The Executive Committee noted that the elaboration of regional standards for products which are traded internationally did not seem to enhance their acceptance by the countries of the region for which the standards were developed. It was further noted that current trends in international trade, the impact of tourism and immigration, had broken down regional barriers and that therefore regionally elaborated Codex standards could be applied outside the region for which they were intended. However, because they would usually require modification, to meet the requirements of other regions, they should be developed in the first place as world-wide standards.

23. The Executive Committee was strongly of the opinion that regional standards should not be developed for commodities moving in international trade, as this would have the potential of creating barriers to trade. Several members recommended that the Commission should not develop regional standards in any case, however, the Committee agreed that if sufficient justification could be made for elaborating regional standards for products moving exclusively in intra-regional trade, there should be provisions for this under exceptional conditions. The Executive Committee further recommended that the role of Coordinating Committees in identifying products of interest to the region for which world-wide standards could be elaborated, be re-endorsed and more vigorously applied. Because this would have an impact on the Rules and on the functions of existing Committees, especially in relation to the Terms of Reference of the Coordinating Committee for Europe, the Executive Committee decided to refer the matter of regional standards to the Committee on General Principles, including the status of existing regional standards.

24. The Representative of the South West Pacific drew attention to Rule VI.3, which, he stated, no longer reflected the current policy of the Commission and regretted that, for practical reasons, it was not possible to amend this Rule. The Representative of the Legal Council of FAO stated that the recent statements of the Commission, at its 16th and 17th Sessions, affirmed the Commission's ultimate authority in determining its programme of work.

ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW REGIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEES (Item 7)

25. The Executive Committee had before it document CX/EXEC 88/35/6, prepared by the Secretariat in response to the request of the delegation of the United States at the 17th Session of the Commission to explore the formation of a new Coordinating Committee for the region of North America. It, taking into account the fact that six member countries of the Commission were not currently members of any Coordinating Committee, instructed the Secretariat to contact the countries concerned to determine whether or not they would concur with the establishment of one or two new Coordinating Committees for the Regions of North America and the South West Pacific, or a single, combined Committee covering both Regions, or, alternatively maintaining the current situation. Depending on the replies received, the Secretariat was further instructed to provide a statement to the Eighteenth Session of the Commission on the administrative and financial implications of the establishment of such new subsidiary bodies, in accordance with Rule IX.9.

26. The Coordinator for Asia (Prof. F.G. Winarno) drew attention to the recommendations of the Coordinating Committee for Asia, in relation to strengthening the input from West-Asian countries in the work of the Coordinating Committee and the Commission, and stated that the Coordinating Committee did not believe that the establishment of a new coordinating Committee for these countries was warranted.

REVIEW OF INTER-COMMITTEE REFERRAL PROCEDURES AND POSSIBLE CHANGES TO THE PROCEDURAL MANUAL (Item 8)

27. The Executive Committee had for its consideration document CX/EXEC 88/35/7 prepared by the Secretariat with substantial input from the Canadian Secretariat of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling, in response to the Committee's request, at its 34th Session (1987), that proposals for a possible revision of endorsement procedures by Codex Committees, be prepared. The paper examined the endorsement responsibilities of all of the relevant Codex Committees, and concluded that many of the problems encountered by these Committees were procedural, and were due to the unnecessary complexity and repetitiveness of some sections of Codex Standards, especially those related to labelling.

28. The Executive Committee expressed its appreciation to the Secretariat of the Committee on Food Labelling and to the Codex Secretariat for the present paper, which it fully endorsed. It especially recognized the importance of the revised General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods as a key point of reference for all Codex standards and recommended that exemptions, or other special requirements in relation to labelling which deviated from the General Standard, should be restricted as much as possible.

29. The Executive Committee noted that this problem was not confined to the work of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling, and recommended that the following approaches be adopted by the Commission and the relevant Committees, to reduce the burden of the formal endorsement procedure:

- (a) incorporate, by reference, the general texts adopted by the Commission in relation to food labelling and food hygiene into Codex Standards, and consider only requests for exemptions or exclusions on an ad hoc basis;
- (b) establish comprehensive, general texts which also could be incorporated by reference in other areas, in preference to endorsing provisions on an individual basis;
- (c) make exclusions or exemptions to the general requirements only where adequately justified.

30. It was noted that these recommendations might require amendments to the Procedural Manual, in the Guidelines for Codex Committees and elsewhere. It was further noted that the extensive use of reference to general texts could lead, in the extreme, to difficulties in understanding and applying Codex Standards, instead of simplifying them, and cautioned against this.

FORMAL ADOPTION, BY THE COMMISSION, OF REPORTS OF ITS SUBSIDIARY BODIES
(Item 9)

31. The Executive Committee had before it document CX/EXEC 88/35/8 which had been prepared by the Secretariat, in response to the Commission's decision at its 17th session to refer the question raised by the delegations of Norway and the United Kingdom to the Executive Committee.

32. The Executive Committee agreed that the formal adoption of reports of its subsidiary bodies by the Commission was unnecessary. It noted that the views, conclusions and recommendations of the Commission's subsidiary bodies did not constitute the views of the Commission itself until they were specifically endorsed by the Commission, and in order to ensure that the Commission would be aware of all matters requiring its attention recommended that a list of all decisions and recommendations made by the subsidiary body should be appended to its report in summary form, in addition to the "Summary Status of Work".

33. Furthermore, the Executive Committee stated that additional efforts were needed to ensure that the Commission would be able to exercise more oversight on the elaboration of guidelines and other texts of a non-mandatory nature outside the Step Procedure. It recommended that, in future, such texts should follow the Step Procedure, unless justification could be provided for not doing so.

34. In any case, the Commission should be fully informed of the progress of all such work, and its approval for undertaking the work should be obtained at an early stage. Finally, it agreed that conclusions or recommendations which Committees wished to address to either FAO, WHO or to member governments, should be subject to the Commission's review and endorsement. Other views which might be expressed by subsidiary bodies would not normally need to be endorsed.

RELATION WITH THE GATT COMMITTEE ON TECHNICAL BARRIERS TO TRADE (Item 10)

35. The Secretariat introduced paper CX/EXEC 88/35/9 entitled "Discussion Paper: The Relationship between the Codex Alimentarius Commission and the GATT Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade" and pointed out that there was a need to re-vitalize the existing agreement for GATT/CAC cooperation. Due to on-going GATT activities under the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade, and the new Uruguay Round on agriculture, and food-related trade negotiations, strengthening of GATT/CAC cooperation and contacts was needed to assure adequate levels of cooperation and to avoid duplication of efforts. The Secretariat called attention to the sections of paper CX/EXEC 88/35/9 which gave information on the roles of CAC and GATT on creation of food standards, notification of acceptance (CAC), examination of procedures for the implementation of standards, notification of approved standards and changes in national regulations, and procedures relating to the settlement of disputes (GATT). Attention was called to the recommendations contained in paper CX/EXEC 88/35/9 for consideration of the CAC Executive Committee.

36. At the invitation of the Executive Committee, GATT Secretariat representatives attended the discussions on this agenda item and provided additional information on GATT activities. Mr J. Magalhaes of the GATT Agriculture Division discussed current GATT Uruguay Round activities to harmonize sanitary and phyto-sanitary regulations governing international trade in food and agriculture. Mrs V. Kulacoglu provided information on implementation of the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade, which had been in effect for over eight years. The Uruguay Round discussions, among other things, were designed to minimize sanitary and phyto-sanitary barriers to trade, taking into account existing international agreements, and might require the creation of a GATT technical group to discuss specific matters in this area. If such a technical group were created, it was anticipated that international organizations such as FAO and WHO would be invited to participate as observers. The GATT representatives expressed the desire to avoid duplication between GATT and CAC work, but, at the same time, to assure the best possible utilization of Codex work in GATT activities. With regard to implementation of the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade, mention was made of efforts to increase transparency of national regulatory procedures, to harmonize testing and inspection procedures, acceptance of test data, and rules on processing of products. It was pointed out that a good CAC/GATT relationship already existed and information from the Commission was currently included in the biennial publication of notifications relative to the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade. The GATT Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade regularly sent invitations to FAO, WHO, ISO, IEC, CAC and other international organizations to attend meetings as observers and to submit appropriate information to GATT.

37. In discussing this agenda item, the Executive Committee expressed its pleasure that GATT Secretariat members could attend the Session and thanked the GATT representatives for the information provided. Members of the Executive Committee called attention to the need for more uniform awareness and intra-governmental discussions in all countries to assure coordination at the national level of CAC and GATT food standards activities. In this context, the Executive Committee was informed that the United States had tabled a harmonization proposal in the current Round of GATT which proposed the elimination of potential trade barriers by urging all nations to accept

Codex Alimentarius, International Plant Protection Convention and Office international des Epizooties standards by the year 2000. The Executive Committee emphasized that the inclusion of CAC standards and codes of practice in GATT agreements would be of great assistance in promoting international trade of foods and minimize current problems of different national regulations which caused technical barriers to food trade. The Executive Committee agreed that the current Uruguay Round discussions, in particular, presented an excellent opportunity for promoting more rapid and uniform acceptance of CAC work and urged strengthened collaboration and cooperation between CAC and GATT. The Executive Committee requested FAO and WHO to ensure that invitations would continue to be extended to GATT for participation in future meetings of the CAC and its subsidiary bodies, particularly in the 18th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission scheduled for 3-14 July 1989 in Geneva. The Executive Committee strongly endorsed the recommendations of CX/EXEC 88/35/9 with the exception of recommendation 3) which it believed should be further examined at a later date if necessary.

MATTERS ARISING FROM CODEX COMMITTEES (Item 11)

Codex Coordinating Committee for Asia

38. The Coordinator for Asia (Prof. F.G. Winarno) provided a brief summary of the matters referred to the Executive Committee by the Sixth Session of the Coordinating Committee. He noted that the question of updating the earlier Advisory List of Food Additives in Soft Drinks, which had been supported by the Committee, would now not need to be re-discussed, in view of developments within the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants to examine the possibility of preparing a general standard for the use of food additives, which would cover all foods.

39. In relation to the proposal of the Committee to elaborate a world-wide standard for coffee, the Executive Committee noted the opinions of the Representatives for the regions of Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America, that standards for coffee were currently being handled by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), and that it was essential to clarify that there would be no duplication of effort. The Executive Committee requested the Secretariat to contact the secretariat of ISO to determine whether or not the standards being elaborated would meet the needs of the member countries of the Commission, particularly in regard to the effect such standards would have on international trade, and to ensure the coordination of efforts.

40. The Executive Committee approved the initiation of the amendment procedure for the Standards for Palm Oil and Palm Kernel Oil, as recommended by the Coordinating Committee, and asked the UK Secretariat of the Committee on Fats and Oils to take appropriate action.

41. In regard to the elaboration of standards for Palm Olein and Palm Stearin, as proposed by the Coordinating Committee, the Executive Committee took note of the justification provided by the Government of Malaysia, but requested the Secretariat of the UK Committee on Fats and Oils to determine whether or not these products were already covered by the General Standard for Fats and Oils. If, in the opinion of the UK Secretariat, these products were not covered, it was agreed that the elaboration procedure should be initiated, subject to the review of the Commission at its next session.

42. With reference to the question of the labelling of processed foods containing fats and oils, it was agreed that adequate guidance was given by the Codex General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods. Nevertheless, the Executive Committee agreed that there were unresolved questions in relation to the labelling of vegetable oils, and that these were mainly related to nutrition. It therefore requested the Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses to study this question, and to refer any specific recommendations for action to the Committee on Food Labelling.

Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants, and Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products

43. The Executive Committee noted the opinions of both Committees in relation to the establishment of guideline levels for mercury or methyl mercury in fish. It also noted the recommendation of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives that efforts should continue to minimize human exposure to methylmercury. The Executive Committee agreed that work on guideline levels should be continued, and authorized the Secretariat to request comments at Step 3 on guideline levels for methylmercury, which would be elaborated within the framework of the Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants.

44. The Representative of the Region of Latin America and the Caribbean drew attention to opinions expressed by several countries of the region that the lists of food additives in some foods were too extensive, and were creating difficulties in relation to acceptance.

Codex Committee on Food Hygiene

45. The Executive Committee approved the further elaboration of the Guideline Procedures to Establish Causes of Microbiological Spoilage in Canned Foods, through the Codex Step Procedure.

46. The Executive Committee further agreed that comments should be sought or Step 3 on the "Proposed Draft (Code/Guidelines) of Hygienic Practice for Raw Milk Preservation by Use of the Lactoperoxidase System, where Refrigeration is Virtually Impossible". It recommended that the comments should be examined by the 24th Session of the Committee on Food Hygiene in October 1989, and that the Milk Committee would review the subsequently-revised draft Code (May, 1990). If there were no major disagreements, the Code could be finally reviewed by the 25th session of the Committee on Food Hygiene (March 1991) and brought to the 19th Session of the Commission for adoption (mid 1991).

Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues

47. The Executive Committee endorsed the opinion of the Committee that it was timely to re-examine the various forms of acceptance for maximum residue limits for pesticides, and referred this matter to the Committee on General Principles. It also noted, with approval, the distribution of a questionnaire to ascertain the reasons why a number of Codes MRL's were unacceptable.

48. In response to the request of the Committee to include the FAO/WHO "Guidelines for Predicting Potential Dietary Exposure to Pesticide

Residues", in the Codex Guide to Pesticide Residues, the Executive Committee noted that these had been prepared by an Expert Consultation under the Joint FAO/WHO Food Contamination Monitoring Programme. It was of the opinion that re-publication of the Guidelines as a Codex document would be an unnecessary duplication of work. It expressed appreciation to the Monitoring Programme for this work, and asked that the Guidelines be diffused as widely as possible. It noted that documents from Expert meetings such as JECFA or JMPR were very useful to Codex, but that they were not normally re-published by the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme.

49. The Executive Committee noted a request from the Chairman of the Committee on Pesticide Residues concerning the publication of the Revised Codex Classification of Foods and Animal Foods. Referring to its earlier discussions concerning the elaboration and publication of texts of a non-mandatory nature (see para 33 above), it agreed that this matter should be dealt with by the Commission.

Joint ECE/Codex Alimentarius Group of Experts on Standardization of Fruit Juices

50. The Executive Committee noted that the Group of Experts was elaborating Guidelines for the labelling and composition of mixed fruit juices and mixed fruit nectars, and referred to its early statements concerning the elaboration of texts of a non-mandatory nature outside the Step Procedure (see para. 33 above).

DRAFT PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE EIGHTEENTH SESSION OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION (Item 12)

51. The Executive Committee endorsed the Secretariat's proposals as contained in document CX/EXEC 88/35/11. It noted that some of the matters listed as sub-items would need to be amended as Codex Committees met and finalised draft standards and other texts. On the basis of discussions on the impact of biotechnology on international food standards and codes of practice (see below, para 60), it was agreed to include this matter on the Provisional Agenda, as well.

Other Business

a) Draft Manual on Policy Decisions

52. The Executive Committee had before it document CX/EXEC 58/35/12, prepared by Canada in response to the request of the Commission at its 17th Session to prepare a summary of policy decisions taken over the last 25 years (ALINORM 87/39, Para 114). It expressed its appreciation of the work done, and noted the opinion of Canada that the Manual should be distributed following review by the Executive Committee. However, the Executive Committee, noting the decision of the Commission to refer this matter to the Committee on General Principles, recommended that the draft Manual should be up-dated to include the decisions of the recent sessions of the Commission, and sent for comments in a limited distribution to Codex Contact Points and Chairmen of Codex Committees, prior to consideration by the Committee on General Principles.

b) Benefits and trade implications relating to the acceptance of Codex Standards and MRL's.

53. The Representative of the Region of Asia drew attention to the report of the Codex Coordinating Committee for Asia (ALINORM 89/15, Paras 107 to 109) which referred to this matter. The Executive Committee endorsed the proposal of the Committee to distribute a questionnaire requesting the views of governments as to the benefit and trade implications of the acceptance of Codex Standards. The Secretariat proposed that a discussion by national experts from the region, within the framework of a Seminar in association with the next session of the Coordinating Committee, would be useful. This proposal was accepted, in principle, and it was agreed that a working paper based on replies to the questionnaire, and other relevant material should be made available for such a Seminar. The Representative of Latin America and the Caribbean requested that the results of the questionnaire, when finalized, be made available to the other Coordinating Committees as well, for their information.

54. The Representative of Latin America and the Caribbean also noted that a similar seminar was being organized in conjunction with the next session of the Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean, on the Inspection and Certification of Foods for Import and Export which would include a special discussion on pesticide residues.

c) Progress Report on Promotion of the Codex Alimentarius

55. The Executive Committee received an oral report from the secretariat on the promotion of the Codex Alimentarius through the distribution of the information booklet "Introducing Codex Alimentarius" and other promotional material prepared by FAO and WHO. It expressed its satisfaction at the efforts being made to promote the work and the image of the Commission.

d) Consideration of the Elaboration of Guidelines for Food Irradiation

56. Dr N. Tape introduced Conference Room Document No. 2, prepared by the secretariat of the International Consultative Group on Food Irradiation, of which he was also the Chairman, on the above subject. The Group had requested its secretariat to approach the Executive Committee with a view to obtaining approval to introduce series of draft provisional guidelines into the Codex system, with the final aim of having them published as part of the Codex Alimentarius.

57. The Executive Committee noted that there was interest in some countries in developing recommendations in relation to food irradiation through Codex Contact Points. It was also noted that a major FAO/WHO/IAEA/ITC (UNCTAD-GATT) Conference on the Acceptance, Control of and Trade in Irradiated Food would be held in Geneva in December 1988 which should provide guidance for the direction of future activities in this area. Several Codex Contact Points were also the national points of coordination for the Conference.

58. The Representative of Latin America and the Caribbean expressed the support of some countries of the Region for the development of the guidelines. However, the Executive Committee noted the concerns expressed by Representatives of Europe and the South-West Pacific in proceeding too

rapidly in an area which did not have strong consumer support. The Representative of North America also questioned what the status of the existing Codex Standard and Code would be in relation to the guidelines, and whether amendments to them would be needed. The Executive Committee recommended that the Commission should await the conclusions of the above-mentioned Conference before taking any decision in relation to the draft Guidelines. It proposed that the draft Guidelines should be made available by the secretariat of ICGFI to governments for their information. The Executive Committee agreed to reconsider this subject at its next session, based on the results of the December 1988 Conference.

e) Implications of Biotechnology on International Food Standards and Codes of Practice

59. The Executive Committee had before it a Conference Room Document, prepared by the United States of America, on the above topic. The paper was introduced by the Representative for North America who drew attention to the fact that certain aspects of new biotechnological processes would have implications for the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. On the other hand, products of biotechnology which were deemed to be safe, and were identical with traditional foods, food ingredients or additives should not need a special designation.

60. The Executive Committee noted the paper, and also that aspects of safety of biotechnology were under evaluation by OECD. It was agreed that the general issues should be brought to the attention of the next session of the Commission, and that expert advice would be required in the preparation of a suitable working paper, by a joint expert consultation if this was considered appropriate by the Organisations.

f) Scheduling of sessions of the Codex Alimentarius Commission

61. The Executive Committee, noting the fact that the current scheduling of sessions of the Codex Alimentarius Commission in June and July meant that delegations were obliged to travel at the peak tourist season for Europe, when air fares and hotel tariffs were at their highest, requested the Secretariat to examine the possibility of scheduling future sessions with this restraint in mind. The Secretariat undertook to discuss the matter with the Conference Services Divisions of the Organizations, as other factors, such as the availability of meeting rooms and other facilities, would need to be considered.

g) Reports of Regional Activities

62. The Representative of the Region of Latin America and the Caribbean reported on the outcome of an FAO/PAHO Workshop on Food Legislation and Standardization in Latin America, which had been held in Mexico City from 25 to 29 April 1988. The Executive Committee noted the need to support programmes in relation to food standardization and control in the region; the concern of participants at the Workshop of problems created by technical barriers to the trade of products from the region on the international market, and the implications of this within GATT and the problems faced by countries of the region in relation to the application of maximum limits for pesticide residues by importing countries, which were not consistent with Codex MRL'S.

63. The Coordinator for Africa (Mr Tawfic Zaglool Murad) requested the use of the Arabic language at future sessions of the Commission and at the forthcoming session of the Coordinating Committee for Africa. The Executive Committee noted that the Rules of the Commission required the use of three of the working languages of FAO and WHO, which were English, French and Spanish, and that other languages were provided only at the expense of the countries requesting them.

35TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

GENEVA, 4-8 JULY 1988

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