

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

20th Session, Geneva, 28 June to 7 July 1993

REPORT OF THE THIRTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION
Geneva, 30 June - 3 July 1992

W/Z 9181

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION
Thirty-Ninth Session, Geneva, 30 June - 3 July 1992

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

expressed its appreciation to FAO for its continuing additional support to the budget of the Programme, and *noted* with appreciation the considerable contribution to Codex work provided by the Host Government countries for Codex Committees, and to those country delegations which contributed working papers and documents to the Codex Programme. (paragraph 9)

expressed concern that Codex would be under great pressure in the post-Uruguay Round environment to provide a greater volume of standards and other recommendations and to ensure their revision as required, so as to help facilitate international trade, and that the current budget may not be sufficient to meet this increased demand. It also proposed that provisions be made in the budget for increased efforts to promote Codex recommendations in the post-Uruguay Round environment, so as to address problems arising from the misunderstanding or misinterpretation of Codex standards and their intent. The Executive Committee *agreed* that these matters should be brought to the attention of FAO and WHO. (paragraph 10.)

recommended that a structural long-term solution be sought by the sponsoring organizations to ensure adequate funding for JECFA and JMPR meetings. (paragraph 14)

recommended that there should be appropriate coordination between the Codex Alimentarius Commission and other international organizations working in the area of food contamination monitoring. (paragraph 17)

agreed that aspects of both the sanitary and phytosanitary text and the technical barriers to trade text of the Uruguay Round should be included for discussion at the Commission's next session. (paragraph 32)

stressed that changes in the Statutes and Rules of Procedure which would be needed to allow membership of regional economic integration organizations in the Commission would have to be fair to Members of the Commission which were not member countries of these organizations, especially developing countries, and that there was a need to examine closely any proposed changes. It *requested* the Secretariat to prepare a detailed working paper for the next Session of the Codex Committee on General Principles. (paragraph 38)

rejected a proposal that Codex standards be elaborated by a system of voting by correspondence. (paragraph 40)

expressed the view that as an elected body representative of all of the Member countries of the Commission through the Regional Representatives, it was entirely appropriate that it should have the authority to advance standards at Step 5, subject to the confirmation of the Commission. (paragraph 40)

stressed that it was important to accelerate the procedure whereby standards and other recommendations would be developed, especially in response to the demands which would be placed on the Commission as a result of the completion of the Uruguay Round; *requested* the Codex Committee on General Principles to devise means to improve the procedure by which Codex texts were elaborated so as to meet these demands; and *instructed* the Secretariat to prepare a paper for the Committee on General Principles which would encourage proposals on how a "fast-track" system could be established. (paragraph 41)

recommended that composition of the Executive Committee not be changed, as it was appropriate to the needs of the Commission and the Member countries, but *recommended* that the functions of the Regional Representatives and the Regional Coordinators should be clarified. It further *recommended* that consideration should be given to amending Rule II.4.(d) so as to allow greater flexibility in cases where the Coordinators might not be able to assume the Chairmanship of the respective Regional Coordinating Committees. It was also suggested that the terms of office of the officers elected by the Commission be made uniform at four years. (paragraph 44)

recommended that a draft Medium-Term Plan be submitted to the next Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission for consideration. (paragraph 47)

did not support the inclusion of a prior informed consent clause into the Code of Ethics. (paragraph 49)

welcomed the idea that the Code of Ethics should be made more available to industry and the food trade and encouraged its use in these sectors. (paragraph 50)

agreed that it would be inappropriate to take any further action on the ISO/IEC Draft Code of Good Practice on Standardization (paragraphs 53-54)

recommended that a proposal concerning the procedure by which the Commission adopts standards based on the recommendations of scientific expert committees should be examined by the Codex Committee on General Principles at its next session, but took no position on the proposal. (paragraph 58)

requested that both the proposed draft Code of Hygienic Practice on Street Foods prepared by the Codex Regional Coordinating Committee for Asia and the WHO draft document on "Essential Safety Requirements for Street-Vended Foods" be submitted to the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene for consideration, and *requested* FAO and WHO to work closely together on this important work so as to insure optimum use of valuable resources and so as to prevent duplication of effort. (paragraph 66)

in view of the specialized nature of the trade in Halal meat and related products, and the need to protect both the producer/exporter and the consumer, *referred* the matter for consideration by the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems with a view to presenting a work proposal to the next session of the Commission. (paragraph 69)

requested FAO and WHO to seek the necessary funds so that the proposed expert consultation on sampling plans for aflatoxins may be held as soon as possible. (paragraph 71)

agreed to a proposed amendment of paragraph (a) of the Terms of Reference of the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants proposal and *recommended* that it be sent to the Commission for approval. (paragraph 72)

strongly urged the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants to concentrate on the elaboration of maximum levels for contaminants in foods moving in international trade, giving priority to those contaminants which give the greatest problem in trade, and for which it could be shown that the establishment of levels was required to protect the consumer. (paragraph 74)

expressed concern that in setting guideline levels or other limits for a wide range of naturally occurring toxins in foods, the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants may inadvertently encourage countries to create unnecessary technical barriers to trade for example by creating a need for expensive testing and certification, and *recommended* that this point be taken into consideration and that limits be established only when a health hazard was identified. (paragraph 75)

agreed to refer to the Codex Committee on General Principles a proposal to amend the Terms of Reference of the Regional Coordinating Committee for Europe. (paragraph 78)

approved the elaboration of new texts and revisions at Step 3 of the Procedure. (paragraphs 79-80)

endorsed the Draft Provisional Agenda for the 20th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, with the addition of certain items. (paragraph 81)

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

20th Session, Geneva, 28 June to 7 July 1993

REPORT OF THE THIRTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION
Geneva, 30 June - 3 July 1992

INTRODUCTION

1. The Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission held its Thirty-Ninth Session at WHO Headquarters, Geneva, from 30 June to 3 July 1992. The Executive Committee was presided over by the Chairman of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, Professor F.G. Winarno (Indonesia) in the presence of its three Vice-Chairmen; Dr. L. Crawford (USA), Dr. Pakdee Pothisiri (Thailand) and Dr. J. Race (Norway). Representatives from the following regions participated in the Session: Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, and the South-West Pacific. The Codex Coordinators for Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America and the South-West Pacific were also present at the meeting as observers. A complete list of participants is given in Appendix 1.
2. The Session was opened by Dr J. Rochon, Director, Division of Health Protection and Promotion, World Health Organization, who welcomed the participants on behalf of the Directors-General of FAO and WHO. He drew attention to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 1992, and to WHO's contribution to this conference through the WHO Commission on Health and Environment. This Commission had identified the increasing demand by the growing world population for food and other products, such as fibre and fuel, as one of the powerful driving forces for environmental change. With regard to the environmental health problems related to food production, the WHO Commission had recommended that attention needed to be paid to (i) food safety, with priority given to the elimination or reduction of food contamination by pathogens such as *Salmonellae*, *Campylobacter* and *Listeria*, and (ii) increasing the food supply by reducing post-harvest losses and by appropriate use of the potential of biotechnology for increasing the quantity, quality and safety of food. Dr Rochon felt that the Executive Committee had reason to view the recommendations of the WHO Commission on Health and Environment with pride and satisfaction because Codex had the foresight to address those issues which have now been confirmed by the WHO Commission as being important for the protection of human health.
3. Dr Rochon also referred to the ongoing negotiations of the Uruguay Round of GATT, where Codex had been cited as the international body whose recommendations should be the basis for harmonizing food safety measures for human health. In this context, he repeated WHO's viewpoint that Codex recommendations provided adequate consumer protection and the stricter standards did not necessarily offer greater health protection but may be used as non-tariff-barriers to trade.
4. The Chairman, in his reply thanking Dr. Rochon for his kind remarks, recalled that the present Session of the Executive Committee coincided approximately with the thirtieth anniversary of the establishment of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme and the creation of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. He also noted that developments in 1992 meant that for the first time in memory discussions could take place on important issues with a greater spirit of cooperation between the

developing and the industrialized countries. He drew particular attention to the efforts to improve international and regional free trade, especially through the establishment of free-trade agreements in regions such as ASEAN, North America, the Andean countries and the countries of the southern cone of Latin America. Professor Winarno also drew attention to the forthcoming International Conference on Nutrition, which he saw as a very important meeting of great importance to developing countries in many areas related to the work of Codex.

5. The Secretary of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, Mr R.J. Dawson, speaking also as Chief of the Food Quality and Standards Service of FAO, extended his best wishes to the Executive Committee for a successful session. He reported that FAO considered the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission as most important for ensuring the continued development of international trade in food, and that this was seen as particularly important for developing countries. In relation to the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, he reported that in view of the support given to environment and sustainable agricultural development a special task force had been created under the United Nations Administrative and Coordinating Committee (ACC) to develop matters including food control and integrated pest management. Mr Dawson also reported that within the preparations for the International Conference on Nutrition, top priority was being given to ensuring the continued access by all peoples to sufficient supplies of nutritious and safe foods.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Agenda Item 1)

6. The Executive Committee had before it the Provisional Agenda, CX/EXEC 92/39/1. In addition to the items included in the Provisional Agenda, the following items were raised for consideration under Other Business (Item 11):

- a. Consideration of the status of European Standards prepared by the Comité Européen de la Normalisation (CEN) in relation to Codex Standards.
- b. Consideration of the status of European Economic Community Standards in relation to Codex Standards in International Trade.
- c. Consideration of the relationship between Codex Alimentarius Commission, JECFA and JMPR, and the activities of the OECD Group on Chemicals in the Environment.
- d. Relationship between Codex and the UNECE and OECD in standards for fresh fruit and vegetables.

7. The Executive Committee adopted the Provisional Agenda as the Agenda for its Session, with the additions outlined above.

REPORT ON THE ACCOUNTS OF THE JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME FOR 1990/91, TOGETHER WITH THE APPROVED BUDGET FOR 1992/93 (Agenda Item 2)

8. Document CX/EXEC 92/39/2 was introduced by the Secretary of the Commission, Mr. R. J. Dawson. Mr Dawson drew attention to the fact that the Joint Programme budget for the biennium 1990/91 had commenced with a small surplus (\$US 42 000) carried over from the previous biennium. However, in the period under review, expenditures exceeded income in the Joint Budget by \$US 89 000, leaving a deficit at the end of the biennium. The increased expenditures were largely due to unfavourable changes in the lira/dollar exchange rate, affecting staff costs, and heavy meeting and travel costs. The Executive Committee was informed that also in

the direct FAO contribution to the Programme, over and above the cost-sharing budget with WHO and which covers the publication costs of reports and working papers prepared by the Secretariat, expenditure exceeded income. The Director-General of FAO continued to agree to provide this additional support to the Codex Programme in view of the high priority attributed to Codex in FAO.

9. The Executive Committee *expressed its appreciation* to FAO for its continuing additional support to the budget of the Programme, and felt greatly encouraged by this support. The Representative for Africa expressed the wish that additional WHO funds might be provided to support the work of Codex in developing countries. The Executive Committee also *noted* with appreciation the considerable contribution to Codex work provided by the Host Government countries for Codex Committees, and to those country delegations which contributed working papers and documents to the Codex Programme.

10. The Executive Committee, in discussing the approved budget for 1992/93, noted that the budget reflected no increase to the Programme in real terms. It *expressed concern* that Codex would be under great pressure in the post-Uruguay Round environment to provide a greater volume of standards and other recommendations and to ensure their revision as required, so as to help facilitate international trade, and that the current budget may not be sufficient to meet this increased demand. It also proposed that provisions be made in the budget for increased efforts to promote Codex recommendations in the post-Uruguay Round environment, so as to address problems arising from the misunderstanding or misinterpretation of Codex standards and their intent. The Executive Committee *agreed* that these matters should be brought to the attention of FAO and WHO.

REPORT ON MATTERS ARISING FROM FAO AND WHO RELATED TO THE WORK OF THE COMMISSION (Agenda Item 3)

A. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE 26TH FAO CONFERENCE: FAO MEMBERSHIP

11. The Committee was informed that at the 26th FAO Conference held from 9 to 28 November 1991, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania officially became members of FAO, and that Puerto Rico was admitted as an Associate Member. These countries thereby became eligible for membership in the Commission, and Latvia and Lithuania had since joined.

12. The Committee was further informed that the General Rules of FAO now provide for the membership of regional economic groupings under specific conditions, and that European Community (EC) officially became a member of FAO. Subsequently membership in the Codex Alimentarius Commission would require amendments to the current Codex Rules of Procedures (see also paras. 35 to 37).

B. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE 45TH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

13. The Committee was informed that during the 45th World Health Assembly (WHA), May 1992, the following countries were admitted as Member States of WHO: Lithuania, Latvia, Slovenia.¹ The WHA also adopted several resolutions, some of which are of interest in relation to the work of the Commission, such as:

¹ The Executive Committee was also informed that the following countries had become members of WHO by virtue of their notifications of adherence to the WHO Constitution: Armenia; Croatia; Georgia; Kirgizistan; Moldova; Tadjikistan; Uzbekistan.

- Health and Environment (WHA 45.31)
- International Programme on Chemical Safety (WHA 45.32)
- National Strategies for Overcoming Micronutrient Malnutrition (WHA 45.33)
- Infant and Young Child Nutrition (WHA 45.34)

C. REPORT ON JOINT FAO/WHO ACTIVITIES

Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives

14. The Committee was informed that two JECFA meetings had been held since the 38th session of the Executive Committee. The Thirty-ninth meeting, held in Rome, February 1992, was devoted to the toxicological evaluation of certain food additives and naturally-occurring toxicants. The Fortieth meeting, held in Geneva, June 1992, had evaluated residues of certain veterinary drugs in food and had developed an approach for evaluating veterinary drugs with long histories of use. The Forty-first meeting would be held in February 1993 and would be concerned with food additives and contaminants. The holding in 1993 of a second JECFA meeting on veterinary drug residues would depend on whether sufficient resources could be obtained for its convening. The Committee stressed the importance of JECFA work for a number of Codex Committees and other users and recalled the strong support which it had received by the March 1991 Joint FAO/WHO/GATT International Conference on Food Standards, Chemicals in Food and Food Trade, and the Nineteenth Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. It recommended that a structural long-term solution be sought by the sponsoring organizations to ensure adequate funding for JECFA meetings. The same applied to JMPR meetings (see below).

Joint FAO/WHO Meetings on Pesticides Residues (JMPR)

15. The Committee was informed that at the last meeting of the JMPR, held in September 1991, 5 new pesticides and 12 other pesticides previously considered by the expert group had been toxicologically evaluated. In addition, 27 pesticides were reviewed for residue and analytical aspects, and MRLs were estimated on a large number of food commodities.

16. The Committee was also informed that WHO had succeeded in securing the necessary extra-budgetary funds to convene a meeting of its Expert Group on Pesticide Residues in September 1992 at the same time as the FAO Panel of Experts on Pesticide Residues in Food and the Environment was scheduled to meet. The Committee reiterated its request for a structural solution to the funding problem of this important expert group.

Report on the Joint FAO/WHO/UNEP Food Contamination Monitoring and Assessment (GEMS/Food) Programme

17. Since its establishment in 1977, GEMS/Food has accumulated data on levels and trends of a variety of priority contaminants in foods and the total diet. Such exposure information is of particular interest to the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants and the Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues. GEMS/Food has embarked on a major expansion within the WHO Region of Europe which should serve the additional purpose of standardizing and improving food safety laboratory services, especially in regard to analytical quality assurance. It was *recommended* that there should be appropriate coordination between the Codex Alimentarius Commission and other international organizations working in this area.

Report on Joint FAO/IAEA/WHO International Consultative Group on Food Irradiation (ICGFI) Activities

18. The Executive Committee was informed that ICGFI was now in its 9th year of existence and had a membership of 37 countries. It had carried out numerous

activities related to the application of food irradiation to promote food safety and food security. The next annual meeting would take place in Orlando, Florida, USA in October 1992.

International Conference on Nutrition

19. The Executive Committee was informed that the International Conference on Nutrition (ICN) jointly sponsored by FAO and WHO would be held in Rome from 5 to 11 December 1992 and would be preceded by a preparatory meeting of government representatives at the technical level in August in Geneva. The Conference will be the first global, intergovernmental conference on nutrition whose final results and recommendations will be based on extensive preparatory activities at both the national and regional levels. To date, more than 140 governments have appointed ICN Country Focal Points and many of these have prepared country papers on their nutrition problems and needed actions. Another feature of the ICN process was the convening of joint FAO/WHO regional/subregional meetings which provide a mechanism for linking country-level and global preparations, and an opportunity to review the nutrition situation in each region. The results of these meetings will provide input into the global Assessment Paper and the global Declaration and Plan of Action to be considered by the ICN. Regional and sub-regional meetings have been held for Asia, Francophone Africa, Anglophone Africa, Western Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Eastern and Central Europe. Food quality and safety will receive a high priority in the deliberations of the Conference, as one of the major theme papers which will be discussed deals with "Protecting the consumer through improved food quality and safety".

D. SELECTED FAO ACTIVITIES IN THE AREA OF FOOD CONTROL

20. The Committee was informed of specific activities carried out by FAO's Food Quality and Consumer Protection Group, Food Quality and Standards Service, in cooperation with member governments in promoting the quality and safety of foods throughout the food chain. These activities were briefly described in part D of CX/EXEC 92/39/3.

21. The Committee noted the extensive activities carried out in the field of mycotoxin prevention, monitoring and control in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean. It welcomed FAO's continued efforts in supplying mycotoxin laboratories in developing countries with reference standards and materials and in organizing regional analytical quality assurance programmes for selected food contaminants, including mycotoxins.

22. The Committee noted with appreciation the technical assistance provided by FAO to developing member countries in the development and strengthening of integrated national food control systems, the establishment of food contaminants monitoring programmes and the setting up of national food import/export quality control and certification systems.

23. The Committee was apprised of FAO's action plan under its Technical Cooperation Programme to assist the governments of the Latin American and Caribbean countries affected by the cholera outbreak in their effort to control the spread of this epidemic. It was informed that this assistance, valued in excess of two million US dollars, would be devoted essentially to improving handling practices at all levels of the food chain with particular emphasis on street foods and to improving import/export inspection and quality control programmes to protect national food supplies and promote trade opportunities. The Committee was further informed of FAO's collaboration with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) in the training of laboratory analysts from the cholera affected countries in the analysis of food for *Vibrio cholerae*.

24. Concerning street foods, the Committee noted with interest the latest activities and projects implemented or that are being implemented by FAO to improve street-food vending practices in several countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. It also noted the various educational materials prepared by FAO on the subject and the use made of them to improve street-food quality and safety in various parts of the world.

25. The Committee was informed of the various training activities carried out recently by FAO in different parts of the world and of the recent publications and training materials issued and distributed to governments and potential users. It was informed, in particular, of the publication of the 1600-page Compendium of Food Additives which compiles specifications for identity and purity of all food additives evaluated by JECFA from 1956 to 1991 and of the preparation of a manual on food import inspection.

E. REPORT ON WHO ACTIVITIES

26. The WHO Global Task Force on Cholera Control, established by the Director-General of WHO in March 1991, had just issued the document, "WHO Guidance on Formulation of National Policy on the Control of Cholera", which contained, among others, two chapters dealing with food and international food trade. An extract of these food-related chapters was being issued in July 1992 under the cover of a Note Verbal to all WHO Member States. The Task Force had also just issued a pamphlet, "Basic Facts on Cholera for Travellers", which was a supplement to the leaflet issued in 1991, "A Guide on Safe Food for Travellers".

27. In 1992, WHO published a book, "Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point Evaluations: a guide to identifying hazards and assessing risks associated with food production and storage", which placed emphasis on the application of the HACCP approach to food prepared at home, in cottage industries and by street vendors. In order to provide guidance to public health and food control authorities regarding the safety of street-vended foods, WHO had just issued an informal document, "Essential Safety Requirements for Street-Vended Foods". This document would be useful for training and education programmes for food inspectors and street-food vendors, as well as consumers. It may also be used to develop codes of practice for street-vended foods, taking into account customary foods and practices and existing socioeconomic conditions.

28. The transmissible spongiform encephalopathies include bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), which was first described in 1986 in the United Kingdom but has subsequently occurred in several other countries. Since there is at least a hypothetical risk of food-borne transmission of the infectious agent of BSE, as well as from medicinal products and medical devices derived from bovine material, WHO convened a consultation in November 1991 to provide appropriate guidance to public health and food regulatory agencies. The consultation recommended a number of measures which, if adequately followed, would provide sufficient protection for human health, including that of infants, children, the elderly, immunocompromised persons, etc., and for that of animals. A summary report has been published in English in Vol. 70(2) and in French in Vol. 70(5) of the WHO Bulletin.

29. In May 1992 WHO convened a panel of experts to undertake the most comprehensive review and evaluation of published and unpublished information on food irradiation attempted to date. The panel re-affirmed the safety and nutritional adequacy of food irradiated under good manufacturing practices. The full report will be published in the near future.

30. WHO through its 6 Regional Offices cooperates with its Member States in a range of activities related to food safety. In response to a query from the Representative of the Region of the South-West Pacific, the WHO Secretariat

reported on several regional- and country-level activities to strengthen the food-safety capacities among Pacific Island Member States. In particular, the development of an imported food inspection manual in Papua New Guinea and a compendium of rapid methods of analysis by New Zealand may be of global interest. At the WHO/DANIDA food safety training course for the Pacific Islands which was held in Suva, Fiji in November 1990, these countries were encouraged to utilize the recommendations of Codex in developing their laws and regulations.

REPORT ON THE URUGUAY ROUND OF MULTILATERAL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS RELATED TO SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES AND BARRIERS
(Agenda Item 4)

31. The Secretariat introduced document CX/EXEC 92/39/4, which contained a brief report of the current status of the Uruguay Round negotiations on sanitary and phytosanitary measures and barriers, and the complete text of the relevant section of the Draft Final Act of the Uruguay Round negotiations. The Executive Committee *noted* that substantial progress on the negotiations had not been made since its previous session, but nevertheless expressed its continued support for the objectives of the sanitary and phytosanitary agreement.

32. In discussing this item, the Executive Committee was informed that the Draft Final Text of the Uruguay Round also included a revised text of the GATT Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (established under the Tokyo Round of Negotiations and known as the GATT "Standards Code"). If the Uruguay Round were to be successfully completed, the revised agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade would also become binding on contracting parties. The agreement covered all those areas contained in Codex Standards which were not covered by the Sanitary and Phytosanitary decision such as labelling to prevent consumer deception or fraud, and quality aspects. The Executive Committee *agreed* that both aspects of the Uruguay Round should be included for discussion at its next session, and that during the interim copies of both documents should be circulated to Codex Contact Points for study.

REPORT ON THE FOLLOW-UP TO THE FAO/WHO CONFERENCE ON FOOD STANDARDS, CHEMICALS IN FOOD AND FOOD TRADE AND THE 19TH SESSION OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION (Agenda Item 5)

33. The Secretariat introduced document CX/EXEC 92/39/5 which contained a summary of actions taken to implement the recommendations of the March 1991 FAO/WHO Conference on Food Standards, Chemicals in Food and Food Trade and the decisions of the 19th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

34. The Executive Committee expressed satisfaction with the follow-up actions described in the report, but also expressed concern that the financial situations facing FAO and WHO limited the timeliness of follow-up to the Conference.

Proposals to amend the Rules of Procedure of the Commission

a. Membership in the Codex Alimentarius Commission of Regional Economic Integration Organizations admitted as Members of FAO

35. Document CX/EXEC 92/39/6 was introduced by Mr R. Stein, FAO. It was noted that the paper had been prepared subsequent to the changes made in the Constitution of FAO which allowed the Membership in that Organization of regional economic integration organizations. It was further noted that FAO Membership by such organizations was subject to a number of conditions, designed to maintain the rights of the Member Countries while at the same time recognizing that the same

Member countries had transferred certain aspects of their national competence to the regional organization.

36. The Representative for Europe welcomed the initiative of the Secretariat in this matter, and stated that the European Community was taking the necessary steps within its procedures to inform the Director-General of FAO of the EC's desire to become a Member of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. He also stated that the competence between the Community and its Member States was regulated by internal EC law and that clear guidelines within the EC had been established.

37. The Executive Committee stressed that changes in the Statutes and Rules of Procedure which would be needed to allow membership of regional economic integration organizations in the Commission would have to be fair to Members of the Commission which were not member countries of these organizations, especially developing countries, and that there was a need to examine closely any proposed changes. It *requested* the Secretariat to prepare a detailed working paper for the next Session of the Codex Committee on General Principles.

38. The Executive Committee *noted* that following consideration by the Committee on General Principles the draft amendments to the Rules could be accepted by the Commission at its 20th Session. It noted further that decisions on amendments or additions require a two-thirds majority vote, and that the number of countries voting (quorum) must be the majority of the number of countries which are Members of the Commission. Also, amendments or additions to the Rules of Procedure would only come into force once approved by the Directors-General of FAO and WHO in accordance with the internal working procedures of the parent organizations, FAO Council and Conference and the WHO World Health Assembly.

b. Proposals to amend the Procedures for the Elaboration of Codex Standards and related texts

39. Document CX/EXEC 92/39/7 was introduced by Mr. R. Stein, FAO, who noted that the paper had been prepared at the request of the 19th Session of the Commission as a result of recommendations made by the FAO/WHO Conference on Food Standards, Chemicals in Food and Food Trade. The paper examined several proposals put forward at the Conference and the Commission, including voting by correspondence on draft standards and giving the Executive Committee the ability to advance proposed draft standards at Step 5. The Executive Committee *noted* that the Commission had already decided to amend the Procedure so as to advance text from Step 5 to Step 8 on a two-thirds majority vote of the Commission.

40. The Executive Committee *agreed* that voting by correspondence was not often appropriate in the context of an international inter-governmental body such as the Commission, where emphasis was placed on direct discussions and agreement, and *rejected* the proposal. However, the Executive Committee expressed the view that as an elected body representative of all of the Member countries of the Commission through the Regional Representatives, it was entirely appropriate that it should have the authority to advance standards at Step 5, subject to the confirmation of the Commission.

41. The Executive Committee *stressed* that it was important to accelerate the procedure whereby standards and other recommendations would be developed, especially in response to the demands which would be placed on the Commission as a result of the completion of the Uruguay Round. It also *stated* that the process by which standards and other recommendations were elaborated should be as efficient and cost-effective as possible, taking into account not only the costs to the Joint Programme but also to Member governments. It *requested* the Codex Committee on General Principles to devise means to improve the procedure by which Codex texts

were elaborated so as to meet these demands. It *instructed* the Secretariat to prepare a paper for the Committee on General Principles which would encourage proposals on how a "fast-track" system could be established.

c. Structure of the Executive Committee and the functions of Regional Representatives

42. The Secretariat introduced document CX/EXEC 92/39/8, which had been prepared in response to the request of the Commission at its last Session. The Executive Committee noted that consideration of this matter was recommended by the Food Standards Conference and endorsed by the Commission. The Executive Committee at its last Session felt that the subject was not of high priority, but nevertheless asked that it be placed on the Agendas of the present Session and the Codex Committee on General Principles.

43. The paper contained three proposals dealing with the composition of the Executive Committee, namely a) to expand the composition of the Executive Committee to make the Regional Coordinators full voting members; b) to combine the functions of the Regional Coordinators with those of the Regional Representatives; and c) to assign the functions of the Regional Coordinators to the Regional Representatives.

44. The Executive Committee recommended that composition of the Executive Committee not be changed, as it was appropriate to the needs of the Commission and the Member countries. It noted that the Executive Committee as currently constituted carried out the work of the Commission effectively and efficiently between Commission sessions. The Executive Committee, however, recommended that the functions of the Regional Representatives and the Regional Coordinators should be clarified, and requested the Secretariat to prepare a suitable proposal for the consideration of the Committee on General Principles at its next session. It further recommended that consideration should be given to amending Rule II.4.(d) so as to allow greater flexibility in cases where the Coordinators might not be able to assume the Chairmanship of the respective Regional Coordinating Committees. One of the possibilities suggested was to appoint a country, and not a person, as Regional Coordinator. It was also suggested that the terms of office of the officers elected by the Commission be made uniform at four years.

45. It was also noted that the Rules of Procedure were unclear on the action to be taken in the event that a Vice-Chairman would be unable to serve for some reason. The Executive Committee felt that continued government support for its elected officers was necessary to ensure the appropriate accountability of the Codex Alimentarius Commission as an intergovernmental body.

PROPOSED MEDIUM-TERM PROGRAMME OF WORK 1993-1998 (Agenda Item 6)

46. The Secretariat introduced document CX/EXEC 92/39/9 which contained a proposal to introduce a 5-year Medium-Term Programme of Work for consideration by the Commission at its next session. The objective was to improve the effectiveness of the Commission's response to the needs of Member States and to provide clear guidance to subsidiary bodies on the Commission's priorities and objectives.

47. The Executive Committee complimented the Secretariat on this initiative. It *instructed* the Secretariat to circulate the present paper, with some modifications, to Member governments for comments and for proposals for inclusion in the Medium-Term Objectives. It invited Codex Committees to confirm the information contained in the draft detailed programme of work and to up-date this information as a standing item on their agendas. It also *recommended* that the draft Medium-Term

Plan, revised in light of the above, be submitted to the next Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission for consideration.

MONITORING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CODE OF ETHICS FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN FOODS AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION (Agenda Item 7)

48. The Secretariat introduced documents CX/EXEC 92/39/10 and CX/EXEC 92/39/10 - Addendum 1. The subject had been included on the agenda of the Session at the request of the Thirty-Seventh Session of the Executive Committee. The paper contained a broad analysis of responses made by governments to the Code of Ethics and included statements made by delegations to recent Codex Regional Coordinating Committee meetings (Appendix 1 and CX/EXEC 92/39/10, Add. 1). The second part invited the Executive Committee to consider ways in which the Code of Ethics might be strengthened. Two proposals were put forward:

- including a *prior informed consent* clause similar to the clause incorporated in the FAO Code of Conduct for Pesticides, to protect developing countries against the dumping of sub-standard food; and
- extending the application of the Code so that it could be adhered to by private commercial producers and exporters.

49. The Executive Committee *did not support* the inclusion of a prior informed consent clause into the Code of Ethics. It was of the opinion that such a clause was inappropriate to trade in food products. The Executive Committee considered that food which presented any health hazard to consumers should not move in trade with or without the consent of the importing country. It also noted the problem of determining how sub-standard foods should be defined or identified. The Executive Committee *stated* that the preferred solution to preventing the dumping of sub-standard food or food not in conformity to Codex standards was the development of an effective national food control infrastructure.

50. The Executive Committee *welcomed* the idea that the Code should be made more available to industry and the food trade and encouraged its use in these sectors. However, it did not see the need to amend the Code so as to invite signature or statements of adherence by private companies.

51. The Executive Committee noted that the Code had been recently been re-published in a booklet form to permit its wider distribution to interested parties.

DRAFT ISO/IEC CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR STANDARDIZATION (Agenda Item 8)

52. The Secretariat reported that the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) had decided to undertake the development of an international consensus on a Code of Good Practice for Standardization. The Codex Secretariat had been informed that this commitment by ISO and IEC had "been undertaken in response to developments in the current round of GATT negotiations, and in recognition of a more general need for the global standards community to articulate the inter-relationships and modes of cooperation between voluntary consensus based standardization activities at national, regional and international levels". It was intended that once the Code has attained consensus agreement, organizations would be able to make statements of adherence to the Code and to its principles. The text of the draft Code was before the Executive Committee as document CX/EXEC 92/39/11.

53. FAO Legal Counsel to the Commission stated that the draft Code posed two juridical problems. He stated that although every attempt was made by the Commission to achieve consensus, its Rules of Procedure stated that all matters under consideration by the Commission shall be decided by majority voting. Secondly, the Commission, as a subsidiary body of both FAO and WHO did not have the independent legal authority to make a formal statement of adherence to the Code as foreseen. WHO Legal Counsel stated that the draft Code was an appropriate instrument for private and non-governmental organizations, but that it was not suitable for intergovernmental organizations with their own procedures established in consultation with Member countries and their own established practices. The Executive Committee *noted* the opinions of the Legal Counsels. It also noted that the aims of the draft Code as outlined in its second Article were entirely consistent with the objectives of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. It was *agreed* that it would be inappropriate to take any further action in the matter.

54. On the broader subject of the relationship between Codex and ISO, the Executive Committee *stressed* that the Codex Alimentarius Commission was the international body responsible for food standards on a world-wide basis, and that it would be inappropriate if fragmentation of standards setting occurred in the food area among different standards-setting organizations. It also noted the existing agreement between Codex Alimentarius and ISO on food standards matters. It *requested* the Secretariat to transmit these findings to the ISO.

MATTERS ARISING FROM CODEX COMMITTEES (Agenda Item 9)

55. The Executive Committee had before it documents CX/EXEC 92/39/12 and CX/EXEC 92/39/12 - Addendum 1 containing matters referred to the Executive Committee for consideration by those Codex Committees which has met since the previous session of the Commission.

a. Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods

Implications for the Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods of the Codex Alimentarius Commission Vote not to Adopt JECFA Recommendations for Growth Promoting Cattle Hormones at Step 8

56. The Executive Committee noted that the Sixth Session of the Committee had before it a paper (CX/RVDF 91/2-Add. 1) prepared by the United States on the above topic. The paper contained a proposal that "The Commission should examine the process by which draft standards recommended by a Codex Committee that are based on thorough scientific assessments by JECFA are evaluated. Unless new scientific information is presented by a delegation which calls into question the validity of the draft standard, thus requiring referral back to a committee, the Commission should adopt the standard." The Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods, without taking any position on the paper, requested the Executive Committee to examine whether the proposal should be further discussed by the Codex Committee on General Principles or by the Commission itself (ALINORM 93/31, paras. 13-16).

57. The Executive Committee noted the opinion expressed by several of its members that science should be the basis for all Codex recommendations while recognizing that other factors may affect the decision-making process. The draft GATT/Uruguay Round Sanitary and Phytosanitary decision, which invoked the concepts of risk assessment, equivalency and transparency, was considered to be very relevant in terms of making scientific determinations.

58. The Executive Committee, after some discussion, *recommended* that the proposal should be examined by the Codex Committee on General Principles at its next session, but took no position on the proposal.

b. Codex Committee on Food Hygiene

Cholera

59. The Committee on Food Hygiene agreed that it would be appropriate for Codex to provide advice to Member Countries on actions which could be taken by both exporters and importers in the case of a major outbreak of food-borne disease or widespread contamination of food due to environmental or industrial causes, in particular to prevent unnecessary restrictions of international trade. At the 25th Session of the Committee on Food Hygiene, the Secretariat was requested to prepare a paper which could be first examined by the Executive Committee with a view to its further elaboration in an appropriate Codex Committee or Committees.

60. The Secretariat noted that partly due to financial and time restrictions, the paper has not been prepared. There had also been a delay in the finalization and publication of WHO guidance on formulation of national policy on the control of cholera. The Secretariat stated that it hoped to have a paper available for the next session of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling in March 1993.

61. The Representative of FAO noted the extensive work which that Organization had undertaken in the prevention of the spread and the transmission of cholera, especially through street foods. He noted that after early severe disruptions in the food trade, the establishment of suitable inspection and control measures had served to minimize later problems.

62. The Executive Committee welcomed the publication of the WHO Policy document, copies of which were made available to Members. It also welcomed the proposal of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene that guidance on actions which should be undertaken in an emergency should be prepared, but recommended that such guidance should be developed by the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems on the basis of technical information provided by the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene.

c. Codex Regional Coordinating Committee for Asia

63. The Coordinator for Asia (Dr. Dato Azizan Ghazali) provided the Executive Committee with a brief summary of the outcome of the 8th Session of the Coordinating Committee for Asia, held in Kuala Lumpur, 27-31 January 1992. She made particular reference to the points discussed below.

Street Foods

64. The Executive Committee was informed that the 8th Session of Codex Regional Coordinating Committee for Asia had been faced with three documents on street foods, the previous draft code prepared by Indonesia for the 7th Session, (attached to the report of its previous Session), a draft Code of Practice for Hawker Food prepared by Malaysia (distributed in advance of the meeting), and a draft WHO document entitled "Essential Safety Requirements for Street-Vended Food" (presented during the 8th Session). The Draft Code of Practice for Hawker Food was examined in detail by the Second FAO Workshop on Street Foods prior to the Session of the Coordinating Committee. The Coordinating Committee had decided to consider the Malaysian text as the basis for its future work. The WHO document has since been issued as a draft text (WHO/HPP/FOS 92.3) and would be circulated for comment. In view of the extensive experience of both FAO and WHO in the area of street foods, the Codex Secretariat had explored the possibility of establishing a joint FAO/WHO document incorporating aspects from each of the drafts for submission to the next meeting of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene.

65. The Secretariat was requested to advise the Executive Committee regarding the action taken at the last meeting of the Committee on Food Hygiene in response to

the previous draft Code of Practice for Street Foods prepared by the 7th Session of Codex Regional Coordinating Committee for Asia. The Executive Committee was advised that in response to a request from WHO the Codex Secretariat had withdrawn the draft document and that no draft Code had been submitted to the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene. The Secretary of Commission regretted the action that had taken place and stated that requests for action by any of the Codex Committees must go forward as requested in spite of the opinion of either FAO or WHO, that if either Agency had comments regarding content that these should be made separately. The Committee was further advised that action had taken place to ensure that such action would not be repeated.

66. Following extensive discussion on the subject the Executive Committee *requested* that both documents be submitted to the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene for consideration. It *stressed* that the work on street foods, which was initiated in 1984 at the 4th Session of Codex Regional Coordinating Committee for Asia, should be finalized at the earliest opportunity by the elaboration of Regional Codes which ensure the quality and safety of street foods, encourage their development which are sufficiently flexible to be adapted to different national and local conditions with the regions. The Committee further *requested* FAO and WHO to work closely together on this important work so as to insure optimum use of valuable resources and so as to prevent duplication of effort.

Labelling of Food with Regard to Religious Requirements

67. The Executive Committee was informed that this matter was previously discussed by the 2nd Session of Codex Regional Coordinating Committee for Asia (Manila 1979) and by the Executive Committee at its 33rd and 34th Sessions in 1987 and 1988. In view of the preparation of appropriate advice in this area by the Muslim League and WHO, the Executive Committee took the view at that time that no additional advice from the Codex Alimentarius Commission was required.

68. The Executive Committee was further informed by the Regional Coordinator for Asia that one fifth of the worlds population was Muslim and as there was substantial international trade in Halal meat and related products, differing interpretations of religious requirements could result in creating technical barriers to trade. In addition to protecting the concerned consumer, it was also important to protect the scrupulous producer and exporter of such products against capricious interpretation of such requirements. Until now, there had not been a satisfactory provision in the Codex Alimentarius to guarantee the truthfulness of certificates or labels claiming that meat and other food products were in conformity with specific religious requirements.

69. In view of the specialized nature of the trade in Halal meat and related products, and the need to protect both the producer/exporter and the consumer, the Executive Committee *referred* the matter for consideration by the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems with a view to presenting a work proposal to the next session of the Commission.

d. Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants

Sampling Plans for Aflatoxin

70. The Executive Committee was informed that the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants had expressed support for convening an expert consultation on sampling plans for aflatoxin however, funds still had to be found to provide for the holding of the proposed consultation.

71. The Executive Committee took note of the status of the work on sampling plans for aflatoxin but expressed concern that the Codex work on aflatoxin had not yet been concluded. The Executive Committee *requested* FAO and WHO to seek the

necessary funds so that the proposed expert consultation may be held as soon as possible. The matter is to be discussed at the next sessions of the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants and the Codex Committee on Cereals, Pulses and Legumes.

Revised Terms of Reference

72. The Executive Committee was informed of the proposed amendment of paragraph (a) of the Terms of Reference of the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants as listed in the Procedural Manual. It *agreed* to the proposal and *recommended* that it be sent to the Commission for approval.

Proposed Draft Codex General Principles for Contaminants

(i) Recommendations on source directed measures

73. The Executive Committee was informed of the proposal by the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants to become more involved in source directed technological measures to prevent or reduce contamination. The Executive Committee was further informed by the Secretariat that the Commission might, in some cases, be exceeding its mandate by making recommendations as proposed. However, it was recognized that Commission could take actions to reduce the levels of certain source contaminants but that all Codex recommendations, including those which are source-directed, should be directly food-related.

74. The Executive Committee recommended that one of ways in which source-directed measures for the control of contamination could be considered was where such recommendations could be incorporated into Codes of Hygienic Practice. The Executive Committee *strongly urged* the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants to concentrate on the elaboration of maximum levels for contaminants in foods moving in international trade, giving priority to those contaminants which give the greatest problem in trade, and for which it could be shown that the establishment of levels was required to protect the consumer.

(ii) Naturally occurring toxins

75. The Executive Committee expressed concern that in setting guideline levels or other limits for a wide range of naturally occurring toxins in foods, the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants may inadvertently encourage countries to create unnecessary technical barriers to trade for example by creating a need for expensive testing and certification. The Executive Committee *recommended* that the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants take this point into consideration and that limits be established only when a health hazard was identified.

(iii) Collaboration with UNEP and other international organizations

76. The Executive Committee was informed of the various working relationships current ongoing with both FAO, WHO and UNEP and there was very close coordination and collaboration on several issues including chemicals and other contaminations related to the environment. The Executive Committee was further informed that UNEP was invited to participate in all of the meeting of Codex however, their attendance was seldom noted. The Executive Committee *requested* the Secretariat to correspond with the UNEP, requesting closer participation between Codex and UNEP.

e. Codex Regional Coordinating Committee for Europe

Terms of Reference of the Committee

77. The Coordinator for Europe (Ms. Barbro Blomberg) provided the Executive Committee with a brief summary of the outcome of the 18th Session of the Coordinating Committee for Europe, held in Stockholm, 11-15 May 1992. She informed the Executive Committee that the Regional Coordinating Committee had proposed the deletion from its Terms of Reference of paragraph d) which authorized the Committee to develop regional standards for products moving exclusively or almost exclusively in intraregional trade. The Coordinator stated that such an amendment should be applied to the Terms of Reference of the Coordinating Committee for Europe, and not to other Coordinating Committees, as there were no products of significance to trade in the Region which were exclusively or almost exclusively traded in Europe.

78. The Executive Committee noted that the Terms of Reference of Regional Coordinating Committees had only recently been harmonized, and was of the opinion that an amendment of this nature was not of high priority. It agreed to refer the matter to the Codex Committee on General Principles.

f. Proposals to undertake new work

79. The Executive Committee approved the further elaboration of the following proposed draft standards and other texts:

Codex Committee on Tropical Fresh Fruits and Vegetables:

- Proposed Draft Standard for Avocado
- Proposed Draft Standard for Baby Corn
- Proposed Draft Standard for Banana
- Proposed Draft Standard for Mangosteen

Codex Coordinating Committee for Asia:

- Proposed Draft Standard for Bamboo Shoots
- Proposed Draft Standard for Pickles
- Proposed Draft Standard for Chutney
- Proposed Draft Standard for Fish Crackers
- Proposed Draft Standard for Dried Anchovies

Codex Committee on Food Hygiene:

- Revision of the Recommended International Code of Practice - General Principles of Food Hygiene

Codex Committee of Fish and Fishery Products:

- Proposed Draft Code of Hygienic Practice for the Sensory Evaluation of Fish and Fishery Products
- Proposed draft amendment to the Code of Practice for Fresh Fish
- Proposed Draft Code of Practice for Surimi.

80. In approving the above new work, the Executive Committee made the following remarks:

Avocado: The Committee on Tropical Fresh Fruit and Vegetables should be requested to examine the UN/ECE Standard for Avocado to determine whether or not it could be adopted as a Codex Standard. If necessary, the Codex Committee on Tropical Fresh Fruit and Vegetables should propose amendments to

the UN/ECE standard to ensure that the standard is suitable for international use and for subsequent adoption as a Codex Standard.

Bamboo Shoots, Pickles and Chutney: Following the preparation of an initial draft by the Coordinating Committee for Asia, subsequent development of the draft standards should be entrusted to the Codex Committee on Processed Fruits and Vegetables. Attention was drawn to the existing Codex Standard for Mango Chutney (CODEX STAN 160-1987) which should be amended if necessary to accommodate other varieties of chutney.

Fish Crackers, Dried Anchovies: Following the preparation of an initial draft by the Coordinating Committee for Asia, subsequent development of the draft standards should be entrusted to the Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products.

DRAFT PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE 20TH SESSION OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION (Agenda Item 10)

81. The Executive Committee had before it document CX/EXEC 92/39/13, prepared by the Secretariat. The Executive Committee *agreed* with the Secretariat's proposals and the proposal to add the following items:

- Report on Risk Assessment Procedures
- Medium-Term Programme of Work 1993-1998
- Report of the First Session of the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems.

OTHER BUSINESS (Agenda Item 11)

a. Consideration of the status of European Standards prepared by the Comité Européen de la Normalisation (CEN) in relation to Codex Standards.

82. The question was raised as to the status of European standards prepared by CEN in relation to Codex standards. It was reported that CEN had decided to work in the field of food and had already begun on methods of analysis. Proposals had also been made for work on standards and/or codes of practice on canned fruits and vegetables and on hygiene. The Commission of the European Communities (CEC) had authorized CEN to elaborate standards in connection with the so-called "New Method" EC directives. Although no formal authorization had been given in the field of foodstuffs, the CEC had participated in CEN Committees discussing food standardization and had indicated its support for such work by CEN.

83. The Executive Committee expressed some concern for these developments and the possibility of duplication of work and the creation of technical barriers to trade. In the light of the EC's stated commitment to the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and its possible future membership, and also in light of the status of international Codex standards which would result from the conclusion of the Uruguay Round, the Secretariat *was requested* to contact the CEC on this matter in order to clarify the situation as much as possible.

b. Consideration of the status of European Community Standards in relation to Codex Standards in International Trade

84. The Representative of Africa raised concerns expressed in countries of his Region, that in trade with the EC European standards were in force rather than

Codex Standards. He requested information as to the status of Codex Standards in the EC.

85. The Executive Committee recalled that in a formal letter to the Director-General of FAO, circulated by the EC representatives at the FAO/WHO Conference on Food Standards, Chemicals in Food and Food Trade in March 1991, the EC stated that it was considering the acceptance of a significant number of Codex standards, MRLs and other recommendations.

c. Consideration of the relationship between the Codex Alimentarius Commission, JECFA and JMPR, and the activities of the OECD Group on Chemicals in the Environment

86. A question was raised by the Representative of the Region of North America concerning the relationship between the Codex Alimentarius Commission, JECFA and JMPR, and the activities of the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) Chemicals Programme. The WHO Representative explained that three meetings had been held recently to discuss the role of the various international organizations in pesticides testing, assessment, and management. The role of the Codex Alimentarius Commission in harmonizing international standards and the work of OECD and IPCS (International Programme on Chemical Safety) were recognized at these meetings. In addition, recommendations for better coordination among international organizations were made.

87. The Executive Committee requested the FAO and WHO Secretariats to prepare a paper summarizing the relevant activities of these Organizations, especially areas where there was a potential duplication of work. The paper should be presented to the next Session of the Commission.

d. Relationship between Codex and the UNECE and OECD in standards for fresh fruit and vegetables

88. In response to an enquiry made by the Coordinator for North America and the South-West Pacific, the Secretariat indicated that a meeting had been held between the Secretariats of the Programme and the UN/ECE to help prevent duplication of work in this area. It was agreed that all efforts would be made to ensure that Codex and UNECE standards would not differ technically, and that in cases of both groups working on similar commodities that both groups should reach agreement on the content of their standards before they were finalized. It was noted that the OECD did not prepare standards *per se*, but worked on the application of international standards prepared by other organizations. It was noted that the OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables could, if its members so wished, also consider means for the application of Codex Standards for tropical fresh fruit and vegetables.

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