

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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Agenda item 4.4 and 4.9

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

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Comments from Mauritius on Agenda Item 4.4, and 4.9 FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committee for Africa (CX/CAC 22/45/11)

Agenda Item 4.4, part 2

Curry leaf (*Murraya koenigii* Spreng.), an aromatic deciduous tree, is a perennial leaf vegetable. As pointed out, there is however, a lack of data on production and trade of curry leaves. But the fact remains that the leaf is grown throughout the world and has been used for many years for food flavouring, essential oil applications, and in traditional medicine. Although considered as a minor commodity, it has flavor-enhancing qualities and its leaves are able to keep their flavour and aroma even after drying; hence it is widely used in culinary as well as Ayurvedic systems of medicine. In addition to the plant's medicinal values, it is one of the richest sources of carbozole alkaloids. *M. koenigii* extracts have been reported to induce peak fall in blood sugar as well as exhibiting strong toxicity against major pathogens. Continuous efforts are underway to explore the nutraceutical characteristics of the plant to boost its utilization in various food applications.

It also appears that the usage of curry leaves in Indian and Sri Lankan cooking goes back to the region's ancient history. Indentured labourers immigrating to Mauritius over several centuries carried curry leaves with them which they planted near their houses. Nowadays, the curry leaf is an important ingredient in the Mauritian cuisine and is appreciated by all Mauritians, whatever be their origin. In view of the above, the development of a standard for curry leaves is highly appropriate and Mauritius approves this new work.

Agenda item 4.9

Mauritius would like to thank Kenya, Morocco and Senegal for the draft guidelines for developing harmonized food safety legislation for the CCAFRICA region. Members and observers' contributions are also acknowledged. The foundation of a food control system is a comprehensive body of appropriate food law from which the control system derives its powers. The food legislation can potentially demonstrate the government's will to assure food quality and to protect the consumer and thus, is designed to drive and achieve the general objectives of National Food Control Systems. As such, food legislation defines the minimum expected standard for the food industry to operate. To the consumer, food legislation defines what is safe and wholesome for consumption. The most effective food control legislation consists of 2 distinct parts: a basic food control act and food regulations. For a more practical and flexible implementation of the law, food control legislation must lay down general principles of control and exclude detailed requirements such as hygienic requirements or overly detailed administrative instructions for its implementation, leaving them for regulations. Each country has its particular way of developing and operationalizing their food legislation and this can have repercussions on trade.

Most national food laws have evolved in response to many influencing and competing factors. Development has usually been reactive, the laws being implemented on a pragmatic and ad hoc basis, often catalysed by highly publicised food scares. Though there is currently limited rational and systematic approach to food legislation, especially in developing countries, food laws are still evolving and are being scrutinised in terms of their scientific justification and economic efficiency, both in the domestic and in the international arenas. Many countries have loopholes in their food legislation, or have not modernized their food legislation system which is a vestige from colonial rule or which they have copied from countries with more advanced food control systems.

Thus the development of these guidelines comes at a very opportune time, that at which the continent is

consolidating its intra-African trade and paving the way for the future establishment of a continental customs union. The guidelines set the main principles, highlight the use of a science and risk-based approach to legislation and will certainly assist in the modernization of laws in African countries. The key elements of food safety legislation are also defined.

Indeed, to be adequate, the food law must have all its terms clearly defined and must also contain the main provisions, the main offences, defences, penalties, duties and powers, inspection and analytical procedures, enforcement procedures, and repeals. The food law must also clearly delineate the roles and authority of all those involved in food control. Other characteristics of food laws have been described for example, the FAO and the WHO Model Food Law, that has been adapted for use in several countries. Thus, we would like to forward the proposed draft guidelines for final adoption at step 5/8.