

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

*Thirty second Session
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**REPORT OF THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE
FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR EUROPE**

*Warsaw, Poland
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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The 26th Session of the FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committee for Europe reached the following conclusions:

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE 32ND SESSION OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND BY THE 64TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

The Coordinating Committee:

- Noted the need for improving horizontal communication of national experts attending different Codex Committees to have consistent national positions and that the establishment of the CCEURO website has been successfully used by the coordinator and members of the CCEURO to exchange information and to distribute newsletters before the 26th Session of the CCEURO session and the FAO/WHO Regional Workshop on the Codex Alimentarius (para. 9);
- Recognised that several Members in the European region whose economies are in transition were eligible for the Codex Trust Fund and acknowledged the important support given by the Codex Trust Fund in funding participation of these countries at Codex sessions but stressed that more capacity building was necessary in order to ensure that participation effective. In this respect the Committee examined various capacity building alternatives and took note of different proposals (para 19);
- Thanked FAO and WHO for their ongoing support to the Codex Alimentarius Commission and its subsidiary bodies through activities and programs on capacity building and scientific advice and noted the efforts of both FAO and WHO in the area of school feeding and promoting nutrition-friendly schools and encouraged close collaboration on these activities (paras 31-32);
- Agreed that information provided on national food control systems, consumer participation in food standards setting and other agenda items could be made available on the CCEURO website together with country information collected by FAO through capacity building projects with the understanding that this would be a useful tool for an exchange of information (para.46);
- Noted that in most countries Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committees generally worked well, while in other countries they needed further capacity building (para. 49);
- Welcomed the recommendation of the 61st Session of the Executive Committee to grant an observer status to the European Consumer Organization (BEUC) (para. 48);
- Noted that Codex standards and related texts were of voluntary nature, however the explicit reference of Codex food safety standards in the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) obliged WTO members to use them unless members wishing to use more stringent standards can scientifically justify it. For this reason, many countries of the Region were integrating Codex standards into their national legislation (para. 54);
- Noted that although many countries of the European region have taken many good initiatives in the area of nutrition and can report good progress, there still was a need for more work throughout the region in order to improve food safety and nutrition and that support from FAO and WHO to member states of the Region was very welcome in this regard (para 60);
- Unanimously agreed to nominate Poland as the Regional Coordinator for Europe (para. 62).

MATTERS REFERRED TO CODEX COMMITTEES AND TASK FORCES***Codex Committee on General Principles (CCGP)*****The Coordinating Committee:**

- reiterated its previously (agreed at its 25th Session¹) position that the promotion of adoption of regional positions on strategic subjects by the Regional Coordinating Committees was already covered by the current terms of reference, in particular, the bullet (g) “exercises a general coordinating role for the Region” and therefore there was no need to change the terms of reference of Coordinating Committees as proposed by the CCLAC (para. 21);
- strongly supported the revision of the Code of Ethics for International Trade in Food (para. 76).

Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL)

- The Coordinating Committee stressed the need for guidance concerning the Labelling of Foods and Food Ingredients obtained through certain Techniques of Genetic Modification/Genetic Engineering (paras 69-71) and noted the importance to have a guidance on labelling provisions dealing with the food ingredients identified in the WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health (paras 72-73).

Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling (CCMAS)

- The Coordinating Committee encouraged all members to participate actively in the work on on the new guidelines for the detection and indentification of foods derived from biotechnology (para. 77);

Codex Committee on Methods of Food Additives (CCFA)

- The Coordinating Committee noted that is was important for delegations to stress in the relevant Codex Commodity Committees that in accordance with section 1.2 of the Preamble of the *General Standard for Food Additives*, Commodity Committees had the responsibility and expertise to appraise and justify the technological need for the use of additives in foods subject to a commodity standard, while the task of the Codex Committee on Food Additives was more focused on the safety of these food additives. Therefore, when the food categories, as defined by the GSFA, are much broader than the scope of the Codex Commodity Standards is not appropriate to just refer in a commodity standard to the list of food additives of the corresponding food category (para. 80).

¹ ALINORM 07/30/19, paras 30 – 33

INTRODUCTION

1. The FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Europe held its 26th Session in Warsaw from 7 to 10 October 2008 at the kind invitation of the Government of the Republic of Poland in cooperation with the Coordinator for Europe (Switzerland). The Session was chaired by Ms Awilo Ochieng Pernet (Switzerland), and attended by 77 delegates and observers representing 33 members, 2 Observer countries and 3 international governmental organizations. A complete list of participants, including the Secretariat, is given in Appendix I to this report.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

2. Mr Marian Zalewski, Deputy-Minister, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, in welcoming the participants to the Session, stressed the importance of the Codex Alimentarius Commission in protecting consumers' health and ensuring fair practices in the food trade and the significance of Codex Standards and related texts for national and international law. Mr Zalewski emphasized that this 26th Session of the CCEURO was jointly organized by Poland and Switzerland in cooperation with the Codex Secretariat on the basis of an excellent cooperation over the last two years. He assured delegations that Poland was prepared to continue taking responsibility for coordinating work in the region. He wished the participants a successful session and a pleasant time in Warsaw.

3. Mr Bénédicte de Cerjat, Ambassador of Switzerland in Warsaw, also addressed the session and stressed the excellent cooperation that Switzerland as coordinator had enjoyed during its two mandates first with Lithuania that had hosted the 25th Session of the CCEURO and since then with Poland. He recalled that, after designation as coordinator, Switzerland's first priority was the enhancement of the participation of all CCEURO members in Codex work. Mr de Cerjat indicated that the training initiatives in Croatia (2006), Lithuania (2006) and Poland (2007 and 2008) were supported by Switzerland in cooperation with FAO/WHO as examples and pointed out that Switzerland had acquired a lot of experience during its time as Coordinator and was eager to share this knowledge with all members in the region in order to ensure the sustainability of the efforts made.

Division of competence

4. The Committee noted the division of competence between the European Community and its Member States, presented by the Delegation of the European Community in CRD 4, according to Rule II.5 of the Rules of Procedure.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Agenda item 1) ²

5. Following proposals from Norway (CRD 6) and the European Community (CRD 9) the Committee agreed that the following items would be considered under Agenda item 8 "Other Business and Future Work" if time allowed:

- Work progress in the Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products;
- Labelling of Foods obtained through certain Techniques of Genetic Modification/ Genetic Engineering (GM Labelling);
- Labelling Provisions dealing with the Food Ingredients identified in the WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health;
- Need for further work on Guidelines on Traceability/Product Tracing;
- Work on the Revision of the Code of Ethics for International Trade in Food;
- New work on the Guidelines for detection and identification of foods derived from biotechnology;
- Annex on Food Safety Assessment in Situations of Low-level Presence of Recombinant-DNA Plant Material in Food;
- Justification for the Use of Food Additives.

² CX/EURO 08/26/1 and CRD 4 (European Community).

6. With these modifications the Coordinating Committee adopted the provisional agenda as its agenda for the Session.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER CODEX COMMITTEES (Agenda Item 2)³

7. The Committee noted the matters referred by the 30th and 31st sessions of the Commission for information and discussed other items as follows.

Implementation of the Strategic Plan 2008-2013

Activity 4.5: Promote interdisciplinary coordination at the national and regional level

8. The Coordinating Committee recalled that the 31st Session of the Commission had requested the Coordinating Committees to review the current status of interdisciplinary coordination and communication at national and regional level and report to the 32nd Session of the Commission on possible actions to be taken to promote it⁴. In discussing this request, the Committee noted information provided by members and observers in response to Part C (i) of CL 2008/4-EURO.

9. The Coordinating Committee noted on the national level the need for improving horizontal communication of national experts to different Codex Committees to have consistent national positions. On the level of regional coordination, the Committee noted the establishment of the CCEURO website which has been successfully used by the coordinator and members of the CCEURO to exchange information and to distribute newsletters before the 26th Session of the CCEURO session and the FAO/WHO Regional Workshop on the Codex Alimentarius (6 October 2008).

Activity 5.4 Strengthen Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committees

Activity 5.5 Enhance Participation of Non-governmental Organizations at International, Regional and National Levels

10. The discussion on these issues is included under Agenda item 4.

Participation of developing countries in Codex Meetings

11. The 31st Session of the Commission had recommended that Coordinating Committees consider the issue of participation of developing countries and report their views to the 32nd Session of the Commission where the subject would be discussed under a specific Agenda item⁵.

12. The Chairperson recalled that the concern voiced at the Commission was that the current participation of developing countries in Codex was not inclusive enough and that existing means such as the Codex Trust Fund were not sufficient to remedy the situation. The Chairperson said further that in the CCEURO region the term “countries in transition” would be more appropriate instead of developing countries. It was mentioned that currently 22 CCEURO members including 7 members of the European Community were considered as countries in transition.

13. The Delegation of Georgia indicated that Georgia was in need of training and other support in many areas in order to be able to successfully participate in Codex work. The Codex Contact Point needed to be strengthened and a National Codex Committee established. Developed countries could provide very useful training about their methodologies and mechanisms.

14. The Representatives of FAO and WHO informed the delegates that they clearly recognized the need to continue to provide capacity building to ensure better preparation of delegates to Codex meetings and to strengthen Codex Contact Points and that quite a number of tools were available for this. As the CCEURO region was quite unique in the sense that many countries had a very developed Codex structure,

³ CX/EURO 08/26/2; CRD 1 (Switzerland); CRD 3 (Poland); CRD 7 (Croatia) and CRD 11 (Italy).

⁴ ALINORM 07/31/REP, para. 141.

⁵ ALINORM 07/31/REP, paras 152-162

twinning programmes could be envisaged. The Representative of WHO mentioned that WHO conducted capacity building through biannual cooperation agreements with countries and urged delegates to get in touch with their Ministry of Health, as necessary so that food safety could enter into such agreements.

15. The Delegation of the European Community informed the Committee that the EC was the largest contributor to the Trust Fund and that also its member states had organized a number of sessions on Codex related activities to which developing/transition countries had been invited. To ensure effective participation and contribution to Codex work a specific EC technical assistance project PAN-SPSO was approved in 2006. This 3.35 million EURO project will be implemented by the Nairobi based "African Union - Inter African Bureau for Animal Resources" (AU-IBAR) and will technically support the efficient participation of African countries in SPS standard setting organizations. The Delegation also indicated that three Codex Committees hosted by the EC member countries recently, are hosted by developing countries in another region now.

16. One member informed the Committee of a high level seminar organized by the Netherlands (The Hague, 9-12 June 2008) on setting food safety standards and their effects on international trade, particularly for developing countries. Amongst the attendees were 68 delegates from 33 developing countries whose attendance was sponsored by the Government of the Netherlands.

17. Some countries expressed the view that it was difficult for them to participate fully in Codex work due to language barriers or high travel costs.

18. The Delegation of Armenia proposed to consider a possibility of organizing a workshop on the strengthening of the work of the National Codex Contact Points.

19. The Coordinating Committee recognised that several Members in the European region whose economies are in transition were eligible for the Codex Trust Fund. The Committee acknowledged the important support given by the Codex Trust Fund in funding participation of these countries at Codex sessions but stressed that more capacity building was necessary in order to ensure that participation effective. In this respect the Committee examined various capacity building alternatives and took note of different proposals:

- Development of partnerships (bilateral: twinning-type mentoring approach);
- Interdisciplinary, multisectoral and inter-ministerial activities;
- Hosting experts from other countries in Ministries (Health, Agriculture, etc.);
- The European Community Technical Assistance Mechanism;
- The Standards and Trade Development Facility (WTO);
- Providing guidance through electronic means, establishment of electronic working groups;
- Training courses on food control activities organised in host countries;
- Bilateral and multilateral visits, study visits, courses/training;
- Organisation of a Workshop specifically dedicated to the work of Codex Contact Points with participation from all countries in the region (developed countries, transition countries), practical exercises.

Nutrition related matters of regional interest

20. The discussion on these issues is included under Agenda item 6.

Terms of Reference for Coordinating Committees

21. The Coordinating Committee reiterated its previous position (agreed at its 25th Session⁶) that the promotion of adoption of regional positions on strategic subjects by the Regional Coordinating Committees was already covered by the current terms of reference, in particular, the bullet (g) “exercises a general coordinating role for the Region” and therefore there was no need to change the terms of reference of Coordinating Committees as proposed by the CCLAC.

22. It was stated during discussion that there might be a misunderstanding outside Europe that the Coordinating Committee for Europe regularly adopted regional positions. However contrary, the European Community was a single member of Codex with a unique position in that most food law harmonised with the Community. Whilst European Community member states often speak with one voice, other European countries were able to maintain their own national positions.

23. The Coordinating Committee also noted the comments that if regional positions were adopted on many issues being discussed by the Commission, the Commission might lose the important advantage of diversity of opinions and that seeking consensus and reaching compromise might become even more challenging.

FAO/WHO ACTIVITIES COMPLEMENTARY TO THE WORK OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION (Agenda Item 3)⁷

24. The Representatives of FAO and WHO introduced their programmes in the areas of capacity building and the provision of scientific advice to strengthen food safety, quality and nutrition in the region.

Capacity building

25. The Representatives explained that document CX/CCEURO 08/26/4 – Part I contained a short analysis of main issues and changes in the region which influence specific FAO/WHO activities and the annex included detailed information on FAO and WHO country activities (training courses, seminars and projects).

26. In food safety and quality, the main areas for FAO/WHO analysis and capacity building work include:

- Adoption of risk analysis principles as a basis for food safety management;
- Strengthening institutional infrastructures;
- Streamlining and consolidating activities between ministries and agencies working on food control/safety;
- Promoting national food safety strategies;
- Promoting involvement of all relevant stakeholders;
- Encouraging public-private partnerships between government and the food industry; and
- Effective response to outbreaks of food borne illnesses and food safety emergencies;
- Developing specific quality schemes and linking specific quality to geographical origin (e.g. Global project by FAO with support from France and Switzerland).

27. Nutrition-related challenges in the region (see also the discussion under Agenda item 6) ranged from under-nutrition and food insecurity, micronutrient deficiency, to obesity. FAO and WHO implement a range of activities on nutrition including:

- Increasing the diversity of available foods;

⁶ ALINORM 07/30/19, paras 30 – 33

⁷ CX/EURO 08/26/4 Part 1 and Part 2.

- Encouraging healthy food choices in institutional settings, such as through the nutrition friendly schools initiative, and
- Motivating consumers to maintain or adopt healthy dietary and lifestyle patterns.
- WHO EURO has initiated several European nutrition networks; covering obesity surveillance, marketing, salt reduction, nutrition in hospitals, and on promoting the nutrition friendly schools initiative.

28. The Representatives of FAO and WHO also provided information on specific guidance documents and tools already available to members or in preparation and on the existing information exchange mechanisms at the international level (e.g. INFOSAN).

Scientific advice

29. The document CX/CCEURO 08/26/4-Part II outlined recently held expert consultations providing scientific advice (as presented to the 31st Session of the Commission, updates to be found on the FAO and WHO website) to the Codex Alimentarius Commission and directly to member countries covering such topics as microbiological hazards in food, assessment of food additives, contaminants, pesticide residues as well as animal feed impact on food safety and critically important antimicrobials. The Table in Part III of the document contained a complete list of requests to FAO and WHO for scientific advice. In addition, to the regular meetings of JECFA, JMPR and JEMRA, FAO and WHO continue to address *ad hoc* priority issues such as health risks and benefits associated with the consumption of fish and other seafood, microbiological hazards in leafy green vegetables and nanotechnology among other issues.

30. The document also provided information on the conclusions and follow up to the FAO/WHO consultative process on provision of scientific advice to Codex and Member Countries such as:

- FAO/WHO Framework for the provision of scientific advice;
- Criteria adopted by the 55th Session of the Executive Committee for the prioritization of requests from Codex for scientific advice;
- Launch of the Global Initiative for Food-related Scientific Advice (GIFSA) to identify extra-budgetary resources which is expected to support additional expert consultations as well as facilitate greater expert input and data from developing countries and countries in transition.

31. The Committee thanked FAO and WHO for their ongoing support to the Codex Alimentarius Commission and its subsidiary bodies through activities and programs on capacity building and scientific advice.

32. The Committee noted the efforts of both FAO and WHO in the area of school feeding and promoting nutrition-friendly schools and encouraged close collaboration on these activities.

ACTIVITIES OF THE STDF IN THE REGION (Agenda item 3.1)⁸

33. The Representative from the World Trade Organization (WTO) presented recent developments in the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Committee) and the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF). The presentation highlighted the importance of the standards developed by the three standard-setting bodies (Codex Alimentarius Commission, IPPC and OIE) under the SPS Agreement. A summary of the Representative's presentation is provided in the following paragraphs.

Monitoring use of standards

34. Monitoring the use of international standards is a regular item on the agenda of SPS Committee meetings. Specific trade problems related to the use or non-use of relevant international standards are drawn to the attention of the relevant standard-setting body after consideration by the SPS Committee.

⁸ This section also includes information on recent developments in the SPS Committee.

35. To ensure transparency, WTO Members have a legal obligation under the SPS Agreement to notify the SPS Committee when they are not using international standards. New procedures scheduled to enter into force in December 2008 encourage WTO Members to notify also when they are using international standards.

36. Information was provided on the new mentoring system to support National Notification Authorities and Enquiry Points, and the WTO's SPS information management system (<http://spsims.wto.org>).

Private standards

37. An informal working group has met recently to consider practical actions which the SPS Committee could take in this area.

Cooperation of the standard setting bodies and the SPS Committee

38. The close and positive working relationship between the SPS Committee and the three standard-setting bodies, including Codex, was highlighted. The Codex Secretariat regularly participates in the SPS Committee as an observer, and contributes to WTO technical assistance activities.

39. An informal meeting on the review of the SPS Agreement, discussing the relationship between the standard-setting bodies and the SPS Committee, met for the first time on 7 October 2008.

Standards and Trade Development facility (STDF)

40. The STDF is a global programme on SPS-related capacity building and technical co-operation, established by FAO, WHO, OIE, the World Bank and WTO in 2002. The Codex Secretariat regularly participates in STDF activities.

41. The STDF aims to: i) act as a vehicle for coordination among technical co-operation providers, the mobilization of funds, the exchange of experience and dissemination of good practice; and ii) assist developing countries in enhancing their capacity to analyse and implement SPS standards with the objective of improving human, animal and plant health, and thus gaining and maintaining market access.

42. The STDF's activities include workshops on SPS-related capacity assessment tools and technical assistance related to SPS and good practice in SPS-related areas. The STDF also offers funding opportunities in the form of project preparation grants (PPG) and project grants. Recently the Republic of Moldova benefited from STDF funding to develop a detailed project proposal to strengthen the government's infrastructure and capacity on food safety and to support an emerging food business sector for consideration by donors. Further information about the STDF is available at www.standardsfacility.org.

INFORMATION ON NATIONAL FOOD CONTROL SYSTEMS AND CONSUMER PARTICIPATION IN FOOD STANDARD SETTING (Agenda item 4)⁹

43. The Coordinating Committee was informed of recent developments and the current status on food control and food safety issues in members on the basis of the written submissions in reply to Circular Letter 2008/4-EURO, Part A.

National Food Control Systems

44. After a round of presentations and discussions, the Committee expressed its appreciation to the members for providing an extensive information on food control and food safety issues and for sharing their own experiences and relevant information with other members and noted the following:

⁹ CX/EURO 08/26/6 (Information of Armenia, Austria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Poland, Serbia, Slovak Republic, United Kingdom, submitted in response to CL 2008/4-EURO, Part A); CX/EURO 08/26/6-Add.1 (Information of European Community, Lithuania, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia and Sweden); CRD 1 (Information of Switzerland); CRD 5 (Information of European Community), CRD 7 (Information of Croatia), CRD 8 (Information of Iceland), CRD 11 (Italy), CRD 12 (Czech Republic).

- The updates of official services for food control, legislation and regulations on food safety and quality which, in many cases, went towards a simplification of structures through establishment of food control authorities and a general food law and towards alignment of national food regulations with the European Community legislation;
- The stepwise integration of HACCP systems in several countries;
- The establishment of equivalence/trade facilitation agreements in particular the ongoing negotiations between the European Community and Switzerland on a free trade agreement in order to expand already existing Agreements in the food and health sector;
- The risk based approach for organizing inspections used by some members in order to achieve the best protection of consumers especially where resources are limited. The Coordinating Committee was informed that these systems worked on the basis of “earned recognition” which recognizes where a high level of food safety control including HACCP is operated by industry e.g. through private standards or other food safety assurance arrangements;
- The need for capacity building in some member countries.

45. The Coordinating Committee welcomed the information provided by the European Community that country profiles for the 27 member states of the European Community were available on the internet at: http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/country_profiles_en.cfm

46. The Coordinating Committee agreed to a suggestion that information provided under this and other agenda items could be made available on the CCEURO website together with country information collected by FAO through capacity building projects with the understanding that this would be a useful tool for an exchange of information.

Participation of stakeholders including consumers and non-governmental organizations (including discussion on implementation of the Strategic Plan 2008-2013, Activity 5.5 Enhance participation of non-governmental organizations at international, regional and national levels)

47. Following the information provided, the Coordinating Committee noted:

- That in many members of the region there was a long tradition of involving consumers and/or consumer associations in the public consultation process for food safety and food control matters, including Codex-related activities;
- That a number of members organized joint meetings of various stakeholders having different opinions on a certain topic (e.g. consumers and food industry) in order to foster a mutual understanding of positions even if this did not in all cases lead to a consensus;
- The suggestion by a member that when national consultations with stakeholders were held, stakeholders should be reminded to also bring their position to their relevant international organization having an observer status with the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

48. The Coordinating Committee welcomed the recommendation of the 61st Session of the Executive Committee to grant an observer status to the European Consumer Organization (BEUC).

National Codex Contact Points and other National Structures for Codex Matters (including discussion on implementation of the Strategic Plan 2008-2013, Activity 5.4: Strengthen Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committees)

49. Based on the information provided, the Coordinating Committee noted that in most countries Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committees generally worked well, while in other countries they needed further capacity building. The Committee also noted that National Codex Committees existed in many countries, whereas some members engaged in Codex related activities with relevant parties through direct consultations organized by the Codex Contact Points.

50. The Committee also noted information that some countries planned to establish their National Codex Committees in the near future.

USE OF CODEX STANDARDS AT NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS (CL 2008/4-EURO, PART B) (Agenda Item 5)¹⁰

51. The Committee recalled that this agenda item had been added for consideration by the Regional Coordinating Committees by the 57th Session of the Executive Committee in order to obtain their views on how Codex standards and related texts are used at national and regional levels.

52. The Delegation of the European Community informed the delegates that Codex standards or related texts were always considered during the elaboration of the EC legislation and that Codex provisions were always adopted unless EFSA risk assessment justified deviations from them. The Delegation pointed out that the current Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and the Council laid down procedures for the establishment of residue limits for pharmacologically active substances in food stuffs of animal origin introduced an obligation for the EC to adopt the Codex MRLs without any further risk assessment by EFSA, which the EC had supported at the Codex Alimentarius Commission session. The Delegation indicated that the EC is in the process of harmonizing their legislation in the area of gluten free foods or maximum levels of aflatoxins on the basis of recently adopted Codex Standard for Foods for Special Dietary Use for Persons Intolerant to Gluten and the new Codex provisions on aflatoxins.

53. Some other delegations indicated that Codex standards were adopted into national technical regulations or legislation according to established procedures, however certain limitations existed due to the need for their translation into their national language.

54. The Committee noted that Codex standards and related texts were of voluntary nature, however the explicit reference of Codex food safety standards in the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) obliged WTO members to use them unless members wishing to use more stringent standards can scientifically justify it. For this reason, many countries of the Region were integrating Codex standards into their national legislation.

NUTRITIONAL ISSUES WITHIN THE REGION (Agenda Item 6)¹¹

55. The Committee recalled that this matter had been placed on the Provisional Agenda as a consequence of the consideration of the WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health at the Codex Alimentarius Commission and upon agreement of the 25th Session of CCEURO.

56. Delegates shared information and discussed nutritional issues covering national actions including obesity, nutritional profiles, and public-health oriented actions taken including the use of nutritional labelling to improve consumer information.

57. The Representative of FAO informed the Committee about FAO activities in the area of nutrition linked to the implementation of a number of Millennium Development Goals and stressed the need for a multisectoral approach and need to link agriculture policies with the health sector.

58. The WHO representative informed the Committee about the 2nd WHO European Action Plan on Food and Nutrition Policies 2007-2012 adopted at the WHO EURO Regional Committee meeting in Belgrade, Serbia in September 2007. It is a framework policy document that countries can use for further developing their national policies and strategies in this field, and implementing relevant measures to reducing foodborne disease, obesity, micronutrient deficiencies and hunger.

59. After an exchange of information the Committee noted:

- That many delegations had submitted substantive replies which had been compiled in the documents examined at the current session and that countries of the Region informed the Committee on national actions and ongoing initiatives to engage consumers, food industry, and relevant government Ministries to work towards achieving the goals of the WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health;

¹⁰ CX/EURO 08/26/7; CX/EURO 08/26/7-Add.1.

¹¹ CX/EURO 08/26/8; CX/EURO 08/26/8-Add.1; CRD 1 (Switzerland); CRD 2 (Poland); CRD 7 (Croatia); CRD 11 (Italy); CRD 12 (Czech Republic).

- The adoption of the 2nd European Food and Nutrition Action Plan 2007 – 2012 and the range of initiatives that members have undertaken in the region to implement of the WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health and the European Charter on Counteracting Obesity. Reference was made to the EC White Paper on a Strategy for Europe on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity adopted in May 2007;
- That many countries have developed national programmes and policies in this field in order to counteract the range of nutritional challenges ranging from obesity, under-nutrition, malnutrition, and micro-nutrient deficiencies;
- The numerous public-private initiatives underway in many countries, many of a voluntary nature, covering several fields , among others the reformulation of processed foods in order to reduce the salt and saturated fat content and a range of front-of-pack labelling initiatives e.g. the traffic lights system in the UK, the use of Guideline Daily Amounts, the Swedish keyhole scheme which is now being adapted for use in other Nordic countries, etc.
- That common themes were the emphasis on nutrition education including the targeting of vulnerable groups (eg. children, adolescents, etc.), provision of adequate and clear nutritional information on food products, and enabling consumers to understand food labels and to make healthy food choices, responsible actions by food industry, importance of encouraging an increase in physical activity, and the need to encourage a balanced diet, with less fat, less salt, and an increased consumption of fruit and vegetables in general. They noted that nutrition was an important issue for the region and currently a very dynamic field with many ongoing initiatives geared to behavioural changes especially among children;
- The need for multi-disciplinary and multisectoral initiatives in order to establish holistic approaches to improve nutritional status.

60. The Committee noted that although many countries of the European region have taken many good initiatives in these areas and can report good progress, there still was a need for more work throughout the region in order to improve food safety and nutrition and support from FAO and WHO to member states of the Region was very welcome in this regard.

61. The Committee agreed to maintain this issue as an agenda item at the next Session of CCEURO in order to share information and follow the best practices in this challenging field. For the list of existing websites in area of nutrition in member countries see Appendix II.

NOMINATION OF THE COORDINATOR (Agenda Item 7)¹²

62. The Committee acknowledged the valuable contribution of the Government of the Republic of Poland to the Codex work in the region and unanimously accepted the proposal of the Delegation of Switzerland to nominate Poland as the next Coordinator for Europe, subject to appointment by the 32nd Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

63. The Committee expressed its appreciation to Switzerland for their excellent work and all activities which they had carried out as Coordinator for the European Region.

64. The Delegation of Poland thanked the Committee for the nomination and informed the Committee that Poland was going to organize a workshop on the strengthening of the work of the National Codex Contact Points in 2009.

OTHER BUSINESS AND FUTURE WORK (Agenda Item 8)¹³

65. The Coordinating Committee recalled that when adopting the Provisional Agenda it had agreed to consider a number of items (see Agenda Item 1) of specific regional interest.

¹² CX/EURO 08/26/9 REV.

¹³ CRD 6 (Norway); CRD 9 (European Community)

Work Progress in the Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products

66. The Delegation of Norway informed the Committee that the Commission had adopted the Standard for Raw and Bivalve Molluscs and had returned Section 13 on Processing of Lobsters to the next session of the CCFFP for consideration at Step 6. This will enable the Committee to discuss the hygiene control programme for lobsters and for crabs at the same time.

67. The Delegation of the European Community regretted that the standard for Raw and Bivalve Mollusks had not been adopted by the last session of the Commission and Section 13 on Processing of Lobsters had been returned for consideration at Step 6 despite the consensus reached at the CCFFP.

68. The Coordinating Committee noted the importance of this issue to the region and also noted that the report from the joint FAO/WHO consultation on *The Benefits and the Risks of the Use of Chlorine Containing Disinfectants in Food Production and Processing* would be available by the end of 2008.

Labelling of Foods obtained through certain Techniques of Genetic Modification/ Genetic Engineering (GM Labelling)

69. The Delegation of Norway informed the Committee about the physical working group session prior to the next session of the CCFL to progress work on the implementation of the WHO Global Strategy and that prior to this working group three electronic working groups were set up. The Delegation also informed about the results of a working group established by the CCFL and chaired by Norway, Ghana and Argentina on developing a list of principles and guidance on the labelling of GM/GE foods. These results had been discussed at the 36th Session of the CCFL and the Proposed Draft Recommendations for the Labelling of Food and Food Ingredients Obtained through Certain Techniques of Genetic Modification/Genetic Engineering had been revised and returned to Step 3 for comments.

70. The Delegation of the European Community expressed their support for the text elaborated by the Working Group in Ghana and said it was a good starting point for the elaboration of overarching horizontal principles on GM labelling and informed the Committee that the EC had already forwarded its comments on the proposed text.

71. The Coordinating Committee stressed that guidance in this area was needed and would not only be useful for countries in the European region but also for developing countries around the world who wish to develop legislation on the labelling of GM foods. The Coordinating Committee encouraged countries of the region to submit their comments on this matter (CL 2008/11-FL) to the Committee on Food Labelling until 15 November 2008.

Labelling Provisions dealing with the Food Ingredients identified in the WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health

72. The delegation of Norway informed the Committee about the activities of an electronic working group established by the CCFL and chaired by Norway which evaluates possible revisions to Codex texts on food labelling for the food ingredients identified in the WHO Global Strategy. The Coordinating Committee was informed that a physical working group session on this issue will be held prior to the next session of the CCFL.

73. The Coordinating Committee noted the importance of this issue and encouraged members to provide their input regarding the EWG to Norway before 15 October 2008.

Need for further Work on Guidelines on Traceability/Product Tracing

74. The Delegation of Norway informed the Committee about the results of an electronic working group established by the CCFICS and chaired by Norway to clearly describe the present gaps in the implementation of traceability/products tracing, identify the key elements of the guidelines that would address these gaps and consider the technical and economical feasibility of countries to implement traceability/product tracing. In the working group, members had only given limited input and very limited information from countries which were not implementing traceability/product tracing thus it was not possible to assess fully the need for further guidance on this matter. Therefore, Norway will propose to the

next session of the CCFICS that the FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committees should be asked to consider this matter and provide their views so that the CCFICS can take an informed decision on this matter.

75. The Coordinating Committee encouraged members to support this proposal at the next Session of the CCFICS and in the Commission.

Revision of the Code of Ethics for International Trade in Food

76. The Coordinating Committee stressed the usefulness of the Code of Ethics especially for developing countries and countries in transition and strongly supported its revision which should not reiterate existing provisions in Codex texts or the WTO agreements but focus on the protection of consumers in countries which do not yet have the capacity for adequate import control for food safety and quality. The Coordinating Committee encouraged members to submit comments on the draft document (CL 2008/19-GP) to the Codex Secretariat until 30 November 2008.

New work on Guidelines for the Detection and Identification of Foods Derived from Biotechnology

77. The Coordinating Committee welcomed the approval by the 31st Session of the Commission of the new work in the field of GM detection methods using “criteria approach” and stressed that this work was particularly important for developing countries and countries in transition. The Coordinating Committee therefore encouraged all members to participate actively in this new work.

Annex on Food Safety Assessment in Situations of Low-level Presence of Recombinant –DNA Plant Material in Food

78. The Coordinating Committee welcomed the contributions of FAO and OECD to the development of a database related to the *Annex on Food Safety Assessment in Situations of Low-level Presence of Recombinant – DNA Plant Material in Food* accessible through the International Portal on Food Safety, Plant and Animal Health.

79. Further to the request by the European Community for regular information on the progress on the development of the data base, the Representative from FAO advised that every effort would be made to keep the Commission informed about this activity.

Justification for the Use of Food Additives

80. The Coordinating Committee noted that it was important for delegations to stress in the relevant Codex Commodity Committees that in accordance with section 1.2 of the Preamble of the *General Standard for Food Additives*, Commodity Committees had the responsibility and expertise to appraise and justify the technological need for the use of additives in foods subject to a commodity standard, while the task of the Codex Committee on Food Additives was more focused on the safety of these food additives. Therefore, when the food categories, as defined by the GSFA, are much broader than the scope of the Codex Commodity Standards is not appropriate to just refer in a commodity standard to the list of food additives of the corresponding food category.

DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE (Agenda Item 9)

81. The Coordinating Committee was informed that its 27th Session would be held in approximately two years time and that more detailed arrangements would be communicated to Members following the appointment of the Coordinator by the 32th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

Appendix I

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Appendix 2

**Members Web Sites on Nutrition
Activities**

IRELAND: www.fooddudes.ie

ITALY: www.inran.it

www.ministerosalute.it/alimenti/nutrizione/nutrizione.jsp

NORWAY: www.mattilsynet.no

POLAND: www.trzymajforme.pl

www.gdainfo.pl

**SLOVAK
REPUBLIC** <http://www.land.gov.sk/index.php?navID=178&id=897>

SWEDEN: www.slv.se

**SWITZERLAN
D** www.bag.admin.ch

**UNITED
KINGDOM:** www.food.gov.uk

www.eatwell.gov.uk

www.salt.gov.uk

**EUROPEAN
COMMUNITY:** www.ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/nutrition/documents/nutrition_wp_en.pdf