

CODEx ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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Agenda Items 13

ASIA20/CRD6

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR ASIA

Twentieth Session

New Delhi, India, 26-30 September 2016

DISCUSSION PAPER ON CO-CHAIRING OF CODEX COMMITTEE MEETINGS

(prepared by the Chairperson of CCASIA20)

1. Capacity building in developing countries, least developed countries and small island developing states, low income countries etc. has always been in the fore-front of Codex Alimentarius Commission. Efforts have been made by the Codex members, FAO and WHO to provide training on various aspects of Codex. Establishment of the Codex Trust Fund (CTF) in 2003 with contribution from members has supported the widening and quality of participation of developing countries. The Codex Trust Fund Successor Initiative (CTF2) has been launched in 2016 to provide support for tailor made capacity building needs of countries identified in the Annex 3 of CTF2 document. In the recent times, Technical Cooperation Programmes (TCP) have been implemented by FAO in some countries for establishment of National Codex structures and to build awareness about Codex and its functioning.
2. The 2002 Evaluation of Codex also pointed out the need for co-hosting of Codex sessions. Proposal No. 32 (Co-chairmanship) was discussed in 26th Session of the Commission held in 2003 (ALINORM 03/41). The Commission referred the matter (paragraph 178) to the CCGP requesting development of appropriate guidelines and explore further the question of co-chairpersons. The Commission also recommended (paragraph 179) that the advice to host governments should include arrangement for holding Codex sessions in developing countries. Some delegations considered vice-chairing arrangements should be considered as an alternative to co-chairmanship, although this was not accepted by other delegations.
3. During the 32nd Session of the Commission held in 2009 (ALINORM 09/32/REP), the Commission discussed the Evaluation of Codex Sessions held in Developing Countries under Agenda Item 11c, based on a study carried out by the Codex Secretariat on the effectiveness of Codex Committee sessions held in developing countries under co-hosting arrangements. The Commission noted (paragraph 158) that the evaluation, while acknowledging various positive impacts on the venue countries, had indicated that in terms of the level of participation, co-hosting arrangements had not had a positive impact with the exception of a few cases. The main reason cited was the late availability of official invitation leading to delays in the signing of the Letter of Agreement (LOA) and Memorandum of Responsibilities (MOR) between FAO and the venue country. Guidance was provided by the Chairperson of the Commission concerning timelines to be reviewed in five years' time (paragraph 160).
4. Many delegations (paragraph 162) stressed that the impact of co-hosting arrangements should not be seen only in terms of level of participation but also in the light of capacity-building in venue countries. It was noted that co-hosting could lead to awareness-raising among relevant stakeholders and might have influence at the political level to assign a higher priority to Codex matters, in addition to imparting knowledge and experiences in hosting Codex Sessions to the officials of the venue country. In view of these unquantifiable but important benefits, the continuation of co-hosting arrangements was strongly supported. Several other practical suggestions were also discussed.
5. Some delegations suggested (paragraph 166) that guidelines for co-hosting arrangements be developed by the Committee on General Principles (CCGP), incorporating recommendations made and practical solutions proposed during the session, in order to make them widely available.

6. The Commission agreed (paragraph 167) to ask the Codex Secretariat to prepare a discussion paper for consideration by the next session of the Committee on General Principles (CCGP), on the basis of the current document taking into account the discussion held at the session, and to consider including the standard formats for Letter of Agreement (LOA) and Memorandum of Responsibilities (MOR) in the Procedural Manual. The Commission noted that the discussion paper would focus on measures to expedite the formal processes for co-hosting of Codex sessions and that any proposal concerning the principles for co-hosting arrangements between members such as selection of the co-hosting country should be made by members as a separate issue.

7. Based on the discussion paper prepared by the Codex Secretariat and discussions at the CCGP and subsequently at the Commission, the Co-hosting Arrangements were introduced in the Codex Procedural Manual. The relevant extract from page 95 of the 24th Edition of the Procedural Manual is reproduced below:

Co-hosting arrangements

8. *The host country should consider arrangements for holding Codex sessions in developing countries. The country, different from the host country, in which the session is held is in following referred to as “co-host country”. The host country and co-host country should ensure that all arrangements necessary to hold a Codex session in the co-host country are completed in a timely manner so as to not interfere with the timeframe for the distribution of the official invitations to the session as mentioned in these guidelines.*

Note: *Practical information and timelines for co-hosting arrangements can be found on the Codex website at: www.codexalimentarius.org.*

Co-chairing: *The host country may invite the co-host country to appoint an official as a co-chair for the session.*

9. Following the decision by the Commission, the Codex Secretariat also placed the *Guidance for Co-Hosting Arrangements of Codex Sessions* on the Codex website. According to these guidelines, host countries are encouraged to “consider arrangements for holding Codex sessions in developing countries.” This guidance focuses on the co-hosting procedures regarding formal correspondence, the timeline with sequence of events, and the responsible party for each step in the process.

10. Several initiatives have been taken by countries to co-host Codex Sessions. Between 2006 and 2015 (ten year period), a total of 26 sessions of Codex General Subject Committees and Commodity Committees have been held in developing countries. A list of the co-hosted Codex sessions is given in Table1.

Table 1

Co-hosted Codex General Subject and Commodity Committees (2006 to 2015)

S. No.	Codex Session	Calendar Year	Host Country	Venue Country
1.	CCPR 38	2006	The Netherlands	Brazil
2.	CCRVDF 16	2006	USA	Mexico
3.	CCFFP 28	2006	Norway	China
4.	CCNFSDU 28	2006	Germany	Thailand
5.	CCFICS 15	2006	Australia	Argentina
6.	CCCF 01	2007	The Netherlands	China
7.	CCFH 39	2007	USA	India
8.	CCNFSDU 30	2008	Germany	South Africa
9.	CCFICS 17	2008	Australia	Philippines
10.	CCFH 40	2008	USA	Guatemala
11.	CCRVDF 18	2009	USA	Brazil
12.	CCFFP 30	2009	Norway	Morocco
13.	CCCF 04	2010	The Netherlands	Turkey
14.	CCPFV 25	2010	USA	Indonesia
15.	CCNFSDU 32	2010	Germany	Chile
16.	CCFH 42	2010	USA	Uganda
17.	CCFFP 32	2012	Norway	Indonesia
18.	CCPFV 26	2012	USA	Jamaica
19.	CCFICS 20	2013	Australia	Thailand

20.	CCCF 07	2013	The Netherlands	Russian Federation
21.	CCFH 45	2013	USA	Vietnam
22.	CCPFV 18	2014	Mexico	Thailand
23.	CCFH 46	2014	USA	Peru
24.	CCNFSDU 36	2014	Germany	Indonesia
25.	CCCF 09	2015	The Netherlands	India
26.	CCRVDF 22	2015	USA	Costa Rica

11. Co-hosting arrangements have been successfully organised by host countries and these have generally resulted into greater sensitization about Codex in venue countries and their participation in Codex has greatly enhanced. In addition, co-hosting has also enabled participation by several officials from the venue countries, many of whom would not have had a chance to be a member of National delegations to Codex sessions abroad. This exposure has made a positive impact on the Codex working in developing countries and the quality of their participation has improved.

12. However, it is noted that few co-hosting of Codex sessions have taken place with Least Developed and Low Income countries and with Small Island Developing States (LDCs, LICs, SIDS, etc). There could be several reasons for this, such as lack of sensitization about Codex, lack of awareness about the importance of co-hosting leading to lack of interest in a co-hosting initiative, concern over expenses and nature of responsibilities, travel logistics.

13. One opportunity for capacity building could be co-chairing of a Codex session in the absence of a co-hosting arrangement by one or more representatives of such countries when the Codex session is held in the host country. There is no expense involved in this process. A foreseeable advantage of such an arrangement is that the co-chair will put in extra efforts to understand the agenda in detail in the likelihood of sharing of the agenda between the chair and co-chair. This process would potentially generate greater interest in Codex work in the country represented by the co-chair. It would give recognition not just to the co-chair but also the country represented by the official. During one of the TCP projects, it was noted that the mere prospect of being able to create a proposal for new work for a Codex standard gave an instant pride to the TCP beneficiary country.

14. Preparation for co-chairing needs to begin well in advance. It would be in the interest of Codex if host countries reach out to one or more of the LDCs, LICs, SIDS, etc. for a co-chairing arrangement. It would support such a co-chairing arrangement if the host country works closely with the co-chairing country and the co-chairing official is also designated well in advance. The Regional Coordinating Committees can be seen as more convenient fora for co-chairing arrangements. This initiative would complement the CTF2 for an overall Codex development.

15. A major advantage of such a co-chairing arrangement is that it does not involve any expenses on the part of the co-chairing country, there is also no additional expense involved on the part of the host country. Further, there is no need for signing any Letter of Agreement (LOA) or the Memorandum of Responsibilities (MOR) by the co-chairing country.

Recommendation

16. The CC-Asia is invited to consider the proposal of co-chairing arrangement by a host country, in the absence of a co-hosting arrangement, with one or more of the Least Developed countries, Low Income countries and/or with Small Island Developing States.

