



منظمة الأغذية
والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

联合国
粮食及
农业组织

Food
and
Agriculture
Organization
of
the
United
Nations

Organisation
des
Nations
Unies
pour
l'alimentation
et
l'agriculture

Organización
de las
Naciones
Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

JOINT MEETING

**Joint Meeting of the
Ninety-fifth Session of the Programme Committee
and the
Hundred-and-thirteenth Session of the Finance Committee**

Rome, 10 May 2006

**SAVINGS AND EFFICIENCIES IN GOVERNANCE:
FURTHER ANALYSIS OF ARRANGEMENTS
FOR THE MEETINGS OF THE CCP AND COAG**

Introduction

1. The 124th Session of Council (June 2003) requested the Secretariat to examine the possibility of combining meetings of the Committee on Commodity Problems (CCP) and the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) so as to improve participation and achieve efficiency savings¹. The Secretariat accordingly presented a paper reviewing the pros and cons of alternative arrangements to the Joint Meeting (JM) of the 90th Session of the Programme Committee and the 104th Session of the Finance Committee in September 2003. At the request of the JM, the Secretariat prepared a second paper which elaborated further on possible arrangements and included the recommendation to hold on a trial basis the two sessions back-to-back over a six-day period, with a reduced duration of both CCP and COAG and more limited but more focused agendas. The JM of the 91st Session of the Programme Committee and the 107th Session of the Finance Committee in May 2004 (and subsequently the 127th Session of the Council) accepted this recommendation and the back-to-back arrangement was implemented on a trial basis in 2005. The Secretariat was requested to present its evaluation of the revised format to a later meeting of the JM.
2. Additionally, at the closing meeting of the 19th Session of COAG (13-16 April 2005) it was suggested by some members that COAG and CCP might be merged, while other members

¹ CL 124/REP.

expressed reservations as to the desirability and practicality of such a merger. The Secretariat was requested to examine this possibility when reporting to the JM on the results of the trial arrangement for 2005.

3. A paper evaluating the arrangements made in holding the CCP and COAG sessions back-to-back in 2005 and examining the option of merging the two Committees into one was presented to the JM in September 2005. This paper reviewed the experience of the back-to-back meetings with a reduced duration of both CCP and COAG and more limited but also more focused agendas. The paper noted that the trial implementation of the new arrangement in 2005 had yielded satisfactory results, receiving broad support from the membership and leading to some cost and efficiency savings. The paper concluded that the option of merging the two Committees would have more disadvantages than advantages: the greatest disadvantage being the dilution of the contents and mandates of the Committees. Based on this analysis, it was recommended that the 2005 arrangement be maintained for future sessions of CCP and COAG, but not that they be merged.

4. While some members of the JM agreed with these conclusions and endorsed the back-to-back arrangements for the CCP and COAG, others requested that the option of merger of the two Committees, including its implications for logistics and for the policy work of CCP, be explored further. This paper reviews the issues involved.

The Mandates and Agendas of CCP and COAG

5. Careful consideration of the mandates of CCP and COAG as laid down in the General Rules of the Organization and of the agendas of their recent sessions suggest little justification for a merger arising from duplication or overlap of the issues discussed. The mandate of the CCP is to review commodity problems of an international nature affecting production, trade, distribution, consumption and related economic matters, to provide an analytical survey of the world commodity situation, and to report on associated policy issues. The mandate of COAG is to review agricultural and nutrition problems, including agricultural, food and nutritional matters referred to it on an ad hoc basis, and to advise the Council on the programme of work of the Organization relating to agriculture, food and nutrition. Comparison of the two mandates of CCP and COAG shows that CCP's mandate is more focused and specialized than that of COAG: the CCP mandate emphasizes specifically international commodity markets, trade and policy while the COAG mandate embraces agricultural production, rural development, food security and nutrition.

6. The different mandates of the two Committees are reflected in the agendas of their meetings. These agendas are quite distinct as shown in 2005 when both Committees focused sharply on their core concerns to accommodate the compressed back-to-back timetable. For CCP, the agenda was based on the essential mandate of the Committee – recent agricultural commodity market developments and policy issues. Delegates welcomed the sharper focus of the CCP agenda and discussions, which emphasized the importance of the CCP as an international forum for agricultural trade policy debate, and distinguished it clearly from other FAO Council committees. COAG's agenda included the customary review of FAO's programme of work in food and agriculture but was more forward-looking and strategic than in previous sessions. The rest of the agenda ranged *inter alia* over sustainable agriculture and rural development (SARD), FAO's strategy for a safe and nutritious food supply, bioenergy, biotechnology, plant and animal genetic resources, biodiversity, the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and other standard-setting work, Codex-related work on food safety, water management and land and water quality improvement.

7. Perhaps the key concern in a merger of CCP and COAG is the threat to the CCP's role as an international forum for discussion of agricultural trade policy matters which, as the Director General stressed in his opening statement to Conference, is unique. The risk identified by several members at the JM meeting in September 2005 was that a merger of CCP and COAG would diminish the CCP's work on trade policy and dilute its trade-focused mandate, and would

compromise the work of the CCP's Consultative Sub-Committee on Surplus Disposal (CSSD). The CCP provides an important service to member countries, especially developing country members, in supporting informed debate on the implications of trade policy reform which in turn informs their full participation in international trade negotiations. Policy discussion in 2005 was further strengthened by the organization of Special and Side Events, including a High-Level Round Table on Trade and Food Security. Food aid and the CCP's sub-committee, the Consultative Sub-Committee on Surplus Disposal (CSSD), also figured strongly on the CCP agenda in view of the negotiations on new disciplines for food aid in the WTO which give renewed importance to the CSSD. The CCP's other subsidiary bodies, the Intergovernmental Groups (IGGs) for particular commodities, provide the only truly global platform for the discussion of problems facing producers, exporters and importers and for identifying appropriate solutions to them. The IGGs have increasingly emphasized policy, including sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) and technical barriers to trade (TBT) issues, fulfilling a vital role in informing both producing and consuming member countries, supporting debate on commodity specific policy developments and promoting consensus. In some cases this leads to concrete international action, as the case of the IGG on Tea's work on harmonisation of regulations on maximum residue levels illustrates.

Possible Efficiency Savings through Merger

8. The scope for efficiency savings through merger was covered in the previous paper submitted to the JM (JM 05.2/4, 22 September 2005). However, that discussion might be elaborated slightly. There is no evidence that a merger would lead to cost savings either for the Organization or for members unless the effectiveness of the Committees was to be compromised.

9. Cost savings could only be achieved if merger resulted in a shorter overall duration than a back-to-back arrangement and if only one secretariat could handle the business of the combined committees (CCP and COAG). However, both of these potential areas for cost savings are doubtful and would have adverse implications for the effectiveness of the work of the committee. A shorter overall duration would imply further reductions in the number of agenda items beyond those already made for the back-to-back arrangement in 2005. While the shortened CCP and COAG agendas have been beneficial in leading to sharper focus on key issues, there is no scope for further reducing the number of agenda items if the core mandates of the Committees are to be addressed in any serious way. Sessions might be run in parallel, but then small delegations might struggle to cover these. Parallel sessions would also put greater pressure on headquarters (HQ) meeting resources and facilities with the likelihood of higher costs. Furthermore, having only one Secretariat to cover both meetings would not be efficient in view of the wide differences in the CCP and COAG agendas and the specialized technical knowledge required to service them.

CCP and COAG in the Director-General's Reform Proposals

10. The arrangements for all technical committees of Council have recently been examined by a working group established by the Director-General in the context of his reform proposals. Specifically this working group was asked to investigate ways of streamlining the committees, their scheduling, agendas and methods of work. The findings of the working group strongly supported the holding of meetings back-to-back following the model of the 2005 CCP and COAG meetings. Such an arrangement was seen as allowing each meeting to deal with a regular specific agenda and the Rome-based representatives to cope with demands for briefing and accompanying delegates. Small delegations are able to participate in both meetings. Experience has shown that such an arrangement can be accommodated by HQ meeting resources such as translation and interpretation services as well as meeting facilities. Back-to-back arrangements were regarded as providing the best compromise in terms of minimizing costs for the Organization and members while maximizing effectiveness. The further step of actual merger of committees was regarded as providing no further benefit in terms of efficiency savings unless sessions were run in parallel. However, this would lead to higher costs because of pressure on resources and facilities.

11. The working group explicitly considered the possible merger of specific committees, including CCP and COAG and noted the potential advantages and disadvantages. The working group felt that the disadvantages far outweighed any possible advantages of merger. Specifically it highlighted the threat of reducing serious discussion of trade policy matters in the CCP which a merger would pose, but also more generally the dilution of the technical content of discussion in both Committees through lack of specialized attendance. The conclusions of the working group are reflected in the proposed revised programme entity (PE) structure with separate PEs for servicing of COAG (2AS01) and support to CCP and its subsidiary bodies (3CP08).

Conclusions

12. As requested by the Council and COAG, the positive and negative aspects of an eventual merger of CCP and COAG have been examined by the Secretariat. The Secretariat concludes that a merger would not lead to any cost savings, either for the Organization or for members, beyond those of a back-to-back arrangement and that the effectiveness of the Committees would be reduced. The substantive content of both Committees would be diminished, but in particular, the unique role of the CCP as an important international forum for discussion of trade policy issues would be compromised.