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codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
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WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION



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Agenda Item 13(a)

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Thirty second Session,

FAO Headquarters, Rome, 29 June – 4 July 2009

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

BACKGROUND

1. In accordance with Rule IX.4 of the Rules of Procedure, the Directors-General of FAO or WHO may invite intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations to attend as observers sessions of the Commission and of its subsidiary bodies. Participation of international organizations in the work of the Commission, and the relations between the Commission and such organizations are governed by the relevant provisions of the Rules of Procedure of the Commission and of the Constitutions of FAO or WHO, as well as by the applicable regulations of FAO or WHO on relations with international organizations; such relations are handled by the Director-General of FAO or of WHO as appropriate.

A. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)

2. The 28th Session of the Commission endorsed the four recommendations of the 55th Session of the Executive Committee related to the collaboration between Codex and OIE:

- OIE be encouraged to continue to participate actively in the standard-setting work of the Commission, namely through the work of relevant subsidiary bodies of the Commission;
- OIE be invited to regularly submit, to relevant Codex subsidiary bodies, reports on its activities relevant to the work of these subsidiary bodies, while these subsidiary bodies continue to seek ways to improve cooperation with OIE in their respective area of work and inform the Executive Committee of their decisions/recommendations accordingly; and
- OIE be invited to submit a summary report to the regular sessions of the Commission on its activities of relevance to the work of the Commission, including the outcome of the OIE Working Group on Animal Production Food Safety.

3. The Commission also noted the recommendation of the Executive Committee that the effectiveness of cooperative arrangements being made between Codex and OIE in accordance with the four recommendations should be reviewed by the 30th Session of the Commission (2007) with a view to considering if further arrangements would be necessary or desirable, including those provisions mentioned in Paragraph 13 of the

*Guidelines on Cooperation between the Codex Alimentarius Commission and International Intergovernmental Organizations in the Elaboration on Standards and Related Texts.*¹

4. Subsequently, the 30th Session of the Commission recommended that FAO and WHO study the possibility of reviewing or updating FAO and WHO Agreements with OIE, as might be required. It also requested the Codex Secretariat to identify, in cooperation with the Legal Offices of FAO and WHO, any practical problems affecting the cooperation between Codex and OIE that might need to be addressed in a pragmatic manner, and taking into account all relevant circumstances.²

5. In April 2008, OIE and WHO agreed to a modification to the text of the current OIE/WHO Agreement. This proposal would specifically include the insertion of a specific reference to the Codex Alimentarius Commission in this agreement; such reference being absent in previous versions of the agreement.

6. At the 31st Session of the Commission, it was noted that collaboration with the OIE had considerably enhanced over the years and needed to continue to be strengthened, in particular in the area of control of microorganisms in animal products.³

7. Since July 2008, the representatives of the OIE participated in:

- The 31st Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission;
- The Second Session of the Codex *ad hoc* Intergovernmental Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance (October 2008). The OIE Observer, jointly with the representatives of FAO and WHO, provided a update report of their work on antimicrobial resistance and contributed to the discussion on the development of guidelines for Risk Analysis of Foodborne Antimicrobial Resistance;
- The 17th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (November 2008). The OIE could not attend the session, however it prepared a document on activities relevant to the work of the Committee and contributed with written comments to the discussion and finalisation of the Generic Model Official Certificate and to the discussion on future work on the development of Guidelines for traceability/product tracing;
- The 40th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (December 2008). The OIE presented a document on activities relevant to the work of the Committee and contributed to the discussion on draft guidelines for the control of *Campylobacter* and *Salmonella* spp. in chicken meat;
- The 25th Session of the Codex Committee on General Principles (March/April 2009). The OIE presented a document suggesting to consider possible arrangements for the development of joint standards.

8. Experts with knowledge and experiences in Codex and staff of the Codex Secretariat have continued to participate to the meetings of the OIE Working Group on Animal Production Food Safety (November 2008). In addition, representatives of the Codex Alimentarius Commission have contributed to the preparatory activities the Conference of the OIE International Conference on Animal Identification and Traceability (Buenos Aires, 23-25 March 2009) and participated to the Conference with a presentation on "Codex Alimentarius Standards, Ongoing Work, and Cooperation with the OIE".

9. Information provided by the OIE Secretariat on activities relevant to Codex work will be presented in document CAC/32 INF/4.

World Trade Organization (WTO)

10. The Codex Secretariat regularly participated in the sessions of the SPS and TBT Committees of the WTO and informed the Committees, orally and in writing, of the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission relevant to the WTO. The Codex Secretariat also participated in, and provided support to selected regional or sub-regional workshops on the SPS or TBT Agreements organised by WTO. The Codex Secretariat provided inputs to meetings of the working group of the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF). Representatives of WTO, in return, participated in selected meetings of the Codex

¹ ALINORM 05/28/41 paras 201-203

² ALINORM 07/30/REP paras 210-220

³ ALINORM 08/31/REP para. 195

Alimentarius Commission and its subsidiary bodies. Information provided by the WTO Secretariat on activities relevant to Codex work is contained in document CAC/32 INF/5.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

11. Representatives of FAO/IAEA participated in the Third Session of the Committee on Contaminants in Foods (March 2009) and provided an update on recent activities relevant to the work of the Committee. Information provided by the IAEA Secretariat on activities relevant to Codex work is contained in document CAC/32 INF/6.

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

12. In accordance with its terms of reference, the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables carries out its work in cooperation with the *UNECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards* and its *Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables* and other selected international organizations such as the *OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruits and Vegetables*, to ensure harmonization of standards and avoid duplication of work, while following the same broad format. Existing UNECE standards for fresh fruits and vegetables continue to be taken into account when developing Codex standards for corresponding or similar products as recommended by the Commission.

13. In order to ensure cooperation between the organizations, the Codex Secretariat has regularly participated in meetings of both UNECE and OECD.

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

Quality standards for fresh fruits and vegetables

14. In the OECD, a Council Decision C(2006)95 revising the *OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruits and Vegetables* was adopted in July 2006. As part of this revision, a reference to the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme was included so that also the relevant standards adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, once approved by the Plenary Meeting, shall be applied under the “Scheme” to the products specified in this Decision, at the export stage, when they enter into international trade between countries participating in the “Scheme”. The standards approved by the Plenary Meeting could be also used in the elaboration of explanatory brochures to facilitate inspection and other procedures for conformity to quality standards.⁴

Foods produced through biotechnology

15. In the area on the safety assessment of foods produced through biotechnology, relevant information on the regulatory approaches and other related aspects has regularly been exchanged at the Secretariats' level between Codex and the OECD. The Codex Secretariat attended the meetings of the OECD Task Force for the Safety of Novel Foods and Feeds for the purpose of information exchange and supporting wide use of relevant Codex guidelines on food safety assessments. The collaboration between Codex and the OECD led to the establishment of a database on safety assessments of recombinant-DNA plants hosted under the International Portal on Food Safety, Animal and Plant Health (IPFSAPH).

Other Intergovernmental Organizations

16. The Codex Secretariat regularly attends sessions of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and cooperates with the IPPC Secretariat on matters of common interest to both bodies such as electronic certification. The Codex Secretariat will continue to liaise with the IPPC Secretariat as necessary in the areas of common interest.

17. Furthermore, the Codex Secretariat maintained contact with the secretariats of and/or participated, since May 2008, in selected meetings convened by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)/ International Trade Centre (ITC), the International Olive Oil Council (IOOC), the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants

⁴ ALINORM 07/30/35 para. 8

(UPOV), the International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV), among others, in order to improve inter-agency coordination of work and ensure widest possible use of Codex texts.

18. The Commission is **invited** to note the information above and provide any guidance deemed appropriate to further cooperation and coordination between the Commission and other intergovernmental organizations.

B. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

19. In accordance with Article 6 of the *Principles Concerning the Participation of International Non-Governmental Organizations in the Work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission*, the Secretary reports to the Codex Alimentarius Commission on the relations between the Codex Alimentarius Commission and international non-governmental organizations established in accordance with the present procedures and provides a list of organizations granted Observer Status, with an indication of the membership that they represent.

20. The review of the current observers in the light of the present criteria set out in the *Principles*, will be concluded by the 62nd Session of the Executive Committee concerning 5 INGO that were granted a two-year delay period and had the opportunity to participate/comment but did not do so.⁵

21. A list of all international non-governmental organizations currently in observer status with the Codex Alimentarius Commission, a list of all applications for observer status considered since the 31st Session of the Commission and a list of non-governmental organizations for which the Executive Committee has recommended termination of observer status will be provided to the Commission for information (CAC/32 INF/2).

International Organization for Standardization (ISO)

22. At its 30th Session the Commission supported continued cooperation and coordination with ISO and agreed that the Codex Secretariat should maintain its contacts with ISO and continue to report regularly to the Commission on ISO activities of relevance to Codex work. The Commission also supported increased coordination and cooperation between the focal points of Codex and ISO at the national level.⁶

23. Codex representatives participated in selected meetings of ISO, and representatives of ISO participated in selected Codex meetings. Liaison status has been granted to the Codex Alimentarius Commission by the ISO Committee on Conformity Assessment (CASCO). Information provided by the ISO Central Secretariat on activities relevant to Codex work is contained in CAC/32 INF/7.

24. The Commission is **invited** to note the information provided, identify those areas where coordination of work between Codex and ISO should be maintained or strengthened and make proposals on practical modalities for implementing such coordination, as appropriate.

Other International Non-Governmental Organizations

25. The Codex Secretariat participated in a limited number of meetings of international non-governmental organizations in observer status with Codex, such as the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM). While wider participation of the Codex Secretariat in meetings of international non-governmental organizations may improve the visibility of Codex and contribute to enhancing the take-up of Codex standards in the private sector, the limited staff and financial resources of the Secretariat obliges the Secretariat to focus coordination activities to the collaboration with intergovernmental organizations and a small number of relevant international non-governmental organizations.

⁵ ALINORM 08/31/3, paras 80 and Appendix IV

⁶ ALINORM 07/30/REP, para. 234