

April 2008



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

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## THIRTIETH REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Brasilia, Brazil, 14 to 18 April 2008

### FOOD SAFETY: EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN CODEX ALIMENTARIUS MEETINGS

#### Background<sup>1</sup>

1. The Codex Alimentarius Commission and its subsidiary bodies offer countries a unique opportunity to participate in the formulation of food standards and texts for their global application, to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the trade of food. Today, 99% of the world's population is represented at the Commission through 175 member countries, including 33 in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) accounting for 19% of all member countries, and one member organization (European Community).
2. The Commission meets every year, alternating between the headquarters of FAO and of the World Health Organization (WHO). There are also meetings of its Executive Committee, attended by the Chairperson of the Commission, the Vice-Chairpersons, the members elected from the geographical regions and the regional coordinators.
3. The Codex Commission functions with different types of subsidiary body.
4. *The General Subject Committees (or horizontal committees)* responsible for determining global concepts and principles to apply to food in general or to selected foods or groups of food (e.g. hygiene, additives, contaminants). They ratify or examine the relevant provisions of Codex commodity standards. *The Commodity Committees (or vertical committees)* responsible for drawing up standards for specific foods or groups of food. General subject or commodity committees meet at intervals of one to two years, as appropriate. Their sessions are convened and chaired by a host country designated by the Commission. These committees are dissolved or suspended (*sine die*) when the Commission decides their work has been completed.
5. *The Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Forces* have very limited, time-bound mandates. Their meetings are also convened and chaired by a host country. Those currently active with the participation of LAC countries are:
  - Task Force on Food Derived from Biotechnology

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Understanding the Codex Alimentarius. Third Edition. WHO/FAO, Rome 2006.

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- Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance
  - Task Force on the Processing and Handling of Quick-Frozen Foods.
6. *The FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees* have, among their objectives, the identification of regional problems and needs relating to food standards and inspection. They normally meet every two years, with representations sent from the countries of the respective region. The coordinating country of a region also chairs the Coordinating Committee (for a maximum term of two sessions). The 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> sessions of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean were held in Argentina (2004 and 2006). The next will be hosted by Mexico in November 2008.
  7. The range of Codex Alimentarius sessions held between August of one year and July of the next have been studied to determine the participation of the LAC countries.

#### Sessions from August 2005 to July 2006: Table 1

8. There were 8 *horizontal* committee sessions during this period. For the Caribbean, the country with the highest attendance was Cuba (6/8); for North and Central America, Mexico (6/8) and Costa Rica (8/8); while for South America, Brazil attended all sessions, followed by Chile (7/8) and Argentina (6/8). As regards the remaining countries, 12 (mostly in the Caribbean) did not attend a single session; 10 only attended one session; and 5 participated in 2 sessions.
9. The *horizontal* committee sessions with the highest attendance of LAC countries during this period were:
  - 14<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on *Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems*, attended by 42% of all LAC countries<sup>2</sup>, accounting for 17% of all countries attending.
  - 34<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on *Food Labelling*, attended by 30% of all LAC countries<sup>3</sup>, accounting for 18% of all countries attending.
  - 27<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on *Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses*, attended by 24% of all LAC countries<sup>4</sup>, accounting for 13% of all countries attending.
10. With regard to the *vertical* (or commodity) committees, only one session was held during this period, that of the Committee on *Milk and Milk Products* (New Zealand, March 2006). The session was attended by no countries from the Caribbean and very few from Latin America (Mexico, Nicaragua, Argentina and Brazil), representing 12% of the regional total and 10% of all countries attending.
11. With regard to the 5<sup>th</sup> Session of the *Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Food Derived from Biotechnology* (Japan, September 2005), there was again very limited participation from LAC countries (Cuba, Costa Rica, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil and Chile), representing 18% of the regional total and accounting for 12% of all countries attending.
12. The 29<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (July 2006) was attended by 58% of LAC countries (4/14 for the Caribbean, 7/8 for North and Central America and 8/11 for South America). However, this high regional proportion drops to 18% in terms of all member countries attending the session.

#### Sessions from August 2006 to July 2007: Table 2

13. There were 9 *horizontal* committee sessions during this period. The countries with the highest participation were: for the Caribbean, Cuba (7/9), followed by Jamaica and Dominican

<sup>2</sup> Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Cuba, Dominica, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Guyana, Venezuela.

<sup>3</sup> Barbados, Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Paraguay.

<sup>4</sup> Cuba, Costa Rica, Mexico, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Venezuela.

Republic (3/9); for Central and North America, Mexico (7/9), followed by Costa Rica (5/9); South America was led by Brazil (7/9), followed by Argentina and Chile (6/9), then Paraguay and Ecuador (4/9). Of the remaining countries, 9 (mostly in the Caribbean) did not attend a single session; 9 countries participated in only one session; 5 countries participated in 3; and 2 countries participated in 3 and 4 sessions respectively.

14. The *horizontal* committee meetings with highest LAC attendance during this period were the 35<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on *Food Labelling*, attended by 58% of LAC countries, accounting for 24% of all countries attending. The meetings on: General Principles; Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems; Pesticide Residues; and Food Hygiene, were attended by 27% of LAC countries. However this proportion works out at 13%, 18%, 17% and 16%, respectively, when measured against all member countries attending.
15. The other sessions of *horizontal* committees: Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses; Methods of Analysis and Sampling; Food Contaminants; and Food Additives, were those with the lowest LAC attendance: 18% the first, 9% the others. These proportions fall to 14% for Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses, to 6% for Methods of Analysis and Sampling and to 5% for Food Contaminants and Food Additives when set against overall country attendance.
16. As regards the *vertical* committees, the ranking in terms of LAC attendance was: Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (27%); Fish and Fishery Products (18%); Fats and Oils (15%) and Processed Fruits and Vegetables (9%). The countries of South America were more consistently present at these sessions: Brazil (3/4), Argentina, Chile, Ecuador and Peru (2/4). For the rest, Mexico, Costa Rica and Cuba each attended two of four sessions.
17. As regards the 6<sup>th</sup> Session of the *Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Food Derived from Biotechnology* (Japan, September 2006), there was no attendance from the Caribbean countries; only Costa Rica and Mexico from Central and North America; while South America was represented by Argentina, Brazil, Chile and this time also Paraguay. This translates as 18% LAC attendance, down to 13% as a proportion of all members attending.
18. The session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean held in Argentina in November 2006 was attended by 8 out of 14 Caribbean countries; by 5 out of 8 Central and North American countries; and by 8 out of 11 South American countries – a country representation of 64%.
19. Finally and notably, the 30<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (July 2007) was attended by 61% of LAC countries (4/14 Caribbean, 6/8 North and Central America, 10/11 South America). However, the LAC participation drops to 17% in terms of overall country attendance.
20. The above study indicates that the LAC developing countries with the highest attendance at Codex Alimentarius committee meetings are: Cuba for the Caribbean; Mexico and Costa Rica for North and Central America, respectively; and Brazil, Argentina and Chile for South America.

**Table N° 1: Meetings of Codex Alimentarius committees for the period August 2005 to July 2006**

<b>COUNTRIES</b>	23 <sup>rd</sup> Session Committee on General Principles (France, Apr 06)	14 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (Australia, Nov 05)	38 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Pesticide Residues (Brazil, Apr 06)	16 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods (Mexico, May 06)	27 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (Germany, Nov 05)	38 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants (Netherlands, Apr 06)	34 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Food Labelling (Canada, May 06)	27 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling (Hungary, May 06)	7 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Milk and Milk Products (New Zealand, March 06)	5 <sup>th</sup> Session Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Food Derived from Biotechnology (Japan, Sept 05)	29 <sup>th</sup> Session Codex Alimentarius Commission (Italy, Jul 06)
<b>CARIBBEAN</b>											
Antigua and Barbuda		1									1
Bahamas											
Barbados		1					1				1
Cuba		1	1		1	1	1	1		1	1
Dominica		1									
Grenada											
Haiti							1				
Jamaica							1				1
Dominican Republic											
Saint Kitts and Nevis											
Saint Lucia											
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines											
Suriname											
Trinidad and Tobago											
<b>Caribbean Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>

Table N° 1 Continued

COUNTRIES	23 <sup>rd</sup> Session Committee on General Principles (France, Apr 06)	14 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (Australia, Nov 05)	38 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Pesticide Residues (Brazil, Apr 06)	16 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods (Mexico, May 06)	27 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (Germany, Nov 05)	38 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants (Netherlands, Apr 06)	34 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Food Labelling (Canada, May 06)	27 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling (Hungary, May 06)	7 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Milk and Milk Products (New Zealand, March 06)	5 <sup>th</sup> Session Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Food Derived from Biotechnology (Japan, Sept 05)	29 <sup>th</sup> Session Codex Alimentarius Commission (Italy, Jul 06)
<b>CENTRAL AND NORTH AMERICA</b>											
Belize											
Costa Rica	1	1	1	1	1	1				1	1
El Salvador						1					1
Guatemala		1									1
Honduras											1
Mexico	1	1		1	1	1	1		1	1	1
Nicaragua									1		1
Panama	1						1				1
<b>CA and Mexico Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>

Table N° 1 continued

COUNTRIES	23 <sup>rd</sup> Session Committee on General Principles (France, Apr 06)	14 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (Australia, Nov 05)	38 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Pesticide Residues (Brazil, Apr 06)	16 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods (Mexico, May 06)	27 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (Germany, Nov 05)	38 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants (Netherlands, Apr 06)	34 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Food Labelling (Canada, May 06)	27 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling (Hungary, May 06)	7 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Milk and Milk Products (New Zealand, March 06)	5 <sup>th</sup> Session Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Food Derived from Biotechnology (Japan, Sept 05)	29 <sup>th</sup> Session Codex Alimentarius Commission (Italy, Jul 06)
<b>SOUTH AMERICA</b>											
Argentina	1	1	1		1		1	1	1	1	1
Bolivia		1			1						
Brazil	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Chile	1	1	1		1	1	1	1		1	1
Colombia	1										1
Ecuador		1									1
Guyana		1									
Paraguay	1						1				1
Peru											1
Uruguay				1							1
Venezuela		1			1						
<b>South America Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>LAC countries participating</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Total countries participating</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>% LAC participation*</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>58</b>

\* as a proportion of all LAC countries

Table N° 2: Meetings of Codex Alimentarius committees for the period August 2006 to July 2007

COUNTRIES	24 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on General Principles (France, Apr 07)	15 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (Australia, Nov 06)	39 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Pesticide Residues (China, May 07)	28 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (Thailand, Oct 06)	38 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Food Hygiene (United States, Dec 06)	28 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling (Hungary, Mar 07)	1 <sup>st</sup> Session Committee on Food Contaminants (China, Apr 07)	39 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Food Additives (China, Apr 07)	35 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Food Labelling (Canada, May 07)	28 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Fish and Fishery Products (China, Sept 06)	13 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (Mexico, Sept 06)	23 <sup>rd</sup> Session Committee on Processed Fruits and Vegetables (United States, Oct 06)	20 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Fats and Oils (United Kingdom, Feb 07)	6 <sup>th</sup> Session Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Food Derived from Biotechnology (Japan, Nov 06)	15 <sup>th</sup> Session FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for LAC (Argentina, Nov 06)	30 <sup>th</sup> Session Codex Alimentarius Commission (Italy, July 07)
<b>CARIBBEAN</b>																
Antigua and Barbuda					1						1				1	1
Bahamas													1			
Barbados									1							
Cuba	1	1	1	1			1	1	1		1	1			1	
Dominica		1	1												1	
Grenada																
Haiti									1						1	1
Jamaica	1				1				1		1				1	1
Dominican Republic		1	1						1						1	1
Saint Kitts and Nevis									1							
Saint Lucia									1						1	
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines																
Surinam													1			
Trinidad and Tobago															1	
<b>Caribbean Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>

Table N° 2 continued

COUNTRIES	24 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on General Principles (France, Apr 07)	15 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (Australia, Nov 06)	39 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Pesticide Residues (China, May 07)	28 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (Thailand, Oct 06)	38 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Food Hygiene (United States, Dec 06)	28 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling (Hungary, Mar 07)	1 <sup>st</sup> Session Committee on Food Contaminants (China, Apr 07)	39 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Food Additives (China, Apr 07)	35 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Food Labelling (Canada, May 07)	28 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Fish and Fishery Products (China, Sept 06)	13 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (Mexico, Sept 06)	23 <sup>rd</sup> Session Committee on Processed Fruits and Vegetables (United States, Oct 06)	20 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Fats and Oils (United Kingdom, Feb 07)	6 <sup>th</sup> Session Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Food Derived from Biotechnology (Japan, Nov 06)	15 <sup>th</sup> Session FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for LAC (Argentina, Nov 06)	30 <sup>th</sup> Session Codex Alimentarius Commission (Italy, July 07)
<b>CENTRAL AND NORTH AMERICA</b>																
Belize																
Costa Rica	1		1	1	1				1			1	1	1	1	1
El Salvador	1		1													1
Guatemala					1										1	1
Honduras																1
Mexico	1	1	1	1	1			1	1	1	1			1	1	1
Nicaragua					1				1						1	
Panama															1	1
<b>CA and Mexico Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>



Table N° 2 continued

COUNTRIES	24 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on General Principles (France, Apr 07)	15 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (Australia, Nov 06)	39 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Pesticide Residues (China, May 07)	28 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (Thailand, Oct 06)	38 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Food Hygiene (United States, Dec 06)	28 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling (Hungary, Mar 07)	1 <sup>st</sup> Session Committee on Food Contaminants (China, Apr 07)	39 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Food Additives (China, Apr 07)	35 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Food Labelling (Canada, May 07)	28 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Fish and Fishery Products (China, Sept 06)	13 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (Mexico, Sept 06)	23 <sup>rd</sup> Session Committee on Processed Fruits and Vegetables (United States, Oct 06)	20 <sup>th</sup> Session Committee on Fats and Oils (United Kingdom, Feb 07)	6 <sup>th</sup> Session Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Food Derived from Biotechnology (Japan, Nov 06)	15 <sup>th</sup> Session FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for LAC (Argentina, Nov 06)	30 <sup>th</sup> Session Codex Alimentarius Commission (Italy, July 07)
<b>SOUTH AMERICA</b>																
Argentina	1	1	1	1		1			1		1		1	1	1	1
Bolivia									1						1	1
Brazil			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1
Chile	1	1	1	1		1			1	1	1			1	1	1
Colombia	1								1		1					1
Ecuador		1					1	1	1	1		1			1	1
Guyana		1							1							
Paraguay	1	1			1				1					1	1	1
Peru					1					1	1				1	1
Uruguay									1						1	1
Venezuela										1						1
<b>South America Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>LAC countries participating</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Total countries participating</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>% LAC participation *</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>61</b>

\* as a proportion of all LAC countries