

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
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ALINORM 07/30/19

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

*Thirtieth Session
Rome, Italy, 2-7 July 2007*

REPORT OF THE TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR EUROPE

*Vilnius, Lithuania
15-18 January 2007*

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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The 25th Session of the Codex Coordinating Committee for Europe reached the following conclusions:

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE 30TH SESSION OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND BY THE 59TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

The Coordinating Committee:

- endorsed the recommendations of the 28th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission regarding the role and activities of Regional Coordinating Committees (para. 7) and made specific comments (paras. 8 – 11);
- urged FAO and WHO to mobilise sufficient resources to allow the CAC to fulfil its mandate. In particular the Committee was very concerned that the option of cancelling the sessions of the Regional Coordinating Committees had been envisaged due to budgetary uncertainty (para. 15);
- endorsed Part 1 of the draft Strategic Plan 2008-2013 (para. 16) and made comments on Part 2 (paras 18-21) and endorsed Part 3 (para. 22);
- supported *Proposals 1 and Proposals 3 to 11* related to the Review of the Codex Committees Structure and Mandates of Codex Committees and Task Forces and made comments (paras. 25-29);
- unanimously agreed that Switzerland be re-appointed as Regional Coordinator for Europe for a second term (para. 54). The delegation of Poland offered to host the next Session of the Committee in Warsaw.

MATTERS REFERRED TO CODEX COMMITTEES AND TASK FORCES

The Coordinating Committee:

Codex Committee on General Principles (CCGP)

- agreed that there was no need to change the current terms of reference of the coordinating committees (para. 33);
- agreed a position on the roles of the Regional Coordinators and the Members Elected on a Geographical Basis and that they should be clarified in the Procedural Manual by the next Session of the Codex Committee on General Principles (para. 35);
- congratulated the working group on Working Principles for Risk Analysis for Food Safety for Application by Governments for its achievement and fully supported the progress of the document in the Codex procedure (para 63);
- supported a principle of ethics concerning the export or re-export of food (para. 68).

Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL)

- expressed a number of positions concerning the Labelling of Foods and Food Ingredients obtained through certain Techniques of Genetic Modification/Genetic Engineering (para. 66)
- fully supported the final adoption of all individual cheese standards as proposed by the Codex Committee on Milk and Milk Products including the declaration of the country of origin (i.e. country of manufacture) (para. 64).

OTHER MATTERSThe Coordinating Committee:

- noted information by FAO and WHO on activities complementary to the work of Codex, including capacity building in the region (paras. 37 - 43);
- noted the reports submitted by delegations on national food control system and consumer participation in food standards setting (paras. 44 - 49);
- recognized that within the European Union and the European Economic Area, the national food standards were harmonized with the regulations of the European Community and the latter regulations were set taking account of Codex standards and related texts. Therefore Codex standards and related texts carried an important weight, providing a basis for the food standards applied in the region (para. 51).

INTRODUCTION

1. The 25th Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Europe was held in Vilnius from 15 to 18 January 2007 at the kind invitation of the Government of Lithuania in cooperation with the Coordinator for Europe (Switzerland). The Session was chaired by Mr. Urs Klemm (Switzerland) assisted by Ms. Awilo Ochieng Pernet (Switzerland), and attended by 55 delegates and observers representing 31 members, one Observer country, two international governmental and two non-governmental organizations. A complete list of participants, including the Secretariat, is given in Appendix I to this report.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

2. The session was opened by Mr. Romualdas Sabaliauskas, Secretary, Ministry of Health of Lithuania, who welcomed the participants to Vilnius. He said that the meeting jointly organized by the Lithuanian National Nutrition Centre and the Swiss Government in cooperation with FAO and WHO was an important event for Lithuania and would increase mutual understanding and facilitate work on the preparation and implementation of international standards. He recalled the achievements 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 in national and international law. He wished the participants a fruitful session and a pleasant time in Lithuania.

3. The Representatives of FAO and WHO also welcomed the delegations and thanked the Lithuanian and Swiss Governments for their contributions to the organization of the session.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Agenda item 1) ¹

4. The Coordinating Committee adopted the provisional agenda as its agenda for the Session. It agreed that the following items would be considered under Agenda item 7 "Other Business and Future Work" if the time available allowed this:

- Proposed Draft Working Principles for Risk Analysis for Food Safety for Application by Governments (proposed by Germany on behalf of the Member States of the European Union)
- Country of Origin Labelling Provisions for Individual Cheese Standards (proposed by Germany on behalf of the Member States of the European Union)
- Labelling of Foods and Food Ingredients obtained through certain Techniques of Genetic Modification/Genetic Engineering (proposed by Germany on behalf of the Member States of the European Union)
- Code of Ethics for International Trade in Food (proposed by Germany on behalf of the Member States of the European Union)
- Information on work on Natural Mineral Waters within Codex (proposed by Switzerland)
- Information concerning the forthcoming election of a Member of the Executive Committee from Europe (proposed by the United Kingdom)

5. The Committee noted the division of competence between the European Community and its Member States, presented by the Delegation of the European Community as CRD1, according to Rule II.5 of the Rules of Procedure.

¹ CX/EURO 07/25/1 and CRD 1

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

6. The Coordinating Committee noted matters arising from the 28th and 29th Sessions of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and from the 23rd Session of the Codex Committee on General Principles, as summarised in the working document and discussed in particular the following matters:

Review of the Regional Coordinating Committees (28th CAC)

7. The Coordinating Committee noted and endorsed the recommendations of the 28th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission regarding the role and activities of Regional Coordinating Committees. The following specific remarks were made:

8. The Committee felt that progress had been made on encouraging countries' participation in CCEURO but that more needed to be done encourage participation of countries outside the European Union.

9. The Committee agreed that no action was necessary to review its work programme and priorities as there were no standard setting activities in CCEURO.

10. The Chairperson informed the Committee that in order to improve communication and coordination in the region Switzerland had created a website including a discussion forum in English and Russian (www.codexeurope.ch). He encouraged all participants to make active use of these tools. He said that one of the major problems in setting up the system had been that many of the email addresses of Codex Contact Points had not been up to date.

11. All participants were reminded that the correct and functioning email addresses of Codex Contact Points should be notified to the Codex Secretariat and that these email accounts should regularly be attended to avoid rejection of messages due to the limited capacity of mail servers. The ideal solution would be generic email accounts which could be checked regularly by several persons. Since 2006 paper distribution of working papers had been discontinued and thus the electronic way was the only possibility to ensure communication between Codex members and the Codex Secretariat.

12. The Committee congratulated Switzerland for the successful organisation of three training courses during its term Vilnius (2005, 2007) and Zagreb, Croatia (2006) in cooperation with FAO and WHO and supported future organisation of workshops and seminars including in conjunction with the Coordinating Committee meetings.

Strategic Plan 2008-2013 (29th CAC)

13. The Coordinating Committee recalled the recommendation made by the 58th Session of the Executive Committee, agreed by the 29th Session of the Commission, inviting the Coordinating Committee to comment on the draft Strategic Plan 2008-2013 contained in ALINORM 06/29/3A, Appendix II.

14. The Coordinating Committee considered the draft Strategic Plan 2008-2013 and made the following general comment.

15. The Committee urged FAO and WHO to mobilise sufficient resources to allow the CAC to fulfil its mandate. In particular the Committee was very concerned that the option of cancelling the sessions of the Regional Coordinating Committees had been envisaged due to budgetary uncertainty.

Part 1

16. The Committee had no specific proposals to amend Part 1 of the draft Strategic Plan and endorsed it in its entirety.

17. Concerning Goal 4 the delegation of Germany, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the European Union, indicated that it was in favour of an improved cooperation with the OIE which was working on subjects directly related to Codex Standards and related texts. The delegation suggested that innovative approaches could be taken for that purpose such as joint working groups or task forces.

² CX/EURO 07/25/2 and CRD 5 (Comments submitted by the European Community)

Part 2

18. The Committee, recalling the dual mandate of the Commission, recommended inserting into Activities 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4 after the words “not more trade restrictive than necessary” the new text “while respecting the basic objectives of the CAC.”.

19. The Committee, recognising the importance of the WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health and the work being carried out by CCFL and CCNFSDU, recommended inserting into Activity 1.3 after the words “technological developments” the new words “and the WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health.”.

20. As regards Goal 5: “Promoting Maximum and Effective Participation of Members” the Committee, while acknowledging the prerogative of Committees to establish working groups when necessary to advance texts between sessions of Committees and at the same time recognizing the financial burden on countries hosting such groups, expressed its concern at the proliferation of inter-sessional physical working groups and the fact that the business of these working groups was often conducted in English only. The Committee feared that both the increasing number of these meetings as well as language limitation could negatively affect inclusiveness and transparency in Codex standards development.

21. The Committee stressed that the Guidelines on Physical Working Groups should be fully respected and that on each occasion it should be considered whether there was a real need to create a physical working group or if an electronic working group could also accomplish the task. Whenever a physical working group was established all effort should be made to use, as much as possible, all languages of the Committee that established it, e.g. it could be considered to co-finance interpretation/translation costs by several members.

Part 3

22. The Coordinating Committee supported the recommendation of the 58th Executive Committee, agreed by the 29th Commission, on the replacement of the current format used by the Executive Committee for the Critical Review with Table 2, Part 3 of the draft Strategic Plan.

Review of the Codex Committee Structure and Mandate of Codex Committees and Task Forces (29th CAC)

23. The Coordinating Committee discussed the proposals contained in paragraphs 1 to 28 of document ALINORM 06/29/9B Part II Add.1 “Review of the Codex Committees Structure and Mandates of Codex Committees and Task Forces”, prepared by the Codex Secretariat for the 29th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

24. In noting that the deadline for the submission of comments to CL 2006/29-CAC requesting governments and observers’ comments on the same subject was 31 January 2007, the Coordinating Committee agreed that its comments on this matter would not pre-empt the views of individual countries on the proposals.

25. The Coordinating Committee supported *Proposals 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11* and noted specific comments made, as follows.

Proposal 1

26. The Delegation of the United Kingdom, while supporting the proposal, requested clarification on actual mechanisms that could be used to implement the proposal in practice. The Codex Secretariat informed the Committee that oversight should be exercised using several managerial tools in order to keep the total number of Codex sessions per biennium under an upper limit and ensure balanced session planning throughout each calendar year. First, the Commission should be cautious in establishing new subsidiary bodies or reactivating committees which have been adjourned sine die so as to keep the number of active committees manageable. Second, the Commission, on the advice of the Executive Committee, should carefully review the Codex pluriannual session planning, developed by the Codex Secretariat and presented to the Commission on a regular basis. Third, dialogue between the host governments of subsidiary bodies and the Codex Secretariat was essential in ensuring an appropriate session interval for each subsidiary body and an optimal sequence between their sessions.

Proposal 6

27. The Coordinating Committee, while supporting the proposal in principle, did not express opinions, at this stage, on the specific examples presented in the document as to the way some of existing subsidiary bodies could be merged. The Delegation of the United Kingdom referred to the written comments made on behalf of the Member States of the European Union which stated that care should be taken in order not to create a committee of such broad mandate that its work would become inefficient and that a case-by-case approach was recommended in this regard.

Proposal 10

28. The Coordinating Committee recalled that it had recommended to include a specific reference to the WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health in the Codex Strategic Plan 2008-2013 (see paragraph xx above) and reaffirmed the leading role of the Committees on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses and on Food Labelling in dealing with nutrition-related issues within Codex.

29. The Coordinating Committee did not support Proposal 2, holding a view that a purely arithmetic approach to limit the number of active subsidiary bodies was not appropriate and that the Commission should retain the possibility of establishing a subsidiary body without dissolving or adjourning another.

Terms of Reference of Regional Coordinating Committees (23rd CCGP)

30. The Chairperson invited the Coordinating Committee to address two questions: (i) whether it is desirable to keep the terms of reference of all Coordinating Committees harmonised, and (ii) what reasons would justify an amendment to the current terms of reference for CCLAC, and eventually for CCEURO, to refer to “promoting the adoption of regional positions on strategic subjects”.

31. The Delegation of Germany, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the European Union, stated that the terms of reference of the Coordinating Committees should be kept harmonised and that if a change was to be made in the terms of reference of one coordinating committee then the same change should be made to the terms of reference of the other committees. The Delegation further stated that the promotion of the adoption of regional positions was already covered by the current terms of reference and there was no need to amend them. This view was supported by the Delegation of Switzerland.

32. The Coordinating Committee also noted the views and comments of other delegations 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; that seeking consensus and reaching compromise might become even more challenging than ever if regional positions originating from different coordinating committees were systematically presented to the Commission and such situation might imply a substantive change in Codex decision-making process; and that it should be evaluated whether, if one coordinating committee changed its terms of reference (TOR) to include a new function, there were legal implications for other coordinating committees who considered their TOR to be broad enough to include such a function and who therefore did not change their TOR.

33. The Coordinating Committee agreed that there was no need to change the TORs of coordinating committees as proposed by CCLAC since in its view the current terms of reference were broad enough to cover the envisaged functions, and that the terms of reference of all coordinating committees should remain harmonised.

Respective Roles of the Regional Coordinators and the Members of the Executive Committee Elected on a Geographical Basis (23rd CCGP)

34. The Coordinating Committee examined the issue of the respective roles of the Regional Coordinators and the Members of the Executive Committees Elected on a Geographical Basis.

35. The Coordinating Committee agreed with the view of the Delegation of Germany, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the European Union, that Coordinators should be able to express the views from the region or group of countries and represent the interests of the same, while the members of the Executive Committee elected on a geographical basis should represent the interests of the whole membership of the Commission from the perspective of the region which elected them. The delegation suggested that in the forthcoming session of the Committee on General Principles these two complementary roles should be clarified and that the clarification could be included in the Procedural Manual.

36. The Coordinating Committee also agreed that the current arrangements regarding the advisors accompanying the members of the Executive Committee elected on a geographical basis were functioning well and the arrangements could stay unchanged.

ACTIVITIES OF FAO AND WHO COMPLEMENTARY TO THE WORK OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION INCLUDING CAPACITY BUILDING (Agenda Item 3)³

37. The Representatives of FAO and WHO informed the Committee of both Organizations' activities to build capacity in member countries to strengthen public health and food control systems. Information was also provided on the outcome of FAO/WHO expert meetings providing scientific advice on chemical and microbiological hazards in foods as well as other issues of food safety concern to Codex and member countries. A progress report on the FAO/WHO Consultative Process on the Provision of Scientific Advice and the current table of requests to FAO/WHO for scientific advice was also provided. Future work was planned on active chlorine, viruses in food, and antimicrobial resistance.

38. The Committee was advised that two participants to this CCEURO meeting were supported by the FAO/WHO Trust Fund for Enhancing Participation in Codex. The Codex Trust Fund also supported the FAO/WHO Seminar on Strengthening Knowledge of Codex Procedures and Risk Analysis, organised in coordination with Switzerland, on 14 January 2007, in conjunction with the present session.

39. The Committee was advised that FAO and WHO continue to actively build capacity in the CCEURO region, including national and regional projects on food safety and food control, seminars and training courses on microbiological risk assessment, Codex Alimentarius, "Five Keys for Safer Food". A range of FAO/WHO training manuals and tools are available to support these activities. The International Portal on Food Safety, Animal and Plant Health and the International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN) were highlighted as important information exchange mechanisms.

40. The Committee was advised of the WHO European Ministerial Conference on Counteracting Obesity, convened in Istanbul on 15-17 November 2006 to follow up on the WHO Global Strategy for Nutrition, Physical Activity and Health. It resulted in the adoption of a European Charter on Counteracting Obesity, which provided political guidance to strengthen action in the region. The Committee noted that the European Commission had introduced a platform for action on diet, physical activity and health which involved key commitments by industry and other players.

41. The Representatives of FAO and WHO extended gratitude to governments for their support in capacity building activities and the provision of scientific advice, and for the continuing support to the FAO/WHO Trust Fund for Enhancing Participation in Codex.

42. The Delegation of Germany, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the European Union commended the work done by FAO and WHO in capacity building and the provision of scientific advice. The delegation however urged FAO and WHO to put in place appropriate mechanisms to ensure adequate funding for the work of Codex as well as the FAO/WHO work on scientific advice in support of Codex.

43. The Delegation of the Netherlands identified a number of actions Codex members may take to support the work of FAO and WHO in scientific advice: (i) emphasise the importance of Codex and Codex-related activities in the governing bodies of FAO and WHO so that the latter allocate adequate budget to these programmes, (ii) make financial and in-kind contribution to FAO and WHO for organising ad hoc expert meetings, (iii) ensure the availability of national experts to contribute to the scientific meetings convened by FAO and WHO, (iv) second qualified experts to FAO and WHO to work

³ CX/EURO 07/25/3 Part 1 and Part 2

directly on food safety issues, and (v) submit relevant scientific data to FAO and WHO as a basis for risk assessments.

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

44. The Coordinating Committee was informed of the recent developments and current status on food control and food safety issues in member countries in the region, on the basis of the written submissions in reply to Circular Letter 2006/21-EURO, Part A.

45. After a round of presentations and discussions, the Chairperson congratulated the members for providing extensive information and for their good will to share their own experiences and relevant information with the other members.

Structure and organization of official services responsible for food control

46. The Coordinating Committee agreed that risk analysis principles should be the foundation of any national food control system. The Committee noted that the functional separation between risk assessment and risk management was increasingly implemented at the government level, and the food chain approach was considered as a key to successful implementation of food control activities. The Committee noted that administrative arrangements ranged from the establishment of a single agency to the coordination among different ministries/governmental agencies. The Committee was informed that in some countries the responsibility for enforcement was delegated to local governments in accordance with their decentralised administrative structure.

Legislation and regulations on food safety and quality including import/export matters

47. The Coordinating Committee noted that the legislation and regulations on food safety and quality were harmonised among the member states of the European Union and of the European Economic Area. Several other countries in the region were interested in harmonising their legislation and regulations with those of the European Union, where appropriate, in order to facilitate food trade. Some of these countries requested information on the EU legislation in non-EU official languages. The new food law of the European Union had recently entered into force with the goal of providing more flexibility while maintaining the same safety level. Under the new legislation each operator is responsible for the safety and traceability of products in their responsibility. Country profiles are used within the European Union to support its monitoring and enforcement activities on food safety, animal health, animal welfare and plant health in its Member States. The profiles of 13 countries are available online at http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/country_profiles_en.cfm.

Cooperation with other countries on food legislation and food control matters

48. The Coordinating Committee was informed that a number of cooperation projects existed within the European Union and its prospective member countries but also between the EU countries and other countries in the region. The Committee noted, as one example, a food safety and nutrition-oriented project carried out under the auspices of the Stability Pact in the Southeast European region, in cooperation with WHO and the Council of Europe, Council of Europe Development Bank and other partners and donors. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Moldova, Romania and Serbia (lead country) were participating in this project.

⁴ CX/EURO 07/25/4 (Information of Austria, European Community, Finland, France, Ireland, Lithuania, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom submitted in response to CL 2006/21-EURO, Part A); CX/EURO 07/25/4-Add.1 (Information of Poland and Sweden); CRD 2 (Information of Switzerland); CRD 3 (Information of the Czech Republic); CRD 4 (Information of Estonia); CRD 6 (Information of Norway), CRD 7 (Information of Denmark); CRD 8 (Information of Latvia); CRD 10 (Information of Serbia) and CRD 11 (Information of Slovakia).

Consumer Participation in Standards Setting

49. The Coordinating Committee noted that in many countries 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. The modalities for such consultation might be formal or informal. Governments in the region were increasingly aware of the importance to involving consumers in policy-making, including when defining means allowing consumers to make informed choices when purchasing foods. The Committee also noted a report from Denmark on its experience on how to provide feedback to consumers regarding the outcome of official inspections to food businesses, as part of risk communication activities. Other countries reported on their experiences in introducing voluntary nutrition labelling schemes, in consultation with consumers and the food industry.

INFORMATION ON USE OF CODEX STANDARDS AT NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS (Agenda Item 5)⁵

50. The Coordinating Committee recalled the decision of the 57th Session of the Executive Committee to add a new agenda item for Regional Coordinating Committees regarding the use of Codex standards and related texts at the national and regional level. Following the abolition, by the Commission, of the notification procedure of the acceptance of Codex standards, all Coordinating Committee were thus tasked to monitor the use/non-use of Codex texts and identify related problems. The Coordinating Committee thanked the members having sent written submissions in reply to Circular Letter 2006/21-EURO, Part B.

51. The Committee recognised that within the European Union and the European Economic Area, the national food standards were harmonised with the regulations of the European Community and the latter regulations were set taking account of Codex standards and related texts. Therefore Codex standards and related texts carried an important weight, providing a basis for the food standards applied in the region.

52. The Delegation of Norway stressed the particular importance of Codex standards for fish and fish products as a common platform for solving trade problems between Norway and its trade partners outside the region. Furthermore the delegation highlighted the usefulness of Codex texts developed through CCFICS and CCMAS in addressing problems that may occur in the import/export setting and when there arise questions on the compliance of food consignments with respect to relevant standards.

53. The Delegation of Italy stated that the extent to which and the condition under which Codex standards and related texts were transposed to national legislation might be different from one region to another, and looked forward to being informed of the discussion taking place on this item in other Coordinating Committees.

NOMINATION OF THE COORDINATOR (Agenda Item 6)⁶

54. On the proposal of the Delegation of Poland, the Coordinating Committee unanimously agreed to recommend to the 30th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission that Switzerland be appointed as Coordinator for Europe for a second term.

55. The Delegation of Switzerland thanked all Countries for their support and accepted the nomination. The delegation proposed that following the successful cooperation with Lithuania during the first term, the 26th Session of the CCEURO could be organised in Poland. The Delegation of Poland accepted this and expressed its willingness to work together with the Coordinator.

56. The Coordinating Committee thanked Lithuania for the excellent work carried out in assisting Switzerland during the current term and as host country of the 25th Session of the CCEURO.

⁵ CX/EURO 07/25/5 (Information of Austria, European Community, Finland, Ireland, Lithuania, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom submitted in response to CL 2006/21-EURO, Part B); CX/EURO 07/25/5-Add.1 (Information of Poland); CRD 3 (Information of the Czech Republic); CRD 4 (Information of Estonia); CRD 8 (Information of Latvia); and CRD 11 (Information of Slovakia).

⁶ CX/EURO 07/25/6.

OTHER BUSINESS AND FUTURE WORK (Agenda Item 7)⁷

57. When adopting the provisional agenda the Committee had agreed to add a number of issues for information or for discussion under this item (see para. 4)

Information on work on natural mineral waters within Codex

58. The delegation of Switzerland as Chair of the adjourned Codex Committee on Natural Mineral Waters informed the Coordinating Committee that the revision of the WHO Guidelines for Drinking-water Quality⁸ had resulted in discrepancies of the values of certain substances between the Codex Standard for Natural Mineral Waters (CODEX STAN 108-1981) and the current edition of the WHO Guidelines. As the Codex Committee was adjourned sine die, a circular letter⁹ was sent to request comments from Codex members and observers on how to proceed. The Delegation of Switzerland will compile the replies and present them in a working document at the 30th Session of the Commission together with recommendations.

59. The Delegation of the European Community stated that they were in favour of reviewing the values in the standard on a case by case basis.

Information concerning the forthcoming election of a Member of the Executive Committee from Europe

60. The Delegation of the United Kingdom informed the Committee that the term of office of Belgium as present member of the Executive Committee elected on a geographical basis would end at the end of the 30th Commission and that Belgium, having completed two consecutive terms, was not eligible for re-election. They informed the Committee further that the United Kingdom was prepared to stand as a candidate for election at the 30th Session of the Commission for this office.

Proposed Draft Working Principles for Risk Analysis for Food Safety for Application by Governments

61. The Delegation of the European Community gave an overview over the history of the work on Principles for Risk Analysis for Food Safety for Application by Governments in CCGP. Recently a physical Working Group on the Working Principles for Risk Analysis for Food Safety established by the 23rd Session of CCGP had met in Brussels, Belgium, 26 to 28 September 2006.

62. As a result of its deliberations, the Working Group had reached consensus on a list of principles covering all steps of risk analysis which would be discussed in the 24th Session of the CCGP.

63. The Coordinating Committee congratulated the working group for its achievement and fully supported the progress of this document in the Codex procedure.

Country of origin labelling provisions for individual cheese standards

64. The Coordinating Committee fully supported the final adoption of all individual cheese standards as proposed by the Codex Committee on Milk and Milk Products. The Coordinating Committee also strongly supports the declaration of the country of origin (i.e. country of manufacture) as required by section 7.2 in accordance with section 4.5.1 of the General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods as its omission could mislead or deceive the consumer.

Labelling of Foods and Food Ingredients obtained through certain Techniques of Genetic Modification/Genetic Engineering

65. The Delegation of the European Community recalled that this issue had been on the agenda of the CCFL for more than 10 years. It noted that the work would be continued at a new working group hosted by Norway.

66. The Coordinating Committee:

- As a basic principle, was in favour of the clear identification of food and food ingredients obtained through certain techniques of genetic modification/genetic engineering;
- Recalled the compromise reached by a previous working group in 2003 proposing two levels of labelling: first mandatory labelling provisions in relation to health and consumer protection, second optional provisions linked to the mode of production;

⁷ CRD 9 (Submission by the European Community and its Member States)

⁸ Available at http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/dwq/guidelines/en/index.html

⁹ CL 2006/13-NMW

- Was of the view that from the consumer point of view it was important that these label declarations were simple, easy to understand, meaningful and non-misleading; and
- Hoped that the CCFL Working Group scheduled for 6 and 7 February 2007 in Oslo would be in a position to propose an acceptable compromise solution.

Code of Ethics for International Trade in Food

67. The Delegation of the European Community introduced the topic which had been for several years on the agenda of the CCGP but neither in CCGP nor in CCFICS to which CCGP had referred a number of questions related to the Code had found a consensus on how to make progress on the revision of the text.

68. The Coordinating Committee:

- Agreed that the Code should concentrate on the ethical aspects of international trade and not reiterate what other Codex texts and the WTO agreements already stated;
- Agreed that the scope should be focused on the protection of consumers in countries which do not have yet the means of checking well the quality and the safety of the imported food; and therefore
- Fully supported the following principle:
“A country should not export or re-export food to a country if this food is generally recognised dangerous, unfit for human consumption, adulterated or misleading to the consumer.”

Future Work

69. The Coordinating Committee agreed that in addition to any items that may be referred by the Commission to the Committee, the following items be considered for inclusion in the provisional agenda of its next session:

- Information on the use of Codex standards at national and regional levels.
- Mutual exchange of information on members activities in capacity building and twinning
- “lessons learned” on the reform of food control systems, where members have the opportunity to report on what had worked well and what might require improvement.
- Nutritional issues within the region such as obesity, nutritional profiles, nutritional labelling and claims.
- Communication about the results of food business inspections to consumers (e.g. labels given to establishments rating their compliance with hygiene rules)

70. The Chairperson encouraged the use of the forum on the CCEURO website (www.codexeurope.ch) to exchange further ideas about future work of the Coordinating Committee.

DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE (Agenda Item 8)

71. The Coordinating Committee was informed that its 26th session would be held in Warsaw, Poland most likely between October 2008 and February 2009 and that more detailed arrangements would be communicated to Members following the appointment of the Coordinator by the 30th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

VALEDICTION

72. The Coordinating Committee warmly thanked Dr. Urs Klemm for his able chairmanship and his relentless efforts to foster communication and coordination in the CCEURO Region. The Committee also recalled that Dr. Klemm had, for a large number of years acting as a national delegate for Switzerland and as Chair of the Codex Committee on Natural Mineral Waters, contributed significantly to the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. The Committee wished Dr. Klemm all the best for his upcoming retirement.

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