

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION



JOINT OFFICE: Viale delle Terme di Caracalla 00100 ROME Tel: 39 06 57051 www.codexalimentarius.net Email: codex@fao.org Facsimile: 39 06 5705 4593

Agenda Item 2

**CX/FH 00/2
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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD HYGIENE

Thirty-third Session

Washington DC, U.S.A., 23 – 28 October 2000

REPORT BY SECRETARIAT ON MATTERS REFERRED BY THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND/OR OTHER CODEX COMMITTEES TO THE FOOD HYGIENE COMMITTEE

1. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE 47TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

1.1 CONSIDERATION OF THE CHAIRPERSON'S ACTION PLAN

The Executive Committee expressed unanimous appreciation of the initiative of the Chairperson in drawing up an Action Plan to address many of the issues facing the Commission in its desire to improve efficiency, timeliness and responsiveness, and ensure inclusiveness of participation and transparency of operations, thereby giving the work of the Commission higher international credibility and relevancy.

In discussing the Action Plan, the Executive Committee highlighted the following points under the relevant sections:

- Codex Alimentarius Commission Meetings
- Leadership of Codex General, Commodity and Regional Committees
- Expert Advisory Bodies
- Trust Fund to Assist Developing Country Participation

Follow-up Action

The Executive Committee noted that it had recommended that elements of the Chairperson's Action Plan be incorporated into the Medium Term Plan 2003-2007, as appropriate. However, since the Action Plan contained other issues of a more immediate nature, it agreed that it should be revised in the light of the above discussion and circulated to governments for comments as well as to the Regional Coordinating Committees for their input.

For more details see ALINORM 01/3, paras 62-71.

1.2 ISO/DIS 5162.2: GUIDANCE FOR THE APPLICATION OF ISO 9001 AND 9002 IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY (ALINORM 01/3, PARA. 35)

The Executive Committee noted that this work was being undertaken by ISO with inputs from the Codex Secretariat and the Secretariat of the Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and

Certification Systems and expressed its appreciation of the cooperation. It also supported the approach of providing guidance for the integration of HACCP principles into ISO 9000 quality management texts for the food industry as a means of assisting the food industry, especially small and medium sized businesses, in applying HACCP effectively. It requested that this work be reported to the Committee on Food Hygiene and the Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems to ensure appropriate coordination.

1.3 IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE 23RD SESSION OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION¹ - RISK ANALYSIS (ALINORM 01/3, PARA. 42)

In relation to the implementation of the decisions in respect of risk analysis, the decisions of Executive Committee are presented in Appendix II of ALINORM 01/3. The Executive Committee clarified that in this table, reference to "relevant Committees" meant those Committees that make recommendations on risk management measures based on risk assessments: at the moment these Committees include the Committees on Food Hygiene, Food Additives and Contaminants, Pesticide Residues, Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods, and Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (on some matters), and the *ad hoc* Task Forces on Foods derived from Biotechnology and Animal Feeding.

The Executive Committee's decisions relevant to the CCFH are presented below.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING RISK ANALYSIS

Recommendation	Implementation
To overcome confusion about the usage of the terms "risk analysis" and "hazard analysis", the Commission should reiterate its definitions for these concepts and explain how they apply in practice;	The Executive Committee referred this matter to the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene for a clear statement of the difference between the two terms and to the Committee on General principles for subsequent action.
Relevant Codex committees should consider developing quality criteria for data used for risk assessment. To the extent possible such criteria should be consistent with one another, taking into account the technical differences in the disciplines covered;	The Executive Committee referred this recommendation to the Committees concerned.
Recognizing that primary production in developing countries is largely through small and medium enterprises, risk assessment should be based on global data, including that from developing countries. This data should particularly include epidemiological surveillance data and exposure studies	The Executive Committee referred this recommendation to the Committees concerned.

1.4 HEAT TREATMENT DEFINITIONS (ALINORM 01/3, PARA. 50)

While considering Matters Arising from Codex Committees the Executive Committee noted that the matter of heat treatment definitions had been transferred to the work programme of the Committee on Food Hygiene.

¹ CX/EXEC 00/47/7.

1.5 ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANT BACTERIA IN FOOD: COORDINATION OF WORK (ALINORM 01/3, PARA. 51)

The Food Hygiene Committee requested the advice of the Executive Committee on how to ensure coordination of work in relation to antimicrobial resistant bacteria in foods.² It noted that other interested Committees may be Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods and the Task Force on Animal Feeding. The Executive Committee noted that the main question was whether or not the question of anti-microbial resistance fell within the mandate of the Committee on Food Hygiene and if so, to what extent. It agreed that the development of a risk profile would assist in this determination and also in determining the extent to which the subject falls within the terms of reference of other Committees. In the absence of a risk profile, there is no reason to assume a necessity for coordination. The Executive Committee informed the relevant Committees/Task Force accordingly.

1.6 COMMITTEE ON FOOD ADDITIVES AND CONTAMINANTS (CCFAC): CODES OF PRACTICE (ALINORM 01/3, PARAS 54-55)

The CCFAC Committee had requested the Executive Committee to provide advice whether codes of practice on source directed measures fall within the Committee's terms of reference.³

Noting the Opinion of the FAO and WHO Legal Counsels transmitted to the 6th Session of the Commission (1969) and the Terms of Reference of the Committees on Food Additives and Contaminants and on Food Hygiene, the Executive Committee expressed the view that the matter fell within the Terms of Reference of the Committee as well as within the Terms of Reference of the Committee on Food Hygiene.

1.7 COMMITTEE ON FOOD ADDITIVES AND CONTAMINANTS: "OTHER LEGITIMATE FACTORS" (ALINORM 01/3, PARA. 56)

The Committee had asked the Executive Committee to clarify the current status of the consideration of "other legitimate factors" within Codex with a view towards providing advice on a uniform approach to the matter and is considering the inclusion of a separate Annex concerning "other legitimate factors" in the Discussion Paper on the Application of Risk Analysis Principles for Food Additives and Contaminants.⁴ The Executive Committee noted that the matter of "other legitimate factors" was under consideration by the Committee on General Principles at the request of the Commission. The Committee on General Principles had requested relevant Codex Committees to provide examples of other legitimate factors taken into account in their decision-making processes so as to facilitate the general debate in the Committee on General Principles on other legitimate factors.⁵ The Executive Committee confirmed that responsibility for a system-wide approach to the consideration of "other legitimate factors" rested with the Committee on General Principles and that no further action in this matter should be taken by the Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants (or any other Committee) at the moment.

1.8 REACTIVATION OF THE MEAT HYGIENE COMMITTEE (ALINORM 01/3, PARA. 46)

The Executive Committee welcomed the proposal that the Codex Committee on Meat Hygiene be reactivated in order to revise the existing codes previously developed by this Committee. It noted that the Committee had been adjourned *sine die* since 1993 and that since that time there had been significant developments that now had to be taken into account including the revision of the three basic texts on food hygiene.⁶ The Executive Committee strongly recommended that the work and Terms of

² ALINORM 01/13, para 132.

³ ALINORM 01/12, para 113.

⁴ ALINORM 01/13, para. 146.

⁵ ALINORM 99/33A, para. 76.

⁶ Recommended International Code of Practice - General Principles of Food Hygiene; Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point System and Guidelines for its Application; Principles for the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria for Foods.

Reference of the Committee be expanded to include reference to poultry. **It was proposed that consideration could also be given to revision of the Code of Hygienic Practice for Meat and Poultry Products pending advice from the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene.** The Representative of WHO stated that the Committee on Meat Hygiene would need to interact directly with the Committee on Food Hygiene in order to include considerations of risk analysis in its work. It noted the proposal to hold the next session of the Committee in late 2001 or early 2002, and also noted the concern of some Members that the session should be held in conjunction with another Codex meeting in the region so as to reduce travel costs for participants.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM CODEX COMMITTEES

2.1 CODEX COMMITTEE ON GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Risk Analysis: Food Safety Objectives (ALINORM 01/33, paras 63-66)

While considering the above Agenda Item the Committee on General Principles was of the opinion that the application of “food safety objectives” concept was of a technical nature and it was premature to generalize the concept with a specific definition.

The Committee agreed that the concept of “food safety objectives” could be further developed by other relevant Committees in order to identify how it could be applied to specific food safety issues, and that the Committee should continue to oversee the consistency in the definition and application of the concept.

2.2 CODEX COMMITTEE ON FISH AND FISHERY PRODUCTS

Residue Levels of Chlorine in Shrimps and Prawns (ALINORM 01/18, paras 146-149)

The Representative of WHO introduced the discussion paper which attempted to address two major issues: risks to consumers’ health that may result from chlorine by-products arising from elevated levels of chlorine in water used for washing fish and fishery products; and gaps in knowledge concerning current practices at industry level in different countries. The Representative indicated that fish handling practices varied from country to country and from region to region. Chlorinated water up to 10mg/l was widely used in the fish-processing sector, in direct contact with fish to prevent microbiological contamination and ensure the relevant sanitation. The Representative concluded that while additional work in this area was recommended, current scientific evidence did not warrant the change of the Codex recommended level of 10mg/l for water in direct contact with fishery products.

The Observer from the EC and some Delegations expressed the view that further risk assessment should be conducted in order to determine benefits of the use of elevated levels of chlorine in the fish industry. It was pointed out that the use of potable water, application of good manufacturing practices and the HACCP System fully ensured hygienic production of fish products.

The Delegation of Brazil supported by other delegations pointed out that chlorine was very commonly used in the world as a disinfectant in order to reduce contamination, especially in developing countries, and that there was no scientific evidence of health hazards regarding its use at the current levels. This position was supported by several delegations, who concurred with the conclusion presented in the document.

The Committee agreed to accept the conclusion of the document and concluded that no further action was necessary on this matter.

Proposed Draft Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products (ALINORM 01/18, paras 30-82)

While developing the above Code the Committee on Fish and Fishery Products agreed to forward the Proposed Draft Code, sections 1, 2 (2.1, 2.2 and 2.9), 3 to 6 and 13 to the 24th Session of the

Commission for adoption at Step 5 (see Appendix V of the above ALINORM). The Proposed Draft Code will be submitted to Food Hygiene Committee in future for endorsement of the provisions on food hygiene.

2.3 CODEX COMMITTEE ON MILK AND MILK PRODUCTS

Heat Treatment Definitions (ALINORM 01/11, paras 106-109)

The Committee was reminded that the subject of heat treatment definitions was briefly considered at its Second Session, where it decided that the IDF would prepare a consolidated document taking account of comments submitted for further consideration at the Third Session and subsequently by the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene.⁷ The Committee noted that due to time constraints, the Third Session of the CCMMP did not consider this subject further, and that the current document was the same paper prepared for that Session.

The Committee also noted that the CCFH was currently elaborating a Code of Hygienic Practice for Milk and Milk Products, and that the 32nd Session of the CCFH had returned the proposed Draft Code to Step 3 for redrafting.⁸

At the suggestion of the Secretariat and the representative of the IDF, the Committee **reaffirmed** its earlier decision that the subject of heat treatment definitions should be further considered by the CCFH. As it was noted that the CCFH would most likely restrict its work to food safety considerations, the Committee noted that other aspects might be considered at a future CCMMP Session. It was also suggested that the CCFL might be requested to address the issue of the labelling of heat-treated products subsequent to the establishment of definitions.

It was **agreed** that the current document should not be forwarded to the CCFH as it was obsolete and that the CCFH should be requested to ensure that the use of terms, such as milk, in the Code of Hygienic Practice for Milk and Milk Products was fully aligned with the Codex General Standard for Dairy Terms.

In view of the decision of the Executive Committee (see Paragraph 1.4 of this document) the Committee on Food Hygiene is invited to consider how to proceed with this matter.

3. GENERAL MATTERS FROM FAO AND WHO

3.1 JOINT FAO/WHO EXPERT CONSULTATION ON RISK ASSESSMENT OF MICROBIOLOGICAL HAZARDS IN FOODS, FAO HEADQUARTERS, ROME, 17 – 21 JULY 2000

A Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on Risk Assessment of Microbiological Hazards in Foods was held in Rome, Italy from 17 to 21 July 2000. The Consultation provided scientific advice on the risk assessment of *Salmonella* spp. in broilers and eggs and *L. monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat foods; on practical guidelines and methodology for hazard characterization of microbial pathogens; and further identified the knowledge gaps and information requirements needed to complete the above-mentioned risk assessments.

The matter will be discussed on Agenda Item 3.

The report of the Consultation is available in English, French and Spanish on the FAO website at the following address:

<http://www.fao.org/WAICENT/FAOINFO/ECONOMIC/ESN/pagerisk/report.pdf>

and on the WHO website:

⁷ ALINORM 97/11, para. 74

⁸ ALINORM 01/13A, paras. 64-70

<http://www.who.int/fsf/mbriskassess/htm>

3.2 WHO CONSULTATION ON GLOBAL PRINCIPLES FOR THE CONTAINMENT OF ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE DUE TO ANTIMICROBIAL USE IN LIVESTOCK, GENEVA, 5-9 JUNE 2000, - WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS (FAO) AND THE OFFICE INTERNATIONAL DES EPIZOOTIES (OIE)

As part of the development of the WHO Global Strategy for the Containment and Surveillance of Antimicrobial Resistance, Global Principles (Guidelines) have been developed relating to the production, licensing, distribution, sale and use of antimicrobials in livestock. The new recommendations were developed and finalized at the Consultation and are designed for use by governments, veterinary and other professional societies, industry and academia. The Consultation had veterinary, medical and academic participants, but also many international organizations and institutions, which have both interests and important activities in the area of non-human use of antimicrobials participated. This broad spectrum of participation ensured the widest possible acceptance of the Global Principles as well as long-term partnerships for their future implementation. Some of the most important measures listed in the Global Principles are:

- termination or rapid phasing-out of the use of antimicrobials for growth promotion if they are also used for treatment of humans in the absence of a public health safety evaluation
- creation of national systems to monitor antimicrobial usage in food animals
- monitoring of resistance to identify emerging health problems and timely corrective actions to protect human health

The WHO Global Principles for the Containment of Antimicrobial Resistance in Animals Intended for Food are available at the internet address:

http://www.who.int/emc/diseases/zoo/who_global_principles.html.

3.3 JOINT FAO/WHO EXPERT CONSULTATION ON FOODS DERIVED FROM BIOTECHNOLOGY, GENEVA, 29 MAY – 2 JUNE 2000

As a follow-up to the Joint FAO/WHO Consultation on Biotechnology and food safety in Rome, 1996 and at the request of the first meeting of the Codex *ad hoc* Task Force on Foods Derived from Biotechnology, March 2000, this Consultation was convened to address food safety questions regarding foods and food ingredients derived from plants that have been genetically modified using recombinant DNA techniques.

The Consultation concluded that safety assessment of genetically modified foods requires an integrated and stepwise, case-by-case approach, which can be aided by a series of structured questions. A comparative approach focusing on the equivalence between the genetically modified food and its conventional counterpart can aid in the definition of necessary testing and is still considered the overall most efficient strategy for the safety assessment of GM foods.

Although the concepts and principles described in the report could be said to be applicable to other types of foods derived from Biotechnology, the Consultation recommended to FAO/WHO in the future to address a number of important areas through future expert consultations, one of these being the consideration of safety assessment specific to genetically modified micro-organisms.

The report of the Consultation is available at the internet address:

http://www.who.int/fsf/GMfood/FAO-WHO_Consultation_report_2000.pdf.

3.4 WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION ON FOOD SAFETY

The 53rd Session of the World Health Assembly, the governing body of WHO, met in May 2000 and discussed the issue of food safety. The Assembly recognized that foodborne diseases result in significant health and economic consequences for individuals, communities, businesses and countries and acknowledged the importance of the public health services in ensuring the safety of food and harmonizing the efforts of all stakeholders throughout the feed-food chain. The Assembly noted that the majority of recent foodborne disease outbreaks of international importance have been caused by microbiological agents and encouraged WHO to strengthen its capacity to assist Member States to ensure the safety of foods.

The Assembly adopted a resolution that directs future priority issues of WHO on food safety, such as microbiological risk assessment, biotechnology, food borne disease surveillance, the use of antimicrobials in food production and technical cooperation with developing countries. The resolution also requested WHO to examine the current working relationship between WHO and FAO with a view to increasing the involvement and support of WHO in the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and its Committees. The Resolution can be reached through the following website of WHO Food Safety Programme:

<http://www.who.int/fsf/>