

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 3

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARD PROGRAMME FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

*13th Session,
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 9-13 December 2002*

UPDATE ON THE PROGRESS OF THE JOINT FAO/WHO EVALUATION OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS AND OTHER FAO AND WHO WORK ON FOOD STANDARDS

I - Introduction

1. At its meeting in June, the 50th session of the Codex Executive Committee (report provided in the Annex to CX/LAC 02/3) welcomed the evaluation and raised issues that would contribute to the progress of the Evaluation and its potential outcome. Members emphasised:

- the importance of the core of Codex work: science-based standards, guidelines and recommendations for food safety and strengthening of scientific risk analysis;
- the major aims of the evaluation should not be sidelined by the consideration of other issues, including cultural and ethical issues;
- management issues should be adequately covered;
- increasing the participation and influence of developing countries in the decision-making process;
- providing adequate resources for the expert scientific bodies and the Codex Secretariat itself; and
- increased participation of WHO in the work of Codex.

2. In line with the requests of the FAO Programme Committee in May 2002 and the 50th Session of the Executive Committee of Codex, the following actions were taken to strengthen the evaluation process:

- The evaluation team membership was revised to obtain wider cultural and national balance and the make-up of the independent expert panel for the evaluation was increased to give greater regional representation, with new members on the panel from China, Brazil and Morocco¹. The current make-up of the evaluation team and expert panel are provided in the Annex to this report;
- The decision was also taken to further increase the number of countries being visited by the evaluation team to 24 and the European Commission, to ensure the fullest representation of different views. The countries and international organizations visited by the evaluation team are summarised below;
- WHO agreed to present 2004-05 proposals for food standards work to its Executive Board meeting in January 2003 but to present the evaluation report itself at the time of the World Health Assembly in May 2003, in coincidence with the FAO presentation to its Governing Bodies through the Programme Committee; and
- To further aid transparency a web-page exclusively on the progress of the evaluation is being maintained on the Codex Web-site, with a link to the FAO Evaluation Website.

¹ The member designated from Morocco has been unable to attend meetings and eventually participate in the work of the panel.

3. A draft of the evaluation report for comment and suggestions has now been submitted to the Chair and three Vice-Chairpersons of Codex and also to the managements of FAO and WHO. The comments and discussion of them was arranged to be completed before the end of October and the evaluation report is expected to be available fully translated at the end of November/beginning of December 2002.

4. This will provide the opportunity for all Codex members to discuss the report at a Special Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission which will be convened in mid-February 2003, prior to discussion in the FAO and WHO Governing Bodies.

II - Evaluation Activities

Visits to Countries and International Organizations

5. Country visits were designed to provide case studies of more in-depth information than is available from country questionnaire responses. In particular to:

- obtain views, representative of countries which may not fully complete the questionnaire;
- discuss with national non-governmental stakeholders (agricultural and fisheries producers, food processors, agricultural input supply business, consumers);
- provide the opportunity to explore a wider range of issues that may arise in discussion without having been foreseen in the questionnaire;
- understand the nuances underlying national positions;
- review any FAO or WHO capacity building activities; and
- hold discussions with FAO and WHO Offices.

6. The initial country visits also provided the opportunity to discuss issues which might be included in the questionnaire to countries and observers.

7. Using a formalised set of criteria for selection of sample countries², the country visits were completed in August as follows:

- Africa: Côte d'Ivoire, Mozambique; Senegal; South Africa, Tanzania;
- The Americas: Argentina, Canada, Costa Rica, Mexico, USA;
- Asia and Pacific: Australia, Bangladesh, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, Philippines, Thailand;
- Europe: EU Commission and Council, France, Netherlands, Hungary, Switzerland;
- Near East: Egypt and Jordan.

8. In addition to FAO and WHO offices, other international organizations setting standards and those concerned with the application of standards in trade have been visited to assess lessons which could be useful for Codex and also to examine any areas where harmonisation and complementarities in work could be improved. These have included:

- Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture (IICA)
- International Organisation for Standardization (ISO)
- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)
- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)
- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN-ECE)
- World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)
- World Trade Centre (WTC)
- World Trade Organization (WTO)

² The criteria used in selecting countries were designed to ensure a cross-section by: region; income-level; size; involvement in international food trade as importers and exporters; extent of food safety-health risks; receipt of FAO and WHO capacity building activities; and involvement in Codex.

Questionnaires and the Public Call for Comments

9. Formal questionnaires were sent to all Codex and other FAO and WHO member countries. They have also been sent to all Codex observers. Replies were received in July and analysed for consideration by the evaluation team and expert panel. One hundred and three responses to the country questionnaire were received out of 186 sent out.

10. The initial public call for comments elicited some 60 replies from individuals and organizations which have also been reviewed by the evaluation team and expert panel. This was followed-up with a questionnaire addressed specifically to national organizations, which was made available for completion on the Web and 52 replies were received.

Annex :
The Evaluation Team and the Expert Panel

Evaluation Team:

Team Leader:

Professor Bruce Traill (UK): Head of Department of Agricultural and Food Economics, University of Reading, UK: Prof. Traill has a Ph.D. in Economics from Cornell University and has a distinguished academic record, having published widely on the food industry. He is a past editor of the Journal of Agricultural Economics and is associate editor of the journal, Agribusiness. Professor Traill served for five years as a Principal Scientific Officer of the Commission of the European Communities, heading teams dealing with science and technology issues in food. He has also worked in the South Pacific.

Members:

Rachel Bedouin (FAO evaluation staff) has a Masters' degree in Economics from Université Paris 9. Prior to taking up her current post in evaluation, she has worked extensively on food security issues and on rural investment in the developing world.

Katharine Gourlie (Canada) has a degree in Pharmacy and was in Canadian Government Service where she was Director-General of the Consumer Products Branch in Industry Canada (responsible for development and delivery of consumer protection policies and regulatory, compliance and enforcement programs). She headed her country's delegation to Codex and served as Chair of the Committee on Food Labelling as well as leading work in a number of sub-committees in international trade negotiations. Since 1995, she has headed her own consultancy firm undertaking national and international assignments concerned with consumer protection and food safety.

Jerri Husch (WHO evaluation staff) has a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Massachusetts. She has worked as an assistant professor and extensively with international organizations, including ILO and WHO on human and policy aspects of drug abuse, primary health care and health management.

Alicia Lustre (Philippines) has a Ph.D. in Food Science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). She is currently Director of the Food Development Center of the Philippine Department of Agriculture, which is responsible for a programme of research and development, training, food testing and quality control and certification for the food industry. She has travelled widely, participating in meetings and assignments with international organizations for food regulatory matters, including heading her country's delegation to the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants. She is Vice-Chair of the ASEAN Sub-Committee on Food Science and Technology.

The Expert Panel:

Chairperson:

Alejandro Cravioto MD (Mexico), Dean Faculty of Medicine, Facultad de Medicina, Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico (joint FAO-WHO nominee).

Members:

Irina du Bois (Switzerland), Vice President, Head of Regulatory Affairs and Environment Nestec Ltd.

Ken Buckle Ph.D. (Australia), Professor and Associate Dean, International Development, Faculty of Science, University of New South Wales, President of the International Academy of Food Science and Technology.

Dilma Scala Gelli (Brazil), Chief, Food Microbiology Laboratory, Instituto Adolfo Lutz Public Health Laboratory, State of San Paulo.

Spencer Henson Ph.D. (U.K.) Associate Professor, Department of Agricultural Economics and Business, and Department of Consumer Studies, University of Guelph.

Anwarul Hoda, Professor (India) Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations, former WTO Deputy Director-General.

Liu Xiumei (China) MD Professor and Director Department of Microbiology and Natural Toxins, Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

Diane McCrea (U.K.) (independent consultant) Former Representative Consumers International.

Ruth K. Oniang'o Ph.D. (Kenya) Professor of Food Science and Nutrition, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology.

Kaye Wachsmuth PhD (USA) Former deputy administrator for the Office of Public Health and Science in the Food Safety and Inspection Service USA and Chairperson of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene.