

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION



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Agenda Item 10

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**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
13th Session
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 9-13 December 2002**

**CONSUMER PARTICIPATION IN FOOD STANDARDS SETTING
AT THE CODEX AND NATIONAL LEVEL**

The following countries have sent comments: Brazil and Colombia

BRAZIL

**II – CONSUMER PARTICIPATION IN FOOD STANDARDS SETTING AT THE CODEX AND
NATIONAL LEVEL – AGENDA ITEM 10**

Brazil's governmental and non-governmental consumer representative bodies have participated in the work of the Codex Alimentarius Committee of Brazil (CCAB) since 1992. The non-governmental body representing consumers on the CCAB is the Brazilian Institute for the Protection of Consumers (IDEC), while the governmental body is the Department for the Protection and Defence of the Consumer, at the Ministry of Justice. In both legal and formal terms, consumers are fully integrated into the activities of the National Committee and its Technical Groups. They are thus able to participate in the shaping of national positions for Codex meetings and can be members of Brazilian delegations to those meetings. In May of this year, a representative of the IDEC participated, with CCAB support, in a training course on risk analysis organized by FAO in Buenos Aires.

Consumers are involved not only in the activities of the National Committee, but also in its Technical Groups.

The problems preventing consumers from participating more actively are financial and technical. The consumer representative bodies do not have their own funds to participate in meetings and are dependent on the support of the body coordinating the National Committee. They also have technical problems as they lack experts in other Codex topic areas able to participate in the meetings of the National Committee.

With regard to the non-governmental body representing Brazilian consumers on the CCAB, more effective government support is needed so that consumer organizations can train a team of experts able to function actively within Codex and its meetings, these being monthly or, with the technical groups, more than monthly. They also point to the need for parity status between consumers and the producer sector (industry, agriculture).

At the national level, in 2001, a Working Group of the National Council of Metrology, Standardization and Industrial Quality (Conmetro), with the participation of the IDEC and ministerial representatives, put forward a proposal to facilitate the involvement of consumers in standardization and regulation activities, recognizing in its terms of reference, among other matters, that "... it is essential that civil consumer protection bodies be actively involved in standardization and technical regulation, because of their legitimate status as representatives of consumer interests and needs.... One of the main factors restricting the participation of civil society bodies in the monitoring of standardization activities is their lack of financial resources." This proposal is currently under discussion within the Conmetro.

COLOMBIA

II. CONSUMER PARTICIPATION IN FOOD STANDARDS SETTING AT THE CODEX AND NATIONAL LEVEL

- A. Colombia established its Contact Point at the Ministry of Health by Decree 977 of 1998.
- B. It set up its National Codex Alimentarius Committee with the same Decree 977 of 1998.
- C. The national subcommittees invite bodies and consumers to participate in their work, but the national position is not put to public consultation.
- D. Consumer organizations have been identified for invitation to the meetings of the National Codex Alimentarius Committee and its subcommittees.
- E. Consumers are members of the National Codex Alimentarius Committee and can participate in discussions, helping determine the country's position.
- F. Two consumer associations have so far been involved: Consumers Colombia (COCO) and the National Federation of Consumers.
- G. Community-based training courses are organized at the local administrative level.