

INTRODUCTION

1. The FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for North America and the South West Pacific (CCNASWP) held its 15th Session in Port Vila, from 16-20 September 2019, at the kind invitation of the Government of Vanuatu. Mr. Timothy Tumukon, Regional Coordinator of CCNASWP chaired the session, which was attended by delegates from 10 Member countries from the NASWP region, one Member country from outside the Region and Representatives of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) as well as the Codex Secretariat. A complete list of participants, including FAO, WHO and the Secretariats, is given in Appendix I.

OPENING¹

2. The Director General of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fisheries and Biosecurity of Vanuatu, Mr. Moses Amos, welcomed delegates and opened the session on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fisheries and Biosecurity, Mr. Matai Seremaiah Nawalu. Tribute was paid to late Honorable Prime Minister of Tonga, Akilisi Pohiva, and recently demised colleagues who were champions and pioneers of the Codex work in the South West Pacific sub-region.
3. The Director General highlighted the occurrence of food-borne illnesses and contaminants as key challenges in the Pacific islands and thanked the Codex Alimentarius Commission for developing standards, which are important for safeguarding public health and improving trade, in a fair, neutral and transparent manner. The Director General underscored that participation of the Pacific island countries in Codex work was low and needed to be improved so that their contribution in Codex standards formulation would be strengthened. The Director General expressed the hope that under the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025, activities would be implemented that would increase the rate of participation in Codex Electronic Working Groups (EWGs).
4. The Director General also urged the eligible Member countries of the region to submit strong individual and/or group applications for the current round of support from the Codex Trust Fund, noting that so far no country had managed a successful application since the launch of the Codex Trust Fund 2 (CTF2).
5. The Director General further emphasized the importance of the two proposed draft standards on the agenda of CCNASWP15, those of kava and noni juice, which when adopted, would be the first regional standards.
6. The Representative of FAO addressed the delegates and emphasized that food safety and standards will need to be improved in a complex environment that includes fast-paced drivers such as globalized trade, technology, urbanization and climate change. The Representative of FAO underscored that that sectoral approaches alone will not be sufficient and that food safety needs to be well integrated with national and regional agriculture and rural development programmes so as to have maximum positive impact on public health and trade.
7. The Representative of WHO addressed the delegates and highlighted the importance of Codex standards and the role the FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committees (RCCs) and their Members had to play in relation to food standards and food controls at both regional and global level. The Representative of WHO referred to the WHO estimates of the global burden of foodborne diseases, which showed that every year approximately 125 million people became ill and about 50,000 people died from contaminated food in the Western Pacific region, a significant proportion of which were children under the age of five.
8. Finally, a video message from the Chairperson of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, Mr. Guilherme da Costa, was presented to the Committee.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Agenda Item 1)²

9. CCNASWP15 adopted the Provisional Agenda as contained in CX/NASWP 19/15/1 as the Agenda for the Session.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS – “MANAGING FOOD SAFETY IN AN ERA OF ACCELERATED CLIMATE CHANGE” (Agenda Item 2)³

10. The Representative of FAO, speaking on behalf of FAO and WHO, introduced this item recalling the ongoing process of revitalization of the RCCs and the inclusion of a keynote address to stimulate discussion and information sharing on a topical issue of interest to the region.
11. The Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs of Vanuatu, Mr. Ralph Regenvanu, delivered the keynote address highlighting the impact of climate change on global agriculture production and complex supply chains and the need for dynamic and proactive processes at regional level to tackle the challenge that climate change poses to food safety. The Honourable Minister underlined that even as data and evidence on the effects of climate change on food safety was being collected, trade rejections could multiply because of insufficient controls from

¹ CRD2 (Opening speech, Government of Vanuatu); CRD5 (Opening remarks from FAO and WHO Representatives)

² CX/NASWP 19/15/1

³ CX/NASWP 19/15/2; CRD1 (Keynote address); CRD3 (Papua New Guinea)

exporting countries as well as the lack of cause-effect evidence related to climate change. This could result in the Codex Committees having to rethink and redesign some Codex standards and other texts.

12. The keynote address was very much welcomed by the Committee as being timely and addressing the challenges that the Small Island Development States (SIDS) are grappling with. The Committee reaffirmed that information on the effect of climate change on food safety and quality and food security needs to be generated and awareness raised at all national and regional platforms to attract more attention and resources.
13. The Committee noted that food safety consequences of climate change should be considered when developing or revising Codex standards and other texts.
14. One Observer informed the Committee that FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Europe (CCEURO) would be held in a few weeks at which the messages in the keynote address at CCNASWP15 would be brought to the attention of delegates.

Conclusions

15. CCNASWP15:
 - i. Welcomed and noted the information contained in the keynote address.
 - ii. Agreed to bring the issue to attention to other Codex committees by making the speech available via a CRD.
 - iii. Noted that food safety consequences of climate change should be considered when revising or developing Codex standards and other texts.

FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY SITUATION IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE REGION: CURRENT AND EMERGING ISSUES (Agenda Item 3.1)⁴

16. The Representative of WHO, speaking on behalf of FAO and WHO, informed the Committee that this agenda item was a new way to facilitate a targeted discussion on critical and emerging food safety issues and priorities in the region. Its purpose was to draw the attention of CCNASWP to emerging issues of concern as well as the general food safety and quality situation in the region and confirmed that the information provided supported FAO and WHO's efforts to enhance food safety capacities and implement the Codex Strategic Plan, with specific linkage to Goal 1.
17. The Representative presented the current and emerging issues identified by the survey, which were: limited support to manage food regulatory systems; climate change; innovative food technologies; non-communicable diseases; limited National Codex Committee (NCC) support mechanisms; risk communication; increased foodborne disease transmission; pesticides residues on food crops (MRLs); AMR; veterinary drugs residues; and human and environmental health risk from foreign food waste.
18. Members were to encourage to provide their feedback on: (i) actions already underway in countries and the region as the result of the identification of the emerging issues; (ii) challenges in identifying and reporting emerging issues; and (iii) perspectives on the way forward.
19. The proposed recommendations as given in the document were also highlighted, in particular the developing of a regional emerging issues framework and strategies to address them. Member countries also highlighted a concern whether certain responses to the survey were questioning scientific work undertaken by Codex advisory and standard setting bodies. Member countries also requested the highlighting of certain issues that needed to be reflected more strongly such as the safety and quality of food supplied as aid during emergencies, adulteration, food fraud and microbiological hazards.

Conclusions

20. CCNASWP15:
 - i. Agreed that that the outcome of the survey was relevant to the region and such studies would support or inform the implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan and the technical programmes of FAO and WHO.
 - ii. Reaffirmed the importance of developing a regional emerging issues framework.

THE FUTURE OF FOOD SAFETY: OUTCOME OF THE FAO/WHO/AU INTERNATIONAL FOOD SAFETY CONFERENCE AND THE INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON FOOD SAFETY AND TRADE – WHATS NEXT? (Agenda Item 3.2)⁵

21. The Representative of FAO, speaking on behalf of FAO and WHO, introduced this item by calling the

⁴ CX/NASWP 19/15/3

⁵ CX/NASWP 19/15/4

Committee's attention to the Chairperson's summary and the Joint Statement that was issued after the FAO/WHO/AU 'First International Food Safety Conference' in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and the FAO/WHO/WTO 'International Forum on Food Safety and Trade' in Geneva, Switzerland. The events focused on national food control systems, the economic and health burden of food-borne illness especially on middle and low income countries, safe and sustainable food systems in an era of accelerated climate change, food standards and trade, the importance of new technologies and the role of consumers and how they could make safe and healthy choices. The presence of high-level leadership from several countries as well as FAO, WHO and WTO ensured that food safety was seen as an important priority without which SDG2 could not be achieved.

22. The representative of WHO further mentioned that, to raise the profile and promote political engagement to address food safety concerns at the country level, it was important to have food safety on the agenda of WHO and FAO governing body meetings both at global and regional level and get commitment of Member States to this effect. The representative informed the Committee that the next Executive Board of the WHO and the World Health Assembly Sessions are scheduled for February and May 2020, respectively.
23. CCNASWP members were invited to express their reaffirmation of the importance and relevance of the issues in the summaries to the region. They were further requested to reflect on: (a) their priority action areas in food safety for the next decade; and (b) concrete actions that member states, WHO and/or FAO should take forward for the next decade along with expected timelines for each area.
24. Member countries expressed that food safety was a critical component to advancing SDGs and it was also important to mainstream food safety to advance public health goals. The commitment from WHO and FAO to provide sustainable support for scientific advice was noted as critical. One delegation informed that they along with other co-sponsors will be submitting a document to the Governing Body of WHO (both Executive Board and the World Health Assembly in 2020) emphasizing the importance of food safety and the need for sustainable support towards this area. Other Member countries expressed support regarding the need to raise the profile of food safety in the governing bodies of both WHO and FAO at global as well as regional level so that more funds could be allocated for scientific advice and food safety capacity building by both the organizations. This would ensure higher visibility and better understanding by policymakers and high level officials of the strong linkage between food safety and public health.
25. CCNASWP15 encouraged Member countries to make available the summary and statement of the international food safety events to high-level policy makers in their Governments.
26. Member countries requested FAO, WHO and the Codex Secretariat to actively support countries in the implementation of technical and capacity building projects and the implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025. Members committed to develop proposals for consideration by the Codex Trust Fund and requested support.
27. Member countries agreed to use the occasion of the annual World Food Safety Day (WFSD) on June 7th to advocate for the food safety at the national level for consumer protection and public health, food security, economic development and trade and report on the activities through the WFSD webpage.

Conclusions

28. CCNASWP15:
 - i. Agreed that it was important to have food safety on the agenda of the upcoming sessions of the Executive Board of WHO and the World Health Assembly in 2020 as well as at FAO governing body meetings both at global and regional level and get commitment of Member States.
 - ii. Encouraged Member countries to make available the summary and statement of the international food safety events available to high-level policy makers in their Governments.
 - iii. Recommended that more funds should be made available for scientific advice and food safety capacity building.
 - iv. Committed to use the occasion of the annual World Food Safety Day (WFSD) on June 7th to advocate for the food safety at the national level for consumer protection and public health, food security, economic development and trade and report on the activities through the WFSD webpage.

FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY SITUATION IN THE COUNTRIES IN THE REGION: USE OF THE ONLINE PLATFORM FOR INFORMATION SHARING ON FOOD SAFETY CONTROL SYSTEMS; STATUS OF INFORMATION AND FUTURE PLANS/PROSPECTS (Agenda Item 3.3)⁶

29. The Representative of FAO introduced the agenda item on behalf of FAO and WHO, as part of the strategy for revitalizing the RCCs. The approach leading to the exchange of information between Member countries,

⁶ CX/NASWP 19/15/5

and the modality (online platform), were designed to allow flexibility, and built on other existing instruments of FAO and WHO to ensure coherence and facilitate their use. Due to the limited response rate and the incompleteness of some submissions (e.g., unanswered questions, draft status), the Committee were asked specific questions to understand the relevance of the platform to Member countries, the challenges faced, and the possible support that could be provided to alleviate these difficulties.

30. There was consensus that the online platform was a suitable replacement of the circular letter to gather information on the food safety and quality situation in countries of the region.
31. Delegates highlighted that one of the key challenges faced by some Member countries was the frequent turnover of the official holding of the position of Codex Contact Point (CCP) and a resulting lack of awareness of the platform. Furthermore, due to the high level of seniority of some CCPs, there was a need to delegate the role of populating the platform. The issue of ensuring that the information was current and the possibility of providing links to country websites for the information to be dynamic was also discussed.
32. The reasons why some Member countries only made partial information available on the online platform included insufficient knowledge of technical areas outside of the ministry in which the CCP was located. Furthermore, there was a lack of clarity concerning the level of detail required in responding to the questions and concerns were raised regarding resources needed to respond to some of the questions. Countries also requested statistics on the use of the platform to get a better idea of the type of demand the platform is trying to meet. Countries also advised that more discussion was needed prior to adding any additional questions, in particular concerning dynamic items such as critical and emerging issues.
33. The Committee noted the difficulties faced by CCPs and appreciated the commitment of some Member countries to populate the platform. It was reaffirmed that FAO, WHO and Codex are available to provide assistance. The Committee confirmed that inserting links to relevant websites can be an efficient approach that also helps to ensure the information stays up to date. Countries were encouraged to take a stepwise approach, commencing with readily available information and adding more when available.

Conclusions

34. CCNASWP15:
 - i. Confirmed the usefulness of exchanging information on national food control systems and that the online platform was generally fit for this purpose;
 - ii. Requested usage statistics of the online platform, as well as guidance on the level of detail required in responding to the questions;
 - iii. Noted the commitment of several Member countries to fill and publish the required information; and
 - iv. Reiterated the availability of FAO, WHO and Codex Secretariat to provide assistance as required.

USE OF CODEX STANDARDS IN THE REGION (Agenda Item 4)⁷

35. The Codex Secretariat introduced the item, which is based on an online survey conducted by the Codex Secretariat in the context of revitalization of the RCCs. The aim of the survey was to gain some insight regarding the extent of use and relevance of Codex standards, difficulties related to the general use of Codex standards, and also to receive general feedback from Member countries on the usefulness of such surveys. The Secretariat noted that the current survey focused on Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) for veterinary drugs in foods and two Codex texts on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR).
36. The Secretariat highlighted the good response rate to the survey (64%) in the NASWP region, noted that six of the nine respondents were SIDS, summarized the survey results and invited the Committee to comment on the findings.

Discussion

37. The Committee expressed that the survey represented a useful tool to obtain information on the use of Codex standards, but it provided limited insight of the real situation.
38. One Member country informed the Committee that a key challenge is the difficulties in harmonization with Codex texts at the national level due to limited capacity and also highlighted that translation to local languages represented a constraint.
39. Another Member country noted that the current method and software did not allow the survey to be shared with other stakeholders, thus increasing the workload on the one responding to the survey; this impacts the response rate.

⁷ CX/NASWP 19/15/6; CRD3 (Papua New Guinea)

40. The Committee expressed overall support for conducting such surveys on an biennial basis.
41. It was mentioned that the use of Codex texts related to HACCP could be a topic for a future survey.

Conclusions

42. CCNASWP15:
 - i. Took note of the outcome of the survey and recognized the value of this information.
 - ii. Agreed to support future surveys that preferably should be conducted on an biennial basis.
 - iii. Recommended that the comments made at the present session should be taken into account in future surveys.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER CODEX COMMITTEES (Agenda item 5)⁸

43. The Committee considered the information provided in documents CX/NASWP 19/15/7 and the Codex Secretariat presented the matters that were referred to CCNASWP for information or action, took note of the matters that were presented for information, and agreed to consider the following items referred for action under the other relevant agenda items:

Regular Review of Codex Work Management: Electronic Working Groups

44. The Committee noted the importance of examining barriers to active participation in EWGs and identifying possible solutions, and agreed to consider this matter under Agenda Item 7.1.

Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025

45. The Committee noted this matter would be considered under Agenda Item 7.2 and Agenda Item 8.

Coordinator for North America and South-West Pacific

46. The Committee noted that Vanuatu as the current Coordinator would hold office until the end of the 43rd session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC43) (2020), and agreed that this matter would be considered under Agenda Item 11.

Committee on Processed Fruits and Vegetables (CCPFV)

47. The Committee noted that Members were encouraged to participate in the work of CCPFV and agreed that this matter would be considered under Agenda Item 6.

Priority list of contaminants and naturally occurring toxicants for evaluation by JECFA

48. The Committee acknowledged the enquiry from the 13th session of the Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods (CCCF13) to NASWP on the retention of scopoletin on the priority list of the Joint Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) and agreed to discuss this matter under Agenda Item 9.

CODEX WORK RELEVANT TO THE REGION (Agenda Item 6)⁹

49. The Regional Coordinator introduced the agenda item and presented the key issues related to Codex work that are of relevance to the region.
50. The Committee supported the observations and recommendations of the Regional Coordinator and noted the following views on some of the recommendations and issues.

i. Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025

This topic of high relevance to the region would be further discussed under Agenda Item 7.2.

ii. Codex Trust Fund (CTF) 2 programmes

Member countries acknowledged the opportunities that CTF2 offered to them in order to strengthen Codex work at the national level, and expressed interest in seeking funding while also emphasizing the need for support in developing successful applications. The Committee was reminded of the fact that whilst there CTF2 donor countries in the region, there are not yet any beneficiary country, which would be good, and that the application period was currently open until end of November 2019.

iii. Cadmium in chocolate containing or declaring <30% total cocoa solids on a dry matter basis'

The topic is of relevance to SIDS as the sub-region is also an exporter of chocolate. CCCF has

⁸ CX/NASWP 19/15/7; CRD3 (Papua New Guinea)

⁹ CX/NASWP 19/15/8; CRD3 (Papua New Guinea)

concluded that the proposed maximum level for cadmium in chocolate containing or declaring <30% total cocoa solids on a dry matter basis is safe and these recommended levels should be adopted at CAC43 if not new data suggesting otherwise be presented.

iv. *Aflatoxins in foods*

Aflatoxin in food is of relevance to the region, and can be problematic both in regard to import and export.

v. *Ciguatera food poisoning*

It was recognized that ciguatera food poisoning was one of the most important foodborne disease in SIDS. The Committee emphasized the need to inform CCCF of the importance of addressing this important public health problem following the release of the report of the *Ad-hoc* FAO/WHO Expert Meeting on Ciguatera Food Poisoning.

vi. *Work of CCPFV*

The Committee was reminded of that CCPFV, a Committee working by correspondence, had several EWGs, some of which could be of interest for Member countries to participate in.

Conclusions

51. CCNASWP15:

- i. Agreed that the the topics identified above were relevant to the region;
- ii. Agreed to request CCCF to prioritize work on ciguatera;
- iii. Encouraged eligible Member countries to take advantage of the support offered by CTF2 and submit applications for round 4;
- iv. Encouraged Member countries to participate in the work of CCPFV.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2014 – 2019 (Agenda Item 7.1)¹⁰

52. The Codex Secretariat introduced the agenda item, noting that the term of the Codex Strategic Plan 2014-2019 was ending and that there were many valuable lessons to be learned from the monitoring and implementation of the plan that needed to be carried forward when implementing the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025. The Committee was informed that a final report on the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2014-2019 would be presented to CAC43, for which input was required from the region.
53. The Secretariat reminded delegates of the important role that Member countries play in both monitoring and implementation and requested members to agree on a suitable mechanism through which they could regularly report to the Codex Secretariat on progress made.
54. As a follow up to the regular review of Codex work management on EWGs, the Secretariat recalled the recommendation of CAC40 to work with regional coordinators and committees to examine barriers to active participation and identify possible solutions. Discussions highlighted that impediments to participation in EWGs included coordination challenges at the national level, weak Codex Contact Point structures, lack of funds to support Codex work and limited communication between CCPs in SIDS.
55. The Committee conveyed its appreciation to the Codex Secretariat for the workshops organized on Codex online tools to support strengthening the Codex work at national and regional levels.
56. There was a clear recognition among Member countries that they needed to find ways of participation that worked in the context of their country. It was noted that both EWGs established by CCNASWP reported challenges on participation, and efforts were needed to address this, as newly established EWGs embarked on their work. The ongoing efforts of the Codex Secretariat to provide support to address the technical issues were appreciated and any initiative that could assist the CCP in their management and communication role was welcomed.
57. The need for further strengthening of the CCP and the national Codex structures was emphasized and FAO and WHO were encouraged to provide more support for capacity building in this field. The opportunities that the CTF2 offers were highlighted.

Conclusions

58. CCNASWP15:

¹⁰ CX/NASWP 19/15/9; CRD3 (Papua New Guinea)

- i. Noted the achievements of the Strategic Plan 2014-2019 and the importance of using the lessons learned from their monitoring and implementation as they embarked on the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025;
- ii. Requested Member countries to proactively provide information through the Regional Coordinator to facilitate the preparation of the final report of the Strategic Plan 2014-2019;
- iii. Noted the need to increase the contribution of the region to scientific advice work that underpinned Codex standards through capacity development and improved regional coordination; and
- iv. Acknowledged the ongoing challenges with participation in Codex meetings and in EWGs and agreed to use the existing mechanisms within Codex i.e. web tools; coordination meetings before and during meetings; as well as look for innovative solutions to meet the challenges in the region and enhance their participation in ongoing work of Codex.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2020 – 2025: ROAD MAP TO IMPLEMENTATION (Agenda Item 7.2)¹¹

59. The Codex Secretariat introduced the item, recalled that CAC42 had adopted the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025; highlighted some of the key differences with the Codex Strategic Plan 2014-2016; and noted the flexibility the new Strategic Plan affords in terms of its implementation. The Secretariat emphasized the shared ownership and responsibility for implementation of the strategic plan among Codex Members and Observers, Codex subsidiary bodies and the Codex Secretariat, host country secretariat and chairpersons. The Secretariat reminded the Committee that the Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CCEXEC) had established a sub-committee to oversee and facilitate the development of the work plan for the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025. It also reminded the delegates of the request to CCNASWP to provide details on the activities it would undertake to support the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 over the next 2 years.

Discussion

60. The Chairperson recalled that the Committee had established an in-session WG to address this request. The WG prioritized activities under Goals 1, 2 and 3 for the next two years for the region and formed groups that consisted of relevant Member countries to discuss activities that were intended to be implemented.
61. The WG identified activities to address Goal 1 such as strengthening the National Codex Committee (NCC); improving the performance of the CCPs by assigning qualified staff to that position; providing sufficient funding and resources; improving the linkages with the Codex Secretariat; and establishing and participating in the Pacific Islands EWG.
62. In order to address Goal 2, the WG identified activities such as hosting a regional workshop with support from FAO and WHO on the use of expert scientific advice in the development of Codex standards; developing and implementing a work plan to generate relevant data to elaborate Codex standard, specifically referring to scopoletin in the regional standard for fermented noni fruit juice; and mobilize sufficient funding.
63. The WG identified activities to address Goal 3 such as the need to deal with lack of effective enforcement of Codex standards; coordination among relevant authorities; awareness of rules and responsibilities; ownership; and resources. The WG also stated that the special needs of SIDS should be recognised.
64. Delegations expressed their appreciation for the work of the WG and indicated their general agreement with the prioritized goals while noting that in two years' time these priorities could be revised. Reflecting on the approaches that the WG proposed for each goal, the Member countries expressed the views that efficient access to CCP should be ensured, that application to CTF2 should be promoted, and that education is key to raise awareness about Codex standards.
65. FAO and WHO urged Member countries to increase focus on food safety, and offered to explore funding opportunities for capacity building activities.
66. Considering the need to refine the activities as well as define responsible parties, the Committee agreed with the proposal to establish an EWG to continue the work.

Conclusions

67. CCNASWP15:
 - i. Welcomed the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025.
 - ii. Agreed that CCNASWP would focus on the implementation of activities aimed towards achieving Goals 1, 2 and 3 of the Strategic Plan.
 - iii. Agreed to establish an EWG, chaired by Vanuatu and co-chaired by Fiji, working in English, with the

¹¹ CX/NASWP 19/15/10; CRD3 (Papua New Guinea)

following terms of reference:

- a. refine the activities to be undertaken in the region to support the implementation of the Strategic Plan over the next two years taking into consideration the discussions at CCNASWP15;
 - b. include the additional information required in the work plan on responsibilities, targets and approach for monitoring; and
 - c. submit the proposed work plan for CCNASWP to the Codex Secretariat through the Regional Coordinator by 31st December 2019, for incorporation into the overarching work plan for implementation of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 by the Strategic Planning sub-committee of CCEXEC.
- iv. Encouraged all Member countries to participate in the EWG to ensure that the work plan was realistic and achievable in the next two years while also reflecting on the priority needs of the region.

CODEX COMMUNICATION WORK PLAN (Agenda Item 8)¹²

68. The Codex Secretariat introduced the item referring to the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025 Goal 3 and recalling CCEXEC74 (Rome, 2017) support for “the need for members to contribute [to the] development and implementation” of the current Codex communications work plan and “the potential for greater engagement and impact through tailored collaboration with the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees”¹³.
69. The Codex Secretariat highlighted the opportunities that both social and traditional media offered for raising awareness of Codex issues whether at the highest political level or when reporting, for example, on technical and capacity building initiatives. The Secretariat reiterated the availability of the communications team in the Codex Secretariat to engage with Member countries and the Regional Coordinator to deliver on the communications work plan, also through the creation of rapid communications groups with tools such as WhatsApp which are widely used effectively throughout the region.
70. The Committee acknowledged the importance of prioritising regional Codex communications, expressed broad support for the communication initiatives undertaken and for the work plan presented.

Conclusions

71. CCNASWP15 agreed to:
 - i. Adopt the draft Regional Communications Work plan 2020-2025 (Appendix I of CX/NASWP 19/15/11) and work towards its implementation;
 - ii. Liaise with the Codex Secretariat primarily through the RC to execute the communications work plan between now (CCNASWP15) and CCNASWP16.

PROPOSED DRAFT REGIONAL STANDARD FOR FERMENTED NONI FRUIT JUICE (Agenda item 9)¹⁴

72. Tonga as the Chair of the EWG, introduced the item and highlighted the progress made in preparation of the draft standard and the outstanding issues to be addressed as contained in document CX/NASWP 19/15/12.

The Committee discussed the Draft Standard section by section, taking into account comments submitted, made appropriate editorial corrections and took decisions as outlined in the following paragraphs.

CCNASWP15, in response to the request from CCCF13, confirmed that they wished to retain scopoletin on the JECFA priority list and called upon Member countries to generate and submit suitable data for the evaluation, which addresses both toxicity and exposure. The Committee also asked FAO and WHO to organize a new call for data for the safety evaluation of scopoletin. The FAO Representative reminded that a full dataset including exposure and toxicity is required.

Discussion

73. The Committee agreed to the Scope (Section 1); Contaminants (Section 4); Hygiene (Section 5); and Weights and measures (Section 7) of the draft standard.

Description

74. One Member country sought clarification whether this standard could be applied also to powder form of noni. The Codex Secretariat referred to the project document which clearly stated that this regional standard would apply only for liquid form of noni. A new work proposal would be needed should the Committee consider to

¹² CX/NASWP 19/15/11; CRD3 (Papua New Guinea)

¹³ REP18/EXEC1 para 9

¹⁴ CX/NASWP 19/15/12; CX/NASWP 19/15/12 Add.1; CRD3 (Papua New Guinea); CRD4 (United States of America)

broaden the scope. The Committee agreed on pursuing the development of the standard based on the current project document.

Essential Composition and Quality Factors

75. The Committee noted that information on moisture was not essential for the standard. One Member country expressed concern on setting a given range for Brix due to discrepancy with its national regulation. Consequently, the Committee agreed to set only a minimum level as 5.5% Brix to ensure inclusiveness. Further, the Committee agreed to establish ethanol level as less than 0.5% rather than specifying an acceptable range.
76. It was proposed that scopoletin be moved from “Essential Composition and Quality Factors” to the section for “Contaminants” and the need to retain it on the priority list of JECFA was underlined. The Committee agreed to keep scopoletin in the “Essential Composition and Quality Factors” with an additional statement that its level must be as low as technologically feasible until safe level is established by JECFA in the footnote.
77. Under the section of “Food Additives”, one Member country proposed to specify the food category of the product as 14.2.7 “Aromatized alcoholic beverages” in accordance with the *General Standard for Food Additives* (Codex STAN 192-1995). Some Member countries stressed that noni fruits juice are commonly produced without using food additives. The Committee agreed that no food additives were permitted to be used.

Methods of sampling and analysis

78. The Committee noted that relevant methods of analysis and sampling provided by the *Recommended Methods of Analysis and Sampling* (CXS234-1999) shall be used.

Annex

79. The Committee was reminded that an Annex is an integral part of the standard and thus it should only include what is necessary. There was agreement that the method to identify scopoletin and deacetylasperulosidic acid should be retained in Annex A and Annex B, respectively, while Annex C was deleted.
80. One Member country suggested adding details to the preparation of samples as well as correcting the methodology for thin layer chromatography analysis. The Committee agreed to retain the proposal in the square brackets for further consideration.

Conclusion

81. CCNASWP15 agreed to:
 - i. Forward the draft standard for fermented noni fruit juice to CAC43 for adoption at Step 5 (Appendix II);
 - ii. Forward for endorsement the draft provisions for Food additives, Labelling and Methods of sampling and analyses to the Codex Committee on Food Additives (CCFA), Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL) and Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling (CCMAS), respectively.
 - iii. Request JECFA to retain scopoletin on the priority list and to call upon Member countries to generate and submit data to support the conduct of the safety evaluation; and
 - iv. Re-convene the EWG, led by Tonga to prepare a revised draft standard for consideration at CCNASWP16.

PROPOSED DRAFT REGIONAL STANDARD FOR KAVA AS A BEVERAGE WHEN MIXED WITH WATER (Agenda item 10)¹⁵

82. Vanuatu as the Chair of the EWG introduced the item and highlighted the progress made in preparation of the proposed draft standard and the outstanding issues to be addressed as contained in document CX/NASWP 19/15/13.
83. The Committee agreed to discuss the Draft Standard section by section, taking into account comments submitted, made appropriate editorial corrections and took decisions as outlined in the following paragraphs.

Discussion

84. The Committee agreed to the Scope (Section 1) and Contaminants (Section 5) of the draft standard.

Title

85. The Committee agreed that the title be “Proposed draft regional standard for kava products for use as a

¹⁵ CX/NASWP 19/15/13; CX/NASWP 19/15/13 Add.1; CRD3 (Papua New Guinea)

beverage when mixed with water”.

Description

86. The Committee noted that the requirement for basal stems to be used for producing kava products to be up to the first node on each branch should be included in the text rather than as a footnote.

Essential composition and quality factors

87. The Committee scrutinized and amended the list of examples of terms used to describe Noble varieties of kava.
88. The Committee further considered chemical and physical characteristics for fresh and dried kava products and decided to delete the table containing requirements for kavalactone and flavokavin since the standard was aimed for the products made solely from Noble variety, which, if any, had only negligible amounts of this compound. One Member country expressed the view that moisture content is important and therefore a provision for moisture was retained in the document. One Member country requested more time to consult with national experts regarding kavalactone and flavokavin.
89. The Committee agreed to add a requirement regarding kava products being free from soil and foreign materials to the draft standard.
90. Based on information provided by the Codex Secretariat, the Committee decided not to include provisions for nutrition in the proposed draft standard.

Food additives

91. The Committee agreed that no food additives including carry-over are allowed, and consequently deleted the part of the sentence relating to permitting carry-over of food additives.

Labelling

92. The Committee considered the name of the products and agreed that, while the name of the food must be clearly stated, the name of the variety(ies) of kava plant from which the kava product was derived should be deemed as optional.
93. The Committee was reminded of the ongoing work on guidance for labelling of non-retail containers in CCFL. The Committee nevertheless agreed to align the section with the current guidance in the Procedural Manual.

Conclusions

94. CCNASWP15 agreed to:
- i. Forward the proposed draft standard to the Commission for possible adoption at Step 5;
 - ii. Task the Coordinator to work with the Member countries of the region to resolve the few outstanding issues prior to CCEXEC79, so that the Coordinator, should consensus be achieved among the Member countries, can recommend omission of Steps 6 and 7 and submission for adoption at step 8 at CAC43;
 - iii. Submit the draft Provisions for labelling, food additives and methods of analysis to CCFL, CCFA and CCMAS, respectively, for endorsement.

NOMINATION OF THE COORDINATOR (Agenda Item 11)¹⁶

95. The Codex Secretariat introduced the item.
96. The Committee on the proposal of Vanuatu, unanimously agreed to recommend to CAC43 that Fiji be appointed for a first term as Regional Coordinator for North America and the South West Pacific.
97. Fiji thanked all Delegations for their support and accepted the nomination.

OTHER BUSINESS (Agenda Item 12)

98. The Committee noted that no other business had been proposed.

Date and Place of Next Session (Agenda Item 13)

99. The Committee was informed that its 16th Session would be held in approximately two years' time and that more detailed arrangements would be communicated following the appointment of the Coordinator by CAC43 in consultation with the Codex Secretariat.

¹⁶ CX/NASWP 19/15/14

