



Agenda Item 7a)

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

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OTHER BUSINESS AND FUTURE WORK

PROPOSAL FOR THE USE OF A CODEX 'LOGO' OR 'MARK'

Submitted by the Chair of the Commission

1. Background

Codex members have expressed the view that the proliferation of private standards has made market access more difficult for various developed markets. Private standards have been promoted extensively for wider acceptability with the promise of market access. The speed of standards development in Codex and the lack of harmonization of national standards by many members with those of the Codex have been mentioned as reasons for the proliferation of private standards, however a recent study carried out by the Codex Secretariat showed that on the average it takes 4.2 years for a Codex standard to be developed (3.5 years for food safety standards) barring a few well publicized exceptions which means it is by far not as slow as perceived.

The non-utilization of Codex standards could be linked to a lack of awareness about Codex standards amongst a number of trading organizations, retailers and consumers. Codex standards are international standards, based on science and developed through consensus among governments and with participation of the private sector as observers but they have not received the necessary visibility of acceptance even though in many cases they form the basis of national regulations.

It will be argued in this paper that a Codex logo could contribute to promoting Codex work and achieving a higher visibility of Codex standards and ultimately to increase their application.

2. Use of logos by other organizations

The WTO SPS Agreement explicitly mentions three international standard setting bodies ("three sisters"): the OIE for animal health; the IPPC for plant health and the Codex for human health.

OIE and IPPC have recognizable logo, which have provided considerable global awareness about the respective bodies. Codex does not use any comparable logo at the moment.

Taking account of the above it is surprising that the body producing world food safety and quality standards that protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade does not have a comparable recognizable identity.

3. Usefulness of a Codex logo

A logo as part of a comprehensive communication strategy could make it easier to create awareness about Codex standards amongst traders, retailers and consumers and thus encourage harmonization of national standards with Codex. The use of harmonized standards would facilitate trade especially for developing countries.

The following activities could be considered:

Step1: Review existing visual identity for Codex and make proposals as necessary for improving it

Step 2: Consider ways for promoting the identity that would encourage national use of Codex standards

3.1 Step1: Review existing visual identity for Codex and make proposals as necessary for improving it

Using a consistent visual identity (e.g. logo) and promoting it internationally through its use on Codex standards, reports, documents, PR campaigns, advertisements and on official Codex stationary etc. could increase the visibility of the Commission and the Codex Alimentarius globally. It would be one part of the toolkit of a bigger communication strategy.

The Codex logo should be registered, for which two options exist: (i) register the mark under Art. 6-ter of the Paris Convention (Intellectual Property Paris Convention) that applies almost to all countries member of Codex (this would be free of charge) and (ii) Madrid Convention (only 86 countries): the process would be costly and time consuming as the logo would need to be registered in each country.

For the Paris Convention there are several requirements to submit in the relevant application to WIPO: being an autonomous / independent entity with an independent budget, the permanent nature of the entity, the existence of rules and procedures for membership, and an organizational structure (including Governing Bodies). Some of these requirements may not be fulfilled for Codex since its budget comes out of the regular budgets of FAO and WHO.

There are concerns in FAO and WHO about the proliferation of logos, as many small projects propose to use them for individual identity and may thus be seen as distinct from the parent organizations. Any decisions on the Codex logo should be agreed upon by both organisations. Agreement would have to be reached between FAO and WHO as to who would own the logo on behalf of Codex.

3.2 Step 2: Consider ways for promoting the identity that would encourage national use of Codex standards

To consider if and how the Codex logo could be used at the national level (e.g. on national standards, by the Codex Contact Point etc.)

The feasibility and exact rules and terms for any use of the logo would have to be defined.

FAO and WHO apply strict criteria for the use of their respective logos given, inter alia, the significant legitimacy that these logos convey and the same would be true for the Codex logo which would be owned by one (or both) of the organizations.