



**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
CODEX COMMITTEE ON FISH AND FISHERY PRODUCTS**

Thirty-fourth Session

Ålesund, Norway

19 – 24 October 2015

DISCUSSION PAPER ON THE FUTURE OF THE COMMITTEE ON FISH AND FISHERY PRODUCTS

(Prepared by the Codex and Host Secretariats)

BACKGROUND.

1. The Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products (CCFFP) was established in 1966 under the following terms of reference: "To elaborate worldwide standards for fresh, frozen (including quick frozen) or otherwise processed fish, crustaceans and molluscs". The Government of Norway has hosted the Committee since its inception. The Committee generally meets every 18 months and has always had a full agenda, in some cases requiring six-day sessions as well as pre-session working groups.

2. Over the years, CCFFP has developed or revised many commodity standards related to fish and fishery products, consolidated earlier codes of practice into the *Code of practice for fish and fishery products* (CAC/RCP52-2003) and developed other guidance documents such as the procedure for the inclusion of additional species in standards for fish and fishery products.

3. New work proposals have mainly concerned the addition of sections to the *Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products* (CAC/RCP 52-2003) and the development of a limited number of standards. Since 2006, there have been six proposals for new work, of which five were taken up and completed, or are nearing completion (see the annex). In addition, considerable work has been done, or is nearing completion, to update existing commodity standards by aligning the food additives sections with the *General Standard for Food Additives* (CODEX STAN 192-1995) and the food hygiene sections with the requirements in the *Procedural Manual*.

4. Noting the approaching completion of key items of the Committee's work and the limited scope for new work at present, the Committee must therefore consider how to continue its work and whether there is sufficient justification to continue physical sessions of CCFFP given its future work programme.

5. This paper summarizes the current work situation and sets out proposals for the possible adjournment of CCFFP, giving alternative ways to proceed with unfinished/future work items.

6. CURRENT WORK PROGRAMME

7. The current session (CCFFP34) has a full agenda but most items of work should be finalized and submitted for adoption to the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) at its 39th session, in July 2016, in accordance with the projected timelines for the completion of work as presented in their respective project documents, such as the additional sections of the *Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products* (CAC/RCP52-2003) on processing of fish sauce, sturgeon caviar and scallop products, or expected to be finalized at this Session, such as agreement on how to deal with the draft or proposed draft appendices to the CAC/RCP52-2003 (their retention, integration or discontinuation); the alignment of food additive provisions; and the amendment to Section 7.4 of the *Standard for Quick Frozen Fish Sticks (Fish Fingers), Fish Portions and Fish Fillets – Breaded or in Batter* (CODEX STAN 166-1989) (nitrogen factors).

8. Should CCFFP34 complete the work on its agenda, then the main outstanding matters for CCFFP could include: work on histamine, considering the extensive proposals made in [CX/FFP 15/34/10](#); and the possible development of a uniform procedure to determine nitrogen factors, as presented in [CX/FFP 15/34/8](#).

9. POSSIBLE NEW WORK

10. At CCFFP33, Colombia proposed new work on a standard for fresh chilled Pirarucú fillet or whole fish and was requested to present a proposal and project document for consideration by CCFFP34. The item

has been included on the agenda for CCFFP34, but the proposal and project document have not been received at the time of writing (28 September 2015), thus it will be too late for CCFFP to consider this work, should such documents be submitted subsequently.

11. Even though many existing commodity standards have been updated, as mentioned above, further questions could arise regarding the continuing relevance of certain existing commodity standards and whether they require revision to bring them up-to-date.

12. HOW TO ADDRESS PENDING AND POSSIBLE FUTURE CCFFP WORK

13. Since only a limited number of items may remain following CCFFP34 or are expected to be proposed in the future, there is scope to consider alternatives to holding regular CCFFP sessions (18 or 24 months).

14. Two leading possibilities exist: (1) CCFFP could be adjourned; or (2) CCFFP could decide not to set a date for a future meeting but to continue working by correspondence.

15. Under scenario (1), if CCFFP were adjourned:

- Pending work of a general nature, such as hygiene issues, methods of analysis, food additives or contaminants, could be referred to other relevant general subject committees, as per their terms of reference; relevant practice in this regard is work on meat hygiene, which, though a task of the Committee on Meat Hygiene, is currently undertaken by the Committee on Hygiene (CCFH).
- The Codex Secretariat together with the CCFFP host Secretariat, Norway, would regularly review whether commodity standards potentially require updating.¹
- There would still be place in Codex for a specific topic related to fish and fishery products but the usual mechanism of regular Committee meetings would have ceased; Members may still therefore make proposals for new work to the Commission, which would take a decision on how to proceed: reactivate the Committee to work through regular physical sessions or work by correspondence; assign the work to a general subject committee; or create a task force for a specific purpose.

16. Under scenario (2), should the Committee not complete its work at CCFFP34 or should the Committee not consider that the remaining work can be addressed through the mechanisms above, it could work by correspondence:

- In recent similar cases, committees have been reactivated to take on specific work through correspondence, such as work on processed cheese, by the Committee on Milk and Milk Products, on "panela", by the Committee on Sugars, and on quinoa, though the Committee on Cereals, Pulses and Legumes.
- The Codex Secretariat has put in place mechanisms to facilitate work by correspondence, including an electronic platform that is currently being piloted, which would provide means for further work on fish and fishery products.
- The host Government would continue in its functions as it would for the physical sessions of the Committee.

17. RECOMMENDATION

18. The Committee is invited to:

Recommend to the Commission that:

- CCFFP be adjourned *sine die* and outstanding work of a general nature, for example, that on histamine, be referred to an appropriate general subject committee;
- or
- Specific items of work be conducted/completed through correspondence and the issue of adjournment to be decided at a future session.

¹ Norway, as host Government, has expressed its willingness to continue following up on future work together with the Codex Secretariat.

Annex**New work proposals since 2006**

In 2006 (CCFFP28) – proposals were made for:

- revision of the procedure for the inclusion of additional species in standards for fish and fishery products (completed);
- an amendment to the *Standard for Quick Frozen Fish Sticks, Fish Portions and Fish Fillets – Breaded or in Batter* (Nitrogen Factors); a standard for fish sauce and one for abalone (completed).

In the case of the nitrogen factors, CCFFP34 will consider an amendment to the *Standard for Quick Frozen Fish Sticks, Fish Portions and Fish Fillets – Breaded or in Batter* that will no longer require amendments with regard to addition of nitrogen factors, which was the major focus of recent amendments.

In 2008 (CCFFP29) – no new work proposals.

In 2009 (CCFFP30) – no new work proposals.

In 2010 (CCFFP31) – proposals were made for:

- criteria/parameters for screening methods of biotoxins in the *Standard for Live and Raw Bivalve Molluscs* (completed); and
- a section on sturgeon caviar in the *Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products* (for possible finalization by CCFFP34).

In 2012 (CCFFP32) – a proposal was made for:

- a section on processing of fish sauce in the *Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products* (for possible finalization by CCFFP34).

In 2014 (CCFFP33) – a proposal was made for:

- a standard for fresh chilled Pirarucu fillet or whole fish. CCFFP33 did not agree to this proposal but requested further information and submission of a project document. The subject is due for discussion at CCFFP34 if a project document is submitted.