

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION **E**



**Food and Agriculture
Organization of
the United Nations**



**World Health
Organization**

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REP12/EXEC1

**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION
35th Session
Rome, Italy, 2-7 July 2012**

**REPORT OF THE SIXTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION**

WHO Headquarters, Geneva, 7 – 9 February 2012

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February 2012

TO: Codex Contact Points
Interested International Organizations

FROM: Secretariat, Codex Alimentarius Commission, Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme

SUBJECT: Distribution of the Report of the 66th Session of the Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (REP12/EXEC)

REQUEST FOR COMMENTS

Draft Codex Strategic Plan 2014-2019 (para. 62, Appendix II)

Governments and interested international organizations wishing to comment on the Draft Codex Strategic Plan (Introduction, Strategic Vision Statement, Codex Core Values, Strategic Goals and Objectives) should do so in writing to the above address, before **15 April 2012**.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission held its Sixty-sixth Session at WHO Headquarters, Geneva, from 7 to 10 February 2012. The session was chaired by Mr Sanjay Dave, Chairperson of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, with the assistance of the three Vice-chairpersons, Dr Samuel Godefroy (Canada), Mrs Awilo Ochieng Pernet (Switzerland), and Professor Samuel Sefa-Dedeh (Ghana). A complete list of participants is attached as Appendix I to this report.

2. The Session was opened by Dr Maged Younes, Director, Department of Food Safety and Zoonoses, WHO, who welcomed the members of the Committee on behalf of FAO and WHO. He recalled that recent food safety incidents had demonstrated the need for concerted action at the international level to address emerging issues and highlighted the importance of food safety in order to ensure food security worldwide. Dr Younes recalled that the Committee had to consider substantial items, especially the new Strategic Plan which should be adopted in 2013, and wished delegates all success in this important task.

3. The Chairperson welcomed the members of the newly constituted Executive Committee and stressed the need to finalising the Strategic Plan by 2013 to provide general orientation to Codex work. He pointed out that collective efforts should ensure greater acceptability of Codex standards worldwide, further enhancing the speed of the standard-setting process while taking into account the concerns of developing countries, in order to meet the expectations of all members.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Agenda Item 1)¹

4. The Executive Committee adopted the Provisional Agenda as the Agenda for the session with the following additions under Agenda Item 9 (Other business and future work):

- A proposal for Coordinators to be assisted by an adviser at the Executive Committee meetings
- Mechanisms to improve distribution of documents in all official languages
- Proposals to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Codex Alimentarius Commission
- Status/Role of the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the Commission when participating in Codex Committees (other than the Commission and Executive Committee)
- Proposal for the development and use of a Codex logo or mark

5. The Committee also agreed to consider the proposal from some members to develop a discussion paper on funding for scientific advice under Agenda item 4 Financial and Budgetary Matters.

CRITICAL REVIEW FOR THE ELABORATION OF CODEX STANDARDS AND RELATED TEXTS

MONITORING OF STANDARD DEVELOPMENT (Agenda Item 2)²

6. The Committee considered the status of all standards and related texts under development and noted that many issues were progressing according to schedule and that several recommendations had been made by the last session of CCEXEC. As only three committees had met since the last session, most updates resulted from adoption at Step 5 or approval of new work at the Commission in 2011. Individual committees are mentioned below only when specific comments were made.

Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods (CCRVDF)

7. The Committee recalled that the draft MRL for BST was held at Step 8 since 1999 and that the draft MRL for ractopamine had been held at Step 8 by the last session of the Commission. It was also recalled that the next session of the Committee on General Principles would consider a document on the status of standards and related texts held at Step 8.

¹ CX/EXEC 12/66/1

² CX/EXEC 12/66/2, CX/EXEC 12/66/2-Add.1

8. Some members proposed that more efforts should be made to reach consensus and that a special meeting should be organised in order to discuss the possibilities of reaching a solution on the MRL for ractopamine through an inclusive and transparent process, which could be held in conjunction with another committee, possibly the Committee on General Principles.

9. Some members stressed the importance of the role of science in the standard setting process and the need to apply the risk analysis framework and to retain the current basis for Codex work. Another member pointed out that decisions should be taken by consensus and that there was no consensus on the MRL for ractopamine as many countries did not support its adoption.

10. Some members pointed out that consideration of standards held at Step 8 should focus on general and policy issues in order to improve the Codex process in such cases rather than discussing specifically ractopamine, as it was likely that the positions expressed at the Commission would be repeated and it would be difficult to achieve any progress.

11. The Chair pointed out that, while general issues concerning texts held at Step 8 would be discussed at the Committee on General Principles, there should be an opportunity to discuss the issue of ractopamine in a separate meeting, which could be formal or informal.

12. Some members pointed out that the role of the Executive Committee (CCEXEC) was to make recommendations in the framework of the critical review and therefore it could propose a new process in order to facilitate consensus. The Committee discussed how to proceed and noted that while CCEXEC could convene working groups, they were limited to the membership of the CCEXEC.

13. After some discussion, the Committee agreed that the decision to convene an in-session meeting to discuss the issue of ractopamine should be left to the Committee on General Principles, which could decide either to convene a separate working group or if practically possible, an in-session working group which could build on the conclusions which would have been made in the discussions on standards held at Step 8. One member noted that this possibility was conditional on the progress which would be achieved in the CCGP on this question. It was also noted that informal discussions between members could always take place during or between Codex sessions.

Committee on Fish and Fishery Products

14. The Committee recalled its earlier recommendations and noted that the Draft Standard for Smoked Fish and the Proposed Draft Performance Criteria for Methods for Marine Biotoxins were expected to be finalised in October 2012 for adoption in 2013 and that the Revision of the Procedure for the Inclusion of Additional Species would be considered for finalisation and alternatively, its discontinuation would be considered.

Committee on Food labelling

15. The Committee noted that it was expected that the Draft Amendment to the Guidelines for Organically Produced Foods (inclusion of ethylene for other uses) would be completed by 2014.

FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Europe

16. The Coordinator for Europe informed the Committee of the progress on the development of the standard for ayran (electronic and physical working groups chaired by Turkey) and the standard for fresh fungus Chanterelle (electronic working group chaired by the European Union).

Committee on Food Hygiene

17. The Committee noted that there was very good progress on some items, emphasized the importance of the cooperation with OIE in the work on zoonotic parasites and also appreciated the initiative of the Trust Fund to facilitate the participation of developing countries in the work on microbiological criteria through a mentoring process.

Summary Table

18. The Committee noted that the Chairperson had prepared a summary table on the status of all texts outlining the standards which were likely to be adopted in 2012 and 2013. The Committee agreed

that the Secretariat would prepare a similar table as an annex to the document on the monitoring of Codex standards in the future.

PREPARATION OF THE CODEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2014-2019 (Agenda Item 3)³

19. The Committee recalled that at its last session it had decided to develop a revised draft strategic plan based on the working document prepared by the Chair and the Vice-Chairs (CX/EXEC 11/65/4) and that the Member for North America would collect and compile comments from Executive Committee members.

20. The Member for North America introduced the working document and said that the goal when drafting the revision had been to come up with a short and concise document that could also serve to explain to policy makers what Codex was about and why it was important.

21. The working document had been further revised in CRD 10. However, the Committee decided to work from CX/EXEC 12/66/3 when discussing the strategic plan in detail as this document had been translated into all working languages.

General comments

22. It was suggested that the strategic plan should contain indicators to measure its performance in order to facilitate its regular review.

Mission statement and Introduction

23. Several members proposed to delete the mission statement, as it did not include the whole mission of Codex but only referred to food safety matters. Other members were of the opinion that it would be useful to have a statement at the beginning of the strategic plan explaining what Codex does.

24. The Committee decided to delete the mission statement and instead to begin the document with a revised introduction, which briefly explains the nature and purpose of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the relation of Codex standards to the WTO Agreements as well as the content of the Strategic Plan.

Strategic vision statement

25. In the working document the following strategic vision statement had been proposed: “To be an effective, inclusive, and trusted global leader in setting food standards, working to achieve the highest attainable level of consumer protection and fair practices in the food trade, and addressing current and emerging food safety and quality challenges”.

26. Several members did not agree with the inclusion of the words “the highest attainable level of consumer protection” which had also been contained in the previous Strategic Plan. They said that the levels of consumer protection attainable might be different in different countries and that to strive for the highest attainable level internationally might make the standards too strict. It was also felt that the words suggested a higher protection than necessary for protecting the health of consumers.

27. One member said that the words “the highest attainable level” could be maintained because in their view the application of Codex standards had never been a problem even in many developing countries, but the application of private standards was a problem as there was no harmonization so that when developing regulations at the national level, provisions of all kinds of different standards needed to be taken into account. The vision should be realistic and contain the notion of harmonized standards.

28. One member proposed the following vision statement: “As a preeminent international food standard setting body ensure that its members have access to the most appropriate food standards that protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade in the context of increasingly challenging international food production and processing environment.”

³ CX/EXEC 12/66/3; CRD 10

29. Some members supported this wording as it highlighted the importance of the institution and was a well balanced text closely linked to the mandate of Codex.

30. Other members felt that this version was too limited as the term “consumer protection” had been lost, the terms “access” and “appropriate” were difficult to understand and the text should also take into account that challenges along the whole food chain were addressed by Codex and not only production and processing.

31. One member proposed to add “consumer concerns” and to include dealing with ethical issues and issues related to fraud.

32. Several revisions were proposed to combine the two proposals and in the end the Committee agreed that the vision statement should be short and concise and set out a vision for the next six years. The Committee agreed that a simple statement combining the striving for global leadership in food standard setting and the Codex dual mandate would be sufficient to describe what the organization would work towards: “To be the preeminent international food standards body working to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade.”

Codex Core values

33. The Committee decided to include, after the strategic vision statement, which explains what is to be achieved, a list of Codex core values, which explain how Codex will fulfil its duties. The list includes but is not limited to collaboration, inclusiveness, consensus building and transparency.

Strategic Goals and objectives

34. The Committee did not discuss the introduction to the strategic goals and the activities. The Committee discussed the text of the four strategic goals conclusively. Concerning the strategic objectives under each goal, some open questions remained: e.g. some need to be rephrased to read as objectives and others were deemed to be rather activities and need to be moved to that level. The Committee agreed to discuss this when reviewing the activities.

Strategic goal 1: Establish international food standards that protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade

35. The Committee agreed that it was not necessary to repeat the mandate in the goal but that the issue of addressing current and emerging issues should be included so that the goal would cover ongoing work and any newly arising concerns so that the revised goal reads: “Establish international food standards that address current and emerging food issues”

Strategic goal 1: Objectives

36. The Committee decided to insert a new first objective regarding the core business of the Commission namely to: “Establish new and review existing food standards, based on priorities of the CAC”.

37. As second objective, the Committee maintained the first objective on the preparedness of the Commission to deal with “emerging issues and needs of members”. Noting the work of FAO and WHO in this area, the notion that this could lead to the development of food standards was incorporated. The amended objective reads: “Proactively identify emerging issues and member country needs and where appropriate, develop relevant food standards”.

38. The Committee agreed to delete the second objective on “International recognition of Codex as the preeminent international food standards body” as this was already contained in the goal. The activities under this objective will have to be reviewed and, where necessary, included under a different objective.

39. In the fourth and now renumbered third objective, the Committee included the word “international” in front of “standard-setting organizations” to clarify the extent of its cooperation with other organizations. It was noted that international non-governmental standard-setting organizations were included in this phrase. The amended objective reads: “Strengthen coordination and cooperation

with other international standard-setting organizations to minimize duplication of efforts and optimize opportunities”.

Strategic Goal 2: Ensure the application of risk analysis principles in the development of Codex Standards.

40. The Committee decided that this goal adequately reflected the intentions and should be maintained unchanged.

Strategic goal 2: Objectives

41. In the first objective, the Committee decided to delete the word “sustainable” as it was not clear in the context and rather to include a new objective on the sustainable access to scientific advice. The amended first objective and new second objective read: “Consistent use of scientific advice and risk analysis principles” and “Sustainable access to scientific advice”.

42. There was some discussion around the third objective concerning increasing scientific input from developing countries.

43. One member said that, in their opinion, no distinction should be made between the state of development of countries in this matter. It was also mentioned that the objective could be placed under Goal 3 on participation of all members. Other members were of the opinion that this wording and positioning of this objective were adequate and in line with the objectives of the Codex Trust Fund (Objective 3).

44. The objective was maintained unchanged as follows: “To increase scientific input from developing countries”.

Strategic Goal 3: Ensure the effective participation of all Codex members.

45. The Committee discussed the use of the word “effective” and how this could be measured.

46. It was proposed that it could be measured with sending national positions or by the willingness of governments to support participation.

47. One member said that if the “effectiveness” was only measured on the basis of actual participation and interventions at meetings or the sending of comments, important changes in countries concerning the knowledge and understanding about Codex and the national structures achieved through capacity development and physical participation at Codex sessions financed by the Codex Trust Fund could remain unrecognised.

48. The Member for Latin America and the Caribbean said that the LAC region supported the concept of effective participation because the simple fact that delegates physically participated in Codex meetings meant giving consensus in a negotiation, and in many cases those who did not speak up during a meeting gave consensus to measures that could not be applied in their countries. It was important to understand that Codex meetings were a place to actively negotiate.

49. The wording of the goal was maintained unchanged.

Strategic goal 3: Objectives

50. The first objective was maintained unchanged as follows: “Increase the participation of developing countries in Codex”.

51. The second objective was simplified to indicate that the objective was that countries can have “sustainable national Codex structures” regardless of their funding. The amended objective reads: “Promote capacity building programs that assist countries in creating sustainable national Codex structures”.

52. Several members requested clarification on the third objective on “leverage the work on existing international food safety and food related economic development programs in identifying and meeting the Codex food standards development needs”. The Member for North America explained that, as there were many organizations providing funding for food safety projects worldwide, the objective was to cooperate with these.

53. The Representative of FAO said that FAO was in touch with some of these organisations to evaluate how FAO could work with them on food safety and in other areas. The Representative of WHO said that the objective was helpful to stimulate FAO and WHO to see how they could include Codex in their capacity development activities.

54. One member said that the fact of including this objective was already useful for local offices when looking for funding.

55. A final wording could not yet be established for the objective and the following draft working text remained in square brackets: [Seek to assist the needs of developing countries through leveraging the work of existing international food safety and food related economic development programs].

Strategic Goal 4: Implement effective and efficient work management systems and practices

56. The Committee decided that this goal adequately reflected the intentions and should be maintained unchanged.

Strategic goal 4: Objectives

57. The Committee maintained the first objective with a slight editorial amendment as follows: “Ensure efficient, transparent and flexible standard setting process for the timely adoption of standards”.

58. The Committee agreed that the second objective concerning capacity building for Chairs and delegates was more an activity and should be deleted from the objectives and placed under an appropriate objective.

59. The Committee agreed that the third objective concerning “efficiency of the standard setting process” was already included in the first objective and could be deleted while some of the activities under this objective would have to be reviewed and if possible allocated to a different place.

60. The Committee agreed that the fourth objective on “Implementing a programme for policy review and assessment” was not clear as it stood but could be rephrased and included as an activity under the first objective.

61. It was proposed to include a new objective as follows: “Overcome major obstacles faced in the context of standard development” or “Enhance the capacity to arrive at/build consensus”. The Committee agreed that this text could be rephrased as an activity under the first objective.

Process for further developing the 2014-2019 Strategic Plan

62. The Committee agreed that the introduction, strategic vision, core values, strategic goals and objectives (some remaining in square brackets) had been discussed and should be annexed to the report of the present session for comments by all Commission members and observers (see Appendix II).

63. To complete the objectives and activities as well as the text of the introduction to the strategic goals, the Committee agreed that the Member for North America would amend the current text in the light of the discussions at the session and would circulate it electronically to all members of the Executive Committee by the end of February 2012. Members of the Executive Committee should comment on the new draft within 10 working days from receipt of the revised draft.

64. The Committee agreed that it would continue to work electronically on the draft and submit a new version to the Codex Secretariat by the end of March/early April 2012 for circulation for comments to all members and observers of the Commission.

65. At its 67th Session the Executive Committee would discuss the comments received to prepare the discussion at the 35th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. Following the Commission the draft would be sent to all FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees for comments and then discussed by the 68th Session of the Executive Committee and finally discussed and adopted by the 36th Session of the Commission in 2013.

FINANCIAL AND BUDGETARY MATTERS (Agenda Item 4)⁴**Codex Budget**

66. The Secretariat presented the total budget and detailed expenditures for 2010-2011, and explained that USD 400,000 had been transferred to WHO at the end of the biennium in the framework of the donor agreement with WHO to support the participation of developing country members of the CCEXEC for the next biennium. The travel expenditures also included funding for the participation of several JECFA experts to the 75th JECFA held in November 2011 on veterinary drug residues. The Secretariat indicated that the figures for 2011 were not final as the last period of the financial year was still open in January, and the updated expenditure would be presented at the next session of the Commission.

67. As regards 2012-2013, it was noted that the budget would remain approximately the same as in 2010-2011, and that 10% efficiency savings had been applied to all programmes in FAO.

68. The Committee expressed its appreciation for the savings realised and their use to support participation of developing countries and scientific advice, while thanking FAO, WHO and host countries for their continuous support to the Codex programme.

FAO/WHO Scientific Support to Codex

69. The Representative of FAO informed the Committee that the provisional budget for scientific advice on food safety and nutrition from the regular programme of the FAO Nutrition and Consumer Protection Division amounted to a total of USD 3,548,196 (staff and activities) for 2012-2013, with additional contributions from other divisions in FAO. In addition to the advice provided to Codex committees, FAO also generated scientific advice related to requests from member countries and on emergency issues as needed. The cost of providing scientific advice to Codex was shared equally between FAO and WHO. A budget shortfall of about 25% is estimated to occur and will need to be obtained from extra-budgetary resources to meet the FAO contribution to respond to outstanding Codex requests.

70. The Representative recalled that FAO continues its efforts to identify extra-budgetary resources, especially through the Global Initiative for Food-related Scientific Advice (GIFSA) and noted with appreciation the contributions had been received from some countries to support scientific advice.

71. The Representative of WHO indicated that in WHO approximately 80% of the budget for the provision of scientific advice is provided by voluntary contributions from member countries rather than the regular programme, and outlined the proposed budget for scientific advice in food safety and nutrition for 2012-2013, including the contribution from several countries. The Representative pointed out that, as of January 2012, the following funding gaps have been identified: for scientific advice in food safety the current budgeted amount for activities is USD 425,000, while the gap amounts approximately to 70% (USD 1,050,000) for activities and 45% (USD 1,118,000) for staff costs. For nutrition, the funding gap is approximately 30% (USD 714,000) for salaries and 70% (USD 942,900) for activities.

72. The Member for Europe recalled that the critical funding situation for scientific advice had been discussed on several occasions and that although recommendations were regularly made this was still a serious concern of member countries, as the lack of scientific advice would negatively affect Codex work on food safety. The Member therefore proposed to prepare a discussion paper to consider this issue and suggest possible solutions. The Member for North America supported this proposal, recalling in particular the difficulties for JMPR to keep up with the requests from the Committee on Pesticide Residues.

73. The Committee agreed that the Member for Europe, in cooperation with the Member for North America, and with the contribution of any other interested members, would prepare a discussion paper

on the funding for scientific advice for consideration by the Commission. The Committee also expressed its appreciation to FAO and WHO for their support to scientific advice.

APPLICATIONS FROM INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS FOR OBSERVER STATUS IN CODEX (Agenda Item 5)⁵

74. The Executive Committee was invited, in accordance with Rule IX.6 of the Rules of Procedure and taking into account the Principles concerning the Participation of International Non-Governmental Organizations in the Work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission as contained in the Procedural Manual, to provide advice regarding the applications for observer status of international non-governmental organizations having neither status with FAO, nor official relations with WHO.

Latinamerican Association of National Agrochemical Industries (ALINA)

Early Nutrition Academy (ENA)

Council on Amino Acid Science (ICAAS)

EU Fish Processors Association (AIPCE)

75. The Secretariat introduced the applications and said that the Codex Secretariat and the Legal Advisors of FAO and WHO had checked the applications of ALINA, ENA, ICAAS and AIPCE and found that they met the criteria.

76. The Executive Committee agreed to recommend to the Directors-General of FAO and WHO to grant observer status to ALINA, ENA, ICAAS and AIPCE.

United States Pharmacopeial Convention (USP)

77. The Secretariat introduced the application and said that the Codex Secretariat and the Legal Advisors of FAO and WHO had checked it and there had been some concerns with the structure of the applicant as it was a member of several Codex observers and one Codex observer was member of USP thus there could be the issue of double representation.

78. The Legal Advisor of WHO clarified that in accordance with the Principles mentioned in para. 74, double representation was not an issue in granting observer status but did need to be avoided in participation of observers at specific meetings.

79. Following that explanation and after having considered the particular structure of the applicant and noting that the applicant was member of other Codex observers, the Executive Committee agreed to recommend to the Directors-General of FAO and WHO to grant observer status to USP.

European Federation of Honey Packers and Distributors (FEEDM)

80. The Secretariat introduced the item and said that the Codex Secretariat and the Legal Advisors of FAO and WHO had checked the application of FEEDM and found that it met the criteria but had noted that FEEDM was a member of a larger organization that already had observer status with the Commission: Fédération internationale des associations d'apiculture (APIMONDIA).

81. Following previous practice in such cases to avoid a double representation, the Executive Committee agreed to recommend to the Directors-General of FAO and WHO to grant observer status to FEEDM on the understanding that: (1) FEEDM will only participate as such in Codex meetings when APIMONDIA is not represented; (2) At meetings where APIMONDIA is represented, FEEDM can only participate as part of the APIMONDIA delegation and not speak as FEEDM; and (3) FEEDM can submit written comments only on those issues for which APIMONDIA does not submit any comments.

⁵ CX/EXEC 12/66/5; CRD 1 (ALINA); CRD 2 (USP), CRD 3 (ENA), CRD 4 (FEEDM), CRD 5 (ICAAS), CRD 6 (YLFA) and CRD 7 (AIPCE)

Association of Yoghurts & Live fermented milks (YLFA)

82. The Secretariat introduced the item and said that the concern with this application was that the documentation provided by the organization showed that it had been established in Brussels in December 2009 and thus it did not fulfil one of the criteria of the Principles: having been established for at least three years at the time of application. The organization had stated that it had been established in 2005 but in 2008 moved to Brussels where its incorporation process had been delayed for reasons beyond its control.

83. The Executive Committee agreed that if the organization would submit proof that it was now essentially the same organization that had been established in 2005, the application could be discussed in its next session; otherwise it would be discussed in 2013 when the mandatory period of establishment had been reached.

General discussion

84. One member questioned the usefulness of the involvement of the Executive Committee in the process of observer applications as this seemed to be a purely administrative issue and little value seemed to be added by the Committee.

85. The Secretariat clarified that this was a function that had been given to the Executive Committee explicitly in 2005 after the Joint FAO/WHO Evaluation of the Codex Alimentarius but that there was no impediment for members to review this function.

FAO/WHO PROJECT AND TRUST FUND FOR ENHANCED PARTICIPATION IN CODEX (Agenda Item 6a)⁶

86. The Representative of WHO presented the 15th Progress Report, including information on participation in Codex meetings and FAO/WHO Codex training activities in 2011, the financial situation and the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission as a follow-up to the Mid-term Review. Modifications were made to the country sub-groupings for eligibility, a new Group 4 was created which encompasses all Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) who will be retained within, or brought back into the Codex Trust Fund for an additional two years of support for one delegate to attend each of the country's two top priority Codex meetings. The Representative also informed the Committee that the Trust Fund Secretariat had initiated a revision of the monitoring and evaluation framework of the Codex Trust Fund.

87. One member proposed to retain Objective 1 (Widening participation in Codex) as the main objective because participation was still a problem in many countries due to economic difficulties, and also proposed to review the criteria so as to include effective participation through presentation of comments and positions in the session, justification of the need for participation as related to impact on health and trade at the national level, or relevant import and export data. The member also expressed the view that the current criteria for eligibility had created a lack of balance between the regions in Codex participation.

88. Another member indicated that the impact of the Trust Fund should not be assessed only through the participation of countries in the Codex process, such as providing comments and positions, but in terms of impact at the national level, as the experience gained from delegates was very useful for their country, and improved awareness of Codex work in decision makers and stakeholders.

89. The Representative of WHO highlighted that the Trust Fund was established to play a catalytic role in widening participation and it was not its function to establish balance between regions. Where countries were not able to sustain participation they may require a support mechanism other than the Trust Fund and thought needed to be given to what might need to be established to meet this need.

⁶ CX/EXEC 12/66/6

90. Some members pointed out that the economic, social and political problems at the regional and national level should be taken into account to assess the need for additional support to countries in which Codex work may not be a priority for decision makers due to difficult national circumstances.

91. Some members expressed their appreciation for the Trust Fund support to improve national Codex structures, facilitate exchanges in the region through web-based platforms, support data collection, and the recent mentoring process in the Committee on Food Hygiene (REP 12/FH, para. 61- 63). They also expressed some concerns as to sustainability of these achievements if funding was discontinued and therefore supported a gradual rather than immediate reduction in support for graduated countries.

92. Some members expressed appreciation for the revision of the criteria which took into account the specific constraints of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and indicated that support for data collection in these countries was also needed.

93. The Representative of WHO explained the mechanism for support of countries in Group 4 and noted that there had been excellent response from the countries concerned so far, recalling that the TF secretariat monitored the situation in all countries to identify the obstacles to participation, and considered application on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the feedback from FAO and WHO units, including regional and country offices. It was also noted that the Coordinating Committees provided a good opportunity to monitor the situation in each region.

94. The Committee expressed its appreciation to FAO and WHO and to donor countries for their support, noted that the Trust Fund had made a substantial impact on the improvement of effective participation and encouraged FAO and WHO to continue their efforts to promote the sustainability of participation in Codex work in conjunction with other capacity building initiatives.

MATTERS ARISING FROM FAO AND WHO: CONSIDERATION OF REQUESTS FOR SCIENTIFIC ADVICE (Agenda Item 6b)⁷

95. The Representative of FAO referred to the wide range of scientific advice activities that had been undertaken since the last session of the Committee, highlighting that this had been possible due to the technical and financial support of some Member countries and the Codex budget. The Representative expressed the appreciation of both organizations for this support, but in referring to the current list of requests for scientific advice from the various Codex Committees noted the severe resource challenges that had to be overcome in order to address these requests in a timely manner.

96. The Committee acknowledged and appreciated the efforts of FAO, WHO and the technical experts to the various expert committees and meetings to provide Codex with the scientific advice essential to its work. The Committee recognised the resource challenges being faced by the parent organizations to support scientific advice activities and the need to take action to redress this situation in order to ensure the standard setting work of Codex in an expeditious manner. In this regard the proactive approach presented by the Member for Europe and discussed under Agenda Item 4 was appreciated.

97. The Representative of WHO recalled that the set of criteria recommended earlier by the Executive Committee (ALINORM 05/28/3, para. 75) was used to prioritise requests for scientific advice to the respective Committees, that for ad hoc consultations, each request was evaluated on a case-by-case basis and that, for example, priority could be given to emergency issues which were identified through INFOSAN and EMPRES.

DRAFT PROVISIONAL AGENDA OF THE 35th SESSION OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION (Agenda Item 7)⁸

98. The Committee noted that the Draft Provisional Agenda for the 35th Session of the Commission was presented in accordance with Rule VII.1 of the Rules of Procedure.

⁷ CX/EXEC 12/66/7

⁸ CX/EXEC 12/66/8

99. The Committee was informed that FAO and WHO proposed to discuss the matters arising from FAO and WHO earlier in the Agenda in order to allow sufficient time for discussion. The Committee recalled that the items related to standard setting should be discussed first as the main task of the Commission, and agreed to rearrange the items following the matters referred to the Commission as follows: strategic planning; FAO and WHO matters; financial and budgetary matters; relations with other international organisations; and the rest of the agenda was unchanged.

100. With this amendment, the Committee agreed with the Draft Provisional Agenda and noted that the final Agenda would be prepared by the Directors-General of FAO and WHO.

101. One member stressed the importance of ensuring cooperation between Codex and other organisations to avoid duplication and to save costs for governments, and proposed to discuss how this cooperation was carried out. The Secretariat recalled that under the item on cooperation with other organisations, there would be an opportunity to discuss this question in detail on the basis of a working document which described how this cooperation was carried out for all organisations concerned, with a format following the relevant activities in the Strategic Plan.

102. The Representative of WHO informed the Committee that the recently held Tripartite Meeting between FAO, OIE and WHO demonstrated the excellent cooperation with OIE which had developed over the years in many areas of common interest. It was also recalled that the development of joint standards with OIE was a separate issue and would be considered by the next session of the Committee on General Principles.

USE OF WEB-BASED PLATFORMS FOR ELECTRONIC WORKING GROUPS (Agenda item 8)

103. The Chairperson recalled that the last session had agreed to consider issues related to the use of web-based platforms in electronic working groups (EWG), on the basis of a paper prepared by the Secretariat.

104. The Secretariat introduced the document and said that at the time of preparation of the paper around 50 EWGs had been active, which showed that EWGs were a successful tool used by Codex committees to work in between sessions. In the paper the Secretariat described the present way of working of EWGs, which was mainly by email, the disadvantages of working this way and the experiences of different Codex committees with using web-based platforms for EWGs. The platforms had different complexity, from offering basic possibilities for posting documents and exchanging messages to complex systems modelling the dynamics of physical meetings.

105. The Secretariat concluded that web-based platforms for EWGs had been used successfully in Codex; that there were advantages of using a harmonized system but that the Secretariat presently was not in a position to offer such a system and that more experience should be gained with complex systems such as the one used by Argentina for CCMAS. The Secretariat suggested that similar to the initiative taken by some host countries to use an online registration system for Codex sessions, one or more hosts of future EWGs could offer to host the group using a web-based platform similar to the CCMAS platform possibly with the assistance from Argentina.

106. The Executive Committee supported in general the use of web-based platforms for electronic working groups as a way to make them more effective, transparent and inclusive. It was stressed that the use of web-based platforms did not have the purpose of discontinuing physical meetings. Physical meetings were still needed for complex issues and offered additional possibilities for meetings of delegations outside formal sessions, and it was also easier to establish conclusions and consensus in a physical meeting.

107. The Executive Committee was of the opinion that it was preferable to use a unified platform for Codex EWGs as many delegations participated in more than one EWG and it would not facilitate participation if each EWG host would use their own system.

108. The Executive Committee requested the Secretariat to send a questionnaire to all members and observers to provide information on: their data processing equipment and internet connections (speed and bandwidth); their present and past involvement in EWGs and the experiences gained; reasons for not participating in EWGs; and proposals for improving the functioning of EWGs.

109. The Executive Committee agreed to the suggestion by the Secretariat that the platform used by Argentina for CCMAS should be tested again in an electronic working group and encouraged host countries of EWGs to do this. It was mentioned that also a Committee working by correspondence such as the Codex Committee on Sugars that worked on a Standard for Panela or the Executive Committee itself in the preparation of the Strategic Plan 2014-2019 could test the system.

110. The Executive Committee agreed that on the basis of replies to the questionnaire and further experiences gained with web-based platforms, the Secretariat would prepare a further study on the requirements for a harmonized web-based system for Codex EWGs, specifying what the system needed to achieve, what tools were available, what would be the development costs and training needs for countries as well as the expected working hours needed by the host to operate the system.

111. The Executive Committee noted that the Codex Secretariat was evaluating the possibility to develop an online commenting system as had been implemented by IPPC and that such a system could also assist EWGs in compiling comments.

112. The Executive Committee noted that there were restrictions on some tools and programmes that the Secretariat could use because of licensing issues between FAO/WHO and certain software providers.

113. The Executive Committee noted the intervention of a member that video conferencing could reduce the need for physical meetings and was particularly useful for regional coordination.

OTHER BUSINESS AND FUTURE WORK (Agenda Item 9)

114. Due to lack of time, the Executive Committee did not discuss the items placed under this agenda item when adopting the agenda for the session.

115. The Executive Committee noted that the agenda for the 27th Session of the Codex Committee on General Principles (CCGP27) already included an item on “Distribution of documents and length and content of reports” (Agenda item 8) and recommended that the issue on “Mechanisms to improve distribution of documents in all official languages” be discussed at CCGP27.

116. The Executive Committee noted that the issues of a “Proposal for Coordinators to be assisted by an adviser at CCEXEC meetings” and the “Status/role of the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the Commission when participating in Codex Committees (other than the Commission and Executive Committee)” were within the mandate of the Codex Committee on General Principles and could be proposed by members to be discussed under Other Business at CCGP27.

117. The Executive Committee agreed to discuss the issues related to the “Proposal for Use of a Codex logo or mark” (see also CRD 9) and “Proposals to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Codex Alimentarius Commission” (see also CRD 8) at its 67th Session.

APPENDIX I

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APPENDIX II

DRAFT CODEX 2014-2019 STRATEGIC PLAN
(Introduction, Strategic Vision Statement, Codex Core Values, Strategic Goals and Objectives as agreed by the 66th Session of the CCEXEC)

Introduction

The Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) was set up by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1963 and today has over 180 members and over 200 IGOs and NGOs are accredited as observers. The Commission's main work is the development of international food standards, guidelines and codes of practice to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade. The Commission also promotes the coordination of all food standards work undertaken by international governmental and non-governmental organizations. For food safety matters, the Commission bases its work on the scientific advice provided by FAO and WHO.

Codex food safety standards, guidelines and recommendations, are recognized as the reference for food safety in the WTO SPS Agreement. Codex standards are also taken into account as international standards in the implementation of the WTO TBT agreement.

The 2014-2019 Strategic Plan:

- Presents the vision, goals, and objectives for the Commission and is supported by a more detailed work plan that includes activities, milestones, and measurable indicators to track the work progress towards accomplishment of the goals.
- Underpins the high priority placed on food safety and quality by FAO and WHO and ensures that the Commission will carry out the responsibilities given to it by FAO and WHO.
- Informs Members, intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders of how the CAC intends to fulfill its mandate and to meet the needs and expectations of its Members during the period 2014-2019.

Strategic Vision Statement

To be the preeminent international food standard setting body working to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade.

Codex Core values

In fulfilling its strategic vision, Codex adheres to core values that include:

- *collaboration,*
- *inclusiveness,*
- *consensus building, and*
- *transparency.*

Strategic Goals and objectives

Strategic Goal 1: Establish international food standards that address current and emerging food issues.

Objective 1: Establish new and review existing food standards, based on priorities of the CAC.

Objective 2: Proactively identify emerging issues and member country needs and where appropriate, develop relevant food standards.

Objective 3: Strengthen coordination and cooperation with other international standard-setting organizations to minimize duplication of efforts and optimize opportunities.

Strategic Goal 2: Ensure the application of risk analysis principles in the development of Codex Standards

Objective 1: Consistent use of scientific advice and risk analysis principles.

Objective 2: Sustainable access to scientific advice.

Objective 3: To increase scientific input from developing countries.

Strategic Goal 3: Ensure the effective participation of all Codex members.

Objective 1: Increase the participation of developing countries in Codex.

Objective 2: Promote capacity building programs that assist countries in creating sustainable national Codex structures.

Strategic Goal 4: Implement effective and efficient work management systems and practices.

Objective 1: Ensure efficient, transparent and flexible standard setting process for the timely adoption of standards.

["Implementing a programme for policy review and assessment" (should be clarified and could be rephrased and included as an activity under the first objective)]

["Overcome major obstacles faced in the context of standard development" or "Enhance the capacity to arrive at/build consensus". (could be rephrased as an activity under the first objective)]