

# codex alimentarius commission E



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE  
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Agenda Item 5 b)

CX/EXEC 09/63/7

## JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Sixty-third Session

WHO Headquarters, Geneva, 8 – 11 December 2009

### IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2008-2013

### EVALUATION OF THE CAPACITY OF THE CODEX SECRETARIAT

#### Background

1. The 32<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Commission recalled that the evaluation was included in the Strategic Plan 2008-2013 under *Activity 3.7 Evaluate the capacity of the Codex Secretariat to perform its function effectively*, and that it had been entrusted to an independent consultant who considered the replies of members to a questionnaire as well as the views of FAO, WHO and the Codex Secretariat in the process. The Commission considered the report and recommendations of the Evaluation presented in ALINORM 09/32/9B Part II<sup>1</sup>. The Commission noted that the Executive Committee had generally supported the recommendations and had considered more specifically Recommendations 5 and 11. The discussion and conclusions of the Commission on the recommendations are presented below.

#### Recommendation 5

2. The Commission noted some questions on the relationship between Recommendation 3 on the Codex budget and Recommendation 5 on the relative autonomy of Codex, in particular whether remaining funds could be transferred from a biennium to the next, and on the possibility of establishing separate assessed contributions to the Codex budget, in addition to the FAO or WHO assessed contributions of member countries.

3. The Representative of FAO informed the Commission that it was not possible to carry over funds from one biennium to the next, as remaining funds at the end of the biennium were returned to member countries in accordance with FAO's financial rules; and a new budget was prepared for each biennium. This applied to all FAO programmes. The Representative also indicated that in response to the Independent External Evaluation of FAO, the Immediate Plan of Action (IPA) approved by the FAO Special Conference in November 2008 included a review of FAO statutory bodies and international organisations established under Article 14 with a view to allowing them more financial and operational autonomy, which would not affect their legal status as FAO bodies. Consideration would be given to a separate assessment of the contributions of member countries or to voluntary contributions to these statutory bodies. He also indicated that these complex questions were still under discussion and would be considered by the FAO Conference in November 2009.

4. The Representative of WHO referred to the WHO management response on Recommendation 5 and informed the Commission that a high level management group met regularly with the participation of the Assistant Directors General of FAO and WHO to consider strategic issues affecting Codex and related FAO/WHO activities, which was an important step to improve the operation of the Codex programme. The

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<sup>1</sup> (see <ftp://ftp.fao.org/codex/CAC/CAC32/al329Bbe.pdf> - english; <ftp://ftp.fao.org/codex/CAC/CAC32/al329Bbf.pdf> - french and <ftp://ftp.fao.org/codex/CAC/CAC32/al329Bbs.pdf> - spanish)

Representative also indicated that the visibility of Codex in WHO would be improved as it would appear as a separate entity in the budget allocated to food safety activities.

#### Recommendation 11

5. Many delegations stressed the considerable progress achieved in the development of Codex standards through the use of annual sessions and expressed the view that the Commission should continue to meet on an annual basis. Some delegations highlighted specific reasons for retaining annual sessions: in view of the lack of resources for risk assessment in many developing countries, timely availability of Codex food safety standards was very important for use at the national level; participation in the Commission had a capacity building function for some countries; biennial sessions may need to be longer in order to address all items of work, which would create practical difficulties; and the considerable efforts made by governments to prepare themselves and participate in annual meetings should be taken into account.

6. One delegation expressed some concern with the proposal to “revitalise” the Executive Committee, noting that it was already carrying out important functions and should retain its advisory role to the Commission, but should not take decisions that were the responsibility of the Commission.

7. The Chairperson recalled that the Executive Committee had considered the possibility of carrying out an analysis of the efficiency of annual meetings versus biennial meetings. However, in view of the lack of support for biennial meetings, the Commission concluded that there was no need for such a study.

#### Other Recommendations

8. Some delegations indicated that they supported the general intent of the recommendations; however as these were complex issues involving FAO, WHO and member states, they required more consideration at the national level. These delegations proposed to reconsider the recommendations in more detail in the Executive Committee, as it was not possible to take final decisions at the present session. One delegation suggested that the Executive Committee should also prepare specific recommendations for the implementation of the evaluation.

9. The Commission noted a request to clarify what was intended in Recommendation 7 by a “more proactive role” of the Codex Secretariat and the reference to “new means of conducting international negotiation”.

10. The Chairperson proposed to limit the discussion at the present session, taking into account time constraints, and to refer consideration of all other Recommendations to the next session of the Executive Committee.

11. Some delegations expressed the view that it was not appropriate for the Executive Committee to take a decision on the Recommendations as the evaluation was clearly the responsibility of the Commission and all members should have the possibility to express their views in this respect.

12. The Commission agreed that no decision would be taken at this stage and that all Recommendations, except Recommendation 11, would be referred for further consideration to the 63<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Executive Committee and to the 33<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Commission (ALINORM 09/32/REP. paras. 139-156).

#### **Recommendations for Consideration by the Executive Committee**

The Executive Committee is invited to consider Recommendations 1 to 10 of the Evaluation, as agreed by the Commission. All recommendations from the Evaluation are reproduced below for ease of reference.

### Summary Table of Recommendations

No.	Addressed to	Recommendation
1.	FAO and WHO	FAO and WHO should agree as a matter of urgency on the desirable balance in their contribution to the Codex budget.
2.	FAO and WHO	FAO and WHO should allocate sufficient resources (staff and non-staff) to the Joint Codex budget to create a sustainable Secretariat, able to support current activities of Codex, to implement the necessary improvements in their daily operations and to enhance their role in the standard-setting process, the strategic orientation of the CAC, communication with member states and the public at large, including well defined capacity-building initiatives targeting CCPs and exploring new means of conducting international negotiation on setting standards.
3.	FAO and WHO	FAO and WHO should agree in a timely manner on the Codex budget for a biennium and should allow the Codex Secretariat to use a saving account in order to have the possibility to transfer money from one biennium to the next when the balance is positive at the end of a biennium.
4.	FAO and WHO	FAO and WHO should improve their communication about the Codex Trust Fund, particularly regarding the responsibilities for the management of the Codex Trust Fund.
5.	FAO and WHO	FAO and WHO should initiate a joint evaluation of the relationship of FAO and WHO to each other as they support Codex and of each organization's separate interaction with Codex with a view to improving the efficiency of the Codex Secretariat and strengthening its relative autonomy where possible
6.	Codex Secretariat	The Codex Secretariat should improve the daily operations of the Codex work, more specifically through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a more rigid management of workflow</li> <li>• the timely availability of working documents</li> <li>• the timely finalization of adopted texts including the uploading to the website</li> <li>• the proper planning of publications</li> <li>• the timely conclusion of Letters of Agreement</li> <li>• further enhancement of language skills</li> </ul>
7.	Codex Secretariat	The Codex Secretariat should play a more proactive role in the standard-setting process and the strategic orientation of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and should explore new means of conducting international negotiation on food standards.
8.	Codex Secretariat	The Codex Secretariat should improve communication with host governments member states, through the national Codex Contacts Points, and the public at large, and should explore new ways of communicating.
9.	Codex Secretariat	The Codex Secretariat should fundamentally rethink and redesign the Codex Website as a function of more proactive communication with the membership, observer organizations and the public at large.
10.	Codex Secretariat	The Codex Secretariat should further integrate IT into the daily work of the Secretariat.
11*.	CAC, FAO and WHO, Codex Secretariat	Biennial meetings of the CAC should be reinstated and the CCEXEC should be revitalized.

\* For reference only.