

# codex alimentarius commission

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE  
ORGANIZATION  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD HEALTH  
ORGANIZATION

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**ALINORM 97/36**

## **JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME**

### **CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION**

Twenty-second Session  
Geneva, 23-28 June 1997

### **REPORT OF THE NINTH SESSION OF THE CODEX COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

Montevideo, Uruguay  
25-28 February, 1997

Note: This document incorporates Circular Letter **1997/7-LAC**

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**CX 3/15.2**

**CL 1997/7-LAC**  
**April 1997**

**TO:**

- Codex Contact Points
- Participants at the Tenth Session of the Codex Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean
- Interested International Organizations

**FROM:**

- Secretary, Codex Alimentarius Commission, Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, FAO, 00100 Rome, Italy

**SUBJECT:** **Distribution of the Report of the Tenth Session of the Codex Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean**

## REQUEST FOR COMMENTS AND INFORMATION

1. **Contamination by Salmonella and other pathogens** (para. 65)

Governments are invited to provide information on their experience with *Salmonella spp.* and other emerging pathogens, including measures taken for the monitoring and control of contamination.

2. **National Codex Committees and Codex Contact Points** (para. 88)

Governments are invited to provide comments on the opportunity of establishing Guidelines for the work of National Codex Committee and Codex Contact Points in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Comments on the above subjects should be submitted in writing to the Secretary, Codex Alimentarius Commission, Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, via delle Terme di Caracalla, 00100 Rome, Italy, **before 1 December 1997.**

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The summary and conclusions of the Tenth Session of the Codex Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean are as follows:

### **Matters for approval by the Commission:**

The Committee:

- agreed to nominate Dr. Galdos Ugarte (Uruguay) for appointment as Regional Coordinator by the 22nd Session of the Commission (para. 91)
- agreed to initiate the revision of the Regional Code of Practice for the Preparation and Sale of Street-Vended Foods (para. 12)

### **Other matters of interest to the Commission:**

The Committee:

- agreed that the Draft Regional Guidelines for Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committees prepared by the CCASIA could not be adopted in the Region (para. 88)
- expressed the view that the questionnaire circulated by the Committee on Pesticide Residues was not adequate to identify problems related to pesticide residues in the Region (para. 37)
- endorsed the recommendations of the Workshop on the Harmonization of Food Law, including the revision of the model food law (para. 70)
- noted the progress of harmonization of food legislation and the extensive use of Codex standards and MRLs as reference in the framework of economic integration organizations and at the national level (paras. 38-43)
- exchanged information on consider consumer participation in Codex work and agreed to consider the matter again at its next session (para. 97)
- agreed to consider contamination by Salmonella and emerging pathogens in the Region, as well as food safety in touristic areas at its next session (paras. 65 and 97)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Opening of the Session .....	2-7
Adoption of the Agenda .....	8-9
Matters of interest to the Committee arising from the Codex Alimentarius Commission and other Codex Committees .....	10-21
Report food safety/food control activities of FAO and WHO complementary to the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission since the 9th Session of the Committee .....	22-28
Consequences for the Codex Alimentarius Commission arising from the WTO Agreements on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and Technical Barriers to Trade .....	29-34
Report on acceptances of Codex standards and Maximum Residue Limits for pesticides in food by countries in the Region.....	35-37
Report on activities related to economic integration and harmonization of food legislation in the Region .....	38-43
Food Certification and Inspection in Latin America and the Caribbean .....	44-62
Report on food safety matters of interest to the region .....	63-68
Report of the Workshop on Harmonization of Food Law and Regulations in Latin America and the Caribbean.....	69-71
Consumer participation in Codex work and related matters.....	72-84
Activities related to the strengthening of Codex Contact Points and National Codex Committees in the Region.....	85-89
Nomination of the Coordinator.....	90-92
Other Business, Future Work and Date and Place of the Next Session .....	93-98

## LIST OF APPENDICES

page

<b>APPENDIX I</b>	LIST OF PARTICIPANTS .....	15-25
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## INTRODUCTION

1. The Codex Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean held its Tenth Session in Montevideo, Uruguay, from 25-28 February 1997, by courtesy of the Government of Uruguay, under the Chairmanship of Dr. Galdos Ugarte, Coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean. The Session was attended by 154 delegates from 22 Member Countries and 8 international organizations. A complete list of participants is included as Appendix I to this report.

### OPENING OF THE SESSION (Agenda item 1)

2. The session was opened by Dr. Julio Herrera, Minister of Industry, Energy and Mines, in his capacity as Chairman of the National Codex Committee, who welcomed all participants and pointed out the diversity of food production systems in the Region. In the changing environment created by the globalization of food trade, he pointed out that care should be taken to develop it in equitable conditions for all countries so as to cover the needs of large parts of mankind which had not sufficient access to food supplies. Similarly he stressed the importance of developing international standards on a scientific basis, and noted that all interested sectors, should be involved in the elaboration process especially research and technical institutes.

3. Dr. Alfredo Solari, Minister of Health, highlighted the importance of ensuring food security and the access to food of populations still suffering from hunger and malnutrition in the Region. He recalled the risks associated with foods and the vigilance required with respect to foodborne diseases, in order to strike a balance between food availability and food safety requirements, and stressed the role of Codex and CCLAC to provide guidance in this respect.

4. Dr. Carlos Gasparri, Minister of Agriculture recalled the active participation of Uruguay in the work of Codex and FAO/WHO Expert Groups at the international level, and the impetus given to such participation by the creation of the National Codex Committee. He stressed the necessity for Codex to meet the requirements of the WTO SPS and TBT Agreements and assist countries to meet their obligations. In this perspective, he highlighted the importance of the statements of principles adopted by the Commission to establish the scientific basis of the decision-making process. He expressed the wish that the Committee would contribute to the improvement and simplification of Codex work and promote larger participation from developing countries.

5. Dr. Gregory D. Orriss, Chief of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, welcomed all participants on behalf of the Directors-General of FAO and WHO and expressed his appreciation to the Government of Uruguay for hosting the Session, and for its continued support to the Codex programme. He recalled the objectives of Codex Alimentarius to protect consumers' health and facilitate international trade, and pointed out the specific relevance of Codex standards and related text in the framework of the SPS and TBT Agreements.

6. Dr. Jaime Estupiñan, Director of INPPAZ, welcomed participants on behalf of the Directors-General of WHO and PAHO, emphasizing the importance of the session of the Coordinating Committee to accompany the actions being developed at the national level to organize food safety programmes. He highlighted the factors which had contributed to the increase of such activities: the cholera epidemic in the region, subregional integration initiatives, and the establishment of WTO and its Agreements. He drew the attention of the Committee to high impact programmes such as the elimination of poliomyelitis and the eradication of foot-and-mouth disease in the countries of the *Cono Sur*.

7. Dr. Michel Négrin, FAO Representative in Uruguay, highlighted the importance of food production for the economy of countries in the Region, and the relevance of Codex standards and recommendations to promote international food trade. Since its creation in 1962 the Codex Alimentarius Commission had integrated the necessities of Member countries and the requirements of international agreements on food and

nutrition. The International Conference on Nutrition, held in Rome in 1992, emphasized the importance of consumer protection and the safety and quality of the food supply. In the recently held World Food Summit, heads of state and governments of approximately 200 countries agreed on the Rome Declaration, committing themselves to the implementation of the Plan of Action of the Summit in an ongoing effort to eliminate hunger and malnutrition. He stressed the importance of Codex in the perspective of the WTO Agreements and the role of the Coordinating Committee to promote the participation of countries in the Region in Codex work, in conjunction with the technical assistance provided by FAO to strengthen food control infrastructures. The Representative expressed his thanks to the Government of Uruguay for the organization of the present Session and wished participants all success in their work.

### **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Agenda Item 2)**

8. The Committee agreed to the suggestion of the Chairman to elect a Vice-Chairman. The Delegation of Peru proposed to elect as Vice-Chairman Dr. Alberto Marrero of Cuba and the Committee unanimously concurred with this proposal.

9. The Delegation of Peru proposed to discuss the possibility of holding a regional workshop on import/export matters (see also para. 93). The Delegation of Argentina proposed to consider: the feasibility of holding sessions of other Codex Committees in the Region; the availability of documents, especially on Internet; the Spanish version of the HACCP Guidelines. The Delegation of Uruguay proposed to consider its offer to host the next session of the Committee on Milk and Milk Products. The Committee agreed to consider these questions under Agenda Item 14 and adopted the Provisional Agenda as proposed in document CX/LAC 97/1.

### **MATTERS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER CODEX COMMITTEES (Agenda Item 3)<sup>1</sup>**

#### **Street-Vended Foods**

10. The Committee discussed the opportunity of revising the Regional Code of Hygienic Practice for the Preparation and Sale of Street Foods in the light of the recommendation of the Commission to incorporate the new approach reflected in the revised General Principles of Food Hygiene and the HACCP Guidelines.

11. Some delegations pointed out that the current Code was used as a basis for national programmes for the control of street foods, and integrated in national legislation. It was proposed that the Committee should consider the experiences of countries in the Region with the application of the Code, prior to undertaking a revision. Other delegations felt that the recommendation of the Commission should be carried out rapidly and noted that the HACCP approach was already used in their inspection systems. The Delegation of Brazil proposed to include an Annex on the application of the HACCP system and the training of vendors.

12. The Committee agreed to circulate the Code of Practice in a Circular Letter which would invite countries to present information on their experience and proposals for amendments to the current text. Subject to the approval of the Commission, the Secretariat would prepare a revised draft in the light of the comments received, in cooperation with interested countries, for consideration by the next session of the Committee. The Delegations of Peru, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil and Ecuador indicated their interest to participate in the revision.

#### **Scientific Principles**

13. With reference to the recommendation of the CCGP to include the four statements of principles in an Appendix to the Procedural Manual, several delegations pointed out that the Principles provided an essential

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<sup>1</sup> CX/LAC 97/2

orientation for the work of Codex as a whole, which was not reflected by their inclusion in an appendix. The Delegation of Chile expressed the view that in the future the CCGP working documents should be available to the CCLAC in order to discuss such questions. While noting that the final decision on this question would be taken by the Commission, the Committee recommended that in view of the importance of the statements, they should be included in the General Principles of Codex in the body of the Procedural Manual.

### **Risk Analysis**

14. The Observer from Consumers International stressed the importance of transparency and the necessity of active involvement of consumers in the decision-making process.

15. The Delegation of Argentina pointed out the problems of the Spanish translation of the definitions proposed by the Expert Consultation on Risk Analysis, especially regarding the meaning of risk and hazard (see para. 94).

### **Quorum**

16. The Committee noted that the Commission had decided to retain the special quorum for the amendment of the Rules of Procedures and that the CCGP had agreed to review the elaboration and adoption procedures as a whole, including the normal quorum (adoption of texts). As the quorum had been reached at the last Commission session and participation was generally increasing, the Committee agreed that the quorum was not an issue in itself at this stage.

17. With reference to the request of the Commission concerning mechanisms facilitating the expression of consensus, the Delegation of Cuba pointed out that, in view of the difficulties met by a number of countries to attend Codex sessions, governments might do so through their diplomatic representations, but this was often difficult as not enough time was allowed to discuss the documents in detail and prepare comments in reply to Circular Letters. The Committee agreed that the late reception of documents was an obstacle to effective participation and recommended that they should be sent well ahead of the Committees' sessions.

### **Advisory Texts**

18. In reply to a question of the Delegation of Argentina, the Secretariat recalled that CCGP had recommended to avoid the terms “ advisory” and “ mandatory” in Codex texts because they had no relevance under WTO; reference should be made to “essential” requirements as set out in the format of standards. Standards and related texts were mandatory only in the framework of national legislation regarding their application. The Chairman emphasized that under the SPS Agreement, Codex texts were a reference for international trade.

19. Regarding the recommendations of the CCGP concerning the status of advisory texts, the Delegation of Uruguay expressed the view that provisions on commercial quality should not be included in the standards, as these should address primarily the need of governments to regulate the food safety aspects and essential quality requirements. In the framework of WTO, reference was made to international standards in their entirety, irrespective of whether or not they covered commercial quality in specific sections.

20. The Delegation of Mexico felt that it was not possible to decide on the opportunity of retaining the appendices to commodity standards at this stage, as all the implications should be considered carefully; in particular, trade barriers might be created if no reference existed under Codex on non-essential commercial aspects.

21. As the statement proposed by CCGP on the application and status of non-essential quality criteria referred to the WTO Agreements, the Committee felt that clarification would be required on its implications under SPS and TBT and asked the Secretariat to seek the advice of WTO in this respect. The Committee

agreed that further consideration of this issue would be required in the light of such advice and following the recommendations of the Commission on this issue.

**REPORT ON FOOD SAFETY/FOOD CONTROL ACTIVITIES OF FAO AND WHO COMPLEMENTARY TO THE WORK OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION SINCE THE 9<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE (Agenda Item 4)<sup>2</sup>**

22. The Committee was informed that, in addition to the expert consultations listed in the document, a Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on Food Consumption and Exposure Assessment was held in Geneva from 10-14 February 1997.

**FAO Activities**

23. In addition to the activities listed in the document, the Committee noted that FAO had organized in collaboration with the University of Chile and LATINFOODS a Workshop on the production and management of data on food composition in Santiago de Chile in 1995, for countries of South America and Mexico. A similar Workshop was held with INCAP in Guatemala in 1996 for Central American countries. In addition, FAO provided support for a course on food composition in Jujuy, Argentina, and a course on carotenoids in Mexico in the National Nutrition Institute, in which several countries in the region participated under the TCDC programme.

24. The Delegation of Brazil expressed its thanks to FAO for its assistance in project TCP/BRA/4555 to strengthen the National Codex Committee, whereby several seminars and training courses had been held concerning HACCP in food control, risk analysis and pesticide residues, while a seminar on the application of Codex recommendations for inspection and certification would be held in April; diffusion of information on Codex had also been developed considerably and the participation of all concerned sectors had been strengthened.

**WHO Activities**

25. The Representative of WHO/PAHO indicated that guidelines had been prepared on "Application of the HACCP System for the Improvement of Food Safety"; "Street-Vended Foods: a HACCP-based Strategy"; and on emerging pathogens. The Global Environment Monitoring Systems/Foods project also continued the collection of information from 60 countries on food contaminants.

**PAHO Activities**

26. In the framework of the Regional Technical Cooperation Programme on Food Safety, the strengthening of institutions responsible for food safety was underway in 5 countries. An information system on food legislation was developed to facilitate the revision of food legislation at the national level. Priority was given to information systems and epidemiological surveillance on foodborne diseases, through regional seminars, diffusion of information, and the organization of national systems.

27. A study on street food contamination was conducted in 7 cities in 7 countries; training was provided in the identification of several emerging pathogens; and inter-laboratory testing was carried out in 19 laboratories in 10 countries for the analysis of organochlorines.

28. The Committee expressed its appreciation to FAO and PAHO/WHO for their technical assistance to countries in the Region in the improvement of food legislation and control infrastructures in order to meet their obligations under the WTO Agreements.

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<sup>2</sup> CX/LAC 97/3

## **CONSEQUENCES FOR THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION ARISING FROM THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION AGREEMENTS ON SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES AND TECHNICAL BARRIERS TO TRADE (Agenda Item 5) <sup>3</sup>**

### **Acceptance**

29. The Committee had an exchange of views on the relevance of acceptance or notification systems as related to notification under WTO. The Secretariat indicated that a notification system would provide a comparative record of all Codex texts and food regulations in Member countries, for information purposes.

30. The Delegation of Uruguay expressed the view that present acceptance procedures were no longer relevant in the perspective of the WTO Agreements and although some delegations supported this position, the Committee could not come to a conclusion at this stage.

31. Following the proposal made by Chile, Mexico and Uruguay, the Committee recognized that countries in the region were aware of the new context created by the WTO SPS and TBT and agreed on the necessity to review the present acceptance procedure and to study a revised system of notification and/or acceptance, which should be simple and the least bureaucratic possible. The Committee therefore asked the Secretariat to distribute the proposals for consideration by CCGP well ahead of the 13th session of that Committee, so that countries in the region could consider them and establish their position accordingly.

### **Priorities**

32. With reference to the request of the Commission for Coordinating Committees to identify Codex texts with major trade impact, some delegations indicated that they had not had sufficient time to consider this question in detail, and that further consideration of this issue was necessary at the regional level. It was noted that the decision to elaborate Codex standards and related texts generally corresponded to a need expressed by Member countries. The Delegation of Chile stressed the importance of receiving requests for comments well in advance to allow countries sufficient time to prepare their position.

33. The Delegation of Mexico stressed the need to identify areas where further standardization work was necessary to facilitate and promote trade in the region; trade problems specifically caused by existing standards would also require consideration.

34. The Committee agreed that further action in this area should be determined by the conclusions of the Commission and that additional information concerning the impact of standardization on trade might be required for consideration by the next session of the Committee, in the light of the Commission's recommendations.

## **REPORT ON ACCEPTANCES OF CODEX STANDARDS AND MAXIMUM RESIDUE LIMITS FOR PESTICIDES IN FOODS BY COUNTRIES IN THE REGION (Agenda Item 6) <sup>4</sup>**

35. The Delegation of Costa Rica informed the Committee that standards on meat and milk products existed and a technical regulation taking into account Codex MRLs was being published and that the Ministry of Agriculture had developed a monitoring programme for residues, as well as training programmes for the use of pesticides. The Delegation of Jamaica stressed the difficulties related to the lack of laboratory capacity for pesticides analysis and noted that Codex MRLs were used as a reference for export control. The Delegation of Uruguay indicated that Codex MRLs were used as a basis for national legislation, although they were not formally accepted.

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<sup>3</sup> CX/LAC 97/4

<sup>4</sup> CX/LAC 97/5, CRD 1 (comments of Argentina), CRD 2 (comments of Costa Rica)

36. The Delegation of Argentina indicated their monitoring system for pesticide residues integrated the interactions plant-pest-pesticide and in this context some MRLs corresponded to those of Codex while others were lower, national limits being applicable in any case, in view of the application of Good Agricultural Practice. Pesticide residues found in a number of commodities were lower than the Codex MRLs, due to the application of good agricultural practices and therefore Argentina did not apply the Codex MRLs.

37. The Committee expressed the view that the questionnaire circulated by the Committee on Pesticide Residues was not adequate to identify problems related to pesticide residues in the region; similarly, the document considered by the last CCPR session (CX/PR 96/11) was not comprehensive enough and did not include important commodities. The Committee therefore invited countries in the region to provide relevant information and comments to the CCPR in order to facilitate discussion of the issues identified during the present session.

## **REPORT ON ACTIVITIES RELATED TO ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AND HARMONIZATION OF FOOD LEGISLATION IN THE REGION (Agenda Item 7) <sup>5</sup>**

### **MERCOSUR**

38. The Delegation of Uruguay informed the Committee of the activities of Sub-Group 3. Technical Regulations concerning the elimination of technical barriers to trade and the achievement of regional integration. The support of FAO would be needed to carry out a project on conformity evaluation, in order to facilitate mutual recognition of national inspection systems. It was noted that FAO was currently considering the feasibility of a TCP in this area.

39. The Delegation of Brazil stressed the increase in commercial exchanges since the creation of MERCOSUR, and indicated that the harmonization of regulations in the region was largely based on Codex standards and recommendations.

40. The Delegation of Argentina informed the Committee of the activities of Sub-Group 8. Agriculture concerning zoo- and phytosanitary matters and indicated its wish to host a training course on Risk Analysis for countries in the Region with technical assistance from FAO.

41. The Observer from Consumers International stated that the objective of the Consumers Association of MERCOSUR (ACOM), created in 1994, was to achieve the improvement of consumer protection and that proposals for joint action in this area had been presented to the authorities of MERCOSUR.

### **CENTRAL AMERICA**

42. The Delegation of Costa Rica indicated that in the framework of the project of "Training and assistance in the certification of non-traditional products in Central America, Belize and Panama" FAO and ILSI held a joint International Seminar/Workshop on Harmonization of Food Standards which identified the difficulties faced by Central America due to lack of resources. The following priorities were defined to facilitate regional integration: strengthening National Codex Committees; harmonization with Codex texts; promotion of industry participation; creation of a group of advisers to achieve the harmonization of standards.

### **CARICOM**

43. The Delegation of Cuba referred to the harmonization process in the framework of CARICOM on the basis of Codex standards and indicated that the PanAmerican Commission on Technical Standards (COPANT) had also decided to adopt Codex standards in order to harmonize PanAmerican food standards.

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<sup>5</sup> CX/LAC 97/6

## **FOOD CERTIFICATION AND INSPECTION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (Agenda Item 8)<sup>6</sup>**

44. The Delegation of Costa Rica indicated that sanitary and phytosanitary inspection was carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture, while voluntary quality certification for exports of fruit and vegetables was implemented by a certification body (National Production Council, accredited by the National Accreditation Body (ENA). A training programme on quality systems was developed in 1996 in small and medium-sized industry in the sectors of fruit and vegetables and shellfish, with a specific orientation towards international trade (see also para. 41).

45. The Delegation of Argentina informed the Committee that the National Service of Food Safety and Quality (SENASA), a subsidiary body of the Secretariat of Agriculture, and the National Food Institute (INAL), a subsidiary body of the Secretariat of Health Policy were mainly responsible for food control. The Delegation presented its comprehensive inspection system of meat products for hygiene and residues, which integrated a risk-based approach in the definition of priorities.

46. The Delegation of the Dominican Republic stressed the efforts made to improve the educational level of food inspectors and upgrade its inspection system through a number of training courses focusing on priority areas: HACCP in the food industry, with the assistance of PAHO, street-vended foods, mass catering. The Delegation expressed its thanks to Argentina for the assistance provided in the food industry sector and pointed out that such bilateral programmes should be encouraged.

47. The Delegation of Brazil indicated that food control infrastructures had not been significantly modified since 1995, and that actions taken to comply with obligations under WTO were intensified. The application of the HACCP system was integrated into several training programmes. As regards import and export matters, the computerized Foreign Trade System (SISCOMEX) coordinated by the Ministry of Economy was created to facilitate the import and export processes, with direct access to the system through computer terminals.

48. With reference to the progress in inspection and certification systems since the last session, the Delegation of Uruguay indicated that the National Advisory Commission on Foodstuffs included all concerned official authorities and interested sectors and that the specialized technical committees in the National Codex Committee followed the structure of the Codex Committees. The HACCP system was applied in the fish and meat industries, which complied with the requirements established by the USA and the EC. Training courses for food inspectors and processors were organized regularly.

49. The Delegation of Peru indicated that the creation of a single sanitary authority was under consideration, and that a surveillance system on the health of the population was applied, with special emphasis on the involvement and information of consumers. The use of product registration was gradually being discontinued, while manufacturers registration and certification was implemented.

50. The Delegation of Cuba indicated that legislation was under review to meet the obligations arising from the WTO Agreements. The National System of Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification was in the process of been established on the basis of the CCFICS recommendations, with the participation of interested Ministries (Agriculture, Health, Fisheries, Food Industry, Foreign Trade through the National Standards Institute). This system had already initiated a number of actions such as the accreditation of laboratories and the application of the HACCP system in the fish industry with the cooperation of FAO.

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<sup>6</sup> CRD 1 (comments of Argentina), CRD 2 (Comments of Barbados), CRD 3 (Comments of Costa Rica)

51. The Delegation of Guatemala informed the Committee that a new legislation on food inspection and certification had been approved whereby the Ministry of Agriculture was responsible for unprocessed food and the Ministry of Health for processed food; the National Codex Committee involved all interested ministries and sectors of the economy, with specialized sub-committees following the structure of the Codex Committees. A pesticides monitoring programme was developed with the assistance of FAO/WHO in the LUCAM laboratory (Ministry of Health). The Ministry of Economy was carrying out the approximation of national standards to Codex standards.
52. The Delegation of Nicaragua emphasized the importance given to the education of consumers as regards health and food safety in national food control programmes, as well as its efforts to modernize the inspection system.
53. The Delegation of El Salvador indicated that the establishment of national standards was underway, on the basis of international standards; an inventory of laboratories had been made and a laboratory accreditation Regulation already existed.
54. The Delegation of Mexico pointed out that the food control system had been revised to follow a risk-based approach, consequently the application of the HACCP system in food processing was mandatory in some cases; this was monitored by the responsible authorities, with external auditing. The review and updating of relevant standards was also ongoing.
55. The Delegation of Bolivia stated that the Secretariat of Health chaired the National Codex Committee, which included other ministries responsible for food control. Revised food legislation was being elaborated with the assistance of FAO.
56. The Delegation of Ecuador indicated that Codex standards were used as a basis for national standards, and officially endorsed as national standards in some cases.
57. The Delegation of Trinidad and Tobago informed the Committee that the Food and Drugs Act and Public Health Act were being reviewed with the assistance of PAHO, and that training in HACCP was being provided for public health and veterinary inspection.
58. The Delegation of Chile indicated that a national food control programme was in operation and included imported foods, with a request for sanitary certification in the exporting country and random controls *a posteriori*. The system was carried out at the national level through 19 food laboratories.
59. The Delegation of Panama indicated that product registration was gradually discontinued and replaced with plant certification, and that the Food Control Programme focused on the monitoring and control of emerging pathogens through random sampling.
60. The Delegation of Jamaica stated that food inspectors were being trained for the application of the HACCP system and increased control of street-vended foods; the veterinary laboratories had being upgraded in accordance with EC requirements and accreditation procedures were underway.
61. The Delegation of Guyana noted that responsibilities for food control were divided between several ministries, and a programme to rationalize the inspection system and to update the food law was underway with the assistance of PAHO.
62. The Representative of FAO expressed his appreciation of the positive results achieved in the region and encouraged the countries to use the opportunities offered by the TCDC programme in order to promote the exchange of experience in the area of food control.

## **REPORT ON FOOD SAFETY MATTERS OF INTEREST TO THE REGION**

**(Agenda Item 9)**<sup>7</sup>**Report on Contamination by Salmonella**

63. The Delegation of Brazil introduced the document prepared as a basis for discussion, describing the major characteristics of *Salmonella enteritidis* and other Salmonella, and possible means of control. The Committee expressed its appreciation to Brazil for this interesting document and Brazil indicated its willingness to revise it if required and continue its work in this area.

64. The Representative of WHO informed the Committee that educational material including basic recommendations for the control of Salmonella in eggs had been prepared for the use of food handlers.

65. The Committee decided that further consideration should be given to this important subject and agreed that governments would be invited to provide information on their experience with Salmonella spp. and other emerging pathogens by Circular Letter.

**b) Food safety in touristic areas**

66. The Delegation of the Dominican Republic made a presentation of its experience with foodborne diseases in touristic areas, especially hotels and mass catering in general, stressing the economic and sanitary consequences. Difficulty of adequate training of food handlers were being solved, national texts on hygiene and food handling oriented towards the hotel industry had been developed. One of the difficulties in the touristic sector was the high consumption of imported foodstuffs. The International Congress on Foodborne Diseases in relation with tourism held (Trinidad and Tobago, 1996) had made specific recommendations in this area. Negotiations were underway with the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and a chain of hotels to establish a training centre for the hotel industry in the Caribbean. The Delegation proposed to set up a technical cooperation network on food safety and tourism in the Region, and this was supported by many delegations.

67. Some delegations informed the Committee of their experience with foodborne diseases related with tourism and stressed the importance of training programmes and specific measures to ensure the safety of the water supply. The Delegation of Brazil indicated that advanced training courses for the hotel industry were held at the national level.

68. The Observer from ILSI indicated that the first PanAmerican Conference on Food Safety and Nutrition, organized by ILSI in cooperation with FAO and PAHO, would be held in Mexico City from 8-12 September 1997 and would discuss strategies concerning food safety issues of relevance to the region, including aspects related to touristic areas, and invited interested countries to participate in this event.

**REPORT OF THE WORKSHOP ON HARMONIZATION OF FOOD LAW AND REGULATIONS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (Agenda item 10)**<sup>8</sup>

69. Dr. Eduardo Mendez, FAO Consultant, recalled the recommendations of the FAO Meeting on Harmonization of the Basic Food Law/Regulations (San José, Costa Rica, 29-31 January 1997) and introduced the report of the Workshop held prior to the session on 23-24 February 1997 with the purpose of facilitating harmonization of food legislation in the Region.

70. The Committee endorsed the recommendations of the Workshop, as follows:

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<sup>7</sup> CX /LAC 97/8

<sup>8</sup> CRD 4

- (i) The Latin American model food law should be reviewed and updated to take into account the obligations under the WTO SPS and TBT Agreements.
- (ii) Codex standards, guidelines and recommendations should be used in reviewing or establishing national food laws and regulations
- (iii) Many countries recommended the gradual replacement of product registration with a system to monitor the application of good manufacturing practices throughout the food chain and the implementation of the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point System.
- (iv) Information and surveillance systems on foodborne diseases and food safety and quality should be developed or strengthened as a means to establish effective food control programmes.
- (v) Mechanisms of harmonization, equivalence and mutual recognition based on Codex standards, guidelines and recommendations should be developed further to assure consumer protection and promote food trade.
- (vi) Additional technical assistance should be provided in the development of food legislation and effective food control programmes including strengthening food inspection and food analysis capabilities. Specifically, countries requested that FAO provide assistance in strengthening National Codex Committees to include input from all food control agencies, the food industry and consumer organizations in inputting into the Codex process and disseminating information on Codex standards, guidelines and recommendations to the appropriate food control and consumer protection organizations.
- (vii) Food legislation should include appropriate penalties for violation of the legislation.
- (viii) The PAHO/INPPAZ information system on food legislation should be incorporated by countries of the region in the framework of their integration activities. For this purpose, interested countries should designate a focal point, conduct training workshops and conduct periodical assessments of the project.

71. The Committee expressed its appreciation for the opportunity to participate in the Workshop and its support for the continued practice of holding such workshops prior to the Committee.

### **CONSUMER PARTICIPATION IN CODEX WORK AND RELATED MATTERS (Agenda Item 11)<sup>9</sup>**

72. The Delegation of Costa Rica indicated that representatives of consumers would participate in the National Codex Committee and that the creation of consumers associations was encouraged, as well as consumers education and information. The Consumer Protection Programme included the control of commercial quality, labelling and net weight control of prepackaged food. The National Consumers Commission received complaints and had the legal authority to sanction unfair practices detrimental to consumers.

73. The Delegation of Argentina pointed out that consumers participated in the Advisory Council of the National Food Commission, and food control programmes included the promotion of consumer education and participation.

74. The Delegation of the Dominican Republic informed the Committee that consumers participated in the National Codex Committee and other committees responsible for the review of food legislation, and that consumer support was significant to facilitate government action in food control matters.

75. The Delegation of Brazil indicated that the National Codex Committee included two types of consumer representation: the Department of Consumer Protection and Defence (Ministry of Justice) and the Brazilian

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<sup>9</sup> CX/LAC 97/10

Institute of Consumer Defence (IDEC), a non-governmental organization affiliated with Consumers International.

76. The Delegation of El Salvador stated that consumers took part in the deliberations of the committees responsible for food legislation, in the framework of the National Council for Science and Technology.

77. The Delegation of Uruguay informed the Committee that the Directorate of Consumer Protection was part of the Ministry of Economy, which includes the National Codex Committee. The Delegation also pointed out the very active participation of consumers associations in the technical sub-committees of the NCC.

78. The Delegation of Peru indicated that the Department of Consumer Protection was responsible for consumer protection issues and that further participation of consumer associations should be encouraged.

79. The Delegation of Cuba noted that the legal basis for the protection of consumers was currently being established. The Delegation of Panama pointed out that consumers participated in the National Codex Committee, the National Commission for Food Safety and that consumer support had been significant in specific food control actions.

80. The Delegation of Guatemala indicated that consumers participated in the Multisectorial Food Commission, which orients national food policy and that it is intended to integrate consumers in the National Codex Committee.

81. The Delegation of Chile indicated that consumer protection was the responsibility of the Ministry of Economy, and that the Consumer Protection Law was in the process of adoption. It also highlighted the resolutions of the World Food Summit with respect to consumer education.

82. The Delegation of Mexico stressed the importance of consumer participation as a support for government action in food surveillance, and the necessity to promote larger and more effective consumer participation.

83. The Observer from Consumers International stressed the efforts made to ensure the high technical level of consumers representatives in Codex Committees and recalled the recommendation of the CCGP concerning the participation of consumers in National Codex Committees. The Observer highlighted the positive results achieved with such participation in Argentina, Brazil and El Salvador and expressed the view that extensive use should be made of modern means of communications, such as Internet, to facilitate and improve the efficiency of Codex work.

84. The Observer informed the Committee that the FAO/PAHO/CI Regional Workshop on the Integration of Consumers Interests in Food Production and Control (Quito, 1996) had made a number of recommendations for improved consumer participation in food standardization and food control activities.

#### **ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE STRENGTHENING OF CODEX CONTACT POINTS AND NATIONAL CODEX COMMITTEES IN THE REGION (Agenda item 12)**<sup>10</sup>

85. The Representative of INCAP/PAHO presented the activities of this Institute in the area of food security, nutrition, including food fortification, nutrition and labelling, sanitary and toxicological protection. He pointed out the problems related to the organization of food control infrastructures and National Codex Committees in the region. He stressed the importance of strengthening NCCs and food inspection services in the Region so that they could operate effectively.

86. Several countries pointed out that their National Codex Committees and Codex Contact Points were operating effectively. Other countries stressed their difficulties to organize Codex work at the national level

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<sup>10</sup> CX/LAC 97/11

and the necessity for technical assistance in this area. The Committee noted that FAO had provided support to several countries in the Region through the organization of national or regional seminars or projects and that such activities would continue as a high priority.

87. As regard the Draft Regional Guidelines prepared by the Coordinating Committee for Asia and proposed for the consideration of other Coordinating Committees, several delegations expressed the view that they did not correspond to the situations in their countries and in the region as a whole. In accordance with the suggestion of Chile, they felt that such guidelines were not necessary as the situation differed significantly from one country to another and in many cases, national Codex Committees and Codex Contact Points were already operating satisfactorily.

88. Some delegations however suggested that specific guidelines could be developed in the region. The Committee concluded that the CCASIA Draft Guidelines could not be adopted in the region, and that a Circular Letter should request government comments on the opportunity of elaborating regional guidelines for Latin America and the Caribbean.

89. In relation with to facilitate Codex work, the Delegation of Chile proposed to promote the decentralization of Committees, to make a wider use of modern means of communication (electronic mail and Internet) and to strengthen the Codex Secretariat. The Committee concurred with these proposals.

#### **NOMINATION OF THE COORDINATOR (Agenda Item 13) <sup>11</sup>**

90. The Delegation of Nicaragua, supported by some delegations, proposed to nominate Dr. Persia Alvarez (Dominican Republic) as Coordinator. Dr. Alvarez, while thanking these countries for their support, declined the nomination as it was current practice to nominate the current Coordinator a second time, and in view of the general interest and cohesion of the Region. She however indicated the willingness of the Dominican Republic to host a future session of the CCLAC. The Committee expressed its thanks to the Dominican Republic and, as proposed by the Delegation of Costa Rica, agreed that alternance between the different subregions should be followed in the future.

91. The Delegation of Brazil, unanimously supported by the Committee, proposed to nominate Dr. Galdos Ugarte (Uruguay) for appointment as Coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean by the 22nd Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and until the end of the 23rd Session of the Commission. Dr. Galdos Ugarte expressed his thanks to the Committee and his intention to work with countries in the Region to strengthen Codex work at the regional and international level.

92. The Delegation of Brazil expressed its thanks to the authorities of Uruguay for providing interpretation into Portuguese during the meeting.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS, FUTURE WORK, AND DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT SESSION (Agenda Item 14)**

##### **Other business**

93. The Delegation of Peru, referring to the discussions in the Workshop (see CRD 4), expressed its interest in hosting a regional workshop for import/export authorities, with the support of FAO.

94. The Delegation of Argentina proposed to circulate the Spanish version of the HACCP Guidelines to Spanish-speaking countries in order to determine the adequate terminology in this area.

95. The Committee expressed the view that more Codex meetings should be held in Latin America and the Caribbean in order to facilitate the participation of countries in the region. The Secretariat recalled that the

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<sup>11</sup> CX/LAC 97/12

Commission encouraged the practice of decentralizing Codex Committees in order to promote the participation of developing countries and that three committees had been held in the region.

96. The Delegation of Uruguay recalled that it had offered to hold the next session of the CCMMP in Uruguay and, while recognizing that such arrangements were subject to bilateral agreement, the Committee expressed its strong support for this proposal.

#### **Future Work**

97. The Committee agreed that in addition to standing items on the Agenda, the following matters would be considered by the next session:

- Street-vended foods
- Contamination by Salmonella and other pathogens
- Food Safety and Tourism
- Activities of National Codex Committees and Codex Contact Points
- Consumer Participation

#### **Date and Place of Next Session**

98. The Committee was informed that the next session would be held in Uruguay in December 1998.

### SUMMARY STATUS OF WORK

<b>Subject Matter</b>	<b>Step</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Document Reference in ALINORM 97/36</b>
Nomination of Coordinator		22nd CAC	para. 91
Revision of the Code of Practice on Street Foods		22nd CAC Governments 11th CCLAC	para. 12
Exchange of information on food legislation and food control		Governments 11th CCLAC	paras. 34-62
Progress report on activities of National Codex Committees		Governments 11th CCLAC	paras. 86-89
Follow-up of the Workshop on Harmonization of Food Law		Governments FAO/PAHO 11th CCLAC	para. 70
Consumer Participation		Governments 11th CCLAC	para. 97
Contamination by Salmonella and emerging pathogens		Governments Brazil 11th CCLAC	para. 63-65

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