Consideration of the draft strategic framework, proposed draft medium term plan 2003-2007 - Comments from the European Community

Draft Strategic Framework

The European Community supports the goals of the strategic vision statement and agrees with the strategic objectives and priorities. The European Community would like to stress the importance of the priorities for the CAC

- to promote the reduction of health risk along the entire food chain,
- to develop concepts and principles for the application of risk analysis both at international and national level,
- to improve understanding of how precaution and scientific uncertainty are taken into account in the risk analysis process,
- to promote consensus-based decision-making and,
- to respond more effectively and expeditiously to new issues, concerns and developments in the food sector.

These objectives should be clearly addressed within the framework of the Medium Term Plan for 2003-2007.

Medium Term Plan

The European Community welcomes and supports the suggested plan in general. However, the European Community believes that greater emphasis is needed in the Medium Term Plan to improving the involvement of consumers in the Codex decision-making process. Examples of initiatives that could be explored are:

- in order to promote understanding of the Codex texts, the Codex decision-making process, including the expert bodies upon which Codex bases many of its decisions, should be as open and transparent as possible.

- in order to facilitate greater participation in Codex, a trust fund administered by FAO/WHO for consumer organisations could be established that could be used for their attendance at Codex meetings, for the analysis of Codex documents from a consumer perspective, and secondments to the Codex Secretariat.

- in view of the complexity of Codex documents, all Codex documents should include a paragraph summarising their implications for consumers (as noted at CCEurope 1999 (paras 42 – 43 Alinorm 99/19)

- guidelines should be developed regarding the appropriate means of consulting/communicating with consumers - as required for example in risk communication.
- developing advice on the composition of delegations at Codex meetings.

- establish international principles/guidelines for assuring product integrity and traceability of food products/ingredients through various links in the food chain

- to promote seamless linkages/interface between Codex and other Multilateral Regulatory Instruments and Conventions. Such co-operation is also important to minimise duplication of effort.

The European Community agrees with the activities listed in Table 1 annexed to the draft Medium Term Plan for 2003-2007 except the first one giving the responsibility to subsidiary bodies to advance standards at Step 5 of the procedure. In the present system either the CAC and or the Executive Committee has to make this formal adoption. If in the future the CAC will be held every year there will be no saving of time by giving this responsibility to the Committees. The CAC is attended by far more countries than the subsidiary bodies. This is also a reason for keeping the present system and the transparency of the decision.