European Community comments
to Codex Circular Letter 2005/30-CAC

Further Study of Certain Recommendations Contained in the Consultants’ Report on the Review of the Codex Committee Structure and Mandates of Codex Committees and Task Forces

The European Community and its 25 Member States (ECMS) appreciate the opportunity to address the Codex Alimentarius Commission’s request for comments on the Further Study of Certain Recommendations Contained in the Consultants’ Report on the Review of the Codex Committee Structure and Mandates of Codex Committees and Task Forces (CL 2005/30-CAC).

4. Wherever possible, committees should be given enabling TOR only. They should be reactivated as necessary to undertake defined tasks and adjourned sine die once that task is completed. (5.5)

As indicated at the 28th session of the CAC the ECMS are supportive of reinforcing the overall management of the committees. Enabling TOR could be part of this strategy. The ECMS indeed consider that giving committees clear enabling TOR would encourage committees to focus on the core subjects of their remit; such a requirement would strengthen the governance arrangements of the Codex Commission and would ensure that resources are focused on work of the highest priority to Codex members. Committees should be reactivated as necessary to undertake defined tasks and adjourned sine die once that task is completed.

6. The relevance of the work of other international standards setting bodies should be determined, and a clear statement of demarcation lines made clear to all participants. (6.5)

The ECMS support close cooperation with other relevant international organisations dealing with food standardisation, especially OIE and IPPC as their output is also used as reference by WTO. In this context, the ECMS wish to recall the recent adoption, which they strongly supported, of the Guidelines on Cooperation between the Codex Alimentarius Commission and International Intergovernmental Organizations in the Elaboration of Standards and Related Texts; this text puts in place procedures of close cooperation between Codex and other international intergovernmental organisations.
It is indeed essential to avoid co-existence of conflicting standards on the same issues and duplication of work in view of the limited resources available to Codex and also to confirm clear lines of demarcation between the officially recognised organisations.

It should also be identified in what relevant areas there is no ongoing work neither in Codex nor in other international organisations in order to ensure that the whole food chain is covered and avoid the existence of major gaps.

As regards other international organisations, attention should be paid to the inclusiveness of the concerned bodies.

11. All commodity committees and task forces should be given simple enabling TOR which should be revised for a limited period only, to assign specific tasks to the committee. (10.10)

The ECMS note that this recommendation was associated with the establishment of a Commodities Management Committee. We also note that there was no support for the establishment of such a committee at the 28th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, although, as already stated in its comments to Recommendation 10 in CL 2005/12-CAC, the view of the ECMS is that standards setting work should certainly be subject to a greater degree of management oversight.

The ECMS also recall that the 28th Session of the Commission concluded that further consideration should be given to possible ways to reorganise the commodity work of the Commission.

Accordingly, the ECMS offer the following suggestion: All committees should assess their current work against the new criteria for proposals for new work. Each committee should then report to the next Commission meeting on whether they are able to lighten their workload as a result. The Commission should subsequently look at all Codex work to ensure that it fits within strategic priorities. The ECMS wish in this context to underline that they do not favour the development of specific procedures/criteria by each Committee to prioritise their work. Each proposal for new work accompanied by a project document should continue to be examined by the Commission according to the Critical Review procedure in force.\(^1\)

As regards the organisation of Codex work, the ECMS are of the opinion that the schedule of the meetings of Codex Committees and Taskforces could be improved. Codex Plenary Sessions are currently mainly concentrated in a short period of 2-3 months in the spring time, where from March to May there are usually meetings going on every week. The ECMS would like to question whether an effort could be made to spread these meetings more evenly over the year. This would certainly allow an increased participation from countries and a better preparation of delegates. In this context, some reflection could also take place to explore whether the move of the annual Commission meeting to another period of the year could contribute to the improvement of the organisation of Codex work.

In addition, the ECMS, in line with paragraph 129 of ALINORM 05/28/41\textsuperscript{2}, wish to reiterate the crucial role of Coordinating Committees and think that they could even play a greater role in the improvement of Codex work.

18. The Commission should consider carefully whether nutrition should play a role in Codex, and if so, what that role should be.

Nutrition is already currently covered in the Terms of Reference of the Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses and the Committee on Food Labelling. However some reflection is probably needed as regards the global involvement of Codex in the field of nutrition. The ECMS support the view that general consideration should be given to how nutrition issues should be integrated into Codex work, while retaining the current mandate of Codex.

The ECMS also recall that at the 27\textsuperscript{th} Session of the Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses, WHO and FAO suggested a way to address the request of the Commission and invited Members and Observers of the Committee to participate in an electronic forum established by WHO and FAO. The Committee recognised that it was very important to cooperate with WHO/FAO in the course of their work to draft a more focused document for implementing the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health within Codex. The delegations of Canada and of The Netherlands offered their assistance to FAO and WHO to help to develop the electronic forum and to define the nature of questions or scope to be addressed.

The ECMS underlined the importance of the Global Strategy and explained that the EC was taking forward a platform for action with the same title. It suggested that the CCNFS DU could make a more positive contribution by setting up an electronic working group. Other delegations who spoke were positive about taking forward the Global Strategy within Codex. The ECMS suggested that the Regional Coordination Committees of Codex should also discuss the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health and its implications for codex work within their regions.

\textsuperscript{2} “The Commission agreed to reassert the important role the Coordinating Committees play in furthering the objectives of the Commission and encourage countries to participate more actively and effectively in the work of Coordinating Committees.”