



**FIFTY-SIXTH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY**

**WHA56.23**

**Agenda item 14.19**

**28 May 2003**

## **Joint FAO/WHO evaluation of the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission**

The Fifty-sixth World Health Assembly,

Recalling resolution WHA40.20 on the Codex Alimentarius Commission and resolution WHA53.15 on food safety;

Having considered the report on the joint FAO/WHO evaluation of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and other FAO and WHO work on food standards;<sup>1</sup>

Acknowledging with appreciation the statement of the Codex Alimentarius Commission on the outcome of the joint FAO/WHO evaluation annexed to the present resolution;

Welcoming the recommendation to give higher priority to setting science-based standards for food safety, nutrition-related issues and health;

Noting with satisfaction the excellent collaboration between WHO and FAO in the area of food safety and nutrition;

Aware that the rise in the global distribution of food is linked to an increased need for internationally agreed assessments and guidelines related to food safety and nutrition;

Recognizing that one of the prerequisites for economic development is a safe food production system for both domestic and export markets based on regulatory frameworks protecting consumers' health;

Conscious of the need for full participation of developing countries in setting globally relevant standards;

Emphasizing the lead responsibility of WHO, in collaboration with FAO, in providing sound scientific assessments of hazards in food and nutrition as a basis for managing risk at national and international levels;

---

<sup>1</sup> Document A56/34.

Stressing the urgent need to reinforce the participation of the health sector in standard-setting activities related to food in order to promote and protect consumers' health,

1. ENDORSES WHO's increased direct involvement in the Codex Alimentarius Commission and an enhanced capacity within WHO for risk assessment;
2. URGES Member States:
  - (1) to participate actively in international standard-setting in the framework of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, especially in the area of food safety and nutrition;
  - (2) to make full use of Codex standards for the protection of human health throughout the food chain, including assistance with making healthy choices regarding nutrition and diet;
  - (3) to stimulate collaboration between all sectors involved at national level in setting standards based on the Codex Alimentarius related to food safety and nutrition, with particular focus on the health sector and fully involving all stakeholders;
  - (4) to facilitate the participation of national experts in international standard-setting activities;
3. INVITES the regional committees to review regional policies and strategies for strengthening capacity in the areas of standard-setting for food safety and of nutrition information, in collaboration with FAO;
4. CALLS ON donors to increase funding for WHO's activities related to the setting of standards for food, with special attention to least developed countries;
5. REQUESTS the Director-General:
  - (1) to support the development and implementation of an action plan to address the recommendations in the Codex Evaluation Report, and, in collaboration with FAO, to consider means to improve the efficiency of the Codex standard-setting process by meeting the unique governance needs of Codex within the overall structure of WHO and FAO;
  - (2) to strengthen WHO's role:
    - (a) in the management of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and to give a higher profile to the Commission and related work throughout the Organization;
    - (b) in complementing the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission with other relevant WHO activities in the areas of food safety and nutrition, with special attention to issues mandated in World Health Assembly resolutions and to the International Health Regulations;
    - (c) in risk assessment, including through the system of joint FAO/WHO expert bodies and consultations and through a coordinating function in WHO;
    - (d) in supporting the capacity of food-safety systems to protect human health throughout the food chain;

- (e) in supporting analysis of links between data on foodborne disease and foodborne contamination;
  - (f) in collaboration with FAO, in providing special support to developing countries for generating data for development of global Codex Alimentarius standards;
- (3) to provide support to Member States, particularly developing and least developed countries, in strengthening capacity in the above areas;
  - (4) to stimulate the establishment of networks between national and regional food-safety regulatory authorities and particularly at country level;
  - (5) to continue to foster collaboration with FAO, including a more coordinated approach between WHO and FAO to capacity-building, especially within the framework of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme;
  - (6) to reallocate resources for WHO's activities related to the setting of food standards based on the Codex Alimentarius with special attention to least developed countries.

ANNEX

**STATEMENT OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION ON  
THE OUTCOME OF THE JOINT FAO/WHO EVALUATION OF  
THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS AND OTHER FAO AND WHO  
WORK ON FOOD STANDARDS**

1. The Codex Alimentarius Commission, having considered the report and recommendations of the *Joint FAO/WHO Evaluation of the Codex Alimentarius and Other FAO and WHO Work on Food Standards*, expressed its appreciation to the parent Organizations for having initiated the Evaluation and ensuring that it was carried out in a consultative, efficient and effective manner. It also expressed its appreciation to the Evaluation Team and Expert Panel for their excellent report, the depth of the analysis and the comprehensive proposals and recommendations contained therein.
2. The Commission noted with satisfaction the finding of the Evaluation that its food standards had a very high importance to Members as a vital component of food control systems designed to protect consumer health and to ensure fair practices in the food trade. It endorsed the view that standards were a fundamental prerequisite in consumer protection but had to be looked at in the context of the total system throughout the food chain, especially for food safety.
3. The Commission recalled that Codex standards were used as references for Member Nations in relation to their obligations under the WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade and the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures. In this regard, it recognized that many Member Nations with less developed economies or with economies in transition were able to use Codex standards directly as a basis for domestic legislation and standards setting in conformity with these Agreements. It noted that this was particularly true when standards were based on global data including those derived from developing countries.
4. The Commission supported the overall thrust of the Evaluation report and expressed its commitment to the **implementation** of strategies that would meet the objectives of the recommendations contained therein. It strongly agreed that these recommendations should be reviewed expeditiously. The Commission noted that since the 1991 Joint FAO/WHO Conference on Food Standards, Chemicals in Food and Food Trade, significant changes had been made in the Commission's priorities and programmes with increased emphasis on food safety issues. This emphasis had resulted in an increased output of health-related standards and was now being extended to the whole food chain; this process would continue to be developed.
5. Noting the Evaluation's recommendations concerning the Commission's mandate, the Commission was of the opinion that its existing **mandate** to protect consumers' health and to ensure fair practices in the food trade continued to be appropriate but might be discussed in the future. Within this mandate, the Commission emphasized that its first priority would be the development of standards having an impact on consumer health and safety.
6. In order to maintain the strong support from all Member Nations and stakeholders, the Commission **agreed** that in their response to the Evaluation, the Commission and its parent Organizations should work towards:

greater efficiency and effectiveness in the development of Codex standards, whilst maintaining transparency and inclusiveness and procedural consistency in the process of their development;

increased participation of developing Member Nations and Member Nations in economic transition in the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission throughout the standards development process;

greater usefulness of Codex standards to Member Nations in terms of relevance to their needs and timeliness;

strengthening of the scientific base for risk analysis, including food safety risk assessment to improve the efficiency and effectiveness in providing expert scientific advice to the Commission and Member Nations and to improve risk communication; and

more effective capacity building for the development of national food control systems.

7. The Commission agreed that it should have greater independence, within the overall structure of FAO and WHO, for proposing and executing its **work programme and budget**, once approved by the two parent organizations.

8. The Commission concurred with the views expressed in the Evaluation Report that the Codex **Secretariat** was hard working, efficient and member-oriented but overworked and with insufficient resources to support the present activities of Codex. It strongly supported the recommendation that the Secretariat be expanded and that the seniority and composition of its staff should match the Commission's increased requirements.

9. On the matter of **expert advice** to Codex, the Commission agreed fully with the view that this was a very important element to all Member Nations and to the Commission itself. It expressed the view that there needed to be sufficient capacity within the parent Organizations to ensure that scientific advice was provided on a timely basis. It also agreed that this work needed to have greater identity within the Organizations, stronger links to Codex priorities, and internal coordination as well as significantly increased resources. Its independence from external influences and its transparency need to be further reinforced within FAO/WHO. The Commission stated that there should also be greater distinction between the function of risk assessment undertaken by experts and that of risk management undertaken by Codex committees, while noting the linkages that needed to exist between these functions. The Commission emphasized that the provision of expert scientific advice was a joint responsibility of FAO and WHO and should continue to be so. It strongly recommended that WHO markedly increase its contribution to health risk assessment carried out by FAO/WHO expert committees and FAO/WHO expert consultations. It also recommended that FAO strengthen its input in areas reflecting its responsibility and expertise. The Commission welcomed the statement by Dr Brundtland in her opening remarks to the present session that FAO and WHO would prepare for and convene as an immediate priority, the consultation requested by the Codex Alimentarius Commission at its 24th Session<sup>1</sup> on strengthening scientific support for Codex decision-making.

10. In the area of **capacity building**, the Commission welcomed the valuable initiatives described in the report including the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) operated by the WTO in collaboration with the World Bank, FAO, WHO, OIE, and in particular the new FAO/WHO Trust Fund to enable effective participation in Codex. It called upon FAO and WHO to undertake a major effort to mobilize extrabudgetary funds and foster coordinated bilateral assistance in capacity building. It also called for a more coordinated approach for capacity building between FAO and WHO and requested the parent bodies to urgently analyse their existing means of providing capacity building and inform the Codex Alimentarius Commission on how they will improve coordination and distribution of work drawing on their mutual strengths and synergies.

---

<sup>1</sup> ALINORM 01/41, paragraph 61.

11. The Commission called upon **FAO and WHO** to provide additional Regular Programme resources, supplemented with extrabudgetary resources where necessary, to strengthen Codex and Codex-related work throughout the two Organizations.

12. The Commission called upon **Member Governments** to support the follow-up to the Evaluation process including through their statements made and positions taken in the World Health Assembly and the Council and Conference of FAO.

13. The Commission reiterated its **commitment** to pursue with all speed full consideration of the recommendations addressed to it in the Evaluation report and in this regard:

- Invited **Member Nations** and interested international organizations to submit written comments to the Secretariat;
- Requested the Secretariat to analyse the comments dealing with the **Codex Committee structures and their mandates** and to provide options for consideration by the Commission at its next Regular Session;
- Requested the Secretariat to analyse the comments dealing with the functions of the **Executive Committee**, and to provide options for consideration by the Commission at its next Regular Session;
- Requested the Secretariat to analyse comments dealing with **standards management** and the procedures for **standards development**, including the establishment of priorities recommended by developing Member Nations, and recommend strategies for the early implementation of more efficient and effective processes, providing options for consideration by the Commission at its next Regular Session;
- Requested the Secretariat to identify a strategy for consideration by the Commission at its next Regular Session on the implementation of the recommendations dealing with the revision of the **Rules of Procedure** and other internal procedures; and
- Requested the Secretariat to analyse the comments on those recommendations in the Evaluation Report not covered by the above and to provide options on how to proceed.

Tenth plenary meeting, 28 May 2003  
A56/VR/10

= = =