

**STATEMENT MADE BY THE OBSERVER OF
CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION
AT THE MEETING OF 7-8 JULY 1999**

1. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on FAO and Codex activities of relevance to the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures. I will refer in the first place to the 23rd Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission that was held in FAO Headquarters, Rome from 28 June to 3 July 1999. The session was attended by 671 delegates and representatives from 97 member countries, one observer country and representatives from 63 international governmental and non-governmental organizations including UN agencies and the WTO.
2. The Commission elected the persons who will take office as chairperson and vice-chairpersons from the end of the 23rd Session to the end of the 24th Session as well as the regional members of the Executive Committee and the regional co-ordinators.
3. The Commission adopted a Medium-Term Plan to 2002 which include the establishment of the following new subsidiary bodies:
 - FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committee for the New Near East
 - Ad hoc Intergovernmental Codex Task Force on Foods derived from Biotechnology (Host Government-Japan, duration 4 years)
 - Ad hoc Intergovernmental Codex Task Force on Animal Feeding (Host Government Denmark, duration 4 years)
 - Ad hoc Intergovernmental Codex Task Force on Fruit Juices (Host Government Brazil, duration 4 years).
4. The Commission adopted the following amendments to the rules of procedures:
 - Appointment of Regional co-ordinators by country rather than ad personam
 - Inclusion of the Near East as member of the Executive Committee
 - Reference to the need for consensus when adopting standards and related texts (Rule X).
5. The Commission expressed appreciation for the continuing budgetary and financial support to the Joint FAO/WHO Foods Standards Programme by FAO and WHO and also expressed appreciation for the technical assistance provided to developing countries to allow the application and use of Codex standards at the national level and in food control in general. However, the Commission expressed concern at the possibility of reduction in resources for the scientific expert committees that provide independent advice to the Commission and adopted a resolution requesting FAO/WHO to strengthen their support to these bodies.
6. The Commission adopted amendments to the Procedural Manual related to the relations between the Commission and International Non-Governmental Organizations; the rules for the establishment of ad hoc Intergovernmental Codex Task Forces and core functions of Codex Contact Points in member countries.

7. The Commission made further recommendations for the application of the principles of risk analysis in the development of Codex standards and adopted 31 new revised Codex standards, guidelines and related texts including Guidelines on the Production, Processing, Labelling and Marketing of Organically-produced Foods; Principles and Guidelines for the Conduct of Microbiological Risk Assessment; Guidelines for the Development of Equivalence Agreements regarding Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems. In addition the Commission amended 5 existing standards; approved conditions for the use in food of 46 food additives; adopted 358 specifications for the identity and purity of food additives; adopted 374 individual maximum residue limits for agricultural and veterinary chemicals; withdrew 27 standards and 252 maximum residue limits. All of the decisions of the Commission at the 23rd Session were made by consensus.

8. The Commission agreed that, subject to the availability of resources, beginning with the biennium 2000/2001, future sessions of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the Executive Committee and Regional Coordinating Committees as appropriate, would be held in Arabic, Chinese, English, French and Spanish.

9. I also would like to inform this Committee about relevant activities implemented by FAO in the area of technical cooperation in food safety. FAO continues to sponsor and conduct workshops, seminars and technical meetings on a national and regional basis on a range of timely and important topics relating to food safety and international trade. These topics include food control management and administration; requirements of newly applied international trading agreements; import/export food control measures; laboratory quality assurance and safety procedures; and risk analysis methods and procedures. In addition, more than 30 projects are under implementation on this field world-wide. A copy of a relevant document on this matter is available for the Members of this Committee.

10. In relation to the implementation of the Uruguay Round Agreements including the SPS Agreement, FAO initiated the implementation of the Uruguay Round Umbrella Training Programme aimed at enhancing national capacities on WTO matters. The first of these training programmes has recently been implemented in Latin America and training for other regions will start in September.

11. In continuing its endeavour to provide a sound scientific basis for sanitary measures, FAO recently organized a Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on Risk Assessment of Microbiological Hazards in Foods (15-19 March 1999) and an FAO Expert Consultation on the Trade Impact of *Listeria* in Fish products (17-20 May 1999). On 3-6 March 1999, FAO organized, in collaboration with WHO and UNEP, the Third FAO/WHO/UNEP Conference on Mycotoxins, in Tunis. This conference examined the problem of, mycotoxins in relation to food safety, and discussed world-wide regulations for, as well as prevention and decontamination of mycotoxins. Currently (5-7 July 1999) the Third International Food Data Conference – Back to Basics – is taking place in FAO headquarters in Rome. The aim of the conference is to discuss basic subjects, current issues and future directions in generating, compiling, disseminating and using food composition data.

12. Finally, I am pleased to announce that arrangements for the FAO/WHO/WTO Conference on International Food Trade beyond 2000, which will be held on 11-15 October 1999 in Melbourne, Australia, continues. One objective of this conference will be to enhance the capacity of developing countries both to enjoy the benefits they accrued on signing the Uruguay Round Agreements and to fulfil their commitments. The conference will address how food quality and safety issues affect trade, health and development at both domestic and international levels. The conference will also analyze current Codex, SPS and TBT procedures and review the prospects for further change.

13. Additional information and papers to be discussed are available for the Members of this Committee from FAO's web page.
