

**THE MELBOURNE RECOMMENDATIONS –
GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CONFERENCE**

Statement made by the Codex Alimentarius Commission
at the meeting of 10-11 November 1999

The FAO Conference on International Food Trade beyond 2000: Science-Based Decisions, Harmonization, Equivalence and Mutual Recognition, meeting in Melbourne, Australia from 11 to 15 October 1999, drew the attention of the member governments of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Health Organization and the World Trade Organization, to the following recommendations:

1. The Conference expressed its appreciation for the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and its fullest support to the current direction of the Commission's work. The Conference stressed in particular the importance of the work of the Commission in providing standards, guidelines and other recommendations on consumer health protection and the facilitation of trade and called upon member governments to strengthen their contributions and participation in its work.
2. Stressing the importance of consumer health protection in the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the Conference called upon WHO to give greater emphasis to its work and strengthen its involvement in relation to the Codex Alimentarius Commission. The Conference also called upon FAO and WHO to review their current relationship under the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme with a view to establishing a more equitable arrangement.
3. The Conference called upon countries to adhere to the Codex Code of Ethics for International Trade in Food in order to ensure that food products exported to developing countries met national or international requirements.
4. The Conference reaffirmed its commitment to the Statements of Principle Concerning the Role of Science in the Codex Decision-Making Process and the Extent to Which Other Factors are Taken into Account and to the Statements of Principle Relating to the Role of Food Safety Risk Assessment.
5. The Conference called upon all parties to recognize that precaution has been and should remain an essential element of risk analysis in the formulation of national and international standards, and agreed that the Codex Alimentarius Commission was the most appropriate forum to discuss this issue.
6. Governments should clearly acknowledge the role of consumers, producers and their representative bodies in the development of national and international food standards to improve transparency and engender commitment. Similarly, efforts should be made to establish national consultative structures for Codex Alimentarius that included the participation of all interested parties.

7. To ensure that adequate resources become available for implementing effective food control systems, there is an urgent need for developing countries to become aware of the economic and health benefits of such systems at the highest political and policy levels in the country. In implementing Codex work, FAO, WHO and funding agencies should give priority consideration to the special needs of developing countries, including infrastructure, resources and technical and legal capabilities, when considering and elaborating Codex texts.
 8. Countries should accept the challenge of strengthening the capacities and capabilities of their national food regulatory systems by devoting increased resources, improving information technology systems, and participating more actively in meetings of relevant technical committees and commissions dealing with food regulatory matters.
 9. Governments of member countries should take all necessary steps to apply Codex standards to all imported, exported and domestically produced and traded foods.
 10. FAO, WHO, government agencies, and industry should make greater efforts to learn and respond to consumers' legitimate concerns about food safety and quality, and to ensure that food-related communication is a two-way, respectful, interactive process.
 11. The Conference recommended that member governments should support relevant food safety research; enhance surveillance systems for, and reporting of, foodborne diseases; increase research coordination and cooperation so that risk analysis data will be more universally accepted; and contribute national data to international database systems. Competent research institutes from developing countries should be supported to contribute to this effort.
 12. Member governments, FAO and WHO should adopt policies wholly consistent with the need for independent and transparent risk assessment processes in particular in relation to the selection of the scientific experts, the working procedures and the tightening of the conflict of interest requirements. FAO and WHO should also provide adequate resources to the expert bodies for risk assessment to continue to ensure confidence and competence in expert evaluations.
 13. WHO and FAO should establish an international expert advisory body similar to JECFA and JMPR to provide microbiological risk assessment support to FAO, WHO and other bodies.
 14. The Conference supported efforts by FAO and WHO to explore strategies to collect information from all regions of the world about consumer requirements, perceptions, beliefs and motivations concerning food, nutrition and food safety so as to consider the role that food labelling and other means of communication can play in addressing these concerns.
 15. FAO, WHO, WTO and other concerned international organizations, in cooperation with funding agencies and other suitable donors, should increase their technical support to developing countries to strengthen their food quality and safety assurance and control systems in order to allow them to participate actively in international food trade beyond the year 2000.
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