

INFORMATION ON ACTIVITIES OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Submission by the Codex Alimentarius Commission

The following communication, dated 25 February 2005, is being circulated at the request of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

I. CODEX SESSIONS SINCE THE LAST MEETING OF THE SPS COMMITTEE (27-28 OCTOBER 2004)

- The 8th Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for North America and South West Pacific (Apia, Samoa, 19-22 October 2004).
- The 15th Session of the Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods (Washington DC, United States, 26-29 October 2004)
- The 26th Session of the Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (Bonn, Germany, 1-5 November 2004)
- The 21st Session of the Codex Committee on General Principles (8-12 November, Paris, France)
- The 14th Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (29 November-3 December 2004, Buenos Aires, Argentina)
- The 13th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (6-10 December 2004, Melbourne, Australia)
- The 16th Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Africa (25-28 January 2005, Rome, Italy)
- The 55th Session of the Executive Committee (9-11 February 2005, Rome)
- The 11th Session of the Codex Committee on Meat Hygiene (14-17 February 2005, Christchurch, New Zealand)
- The 19th Session of the Codex Committee on Fats and Oils (21-25 February 2005, London, United Kingdom)
- The 27th Session of the Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products (28 February-4 March 2005, Cape Town, South Africa)

1. In particular, the SPS Committee may wish to draw its attention to the following meetings.
2. The 15th Session of the **Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods** continued its work on the elaboration of maximum residue limits (MRLs), sending five to the Commission for adoption. It recommended the adoption of the Code of Practice to Minimize and Contain Antimicrobial Resistance by the 28th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.
3. The 13th Session of the **Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems** began work on the *Proposed Draft Appendices to the Guidelines on the Judgement of Equivalence of Sanitary Measures associated with Food Inspection and Certification* (CAC/GL 53-2003) and decided to focus on the following three objectives as a first priority: (1) Documentation for evaluation of submissions of requests for equivalence determinations; (2) Determining an "objective basis of comparison"; and (3) More details on the process of judging equivalence. It was agreed that after these objectives were met then attention would focus on: (1) Assessing which measures are to be the subject of an equivalence determination; (2) Terms for on-site visits by importing country authorities undertaking a determination of equivalence; and (3) Information relating to the need for technical assistance and cooperation between the importing countries to exporting countries.
4. The Committee recommended the 28th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission adopt the Principles for Electronic Certification and to attach them as an Appendix to the *Codex Guidelines for Generic Official Certification Formats and the Production and Issuance of Certificates*.
5. In addition, the Committee continued work on the proposed draft *Guidelines for Risk-Based Inspection of Imported Foods* and agreed on the need to develop principles for the application of traceability/product tracing in the context of food import and export inspection and certification systems. The Committee requested the 28th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission to initiate new work on this subject.
6. The Committee also agreed to recommend to the 28th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission to add a footnote to paragraph 35 of the *Codex Guidelines for Food Import Control Systems* to refer to the WTO Decision WT/MIN (01)/17, which, *inter alia*, specified that "a reasonable interval . . . shall be understood to mean normally a period of *not less than six months*" subject to a number of provisions.
7. The 11th Session of the **Codex Committee on Meat Hygiene** agreed to forward the draft *Code of Hygienic Practice for Meat* to the 28th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission for final adoption and to request the Commission to revoke relevant Codex Codes of Practice that were superseded by the draft Code.

II. FORTHCOMING CODEX MEETINGS

- The 3rd Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Near East (7-10 March 2005, Amman, Jordan)
- The 37th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (14-19 March 2005, Buenos Aires, Argentina)
- The 26th Session of the Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling (4-8 April 2005, Budapest, Hungary)
- The 22nd Session of the Codex Committee on General Principles (11-15 April 2005, Paris, France)

- The 37th Session of the Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues (18-23 April 2005, The Hague, Netherlands)
 - The 37th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants (25-29 April 2005, The Hague, Netherlands)
 - The 33rd Session of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (9-13 May 2005, Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia)
 - The 12th Session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (16-20 May 2005, Mexico City, Mexico)
 - The 56th Session of the Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (30 June – 2 July 2005, Rome, Italy)
 - The 28th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (4-9 July 2005, Rome, Italy)
8. In particular, the SPS Committee may wish to draw its attention to the following meetings.
9. The 37th Session of the **Codex Committee on Food Hygiene** will continue with the development of several documents, including: the *Proposed Draft Revision of the Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Foods for Infants and Children*, the *Proposed Draft Guidelines on the Application of General Principles of Food Hygiene to the [Management] of Listeria monocytogenes in Foods*, the *Proposed Draft Guidelines for the Validation of Food Hygiene Control Measures*, and the *Proposed Draft Revision of the Code of Hygienic Practice for Egg Products*.
10. The 26th Session of the **Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling** will continue work on: the Criteria for Evaluating Acceptable Methods of Analysis, including the *Draft Guidelines for Evaluating Acceptable Methods of Analysis* and *Proposed Draft Guidelines for Settling Disputes over Analytical (Test) Results*; Review of the *Analytical Terminology for Codex Use* in the Procedural Manual; The Use of Analytical Results: Sampling Plans, Relationship between the Analytical Results, the Measurement of Uncertainty, Recovery Factors and Provisions in Codex Standards (for inclusion in the Codex Procedural Manual); the Criteria for the Methods for the Detection and Identification of Foods Derived from Biotechnology; and Methods of Analysis for the Determination of Dioxins and PCBs.
11. The 22nd Session of the **Codex Committee on General Principles** in addition to procedural matters, will discuss the following: the *Proposed Draft Working Principles for Risk Analysis for Food Safety* and the *Proposed Draft Revised Code of Ethics for International Trade in Foods*.
12. The 37th Session of the **Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues** will continue to elaborate maximum residue limits for pesticides (MRLs) and extraneous maximum residue limits (EMRLs) in or on foods and feeds moving in international trade and revise or recommend to revoke, if appropriate, existing MRLs/EMRLs based on its previous discussions and recommendations made by the Joint FAO/WHO Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR). The Committee will also discuss the risk analysis policies in the elaboration of Codex standards as it relates to the establishment of MRLs/EMRLs. The Committee will also consider: the Discussion Paper on Probabilistic Modelling – 'MRLs: Health or Trade Limits?'; the Pilot Project for the Examination of National MRLs as Interim Codex MRLs for Safer Replacement Pesticides; Establishment of MRLs for Processed or Ready-to-Eat Foods; revision of the Codex Classification of Foods and Animal Feeds and Matters Related to Methods of Analysis for Pesticide Residues.
13. The 37th Session of the **Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants** will take into account the recommendations of the 63rd and 64th Meetings of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) in considering the establishment of Maximum Limits for additives and contaminants. The Committee will primarily be involved in the continued elaboration of

the Codex General Standard for Food Additives. It will also examine other issues related to the General Standard, including the endorsement of food additive provisions arising from other Codex Committees. The Committee will also consider specific issues related to food additives, such as: the harmonization of the terms used by Codex and JECFA, carrier substances for food additives, the inventory list of processing aids, and flavouring agents.

14. With regard to contaminants, the Committee will be involved in the continued elaboration of the Codex General Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Foods. The Committee will discuss proposals for the establishment of maximum levels for lead, cadmium and tin, as well as proposed draft *Codes of Practice for the Prevention and Reduction of Inorganic Tin Contamination in Canned Foods* and *Source Directed Measures to Reduce Dioxin and Dioxin-like PCB Contamination of Foods*. Proposed maximum levels and sampling plans for aflatoxin in unprocessed and processed almonds, hazelnuts and pistachios and the *Code of Practice for the Prevention and Reduction of Aflatoxin Contamination in Tree Nuts* will be discussed. In addition, the Committee will consider the draft revision of the *Guideline Levels for Radionuclides in Foods Following Accidental Nuclear Contamination*.

III. REVIEW OF CODEX COMMITTEE STRUCTURE AND MANDATES OF CODEX COMMITTEES AND TASK FORCES

15. As a follow up to the Joint FAO/WHO Evaluation of the Codex Alimentarius and Other FAO and WHO Work on Food Standards, conducted in 2002, and the ongoing implementation of its recommendations by Codex, a team of consultants was recruited to conduct a review of the Codex Committee structure and the mandates of Codex Committees and Task Forces, with a view to formulating recommendations for consideration by the Commission. To assist the work of the consultants, a questionnaire had been sent to the chairpersons of Codex Committees and Task Forces and the host governments. The consultants prepared a Preliminary Report based on the responses to the questionnaire and the information provided by the officers of the Codex Secretariat and it was presented to the 55th Session of the Executive Committee (February 2005) along with a number of proposals and recommendations. The Executive Committee provided their recommendations on ways to progress with the review. A Final Report by the consultants will be circulated for government comments and presented to the 56th Session of the Executive Committee, followed by discussion at the 28th Codex Alimentarius Commission (July 2005).

IV. MEMBERSHIP OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

16. The membership currently comprises 171 Member Nations and one Member Organization.
