

**REPORT OF THE UNITED STATES DELEGATE ON THE 27<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE  
CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD IMPORT AND EXPORT  
INSPECTION AND CERTIFICATION SYSTEMS (CCFICS27)**

**16-20 September 2024 Cairns, Queensland, Australia**

**BACKGROUND SUMMARY**

The 27<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS27) met September 16-20, 2024, in Cairns, Queensland, Australia. The meeting was held in a hybrid format. The meeting was hosted by Australia and chaired by Mr. Tom Black of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, and was attended by 70 Member Countries, one Member Organization (the European Union), and 11 Observer organizations. The United States was represented by the U.S. Delegate, Dr. Michelle Catlin from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), and the U.S. Alternate Delegate, Ms. Jennifer Thomas from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Other members of the U.S. delegation included representatives from the U.S. Codex Office, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, FSIS, the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, and the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service.

The meeting was opened by Mr. Gavin Singleton from the Yirrganydji Traditional Custodians, who welcomed delegates to the country. Additional welcome was provided by the Honorable Julie Collins, Government Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Australia, who also highlighted the important role of CCFICS in effectively responding to the global challenges in food production and food trade that will support consumer confidence in the food supply and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Mr. Adam Fennessy, the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Australia; Ms. Catherine Bessy, Senior Food Safety Officer, Food Systems and Food Safety Division of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); Dr. Akio Hasegawa, Technical Officer of the World Health Organization (WHO); Mr. Raj Rajasekar, Vice-Chairperson of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC); and Ms. Sarah Cahill, Codex Secretary, also addressed the Committee. The meeting was also addressed by Ms. Sharon Winsor, Weilwan woman and founder of Indigiearth, who spoke about the important role of indigenous foods and indigenous culture as part of agrifood systems.

In addition to the business of the Committee, two side events were held on matters related to CCFICS work. The first event was on optimizing regulation of food through information sharing and included presentations from the perspectives of regulators and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). The second side event was on digitalization and its practical application by regulators and industry, including the use of artificial intelligence, with presentations by representatives from government and industry.

The United States was successful in achieving most of its major goals for the session, and the Committee agreed to:

- Forward one major text—guidelines on the prevention and control of food fraud—for adoption at Step 5 by the 47<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC47, scheduled for November 2024).
- Return two major texts—one on the revision and updating the principles of traceability/product tracing as a tool within a food inspection and certification system and one on consolidated Codex guidelines related to equivalence—back to Step 2 for further consideration at CCFICS28.
- Recommend CAC47 approval of four new work proposals: i) guidance on appeals mechanisms in the context of rejection of imported food; ii) guidance on the standardization of representation of sanitary measures; iii) revising the *Principles and guidelines for the exchange of information between importing and exporting countries to support the trade in food (CXG 89-2016)* to develop principles and guidelines to harmonize the use, development and implementation of establishment listings; and iv) the development of high-level guiding principles for the digitalization of National Food Control Systems (NFCSS).

## HIGHLIGHTS

The 27<sup>th</sup> Session of CCFICS agreed to:

- Send the Draft Guidelines on the Prevention and Control of Food Fraud to CAC47 for adoption at Step 5.
- Return the Draft Consolidated Codex Guidelines Related to Equivalence to Step 2.
- Return the draft revision of Principles for Traceability/Product Tracing as a Tool Within a Food Inspection and Certification System to Step 2.
- Forward four new work proposals — on appeals mechanisms; standardization of representation of sanitary requirements; establishment listings; and principles of digitalization of NFCSS — to CAC47 for approval.

A more detailed summary of the 27<sup>th</sup> Session of CCFICS is given below. The official report of CCFICS27 is posted on the [Codex website](#).

## NEXT SESSION OF CCFICS

The 28<sup>th</sup> Session of CCFICS (CCFICS28) is tentatively scheduled for October 2026.

## MEETING SUMMARY

### PROPOSED DRAFT CONSOLIDATED CODEX GUIDELINES RELATED TO EQUIVALENCE

To Be Presented for Adoption at Next CAC? No  
Have the United States' Objectives Been Met? Yes  
Is it anticipated that this item will or should be raised at the CAC? No

#### **United States Objective**

The United States objective was to continue to support the work on consolidated Codex Guidance on equivalence, while ensuring that: i) the consolidated document provides a clear distinction between measure-by-measure equivalence and systems equivalence; ii) agreements made on the language in the NFCS equivalence document are reflected in the consolidated equivalence text, where appropriate; and iii) where different standards exist, such as between Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) measures, those distinctions are clear in the consolidated text.

#### **Outcome/Conclusion**

In light of extensive discussions and comments made and the need to resolve outstanding issues, including the United States' three main objectives cited above, the Committee agreed to return the proposed draft consolidated guidelines related to equivalence at Step 2, for redrafting and circulation for comments at Step 3.

#### **Other Comments**

The United States is a co-chair of this electronic workgroup (EWG), which is chaired by New Zealand; Kenya is also a co-chair. On Sunday prior to the plenary, a physical working group (PWG) meeting was held, at which participants provided general comments on the draft and identified concepts or language from the Codex guidance that are being consolidated in this new guidance. There was broad support for incorporating the language from the *Guidelines on Recognition and Maintenance of Equivalence of National Food Control Systems (NFCS)* (CXG 101-2023) as a default wherever possible. The United States provided interventions to highlight the need to differentiate between sanitary and technical measures. Other members, including Canada, supported the U.S. interventions. Canada intervened and recommended specific paragraphs from the three documents being consolidated for inclusion in the draft guidance, and the need for a side-by-side comparison of the documents being consolidated and the current draft, which was supported by other members including Norway, Australia, Chile and the United States. There was also some discussion around the definitions and principles, including carrying forward the principle around assessment and the principle around equivalence not having to be reciprocal from *Guidelines for the Development of Equivalence Agreements Regarding Food Imports and Export Inspection and Certification Systems* (CXG 34-1999). The need for continued discussion during plenary was noted. The United States made an intervention emphasizing the need to use full language around the level of protection throughout the document for clarity. The U.S. position was supported by the European Union,

Honduras, Morocco and Mexico. The Chair of the EWG prepared a CRD summarizing the discussions of the PWG.

At plenary, there was extensive discussion of the guidelines. The United States made interventions emphasizing the need to be specific when discussing sanitary requirements vs. technical regulations, conformity assessment procedures, and standards, noting the different level of commitment for these different aspects. The United States also noted that previous equivalence texts had not specifically focused on equivalence of technical regulations. The United States also suggested that language indicating that not all technical regulations are amenable to equivalence be added. The comments about the WTO's Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreements were consistent with an intervention by Uganda and supported by the United Kingdom. There were continued concerns from Canada about the source of the various portions of the text and whether all necessary concepts from the documents being consolidated had been captured. The United States, along with other members, were supportive of Canada's interventions.

Although agreement was reached on some broad concepts and issues, the Committee agreed to return the document to Step 2 for further discussion, given that there were a number of questions, particularly about the source of some text and the comprehensiveness of the text relative to those being consolidated.

Although the United States had been an EWG Co-chair, the United States decided not to continue in that role given its leadership in the other two ongoing EWGs for CCFICS. Moving forward, New Zealand and Kenya will continue as the EWG Chair and Co-chair, respectively.

**PROPOSED DRAFT GUIDELINES ON THE  
PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF FOOD FRAUD**

To Be Presented for Adoption at Next CAC? Yes, at Step 5  
Have the United States' Objectives Been Met? Yes  
Is it anticipated that this item will or should be raised at the CAC? Yes

**United States Objective**

The U.S. objective was to continue to progress the document, while ensuring that text excluding geographical indications (GIs) and intellectual property (IP) from the scope of the guidance was retained. The United States chairs this work, with China, the European Union (EU), Iran, and the United Kingdom (UK) as co-chairs.

**Outcome/Conclusion**

The Committee agreed to forward this document to CAC47 for adoption at Step 5.

**Other Comments**

During opening statements, the United States, in its role as chair of the EWG, noted that the comments received on the draft document (CX/FICS 24/27/5) reflected broad support for the document, with positive feedback on its overall progress. There was general agreement on the importance of these guidelines, with other members, including Panama, Jamaica, Brazil and Jordan expressing their general support of the work.

The document was reviewed paragraph by paragraph, with a focus on the questions that were embedded in the Circular Letter (CL 2024/71-FICS). The United States made an intervention suggesting that the language about “authenticity, integrity, and suitability” be deleted from paragraph 3. That proposal was supported by Canada, Brazil, and Kenya, but not by the European Union. At the CCFICS chair’s recommendation that language was simplified, and the suggested deletion was made.

The Committee discussed the questions highlighted in the text and came to agreement on most aspects.

There was extensive discussion over the definitions and the principles. During a break, the United States and the European Union met to develop two streamlined principles. The committee agreed on those two simple principles which do not mention food authenticity or food integrity. The definitions, however, were not finalized and will continue to be considered by the EWG during the intersessional period. With respect to the definitions, Canada made an intervention proposing to delete the definitions of food authenticity and food integrity, and the United States made an intervention in strong support of Canada’s intervention. The European Union, however, intervened stating they should be retained. The chair noted the divergent views and suggested, and the committee agreed, to retain those definitions in brackets for further discussion by the EWG.

Whether to retain paragraph 6.bis, which includes discussion of the importance of an anti-food fraud culture, was also discussed. The United States and several other members, including Kenya, Morocco, India, Côte d'Ivoire, Iran, and Mexico, provided interventions in support of retaining the paragraph, while other members, including Chile, Australia, Thailand, France, and Uruguay, were not in favor of retaining the paragraph. Canada suggested simplifying the language and not including the novel term “anti-food fraud culture.” Based on the discussion, the CCFICS chair proposed the simplified language, and the committee agreed.

Extensive discussion also occurred around the scope section of the guidelines; specifically, whether the issue of intellectual property (IP) - and geographical indications (GIs) - should be explicitly excluded from the scope section of the guidelines. Brazil, with the support from Argentina, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, and Uruguay, prepared CRD15, which proposed alternate language for the scope. The United States emphasized the importance of clarifying that issues of intellectual property, including geographical indications, are not within the scope of the guidelines, and given the confusion around this topic proposed that the following simple language be included in the scope: “Issues related to intellectual property, such as geographical indications, are not included in this document.” The European Union expressed concern about singling out geographical indications, suggesting that it would be more appropriate to exclude intellectual property more broadly from the scope, and suggested deleting “such as geographical indications” from the U.S.-proposed language. Australia, Bhutan, Libya, United Kingdom, Jordan, Morocco, and the International Dairy Federation expressed support for either the language from the United States or the modified version suggested by the European Union. Although the United States expressed preference for a direct reference to geographical indications, it agreed to compromise by supporting the broader exclusion of intellectual property from the guidelines but requested that the meeting report reflect the fact that intellectual property includes geographical indications. Following the constructive discussion, and in the spirit of compromise, CCFICS27 agreed to i) delete the footnote 3; ii) add at the end of paragraph 3 the phrase “Issues related to intellectual property are not included in this document”; and iii) exclude mentioning GIs as they are a type of IP. However, the report did include the language noting explicitly that GIs are a type of IP.

Discussion of whether or not to include animal feed and limiting its inclusion to “that affects human food safety” was not resolved by the Committee, and the Chair requested that the text be bracketed and that the forthcoming EWG continue to discuss it. With respect to paragraph 7.bis, after discussion the committee agreed with the chair’s proposal to retain 7.bis but have the EWG simplify the language.

CCFICS27 made significant progress in building consensus on Sections 1, 2, 4, and 5 and resolved substantial issues and agreed to recommend that the document progress to Step 5. The committee also established a new EWG to consider comments received at Step 6, and all other outstanding issues, including comments made at CCFICS27 on Sections 3, 6, 7 and 8. The EWG will be chaired by the United States, and co-chaired by China, EU, Iran, Panama, and UK, working in English and Spanish.

**PROPOSED DRAFT REVISION AND UPDATING OF THE  
PRINCIPLES FOR TRACEABILITY/PRODUCT TRACING AS A TOOL  
WITHIN A FOOD INSPECTION AND CERTIFICATION SYSTEM (CXG 60-2006)**

To Be Presented for Adoption at Next CAC? No  
Have the United States' Objectives Been Met? Partially  
Is it anticipated that this item will or should be raised at the CAC? No

**United States Objective**

The United States agrees that it is timely to update the existing principles document to include practical guidance for members in developing traceability/product tracing as part of their NFCS, and that it is important to consider the level of risk of the product when considering establishing traceability requirements. The United States hoped to advance the guidelines to at least Step 5. The United States chairs this EWG, with Australia, Ecuador, Honduras, and the United Kingdom as co-chairs.

**Outcome/Conclusion**

The draft guidelines were returned to Step 2.

**Other Comments**

There was general support for the work done by the EWG to update the *Principles for Traceability / Product Tracing as a Tool Within a Food Inspection and Certification System* (CXG 60-2006), and significant interest and engagement in its revision. A number of members, including Canada, Thailand, Bhutan, and New Zealand, weighed in supporting the work but noting that there was still work to be completed.

Canada made an intervention pointing out that traceability is a tool and in-and-of itself does not make food safe, and consequently suggested that the concept of it being a tool be added to the title of the guidelines. With respect to the question of whether to use the full phrase of "traceability/product tracing" or just 'traceability' in the document, Canada suggested and the EWG co-chairs, as well as the European Union, agreed to use the phrase "traceability." Morocco proposed and there was support from New Zealand, Kenya and Thailand, to move some of the language from the preamble to the scope of the document. There were also extensive comments on the principles in the document.

The CCFICS chair noted that there was a great amount of interest in the document and noted that, on the basis of the discussions, the document was not ready to progress. CCFICS27 agreed to return the revision of the draft principles on traceability/product tracing as a tool within a NFCS to Step 2 for redrafting, using the edited text from CCFICS27 as a basis, and for circulation at Step 3 for comments. It established an EWG, open to all Members and Observers, chaired by the United States and co-chaired by Australia, Ecuador, Honduras, and the United Kingdom, working in English and Spanish, to continue the revision of the guidelines, taking into account the discussions and comments made during CCFICS27.

**DISCUSSION PAPER ON GUIDANCE ON APPEALS MECHANISM  
IN THE CONTEXT OF REJECTION OF IMPORTED FOOD**

To Be Presented for Adoption at Next CAC? Yes, for approval as new work  
Have the United States' Objectives Been Met? Yes  
Is it anticipated that this item will or should be raised at the CAC? Yes

**United States Objective**

The United States does not specifically oppose this proposal but is cautious of CCFICS taking on too much new work if existing work does not progress. The United States is also cognizant of the need to ensure that any guidance on appeals does not place an undue burden on importing countries from spurious appeals.

**Outcome/Conclusion**

There was general support for the proposal and CCFICS27 agreed to forward the new work proposal on developing guidance on appeals mechanism in the context of rejection of imported food to CAC47 for approval and to establish an EWG, working in English, chaired by India and co-chaired by Nigeria, Australia, Chile, and Kenya, subject to approval of new work by CAC.

**Other Comments**

India introduced the item proposing new work on developing guidance on appeals mechanism in the context of rejection of imported food, highlighting the need for a uniform appeal mechanism to ensure fair practices in food trade (CX/FICS 24/27/7). The committee recommended that the work be an annex to either the *Guidelines for the Exchange of Information between Countries on Rejections of Imported Foods* (CXG 25-1997) or *Guidelines for Food Import Control Systems* (CXG 47-2003).

Members noted that: i) there are many appeals related to laboratory and sampling protocols that may need to be taken into account; ii) the work should also focus on preventive actions and mechanisms for dealing with information from Competent Authorities; and iii) the scope of the new work proposal should include the exporting country as one of the stakeholders that may file an appeal against the rejection.



## DISCUSSION PAPER ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF SANITARY REQUIREMENTS

To Be Presented for Adoption at Next CAC? Yes, for approval as new work

Have the United States' Objectives Been Met? Yes

Is it anticipated that this item will or should be raised at the CAC? Yes

### **United States Objective**

The United States recognizes the complexity of certificates and the interest in standardization to allow for more streamlined utilization of electronic certificates. The United States does not specifically oppose this proposal but is cautious of CCFICS taking on too much new work if existing work does not progress. It also is cognizant that the scope of this proposal, depending on how it develops, includes highly technical elements that may evolve beyond CCFICS' expertise.

### **Outcome/Conclusion**

CCFICS27 agreed to forward the new work proposal to CAC47 for approval as new work and to establish an EWG working in English, chaired by Brazil and co-chaired by Australia, EU, India, Kenya, Spain, and Uganda.

### **Other Comments**

Brazil introduced the new work proposal (CX/FICS 24/27/8), which was based on the identification of issues with electronic certification, including non-unique requirements, repetitive information, and lack of consistency and transparency in communication. The proposal aims to develop guidance to continue with the simplification and the use of electronic certification which would, in turn, expedite clearance processes while maintaining the flexibility for countries to define specific requirements. The United States made an intervention suggesting that the title be modified to reflect that it is the "representation of sanitary requirements" that are being standardized, not the sanitary requirements themselves or a harmonized list of attestations.

## DISCUSSION PAPER AND NEW WORK PROPOSAL ON ESTABLISHMENT LISTINGS

To Be Presented for Adoption at Next CAC? Yes, for approval as new work

Have the United States' Objectives Been Met? Yes

Is it anticipated that this item will or should be raised at the CAC? Yes

### United States Objective

The United States recognizes the potential of this new work proposal to help limit the extent of unnecessary information on individual establishments that some importing countries require, but is also aware of the potential for excessive information requests to become enshrined in Codex as a result of this proposed document. The United States does not specifically oppose this proposal but is cautious of CCFICS taking on too much new work if existing work does not progress.

### Outcome/Conclusion

CCFICS27 agreed to forward the proposal for new work on revising the *Principles and guidelines for the exchange of information between importing and exporting countries to support the trade in food* (CXG 89-2016) to CAC47 for approval. It established an EWG, working in English, chaired by Norway and co-chaired by Australia, India, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Spain, subject to approval of the new work by CAC47.

### Other Comments

Norway introduced the discussion paper and new work proposal (CX/FICS 24/27/9 Add. 1) on revising the *Principles and guidelines for the exchange of information between importing and exporting countries to support the trade in food* (CXG 89-2016) to develop principles and guidelines to harmonize the use (the drivers), development (content and format) and implementation (mechanisms including digitalization) of establishment listings, which could be annexed to CXG 89-2016.

Members expressed support for the new work proposal as they considered that it addressed a need for NFCs and that the work was timely. They supported the work to be an annex to CXG 89-2016 as this would avoid opening up the existing guidelines for a more extensive review. It was also proposed that aspects such as prelisting, list of products and establishments, and necessity of lists could be taken into account. Norway proposed that, should the new work proposal be approved, an intersessional PWG could be hosted by Norway.

**DISCUSSION PAPER AND NEW WORK PROPOSALS ON  
DIGITALIZATION OF NATIONAL FOOD CONTROL SYSTEMS**

To Be Presented for Adoption at Next CAC? Yes, for approval as new work  
Have the United States' Objectives Been Met? Yes  
Is it anticipated that this item will or should be raised at the CAC? Yes

**United States Objective**

The United States does not specifically oppose this proposal but is cautious of CCFICS taking on too much new work if existing work does not progress. If this proposal progresses, the United States will need to work to ensure that any guidance remains at a high level and is not overly prescriptive but is still useful in facilitating countries' digitalization efforts.

**Outcome/Conclusion**

Australia introduced the discussion paper and new work proposal on digitalization of national food control systems (CX/FICS 24/27/9 Add.2). CCFICS27 agreed to forward the project document on the development of high-level guiding principles for the digitalization of NFCSs to CAC47 for approval as new work, and to establish an EWG working in English, chaired by Australia and co-chaired by Canada, Jamaica, the Netherlands, and the UK, subject to approval of new work by CAC.

**Other Comments**

During plenary, Members recognized the importance of developing principles to assist members as they consider implementing digitalization within their NFCS. They generally expressed support for this project and the committee agreed to forward it for approval as new work.