



## U.S. Delegate's Report, 27th Session, Codex Committee on General Principles

*April 2-6, 2012  
Paris, France*

The 27th Session of the [Codex Committee on General Principles](#) (CCGP), focused on several policy and procedural areas including:

- Agreed to carry out, during the 2013 Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC), a facilitated discussion on the issue of standards held at Step 8. The United States and the European Community will serve as co-chairs.
- Agreed to develop a Discussion Paper associated with the economic impact of Codex standards as a means to determine whether further guidance on this area is needed in association with the Codex standards development process.
- Agreed to establish a working group to make recommendations on how Codex and OIE could better reference each other's work.
- Agreed to establish a working group led by the United States to develop the concept of "information papers" for use by Codex that would be outside of the formal Step procedure.

The CCGP meeting was attended by 170 Delegates representing 64 member countries, one member organization (EU), and 12 international non-governmental organizations. The United States was represented by the U.S. Delegate, Ms. Karen Stuck, U.S. Manager for Codex, six (6) government advisors, and two (2) non-government advisors.

The full report of the 27th Session of CCGP can be found in REPT 12/GP on the Codex website, [www.codexalimentarius.org](http://www.codexalimentarius.org).

The following summarizes the results of the Session.

### **Standards Held at Step 8**

At the last meeting of CCGP in 2010, a working group was established to consider the matter of standards held at Step 8 and to provide recommendations to resolve the problem. Under the leadership of Canada and The Netherlands, the working group concluded that the root causes of the Commission's inability to reach consensus on the two standards currently held at Step 8 (rBST and Ractopamine) are non-science factors and concerns about World Trade Organization implications.

The working group provided seven recommendations for consideration.

The recommendation that was subject of most of the discussion was to hold a facilitated discussion on standards held at Step 8 to allow for an open discussion on the issues associated with the problem. Mixed views were expressed on this recommendation, but the Committee ultimately agreed to hold such a discussion during the 2013 session of the CAC, with the following terms of reference: to "identify and consider the root causes for holding standards at Step 8. The purpose of the discussion is to enhance awareness and understanding of these issues amongst members." A summary report of the discussion will be prepared, but there will be no recommendations forwarded. The United States and the European Union agreed to serve as co-hosts for the discussion, and the three Codex Vice-Chairpersons will serve as facilitators.

In discussion of other recommendations, the Committee agreed that no new Codex procedures or guidelines on reaching consensus were needed but did agree that additional training on this area for Codex Committee Chairpersons and Delegates to Codex Committees would be helpful. The Committee was of mixed views as to the usefulness of "concern forms," which the Committee on Pesticide Residues uses to identify technical issues and problems that require attention before advancing a pesticide residue Maximum Residue Limit. CCGP agreed to forward the concept to the various scientific horizontal Codex committees (CCFH, CCCF, CCRVDF, CCNFSDU, CCFICS) requesting their input on the usefulness of "concern" forms with respect to their committee's work. CCGP will reconsider this issue at its next Session.

There was no support for a recommendation to require voting on a standard held at Step 8 for a specified number of years.

### **Economic Impact Statements Relating to Codex Standards**



Arising from the review of CCGP's Terms of Reference (TORs) was the request to consider whether a mechanism was needed for examining economic impact statements with respect to Codex standards that were under development. Mixed views were expressed as to the need for a mechanism, with some delegations supporting the need for a mechanism and others (including the United States) observing that reference to considering economic impact occurred in numerous places in the Codex Procedural Manual in relation to standards development, that these references provide sufficient guidance, and that no additional guidance is required. After significant discussion, the Committee agreed to a proposal from Australia that a discussion paper be prepared on how Codex committees can consider balancing economic impact of measures with food safety issues and other matters. Australia, with the assistance of Malaysia, will prepare the paper for consideration by the next session of CCGP.

### **Joint Codex/OIE Standards**

CCGP had previously considered the issue of joint standards between Codex and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), but had rejected such an approach given the difference in policies and procedures of the two organizations. However, the two organizations have cooperated closely on several standards (e.g., guidelines for *Salmonella* control in poultry meat, food safety assessment of genetically modified animals, control of parasites in certain meat products, traceability). The Representative from OIE withdrew an earlier proposal for joint standards, but proposed an alternative approach involving some form of mutual recognition or cross-referencing of standards between the two organizations. While noting the comments of the FAO legal counsel regarding the legal and administrative ramifications of mutual recognition, the Committee indicated no objection to pursuing some type of collaboration. An electronic working group, chaired by Canada, will develop guidance to better take into account relevant work that has been or is in the process of being undertaken with the aim of identifying a means to consistently reference each other's work.

### **Definition of "Hazard"**

At its last session, the Committee was requested by an observer organization to consider whether the Codex definition of "hazard" should be revised to include "effect" as related to nutrient risk assessment. The matter was referred to the scientific horizontal Codex committees, all of whom indicated that there was no need to modify the definition. CCGP agreed with this conclusion.

### **Terms of Reference of CCGP**

The Committee re-considered proposed revisions to its Terms of Reference (TORs) initially brought forward at its last (2010) session, and there continued to be mixed views as to whether a mechanism for examining out economic impact assessments should be included. Many countries wished to include some type of reference to this provision while others (including the U.S.), noted that reference to economic impact was an activity, should not be included into a committee's TORs. No consensus was reached, and it was agreed to postpone discussion on the subject until the discussion paper to be developed by Australia and Malaysia on economic impact (see above) could be considered.

### **Other Business and Future Work**

Based on a paper tabled by Canada, the Committee agreed that Canada would prepare a Discussion Paper that would consider the appropriate roles of the Codex Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons at Codex Committee meetings (other than CCEXEC and the CAC). As engagement of the Chair and Vice-Chairs in Committee work has increased over the past several years, it was suggested that it would be helpful to clarify their roles. It was also noted that the term "bureau" had developed to describe the Chair and Vice-Chairs as an operating entity, and that it would be helpful to clarify this as well. The Discussion Paper will be considered by the Committee at its next session.

### **Use of "Information Papers"**

The Codex Committee on Contaminants (CCCC), at its 2012 Session, suggested that in some instances there was a need for "information papers" to be prepared by Codex that would be developed outside of the Codex Step Procedure and which would not be included either in the Codex Alimentarius or the Codex Procedure Manual. The CCCC referral was in relation to the "Guidelines for Risk Management Options in Light of Different Risk Assessment Options." There was general agreement by CCGP that such an information paper could be helpful to governments and agreed to establish an electronic working group led by the United States to develop a Discussion Paper on ways to make such documents more widely available (e.g., placement on the Codex website) and to develop criteria for selecting such documents.

### **Cooperation Between General Subject and Commodity Committees**



The Delegation of Norway noted that there was a need for enhancing cross-committee cooperation in certain instances, citing as an example the need for such cooperation between the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene and the Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products on the recently adopted guidelines for the control of viruses in foods. The Committee generally agreed that improved cross-committee communication would be helpful and requested Norway to prepare a Discussion Paper for consideration by the Committee at its next session.

**Date and Place of the Next Session**

The 28th Session of the Committee was tentatively set for 2014 in Paris, unless the Codex Commission determines that a 2013 session will be necessary.