



Delegate's Report of the 65th Session of the Codex Executive Committee and 34th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission

June 28-July 1, 2011 (Codex Executive Committee)

**July 4-9, 2011
Geneva, Switzerland (CAC)**

Codex Commission Meeting

The [Codex Alimentarius Commission \(CAC\)](#) meeting was attended by 145 member countries, 9 international governmental organizations, and 28 international non-governmental organizations. The United States delegation was led by U.S. Department of Agriculture Deputy Under Secretaries Brian Ronholm and Darci Vetter.

Although the Commission adopted an array of important standards and guidance, the United States was disappointed in the failure to adopt a maximum residue limit for the veterinary drug ractopamine, which has been before the CAC since 2009. For the first time, the CAC voted on the matter, although the decision to retain the standard at Step 8 occurred on a procedural vote and not on a vote to adopt the MRL. Debate on the MRL began mid-morning on Tuesday July 5, and concluded mid-morning on Wednesday with a 59-68 vote against conducting a vote on adoption of the MRL. Had that vote been favorable, the CAC would have next voted on adoption of the MRLs. Previously, the delegates had voted 63-54 in favor of conducting the votes by secret ballot. The CAC action means that the MRL remains at Step 8 and can be taken up in future CAC meetings. During the lengthy debate on the issue, support for adoption of the MRLs was voiced by much of North America, South America, Africa, and the Southwest Pacific, as well as a number of Asian countries. Opposition was primarily from Europe and China.

Elections:

Mr. Sanjay Dave of India is the newly elected chair of the Codex Commission; he had no opposition. Newly elected vice chairs are: Dr. Samuel Godefroy of Canada, Mrs. Awilo Ochieng Pernet of Switzerland, and Professor Samuel Sefa-Dedeh of Ghana. The vice chair election took two ballots to eliminate candidates from Argentina and Indonesia.

The United States was re-elected to serve on the [Codex Executive Committee \(CCExec\)](#) as the representative of North America.

Decisions on Standards



Over 40 standards, codes of practice, and related texts were adopted by the Commission including:

- Guidelines for Risk Analysis of Foodborne Antimicrobial Resistance
- Guideline for the Control of *Campylobacter* and *Salmonella* spp. in Chicken Meat.
- Compilation of Codex Texts Relevant to the Labeling of Foods Derived from Modern Biotechnology.
- Revision of the Guidelines on Nutritional Labeling: List of Nutrients that are always Declared on a Voluntary or Mandatory Basis.
- Annex to the Guidelines on Nutrition Labeling: General Principles for Establishing Nutrient Reference Values of Vitamins and Minerals for the General Population.
- Revision of the Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Collecting, Processing and Marketing of Natural Mineral Waters.
- Regional standards for edible sago flour and chili sauce (Asia), cilantro coyote and lucuma (Latin America), and harissa and halwa tehenia (Near East).
- 193 additive provisions in the General Standard on Food Additives.
- 381 Pesticide MRLs for 25 pesticides; 22 MRLs for 3 pesticides were advanced in the Codex process.
- Veterinary drug MRLs for narasin in pigs and tilmicosin in chickens and turkeys.

In other action, the CAC:

- Revised the Terms of Reference for the [Codex Committee on Processed Fruits and Vegetables](#) to include development of standards for fruit and vegetable juices and nectars in its scope of work. These products were included under the scope of a Codex ad hoc task force that ended its work in 2005. The CAC dropped a phrase "and related products" after many countries, including the United States, felt it broadened the scope extensively to include, for example, fruit juice drinks containing very low amounts of juice and flavored waters. Members indicated that extending the terms of reference to include these products was not necessary as these products were extremely varied, that development of a Codex standard would be difficult, that the product area changes rapidly due to consumer demands and advancing technology, and that there appeared to be no trade impediments at present.

Significant discussion occurred with respect to several standards proposed for adoption:

- Proposed Draft Maximum Levels for Melamine in Liquid Infant Formula were returned to the [Committee on Contaminants in Foods](#) for further consideration after several countries objected to adoption because of a footnote that permitted a higher ML if it resulted from migration from the packaging material.

- A Code of Practice for the Storage and Transport of Edible Oils in Bulk: Criteria to Assess the Acceptability of Substances for Inclusion in a List of Acceptable Cargoes was adopted along with lists of acceptable previous cargoes. However, many countries, including the United States, expressed the view that there was no consensus on the lists of previous acceptable cargoes, that many of the substances had not been evaluated by the [FAO/WHO Joint Expert Committee on Food Additives \(JECFA\)](#), that the Codex guideline providing criteria for the assessment of previous cargoes was sufficient. In adopting the lists, the CAC directed the [Committee on Fats and Oils](#) to take up as an immediate priority a review of the substances against the criteria, taking into account the limitations of JECFA resources and the availability of data.
- The use of certain food additives (colorants) in fish glaze and pasta. Concerns were expressed by some countries on the use of carotenoids in fish glaze and, specifically, on a footnote ("for use in glazes, coatings or decorations for fruit, vegetables, meat or fish") since they felt that the use would be deceptive to consumers. The United States and other countries supported the footnote and noted that CCExec recommended that "the GSFA should be the single authoritative reference point for food additives and this should be made clear in all commodity standards." The CAC adopted the food additive provision without the footnote, and the United States and Australia entered reservations to this decision.
- A similar discussion occurred with respect to the use of beta-carotenoids in pasta with the European Commission, EU Member States, and others objecting to the permitted use of these food additives in certain pasta products. The Commission adopted the provisions for beta-carotenoids, limiting use of these colorants to noodles.
- Considered the relationship of the [Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables](#) with respect to the UNECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards in order to help resolve their somewhat competing approach to establishing fresh fruit and vegetable standards.
- Recommended that the Committee on Fresh Fruits consider its Terms of Reference as they relate to consultation with the UNECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards. A statement from the EU indicated its position that the goal of the consultation process between Codex and UNECE should be harmonization of standards, and not necessarily identical standards. The Committee Chair requested the Codex Secretariat to prepare a background document on the history and linkages between the Committee and the UNECE.

New Work

- The CAC approved new work proposed by the [Committee on Food Hygiene](#) on "Guidelines for Control of Specific Zoonotic Parasites in Meat: *Trichinella spiralis* and *C. bovis*." The United States did not support the proposal in either the



CCExec or at the Commission meeting arguing that the parasites were not significant public health concerns, that OIE-referenced documents were not completed making it difficult to agree to them, and that Codex should delay any work until the OIE had completed its work on *Trichinella*. The United States supported a broader guidance document covering foodborne parasites in general. In response to the U.S. interventions, the Commission recommended that the work be risk-based, reviewed against the prioritization of parasites prepared by the FAO and WHO, and that the Committee monitor the work of the OIE to ensure that there is no duplication. During the CAC meeting, the EU representative indicated interest in making this guidance a joint standard with the OIE. The United States has in the past opposed joint standards between Codex and the OIE because of differences in mission and operating procedures and, instead, supports collaboration between the two organizations on documents such as this one.

- Durian was proposed by CCAAsia as a regional standard, but the CAC assigned it to the Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables for development as an international standard.
- The CAC approved work on new regional standards for fresh fungus chanterelle and ayran (Europe) and tempe and laver products (Asia).

Processed Cheese Standard

The CAC noted the difficulty associated with the processed cheese standard, which had been under discussion in the [Milk and Milk Products Committee](#) for approximately 16 years. The last Session of the CAC, unable to reach agreement on discontinuation of work, had requested the regional coordinating committees to discuss the necessity and scope of the standard. The results were split with some regions favoring a standard and others favoring discontinuation. During this year's meeting, many countries, particularly some developing countries, continued to express a need for the standard. The United States and others supported discontinuation of work. The Committee Chair from New Zealand argued that the commodity did not lend itself to standardization and suggested that members should consider a narrower scope if they wanted to continue work. After a fair amount of discussion in both CCExec and the Commission meeting, it was agreed to suspend a decision on discontinuing work on the standard until the next CAC session. In the meantime, the Codex Secretariat will seek information from Codex members on questions regarding scope, content, technical specifications, and trade impediments. An analysis of the information will be provided to the next meetings of CCExec and the CAC.

Codex Executive Committee Meeting

Prior to the CAC meeting, the 65th Session of the [Codex Executive Committee](#) met in Geneva June 28-July 1. The United States is a member of CCExec as the elected



representative from North America, and was represented by Karen Stuck, U.S. Manager for Codex with Michael Wehr, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and Samuel Godefroy, Health Canada, serving as advisors. CCExec carries out the critical review of Codex's standards-setting work and is also responsible for development and implementation of the strategic plan and provision of guidance and recommendations on Codex budget and operations.

Strategic Planning

The CCExec reviewed the status of the current Codex Strategic Plan for 2008-2013, primarily simply taking note of the status of the various work items included in the plan.

Significant time was spent discussing the Strategic Plan for 2014-2019. CCExec agreed to take a more dynamic approach to the Plan, including a clear forward-looking vision statement for Codex, and creating a document that can be used to explain: the importance of Codex as the premier international food standards-setting body; why Codex is crucial to international food safety/consumer protection; the importance of harmonized science-based standards-setting; the need to serve all countries both developed and developing; the need for fiscal soundness and sound work management; and the need for strong coordination with other international food-related standards-setting organizations.

The Committee agreed that North America would take the lead preparing an initial draft of a 2014-2019 Codex Strategic Plan that would be circulated to the CCExec for comment and further development by the Committee and subsequently submitted to the Commission for review and comment.

Codex Finances and Budget

The Codex Secretariat presented the 2012-2013 proposed budget noting that the total budget is virtually the same as that for 2010-2011. CCExec agreed to hold only one mid-term meeting just prior to the CAC meetings, which was deemed sufficient and would provide substantial savings. CCExec also reviewed the budget and finances for the provision of FAO/WHO scientific advice to Codex.

Codex Trust Fund

CCExec considered a number of recommendations arising from the recently completed evaluation of the Codex Trust Fund (CTF). The Committee recommended continuing to focus on Objective 1-participation of developing countries in the work of Codex. Regarding this Objective, CCExec recommended that more flexibility be given to countries that are "graduates" of the CTF (countries whose national economic level places them above lesser developed countries but still substantially lower than



developed countries) to continue to receive support under certain criteria, recognizing that essentially all developing countries continue to find it financially difficult to participate in Codex. The Committee also noted the importance of sustainability including proper meeting selection for CTF participants, and training (including mentoring) to increase the ability of developing country participants to effectively engage in the work of Codex. CCExec also supported work at a modest level relating to the other two Objectives of the CTF-capacity building with respect to Codex capabilities and participation in the scientific work supporting Codex standards-setting.

Other CCExec actions:

- Recommended to FAO/WHO that three international non-governmental organizations be approved as Codex Observers: the European Chilled Food Federation; Safe Supply of Affordable Food Everywhere; and, the European Association of Polyol Producers.
- Discussed options for physical working groups and requested the [Codex Committee on General Principles](#) to consider new options for physical working groups to attempt to resolve issues associated with their large size and relative lack of developing country participation.
- Considered enhanced uses of IT systems to assist in implementing electronic working groups, with the Codex Secretariat to prepare a paper on systems which could be used via web-based platforms and related processes.
- Supported the continuation of the Codex committee chairpersons retreat as a helpful means of discussing issues related to managing Codex committee meetings and improving the capabilities of Codex committee chairs.

The next meeting of the Codex Commission will be held July 2-7, 2012, in Rome, Italy.