



## Delegate's Report, 12th Session, Codex Committee on North America and the Southwest Pacific (CCNASWP)

The 12th Session of the [Codex Committee for North America and the Southwest Pacific](#) (CCNASWP) was held from September 19-22, 2012, in Madang, Papua New Guinea. The Session was attended by 53 delegates from 14 Member countries, two Member countries from other regions (Japan and India), two International Organizations (IFAH and IFPRI) and representatives of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). The United States was represented by Marie Maratos, International Issues Analyst in the U.S. Codex Office, FSIS, USDA. The full report of the 12th Session is currently available on the Codex website, [www.codexalimentarius.org](http://www.codexalimentarius.org).

Prior to the Session, the FAO and WHO held a two-day technical workshop on issues under consideration by the Codex Committees of interest to the Pacific Island Countries (PICs), specifically Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (CCNFSDU), Food Labeling (CCFL), and Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS).

The 12th Session largely focused on issues referred from the 35th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) held in July 2012. More specifically, the Committee discussed and provided recommendations on the most recent draft of the Codex Strategic Plan 2014-2019. It also endorsed the decision of the CAC to discontinue work on the Processed Cheese standard. Regarding the discussion paper on Kava, the FAO and WHO will provide technical assistance to answer some of the outstanding scientific issues. Likewise, Australia and Canada will help Tonga revise the discussion paper on Noni to narrow the scope so that it is relevant to the region. As a result of the challenges CCNASWP has faced in developing possible Kava and Noni standards, the Committee agreed to develop a mechanism to prioritize products of potential interest for the Region. Further details on these and other items considered by the 12th Session of CCNASWP are given below.

### Processed Cheese

The 35th Session of the CAC agreed to discontinue work on the development of a standard for Processed Cheese and referred the question on the need for a standard to the Coordinating Committees, since there are a variety of processed cheese production methods currently in use throughout the world. The U.S. delegate underlined that the existing key differences with processed cheese were extensively deliberated in the Codex Committee on Milk and Milk Products (CCMMP) without resolution, and as a result the only possible outcome was to discontinue work on this issue. The United States, along with other delegations, indicated that the development of either an international or a regional Codex standard for Processed Cheese would be futile. The Committee agreed that there was no need to establish either type of standard for processed cheese and reiterated its previous conclusion to discontinue work.

### Spice Committee

The 35th Session of the CAC considered a proposal from India to establish a new subsidiary body on spices, aromatic herbs and their formulations, and requested that the Coordinating Committees provide their views on the proposal. CCNASWP generally supported work on spices and aromatic herbs; however there were numerous questions that came out of the discussion. The United States questioned how existing standards for spices would be taken into account and/or harmonized with the proposed Codex standards. In addition, the U.S. delegate wondered whether there would be other areas (e.g. food hygiene) to be considered by other Codex horizontal committees. In addition, other delegations floated the idea that a general standard, covering broad aspects of spices, with several annexes on specific products, could be an appropriate way to address the work proposed. Moreover, other delegations noted that, in line with the recommendations of the 2002 FAO/WHO Codex Evaluation, time-limited Task Forces, rather than permanent committees, were the better way forward. In conclusion, CCNASWP generally supported Codex work on standards for spices, aromatic herbs and their formulations, noting that the CAC would ultimately determine the mechanism for this work.

### 50th Anniversary of Codex

The CCNASWP Chair invited the Committee to share views on ways to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Codex at the national, regional and global levels. The U.S. Delegate indicated that the United States, as host country of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH), was planning an event, in conjunction with the upcoming Session scheduled in New Orleans, LA, from November 12-16, 2012, on Codex's impact and successes over the past fifty years and where Codex should go in the next fifty. Canada indicated that it too was considering organizing a similar event in conjunction with the next Session of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling, scheduled for May 2013.



### **Codex Strategic Plan 2014-2019**

CAC Vice Chair Samuel Godefroy, acting as Chairperson of the sub-Committee of the Executive Committee charged with the revision of the latest draft of the Codex Strategic Plan, guided CCNASWP through an examination of each section of the document, including the new work plan. The Committee expressed overall support for the draft Strategic Plan as currently presented, which had resulted in a more concise and better constructed text, but provided some additional inputs and recommendations for further review by the sub-committee of the Executive Committee.

### **CCNASWP Strategic Plan**

At this Session, delegates did a cursory review of the status of implementation of the current Strategic Plan for CCNASWP. The Regional Coordinator agreed to prepare an update of the status of implementation of the current Strategic Plan for consideration at the next Session. With regard to the new draft Strategic Plan for CCNASWP 2014-2018, the Committee agreed that since the Codex Strategic Plan 2014-2019 was still in draft form, it was premature to finalize the new draft of the CCNASWP Strategic Plan at the current Session. The Committee agreed to review and finalize the CCNASWP Strategic Plan 2014-2018 at its next Session, following the adoption of the Codex Strategic Plan 2014-2019.

### **Kava Standard**

The discussion paper on Kava came up once again for consideration at this Session of CCNASWP. Unfortunately, many of the core questions previously raised at the last Session by the United States and other delegations, as well as the WHO, were still not addressed. Nevertheless, a number of PICs supported the development of a regional standard for Kava since in certain PICs it was a major crop, while in others, it was imported and consumed by a significant part of the population. They noted that the lack of such a standard might result in a risk to consumers, due to the potential risk of using unsafe varieties of Kava.

The United States, along with other delegations, reiterated their concerns expressed at previous CCNASWP sessions and in written comments submitted to the electronic Working Group (eWG), on the safety of Kava and on whether it could be classified as a food. The U.S. Delegate also suggested that if this were ever to be developed, perhaps an international standard would be better suited if the intent was to eventually trade Kava beyond the region, to other areas including the European Union, China, India, and Africa.

The Committee agreed to establish an eWG, chaired by Vanuatu, to revise the proposal for the development of a regional standard for Kava focusing on the dried product that can be used as a beverage when mixed with water. It also accepted the FAO and WHO's offer to assist in the review of existing scientific information and identification of data gaps that may be impacting a proper safety assessment.

### **Noni (Nonu) Standard**

Tonga, as Chair of the eWG, introduced the discussion paper on Noni and recalled that the original proposal for the development of a standard for Noni was first tabled at the 9th CCNASWP in 2006. He emphasized the importance to develop a standard for Noni since it could become a potential trade commodity for the PICs. The United States, along with other delegations, indicated that there was still a need to better clarify the nature, scope, safety, and intended use of Noni. In addition, the U.S. Delegate expressed concern as to its safety, referring to poor compliance with a French study that discouraged consuming over 30 mL/day of Noni juice, whereby certain consumers in the PICs exceeded 500 mL/day. Tonga clarified that the advice was intended for European consumers, whereas in the PICs, consumption could be higher due to their knowledge on the long-term safe use of Noni products.

' Although the United States underlined that it was premature to start work on Noni with outstanding safety questions, there was general support for a regional standard. As such, the Committee agreed to establish an eWG, to be led by Tonga with the assistance of Australia and Canada, to start new work on the development of a regional Standard with a narrowed scope on fermented noni juices.

### **Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs) and Vitamin and Mineral Deficiencies (VMDs)**

The Representative of FAO, noted that diet-related Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs) and Vitamin and Mineral Deficiencies (VMDs) remained at levels that posed a serious public health risk for most PICs. In addition, NCDs and VMDs also impacted greatly on the economic and social development of the region. He pointed out that food regulation was seen as a key policy instrument to influence the composition of foods and labelling and the exposure to diet-related risk factors for NCDs such as fats, sodium, and sugars. Reflecting on how CCNASWP had managed to



initiate action within Codex on date marking/labelling concerns, the Committee agreed that a similar approach should be taken to initiate regional action on diet related NCDs and VMDs.

**Coordinator**

The Committee unanimously agreed, at the proposal of the Delegation of Kiribati, to recommend to the 36th Session of the CAC that Papua New Guinea be re-appointed as Coordinator for CCNASWP.

The next Session of CCNASWP is tentatively scheduled for September 2014 in Papua New Guinea.