



Report of the U.S. Delegate, 13th Session, Coordinating Committee on North America and the Southwest Pacific

September 23-26, 2014

Kokopo, Papua New Guinea

The 13th Session of the Coordinating Committee for North America and the Southwest Pacific (CCNASWP) was held from September 23-26, 2014, in Kokopo, Papua New Guinea. The Session was attended by delegates from 14 Member countries, two Member countries from other regions (Japan and Switzerland), one international organization (*International Food Policy Research Institute*--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 13th Session is currently available on the Codex website (www.codexalimentarius.org).

Prior to the Session, the FAO and WHO held a one-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 13th Session largely focused on the revitalization of the Regional Coordinating Committees (RCCs), on the Draft Standard for Fermented Noni Juice, and on finalizing the CCNASWP Draft Strategic Plan (2014-2019) for forwarding to the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC). Further details on these and other items considered by the 13th Session of CCNASWP are given below.

Regional Coordinating Committees (RCCs)

CCNASWP agreed on the need to revitalize the RCCs in order to improve their effectiveness in achieving both regional and global goals of Codex, FAO, WHO and countries concerning food safety systems, food trade, consumer information, and food and nutrition. The United States, along with other CCNASWP members, also supported the proposal for agenda alignment across the six RCCs, but noted that the specificities of CCNASWP should not be lost in the process. The United States and others expressed general support for maintaining Regional Strategic Plans that serve in the development of national strategies for Codex and for the planning of capacity development activities and resource mobilization.

CCNASWP Strategic Plan (2014-2019)

The United States was active in the redrafting of the CCNASWP Strategic Plan (2014-2019) since the last Session and helped the Committee finalize the document at the recent Session. The Coordinating Committee established clear linkages for each of its objectives with the global Codex Strategic Plan and expects the CAC to adopt the document at its 38th Session in July 2015. The Coordinator will present a report on the status of implementation of the CCNASWP Strategic Plan at its next Session, scheduled for 2016.

Codex Trust Fund (CTF)

The United States has been a strong supporter of the Codex Trust Fund since its inception and has contributed funds for country participation on annual basis and for the mid-term evaluation completed in 2011. At this Session, the United States, like all other CCNASWP members, acknowledged the valuable support of the CTF to the region, and expressed broad support for a successor initiative. The U.S. Delegate, recognizing the importance of the final evaluation of the CTF which is currently under way, requested from FAO and WHO that adequate time be allowed for the evaluation findings to be fully considered to inform the successor initiative.

Kava Standard

The proposal for a draft regional standard for kava came up once again for consideration at this Session of CCNASWP. Vanuatu, as Chair of the electronic Working Group (eWG), indicated that since there had not been sufficient time to fully consider the recent FAO/WHO report on kava, as well as other information, that it was not



necessary to have a full discussion on kava at this Session. As such, the Coordinating Committee agreed to reconvene the EWG, led by Vanuatu, to further develop the discussion paper (on kava as a dried product that can be used as a beverage when mixed with water), taking into account the recent FAO/WHO report and all new available information, and to consider the possibility of other risk management options, such as a code of practice.

Fermented Noni Juice Standard

Tonga, as Chair of the eWG, introduced the revised discussion paper on fermented noni juice, citing good progress since the last Session, and emphasized the importance of developing a standard for fermented noni juice since it could become a potential export commodity for the PICs. The United States, along with other delegations, indicated that although good progress had been made, there was still a need to address some of the safety concerns associated with the consumption of fermented noni juice. These safety concerns stemmed from the potential maximum daily intake of fermented noni juice, which if consumed in the same quantities as other juices, could be dangerous. The U.S. Delegate requested that a safe maximum level of scopoletin would be needed to possibly determine the recommended maximum daily intake of fermented noni fruit juice products.

CCNASWP agreed to return the proposed draft Standard to Step 2/3 for further redrafting since several issues needed additional discussion at the technical level, and to reconvene the eWG, led by Tonga, taking into account the discussion and decisions taken by the Coordinating Committee, as well as all written comments submitted for consideration by its next session. At the request of the United States, the CCNASWP agreed to request advice from the Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods (CCCF) on a safe maximum level for scopoletin, as well as a method of analysis.

Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs)

The Committee noted that diet-related Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs) remained at levels that posed a serious public health risk for most PICs and that food regulation was seen as a key policy instrument to influence the composition of foods, labelling, and exposure to diet-related risk factors for NCDs such as fats, sodium, and sugars. The Coordinating Committee was advised that FAO and WHO, with support from the Codex Trust Fund, will conduct a workshop for PICs in early 2015 on nutrition and diet related NCD challenges in the Pacific and the role of Codex. Moreover, the CCNASWP agreed on the need for continued resource mobilization and capacity development from FAO and WHO to address national and regional priorities in the area of food safety and quality.

New Regional Coordinator

The Committee thanked Papua New Guinea for their leadership as Regional Coordinator over the last two Sessions. CCNASWP unanimously agreed to recommend to the 38th Session of the Commission that Vanuatu be appointed as the next Coordinator for North America and the South West Pacific.

Next Session

The next Session of CCNASWP is tentatively scheduled for September 2016 in Vanuatu.