

codex alimentarius commission

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS

WORLD HEALTH
ORGANIZATION

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ALINORM 76/28

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Eleventh Session

Rome, 29 March - 9 April 1976

REPORT OF THE SECOND SESSION OF THE
COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR AFRICA

Accra, 15-19 September 1975

INTRODUCTION

1. The Coordinating Committee for Africa held its Second Session in Accra (Ghana), from 15 - 19 September 1975 by courtesy of the Government of Ghana. Dr. Robert Oteng, the Coordinator for Africa, was chairman for the session.
2. The Session was attended by Government delegations from the following countries: Cameroon

Dahomey

Ethiopia

Ghana

Ivory Coast

Kenya

Libya, Arab Republic of

Malawi

Nigeria

Senegal

Togo

Upper Volta

Zambia

Observers were present from:

Cocoa Producers' Alliance (COPAL)

East African Community (EAIRO)

Food and Drug Law Institute

International Organization for Standardization (ISO)

The list of participants including officers from FAO and WHO is contained in Appendix I to this Report.

3. His Excellency, Lt.-Col. George Minyila, Commissioner for Industries of Ghana, formally opened the Session on behalf of the Ghanaian authorities. The Commissioner stated that African countries should concentrate their efforts on eliminating fraudulent practices in the food trade. This could best be achieved by cooperation among African countries in the field of food legislation and to this end the Government of Ghana fully supported the work of the Coordinating Committee for Africa.
4. The Secretariat, speaking on behalf of the Directors-General of FAO and WHO, thanked the Government of Ghana for their kindness in hosting this Session of the Committee. The importance given by member countries to developing a coordinated and harmonised approach to food legislation was reflected in the active participation of

Governments in the work of the Coordinating Committee, It was thought that this work would be undertaken in collaboration with other regional bodies such as Organization of African Unity (OAU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), East African Community (ECA), Customs and Economic Union of Central Africa (CEUCA) and the African Regional Standards Organization (ARSO) to give maximum impact to the work of the Committee.

5. The Chairman stated that the opening speeches highlighted the main issues which would be discussed in detail under the various agenda items. He pointed out that the countries of the Region would have to work together in order to obtain optimal results in their attack on problems facing the individual countries and the region as a whole.

ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN AND RAPPORTEURS

6. The Committee unanimously elected Or. T. N'Doye (Senegal) and Mr. K.K. Eyeson (Ghana) and Mr. Nathanael Avoundogba (Dahomey) as Vice-Chairman and Rapporteurs respectively.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

7. Agenda without The Committee agreed to adopt the amendments.

MATTERS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM THE TENTH SESSION OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND CODEX COMMITTEES

8. The Secretariat pointed out that the question of the role of the Coordinator had been considered by the Commission at its Tenth Session and subsequently had been the subject of detailed discussion by the Executive Committee in June 1975. As this matter was a separate item on the Agenda, the Committee agreed to defer the discussions until later during the Session.

9. The Committee noted with interest that the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene had begun to elaborate microbiological specifications for certain commodities. It was thought that this might be of particular interest for African products.

FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF THE ROLE OF THE COORDINATOR

10. The Committee in dealing with the above subject had before it document CX/AFRO 75/2 containing an extract from the Report of the 21st Session of the Executive Committee (June 1975) on its deliberations on the role of Codex Coordinators.

11. The Secretariat introduced the paper and it was noted that the Executive Committee had decided:

- (1) to request the Secretariat to contact international organizations likely to be interested in the work of the Coordinating Committee within the region of Africa in order to enlist their support in the work of the Committee (ALINORM 76/3, para 43);
- (2) that the Rules of Procedure of the Commission should not be changed and that the functions of the Coordinator would essentially be:
 - i. to preside over sessions of the Coordinating Committee;
 - ii. to guide the deliberations of the Committee;
 - iii. to formulate policy and action proposals for consideration by the Committee;
 - iv. to be the spokesman for the Committee and to report to the Commission;

- v. to maintain a close liaison with the Codex Secretariat and, as appropriate with FAO and WHO Regional Offices in Africa.

12. It was pointed out that, in view of the different circumstances of this Region, the task of the Coordinator for Africa was not directly comparable with that of the Coordinator for Europe. It was thought to be imperative that the work of the African Coordinator - who should be familiar with the specific problems and needs of the Region - should be related closely to the Region. It was assumed that in drawing up the tasks for the Coordinators for Asia and South America the experience gained here would be useful.

13. Several delegations pointed out that the task of the Coordinator should be of an operational character and that this might well also apply to sub-regional Coordinators. The Commission was requested to consider further the question of financing the work of the Coordinator as envisaged by the Committee.

14. The possibilities of providing funds from other sources such as OAU, ECA, ECOWAS, etc. should also be investigated. Alternatively a fund based on direct contributions from member governments to permit the proposed functioning of the Coordinator's Office could be considered. One delegation suggested that the matter should also be considered during the meeting on the establishment of an African Regional Standards Organization (ARSO) later during the week. The Secretariat mentioned that approaches had been made to the United Nations Environment Fund to allow more countries to participate in Coordinating Committee meetings, but that final approval had not yet been obtained. It was also mentioned that UNDP was financing a Regional FAO Food Control Officer who could assist the Coordinator, possibly through support with consultants funds.

15. The Committee noted that in the meantime the Coordinator would, continue on a voluntary basis, i.e. financed by the host government in his efforts to create awareness of and stimulate participation among African nations in the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. The Committee urged that further funding be sought and encouraged the Coordinator and the Secretariat to intensify their efforts in this regard.

FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF A MODEL FOOD LAW

16. The Committee had before it for discussion document CX/AFRO 75/3 "Further Consideration of a Model Food Law". The document was introduced by the Secretariat who reviewed briefly the previous deliberations on this topic at the 1973 FAO/WHO Codex Food Standards Conference for Africa and the 1974 First Session of the Coordinating Committee for Africa. It was explained that the paper was based on the previous deliberations and took into account the comments of the member countries at the previous meeting.

17. The paper included an introduction, a draft model food law, explanatory notes on the meaning and intent of the various sections of the draft food law, a questionnaire addressed to countries to obtain a review of existing food law vis-à-vis the model law, and a list of proposed regulations that should be developed by each country after its basic food law had been brought into line with the Model Food Law. The Secretariat pointed out that the introduction to the paper contained proposals for action by the Member Governments if they found the draft model law acceptable.

18. In discussing the paper, the attention of the Committee was first directed to the annex containing the Model Food Law. Some delegations favoured a page by page review of the annex, but after some discussion it was agreed that the Model Food Law

covered all major points that a food law should contain, and that it could be adopted in toto by the Committee.

19. There was some discussion about bringing various definitions and other provisions into line with local conditions. It was pointed out, however, that in view of differences from one country to the next it would be better for each country to try to determine exactly how the provisions of the Model Law should be adapted to local conditions.

20. The Committee agreed that the Model Law as adopted would enable the Ministries or Institutions involved in enforcement to make adaptations in the Model Law to meet local conditions and to draw detailed regulations for food standards, labelling rules, food additive and pesticide residue limits, microbiological standards, etc.

21. It was stated by several delegations that allowing the law to be simple and basic, with flexibility for creating or changing regulations under the Act was the best procedure, since this approach could be more easily adapted to changing or emergency situations, new technology, etc.

22. Following the Committee decision to accept the document as it was drafted, the Coordinator invited general comments on the model law which could be further considered by the Secretariat. Some discussion ensued on the meaning of "sell" as defined in the accepted draft. It was pointed out that under conditions prevailing in the Region close attention should be given to the concept of "barter" and "gifts" in the act. The Secretariat agreed to reexamine the draft in this respect. Also the problem of wording with regard to packaging or containers was thoroughly discussed and the need was agreed upon for national examination in the light of local practices.

23. It was proposed to define "Standards for Food" to show that the elaboration of standards could be the duty of specific Standards Institutes in some countries. Another delegation questioned whether relabelling or reconditioning of unsatisfactory imports should be allowed, as mentioned in Part III, Section 8(2) of the Model Law, but after discussion it was decided that this practice might be desirable under some circumstances although there was a need for careful control of such action.

24. It was further pointed out that the part dealing with creating Regulation (Part IV of the draft) could be combined with the part on Administration and Enforcement (Part V). The Secretariat explained that these were separated to give particular emphasis to the need for regulations once a basic law has been enacted. It was noted that there were no specific provisions in the Model Law to allow an analysis to be challenged by an official laboratory if a dispute arose on such matters.

25. The view was expressed that, since the document had been accepted, including the Model Law, Governments should now be invited to determine how they would utilize the Model Law. The questionnaire attached to the paper as Annex III would be useful in this regard.

26. The Chairman, in reviewing and summarizing the deliberations of the Committee, called upon the Secretariat to take into account the discussion and comments of the Members on the Model Law. He requested that the Model Law be redistributed with an appropriate summary of the views of the Members attending the Second Session, along with the questionnaire, to determine steps being taken by Member Governments to harmonize food laws in line with the Model Law. The responses would be summarized and further discussed at the next session of the Coordinating Committee.

FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF INCLUDING CODEX CRITERIA IN NATIONAL LEGISLATION AND ACCEPTANCE OF RECOMMENDED INTERNATIONAL CODEX STANDARDS

27. The paper on this subject, CX/AFRO 75/4, I was introduced by the Secretariat. The document explored the use of Recommended International Codex Standards and Codes of Practice in formulating national regulations. It also listed the possible acceptance procedures which could be used by developing countries with regard to acceptance of the Recommended International Codex Standards and use of Codes of Practice within the rules of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

28. The paper explained that countries which lack adequate food laws at present could give "target acceptance" to the Codex standards, and thus notify other Member countries that foods shipped to those countries giving "target acceptance" should conform to the Recommended International Codex Standards.

29. The paper on this item was well received and a number of delegations associated themselves with the thoughts expressed in the paper. In discussing the topic, it was generally agreed that Member Governments of the African Region should give careful consideration to the subject of acceptance of Recommended International Codex Standards. It was also generally agreed that the Codex work formed a good basis on which countries of the Region could establish national regulations, and that in doing so, it should lead to a harmonized approach in food regulations on a region-wide basis, reduce health hazards, and lead to better regional and international trade possibilities. It was pointed out that Codex Standards or the national regulations of exporting countries could be used at any time as the basis for a request for a certificate that foods for export met these standards.

30. The Committee discussed thoroughly the need for an adequate food control infrastructure to enforce food standards and other regulations, whether national or international. Some delegations remarked on the difficulties faced by countries of the region in creating adequate laboratories, in finding and training of field inspection and analytical personnel, and, in general, building up an adequate food control infrastructure.

31. Other delegations pointed out positive steps being taken in their countries to create such an infrastructure, and stressed the need for developing these facilities if imports were to be better controlled, local products improved, and export potential increased. The need for proper food hygiene, pesticide residue control, etc., was highlighted by statements from the delegations of Kenya and Malawi in discussing specific steps necessary to assure markets for products in developed countries.

32. The delegation of Ghana proposed that the Coordinator be given the task of making an inventory of facilities and staff available in the region to identify whether some regional or sub-regional facilities could be developed. The possibility of seconding staff from one country to another for short periods to assist in infrastructure development was also mentioned.

33. It was pointed out that more work on standards for products important to the African Region was necessary since a number of existing Codex Standards were not particularly relevant to African requirements.

EXISTING AND PROPOSED PROJECTS ON FOOD CONTROL IN THE AFRICAN REGION

34. In introducing document CX/AFRO 75/5, entitled "Existing and Proposed Projects on Food Control in the African Region", the Secretariat drew the Committee's attention to the variety of subjects and the types of projects listed in the document which was an up-dating of the list which had been presented to the previous session of the Committee.

35. The international assistance to the African countries comprised among other activities visits to countries by technical staff of the international organizations and by short term consultants to provide long-term expert advice on food legislation and food control; training of chemists, microbiologists, field inspectors, administrators and technicians in food control by making use of the fellowship programmes and on-the-job training; assistance to countries for developing food control laboratory facilities through provision of supplies and equipment; and promotion of nutrition education. In implementing the above, FAO and WHO were collaborating with UNDP, ILO, UNICEF and UNEP, as well as other interested agencies at regional and country levels.

36. In the discussion which followed, the fragmentary nature of some projects was cited as was the lack of sufficiently developed national food control activities. Some delegations welcomed the more comprehensive approach in food control projects that was emerging from the international agencies at present.

37. The Secretariat outlined briefly the procedure currently in force with regard to obtaining assistance from FAO and WHO through various funding Agencies such as UNDP, UNEP or other sources. The Secretariat was requested to prepare a paper on this subject so that Member Governments would be more fully informed about possible means of obtaining assistance in strengthening food control systems.

CONSIDERATION OF FOOD PRODUCTS FOR EVENTUAL STANDARDIZATION ON A REGIONAL OR SUB-REGIONAL BASIS

38. The paper on the subject (OX/AFRO 75/6) was introduced by the Secretariat. It contained the review of discussions which had taken place on possible food products for eventual standardization by the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Regional Conference for Africa (Nairobi, October 1973 - CX/Africa 73/9, pages 74-91); the first session of the Coordinating Committee for Africa (Rome, June 1974 - ALINORM 74/28, pages 22-27); the tenth session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Rome, July 1974 - ALINORM 74/44, pages 311-377); and the 21st Session of the Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Geneva, June 1975 - ALINORM 76/3, pages 56).

39. The Secretariat also read the list of commodities, which had been considered at the Conference in Nairobi to be of significance in the trade of African countries and for which standards were not yet being elaborated within the Codex framework.

40. A number of West African delegations held the view that certain tuber products such as cassava products (Tapioca and Gari, etc.) and yam products should be included in the list. A similar suggestion was made for legumes which form part of the staple diet in extensive areas of the continent. The Secretariat pointed out that in certain Asian countries tuber products and legumes also formed a common component of the diet. This implied that any standard elaborated for these products might have to be of a worldwide scope.

41. One delegation stated that in its country advanced technology had been developed for the processing of cassava and that biscuits, bread and alcohol were manufactured from root derivatives. When tested against the criteria for the establishment of work priorities applicable to commodities considered for

standardization, it was agreed that the criteria seemed to be complied with to a large extent.

42. It was realized, however, that no data were available with regard to the volume and pattern of trade. It was thought that as a positive side effect of standardization it could be expected that Governments would be encouraged to give more attention to technological development and industrial processing of the products concerned. Fortification could also be regulated.

43. During the discussions it became clear that it would be desirable to have the list of all commodities for which standards had been elaborated or were being considered. The Secretariat was requested to send a list to the participants of this session.

44. The Committee held the view that, in addition to product standards, it would be advantageous to ask the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene to elaborate microbiological specifications for certain commodities traded extensively in the Region.

45. The Representative of WHO called the attention of the Committee to a criteria document on mycotoxins which was under preparation by WHO. He further mentioned that FAO/WHO projects concerned with mycotoxins were under discussion. All these activities would receive support from UNEP. The information which would thus become available would be of considerable interest to countries in Africa as well as other regions and should contribute to the control of these contaminants which were a great hazard to public health and a threat to trade.

46. Several delegates expressed their disappointment with regard to the decision of the Commission at its Tenth Session not to elaborate standards for coffee and coffee products. The Committee agreed to request the Commission to reconsider its decision. The delegations undertook to make additional information available to the Secretariat to support the request.

47. The Committee agreed that among the commodities which would be discussed by the 11th Session of the Commission for possible standardization, tuber products should also be given priority. The Committee agreed that the list of commodities of significance in the trade of African countries should be revised as below and be reviewed periodically:

Tuber products	-	3rd Session of Coordinating Committee for Africa
Legumes	-	- do -
Groundnuts (Peanuts)	-	-
Tea	-	11th Session of Codex Alimentarius Commission
Coffee	-	- do - (If further information ')
Cereals and Cereal Products	-	- do - is forthcoming)
Rice	-	-
Coconut Oil	-	8th Session of Codex Committee on Fats and Oils
Palm Oil	-	- do -
Palm Kernel Oil	-	- do -
Fish Oils	-	-
Cashew Nuts	-	-
Salted, dried and	-	10th and later sessions of Codex Committee on

NOMINATION OF COORDINATOR

48. The Secretariat introduced this agenda item with a summary of the history of discussions held on the subject at the 1973 Nairobi Food Standards Conference and the First Session of the Coordinating Committee in June 1974. The financial restraints on Secretariat assistance to the Coordinator were detailed, and the generous assistance of the Government of Ghana in hosting the Second Session was acknowledged. It was pointed out that the Coordinator had been in both the European and African Coordinating Committees from the host country for meetings.

49. The Secretariat informed the meeting that the Government of Ghana had advised the Codex Secretariat that it was willing to continue to provide the Coordinator for Africa for another term, and would also be willing to host the next Session.

50. Following the Secretariat introduction, the delegation of Kenya expressed its thanks to the Government of Ghana for the effective work it had done in organizing the Second Session of the Coordinating Committee and for the able leadership of Dr. R. Oteng, Coordinator and Chairman of the Meeting. Kenya then nominated Dr. R. Oteng of Ghana as Coordinator for the next term of office;

51. The delegations of Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo supported the nomination of Dr. Oteng as Coordinator, and the Committee unanimously supported this nomination.

52. The delegation from Ghana expressed the pleasure of its Government in being selected to retain the office of the Coordinator for another term and stated that Ghana would be pleased to host the next meeting of the Committee. He pointed out that the Coordinator, under the rules of the Commission, could only serve for two consecutive terms and that he hoped other countries would be willing to consider continuation of the work of the Coordinating Committee after the next term.

53. Dr. H. Bodhal, WHO Scientific Secretary to the Joint FAO/WHO/OAU Regional Food and Nutrition Commission for Africa, offered the use of the Journal of the Commission "Food and Nutrition in Africa" for disseminating Coordinating Committee information to the 3,300 or more subscribers to the journal.

DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

54. The Secretariat explained that in view of the tradition of holding the sessions in the country of the Coordinator, and the willingness of the Ghanaian Government to host the next session, the Secretariat felt the next meeting should be in Accra. The date preferred by the Secretariat, to fit into the schedule for other meetings and allow attention to be given to the work-load of the Coordinating Committee, should be January 1977 subject to further consultation between the Government of Ghana and the Codex Secretariat. It was therefore unanimously agreed that the next session should be in Accra if possible in January 1977. The delegation of Senegal pointed out that it would also be willing to host the next session of the Coordinating Committee, should for any reason Ghana not be able to host the meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

55. A paper prepared by the delegation of Zambia on various topics of importance was presented to the meeting. Comments on the Zambian proposal by the delegation of Ghana were also reviewed. On the matter of metallic contaminants in food, the

Committee supported the position of Zambia that more consideration should be given by the Commission to limits on metallic contaminants in specific foods since many countries did not have sufficient dietary information to make estimates of overall contaminant intakes.

56. It was pointed out that an International FAO/WHO Food Contaminants Monitoring Programme was being established and that several meetings had been held to set up the programme of work. An integral part of the Programme could be supporting the compilation of food consumption data and all countries were urged to try and collect such data.

57. A discussion on marking systems showed that there was a possibility of abuse of such systems unless they were strictly enforced. The Secretariat pointed out that a proposal for a "Codex mark" or symbol had been rejected at a previous Commission Session.

58. With regard to ad hoc working groups that might meet before the 1977 Session of the Committee, it was pointed out that Senegal would be willing to host such an ad hoc working group on legume products. The Secretariat was requested to carry out a survey of member countries to determine which countries would be willing to host such ad hoc meetings, assist in the preparation of technical working papers and attend such meetings. These meetings would be necessary to enable preparation of preliminary drafts of standards for root products, legume products, etc

59. The Chairman brought up the matter of further work for the Coordinating Committee, and asked the Committee's opinion if work on regional standards that might eventually lead to world-wide standards was acceptable. The Committee supported this approach and felt that this was a good way to expand trade eventually, as well as improve quality and safety of products on a regional basis.

60. The Chairman also asked the Secretariat to take steps to prepare a paper which would list the more general Codex standards such as the General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods, limits for additive and pesticide residues and inquire of countries of the region as to what steps were being taken to incorporate these standards into national regulations. It was agreed by the Secretariat that this would be a useful supplementary procedures to the current Codex acceptance procedures. It would bring to the attention of member Governments ways and means of utilizing the Codex Standards in national regulations and would enable further detailed discussion of such matters at future meetings.

CLOSING CEREMONY

61. The session was closed with an address by Lt. Colonel P.K. Nkegbe, Commissioner for Agriculture of Ghana.

APPENDIX I

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LIST OF DOCUMENTS

- CX/AFRO 75/1 - Provisional Agenda
- CX/AFRO 75/2 - Further Consideration of the Role of the Coordinator
- OX/AFRO 75/3 - Farther Consideration of a Model Food Law
- CX/AFRO 75/4 - Further Consideration of including Codex Criteria in National Legislation and Acceptance of Recommended International Codex Standards
- CX/AFRO 75/5 - Existing and Proposed Projects on Food Control in the African Region
- CX/AFRO75/6 - Consideration of Food Products for Eventual Standardization on a Regional or Sub-regional Basis
- CX/AFRICA 73/9 - Report of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Regional Conference for Africa
- ALINORM 74/28 - Report of the First Session of the Coordinating Committee for Africa