

## **29th Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Europe**

**The Hague, the Netherlands - 30 September - 3 October 2014**

### **European Union comments on Circular Letter 2014/20-EURO**

#### **Request for comments and information on:**

- (i) National food control systems**
- (ii) Codex at national level**
- (iii) Codex standards national priorities and interests**

The European Union and its Member States (EUMS) are pleased to submit the following answers to the questionnaire included in Circular Letter 2014/20-EURO.

#### ***Question 1: Strengthening National Food Control Systems***

The information provided by the EU for the 28<sup>th</sup> session of CCEURO on food control systems remains valid (CX/EURO 12/28/7). All the relevant information related to food control systems is available on the website of the European Commission's Directorate General for Health and Consumers: [http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/index_en.htm). Databases on food additives, pesticide residues and the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) are also available at the same website.

#### ***Question 2: Strengthening Codex at the national level***

As a Member Organisation, the EU activities aimed at Strengthening Codex at the national level are focused on capacity building activities at regional and/or national level for non-EU Codex member countries. The Europe region (CCEURO) is the main priority for the EU.

In 2011, the European Commission (EC) launched specific capacity building activities on Codex under the umbrella of the programme "Better Training for Safer Food". The first activity was a joint EC/FAO workshop, attended by 39 participants from 13 countries of CCEURO. The aim of the training was to increase countries' participation in Codex by being better able to both understand and utilise Codex standards but also to contribute at a technical level to their formulation. The underlying objective is to help strengthen national food safety programmes in countries of the European Region. The next event will take place in Astana in October 2014 and 12 countries of the European region have been invited.

The EU will ensure continuity of these actions aimed at improving the dissemination of the activities undertaken in Codex Alimentarius in order to raise awareness and better address food safety issues and the development of standards according to the needs of different countries/ regions.

In addition to the BTSF programme, the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument (TAIEX) of the European Commission provides support to certain partner

countries<sup>i</sup> on issues that may also include Codex-related capacity building. Further information can be found on the TAIEX website: [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/taix/what-is-taix/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/taix/what-is-taix/index_en.htm)

The EU and its Member States continue to be the main donors to the Codex Trust Fund (CTF) with a contribution of 71% of the total funding. The EU considers that it is very important for as many Codex members as possible to participate actively and efficiently in Codex work at all the stages of the process. To this end, objective 2 (Strengthening Participation in Codex) of the CTF is of particular relevance to the EU. The EU would like to encourage all eligible CCEURO countries to request support from the CTF. Although the CTF will come to an end next year, the WHO in close cooperation with the donor countries are already working on a successor activity to the CTF. The EU welcomes views on this from the beneficiary countries.

### ***Question 3: Codex Standards national priorities and interests***

- i) Which specific Codex standards and related texts (currently under development or already in existence) are of most importance and interest to your country?
- ii) What are the current priority areas for setting national standards?
- iii) Use and relevance of Codex standards at national level.

Due to the fact that the EU is the world's biggest exporter and importer of food, the work of all Codex Committees is of high interest to the EU.

Codex standards are of high relevance for the EU and they are always taken into account when EU legislation is developed. Direct reference to Codex standards is used in EU legislation when appropriate. For example, Regulation 470/2009 laying down procedures for the establishment of residue limits of pharmacologically active substances in foodstuffs of animal origin introduces an obligation for the EU to take over maximum residue limits (MRL) set by Codex for those MRLs which the EU has supported in the relevant Codex Alimentarius Commission meeting. Another example concerns pesticide residues, where the EU has a policy in place whereby EU MRLs are aligned with adopted Codex MRLs in those cases where the EU has not signalled its reservation.

At a European level, the EU and its Member States are keen to see European countries have a stronger capacity to participate in Codex work. This must stem from the national levels first of all, but can be further complemented at a regional level. Given that CCEURO is the largest region in Codex and often have very particular views, it is important that this capacity is also extended to the way in which we can defend European values and interests on the international stage. The EU is committed to facilitating this process of integration in the region and will continue to invest resources in the CCEURO region to this end.

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<sup>i</sup> Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia; Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Israel, Moldova and Ukraine