

4 March 2019

**CODEX COMMITTEE ON GENERAL PRINCIPLES (CCGP)
(31st session)**

Bordeaux, France, 11-15 March 2019

European Union comments on

Agenda item 6

**Discussion paper on emerging and future issues within the remit of the
CCGP**

CX/GP 19/31/6

*Mixed Competence
Member States Vote*

The European Union and its Member States (EUMS) welcome the list of possible topics for future work included in the discussion paper. As the paper rightly points out, over the years CCGP has addressed important procedural and other cross-cutting questions to improve the functioning of Codex. And CCGP should continue to do so — for the benefit of all Codex members.

We have the following comments on the topics included in the discussion paper.

On point 1: *Facilitating the elaboration of standards by Codex*

In order to remain relevant in this era of rapid digital transformation, Codex has to closely monitor its working methods and procedures, so as to be able to adjust them in a timely manner.

In this respect and with reference to the comments submitted on agenda item 3, the EUMS agree that the revision of the Guidelines on electronic Working Groups (and, at a later stage, the review of the existence procedural guidance for physical Working Groups) could be a good starting point for CCGP to assess the impact of new technologies and digitalisation on, in particular, existing practices. In this regard it is also important to note that, in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular those related to climate change mitigation, it is likely that the number of physical Codex committee meetings will be limited in the future.

Naturally, in discussions on Codex's future digital transition special attention will have to be paid to the key principle of inclusiveness: all Codex members must be in a position to actively contribute to Codex discussions.

On point 2: *Monitoring Codex results in the context of the SDGs*

As is highlighted in the revised version of the Codex Strategic Plan, Codex has an important role to play in supporting its members in their implementation efforts with respect to certain SDGs.

The inclusion of specific SDG-related indicators in the Codex Strategic Plan would be an effective way to monitor and assess Codex's contribution. This is, however, a challenging task which would require significant resources and time.

On point 3: *Food fraud/food integrity and food authenticity*

As indicated under agenda item 2, the EUMS consider that the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) discussions on tackling fraudulent practices in food trade are both timely and necessary.

Clear terminology and definitions are critical for a common understanding and for developing a horizontal approach across Codex committees. CCGP could make a valuable contribution in this regard.

On point 4: *Consumer information*

The EUMS acknowledge that a fundamental discussion on consumer information could provide valuable input on cross-cutting aspects beyond the current scope of food labelling.

CCGP would be a fitting venue in which to start such a process.

On point 5: *Observation structure for the application of Codex standards*

The EUMS acknowledge that more structured monitoring of the application and impact of Codex standards on the ground is critically important to ensure that Codex work remains relevant. Collecting global data would in particular allow possible difficulties and challenges to be identified, and could provide valuable insights with a view to improving the effectiveness of Codex standards. This would be in line with the enhanced emphasis which the revised version of the Codex Strategic Plan puts on monitoring of the use of Codex standards.

The EUMS hence welcome the idea of setting up a dedicated Codex observation structure and consider that CCGP could play an important role in clarifying a number of key questions in this regard, such as:

- which data would be necessary to obtain an adequate overview;
- which agri-food stakeholders should be involved in this exercise;
- what role the Codex contact points and other international organisations could play in data collection activity.

In addressing these and other questions related to a possible Codex observation structure, good use could be made of the experience gained by other international organisations, in particular the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).

On point 6: *System for improving coordination with other international organisations*

The EUMS welcome the discussion started last year on how to better coordinate Codex work with the standard-setting work of other international organisations. There is definitely scope for improvement, particularly with a view to ensuring consistency and avoiding duplication.

Based on the outcome of further discussion on this issue in the CCEXEC, CCGP could take this work forward and examine the procedural and practical aspects of a possible mechanism to enhance coordination.

On point 7: *Possible changes to the Procedural Manual*

In line with our previous comments on the need for Codex to stay fully aligned with digital developments, the EUMS consider that the Codex Secretariat's work on a new online version of the Procedural Manual is both timely and necessary.

In this regard, we would also welcome a more fundamental discussion by CCGP to identify, in close cooperation with the Codex Secretariat, possible improvements to the architecture of the Codex Procedural Manual, in order to enhance its accessibility for all Codex members — and hence improve the transparency of Codex work in general.
