

5 March 2019

**CODEX COMMITTEE ON GENERAL PRINCIPLES
(31st Session)**

Bordeaux, France, 11 - 15 March 2019

European Union Comments on

Agenda item 5

Information on activities of FAO and WHO relevant to the work of CCGP

CX/GP 19/31/5

*Mixed Competence
Member States Vote*

Matters arising from FAO

The European Union and its Member States (EUMS) welcome the efforts of the FAO's governing bodies to make progress in finding new ways to provide enhanced funding for food safety scientific advice.

The joint FAO/WHO scientific advice programme in support of Codex is of critical importance for the setting of Codex food safety standards. The EUMS would therefore like to reiterate the importance of ensuring a sustainable funding for the FAO/WHO joint scientific advice programme from the regular programme budget of both FAO and WHO.

Following the invitation at CAC41 to countries to develop a discussion paper on sustainable funding of scientific advice provided to Codex, the EUMS have prepared a draft paper for submission to CAC42.

The draft paper in Annex provides a contribution to the development of a strategy to ensure short and long-term solutions for sustainable funding for scientific advice in support of Codex. The purpose of the paper is to substantiate the need for action and to make specific recommendations to that effect.

The EUMS have shared the draft paper with the regional coordinators and other Codex members and invite interested Codex members to co-sign it. The EUMS thank those Codex members who have already expressed their support to this initiative.

The EUMS would welcome the views of additional Codex members and stand ready to provide further information on this initiative.

Finally, as regards the 'World Food Safety Day', the EUMS are committed to giving the inaugural event on 7 June appropriate visibility through initiatives and activities that will contribute to its success. Any guidance from the parent organisations in this respect would be welcome.

ANNEX: DRAFT OUTLINE FOR A DISCUSSION PAPER ON
SUSTAINABLE FUNDING OF SCIENTIFIC ADVICE PROVIDED TO CODEX

PURPOSE

This paper is intended to highlight the ongoing concerns on the issue of sustainable funding for scientific advice reiterated by Codex members at the 41st session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, to substantiate the need for action by the WHO and FAO, and to make specific recommendations to that effect. Further, it seeks consensus on the recommendations that flow from the discussion below.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Urge the FAO and WHO to step up their efforts to ensure sufficient and sustainable funding for the joint FAO/WHO scientific advice programme, taking due account of the guidance set out in this document;
- Express appreciation for the outcome of recent discussions on this issue in the FAO governing bodies and encourage them to take those discussions forward;
- Encourage the WHO to have similar discussions and urge all members of the Codex Alimentarius Commission to invite their representatives in the WHO governing bodies to highlight the importance of providing sufficient and sustainable funding for scientific advice from WHO's regular budget, with a view to promoting sound science-based international standards and achieving broader food safety and public health goals.

DISCUSSION

Introduction

The joint FAO/WHO scientific advice programme in support of Codex is of critical importance for global food safety governance. Without the authoritative and globally-relevant advice from the joint FAO/WHO expert bodies, the setting of many critical Codex food safety standards would not be possible.

At its 41st session, the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC41) reviewed the activities and budgetary and financial matters related to the provision of FAO/WHO scientific advice to Codex, based on a report prepared by FAO and WHO (CAC/18/41/16). The conclusions of this review as set out in the CAC41 report were as follows:

The Commission:

- (i) recognised FAO and WHO efforts to accelerate delivery and ensure continuous improvement of scientific advice;*
- (ii) noted that FAO and WHO had highlighted the importance of ensuring stable, multi-year, extra-budgetary contributions to support an enhanced FAO/WHO scientific advice programme, stressing the key facilitating role Codex delegates could play;*

(iii) noted the need to develop a strategy to ensure short- and long-term solutions for sustainable funding, inviting countries so interested to develop a discussion paper for submission to the Commission; and

(iv) recommended that FAO and WHO provide adequate sustainable funding for the joint FAO/WHO scientific advice programme, noting that, in accordance with Rule X.3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the Directors-General of FAO and WHO were bound to bring this recommendation to the attention of their respective governing bodies for appropriate action.

In reply to the above invitation to Codex members, this discussion paper aims to provide a contribution to the development of a strategy to ensure short- and long-term solutions for sustainable funding for scientific advice in support of Codex.

State of Play

The reports on the financing of scientific advice in support of Codex submitted to the CAC over the past years² show that the funding situation has been more or less the same for quite some time. According to the most recent report submitted to CAC41 and the explanations provided by the FAO and WHO representatives at CAC41, the overall contribution of FAO and WHO to the provision of scientific advice amounts to approximately USD 12 million per biennium approximately equally shared between the two organisations. Based on the information made available by FAO and WHO, the situation with regard to the respective contributions of both organisations is as follows:

WHO's contribution

The lion's share of the funds provided by WHO for the operation and staff costs related to scientific advice in the area of food safety and nutrition comes from voluntary extra-budgetary contributions from a limited number of WHO members and other donors. The contribution from WHO's regular programme budget (i.e. assessed contributions) is limited.

WHO's scientific advice programme is implemented by the Department of Food Safety and Zoonoses and the Department of Nutrition for Health and Development. According to the information provided at CAC41, efforts are under way within WHO to move beyond the status quo, to address requests for scientific advice in a timelier manner and to update the risk assessment methodology.

FAO's contribution

The funds provided by FAO to support the operation and staff costs related to the provision of scientific advice to Codex come mainly from FAO's regular programme budget (i.e. assessed contributions). Scientific advice on food safety provided to Codex is supported by a number of units and divisions within FAO, including the Office of Food Safety, the Plant Production and Protection Division, the Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy and Resources Division, and the Animal Production and Health Division. Scientific advice on nutrition, when requested, is provided by the Nutrition and Food Systems Division. Additional resources are needed to update methodologies, to address the backlog of requests for scientific advice and to deal with the increase in such requests.

In recent years, FAO's governing bodies have repeatedly emphasised the importance of FAO's standard-setting work and, in this context, echoed the continued call by Codex members to secure increased and more sustainable funding for the joint FAO/WHO scientific advice programme in support of Codex. In this regard, they have also acknowledged the need to look into possible alternative (extra-budgetary) solutions to widen the funding base for scientific advice, but emphasising the importance of safeguarding the independence, integrity and neutrality of the scientific advice programme.

The Way Forward

Codex members supporting this discussion paper greatly appreciate the activities from both FAO and WHO for scientific advice in support of Codex's critically important standard-setting work. They also reiterate their recognition for FAO and WHO efforts to accelerate the delivery and ensure the continuous improvement of scientific advice in support of Codex.

They consider, however, that the current funding model for scientific advice depends too much on voluntary financial contribution from countries and stakeholders. It therefore lacks the necessary stability and predictability to ensure the continued delivery of the scientific advice vital for Codex's standard-setting work. They also note that, due to this insufficient predictability and the insufficient level of the overall resources made available by WHO and FAO for scientific advice, there is an increasing backlog in scientific advice in support of Codex.

While the Codex members supporting this discussion paper acknowledge the ongoing efforts to find sustainable solutions, they consider that a new sustainable funding strategy for scientific advice in support of Codex is needed. This strategy should take account of the following elements:

- the recognition that the main solution for providing stable and sustainable funding for the FAO/WHO joint scientific advice programme should come from the regular programme budget of both FAO and WHO;
- a clear commitment from both FAO and WHO to earmark in their regular programme budget adequate resources for the joint scientific advice programme in support of Codex;
- an increased contribution from both FAO and WHO regular programme budgets in the short term to update methodologies and address the existing backlog of requests for scientific advice in support of Codex;
- the recognition that additional funding sources outside the FAO and WHO budgets should only be used to cover the funding needs of extraordinary advice activities or specific projects, and after appropriate mechanisms have been put in place to ensure that such additional funding sources are fully transparent and include all the necessary guarantees to ensure the independence, neutrality and integrity of the scientific advice programme. However any alternative extra-budgetary solutions should not substitute sustainable and programmed funding by both FAO and WHO parent bodies;
- the need to continue work on the options for widening the funding base for scientific advice in support of Codex as identified by FAO's 'Informal Open-ended Working Group on Food Safety Scientific Advice Programme'.