

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

41st Session

Rome, 2-6 July 2018

European Union Comments on

CL 2018/23/OCS-CAC:

Draft Report by the Codex Secretariat on preliminary findings of Regular review of Codex work management: Cooperation between the Codex Alimentarius Commission and other standard-setting organizations

Member States Competence

Member States Vote

The Member States of the European Union (MSEU) welcome the initiative taken by the Codex Secretariat to gather information on the cooperation between the CAC and other standard-setting organizations. We believe that, in general, cooperation between standard-setting international organizations constitutes an important objective in the context of the evolution of global governance.

Concerns have frequently been raised in various Codex Committees, including in the CCGP (*e.g.* : 2010, 2012)¹, on the risk of duplication of work and/or contradictions between guidance provided by different standard-setting international organizations.

However, efforts made to avoid such situations have been challenged by:

- the partially overlapping mandates of existing standard-setting international organizations and the difficulty of amending those mandates;
- the incompatibility of the standard-setting processes of different organizations;
- differences in membership.

Therefore, the MSEU are in favour of an approach aimed at countering the adverse effects deriving from different and potentially contradictory international standards. More specifically on the review carried out by the Codex Secretariat, we would like to make the following comments.

General Comments:

1. At its 40th session, the CAC agreed to support the recommendations made by the 73rd CCEXEC session, to the effect that the Secretariat would:

- (i) develop practical guidance for EWGs as outlined in the working document and paragraph 88 of REP17/EXEC2;
- (ii) examine barriers to active participation and identify possible solutions;
- (iii) record actions taken as part of the report on the implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan 2014–2019; and
- (iv) continue the regular review of Codex work management.

¹CX/GP 10/26/8, CX/GP 12/27/8,

2. We note that CL 2018/23/OCS-CAC aims to follow up on the above point (iv). We would however underline that the other points are equally important and should be discussed in the RCCs and in future CCGP meetings.

3. It would be in the interest of all Codex members to increase cooperation between Codex Alimentarius and standard setting bodies with a more limited, but not less relevant remit, such as UNECE, OIV and IOC, which are open to all Codex members and already include a number of Codex members.

Specific Comments:

1. The MSEU consider that the review should have focused more on the technical difficulties that arise from the need to coordinate activities conducted within different organizations. Recent examples of such difficulties include: CCCF12 work on the revision of Maximum Limits of lead in selected commodities in the General standard for contaminants and toxins in food and feed (CXS 193-1995); the CCFA 49 discussion on the use of food additives in wine²; on-going CCFFV discussions on several commodities (*e.g.* berry fruits, ware potatoes, etc.) and on the elaboration of a layout for Codex standards for fresh fruits and vegetables. The duplication of existing standards and/or the refusal to recognise existing international standards waste Codex and Members' resources and have in some cases derailed, slowed or stopped the Codex standard-setting process.

In light of the above, we would suggest a new paragraph under **point 3 "Background"** to better highlight the different views among Codex members on the cooperation between Codex Alimentarius and other international organisations. This could read as follows:

"Different views on the cooperation between Codex and certain international standard-setting organizations have been expressed in some Codex Committees and consequently work on certain Codex standards has been delayed/discontinued. In the Codex Committee for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables (CCFFV), some delegations were in favour of references to the UNECE standards and OECD brochures, in line with the core mandate of the CAC, while others were opposed to it. The Codex Committee on Food Additives (CCFA) agreed to discontinue work on food additives for grape wine, as there was no consensus on a footnote referring to the International Organisation for Vine and Wine (OIV)."

2. As the draft report prepared by the Codex Secretariat does not formulate any recommendation to CAC41, the MSEU would like to underline the following key elements which could help furthering the discussion:

(i) As a priority, Codex should take into account completed or on-going work of other international organizations open to all Codex members. This would facilitate and speed up the elaboration of Codex standards. Codex should not necessarily focus, at the present time, on those organizations' internal working procedures (*e.g.* is there a focal point dedicated to the follow-up of Codex work, etc.).

(ii) A systematic procedure could be developed to assess new work (*e.g.* a decision-tree that could be included in the CCEXEC critical review when considering new work), so as to avoid wasting resources and reduce the duplication of existing standards.

(iii) When the need for a Codex standard is identified (through the procedure under (ii)), a dialogue structure between standard-setting organizations secretariats and/or standard-setting organizations members could be identified to facilitate cooperation.

² CX/FA 17/49/10

3. Finally, the MSEU consider that innovative ideas could be explored with a view to improving cooperation between standard setting organizations (e.g.the issue could be further discussed in an inclusive and open Codex body).