The Codex Alimentarius Commission and Codex Standards: an Introduction

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Codex Alimentarius Commission

- The purpose of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, which is implemented by the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC), is to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade.
- CAC was established 1961/1963 (OIE est.1924)
- Current CAC membership: 180 countries (48 in Europe) and the European Community, which has been a member since 2003
- CAC is an intergovernmental standard-setting body which produces the Codex Alimentarius or "Food Code".
Codex Alimentarius

- Codex Alimentarius - a collection of international standards, codes of practice, guidelines and other recommendations, including:
  - Food commodity standards, e.g. for cheeses
  - Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) for residues of veterinary drugs and pesticides in foods
  - General standards, e.g. contaminants and toxins
  - Codes of Practice, e.g. on Good Animal Feeding
  - Guidelines, e.g. for Food Import Control Systems
Codex and the World Trade Organization

- WTO Members shall base their sanitary or phytosanitary measures on international standards, guidelines or recommendations….

- Codex standards, guidelines and recommendations specifically recognised in the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (“SPS Agreement”) as the international food safety benchmarks

- National sanitary measures based on Codex texts are deemed to meet international requirements for food safety
OIE and the World Trade Organization

- For animal health and zoonoses, the SPS Agreement specifically recognizes the standards, guidelines and recommendations developed by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)
- Cooperation between the OIE and CAC important to avoid duplication, gaps and inconsistencies in standards, etc. falling within the scope of both organizations
Cooperation between Codex and OIE

• Whole food chain approach to food safety.
• OIE has participated and participates actively in Codex work, e.g. on meat hygiene, animal feeding and food import and export inspection and certification systems
• In 2002 the OIE established an Animal Production Food Safety Working Group with participation of experts from Codex, FAO and WHO.
• The Working Group is an advisory body whose task is to strengthen OIE’s activities in the food safety area and further develop collaboration with the CAC.
The role of science and other factors in Codex standard setting

- The food standards, guidelines and other recommendations of Codex Alimentarius shall be based on the principle of sound scientific analysis and evidence, involving a thorough review of all relevant information, in order that the standards assure the quality and safety of the food supply.

- When elaborating and deciding on food standards Codex Alimentarius will have regard, where appropriate to other legitimate factors relevant for the health protection of consumers and for the promotion of fair practices in the food trade........
Scientific basis for Codex standards

- Risk assessments provided mainly by independent scientific expert groups convened by FAO/WHO
- Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) - additives, contaminants and veterinary drug residues
- Joint FAO/WHO Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR)
- Joint FAO/WHO Expert Meetings on Microbiological Risk Assessment (JEMRA)
- Other FAO/WHO expert consultations, etc
Risk analysis in Codex

During the 1990s there was a series of FAO/WHO Expert Consultations on the application of risk analysis to food safety issues. CAC has adopted

- Working Principles for risk analysis for application in the framework of the Codex Alimentarius
- Working Principles for risk analysis for food safety for application by governments
How Codex is organised

- Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC)
- Executive Committee
- Codex Secretariat
- Codex subsidiary bodies
  - general subject (“horizontal”) committees
  - commodity (“vertical”) committees
  - regional coordinating committees
  - ad hoc intergovernmental task forces
Codex Alimentarius Commission

- Participants: **Members** (with voting rights) and **Observers** representing international governmental organisations (e.g. OIE) and non-governmental organisations (e.g. food industry, consumers, professional organisations, e.g. WVA, and other standardisation bodies, e.g. ISO).

- Advancement and adoption of standards, etc.
- Election of officers, designation of host countries
- Strategic planning and decisions on new work
- Relations with other international organisations
Executive Committee of the CAC

- Members: CAC Chairperson and three Vice-Chairpersons, seven regional representatives and six regional coordinators
- Role: makes recommendations about the general direction of the CAC’s work, acts as the executive organ of the CAC and is the body responsible for managing standards development
Codex Secretariat

- Secretary of the CAC (Dr Kazuaki Miyagishima) together with a small staff of professional and technical officers. Located at FAO in Rome
- Administers and services the CAC and Executive Committee meetings and coordinates and oversees the operations of Codex subsidiary bodies serviced by host governments
- Maintains the Codex website and provides documents and other information about Codex
- Liaises with other standard-setting bodies
General Subject Committees (1)

- Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods (CCCF)
- Codex Committee on Food Additives (CCFA)
- Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH) hosted by the USA
- Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) hosted by Australia
- Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL)
General Subject Committees (2)

- Codex Committee on General Principles (CCGP)
- Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling (CCMAS)
- Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Purposes (CCNFSDU)
- Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods (CCRVDF) hosted by the USA
Commodity Committees

- Codex Committee on Fats and Oils (CCFO)
- **Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products (CCFFP)** hosted by Norway
- Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (CCFFV)
- **Codex Committee on Milk and Milk Products (CCMMP)** hosted by New Zealand
- Committee on Processed Fruits and Vegetables (CCPFV)
Regional Coordinating Committees

- Africa
- Asia
- **Europe** (Coordinator: currently Switzerland, Poland probably next)
- Latin America and the Caribbean
- Near East
- North America and South West Pacific
Ad hoc Codex Intergovernmental Task Forces

- **Antimicrobial Resistance** (active) hosted by Korea
- **Animal Feeding** (dissolved)
- **Foods Derived from Biotechnology** (dissolved)
- **Fruit and Fruit Juices** (dissolved)
- **Processing and Handling of Quick Frozen foods** (dissolved)
Development of Codex standards

• Codex secretariat arranges for preparation of proposed draft standard, which is then developed through a 5/8 step procedure

• Codex Committees and ad hoc Task Forces prepare draft standards for submission to the CAC for adoption

• Circulation to governments and other interested parties for comments. High level of transparency: documents on open website. Over 150 NGOs in observer status.

• Standards adopted by CAC and then added to the Codex Alimentarius
Procedural Manual 18th edition

- Statutes and rules of procedure of the CAC
- Procedures for the elaboration of standards, etc.
- General principles of the Codex Alimentarius
- Guidelines for CAC subsidiary bodies
- Guidelines for cooperation with other IIGOs
- Risk analysis principles
- Role of science and other factors in setting Codex standards
- Role of food safety risk assessment
Animal Feeding (1)

• In 2004 the CAC adopted a **Code of Practice on Good Animal Feeding** developed by an *ad hoc* Task Force. The Code was amended in 2008

• The Code is to establish a feed safety system for food-producing animals which covers the whole food chain, taking into account relevant aspects of animal health and the environment in order to minimize risks to consumers’ health. The Code applies in addition to the principles of food hygiene already established by the CAC, taking into account the special aspects of animal feeding.
Animal Feeding (2)

The Code of Practice comprises:

• Introduction, purpose and scope, definitions
• General principles and requirements
• Production, processing, storage, transport and distribution of feed and feed ingredients
• On-farm production and use of feed and feed ingredients
• Methods of sampling and analysis
In July 2009 the CAC will decide whether to re-establish the Task Force on Animal Feeding and, if so, what its new tasks will be.

An OIE ad hoc Group has drafted a Terrestrial Code Chapter on the control of hazards of animal health and public health importance in animal feed which, after going through the usual OIE process, will be proposed for adoption by the 77th OIE General Session in May 2009. This Chapter takes into account the Codex Code of Practice.
Hygienic Practice for Meat


More information about this Code of Practice will be provided in my presentation tomorrow at this Workshop.
Veterinary drugs

The CAC has adopted:

• a large number of **Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs)** for veterinary drugs in foods (muscle, milk, liver, fat, etc.) from different animal species.

• a **Code of Practice for Control of the Use of Veterinary Drugs**

• **Guidelines for Control of Veterinary Drug Residues in Food**

• a **Code of Practice to Minimize and Contain Antimicrobial Resistance**

More information on the above on Friday
Food hygiene (1)

The following are some examples of Codex texts on food hygiene:

• Code of Practice – General Principles of Food Hygiene, including an annex on Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) System and Guidelines for its Application

• Code of Hygienic Practice for Milk and Milk Products

• Code of Hygienic Practice for Egg Products (revision underway)
Food hygiene (2)

- Guidelines on the application of general principles of food hygiene to the control of *Listeria monocytogenes* in foods. (CAC/GL 61-2007)
- Proposed Draft Microbiological Criteria for *Listeria monocytogenes* in Ready-to-Eat foods at Step 5/8
- Code of practice for fish and fishery products
Recent developments

- Work on Guidelines for the control of *Campylobacter* and *Salmonella* in chicken meat underway in Codex Committee on Food Hygiene.
- FAO/WHO Expert Meeting on *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* in chicken meat, Rome, 4-8 May 2009
Inspection and certification systems

Some examples of Codex texts:

• Principles for food import and export certification and inspection
• Guidelines for design, production, issuance and use of generic official certificates
• Guidelines for food import control systems
• Principles for traceability/product tracing as a tool within a food inspection and certification system
• Guidelines for the validation of food safety control measures
Further information

• Codex web site: www.codexalimentarius.net
• Codex Contact Point in each Member State
• FAO/WHO expert group risk assessments can be found via www.who.int and www.fao.org
• OIE web site: www.oie.int