

Codex Alimentarius Commission

Transcript from part of a meeting held in Rome, Italy, on Thursday 7th July, 2005.

Agenda item 16

Other Matters Arising from FAO and WHO: WHO Global Strategy on Diet Physical Activity and Health

Chairman: Can we then go on to Part Five of this document; other matters from FAO and WHO, and in particular the implementation of the WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health? Dr. Schlundt, do you want to introduce this part?

Dr. Schlundt (WHO): Thank you Mr. Chairman. We will have three important activities that we would like to inform about from WHO side here, and we would be three people to do it. So the first one will be, in relation to diet and physical activity strategy, and we have Dr. Ingrid Keller, from the Noncommunicable Diseases Cluster, to do that. Thanks.

Dr. Ingrid Keller (WHO): Thank you very much. Good afternoon. In relation to this the document CAC/28 LIM/6.

In response to the global epidemic of chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and cancer, and the common risk factors, WHO has developed, at the request of the Member States, the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health. This strategy was endorsed by the World Health Assembly in May 2004.

This strategy is a comprehensive set of policy options that countries can adopt, as appropriate, and in their national circumstances, and the strategy recognizes that actions to prevent chronic diseases are needed at international, regional, national, community and individual levels.

In endorsing the strategy, WHO calls upon the Codex Alimentarius Committee, and I quote here, “to continue to give full consideration, within the framework of its operational mandate, to evidence-based action it might take to improve the health standards of foods consistent with the aims and objectives of the strategy.”

At the 55th Session of the Executive Committee of Codex it was agreed to ask WHO and FAO to prepare a document highlighting the actions that could be taken by Codex, in the

framework of its mandate, to facilitate the implementation of the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, which is document LIM/6.

In preparing this paper, WHO and FAO recognize that the Global Strategy is a relatively new strategy, that the relevant issues need further analysis and consultation, and that coordination of ongoing activities is needed.

Two Codex Committees seem to be directly germane to the issues raised by this global strategy, which are CCFL and CCNFSDU. So WHO therefore invites the Commission to adopt the recommendations of the Codex Executive Committee, for WHO and FAO to produce a more focussed document for consideration by CCFL and CCNFSDU.

Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you very much. This recommendation is in paragraph 84 in the report of last week's Executive Committee, document 28/3A. Can I ask the Commission if there are any objections to following the recommendation by the Executive Committee, or if there are any other comments? United Kingdom.

United Kingdom: Thank you Chairman.

The Member States of the European Community welcome the WHO discussion paper. They are convinced that clear and easily understandable nutrition labelling provides important information for consumers, and can help them to make healthier choices.

The Member States note that nutrition issues are already covered in the terms of reference of the Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses and the Committee on Food Labelling, and therefore agree with the Executive Committee that these two committees should play a central role in the action taken by Codex regarding the implementation of the WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health.

However, a more general reflection is needed as regards the global involvement of Codex in the field of nutrition, and in that context the report that is mentioned in paragraph 14 of the discussion paper would be welcome.

The Member States support the view that general consideration should be given as to how nutrition issues should be integrated into Codex work while retaining the current mandate of Codex.

The Member States therefore favour the consideration at the Commission level on this issue, as proposed by the 55th Session of the Executive Committee.

Thank you Chairman.

Chairman: Yes, thank you UK. Are there any more members of the Commission wish to say anything about this? I don't see any. NGO IFAP has asked for the floor.

IFAP (International Federation of Agricultural Producers): Thank you Chairman for giving us the floor. I'm speaking on behalf of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers, IFAP.

We are worried that the Global Strategy is giving so much attention to over-nutrition, and so little attention to under-nutrition. The strategy is really not written for the developing countries. For us it is astonishing that a global strategy for intake of food does not include in the main objectives the fight against hunger.

Under-nutrition is causing so many diseases, both communicable ones and non-communicable ones.

It's frightening that today 850 million people, or perhaps more, are suffering from serious hunger. And about 2 and a half billion are suffering from micronutrient deficiencies.

And more frightening is of course that we don't see any success in fighting hunger. The Director General of FAO, Dr. Diouf, said that the millennium development goal for 2015 of halving the number of people going around hungry. It may even take until the end of this century.

Of course, Mr. Chairman, you can wonder why we, the farmers, are so concerned about.....

Chairman: Can you round up your remarks please?

IFAP: I'm sorry. It is very simple. Amongst the 850 million people going around hungry, 50 percent are farmers. 25 percent, in addition, are farm labourers. So there are about three-quarters of those people going around hungry who live in farm country.

Chairman: Thank you.

IFAP: And I can assure you.....

Chairman: Thank you. Can you finish your remarks please?

IFAP:farm families, where many, many, many people.....

Chairman: Thank you. I give the floor to CIAA please.

IFAP:that are blind because of lack of 'A' vitamin. Many people get anaemia because of lack of iron. And.....

Chairman:can the speaker now finish please, you have gone way over your time. Can the messenger give the microphone to CIAA please?

IFAP:that the Global Strategy should take so much.....

Chairman: Can the messenger please take the microphone from the speaker and give it to CIAA please? CIAA please.

CIAA (Confederation of the Food and Drink Industries of the EU): CIAA supports LIM/6 and its conclusions that more time is required to identify actions to be taken by Codex. The CIAA has contributed to the work of many Codex committees over many years, including those committees that have been identified as most relevant to the Global Strategy, CCFL and CCFNSDU. The CIAA intends to continue its engagement in this work. As a committed stakeholder CIAA looks forward to participating in discussions on how Codex can assist with the implementation of the WHO Global Strategy. We would like to be involved in the preparation of the document to be discussed next year.

Thank you Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. ICGMA please.

ICGMA (International Council of Grocery Manufacturers): Thank you Mr. Chairman.

ICGMA, and in particular its United States member, the Grocery Manufacturers Association, also support the LIM/6 document. And I'd also like to point out that when the Global Strategy was announced last year, GMA, along with CIAA, very strongly endorsed the objectives of the world.....the Global Strategy.

We too also look forward to participating in the development of the document, and very appreciatively note in paragraph 14 WHO's commitment to solicit stakeholder input, and we're also glad to participate along with CIAA and other NGOs here at this meeting at a meeting in March in Geneva to begin that discussion with WHO and provide stakeholder input.

Thank you very much.

Chairman: Thank you. Consumers International please.

Consumers International: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, Consumers International wholeheartedly supports the contents of LIM/6, and the recommendations in para. 13 and 14. Many of our consumers in developing countries are poor, but it is a paradox to see that in a poor country, even the population that has food is ending up in bypass surgeries below the age of 40.

It is frightening to see young people, leading.....going astray, with little nutritional awareness, and we do believe that this strategy is well-timed, and that does not undermine in any way the resolve of other organizations, including ours, to take action to fight hunger throughout the world.

So while supporting, you know, banishment of hunger, we wholeheartedly support the WHO resolution, and we call upon WHO also to involve consumer organizations in spreading nutritional awareness in their communities, so that this major threat can be reduced.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. United States please.

United States: Thank you Mr. Chairman.

The first observer who intervened, although going on a bit long, did raise some very fundamental problems. A fundamental problem is how Codex, or any other international organization, can approach this subject, given the diversity of nutritional problems and nutritional status throughout the world.

The issue is compounded by the different dietary patterns, underlying disease states, the fact that chronic non-communicable diseases are multi-factorial, the fact that the probability of disease results from an overall lifetime dietary pattern and not from individual foods. The most effective approach to the problems raised is consumer education, not the restriction of consumer choices, and nutritional education is not within the mandate or expertise of Codex.

Mr. Chairman, this is just to say that Codex must very carefully study how Codex, within its mandate, can contribute to the implementation of the Global Strategy.

Thank you Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you. Switzerland please.

Switzerland: Switzerland is absolutely convinced that the implementation of the Global Strategy is of high importance. Therefore we would like to have first a clarification concerning of the procedure mentioned in para. 84 in the report of the Executive Committee.

In particular, we would like to have information when we will have the opportunity to discuss the outcome of these papers in the Commission.

Thank you Chair.

Chairman: Thank you. Well I think the response to the last question is when do document has been considered by the committees, then it will come back to the Commission forand it may go to the Executive Committees before I'm not sure what the timing is now but it will come back to the Commission after it has been to the.....the two committees concerned and they have given their views on it.

So the last speaker on this item, this particular item, NHF please.

NHF: Thank you Mr. Chairman.

The NHF agree wholeheartedly that the Global Strategy outlined is of crucial importance to global nutrition. We think that there would be space within the Codex mandate for Codex to consider such problems that are of such crucial importance.

We would also like input into any such document that might emanate from these discussions.

Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Well, what I've read up to now is that no Member of the Commission disagrees with the recommendation coming from the Executive Committee, that WHO, in cooperation with FAO, and that's important, should produce a more focussed document for consideration by the committees on food labelling and on nutrition and foods for special dietary uses, including specific proposals for new work.

And so that will certainly be a conclusion, but I give the floor to WHO if you want to make any comments on the comments.

WHO: Thank you Mr. Chairman, and I would like to thank everybody for the comments to the....just one quick point to the discussion of over-nutrition as against under-nutrition. There is a considerable double burden of over and under nutrition in this world, and if I may raise one other figure, the WHO estimates that we count about one billion overweight, including obese people, globally. So there is a considerable double burden between overweight and underweight people.

And you may also be aware that WHO has various strategies, including the Strategy on Infant and Young Child Nutrition, as well as the Global Strategy on Iodine Deficiency Elimination, so the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health is really a cousin, let's say, of the other strategies looking more to underweight, and this is why this particular strategy is really more focussed on, in an integrative multidisciplinary way, look at various risk factors, diet and physical activity, which are determining the major chronic diseases.

In terms of process, I have heard several representatives wanting to participate, and I would like to assure you that the process to develop this document will be transparent, that stakeholders will have a way to participate, that may be electronically, that may be physically, that we will definitely be in communication on that.

Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, then just to be clear as well, the point raised by United Kingdom, just for a check with the UK, that they pointed out that in paragraph 14 of document

LIM/6, there is some WHO activity, it says WHO, as the Organization responsible for implementing the Global Strategy, plans to undertake work to consider appropriate options for responding to the Commission's request to highlight actions. These efforts will be pursued in cooperation with FAO. And, as part of this effort, WHO will solicit stakeholder input. The goal would be to provide a report on these activities to the next session of the Commission. But, in addition to that, there was also this more specific items which we've just discussed about how, which is contained in the recommendation from the Executive Committee.

So these two things fit together.

And that, I think, takes care of this request to provide input into the whole business that have been expressed by several speakers.

Well, thank you very much. We are then finished on that part of that item.....

Transcribed from audio recordings available online in English at
ftp://ftp.fao.org/codex/audio/cac_28/audio_en.htm

See ftp://ftp.fao.org/codex/audio/cac_28/recordings_en/07-07-05%20PM%202.mp3
(Thursday , 7 July, 14:30-17:30, Part 2), and
ftp://ftp.fao.org/codex/audio/cac_28/recordings_en/07-07-05%20PM%203.mp3
(Thursday , 7 July, 14:30-17:30, Part 3).