

CCEURO Meets In The Hague

Written by Scott C. Tips
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Scott Tips attended the recent meeting of the European regional members of Codex (CCEURO) in The Hague, the Netherlands, from September 30th to October 1st. This is a meeting (held once every other year) by Codex Alimentarius member States of Europe where common regional interests are discussed as well as strategic plans laid.



The Chairman is Martijn Weijtens, the former chairman of the Codex Committee on Contaminants in Food, who was advanced up to the chairmanship of this regional committee for a very good reason: He is a master facilitator, smart, and loved by all. Always kind and gracious to the National Health Federation, at this most recent CCEURO meeting, he even publicly tipped his hat to NHF with a general announcement to the delegates that welcomed us to the meeting and recognized us as the only consumer organization in attendance.

At CCEURO, there were several agenda items but the ones of most interest to the NHF were the discussions about the Codex Strategic Plan 2014-2019 and the sudden withdrawal of the proposal for a regional standard for Ayran (a live, fermented-milk product common to Turkey).

Strategic Plan

Over the many years that the Federation has been following Codex, we have been pointing to the various five-year Codex Strategic Plans as proof positive that Codex standards and guidelines are intended for domestic (i.e., national) legislation. Codex is **not** just about international trade, despite the protestations of those who claim it is; and in numerous speeches and articles NHF has quoted language directly from those Plans to prove that Codex's intended food standards are all-dislodging, from top to bottom.

Interestingly enough, such language is now absent from this latest iteration of the Strategic Plan! Either someone has been listening to NHF and decided to hide Codex's plans or else Codex has changed its plans for national legislation. The CCEURO discussion, though, made it clear that Codex had not changed its plans at all when the Committee Chairman restated for the delegates that its objective was "to promote Codex standards as the basis for national legislation" and "to assist governments in harmonizing legislation to Codex standards." Q.E.D.

Ayran – Dead or Alive?

It was very simple. Turkey had proposed a Codex standard for Ayran, which is a refreshing, cold yogurt beverage mixed with salt. Such a standard would allow Turkish manufacturers to sell their products into the European Union market. Importantly, though, in the Turkish version, this drink contains live, healthful bacteria. In the German version (Germany has a large ethnic Turkish population), by law, ayran must always be heated, which naturally destroys the live bacteria. Hence, the dynamic tension at Codex between the Turks who want a healthful drink and the Germans who insist upon a "safe" killed version. The two could not agree upon a standard that would include the German's "dead" ayran and so the Turkish government withdrew its proposal entirely to create this standard for ayran. To its mind (and ours), ayran is not ayran unless it contains live bacteria. NHF's and others' suggestion to rename or affix "heat treated" wording to the German version went nowhere, so the unfortunate result is that real ayran may still not be sold into the EU from Turkey and other countries.

Overall, the CCEURO meeting was a successful one for the Federation as personal contacts were strengthened and bridges built for our future activities in other committees. The new Chairwoman of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, Ms. Awilo Pernet, was in attendance and her presence there added greatly to the meeting as well as the wisdom of NHF's own decision to attend.