

# Evolution of the cooperation between the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the Codex Alimentarius Commission

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## Summary

The Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement) of the World Trade Organization recognises the international standards adopted by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) in matters of animal health and zoonoses and those adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission (the Commission) in matters of food safety. The importance of the production phase in ensuring food safety has been acknowledged and the OIE and the Commission have been working to strengthen their cooperation since 2001, with the intent of promoting a holistic approach to the food chain.

Procedures for exchanging information are in place, communication has improved and there is cross-referencing between the respective international standards of the two organisations. Good examples of collaboration in the development of standards include the texts produced by the two organisations regarding meat inspection and animal/product identification and traceability.

At the same time, there is still room for improving cooperation and the legal services of the OIE, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Health Organization are expected to work together to find options for closer collaboration between the OIE and the Commission.

## Keywords

Animal health – Codex Alimentarius – Food – Food chain – Food safety – International standard – OIE – Sanitary measure – SPS Agreement – Trade – Veterinary Services – World Organisation for Animal Health – World Trade Organization – Zoonose.

## Introduction

In order to take a holistic approach to addressing the risks arising from the food chain, several countries have been encouraging coordination among stakeholders.

Approaches to food safety increasingly address the food chain in a unified way, leading to increased

complementarities between the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (hereinafter referred to as the Commission) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the need for coordination to avoid gaps and duplications.

The World Trade Organization (WTO), through its Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and

Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement), recognises the OIE and the Commission as the standard-setting bodies at the international level for issues of animal health and for food safety, respectively.

This paper begins by considering the relevance of animal health (including zoonoses) for an integrated approach to the food chain and then provides a brief introduction to the OIE and the Commission and an analysis of the evolution of their cooperation.

### An integrated approach to the food chain

The approach taken by the OIE and the Commission reflects the awareness of the international community concerning the importance of the animal production phase in regard to the rest of the food chain.

Many parts of the world have seen dramatic and continuous increases in human outbreaks of salmonellosis caused by infections in animals (16). Other important emerging foodborne zoonoses are *Campylobacter* spp., enterohaemorrhagic *Escherichia coli* (EHEC), *Toxoplasma gondii* and *Cryptosporidium parvum* (17). Chemicals are another significant source of foodborne diseases, although effects are often difficult to link with a particular food. Chemical contaminants in food include natural toxicants such as mycotoxins or environmental contaminants such as dioxins, mercury, lead, and radionuclides. Food additives, pesticides and veterinary drugs are widely used too and it is essential to ensure that these uses are safe (14).

A study conducted by the American Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) showed that a total of 6,647 outbreaks of foodborne disease were reported in the United States of America between 1998 and 2002. These outbreaks caused a reported 128,370 people to become ill. Among the 2,167 (33%) outbreaks for which the aetiology was determined, bacterial pathogens caused the largest percentage of outbreaks (55%) and the largest percentage of cases (55%). Among bacterial pathogens, *Salmonella* serotype Enteritidis accounted for the largest number of outbreaks and outbreak-related cases; *Listeria monocytogenes* accounted for the majority of deaths of any pathogen (1).

A report of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) indicates that a total of 6,860 foodborne outbreaks were reported in the European Union (EU) in 2004. The outbreaks affected 42,447 people, 9.8% of whom were hospitalised. Thirteen deaths were reported from these outbreaks. The most common cause of outbreaks in the EU in 2004 was *Salmonella*, which caused the largest number of outbreaks (73.9%) and by far the largest number of cases (68.9%). The second most common cause of outbreaks in the same period was *Campylobacter*. The report indicates that *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* are

currently the leading causes of foodborne bacterial gastroenteritis in the EU and it links infections caused by *S. Enteritidis* with poultry products and especially table eggs and egg products. Poultry, particularly broiler meat, is regarded as the single most important source of human campylobacteriosis, although other sources do exist (13).

Many African countries do not have adequate food security, resulting in a situation in which at least 60% of the food supply is imported to supplement local production. With around 75% of food in Africa purchased on the street, improvements in the food safety sector can have a huge impact on public health. Because there is not an effective food safety regime in place in most countries of the region, the safety of imported food cannot always be assured, adding to the risk of widespread food contamination. Improved food safety would help reduce the 2,000 deaths estimated to occur every day in Africa from food and waterborne diseases.

Several devastating outbreaks of foodborne diseases such as cholera, salmonellosis, EHEC, hepatitis A and acute aflatoxicosis have occurred in a number of African countries recently. In 2005, 34,000 cases of cholera due to contaminated water and food were reported in 30 countries with more than 1,000 deaths. It is thought that these outbreaks were only the tip of the iceberg since many more sporadic cases go unrecorded (15).

The figures provided above show the consequences that hazards originating from the production phase (the farm level) of the food chain can have on the final consumer through the consumption of food and water. To address this problem, which is relevant to both developed and developing countries, an integrated approach to the food chain is being promoted by the OIE and the Commission.

## What is the OIE?

In 1924, 28 founding Members agreed to create the OIE. The original aim of the organisation was to coordinate and to facilitate the international effort to battle the outbreaks of serious diseases that were affecting livestock.

Today the OIE is the intergovernmental organisation responsible for improving animal health worldwide. As of May 2007, it had a total of 169 Members (23) (Fig 1). The OIE maintains permanent relations with 20 other international and regional organisations and has regional and sub-regional offices on every continent. The OIE's priority missions are as follows:

a) Transparency of the animal disease situation worldwide  
Each Member has a commitment to inform the OIE of occurrences of animal diseases, including those



**Fig. 1**  
**The OIE International Committee at its 75th General Session**

transmissible to humans. The OIE then disseminates the information to all other countries so they can take the necessary steps to protect themselves. This monitoring, surveillance and information mission applies to both naturally occurring and deliberately caused animal disease events.

*b) Scientific excellence*

Through its worldwide scientific network, the OIE collects, analyses and publishes the latest scientific information on control methods for animal diseases, including those transmissible to humans. This information is intended to help Members to update and to improve their disease prevention and control methods.

*c) International support to developing countries and the role played by Veterinary Services*

The OIE endeavours to improve animal health throughout the world. The organisation operates to persuade governments, policy-makers and donors to show solidarity with developing countries and their Veterinary Services. Solidarity is also in everyone's interest since one single country infected with a disease can pose a threat to all other countries.

*d) Safety of international trade in animals and animal products*

The OIE develops standards for use by its Members to protect themselves from incursions of diseases or pathogens while avoiding unjustified sanitary barriers. The relations with the WTO SPS Agreement will be addressed later in this paper.

*e) Food safety*

The OIE's standard-setting activities in this field focus on eliminating hazards existing during production at the farm and prior to the slaughter of animals or the primary processing of animal products (meat, milk, eggs, etc.) that could pose a risk to consumers. To this end the OIE works

in close collaboration with the Commission and its parent organisations.

*f) Animal welfare*

Since it was created, the OIE has played a key role in its capacity as the sole intergovernmental reference organisation for animal health; it enjoys international recognition and benefits from the close collaboration it has with the Veterinary Services of all its Members. Due to the close relationship between animal health and animal welfare, the OIE has become, at the request of its Members, the leading international organisation for animal welfare and for the publication of standards and guidelines in this field.

The OIE acknowledges the relevance of its international standards and their implication in the SPS Agreement. The OIE process for developing and updating standards is flexible and allows for continuous improvement to standards, when justified by supporting scientific information. Draft texts for new or updated standards are developed by small groups of independent experts selected from all regions, reviewed by the relevant Specialist Commission and then circulated to Members for comment. These comments are then reviewed by the experts and the Specialist Commissions, and appropriate changes made before the texts are resubmitted to Members for adoption. Although the normal cycle for the adoption of new or updated standards is two years, the OIE process allows for modification of standards on an annual basis if warranted (12, 25).

## What is the Codex Alimentarius Commission?

The Codex Alimentarius Commission was established by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1963. Since its creation it has been responsible for implementing the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme. The objectives of the Programme are to protect the health of consumers, to ensure fair practices in the food trade, and to coordinate all food standards work.

The Commission is an intergovernmental body with a membership of 174 Member Countries and one Member Organisation as of June 2007. Membership is open to all Member Nations and Associated Members of FAO and/or WHO. In addition, observers from United Nations agencies, international intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations (representing international scientific associations, the food industry and trade and consumers) may attend sessions of the Commission and of

its subsidiary bodies (i.e. Codex committees and *ad hoc* Task Forces).

The Codex Alimentarius is a collection of food standards developed by the Commission and presented in a unified, codified manner, together with associated material such as codes of hygienic and good manufacturing practices, recognised methods of analysis, and general principles and guidelines. The Codex Alimentarius contains standards for all principal foods (whether processed, semi-processed or raw when they reach the consumer) and other recommendations relating to food quality, composition and safety.

The Commission is a rule-based organisation; the Statutes provide the legal basis for the Commission's work and formally reflect the concepts behind, and reasons for, its establishment. The Statutes and Rules of Procedures ensure that the Commission pursues its objectives in a disciplined way; in addition, the Rules of Procedures describe and formalise the Commission working procedures.

The elaboration of draft standards and related texts within Codex is undertaken by Codex subsidiary bodies, which are responsible for the preparation of draft texts for adoption by the Commission.

In 1995 and 1997 respectively, the Commission adopted the 'Statements of Principle Concerning the Role of Science in the Codex Decision-Making Process and the Extent to which Other Factors are Taken into Account' (10) and the 'Statements of Principle Relating to the Role of Food Safety Risk Assessment' (10), which confirmed the pre-eminent role of science and risk assessment in Codex decision-making processes. In 2003, the Commission adopted 'Working Principles for Risk Analysis for Application in the Framework of the Codex Alimentarius' (10), which provide guidance to ensure that the food safety and health aspects of Codex standards and related texts are based on risk analysis. Both the Strategic Framework 2003-2007 and the Strategic Plan 2008-2013, adopted by the 30th session of the Commission (2007), emphasise the science-based nature of Codex work.

The process of risk analysis is fundamental to the scientific basis of Codex standards developed to protect the health of consumers. It is also because of this scientific basis that Codex is referenced by the WTO as the international benchmark for food safety standards. Codex receives expert scientific advice from the FAO/WHO standing committees, such as the Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA), the Joint Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR) and other expert consultations convened by FAO and WHO on an *ad hoc* basis to respond to specific requests of Codex.

## The context of the Codex Alimentarius and OIE standards

The SPS Agreement entered into force with the establishment of the WTO on 1 January 1995. It concerns the application of food safety and animal and plant health regulations to international trade. It recognises the fundamental right of countries to protect the health and life of their consumers, animals, and plants against pests, diseases, and other threats to health. One of the intents of the SPS Agreement is the establishment of a multilateral framework of rules to guide the development, adoption and enforcement of sanitary and phytosanitary measures in order to minimise their negative effects on trade.

Article 2 of the SPS Agreement clarifies that SPS protection measures must be based on either a relevant international standard (established by an international standard-setting organisation recognised by the SPS Agreement) or a science-based risk assessment.

Annex A of the SPS Agreement clearly recognises that the relevant international standards, guidelines and recommendations for food safety are those adopted by the Commission, while for animal health and zoonoses the relevant standards are those adopted by the OIE (26).

During 2006, 28 specific trade concerns were brought to the attention of the SPS Committee, 10 of which were new issues. Overall, 6 issues (21%) related to food safety, 10 issues (35%) to plant health, and 11 issues (39%) to animal health and zoonoses, which included issues that were also relevant to food safety, e.g. transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs) (27).

Considering the implications of the SPS Agreement both the Commission and the OIE acknowledge the need to cooperate in promoting a holistic approach to the food chain continuum.

## Collaboration between OIE and the Codex Alimentarius Commission – development of the discussion and decisions

In 2001 Dr Bernard Vallat (the OIE Director General) and Mr Thomas Billy (the Chairperson of the Commission at that time) initiated an informal discussion to seek ways of enhancing cooperation between the two standard-setting bodies. Since then the OIE and the Commission have been

actively debating how to improve their cooperation in order to ensure a consistent approach to food safety throughout the entire food chain.

Both OIE and Codex Members have expressed the wish to further strengthen the collaboration between the two organisations in order to avoid gaps and duplications in the standard-setting process. Below, the authors describe the main developments of the debate so far.

## The OIE perspective

The 3rd OIE Strategic Plan for 2001-2005 recommended that the OIE should be more active in the area of public health and consumer protection and noted that this should include zoonoses and diseases transmissible to humans through food, whether or not animals are affected by such diseases or pathogens, with the objective of improving the production to consumption food safety continuum worldwide.

In 2001, at the 69th OIE General Session, Mr Thomas Billy was invited to make an address. Speaking to the OIE International Committee, he referred to the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the OIE and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) as the 'three sisters' and stressed the need to explore the possibilities for future collaboration between these international standard-setting bodies. In this same session, OIE Delegates recommended that horizontal chapters of the OIE *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* (OIE *Terrestrial Code*) be harmonised, as far as practicable, with similar horizontal provisions drawn up by the other 'sisters' under the SPS Agreement (19).

To study options for implementing the 3rd Strategic Plan, the OIE *Ad hoc* Group on Food Safety was convened in 2002. Its conclusions were that a clear definition of the OIE's role in food safety, and the coordination and integration of the food safety activities of the OIE and the Commission would enhance the scope and scientific quality of international standards, guidelines and related texts, facilitate risk-based approaches, and genuinely address the 'production-to-consumption' exposure pathway for foodborne hazards while reinforcing the credibility of the SPS Agreement.

In May 2002, the OIE International Committee debated the conclusions of this *ad hoc* Group and adopted Resolution XV (Food Safety Mandate of the OIE). Implementing this Resolution, the Director General of the OIE established a permanent Working Group on Animal Production Food Safety to coordinate the food safety activities of the OIE. The Resolution indicates that OIE Members are in favour of the coordination and integration of the food safety activities of the OIE and the

Commission. It recognises that Members are strengthening both institutional structures and regulatory frameworks, and incorporating 'shared responsibility' for food safety, which leads to greater coordination within national authorities. The Resolution also indicates that the goal of the OIE regarding animal production food safety should be to reduce foodborne risks to human health due to hazards (a biological, chemical or physical agent in, or a condition of, food with the potential to cause an adverse health effect) arising from animals, in collaboration with appropriate international agencies. Despite the fact that historically the OIE has mainly been concerned with animal health and zoonoses, this Resolution broadens the scope of the OIE and requires it to be more active in the area of public health and consumer protection. This new approach includes in the remit of the OIE zoonoses and diseases transmissible to humans through the food chain, whether or not animals are affected by such diseases or pathogens (20).

One of the Working Group's roles is to help the OIE define more precisely its policies on the development of standards aimed at protecting consumers from foodborne hazards arising from animals at the production level of the food chain. The Working Group includes in its membership high level experts from FAO, WHO, the Commission and the Codex subsidiary bodies, and reflects a broad geographical basis.

The Working Group has met six times since its creation in 2002 and has addressed several issues of relevance for both the OIE and the Commission, as follows:

- the relationship and coordination between the OIE and the Commission
- a review of the OIE *Terrestrial Code* chapters on bovine tuberculosis and bovine brucellosis
- the role and functionality of Veterinary Services in food safety
- the control of hazards of public health and animal health importance through *ante-* and *post-mortem* meat inspection
- Codex Committee on Meat Hygiene
- bovine spongiform encephalopathy
- identification and traceability of live animals
- guide to good farming practices
- antimicrobial resistance
- animal feeding
- OIE model certificates
- salmonellosis
- OIE activities on biotechnology.

Several of these points are still on the work plan of the Working Group (18, 22). The OIE International Committee asked the Working Group to continue in its efforts to minimise gaps and duplications between OIE and Codex international standards (23).

The recently adopted 4th OIE Strategic Plan retains three key elements from the previous Plan:

- provision of international disease information
- development and implementation of science-based standards
- provision of recommended methods for the prevention, control and eradication of animal diseases (including zoonoses) and the determination of animal health status.

Two new strategic elements have been added:

- capacity building
- the strengthening of the OIE's influence in policy design, research and governance in animal health and welfare.

Under the heading of development and implementation of science-based standards, the Plan stresses the need for renewing the OIE mandate in animal production food safety and recommends that the Working Group continue to work with other relevant organisations, especially the Commission, in reducing foodborne risks to human health due to hazards arising from animals (21).

In May 2007, at the 75th OIE General Session, Dr Claude J.S. Mosha, Chairperson of the Commission, was invited to make an address. Speaking to the OIE International Committee, he recognised the need for Codex to work closely with other international standard-setting and regulatory bodies on matters of common interest, to achieve complementarity. He also stressed the need to seek cooperation at regional and national level (23).

## The Commission's perspective

The Commission Strategic Framework for 2003-2007 and the new Strategic Plan 2008-2013, recognise that the Commission does not operate in isolation and that it must work closely on matters of common interest with other relevant international organisations to achieve complementarity, avoid duplications and prevent the development of contradictory standards. Both the Strategic Framework for 2003-2007 and the Strategic Plan 2008-2013 state that the Commission should consider the establishment or promotion of cooperation with other relevant international intergovernmental organisations, in

particular the OIE and IPPC, to ensure effective collaboration and coordination, in line with the 'Guidelines on Cooperation between the Codex Alimentarius Commission and International Intergovernmental Organizations in the Elaboration of Standards and Related Texts', adopted by the Commission in 2005 and included in the *Procedural Manual of the Codex Alimentarius Commission* (the document intended to help Member Governments participate effectively in the work of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme [10]).

The first Article of the Statutes of the Commission states that one of the objectives of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme is '... promoting coordination of all food standards work undertaken by international governmental and non-governmental organizations' (10). This Article implies that international governmental and non-governmental organisations other than the Commission may undertake work in the area of food standards and it requires the Commission to coordinate this work. Consistent with this Article, the Commission's *Procedural Manual* contains the eight-step 'Uniform Procedure for the Elaboration of Codex Standards and Related Texts', which allows work to be undertaken by a body other than a subsidiary body while at the same time maintaining the authority of the Commission to consider the draft texts at steps 5 and 8 of the procedure. In the past, the ability of the Commission to entrust the elaboration of standards to a body other than a subsidiary body has been used for some Codex standards, including the standards for quick frozen foods, for fruit juices and for table olives. It should be noted that in the case of milk and milk products or individual standards for cheeses, the Codex Secretariat distributes the texts developed by a non-governmental organisation (International Dairy Federation) for comments as per step 3 of the uniform elaboration procedure (10).

The Commission first addressed the topic of relations between the Commission and other international intergovernmental organisations at its 24th session in 2001. During the discussion Dr Bernard Vallat, on behalf of the OIE, stated that there was a need to increase coordination and integration between Codex and the OIE to secure the best available scientific and technical advice and to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort. The Commission made reference to Article I of its Statutes as well as to step 1 of the uniform elaboration procedure, which provides for the allocation of work items to bodies other than subsidiary bodies.

The issue was first discussed by the Codex Committee on General Principles (CCGP) at its 17th session (in April 2002), during which it asked the Codex Secretariat to draft specific guidelines to define more precisely the modalities of

cooperation between the Commission and other international intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations when elaborating standards and related texts (2).

At the three following sessions, the CCGP discussed the document that the Secretariat developed, which identified three types of cooperation:

- a) the elaboration of a joint standard or related text with a cooperating organisation
- b) the elaboration of a Codex standard or related text by a cooperating organisation on behalf of the Commission
- c) substantial cooperation at the initial drafting stages of a Codex standard or related text.

The first type of cooperation (i.e. elaboration of joint standards) was not supported by CCGP because of the technical problems that could arise due to differences of procedures and membership with the cooperating organisation and because this type of cooperation could result in increased cost and substantial delays. The second type of cooperation (i.e. elaboration by a cooperating organisation) was not supported either because of the different procedures and different degree of transparency of the cooperating organisation and the difficulties that some developing countries might face in participating in the work of other organisations.

At its 20th session (in May 2004) the CCGP agreed to ask the Secretariat to prepare draft Guidelines based on the third type of cooperation (i.e. cooperation at initial drafting stages) taking into account the relationship with organisations referred to under the SPS Agreement (3).

The 21st extraordinary session of the CCGP (in November 2004) finalised the 'Guidelines on Cooperation between the Codex Alimentarius Commission and International Intergovernmental Organisations in the Elaboration of Standards and Related Texts' which were adopted by the 28th session of the Commission (in July 2005) and included in the *Procedural Manual* (6, 7).

At the 26th session of the Commission (in July 2003) the Joint FAO/WHO Evaluation of the Codex Alimentarius and other FAO and WHO Work on Food Standards had been presented; the Commission had endorsed the recommendation by the Evaluation Team and Panel that Codex and the OIE should intensify their collaboration to minimise overlaps and avoid gaps in standard setting, so as to ensure a farm-to-fork approach to the safety of foods of animal origin.

At its 28th meeting (in July 2005), the Commission expressed its appreciation for the active participation of the OIE in the work of Codex and reiterated its interest for

strengthening this cooperation. The Commission endorsed the recommendations proposed by the 55th session of its Executive Committee related to the collaboration between the Commission and the OIE. These recommendations encouraged the OIE to continue to participate actively in the standard-setting work of the Commission, namely in the work of relevant subsidiary bodies. They invited the OIE to regularly submit to the Commission and its relevant subsidiary bodies, reports on its activities, while these subsidiary bodies continue to seek ways to improve cooperation with the OIE in their respective areas of work and inform the Executive Committee of their decisions/recommendations accordingly.

The Commission also noted the recommendation of the Executive Committee that the effectiveness of cooperative arrangements being made between the Commission and the OIE should be reviewed by the 30th session of the Commission in 2007, with a view to considering if further arrangements would be necessary or desirable. This revision would need to give particular consideration to the provisions mentioned in paragraph 13 of the 'Guidelines on Cooperation between the Commission and other Intergovernmental Organisations in the Elaboration of Standards and Related Texts' (i.e. the need for FAO and WHO to conclude appropriate agreements with cooperating organisations) (7, 10).

At the 30th session of the Commission (in July 2007) the Director General of the OIE stated that it would be appropriate to formalise the relationship between the OIE and the Commission by strengthening the legal basis for the production of international standards, including the development of joint OIE-Codex standards, where appropriate. He encouraged the Commission to recommend that OIE, FAO and WHO legal services work together with a view to eventually updating their existing mutual cooperation agreements to enable the adoption of common OIE and Codex standards.

The Commission concluded its discussion by noting the ongoing substantial cooperation between Codex and the OIE and recognised the need to further strengthen this collaboration on substantive matters. The Commission recommended that FAO and WHO study the possibility of reviewing or updating FAO and WHO Agreements with the OIE, as might be required (11).

## Concrete results of OIE/Codex collaboration

The cooperation between the OIE and the Commission has already improved the exchange of information and cross-referencing between the respective international standards.

Good examples where cross-referencing has been successfully applied are:

- the OIE *Terrestrial Code* Appendix on 'Identification and Traceability of Live Animals' (24) and the Codex 'Principles for Traceability/Product Tracing as a Tool within a Food Inspection and Certification System' – CAC/GL 60/2006 (8)
- the OIE *Terrestrial Code* Appendix on 'Guidelines for the Control of Biological Hazards of Animal Health and Public Health Importance through Ante- and Post-Mortem Meat Inspection' (24) and the Codex 'Code of Hygienic Practice for Meat' – CAC/RCP 58-2005 (4).

In the process of updating its model certificates, the OIE has been working with the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) and the Codex Committee on Milk and Milk Products (CCMMP) to provide a comprehensive approach to the certification process of the food chain. The current proposal for new model veterinary certificates in the OIE *Terrestrial Code*, the revised Codex 'Guidelines for Design, Production, Issuance and Use of Generic Official Certificates' – CAC/GL 38-2001 (9) and the proposed draft 'Model Export Certificate for Milk and Milk Products' take into account the work done by both the OIE and the Commission.

Another example of cooperation between the Commission and the OIE relates to the issue of antimicrobial resistance. The 'Codex Code of Practice to Minimise and Contain Antimicrobial Resistance' – CAC/RCP 61-2005 (5) takes full account of and cross-references to specific provisions of the OIE 'Guidelines for Antimicrobial Resistance: Responsible and Prudent Use of Antimicrobial Agents in Veterinary Medicine'. Following a suggestion of the 53rd session of the Executive Committee of the Commission to address the issue of antimicrobial resistance, worldwide consultations of experts were launched in Geneva (2003) and Oslo (2004) by WHO, FAO and the OIE, followed by expert meetings in Seoul (2006) and Copenhagen (2007), with a view to gathering all available scientific data and preparing a common action plan for the future. Based on the recommendations of these expert consultations, the OIE offered to work jointly with the Commission in developing joint standards addressing antimicrobial resistance. At its 29th session, the Commission considered the logistical and legal problems related to a joint Codex/OIE standard and considered it appropriate to establish a Codex *ad hoc* Intergovernmental Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance, the terms of reference of which foresee that the work will be done in close collaboration with the OIE. The OIE was concerned about the lack of a legal basis for creating joint Codex/OIE standards and this was a technical obstacle that could not be overcome.

## Conclusions

Both the OIE and the Commission have acknowledged the usefulness of working together and strengthening their collaboration. Members of the OIE and the Commission have expressed their wish for closer cooperation between the two organisations while recognising the accomplishments already achieved. Strengthened collaboration has resulted in a better exchange of information between the OIE and the Commission, a reduction of gaps and duplication in their work and the setting of more coherent standards.

The authors are of the opinion that after the positive initial phase of cooperation, both the OIE and the Commission, may move forward and further strengthen their collaboration on more substantive matters, including the possibility of updating the existing agreements between the OIE and FAO and WHO and for establishing a joint Codex/OIE standard-setting process.

The authors consider that these efforts would contribute to the establishment of more coherent standards, thus facilitating the implementation of the SPS Agreement.

The authors consider the following to be concrete steps towards improving cooperation between the two organisations:

- the OIE proposal to explore the possibility of updating the existing agreements between FAO, WHO and the OIE to facilitate the establishment of an appropriate joint Codex/OIE standard-setting process
- the recommendation of the Commission (at its 30th session) that FAO and WHO study the possibility of reviewing or updating FAO and WHO Agreements with the OIE, as might be required
- the request of the Commission to the Codex Secretariat to identify, in cooperation with the Legal Offices of FAO and WHO, any practical problems affecting the cooperation between Codex and the OIE that might need to be addressed in a pragmatic manner (11).

In addition to the efforts of the OIE and the Commission to find ways of improving their cooperation at international level, it is also essential that coordination between public health and animal health sectors be strengthened at national level.

Action should be taken both at national and international level to promote an integrated approach to the food chain. In view of the differences in structures and mandates

between the OIE and the Commission, particular attention should be given to the legal aspects and the possible options for strengthening cooperation, which would result in an increased assurance of food safety and an optimisation of resources.

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# Évolution de la coopération entre l'Organisation mondiale de la santé animale (OIE) et la Commission du Codex alimentarius

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### Résumé

Aux termes de l'Accord sur l'Application des mesures sanitaires et phytosanitaires (Accord SPS) de l'Organisation mondiale du commerce, les normes élaborées par l'Organisation mondiale de la santé animale (OIE) couvrent le domaine de la santé animale et des zoonoses, tandis que celles élaborées par la Commission du Codex alimentarius (CCA) s'appliquent à la sécurité sanitaire des aliments. L'importance de contrôler la phase de production pour garantir la sécurité sanitaire des aliments est un principe acquis ; depuis 2001, l'OIE et la CCA s'efforcent de renforcer leurs liens de coopération dans le but de promouvoir une approche holistique de la chaîne alimentaire.

Des procédures de partage d'information sont en place, la communication a été améliorée et des renvois réciproques entre les normes respectives des deux organisations ont été établis. Les textes produits par les deux organisations sur l'inspection des viandes et sur l'identification et la traçabilité des animaux et des produits d'origine animale sont de bons exemples de cette collaboration dans le domaine normatif.

En même temps, cette collaboration étant perfectible à maints égards, les services juridiques respectifs de l'OIE, de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'alimentation et l'agriculture et de l'Organisation mondiale de la santé sont à pied d'œuvre pour tracer les voies possibles d'une collaboration renforcée entre l'OIE et la CCA.

### Mots-clés

Accord SPS – Chaîne alimentaire – Codex alimentarius – Commerce – Denrée alimentaire – Mesure sanitaire – Norme internationale – OIE – Organisation mondiale du commerce – Organisation mondiale de la santé animale – Sécurité sanitaire des aliments – Service vétérinaire – Zoonose. ■

## Evolución de la cooperación entre la Organización Mundial de Sanidad Animal (OIE) y la Comisión del Codex Alimentarius

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### Resumen

En el Acuerdo sobre la Aplicación de Medidas Sanitarias y Fitosanitarias (Acuerdo MSF) de la Organización Mundial del Comercio (OMC) se reconocen como normas de referencia internacional las que tiene aprobadas la Organización Mundial de Sanidad Animal (OIE) en materia de sanidad animal y zoonosis y las de la Comisión del Codex Alimentarius (la Comisión) en materia de salubridad de los alimentos. Conscientes de la importancia que reviste la fase de producción para garantizar la higiene de los alimentos, la OIE y la Comisión vienen trabajando desde 2001 para estrechar aún más su colaboración a fin de promover planteamientos holísticos, que abarquen la totalidad de la cadena alimentaria.

Ya están en marcha procedimientos de intercambio de información, la comunicación ha mejorado y hay referencias cruzadas entre las respectivas normas internacionales de ambas organizaciones. Como buen ejemplo de colaboración en la elaboración de normas cabe citar los textos redactados por ambas organizaciones sobre la inspección de productos cárnicos o sobre la identificación y rastreabilidad de animales y productos de origen animal.

Al mismo tiempo, las relaciones de cooperación son todavía perfectibles, y es de esperar que los servicios jurídicos de la OIE, la Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Agricultura y la Alimentación (FAO) y la Organización Mundial de la Salud (OMS) trabajen conjuntamente para encontrar fórmulas que propicien una colaboración más estrecha entre la OIE y la Comisión.

### Palabras clave

Acuerdo MSF – Alimento – Cadena alimentaria – Codex Alimentarius – Comercio – Medida sanitaria – Norma internacional – OIE – Organización Mundial de Sanidad Animal – Organización Mundial del Comercio – Salubridad de los alimentos – Sanidad animal – Servicio Veterinario – Zoonosis.



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