



Federal Ministry
of Food
and Agriculture

50 Years

Codex Committee on Foods for Special Dietary Uses (CCFSDU)/ Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (CCNFSDU)

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How it all began

The establishment of a Codex Committee for dietetic foods was a European initiative. The Coordinating Committee for Europe, set up by the Codex Alimentarius Commission (herein below referred to as the Commission) at its second session in 1964, discussed at its very first session in 1965 the proposal to set up a Codex Committee on Dietetic Foods. The Coordinating Committee submitted a recommendation to the Commission to transfer responsibility for the new European Codex Committee on Dietetic Foodstuffs to the Federal Republic of Germany as its Federal Ministry of Health was already working on legislation on dietetic foods and therefore had experience in this area. On behalf of the Coordinating Committee the delegations of the Federal Republic of Germany and the United Kingdom elaborated proposals for a definition of “dietetic foods” and the terms of reference for the new Committee.

At its third session in 1965 the Commission approved the proposal of the Coordinating Committee for Europe to establish a *Codex Committee on Dietetic Foods* under the chairmanship of the Federal Republic of Germany. Its initial task was to prepare European regional standards as the first steps towards worldwide standards.

The Commission approved the proposed definition for “dietetic foods” and the terms of reference submitted by the Coordinating Committee. Under these terms of reference the new Committee was to elaborate general guidelines, principles and standards for dietetic foods and particular requirements for some explicitly mentioned categories of dietetic foods. These categories were incorporated into a list of priorities: the new Committee was to give the highest priority to foods for nursing mothers, infants and the aged. The Committee was then to draw up specific requirements for diabetic foods and sugar substitutes followed by, in this order of priority, low-sodium foods, salt substitutes, gluten-free foods, starch-reduced foods and other significant dietetic additives (e.g. calcium and iron compounds). The terms of reference likewise included consideration of whether specific labelling requirements for dietetic foods were necessary. This was to be done in consultation with the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL).

First session of the Codex Committee on Dietetic Foods

The first session of the Codex Committee on Dietetic Foods was held in Freiburg/Germany from 2 to 5 Mai 1966. Dr. h.c. Edmund Forschbach, Head of Directorate in the Federal Ministry of Health chaired the session. Delegates from eight countries and observers from three international organisations, a total of 30 persons, attended the session. The main topics discussed at the first session were the Guidelines for the Elaboration of Standards for Dietetic Foods along with the definition of dietetic foods and the description of the different categories of dietetic foods. Corresponding working documents had been prepared by the German secretariat of the new Committee. Furthermore, the Committee decided to immediately start work on the development of standards or guidelines for the individual categories of dietetic foods. For each individual category one of the delegations declared its willingness to prepare discussion papers for the next session of the Committee.

At its 4th session in 1967 the Commission approved the Committee's proposals and decided that the Codex Committee on Dietetic Foods should be authorised to elaborate worldwide standards but that, where it was not found possible by the Committee to reach agreement on a worldwide standard, it would retain its authority to proceed with the elaboration of regional standards. Furthermore, the Federal Republic of Germany was confirmed as the responsible host country for the Committee.

Extension of the terms of reference and change in the name of the Committee

Based on a proposal of the Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CCEXEC), the Codex Committee on Dietetic Foods changed its name at its 2nd session in November 1967 and replaced "dietetic foods" with the wider term "foods for special dietary uses". The aim was to make it clear that the terms of reference of the Committee cover both dietary foods, the use of which was connected with morbid conditions of the human body and also foods for special dietary purposes, intended for certain groups of healthy people. The Commission approved this proposal at its 5th session in 1968. The name Codex Committee on Foods for Special Dietary Uses, abbreviated CCFSDU, was valid until 1987.

The Commission discussed at its 13th session in 1979 how to respond to the increased interest of the Commission and the Codex Committees in nutritional aspects. The Commission decided to recruit a consultant to prepare a discussion paper on these topics. At its 12th session in 1980 the CCFSDU addressed this topic and came to the conclusion that it was the appropriate committee to deal with nutritional aspects. The Commission was asked to consider an appropriate revision of the Committee's terms of reference.

At its 14th session in 1981 the Commission supported the recommendations of the CCFSDU and the consultant in his report

“Nutrition and the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission” to assign nutritional aspects in conjunction with Codex work to the CCFSDU, and to amend the terms of reference accordingly. In line with the remit assigned by the Commission, the CCFSDU elaborated, at the following sessions, a revised version of its terms of reference which were approved by the Commission at its 15th session in 1983, and discussed changing the name of the Committee. At its 15th session in 1987 the CCFSDU then decided to ask the Commission to change the name of the Committee to Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (in short CCNFSDU) so as to fully reflect its new extended terms of reference in its name. The Commission adopted the proposal at its 17th session in 1987. The terms of reference were once again amended in 1997 and a change in name, based on a proposal of CCEXEC at its 41st session in 1995, was discussed. However, no change was made.

Terms of Reference des CCNFSDU (Procedural Manual, Twenty-fifth edition, 2016):

- (a) to study specific nutritional problems assigned to it by the Commission and advise the Commission on general nutrition issues;*
- (b) to draft general provisions, as appropriate, concerning the nutritional aspects of all foods;*
- (c) to develop standards, guidelines or related texts for foods for special dietary uses, in cooperation with other committees where necessary;*
- (d) to consider, amend if necessary, and endorse provisions on nutritional aspects proposed for inclusion in Codex standards, guidelines and related texts.*

Achievements and Challenges

From the very outset the CCFSDU worked extensively on the tasks assigned to it. There were already so many topics on the Committee's agenda by its 3rd session that it decided not to start work on any new ones before the documents in progress had been finalised. Up to the introduction of electronic working groups, there were numerous meetings of ad hoc working groups of the Committee. These working groups normally met immediately prior to the Committee sessions and prepared the discussions in the Committee. For instance, in 1985 there were four working group meetings in the run-up to the CCFSDU session, including the Working Group on Methods of Analysis and Sampling that was active for many years. In addition to physical working groups CCFSDU started in 2000 to establish electronic working groups which focussed on specific tasks between the Committee sessions. In this way the Committee sessions could be prepared more efficiently and the work could be speeded up.

A number of Codex texts could be elaborated in a speedy manner. For instance already at the 2nd session of CCFSDU the Codex Guidelines for the Elaboration of Standards for Foods for Special Dietary Uses were finally discussed and forwarded to the Commission for adoption. The first draft standard to be submitted by the CCFSDU for adoption by the Commission was the Draft Standard for Special Dietary Foods with Low Sodium Content (including Salt Substitutes) once the deliberations had been concluded at its 5th session in 1970. At its 8th session in 1971 the Commission adopted the Draft Standard at Step 8.

As the number of countries and international organisations that attended the CCFSDU/CCNFSDU sessions grew, so did the spectrum of opinions. This meant that the elaboration of draft standards now took more time and, in some cases, became more difficult as, in line with Codex rules, all delegations of Member Countries (and the European Union since its accession to the Codex

Alimentarius Commission at the end of 2003) and of the international organisations are entitled to present their views and arguments. This resulted in a need for more discussion and consultation in order to respect all their interests. The Committee discussed some draft standards over a period of several years and worked intensively on finding a compromise until a consensus could be reached. One example for this is the Codex Standard for Infant Formula. Foods for infants and young children and the development of standards for these foods were already discussed at the Committee's first session. However, the Committee began by elaborating general requirements for these products, the General Principles for Foods for Infants and Children. They covered, for instance, general aspects of the composition, purity requirements, use of food additives and general labelling requirements which had been approved at the Committee's 3rd session in 1968. Detailed requirements were to be laid down in individual standards for the specific product groups. At the Committee's 4th session in 1969 deliberations on a Draft Standard for Infant Formula began. The final deliberations of the Draft Standard were undertaken at its 9th session in 1975 and then adopted by the Commission at Step 8. At the following sessions various amendments to the Standard, like for instance the use of food additives, were discussed and approved. Also the implications for the work of this Committee arising from the WHO International Code on the Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes were discussed intensively and resulted in an amendment to the Standard. Finally, the Committee decided at its 19th session in 1995 to undertake a complete review of the Standard. After very difficult, year-long deliberations a consensus was reached at its 28th session in 2006, and the new Codex Standard for Infant Formula and Formulas for Special Medical Purposes Intended for Infants was recommended to the Commission for adoption at Step 8. The Commission then adopted the Standard at its 30th session in 2007.

Also the elaboration of a Codex Standard for Follow-up Formula was a very time-consuming piece of work particularly as the views about

this kind of milk-based food for older infants and young children differed considerably in the Member Countries. Work began in 1975 and could only be concluded ten years later at the Committee's 15th session in 1987. Now CCNFSDU has been working for several years on a complete revision of the Standard in order to take new scientific knowledge and new developments in infant and baby nutrition into account.

Over the years other standards and guidelines for foods for special dietary uses have been elaborated and then either partially or completely revised at a later date. The product-related standards and guidelines developed by the CCFSDU/CCNFSDU are listed in Table 1.

- Standard for Special Dietary Foods with Low Sodium Content (including Salt Substitutes)
- Standard for Infant Formula and Formulas for Special Medical Purposes Intended for Infants
- Standard for Follow-up formula
- Advisory Lists of Nutrient Compounds for Use in Foods for Special Dietary Uses intended for Infants and Young Children
- Standard for Processed Cereal-Based Foods for Infants and Young Children
- Guidelines on Formulated Complementary Foods for Older Infants and Young Children
- Standard for Canned Baby Foods
- Standard for Foods for Special Dietary Use for Persons Intolerant to Gluten
- Standard for Labelling of and Claims for Foods for Special Medical Purposes
- Standard for Formula Foods for Use in Weight Control Diets
- Standard for Formula Foods for Use in Very Low Energy Diets for Weight Reduction
- Guidelines for Vitamin and Mineral Food Supplements

Product-related standards and guidelines

After extension of the terms of reference to include nutritional aspects, these aspects played a major role in the work of the CCNFSDU. The Committee set up an Ad hoc Working Group on Nutritional Aspects of Codex Standards and Related Matters and discussed numerous questions in this field like, for instance, the iodisation of food-grade salt, non-nutritive fat replacers, ways of addressing the concern over excessive intakes of fat, sugars and sodium and the inadequate intake of fibre. The Committee elaborated fundamental documents like the Guidelines for the Use of Codex Committees on the Inclusion of Provisions on Nutritional Quality in Food Standards and other Codex Texts (adopted by the Commission in 1987 and revoked in 1997) and the General Principles for the Addition of Essential Nutrients to Foods (adopted by the Commission in 1987, review completed in 2014, revised version adopted by the Commission in 2015).

Special mention should also be made of the Nutritional Risk Analysis Principles and Guidelines for Application to the Work of the Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses. Codex nutritional risk analysis addresses nutrients and related substances and the risk to health from their inadequate and/or excessive intake. The Nutritional Risk Analysis and Guidelines underwent final deliberation by the CCNFSDU at its 30th session in 2008 and were submitted to the Commission for adoption at Step 8. After adoption by the Commission at its session in 2009 the document was included in the Procedural Manual.

The CCNFSDU addressed nutritional topics, particularly also in conjunction with the Guidelines on Nutrition Labelling and the Guidelines for Use of Nutrition and Health Claims elaborated under the lead of the CCFL. Already at its 12th session in 1980 the CCNFSDU asked the Codex Secretariat to ensure that the Draft Guidelines on Nutrition Labelling, which had been discussed at that time by the CCFL, were referred to the CCNFSDU for consideration as they related to scientific matters that came under the expertise

and competence of the Committee. After the corresponding extension of the terms of reference the CCNFSDU elaborated, for instance, Nutrient Reference Values (NRVs) for vitamins and minerals for labelling purposes, a definition for dietary fibres and further definitions as well as the General Principles for Establishing Nutrient Reference Values for the General Population for inclusion in the Guidelines on Nutrition Labelling.

The CCFL asked the CCNFSDU for advice on various aspects of the Guidelines for Use of Nutrition and Health Claims. Significant parts of the Guidelines, like the Table of Conditions for Nutrient Content Claims and the Recommendations on the Scientific Substantiation of Health Claims in the Annex to the Guidelines, were elaborated by the CCNFSDU.

At the request of the Commission the CCNFSDU also considered the question of how the WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, which had been adopted in 2004 by the World Health Assembly, could be implemented within the framework of its terms of reference. In consultation with the CCFL, the CCNFSDU proposed revising and supplementing the existing NRVs for vitamins and minerals, and elaborating NRVs for other nutrients that are associated with increased or decreased risks of non-communicable diseases (NRVs-NCD) for inclusion in the Guidelines for Nutrition Labelling. In recent years the CCNFSDU has established NRVs-NCD for saturated fatty acids, sodium and potassium. After approval by the Commission they were taken over into the Guidelines. For several years now the CCNFSDU has been working on a review of the existing NRVs for vitamins and minerals (NRVs-R) and the establishment of NRVs-R for further vitamins and minerals. This work is now almost completed.

The Committee has repeatedly discussed the question of scientific advice for the CCNFSDU. At its 16th session in 1988 the CCNFSDU came to the conclusion, after in-depth discussions, that

there was no need to establish a new Joint Expert Committee on Nutrition on a standing basis. It was sufficient to convene ad hoc expert meetings on specific issues on which the Committee was in need of scientific advice. In the meantime FAO and WHO have put in place a procedure, the Joint Expert Meeting on Nutrition (JEMNU), which allows the CCNFSDU to seek scientific expert advice on concrete issues.

CCFSDU/ CCNFSDU in figures

At the Committee's 1st session 30 participants attended. The number of participating countries and international organisations rose steadily, particularly as the level of interest in the Committee's work increased around the globe. Already at its 10th session in 1977 the 100th participant threshold was crossed. 29 countries and 9 international organisations were represented. For the first time at the 21st session in 1998 200 delegates and observers took part. They represented 42 Member Countries and 21 international organisations. The session with the most participants was the 27th CCNFSDU session in 2005 with 315 participants who represented 68 Member Nations, the European Union and 33 international organisations. Since then between 250 and 300 participants have regularly been counted at its sessions. The number of Member Countries represented was normally between 60 and 70, the number of international organisations fluctuated between 24 and 36.

In the initial years the Committee held annual sessions. Between 1972 and 1974 and then in the period from 1975 to 2000, the sessions were held at two-yearly or 18-month intervals. Since 2000 the CCNFSDU has again been holding annual sessions.

Up to now the Committee has had a total of eight different chairpersons (see Table 2). In 2010 Dr. Pia Noble was the first woman to take over the chair.

1966 – 1968	Dr. Edmund Forschbach
1969 - 1972	Dr. H. P. Mollenhauer
1974 – 1977	Dr. R. Franck
1978 – 1985	Dr. Horst Drews
1987 – 1991	Dr. Günter Pahlke
1992 – 1996	Prof. Dr. Arpad Somogyi
1998 – 2009	Dr. Rolf Großklaus
Since 2010	Dr. Pia Noble

List of chairpersons

Co-Hosting

Four CCFSDU sessions were held under the Co-Hosting Programme outside Germany:

- 28th session October/November 2006 in Chiang-Mai, Thailand,
- 30th session November 2008 in Cape Town, South Africa,
- 32nd session November 2010 in Santiago, Chile
- 36th session November 2014 in Bali, Indonesia.

All four sessions were very well organised by the Co-Host countries and highly appreciated by the participants. With increased participation by countries from the respective region, one of the main goals of the Co-Hosting-Programme was achieved.



Outlook

At the present time, the CCNFSDU is working on the review of the Standard on Follow-up Formula, the Draft Definition for Biofortification, the Draft NRV-NCD for EPA and DHA long chain omega-3 fatty acids, and the Draft Guideline for Ready-to-use Therapeutic Foods. The Committee will also consider conditions for the use of the claim for “free” of trans fatty acids.

In future, too, nutritional aspects will play a major role in the work of the CCNFSDU. Nutritional questions are centre-stage of political attention and, in recent years, have come under increasing public scrutiny. Furthermore, new scientific research findings like, for instance, the impact of diet on food-related diseases, are to be expected which may lead to tasks for the CCNFSDU.

The CCNFSDU will continue to revise existing standards and guidelines with a view to aligning them with new scientific findings and other developments. Nor can it be ruled out that it may be necessary to elaborate new standards or guidelines for specific categories of foods for special dietary uses.

N.B.: The above remarks are based on the minutes of meetings of the CCFSDU and CCNFSDU, the Codex Alimentarius Commission and the Procedural Manual of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and information on the Codex website.



36th session in Bali, Indonesia

