Food safety: accession of the Community to the Codex Alimentarius Commission

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PURPOSE: to set up the legal framework permitting the European Community accession to the Codex Alimentarius Commission CONTENT: The European Community has been a member of the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) since 1991. There has been an understanding since then that the European Community should be entitled to membership of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, which is a joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme. The object of the Codex Alimentarius is to protect the health of the consumers and to ensure fair practices in the food trade. Now that the WTO recognises Codex Alimentarius standards, guidelines and recommendations, there is an added urgency for Community participation. Codex standards, for example, are relied upon under WTO agreements such as the Agreement of the application of sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS Agreement) and on the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT Agreement). Accordingly, the European Commission has been negotiating membership since 1993. The Commission proposal acknowledges that now is the right time for Community participation and recommends that membership proceed forthwith.