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JOINT FAO/WHO PROGRAM ON FOOD STANDARDS
CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION
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CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD HYGIENE
REPORT OF SECOND MEETING, ROME, 14-16 JUNE 1965

Explanatory Note

With regard to the Second Meeting of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene, attention is drawn to the following points:

1. Appendix I, List of participants, is omitted.

2. Appendix II entitled "Draft Provisional General Principles and Guidelines for development of Food Hygiene Standards" is not attached to this report. This standard has reached Step 3 of the Codex Commission's Procedure for the elaboration of world-wide Standards and, in accordance with the Committee's intention, has been distributed shortly after the end of the meeting to governments for comments. These comments were requested to be made available to the Secretariat by 1st November 1965 so that they could be assembled for consideration by the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene at its third meeting.

3. Appendix III entitled "Draft Provisional Hygiene Standards for Dried Fruits" is omitted from this report. This standard also advanced Step 3 of the Commission's Procedure for the elaboration of world-wide Standards and has been distributed shortly after the end of the meeting of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene. Comments on this standard were likewise requested to be in the hands of the Secretariat by 1st November 1965.

JOINT FAO/WHO CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD HYGIENE

REPORT OF SECOND MEETING, ROME, 14-16 JUNE 1965

Introduction

1. The Second Meeting of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene was held 14-16 June 1965 at FAO Headquarters, Rome, by the U.S. Government under the Chairmanship of Mr. Kenton L. Harris (U.S.A.). The following report was adopted by the Committee. The meeting was attended by delegates and observers from 13 countries and representatives from FAO and WHO. (List of participants is at Appendix 1). The Agenda proposed by the Chairman was adopted by the Committee. The Chairman expressed the hope that the Committee should try to reach agreement on General Principles of Food Hygiene during the meeting so they could be issued for comment by Governments under Step 3 of the Commission's Procedure for the elaboration of Standards. (See page 57 of Report of 2nd Session of Joint FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission).

Terms of Reference of Codex Committee on Food Hygiene

2. During the discussion of the terms of reference of the Committee it was pointed out that these had been elaborated by a Working Party at the Second Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. The new terms of reference were designed to establish clear lines of communication between the various Commodity Codex Committees and the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene so that comprehensive hygiene standards covering the general principles including specific requirements for certain commodities where the relevant hygiene requirements were peculiar to that commodity, could be elaborated. The revised terms of reference meant that the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene would consider specific hygiene requirements on referral to it by Commodity Codex Committees or where no such Committees had been established would take up work on its own initiative. It was further noted that it was within its terms of reference for the Committee to consider hygiene matters which were already within the purview of a Commodity Codex Committee but which in the expert opinion of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene had not been covered adequately.

3. During the discussion the delegate of the U.S. expressed concern that the new terms of reference of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene did not require Commodity Codex Committees to refer hygiene questions to this Committee. The Commission had however decided that the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene must, in any event, be informed of any food hygiene specifications developed by other Codex Committees through the Secretary of the Joint FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission.

4. In this connection certain delegations questioned whether the revised terms of reference would encompass the hygiene aspects of the production of raw materials and include such aspects as the growing and harvesting of foods. Many delegations supported the view that if hygiene specifications were to be elaborated to ensure public health, such specifications would have to include the raw material itself. Other delegations thought that the need to go back to the hygiene aspects of raw materials would only arise in a few special cases, and should not therefore be part of the general principles of food hygiene.

5. On that point the Committee was informed that the revised terms of reference were expressly drafted in such a way that Commodity Committees should be able to deal with the relevant hygiene requirements in as much detail as they wished to do, but that they should also be allowed to submit for an expert opinion any matter which they considered to be within the province of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene. The Codex Committee on Food Hygiene thought, however, that in order to adequately perform its functions a widening of terms of reference would be necessary. This widening would also include the establishment of authority to examine the hygiene aspects of commodities right from the initial production stages.

6. Questions were also raised about the status of the FAO/WHO Expert Panels on Meat Hygiene and on Milk Hygiene under the Codex Alimentarius and whether there was any danger of overlapping in the work. It was explained that these Panels consisted of independent experts whose recommendations were made available to all Governments though not necessarily for implementation as was the case with Codex standards. It was pointed out that the work of the Expert Panel on Meat Hygiene also covered Poultry and that the Second Report of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Panel on Meat Hygiene had dealt with problems of poultry hygiene - Reference FAO Agriculture Studies - Technical Report Series No. 241. In view of this, the Committee decided that the proposed hygiene requirements for poultry prepared by the U.K. should be revised in collaboration with the U.S.A. and be made available to the Commission and other groups already working in this field.

7. Hygiene requirements for pre-cooked frozen foods

The Committee discussed the proposals submitted by Canada for the hygienic preparation and handling of pre-cooked frozen foods. The following suggestions for the revision of the proposed standards were made:

(a) the time/temperature relationships were questioned especially the requirement to hold such pre-cooked foods at 0°F.
(b) the need for a salmonella test for all frozen foods rather than the specific foods mentioned in the standard was queried
(c) the need for multiple microbiological tests and the levels of the standards was queried.

The Committee suggested that 7(c) above should be deleted from the standard and replaced by a statement that such requirements would be developed at a later stage together with appropriate sampling procedures.

8. The author country, Canada, was requested by the Committee to revise the draft standard in the light of comments from Member Governments of the Committee, which were to be submitted to Canada within three months, that is before 1 October 1965. Canada would then submit the revised draft to the Chairman of the Committee by 1 January 1966 for distribution to the Committee well in advance of the third meeting.

Hygiene Standards for Eggs

9 The Committee briefly discussed the draft standard submitted by the United Kingdom. It was agreed that the United Kingdom should revise the draft in the light of Member Government comments. The following points were listed for inclusion in the revised draft:

(a) the standards should also cover the mechanical preparation of liquid whole egg;
(b) the time/temperature relationship for pasteurisation should be re-examined to see whether a lower temperature for a longer time, which would have a less deleterious effect on the quality of the product, could be employed;
(c) the standard should include tests which would determine the cleanliness of the product from a microbiological standpoint, such as an enumeration of total enterobacteriaceae;
(d) other egg products.

The United Kingdom delegation undertook to re-examine its draft standard and to submit a revised version to the Chairman before 1 January 1966. It would then be distributed to Members of the Committee well in advance of the third meeting and include the comments received.

Fish

10. The Committee considered the request of the Codex Meeting of Independent Fisheries Experts (held in February 1964) that work should be undertaken on the sanitation and disinfection of fish processing plants. It was agreed that the U.K. in collaboration with the U.S.A. should prepare draft standards for the third meeting of the Committee. In addition, as a separate matter, the U.K., in collaboration with Canada and the U.S.A., would prepare draft hygiene standards for all aspects of the production and processing of molluscan shellfish.

Salmonella

11. The Committee discussed a report made by the Netherlands delegation on the problems of salmonella in relation to foods and food hygiene. It was agreed that these matters should be taken care of in the proposed hygiene requirements for specific commodities.

Hygiene Standards for Cereal Grains

12. The Committee briefly discussed the proposed standards submitted by the U.S. delegation. It was agreed to delete Section III on Seed Selection and to substantially modify Sections IV and V. Written comments would be submitted by the U.K., Canada, Australia and the Netherlands to the U.S.A.

as author country. A revised draft would be considered at the third meeting of the Committee subject to an opinion to be given by the Commission at its Third Session.

General Principles and Guidelines for Food Hygiene Standards

13. The Committee examined in detail the proposals submitted by the U.K. and U.S.A. regarding general principles and guidelines for the development of food hygiene standards. A revised proposed draft provisional standard was agreed upon by the Committee, see Appendix 2 to this report. The Committee further decided that the draft should be sent to governments for comments in accordance with Step 3 of the Commission's Procedure for the elaboration of Standards. The draft standard provided the basic guidance for future draft standards and contained the General Principles of Hygiene applicable to all foods. The General Principles as they applied would be repeated in all hygiene standards for specific commodity groups.

Hygiene Standards for Dried Fruits

14. The Committee considered a draft standard prepared by the U.S.A. which had been considered and referred by the Codex Committee on Processed Fruit and Vegetables to it for appropriate action. The Committee carried out a detailed examination of the draft and after minor revision decided that it could be sent to Governments for comment in accordance with Step 3 of the Commission's Procedure for the elaboration of Standards, see Appendix 3 to this report.

Hygiene Standards for Canned Fruits, Vegetables and Related Products

15. The Chairman of the Codex Committee on Processed Fruit and Vegetables who was attending this meeting drew the attention of the Committee to two papers prepared for his Committee which were now before the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene for consideration, namely hygiene standards for canned fruits and vegetables and plant hygiene requirements for Canneries. The Committee carried out a detailed examination of the proposed standards referred to it for appropriate action by the Codex Committee on Processed Fruit and Vegetables. After an oral revision of the draft to bring it into line with the General Principles and Guidelines for Food Hygiene the Committee requested the U.S. delegation to prepare the revised draft and send it to the Commission's Secretariat for issue to Governments for comment in accordance with Step 3 of the Commission's Procedure for the elaboration of Standards. The Committee further decided that the standard should include the following end product specifications:

(a) Canned foods should be free from objectionable matter including: insects, or insect parts, insect webbing, soil, sand or stone fragments, fecal matter of any kind, human or animal hair, and free from fungal filaments (mould) to an extent indicative of decayed ingredients.

(b) Canned foods should be free from any pathogen and from any toxic substance originating from bacteria or fungi.

(c) Canned foods should not contain detectable amounts of any foreign chemical substance unless permitted by the applicable laws and official regulations of the country in which the product will be consumed. Approved food additives or other chemical residues should be within legal limits of the country to which it is to be sent.

(d) Canned foods of pH above 4.5 should receive a processing treatment sufficient to destroy all spores of Clostridium botulinum.

Aflatoxin

16. The Committee considered a report prepared by the Netherlands delegation entitled "Proposed Recommendations on the Prevention of the Occurrence of Aflatoxin in Groundnut Products". It was pointed out by some delegates that extensive research into all aspects of the aflatoxin problem was being carried out in various parts of the world. In view of this, the Committee agreed to accept the Netherlands report as a report for discussion and requested the Netherlands delegation to continue to keep the Committee informed of developments in this field. The Committee further expressed its support of and interest in research on aflatoxin in all parts of the world and agreed that when the problem was more completely understood, this Committee would consider its rôle in developing food hygiene guidelines for aflatoxin.

Technical work of other bodies in the field of food hygiene

17. The Committee discussed generally the need to ensure that technical work being done by other bodies in the field of food hygiene, for example I.C.M.S.F., was taken into account by the Committee. It was concluded that the Committee should keep abreast of and utilize whenever appropriate the microbiological standards being developed by any group doing work in this field.

Future work

18. The following subjects were proposed as future works for hygiene standards:

(a) Dehydrated fruits and vegetables including edible fungi.
(b) Tree nuts, both shelled and unshelled, and including desiccated coconut.
(c) Problems of food hygiene in developing countries.
(d) Retail handling of foods.
(e) Fruit juices.

In respect of (d) the Committee decided to request the Commission to consider extending the Committee's terms of reference to include the hygiene aspects of the retail handling of foods in establishments.

19. The following countries accepted responsibility to prepare draft standards on the subjects listed in paragraph 18:

Subject	Assigned to	In collaboration with
(a)	U.S.A.	Sweden
(b)	U.S.A.	Switzerland, United Kingdom (for desiccated coconut)
(c)	U.S.A.	With developing countries to be invited by U.S.A.
(e)	U.S.A.	Israel

Arrangements for collaboration

20. Countries assigned responsibility for the drafting of standards are requested to communicate with the heads of delegations of the other countries which have expressed a wish to collaborate as set out in paragraph 19 of this report. It is further requested that all correspondence be copied to the Chairman of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene, Dr. Kenton L. Harris and to the Officer in Charge of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme (FAO, Rome). Completed drafts should be submitted to the Chairman of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene as soon as possible to enable translation and distribution to members of the Committee well in advance of the third meeting.