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# CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture  
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Organization

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**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME**

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**REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE OECD RELEVANT TO THE WORK OF THE  
CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION**

(Report by the OECD Secretariat)

This report was developed by the OECD Secretariat. It provides a summary of the activities of the OECD related to the activities of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. The document includes the OECD works on fruit and vegetables quality inspection, risk/safety assessment of products of modern biotechnology and pesticides.

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## ACTIVITIES OF THE OECD FRUIT AND VEGETABLES SCHEME

### *Introduction*

1. The OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables was set up by the OECD Council in 1962. The Scheme primary objective is to facilitate international trade in fruit and vegetables through the harmonization and interpretation of international marketing standards. It provides best practices to the Members on the area of fruit and vegetables quality inspection. The Scheme is well known for its explanatory brochures on standards, but is also involved in defining inspection procedures that are recognized in many countries. The Scheme also organizes peer reviews with the goal of helping the reviewed country improve its quality inspection system. The Scheme sponsors training courses, workshops and capacity building activities.
2. The Scheme is open for the Member Countries of the OECD and all exporting and importing countries which are member of the UN or the WTO and willing to fulfill the rules of the Scheme. Currently, 25 countries participate in the Scheme, from which 20 are Members of the OECD and 5 are major exporting countries outside of the OECD. The WHO/FAO Codex Alimentarius Commission is an observer Organization to the Scheme.

### *Activities*

#### *Framework for a fruit and vegetables quality inspection system*

3. The Scheme's core activity is to provide a complete fruit and vegetables quality inspection system at the export stage to its Member Countries. All rules are compulsory to the Member countries. The OECD standards, the OECD inspection rules and the OECD Certificate are the elements of the quality inspection system.
4. The OECD standards are adopted from other international standardisation bodies such as the UNECE or the FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission. The OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme aim is to extend the number of OECD Standards with the adoption of CODEX fruit and vegetables standards; e. g. bananas.
5. The OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme establish inspection rules for the implementation of conformity checks. The purpose of the rules is to ascertain that the quality and the classification of the exported product are in conformity with the OECD Standard. These rules are unique in international level and serve as a basis of many national fruit and vegetables inspection system. It is applied by the EU member countries and also recommended by the UNECE.
6. The conformity check results in the issuance of the OECD Conformity Certificate or in the initialization of a non-conformity procedure made by according to the legal provision of the individual countries. The OECD Conformity Certificate is an attestation issued by an authorized national control service that the consignment conforms to the OECD standard at the time of the inspection. It has to accompany the consignment until the checking point in the importing country.

#### *Peer reviews*

7. The Peer Review is a systematic examination and assessment of performance of national fruit and vegetables quality inspection systems by experts from other countries under the umbrella of

the OECD. The ultimate goal of the peer review is to help improve policy making, adopt best practices and comply with established international standards and principles. The examination is conducted on a voluntary basis, and relies on the mutual trust and co-operation among reviewers, as well as their shared confidence in the process.

8. The Scheme publishes the peer review reports after agreement from the evaluated countries and are available in hard copies and electronic versions for the Members. The Peer Review of Morocco was recently published. In 2010, the Scheme will undertake a peer review on the Turkish quality inspection system.

#### *Economic and market analysis*

9. The Scheme provides economic market analysis of selected fruit and vegetables products for its Members, in order to give an overview on trends, trade volume/value on international trade and forecast for the next season. The economic market analysis is done by experts for the invitation of the OECD Secretariat. Last year FRESHFEL/WAPA gave an overview on the international apples market.

#### *Meeting of Heads of National Inspection Services*

10. The OECD Meeting of Heads of National Inspection Services facilitates discussions between inspection services on major problems, developments and challenges in the fruit and vegetables sector and quality inspection system. It provides an update on the latest developments in inspection techniques and tools. It is also a possibility for the Host Countries to present developments in the fruit and vegetables sector and quality inspection system in their countries. The Meeting is hosted by a Scheme's Member Country and is organized, at least, once every 2 years. The Meeting is open to all Members of the Scheme, and any other country and organizations invited by the OECD Secretariat and/or Host Country.

#### *International Training Courses and Workshops*

11. The Scheme sponsors International Training Courses, e.g. in Slovakia. These training courses are focused on the interpretation of international standards by the OECD explanatory tools, the introduction of inspection authorities and latest developments and challenges in the quality inspection. The next course will take place in Mojmirovce, Slovakia on 21-23 September 2010. The OECD Secretariat intention is to invite a member country of the Codex Committee for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables to introduce the Codex banana standard for the Scheme Members.

12. The Scheme organizes workshops upon request of countries. The Scheme provides explanatory materials and OECD experts for the workshop. The workshops are financed from voluntary contributions. The OECD Secretariat and the FAO Secretariat is discussing the possibility for joint workshops and capacity building activities in developing countries.

#### ***Publications***

##### *Explanatory brochures*

13. The OECD Scheme' flagship publications are the explanatory brochures on international fruit and vegetables standards. The brochures comprise explanatory notes and illustrations to facilitate the common interpretation of the standards. They are valuable tool for the inspection authorities, professional bodies and traders interested in the international trade of fruit and vegetables.

Currently the OECD explanatory brochures are available for 24 products in hard copies as well as in electronic versions. The latest publications were on standards on apricots and peaches and nectarines. The brochures on apples and citrus fruits are expected to be published in early July 2010. The newest publications also include a USB key with the high quality electronic version of the brochures. The ultimate aim is to have brochure for all products covered by OECD standards.

### *Guidelines*

14. The Scheme recently published the revised OECD Guidelines on Objective Tests to Determine Quality of Fruits and Vegetables and Dry and Dried Produce. It describes the methods of objective testing of fruits in determining acceptable levels of ripeness and quality, that are beneficial to both Inspection Services, and the industry.

15. The OECD Guidelines on Exchange of Information on Non-conformity of Fruit and Vegetables facilitate the communication between two inspection authorities. It is used when the exported produce is found not to be in conformity with the standard at the stage of import inspection. The notification is a coded message which eliminates the language barriers between the countries. It is used by many countries and by the European Commission in the communication with Member States.

16. The OECD Guidelines on Risk Analysis define the objective criteria for assessing the risk of lots which are not conforming the standard. This guideline facilitates the establishment of an export quality inspection system based on risk assessment.

17. The OECD Scheme is developing Guidelines on Quality Inspection. It will be an illustrated publication with explanatory notes on the rules of inspection. It is expected to be adopted by the end of 2010.

### *Distance Learning Tools*

18. The Scheme has initialized the work on distance learning tools. The aim of the project is to provide advice, assistance and sufficient training tools on standards, guidelines, methodologies for the countries. The application of the tool could mean saving on human and financial resources. The OECD and the FAO Secretariat is examining the possibility to develop jointly an e-learning tool on quality inspection based on the OECD Guidelines on Quality Inspection.

### *Information on the OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme*

19. Information on the OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme is available on its official website ([www.oecd.org/tad/fv](http://www.oecd.org/tad/fv)). All rules, guidelines and explanatory brochures and information on upcoming meetings and training courses are uploaded there.

## OECD WORK ON RISK/SAFETY ASSESSMENT OF PRODUCTS OF MODERN BIOTECHNOLOGY

20. The assessment of the safety of products derived from modern biotechnology is an important challenge for countries as transgenic crops are increasingly cultivated worldwide, and as human foods and animal feeds derived from such crops are being marketed. In order to increase the efficiency of the risk/safety assessment process and to reduce duplication of effort, the OECD works to harmonise country approaches and share information used in safety assessment. Two closely related programmes are being implemented:

- The *Working Group on Harmonisation of Regulatory Oversight in Biotechnology* addresses aspects of the environmental risk/ safety assessment of transgenic organisms;
- The *Task Force for the Safety of Novel Foods and Feeds* addresses the safety assessment of foods and feeds derived from transgenic organisms.

21. The main purpose of the work is threefold:

- (a) To assist countries in evaluating the potential risks of transgenic products to ensure high standards of safety;
- (b) To foster communication and mutual understanding of the regulatory processes in different countries; and
- (c) To reduce the potential for non-tariff barriers to trade.

22. Both programmes identify a common base of scientific information that can be useful in assessing the safety of specific products with respect to human food and animal feed as well as the environment. The aim is to ensure that the types of information and data used in safety assessments, as well as the methods used to collect these elements, are as similar as possible amongst countries.

23. The main outputs of the two bodies are the “OECD Consensus Documents” which constitute practical tools for safety assessors and other stakeholders. These documents compile key information on major crops, trees, micro-organisms as well as on introduced traits, which countries believe to be relevant to risk/safety assessment when comparing new (genetically engineered) products to conventional ones. The documents relating to *Environmental Safety* focus mainly on the biology of plants (Species and taxonomic group, reproductive biology and potential for out-crossing with related species, centres of diversity, agronomic practices, major uses,..). The documents for *Food and Feed Safety* contain information on the key nutrients, toxicants, anti-nutrients and allergens. To date, a total of 60 documents are available on [www.oecd.org/biotrack](http://www.oecd.org/biotrack).

24. The FAO and the Codex Alimentarius Commission are observers in these activities, which involve also many non-OECD countries and other interested Organisations. An example of the practical cooperation can be mentioned as follows: when dealing with the appropriate comparators for testing new varieties, the OECD Food Safety Documents always refer to the “Guideline for the Conduct of Food Safety Assessment of Food Derived from Recombinant DNA Plants CAC/GL 45/2003 of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, including its Annexe II updated in 2008.

## OECD WORK ON PESTICIDE

25. The Pesticides Programme was created in 1992 to help OECD countries:

- harmonise their pesticide review procedures,
- share the work of evaluating pesticides, and
- reduce risks associated with pesticide use.

26. The Codex Secretariat is observer at the Working Group on Pesticides, the upper body of OECD the Pesticides Programme.

27. Below is some information about the two OECD Groups which are of main interest to the work of Codex.

### *Residue Chemistry Expert Group*

28. The Residue Chemistry Expert Group (RCEG) was established in 2003. Its objectives are to:

- Harmonise the way residue testing is conducted and results are interpreted,
- Develop methods to support international harmonisation of MRLs (the OECD does not set MRLs).

29. The FAO/WHO Joint Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR) Secretariat is observer in the RCEG.

30. Up to now, 9 Test Guidelines ([TG 501](#): Metabolism in Crops, [TG 502](#): Metabolism in Rotational Crops, [TG 503](#): Metabolism in Livestock, [TG 504](#): Residues in Rotational Crops (Limited Field Studies), [TG 505](#): Residues in Livestock, [TG 506](#): Stability of Pesticide Residues in Stored Commodities, [TG 507](#): Nature of Pesticide Residues in processed Commodities - High Temperature-Hydrolysis, [TG 508](#): Magnitude of Pesticide Residues in Processed Commodities, [TG 509](#): Crop Field Trial) and 4 Guidance Documents (Definition of Residue, Overview of Residue Chemistry Studies, Magnitude of Pesticide Residues in Processed Commodities, Pesticide Residue Analytical Methods) have been published.

31. The following outputs are in preparation: Livestock Feeding Guidance (publication planned in 2011), Guidance Document on Crop Field Trials, Statistical calculation of MRLs: “MRL Calculator” (publication planned in 2011).

### *Expert Group on Minor Uses*

32. The Expert Group on Minor Uses (EGMU) was established in 2007. The current work plan of the OECD EGMU focuses on issues associated with cooperation, technical and policy activities with the aim at facilitating the development of data and registration of pesticides for minor uses. As with many OECD chemicals and pesticide projects, the EGMU works towards providing the infrastructure, guidance and tools for promoting the registration of pesticides for minor uses, including aspects of data requirements, data generation and opportunities for harmonization to make available data useful across countries. Described in another way, the OECD work focuses on developing tools for risk assessment and mechanisms to facilitate co-operation and work-sharing.

33. A Guidance Document on Defining Minor Uses of Pesticides was published in 2009.

34. All OECD pesticide publications are available free of charge on the OECD public web site <http://www.oecd.org/env/pesticides>