

**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION
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**REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE OECD
RELEVANT TO THE WORK OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION, 2015¹**

ACTIVITIES OF THE OECD FRUIT AND VEGETABLES SCHEME

1. At the 18th Session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (CCFFV18) (Phuket, Thailand, 24-28 February 2014) a Codex/OECD Side Event on Pomegranate was held, showing collaboration between Codex member countries and OECD member countries in the development of the OECD explanatory brochure on Pomegranate, the first based on a Codex standard. Delegates welcomed this initiative and continuation of work between Codex and the OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables in complementary areas of work.
2. The Scheme had made progress on the revision of the OECD Operating Rules for the Conformity Checks of Produce Exported under the Scheme (OECD Inspection Methods) and will be presented for adoption in 2015. The Scheme also develops an OECD Guidelines on Quality Inspection which will be discussed at the 74th Plenary Meeting.
3. The Scheme regularly undertakes peer reviews on national fruit and vegetables quality inspection system on a voluntary basis, to examine and assess its performance by experts from other countries under the umbrella of the OECD. The ultimate goal is to help improve policy making, adopt best practices and comply with established international standards and principles. The Scheme will undertake a peer review on the French fruit and vegetables quality inspection system in 2015.
4. The Scheme is involved in capacity building activities. These training courses and workshops focus on the implementation of the OECD quality inspection system, interpretation of international standards and on latest developments and challenges in the fruit and vegetables sector. The latest events were organized in Eastern Africa. The Codex Secretariat is always invited to participate and provide information on the activities of the Codex Alimentarius Commission related to fruit and vegetables inspection.
5. The Scheme regularly provides economic and 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 analysis is done by experts for the invitation of the OECD Secretariat. In 2014, the representative of the International Nut and Dried Fruit Council made a comprehensive presentation on the walnut and tree nuts market review especially on the statistics of consumption, growing area, production. The world trade of nuts was also presented.
6. The OECD explanatory brochures, guidelines and peer review reports are available from the official website of the OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme (www.oecd.org/tad/fv) free of charges.

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

Biosafety and Food-Feed safety programmes

7. The safety assessment of products derived from modern biotechnology is an important challenge as genetically-engineered (GE) organisms are developed, in particular transgenic plants 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 this assessment. Two closely-related programmes are being implemented:

¹ This document has been prepared under the responsibility of the OECD.

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

8. The main purpose of the work is threefold:

- i) to assist national authorities in evaluating the potential risks of GE products and ensuring high standards of safety;
- ii) to foster communication and mutual understanding of the regulatory processes in different countries; and
- iii) to reduce the potential for non-tariff barriers to trade.

9. Both programmes identify a common base of scientific information that can be useful in assessing the safety of specific products. 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.

Main outputs

10. The main outputs 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 national risk/safety assessors believe to be relevant 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, potential for out-crossing with related species, centres of diversity, agronomic practices, major uses and other relevant elements). The documents for *Food and Feed Safety* contain information on the key nutrients, toxicants, anti-nutrients and allergens. To date, a total of 65 Consensus documents are available on www.oecd.org/biotrack. Two publications achieved early 2015, “Safety Assessment of Novel Foods and Feeds, Vol. 1 and 2”, compile all the key Consensus Documents issued by the Task Force from 2002 until the present day:

<http://www.oecd.org/chemicalsafety/safety-assessment-of-foods-and-feeds-derived-from-transgenic-crops-volume-1-9789264180147-en.htm>

<http://www.oecd.org/chemicalsafety/safety-assessment-of-foods-and-feeds-derived-from-transgenic-crops-volume-2-9789264180338-en.htm>

11. In addition, a database on genetically-engineered products is updated by participants in these OECD programmes for public availability. The database aims to allow regulatory officials to easily share basic information on biotech products that have been approved for commercial application in terms of food, feed or environmental safety. As at March 2015, the database contained information on 229 biotech products from 14 plant species, approved in one or more of 10 countries and the E.C. The biotech products are tagged with their ‘Unique Identifiers’ (coding system developed by OECD), thus facilitating the exchange of information between international databases.

Collaboration with FAO, WHO and Codex

12. FAO, UNEP, WHO and the Codex Alimentarius Commission are regular observers in these activities, which involve several non-members of the OECD, as well as other interested Organisations. The work includes crops and commodities often produced in tropical and sub-tropical regions (e.g. rice, cotton), with recent developments focused on cassava, sorghum, common bean, sugarcane or eucalyptus as a result from the active involvement of Bangladesh, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Paraguay, Philippines, South Africa and Thailand among others.

13. Example of practical cooperation with Codex: 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 Annexes II and III updated in 2008. Similarly, documents from the Codex Standard Series constitute useful sources of information and key references when developing these OECD documents.

14. The OECD Secretariat participates in the work of the joint “FAO/WHO Expert Meeting on Hazards Associated with Animal Feed”, for which the report is being finalized for publication by the end of 2015.

15. FAO, UNEP-CBD and OECD are coordinating their efforts for the harmonized development of their biotech product databases, the FAO GM Foods Platform, the CBD Biosafety Clearing House and the OECD Biotrack Database respectively. Common webinars are organized since 2014 for presenting the specificities of each database, discussing with users around the world, favouring complementarities and identifying synergies for better fulfilling the needs while saving resources.

OECD WORK ON PESTICIDE

16. 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.

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

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

Residue Chemistry Expert Group

19. 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).

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

21. 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 7 Guidance Documents (Definition of Residue, Overview of Residue Chemistry Studies, Magnitude of Pesticide Residues in Processed Commodities, Pesticide Residue Analytical Methods, Crop Field Trials, Residues in Livestock) have been published.

22. The MRL Calculator, a tool for statistical calculation of MRLs was published in 2011. It is an Excel spreadsheet simple to use without requiring extensive statistical knowledge from the user.

23. The following outputs are in preparation: revision of the Guidance Document on Crop Field Trials (to deal with proportionality issues, clarify sampling procedures and take into account national/Codex information on recent changes in crop groups) and development of a Rotational Crop Field Trial Guidance Document).

Expert Group on Minor Uses

24. 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.

25. Two Guidance Documents have been published: a Guidance Document on Defining Minor Uses of Pesticides and a Guidance Document on Regulatory Incentives for the Registration of Pesticide Minor Uses. Two survey reports have been published: the Survey Results on Regulatory Incentives for the Registration of Pesticide Minor Uses and the Survey Results on Efficacy & Crop Safety Data Requirements and Guidelines for the Registration of Pesticide Minor Uses.

26. In 2015, three main activities are underway: first, EGMU Project no.1 seeks to develop a Guidance document to address & solve minor uses. To that aim, a questionnaire was distributed in June 2013 to collect information on existing national & regional processes and on known data exchanges – a pilot data generation project (global residue/efficacy) will be scheduled at a later stage. Second, EGMU Project no.2 focuses on Global Joint Reviews (GJRs) with the objective to enhance minor uses from GJRs. Last, EGMU Project no. 3 involves the development of a Guidance document on the exchange and use of international efficacy & crop safety data for minor uses.

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