

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS



WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION

JOINT OFFICE: Viale delle Terme di Caracalla 00100 ROME Tel: 39 06 57051 www.codexalimentarius.net Email: codex@fao.org Facsimile: 39 06 5705 4593

Agenda Item 3

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**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
CODEX COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR AFRICA
Fourteenth Session
Kampala, Uganda, 27 – 30 November 2000**

**REPORT ON ACTIVITIES OF FAO AND WHO COMPLEMENTARY TO THE WORK OF THE
CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION**

A - SELECTED JOINT FAO/WHO ACTIVITIES

1. JOINT FAO/WHO EXPERT COMMITTEE ON FOOD ADDITIVES (JECFA)

Since the 11th Session of the Committee four meetings of JECFA have been held. The 50th (Rome, February 1998) and 52nd meetings (Rome, February 1999) assessed the safety of residues of 29 veterinary drugs: 17 at the 50th meeting and 12 at the 52nd meeting. Among them, a total of 8 substances were evaluated for the first time.

The 51st meeting (Geneva, June 1998) and 53rd meeting (Rome, June 1999) reviewed a total of 500 food additives, including 435 flavouring agents, and three contaminants, lead, methylmercury and zearalenone. The 53rd meeting also considered allergenicity of peanut and soya bean oils.

2. JOINT FAO/WHO MEETING ON PESTICIDE RESIDUE (JMPR)¹

Two meetings were held since the last session of the Committee: in Rome in September 1998 and 1999. A total of 45 pesticides were assessed, of which 21 were reviewed toxicologically and 37 for estimation of maximum residue limits. Of these, 2 were new compounds and 28 were pesticides that were undergoing evaluation under the periodic review programme of the Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues.

B - SELECTED FAO TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES

FAO continued to provide technical assistance to member countries in the African Region as part of its regular programme work as well as through its technical co-operation programme (TCP). This assistance covered both the provision of policy advice in the overall organization and management of food control services and the strengthening or establishment of specific components of the food control system. The following is a summary of some of the activities carried out by FAO in the Region during the current biennium.

¹ Reports (1991-) and Residue Monographs (1997-), and future agendas of JMPR are available for download at:

C STRENGTHENING OF NATIONAL FOOD CONTROL SERVICES

1. NATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Activities to strengthen food control in Egypt, Lesotho, Mozambique and Senegal were completed.

Two projects have been concluded in Algeria and Morocco. They aimed at strengthening national food control systems. In Algeria, the personal of the National Veterinary Institute Laboratory of Algiers received training, and equipment was provided to enhance the capability to carry out complete analyses of pesticide and veterinary drug residues in meat and animal products. In Morocco, food regulations were revised and updated, in order to create a coherent and modern basis for effective food control. A new food law was drafted, in addition to the technical regulations and administrative circulars. This will be important in facilitating that country's involvement in world-wide food trade.

In Senegal, a project aimed at supporting the capacity of small-scale farmers' associations to analyse and participate in the formulation of agricultural policy was concluded. It was mainly focusing at assisting these groups to analyse the impact of Uruguay Round Agreements on small-scale farmers so that they can plan appropriate strategies.

A project initiated to support proper structuring and functioning of the South African National Codex Committee. The establishment of its working groups and assurance of its effective operation as an advisory group to the government on matters related to food standardisation and food safety will facilitate a full implementation of the Uruguay Round Agreements on Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures and Technical Barriers to Trade.

Another project to improve quality, safety and nutritional value of food produced in Swaziland was approved. The main objectives of the project are to ensure the acceptability of food entering into the country by using the experience gained in similar national food legislation in the sub-region and to prepare a draft national food law with enabling regulations for Swaziland. The project will also focus aspects of setting up effective Food Control Administration for the country, upgrading the training programme for food inspectors and enhancing the capabilities of the existing food analysis laboratory.

In Zimbabwe FAO provided assistance to improve the food control system and services by up-grading the food analytical capabilities of the Government Analyst Laboratory (GAL), improving the information-handling capacity of the food control secretariat at the GAL, strengthening the Secretariat of the Food Standards Advisory Board (FSAB) and optimizing the food inspection operations of the Port Health Authority.

The Government of Tunisia requested assistance to FAO in strengthening the food control system in the country. A project initiated to facilitate the participation of the country in the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and to promote food safety and facilitate the export of food products in the region and at international level.

In relation to problems of contamination of coffee and given the sensitivity of major markets to possible health risks in food and consequence for producing countries, FAO initiated a project of assistance to Uganda to develop a Centre of excellence in the field of coffee quality assurance, which would have a positive impact on the income of producers and minimise potential health risk to consumers. The expertise developed would serve as an important regional resource to develop a HACCP programme for coffee and to elaborate improved and environmentally sound coffee production and handling procedures. In Uganda, allied to the project directed at improving the safety and quality of fish processing in order to fit them for the international market, was the launching of the National Codex Committee. The Committee is to give direction and purpose to the activities of the Commission in Uganda. This will enhance Uganda's capabilities to manage the challenges posed by the application of the WTO agreements on sanitary and phytosanitary measures and technical barriers to trade.

The Tanzanian Bureau of Standards requested the assistance of FAO in preparing and conducting a Workshop on the Strengthening of a National Codex Organization and the Food Control System in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania (29-30 May 2000). The general objective of the Workshop was to present an overview of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, including its relationship with other international bodies such as the World Trade Organization, and the administration and strengthening of National Codex Committees and Codex Contact Points as well as to develop strategies to improve the current national food control system. The workshop was attended by stakeholders involved in the food processing and marketing and more than 50

people from industry, trade, university and national authorities of Tanzania and Zanzibar.

In South Africa, a 2-day Seminar on proposals to strengthen the harmonization of food standards and food regulations in the SADEC region was held on 24 & 25 May 2000. Participants included senior government officials, and industry representatives. The main objectives of the seminar were (a) that participants have a better recognition and understanding of the role and activities of the Commission, and (b) to focus on the benefits that can be derived by the application of equivalent standards to all food products moving between the countries in the region.

In Guinea and in Djibouti, a review of the food control capacities and infrastructures was carried out. This resulted in a request for a TCP for Guinea, which could target primarily small and medium size industries, and provide training on Good Manufacturing Practices and HACCP, as well as the specific training of food inspectors.

The Government of Cameroon requested assistance to strengthen the food control system in the country. A funding mission of an expert is under consideration to assess the current activities in the country and to prepare a programme with the scope of organising an operative system to modernise food control in the country and provide inputs to implement a programme of review of the food legislation and harmonization of national food standards with Codex

Project proposals to review the food control system and the harmonization of food standards in Gambia and Sudan are also under consideration.

2. REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

A regional workshop on food safety in Western Africa was held in Dakar from 24 to 26 January 2000, in collaboration with the World Bank and the French Cooperation. This workshop intended to raise awareness of governments on co-operative tools between private and public sectors, and International Organisations. Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Togo were represented at that workshop. Follow up activities at national level are on the way to be organised to define an integrated approach towards Food Safety problems.

FAO has collaborated with the Institute for Scientific Information on Coffee (ISIC), and the International Coffee Organization (ICO) in the preparation of a project addressing the improvement of coffee quality through the prevention of mould formation. This action was in response to requests from a number of coffee producing countries for assistance in improving the quality of their product. The project was funded by the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC), the Institute for Scientific Information on Coffee (ISIC) and the Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement (CIRAD). Projects activities will be carried out under the supervision of national collaborating centres in Brazil, Colombia, Ivory Cost, India, Indonesia, Kenya and Uganda.

The FAO Umbrella Programme is part of the FAO Uruguay Round follow-up process of providing assistance to Member Countries in this area. It aims to assist Member Countries in enhancing national capacity on WTO issues relating to agriculture and covers the relevant Uruguay Round Agreements (e.g. on agriculture, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, technical barriers to trade and trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights), emerging issues and topics relevant to future negotiations relating to agriculture, and special issues of regional and sub-regional concern in these areas. An initial series of fourteen sub-regional Workshops are being organised 4 of which will be in Africa. These workshops are implemented over a 5 day period and consist on 3 parallel sessions, one of which addresses the SPS and TBT Agreements, Codex and risk analysis

To date one workshop has been implemented in Dakar, Senegal. This took place on 4 - 8 October 1999. A total of 64 people from twelve countries in French speaking West Africa participated in the workshop. The participating countries included Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Togo.

Workshops are also scheduled to take place in Addis Ababa for English speaking East and West Africa, South Africa for SADC countries and Eritrea and Cameroon for the Central African Economic Communities. These workshops will be implemented in late 2000 or early 2001.

Regarding specific activities with African nations, the 12th Session of the Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods (March 2000), considered a submission from Tanzania on eleven substances for priority evaluation by JECFA. At this time, no sponsor has been identified specifically to provide the

necessary data, however, other options are being explored.

FAO, in collaboration with the FAO/WHO Collaborating Centre in Berlin, Germany (Federal Institute for Health Protection of Consumers and Veterinary Medicine), held a technical meeting on Risk Assessment procedures for Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Food, in November 1999. Participants from eight African nations attended. The objectives of the technical meeting were to: create awareness of the importance of veterinary drug residues in national and international trade; examine current scientific knowledge concerning risk assessment for residues of veterinary drugs in foods; and prepare a strategy to develop technical capacity for African countries for the application of risk assessments for residues of veterinary drugs in their food safety programmes. The final report was prepared and reviewed at the Second Southern and Eastern African Veterinary Drug Regulatory Affairs Conference in Nairobi, Kenya, July 2000. In addition, the FAO secretariat to JECFA provided an informational presentation on the Codex Alimentarius Commission and a technical presentation on how JECFA conducts risk assessments on residues of veterinary drugs at the Nairobi meeting. FAO also visited with government authorities from five countries to discuss potential Technical Cooperation Projects regarding residues of veterinary drugs in food

ESNS organised a Regional training course on Food Quality and Safety Systems based on Good Manufacturing Practices and the Hazards Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) system. The course was held in Dar es Salaam from 11 - 22 September 2000 and was organised in collaboration with the Tanzania Bureau of Standards. Twenty participants attended the training course, representing Uganda, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Botswana, Tanzania and Ethiopia. Participants were drawn from the food industry personnel, academia and government officials. The training course was focused on the standards for food hygiene and the development of HACCP plans by the food industry.

A regional project is currently being discussed for funding by France. This project would provide a training of trainers at a regional level in Food Quality and Safety Systems. In its second phase, at a national level, the project would duplicate this training to small and medium-size industries, with a view to improve their practices, in order to increase the safety of products for domestic market and facilitate the acceptance of export products on the international markets.

D MYCOTOXINS

The Third Joint FAO/WHO/UNEP International Conference on mycotoxins was held in Tunis, Tunisia from 3 to 6 March 1999. This event provided a forum for policy makers, scientists, food control officials and stakeholders, to make joint recommendations for prevention and control of mycotoxin contamination of food and feed products. Thirty-eight countries and ten International Organisations participated in this event.

E STREET FOODS

1. NATIONAL ACTIVITIES

A project was initiated to improve the quality of street food and vending in South Africa in order to ensure consumer safety and to provide vendors and handlers with health education and training regarding acceptable street food preparation and handling practices. National experts will be used as consultants to gather and assess the information and data on local conditions and circumstances in street food vending, needed to develop both the seminars and the later training courses. They will participate in the seminars and their efforts will be key activities in achieving the project objective. On conclusion of the project, these experts will be a valuable resource to the national food control agencies regulating street foods.

A project in Senegal to improve the street foods situation in Dakar, is about to be concluded. The objective of the assistance was to support the municipality in defining a strategy for the reorganisation of the street food sector, taking into account the urban socio-economic conditions and encouraging the promotion of quality and safety of street foods.

A project aiming at promoting and controlling the street foods business in Benin has been formulated and proposed to FAO for funding under the TCP scheme. This project is integrating various approaches to the safety problem of street foods: review and update of the regulatory framework; enforcement practices by the inspectors and training of these officers; training in hygienic practices to the street foods producers, review of basic infrastructures and proposal of improved practices/tools, definition of a strategy by the Municipality of Cotonou, including the various facets of the problem: technical, but also socio-economic, and urban plan.

2. REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

A regional meeting of the mayors of the main municipalities in French and Spanish speaking African countries was held in Praia, Cape Verde from 7 to 9 June 1999, in order to define common elements of strategies regarding the development of street foods in the cities, and their integration with sustainable urban development planning.

F RECENT PUBLICATIONS

A list of recent publications is the annex to this paper

SELECTED WHO ACTIVITIES

A. GLOBAL ACTIVITIES

1. WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION ON FOOD SAFETY

53rd Session of the World Health Assembly, the governing body of WHO met in May 2000 and discussed the issue of food safety. The Assembly recognized that foodborne diseases result in significant health and economic consequences for individuals, communities, businesses and countries and acknowledged the importance of the public health services in ensuring the safety of food and harmonizing the efforts of all stakeholders throughout the feed-food chain. The Assembly noted that the majority of recent foodborne disease outbreaks of international importance have been caused by microbiological agents and encouraged WHO to strengthen its capacity to assist Member States to ensure the safety of foods. In this connection, the Assembly adopted the resolution that directs future priority issues of WHO on food safety, such as microbiological risk assessment, biotechnology, food borne disease surveillance, the use of antimicrobials in food production and technical cooperation. The Resolution can be found through the following website of WHO Food Safety Programme. (<http://www.who.int/fsf/>)

2. MEETING OF INTERESTED PARTIES

Following the decision made at the World Health Assembly, WHO had a “Meeting of Interested Parties” in June 2000 at WHO Headquarters in Geneva. The purpose of the meeting was to show interested parties, i.e. Member States, international organisations, and NGOs, the future plans of WHO on food safety and to receive suggestions for improvements in or funding of these efforts. The documents presented are posted on the following website. (http://www.who.int/eha/MIP2000/index_en.htm)

3. MICROBIOLOGICAL RISK ASSESSMENT

In addition to the activities prepared jointly with FAO, WHO, in collaboration with the Institute for Hygiene and Food Safety of the Federal Dairy Research Center, Germany and FAO, had a Consultation on the Interaction between Assessors and Managers of Microbiological Hazards in Foods. The main objective of the Consultation was to obtain advice on the appropriate mode of interaction between assessors and managers in the field of microbiological risk assessment. The report of the Consultation will be posted on the WHO Food Safety Programme website.

4. ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE

A WHO Consultation on Global Principles for Containment of Antimicrobial Resistance in Animals Intended for Food was held in Geneva from 5 – 9 June. Objective of the meeting was to develop guidelines to reduce overuse and misuse of antimicrobials in animals intended for food, with a view of protecting human health. The Consultation addressed questions related to production, licensing, distribution, sales and use of antimicrobials in livestock. The final text is available from the following website. (http://www.who.int/emc/diseases/zoo/who_global_principles.html)

5. HACCP

WHO had two expert consultations on HACCP. One was regarding the role of government agencies in assessing HACCP held in June 1998. The Consultation produced the “Guideline on Regulatory Assessment of HACCP. Another consultation was held in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports of the Netherlands regarding the strategy for the implementation of HACCP in small and/or less developed businesses. Furthermore, WHO, jointly with the Industry Council for Development (ICD), produced a HACCP manual entitled “HACCP Principles and Practice”, which is targeted for use by food inspectors

as well as personnel in the food industry.

6. FOOD CONTAMINATION MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT PROGRAMME

The Food Contamination Monitoring and Assessment Programme, which is part of the Global Environment Monitoring System(GEMS), continues to collect, collate and evaluate data to assess human exposure to chemicals through food. Most recently, GEMS/Food has distributed a manual for the electronic report of the chemical contaminant data in food. GEMS/Food will also conduct an analytical quality assurance study for heavy metals and laboratories in developing countries. Institutions wishing to participate are welcome to contact WHO.

B JOINT FAO/WHO ACTIVITIES

1. MICROBIOLOGICAL RISK ASSESSMENT

Risk assessment of microbiological hazards in foods has been identified as a priority area of work for the Codex Alimentarius Commission. At its last session (32nd) the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH) identified a list of pathogen-commodity combinations that require expert risk assessment advice. In response, FAO and WHO, are jointly launching a programme of work with the objective of providing expert advice on risk assessment of microbiological hazards in foods to their Member countries and to the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

To implement this programme of work, FAO and WHO have convened the following major meetings:

2. JOINT FAO/WHO HAZARD CHARACTERISATION WORKSHOP

The objective of this Workshop, held in June 2000, was to provide practical guidance on the conduct of risk assessment for microbiological hazards in food and water in the area of hazard characterization. The consultation compared different approaches to hazard characterization related to different pathogens and prepared a first draft of guidelines for hazard characterization.

3. JOINT FAO/WHO EXPERT CONSULTATIONS ON RISK ASSESSMENT OF MICROBIOLOGICAL HAZARDS IN FOODS

The objectives of the Consultation were 1) to provide scientific advice to Codex on the risk assessment of *Salmonella* spp. in broilers and eggs and *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat foods; 2) to provide guidance to FAO and WHO Member Countries and Codex on practical guidelines and methodology for hazard characterization and exposure assessment; and 3) to identify the knowledge gaps and information requirements needed to complete the above-mentioned risk assessments. The preliminary report of the Consultation will be published before the next session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene in October 2000, and the working documents at the Consultation will be presented on the respective FAO and WHO websites for further public comments.

4. FOODS DERIVED FROM BIOTECHNOLOGY

In June 2000, the Joint FAO/WHO Consultation on Foods Derived from Biotechnology was held in Geneva. It addressed the overall safety aspects of foods derived from genetically modified plants and reviewed the existing strategies for the safety and nutritional assessment of those foods. It also addressed the questions posed by the Codex *ad hoc* Intergovernmental Task Force on Foods Derived from Biotechnology.

The Consultation identified specific areas on which further expert consultation was needed and recommended that FAO/WHO should convene an expert consultation on the assessment of allergenicity of genetically modified foods and the novel proteins contained therein as a matter of priority. The Second consultation on allergenicity is scheduled to be held in the beginning of the year 2001.

5. SELECTION OF EXPERTS

To further improve the transparency of the selection procedure of experts who attend expert consultations, WHO and FAO jointly established a new procedure. In the field of microbiological risk assessment and safety assessment of genetically modified foods, WHO and FAO established rosters of experts (biotechnology and microbiological risk assessment) from which individuals will be selected to serve at expert consultations. In order to establish the rosters, WHO and FAO issued "Call for application to the roster", which described essential qualification of the applicants, selection procedure to the roster and other relevant information. The rosters are put on the respective WHO and FAO websites.

ANNEX

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

70 - The application of risk communication to food standards and safety matters

1999, 44 pp. English

ISBN 92-5-104260-8

US\$9.00

FAO Expert Consultation on the Trade Impact of *Listeria* in Fish Products (Report)

(Report) Amherst, MA, USA 1999

FAO Fisheries Report No. 604 – FIIU/ESNS/R604 –1999, 40 pp. English

ISSN 0429-9337

Risk assessment of microbiological hazards in foods. Report of a Joint FAO/WHO Expert consultation Geneva, Switzerland 15-19 March 1999. Issued by WHO in collaboration with FAO. 1999, 29 pp. English

WHO/SDE/PHE/FOS/99.5

41/11 – Residues of some veterinary drugs in animals and foods. Monographs prepared by the fiftieth meeting of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives- Rome, 17-26 February 1998.

Rome, 1999, 157 pp. English

ISBN 92-5-104280-2

US\$19.00

41/12 Residues of some veterinary drugs in animals and foods. Monographs prepared by the fifty-second meeting of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives

Rome, 1999 (JECFA 52)

1999, 140 pp. English

ISBN 92-5-104401-5

\$20.00

Understanding the Codex Alimentarius

34 pp. 1999 English, French and Spanish, Arabic

ISBN 92-5-104248-9

US\$9.00

Codex Alimentarius Commission. Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme. Report of the twenty-third Session

Rome, 28 June – 3 July 1999

Rome, 1999 130 pp.

English, French and Spanish

ISBN 92-5-104310-8

US\$12.00

Codex Alimentarius: Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems - Combined Texts

2000, 45 pp. English, Chinese (504409-5)

ISBN 92-5-104409

Small A-5 Version

US\$8.00

Procedural manual of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. Eleventh edition

185 pp. 2000 English

ISBN 92-5-104402-3

US\$12