codex alimentarius commission

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

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Agenda Item 3 **CX/CF 08/2/3 rev.1**
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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX COMMITTEE ON CONTAMINANTS IN FOODS

Second Session

The Hague, The Netherlands, 31 March – 4 April 2008

MATTERS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM FAO AND WHO

1. This document provides information on FAO/WHO activities in the area of provision of scientific advice to Codex and Member countries, as well as other activities which are of interest for CCCF.

The results of the 68th meeting of JECFA

2. The results of the 68th meeting of JECFA on food additives and contaminants are available in the summary report[1]. The meeting report (WHO Technical Report Series No 947, 2008) is available at http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2007/9789241209472_eng.pdf and the toxicological monographs (WHO FAS 59, 2008) are available at http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2008/9789241660594_eng.pdf.

Call for experts for JECFA rosters 2007 – 2011 (Chemistry and Exposure)

3. The new rosters of FAO experts and exposure experts for JECFA for the period 2007 – 2011 have recently been finalized in response to the call for experts on issued by FAO and WHO in 2006. The rosters include experts for the following areas:

FAO Roster of experts for JECFA for food additives, contaminants and natural toxicants
FAO Roster of experts for JECFA for residues of veterinary drugs in food
FAO/WHO Roster of experts for JECFA for exposure assessment of chemicals in food

More information relating to JECFA expert rosters are available at the JECFA websites of FAO and WHO at: http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/agns/jecfa_experts_en.asp and http://www.who.int/ipcs/food/jecfa/experts/en/index.html .

[1] See the Summary and Conclusions of the 68th Meeting of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives for additional details: http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/agns/files/jecfa68_final.pdf and http://www.who.int/ipcs/food/jecfa/summaries/summary68.pdf.

Provision of Scientific Advice

4. FAO and WHO have continued their efforts in the enhancement of the FAO/WHO work to provide scientific advice. The FAO/WHO Framework for the Provision of Scientific Advice on Food Safety and Nutrition has been finalised and is available at the website of the Nutrition and Consumer Protection Division of FAO at: http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/agns/advice_en.asp . This Framework is a compilation of written procedures currently followed in relation to the provision of scientific advice on food safety and nutrition to Codex and member countries. It discusses the different types of scientific advice provided, as well as the current principles, practices and procedures that underpin this advice. The purpose is to enhance the outcomes and transparency of scientific advice generated by FAO and WHO.

Expert Consultation on the use of 'active chlorine' in the food industry

5. CCFAC and CCFH have requested FAO and WHO to address the safety of use of 'active chlorine' in the food industry. Funding has been made available and FAO and WHO are in the process of executing the project. A core group of experts has been identified that met in November 2007 to clearly define the scope and content of the project. Working papers as basis for discussion at an international expert consultation are in preparation, the consultation is planned for May 2008. Information on the project can be found at: http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/agns/chemicals_chlorine_meeting_en.asp and http://www.who.int/ipcs/food/active_chlorine/en/index.html

Principles and Methods for Risk Assessment of Chemicals in Food

6. FAO and WHO are in the process of updating the principles and methods for risk assessment of chemical in food, including food additives, contaminants and natural toxins, residues of veterinary drugs and pesticides. The project has included several workshops on specific areas of risk assessment. The final draft document, intended to replace Environmental Health Criteria Documents 70 and 104, will be posted on the websites of FAO and WHO for public comments and joint efforts will be made to finalize the guidance in 2008/early 2009.

WHO Total Diet Study Training Courses

7. Two training course on total diet studies (TDS) were held, in October 2007 in Cairo and in November 2007 in Jakarta, sponsored by the WHO Regions for Europe, Eastern Mediterranean and Southeast Asia. The training courses were also supported by the Government of New Zealand through its Institute of Environmental Science and Research and the New Zealand Food Safety Authority. As a result a number of countries are planning to undertake TDS, which is viewed as one of the most cost-effective means for assessing exposure of populations to chemicals in the food supply. Another training course for Asia is being planned for 2008 with the Centre for Food Safety in Hong Kong and the 5th International TDS Workshop is being planned for later in 2008 in Rio de Janeiro.

Biomonitoring of Human Milk for Persistent Organic Pollutants in Cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

8. At its third session held 30 April - 4 May 2007 in Dakar, Senegal, the Conference of the Parties of the Stockholm Convention, in its decision on effectiveness evaluation, adopted the global monitoring plan on persistent organic pollutants and the implementation plan for the first effectiveness evaluation.

9. The WHO/UNEP Global Survey of Human Milk for POPs was launched with the signing of a Letter of Agreement at the end of 2007. The WHO Global Coordinator for the survey attended five regional inception workshops in order to undertake the implementation activities. Priority countries were identified during the workshops.

10. Countries who are interested in participating in the survey should contact the Global Coordinator: Dr Seongsoo Park (Tel: +41 22 791 3364 - Email:parks@who.int). The general information on breast milk project is available at: http://www.who.int/foodsafety/chem/pops/en/index.html

INFOSAN Emergency linked to International Health Regulations(IHR)

11. The International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN) was initiated in 2004 by WHO in collaboration with FAO and currently has 166 countries enrolled. INFOSAN promotes the exchange of food safety information and improves collaboration among food safety authorities at national and international levels.

12. Within INFOSAN, INFOSAN Emergency responds to food safety events of international concern under the umbrella of the International Health Regulations (2005). With regard to food safety events caused by the presence of chemicals, the absence of an Acute Reference Dose of the contaminant, prevents effective risk assessment and management. WHO is interested in collaborating with Member States who can support the strengthening of INFOSAN Emergency's response to events involving chemical contamination of food. For more information, see http://www.who.int/foodsafety/fs_management/No_04_IHR_May07_en.pdf:

Expert Consultation on the Risks and Benefits of Fish Consumption

13. The small Expert Group Meeting on the risks and benefits of fish consumption, held in Rome 29-30 May 2007, advised FAO/WHO to organize an Expert Consultation on approaches to the risk-benefit assessment of fish consumption. The expert group recommended that the limitations of the scope of the consultations must be well defined. Their advice was that the first phase in this process should be specifically related to the impact of methylmercury exposure on women of childbearing age and the future development of their children, with respect to neural and cardiovascular development as well as the benefits of fish and its components to these endpoints. Benefits of fish consumption should not be limited to intake of DHA and EPA, but include benefits related to other nutrients such as amino acids, minerals, vitamins and other nutrients. Effects on neural development should cover pre- and post natal brain development of children up to the age when the brain is fully developed. The potential risks associated with exposure to dioxin and dioxin-like PCB's, as well as confounding effects with methylmercury, should also be considered as dioxin intake is highly correlated with the intake of fatty fish, which are also significant sources of the beneficial omega 3 fatty acids. The Expert Consultation in planned for late 2008/2009, depending on when adequate funding and other resources can be secured.