

codex alimentarius commission



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Agenda Item 4

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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 OF THE 68TH MEETING OF THE JOINT FAO/WHO EXPERT COMMITTEE ON FOOD ADDITIVES (JECFA)

1. This document highlights main discussion and conclusion resulting from the 68th JECFA meeting.

Aflatoxins

2. The Committee decided to base the assessment of the impact of different MLs for aflatoxin (AFL) exposure on data provided by producing countries rather than importing countries (with the exception of hazelnuts), noting that these better represent the materials in commerce and result in a robust estimate of AFL dietary exposure from the tree nuts.
3. Consumption of almonds, Brazil nuts, hazelnuts, pistachios, and dried figs contributes greater than 5% of the total AFL dietary exposure in only five of the 13 GEMS/Food Consumption Cluster Diets (Clusters B, C, D, E and M). If fully enforced, an ML at 20 µg/kg in hazelnuts, almonds, pistachios, Brazil nuts, and dried figs would only have an impact on the relative contribution to AFL dietary exposure in these clusters, including high-level consumers of tree nuts. This contribution is due solely to the elevated AFL level in pistachios. For tree nuts other than pistachios, the presence of an ML has no effect on AFL dietary exposure. Moreover, the Committee concluded that enforcing an ML of 15, 10, 8, or 4 µg/kg, would have little further impact on the overall dietary exposure to AFT in all five of the highest exposed population groups compared to setting an ML of 20 µg/kg.
4. Regarding dried figs, the Committee concluded that whatever the hypothetical ML scenario applied (no ML, 4, 8, 10, 15, or 20 µg/kg) there would be no impact on the overall dietary exposure to AFL.
5. The Committee noted that the reduction of AFL dietary exposure is an important public health goal; particularly in populations who consume high levels of any potentially AFL contaminated food.

Ochratoxin A (OTA)

6. The previous PTWI of 100 ng/kg bw was retained.
7. The new data, including data on mode of action of OTA in the kidney, do not indicate any reason to modify the previous risk assessment approach taken by JECFA.
8. The current estimate of overall dietary exposure to ochratoxin A from cereals, based mainly on European data, is about 8–17 ng/kg bw per week, based on processed cereals, compared with 25 ng/kg bw per week in the previous evaluation, based on raw cereals. The current estimates are well below the PTWI. Contamination levels in the majority of raw cereal samples were below 5 µg/kg. Due to the very small number of samples contaminated above the highest proposed limit of 20 µg/kg, such an ML would have very limited impact compared with no ML. The Committee concluded that the use of an ML of 5 or 20 µg/kg would be unlikely to have an impact on dietary exposure to ochratoxin A. The Committee was unable to reach a conclusion regarding the situation in developing countries, due to the lack of adequate data to consider.