CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION E

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

World Health Organization

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Agenda Item 3 **CX/CF 13/7/3**
March 2013

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX COMMITTEE ON CONTAMINANTS IN FOODS

Seventh Session
Moscow, Russian Federation, 8 – 12 April 2013

MATTERS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM FAO AND WHO (INCLUDING JECFA)

1. This document provides information on FAO and WHO activities in the area of provision of scientific advice to Codex and Member countries, and capacity development activities, which are relevant to the work of the CCCF.

Joint Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA)

2. Only one JECFA meeting, JECFA 76, has been convened since the last session of the CCCF. This meeting addressed food additives only. The report is available at: http://www.who.int/foodsafety/chem/jecfa/publications/reports/en/index.html.

3. Following the request of the sixth session of the CCFA, the issue of exposure assessment to cadmium from cocoa and cocoa products is scheduled to be considered by the 77th JECFA which will take place in Rome Italy on 4 – 13 June 2013. Should additional data subsequently become available the exposure assessment could be updated accordingly.

Histamine in Fish and Fishery Products

4. In response to a request from the CCFFP, FAO/WHO implemented a joint Expert Meeting on the Public Health Risks of Histamine and other Biogenic Amines from Fish and Fishery Products in Rome on 23-27 July, 2012. The expert meeting focussed their advice on histamine limits and related sampling plans relevant to consumer protection rather than quality determinants. The hazard identification process, in which all biogenic amines were considered, concluded that there is compelling evidence that histamine is the most significant causative agent of Scombrotoxin fish poisoning (SFP) and that histamine can be used as an indicator of SFP. It was also concluded that 50 mg histamine is the no-observed-adverse-effect level (NOAEL) and based on a serving size of 250g, it was calculated that the maximum concentration of histamine in a serving that would not cause adverse effect is 200 mg/kg. Based on data made available by industry, the meeting noted that when food business operators apply good hygienic practices (GHP) and the hazard analysis critical control point (HACCP) system, an achievable level of histamine in fish products was lower than 15 mg/kg. The meeting advised that the risk from SFP is best mitigated by applying basic GHPs and where feasible, a HACCP system. Appropriate sampling plans and testing for histamine should be used to validate the HACCP systems, verify the effectiveness of control measures, and detect failures in the system. The meeting analysed a range of sampling plans implemented under different scenarios of histamine levels and acceptance of non-compliant samples and provided some advice and guidance on sampling plans. In addition, following the recommendation of the expert meeting, FAO and WHO are working to make a mathematical tool to design and assess sampling plans for histamine available in an easy to use format. The full report is available at http://www.fao.org/food/food-safety-quality/a-z-index/histamine/en/.

Global Initiative for Food-related Scientific Advice (GIFSA)

5. GIFSA is a mechanism established by FAO and WHO to facilitate the provision of extra-budgetary resources for scientific advice activities. For additional information and advice on the procedure for making a donation/contribution, contact Ms Dominique Di Biase, Policy Assistance and Resources Mobilization Division(Dominique.DiBiase@fao.org; Tel: + 39 06 57055391) at FAO; and Dr Angelika Tritscher, Department of Food Safety and Zoonoses, WHO (tritschera@who.int; Tel: + 41 22 7913569). In addition, FAO has developed a Strategy for the Provision of Scientific Advice for Food Safety (2010-2013).

Requests for providing scientific advice

6. Both organizations continue to jointly prioritise the requests for scientific advice taking into consideration the criteria proposed by Codex as well as the requests for advice from Member Countries and the availability of resources. A description of the current requests for scientific advice posed to FAO and WHO directly by the Codex Alimentarius Commission and its subsidiary bodies as well as meetings being planned by FAO and WHO in response to requests from member countries will be presented at the next CAC. In prioritizing the requests for scientific advice to be addressed, FAO and WHO continue considering the set of criteria for the prioritization proposed by Codex (ALINORM 05/28/3, para. 75) as well as the requests of advice from Member Countries and the availability of resources.

FAO/WHO Guide for developing and improving national food recall systems.

7. FAO and WHO have recently developed this guide to support countries in establishing and implementing an effective national food recall system to respond to food safety events or emergencies. By drawing on demonstrated best practices, the elements for an effective national food recall system, and the process for establishing, reviewing and/or improving the national food recall system, are described in the context of a national food control system. The primary target audience comprises the competent authorities and all other national authorities working in the area of food safety. However the document may also be useful for other organizations that engage in activities within the area of food safety, including those in the private sector. The Guide is available in English, French and Spanish from the FAO (http://www.fao.org/food/food-safety-quality/empres-food-safety/emergency-prevention/en/) and WHO (http://www.who.int/foodsafety/publications/fs_management/recall/en/index.html) websites.

FAO/WHO project on mycotoxins in sorghum (2012-2014)

8. The 6th Session of CCCF was provided with a detailed overview of the background and objectives of the FAO/WHO project on mycotoxins in sorghum (CX/CF 12/6/5 – Add.1), which is related to the ongoing discussions in the Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods (CCCF) on the potential need for a Codex Maximum Level on mycotoxins in sorghum. The aim of this project is to assist countries in generating data which the CCCF may decide to submit to JECFA to carry out a detailed risk assessment, with a view to the establishment of MLs for selected mycotoxins in sorghum.

9. The FAO/WHO project will facilitate an assessment of the types and levels of mycotoxins in sorghum in four major sorghum producing/exporting countries. The project with a start-up date of January 2012 is funded by the European Commission through funds provided to the FAO/WHO Project and Fund for Enhanced Participation in Codex (Codex Trust Fund).

10. This note provides an update on the progress and main activities completed since the last Session of CCCF.

Inception missions have been undertaken in all project countries (Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mali and Sudan) and have resulted in the identification of national personnel who will be responsible for project activities, establishment of project budgets, workplans and timelines for project activities. Standard approaches to ensure reliability of data and information collected and comparison of results between countries have been established including: a sampling protocol; sample collection and preparation procedures; template for the value chain study. An accredited laboratory with expertise and experience in mycotoxin analysis was identified and contracted to undertaken the laboratory analysis of multi-mycotoxins in sorghum samples. In 2013, and according to the workplans established for each country, the following activities are being implemented in all countries:

- Conduct of a value chain study to collect information on the sorghum production systems and practices in each of the countries included in the pilot project1 (e.g. description of the production chain, quantities produced and uses – human consumption, feed, trade, private and public sector controls of sorghum quality and safety, testing and analytical capacities, etc.)
- Collection of sorghum samples at three different stages in the sorghum production chain (on the 2012/13 harvest);
- Preparation of samples for analysis of mycotoxins in project countries and shipment to external laboratory;
- Analysis of samples by the Laboratory of Food Analysis at the University of Ghent, Belgium.

11. In 2014 results of laboratory analysis will be analysed at country level and country reports prepared. An overall report including results from all countries will be prepared as an input to discussion underway in the CCCF. It is envisaged that interim results will be communicated to the 8th session of the CCCF in 2014, with the final report available for input to discussions at the 9th Session of CCCF in 2015. FAO/WHO will be examining the best way to share widely the different inputs and tools developed for the project (e.g. sampling protocols) so that other Codex member states that may have a particular interest in assessing mycotoxins in sorghum could adapt and use these as relevant.

12. FAO and WHO officers are working closely to implement the project with a team of national and international experts. FAO and WHO are available to provide any additional information and will keep the Committee informed of progress project implementation and outcomes.

Tool to guide sampling plans for mycotoxin detection

13. Last year FAO reported on the newly started work to investigate the feasibility of developing a tool for assisting in the design and characterize the performance of sampling plans for mycotoxin detection in food commodities (see CX/CF 12/6/5-Add.1).

14. The work is continuing, and FAO is currently involved in the development of prototypes for the database and the sampling tool. The database will be linked to the computation models of the tool so that the assumptions which must be made by the tool user can be based on real data and will be increasingly more informed by an accumulating database of experience with new mycotoxin contamination data. The prototypes will be reviewed by a group of mycotoxins expert that will be asked to provide feedback and technical inputs for the finalization of the tool.

[1] This context is important to allow for future analysis of possible ways and means to reduce mycotoxin contamination which is beyond the scope of this pilot project. It can also provide additional supporting information to enrich future discussions in CCCF.

15. FAO is also continuing in the collection of mycotoxin contamination data in collaboration with various research institutes and other international organizations. National authorities that are interested in providing mycotoxin contamination data from their surveillance and monitoring programmes, can contact FAO- Food Safety and Quality, Email: food-quality@fao.org. FAO will ensure confidentiality and anonymity of the data.

GEMS/Food cluster diets

16. WHO has commissioned an update of the GEMS/Food cluster diets that are based on FAO food supply data and correspond to average per capita consumption. The clustering is based on a more accurate statistical technique as well as on the latest available FAO data (from 2002 to 2007). The new analysis resulted in 17 cluster diets which are available on the WHO website to be used when appropriate for dietary exposure assessment.