



Food and Agriculture
Organization of
the United Nations



World Health
Organization

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Agenda Item 11

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX COMMITTEE ON CONTAMINANTS IN FOODS

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PROPOSED DRAFT CODE OF PRACTICE FOR WEED CONTROL TO PREVENT AND REDUCE PYRROLIZIDINE ALKALOID CONTAMINATION IN FOOD AND FEED

Comments at Step 3 received by Costa Rica and African Union

COSTA RICA

Costa Rica considers that it is an important code of practice to prevent and reduce contamination in food, however there is no characterization of the alkaloids in the weeds typical of this region. On the other hand, as it is referred to in the document, the geographic and climate conditions have an impact on the plants and thus on the type and concentration of the alkaloids present, and in this sense we think that this code should be more carefully analysed, as well as identifying the types of alkaloids present in weeds.

AFRICAN UNION

AU supports the Code of Practice (COP) for prevention and reduction of pyrrolizidine alkaloids (PAs) contamination in food and feed.

AU supports the COP for the following reasons:

1. Pyrrolizidine alkaloids (PAs) are natural toxins occurring in over 6000 plant species throughout the world and are probably the most widely distributed natural toxins that can affect wildlife, livestock and humans.
2. The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has classified three PAs, lasiocarpine, monocrotaline and riddelliine, as 'possibly carcinogenic to humans' (Group 2B).
3. In most African countries cattle are allowed to graze freely and they may eat plants containing PAs especially in times of drought. This could result in carry-overs into humans through foods such as milk, offals and eggs. PAs have also been found in herbal teas and traditional medicines
4. Several African countries are currently trading in honey. The removal of beehives from areas with PA containing plants may not be feasible and this may result in honey being contaminated with PAs.

AU agrees with the EWG decision that the structure of the COP be based on management practice. It includes control measures for the management of the PA-containing plants as well as measures for control of plant release and spread with additional separate sub-headings describing specific measures applicable for different land types.

The management practices are to prevent or reduce PA contamination of food and feed and will comprise weed management (removal/reduction) practices to reduce exposure of food-producing animals, including livestock and bees, to PA-containing plants.

Providing separate recommended practices for arable fields and pastures and areas bordering crop or pasture gives the COP a wider application.

AU supports the recommendation by the EWG that a list of PA-containing plants is made available. This list was provided in the discussion paper presented at the last session of the Committee (CX/CF11/5/14). It is recommended that the list though not exhaustive could serve a useful purpose and should be updated and maintained.

African countries are urged to make reference to this list and help update it periodically.

This list is to help national authorities identify which local plants to target for weed control.