

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
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Agenda Item 17 (h)

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD ADDITIVES AND CONTAMINANTS

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DISCUSSION PAPER ON POLYCYCLIC AROMATIC HYDROCARBONS (PAH) CONTAMINATION

COMMENTS

The following comments have been received from: European Community

European Community:

1. The European Community welcomes this discussion paper. The paper provides a good basis from which to develop a code of good practice to help operators reduce the contamination of foods with PAH. This is necessary to respond to scientific advice from the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA, 2005) and the EU Scientific Committee on Food (SCF, 2002) that many PAH are genotoxic and carcinogenic (15 PAH clearly genotoxic *in vivo*), that a threshold of safety could not be established and that efforts should be made to reduce contamination of foods with PAH.
2. The European Community has recently responded to the advice of the SCF, using data generated within the EU on the occurrence of PAH in different foods and dietary exposure (SCOOP report on PAH, 2004¹) by establishing legislation setting maximum levels for benzo(a)pyrene in foods where PAH can be found (fats and oils, foods for infants and young children, smoked foods, fishery products). The maximum levels are set in Commission Regulation (EC) 208/2005², provisions on sampling and analysis are given in Commission Directive 2005/10/EC³ and areas for further study on PAH are given in Commission Recommendation 2005/108/EC⁴.
3. The presence of PAH in vegetable oils has been of particular concern in the past due to production practices that encourage contamination. Refining processes are often recommended in such cases, but these can sometimes lapse. Ideally, production methods should be used which do not promote the formation of PAH and thereby do not rely upon refining processes to remove the contamination. A code of practice should include details on best practice to achieve this. Where refining is essential, the best refining practice should be detailed.

¹ http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/food/chemicalsafety/contaminants/index_en.htm

² Official Journal of the European Union, L 34, 8.2.2005, p.3

³ Official Journal of the European Union, L 34, 8.2.2005, p.15

⁴ Official Journal of the European Union, L 34, 8.2.2005, p.43

4. We support the need to include in the code of practice details on environmental contamination, despite the indication in paragraph 4 of the paper that perhaps environmental aspects should be omitted. Why PAH are present in some foods is unclear and it is important to cover all potential routes of contamination at this stage, to help identify practices to reduce PAH from whatever source. For example, cocoa butter can contain PAH, but whether this is due to processing, environmental factors or both is not yet clear. Also, contamination of shellfish with PAH is influenced by the location of shellfish beds and information on this aspect can be usefully included. At this stage it would seem important to keep all possible contamination routes under investigation for the code of practice.
5. In conclusion, the European Community supports the need for CCFAC to start to develop a code of practice on PAH, to incorporate the points highlighted in paragraph 39c (both for the use of direct drying and smoking of food), paragraph 39d (for the use of barbecuing in the catering sector – this subsequently could be used at regional level to develop advice for consumers) and also to include considerations on environmental sources of PAH contamination.