

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
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Agenda Item 4

**CX/FAC 06/38/3
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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD ADDITIVES AND CONTAMINANTS

Thirty-eight Session

The Hague, the Netherlands, 24 – 28 April 2006

INFORMATION ON MATTERS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM FAO/WHO

1. This document highlights ongoing activities in FAO/WHO related to recommendations arising from the 65th meeting of JECFA in terms of development of risk assessment principles and updating and publishing of output from JECFA, in particular the updates of the compendium of food additive specifications and analytical methodology for food additives.

In addition, information on FAO/WHO activities in the area of provision of scientific advice to Codex and Member countries, which are of importance for CCFAC are provided.

Flavouring Agents

2. At its 65th meeting, JECFA evaluated a large number of flavouring agents using the Procedure for the Safety Evaluation of Flavouring Agents. The meeting discussed and considered how to better identify and assess those flavouring agents where the intake estimate (MSDI) used in the Procedure may not be sufficiently conservative. The Committee anticipated that in the vast majority of the flavouring agents submitted to JECFA for review, existing data would be sufficient to conclude on the safety of the substances concerned at estimated exposures, even if those may be higher than the MSDI. However, JECFA recommended that the Joint Secretariat would organise a small working group to address concerns raised at the 65th meeting, at the recent FAO/WHO workshop on dietary exposure assessments and in several recent publications, in order to consider further all relevant aspects of the introduction of an additional use-level based screening method to complement the current JECFA procedure for the estimation of intake of flavouring agents.

The Working Group has been constituted and consists of two parts, a drafting group to prepare a concise working paper according to the terms of references, and a reviewing group to comment on the working paper. Terms of Reference for the work were outlined by JECFA in its recommendation and have been refined by the Secretariat. They include:

- review the impact of different methods for estimating dietary exposure on the safety assessment of flavouring agents, according to the current Procedure;
- investigate feasibility to develop a set of criteria to identify flavouring agents for which the current JECFA approach (MSDI) for intake assessment may not be sufficiently conservative;
- develop a pre-meeting approach, based on MSDI and use level-derived dietary exposure estimates, to identify flavouring agents that require special consideration at future meetings of JECFA;
- revise, if appropriate and to the extent necessary, the dietary exposure section of the Procedure for the safety evaluations of flavouring agents;

- consider an approach for the estimation of combined dietary exposure for a group of substances, e.g. through use level-based model diets.

The results and conclusions of the working group will be presented and discussed at the 67th JECFA meeting in June 2006.

3. In addition, at its 65th meeting, JECFA concluded that evaluation of flavouring agents should be based on complete and up-to-date information on accurate poundage and use levels. The assessments of a number of flavouring agents, for which only anticipated poundage were made available, were made conditional and the Committee concluded that these assessments would be revoked if accurate poundage or use levels were not provided by the end of 2007. The Committee also decided that this would apply for all previously assessed flavouring agents for which only anticipated poundage had been submitted. A list of all flavours for which this applies has been published in the summary report and specifically provided to the flavour industry. In addition, the JECFA Secretariat is in liaison with the industry to follow up on the surveys the flavouring industry organisations have proposed to undertake, to ensure that the data to be submitted in the future will be adequate for the assessment of flavouring agents.

Compendium of Food Additive Specifications

4. JECFA, at its 65th meeting concluded that an update of the compilation of JECFA food additive specifications and analytical methods used for analysis of the identity and purity of the food additives was needed. The first edition of Compendium of Food Additive Specification was published in 1992 and since, Addenda to this Compendium have been published since. The original Compendium and the succeeding Addenda were all published in the FAO Food and Nutrition Paper series No. 52 and the analytical methods in the FNP No 5. An update has been prepared by FAO and a new Combined Compendium replaces the earlier edition and incorporates all the additions and revisions made since 1992, up to and including those contained in FNP 52 Addendum 13. It is being published as the first document under a new publication series, the FAO JECFA Monographs. The first 3 volumes are expected to be in print by May 2006 and the fourth volume by July 2006.

Many additive specifications have been revised two or more times as new information or circumstances require. The specifications contained in this Combined Compendium are the most recent version or revision for each additive. In addition, information on the precise JECFA meetings at which specifications were established or modified and conclusions of JECFA on ADIs are included in introduction to each specification for ease of reference. This new Combined Compendium is in four volumes as follows:

- Volume 1 – Specifications for food additives A through D.
- Volume 2 – Specifications for food additives E through O.
- Volume 3 – Specifications for food additives P through Z.
- Volume 4 – Analytical methods, test procedures and laboratory solutions used by and referenced in the food additive specifications.

JECFA specifications are also available online on the FAO JECFA website <http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/jecfa/database/cover.htm>. The on-line edition is in the process of being updated and a new and more user-friendly version will be made available during the course of 2006.

Specifications for flavouring agents are not included in this Compendium, excepting those few which have an additional technological function as a food additive (e.g. carrier solvent). Flavouring agent specifications will, however, still be available online in a searchable database at the above FAO website.

Call for experts for JECFA rosters 2007 – 2011

5. FAO and WHO has issued a call for experts to serve on JECFA for the period of 2007 to 2011. Details on the scientific expertise required for the fields in which JECFA is mandated to perform risk assessment and the application procedure and process is available at http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/jecfa/experts_en.stm .

Provision of Scientific Advice

6. FAO and WHO have continued their efforts in the enhancement of the FAO/WHO work to provide scientific advice. Efforts have been concentrated in two main activities:

- a) Further work on the framework for the provision of scientific advice which will include a compilation of all written procedures followed by FAO and WHO in relation to the provision of scientific advice. This document will be finalized during 2006.
- b) A joint FAO/WHO technical meeting to explore new approaches to enhance participation of experts and the use of data from developing countries was organized in Belgrade, 12 – 15 December 2005. The report of the meeting is in preparation and will be available at http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/proscad/index_en.stm. The meeting was intended to provide a fully comprehensive plan to facilitate an increased presence of scientific experts and contribution of reliable data from developing countries to the FAO/WHO program on scientific advice.

The completion of the FAO/WHO review process on provision of scientific advice has been postponed to 2006 as it requires the support and involvement of member countries and requires additional resources to meet the expectations of the CAC and member countries.

Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants

7. With the ratification of the Convention in May 2004, countries have begun efforts to reduce or eliminate emission to 12 so-called POPs, including dioxins, dibenzofurans and PCBs into the environment. Under Article 16 of the Convention, the effectiveness of the treaty in achieving its objective is required after four years and WHO is working closely with UNEP in preparing for a global survey of POPs in human milk as one of the matrices to be monitored. With more than 120 ratifying countries, collaboration between the health and environmental sectors at the national level is required in order to provide baseline data on levels of POPs in human milk for health, food safety and environmental reasons. Contact moyg@who.int for more information.

Application of risk analysis to methylmercury in fish

8. WHO in cooperation with FAO and UNEP are preparing a guidance document for risk managers on addressing the problem of methylmercury in fish in a manner that takes into consideration the health and other benefits of fish consumption. The document makes use of the risk analysis paradigm in providing a structured approach for placing the health risk in the larger context of the health benefits of nutrients in fish, in particular for developing countries. In this regard, national authorities are advised to refine their estimates of methylmercury exposure at the national level by collecting information on consumption of specific fish species and levels of methylmercury in those fish. Among risk management options, risk communication targeting pregnant women is one of the most useful approaches for protection the most vulnerable group, namely the developing fetus. A draft of this document is available for comment, but the final document will also take into account the methylmercury considerations of the 67th JECFA in June 2006 as well as any recommendations of this Committee. Contact moyg@who.int for more information.

Fourth International Total Diet Study Training Course and Workshop

9. From 16 to 27 October, WHO in cooperation with FAO and the Chinese Centers for Disease Control will sponsor the fourth TDS training course and workshop in Beijing. Total diet studies are considered to be one of the most cost effective methods for providing general assurance that the food supply is safe from chemical contaminants as well as baseline intakes for nutrients. The 5-day training course is open for nomination from all countries. From 23-27 October, an international TDS workshop will focus on the latest developments in countries, on the state-of-the-art methods and technologies and discussion of new and emerging issues. Contact moyg@who.int for more information.

INFOSAN and INFOSAN Emergency

10. Since 2000, the World Health Assembly has adopted several resolutions on the subject of food safety. Member States have called for WHO to be more proactive in communicating about food safety. WHO has also been asked to provide tools and support to Member States to increase their capacity to respond to health emergencies posed by natural, accidental and intentional contamination of food. Furthermore, WHO's recent report on the terrorist threats to food identified a food safety emergency network as one of the basic preparedness measures that needed to be taken.

In view of the need for all countries to promote the exchange of food safety information and to improve collaboration among food safety authorities at national and international level, WHO has launched a new International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN). A food safety emergency network (INFOSAN Emergency) will be an integral part of INFOSAN. The food safety emergency network is intended to complement and support the existing WHO Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network ([GOARN](#)) which includes a Chemical Alert and Response component. For more information contact fontannazf@who.int.