

# codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE  
ORGANIZATION  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD  
HEALTH  
ORGANIZATION



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Agenda Item 14

CX/FH 00/14

## JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

### CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD HYGIENE

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Washington, D.C., USA, October 23-28, 2000

#### PRIORITIES FOR THE REVISION OF CODES OF HYGIENIC PRACTICE

#### BACKGROUND

The 30<sup>th</sup> (1997) Session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH) noted the recommendations of the Commission concerning the need to review and revise Codex standards and related texts, including codes of hygienic practice<sup>1</sup>. The Committee formed an *ad-hoc* working group chaired by Australia to discuss priorities for revision to existing codes of practice. The *ad-hoc* group prioritized the Codes for revision on the basis of the likelihood of common hygiene requirements. Excluded from this revision are recently adopted codes of hygienic practice or codes of hygienic practice currently recommend for adoption at Step 8.

While the 31<sup>st</sup> (1998) Session of CCFH<sup>2</sup> did not have time to examine in depth the issue of revision of codes of hygienic practice, it did note the comments received on the subject obtained through CL 1997/43-FH<sup>3</sup>. These comments presented alternatives for the priority of revision based on the time since the last review of the Codes and the potential for a product to present a food safety issue.

A set of revised priorities for revising existing codes of hygienic practice were presented to the Committee for consideration at the 32<sup>nd</sup> Session.<sup>4</sup> These priorities were as follows.

#### Priority 1

Canned Fruits and Vegetables

Poultry Processing

#### Priority 2

Fresh Meat

Processed Meat and Poultry Products

Mechanically Separated Meat and Poultry Meat

<sup>1</sup> ALINORM 95/37, paragraph 9.

<sup>2</sup> ALINORM 99/13A, paragraph 111.

<sup>3</sup> 31<sup>st</sup> Session of CCFH, Agenda Item 13, Conference Room Document 2.

<sup>4</sup> CX/FH 99/14.

Egg Products

Priority 3

Dried Fruits

Dehydrated Fruits and Vegetables

Desiccated Coconut

Priority 4

Low-Acid and Acidified Low-Acid Canned Foods

Aseptically Processed and Packaged Low-Acid Foods

Quick Frozen Foods

Tree Nuts

Groundnuts

Spices and Aromatic Plants

Pre-cooked and Cooked Foods in Mass Catering

Frog Legs

Dried Milks

Natural Mineral Waters

In its discussion on the subject, the 32<sup>nd</sup> Session of CCFH noted that some of the Codes could be combined and that some have been superseded by more recent CCFH work.<sup>5</sup> The Committee accepted the offer of Australia to revise the proposed priority list on the basis of the Committee's discussion. This task has been undertaken with assistance from the United Kingdom and USA, and is reported on below.

## REVISED PRIORITY LIST

### IDENTIFYING THE CODES WHICH CCFH IS RESPONSIBLE FOR REVISING

Following the decision of the Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission to reactivate the Codex Committee on Meat Hygiene<sup>6</sup>, it is considered that the revision of the codes listed in Table 1 below should be the responsibility of the Meat Hygiene Committee:

**Table 1: List of Codes for which the Meat Hygiene Committee Has Responsibility**

Title of Code	Date of adoption by the CAC and Revision
CAC/RCP 011-Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Meat	1976, Rev. 1-1993
CAC/RCP 014-Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Poultry Processing	1976
CAC/RCP 013-Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Processed Meat and Poultry Products	1976, Rev. 1-1985
CAC/RCP 029-Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Game	1983, Rev.1-1993

<sup>5</sup> ALINORM 01/13, paragraph 136.

<sup>6</sup> ALINORM 01/3, paragraphs 46 and 59.

CAC/RCP 032-Recommended International Code of Practice for The Production, Storage and Composition of Mechanically Separated Meat and Poultry Meat Intended for Further Processing	1983
CAC/GL 014-Guide for The Microbiological Quality of Spices and Herbs Used in Processed Meat and Poultry Products	1991

The Codex Committee for Fish & Fishery Products (CCFFP) is responsible for revising the codes of practice for fish and fishery products in Table 2 below. Six of these codes have been revised and are being considered by that Committee at Step5.<sup>7</sup> The revised code is to be submitted to CCFH for endorsement.

**Table 2: List of Codes for which CCFFP has responsibility**

<b>Title of Code</b>	<b>Date Current Code Adopted by CAC</b>
CAC/RCP 009-Recommended International Code of Practice for Fresh Fish	1976
CAC/RCP 016-Recommended International Code of Practice for Frozen Fish	1978
CAC/RCP 026-Recommended International Code of Practice for Salted Fish	1979
CAC/RCP 025-Recommended International Code of Practice for Smoked Fish	1979
CAC/RCP 010-Recommended International Code of Practice for Canned Fish	<b>1976</b>
CAC/RCP 027-Recommended International Code of Practice for Minced Fish Prepared by Mechanical Separation	1983
CAC/RCP 035-Recommended International Code of Practice for Frozen Battered and/or Breaded Fishery products	1985
CAC/RCP 037, CAC/RCP 018, CAC/RCP 017, CAC/RCP 024, CAC/RCP 028: the codes of hygienic practice for Cephalopods, molluscan shellfish, Shrimps & prawns, lobsters and crabs respectively	

The Code of Hygienic Practice for Dried Milk will be incorporated into and superceded by the Code of Hygienic Practice for Milk and Milk Products.

A list of the codes that CCFH is responsible for revising (after removing meat and fish codes and the code of practice for dried milk) is at Attachment 1.

### **RATIONALISING/COMBINING EXISTING CODES OF PRACTICE**

A comparison of the published Codex codes of hygienic practice, taking account of the work already undertaken by UK, shows that:

1. there is a high level of duplication within the codes, especially in respect of general requirements on hygienic practice which are applicable to all foods, and which should be catered for through the provisions of the general codes of hygienic practice listed in Table 3 below:

<sup>7</sup> ALINORM 01/18, (para. 82 & Appendix V);

**Table 3: Listing of Codes of General Hygienic Practice and related texts**

Title of Code	Date Current Code Adopted by CAC
CAC/RCP 001 -Recommended International Code of Practice General Principles of Food Hygiene Annex: Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) System and Guidelines for its Application	1969, Rev.3-1997, Amend. 1999 1993 Rev1- 1997
CAC/GI 021 - Principles for the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria for Foods	1997
CAC/RCP 008-Recommended International Code of Practice for The Processing and Handling of Quick Frozen Foods	1976
CAC/RCP 023-Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Low-acid and Acidified Low-acid Canned Foods	1979, Rev. 1- 1992
CAC/RCP 040-Code of Hygienic Practice for Aseptically Processed and Packaged Low-acid Foods	1993
CAC/GL 017-Guidelines Procedures for The Visual Inspection of Lots of Canned Foods for Unacceptable Defects	1993

2. there are a significant number of hygiene requirements which ~~enter for the specific needs~~ are specific to the product sectors/products covered under product specific codes of hygienic practice; and
3. there are several general hygiene requirements/specification which are not covered by the general codes of hygienic practice in their present form.

General hygiene requirements are applicable to all product specific codes of hygienic practice, with a greater or lesser degree of importance. These general requirements should therefore be ~~entered for through~~ handled by the general codes of hygienic practice listed in Table 3 above, either in their present form or as revised. Ideally the product specific codes should call up the requirements of general codes, highlight aspects of general practice which are especially critical to specific products and specify requirements which are unique to the product/or product categories which fall within their scope. HACCP could be used to identify those aspects of general hygienic practice which are of critical importance to the hygienic production and/or processing of products within the scope of each sector or product specific code.

Comparison of provisions in product specific codes which remain after removing requirements covered by the general codes of hygienic practice, suggests that the most effective approach to combining codes is to combine product codes on a sectoral basis. This would involve, for example, combining all the codes of hygienic practice for fruits and vegetables into one code . This is because each of the current product codes contains common sections on the hygienic production and/or harvesting, primary processing, raw material receival etc. which precede requirements for further processing, such as canning, drying etc. Thus combining the codes on a sectoral basis (eg. for fruit and vegetables) will avoid the need to repeat common provisions which apply to all products within the sector, on primary production, harvesting transport etc., in each of the product codes within that sector.

The sections dealing with further processing, such as freezing or canning, would be expected to call up one or more of the general codes as necessary, eg through reference to the International Code of Hygienic Practice for Low-acid and Acidified Low-acid Canned Foods and/or Recommended International Code of Practice for the Processing and Handling of Quick Frozen Foods. Where necessary, they may also contain additional provisions which are unique to the products within their scope.

The result of implementing this approach is illustrated by the Codex Code of Hygienic Practice for Egg & Egg Products, which contains detailed provisions for the production and processing of egg and egg products, and deals with the hygienic production of eggs in shell, frozen egg and dried egg within it.

A second example involves the codes of hygienic practice for fruits and vegetables. These codes could be conveniently combined to produce a single code dealing with the production and processing of fruits and vegetables and products thereof:

**Table 4: List of Codes on Fruits and Vegetables and Products Thereof**

<b>Title of Code</b>	<b>Date Current Code Adopted by CAC</b>
CAC/RCP 003-Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Dried Fruits	1969
CAC/RCP 005-Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Dehydrated Fruits and Vegetables Including Edible Fungi	1971
CAC/RCP 002-Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Canned Fruit and Vegetable Products	1969

CCFH also needs to decide on an approach for addressing deficiencies in the general hygiene codes, identified through the ongoing revision of product and/or sector specific codes of practice. Australia, with assistance from the United Kingdom, has already compared many of the codes and has compiled a list of identified deficiencies that could be evaluated by responsible drafting groups and incorporated into the general codes as necessary.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. That CCFH agrees to:**

#### **1a. combining current codes of hygienic practice as shown in the following tables:**

<b>Proposed Outcome from Revision</b>	<b>Incorporating</b>
Code of Hygienic Practice for Fruits & Vegetable and Products Thereof	CAC/RCP 003 - 1969; CAC/RCP 005 - 1971; CAC/RCP 002 - 1969
Code of Hygienic Practice for Nuts	CAC/RCP 006 - 1972 ; CAC/RCP 022 - 1979
Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Collecting Processing & Marketing Natural Mineral Waters	CAC/RCP 033 - 1985 - consideration should be given as to whether this can be combined with the Draft Code of Hygienic Practice for Bottled/Packaged Drinking waters Other than Natural Mineral waters- at Step 8)
Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Low Acid and Acidified Low-Acid Canned Foods, including Aseptically Packaged Low Acid Canned Foods	CAC/RCP 023 - 1979, revised 1992; CAC/RCP 040 - 1993; CAC/RCP 017 - 1993.

**1 b. the priorities listed in the following table, which are arrived at on the basis of the combined factors of the known potential public health risk, the impact on sensitive populations and the date since the last revision:**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Priority</b>
Egg Products	1
Foods for Infants and Children	2
Treenuts and Groundnuts with a view to combining these two codes into a single code of practice for nuts.	3
All codes of hygienic practice for fruits and vegetables, with a view to combining all existing codes of hygienic practice for fruit, vegetables and products thereof into a single code of practice for fruits and vegetables;	4
Desiccated Coconut, with a view to combining this code with the code for fruits and vegetable <b>or</b> the code for nuts if considered to be more appropriate	5
Quick Frozen Foods, ensuring that all general requirements for frozen foods from the fruit and vegetables and fish codes are adequately addressed;	6
Spices and Aromatic Plants	7
Low-Acid and Acidified Low-Acid Canned Foods and Aseptically Processed and Packaged Low-Acid Canned Foods, with consideration being given to whether these codes can be combined and incorporated as appendices to the General Principles of Food Hygiene	8
Natural Mineral Waters	9
Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for The Processing of Frog Legs	10
Code of Hygienic Practice for Precooked and Cooked Foods in Mass Catering	11
Code of Hygienic Practice for the Preparation and Sale of Street-vended Foods	As required

2. **CCFH consider how best to address deficiencies in the codes of general hygienic practice, and in particular indicate its preference for one of the following proposed options**
- i) **identify general requirements in the product specific codes of hygienic practice which should be incorporated in the general codes of hygienic practice and revise the general codes as the first priority for revision; OR**
  - ii) **select and revise two product sector codes and then revise the general codes of practice.**

## ATTACHMENT 1

## LIST OF CODES FOR REVISION BY CCFH

Title of Code	Date Current Code Adopted by CAC	Code Category
CAC/RCP 001 -Recommended International Code of Practice General Principles of Food Hygiene	1969 Rev.3- 1997	general
Annex: Guidelines for The Application of The Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) System	1993 revised 1997	
CAC/GI 021 - Principles for the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria for Foods	1997	general
CAC/RCP 008-Recommended International Code of Practice for The Processing and Handling of Quick Frozen Foods	1976	General - freezinhg
CAC/RCP 023-Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Low-acid and Acidified Low-acid Canned Foods	1979, revised 1992	General - thermal processing
CAC/RCP 040-Code of Hygienic Practice for Aseptically Processed and Packaged Low-acid Foods	1993	General - thermal processing
CAC/GL 017-Guidelines Procedures for The Visual Inspection of Lots of Canned Foods for Unacceptable Defects	1993	General - thermal processing
CAC/RCP 039-Code of Hygienic Practice for Precooked and Cooked Foods in Mass Catering	1993	Foods for mass catering
CAC/RCP 043-Code of Hygienic Practice for the Preparation and Sale of Street-vended Foods	1995	Street vended foods
CAC/RCP 021-Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Foods for Infants and Children (including Microbiological Specifications and Methods for Microbiological Analysis)	1979	infant foods
CAC/RCP 003-Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Dried Fruits	1969	fruit/vegetable
CAC/RCP 005-Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Dehydrated Fruits and Vegetables Including Edible Fungi	1971	fruit/vegetable
CAC/RCP 002-Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Canned Fruit and Vegetable Products	1969	fruit/vegetable
CAC/RCP 006-Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Tree Nuts	1972	nuts
CAC/RCP 004-Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Desiccated Coconut	1971	Nuts or fruit/vegetable ?
CAC/RCP 022-Recommended International Code Of Hygienic Practice For Ground Nuts (Peanuts)	1979	nuts
CAC/RCP 015-Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Egg Products	1976	egg
CAC/RCP 042-Code of Hygienic Practice for Spices and Dried	1995	spices

Aromatic Plants		
CAC/RCP 030-Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for The Processing of Frog Legs	1983	frogs legs
CAC/RCP 033-Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for The Collecting, Processing and Marketing of Natural Mineral Waters	1985	water