

**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME  
CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD HYGIENE**

**Forty Fourth Session  
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**DISCUSSION PAPER ON NEW WORK AND PERIODIC REVIEW/REVISION  
OF CODES OF HYGIENIC PRACTICE**

**Prepared by Australia with input from New Zealand, Canada and the United States of America**

**BACKGROUND**

- 1) Since 2006, the *ad hoc* Working Group for the Establishment of CCFH Work Priorities (*ad hoc* Working Group) has met to develop recommendations for consideration by the CCFH on the acceptance, revision and/or rejection of proposals for new work. The *ad hoc* Working Group outcomes are recorded in a conference room document (CRD) and presented to the CCFH.
- 2) At the 43<sup>rd</sup> session of CCFH, the Committee agreed to the recommendations of the working group for the development of two discussion papers on low moisture foods and new work periodic review and revision of codes of hygienic practice, respectively.
- 3) Australia agreed to prepare a Discussion Paper on new work and periodic review/revision of codes of hygienic practice (Discussion Paper) that would provide a process for ensuring that:
  - i. prior decisions by CCFH relating to proposals for new work were not lost;
  - ii. any list developed by CCFH relating to proposals for new work, including the current list of existing codes that needed to be revised would be retained, reviewed and updated on a regular basis (including deletion of work items that are no longer needed); and,
  - iii. agreed Codex and CCFH criteria are used in assessing the priorities for moving work forward
- 4) This Discussion Paper also considers how to address proposals for new work that were not initially considered a priority by the Committee, for example, whether such proposals need to be resubmitted to the *ad hoc* Working Group.

**Prior decisions relating to new work and existing codes**

- 5) A summary of all of the issues considered by the *ad hoc* Working Group from 2006 is provided at Appendix 1. In reviewing the relevant CRDs, it is noted that, in addition to the proposals for new work that were presented following the steps detailed in the “*Process by which the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene will undertake its Work*”, additional proposals for new work have been presented by delegations at the *ad hoc* Working Group meetings.
- 6) Appendix 1 identifies three issues that have not been addressed:
  - In 2007, CCFH agreed to start work on an annex for leafy greens. However annexes on tomatoes and carrots were considered to be the next priority. In 2011 the development of an annex on tomatoes was reaffirmed as work that should be done, but no delegation offered to develop a project document. There has been no further discussion regarding the development of an annex on carrots.
  - In 2011, a delegation proposed the revision of the code of practice relating to tree nuts and other related codes and the *ad hoc* Working Group supported this being considered within the scope of work proposed under the 2012 Discussion Paper on the development of a code of hygienic practice for low-moisture foods.
  - Development of a Code of Practice for the Production and Processing of Cocoa (Cacao) and Chocolate was discussed in 2008, 2009 and 2011. In 2011 it was agreed that a separate code

should not be developed, however this work should be considered within the scope of work proposed under the 2012 Discussion Paper on the development of a code of hygienic practice for low-moisture foods.

7) In 2007, the *ad hoc* Working Group reviewed the current list of Codes for possible future work by CCFH and agreed to retain it as a resource. The CCFH noted that moving any of these revisions to the formal work plan would require identification of a project sponsor, the development of a proposal for new work and consideration by the *ad hoc* Working Group. The 2011 request for proposals for new work and/or revision of existing standards (CL2011/11 – FH) provided an updated list of existing codes and previous recommendations (CX/FH 00/14) on codes.

8) Consequently CCFH currently has a process whereby proposals for new work are prioritised by the *ad hoc* Working Group each year and there is also the list of existing codes that could be reviewed. As noted at CCFH33 and CCFH42, a number of the existing codes could be consolidated according to the type of food or the production process.

9) The United States of America is currently developing a Discussion Paper on the development of a code of hygienic practice for low-moisture foods which will consider including guidance for cocoa and chocolate and revising the existing codes on nuts, dried fruits, edible fungi and desiccated coconut.

10) At CCFH43, two proposals for new work were accepted:

- Revision of CAC//RCP 42 – Code of Hygienic Practice for Spices and Dried Aromatic Plants; and
- Development of an annex on berries for the Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables.

11) In addition, CCFH discussed the need for a review of the entire structure of the *Code of Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables* and its annexes to ensure consistency across the document and to reduce duplication in the annexes. It was agreed that this matter could be addressed in this discussion paper.

12) The above information has been taken into account in the development of a forward workplan for CCFH (Appendix 2).

13) It is noted in this Discussion Paper that at the 43<sup>rd</sup> session of CCFH, the committee was reminded that all items previously submitted as proposals for new work that were not accepted or given low priority should be re-submitted in response to a circular letter to request comments on new work and/or revision of existing standards for consideration by the working group on CCFH Work Priorities.

#### **PROCESS FOR PRIORITISING NEW WORK PROPOSALS (INCLUDING THE, REVIEW OF CODES OF HYGENIC PRACTICE AND PREVIOUS PROPOSALS FOR NEW WORK NOT YET ACTIONED)**

14) In order to prioritise new work proposals and/or reviews of existing codes of hygienic practice for the workplan, the following criteria have been developed:

- Is there a public health risk?
- Is there a trade impact due to the public health risk?
- Is the information within an existing code current? Are there new technologies or data that supersedes the original purpose?
- Is there duplication, or inconsistency with, existing codes?
- Has this issue been considered by the Committee previously?
- For existing Codes, how many years since their development or last review?

15) Answering these questions should provide adequate information for the Committee to decide if this issue is suitable for inclusion in the workplan. Adding a weighting system to the criteria will then allow the Committee to prioritise the work.

16) In developing the forward work plan (covering new work proposals and existing codes), the following criteria and associated weighting have been applied:

Criteria	Weighting Value
*Public health risk – such as a foodborne risk to public health	Actual 10 Potential 8
Impact of trade on the public health risk	Global impact 10 Regional impact 8
Currency of information - New data/technologies that influences need to review existing code	5
Duplication of, or inconsistency with, existing codes	5
More than 5 years since implementation, last review and/or last consideration by the Committee	3

\*Risk is defined in the *Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) Procedural Manual* as a function of the probability of an adverse health effect and the severity of that effect, consequential to a hazard in food. The hazard may be a biological, chemical or physical agent in, or condition of, food that has the potential to cause an adverse health effect.

17) The public health risk should be based on documented convincing or probable scientific evidence of adverse health effects or potential adverse health effects including morbidity and/or mortality due to a biological, chemical or physical agent in, or condition of food. *The Working Principles for Risk Analysis for Application in the Framework of the Codex Alimentarius* within the *CAC Procedural Manual* should be referenced when determining the public health risk.

18) This process has been applied to the list of codes in Appendix 2 as a first step in their prioritisation. The forward workplan (Appendix 2) lists the work items in proposed order of priority (from highest to lowest) for progression as new work.

19) The forward workplan would be reviewed by the *ad hoc* Working Group each year when prioritizing proposals for new work. For example, a proposal for new work may be put forward and considered by the *ad hoc* Working Group. If accepted, a recommendation will be provided on the priority of the proposal for new work compared to pre-established priorities i.e. it would be assigned a priority in relation to the items already on the forward workplan. This could either be a high priority (moved into number 1 or 2 on the forward workplan) or a lower priority to the work already on the forward workplan.

20) CCFH would progressively work down the prioritised list of items on the forward workplan depending on the available resources and the existing workload of the Committee. Once a proposal for new work has been placed on the forward workplan, the nominating delegation would also be recorded. This process would eliminate the need for proposals to be resubmitted each year via a circular letter for consideration by the *ad hoc* Working Group.

21) Each year during their assessment and consideration of new work the *ad hoc* Work Group could reassess the priority of each item on the work plan. Where new data or other information is available, relating to an item on the workplan, the nominated delegation may submit updated information to the *ad hoc* Working Group for consideration. The assessment of this new information may influence the priority of the item on the workplan.

22) It is acknowledged that in the case of reviewing the existing codes, delegations may need to be nominated to Chair working groups to progress the work. As the majority of the proposed work is focused on consolidation of existing codes, a short proposal could be developed during the CCFH meeting for consideration at plenary. If a decision is not reached during the plenary delegations may be called on to provide further information and/or to Chair a working group if necessary.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### It is proposed that:

1. The summary of CCFH considerations for New Work Proposals is updated by the *ad hoc* Working Group following its annual meeting to ensure that any discussion is not lost nor repeated unnecessarily at future meetings.
2. The forward workplan approach is adopted by CCFH in order to ensure that previous considerations and deliberations on proposals for new work and their prioritization are not lost.
3. The proposed criteria are used in prioritising the forward workplan.
4. The forward workplan is reviewed annually, by the *ad hoc* Working Group and CCFH, to reaffirm priority listing.
5. Proposals for new work are progressed as per the priority allotted to them.

## Appendix 1

## CCFH Consideration of New Work Proposals

YEAR	PROPOSAL	CCFH DECISION	STATUS
2006 CRD1	Guidelines for the Application of the General Principles of Food Hygiene to the Risk Based Control of <i>Salmonella</i> spp. in Broiler Chickens (prepared by Sweden).	Agreed to consolidate two proposals on broiler chicken into a single one and to initiate new work on the proposed draft Guidelines for Control of <i>Campylobacter</i> and <i>Salmonella</i> spp. in Broiler (Young Bird) Chicken Meat.	Completed December 2010.
	Guidelines for Risk Management Options for <i>Campylobacter</i> in Broiler Chickens (prepared by New Zealand).	See above	
	Guidelines for Hygienic Control of <i>Vibrio</i> Spp. in Seafood (prepared by the United States).	Agreed second priority in 2006 and not progressed. Agreed to take on as new work at CCFH39 in 2007.	Completed December 2009.
	Development of Guidelines to Control Norovirus in Bivalve Molluscan Shellfish (prepared by The Netherlands).	New work not be undertaken at this time but FAO/WHO Joint Expert Consultation on “Foodborne Viruses” be undertaken in 2007. Nov 2007 – The Netherlands to develop proposal for 2008 consideration on the development of a general guidance document for the control of foodborne viruses with a series of annexes to address specific virus-commodity pairs as prioritized by the FAO/WHO.	Guidelines on viruses completed December 2011.
	The United States advised the Working Group that a proposal for new work on “Guidelines for the Application of the General Principles of Food Hygiene to Risk Based Control of Enterohaemorrhagic <i>E. coli</i> in Ground Beef and Fermented Sausages” would be delayed for one year. November 2007 – The United States advised more time was required for submission of a proposal for new work.		A proposal has not been presented to the CCFH.

<b>2007 CRD1</b>	Development of commodity specific annexes to the code of hygienic practice for fresh fruit and vegetables, namely leafy green vegetables and tomatoes (United States). However carrots were also considered by the Working Group as the third annex to be developed.	Agreed to start new work on leafy greens only.	Leafy greens completed December 2009.  2007 The Secretariat deleted reference to tomatoes in the project document for CAC approval as new work.  Carrots - should an annex on carrots be added to the priority list?
	Development of a Code of Hygienic Practice for <i>Vibrio</i> spp. In Seafood (United States of America lead).		Addressed under 2008 decision.
	Development of Guidelines to Control Viruses in Food (the Netherlands).	The Netherlands to prepare a proposal for future consideration.	Addressed immediately below.
<b>2008 CRD1</b>	Development of a Code of Hygienic Practice for the Control of Viruses in Food (the Netherlands). December 2009 - Renamed <i>Proposed Draft Guidelines on the Application of General principles of Food Hygiene to the Control of Viruses in Food</i> .	Agreed to start new work.	Completed December 2011.
	In response to the request of the 31st Session of the Commission to consider giving a higher priority to the revision of the <i>Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Collecting, Processing and Marketing of Natural Mineral Waters</i> (CAC/RCP 33-1985).	An eWG was tasked to prepare a discussion paper including, as appropriate, a draft project document, to be circulated for comments prior to the next session of the Committee (Switzerland).	Completed December 2010.
	<i>Code of Hygienic Practice for Cocoa and Chocolate Production and Processing</i> (United Kingdom).	Agreed for circular letter to collect comments and information to assess whether a code was necessary. The United Kingdom would consider the information provided and prepare a discussion paper for consideration in 2009.	December 2009 - Agreed that this proposal could be reconsidered in the future.  Is this within scope of Discussion Paper on development of Code of Hygienic Practice for low-moisture foods?

	Development of an annex to the Proposed Draft Code of Hygienic Practice for Pathogenic <i>Vibrio</i> species in Seafood on control measures for <i>V. parahaemolyticus</i> and <i>V. vulnificus</i> in molluscan shellfish.	Agreed to start work.	Completed December 2009.
	The ICMSF, supported by the United States of America, requested that consideration be given to whether it was necessary to update the Principles for the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria for Foods (CAC/GL 21-1997)	Any other proposals for new work should be submitted as per the process.	Agreed as new work in 2009. Under development.
<b>2009</b>	Revision of the <i>Code of Hygienic Practice for Collecting, Processing and Marketing of Natural Mineral Waters</i> (CAC/RCP 33-1985).	Agreed to start new work.	Completed December 2010.
	Revision of the <i>Principles for the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria for Foods</i> (CAC/GL 21-1997).	Agreed to start new work.	Under development.
	Elaboration of a Code of Hygienic Practice for the Production and Processing of Cocoa (Cacao) and Chocolate.	Agreed this proposal could be reconsidered in the future.	Not progressed. Is this within scope of Discussion Paper on development of Code of Hygienic Practice for low-moisture foods?
<b>2010</b>	Guidance for the control of <i>Trichinella spiralis</i> and <i>Cysticercus bovis</i> in meat (first priority) (CAC/RCP 53-2003).	First priority	Under development.
	Annex on tomatoes and/or melons to the Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables.	Agreed to start annex on melons as new work.	Annex on melons completed December 2011.
<b>2011 CRD2</b>	Revision of the <i>Code of Hygienic Practice for Spices and Dried Aromatic Plants</i> (CAC/RCP 42-1995) (United States of America).	Agreed to start work and be incorporated as an annex to a general Code of Hygienic Practice for Low-Moisture Foods at a later stage.	Under development.

	Annex on berries to the <i>Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables</i> (CAC/RCP 53-2003).	Agreed to start work.	Under development.
	<i>Code of Hygienic Practice for the production and Processing of Cocoa (Cacao) and Chocolate</i> (Peru).	A separate code should not be developed, however this work should be incorporated into work on the Code of Hygienic Practice for low moisture foods.	Is this within scope of Discussion Paper on development of Code of Hygienic Practice for low-moisture foods?
	<i>Development of a code of safety for materials permitted for packaging in contact with food</i> (Peru).	This work was not within the terms of reference of CCFH.	Not supported
		The United States of America to further develop the discussion paper for a Code of Hygienic Practice for Low Moisture Foods (e.g. nuts, dried fruits, edible fungi, desiccated coconut).	For consideration in November 2012.
		Australia would prepare the discussion paper on new work and periodic review/revision of codes of hygienic practice. To be considered at CCFH44 (2012).	For consideration in November 2012.
	Revision of the Code of Practice relating to tree nuts and other related codes (Nigeria) – no written proposal.	This work should be incorporated into work on Code of Hygienic Practice for low moisture foods.	Is this within scope of Discussion Paper on development of Code of Hygienic Practice for low-moisture foods
	Annex on tomatoes to the <i>Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables</i> (CAC/RCP 53-2003).	No Delegation offered to develop a project document, however there was no disagreement that work should be done.	Needs to be added to priority list.



## Appendix 2

## CCFH FORWARD WORKPLAN

<i>Title of work (Date revised)</i>	Prioritisation Criteria					Total
	Public health	New information	Inconsistency	Trade impact	5 years or more since developed	
CAC/RCP 53-2003 Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables <i>(The annex for fresh leafy greens was completed in 2010, however the code is greater than ten years old and a review would also examine why additional annexes need to be developed).</i>	10		5	10	3	28
<i>Development of a code of hygienic practice for low-moisture foods</i>  <i>The following may be within scope:</i> <i>CAC/RCP 3 – Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Dried Fruits (1969)</i>  <i>CAC/RCP 4 – Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Desiccated Coconut (1971)</i>  <i>CAC/RCP 5 – Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Dehydrated Fruits and Vegetables Including Edible Fungi (1971)</i>  <i>CAC/RCP 42 – Code of Hygienic Practice for Spices and Dried Aromatic Plants</i>	10 – still evidence of systems failures e.g. spices /nuts; illness with these foods	5	10			25

<i>CAC/RCP 6 - Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Tree Nuts (1972)</i>						
<i>CAC/RCP 22 – Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Ground Nuts (Peanuts) (1979)</i>						
<i>Development of an annex on tomatoes for the code of hygienic practice for fresh fruit and vegetables</i>	10			8	0	<b>21</b>
<i>Development of an annex on carrots for the code of hygienic practice for fresh fruit and vegetables</i>	10			8	0	<b>21</b>
<i>CAC/RCP 48 - Code of Hygienic Practice for Bottled/Packaged Drinking Waters (other than natural mineral waters) (2001)</i>	8			10	3	<b>21</b>
<i>CAC/RCP 2 – Code of Hygienic Practice for Precooked and Cooked Foods in Mass Catering (1993)</i>	10	5			3	<b>18</b>
<i>CAC/RCP 23 – Recommended International Codes of Hygienic Practice for Low-acid and Acidified Low-acid Canned Foods (1993)</i>		5	5		3	<b>13</b>
<i>CAC/RCP 40 – Code of Hygienic Practice for Aseptically Processed and Packaged Low-acid Foods (1993)</i>						
<i>CAC/GL 17 – Guideline Procedures for the Visual Inspection of Lots of Canned Foods for Unacceptable Defects (1993)</i>						

<i>CAC/RCP 2 – Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Canned Fruit and Vegetable Products (1969)</i>						
CAC/RCP 47 - Code of Hygienic Practice for the Transport of Food in Bulk and Semi-Packed Food (2001)				10	3	<b>13</b>
CAC/RCP 30 – Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for the Processing of Frog Legs. (1983)				8	3	<b>11</b>
<i>CAC/RCP 1 – Recommended International Code of Practice – General Principles of Food Hygiene Annex: Guidelines for the Application of HACCP systems (2003)</i>			5		3	<b>8</b>
CAC/RCP – Code of Hygienic Practice for Refrigerated Packaged foods with Extended Shelf Life (1999)		5			3	<b>8</b>
CAC/RCP 57 - Code of Hygienic Practice for Milk and Milk Products (2009)					3	3
CAC/RCP15 – Code of Hygienic Practice for Egg and Egg Products (2007)					3	3
CAC/RCP 58 – Code of Hygienic Practice for Meat (2005)					3	3