CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION E

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

World Health Organization

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX COMMITTEE ON CONTAMINANTS IN FOODS

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To be held at the Windsor Marapendi Hotel, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Comments of Thailand on agenda item 5, 7, 10, 11 and 12

Agenda Item 5 **Proposed draft revision of maximum levels for lead in selected fruits and vegetables (fresh and processed) and other selected food categories in the *General Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Food and Feed* (CODEX STAN 193-1995)** (at Steps 7 and 4)

Thailand would like to submit comments to the proposed draft of MLs for lead in selected fruits and vegetables and other selected foods in the *GSCTFF* as follows:

We agree with the EWG recommendation on the draft MLs for lead in commodities as followed:
- **Juices and nectars from berries and other small fruits**: Lower the ML to 0.03 mg/kg with the exception of juices and nectars derived exclusively from currants, elderberries, raspberries, and strawberries.
- **Preserved tomatoes**: Lower the ML to 0.05 mg/kg with the deletion of the note in the *GSCTFF* for preserved tomatoes.
- **Fresh fungi and mushrooms**: Establish an ML of 0.6 mg/kg.
- **Fish**: Maintain an ML of 0.3 mg/kg.

We, moreover, support the recommendation for lowering the ML for lead in **jams (fruit preserves) and jellies** to either 0.2 or 0.5 mg/kg. But, we do not agree with the recommendation to revoke the current ML of 1 mg/kg without any new ML, if the agreement cannot be reached to revise the ML.

For **canned brassica vegetables**, we would like to seek the clarification whether canned pickle brassica vegetables are included in this commodity. Referring to Codex Stan 260-2007 (*Standard for Pickled Fruits and Vegetables*), the product under this standard are processed or treated to produce an acid or acidified product preserved through natural fermentation or acidulants. The pickled products include, for example onions, garlic, cabbage, lettuce, green mustard (*Brassica juncea* ssp), but does not cover pickled cucumbers, kimchi, table olives, sauerkraut, chutneys and relishes. Technologically lead content in canned pickled vegetables are normally higher than canned vegetables. If the commodity Canned Brassica Vegetables include canned pickled brassica vegetables e.g. pickled cabbage, pickled green mustard, then the ML of canned brassica vegetables should not be the same as canned vegetables. We can only accept the proposal of extending the current ML of 0.1 mg/kg lead in canned vegetables to canned brassica vegetables if canned pickled brassica vegetables are excluded from this category.

Besides, we do not agree with the recommendation for lowering the ML in **pulses** from 0.2 mg/kg to 0.1 mg/kg because this commodity is a major food crop which has high volume in consumption and global market. The hypothetical ML of 0.1 mg/kg with 3% violation rate cause too high impact to international trade. Moreover, this commodity is a dried product and can be further cooked or processed to reduce lead concentration. To be aligned with the ML for legume vegetables at 0.1 mg/kg which is on fresh weight basis, the ML for pulses which is on dried weight basis should be at 0.2 mg/kg or 0.15 mg/kg at the lowest.

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Agenda Item 7 **Proposed draft code of practice for the prevention and reduction of arsenic contamination in rice** (at Step 4)

General comments:

Thailand would like to reiterate our previous comments on this agenda that the advancement of Code of Practice for the Prevention and Reduction of Arsenic Contamination in Rice should be postponed foe a few years, for example to 2019. As indicated in Table 2 of Appendix II of CL 2017/25-CF, the majority of the studies are ongoing process. Most of the results from the studies will be available in 2 years. Only a few countries have their data ready.

Regarding the studies conducted by Thailand, we would like to inform that we are in process (50% progress) of conducting study on relationship between chemical species of arsenic in soil and rice and suitable management to reduce arsenic accumulation in paddy rice that are expected to be completed in 2018. We believe that the outcomes from these studies are necessary for use in the elaboration of COP, especially Section 4.4 “Agricultural Measures” which is the most important section.

In Thailand point of view, the details that currently includes in Section 4.4 “Agricultural Measures” are not enough to be used as guidance in prevention and reduction of arsenic contamination for member countries. Thus, the additional details should be added to this section in order to make it more understandable and practical for farmers. Even if the committee decides to adopt the COP this year, this Section still needs to be revised again in the very near future, when the outcome from the studies is available.

Therefore, Thailand would like to suggest that the final adoption of the Code of Practice for the Prevention and Reduction of Arsenic Contamination in Rice should be set to the year 2019.

Specific comments:

We are pleased to provide our specific comments on each section as follows:

1. INTRODUCTION

We do not oppose the addition of new sentence to the first paragraph of section 1.1.

3. DEFINITIONS

3.6 Inorganic arsenic

We do not oppose the addition of new sentence to the last paragraph of section 3.6.

3.8 Aerobic condition

We are in flavor of revising the sentence as follows:

“Aerobic condition of soil in a paddy field where rice is grown is ~~[~~a condition that a paddy field is more aerobic than flooded condition.~~][in well drained, [non-puddled][non-flooded] and unsaturated soils.]~~”

3.10 Production under irrigation

We are of the view that section 3.10 should be deleted because the term does not appear in the proposed draft COP.

4. MEASURES TO PREVENT AND REDUCE ARSENIC CONTAMINATION

Section 4.1

We do not oppose the inclusion of the new section 4.1.

Section 4.2

We are of the view that, in most cases, the guidance in Section 4.3 “Sources Directed Measures”, if effective, can be used alone without applying guidance in Section 4.4 “Agricultural Measures” for highly arsenic contaminated rice producing area. So, we suggest to revise the last sentence as follows:

"…National or relevant food control authorities may consider implementing the measure in Section 4.3 **as priority before considering** ~~prior to~~ the implementation of measures in Section 4.4, ~~if~~ **as** appropriate.".

4.3 Source Directed Measures

Section 4.3.2 - Soil;

We think that the last part of the sentence in the first bullet under "Soil" does not focus on measures to reduce arsenic concentration in soil. So, we suggest to revise the sentence as follows:

"Identification of paddy fields in which arsenic concentration in soil is high and/or where rice **produced from that soil has high arsenic concentrations** ~~with high concentration of [inorganic] arsenic is produced~~"

5. MONITORING

Section 5.1

We are in flavor of revising the sentence as follows:

"The effectiveness of measures should be monitored ~~[by] [~~to assess~~]~~ arsenic concentration in rice."

Section 5.2

We are in flavor of revising the sentence as follows:

"If agricultural land or ground waters used for growing rice are widely contaminated by natural sources, non-point source or ~~[~~past~~] [historical]~~ activities, monitoring of arsenic concentrations in soil and/or irrigation water may also be necessary.**"**

6. RISK COMUNICATION

Section 6.1

We are in flavor of revising the sentence as follows:

"National or relevant food control authorities should share information on risks and benefits of consuming polished and/or husked rice among stakeholders in the light of arsenic concentrations and nutrient components, ~~[noting that there are health benefits associated with consumption of husked rice] [~~considering concerns regarding arsenic concentrations and the nutritional benefits of rice consumption~~]~~."

Section 6.3

We are in flavor of revising the sentence as follows:

"~~[It is known that during polishing process more arsenic is removed from husked rice that contains higher concentration of arsenic and that husked rice polished at the higher polishing rate results in polished rice with lower arsenic concentration.]~~ Polished rice contains less inorganic arsenic than husked rice, because polishing removes inorganic arsenic in the bran layer. ~~[~~Husked rice polished at the higher polishing rate results in polished rice with lower arsenic concentrations.~~] [Thus, husked rice containing high concentration of arsenic can] [may] be distributed and safely consumed after it is appropriately processed into polished rice.~~**"**

Section 6.4

We support to retain the measures of washing polished rice and applying "rinse-free" treatment.

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Agenda Item 10 **Proposed draft code of practice for the prevention and reduction of mycotoxin contamination in spices**

General comments:

Thailand thinks that the draft COP should be able to apply to all spices without too prescriptive and specified for particular spices.

We support both recommendations to propose to the Committee on Food Hygiene to consider the possibility of including some general practices for spices on hygiene (Section 2.3.4.2) and packaging (Section 2.3.5) in the Code of Hygienic Practice for Low Moisture Foods, Annex III on spices and dried aromatic herbs

(CAC/RCP 75-2015) and the Committee on Food Labelling to endorse the part of this COP dealing with Labelling and distribution/information to consumers (Section 2.3.6).

Specific comments:

We are pleased to provide our specific comments on each section as follows:

2.2.1 Harvest
Para. 28

We suggest to amend the text as follows:

"…farmers should not hold the crop in piles or in bags for ~~any~~ **long** period of time…"

Para.29

We would like to seek the clarification on the necessity of measuring temperature, moisture and humidity in harvesting step. We think that the essential record should be mentioned in drying step. So, we propose revising the sentence to be more flexible as follows:

"**Where possible,** ~~T~~the harvesting procedures implemented each season should be documented by making notes of measurements (e.g., temperature, moisture, and humidity) and any deviation or changes from recommended practices…."

2.2.4 Storage (source plant)
Paras. 37 and 38

We think that source plant characteristics such as water activity should be taken into account while selecting storage condition. The storage condition which specifies temperature of 5 to 8 ˚C is not suitable for all fresh material for spices or source plant. It should be generally stated that source plant should be stored in chilled temperature and suitable relative humidity. Therefore, we suggest to revise Paras. 37 and 38 as follows:

"37. Store fresh material for spices or source plants in ~~controlled~~ **suitable storage** temperature ~~storage~~**, for example,** ~~of~~ 5 to 8 degrees Celsius. Care must be taken in cold storage to prevent condensation from the chiller units falling onto the product.

38. Relative humidity of storage conditions should be **controlled as appropriate, for example,** less than 75 % **for lower water activity source plant**."

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Agenda Item 11 **Discussion paper on maximum levels for mycotoxins in spices**

Thailand would like to submit our comments as follows:

We support to establish MLs for mycotoxins in each spice mentioned in Annex V of CX/CF 17/11/11 including Nutmeg, Chilli and Paprika, Ginger, Pepper, and Turmeric in dried or dehydrated forms because these spices are important in the international trade and contaminated with high concentrations of mycotoxins.

For mycotoxin type, we are of the view that MLs should be developed for total aflatoxins and ochratoxin A only. Because all MLs of mycotoxin for commodities such as peanut, almonds, Brazil nuts, hazelnuts, pistachios in the GSCTFF only specify total aflatoxins but not aflatoxin B1. So, it should be consistent with the existing MLs.

We, also, support the recommendation for requesting JECFA to perform an exposure assessment for health impact on proposed MLs for spice(s)/mycotoxin(s) combinations.

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Agenda Item 12 **Discussion paper on maximum levels for methylmercury in fish**

Thailand would like to express its appreciation to the Netherlands, New Zealand and Canada for preparing the discussion paper on the maximum levels for methylmercury in fish. We would like to provide the following comments for consideration.

Establishment of MLs for methylmercury

With regard to the considering of establishment of MLs based on methylmercury, we would like to emphasize that the MLs establish with the note indicating that the analytical methods for total mercury can be used for screening purposes. Because several countries usually analyze total mercury in fish. Moreover, performing of methylmercury analysis may pose a chemical hazard to examiner.

Establishment of MLs in tuna

For the setting MLs for methylmercury in tuna, we are of the view that it might not be easy to distinguish tuna species as well as identify origin of tuna. Thus, we support establishment of generic MLs in tuna, do not specify for single species, because it is more feasible in practice.

Establishment of MLs in canned tuna

To consideration of setting of MLs in canned tuna, based on the discussion in the eWG that the low levels of methylmercury were found in canned tuna and it is consumed in smaller amounts compared with fresh or frozen tuna, as such we do not agree to establish ML for methylmercury in canned tuna.

Proposed of MLs for selected fish species

We do not oppose the setting of MLs in fish which is listed in “list of concern” identified by FAO/WHO (including, Alfonsino, Kingfish/Amberjack, Marlin, Shark, Dogfish and Swordfish.

MLs based on ALARA versus risk/benefit

We are of the opinion that the establishment MLs for methylmercury in fish should be done based on ALARA principle rather than risk/benefit assessment as it is not complicated and more practical.

Use of a footnote

We support the eWG recommendation on the addition of footnote to the higher MLs in order to address the need for additional risk management to protect consumer health. However, we think that it is not necessary to indicate the amount of serving of fish. Serving amount should be developed at the national level as the amount of serving is varied, depending on pattern of consumption of fish and type of fish consumed.