

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
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Agenda Item 8

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX COMMITTEE ON NUTRITION AND FOODS FOR SPECIAL DIETARY USES

Twenty-fourth Session

Berlin, 4 – 8 November 2002

DISCUSSION PAPER ON THE FINDINGS OF THE FAO/WHO EXPERT CONSULTATION IN RELATION TO ENERGY CONVERSION FACTORS

Prepared by FAO

1. A discussion paper on energy conversion factors was introduced at the 23rd Session of the Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (Berlin 26-30 November 2001) by the Delegation of Australia. It was pointed out that there were considerable differences across member countries with relation to use of energy conversion factors for some food components.
2. The Committee noted that the differences in assigning different energy conversion values to the same food component were likely to create problems with labelling and with trade. Given the support received from member countries it was proposed that this issue be resolved scientifically and attempts at harmonization of energy conversion values be undertaken as a follow-up to the introduction of this topic.
3. During the Session the Representative of FAO indicated that some work related to this topic had already been recently undertaken by soliciting a background document on Energy Conversion Factors in preparation for the October 2001 FAO/WHO Joint Expert Consultation on Human Energy Requirements. It was also pointed out that the Expert Consultation had strongly endorsed the view that FAO convene an Expert Consultation or a Technical Workshop on this topic. Given the views of the Codex Committee the FAO Representative indicated that this work

would receive priority even before the publication of the Joint Expert Consultation Report on Energy Requirements and an FAO Technical Report on Energy Conversion Factors would be made available as soon as it was possible.

4. FAO had taken a decision to hold the Technical Workshop to Harmonize the Energy Conversion Factors to produce a Technical Report on this topic during the year 2002. It had hoped to make a draft report available to the current session of the Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses. However two attempts to convene this meeting in Mexico (first on 8-12 July 2002 and again on 7-11 October 2002) were unsuccessful due to technical reasons.

5. The Technical Workshop, “ Food Energy: Harmonization of Energy Conversion Values of Food” is now scheduled for 3-6 December 2002 in Rome at FAO Headquarters. Five background documents will be available to the Experts along with the final report of the Joint FAO/WHO Consultation on Human Energy Requirements.

6. The Technical workshop will address the following issues (i) Variations in the use energy conversion values of food; (ii) Harmonisation of energy conversion values of food; (iii) Determination and presentation of energy in food composition data bases; (iv) Effects on macronutrient content of infant foods and breastmilk substitutes; (v) Regulatory use of energy values for food labeling; and (vi) Impact of harmonised energy conversion values on FAO statistical databases, Dietary Energy Supply (DES) adequacy of individuals and populations and estimations of number of undernourished using FAO methodology. The 12 Experts who are expected to attend have been identified and notified.

7. FAO will publish a report on Harmonisation of Energy Conversion Values and its uses in the context of nutrition, food regulation, food quality and safety, and food security. This document is expected to assist the work of the Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses which first recommended that the energy conversion values be harmonised thus enabling uniformity in labeling and in the information provided to the consumer. FAO has already arranged for a consultant to record the deliberations of the Technical workshop and write the Technical Report which is scheduled to be available by March 2003 for release.