

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy - Tel: (+39) 06 57051 - E-mail: codex@fao.org - www.codexalimentarius.org

CRD 13

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME CODEX COMMITTEE ON RESIDUES OF VETERINARY DRUGS IN FOODS

Twenty-third Session

Houston, Texas, United States of America, 17 – 21 October 2016

OPENING CEREMONY REMARKS

Deputy Under Secretary for Food Safety

Brian Ronholm

Distinguished Delegates and Guests,

Thank you, Kevin, for the kind introduction; and good morning, everyone.

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 23rd Session of the Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods (CCRVD). The last time we all meet, we were in San José, Costa Rica. It was a great privilege to have co-hosted the last session with Costa Rica, but we are also happy to bring the meeting back to the United States.

This is my third time delivering opening remarks to this Committee and I hope you have not grown tired of me. I am sad to say that this will most likely be my last time appearing before you. With the presidential election next month and the change in administration this coming January, next time you will have someone else delivering these opening remarks in my place, representing a new president.

I have thoroughly enjoyed participating in CCRVD because it has been a privilege to work with all of you—delegates from over 50 countries, from all corners of the globe, both large and small, sharing our knowledge and best practices, and reaching consensus on a variety of issues related to the residues of veterinary drugs in foods.

Speaking of large. Here we are in Texas... And there is a saying... *that everything is bigger in Texas*. The saying likely originated as a reference to Texas's geographical area. In terms of square miles, Texas is second only to Alaska in size, making it the largest state in the continental United States. And Houston, also known as Bayou City, is the largest city in Texas...and all of the southern United States. It is very exciting to be here in Houston and in preparing for this speech, I also learned a few other interesting facts and superlatives I want to share with you about the city and its residents.

- "Houston" was the first word spoken from the moon. Perhaps on Thursday, the report writing day, you could explore the [Space Center Houston](#), NASA's Official Visitors Center with actual spacecraft, like the Mercury, Gemini and Apollo capsules, and take a walk in space through state-of-the-art simulators.
- Houstonians eat out at restaurants and delis more than residents of any other city in the United States. Ok, that's an interesting superlative. I know I look forward to some good Texas Brisket this week!
- Houston is home to more than 5,000 energy related firms. As such, Houston is considered by many as the Energy Capital of the world.
- More than 90 languages are spoken throughout the Houston area. In fact, 92 countries have consular offices in Houston, the third highest in the United States.
- And one last superlative that you may not find all that surprising...Houston is home to the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. It is the world's largest livestock show and rodeo that attracts more than 2.2 million visitors each year.

Getting back to the reason we are all here, the 23rd Session of CCRVD, your presence demonstrates the value that Codex has to a wide spectrum of stakeholders. Over 60 countries have sent delegations to this meeting, and over 10 international organizations have sent observers. That in itself is an impressive vote of confidence for the global importance of Codex. Our most recent participant count for this session is approximately 230 - which could result in record high attendance for a CCRVD meeting.

I think this high level of attendance clearly demonstrates the importance of the committee to our countries and organizations. In a way, that answers the question as to why we are here, but now we should think about what we will do to sustain the confidence that our governments and international organizations have placed in our work.

Over the years, CCRVDF has contributed an important body of work to the Codex Alimentarius by recommending Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) and standards that provide countries with valuable guidance for their own legislation and regulatory policies. Governments can be confident that the MRLs from CCRVDF that have been evaluated and recommended by the FAO/WHO Joint Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) are scientifically sound, so that the use of these MRLs and guidelines will effectively protect consumers.

However, the United States continues to be concerned that CCRVDF respect the risk management roles of Codex and those of national regulatory authorities, and apply appropriate care that the Risk Management Recommendations (RMRs) provided do not limit the risk management options Codex member countries may find necessary to use as appropriate to their circumstances.

I know that you have all had a very busy Sunday with a number of side events and a physical working group that it's hard to imagine that the actual session has yet to begin! However, there is still productive work to be accomplished this week involving several compounds.

We also will consider new work for the committee. Specifically:

- A Discussion paper on the unintended presence of residues of veterinary drugs in food commodities resulting from the carry-over of drug residues into feed
- A Discussion paper on the establishment of a rating system to establish priority for CCRVDF work
- Global survey to provide information to the CCRVDF to move compounds from the database on countries' needs for MRLs to the JECFA Priority List (Report of EWG) and Database on countries' needs for MRLs
- Draft priority list of veterinary drugs requiring evaluation or reevaluation by JECFA

Codex has changed with the times, but our mission and mandate remain the same: to develop standards and recommendations that will provide member countries with effective ways to protect the health of consumers and to ensure fair practices in trade of safe food. Codex must remain true to its dual mandate, and Codex must remain committed to science-based standards. Equally important, Codex should strive to reach consensus in the development of these science-based standards. We have the challenge of being dedicated to the same goals while being adaptable to the changes in food science, in food production, and in food trade.

After all, it is both the scientific basis and the worldwide relevance and adaptability of Codex standards, guidelines and codes of practice to member countries that make Codex the preeminent international food standard setting organization. That is our vision, and it is what we must continue to strive for, in addressing the needs of 187 member countries, one member organization, and 240 observers.

Thank you all for your attention, and I wish you all a productive meeting.