CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

World Health Organization

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX COMMITTEE ON SPICES AND CULINARY HERBS

Second Session

Goa, India, 14 - 18 September 2015

ACTIVITIES OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS RELEVANT TO THE WORK OF CCSCH

REPORT ON ACTIVITIES OF FAO and WHO

(Prepared by FAO and WHO)

Introduction

1. As Codex endeavours to provide risk management guidance on a wide range of issues pertinent to the safety and quality of food in international trade in order to protect consumer health, FAO and WHO aim to provide the relevant scientific advice in a timely manner.

2. In addition to the provision of scientific advice, FAO and WHO support member countries in developing their capacities to effectively manage food safety and quality as a key step to safeguarding the health and well-being of people as well as accessing domestic, regional and international markets.

3. This paper provides a summary of recent activities undertaken by FAO and WHO that may be of interest to the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH).

FAO/WHO Scientific advice

4. After the Code of Hygienic Practice for Spices and Dried Aromatic Herbs (CAC/RCP 42-1995) (Revision) was adopted at the 37th session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC), the 45th session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH) further requested FAO and WHO to provide scientific advice on microbiological hazards in spices and dried aromatic herbs, excluding tea (*Camellia sinensis*).

5. FAO and WHO convened an expert meeting on 7-10 October 2014 in Rome. The meeting addressed three key questions: 1) identification of primary microbiological hazards of concern in spices and dried aromatic herbs; 2) risk ranking/prioritization of key commodity-pathogen pairs; and 3) performance and value of microbiological criteria/sampling plans for spcies and dried aromatic herbs. A rapid structured review to identify, evaluate and summarize the existing knowledge, taking into consideration outbreak reports and information on prevalence of pathogens in the commodities, was undertaken as part of FAO/WHO work on Low Moisture Foods (LMFs) and the results (ftp://ftp.fao.org/codex/meetings/CCFH/CCFH46/LMF%20Part%201-3%2030Oct%202014.pdf) were used as the basis for the work on spices and dried aromatic herbs. *Salmonella* spp. and the spore-forming organisms, *B. cereus* and *C. perfringens* were identified as the primary pathogens of concern associated with spices and dried aromatic herbs.

6. The meeting recognized that it was difficult to use specific commodities for the risk ranking/prioritization process and instead decided to use scenario-based categories defined by production and processing conditions. The meeting then developed a risk ranking model where eight key variables influencing the risk of microbial contamination, proliferation or inactivation in spices and dried aromatic herbs were characterized for each scenario. Example scenarios were based on a range of control conditions and treatments, and combined with commodities from representative food categories.

7. The results highlighted that irrespective of the specific spice or dried aromatic herb, poor controls and practices can result in a commodity with a high estimated level of contamination. It also indicates that generally the estimated level of contamination may be reduced when microbial reduction treatments are applied, however, the success of a microbial inactivation treatment in eliminating/reducing the contamination depends on treatment efficacy and production and processing practices. Further work is ongoing to convert these pathogen levels into risk, considering the dose-response and potential severity

of infection for each of the three primary pathogens of concern.

8. The meeting report also provided analysis on the value of different sampling scenarios for *Salmonella* and other pathogens in spices and dried aromatic herbs as a means of determining whether the commodities had been produced and processed using GHPs or had been subjected to a microbial inactivation treatment and/or preventing contaminated product from entering the food chain.

9. The summary report of this work is available at: ftp://ftp.fao.org/codex/meetings/ccfh/ccfh46/Report_Spices_Dried_Herbs_Expert%20Meeting.pdf. The final report of the FAO/WHO scientific advice on spices and dried aromatic herbs will be published in the Joint FAO/WHO Microbiological Risk Assessment Series by the end of 2015.

10. The Joint FAO/WHO Expert Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR) is evaluating annually various pesticides which may be used for production of spices and culinary herbs, according to requests from the Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues (CCPR). The meeting reports are available at http://www.who.int/foodsafety/chem/jmpr/publications/en/index.html.

11. JMPR also published, in 2009, guidance on data submission for estimation of residue levels in/on spices: http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/agphome/documents/Pests_Pesticides/JMPR/JMPRreport09.pdf.

FAO Capacity development

12. FAO is currently providing support to the Government of Nepal through a Trust Fund Project on *Enhancing Sanitary and Phytosanitary Capacity of Nepalese Ginger Exports through Public Private Partnerships* (2012-2014). Ginger is Nepal's most important spice export, and under this project, training manuals, relevant capacity development tools and guidance documents have been developed and a market study of Nepalese ginger and its derivative products in India and Bangladesh has been carried out. The report of the study will be made available upon completion of the project.

13. The FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAORAP) has developed a training manual on implementing ASEANGAP in the fruit and vegetable sector which is available online[1]. FAORAP is currently working with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries on GAP for fruits and vegetables including culinary herbs. A GAP scheme on "Development of Standards and Schemes for Good Agriculture Practice (GAP) Implementation and Certification in countries of SAARC" has been developed based on international requirements. Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives and Nepal were selected as Pilot Countries. The project assisted the countries in establishing National standards, a Scheme Owner along with the GAP logo and a National Certification Body for GAP. With the steps being initiated by the governments of these countries, the farmers/growers of the countries will be encouraged to follow the scheme which will result not only in increased safety and quality of produce but also economic viability, environmental sustainability, social acceptability.

14. Along with the project, a training manual has also been developed on GAP Scheme for SAARC countries. This manual can be used for guidance for implementing GAP for other agricultural produce including spices and herbs. For more information on this training manual, contact Ms Shashi Sareen (Senior Food Safety and Nutrition Officer, FAORAP) at Shashi.Sareen@fao.org.

15. **Regional Guidance on Criteria for Good Manufacturing Practices/ Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (GMP/HACCP) for Asian Countries** has been developed to support Member States across Asia to fully integrate the preventive approach into national food control systems and incorporate GHP/HACCP into their regulations. The document supports the translation of the Codex texts from their advisory nature into standards or criteria which are more directive and specific and therefore enforceable as well as additional clarifications on relevant terminology and additional aspects such as management systems. The guidance document is applicable to all sectors including the spice sector and is available online at http://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/31d0c077-a9d7-48bf-a076-ece0c07e45c8/.

[1] http://www.fao.org/docrep/019/i3576e/i3576e00.htm (RAP/Publication 2014/2).