



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

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COMMUNICATION FROM OECD¹

ACTIVITIES OF THE OECD FRUIT AND VEGETABLES SCHEME

1. The OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme, with the support of Kenya (Rapporteur) and Brazil started to develop an OECD Explanatory Brochure on Passion Fruit in 2016. This is the second OECD Brochure which will be based on a Codex Standard. The first explanatory brochure based on a Codex Standard was dedicated to Pomegranates and was published in 2014. The OECD is also discussing with the Codex Secretariat the feasibility of organising a joint workshop in Africa in 2018. Further details will be provided in due time and all interested Codex Member Countries will be invited to participate in the workshop.
2. Albania, Brazil and Croatia officially applied to join the OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme. Evaluation missions will take place during the summer (June/July 2017) and an evaluation report will be completed and subsequently discussed by all of the OECD National Designated Authorities at the next OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme Plenary Meeting (December 2017). Subject to the approval by the Committee for Agriculture and the OECD Council, these countries could then become official members of the OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme in early 2018. The Scheme is also finalizing the OECD Guidelines on Quality Inspection which will be approved next December 2017.
3. The Scheme regularly undertakes peer reviews on national fruit and vegetables quality inspection systems on a voluntary basis, to examine and assess its performance by experts from other countries under the umbrella of the OECD. The ultimate goal is to help improve policy making, adopt best practices and comply with established international standards and principles. This year the OECD Scheme undertook a peer review on the Israeli fruit and vegetables quality inspection system. A final report will be presented for approval at the next Plenary Meeting (December 2017).
4. The Scheme is involved in capacity building activities. These training courses and workshops focus on the implementation of the OECD quality inspection system, interpretation of international standards and on latest developments and challenges in the fruit and vegetables sector. The latest events were organised in Kenya. OECD is also in talks with UNESCAP to try to organise a joint workshop in Asia at the end of 2017. The Codex Secretariat is always invited to participate and provide information on the activities of the Codex Alimentarius Commission related to fruit and vegetables inspections.
5. The Scheme also holds Meeting of Heads of National Inspection Services (HNIS) of its Members every other year. The objective of these meetings is triple: to facilitate discussions between inspection services on major problems, developments and challenges in the fruit and vegetables sector and quality inspection system; to share and harmonise the application of the OECD Scheme; and to present developments in the fruit and vegetables sector and quality inspection system in the Host Country. The proceedings are available upon request. The latest HNIS meeting was hosted by Italy in October 2016 and the Codex Secretariat attended as Observer.
6. The Scheme regularly provides economic and market analysis of selected fruit and vegetables products for its Members, in order to give an overview on trends, trade volume/value on international trade and forecast for the next season. The analysis is done by experts at the invitation of the OECD Secretariat. In 2016, experts from the Slovak Republic gave an overview on the fruit and vegetables markets situation in their country.
7. The OECD explanatory brochures, guidelines and peer review reports are available from the official website of the OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme free of charges.

<http://www.oecd.org/agriculture/fruit-vegetables/>

¹ Document prepared by and under the responsibility of the OECD.

OECD WORK ON RISK/SAFETY ASSESSMENT OF PRODUCTS OF MODERN BIOTECHNOLOGY

Biosafety and Food-Feed safety programmes

8. The safety assessment of products derived from modern biotechnology is an important challenge as genetically-engineered (GE) organisms are developed, in particular transgenic plants increasingly cultivated worldwide, and as human foods and animal feeds derived from such crops are being marketed. In order to increase the efficiency of the risk/safety assessment process and to reduce duplication of effort, the OECD works to harmonise country approaches and share information used in this assessment. Two closely-related programmes are being implemented:

- The Working Group on Harmonisation of Regulatory Oversight in Biotechnology addresses aspects of the environmental risk/ safety assessment of GE organisms;
- The Working Group for the Safety of Novel Foods and Feeds addresses the safety assessment of foods and feeds derived from GE organisms.

9. The main purpose of the work is threefold: i) To assist national authorities in evaluating the potential risks of GE products and ensuring high standards of safety; ii) To foster communication and mutual understanding of the regulatory processes in different countries; and iii) To reduce the potential for non-tariff barriers to trade.

10. Both programmes identify a common base of scientific information that can be useful in assessing the safety of specific products. The aim is to ensure that the types of information and data used in safety assessments, as well as the methods used to collect these elements, are as similar as possible amongst countries.

Main outputs

11. The main outputs are the “OECD Consensus Documents” which constitute practical tools for safety assessors and other stakeholders. These documents compile key information on major crops, trees, animals, micro-organisms, as well as on introduced traits, which national risk/safety assessors believe to be relevant when comparing new (genetically-engineered) products to conventional ones. The documents relating to *Environmental Safety* focus mainly on the biology of *plants* (Species and taxonomic group, reproductive biology, potential for out-crossing with related species, centres of diversity, agronomic practices, major uses and other relevant elements). The documents on the biology of Sorghum and Tomato species were issued in the course of 2016. The first biology document dealing with an *animal* species, Atlantic salmon, was published in May 2017 and constitutes an important milestone in the OECD biosafety work. The documents for *Food and Feed Safety* contain information on composition including the key nutrients, toxicants, anti-nutrients and allergens, and the revised document on the composition of Rice was published in August 2016. To date, more than 70 Consensus documents (biology, and/or composition) are available on www.oecd.org/biotrack.

12. In addition, a database on genetically-engineered products is updated by participants in these OECD programmes for public availability. The database aims to allow regulatory officials to easily share basic information on biotech products that have been approved for commercial application in terms of food, feed or environmental safety. As at March 2017, the database contained information on about 255 biotech products from 15 plant species, approved in one or more of 11 countries and the E.C. The biotech products are tagged with their ‘Unique Identifiers’ (coding system developed by OECD), thus facilitating the exchange of information between international databases.

Collaboration with FAO, WHO and Codex

13. FAO, UNEP, WHO and the Codex Alimentarius Commission are regular observers in these activities, which involve several non-members of the OECD, as well as other interested Organisations. The work includes crops and commodities often produced in tropical and sub-tropical regions (e.g. rice, cotton), with recent developments focused on cassava, sorghum, cowpea, sugarcane or eucalyptus as a result from the active involvement of Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, China, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Paraguay, Philippines, Vietnam and South Africa among others.

14. Example of practical cooperation with Codex: when dealing with the appropriate comparators for testing new varieties, the OECD Food Safety Documents always refer to the “Guideline for the Conduct of Food Safety Assessment of Food Derived from Recombinant DNA Plants” CAC/GL 45/2003 of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, including its Annexes II and III updated in 2008. Similarly, documents from the Codex Standard Series constitute useful sources of information and key references when developing these OECD documents.

15. The OECD Secretariat participates in the work of the joint “FAO/WHO Expert Meeting on Hazards Associated with Animal Feed”, for which the report is being finalized for publication in 2017.

16. FAO, UNEP-CBD and OECD are coordinating their efforts for the harmonized development of their biotech product databases, the FAO GM Foods Platform, the CBD Biosafety Clearing House and the OECD Biotrack Database respectively. Common webinars are organized since 2014 for presenting the specificities of each database, discussing with users around the world, favouring complementarities and identifying synergies for better fulfilling the needs while saving resources.

OECD WORK ON PESTICIDE

17. The Pesticides Programme was created in 1992 to help OECD countries:

- harmonise their pesticide review procedures,
- share the work of evaluating pesticides, and
- reduce risks associated with pesticide use.

18. The Codex Secretariat is an observer in the Working Group on Pesticides (WGP), the parent body of the OECD Pesticides Programme.

19. Below is some information about the two OECD groups which are of main interest to the work of Codex.

Residue Chemistry Expert Group

20. The Residue Chemistry Expert Group (RCEG) was established in 2003. Its objectives are to:

- harmonise the way residue testing is conducted and results are interpreted,
- develop methods to support international harmonisation of MRLs (the OECD does not set MRLs).

21. The FAO/WHO Joint Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR) Secretariat is an observer in the RCEG.

22. Nine OECD Test Guidelines have been published, as follows: **TG 501** Metabolism in Crops; **TG 502** Metabolism in Rotational Crops; **TG 503** Metabolism in Livestock; **TG 504** Residues in Rotational Crops (Limited Field Studies); **TG 505** Residues in Livestock; **TG 506** Stability of Pesticide Residues in Stored Commodities; **TG 507** Nature of Pesticide Residues in processed Commodities - High Temperature-Hydrolysis; **TG 508** Magnitude of Pesticide Residues in Processed Commodities; and **TG 509** Crop Field Trial.

23. Seven Guidance Documents are available: Definition of Residue; Overview of Residue Chemistry Studies; Magnitude of Pesticide Residues in Processed Commodities; Pesticide Residue Analytical Methods; Crop Field Trials; and Residues in Livestock. In 2016, the second edition of the 2011 Guidance Document on Crop Field Trials (which deals with proportionality issues, clarifies sampling procedures and takes into account national/ Codex information on recent changes in crop groups) was published.

24. The MRL Calculator, a tool for statistical calculation of MRLs was published in 2011. It is an Excel spreadsheet which is easy to use and does not require an extensive knowledge of statistics.

25. All the documents mentioned above and the MRL calculator are available on the OECD public web site: <http://www.oecd.org/env/ehs/pesticides-biocides/publicationsonpesticideresidues.htm>

26. The RCEG is developing a new Guidance Document for Rotational Crop Field Trials. The draft GD is expected to be distributed for a second broad commenting round through the WGP and the WNT (the Working Group of National Co-ordinators of the Test Guidelines Programme) in the second half of 2017.

27. Potential future work of the expert group might include the development of new guidance documents on residues in honey and aquaculture feeds and the revision of the OECD TG 509 on Crop Field Trials.

Expert Group on Minor Uses

28. The Expert Group on Minor Uses (EGMU) was established in 2007. The current work plan of the OECD EGMU focuses on issues associated with cooperation, technical and policy activities with the aim of facilitating the development of data and registration of pesticides for minor uses. As with many OECD chemicals and pesticide projects, the EGMU works towards providing the infrastructure, guidance and tools for promoting the registration of pesticides for minor uses, including aspects of data requirements, data generation and opportunities for harmonization to make available data useful across countries. The OECD work focuses on developing tools for risk assessment and mechanisms to facilitate co-operation and work-sharing. For further information, see the OECD website: <http://www.oecd.org/env/ehs/pesticides-biocides/minoruses.htm>

29. Two Guidance Documents have been published: a Guidance Document on Defining Minor Uses of Pesticides and a Guidance Document on Regulatory Incentives for the Registration of Pesticide Minor Uses.

30. Two survey reports have been published: the Survey Results on Regulatory Incentives for the Registration of Pesticide Minor Uses and the Survey Results on Efficacy & Crop Safety Data Requirements and Guidelines for the Registration of Pesticide Minor Uses.

31. All OECD Minor Uses publications are available at:

<http://www.oecd.org/env/ehs/pesticides-biocides/publicationsonminorusesofpesticides.htm>

32. Currently, three main activities are underway, as follows.

Project 1: *work towards developing a Guidance Document to address & solve minor uses:*

33. Responses to a 2013 survey to collect information on existing national and regional processes and known data exchanges are being analysed and a report of the survey was made available in September 2015. The survey report will now be utilised to form the basis of developing an OECD guidance document to address and solve minor uses. Other information sources such as further detailed background provided during the survey about various different approaches and programs operating internationally will also be utilised.

34. As part of the survey, members were requested to propose a suitable crop for establishing a joint project. Many diverse suggestions were made as to a potential crop. The Netherlands, Australia and the Secretariat considered the suggested crops and also discussed if EGMU members themselves who are largely regulatory authorities had the capacity (including funding and mandate) to conduct a data generation project. They also noted that the first Global Minor Use Priority Setting Workshop was held in September 2015 where the objective was to establish joint global data generation projects for minor uses, and for which many EGMU members were involved. It was determined that rather than duplicate work being initiated elsewhere that EGMU would utilise the priorities identified from that process and offer regulatory support to the identified priority projects going forward. The EGMU had agreed to work with the leads of those projects to offer input to facilitate agreement of a global data package acceptable to regulators and in turn explore the possible establishment of a joint review of the data when available.

Project 2: *Global Joint Reviews (GJRs) –enhancing minor uses from GJRs:*

35. Information on GJRs relevant for minor uses is being collated as part of the existing work associated with the Global Joint Review MRL Analysis project and further sources of information are being explored. The first aim of the work is to identify differences in uses (crops) approved in various countries through GJRs. Subsequent aims would involve identifying the reasons for these differences and activities or initiatives that could enhance the scope of minor uses approved amongst countries through GJRs.

Project 3: *work towards developing a Guidance Document on the exchange and use of international efficacy & crop safety data for minor uses:*

36. A draft of the guidance document is being developed that will be available for further review by members in the second quarter of 2017. While some OECD countries do not currently require efficacy data, it was confirmed as an important consideration amongst the EGMU participants. The first step of the project – collecting and compiling information and data relating to pesticides efficacy for minor uses crops – is completed.

37. Finally, the EGMU and OECD's Expert Group on Integrated Pest Management are considering a thought starter on how Integrated Pest Management (IPM) tools and technologies, including bio-pesticides, can help fill the gaps in available crop protection products as regards minor uses. The thought starter was discussed at the 2016 meeting of the Working Group on Pesticides. The group agreed that there is, in principle, no difference between minor uses and major uses with regard to the implementation of IPM and highlighted the importance of IPM, the need for communication in and between countries and the need to harmonise concepts, not necessarily methodologies, due to country specific needs.

PROPOSED EXCHANGE BETWEEN FAO AND NEA ON A FRAMEWORK FOR POST-ACCIDENT FOOD MANAGEMENT

38. An NEA member-country survey of government decisions and criteria for accepting food trade from Japan following the Fukushima accident, and experience since the accident, have demonstrated two things. First, the large variety in governmental survey responses demonstrated that there is no common understanding of existing international post-accident food trade guidance, and that existing international guidance only partially addresses the entire context of post-accident management of food. Second, experience since the accident has demonstrated the need to improve domestic and international confidence and trust in post-accident governmental food safety decisions (e.g. food-marketing criteria, food certification processes).

39. To address the first issue, the NEA's Committee on Radiological Protection and Public Health (CRPPH) has developed a comprehensive post-accident food-management framework that is summarised in

annex to this note. This inclusively describes the management of: food production in accident-affected agricultural lands; consumption of locally-produced food by residents of accident-affected areas; marketing of locally-produced food in accident-affected areas; domestic marketing of food produced in accident-affected areas; export of food from accident-affected countries; and import of food from accident-affected countries. To help assure broad international coherence, the technical aspects of this framework are being discussed with the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Codex Alimentarius Committee on Contaminants in Food (CCCF), and NEA member countries. The framework is also being included in new ICRP recommendations currently being drafted for the Protection of People in the Event of a Nuclear Accident.

40. To address the second issue, and help improve domestic and international confidence and trust in governmental food-safety decisions, often a neutral and international opinion is of value. To offer this, the proposed post-accident food-management framework includes a two-team validation process. One international team, of experts in calculating dose from eating contaminated food, would review and scientifically validate, as appropriate, the science and assumptions used by the accident country to establish numerical criteria for food consumption and marketing. This would not involve questioning the resulting numerical criteria, but rather the science behind it. A second international team, of experts in radiological measurement, would review, and scientifically and technically validate, as appropriate, the science and technology used by the accident country to measure contamination in food products and certify, as appropriate, food as meeting government criteria.

41. Discussions with emergency and recovery management experts support this framework and twofold international validation process as positive steps to increase confidence, both domestically and internationally, that the accident country's consumption criteria are scientifically well based, and that the process of certifying all marketed food as meeting these criteria are scientifically and technically state-of-the-art. To achieve broad discussion, technical agreement and political recognition of this framework will require an extended effort to develop some level of formal, governmental agreement. Collaboration with the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC), its CCCF, and the FAO on this issue is essential to improving the current situation.

Annex Food Management Framework

The CRPPH post-accident food management framework: recognises the responsibility of the accident country to develop an accident-specific approach to food criteria and management; acknowledges the political, social and ethical rationale for a consistent approach and single criteria for domestic consumption and exportation of food; and proposes that importing countries accept the accident country's export criteria for allowing importation.

Framework Assumptions

- Accidents are rare and are unique
- Affected food products will be accident specific
- There are a limited number of export food products from any affected area
- Consumption and export criteria are a matter of national choice and will evolve with circumstances

Emergency Food Actions

- Food consumption in areas modelled to be affected will be banned / restricted rapidly
- Food distribution and export from areas modelled to be affected, will be banned / restricted rapidly
- Food consumption, distribution and export will be resumed only after:
 - the accident is under control
 - affected areas have been radiologically characterised
 - national criteria have been established, and
 - a measurement / certification process has been established

Framework National Consumption Criteria Assumptions

- National criteria should be based on pre-determined risk assessments
- National criteria will need to be refined to address actual prevailing circumstances:
 - What food products are affected
 - What radionuclides have been released
- Criteria refinement can take place during the time that the accident is being brought under control and affected areas are being characterised
- Criteria will be developed to protect the most exposed group – those living in the affected area

Post-Accident Food-Management Framework

- For affected food, national consumption criteria will be developed in easily measurable quantities:
 - Activity concentration (Bq/kg)
 - Based on an assumed annual food consumption (kg/a)
 - Such that eating affected food will not cause a radiation exposure over a specified level (mSv/a)
- Codex Alimentarius levels should be used as a ceiling for national consumption criteria
- It will be socially, politically and perhaps ethically difficult for a country to use different criteria for those living in the affected area and those living in unaffected areas
- Similarly, criteria for national consumption will most likely be used as export criteria
- Importing countries should use the accident country's export criteria as their import criteria
- The Framework thus uses the same consumption criteria for the local, national and international management of food from post-accident affected areas