

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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Agenda Item 14

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ORIGINAL LANGUAGE ONLY

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME CODEX COMMITTEE ON CONTAMINANTS IN FOODS

Tenth Session
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(Comments submitted by Colombia, Ecuador, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Republic of Korea, Senegal, Thailand, USA and African Union)

Discussion paper on maximum levels for methylmercury in fish

COLOMBIA

Sin embargo, Colombia encomienda revisar la alternativa de formular recomendaciones al consumidor acerca de la ingesta de pescado, buscando disminuir la exposición a contaminantes y teniendo en cuenta las bondades en los aspectos nutricionales, antes de formular los niveles máximos permisibles de metilmercurio en especies de pescado diferentes al atún.

Por tanto, el documento podría virar su rumbo en lo relativo a formular recomendaciones acertadas de acuerdo a la contaminación que se presente con mercurio total y tendría que considerarse un título acertado a su contenido.

ECUADOR

(i) Comentarios Generales:

Ecuador, aprecia los esfuerzos realizados por Japón y Nueva Zelanda sobre el Documento debate sobre Niveles Máximos de Metilmercurio en pescado, y al respecto, Ecuador considera de que en vista de que los datos de consumo fueron proporcionados sólo por dos países miembros y sólo hubo un conjunto de datos de cada especie, es necesario recoger datos adicionales sobre la presencia y el consumo; sin embargo a Ecuador le gustaría compartir la experiencia que tiene como país respecto a este tema:

La entidad ecuatoriana competente en este tema es el Instituto Nacional de Pesca (INP), quienes como autoridad competente realizan el control sanitario y certificación de los productos de la pesca y acuicultura con el objetivo de verificar el cumplimiento de las legislaciones sanitarias vigentes bajo la directriz del Plan Nacional de Control (2006) el cual incluye el Monitoreo de contaminantes ambientales y microbiológicos entre otros protocolos de control.

Sin embargo, en el laboratorio de análisis de metales pesados del INP no realiza la cuantificación del metilmercurio, así mismo las regulaciones de las autoridades sanitarias de los mercados donde se exportan los productos pesqueros ecuatorianos establecen únicamente el límite máximo de 1,0 mg.kg-1 para el contenido de mercurio total (Reglamento (CE) N° 1881/2006 de la Comisión, del 19 de diciembre de 2006, por el que se fija el contenido máximo de determinados contaminantes en los productos alimenticios).

Adicionalmente, el Servicio Ecuatoriano de Normalización (INEN) en el año 2014 emitió una enmienda a la normativa NTE INEN 183:2013 Pescado Fresco Refrigerado o Congelado Requisitos en la que también establece 1,0 mg.kg-1 de Mercurio (Hg) en peces depredadores.

El laboratorio de análisis de metales pesados del Proceso de Aseguramiento de la Calidad Pesquera Acuícola y Ambiental (ACPAA) del INP ha validado el método para la cuantificación de mercurio en productos de la pesca y acuícolas por espectrofotometría de absorción atómica mediante vapor frío.

Este método fue acreditado por el Servicio de Acreditación Ecuatoriano (SAE) en el año 2006, actualmente se han acreditado métodos para la cuantificación de otros metales de interés sanitario como el cadmio, plomo, arsénico y estaño.

Para la determinación del mercurio total, se emplea espectrofotometría de absorción atómica y los resultados son expresados en mg.kg -1 de peso húmedo.

Los análisis realizados en el laboratorio de metales pesados del INP, durante el período 2006 a 2008 y primer semestre del año 2009 en muestras de diferentes especies de atún, revelaron que de 8825 muestras solo el 1,87 % presentó concentraciones de 1,0 a 2,47 mg.kg⁻¹ que excedieron el límite máximo de mercurio total (Moncayo et al., 2010).

En análisis rutinarios del INP, en el período de agosto del 2009 a diciembre del 2013, las concentraciones de mercurio total en 2055 muestras de atún (*Thunnus albacares*, *Katsuwonus pelamis*, *Thunnus obesus*) estuvieron en el rango < 0,09 mg.kg⁻¹, es decir inferior al límite de cuantificación del método y como máximo 1,89 mg.kg⁻¹. De acuerdo a la información analizada, los porcentajes de las concentraciones de mercurio en atún que excedieron el límite permisible en relación al número de muestras fue de 2.07 % en *Thunnus albacares*, 0,44 % en *Katsuwonus pelamis* y del 2,65 % en *Thunnus obesus* (Maridueña, 2014).

REFERENCIAS:

- Maridueña Ana (2014). Concentraciones de Mercurio en Atún Fresco/Congelado de Exportación (*Thunnus albacares*, *Katsuwonus pelamis* y *Thunnus obesus*). Poster presentado en el VIII Simposio de la Sección Latinoamericana y del Caribe AOAC Internacional.
- Inocuidad Alimentaria: Nuevos Desafíos. Buenos Aires, Argentina. Moncayo D., Trejos R., Maridueña A., Castro R. (2010). Niveles de Mercurio, Cadmio y Plomo en Productos Pesqueros de Exportación. Revista de Ciencias del Mar y Limnología, Vol. 4(1): pg. 65-74.

(ii) Comentarios Específicos:

- EXPOSICIÓN ALIMENTARIA AL METILMERCURIO EN PECES QUE PUEDAN ACUMULAR ELEVADAS ELEVADAS CONCENTRACIONES DE METILMERCURIO

GHANA

Position: Ghana does not support the development of ML for methylmercury in tuna and other fish species at this time.

Rationale: Currently available occurrence and consumption data on individual fish species is too limited to warrant the establishment of MLs. The MLs proposed in the discussion paper were based on data for methylmercury from only two countries. In our opinion, MLs for methylmercury must reflect regional variations thus the need for global occurrence data. Concerns have also been raised with regards to the performance criteria for some of the methods used for methylmercury analysis. There is the need for clear guidance on analytical methods to be used for enforcement. With all these limitations it appears premature to develop MLs for methylmercury in fish. We recommend that the already established GLs for methylmercury in fish should apply until the above-mentioned gaps have been addressed following which the CCCF can consider establishing MLs.

INDIA

India is of considered opinion that decision of developing ML(s) at this stage may not be appropriate particularly in view of the data limitations mentioned under paras 17, 24, 30 and 35 of the papers and suggest that additional occurrence and/or consumption data should be collected to take decision in future. Meanwhile, guideline level for methyl mercury in fish may be followed.

INDONESIA

Indonesia welcomes and appreciates the work performed by the electronic Working Group under the lead of Japan and co-chaired of New Zealand on Discussion Paper On Maximum Levels For Methylmercury in Fish. Indonesia supports the recommendation.

KENYA

SPECIFIC COMMENT:

We would like to support the discussion paper to advance to the next stage while confirming the decision of the 9th Session of CCCF for which species ML to be developed. Tuna is predatory so it can bio-accumulate methyl mercury. We also recommend additional consumption data to be collected / submitted for analysis especially from the countries that export the fish

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

The Republic of Korea supports the recommendation of EWG regarding the start of a new work on ML(s) for methylmercury in tuna. However, we propose that the ML for methylmercury should also be applied to some predatory fish which are identified to accumulate high level of methylmercury such as inshore hagfish (*Eptatetus burgeri*) and sharks.

In order to support the above comment, we would like to submit our occurrence data of total mercury in inshore hagfish, sharks and Bluefin tuna and that of methylmercury in some predatory fish and tuna species. Please find the attached excel file.

ADDITIONAL DATA IN CRD 19

SENEGAL

Position: Nous ne soutenons pas la mise en place de LM pour le mercure dans le poisson. Au cas où le Comité s'accorderait à établir des LM, nous aimerions que ça soit sur le thon !

Justification: nous ne soutenons pas cette mise en place des LM, parce que:

- Le nouveau document de travail pour l'élaboration de ces LM est fondé sur des données extrêmement limitées fournies par les Etats-Unis et la Nouvelle Zélande;
- Les données de consommation sur l'espèce sont insuffisantes,
- le non respect (par le groupe de travail) des critères du Codex pour le choix des aliments et des contaminants.

THAILAND

Thailand appreciates the work of the development of the MLs for methylmercury in fish done by Japan as chair and New Zealand as co-chair.

We found that the occurrence data for consideration are mostly total mercury, while data of methylmercury are limited. Moreover, method of analysis for methelymercury concentration are harmful to laboratory analyzers. Many member countries currently use the analytical methods of total mercury. We, therefore, are of the view that the MLs should be developed for total mercury in fish. It is useful and practical as well as reflecting consumer protection.

For fish species, to which MLs apply, we are of the view that the MLs should be developed for all tuna species. Predatory fish and fish species other than tuna which can accumulate high methylmercury concentrations should be taken into account only when additional data are available.

USA

- The U.S. position continues to be the following:
 - Guidelines (GLs) or MLs, while potentially eliminating fish samples with high levels of mercury, are not practical to manage the risk of chronic methylmercury exposure from fish, and may result in limiting availability of an important source of nutrition.
 - Since methylmercury levels in individual fish are highly variable, enforcing MLs based on testing a traded lot of fish can be difficult.
 - Consumer advice at the national level (e.g., recommended number of servings of fish) is the appropriate mechanism to manage the risk of methylmercury contamination in fish and to ensure that Codex actions do not result in limiting consumption of fish unnecessarily.

The United States believes that it is premature to start new work on MLs for either tuna, fish species that can accumulate high methylmercury, or predatory fishes including/excluding tuna, etc., given that limited worldwide occurrence and consumption data are available.

In addition to addressing occurrence and consumption data needs, the Committee would need to consider the following before proceeding with development of an ML:

- Whether it is appropriate to develop an ML for tuna species in general with limited data from only three species of tuna.
- Clearly defining the list of species that are comprised by "tuna."
- Identifying fish species and predatory fishes with high methylmercury levels to be considered for development of MLs
- Clarifying whether ML(s) would apply to fresh and/or processed fish products (e.g., canned tuna) in international trade.

If new methylmercury MLs are proposed, the United States also recommends that the Committee ask JECFA to conduct impact assessments of the proposed MLs.

The United States supports the suggestion made at the 9th Session of CCCF that FAO and WHO should consider development of guidance to assist governments in addressing the risk from methylmercury.

AFRICAN UNION

Position: AU retains its position that it does not support the establishment of MLs for methylmercury in fish. In the event the committee agrees to develop MLs, we could only agree to the setting for tuna.

Issue & Rationale: In AU advice on this matter in 2015, AU urged countries not to support establishment of MLs for methylmercury in fish at that point. AU advice was based on the observation that the EWG had established that methylmercury intake from tuna is 2.3% of PTWI (1.6µg/kg bw per week); a situation that does not meet the Codex criteria for selecting food and contaminants for ML setting, although the updated data does show certain groups exceeding the PTWI for certain fish species. The CCCF9 decided to continue the work toward setting MLs on the basis that the MLs were necessary to protect consumers, in particular those most vulnerable, like pregnant women and lactating mothers and children. The CCCF9 also noted that species, other than tuna, which can accumulate high concentrations of methylmercury, should also be included, such as shark, sword fish and blue marlin. It was also acknowledged that consumer advisories at the national or regional levels should be used in conjunction with an ML.

The new discussion paper is based on extremely limited data for methylmercury contributed by USA and New Zealand. Similarly, there is a lack of consumption data on individual fish species. Based on this narrow basis of available data, we feel it is premature to set MLs.