JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX COMMITTEE ON CONTAMINANTS IN FOODS

15th Session
Virtual
9-13 and 24 May 2022

Summary of discussion of group of CCCF15 delegations on Maximum level
for total aflatoxins in ready-to-eat peanuts and associated sampling plan

(Prepared by India)

The CCCF15 plenary formed a group of delegations, based on their interventions during the session to discuss methodological data presentation related to proposal for establishing a Maximum Level (ML) for Total Aflatoxins (AFT) in Ready-to-eat (RTE) peanuts under its discussion. The delegations participated in the discussions on 13/05/2022 lead by India were: (1) Australia (2) Brazil (3) Canada (4) India (5) Japan (6) Senegal (7) USA (8) Others. Following is the summary of discussions.

The EWG lead by India briefed the group regarding 65,041 GEMS/Food data sets made available to it for ten years for analysis pertaining to combined categories of peanuts without segregation to RTE peanuts after implementation of COP from 2017 and for the years 2010 to 2016 without implementation of COP. Regarding presentation of the data in discussion paper this has been carried out in line with the earlier approach of JECFA assessment and as per the terms of references of the EWG based on discussions took place in previous CCCF sessions and decisions taken by it.

The 65,041 GEMS/Food data sets were presented based on percentage of samples detected at an ML of ≤4 µg/kg, >4 to ≤10 µg/kg, >10 to ≤15 µg/kg and >15 µg/kg as given at table 2, percentage of rejection at hypothetical ML of 4 µg/kg, 10 µg/kg and 15 µg/kg as given at table 3 to 5 for the years 2017 to 2020 after implementation of COP. The 2010 to 2016 data has already been assessed by the JECFA83 concluding that enforcing an ML of 10, 8 or 4 µg/kg for RTE peanuts would have little further impact on dietary exposure to AFT for the general population, compared with setting an ML of 15 µg/kg, however, the rejection rate of 9.7% at an ML of 15 µg/kg increased to 12.6% at an ML of 10 µg/kg.

The views (methodology on data presentation) of delegations participated are summarized as follows:

(i)   There is a need to create RTE category for peanuts to address immediate trade impediments so that the producing countries can label it for simultaneous generation of AFT occurrence data with percentage of rejection to protect the health of consumers ensuring appropriate food supply as well as review the adopted ML after five years;

(ii)   It is difficult to segregate the data between RTE peanut and peanuts destined for further processing. However, a compromise ML should be established for RTE peanuts in this session and the same may be reviewed after five years of time as there would be data after implementing the MLs for RTE peanuts;

(iii)   The segregation of GEMS/Food data is yet to be confirmed by FAO/WHO and if they can provide separate data for RTE Peanuts at this stage;

(iv)   Data submitted by the members for the years 2019/2020 omitted from GEMS/Food hence not shared with the EWG for incorporating in discussion paper to take an informed view, the year to year occurrence of AFT in RTE peanuts may also be presented to take a decision;

(v)   It is possible to reduce AFT specifically for RTE peanuts after applying COP as well as available tools to exclude AFT contaminated produce from the food chain, presentation of data from the producing countries with geographical distribution for which the community level publications has been made available to minimize the risk of AFT exposure;

(vi)   Provide more time for implementation of COP and generation of data for taking more informed decision by the CCCF plenary;

Recommendation: The CCCF15 plenary may like to take the proposal forward to adopt a compromised ML in the interest of the immediate trade impediments for RTE peanuts, (subject to reservations of members, if any), generation of data specifically for RTE peanuts after implementation of COP and review in five years' time which would be in line with the decisions taken by it in case of setting up of MLs of contaminants in other commodities.