



منظمة الأغذية
والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

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Продовольственная и
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Объединенных
Наций

Organización
de las
Naciones
Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

COMMITTEE ON COMMODITY PROBLEMS

INTERGOVERNMENTAL GROUP ON TEA

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REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON MAXIMUM RESIDUE LEVELS (MRLs)¹

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Intergovernmental Group (IGG) on Tea recognizes the urgent need for harmonization of MRLs to reduce the cost of compliance by tea producing/exporting countries in meeting the MRL requirements of different importing countries. At the same time, the Group recognizes the concerns of consumers in relation to the residues in tea, thus ensuring that consumption is unaffected and continues to be safe. An initiative was set up by the Group to prioritize the close cooperation between tea producers, importers, traders, boards, associations and other organizations to deliver the work programme outlined in the action plans of the 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th Sessions of the IGG.

2. The complexity in international regulations on pesticides in tea is creating difficulties in legislative compliance in a number of countries thus affecting the international trade in tea. The global harmonization of regulations on tea MRLs would facilitate both compliance and trade. Moreover, whilst tea is consumed as an infusion, regulations are set, in contrast, on the form the commodity is traded (i.e. leaves). Therefore, there is a proposal to review the appropriateness of this.

3. The Group at its 16th Session agreed that the generation of data was required by cooperation between producers and importers to address the difficulties arising from pesticide MRL regulatory changes in the key importing countries. The Group acknowledged and supported the considerable efforts of the producing countries in MRL data preparation and collation for

¹ Report of the Coordinators of the Working Group on MRLs, T. C. Chaudhuri and Andrew Scott, with inputs from Prof. Zhangmao Chen.

submission for expert consultation; and the “global initiative for pesticide management in tea” for consuming countries to “harmonize” the approach to legislation on tea MRLs.

4. The Group noted, at its 17th Session, significant progress had been achieved by the Working Group on Pesticides in Tea; establishing a global focus on the issues; discussions with key regulatory authorities and the tea trade; and much improved exchange of information. This included producers agreeing on a joint work programme, being sensitized to the issues of the tea importers and *vice versa*.
5. The Group recorded, at its 18th Session, the progress made including publication of EC regulations (March 2008), retention of MRL by FSANZ, discussions progressing with PMRA and FSANZ, the meeting of producer countries in Colombo (August 2007) and the sharing of information on pest management systems, data and work programmes and priorities. In addition, discussions had been established with a broader group of stakeholders including Crop Life International.
6. At its 18th Session, the Group recommended and agreed on an action plan with good communication channels to continue improving the regulatory compliance of internationally traded tea, establishing a transition period in consuming countries of plant protection systems that are no-longer sustainable in the long term whilst the producing countries find alternatives to the same, producer countries carry out trials for data used in the successful application of new regulations. This would involve all stakeholders, as well as Codex CCPR (including WG on Minor Uses and Specialty Crops), the European Commission and other standards-setting bodies. There was continued support for discussions to achieve global harmonization for MRL regulations. It was also recommended that sampling of tea on the brew to collect data and investigate the legal considerations for establishing MRLs by this method and consulting with appropriate agencies such as JMPR, Codex Alimentarius and national authorities. The Group suggested that funding support for collection of field trial data in producing countries be sought from the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC).
7. It was recommended that the Working Group under the co-leadership of India and the United Kingdom coordinate, prioritize and accelerate submission on behalf of the industry for pesticide MRLs for tea. It was further recommended that this action plan be addressed by the Working Group to achieve this objective and that it would involve all stakeholders, as well as Codex Alimentarius, the European Commission and other standards-setting bodies. It was also recommended that the work on sampling and testing of tea on the brew be investigated under the leadership of Professor Chen (China), Dr Chaudhury (India) and Mr Simrany (United States).
8. India and the United Kingdom have coordinated a range of activities to meet the objectives agreed at the last session, and Professor Chen, Dr Chaudhury and Mr Simrany have investigated on the sampling of tea on the brew. This is a report on the progress made in the intervening period.

II. GLOBAL PLANT PROTECTION INITIATIVE IN TEA

9. The Working Group recognizes the high level of challenges in establishing progress in the development of regulations in national legislation and making progress at the FAO/WHO Joint Meeting on Pesticides Residues (JMPR) on recommending pesticide MRLs to Codex Alimentarius. The step wise approach continues to be taken through a series of meetings with a large number of stakeholders.
10. Significant progress has been made in 2009, both in the importing and producing countries. Following a number of meetings with the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) a meeting was held with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Interregional Research Project No. 4 (IR-4) (October 2008) which arranged an OECD side-bar meeting (November 2008) with EPA , PMRA

(Canada), APVMA (Australia), MAFF (Japan), PSD (UK) and tea importers. This resulted in the submission of an initial shortlist of requirements which was requested and circulated to EPA, PMRA and FSANZ (December 2008). Discussions were held with the EPA and IR-4, FSANZ (February 2009), PMRA (July 2009) where a clear understanding of the opportunities for submission of applications for MRLs were identified. Discussions with importing and producing countries were hosted by the ITC/ UKTC and ETC (May 2009). The United States, Canada and Australia programme was discussed at the workshop in Toronto (September 2009) with the EPA, PMRA, producing country representatives (Kenya, India, Sri Lanka) and chemical companies.

11. This intense activity has resulted in a number of submissions being made for pesticide MRLs in tea in a number of countries. There have been five submissions to the EPA through the IR-4 programme (August – December 2009), four submissions to PMRA by chemical companies including tea in their applications (August 2009 – February 2010), ten submissions to FSANZ through the APVMA review programme (July and September 2009), and in India there have been three notifications (July 2008, April 2009 and May 2009) giving 12 new draft MRL proposals for tea. Chemical registrant companies, Tea Research Associations in India and China and surveillance data from individual tea companies have enabled these applications to be made. It is good to be able to report that the EPA published an MRL (50ppm) for Acetamiprid in tea (February 2010).

12. The discussions at the Minor Use Workshop (Ottawa 23 March 2010), Codex CCPR Meeting (Xian, 19-24 April 2010) and ITC meeting (London, May 2010) are some of the next steps.

13. The producing country Working Group met separately in addition to the IGG sessions on a few occasions and fact finding on the global use of pesticides and existing MRLs in the tea producing countries could be compiled to frame further actions on the issue of MRL in tea. A “Module” for data generation has been developed with Codex Alimentarius and the protocol has been developed with PHI-7 day uniformly including computation module for MRL. After profiling over 75 globally used compounds, it was decided to select 49 for prioritization, 24 in the first phase and 25 in the second. Field level residue experiments were laid out uniformly in tea producing countries like India, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Indonesia, China and Malawi from which data could be compiled for national use as well as for international (e.g. Codex) submission. India so far has submitted data to Codex for five compounds, two compounds, Cypermethrin and Endosulfan (2010), at different stages of the MRLs protocol whilst the IGG forwarded data to JMPR to accelerate the process for those compounds. The producer countries held a meeting in Kochi, India (February 2009), where short and medium term difficulties were recognized and discussed. The National MRL Committee (Tea Board India) has also held a meeting with the regulators (March 2009) and held its first Working Group Meeting with the regulators and secondly with the chemical companies to identify key issues and agree to the work programme (August 2009).

14. A draft scheme was framed and circulated to all the members (September 2008) and again later, to use it as guideline document for preparing a full fledged proposal to be submitted by individual country to the CFC. A coordinated approach from the IGG appears to be difficult since requirements are different, also requiring a guarantee from the member country to the CFC being essential.

15. India and China coordinated an investigation on the sampling of tea on the brew. An international ring trial (six laboratories in four producing countries) was used to establish the analyses. After a meeting of the Working Group in Rome (20-22 May 2009), the methodology for analysis of tea on the brew has been validated and amended using a low and two high polarity pesticides. Tea samples (three green and three black) sprayed with the three pesticides were then analyzed (eight laboratories, August 2009) and the detection of pesticides in the tea brew was found to be related to water solubility. Further work on analytical methods, transfer rates, risk assessment, establishing the method and the legal consideration supported with CFC funding are

proposed as the next steps. Presentation of the findings of the Working Group of MRL in analyzing tea on the brew will be made by Dr Chadhuri and Professor Chen and their reports are available as documents CCP: TE 10/CRS 1 and CRS 2.

III. CONCLUSION

16. The Action Plan of the Working Group on MRLs which was adopted at the 18th Session has largely been achieved. Detailed results of the activities, field trials, and development of a common methodology to analyze tea on the brew which were requested in the Action Plan will be presented to the Group for consideration and discussion. In summary, the Action Plan recommended at the 18th Session of the IGG on Tea included:

- the coordination, prioritization and acceleration of submission on behalf of the industry for pesticide MRLs for tea;
- the provision of field trial data by tea producing countries for submission;
- the identification and carrying out of trials on alternative pest management systems to replace those that are proving to be unsustainable in the medium term;
- the involvement of all stakeholders, as well as Codex Alimentarius, the European Commission and other standards-setting bodies, by the Working Group on MRLs;
- the pursuance of other activities to broaden the stakeholder group and to ensure alignment; and
- that the work on sampling and testing of tea on the brew be investigated under the leadership of Professor Chen (China), Dr Chaudhury (India) and Mr Simrany (USA).