

# CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



World Health  
Organization

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Agenda Item 8

CX/CF 23/16/8

February 2023

## JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

### CODEX COMMITTEE ON CONTAMINANTS IN FOODS

16<sup>th</sup> Session

18-21 April 2023 (physical plenary meeting)

26 April 2023 (virtual report adoption)

### MAXIMUM LEVEL FOR TOTAL AFLATOXINS IN READY-TO-EAT PEANUTS AND ASSOCIATED SAMPLING PLAN (at Step 4)

(Prepared by the Electronic Working Group chaired by India)

Codex members and observers wishing to submit comments at Step 3 on the recommendations put forward in paragraph 7 should do so as instructed in CL 2023/23-CF available on the Codex webpage<sup>1</sup>

#### BACKGROUND

1. The 15<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods (CCCF15, 2022) agreed<sup>2</sup> on the following based on the discussions held in the plenary session and in an in-session working group that took place during the plenary:
  - (i) to return the maximum level (ML) and associated sampling plan to Step 2/3 for further consideration;
  - (ii) to re-establish the electronic working group (EWG) chaired by India and co-chaired by Senegal, working in English to prepare:
    - (a) new proposal for an ML for total aflatoxins (AFT) in ready-to-eat (RTE) peanuts; and
    - (b) an associated sampling plan applying the same principles for the sampling plan for peanuts intended for further processing in the *Standard for Contaminants in Food and Feed* (CXS 193-1995)
  - (iii) that the EWG should carefully consider all the data and take into account all comments submitted to and made at the plenary session, in particular those in paragraphs 170 and 177 and identified in the report of CCCF14 (REP21/CF14, paragraph 140) and submit a paper that clearly presents the data analysis for consideration by CCCF16 (2023).

#### WORK PROCESS

2. The EWG was re-established, chaired and co-chaired by India and Senegal respectively. An email was sent to the member countries and observers during August 2022 to participate in the EWG in this respect.
  - a. **Sampling Plan:** Regarding sampling plan for RTE Peanuts, CCCF15 agreed to apply the same principles for the sampling plan for peanuts intended for further processing in CXS 193 and that the EWG should present the proposal to CCCF16 (REP22/CF15, paragraph 179).

<sup>1</sup> Codex webpage/Circular Letters:  
<http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/resources/circular-letters/en/>.

Codex webpage/CCCF/Circular Letters:

<http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/committees/committee/related-circular-letters/en/?committee=CCCF>

<sup>2</sup> REP22/CF15, paras. 156-180

- b. **Segregated GEMS/Food Data pertaining to AFT in RTE Peanuts:** Regarding segregated data pertaining to AFT in RTE Peanuts, the WHO GEMS/Food Administrator explained that he would look into the current data on GEMS/Food and to provide support to the EWG by assisting with identifying and segregating data specific for RTE peanuts (REP22/CF15, paragraph 178).

#### SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS OF DISCUSSION

3. Segregated GEMS/Food data was provided by the WHO GEMS/Food Administrator to the EWG through NCCP-India mentioning that only 250 data points available in GEMS/Food database would be suitable for RTE Peanuts ML setting. The analysis of the 250 data points could not be carried out as member country/geographical region wise break up of AFT occurrence in RTE Peanuts shared by WHO was unavailable. Later, the WHO GEMS/Food Administrator provided interpretation which was pertaining to AFB1 (Unknown) and AFB1 (RTE), however, the scope of the EWG was to recommend ML of AFT in RTE Peanuts based on segregated data points available in GEMS/Food after implementation of the *Code of practice for the prevention and reduction of aflatoxin contamination in peanuts* (CXC 55-2004). As a result, the EWG could not determine a workable conclusion and recommendation to be presented at CCCF16.
4. It was also highlighted by the WHO GEMS/Food Administrator that 8802 data points outliers uploaded by India for RTE Peanuts for the period 01/04/2018 to 15/03/2019 had been discarded as it seems that the values are 3 orders of magnitude above the expected values (probably  $\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$  reported inadvertently as  $\text{mg}/\text{kg}$ ) leaving it up to check. The WHO GEMS/Food Administrator also discarded 102 data points from other regions with limit of detection (LOD) exceeding  $4 \mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$ .
5. NCCP-India was requested to examine the AFT occurrence data in RTE Peanuts uploaded in GEMS/Food. It was noted that during the year 2017 AFT occurrence data in Peanuts were uploaded by India in the unit  $\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$ . Later, in the year 2019 AFT occurrence data for 8802 RTE Peanuts after implementation of the Code of practice (CoP) was uploaded on the GEMS/Food database. However, the unit of the uploaded data points was inadvertently selected from dropdown menu as  $\text{mg}/\text{kg}$  instead of  $\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$ . After excluding the outliers (8802 data points), only 250 data corresponding to the RTE Peanuts remains as elaborated at para 3 above.

#### CONCLUSION

6. As concluded at CCCF15, the WHO GEMS/Food Administrator could provide only 250 data points segregated for AFT in RTE peanuts after implementation of the CoP as available in GEMS/Food without corresponding occurrence in the respective member country/geographical region wise break up due to which the EWG could not analyze the data provided to it to present to CCCF16. There was also paucity of time for the EWG to obtain the above information for analysis taking into consideration for addressing the conclusion of CCCF15, (REP22/CF15, paragraphs 170 and 177) and identified in the report of CCCF14 (REP21/CF14, paragraph 140) and present a paper that clearly presents the data analysis for consideration at CCCF16 as well as majority of the occurrence data was excluded as elaborated in paragraph 4 and 5 above.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

7. In view of the above, the EWG recommends CCCF to consider the following:
  - (i) Member countries to submit RTE Peanut AFT occurrence data to GEMS/Food after implementation of the *Code of practice for the prevention and reduction of aflatoxin contamination in peanuts* (CXC 55-2004) for the years 2019 onwards, if not yet submitted, to enable the WHO GEMS/Food Administrator to provide segregated RTE Peanut occurrence data country/geographical region wise.
  - (ii) India to resubmit 8802 RTE Peanut AFT occurrence data to GEMS/Food in  $\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$  unit instead of  $\text{mg}/\text{kg}$ ;
  - (iii) Members to relook at 102 data points related to limit of detection (LOD) below  $4 \mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$ .
  - (iv) The EWG to present a paper at CCCF17 (2024) taking into consideration the segregated RTE Peanut AFT occurrence data country/geographical region wise provided by the WHO GEMS/Food Administrator.

**APPENDIX I****List of Participants**

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