

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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Agenda Items 19

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ORIGINAL LANGUAGE ONLY

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

15th Session
Virtual
9-13 and 24 May 2022

REPORT OF THE PRE-SESSION WORKING GROUP ON THE FOLLOW-UP TO THE OUTCOMES OF JECFA EVALUATIONS AND FAO/WHO EXPERT CONSULTATIONS

(Prepared by the EU as Chair of the WG on the Follow-up to the outcomes of
JECFA evaluations and FAO/WHO expert consultations)

INTRODUCTION

1. CCCF14 (2021)¹ agreed that an in-session WG established at CCCF15 would consider comments in reply to a circular letter issued in advance of CCCF15 and make recommendations on possible follow-up actions for consideration by CCCF15.
2. The circular letter² invited Codex members and observers to provide comments on possible follow-up actions to the outcomes of the JECFA evaluations and FAO/WHO expert consultations in particular those for which the full report is already available. The list of JECFA evaluations (ergot alkaloids and pyrrolizidine alkaloids) and/or FAO/WHO expert consultation outcomes (ciguatoxins and tropane alkaloids) was provided in the Annex to the CL. It was also highlighted in the CL that when prioritizing work on these items, Codex members and observers were invited to consider the following CLs enabling to better assess the future work of CCCF vis-à-vis ongoing work :
 - CL 2021/87-CF on the approach/methodology for the review of contaminant/staple food combinations for future work of CCCF (Forward work-plan for CCCF),
 - CL 2021/88-CF on the prioritization of contaminants for evaluation and/or re-evaluation by JECFA, and
 - CL 2021/90-CF on the on the review Codex standards for contaminants in food and feed.A compilation of the comments in response to the circular letter are available in document CX/CF 22/15/18.
3. A summary of the comments received in response to the circular letter were presented in a conference room document³ posted on the CCCF15 website⁴.
4. The pre-session WG was held on 3 May 2022 and chaired by the EU.

OBJECTIVE OF THE WORKING GROUP

5. The objective of the WG is to consider follow-up actions to the outcome of the JECFA evaluations and FAO/WHO expert consultations and to discuss and agree on possible recommendations to the CCCF for consideration and agreement

PRESENTATION OF THE TOPICS

6. Some background was provided to the outcome of the JECFA evaluations and FAO/WHO expert consultations. It was clarified that the order of presentation of the items were not reflecting any prioritization.

¹ REP21/CF para 235

² CL 2021/89-CF

³ CF15/CRD02

⁴ <https://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/meetings/detail/en/?meeting=CCCF&session=15>

7. **Ciguatera Poisoning:** The report of the FAO/WHO Expert Meeting on Ciguatera Fish Poisoning (2018) was published in 2020. The expert meeting was convened at the request of CCCF11 (2017) to request scientific advice from FAO and WHO to allow CCCF to develop appropriate risk management options to address this matter. The Expert Meeting concluded that there are many gaps in the available information about ciguatera poisoning, and there were some needs that require urgent attention regarding both risk management and research and drew attention to the FAO/IAEA/IOC-UNESCO initiatives as highlighted in CX/CF 21/14/3.
8. **(-) Scopolamine and (±) hyoscyamine (tropane alkaloids):** The FAO/WHO Expert Meeting (2020) was convened to respond to a request for scientific advice from the World Food Program (WFP) after poisoning incidents from the distributed food aids. The Expert Meeting had proposed operational limits that should be health protective for adults and children for WFP products, but that these limits could be extended also to other cereals and grain products when consumed in comparable quantities.

In addition, based on the deliberations of the expert meeting a guidance document was developed to provide specific recommendations on the limits for physical toxic *Datura stramonium* seed contamination in cereals and grains, which makes the document beneficial for screening purposes at the field level. This document was also published in 2020 and is available online <https://www.fao.org/publications/card/ar/c/CB2105EN>
9. **Ergot alkaloids:** JECFA91 (2021) evaluated ergot alkaloids at the request of CCCF13 (2019). JECFA91 noted that some exposure estimates exceeded the group health-based guidance value (HBGV) established for ergot alkaloids, and that this may indicate a human health concern. However, the full report of the JECFA evaluation is not yet available.
10. **Pyrrolizidine alkaloids (PAs) :** JECFA80 (2015) had evaluated PAs on request of CCCF05 (2011), and CCCF10 (2016) agreed to discuss PAs once the full JECFA evaluation became available. The full JECFA evaluation was published in advance of CCCF14. Based on limited occurrence data, the Committee noted that the calculated MOEs for honey (high consumers) and tea (mean and high consumers) indicated a potential concern. It should be noted that PAs measured in these commodities might not be representative for all food groups and all regions. There was insufficient information to reach conclusions on food or beverages other than honey and tea.
11. The WG was also informed of the completion of a very recent JECFA evaluation of **T-2, HT-2 toxin and diacetoxyscirpenol** (JECFA93) and the publication of the summary and conclusions (available in the Appendix to CX/CF 22/15/3 -rev1).

WORKING GROUP DISCUSSION

12. As regards pyrrolizidine alkaloids: CCCF14 agreed to establish an Electronic Working Group (EWG) chaired by EU, working in English, to prepare a discussion paper on pyrrolizidine alkaloids to look into the feasibility of possible follow-up actions for consideration by CCCF15. This discussion paper was not issued and therefore it is proposed to re-iterate the conclusion of last year. The EU, appointed as chair of the EWG last year, indicated to give it another try as chair in case no other Member Country wishes to volunteer as chair.
13. As regards ciguatoxins, it is clear, based on the comments received on the circular letter, that no member country is in favour of starting work on setting regulatory levels on ciguatoxins but, contingent on the overall workload of the Committee, the development of a Code of Practice/guidelines to prevent/avoid ciguatera poisoning could be considered thereby building upon the work already undertaken by FAO in collaboration with IAEA and IOC-Unesco. Development of such a Code of Practice within Codex might increase awareness and implementation of the mitigation measures.
14. On tropane alkaloids, divergent views were expressed in reply to the CL. On the one hand, there is the view that no further work is to be undertaken by CCCF given that the FAO and WHO expert consultation outcome contains operational health protective limits and a guidance to avoid contamination of cereals by *Datura* seeds has already been elaborated. On the other hand there is the view that given the relevance for public health protection Codex risk management measures should be considered as priority. Taken into account this divergence of views, it was proposed that, in case a Member Country would volunteer to take the lead, a discussion paper should be prepared on tropane alkaloids to look into the need and feasibility of possible follow-up actions for consideration by CCCF16.
15. As regards ergot alkaloids, T-2 and HT2 toxin and diacetoxyscirpenol, given that the full reports of the JECFA evaluations are not yet available, it is premature to discuss follow-up actions by CCCF. Given the recommendations from JECFA that for these mycotoxins there is a lack of occurrence data from all relevant regions of the world,, it could be considered to ask the JECFA secretariat to issue a call for occurrence data on ergot alkaloids, T-2 and HT-2 toxin and diacetoxyscirpenol. Upon request for clarification, it was confirmed that these calls for occurrence data would be issued before the full reports of the JECFA evaluations are available (if agreed by the Plenary).

WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS TO CCCF15

16. The following recommendations are put forward to CCCF15 for consideration and agreement:

(i) as regards pyrrolizidine alkaloids, to reiterate the conclusion of CCCF14, i.e. establish an EWG, working in English, to prepare a discussion paper on pyrrolizidine alkaloids to look into the feasibility of possible follow-up actions for consideration by CCCF16;

(ii) as regards ciguatoxins, to consider, contingent on the overall workload of the Committee, the development of a Code of Practice/guidelines to prevent/avoid ciguatera poisoning building upon the work already undertaken by FAO in collaboration with IAEA and IOC-Unesco;

(iii) as regards tropane alkaloids, to establish an EWG, working in English, to prepare a discussion paper on tropane alkaloids to look into the need and feasibility of possible follow-up actions for consideration by CCCF16;

(iv) as regards ergot alkaloids, T-2 and HT-toxin and diacetoxyscirpenol (DAS), to request JECFA secretariat to issue a call for occurrence data to be submitted to the GEMS/Food Database in order to obtain an overview of available data from all relevant regions of the world.