



**Food and Agriculture
Organization of
the United Nations**



**World Health
Organization**

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Agenda Item 20

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX COMMITTEE ON CONTAMINANTS IN FOODS

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**PROPOSAL FOR NEW WORK ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MAXIMUM LEVEL FOR TOTAL AFLATOXINS
IN READY-TO-EAT PEANUTS AND ASSOCIATED SAMPLING PLAN**

(Prepared by India)

1. The purpose and scope of the project

This project aims to establish a maximum level for total aflatoxins in ready-to-eat peanuts and the sampling plan.

2. Relevance and timelines

Aflatoxins were evaluated by the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) at its 31st, 46th, 49th and 56th meetings. The JECFA, during its 49th meeting held in 1997, considered estimates of the carcinogenic potency of aflatoxins and the potential risks associated with their intake.

It appears from the countries' regulations that countries have not established maximum levels for ready-to-eat and intended for further processing peanuts except the European Union. Codex has established a maximum level of 15 µg/kg for total aflatoxins in peanuts intended for further processing. However, in recent times, it is noted that trade in ready-to-eat peanuts has shown an increasing trend as requiring establishment of maximum levels for aflatoxins for such items. The total aflatoxin maximum levels fixed by some countries for peanuts/all food products are given below:

S. No.	Country	Product	Aflatoxin	Maximum level for aflatoxin (µg /kg)
1	China	Peanuts	Total	10
2	Japan	Peanuts	Total	10
3	Thailand	Peanuts	Total	10
4	Indonesia	Peanuts	Total	15
5	Malaysia	Peanuts	Total	15

Source: Information from national governments

S. No.	Country	Product	Aflatoxin	Maximum level for aflatoxin (µg /kg)
1	Australia	Peanuts	Total	15
2	Canada	Nuts and nut products	Total	15
3	Egypt	Peanuts	Total	10
4	EU	Peanuts	Total	*4 / **15
5	India	All Food Products	Total	30
6	Kenya	Peanuts	Total	20
7	Philippines	Nuts and Products	Total	20
8	Russia	Peanuts	B1	5
9	Singapore	Nuts	Total	5
10	Taiwan Province of China	Peanuts	Total	15
11	Turkey	Peanuts	Total	10
12	USA	All Foods Except Milk	Total	20
13	Vietnam	Food stuffs	Total	10

* Standard for peanut meant for direct human consumption

** Standard for peanut meant for further processing

Source: *Worldwide regulations for mycotoxins in food and feed in 2003 (FAO)*

The global trade in peanuts faces difficulties due to different levels for aflatoxins in peanuts fixed by various importing countries which results in a trade barrier. Therefore, there is a need for an international standard, based on scientific evidence, having as its goal the protection of human health with a minimum of economic impact on international trade. Moreover, several countries have fixed aflatoxin levels for different purposes, viz., (i) for further processing; and (ii) for ready-to-eat purposes (direct human consumption). There is, thus, a need to establish harmonized levels for aflatoxins in ready-to-eat peanuts and the sampling plan to ensure fair practices in trade in this product.

3. The main aspects to be covered:

Toxicological evaluation of aflatoxins in ready-to-eat peanuts by JECFA based on the recommended Code of Practice for the prevention and reduction of aflatoxin contamination in Peanuts (CAC/RCP 55-2004) and recommendation on total aflatoxin levels for ready-to-eat peanuts. Another aspect that needs to be covered is to develop a sampling plan for ready-to-eat peanuts.

4. Assessment against the Criteria for the establishment of work priorities

1. Consumer protection from the point of view of health, food safety, ensuring fair practices in food trade and taking into account the identified needs of developing countries

The new work will establish a maximum level for total aflatoxins in ready-to-eat peanuts and the sampling plan, which will help to provide a direct health protection to consumers. This work will also ensure fair practices in trade in ready-to-eat peanuts. This work will also help the developing countries as peanuts are largely produced in developing countries.

2. Diversification of national legislations and apparent resultant or potential impediments to international trade

Goal 1: Promoting sound regulatory frameworks

The result of this work will assist in promoting sound regulatory frameworks in international trade by using scientific knowledge. With a view to promoting maximum application of Codex Standards, this work will provide harmonized regulations for developed and developing countries, leading to enhanced fair practices in food trade.

Goal 2: Promoting widest and consistent application of scientific principles and risk analysis

This work will help establish risk management options based upon scientific evaluation.

6. Information on the relationship between the proposal and other existing Codex documents

None.

7. Identification of any requirement for any availability of expert scientific advice

Scientific Risk Assessment by JECFA would be required.

8. Identification of any need for technical input to the standard from external bodies

None anticipated at this stage.

9. The proposed time line for completion of the new work, including the starting date, proposed date for adoption at Step 5 and proposed date for adoption by the Commission

Subject to approval by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the proposed draft maximum level for total aflatoxins in ready-to-eat peanuts will be considered by the 7th Session of the CCCF with a view to its adoption in 2014 or 2015, depending upon the availability of scientific advice.

If it is decided by the Commission that a maximum level for total aflatoxins in ready-to-eat peanuts should be set, it is recommended that a sampling plan for determination of total aflatoxins in ready-to-eat peanuts mal also be established.