

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION



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Agenda Item 2

CX/FFP 02/2

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME CODEX COMMITTEE ON FISH AND FISHERY PRODUCTS

Twenty-fifth Session
Ålesund, Norway, 3 - 7 June 2002

MATTERS REFERRED BY THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER COMMITTEES

A. DECISIONS OF THE COMMISSION AND THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CONCERNING THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

Draft Standard for Crackers from Marine and Freshwater Fish, Crustacean and Molluscan Shellfish

The Commission adopted the Draft Standard as proposed by the Committee.

Proposed Draft Amendment to the Standard for Sardine and Sardine Type Products

The Delegation of Norway as the Member responsible for appointing the Chairperson of the Committee on Fish and Fishery Products, recalled that the 21st Session of the Commission had requested that the Accelerated Procedure should generally be used for the inclusion of additional species, and especially to consider *Clupea bentincki*, as proposed by Chile. In application of its specific procedure, the Committee on Fish and Fishery Products had designated three independent laboratories and interested countries had been invited to provide samples. In view of the results, the Committee had agreed to propose the inclusion of this species in the Standard. As no consensus had been reached in the 23rd Session of the Commission, the Committee had considered this question again at its 24th Session and confirmed its earlier conclusion, considering that there were no new factors. The Commission also noted that the Committee had initiated a review of its current procedure.

The Delegation of Chile stressed that the procedure for the inclusion of species had been followed and that its results should be recognized; no new element had been brought forward in the last session of the Committee on Fish and Fishery Products and there was no justification for further delaying the adoption of the amendment until a new procedure was developed. The Delegation pointed out that *Clupea bentincki* was generally recognized as a sardine type product, including in the FAO classification and that objections raised to its inclusion were not based on scientific data and created unjustified barriers to trade related to economic interests; all this provided credibility for the objectives of the Commission and its standards-setting procedures.

The Delegation of Morocco expressed its objection to the amendment as the procedure had not been followed adequately since no samples from Morocco had been examined, and as only *Sardina pilchardus* should be presented as sardine on the market. The name of products should not be determined by their presentation, as was the case for most "sardine type" species included in the standard, and the Committee should review the current procedure before including any new species. The Delegation pointed out that unfair competition from such products seriously affected the economic interest of Morocco as an exporting country and it could not accept the inclusion of an additional species in the Standard.

Due to lack of time the Commission adjourned the debate on this question and no conclusion was reached (ALINORM 01/41, paras. 159-165).

Proposed Draft Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products

The 49th (Extraordinary) Session of the Executive Committee adopted the Proposed Draft Code at Step 5 and referred the comments of Malaysia to the CCFFP for further consideration (ALINORM 03/3, para. 9). The Code will be considered under **Agenda Item 5**.

Approval of New Work

The 49th (Extraordinary) Session of the Executive Committee approved as new work the Proposed Draft Amendment to the Standard for Quick Frozen Lobsters and the elaboration of a Proposed Draft Standard for Scallops (ALINORM 03/3, para. 21, Appendix III). These standards will be considered under **Agenda Items 9 and 10**.

B. GENERAL DECISIONS OF THE COMMISSION

Strategic Framework and Medium-Term Plan 2003-2007

The Commission discussed and finally adopted the draft Strategic Framework, including the Strategic Vision Statement. It agreed that the draft Medium-Term Plan should be revised by the Secretariat in the light of the Strategic Framework, the Commission's discussion and the written comments received and should incorporate the elements of the Chairperson's Action Plan agreed to by the Commission. The revised draft Medium-Term Plan would then be circulated for the inputs of Codex Coordinating Committees, other Codex Committees, member governments and international organizations, further consideration by the 50th and 51st Sessions of the Executive Committee and finalization at the 25th Session of the Commission.

C. TRACEABILITY

Executive Committee

The 49th (Extraordinary) Session of the Executive Committee (October 2001) discussed how to address the general issue of traceability in the framework of Codex on the basis of a document prepared by the Codex Secretariat. The Executive Committee recommended that the Committee on General Principles consider the following aspects of traceability: as a food safety objective (i.e., as an SPS measure); and as a legitimate objective as a TBT measure. However, the Executive Committee was of the opinion that the first consideration should be given to the use of traceability as a risk management option in the Working Principles for Risk Analysis and also noted that the role of Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems. The Executive Committee agreed that the Committees concerned (including the Committees on General Principles, Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems, Food Hygiene and Labelling) should undertake work as they deemed appropriate, within their respective mandates (ALINORM 03/3, paras. 29-33).

Committee on Food Hygiene

The 34th Session of the Committee on Food Hygiene (October 2001) recalled its previous decision that traceability would be considered in the context of its work on the proposed draft *Principles and Guidelines for the Conduct of Microbiological Risk Management*. However, the Committee was of the opinion that specific work on traceability as related to food hygiene was premature. The Committee therefore reiterated its request to the drafting group that the concept of traceability should be taken into account in the further elaboration of the above Principles and Guidelines (ALINORM 03/13, paras. 170-171).

Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems

The 10th Session of the Committee (February 2002) had an extensive debate on the application of traceability in the context of food inspection and certification systems and decided that a working group would draft a discussion paper for circulation, comment and further consideration at its next meeting (ALINORM 03/31, paras. 53-67).

Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Foods Derived from Biotechnology

The Third Session of the Task Force (March 2002) considered the issue of traceability in the framework of the *Draft Principles for the Risk Analysis of Foods Derived from Modern Biotechnology* (Section III - Principles - Risk Management).

The Task Force was of the opinion that the resolution of this issue was important in order to reach a final conclusion on the text of the Draft Principles. It noted that the addition of a new paragraph after paragraph 20 concerning tools for the implementation and enforcement of risk management measures made it possible to place the question of traceability into context as a one of these tools, leaving aside its use for other purposes. On this basis a compromise text was drafted and accepted by the Task Force. In drafting this compromise text, the Task Force recognized that there were applications of product tracing (traceability) other than the risk management of foods derived from biotechnology, and that these applications be consistent with the provisions of the SPS and TBT Agreements. The Task Force noted that further consideration of these broader issues would continue within Codex (ALINORM 03/34, paras. 22-28).

The following paragraphs and footnote were therefore included in the *Draft Principles for the Risk Analysis of Foods Derived from Modern Biotechnology*:

20. Post-market monitoring may be an appropriate risk management measure in specific circumstances. Its need and utility should be considered, on a case-by-case basis, during risk assessment and its practicability should be considered during risk management. Post-market monitoring may be undertaken for the purpose of:

- a) verifying conclusions about the absence or the possible occurrence, impact and significance of potential consumer health effects; and*
- b) monitoring changes in nutrient intake levels, associated with the introduction of foods likely to significantly alter nutritional status, to determine their human health impact.*

21. Specific tools may be needed to facilitate the implementation and enforcement of risk management measures. These may include appropriate analytical methods; reference materials; and, the tracing of products¹ for the purpose of facilitating withdrawal from the market when a risk to human health has been identified or to support post-market monitoring in circumstances as indicated in paragraph 20.

The Task Force finalized the *Draft Principles for the Risk Analysis of Foods Derived from Modern Biotechnology* and the *Draft Guideline for the Conduct of Food Safety Risk Assessment of Foods Derived from Recombinant-DNA Plants* and advanced them to Step 8 for adoption by the 25th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

D. MATTERS REFERRED BY OTHER COMMITTEES

1. COMMITTEE ON FOOD ADDITIVES AND CONTAMINANTS

The 33rd Session of the Committee endorsed the additives provisions in the Draft Standard for Crackers from Marine and Freshwater Fish, Crustacean and Molluscan Shellfish (subsequently adopted at Step 8) and in the Draft Standard for Salted Atlantic Herring and Salted Sprats.

The 34th Session considered a discussion paper on the use of active chlorine as agreed at the 33rd Session. The Committee noted that active chlorine was commonly utilised as a food additive or decontaminating/disinfecting agent in water treatment or surface treatment of foodstuffs. In this regard, a number of delegations pointed out that safety problems that might be associated with the use of this compound were mainly related to inappropriate handling or misuse. It was noted that the work of CCFAC in this respect should not prevent countries from using this chemical in the prevention of microbial contamination that might occur in water or food. Other delegations indicated that the CCFAC should take account of the work being

¹ *It is recognised that there are other applications of product tracing. These applications should be consistent with the provisions of the SPS and TBT Agreements. The application of product tracing to the areas covered by both Agreements is under consideration within Codex on the basis of the decisions of 49th Session of the Executive Committee.*

done in other Codex Committees and, in this regard, suggested that the Committee could work together with the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene in addressing this issue.

The Committee recognised the need for active chlorine to be assessed on a global basis by JECFA. In this regard, it was indicated that any risk assessment should take into account different uses of this compound including by-products of reactions between active chlorine and organic materials in food or water for food processing. The JECFA secretariat indicated that any question put to JECFA on the issue must be clear as to just exactly what aspect(s) are to be assessed. The delegation of the United States stated that both the microbiological and chemical risks must be considered and this could best be done by a FAO/WHO expert consultation.

The Representative of WHO indicated that the WHO Guidelines for Drinking Water Quality recommended a maximum level of 5 ppm of active chlorine and indicated that this level was both safe and protective of consumer's health. He drew the attention of the Committee to the fact that restrictions on the use of active chlorine in water treatment in food processing might compromise the benefits of reducing microbial contamination and public health. He strongly suggested that the CCFAC continue to study this issue so that all public health risk/benefits be considered in order that the health of consumers not be put at risk.

The Committee agreed that the discussion paper should be revised by Denmark, in cooperation with Finland, Israel, Norway and WHO, in light of the above discussion and comments to be submitted in response to a Circular Letter, for circulation and consideration at its next meeting (ALINORM 03/12, paras. 69-73).

2. COMMITTEE ON FOOD HYGIENE

The Committee on Food Hygiene considered the hygiene provisions in the Proposed Draft Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products. This question will be considered under **Agenda Item 5**.

3. AD HOC INTERGOVERNMENTAL TASK FORCE ON FOODS DERIVED FROM BIOTECHNOLOGY

In addition to the matters mentioned above, the Representatives of FAO and WHO announced that they were planning to convene a Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on genetically modified animals, the outcome of which would be reported to the Task Force (ALINORM 03/34, para. 96).

4. COMMITTEE ON METHODS OF ANALYSIS AND SAMPLING

The Committee accepted the information of the Delegation of Norway regarding the availability of the collaborative studies and endorsed the WEFTA method for determination of salt in Salted Fish of the *Gadidae* Family as a Type II method, with the understanding that the result will be calculated on the basis of the chloride content. The Committee also agreed that the method of determination of histamine in Salted Atlantic Herring (AOAC 977.13) was applicable to all fish species where histamine was a concern and endorsed the method for "fish and fishery products", as this would apply to all relevant standards (ALINORM 01/23, para. 93). The Draft Standard will be copnsidered under **Agenda Item 4**.

The methods proposed by the CCFFP were endorsed as indicated in the attached Table (ALINORM 01/23, Appendix IV).

Commodity	Provision	Method and Principle	Note from CCMAS	Endorsed as Type
Quick Frozen Fish Sticks (fish fingers) and Fish Portions-Breaded and in Batter(except for certain fish species with soft flesh)	Proportion of fish fillet and minced fish	WEFTA Method <i>Gravimetry</i>	The Commodity Committee is requested to provide the reference to the published method.	I
Quick Frozen Fish Sticks (fish fingers) and Fish Portions-Breaded and in Batter	Proportion of fish flesh in fish sticks (fish core)	AOAC 996.15 (with an adjustment factor of 2% for raw breaded and batter-dipped products; 4% for precooked products) <i>Gravimetry</i>	AOAC 996.15 is a modified method of AOAC 971.13 which was endorsed previously.	I
Salted Fish of the <i>Gadidae</i> Family	Salt	WEFTA Method <i>Titrimetry (Mohr)</i> <i>Salt determined as chloride expressed as sodium chloride</i>	The Commodity Committee is requested to provide method reference.	II
Fish and Fishery Products	Histamine	AOAC 977.13	Fluorimetry	II