

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
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Agenda Item 3

CX/NFSDU 00/3-Add. 2

May 2000

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX COMMITTEE ON NUTRITION AND FOODS FOR SPECIAL DIETARY USES

**Twenty-second Session
Berlin, Germany, 19-23 June 2000**

GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF NUTRITION CLAIMS: DRAFT TABLE OF CONDITIONS FOR NUTRIENT CONTENTS (PART B)

PROGRESS REPORT ON DIETARY FIBRE

*prepared by the United Kingdom, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary,
Republic of Korea, and the United States of America (USA)*

1. An informal working group on dietary fibre was convened at the twenty-first session of the Committee to progress work on draft Guidelines for Use of Nutrition Claims. The remit of the working group was to agree the definition of fibre and “source” and “high” criteria for use in Table B of the draft Table of Conditions for Nutrient Contents (CX/NFSDU 98/3).
2. On 9 October 1998 a consultation paper was issued to working group members seeking their views on the following questions:
 - Q1 What are the health benefits and
 - Q2 What are the physiological bases for each of these benefits
 - Q3 What components of the diet are associated with these physiological effects/health benefits?
 - Q4 How can these components be analysed for?
 - Q5 What is the appropriate level for the source claim criterion and why?
3. Responses to these questions were received from Denmark (DK), Germany (G), Hungary (H), Korea (K), UK and the USA. These were used to develop a draft report and summary reflecting areas of consensus and scientific difference, and proposing draft recommendations and conclusions. These documents were circulated for comment in July 1999. It has not been possible to achieve a consensus on recommendations for the definition of fibre or claims criteria, consequently these have been removed from the summary.

Definition of dietary fibre

4. Working group members were divided as to whether a revised definition of fibre should be adopted which included animal material, and other chemically characterised substances.

5. To progress this issue the working group attempted to establish a consensus on the components which should be considered as dietary fibre by consideration of the potential health benefits/physiological effects of fibre. However some members did not like this approach. It is interesting to note that irrespective of individual countries' preferred definition of dietary fibre, and the way this may have been derived, the majority allow AOAC International methodology for its analysis.

Claims criteria

6. The working group considered the use of Recommended Daily Amounts (RDA) as a basis for development of claims criteria. However some felt this was not possible because of the wide range of existing intakes and different dietary habits of Codex countries. RDAs currently in use are between 20g and 35g for fibre measured by AOAC, or 18g for non-starch polysaccharides.

7. A further issue which impacts on the development of claims criteria is that working group members hold differing views about the acceptability of fortification of food with isolated fibre sources. For example, Korea accepts fortification as potentially beneficial, whilst Denmark discourages it. This difference in approach frequently stems from concern over the lack of evidence for health benefits of isolated fibre sources, and food based dietary guidance which recommends a diet rich in wholegrain cereals, fruits and vegetables and low in processed foods.

8. The basis for fibre claims also varies widely among countries, criteria based on energy, serving size and per 100g are used. Not all countries apply these criteria on the food ready for consumption, in some countries criteria apply on a dry matter basis.

9. The tables below show the variation in national claims criteria for source and high fibre claims:

	Source of fibre	High fibre
Per serving	1.25-2.5 g	4-5 g
Per 100kcal	1.25g	2.5g
Per 100g	3g or 5.6 (dry matter basis)	5g up to 11.2g (dry matter basis)
In a reasonable daily intake	3g	6g

Fruit and vegetables are considered good sources of fibre in Denmark, limits are therefore considered irrelevant and so none have been set even though claims are permitted.

Summary

10. As expected our consultation has demonstrated that working group members have widely differing views on the role of dietary fibre with regard to its physiological effects and its ability to provide health benefits and prevent disease. Whilst we have identified areas of partial consensus, these have proved insufficient to reach agreement on a definition of dietary fibre or claims criteria for the reasons given above. However it is apparent that despite the

different definitions and approaches adopted by the countries represented in the working group, the AOAC method is widely used for analysis of fibre for nutrition labelling.

FUTURE PROGRESS

11. The Commission and working group members may wish to consider whether it would be appropriate to:

- a) request expert consultation to give this issue further consideration;
- b) attempt to reach consensus on claims criteria, and analytical methodology without addressing the detailed definition of fibre or its health impacts.

12. The rationale for the latter approach would be to achieve a degree of harmonisation of fibre labelling which would facilitate consumer choice and trade. National RDAs would be respected and yet 'source' and 'high fibre' claims could still be used by consumers in the context of national dietary recommendations (e.g. to increase fibre consumption).

13. It would be necessary to agree:

- (i) a method of analysis to ensure consistent labelling of foods and allow consumers to make comparisons between them; and
- (ii) claims criteria which enable consumers to broadly identify foods which are 'sources' or 'high in fibre', and are based on the range of levels found in foods rather than RDA.

Information containing draft summary which was circulated to the members of working group and the full report, detailing contributions from working group will be issued as Conference Room Document.