

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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

Eleventh Session Rio De Janeiro, Brazil, 3-7 April 2017

SIDE EVENT ON RELEVANT WORK TO BE CONSIDERED FOR CIGUATOXINS

Date: Wednesday 5th April 2017 at (tbc)

Background

Ciguatera fish poisoning (CFP) is one of the most common food-borne illnesses related to finfish consumption. It has been known for centuries. Its true incidence is not known, but it is estimated that 10,000–50,000 people per year suffer from this illness, making it one of the most common types of marine food-borne poisoning worldwide (FAO 2014). It is caused by the consumption of herbivorous fish that have become toxic from feeding on toxic benthic dinoflagellates (*Gambierdicus toxicus*) or from carnivorous fish that have consumed toxic herbivorous fish that have fed on the dinoflagellate. *Gambierdicus toxicus* is found primarily in the tropics in association with macro algae usually attached to dead corals. More than 400 species of fish are known to be vectors of ciguatera (FAO, 2014). These fish are usually found in the tropical and subtropical Pacific and Indian Ocean regions and the tropical Caribbean. However, due to climate change, the frequency of storms and hurricanes, and sea surface temperature (SST) increases, impact on the distribution and proliferation of ciguatera-toxins (CTX) making the occurrence of CFP less predictable.

As a result of recent CFP events, the capture of many species has been banned for sustained periods of time in affected areas, which may have major implications for food security and trade for these coastal communities.

In addition to climate change, globalization of trade is predicted to lead to the presence of ciguatoxins (CTX) in an ever widening geographical area. Therefore guidance would be needed for those countries that currently do not consider CTX in their risk management programs.

The side event will be used as a platform to share experiences, ideas and explore possibilities to face current challenges.

Relevance to CCCF

CCCF has the mandate to establish maximum levels for contaminants in food and feed to assure the safety for consumers, or to develop other alternative management measures to contain contamination of food and feed with contaminants in compliance with the mandate of the Commission. Ciguatera is a natural occurring toxin in fish and CCCF will be the relevant subsidiary body of CAC to recommend measures to reduce contamination to safe levels to ensure public health and facilitate trade.

Who should attend?

All delegates from tropical and subtropical regions of the Pacific Ocean, Indian Ocean, and Caribbean Sea, between the latitudes 35°N and 35°S and delegates from countries importing fishery products from the affected areas. Those who would like to know more and those who would like to share their experiences.

What will you see?**Programme**

- A brief presentation on the past FAO and WHO work on ciguatera;
- Presentation of current challenges faced by countries;
- Discussion and way forward.

The side event may include interpretation if the plenary sessions do not require additional time beyond the current proposed schedule.

Reference:

FAO, 2014. *Assessment and management of seafood safety and quality*. Fisheries Technical Paper 574.