

# codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE  
ORGANIZATION  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS



WORLD  
HEALTH  
ORGANIZATION

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**Agenda Item 2 (ii)**

**CX/NFSDU 09/31/2-Add.1  
September 2009**

## **JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME**

### **CODEX COMMITTEE ON NUTRITION AND FOODS FOR SPECIAL DIETARY USES Thirty first Session**

**Robert Schuman Hall, Museum Kunst Palast, Düsseldorf, Germany  
2 – 6 November 2009**

#### **MATTERS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM FAO AND WHO**

#### **Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on the Risks and Benefits of Fish Consumption**

1. Based on the recommendation from the 38<sup>th</sup> Session of Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants (CCFAC), the 29<sup>th</sup> Session of Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) requested FAO and WHO to consider holding an Expert consultation on the health risks associated with methylmercury, dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs in fish and health benefits of fish consumption. FAO/WHO held a small expert group meeting to get advice on these issues and plan the expert consultation. The meeting noted that international risk assessments and a number of national risk benefit studies and assessments were available and that these could form the basis for further development of assessment models and for evaluation. However, the expert group noted that a quantitative risk-benefit approach may not be possible at the international level and other options may need to be explored. FAO/WHO has issued a call for information and data and a call for experts. The Expert consultation will be held on 25-29 January 2010.

#### **Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on Fats and Fatty Acids in Human Nutrition**

2. A Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on Fats and Fatty Acids in Human Nutrition was held in Geneva, 10–14 November, 2008. The Consultation placed more emphasis on the role of certain fatty acid categories, an example being the convincing role played by long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids in neonatal and infant growth and development, as well as a beneficial role in the maintenance of long-term health and prevention of some chronic diseases. There was strong evidence to recommend a reduction in *trans* fatty acids due to an increased risk of developing coronary heart disease and adverse blood lipid changes, including increasing LDL concentrations and adverse changes in the total/LDL cholesterol ratio. The timeliness of this expert consultation is also tied to the clear recognition of the increasing global burden of chronic disease.

Recent work by the FAO and WHO related to this issue include: the 2002 expert consultation on 'Diet, nutrition and the prevention of chronic diseases', the 2001 expert consultation on 'Human energy requirements' and its companion 2002 expert consultation on 'Protein and amino acid requirements in human nutrition', the 2002 technical workshop on 'Food energy – methods of analysis and conversion factors', and several scientific updates; one by the FAO/WHO in 2006 on carbohydrates in human nutrition and another by the WHO on *trans* fatty acids. These integrated efforts provide the scientific basis for strategies, programmes and projects of FAO, WHO and their member countries.

3. The report of the Consultation is being finalized while the background papers prepared for the Consultation have been published in the Annals of Nutrition and Metabolism (Volume 55, 2009).

### **FAO/Bioversity International Expert Consultation on Nutrition Indicator for Biodiversity - 2. Food consumption**

4. FAO/Bioversity International Expert consultation on Nutrition Indicator for Biodiversity - 2. Food consumption was held in Washington DC., USA, on 8-9 June 2009. 12 experts from 8 countries defined and developed an indicator; identified data sources and gaps, and recommended a reporting mechanism. The report is expected to be published in 2009 in English and 2010 in French and Spanish. The baseline reporting for 2009 is being done and shows that only few surveys so far are able to investigate biodiversity in the foods consumed. It is expected that in the future more surveys will include foods on variety level as well as wild and indigenous foods as they may be very rich in micronutrients. Macronutrients may vary for the same food by a factor of 10 and micronutrients by a factor of 1000, depending on variety, growing conditions and maturity. Once more consumption and compositional data are available on wild foods and different varieties of foods, their contribution to dietary adequacy can be investigated. It is expected that the consumption of nutrient dense varieties, if reported and included in dietary assessment, will lower the necessity of fortification programmes.

### **FAO Publications**

5. *Food Composition Study Guide* has been published in September 2009 on the INFOODS website [http://www.fao.org/infoods/publications\\_en.stm](http://www.fao.org/infoods/publications_en.stm). It contains all necessary information on food composition for compilers and users, also for analysts, to be able to generate, compile and use food composition data correctly. It is intended mainly as a self-learning tool but can also be used in conjunction with food composition courses and formal training, e.g. universities for nutrition. The first volume contains the required reading, the questions and exercises in 17 modules representing all aspects of food composition and the second volume provides the answers. It will also be available in printed form and on CD, and in French and Spanish. It is a timely publication in view of the discussion on making nutrient labelling mandatory.

6. *Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems: the Many Dimensions of Culture, Diversity and Environment for Nutrition and Health* was published in 2009 and is available at <http://www.fao.org/docrep/012/i0370e/i0370e00.htm>. Food systems of Indigenous Peoples who retain connection to long-evolved cultures and patterns of living in local ecosystems present a treasure of knowledge that contributes to well-being and health, and can benefit all humankind.

This book seeks to define and describe the diversity in food system use, nutrition and health in 12 rural case studies of Indigenous Peoples in different parts of the world as a window to global Indigenous Peoples' circumstances. A procedure for documenting Indigenous Peoples' food systems was developed by researchers working with the Centre for Indigenous Peoples' Nutrition and Environment (CINE) at McGill University, Canada, and the FAO. The procedure was adapted and applied in case studies located in Canada, Japan, Peru, India, Nigeria, Colombia, Thailand, Kenya, and the Federated States of Micronesia. The collective intent of this documentation is to show the inherent strengths of the local traditional food systems, how people think about and use these foods, the influx of industrial and purchased food, and the circumstances of the nutrition transition in indigenous communities. This research was completed with both qualitative and quantitative methods by Indigenous Peoples and their academic partners in the context of the second International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples, and the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted in 2007 by the General Assembly of the United Nations.

7. *Innovations in Food Labelling* will be published in December 2009. It provides information about the principles and requirements of food labelling, based on current experiences. The book includes chapters on Codex, international trade agreements, nutrition labelling and allergies, as well as labels related to environmental and social concerns. The intended audience for the book includes food regulatory agencies, food law experts, the food industry, consumer and environmental associations. The book is published with Woodhead Publishing Limited. FAO will distribute free copies to its Member Governments.

#### **Development of the WHO E-Library for Nutrition Programmes Guidance**

8. The WHO E-Library for Nutrition Programmes Guidance is currently being designed as an on-line web portal containing the most current and relevant information relating to nutrition interventions. The E-Library will provide comprehensive programme guidance and support to Member States and the partners for the successful implementation of safe and effective nutrition interventions. Various new and updated guidelines being developed through the new WHO guideline development process will also be included in the E-Library.

#### **Systematic Review on the Level of Total Fat and Obesity and Related Noncommunicable Diseases**

9. As a follow-up to the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on fats and fatty acids in human nutrition (Geneva, November 2008), WHO has initiated a process of undertaking a systematic review on the issues related to the level of the total fat consumption and obesity and related noncommunicable diseases in order to further assess the impact of the level of total fat consumption. This systematic review is being undertaken following the new WHO guideline development process. As part of the required process of the Guidelines Review Committee (GRC), the WHO Steering Committee has been formed bringing together the members from concerned technical Departments within WHO and in consultation with GRC, a centre that will implement the systematic review has been identified. Currently a process is underway to form a WHO Nutrition Guidance Expert Advisory Group (i.e. guidelines group) who will formulate and define the scope of this systematic review.

## **Development of Micronutrient Guidelines**

10. In 2009, WHO began the process of updating existing guidelines and developing new guidelines in the following areas:

### **a. Vitamin A supplementation**

Vitamin A deficiency remains a significant public health problem with an estimated 190 million children and 19 million pregnant women affected globally<sup>1</sup>. Intensive efforts remain critically important to prevent and control vitamin A deficiency. Current WHO guidelines on vitamin A supplementation were published in 1997<sup>2</sup> and 1998<sup>3</sup>. Since this time, knowledge has expanded and additional research has been conducted. Therefore, the current guidelines on vitamin A supplementation need to be revised in a systematic manner using the current evidence<sup>4</sup>. WHO will update only some of the most critical policy areas strictly following the procedures recently adopted by WHO. This work is expected to be completed in 2010. For more information, please see [http://www.who.int/nutrition/events/guideline\\_dev\\_vas/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/nutrition/events/guideline_dev_vas/en/index.html)

### **b. Food fortification**

In 2006, WHO and FAO published the Guidelines on Food Fortification with Micronutrients<sup>5</sup>. These general guidelines, written from a nutrition and public health perspective are a resource for governments and agencies implementing or considering food fortification, and a source of information for scientists, technologists and the food industry. Some basic principles for effective fortification programs along with fortificants' physical characteristics, selection and use with specific food vehicles are described. WHO plans to update these general guidelines with more specific guidelines to assist countries in the design and implementation of appropriate food fortification programmes as part of a comprehensive food-based strategy for combating micronutrient deficiencies. Work is expected to commence and late 2009 and be completed in 2010.

### **c. Use of home fortification with multiple micronutrient powders**

The recent development of alternative ways of providing micronutrients to young children and women of reproductive age has lead to new and innovative products, such as multiple micronutrient powders (Sprinkles, Vitashakti, Anuka, MixMe). Multiple micronutrient powders (MNPs) are designed to fortify and improve the quality of complementary foods for infants and young children prepared at home and contain a number of micronutrients in a tasteless powder form. It has been used also as an alternative to provide additional vitamins and minerals to the diets of pregnant women without changing their dietary habits. Thus far, the main goal of MNPs has been to safely and effectively address the problem of anaemia. More than 30 countries have developed plans or have started implementing MNP distribution in various target populations. An

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<sup>1</sup> WHO. [Global prevalence of vitamin A deficiency in populations at risk 1995-2005](#). Geneva, World Health Organization, 2009

<sup>2</sup> WHO/UNICEF/IVACG. [Vitamin A supplements: a guide to their use in the treatment and prevention of vitamin A deficiency and xerophthalmia](#) - Second edition. Geneva, World Health Organization, 1997.

<sup>3</sup> WHO/MI. [Safe vitamin A dosage during pregnancy and lactation](#). Geneva, World Health Organization, 1998.

<sup>4</sup> WHO. WHO handbook for guideline development. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2008. [Full text](#).

<sup>5</sup> WHO/FAO. Guidelines on food fortification with micronutrients. Allen L et al, eds. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2006.

increasing number of Member States are requesting a WHO position on the use and safety of these MNPs. In order to respond to these requests, WHO will be initiating the work later in 2009 to develop official guidelines for the use of MNPs, taking into consideration additional studies conducted in a variety of contexts. This work will also follow the new WHO guideline development process and will be completed in 2010.

11. In 2010, WHO is planning to begin work on another three sets of additional guidelines, following the same process. The work is expected to include guidelines on:

- a. The use of iron interventions in malaria endemic regions
- b. The use of calcium supplementation for women during pregnancy to prevent hypertensive disorders
- c. Indicators for the assessment of vitamin A status.

### **Development of the Guidance on Nutrient Profiling**

12. WHO has initiated the work on nutrient profiling in collaboration and involvement of various partners. This is part of WHO's efforts in implementing the recommendations of the Organization's Nutrition Programme Review undertaken early 2009. The development of an internationally recognised method (or set of methods) of nutrient profiling is clearly beneficial for a wide range of applications in commercial, international, governmental policy and health promotion strategies. WHO is responding to this challenge through developing an evidence-based framework and guiding principles for the nutrient profiling of food, based on international dietary recommendations established by FAO/WHO. The work has 5 phases: 1) Production of a systematic review of existing nutrient profiling systems; 2) Production of methodological guidance and manual for developing and implementing nutrient profiling; 3) Validation of guiding principles and methodological guidance at least in 6 countries in each Region; 4) Holding of a technical consultation to review the outcome of the validation work with a view to assess the feasibility of a single international nutrient profiling system and the key elements that such a system should contain; 5) Development of a WHO framework and manual for the country level development of nutrient profiling.

### **Procedural Manual on the Development and Implementation of the Food-based Dietary Guidelines (FBDGs)**

13. WHO, in collaboration with various countries and concerned agencies particularly at the country level, has completed the field-testing of a procedural manual for the development and implementation of regional and country-specific food-based dietary guidelines (FBDG) in 3 countries in Asia and is being planned in a few additional countries in Eastern Mediterranean Region and in the African Region. The manual, which is also going through expert peer-review process, includes modules on how to formulate FBDG based on scientific evidence, field-testing of FBDG, how to develop of advocacy materials including educational materials such as food guides, how to implement FBDG and how to monitor and evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of FBDG. It is planned that the final procedural manual will be completed by the end of 2009, taking into consideration of the outcomes of the field-testing in countries and comments received from the peer-review, and will become available early 2010 for wider dissemination.

### **Dietary Management of Moderate Acute Malnutrition**

14. The Joint WHO/UNICEF/WFP/UNHCR Consultation on the dietary management of moderate malnutrition was held in Geneva in October 2008 (MM1). The Consultation agreed that nutritional requirements in relation to energy for moderately wasted children lies between those of a well nourished child and those of severely wasted children during their recovery phase. The meeting also concluded that animal source foods are superior to unprocessed plant foods to promote growth, and that more attention should be given to the essential fatty acid content of the diets given to malnourished children. Reformulation of foods currently used in food aid programmes is expected as an immediate follow-up of this meeting.

15. In addition, the following activities are being undertaken by WHO in collaboration with partners, as follow-up of MM1:

- Commission work on framework of specifications for moderately malnourished children.
- Creation of a Steering Committee with the specific objective of formulating the specification for food supplements for moderately wasted children
- Develop draft specifications for food supplements for moderately wasted children. These specifications will describe the minimum nutritional composition of the foods, in terms of macro and micro nutrient content and include some minimal requirements in terms of ingredients. These specifications should also take into account that most wasted children have at least some degree of stunting.
- Draft joint statement on improved dietary management of moderate malnutrition (by January 2010).

### **Improving Policy Guidance and Programme Implementation on Management of Moderate Malnutrition**

16. WHO is organizing a 2nd consultation on moderate malnutrition (MM2) in December 2009. The overall aim of the MM2 is to improve policy guidance and programme implementation on the management of moderate malnutrition. The focus will be on the management of moderate wasting. The consultation will focus on the following specific programmatic options, such as blanket and targeted approaches, food supplementation and dietary counselling.

### **Joint WHO/UNICEF Technical Consultation on Strengthening Action to improve feeding of infants and young children 6 - 23 months of age in nutrition and child health programmes**

17. WHO and UNICEF organized a technical consultation on *Strengthening action to improve feeding of infants and young children 6-23 months of age in nutrition and child health programmes* in Geneva, 6 - 9 October 2008. The overall objectives of the consultation were to: discuss a framework to translate the Guiding Principles for complementary feeding of the breastfed child and the Guiding principles for feeding non-breastfed children 6-24 months of age into context specific interventions and intervention combinations; and recommend how to promote accelerated and strengthened action for infant and young child feeding, in particular for children 6-23 months in low-income countries. The meeting considered how to fill the gap between the

progress that has been made in defining principles for appropriate feeding for infants and young children from 6 to 23 months and translating these into specific policies and programmes. It was recognized that currently there are not enough examples of well-documented, large-scale programmes that have successfully improved feeding practices in children 6-23 months of age and resulted in improved health outcomes and therefore a weaknesses in the evidence base for effective action was observed. As part of the follow-up to the consultation, WHO and UNICEF, in coordination with various partners, are starting the systematic review of regulations on foods for infants and young children, including fortified complementary foods and micronutrient supplementation. This process started on 2009 and will continue during the next biennium. The report of the technical consultation is available at

[http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2008/9789241597890\\_eng.pdf](http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2008/9789241597890_eng.pdf).