CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

E

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

World Health Organization

Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy - Tel: (+39) 06 57051 - E-mail: codex@fao.org - www.**codex**alimentarius.org

Agenda Item 13	CX/CF 23/16/13
	March 2023

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX COMMITTEE ON CONTAMINANTS IN FOODS

16th Session
18-21 April 2023 (physical plenary meeting)
26 April 2023 (virtual report adoption)

FORWARD WORK-PLAN FOR THE CODEX COMMITTEE ON CONTAMINANTS IN FOODS:
DISCUSSION PAPER ON THE REVIEW OF STAPLE FOOD-CONTAMINANT COMBINATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK OF CCCF

(Prepared by the Host Country, JECFA and Codex Secretariats)

Background

1. At CCCF11, the Committee agreed to consider a forward work plan to manage (prioritize) its overall work in order to address increasing requests for new work from Codex members in reasonable time (REP17/CF, para. 126).

2. At CCCF12, the Codex Secretariat underlined the importance for CCCF to operate strategically by prioritizing items within its workload and explained that CCCF might benefit from applying an approach that looks at the overall workload of CCCF, in order to keep a balance between ongoing work and proposals for new work and to strategize the agenda for future meetings. It was not intended to leave out work, but to prioritize work so that all work had the same opportunity for discussion and completion with a reasonable timeframe (REP18/CF, paras. 150-151).

3. The Representative of WHO proposed that there might be real value in longer term forward planning, by systematically identifying areas for food contamination of concern for public health and with trade implications, e.g., starting with key staple foods and known contamination problems. This would allow delegates to work within their countries on information and data gathering well in advance before topics come on the agenda of CCCF (REP18/CF, para. 153).

4. CCCF12 agreed that a further discussion paper would be prepared by the Codex, JECFA and the Host Country Secretariats with assistance of EU. The paper would focus on whether CCCF covered the main staple foods moving in international trade and the related presence of contaminants being of public health concern (REP18/CF, para. 154).

5. At CCCF13, the Host Country Secretariat introduced the approach (i.e. to have a systematic exploration of possible contamination of the identified staple foods and identify if there were key staple food – contaminant combinations that could be of health concern but had not been considered by CCCF) and made the following clarifications to the appendix: Millet and sorghum should be included in the list of the most important staple food; and the inventory in the table more referred to "cereal grains" rather than "raw grains". CCCF agreed that the approach could provide an adequate framework to identify important topics of work for CCCF (REP19/CF, paras. 172 - 173).

6. CCCF13 agreed that the Host Country, JECFA and the Codex Secretariats would continue work on this matter taking into account comments received during and after the meeting and report back to CCCF14 (REP19/CF, para. 175).

7. At CCCF14, the Host Country Secretariat introduced the item and noted that the paper was developed in collaboration with the Codex and JECFA Secretariats. Referring to CX/CF 21/14/17 and noting that the paper had been issued just prior to the session, she explained that it would be circulated for comments and thus was presented at this session for information only (REP21/CF, para. 219).

8. CCCF14 agreed that the Codex Secretariat would issue a CL requesting comments on the approach/methodology proposed and the Host Country Secretariat, JECFA and Codex Secretariats would consider the comments received and further develop the paper for consideration by CCCF15 (REP21/CF, para. 223).

9. At CCCF15 the Host Country Secretariat stated that the Host Country, Codex and JECFA Secretariats noted that the comments received on the approach/methodology proposed in the discussion paper in response to the CL 2022/87-CF were diverse and unclear about how to revise the discussion paper. While there was a suggestion to establish an EWG to further develop the work, she stated that it would be difficult to define a clear mandate without a detailed technical discussion on the methodology in the discussion paper. As such, she announced that a virtual workshop would be organized after CCCF15 to discuss the best way forward to continue with the consideration of this item and based on outcomes of this discussion, to develop a proposal for consideration by CCCF16 (2023) (REP22/CF, para. 213).

10. CCCF15 noted that that a virtual workshop on the review of staple food-contaminant combinations for future work of CCCF would be held in 2022 to address the issues raised in reply to CL 2022/87-CF and to propose a way forward for the consideration of this item at CCCF16 (2023) (REP22/CF, para. 214).

11. Due to logistic reasons, a virtual workshop could not take place in 2022. The Host Country, JECFA and Codex secretariats analysed the comments submitted (CX/CF 22/15/16) and had an internal discussion on possible follow-up. The current paper was prepared by the Host Country, JECFA and Codex Secretariats as a summary of the discussion.

Introduction

12. The discussion paper (CX/CF 21/14/17) was developed as a result of the discussion on (one part of) the forward plan at CCCF13, in which it was agreed to focus on staple foods as contamination in these foods could have a significant impact on exposure and thus be a health risk to populations. The aim of the document was to provide an approach/methodology (screening method) so that a list of staple food – contaminant combinations (SFC) could be identified for further follow-up by CCCF.

13. The approach was illustrated by three examples, which could be expanded if there was agreement on the approach presented. The choice to take up SFC from the list of interest for further exploration (e.g., in a discussion paper) by CCCF should take account of the workload of CCCF. The final decision whether or not to start work on a SFC should be part of a prioritization process for CCCF together with other new topics, e.g., coming from, the follow-up to JECFA/FAO/WHO evaluations/expert meetings, the review of existing standards for contaminants in food and feed and possible other proposals for new work.

14. The steps and placement of the presented work in the CCCF workflow are presented below:

    I.   Finding relevant staple food – contaminant combinations (SFC) for compilation of a list of interest

         a.   Selecting staple foods (note: current list is not complete, different aggregation levels in list)

              i.   Use list from discussion paper as a basis(

              ii.   Excluding combinations already dealt with by CCCF

              iii. Select 3 staple foods to serve as examples

         b.   Finding occurrence data for selected staple foods

              i.   GEMS/Food (biased by MLs)

              ii.   Screening literature, without quality check.

                    Note: even without quality check this step still requires substantial work

         c.   Including resulting occurrence data in database and generating overview

    II. Compiling a list of interest SFC for further exploration

         a.   Selecting relevant combinations from results in database

              Note: need to agree on criteria to do this step

         b.   Prioritize combinations

              Note: need to agree on criteria to do this step

    III. Selecting combinations from the list of interest for possible further exploration in discussion paper CCCF

         a.   Selection of SFC

              Note: need to agree on criteria to do this step

    IV. Decision for developing discussion paper depending on available discussion time in total workload of CCCF

    V.   Development of a discussion paper on the selected SFC,

         a.   Including additional info in discussion paper on the SFC such as existing management measures, health effects etc.

         b.   Recommendation on necessity of further work by CCCF (COP or ML) or JECFA

> VI.   Decision on starting new work on SFC in step procedure
>
>> a.   Depending on workload, weighing in relation to other proposed work items
>>
>>> i.   From Follow-up to JECFA
>>>
>>> ii.   From Review of Standards
>>>
>>> iii.   Requested by other Codex committees
>>>
>>> iv.   From other CCCF discussions
>>
>> b.   Could also be decision that new work is not needed
>
> VII.   Development of new CCCF standard

15. It should be noted that the working document (CX/CF 21/14/17) only describes steps 1 and 2, and not a decision on further exploration of SFCs. It contains a pilot study, performed by the three Secretariats to come to a substantiated selection of SFC. While giving a transparent basis for compilation of the List of interest, it should be noted that the followed method is labour intensive.

Discussion

16. The comments received in CL 2022/87-CF were diverse. There was general agreement on the overall concept of compiling a 'list of interest' (step 2 above), for selecting relevant combinations to be explored further in CCCF (e.g., by discussion paper). Some member states support the presented method to come to such a list, others thought that nomination of SFC without the presented method would be sufficient. Others would rather use it as a start for discussion and not develop it further, there were also quite some different statements on who should do the work/maintain the list.

17. Codex, JECFA and the Host Country Secretariats have finalized the pilot study in order to provide a framework to continue work. For continuing the work, engagement from member states is necessary.

Recommendations

18. The Secretariats propose to decide on the following options for follow-up:

- **Option 1**: Continue this work through an EWG, using the same methodology.

- **Option 2**: Continue this work through an EWG, following a different methodology

- **Option 3**: Postpone this work and to resume discussion at a later time (the time could be specified or leave it open). It should be noted that new work on SFC could still be proposed following the existing procedures in CCCF.

- **Option 4**: Discontinue this work. It should be noted that new work on SFC could still be proposed following the existing procedures in CCCF.

- **Option 5**: Another option not presented above.