

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



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.codexalimentarius.org

Agenda Item 9

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ORIGINAL LANGUAGE

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX COMMITTEE ON CONTAMINANTS IN FOODS

17th Session
15-19 April 2024

Comments submitted by Cabo Verde

Agenda Item 9: Code of practice/guidelines for the prevention and reduction of ciguatera poisoning (at Step 4)

BACKGROUND

At the 32nd Session of the Codex Committee on Fisheries and Fishery Products (2016), the Pacific Nations raised ciguatera poisoning (CP) as an issue that is increasingly affecting the tropical and subtropical regions of the Pacific Ocean, Indian Ocean, and Caribbean Sea between the latitudes of 35°N and 35°S.

The issue of CP was discussed at the 11th Session of the Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods (2017) in which it was agreed to request scientific advice from FAO/WHO to enable the development of appropriate risk management options, resulting in the 2018 FAO/WHO Report of the Expert Meeting on Ciguatera Poisoning.

CCCF15 (2022) agreed to establish an electronic working group (EWG) chaired by the United States of America (USA) and co-chaired by the European Union (EU) to prepare a discussion paper on the development of a code of practice (CoP) or guidelines to prevent or reduce CP. The EWG was asked to build upon the work already undertaken by the FAO in collaboration with the International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA) and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (IOC-UNESCO).

The EWG Chair and Co-Chair, prepared the paper on prevention or reduction of CP, including an outline of topics that could be included in a CoP, for discussion by CCCF16 (2023). CCCF16 agreed that there was general support to start work on a CoP to prevent or reduce CP, as CP is of major public health concern even though there are still some knowledge gaps/challenges. A Member questioned the appropriateness of a CoP noting the knowledge gaps and whether it would be more appropriate to work on Guidelines. CCCF16 agreed to be flexible on this matter for developing either a CoP or Guidelines.

ISSUES/KEY POINTS OF DISCUSSION

In developing the CoP, the EWG considered comments from the members and made the following conclusions:

- **Paragraph 2:** One country questioned whether the genus *Fukuyoa* should be mentioned, as the contribution of *Fukuyoa* to CP is not completely understood. There was general agreement that it is beneficial to retain mention of *Fukuyoa* in the CoP.
- **Paragraph 16:** Several EWG members supported the idea of using migratory patterns in the development of maps of toxic algae/fish, but the EWG did not identify any practical measures to include in the CoP. A general statement that migratory information may be useful for complex maps was included.
- **Paragraphs 30-31:** Several EWG members commented that details about analytical methods could be beneficial to the CoP. Others felt that the CoP should not include methods, as these could change over time and some current methods lack official validation. There was general agreement that a list of specific methods should not be included, but that the CoP could mention some types of methods that are applicable to CTX testing and refer to the methods presented in the 2020 FAO/WHO Report of the Expert Meeting on Ciguatera Poisoning.

- **Paragraphs 48-49:** Several EWG members supported the idea that human activity may impact prevalence of CP, but the EWG did not identify any practical measures related to monitoring or assessing human activity for CP reduction to include in the CoP. There was general agreement that the CoP could include a general statement that government officials could determine if changes to ecosystems are contributing to an increase in Gambierdiscus or Fukuyoa blooms or CTX-contaminated fish, and if steps can be taken to decrease these effects.
- **Annex I:** There was discussion about whether a list of marine organisms known or suspected to be associated with CP should be included in the CoP, given that it is not exhaustive, is included for example purposes only, and may become out of date. In addition, it is not common for Annexes to be included in Codex CoP documents. There was general agreement in the EWG that the Annex would be helpful and should be retained if possible.

POSITION:

Cabo Verde supports the adoption of the Code of Practice for the prevention or reduction of Ciguatera poisoning. Cabo Verde also supports its advancement in the step procedure.

RATIONALE:

Ciguatera poisoning is present in certain coastal regions of Africa, particularly in areas where coral reefs are abundant including the Indian ocean island (such as Mauritius, Seychelles and Comoros) the red sea coast, and the Western coast of Africa (such as Senegal, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire). Providing a Code of Practice for the Prevention and Reduction of ciguatera poisoning is an important public health measure which can contribute to protecting the health and wellbeing of consumers mitigate the economic losses and support livelihood of fishermen and seafood businesses. Several African country, includin Cabo Verde¹, are dependent on fish and fishery products for consumption, while others depend on the industry for economic purposes. It is therefore important for Africa to have this Code of Practice.

¹ The first reported case of CP occurred in Cabo Verde. in 1948