



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

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REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE OECD

RELEVANT TO THE WORK OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION, 2012

ACTIVITIES OF THE OECD FRUIT AND VEGETABLES SCHEME

1. The 70th Plenary Meeting of the OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme held in December 2011 supported the good cooperation with the FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission that is currently ongoing and working well, in an informal manner.
2. The preamble of the Council Decision [C(2006)95] on the OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme's Rules was modified in 2011 with the inclusion of a reference to the fruit and vegetables standards adopted by the WHO/FAO Codex Alimentarius Commission.
3. The Scheme's members agreed to develop OECD explanatory brochures on Pomegranates and Bananas based on the Codex Standards. The work will be done in close cooperation with interested Codex member countries, who were invited to be a member of the relevant OECD working groups in the course of 2011. The selection of the rapporteurs is underway. The Codex Secretariat will be informed on the decision and the details on the working procedure of the working groups in the coming month.
4. The Scheme had also made progress in the revision of the OECD Operating Rules for the Conformity Checks of Produce Exported under the Scheme (inspection methods) and the development of OECD Guidelines on Quality Inspection. Both documents would be discussed at the next Plenary Meeting to be held in Montpellier, France from 4-7 December 2012.

OECD WORK ON RISK/SAFETY ASSESSMENT OF PRODUCTS OF MODERN BIOTECHNOLOGY

Biosafety and Food-Feed safety programmes

5. The assessment of the safety of products derived from modern biotechnology is an important challenge for countries as transgenic crops are increasingly cultivated worldwide, and as human foods and animal feeds derived from such crops are being marketed. In order to increase the efficiency of the risk/safety assessment process and to reduce duplication of effort, the OECD works to harmonise country approaches and share information used in this assessment. Two closely related programmes are being implemented:

- The *Working Group on Harmonisation of Regulatory Oversight in Biotechnology* addresses aspects of the environmental risk/ safety assessment of transgenic organisms;
- The *Task Force for the Safety of Novel Foods and Feeds* addresses the safety assessment of foods and feeds derived from transgenic organisms.

6. The main purpose of the work is threefold: i) To assist national authorities in evaluating the potential risks of transgenic products and ensuring high standards of safety; ii) To foster communication and mutual understanding of the regulatory processes in different countries; and iii) To reduce the potential for non-tariff barriers to trade.

7. Both programmes identify a common base of scientific information that can be useful in assessing the safety of specific products. The aim is to ensure that the types of information and data used in safety assessments, as well as the methods used to collect these elements, are as similar as possible amongst countries.

Main outputs

8. The main outputs of the two bodies are the “OECD Consensus Documents” which constitute practical tools for safety assessors and other stakeholders. These documents compile key information on major crops, trees, micro-organisms as well as on introduced traits, which countries believe to be relevant to risk/safety assessment when comparing new (genetically engineered) products to conventional ones. The documents relating to *Environmental Safety* focus mainly on the biology of plants (Species and taxonomic group, reproductive biology, potential for out-crossing with related species, centres of diversity, agronomic practices, major uses and other relevant elements). The documents for *Food and Feed Safety* contain information on the key nutrients, toxicants, anti-nutrients and allergens. To date, a total of 62 documents are available on www.oecd.org/biotrack.

9. In addition, a database on genetically-engineered plant products was developed for public availability, and is being updated by participants in these OECD programmes. The database aims to allow regulatory officials to easily share basic information on biotech products that have been approved for commercial application in terms of food, feed or environmental safety. As at mid-June 2012, the database contained information on 176 biotech products from 14 plant species, approved in one or more of 10 countries and the E.C.

Collaboration with FAO and Codex

10. The FAO and the Codex Alimentarius Commission are observers in these activities, which involve several non-members of the OECD including developing countries, and other interested Organisations. The work includes crops and commodities often produced in tropical and sub-tropical regions (*e.g.* rice, cotton), with recent developments focused on sweet potato, cassava, sorghum or sugarcane as a result from the active involvement of Brazil, China, India, Philippines, South Africa and Thailand among others.

11. Example of practical cooperation with Codex: when dealing with the appropriate comparators for testing new varieties, the OECD Food Safety Documents always refer to the “Guideline for the Conduct of Food Safety Assessment of Food Derived from Recombinant DNA Plants” CAC/GL 45/2003 of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, including its Annexes II and III updated in 2008. Similarly, documents from the Codex Standard Series (*e.g.* on Sugars, on Named Vegetable Oils constitute useful sources of information and key references when developing these OECD documents.

OECD WORK ON PESTICIDE

12. The Pesticides Programme was created in 1992 to help OECD countries:

- harmonise their pesticide review procedures,
- share the work of evaluating pesticides, and
- reduce risks associated with pesticide use.

13. The Codex Secretariat is observer at the Working Group on Pesticides, the upper body of OECD the Pesticides Programme.

14. Below is some information about the two OECD Groups which are of main interest to the work of Codex.

Residue Chemistry Expert Group

15. The Residue Chemistry Expert Group (RCEG) was established in 2003. Its objectives are to:
 - Harmonise the way residue testing is conducted and results are interpreted,
 - Develop methods to support international harmonisation of MRLs (the OECD does not set MRLs).
16. The FAO/WHO Joint Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR) Secretariat is observer in the RCEG.
17. Up to now, 9 Test Guidelines ([TG 501](#): Metabolism in Crops, [TG 502](#): Metabolism in Rotational Crops, [TG 503](#): Metabolism in Livestock, [TG 504](#): Residues in Rotational Crops (Limited Field Studies), [TG 505](#): Residues in Livestock, [TG 506](#): Stability of Pesticide Residues in Stored Commodities, [TG 507](#): Nature of Pesticide Residues in processed Commodities - High Temperature-Hydrolysis, [TG 508](#): Magnitude of Pesticide Residues in Processed Commodities, [TG 509](#): Crop Field Trial) and 6 Guidance Documents (Definition of Residue, Overview of Residue Chemistry Studies, Magnitude of Pesticide Residues in Processed Commodities, Pesticide Residue Analytical Methods, Crop Field Trials) have been published.
18. The MRL Calculator, a tool for statistical calculation of MRLs was published in 2011. It is an Excel spreadsheet simple to use without requiring extensive statistical knowledge from the user.
19. The following output is in preparation: Livestock Feeding Guidance (publication planned in 2012).

Expert Group on Minor Uses

20. The Expert Group on Minor Uses (EGMU) was established in 2007. The current work plan of the OECD EGMU focuses on issues associated with cooperation, technical and policy activities with the aim at facilitating the development of data and registration of pesticides for minor uses. As with many OECD chemicals and pesticide projects, the EGMU works towards providing the infrastructure, guidance and tools for promoting the registration of pesticides for minor uses, including aspects of data requirements, data generation and opportunities for harmonization to make available data useful across countries. Described in another way, the OECD work focuses on developing tools for risk assessment and mechanisms to facilitate co-operation and work-sharing.
21. Two Guidance Documents have been published: a Guidance Document on Defining Minor Uses of Pesticides and a Guidance Document on Regulatory Incentives for the Registration of Pesticide Minor Uses. Two survey reports have been published: the Survey Results on Regulatory Incentives for the Registration of Pesticide Minor Uses and the Survey Results on Efficacy & Crop Safety Data Requirements and Guidelines for the Registration of Pesticide Minor Uses.
22. All OECD pesticide publications are available free of charge on the OECD public web site <http://www.oecd.org/env/pesticides>