

# CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



World Health  
Organization

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**Agenda Items 1 and 10**

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## **JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME CODEX COMMITTEE ON METHODS OF ANALYSIS AND SAMPLING**

Forty-fifth Session

Budapest, Hungary

9-13 March 2026

The Republic of Korea appreciates the opportunity to provide the following discussion paper on Agenda Items of 1 and 10

### **DISCUSSION PAPER FOR NECESSITY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANALYTICAL METHODS FOR THE DETERMINATION OF MICROPLASTICS IN FOOD GRADE SALT**

(Submitted by the Republic of Korea)

#### **Background**

1. Microplastics are contaminants of emerging global concern due to their widespread presence in marine, freshwater, and terrestrial environments. Salt, particularly sea salt, is produced directly from marine or saline environments and has been reported in numerous scientific studies as a food commodity in which microplastics may be detected.
2. Several national and regional studies have investigated microplastics in salt; however, comparison of results is difficult due to significant differences in analytical approaches. These include variations in sample preparation methods (e.g. dissolution, filtration, density separation), particle size thresholds, analytical techniques (FT-IR, Raman spectroscopy, Py-GC/MS), and reporting units (particles/kg, particles/g, or mass-based units).
3. At present, no Codex-endorsed analytical method or guidance exists for the determination of microplastics in food grade salt. This situation may lead to inconsistent data generation, limited international comparability, and potential trade concerns if regulatory measures are introduced without harmonized analytical foundations.

#### **Issue Identification**

4. The Republic of Korea identified that
  - There is no internationally harmonized definition or analytical scope for microplastics in food grade salt.
  - Lower and upper particle size limits applied in analysis differ among countries and laboratories.
  - Identification and quantification methods vary in terms of selectivity, sensitivity, and reproducibility.
  - No Codex guidance exists on quality assurance, contamination control, reference materials, or method performance characteristics for microplastics in food matrices such as food grade salt.

#### **Relevance to CCMAS**

5. Under its mandate, CCMAS is responsible for the development and endorsement of:
  - Methods of analysis;
  - Sampling plans; and
  - Performance criteria for Codex standards.
6. The issue of microplastics in food grade salt is fundamentally methodological. Any future Codex discussions on risk assessment or risk management would require reliable and comparable analytical data. Therefore, it is relevant for CCMAS to be aware of this issue and encourage relevant standard development organizations (SDOs) to explore work on in this area.

#### **International Context and Previous Codex Discussions**

7. At the 48th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC48, 2025), the European Union submitted a New Work Proposal on the development of principles for risk analysis of New Food Sources and Production

Systems (NFPS), emphasizing the importance of internationally harmonized scientific approaches in addressing emerging food safety issues.

8. Although microplastics are not considered NFPS, discussions at CAC48 highlighted:

- the growing relevance of emerging food safety issues;
- the need for Codex guidance to support national authorities; and
- the importance of scientific and analytical harmonization prior to risk analysis.

9. These considerations are directly applicable to the issue of microplastics in food grade salt.

### Purpose of the Discussion Paper

10. The purpose of this discussion paper is to invite CCMAS to be informed the necessity of the development of analytical methods for the determination of microplastics in food grade salt and any potential work underway in the area of method development.

### Conclusion

11. Microplastics in food grade salt represent an emerging analytical issue of international relevance. In the absence of Codex-endorsed analytical guidance, data comparability remains limited and may complicate future food safety and trade discussions. Consideration of this issue within CCMAS would provide a scientifically sound foundation for any subsequent Codex work.

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