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.codexalimentarius.org

Agenda item 6 **CX/NASWP 19/15/8**

August 2019

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR NORTH AMERICA AND THE SOUTH WEST PACIFIC

Fifteenth Session

Port Vila, Vanuatu, 16-20 September 2019

CODEX WORK RELEVANT TO THE REGION

(*Prepared by the Coordinator for North America and the South West Pacific*)

1. Introduction

1.1. The CCNASWP region is affected by a wide range of food related health issues, notably in the smaller nations of the South West Pacific. The effects of climate change and other natural disasters have compounded the problems. This paper highlights some of the pertinent issues raised through various Codex committees and which are discussed in this paper for the CCNASWP15 to deliberate on. Concerted efforts are needed by CCNASWP to address these issues. It is therefore critically important that Members familiarize themselves with the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 and contribute to the development of the work plan for its implementation. Again, for the smaller economies of the CCNASWP region, Members are strongly encouraged to apply for Codex Trust Fund (CTF) support to build local capacities to actively participate in and benefit from the work of Codex. Some of the smaller Member countries are producers of cacao products, but all countries of the CCNASWP region are consumers of food products produced from cacao fruits. Members are encouraged to follow the work of the Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods (CCCF) and its recommendation on the Maximum Level (ML) of cadmium for chocolates containing or declaring <30% total cocoa solids on a dry matter basis. The discussion on ML for cadmium in cocoa products is coming up again in the 43rd Session of Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC43). Aflatoxins in food and ciguatera fish poisoning remain serious food safety problems for our consumers and Member countries are encouraged to develop their food control systems to manage these food safety challenges.

2. Relevant issues

Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025[1]

2.1 The 77th Session of Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CCEXEC77) recommended to CAC42 that it adopt the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 as revised by CCEXEC77, and agreed to establish a third strategic-planning subcommittee to facilitate and support development of the workplan for implementation of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 and ensure all relevant Codex actors can participate in that process.

2.2 CAC42 adopted the Strategic Plan 2020-2025, and encouraged all Members to familiarise themselves with the plan as well as participate in the development of the work plan for implementation through the upcoming discussions at the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees.

Codex Trust Fund

2.3 The initial Codex Trust Fund (CTF1) came to an end in December 2015, and the successor trust fund (CTF2) was officially launched in 2016 at CAC39. CTF2 focuses on in-country capacity building to promote more effective participation in Codex, in contrast to CTF1, which focused on increasing participation at Codex meetings by developing countries.

2.4 No Member country from the NASWP region has benefited yet from the CTF2. One member from the NASWP region submitted a proposal in the third funding cycle, but did not meet all criteria set by FAO and WHO. Eligible Members are encouraged to submit proposals to benefit from CTF2.

[1] REP19/EXEC2 para 64; REP19/CAC para. 122

Cadmium in chocolate containing or declaring <30% total cocoa solids on a dry matter basis

2.5 CCCF13 agreed to advance the ML of 0.3 mg/kg for chocolates containing or declaring <30% total cocoa solids on a dry matter basis for adoption at Step 5/8 by CAC42, and noted the reservations of the EU, Norway and Ecuador to this decision[2]. For the EU risk assessment, it had been shown that for certain vulnerable groups the Health Based Guidance Value could be exceeded up to six-fold; and that in terms of exposure of children to cadmium, strict levels had been set in the EU for chocolate products containing less than 50% total cocoa solids on a dry matter basis and for cocoa powder which was used as an ingredient in chocolate milks consumed by children[3].

2.6 CCCF13 also agreed to re-establish the Electronic Working Group (EWG) and to encourage continued data submission for use by the EWG in view of the need for balance between proportionality and rejection rates.

2.7 CAC42 discussed this issue and agreed to adopt the proposed ML at Step 5, which would allow for further discussion at CCCF and noted the reservations of EU, Norway and Switzerland. The concept of proportionality as agreed by CCCF with respect to the adopted MLs by CAC41 should be maintained. If new additional information provided does not justify a change to the ML, CCCF14 will recommend the adoption of the ML of 0.3 mg/kg by CAC at its next session[4].

Relevance of ML for cadmium in chocolate to the CCNASWP region

2.8 Some of the Members of the NASWP region are exporting dried cacao beans. Citizens of some member states have began producing cottage industry-type products from cacao beans and selling these to locals and tourists.

Aflatoxins in foods

2.9 Aflatoxins are poisonous substances produced by certain kinds of fungi (moulds) that are found naturally all over the world; they can contaminate food crops and pose a serious health threat to humans and also livestock. Long-term or chronic exposure to aflatoxins through contaminated foods could cause liver cancer, suppressed immune systems, and retarded growth and development by contributing to malnutrition. Aflatoxins also pose a significant economic burden and due to loss of food crops compromises food security in the most vulnerable groups of people, especially children in developing countries.

2.10 CCCF12 agreed to hold the ML of 10 µg/kg for aflatoxins in ready-to-eat peanuts at Step 4 to ensure implementation of the Code of Practice (CXC 55-2004), that JECFA would issue a call for data in three-years' time and that an EWG would be re-established, once the data were submitted, to prepare a proposal for consideration by CCCF15[5].

2.11 CCCF12 also agreed to suspend work and to hold the ML of 20/30 µg/kg for aflatoxin in nutmeg, chili and paprika, ginger, pepper and turmeric, respectively, at Step 4 to give time to countries to implement the Code of Practice for the prevention and reduction of mycotoxins in spices (CXC 78-2017), that JECFA would issue a call for data in three-years' time and that an EWG would be re-established once the data were submitted to prepare a proposal for consideration by a future CCCF[6].

2.12 With regard to new work on MLs for aflatoxins in cereals and cereal-based foods including foods for infants and young children, CCCF12 agreed to establish an EWG chaired by Brazil and co-chaired by India, working in English, reporting to CCCF13, to further develop the discussion paper and provide proposed MLs for total aflatoxins in wheat, maize, sorghum and rice (specifying the categories) for grains for human consumption, as well as for flour and cereal-based foods for infants and young children[7].

2.13 CCEXEC75[8] noted that CCCF12 had agreed to hold the ML of 10 ug/kg for AFT in RTE peanuts at Step 4 to ensure implementation of the Code of practice for the prevention and reduction of aflatoxin contamination in peanuts (CXC 55-2004) and that the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) would issue a data call after three years to collect data for further consideration by CCCF.

2.14 CCEXEC75 recommended that CCCF accelerate the process to finalize the ML and sampling plan.

Relevance of aflatoxins in foods to the CCNASWP region

2.15 Aflatoxin has been found in both domestic and exported food products in the CCNASWP region. It is problematic for several products, especially dried copra, copra meal and coconut oil.

---

[2] REP19/CF paras 54 and 56

[3] REP19/CF para 53

[4] REP19/CAC para 65

[5] REP18/CF para 115

[6] REP18/CF para 119

[7] REP18/CF para 138

[8] REP18/EXEC2-Rev.1 paras 20 and 23

Ciguatera food poisoning

2.16 Ciguatera fish poisoning is one of the most common foodborne illnesses related to seafood consumption. It is caused by ciguatoxin through consumption of herbivorous fish feeding on dinoflagellates (*Gambierdiscus toxicus*) or carnivorous fish that have accumulated ciguatoxin by consuming herbivorous fish feeding on dinoflagellates. More than 400 species of fish are known to be vectors of ciguatera, and *Gambierdicus toxicus* is found primarily in the tropics in association with macro algae usually attached to dead corals.

2.17 At CCCF13 (2019)[9] it was announced that the *Ad-hoc* FAO/WHO Expert Meeting on Ciguatera Food Poisoning, which was held in 2018 in responding to a request by CCCF11 (2017), evaluated ciguatoxin (toxicological and exposure assessments) including geographic distribution, rate of illness and guidance for the development of risk management options and that the report would be available by the third quarter of 2019.

Relevance of ciguatera food poisoning to the CCNASWP region

2.18 Ciguatera fish poisoning has been increasingly affecting tropical and subtropical areas including the NASWP region. Ciguatera fish poisoning has been predicted to become one of the increasing food safety threats due to climate change.

3. Conclusion and recommendations

3.1 The Committee is invited to consider and review the above topics and in particular address the following issues:

a) Note the topics highlighted above with a view to support the ongoing work;

b) Encourage countries to jointly prepare and submit new work proposals of common interest;

c) Explore possibilities of information exchange amongst the countries of the region, including relevant data and scientific expert advice for preparing new work proposals;

d) Encourage Members to consider co-hosting arrangements with a view to enhance participation of the region in the topics relevant to the region.

[9] REP19/CF para 19