

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION



JOINT OFFICE: Viale delle Terme di Caracalla 00153 ROME Tel: 39 06 57051 www.codexalimentarius.net Email: codex@fao.org Facsimile: 39 06 5705 4593

Agenda Item 4a

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD ADDITIVES

Thirty-ninth Session

Beijing, China, 24 – 28 April 2007

MATTERS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM FAO/WHO

1. This document highlights ongoing activities in FAO and WHO related to recommendations arising from the 67th meeting of JECFA in terms of development of risk assessment principles and updating and publishing of output from JECFA. In addition, information on FAO/WHO activities in the area of provision of scientific advice to Codex and Member countries, which are of importance for CCFA are provided.

Flavouring Agents

2. At its 67th meeting, JECFA discussed and evaluated, the recommendations of the ad hoc Working Group on dietary exposure assessment of flavours, constituted on recommendation of the 65th meeting of JECFA. This Working group had considered the relevant aspects of the introduction of an additional screening method for exposure assessment based on use levels, to complement the maximized survey-derived intake (MSDI) that has been used to date as a surrogate measure of dietary exposure in the Procedure for the Safety Evaluation of Flavouring Agents. JECFA considered that the MSDI method for exposure assessment to be a practical and realistic approach, but additional considerations may be needed for flavours that may be disseminated unevenly within the food supply. Using data for over 800 flavouring agents, the Working Group noted that MSDI values could be up to four orders of magnitude lower than dietary exposures derived using anticipated average use levels in foods. Analysis of the safety implications showed that in the majority of cases the differences between estimates would not have affected the conclusions reached by the Committee on these flavours. The Committee decided that an additional method of dietary exposure assessment should be used on a trial basis for a sufficient number of flavouring agents fitting specific criteria for low and high poundage levels, respectively. The call for data for the 68th JECFA meeting, to be held 19 – 28 June 2007 in Geneva, included a request for the submission of such data.

3. The Committee at the 68th meeting will consider the analysis of the data in addition to the assessment of the flavouring agents submitted for review using the existing guidelines. These additional analyses will include a dietary exposure for selected flavouring agents, estimated using a method based on use levels. The method will be based on recommended use levels for each flavouring agent in food categories, in combination with standard portion sizes. For flavouring agents with usages in multiple food categories, only the food category resulting in highest potential dietary exposure would be considered. This dietary exposure is taken to represent that of a regular consumer of a flavoured food, who is loyal to a brand containing the specific flavour of interest. Such an estimate, based on daily consumption and using a single standard portion size, is likely to provide a conservative assessment of long-term average dietary exposure. The ramifications of any differences between the MSDI and the dietary exposure estimated by the additional method would be examined by the Committee.

4. At its 67th JECFA meeting, the Committee noted that new surveys of production of flavouring agents for use in food had recently been undertaken by flavour industry associations in the European Union, Japan and the United States of America, and that the results of these surveys would be available to support the Committee's future evaluations of flavouring agents and to update previous evaluations. The Committee asked that the survey methods be described in detail when data from the new surveys are submitted for the first time, so that the Committee can fully assess the coverage of the surveys and any uncertainties in the results.

Compendium of Food Additive Specifications

5. The new and updated Combined Compendium of Food Additive Specifications published in four volumes as follows:

- Volume 1 – Specifications for food additives A through D
- Volume 2 – Specifications for food additives E through O
- Volume 3 – Specifications for food additives P through Z
- Volume 4 – Analytical methods, test procedures and laboratory solutions used by and referenced in the food additive specifications. This final volume was published in the end of 2006 while the first 3 volumes were published earlier in 2006

6. JECFA specifications are also available online on the FAO JECFA website <http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/jecfa-additives/search.html?lang=en>. The on-line edition has been updated and made more user-friendly. Volume 4 containing the analytical methods is available from the online data base and at <http://www.fao.org/docrep/009/a0691e/a0691e00.htm>.

7. Specifications for flavouring agents are not included in this Compendium, excepting those few which have an additional technological function as a food additive (e.g. carrier solvent). Flavouring agent specifications are available online in a searchable database at the above FAO website. This database is on the process of being updated in a similar fashion as the database on food additives during the course of 2007.

General specifications for enzyme preparations used in food processing

8. At the 67th JECFA session, the General Specifications and Considerations for Enzyme Preparations Used in Food Processing were revised. General information on the classification and nomenclature of enzymes was updated and recommendations for naming enzymes, including enzymes from micro-organisms containing recombinant DNA, were introduced and other parts of the guide line were expanded. The general information on microbial sources was updated to address the use of fungal species with the potential to produce low levels of certain mycotoxins under fermentation conditions conducive to mycotoxin synthesis. A statement was added that enzyme preparations derived from such fungal species should not contain toxicologically significant levels of mycotoxins that could be produced by these species. The possible elaboration of further guidance on requirements and principles for the safety evaluation of enzyme preparations used in food processing will be discussed at a future JECFA meeting.

Harmonisation of terms used by CCFA and JECFA on functional uses for food additives

9. The 67th JECFA meeting decided to follow the terminology to describe the functional uses of food additives recommended by the 38th session of CCFA in the preparation of food additive specifications monographs at future meetings of the Committee, once the terminology had been adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

JECFA expert rosters 2007 – 2011

10. In response to the call for chemical/technical and exposure experts issued by FAO and WHO in 2006, the JECFA Secretariat has received and examined over 60 applications for the fields of expertise in chemistry and analysis of food additives and contaminants. The composition of the roster will be communicated on the JECFA website, once a final decision has been taken.

Provision of Scientific Advice

11. FAO and WHO have continued their efforts in the enhancement of the FAO/WHO work to provide scientific advice. The FAO/WHO Framework for the Provision of Scientific Advice on Food Safety and Nutrition has been posted on the websites of FAO and WHO for public comments. This Framework is a compilation of written procedures currently followed in relation to the provision of scientific advice on food safety and nutrition to Codex and member countries. It discusses the different types of scientific advice provided, as well as the current principles, practices and procedures that underpin this advice. The purpose is to enhance the outcomes and transparency of scientific advice generated by FAO and WHO. All comments are being assessed and a final document will be issued during 2007.

Expert Consultation on the use of 'active chlorine' in the food industry

12. CCFAC and CCFH have requested FAO and WHO to address the safety of use of 'active chlorine' in the food industry. Funding has been made available for this project and FAO/WHO are in the process of planning the project in further detail, with the aim to hold an international expert consultation by the end of 2007. A call for data and a call for experts will be published on the FAO and WHO websites, together with a clearly defined scope of the project.

Provision of technical support to FAO and WHO Member countries

13. FAO and WHO have recently been engaged in the development of a number of manuals, guidelines and training materials to facilitate the capacity building effort. These materials include the following:

- "Food Safety Risk Analysis – A Guide for National Food Safety Authorities" a joint FAO/WHO publication;
- FAO/WHO guidance document for governments on the application of HACCP, in small and less developed businesses (SLDBs). The document will be soon available at http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/food/quality_haccp_en.stm.

These materials, once finalized, will be issued in multi-lingual form for wider use by member countries.

14. The 4th International workshop was held from 23-27 October 2006 in Beijing, co-sponsored by WHO and the National Institute of Nutrition and Food Safety and in cooperation with FAO. While the workshop mainly focussed on contaminants in food, a number of countries reported on the use of the Total Diet Study (TDS) to assess exposure to certain food additives. The workshop was preceded by a one-week training course for developing countries organised with the support of the New Zealand Food Safety Authority (NZFSA), for participants from countries wishing to initiate TDS in their countries. Fifty-five representatives from 27 countries were present. The objectives of the workshop were to promote and support TDS; to report on recent developments and results in the field of TDS; to promote reliable and comparable TDS through harmonized approaches and exchange of international 'best practices' and expertise; to discuss methods and resources needed to conduct dietary exposure assessments; to establish a network of national counterparts for undertaking regional TDS projects; and to promote electronic submission to and use of total diet study data from the GEMS/Food. In 2007, regional TDS workshops are planned by the WHO Regions of Africa (francophone countries), Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean. The report of the meeting is available at the WHO Website at <http://www.who.int/foodsafety/chem/gems/en/index3.html>