



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, 2013¹

ACTIVITIES OF THE OECD FRUIT AND VEGETABLES SCHEME

1. The OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme, with the support of the Codex Alimentarius Commission started to develop an OECD Explanatory Brochure on Pomegranate in 2012. This is the first OECD Brochure which will be based on a Codex Standard. The first draft explanatory brochure was sent out for comments to interested Codex Member Countries. The OECD will also organize a special Working Group Meeting on Pomegranate at the Headquarters of OECD in Paris, France on 10-11 September 2013. All interested Codex Member Countries are invited to participate in this Meeting with the view to finalizing the work on the brochure. The final Draft Explanatory Brochure will be presented for discussion and adoption at the 72nd Plenary Meeting of the OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme to be held in December 2013.
2. The Scheme had made progress on the revision of the OECD Operating Rules for the Conformity Checks of Produce Exported under the Scheme (OECD Inspection Methods) and will be presented for adoption in 2013. The Scheme also develops an OECD Guidelines on Quality Inspection which will be discussed at the 72nd Plenary Meeting.
3. The Scheme regularly undertakes peer reviews on national fruit and vegetables quality inspection system on a voluntary basis, to examine and assess its performance by experts from other countries under the umbrella of the OECD. The ultimate goal is to help improve policy making, adopt best practices and comply with established international standards and principles. The Scheme will undertake a peer review on the Spanish fruit and vegetables quality inspection system in 2013.
4. The Scheme is involved in capacity building activities. These training courses and workshops focus on the implementation of the OECD quality inspection system, interpretation of international standards and on latest developments and challenges in the fruit and vegetables sector. The latest events were organised in Eastern Africa and South Eastern Europe. The Codex Secretariat is always invited to participate and provide information on the activities of the Codex Alimentarius Commission related to fruit and vegetables inspection.
5. The Scheme regularly provides economic and market analysis of selected fruit and vegetables products for its Members, in order to give an overview on trends, trade volume/value on international trade and forecast for the next season. The analysis is done by experts for the invitation of the OECD Secretariat. In 2012, a French expert gave an overview on the economic and market situation of melons.

¹ This document has been prepared under the responsibility of the OECD.

6. The OECD explanatory brochures, guidelines and peer review reports are available from the official website of the OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme (www.oecd.org/tad/fv) free of charges.

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

Biosafety and Food-Feed safety programmes

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. 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

10. 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 65 documents are available on www.oecd.org/biotrack.

11. 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 February 2013, the database contained information on 186 biotech products from 14 plant species, approved in one or more of 10 countries and the E.C.

Collaboration with FAO and Codex

12. 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, sugarcane or eucalyptus as a result from the active involvement of Brazil, China, India, Philippines, South Africa and Thailand among others.

13. 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

14. 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.

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

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

Residue Chemistry Expert Group

17. 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).

18. The FAO/WHO Joint Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR) Secretariat is observer in the RCEG.

19. 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 7 Guidance Documents (Definition of Residue, Overview of Residue Chemistry Studies, Magnitude of Pesticide Residues in Processed Commodities, Pesticide Residue Analytical Methods, Crop Field Trials, Residues in Livestock) have been published.

20. 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.

21. The following outputs are in preparation: revision of the Guidance Document on Crop Field Trials (to deal with proportionality issues, clarify sampling procedures and take into account national / Codex information on recent changes in crop groups) and development of a Rotational Crop Field Trial Guidance Document).

Expert Group on Minor Uses

22. 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.

23. 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.

24. In 2013, three main activities are underway: first, EGMU Project no.1 seeks to develop a Guidance document to address & solve minor uses. To that aim, a questionnaire was distributed in June 2013 to collect information on existing national & regional processes and on known data exchanges - a pilot data generation project (global residue/efficacy) will be scheduled at a later stage. Second, EGMU Project no.2 focuses on Global Joint Reviews (GJRs) with the objective to enhance minor uses from GJRs. Last, EGMU Project no. 3 involves the development of a Guidance document on the exchange and use of international efficacy & crop safety data for minor uses. The next EGMU meeting will take place at OECD, in Paris, France, on 10-11 October 2013.

25. All OECD pesticide publications are available free of charge on the OECD public web site <http://www.oecd.org/env/pesticides>