

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

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**Food and Agriculture
Organization of
the United Nations**



**World Health
Organization**

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**CAC/34 INF/1
ORIGINAL LANGUAGE ONLY**

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Thirty-fourth Session

Geneva, Switzerland, 4-9 July 2011

COMMUNICATION FROM OECD (report of activities relevant to Codex work)

**REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE OECD RELEVANT TO THE WORK OF THE
CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION**

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REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE OECD RELEVANT TO THE WORK OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

ACTIVITIES OF THE OECD FRUIT AND VEGETABLES SCHEME

1. The 69th Plenary Meeting of the OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme held in December 2010, expressed strong interest in enhancing cooperation with the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables in several areas, especially the development of explanatory brochures. The Scheme approved the Codex Standard for Bananas under the Scheme excluding Sections 7 and 8 on Contaminants and Hygiene (as these are outside the scope of the OECD Scheme). This is the first Codex Standard that can be used as a reference standard for the OECD fruit and vegetables quality inspection system. The Scheme members also recognized the need of an international standard on pomegranate, which is currently under development in the CCFFV and the need for international interpretative material. **Therefore, the Scheme is requesting support and cooperation in the development of an OECD brochure on bananas, as well as on pomegranate with the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables.**

2. More specifically, these brochures would not be an official interpretation of the Codex Standard. However, it would serve as useful explanatory material for inspection services in producing and importing countries, as well as for all stakeholders involved in international trade of bananas and pomegranates. The Codex members could participate in the development of these OECD brochures. They would be invited to participate in the special working group meetings and electronic fora where the explanatory text and illustrations would be discussed. Codex members are invited to contact the OECD Secretariat, if they were interested in the development of an OECD brochure for bananas and pomegranates.

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

Biosafety and Food-Feed safety programmes

3. 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 safety 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.

4. The main purpose of the work is threefold: i) To assist countries in evaluating the potential risks of transgenic products to ensure 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.

5. Both programmes identify a common base of scientific information that can be useful in assessing the safety of specific products with respect to food and feed as well as the environment. 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

6. 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 and potential for out-crossing with related species, centres of diversity, agronomic practices, major uses,..). 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.

7. In addition, a database on genetically-engineered plant products was developed for public availability, and will be updated in the coming years. The database aims to allow regulatory officials participating in these OECD programmes to easily share basic information on biotech products that have been approved for commercial application in terms of food, feed or environmental safety.

Collaboration with FAO and Codex

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

9. An example of the practical cooperation with the Codex can be mentioned as follows: 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 Annexe II updated in 2008. Similarly, documents from the Codex Standard Series (*e.g.* on Sugars, on Named Vegetable Oils, etc.) constitute useful sources of information and key references when developing these OECD documents.

OECD WORK ON PESTICIDE

10. 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.

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

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

Residue Chemistry Expert Group

13. 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).

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

15. 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 4 Guidance Documents (Definition of Residue, Overview of Residue Chemistry Studies, Magnitude of Pesticide Residues in Processed Commodities, Pesticide Residue Analytical Methods) have been published.

16. The MRL Calculator, a tool for statistical calculation of MRLs was published early this year. It is an Excel spreadsheet simple to use without requiring extensive statistical knowledge from the user.

17. The following outputs are in preparation: Livestock Feeding Guidance (publication planned in 2011/2012) and a Guidance Document on Crop Field Trials (publication planned in 2011).

Expert Group on Minor Uses

18. 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.

19. A Guidance Document on Defining Minor Uses of Pesticides was published in 2009. Three other documents were published since the last session of the CAC: a Guidance Document on Regulatory Incentives for the Registration of Pesticide Minor Uses, 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.

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