



## Report of the U.S. Delegate, 44th Session, Codex Committee On Food Hygiene (CCFH)

November 12-16, 2012

New Orleans, LA

The 44th Session of CCFH was attended by 207 delegates representing 73 Member countries, one Member organization (the European Union (EU)), and 16 international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. The United States was represented by the Delegate, Ms. Jenny Scott, FDA Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition; Co-Alternate Delegates Dr. Kerry Dearfield, USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service, and Dr. Joyce Saltsman, FDA Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition; ten government advisors; and three non-government advisors.

The 44th Session of the [Codex Committee on Food Hygiene \(CCFH\)](#):

- Completed work on the Proposed Draft *Principles and Guidelines for the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria for Foods*, recommending adoption by the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) at Steps 5/8 .
  - Completed work on the *Proposed Draft Annex to the Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables, Annex for Berries*, recommending adoption by the CAC at Steps 5/8.
  - Endorsed with amendment the hygiene provisions of the draft *Regional Code of Hygienic Practice for Street-Vended Foods (Near East)*.
  - Continued work on the *Guidelines for the Control of Specific Zoonotic Parasites in Meat: Trichinella spiralis and Cysticercus bovis*, returning the document to step 2 for revision by an electronic working group .
  - Continued work on revision of the *Code of Hygienic Practice for Spices and Dried Aromatic Plants*, (changing "Dried Aromatic Plants" to "Dried Aromatic Herbs"), returning the Code to step 2 for revision by an electronic working group .
  - Agreed to new take up work on a *Code of Hygienic Practice for Low-Moisture Foods*.
  - Agreed to develop two discussion papers for consideration by the next session, one on occurrence and control of parasites in food and the other on the need to revise the *Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables* and its annexes.
  - Prepared a draft revision of the "Process by which CCFH will undertake its work" and a draft "forward workplan," which will be applied on a provisional basis this year and revised at the next session.
- A summary of the results of the 44th Session of CCFH is given below. The full report of the Session can be found on the Codex Website, [www.codexalimentarius.org](http://www.codexalimentarius.org).

### MEETING SUMMARY

#### PROPOSED DRAFT REVISION OF THE *PRINCIPLES FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND APPLICATION OF MICROBIOLOGICAL CRITERIA FOR FOODS*

The Committee had agreed to take up the revision to the *Principles for the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria for Foods* (CAC/GL 21-1997) at its 41st session, with Finland and Japan serving as co-leads for this work. Five physical working groups have been held, including one that met just prior to this session of CCFH.

The Committee agreed to a number of revisions to the document, including text related to attributes and variables sampling plans, a moving window approach, and trend analysis. The Committee was unable to agree on a definition of "metric" and agreed to delete it. The Committee deleted a bullet point on use of microbiological criteria in validation and made a number of changes for clarification.

The Committee considered what to do with the examples that had been developed to help clarify some of the purposes of microbiological criteria. Some delegations wanted these to become an annex of the document; however other delegations expressed concern that these would be interpreted as official Codex positions with respect to the foods to which the examples were applied. Another option was to send the examples to FAO/WHO for posting on their websites. The Committee agreed with a recommendation of the working group to ask FAO/WHO to conduct a peer review of the examples prior to posting them on the website, where they will be linked to other relevant



information. Before sending the examples to FAO/WHO, the drafting countries will be given an opportunity to revise and correct the examples.

The Committee also agreed to request FAO/WHO to address the statistical and mathematical considerations related to establishing the performance characteristics of a sampling plan, including the development and interpretation of operating characteristic curves, the impact of assumptions about the distribution and standard deviation of microorganisms in a food, establishing the length of a moving window, and other relevant aspects.

The Committee completed work on the Proposed Draft *Principles and Guidelines for the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria for Foods* (see Appendix III of the meeting report) and agreed to forward it to the Codex Alimentarius Commission for adoption at Steps 5/8.

#### **PROPOSED DRAFT GUIDELINES FOR THE CONTROL OF SPECIFIC ZOOBOTIC PARASITES IN MEAT: TRICHINELLA SPIRALIS AND CYSTICERCUS BOVIS**

CCFH, at its 42nd Session, approved new work on the development of *Guidelines for the Control of Specific Zoonotic Parasites in Meat: Trichinella spiralis and Cysticercus bovis*. A physical working group, led by New Zealand and the European Union, prepared an initial draft text for the 43rd Session, and this draft was revised by an electronic working group for the 44th Session to take into account the draft revision of Chapter 8.13 "Infection with *Trichinella* spp" of the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code. An in-session working group was held to look at options for completing the work on *Trichinella* spp., which included the following:

- Option (i) based on the pathway of the current draft of the revised OIE Chapter 8.13, which describes requirements for establishing "negligible risk compartments;"
- Option (ii) based on a proposal for achieving and maintaining a "negligible risk compartment" following an alternative pathway to that described in the current draft OIE Chapter 8.13; and
- Option (iii) based on the possibility of achieving a "negligible risk status" for a country or region for domestic pigs with possible interaction with wildlife, based on an independent pathway to that described in the current draft OIE Chapter 8.13.

Option (ii) would require less extensive on-farm auditing to maintain a "negligible risk compartment" than Option (i) because it was linked to a slaughterhouse monitoring plan. It was noted that Option (ii) would require additional provisions in the current draft OIE Chapter 8.13; countries supporting this option would need to work with their national delegates to OIE to get changes in the current draft, which had a January 18, 2013 deadline for comments.

The Committee did not support Option (iii), as it refers to monitoring of wildlife, which is outside the scope of the work.

The Committee agreed to continue working in parallel on the development of the documents on *Trichinella* spp. and *Taenia saginata* /*Cysticercus bovis*. The Committee agreed to establish an electronic working group to further develop the draft guidelines, taking into account the above discussion and the development of the OIE work on the revision of Chapter 8.13 "Infection with *Trichinella* spp" of the Terrestrial Animal Health Code, where applicable. The Committee further agreed to have a physical working group (subject to OIE adoption of the revision of chapter 8.13) to meet prior to the 45th Session of CCFH.

The proposed draft guidelines were returned to Step 2 for further re-drafting by an electronic working group and for circulation at Step 3 prior to the next session.

#### **PROPOSED DRAFT REVISION OF THE CODE OF HYGIENIC PRACTICE FOR SPICES AND DRIED AROMATIC PLANTS**

CCFH, at its 43rd Session, approved new work on the revision of the *Code of Hygienic Practice for Spices and Dried Aromatic Plants* and agreed to establish an electronic working group led by the United States to prepare the proposed draft revision for comments and consideration by this session. The Committee did not consider the draft in depth but provided input on specific areas requested in the report of the working group. The Committee agreed that tea and dried vegetables would not be included in the scope, and the title was revised to refer to spices and dried aromatic herbs. Of particular concern was the microbiological criterion for *Salmonella*. The Committee agreed to request that FAO/WHO undertake a risk assessment to determine whether there is a significant public health risk from *Salmonella* associated with consumption of spices and dried aromatic herbs and to evaluate whether criteria



for *Salmonella* are meaningful to ensure adequate consumer health protection. The Committee also requested that FAO/WHO extend the call for data to other microbiological hazards that may be associated with spices and dried aromatic herbs.

The proposed draft Code was returned to Step 2 for further re-drafting by an electronic working group, led by the US, and for circulation at Step 3 prior to the next session.

### **PROPOSED DRAFT ANNEX ON BERRIES TO THE *CODE OF HYGIENIC PRACTICE FOR FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES***

The Committee had agreed at its 43rd Session to develop an Annex to the *Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables* on berries (Berries Annex), with work to be done by an electronic working group led by Brazil. The Committee, in revising the Annex, noted that there was duplication with the main code and other annexes that would be addressed in a future revision of these documents and did not focus on issues of duplication and consistency among these documents.

The Committee in particular addressed the scope of the annex, and agreed to limit the scope to all edible varieties of strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, mulberries, blueberries, currants, gooseberries and groundcherries, and included their scientific name to avoid confusion, since common names differ from country to country. The Committee also agreed that for wild berries only measures for handling and post-harvest activities would apply. Numerous revisions were made for clarification, and the section on training was enhanced.

The Committee completed work on the Berries Annex to the *Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables* (see Appendix IV of the meeting report) and agreed to forward it to the Codex Alimentarius Commission for adoption at Steps 5/8.

### **OTHER MATTERS**

#### **Endorsement of the Hygiene Provisions of the Draft Regional *Code of Practice for Street-Vended Foods (Near East)***

The Committee considered the hygiene provisions of a Codex Regional *Code of Practice for Street-Vended Foods* prepared by the Codex Regional Coordinating Committee for the Near East. Many comments had been received on the document; however, it was noted that the role of CCFH was to focus on the hygiene aspects only. An in-session working group met to consider these and make recommendations. The working group made numerous revisions to the hygiene provisions. The Committee agreed to endorse the hygiene provisions (as amended by the working group), except for a paragraph on cleaning of utensils, for which the Committee requested clarification from CCNEA on the scientific basis for the measures. The amended, endorsed hygiene provisions will be forwarded to CCNEA along with the comments on sections that were not hygiene related, for their consideration.

### **RECOMMENDED NEW WORK FOR CCFH**

Based on an established process for addressing new work proposals, a CCFH *Ad Hoc* Working Group for the Establishment of CCFH Work Priorities, led by the United States, met immediately prior to the Session and considered several items:

- a discussion paper from the United States, along with a project document from Canada, on a *Code of Hygienic Practice for Low-moisture Foods*;
- a discussion paper and project document from India on a code of hygienic practice for storage of cereals (grains);
- a discussion paper developed by Australia on new work and periodic review/revision of codes of hygienic practice. The working group meeting resulted in 6 recommendations, which were considered by the Committee, with the following decisions:

**Recommendation for new work on low-moisture foods:** The Committee agreed to the recommendation for new work on a *Code of Hygienic Practice for Low Moisture Foods*. The Committee further agreed to request FAO/WHO to provide the Committee with scientific advice on which low moisture foods should be considered as the highest priorities for the Committee; the associated microbiological hazards; information relevant to the risk management of the microbiological hazards associated with the identified range of low moisture foods; the role of agricultural and



handling/manufacturing practices in the introduction and control of hazards; and the identification of the critical control points for mitigation of the risks associated with low moisture foods.

The Committee agreed to establish an electronic working group, led by Canada and co-chaired by the United States, to develop the proposed draft Code for comments at Step 3 and consideration by its next Session pending approval by the Commission. The Committee also agreed to establish a physical working group with interpretation in English, French and Spanish to meet immediately prior to the next session, but noted that this would be subject to confirmation.

**Discussion paper on parasites:** The Committee agreed to the recommendation of the working group to develop a discussion paper on the occurrence and control of parasites in food, taking into account the FAO/WHO report on *Multicriteria-based Ranking for Risk Management of Foodborne Parasites*. The discussion paper should (i) consider whether control of parasites should be addressed in a general code of practice or within existing commodity codes; (ii) consider whether additional guidance on criteria for prioritization of parasites for use by governments should be developed; and (iii) include a project document as appropriate. The electronic working group will be led by Australia.

**Discussion paper on revision of the Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables and its annexes:** The Committee agreed to the recommendation of the working group to a discussion paper to revise the *Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables* and its annexes to eliminate duplication and redundancies and to identify provisions that might be missing from the Code. The electronic working group will be led by Brazil.

**Proposal for a Code of Hygienic Practice for Storage of Cereals :** The Committee agreed with the recommendation to take no action on this proposal for new work but to include this proposal in the proposed CCFH "forward workplan." The Committee noted that this work should be considered in relation to the development of the *Code of Hygienic Practice for Low Moisture Foods*.

**Process by which CCFH will undertake work:** The Committee agreed with the recommendation that the proposed draft revision of the "Process by which CCFH will undertake its work," which was drafted by the United States and includes the proposed criteria for evaluating and prioritizing new work, be used on an experimental basis by the chair of the next working group on priorities.

**Provisional Forward Workplan :** The Committee agreed with the recommendation that a "forward workplan," which would be updated annually, should be established for the Committee in order to prioritize potential future work. It was agreed that the proposed "forward workplan" developed in the discussion paper from Australia and amended by the addition of work on parasites and storage of cereals, would be circulated for comments.

Although the working group did not have time to fully address how the workplan would be implemented, it was agreed that the provisional workplan would be included in the circular letter requesting proposals for new work would also include a request:

- For comments on the provisional criteria and their weighting values; and on the "forward workplan";
- To evaluate each workplan item;
- To evaluate the weighting values given to each workplan item;
- To provide weighting values for each criterion for the newly added workplan items, i.e., parasites and storage of cereals.

The Committee agreed to re-establish the working group on CCFH work priorities which will meet the day before the next session of the Committee. Vietnam volunteered to chair the working group on CCFH work priorities next year with the assistance of the United States.

## NEXT SESSION OF CCFH

The 45th Session of CCFH is tentatively set for November 11-15, 2013 in Hanoi, Vietnam.