



Delegate's Report, 42nd Session, Codex Committee on Food Hygiene

November 29-December 3, 2010

Kampala, Uganda

The United States believes the 42nd Session of the [Codex Committee on Food Hygiene \(CCFH\)](#) was a productive Session, with the Committee completing work on two items, discussing two additional documents that are in process and initiating two new work items. The Committee:

- Completed work on *Draft Guidelines for the Control of Campylobacter and Salmonella spp. in Chicken Meat*, recommending adoption by the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) at Steps 5/8.
- Completed work on the Proposed *Draft Revision of the Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Collecting, Processing and Marketing of Natural Mineral Waters*, recommending adoption by the CAC at Steps 5/8.
- Continued work on the *Guidelines on the Application of General Principles of Food Hygiene to the Control of Viruses in Food*, returning it to step 3 for comments to be considered by an electronic working group.
- Continued work on the revision to the *Principles for the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria for Foods*, providing input to be used by a physical working group.
- Agreed to new work on *Guidelines for the Control of Specific Zoonotic Parasites in Meat: Trichinella spiralis and Cysticercus bovis*.
- Agreed to new work on an Annex on melons for the *Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables*. The 42nd Session of CCFH was attended by 230 participants representing 75 Member countries, one Member organization (the European Union (EU)), and eleven 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; six government advisors; and, three non-government advisors.

A summary of the results of the 42nd Session of CCFH is given below. The full report of the Session can be found on the Codex Website, www.codexalimentarius.net.

MEETING SUMMARY

Proposed Draft Guidelines for the Control of Campylobacter and Salmonella Spp. in Chicken Meat

The proposed draft guidelines were presented for consideration of advancing the document to Steps 5/8. At the 41st session, the European Commission (EC) stated they could not support a document including chemical interventions; since the committee acknowledged a consensus would not be reached on this point, it agreed to end further discussion of the document at that Session and established an electronic working group to further develop the document. Between sessions, the EU attempted to work out compromise language related to approvals for chemical decontaminants with the U.S., but we had not reached an agreement prior to the meeting on wording for the key sentence in paragraph 14. Several meetings between the EU and the U.S. were held before the document was introduced at this CCFH session, and a compromise was agreed to: "The use of these control measures, including chemical decontaminants, where relevant, in the primary production-to-consumption food chain, is subject to approval by the competent authority, where appropriate." The Committee then considered the document in detail and made a number of changes of a technical and editorial nature that resolved all outstanding issues. The scientific references were removed from the document and will be included on the FAO/WHO website for the decision-support tool for the control of *Campylobacter* and *Salmonella* in poultry.

The Committee recommended forwarding the document for adoption by the Commission at Step 5/8.

Proposed Draft Revision of the Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Collecting, Processing and Marketing of Natural Mineral Waters

The Committee had agreed at the 41st Session to new work to revise the *Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Collecting, Processing and Marketing of Natural Mineral Waters* (CAC/RCP 33-1985), with Switzerland leading the work and a physical working group. The U.S. participated in the physical working group in Lucerne in June, and at that time questioned the basis for the numerous microbiological criteria. We also submitted numerous comments on the draft document circulated prior to the meeting. Switzerland revised the document prior to the meeting, taking into account the comments submitted by the U.S. and others, and met with the U.S. to discuss the changes that had been made. The primary outstanding issue remained the microbiological criteria in Annex I. A

brief intersession working group met to draft wording that would provide flexibility by allowing manufacturers to choose all or a subset of the microbiological criteria for fecal indicators as appropriate, in accordance with any requirements set by the competent authority. Similarly, provision was included for competent authorities to use all or a subset of the criteria to verify control measures. This compromise allowed the Committee to reach consensus on the document. The document was reviewed paragraph by paragraph and a number of additional changes were made.

The Committee recommended forwarding the document for adoption by the Commission at Step 5/8. In light of the agreement on Annex I, the Committee further agreed to request the Commission to remove section 4.4 (microbiological criteria) of the *Standard for Natural Mineral Waters and to reference the Code*.

Proposed Draft Guidelines on the Application of General Principles of Food Hygiene to the Control of Viruses in Food

The document revised by the Netherlands-led working group in 2010 had been circulated for comments prior to the 42nd Session of CCFH. Extensive comments on the document, both editorial and technical, were submitted, and the Netherlands prepared a revised draft for discussion at the meeting. Although the Netherlands had attempted to restructure the document to remove duplication between the main body and the annexes, the Committee noted the need to further improve the structure and text of the document. CCFH thus considered the document section by section, focusing on key changes and comments for further revision of the document.

The issues and concerns raised by delegations, both in written comments and oral interventions, focused on the following areas.

- The overall structure of the document
- Molecular methods for testing for norovirus
- Regular testing for hepatitis A virus of workers
- Cooking parameters to inactivate viruses
- Recall language
- Hand washing (removal of prescriptive requirements)
- Flexibility with regard to keeping children out of growing fields

The document was returned to Step 3 for comments to be considered by an electronic working group, with subsequent circulation at Step 3 for country comments.

Proposed Draft Principles for the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria for Foods

The Committee 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. A physical working group was held in Tokyo in 2010 to carry out the initial revision. The Committee provided written and oral feedback on the current document, focusing on the following areas:

- Make the guidelines more user friendly and flexible to allow use by countries with different levels of expertise on these issues
- Consider categorizing microbiological criteria (MC) into groups:
 - Those based on GHPs (e.g., MCs for indicator organisms)
 - Hazard-based MCs (e.g., for a specific pathogen in a specific commodity)
 - Risk-based MCs (e.g., those linked to an ALOP or FSO)
- Retain relevant information from the current principles
- Take into account work in CCMAS on uncertainty and variability
- Develop examples to illustrate the practical application of MCs
- Develop an annex on the technical and statistical aspects of MCs and sampling

The Committee supported the ongoing work of FAO and WHO to develop a tool to assess the performance of sampling plans.

The document was returned to Step 2 for further development by a physical working group, which will meet in Brussels in 2011, using an electronic working group prior to the physical working group to facilitate broad participation. The revised version will be circulated at Step 3 for country comments prior to the next session of the Committee.



OTHER MATTERS

Endorsement of the Hygiene Provisions of Commodity Standards

The Committee endorsed the hygiene provisions of the *Proposed Draft Standard for Smoked Fish, Smoke-Flavored Fish and Smoke Dried Fish* with amendments. Specifically, a paragraph was added to indicate time/temperature indicators could be a useful tool to determine if the product had been temperature abused. A statement was added to clarify that the purpose of aerobic packaging is not to provide sufficient oxygen to prevent growth and toxin formation by *Clostridium botulinum*. The row of the table related to storage at >5 to 10°C was deleted as inappropriate because these temperatures were considered mild temperature abuse.

The Committee endorsed the hygiene provisions of the *Proposed Draft Standard for Fish Sauce* without amendment.

These recommendations will be sent to the Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products.

Definition of Hazard

The Committee considered a request from the Committee on General Principles to amend the Codex definition of a hazard. The proposal was related to nutrient risk assessment. However, the Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses had decided that the definition did not need amendment, so CCFH agreed that further discussion was not necessary.

Risk Analysis Principles and Procedures Applied by the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene

At the request of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, CCFH developed *Risk Analysis Principles and Procedures Applied by the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene* at its last meeting and forwarded it to the Codex Committee on General Principles (CCGP) for review. CCGP provided CCFH with suggestions for simplification of the document. CCFH elected not to revise the document at this session; the EU Delegation volunteered to prepare a proposal for consideration at the next session of CCFH.

Recommended New Work for CCFH

Based on the recommendations of the Working Group for Establishment of CCFH Work Priorities, CCFH agreed to undertake two new items of work, as follows:

Guidelines for Control of Specific Zoonotic Parasites in Meat: Trichinella spiralis and Cyticercus bovis

The EU and New Zealand had submitted a project document for new work that would provide risk-based, farm-to-plate guidance on control of priority biological hazards in meat, beginning with control measures for *Trichinella spiralis* in pigs and for *Cyticercus bovis* in cattle. The U.S. raised concerns in both the Working Group meeting and the plenary session about the merits of this new work, noting ongoing work by OIE in the area, the limited public health impact of these parasites, and areas of work with greater public health impact (e.g., additional annexes to the *Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables*). There was support for the U.S. position, as well as for taking up this new work, which was seen as important with respect to ongoing trade issues. In addition, it was noted that we had finalized two documents and could thus take on two new pieces of work. The EU and New Zealand emphasized that the work would be complementary to and not duplicative of the OIE efforts and that the work would strengthen collaboration with OIE in line with the Codex Strategic Plan goal of promoting cooperation between Codex and other relevant international organizations. The Committee did note, however, that to undertake this work there was a need to review available information on parasites and to develop a general guidance document that would provide a framework in which annexes on specific parasite/commodity combinations could be addressed. A review of available information on parasites and the related global public health issues will be done concurrently with the new work. The Committee agreed to establish a physical working group co-chaired by the EU and New Zealand to develop a draft document for the next session.

Annex to the Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

The U.S. had prepared a project document to continue work on annexes to the *Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables* (work that had been approved by the CAC at its 33rd session and that began with an annex on leafy green vegetables, including herbs), proposing work on melons and/or tomatoes. The Committee agreed to take up work on melons based on the global public health significance. Canada and the U.S. will co-chair this working group, which will have a meeting in Ottawa the second quarter of 2011.



Project documents were developed and approved for both new work items, and will be considered by the next Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

The U.S. had reminded the attendees at the Working Group meeting that in 2000 the Committee had developed a prioritized list of codes of hygienic practice for review. The Codex Secretariat agreed to include in the Circular Letter inviting proposals for new work information on requests that were assigned lower priority in previous meetings along with the list of existing codes of hygienic practice that could be reviewed for updating or revocation.

NEXT SESSION OF CCFH

The 43rd Session of CCFH is tentatively set for December 5-9, 2011 in the United States.