



Report of the U.S. Delegate on the 45th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene(CCFH)

November 11-15, 2013

Ha Noi, Viet Nam

The 45th Session of CCFH was attended by 237 delegates representing 63 member countries, one member organization (the European Union (EU)), and 18 international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, including the World Health Organization (WHO) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The United States was represented by the Delegate, Ms. Jenny Scott, Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA); Co-Alternate Delegates Dr. Kerry Dearfield, Food Safety and Inspection Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Dr. Joyce Saltsman, FDA Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition; six government advisors; and five non-government advisors

The 45th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene

Completed work on the Proposed Draft Guidelines for Control of Specific Zoonotic Parasites in Meat: *Trichinella* spp. in Meat of Suidae and the Proposed Draft Guidelines for Control of Specific Zoonotic Parasites in Meat: *Taenia saginata* in Meat of Domestic Cattle, forwarding them at Step 5/8 for adoption by the 37th Session (2014) of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC).

Completed work on the Proposed Draft Revision of the Code of Hygienic Practice for Spices and Dried Aromatic Herbs, recommending adoption by the CAC at Step 5/8.

Continued work on the Code of Hygienic Practice for Low-Moisture Foods, returning the document to step 2 for revision by an electronic working group.

Agreed to establish an electronic working group to review a consolidated, revised Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables and its annexes on leafy greens, melons and berries.

Agreed to replace interim definitions in the Principles and Guidelines for the Conduct of Microbiological Risk Assessment (CAC/GL 30-1999) with those in the Procedural Manual for hazard characterization (with amendment), risk communication, risk estimate (with amendment) and risk management.

Agreed to take up new work on Guidelines for the Control of Nontyphoidal *Salmonella* spp in Beef and Pork Meat.



Agreed to take up new work on Guidelines on the Application of General Principles of Food Hygiene to the Control of Foodborne Parasites.

Prepared a draft revision of the “Process by which CCFH will undertake its work” and a draft “forward workplan,” which was applied on a provisional basis this year and revised as necessary at the next session.

A summary of the results of the 45th Session of CCFH is given below. The full report of the Session can be found on the Codex Website, www.codexalimentarius.org

MEETING

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

CCFH, at its 42nd Session (2010), 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 (2011) Session, and this draft was revised by an electronic working group for the 44th Session (2012) to take into account the draft revision of Chapter 8.13 “Infection with *Trichinella* spp” of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) Terrestrial Animal Health Code. During the 44th (2012) session of the CCFH, it was agreed to continue development of the draft Guidelines based on written comments provided at Step 3, the recommendations of the 44th session, and the anticipated work by OIE to update and revise their guidance document on *Trichinella*. A physical working group was held the day prior to the 45th session to look at options for completing the work on *Trichinella* spp. in meat of Suidae. An in-session working group met to consider the work on *Taenia saginata* in meat of domestic cattle and some outstanding issues on *Trichinella*.

One of the major issues resolved at this meeting related to the establishment and maintenance of a “negligible risk compartment” for pigs. Additional flexibility was provided to allow for multiple options for verifying maintenance of negligible risk: (a) farm audits; (b) slaughterhouse surveillance demonstrating that prevalence of infection does not exceed 1 in a million pigs with at least 95% confidence; (c) slaughterhouse surveillance demonstrating public health protection equivalent to (b); or a combination of audits and slaughterhouse surveillance that provides public health protection equivalent to (b). Obtaining this flexibility was a key goal of the United States.

The delegations of a number of Latin American countries expressed reservations on the sections related to establishment and maintenance of a negligible risk compartment because the documents used to establish the scientific basis for the proposed



alternatives had not been available for review by their technical experts and there was reference to FAO/WHO examples of the level of public health protection that can be achieved when establishing a compartment with negligible risk that were not currently available on the FAO/WHO websites. Although they did express their reservations regarding the document, in the spirit of compromise, they did not oppose the advancement of the document. Any concerns of their experts, can be raised when the document comes before the CAC or their reservations can be removed at that time. In the interim, the United States has offered to provide guidance or clarification on any issues or concerns about the document raised by Latin American or other countries.

The guidelines for control of *Taenia saginata* in cattle were revised, including eliminating the use of *Cysticercus bovis* to refer to the cyst, amending the definition of herd, changing the temperature for lethality during cooking to reflect WHO recommendations, and allowing more flexibility in monitoring with respect to the use of histopathology following detection of suspected cysts at slaughter.

The Committee completed work on the Proposed Draft Guidelines for Control of Specific Zoonotic Parasites in Meat: *Trichinella* spp. in Meat of Suidae (see Appendix III of the meeting report) and agreed to forward it to the Codex Alimentarius Commission for adoption at Step 5/8.

The Committee completed work on the Proposed Draft Guidelines for Control of Specific Zoonotic Parasites in Meat: *Taenia saginata* in Meat of Domestic Cattle (see Appendix IV of the meeting report) and agreed to forward it to the Codex Alimentarius Commission for adoption at Step 5/8.

PROPOSED DRAFT REVISION OF THE CODE OF HYGIENIC PRACTICE FOR SPICES AND DRIED AROMATIC HERBS

CCFH, at its 43rd (2011) 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 the 44th (2012) session. At that session the committee made a number of decisions regarding the content of the revised code, including the understanding that this document may become an annex to a general code on low moisture foods at a later stage. The Committee reestablished an electronic working group, with the United States and India as co-chairs, to address outstanding issues.

The Committee had requested 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. FAO/WHO is considering this issue in conjunction with work related to low-moisture foods; as a result, no information was available to inform the decision on a microbiological criterion. A report is expected to be available next year.

The revised code was developed with the recognition that a wide diversity of practices is used in spice production, processing, and packaging throughout the world. The working group added language to the code to provide flexibility for small-scale producers and producers from developing countries by adding statements such as “if used” or “where practicable” to particular provisions where flexibility is needed. The United States had prepared a Conference Room Document that included a number of changes in response to country comments; additional changes were made by CCFH during the meeting. The Committee agreed to delete the Annex on the microbiological criterion in light of the ongoing work of FAO/WHO and reconsider the development of a microbiological criterion if the FAO/WHO advice suggests a criterion would be appropriate for public health protection.

The Committee completed work on the Code of Hygienic Practice for Spices and Dried Aromatic Herbs (see Appendix V of the meeting report) and agreed to forward it to the Codex Alimentarius Commission for adoption at Step 5/8.

PROPOSED DRAFT CODE OF HYGIENIC PRACTICE FOR LOW MOISTURE FOODS

At the 44th Session of CCFH (2012), the Committee agreed to begin new work on a Code of Hygienic Practice for Low-Moisture Foods and agreed to establish an electronic working group (eWG) led by Canada and co-chaired by the United States. CCFH also requested that FAO/WHO undertake work to provide the Committee with scientific advice on the low moisture foods that should be considered as the highest priorities for the Committee and the associated microbiological hazards, as well as information relevant to the risk management of the microbiological hazards associated with the identified range of low moisture foods.

The eWG developed a draft code that was circulated for country comment. The Committee focused discussion on several issues posed by the eWG. The Committee agreed that the Code should be a general document and that advice from existing codes of practice for specific low-moisture foods may be appended as annexes. The Committee agreed to include teas in the scope because preparation of teas did not necessarily include a step that adequately inactivated Salmonella. The Committee also agreed not to include dried meat and dried fish, since this would have expanded the FAO/WHO work and resulted in a delay in their report. The Committee decided not to expand the sections on primary production and validation, and deferred a decision on microbiological criteria pending the information from FAO/WHO.



The Committee agreed to reestablish an electronic working group, with Canada and the United States as co-chairs, to prepare a revised draft code, taking into account the FAO/WHO report when it becomes available. It was also agreed to hold a physical working group meeting immediately prior to the next session.

PROPOSED REVISION OF THE CODE OF HYGIENIC PRACTICE FOR FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

At the 44th (2012) session of CCFH, Brazil was charged with developing a discussion paper on revision to the Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (CAC/RCP 53-2003) and its annexes, specifically with regard to eliminating duplication and redundancies and identifying provisions that might be missing from the Code. Brazil prioritized the comparison between the main code and the annexes prepared for Fresh Leafy Vegetables, Melons, and Berries, but did not include the annex for Ready-to-Eat Fresh Pre-Cut Fruits and Vegetables or the annex for Sprout Production. This comparison was attached to the Discussion Paper that was submitted for consideration by the 45th session of CCFH. The next step is to prepare a consolidated version of the Code and its annexes.

The Committee agreed to establish an electronic working group, co-chaired by Brazil and France, to review a consolidated Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables and identify any additional changes for consideration at the next session. If the eWG identifies the need for additional sections/provisions or substantive changes, the eWG is to prepare a project document for new work.

OTHER MATTERS

Replacement of Interim Definitions in the Principles and Guidelines for the Conduct of Microbiological Risk Assessment

The Committee considered a proposal by the Codex Secretariat to align specific definitions (i.e., hazard characterization, risk communication, risk estimate, and risk management) in the Principles and Guidelines for the Conduct of Microbiological Risk Assessment that had been adopted on an interim basis in 1999 with the definitions in the Procedural Manual. The Committee supported the proposal, but requested amendment of the definition of hazard characterization to remove sentences at the end that were advisory in nature and the definition of risk estimate to add a reference to a qualitative estimate. The amended definitions are expected to be reviewed by the next session of the Codex Committee on General Principles and the CAC.

Revision of the General Principles of Food Hygiene and its HACCP annex: The delegation of Finland informed CCFH that it planned to have a colloquium for industry,



government and academia in June 2014 to discuss the General Principles of Food Hygiene and its HACCP annex to determine whether these should be updated. Possible changes include separating verification and validation; providing more useful figures and diagrams; revising or deleting the decision tree; providing better advice on application of HACCP in small businesses; and more emphasis on distinguishing prerequisite programs and HACCP. It will also consider possible changes to the General Principles of Food Hygiene. The outcome of this meeting is likely to be a discussion paper and a project document for new work.

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 Vietnam with the assistance of the United States, met immediately prior to the 45th Session and considered several items:

The criteria and weightings to the forward workplan;

A discussion paper and project document from the United States on a Guidelines for the Control of Nontyphoidal Salmonella spp. in Beef and Pork Meat;

A discussion paper and project document from Australia on Guidelines on the Application of General Principles of Food Hygiene to the Control of Foodborne Parasites; and

A discussion paper from Brazil on the revision of the Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables and its annexes (which was not addressed as new work, since, at this time, it is editorial in nature).

The working group meeting resulted in four recommendations, which were considered by the Committee, with the following decisions:

Recommendation for new work on Salmonella in beef and pork: The Working Group recommended that CCFH proceed with new work on the development of Guidelines for the Control of Nontyphoidal Salmonella spp. in Beef and Pork Meat. CCFH agreed to take on this new work and forward the project document to the CAC for approval. The U.S. and Denmark agreed to co-chair an eWG.

Recommendation for new work on parasites: The Working Group recommended that CCFH proceed with new work on the development of Guidelines on the Application of General Principles of Food Hygiene to the Control of Foodborne Parasites. CCFH



agreed to take on this new work and forward the project document to the CAC for approval. Japan and Canada agreed to co-chair physical and electronic working groups

Provisional Forward Workplan: The Working Group recommended that the Committee accept the revised Forward Workplan. The Committee agreed to the Forward Workplan.

Process by which CCFH will undertake work: The Working Group recommended that the Process by which the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH) Will Undertake its Work be revised. The revisions address the criteria and weighting values to be applied on a provisional basis to the consideration of new work proposals and the Forward Workplan for the next Session of CCFH. The Committee agreed that next year's Working Group on CCFH Work Priorities should apply the criteria and weighting values on an experimental basis when considering new work proposals and to update the Forward Workplan.

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. The U.S. agreed to chair this Working Group next year with the assistance of Peru.

NEXT SESSION OF CCFH

The 46th Session of CCFH is tentatively set for November 17-21, 2014 in Lima, Peru.