

**48th SESSION OF THE
CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD HYGIENE**

**07-11 NOVEMBER 2016
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, USA**

INDIAN DELEGATION REPORT

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- i. The 48th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH) and related meetings were held during 07-11 November 2016 in Los Angeles, California, USA. The Session was attended by delegates representing 48 member countries, a member organization and 8 international organizations.
- ii. The Committee had 10 agenda items, including two draft standards at Step 4 of the Codex Step Procedure for elaboration of standards (*Codex Step Procedure is explained briefly in the Annex*), for discussion during the Session.

Based on the discussions on the relevant agenda items, the Committee took following important decisions:

- Endorsed the following food hygiene related texts submitted to it by other Codex Committees:
 - Revised ‘Date marking’ provision in the General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods (CODEX STAN 1-1985); and,
 - Regional Code of Hygienic Practice for Street-Vended Foods in Asia.
- Established an electronic working group (hosted by United Kingdom and co-hosted by France, Ghana, India, Mexico and United States of America) to continue revision of the General Principles of Food Hygiene /GMP/ HACCP document, in light of the discussions at the current session of the Committee, for circulation at comments at Step 3. It also established a physical working group (chaired by United Kingdom and co-chaired France, Ghana, India, Mexico and United States of America) to be held in conjunction with the CCFH49 (November 2017; Chicago, US) to consider all the comments and prepare a revised proposal for consideration by the CCFH49 plenary; and,
- Forwarded the ‘Revised Code of Hygienic Practices for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables’ to the 40th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC), 2017 for final adoption at Steps 5/8;
- The Committee agreed to revise control guidance of the *Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products* for the “hazard of scombrototoxin fish poisoning” for circulation for comments at Step 3. The revision would be undertaken by an electronic working group hosted by Japan and co-hosted by USA.

- Requested FAO/WHO to provide scientific advice on issues related to the agenda items for the Committee, including but not limited to guidance on water quality in the context of relevant Codex texts.
 - Amended the forward work plan and agreed to re-consider the prioritization approach at its next session;
- iii. The 49th Session of the CCFH is tentatively scheduled during 13-17 November 2017 in Chicago, Illinois, USA.

2. INTRODUCTION

The Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH) held its 48th Session in Los Angeles, California, USA during 07-11 November 2016.

Dr Emilio Esteban, of the United States of America, chaired the CCFH Session. The Session was attended by delegates representing 48 member countries, a member organization and 08 international organizations including FAO and WHO.

The Indian delegation included the following six members:

- Dr A Jayathilak, Spices Board of India (*Leader of the Delegation*)
- Shri S Bakshi, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India
- Ms Praveen Gangahar, Quality Council of India
- Shri Aditya Jain, National Dairy Development Board
- Shri S S Shaji, Marine products Export Development Authority
- Ms. Simi Unnikrishnan, Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority



Indian delegation

(L-R: Ms Simi Unnikrishnan, Ms Praveen Gangahar, Mr S S Shaji, Dr A Jayathilak, Mr Sunil Bakshi and Mr Aditya Jain)

The CCFH session was preceded by the following three meetings on 6 November 2016 (Sunday):

- Meeting of the Chairs (France, Chile, Ghana, India and USA) of the working group on revision of the *General Principles of Food Hygiene* and its HACCP Annex with the Chair of the CCFH;
- Meeting of the delegations of the members of the FAO/WHO Regional Coordination Committee for Asia (CCASIA) with the delegation of the USA; and,
- Meeting of the delegations of the members of the CCASIA; the meeting was chaired by India.

All the above meetings, and an additional meeting of CCASIA members on 8 November 2016, were attended by the members in the Indian delegation as appropriate.

3. IMPORTANT PROCEEDINGS

3.1 Matters Referred by the Codex Alimentarius Commission and/or Other Codex Subsidiary Bodies to the Food Hygiene Committee (Agenda Item 2)

(i) Revision of the General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods (CODEX STAN 1-1985): Date Marking

The Committee noted that the safety and quality of foods were always dependent on the storage conditions and therefore proposed the following revised text for consideration by the Codex Committee on Food Labelling as criteria for exempting foods from date marking:

“Where safety is not compromised and quality does not deteriorate because the preservative nature of the food is such that it cannot support microbial growth (e.g. alcohol, salt, acidity, low water activity) under stated storage conditions.”

(ii) Proposed Draft Regional Code of Hygienic Practice for Street-Vended Foods in Asia

The Committee endorsed the hygienic provisions of the Proposed Draft Regional Code of Hygienic Practice for Street-Vended Foods in Asia and recommended CAC40 to consider modifications to include the following:

- When the use of gloves is necessary, they should be disposable and clean;
- When washing raw meat/poultry, caution should be taken to prevent cross contamination of other foods; and,
- Frozen food should be thawed only once and used for food preparation immediately after thawing.

3.2 Revision of the General Principles of Food Hygiene (CAC/RCP 1-1969) and its HACCP Annex (Agenda Item 4)

The agenda was discussed in the plenary, followed with discussions in an in-session working group. The recommendations of the in-session working group were presented back to the plenary for further discussions:

(i) **Plenary:** France as chair of the Electronic Working Group (co-chaired by Chile, Ghana, India and USA) presented the document prepared by the EWG outlining its 3-part structure and detailing of the first part 'Introduction' with some new concepts. The plenary opened the discussion on this agenda and generally agreed that the document will have three parts – Introduction, Good Hygienic Practices (GHP) and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) System. The Committee noted, among others, the following points made during the discussions:

- Revision should keep in view the fact that GHP can be applied stand alone and HACCP is applied only where necessary;
- Revision should also address control measures which do not have a critical limit; and
- Revision should clarify in the 'Introduction' the relationship between GHP and HACCP and links to other codes of practice;

Noting that a large number of comments had been received, the plenary decided to convene an in-session working group to consider the comments and decided the terms of reference for the same.

(ii) **In-session working group:** The in-session working group (chaired by USA and co-chaired by France, India and Mexico) discussed the document and generally agreed, among others, on the following points concerning relationship between GHP and HACCP:

- GHP lay the foundation for producing safe and suitable food. In circumstances where specific control of hazards is required, HACCP should be implemented;
- GHP should always be implemented in any operating food business;
- GHP can be stand-alone food hygiene measures or as programs prerequisite to HACCP;
- HACCP is a systematic approach that aims to ensure food safety by improving the control of hazards, where necessary, over that achieved by the GHP; and,
- HACCP may not be applicable to all types of food businesses, in particular at the stages of primary production. However, the principles of HACCP can be applied to certain activities related to primary production

The working group also discussed the issue of two types of control measures - control measures applied at Critical Control Points (CCPs) as currently defined and those that are challenging with respect to monitoring (where measurement, critical limit and/or timeliness of monitoring is not available). Existence of two types of control measures was generally recognized and it was noted that the second type of control measures were addressed differently by countries - some consider them as enhanced GHP while other address them as Operational Pre-Requisite Programmes (OPRP) as defined in ISO 22000.

The in-session working group presented its recommendations to the plenary and proposed that the Committee establish an electronic working group (EWG) to continue the revision of the document. It also proposed that the Committee convene a physical working group (PWG) in conjunction with its next session.

(iii) Plenary: The Committee agreed as follows:

- To establish an EWG, hosted by the United Kingdom and co-hosted by France, Ghana, India, Mexico and United States of America, working in English, French and Spanish to:
 - Revise the ‘Introduction’ and to undertake the revision of the second and third parts in parallel for circulation for comments at Step 3; and,
 - Consider if aspects on commitment and responsibility on food safety, including food safety culture, should be incorporated.
- To convene a PWG, chaired by the United Kingdom and co-chaired by France, Ghana, India, Mexico and United States of America, to be held in conjunction with 49th session of the CCFH to consider all comments received and to prepare a revised proposal for consideration by the plenary.

3.3 Proposed Draft Revision of the *Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables* (CAC/RCP 53-2003) (Agenda Item 5)

The Committee considered the revised proposed draft section by section, noted comments, made editorial corrections and amendments both for purposes of clarity and to provide greater flexibility in the text, and took.

India’s concerns on some parts of the document were also suitably addressed. Specifically, in the scope of Annex on ‘Fresh Leafy Vegetables’ the Committee agreed to include examples of other products such as betel leaf (*Piper betle*), curry leaf (*Murrayakoenigii*), fenugreek leaves, Colocasia which were important from India’s export point of view. Further, in the main document a ‘written training programme’ was specified for growers and packers which would not have been feasible for implementation in Indian situation as the growers are largely not literate. On our

intervention, the same was changed to ‘documented training programme’ for growers and packers that is routinely reviewed and updated.”

The Committee forwarded the proposed draft revision of the *Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables* (CAC/RCP 53-2003) to CAC40 for adoption at Step 5/8.

3.4 Proposed draft guidance on histamine control and sampling plans for histamine (Agenda Item 6):

The Committee considered the report of the EWG, led by Japan and USA, and the recommendations therein.

The Committee took the following decisions:

- a. To develop separate guidance on histamine control and to decide at a later stage on the final format in the *Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products* (CAC/RCP 52-2003)
- b. To include a simplified table in the draft guidance with listing of fish species associated with histamine formation using only the scientific name. This would be largely based on the Table 2.3 of the report of *Joint FAO/WHO Expert Meeting on the Public Health Risks of Histamine and other Biogenic Amines from Fish and Fishery Products* (July 2012) which i) aimed at providing the most comprehensive list of fish species associated with “scombrototoxin fish poisoning” (SFP) or high levels of free histidine (the precursor to histamine), and ii) had been developed as part of the hazard identification step of the risk assessment.

Inclusion of fish of the Salmonidae family in the table of the guidance document was not supported by some delegations in view of the fact the data relevant to Salmonidae were limited, the levels of histamine in implicated salmon were very low and no report on SFP illnesses linked to salmon consumption had been published for more than 20 years. Yet some other delegations were in favour of the inclusion of Salmonidae family in the table on the basis of precautionary principle as the same had been listed in the report of *Joint FAO/WHO Expert Meeting* on the basis of reported scombrototoxicosis-like illness.

The Committee agreed, as a compromise, to request FAO/WHO to conduct a literature review on histamine related illness in Salmonidae, and provide this to the EWG for its consideration on inclusion of Salmonidae in the list.

- c. To establish an EWG, hosted by Japan and co-hosted by the United States of America, working in English with the following terms of reference: (a) revise control guidance of the Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products for the “hazard of scombrototoxin fish poisoning”, using histamine as the marker biogenic amine for control, and using a GHP and HACCP-based approach for circulation for comments at Step 3, (b) ensure that the guidance covers the entire food chain (harvesting, storage, handling, processing, and distribution), (c) Include, where appropriate, scientific information about histamine formation with the purpose of informing on the importance of time/temperature controls (e) consider if any products covered by the *Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products* need specialized or revised control guidance (f) consider the inclusion of Salmonidae in the list of susceptible species based on the FAO/WHO literature review.

The committee agreed to inform CCEXEC72 and CAC40 about its agreement with the original timeline for completion of this work, i.e. adoption at Step 5 in 2018 and adoption at Step 8 in 2020.

3.5 Other matters (Agenda Item 8) - Water Quality

The Committee requested FAO/WHO to provide guidance for those scenarios where the use of clean water was indicated in Codex texts, in particular, irrigation water, clean seawater, and on the safe re-use of processing water.

The Representative of FAO noted that it would not be possible to address all scenarios in Codex texts, but the work could focus on a few representative examples.

3.6 Date and Place of Next Session (Agenda item 9)

The Committee agreed to tentatively schedule its 49th Session during 13-17 November 2017 in Chicago, USA.

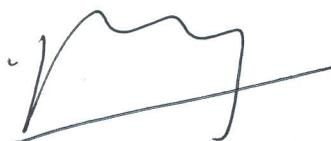
4. OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

- **Revision of the General Principles of Food Hygiene (CAC/RCP 1-1969) and its HACCP Annex:** This is a very important document and revisions to it will impact the entire food industry. Looking to the importance of the document, India has agreed to co-chair the working groups established by the Committee for its revision.

India's comments and interventions on the document were primarily focused on the role of GHPs in ensuring not only food hygiene but also food safety in various situations. It has been adequately emphasized by the delegation of India during the discussions in this session that the revision of the document should keep in view the fact that GHPs can be applied stand alone and HACCP is applied only where necessary; and that GHPs are called 'pre-requisites' only when referred to in the context of application of HACCP system.

India should now continue to remain vigilantly involved during the revision of the document to ensure that revisions to the document are in line with the stated position of the country.

- India may support adoption of the standards forwarded by the CCFH to the 40th Session of the CAC (2017) for final adoption.



1. Dr. Jayathilak
Chairman, Spices Board & MPEDA



2. S S Shaji
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MPEDA

20.12.2016