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SECOND JOINT FAO/WHO CONFERENCE ON
FOOD ADDITIVES
Rome, 24-25 June 1963
Report



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INTRODUCTION

History

1. The First Joint FAO/WHO Conference on Food Additives met in Geneva from 19 to 22 September 1955.¹ The Conference considered the advantages that could be derived from international action in this field and discussed the possible means whereby FAO and WHO might jointly proceed.
2. The Conference formulated and recommended to the two Organizations a program of work to meet urgent needs in the field of food additives.
3. This program has been carried out in two lines of activities:
 - (a) By collecting and disseminating information on legislation concerning the food additives and their control. This was done by issuing, since 1956, a periodical under the title of "Current Food Additives Legislation" (CFAL). This periodical gives the changes in food legislation concerning food additives in the various countries. In addition, a series of monographs under the title of "Food Additive Control", inaugurated in 1958, describe national systems for regulating the manufacture and use of food additives. This series, so far, covers Canada, U.K., Netherlands, Australia, Denmark and France. The monograph dealing with West Germany is in the process of editing and printing.
 - (b) By convening the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives to sessions on specific phases of the food additives problem. This Committee, which has been established at the recommendation of the First Conference on Food Additives, had its first meeting in 1956 and to this date held 7 sessions. It has established the principles for the use of food additives;² has reviewed the methods for establishing the safety for the use of food additives and made recommendations in this respect;³ has considered the carcinogenic hazards involved in the use of food additives;⁴ has drafted specifications for

¹ FAO Nutrition Meetings Report Series, 1956, No.11; World Health Organization technical Report Series, 1956, 107

² FAO Nutrition Meetings Report Series, 1957, No.15; World Health Organization technical Report Series, 1957, 129

³ FAO Nutrition Meetings Report Series, 1958, No.17; World Health Organization technical Report Series, 1958, 144

⁴ FAO Nutrition Meetings Report Series, 1961, No.29; World Health Organization technical Report Series, 1961, 220

antimicrobial preservatives and antioxidants,⁵ food colors,⁶ emulsifiers, stabilizers, bleaching and maturing agents; has evaluated the toxicity and established acceptable daily intake levels for the aforementioned groups of food additives with the exception of food colors.⁷

Terms of reference

4. The Second Conference on Food Additives has convened to
 - (a) review the work of the two Organizations, in particular that of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives;
 - (b) consider the future program on food additives;
 - (c) discuss the Committee's relationship with and contribution to the new Joint FAO/WHO program on Food Standards

ORGANIZATION OF THE CONFERENCE

5. The Conference met in Rome on 24 and 25 June 1963. Delegates were sent by the following countries: Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Israel, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Poland, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States of America. The following Organizations were also represented by observers: European Council of Codex Alimentarius, European Economic Commission (EEC), Industrial Union of the EEC: Agricultural and Food Industries Commission (UNICE), International Commission for Agricultural Industries (CIAA), International Federation of Margarine Associations (IFMA), International Liaison for the Food Industries (LIDIA), International Union of Pure Applied Chemistry (IUPAC), Liaison Committee for Mediterranean Citrus Fruit Culture (CLAM), Permanent Council International Stresa Convention for Cheeses (PCSC), Permanent International Bureau of Analytic Chemistry (PIBAC), Permanent International Committee on Canned Foods, (CIPC), Scandinavian Committee for Food Analysis (NMKL).

⁵ Specifications for Identity and Purity of Food Additives, Vol.I, Antimicrobial Preservatives and Antioxidants

⁶ Specifications for Identity and Purity of Food Additives, Vol.II, Food Colors

⁷ FAO Nutrition Meetings Report Series, 1962, No.31; World Health Organization technical Report Series, 1962, 228

6. The Conference elected Dr. R.A. Chapman (Canada) as Chairman and Mr. R. Souverain (France) as Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur. Members of the staff of FAO and WHO acted as Technical Secretaries.

REVIEW OF WORK ACCOMPLISHED

7. The Conference took note of the activities of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives and of the activities of the Joint FAO/WHO Secretariat in collecting and disseminating information regarding legislation on food additives in member countries (CFAL and Food Additive Control Series).

8. The Conference commended the Expert Committee for the work accomplished by its seven meetings and for the reports emanating from these meetings.

9. The Conference discussed the procedure by which the expert members of the Committee are selected and the procedures through which the Committee is functioning. The Conference agreed with the procedures used and recommended that they be followed for the future meetings.

10. The Conference noted that considerable delay has been experienced in publishing certain reports of the Expert Committee. It also observed that the second printings of the monographs of the Food Additive Control Series have been done without bringing the monographs up to date. It expressed the view that the monographs should be brought up to date before reprinting and urged the Director-General of FAO to find the means to do this.

11. It has been suggested that the possible coordination of the publishing of the Current Food Additives Legislation (CFAL) with the work of other journals covering this same field should be explored. It was also felt that the filing of the CFAL abstracts would be facilitated by printing the text on one side of the paper only. At the present, such printing is used only for copies for the paying subscribers, whereas copies for free distribution are printed on both sides.

12. The Conference considered that the work of the Expert Committee concerning specifications and evaluation of toxicological data on food additives was of basic importance and delegates pointed out that positive lists of additives should emerge from such work.

13. Certain delegates noted that the program has not included methods for the detection and quantitative determination of food additives in foodstuffs. The Conference was informed by the Secretariat that other international organizations are active in this particular field and therefore such an undertaking by FAO/WHO would

not be justified. The work of those other international organizations would be utilized by the new FAO/WHO Food Standards Program.

SCOPE OF THE PROGRAM

14. The Conference felt that the scope of the program carried out so far being limited only to "non-nutritive substances which are added intentionally to food, generally in small quantities, to improve its appearance, flavor, texture or storage properties"¹ was too narrow. The Conference considered that the scope of the future program on Food Additives should cover intentional additives with the exception of substances which are added exclusively for their nutritive properties. The program should also cover substances unintentionally introduced to human food, including:

- (a) animal feed adjuncts which may result in residues in human food, and
- (b) components of packaging materials which may find their way into foods.

15. Pesticide residues and radioactive contaminants of foods are being dealt with in separate FAO/WHO programs and therefore are not included at this time in the future scope of the work on food additives.

FUTURE PROGRAM

16. The Conference felt that the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives should complete the mandate given by the First Conference. This work should include the following activities:

- (a) To convene the Eighth meeting of the Joint Expert Committee in 1964 to discuss and evaluate data on the toxicity of food colors for which specifications for identity and purity were prepared at the Fourth meeting. The meeting should use this opportunity to revise, if needed, specifications of identity and purity and consider new food colors which have come into general use since the previous meetings.

¹ FAO Nutrition Meetings Report Series, 1955, No.9, p.30; World Health Organization technical Report Series, 1955, 27, 30

(b) To convene the Ninth meeting in 1965 to prepare specifications for the additives already evaluated from the toxicological point of view at the Sixth meeting. It should also deal with new additives of the groups covered in previous meetings. Finally it should revise if needed the toxicological evaluation of all additives considered in previous meetings of the Expert Committee.

17. In line with the enlarged scope of the program as recommended by the Conference (see para. 14 and 15), future work of the Expert Committee should cover intentional additives as well as animal feed adjuncts which may result in residues in human food and components of packaging materials which may find their way into foods. The Conference agreed that subjects for future study by expert committees should be selected from the following groups:

- (a) Intentional additives including acids, bases, buffers, anticaking agents, release agents, glazes, humectants, sequestrants, propellants, carriers, and non-nutritive sweetening agents.
- (b) Flavoring preparations.
- (c) Components of packaging materials.
- (d) Animal feed adjuncts.

18. Priorities assigned to these studies should be based on the data available to the two Organizations and on research investigations underway in a particular field at the time the meeting of the Expert Committee is contemplated.

19. The Conference also recommended that a further Expert Committee be convened to review the procedures for the testing of food additives to establish their safety for use as described in the Second and Fifth Reports. This revision should be carried out at such a time when developments in toxicological methods justify such action.

RELATION WITH AND CONTRIBUTION OF THE EXPERT COMMITTEE TO THE WORK OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

20. In view of the newly established Joint FAO/WHO Program on Food Standards, the Conference wished to define the appropriate link between the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives and the Joint FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission, the principal organ of the Food Standards Program.

21. The Conference felt that the Expert Committee, which is a purely technical committee of specialists acting in their individual

capacity, should serve as the advisory body to the Codex Alimentarius Commission on all scientific matters concerning food additives.

22. The Expert Committee will continue therefore to prepare standards of identity and purity for food additives as well as to recommend acceptable maximum daily intake levels. Its findings will then be considered by the Codex Commission.

RECOMMENDATIONS

23. FAO/WHO are urged to stimulate and coordinate the biological testing of food additives and research on the development of more specific and rapid methods for determining the toxicity of these chemicals.

24. Governments are urged to create adequate facilities for the biological testing of food additives and for the training of toxicologists in this field.

25. FAO/WHO should use all means to keep governments and industries informed on the agenda and the compounds which will be considered at a meeting of the Expert Committee. This should be done well in advance to enable governments and industries to suggest additional additives for possible consideration and to permit them to organize and submit unpublished data for the use of the Expert Committee.

Annex

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Delegates of countries:

Australia

- Dr. Frederick A.S. Jensen, Medical Director, Australian Migration Office, Australian Embassy, Rome
- Mr. J.F. Kefford, Senior Principal, Research Officer, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization, P.O. Box 43, Ryde, New South Wales

Austria

- Dr. Herbert Woidich, Chemist, Wien XIX, Blasstr. 29

Canada

- Dr. Ross A. Chapman, Assistant Director, Scientific Services, Food and Drug Directorate, Department of National Health and Welfare, Tunney's Pasture, Ottawa
- Mr. Henry V. Dempsey, Director, Inspection Service, Department of Fisheries, Ottawa

Denmark

- Mr. Niels J. Blom-Hanssen, Head of Division, Ministry of Interior, Copenhagen
- Mr. Viggo Enggaard, Assistant Director, Meat Product Laboratory, Landbohoj skolen, Bülowsvej 13, Copenhagen V
- Mr. Anders Herløw, Director Chemical Engineering, Akts. Grindstøllværket, Vestre Kongerej 30, Viby J.
- Mr. P.H. Hjorth Hansen, Legal Adviser of the Federation of Danish Industries, H.C. Andersens Boulevard 18, Copenhagen V
- Mr. Poul Fr. Jensen, Director, Danish Ministry of Fisheries, Inspection Service for Fish Products, Gøthersgade 2, Copenhagen

France

- Mr. Germaine Moreau, Administrateur Civil, Chef de Service, Ministère Santé Publique, 18 rue de Tilsitt, Paris 17^e
- Mr. Raymond Souverain, Inspecteur divisionnaire de la Répression des Fraudes, 42 bis, Rue de Bourgogne, Paris VII^e

Germany

Dr. H.W. Walther Fachmann, Rapporteur, Federal Ministry of Nutrition, Agriculture and Forestry, Bonn 12

Mr. Edmund Forschbach, Ministerial Director, Bad Godesberg, Michaelshof

Mr. Günter Klein, Lawyer, Bonn, Am Hofgarten 16

Israel

Prof. Dr. Gideon Zimmermann, Department of Food and Biotechnology, Technion, Israel Institute of Technology, Haifa

Italy

Dr. Carlo Bessler, Medico Provinciale Capo, Ministero Sanità, Rome

Dr. Riccardo Monacelli, Chimico, Istituto Superiore Sanità, Rome

Prof. Dr. Francesco Muntoni, Istituto Superiore Sanità, Rome

Mr. Achille Paiella, Ispettore Capo, Ministero Agricoltura e Foreste, Rome

Dr. Anna Maria Rimoaldi, Ecologo Principale, Ministero Agricoltura e Foreste, Rome

Japan

Dr. Kinji Toyoda, Food Scientist, Kasumigasaki, Chyoda-ku, Tokyo

Luxembourg

Mr. Henri Krombach, Chemical Engineer, Laboratoire de l'Etat à Luxembourg

Netherlands

Prof. M.J.L. Dols, Cabinet Adviser to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, The Hague

Mr. Alexander Kruijsse, Director in Chief of Public Health, (Foodstuffs Division), Houtrustlaan 10, The Hague

New Zealand

Mr. James John Walker, St. Olaf House, Tooley Street, London S.E.1 England

Nicaragua

Mr. Eduardo Arguello Cervantes, Ambassador of Nicaragua in Italy, Via P. Tacchini 31, Rome

Nicaragua

Mr. José Luis Gotor, Secretary, Embassy of Nicaragua, Rome

Norway

Mrs. Grete Hoyer, Chief of Section, Public Health Service of Norway, The Ministry of Social Affairs, Oslo

Poland

Mr. Stanislaw Krauze, Professor of the Faculty of Pharmacy, President of the National Committee for the Codex Alimentarius, 25 Przemyslowa str., Warsaw

Mr. Jan H. Zaleski, Department for Analysis of Food and Objects of Common Use, The State Institute of Hygiene, 24 Chocimska str., Warsaw

South Africa

Mr. L.H. Clark, Professional Officer, Department of Agriculture, South African Embassy, London

Spain

Mr. Guillermo Escardó, Agricultural Attaché, Embassy of Spain in Italy, Rome

Sweden

Dr. Ernst Abramson, Professor, National Institute of Public Health, Stockholm 60

Dr. Alfred Hugo Fredholm, University Teacher, Sveriges Slakteriförbund, Stockholm

Switzerland

Dr. Francis Ackermann, Chemical Engineer, Member of the National Committee, Neuchâtel

Dr. Pierre Georges Borgeaud, Scientist, Afico S.A. Tour-De-France

Dr. Otto Høgl, Professor of the University of Berne, President of the Council of the Codex Alimentarius Europaeus, Taubenstr.18, Berne

Thailand

Mr. Yos Bunnag, Deputy Director-General, Department of Science, Ministry of Industry, Rama VI Road, Bangkok

Turkey

Dr. Mustafa Bağdurak, Veterinary, Direction Général des Affaires
Vétérinaires auprès du Ministère de l'Agriculture

Prof. Dr. Sait Tekeli, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Ankara

United Kingdom

Mr. Graham Oswald Kermode, Principal, Food Standards Division,
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Great Westminster
House, Horseferry Road, London S.W.1

Mr. George Oswald Lace, Assistant Secretary, Food Standards
Division, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Great
Westminster House, Horseferry Road, London S.W.1

United States of America

Mr. John L. Harvey, Food and Drug Administration, Washington D.C.

Mr. Nathan Koenig, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington 15,
D.C.

Mr. Gerald W. Sheldon, Agricultural Economist, Foreign Agricul-
tural Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington 25,
D.C.

Observers:

South Africa

Mr. B.H. Swart, Commercial Secretary, South African Embassy, Rome

United States of America

Mr. Clinton L. Brooke, Miller National Federation, National Press
Building, Washington 4, D.C.

Mr. Harry Meisel, Corn Products International, 717-5th Ave., New
York City

Mr. Michael F. Markel, 522 Munsey Building, Washington 4, D.C.

European Council of Codex Alimentarius

Mr. Pierre E. Bolle, Presidential Secretary of the Codex Alimen-
tarius, Taubenstr. 18, Berne

European Economic Commission (EEC)

Dr. Sergio Ventura, Lawyer, 12 Avenue de Broqueville, Direction
Générale de l'Agriculture, Bruxelles

Industrial Union of the EEC: Agricultural and Food Industries
Commission (UIICE)

Mr. Georges Jumel, Chemical Engineer, 3 rue de Logelbach, Paris 17^e
Mr. Maurice Loubaud, 4 rue Ravenstein, Bruxelles

International Commission for Agricultural Industries (CIA)

Mr. R. Braconnier, President of the Organization, 18 Avenue de
Villars, Paris VII^e
Mr. H.F. Dupont, Secretary General, 18 Avenue de Villars, Paris VII^e

International Federation of Margarine Associations (IFMA)

Mr. Arthur Bakker, President, Raamweg 44, The Hague
Dr. Hohan Piet Klaas van der Steur, Rochussenstraat 49c, Rotterdam
Dr. Bodo Tolkmitt, Hamburg-Blankenese, Ferdinands HSh 9, Germany

International Liaison for the Food Industries (LIDIA) and
Permanent International Committee on Canned Foods (CIPC)

Mr. Georges Jumel, Chemical Engineer, 3 rue de Logelbach, Paris 17^e

International Union of Pure Applied Chemistry (IUPAC)

Dr. Rudolf Morf, Basel 2

Liaison Committee for Mediterranean Citrus Fruit Culture (CLAM)

Mr. I. Mitrani, Director, Bet Hanan, Israel

Permanent Council International Stresa Convention for Cheeses (PCSC)

Miss Francesca Zafarana, Assistant Secretary, National Italian FAO
Committee, c/o Ministry of Agriculture, Rome

Permanent International Bureau of Analytic Chemistry (PIBAC)

Mr. H.F. Dupont, Secretary-General, 18 Avenue de Villars, Paris VII^e

Scandinavian Committee for Food Analysis (SKKL)

Mr. Jørgen Bielefeldt, Njalsgade 15, Copenhagen

Secretariat:

Dr. Claus Agthe, WHO, Scientist (Food Additives), Health Laboratory
Methods Section

Dr. G.D. Kapsiotis, FAO, Food Technologist, Nutrition Division

In attendance:

Dr. Z.I. Kertesz, Chief, Food Science and Technology Branch, FAO

Mr. F.H. Townshend, Officer in Charge, Food Standards Program, FAO

Dr. S.C. Hansen, Assistant Officer, Food Standards Program, FAO

Mr. E.S. Abensour, Chief, Legislation Research Branch, FAO