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## ANALYSIS OF AGENDA ITEMS IN PREPARATION FOR THE 16<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE CODEX COMMITTEE ON CONTAMINANTS IN FOOD (CCCF16)

*18 to 21 April 2023 (physical plenary meeting)*

*26 April 2023 (virtual report adoption)*

### AGENDA ITEM 6: CODE OF PRACTICE FOR PREVENTION AND REDUCTION OF MYCOTOXIN CONTAMINATION IN CASSAVA AND CASSAVA-BASED PRODUCTS (AT STEP 7)

#### OBJECTIVES

This document offers a review and analysis of the agenda items planned for discussion at the 16<sup>th</sup> session of the **Codex Committee on contaminants in Foods (CCCF16)**, scheduled to take place face to face from 18 to 21 April 2023 (physical plenary meeting) and 26 April 2023 (virtual report adoption). This document is intended for possible use by the Codex communities of practice, promoted by [GForSS](#) and [PARERA](#), as part of their contribution to enhancing awareness and supporting effective participation in international food standard setting meetings (Codex meetings) by representatives from members and observers.

The analysis provided in this document offers a factual review of agenda items, their background and a discussion of some considerations. This analysis is indicative in nature and does not represent an official position of the organizations mentioned above ([PARERA](#) and [GForSS](#)), their membership or their management. It provides a synthesis and analysis of the work currently under discussion by the CCCF, which may be useful for delegations from Arab countries to prepare their positions considering the needs and specificity of the region and the potential impact of the proposed food standards.

This analysis is prepared as part of the **Codex Initiative for the Arab Region: Arab Codex Initiative**, implemented by [PARERA](#) and [GForSS](#), hosted and coordinated by the [Arab Industrial Development, Standardization and Mining Organization \(AIDSMO\)](#) and funded by the US Codex Office, US Department of Agriculture.

*\*It is important to note that experts – members of the Expert Working Group (EWG) – do not represent the organizations and / or jurisdictions to which they are affiliated. The selection and participation in the EWG proceedings is based on each expert's own credentials and experience which should not be misconstrued as the country's / delegation's / organization's position to which they belong.*

## Agenda item 6: Code of Practice for prevention and reduction of mycotoxin contamination in cassava and cassava-based products at Step 7

### Documents

- ❖ CX/CF 23/16/6

### Background

- ❖ The health impact of aflatoxins and OTA in cassava and cassava-based products was considered by CCCF13 (2019) (CX/CF 19/13/14). Summary of data from a WTO/FAO/WHO supported regional total diet study involving four sub-Saharan African countries amongst others, showed that aflatoxins and OTA contamination in cassava is of public health concern and the most frequently occurring mycotoxins in cassava and cassava-based products are aflatoxins and ochratoxin A. Stored cassava and cassava-based products at processing or storage facilities are usually associated with pre-harvest and/or postharvest contamination of cassava and cassava-based products in regions having climate and soil conditions that permit both small or large scale cassava cultivation.
- ❖ At the CCCF14 (2021), the committee considered the discussion paper prepared by the Electronic Working Group (EWG). Nigeria, Chair of the EWG, highlighted that, based on the replies to the circular letters CL 2019/74-CF and CL 2020/51- CF, as well as data and information provided by members of the EWG on risk management measures available to contain mycotoxin contamination in cassava and cassava-based products.
- ❖ CCCF14 agreed with the development of the Code of Practice (COP) for prevention and reduction of mycotoxins contamination in cassava and cassava-based products, which was approved by CAC44 (2021).
- ❖ At the CCCF15, the Committee considered the CoP as presented by Nigeria, Chair of the EWG. The presentation covered summaries of the CoP highlighting its major focus for prevention or reduction of mycotoxins development in cassava and cassava-based products including the **stages at which risk control practices** should apply. It also emphasized **processing conditions required to prevent or reduce mycotoxin contamination**, critical parameters applicable to **farm selection, farm preparation, cassava variety selection**, planting to harvesting as well as **post-harvest activities** and preventive measures during transport and distribution.
- ❖ While there was a general support by CCCF15 for the CoP and its advancement to Step 5 for adoption by CAC45 (2022), the Committee sought for scope clarification in the CoP clearly stating that it aimed at cassava and cassava-based products **for human consumption** rather than animal feed since a large proportion of cassava in the international market was used for feed.
- ❖ CCCF15 advanced the Code of Practice for the Prevention and Reduction of Mycotoxin Contamination in Cassava and Cassava-Based Products to CAC45 for adoption at Step 5 and re-established the EWG, chaired by Nigeria and co-chaired by Ghana to further revise the CoP with a view to finalizing the document at CCCF16.

At the CAC45 (2022), the commission adopted the CoP at Step 5 and advanced it to Step 6 for comments and further consideration/ finalization by CCCF16

### Analysis

- ❖ The CoP aims to provide internationally harmonized risk management practices to Codex members and stakeholders for the prevention/reduction of aflatoxins and OTA contamination in cassava and cassava-based products to ensure public health and fair practices in trade. The CoP covers cassava and cassava-based products meant for human consumption and intends to provide national and local authorities, farmers, producers, manufacturers, distributors and other relevant bodies with information and guidance to aid in the prevention and reduction of mycotoxin in cassava and cassava-based products. This guidance covers: Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), Good Storage Practices (GSP) and Good Distribution Practices (GDP). This CoP provides science-based information for all countries to contemplate in their efforts to prevent and reduce mycotoxin contamination in cassava and cassava based products.

- ❖ The CoP provides current information on the required practices to control contamination of cassava and cassava fermented products with mycotoxins. Emphasis was made on the following:
  - Stages at which best practices should apply in the prevention or reduction of mycotoxins in cassava and cassava-based products.
  - The processing conditions required to prevent or reduce mycotoxin contamination.
  - Critical parameters which are applicable to be complied with, from farm selection, farm clearing, cassava variety selection, planting to harvesting as well as post-harvest activities.
  - Education and Personnel hygiene measures.
  - The identified storage conditions to prevent or reduce mycotoxins contamination.
  - Prevention or reduction measures during transport and distribution.
- ❖ The EWG adopted a workplan for itself featuring circulation of updated CoP reflecting the advice at CCCF15 (2022). This was followed by 2 rounds of comments by its members and a final distribution of the final revised CoP.

### Comments and Considerations

- ❖ The comments were received from Brazil, Canada, Chile, Egypt, EU, Iraq, Ghana, Kenya, Peru, Uganda, USA, ICUMSA, Republic of Korea, Thailand, and IAEA.
- ❖ The comments were generally supportive of progressing the advancement of the Code of Practice in the Codex Step Procedure. However, a member country advanced a contrary opinion to the progression of the CoP under two premises: that the CoP was putting more emphasis on general good agricultural practices at the expense of addressing specifically the reduction and prevention of mycotoxins; that similarly the proposed CoP offers more general information on food production practices and home use, rather than specific approached to the reduction of mycotoxin contamination.
- ❖ The suggestion of Thailand for the **inclusion of “for human consumption” in titling** the document **may be a useful clarification**, given that a large proportion of cassava in the international market may be used for feed and would include a different portion of the crop.
- ❖ **The suggestion by the EU to include Fumonisin** as part of most frequently occurring mycotoxins in cassava and cassava-based products. However, the EWG considered that Fumonisin could not be included as the report of scientific studies reported in discussion papers and information notes reflected that, though Fumonisin was isolated, its occurrence was not widespread on cassava products and the level of concentrations of Fumonisin were not considered to be of any significant threat or consequence to public health so it could not be included.
- ❖ **The suggestion by EU to include *Asparagillus minisclerotigenes*** was adopted and broadened as it has been reported in three countries of two continents and possibilities of its further isolation in other regions could not be ruled out.
- ❖ The suggestion by Uganda for reclassification of sweet cassava roots (HCN  $\leq$  50mg/kg) and bitter cassava (HCN  $\geq$  50) if included will be contrary to the current classification of cassava in Codex, which classify sweet cassava as (HCN  $\leq$  50 mg/kg) and bitter cassava (HCN  $\geq$  100 mg/kg) so it could not be included.

### Conclusion and Considerations for the Region

Cassava is a crop with an increasing consumption and production rate in the Arab region.

The Adoption of the Code of Practice for prevention and reduction of mycotoxin contamination in cassava and cassava-based products proposed by the Codex EWG could help ensure the safety and quality of these products for consumers in the Arab region.

It may be recommended that:

- ❖ Arab Codex delegations may consider supporting the adoption of this CoP at Step 8.
- ❖ Governments and industry stakeholders in the Arab region should establish a monitoring program for AFs and OTA in cassava and cassava-based products and assess their levels.