



November 2013— February 2014
Volume I, Issue III

Connect@CodexIndia

fssai

Food Safety and Standards Authority of India

CODEX 50
ALIMENTARIUS 1963-2013



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From the desk of National Codex Contact Point (NCCP)

As you read the third issue of the Connect@CodexIndia, a lot has happened. India had joined the select club of countries hosting Codex Committees when the setting up of Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH) was approved in the 36th Session of the CAC in July 2013. India hosted the first plenary session of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs at Kochi, Kerala from 11th to 14th February 2014. It was attended by 107 delegates from 40 countries and seven observer organisations. The Inaugural Session of CCSCH was attended by Shri Nikhil Kumar, Hon'ble Governor of Kerala, Shri Chandramouli, Chairperson, FSSAI, Shri J.S. Deepak, Additional Secretary, Department of Commerce, Government of India, Shri Dave, Chair, Codex Alimentarius Commission and Dr Bagchi, Regional Adviser, WHO. Dr. Jayathilak, Chairman, Spices Board welcomed the dignitaries to the inaugural session and the distinguished delegates to the first plenary session of CCSCH. It indeed was appropriate that the first Session of CCSCH was held in Kerala, the land of spices. You will read in greater detail about the first session of CCSCH in the current issue.

The National Codex Committee meeting was held on 24th December 2013 under the Chairmanship of Shri Chandramouli, Chairman, FSSAI. A number of important agenda



items were discussed during the meeting including the draft strategic plan

(2014-2019) of the National Codex Contact Point of India. Another important point which was highlighted during the meeting was pertaining to data. It was highlighted that for effective participation and for meaningful interventions in various Codex Committee, scientific data is a must. Building partnerships with various R&D Institutes will help in this work.

Increasing participation in various Codex Committee meetings and activities will go a long way in building capacities of various stakeholders in the country and also protecting the national interests. It is our endeavour through this Electronic Newsletter to keep you abreast

with the activities of the National Codex Contact Point of India and we would like to hear from you at

codex-india@nic.in.

Wishing Happy Reading with this edition too.

India's participation in the Codex Committee meetings during November 2013 -February 2014

Participation in the 35th session of Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (CCNFSDU)

A four member delegation from India including Dr. Sandhya Kabra, Director (QA/PA), from FSSAI had attended the 35th session of CCNFSDU held in Bad Soden am Taunus, Germany from 4th - 8th November, 2013. Amongst the various agenda points that were discussed, Agenda item 5 was of importance as India had proposed the draft amendment of the Standard for Processed Cereal- based foods for infants and young children (Codex Stan 74-1981) to include part B for underweight children. The agenda item was discussed in the meeting; after detailed deliberations the committee concluded that the proposed work needs reconsideration, further review and clarification of the scope. The Committee agreed to return the proposed draft amendment to step 2/3 for re-drafting, circulation at Step 3 and consideration at the next session.

Participation in the 45th session of Codex Committee on food Hygiene (CCFH)

A four member Indian delegation led by Dr. Meenakshi Singh, Scientist (S), FSSAI participated in the 45th session of CCFH held from 11-15 November 2013 in Ha Noi, Viet Nam. Important agenda items like **Proposed Code of hygienic practice for spices and dried aromatic herbs** and **Code of Hygienic Practice for Low Moisture Foods** were of concern to India as India had co-chaired and participated in their EWGs respectively. The committee in the



session discussed these two agenda items along with other Agenda's. The deliberations following the Agenda item **Proposed Code of hygienic practice for spices and dried aromatic herbs** were that the Committee agreed to **advance the proposed draft to Step 5/8 with the Omission of Steps 6 and 7, for adoption by the 37th Session of the Commission. For the Agenda Code of Hygienic Practice for Low Moisture Foods, the Committee agreed to return the proposed draft at Step 2 for redrafting by the EWG and circulation at Step 3 for the next session.**

In the session there were three new work proposals, out of which one was proposed by United States on **Guidelines for the Control of Nontyphoidal *Salmonella* spp. in Beef and Pork Meat**, **Guidelines on the Application of General Principles of Food Hygiene to the Control of Foodborne Parasites** was proposed by Japan and **Revision of the *General Principles of Food Hygiene*** and the Annex on HACCP proposed by Finland.

Participation in the 18th session of Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (CCFFV)

A four member delegation led by Dr Malhotra, Horticulture Commissioner, Department of Agriculture participated in the 18th Session of CCFFV



held in Phuket, Thailand from 24th to 28th February 2014. It was an important session from India's perspective as the draft standards for Okra prepared by a EWG led by India were approved for forwarding to the 37th session of CAC. The work proposal on Ware Potato submitted by India at the last session of CCFFV was considered after extensive discussions in the plenary session. India has also proposed new work on Aubergine in the current session and also proposed new work on fresh dates, for which proposal has to be submitted in the next session.

Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (11th to 14th February 2014): Global convergence of spices and herb regulators



Dr. P.S. Sreekantan Thampi
Organising Secretary,
CCSCH &
Deputy Director, Spices
Board India

A global convergence for spices and herbs under the ambit of Food and Agricultural Organization and the World Health Organization is the first of its kind that could happen. Befitting it is to have this happen in the spice scented Malabar Coast of the spice country of India in February 2014, where the world history of spices has its many references.

Term it as a global parliament for spices and herbs, the terminology is not an exaggeration to describe the international importance of the newly constituted Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH) hosted by India with many firsts to its credit. It was in July 2013 that the 36th session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission accorded its approval to the Indian proposal to constitute the CCSCH which turned out to be a gift on the Commission's 50th Birthday celebrations. CCSCH came into reality with the terms of reference: to elaborate worldwide standards for spices and culinary herbs in their dried and dehydrated state in whole, ground and cracked or crushed form; to consult, as necessary, with other international organizations in the standards

development process to avoid duplication.

The successful culmination of the proceedings of the first session of the newly constituted Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs hosted by India has many unique features. In just seven months after the formal approval, the Committee could settle down to start deliberating business bringing to its fold 107 delegates from 40 countries and seven observer organizations. The approval for the committee obtained at the 36th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission

has instantly triggered the organizing activities to convene its first session in record time. The Secretariat of the CCSCH

operating from the Spices Board could rope in the participation of many countries from far and wide, of course in close liaison with the Codex Secretariat in Rome and the National Codex Contact Point of India in FSSAI.

CCSCH is the youngest of the lot of 16 commodity committees of the Codex Alimentarius Commission; though only six



are active at present. At the first session itself, overwhelming participation with creative inputs from member countries was discernible as eight new work proposals for various spices got registered. The Delegation of the United States of America, as Chair of the in-session Working Group, deliberated and introduced the report of the in-session Working Group on prioritization of proposals for new work. The Working Group had considered eight project documents proposing new work: on oregano (Argentina), paprika (Argentina), pepper (India, United States of America and Indonesia), rosemary (India), cumin (India), thyme (India), saffron (Iran) and nutmeg (Indonesia).

The Committee ultimately came to a conclusion in taking up work of spices with identified responsibilities subject to approval by the 37th session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission in July 2014. The task of preparing a draft Standard for **Black, White and Green Pepper** for circulation for comments at Step 3 has been delegated to an Electronic Working Group, led by India and co-chaired by Cameroon and Indonesia. The draft standard for **Cumin** will be taken care of by another Electronic Working Group chaired by the European Union and co-chaired by India. Argentina will chair the Electronic Working Group for **Oregano** with the support of Greece as its co-chair. **Thyme** will be considered by an Electronic Working Group led by European Union and co-chaired

Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (11th to 14th February 2014): Global convergence of spices and herb regulators

by Cameroon and Indonesia. The draft standard for **Cumin** will be taken care of by another Electronic Working Group chaired by the European Union and co-chaired by India. Argentina will chair the Electronic Working Group for **Oregano** with the support of Greece as its co-chair. **Thyme** will be considered by an Electronic Working Group led by European Union and co-chaired by Switzerland.

India will again be chairing the Electronic Working Group to evolve a discussion paper on grouping of spices and culinary herbs.

The spirit and stature of the first session indicates the possible influx of very serious and relevant proposals for many of the spices and culinary herbs. References from General Subject Committees and interventions from international organizations relevant to the work of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs will result in uploading more genuine tasks in the coming sessions. The presence of regulators and administrators of quality laws could generate enough of academic information and scientific data on crops, standards and quality.

With India hosting CCSCH, a culture of quality has started pervading the Indian spices sector. True to the cardinal principles of Codex Alimentarius Commission, the world's single anchoring platform for all matters relating to quality food, CCSCH has started sending waves of positive signals to all the spices and herb producing countries on the basics to evolve harmonization in standards to ensure fair practices in trade besides ensuring safety of consumers.

The Spices Board India, the organization which is housing the Secretariat of the CCSCH, has become a vital part in the total exercise of harmonizing standards alongside the international stakeholders and more so with the Indian constituents. The onward march in organizing future sessions of the CCSCH will bring closer association for transparent business in evolving standards and coming to science based conclusions to set them to realize the objectives of the Committee in the larger interest of the world.

Back at home in India, CCSCH activities has forged a united working alliance with a whole lot of organizations in the country; from research to extension, from processing to marketing, from promotion to standard setting, and from adherence to conformities. Alongside the hospitality role, the first session of the CCSCH paved the way for serving a visual feast of the Indian spice chest bringing forth the colours and contours of Indian specialties.

UPCOMING EVENTS
(March 2014 to June 2014)

1. 35th Session of Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling (CCMAS), 3rd to 7th March, 2014 in Budapest, Hungary.
2. 46th Session of Codex Committee on Food Additives (CCFA), 17th to 21st March, 2014 in Hongkong, China.
3. 8th Session of Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods (CCCF), 31st March to 4th April, 2014 in The Hague, Netherlands.
4. 28th Session of Codex Committee on General Principles (CCGP), 7th to 11th April, 2014 in Paris, France.
5. 46th Session of Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues (CCPR), 5th to 10th May, 2014 in Nanjing, China.



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for future issues, kindly contact codex-india@nic.in