

China Trip Report
Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues
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On Friday April 5, I traveled to Macau, China to attend the Codex meeting on pesticide residues and returned to California on Sunday, April 14.

Codex Meeting on Pesticide Residues

The Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues is a collaboration between the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) to set maximum residue levels (MRLs) on pesticides to facilitate the trade of agriculture and food commodities. CCQC attends as a delegate from the International Society of Citriculture to advocate for the establishment of MRLs for citrus fruits. Two hundred and sixty people from over fifty member-countries attended the meeting

The Committee discussed a range of technical issues that determine policies for risk assessment, management of priorities and process improvements. The following issues were discussed:

- FAO and WHO convened a workshop on the harmonization of residue definitions.
- FAO requested data on the plant uses of antibiotics and copper to facilitate discussion by the Codex task force on human resistance to antibiotics.
- The European Union (EU) supported evaluation of the impact of fungicides on intestinal microbiomes.
- Imazalil is under periodic review in Codex. New Imazalil MRLs were set for oranges and lemons. However, data were not sufficient to establish new MRLs for grapefruit and mandarins. CCQC requested that the Committee maintain the citrus fruits group-MRL to ensure that all citrus varieties would have MRLs while the registrant developed data for mandarins and grapefruit. The Committee agreed to maintain the citrus fruits group-MRL until the registrant provided the data to conduct the review.
- The Netherlands reported on progress of the Electronic Working Group (EWG) that is evaluating an acute risk assessment equation known as the IESTI equation. The EWG is waiting for a benchmarking study conducted by WHO that compares the proposed IESTI equation to a probabilistic assessment. The EWG was reinstated for one more year and awaits the WHO benchmarking study.
- Canada reported on the Electronic Working Group that was established last year to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of Codex participation in a global joint review of a new compound. The EWG determined that a parallel review would be feasible. The EWG was re-established for an additional year to analyze issues such as the potential additional workload for Codex, how to nominate new chemicals for review and how to fit such a review into Codex' current work schedule.
- Chile reported on an EWG that was established last year to evaluate criteria that could exempt compounds of low public health concerns from MRLs. Discussion centered on

development of criteria instead of developing lists of exempt compounds. The EWG was reestablished to develop criteria for consideration.

- Several old pesticides have languished for significant periods of time on the list of compounds that need a periodic Codex review. However, since no registrant will provide data, the reviews can't be completed. The Committee discussed whether to cancel all of the MRLs for these pesticides. An EWG was established to explore options for generating data and whether MRLs should be maintained if the compound doesn't present a public health concern.

Note: As is common practice, the EU lodges reservations against the establishment of Codex MRLs when its domestic reviews generate risks of concern, which do not surface during a Codex review. The EU seems to have noted more reservations that have arisen from concerns about metabolites or the inability of registrants to meet data demands for metabolites. This seems to be another area where EU policy is diverging from those of other major competent global authorities on pesticide risk evaluation.

This issue may become more topical in the CCPR if the WTO and FAO recommend changes to residue definition principles.