
International

Codex fats and oils unit meets

The Codex Alimentarius Committee on Fats and Oils held its 12th session during April in London, England. This report was prepared by AOCS' Codex representative, Dr. R.J. Sims of General Foods. The 12th session considered the topics of processing aids, nutritional labeling, identifying rapeseed and olive oils by sterol ranges, and agreed to ask the full Codex Alimentarius Commission to approve use of GLC fatty acid ranges for identification of crude fats and oils.

The Codex Committee on Fats and Oils held its 12th meeting in London, April 19-23, with Dr. P.J. Bunyan of the U.K. as chairman. The session was attended by representatives of 33 countries and observers from 11 countries and international organizations. This meeting is part of the food standards program sponsored jointly by FAO and WHO.

At the 14th session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission the procedure for acceptance or non-acceptance of Codex standards by member governments had been revised. If a country is not able to give formal acceptance, it can permit entry of products which conform to the standards with or without specified deviations. Now such a decision by a government is not considered to be a rejection of the standards. The U.S., which previously accepted only the margarine standard with some specified deviations, will fall into this category.

Scope of the Standards

During the 11th Session, the Fats and Oils Committee had agreed that GLC fatty acid ranges could be applied to both crude fats and oils and to those ready for human consumption. Since most of the oils traded on a worldwide basis are crude or only partially refined, this extension of the scope of the standards would enhance their usefulness. A new section on raw materials will be included in the standards for edible oils. The full commission will be asked to confirm that GLC fatty acid ranges should be included in all standards on a mandatory basis. Other non-mandatory criteria such as sterol ranges may be used to ascertain the authenticity of a sample. Some governments object that the GLC ranges are so broad as to include samples which are adulterated. The U.S. noted that fatty acid ranges had been tested and found to be sufficiently precise to identify correctly 269 out of 275 samples of crude oils. Also the use of GLC ranges does not exclude the use of other identity criteria for confirmation. If the GLC ranges are made more narrow, some authentic samples would be rejected.

Draft Standard for Fat Spreads/Spreadable Table Fats

The committee agreed on the development of a standard for Fat Spreads/Spreadable Table Fats having a fat content

ranging from 20% to 70%. The rationale for adopting such a wide range is that in the U.S. it is required to cover the spectrum of products under development. The Minarine standard, which covers the product produced in Europe at a 39-41% range of fat content, is too restrictive for American industry. As a consequence, two separate standards have been developed, one for the European product and a second to cover the U.S. group of products resembling margarine but with reduced fat content. All products must be labeled "Fat Spread/Spreadable Table Fat" followed by any other optional designation which does not mislead the consumer in the country where the product is sold. The name of the product must be closely followed by a declaration of the fat content.

Nutrition Labeling

The committee concluded that a claim regarding the fatty acid composition of a food should be accompanied by a declaration solely of the maximum percentage of saturates and the minimum percentage of polyunsaturates in the fatty acid portion of the food. When a claim is made regarding the *trans* fatty acid content of a food, the maximum percentage of the total as *trans* fatty acids should be declared. Saturated fatty acids should be determined by GLC, *cis-cis* methylene interrupted polyunsaturated fatty acids by the lipoxidase method, and *trans* fatty acids by infrared spectrophotometry. The committee recommends dropping the requirement for the declaration of cholesterol. These comments will be submitted to the 16th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Labeling.

Processing Aids

The list of processing aids is considered to be an open list and purely advisory. Processing aids need not be declared on the label. The list will be sent to governments for their comments, and in particular requesting information on residue levels and methods of analysis for residues. This information should enable the Codex Committee on Food Additives to identify those which leave an unacceptably high residue and might require toxicological examination by the Joint Expert Committee on Food Additives. The chairman stated that all processing aids reported to be used by countries were to be included in the list. Not all aids will be acceptable in all countries on either technological or toxicological grounds.

Identity Characteristics Based on Sterol Ranges

It was agreed that while mandatory provisions relating to sterol ranges might be desirable, at present there is insufficient evidence on which to base these provisions in most instances. Exceptions are rapeseed oil (high and low erucic varieties) and olive oil. Standards for these oils will include provisions for sterol ranges. The committee recommended

that organizations such as IUPAC continue to develop standard methods for sterol measurements in fats and oils.

Additional Discussions

The committee considered proposals to adopt a standard for vegetable ghee. Amendments to the standard for edible rapeseed oil were also discussed. Details of analytical methods for olive oil were considered. Other matters taken up by the committee included:

1. Review of methods of analysis in standards and draft standards.
2. Determination of erythridiol content of grapeseed oil.
3. Determination of clarity of sunflower seed oil.
4. Consideration of content and format of a compendium of Codex standards for fats and oils.

Future Meetings

The small amount of remaining committee work did not appear to justify arranging for another meeting at this time. A decision on a future date was postponed until the secretariat and the host government find it necessary to reconvene the committee.

Indians seek more domestic oils

The government of India should offer financial incentives for increased use of rice bran oil and minor tree crop oils to reduce dependence on imported vegetable oils, a national seminar held during November 1981 has recommended.

Increased use of domestic origin oil would help preserve foreign exchange, the seminar recommendations noted.

"The National Seminar on Problems and Prospects of Nonconventional Oils" was held Nov. 13, 1981, in Calcutta under auspices of the Oil Technologists' Association of India (Eastern Zone); East India Oil Millers Association, Association of Food Scientists and Technologists, Calcutta Chapter; and Jadavpur University.

The conference proceedings noted that since 1977 India

has become a major importer of vegetable oils to meet demand, but only one-fourth of the potential rice bran oil has been recovered. The potential for oil from minor tree crops is even greater, the conference was told, if financial incentives are provided and market roads and similar infrastructure is available. One speaker estimated India could meet all domestic demand through use of nonconventional oils. The recommendations noted India's various state governments have different policies and regulations affecting potential use of these oils, making it difficult for potential processors. The seminar recommended a single national policy toward minor oil seeds of tree origin would speed use of such oils.

The proceedings was published by the East India Oil Millers Association and the Oil Technologists Association of India (East Zone). Copies are available at US \$3 from: Secretary, East India Oil Millers Association, 8 Old Court House Street, Calcutta-700 001, India.

U.N. panel expects 4% rise in fats and oils

The U.N. Food and Agricultural Organization's Intergovernmental Group on Oilseeds, Oils and Fats met in Rome during late March with its statistical subcommittee estimating world fats and oils production will rise by 4% this year and meal production by 7%. Consumption also is expected to rise, but no precise estimate was made. Nor were any price forecasts attempted because of currency fluctuations.

During the meeting, representatives of exporting countries expressed concern over the possibility the European Economic Community might impose a tax on fats and oils. EEC representatives denied any such prospects, but exporters were not fully convinced. The EEC, in turn, sought assurances that Brazil would rescind financial incentives for Brazilian firms to export oil and meal, as opposed to whole soybeans.

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