Codex unit approves GLC identification

There was good news and bad news for the U.S. delegation to the meeting last fall of the Codex Alimentarius Fats and Oils Committee.

The good news is that a proposed method for identifying oils by GLC was accepted for possible adoption, including a resolution commending the U.S. delegation for the proposal. The method was proposed by William H. Tallent, director of the Northern Regional Research Center at Peoria, Illinois, and alternate head of the U.S. delegation. The method involves plotting GLC analysis of an unknown oil on standard graph paper, then placing a series of coded transparencies over the graph paper until a match is found. The system could become a mandatory standard of identity for Codex.

Because of the accord on the transparency system, Dr. Tallent said, a second "decision-tree" method was not proposed. Some delegates told Dr. Tallent they would use the transparency method in their classes, Dr. Tallent said. A paper on these methods will be presented during AOCS St. Louis meeting, Dr. Tallent said, and a manuscript is being prepared for submission to *JAOCS*.

The bad news for the U.S. delegation was the resistance to its efforts to expand the list of additives permitted under the general standards for fats and oils. General standards apply to fats and oils for which individual standards have not been established. The U.S. had sought approval for a compromise proposal allowing a wider variety of additives in fats and oils to be used in manufactured foods, with a more restrictive limit on additives for fats and oils destined for direct consumption with relatively little processing (margarines, salad oils).

The U.S. did succeed in obtaining a clarification that the general standards will apply only to fats and oils for which the committee has not developed specific standards. Thus, the specific standards for soybean oil, cottonseed oil, and other individual oils, will take precedence over those in the general standards.

Europeans are reluctant to permit use of an additive in fats and oils that is not approved for use in the end food product in which the fat or oil is to be used, Dr. Rex Sims, AOCS representative to Codex, reports, even if the additive would form a negligible percentage of the final foods.

"It all depends on your point of view, I guess," Dr. Sims said. "We've been wrong a few times (on additives). Maybe they're just years ahead of their time."

In other general action, the committee approved draft standards for coconut oils, palm oil, palm kernel oil, grapeseed oil, and babassu oil. These also will be considered by the full commission this spring and, if approved, go to governments for comment (Step 6 of the 10-step Codex approval process).

A discussion of reduced fat margarines drew support for a standard for "Minarine" to be defined as a product with 39 to 41% fat content. Products with other fat content could be labeled as "Reduced Fat Margarine (XX % fat)," with the appropriate percentage figure being used. The members stressed that labeling on such products should not deceive potential consumers as to content.

Dr. R.P.A. Sims, Canadian representative to Codex, foresees major discussions coming on labeling requirements. There are those, he says, who want to require quite detailed information on labels, down to *cis-trans* content and saturated and unsaturated content. Dr. Sims also pointed out that the Soviet Union for the first time sent a representative to the Fats and Oils commission meeting, as did Egypt, Peru, Tunisia, and Zaire. Countries represented in the past but not represented at the 1976 meeting included India, Israel, the Ivory Coast, the Philippines, and Portugal, he reported.

Dr. Rex Sims' report on the Codex Alimentarius Fats and Oils Committee meeting follows this article, along with reports on other groups involved in setting international standards for fats and oils or analytical methods of fats and oils groups. ●

Ninth Session of the Codex Committee on Fats & Oils London November 28-December 2, 1977

(Note: Dr. Rex J. Sims of General Foods Corp. in White Plains, NY, is AOCS' official representative to the Codex Alimentarius Fats and Oils Committee. The following is his report to AOCS on the Nov. 29-Dec. 2, 1977, meeting of that committee.)

This session was attended by representatives of 30 countries and observers from 9 international organizations. The chairman was A.W. Hubbard of the United Kingdom. I was present as an advisor to Dr. R.W. Weik of FDA, who headed the U.S. delegation, and also to represent The American Oil Chemists' Society.

I. Report of FAO/WHO on the Role of Fats and Oils in Human Nutrition

A group of experts had considered the above subject and had prepared a report. The experts' conclusions were:

1. Short-term intake by experimental animals of oils high in erucic acid (e.g., rapeseed) causes transient diffuse myocardial lipidosis. Accumulation of triglycerides in the heart is directly proportional to the amount of erucic acid in the diet. Similar but milder effects have been noted with partially hydrogenated marine oils high in docosenoic acids.
2. Long-term intake of high-erucic rapeseed oils by the rat induces necrotic lesions leading to fibrotic changes in the heart muscle.
3. Some laboratories report similar effects, but less severe, when oils low in erucic acid are fed to rats. There may be some factor other than erucic acid in rapeseed responsible for this effect.