

**REPORT OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION ON**  
**THE THIRTY-FOURTH SESSION OF CODEX COMMITTEE ON**  
**FOOD LABELLING, OTTAWA, CANADA**  
**(1-05 MAY 2006)**

The 34<sup>rd</sup> Session of Codex Committee on Food Labelling was organised in Ottawa, Canada from 1<sup>st</sup> – 05<sup>th</sup> May 2006. The Session was chaired by Dr. Anne Mackenzie, Sr. Science Advisor, Science Branch, Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Canada. The session was attended by 258 delegates representing 55 member countries, one member organisation, European Community (EC) and 26 international organisations. The Indian delegation to 34<sup>th</sup> session of CCFL consisted of

1. Shri Rajesh Bhushan - Head of Delegation  
Director  
Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
2. Dr. D. Chattopadhyaya  
Assistant Director General  
Dte. General of Health Services
3. Dr. Rajesh Kapur  
Director  
Department of Biotechnology  
Ministry of Science & Technology
4. Mr. Bejon Misra  
Chief Executive Officer  
Voluntary Organisation in Interest of Consumer Education (VOICE)
5. Mr. Shaminder Pal Singh  
Representative of CIFTI
6. Mr. D.S. Chadha  
Technical Adviser  
CII

**Agenda 1** : Dealt with adoption of the agenda. The agenda was adopted with the following decisions – to discuss the issues in item 9 related to organic production (CX/FL06/34/11) directly after item 4 while acknowledging that they were related to new work, to discuss CX/FL/06/34/3 ADD.1 on the second day of the session as the document had been made available recently and to consider the draft discussion paper on modified standardized common names (CRD 20 Canada) under item 9.

**Agenda 2** :- Dealt with matters referred by CAC and other Codex Committees. In respect of agenda 2B(1) relating to “general standard for fruit juices and nectars”. The Committee agreed to endorse inclusion of three processing aids that might cause allergenicity i.e. isinglass, sodium caseinate and potassium caseinate ( endorsed by CCFAC) for the purpose of ingredient declaration (it may be recalled that processing aids are exempted from labeling declaration in the general standards for the labeling of prepackaged fruits).

The Committee also considered the issue of proposed draft revised class names and international numbering system which had been advanced by CCFAC to Step 5, wherein CCFAC had requested CCFL to clarify the labeling provisions for labeling of “carriers” and “packaging gases”. There was no unanimity in this respect in the Committee therefore, it was decided that CCFAC be requested to clarify the conditions under which “carriers” and “packaging gases” were considered as additives or as processing aids, possibly with some specific examples.

In respect of agenda item 2(B) which related to implementation of the global strategy on diet, physical activity and health, the delegation of India forcefully put forward the view that the CCFL should consider for new work three main areas namely- mandatory nutrition labeling for all processed foods irrespective of whether claims were made or not, mandatory quantitative ingredient declaration, health claims in advertising and labeling. This view of India was supported by a large number of delegations and observers. The Chairperson concluded that it would be advisable to await the results of the WHO FAO E Forum, that has been established to elicit the responses of interested stakeholders on the global strategy and then seek the agreement of the Commission to proceed with the development of a document containing proposals for future areas of work in the implementation of the global strategy.

**Agenda 3** :- Dealt with consideration of labeling provisions in the draft Codex standards and related to matters referred by Committee on Nutrition and Food for Special Dietary Uses as well as Committee on Milk and Milk Products.

The draft revised standards (as pertaining to labeling provisions) for processed cereal based foods for infants and young children (at Step 8) sent by CCNFSDU was endorsed by the Committee.

Draft revised standards for a Blend of Evaporated Skimmed Milk and Vegetable Fat, a Blend of Skimmed Milk and Vegetable Fat in Powdered Form, a Blend of Sweetened Condensed Skimmed Milk and Vegetable Fat (as pertaining to labeling provisions) sent by Committee on Milk and Milk Products were endorsed by CCFL for onward transmission to the Commission with the proviso that the phrase “Subject to the legislation of the country of retail sale” be added at the beginning of 7.5 of the proposed labeling provisions.

Draft revised standards (as pertaining to labeling provisions) for Cheddar, Danbo, Edam, Gouda, Samsø, Emmentaler, Tilsiter, Saint-Paulin, Provolone, Coulommiers, Camembert, Brie, Havarti, Cottage Cheese, Mozzarella, and Cream Cheese as well as Whey Cheese and Dairy Fat Spreads sent by Committee on Milk and Milk Products was endorsed by the CCFL, without endorsing Section 7.2 of the standards pertaining to mandatory country of origin labeling. **Since these standards would be forwarded to the Commission without endorsement of Section 7.2 hence, it is an issue that will have to be addressed at the time of the CAC meeting.**

**Agenda No. 4:-** Dealt with guidelines for the production, processing, labelling and marketing of organically produced foods. The Chair of the Working Group Ms. Carla Barry (Canada) presented the recommendations relating to agenda item 4(a) (draft revised Annex II Table 3) and 4(c) (process for evaluating substances in Annex II), in addition draft revised Annex 2: Table 1 (natural sodium nitrate) were also discussed under this agenda.

In respect of agenda item 4(a) we had no specific comments. CCFL agreed to advance draft Table 3 to Step 8 for adoption by the Commission as there was consensus on the list of additives, with the proviso that food additives and / or functional uses under evaluation by JECFA and food additives provisions not adopted by the CAC would remain in square brackets and that future submissions for the addition of a food additive to Table 3 or Annex II of the guidelines will only be considered if that additive is approved by JECFA and adopted by the Commission.

In respect of draft revised Annex II Table 1 (natural sodium nitrate) India took the view that proposal to include natural sodium nitrate in table 1 is not acceptable because natural sodium nitrate is not necessary to grow organic crops, manufacture use and disposal of natural sodium nitrate may contaminate the ground water and that crop rotation / use of legumes crops are more appropriate means of obtaining adequate quantity of nitrogen. CCFL agreed to consider this substance at its next session and to return the proposed draft revised Table 1 to Step 3 for further comments.

In respect of agenda item 4(c) which pertained to consideration of the process for evaluating substances in Annex II and decided to discontinue further work on a new process for evaluating substances. It was also decided that prior to the next CCFL meeting, members and observers should submit a summary of the results of their evaluation (including as appropriate, scientific research and/or analysis of stakeholders viewpoints and/or analysis of principles) against the criteria in Section 5 of the Guidelines addressing each of the substances in square brackets (this includes comments that support or oppose the addition of substances to Annex 2). An *Ad Hoc* Working Group will meet prior to the next session of the CCFL to address the substances in square brackets.

**Agenda No. 5** :- Dealt with labeling of foods and food ingredients obtained through certain techniques of genetic modification/genetic engineering. Agenda item 5(a) related to draft amendment to the General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged foods (draft recommendations for the labeling of foods obtained through certain techniques of genetic modification/genetic engineering): Definitions (At Step 7). Agenda item 5 (b) related to proposed draft guidelines for the labeling of foods and food ingredients obtained through certain techniques of genetic modifications / genetic engineering: Labelling provision (at Step 4).

The report of the Electronic Working Group was presented by its Chair Canada. There were sharp divisions in the Committee with respect to the course of action to be adopted in respect of this agenda item. A small group of countries led by USA and including Argentina, Mexico, Australia and Philippines favoured discontinuation of this work. Another group of two countries namely New Zealand and Canada favoured keeping this work in abeyance and continuing informed consultations on a narrowed down version of the proposed draft guidelines. India within the Committee and in the informal group consultations which were held on the sidelines of CCFL favoured continuation of this work. India took the view that considerable investment in terms of time, manpower and money has gone into developing the base documents hence the work must continue. We appreciated the work done by the Electronic Working Group chaired by Canada, we supported mandatory labeling of GM food and the need for renewed efforts to achieve consensus on this issue. Eventually, a group of countries including Norway, EC, India, Switzerland, Thailand, Indonesia, Japan etc. proposed constitution of a physical group to be hosted by Norway.

The Chair of CCFL appreciating the views expressed requested US, Canada, India, EC, Norway, Argentina and Ghana to draft the objectives and terms of reference for the physical working group. India made a major intervention while drafting the following terms of reference of the physical working Group –

- (1) Consideration of the rationale for Members' approach to the labeling of food and food ingredients obtained through certain techniques of genetic modification/genetic engineering.
- (2) Identify the current standards, regulations, acts/decrees, etc. among current Members with respect to the mandatory and voluntary labeling of foods and food ingredients obtained through certain techniques of genetic modification/genetic engineering.
- (3) Identify Members practical experiences in applying/implementing mandatory and voluntary labeling of food and food ingredients obtained through certain techniques of genetic modification/genetic engineering.
- (4) Identify communication strategies used in communicating information to the public on foods and food ingredients obtained through certain techniques of genetic modification/genetic engineering with particular reference to how Members label these foods.
- (5) The output CCFL may require to respond to item 1-4 above.

The Committee therefore, agreed to retain the draft amendment pertaining to definitions at Step 7 and the draft guidelines at Step 4.

**Agenda No.6** :- Dealt with proposed draft amendment to the general standard for the labeling of pre-packaged foods – quantitative declaration of ingredients (at Step 3).

The delegation of India supported quid in view of the mandate given by WHO's global strategy on diet and physical activity which specifically lays down that "consumers require accurate, standardized and comprehensible information on the content of food items in order to make healthy choices" and also stipulates that "areas for further development could include – labeling to allow consumers to be better informed about the benefits and contents of foods". We also emphasized that in respect of proposed draft amendment to the general standards for the labeling of pre-packaged foods, in clause 5.1.1 sub-clauses (a) and (b) be retained, in respect of sub clause (c) the square brackets be removed and the word "appears" may be deleted. In sub-clause (d) the square brackets be removed. In sub-clause (e) the square brackets be removed and the words "or implied" be deleted. In sub-clause (f) the figure 2% be retained and the figure 5% be deleted.

Countries of European Community took the stand that while square brackets be removed from sub-clause (c), sub-clauses (d) and (e) be deleted altogether. EC also suggested that in sub-clause (f) the phrase "small quantities" be used in place of 2% / 5%.

Both the delegations of USA and Canada favoured deletion of sub-clause (c) and a re-look at the wording in some areas of the proposed amendment. This stand was supported by Argentina.

The Chairperson concluded that there was consensus only on the amendment to sub-clause (f) regarding "small quantities" to replace 2% / 5% and that there was not sufficient consensus on the rest of the proposed amendment. The Committee took a decision to hold a working group meeting chaired by UK prior to the next session of CCFL to refine the proposed amendment.

**Agenda No. 7** :- Dealt with proposed draft definition of trans fatty acids. This definition had resulted as the consequence of the request of CAC to CCFL to continue its work on trans fatty acids in cooperation with CLFSU to provide a definition of trans fatty acids. After due discussions the Committee agreed to retain the definition of trans fatty acids as proposed at the last session and to insert a footnote referring to the review of the inclusion of trans fatty acids "if new generally accepted scientific become available".

**Agenda No. 8** :- Dealt with discussion paper on advertising. Canada supported by a large number of countries and observers pointed out that developing a definition of advertising was within the mandate of the Committee and that work on such a

definition should be started. India stressed the fact that because of adoption of “guidelines for use of nutrition and health claims” there is a need to regulate the health claims and hence the “definition” as well as “guidelines” for advertising the products relating to health and nutrition claims appear imperative.

The Committee took a decision to propose to CAC to initiate new work on the definition of advertising as related to health and nutrition claims. After the approval of new work by the Commission, the definition proposed by Canada will be circulated in square brackets for comments at Step 3.

**Agenda No. 9** :- Dealt with other business, future work and date and place of the next session. The delegation of Canada proposed that a discussion paper prepared by them on misleading labels and use of standardized common names in the names of non-standardised foods be considered. They further pointed that the main objective was to avoid misleading the consumers and to ensure that these products were clearly differentiated from standardized foods. After due discussion it was decided that Canada would prepare a more detailed and focused paper for consideration at the next session.

It was informed that the next session of CCFL has been tentatively scheduled to be held in Ottawa, Canada from 30<sup>th</sup> April to 4<sup>th</sup> May 2007.

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