**CRD 18**

**SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION**

1. Sampling and testing are, among others, procedures utilized to assess whether foods in trade are compliant with particular specifications. These procedures ~~can~~ [may] affect the probabilities of wrongly accepting or wrongly rejecting a lot or consignment. Therefore these probabilities should be evaluated so that they can be controlled to acceptable levels for affected parties. The absence of defined, scientifically valid procedures could lead to *ad hoc* practices being used, resulting in inconsistent decisions and an increased occurrence of disputes.

2. To ensure the sampling and testing procedures are valid, they should be based upon scientific, internationally accepted principles, and it is necessary to ensure that they can be applied fairly. In regard to sampling, the *General Guidelines on Sampling* states that “Codex Methods of Sampling are designed to ensure that fair and valid sampling procedures are used when food is being tested for compliance with a particular Codex commodity standard.” [With regard to testing,] The methods of analysis endorsed by Codex should be considered first.

3. Sampling and testing procedures in international food trade are often used for the purpose of risk management related to safety. For this purpose, sampling and testing procedures should be established as an integral part of a national food control system to the extent possible.

4. Risk management decisions should be commensurate to the assessed risk, and should take into account risk assessment and other legitimate factors relevant for the health protection of consumers and for the promotion of fair practices in the food trade and, if needed, selecting appropriate prevention and control options.

5. It should be recognised that end-product sampling and testing is only one of the methods by which an exporter can validly claim confidence that product meets specifications. Other means of establishing whether foods in trade meet specifications exist in Codex.

[5. It should be recognised that end-product sampling and testing is only one of the methods by which an exporter can validly claim confidence that product meets specifications. Other means of establishing whether foods in trade meet specifications are addressed by CCFICS and Codex commodity committees]

6. This document does not affect existing Codex provisions or the current way of setting those provisions. This document should be read in conjunction with the *Guidelines for Food Import Control Systems* (CAC/GL 47-2003) and the *Working Principles for Risk Analysis for Food Safety for Application by Governments* (CAC/GL 62-2007)

**SECTION 2 - SCOPE**

7. These principles are intended to assist governments in the establishment and use of sampling and testing procedures for determining, on a scientific basis, whether foods in international trade are in compliance with particular specifications. Compliance with these principles will also assist in avoiding potential disputes.

**SECTION 3 - DEFINITIONS**

**Testing**

Process to examine the specified characteristics of a sample.

**Testing procedure**

Operational requirements and/or instructions relating to the testing; i.e. preparation of sample and method of analysis to yield knowledge of the characteristic(s) of the sample.3

**Sampling procedure**

Operational requirements and/or instructions relating to the use of a particular sampling plan; i.e. the planned method of selection, withdrawal and transport to the laboratory of sample(s) from a lot or consignment to yield knowledge of its characteristic(s).

**Probability**

The word “probability” should be interpreted as the proportion or percentage of times that lots or consignments identical to the given lot or consignment would be incorrectly decided by the specified sampling and testing procedures.

Other definitions relevant to these principles include:

**Consignment1**

**Lot1**

**Sample1**

**Sampling1**

**Sampling plan1**

**Result2**

**Measurement uncertainty3**

1 *General Guidelines on Sampling* (CAC/GL 50)

2 *Guidelines on Analytical Terminology* (CAC/GL 72)

3 *Guidelines on Measurement Uncertainty* (CAC/GL 54)

**SECTION 4 - PRINCIPLES**

**Principle 1: Agreements before initiating trade, and transparency [Transparency and agreements before initiating trade]**

Before starting trading activities, or when introducing or modifying an import testing program, the parties concerned should reach agreement related to the sampling and testing procedures that will be applied to assess whether the food in trade meets the specifications of Codex or the importing country. This agreement should also relate to the sampling and testing procedures to be followed in the case of a dispute.

When a lot or consignment is assessed, sampling and testing procedures used and the criteria for acceptance of a product should be documented, communicated and agreed upon by all parties. In the event of a failure, all relevant information should be shared between governments using mutually agreed upon format and language(s).

**Principle 2: Components of a product assessment procedure**

Sampling and testing of food in trade to assess whether the food meets specifications involves three components, and all three of these should be considered when an assessment procedure is selected:

- Selection of samples from a lot or consignment as per the sampling plan;

- Examination or analysis of these samples to produce test results (sample preparation and test method(s)); and

- Criteria upon which to base a decision using the results.

**Principle 3: Probability of incorrect decisions**

Whenever food is sampled and tested, the probabilities of wrongly accepting or wrongly rejecting a lot or consignment affect~~s~~ both exporters and importers and can never be entirely eliminated. These probabilities should be evaluated and controlled, preferably using methodology described in internationally recognized standards.

**Principle 4: Selecting appropriate sampling and testing procedures**

The sampling and testing procedures selected should be scientifically based taking into account the existing Codex standards and appropriate to the commodity and lot or consignment to be sampled and tested, fit for intended purposes and applied consistently.

The selection of sampling and testing procedures should take into account the potential variation within a lot or consignment.

The selection of sampling and testing procedures should take into account practical matters such as cost and timeliness of the assessment and access to lots or consignments, provided that the probability of accepting a non-compliant lot or consignment is not too high.

[The sampling and testing procedures selected should be:

- Scientifically based, taking into account the existing Codex standards;

- Appropriate to the commodity and lot or consignment to be sampled and tested;

- Fit for intended purposes and applied consistently.

The selection of sampling and testing procedures should take into account practical matters such as cost and timeliness of the assessment and access to lots or consignments, provided that the probability of accepting a non-compliant lot or consignment is not too high. Additionally, the selection should take into account the potential variation within a lot or consignment.]

**Principle 5: Taking account of analytical measurement uncertainty and its implications [Analytical measurement uncertainty]**

The selection of the product assessment procedure should take into account analytical measurement uncertainty.

**Principle 6: Fitness for purpose**

A testing procedure is fit for purpose in a given product assessment procedure, if, when used in conjunction with the sampling plan and the decision criteria, has acceptable probabilities of wrongly accepting or wrongly rejecting a lot or consignment.

**Principle 7: Review procedures**

Sampling and testing procedures should be reviewed periodically to ensure they take into account new science and information.

**SECTION 5 - REFERENCES**

*Guidelines for Food Import Control Systems* (CAC/GL 47-2003)

*Working Principles for Risk Analysis for Food Safety for Application by Governments* (CAC/GL 62-2007)

Publications and resources of the ISO Committee on Conformity Assessment (ISO CASCO) at http://www.iso.org/iso/resources/conformity\_assessment.htm.