**SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION**

1. Sampling and testing are, among others, procedures utilized to determine if foods in trade are compliant with particular specifications. These procedures ~~shall minimise~~ can 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 procedures used should consider these probabilities.~~ 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.” As for methods of analysis, those 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 the economic consequences and feasibility of risk management options. Risks due to conditions during storage and transport should be considered by all business operators in the food distribution chain. In order to achieve this there should be an understanding of the impacts of sampling and testing options on all affected parties. Risk management itself should be a continuing process that takes into account all new information, including scientific information, in the evaluation and review of risk management decisions based on sampling and testing.

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.

6. This document does not affect existing Codex limits or the current way of setting those limits. These responsibilities are set out in committees’ terms of reference. 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.

8. Other means of establishing whether foods in trade meet specifications are addressed in CCFICS and Codex commodity committees. A context of risk management in which to consider ~~A framework for choosing~~ acceptable probabilities of wrongly accepting or wrongly rejecting a lot or consignment is ~~addressed~~ provided by CCFICS and CCGP.

**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).

Other definitions relevant to these principles include:

**Consignment1**

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

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

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

**Lot1**

**Sample1**

**Sampling1**

**Sampling plan1**

**Result2**

**Measurement uncertainty3**

**Consumers' Risk and Producers' Risk1**

*Note 1*

The definitions of Consumers' Risk and Producers' Risk refer to the probabilities of wrongly accepting or wrongly rejecting a lot or consignment, respectively.

*Note 2*

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.

**SECTION 4 - PRINCIPLES**

**Principle 1: Agreements before initiating trade**

Before starting trading activities, the parties concerned should reach agreement related to the sampling and testing procedures that will be applied to determine whether the food in trade meets the specifications of the importing country and also on the sampling and testing procedures to be followed in the case of a dispute.

**Principle 2: Transparency**

The selection of sampling and testing procedures and the process for comparing test results to specifications should be documented, communicated and agreed upon by all parties. All relevant information should be shared between governments using mutually agreed upon format and language(s).

**Principle 3: Components of a product assessment procedure**

Sampling and testing of food in trade to determine 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 4: Probability of incorrect decisions**

Whenever food is sampled and tested, the probabilities of wrongly accepting or wrongly rejecting a lot or consignment affects 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 5: Selecting appropriate sampling and testing procedures**

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

**Principle 6: Practical considerations**

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.

**Principle 7: Taking account of analytical measurement uncertainty and its implications**

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

**Principle 8: Product variation**

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

**Principle 9: 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, it has accepted probabilities of wrongly accepting or wrongly rejecting a lot or consignment.

**Principle 10: 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)

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