

WHO/FOOD ADD/74.43

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

REPORT  
OF  
THIRD JOINT FAO/WHO CONFERENCE  
ON  
FOOD ADDITIVES AND CONTAMINANTS  
Geneva, 22-26 October 1973



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



Miscellaneous Meeting Reports Series - ESN:MMS 74/6

WHO/Food Add./74.43

THIRD

JOINT FAO/WHO CONFERENCE

on

FOOD ADDITIVES AND CONTAMINANTS

Geneva, 22-26 October 1973

REPORT

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Rome, 1974

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## INTRODUCTION

The Conference met in Geneva from 22-26 October 1973 and was attended by delegates from 34 Member States of FAO and WHO, as well as by observers from 14 international organizations (see Annex 1). The Conference was opened by Dr. P. Dorolle, Deputy Director-General, on behalf of the Directors-General of FAO and WHO. Dr. Dorolle stated that the Conference was the third to be held on the subject of food additives; the First and Second Conferences were held in 1955 and 1963, respectively. The scope of this Conference had been widened to include matters concerning food contaminants and the objectives were to advance the progress toward consumer protection through safer food. It was hoped that the Conference would delineate additional areas where international action would be desirable and give guidance to FAO and WHO on priorities to be observed in future work in the field of food additives and contaminants.

The Conference then proceeded to elect Dr. D.G. Chapman (Canada) as Chairman, Mr. H.P. Mollenhauer (Federal Republic of Germany), Dr. A.A. Owusu (Ghana) and Dr. H. Sadowska (Poland) were elected Vice-Chairmen. Dr. P.S. Elias (United Kingdom) and Mr. R. Souverain (France) were appointed as Rapporteurs.

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Third Joint FAO/WHO Conference on Food Additives and Contaminants was convened to discuss the items listed in the draft agenda <sup>1/</sup> and to make recommendations to FAO, WHO and Member States, where appropriate. It was agreed to restrict the reference to various aspects of pesticides only to those points in the discussion where this might be an important consideration, in view of the fact that pesticides are treated by other bodies in FAO and WHO. It was, therefore, agreed to request FAO and WHO to consider the desirability of holding a conference of the appropriate government authorities which might deal with various aspects of pesticides.

The draft agenda was then adopted without further discussion (see Annex 2).

### 1. A REVIEW OF THE WORK OF THE JOINT FAO/WHO EXPERT COMMITTEE ON FOOD ADDITIVES (1955-73)

#### 1.1 Historical background

Upon invitation by the Chairman the Secretariat briefly reviewed the work of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives which was established following a recommendation of the First Conference. Since 1956 the Expert Committee had met on seventeen occasions and had dealt with a large number of intentional and some unintentional food additives. Because of their major importance, the Expert Committee also gave attention to the three important metal contaminants - mercury, lead and cadmium. The function of the Expert Committee was to provide advice to FAO, WHO and their Member States, and it accomplished this task by the preparation of reports and monographs available to the two sponsoring Organizations and the responsible authorities of the Member States. The Committee also served in an advisory capacity to the Codex Alimentarius Commission, especially to the Codex Committee on Food Additives.

The Expert Committee performed its task in two working groups, one concerned with toxicological appraisal, the other concerned with the development of specifications and, more recently, the assessment of technological efficacy. In relation to the metal contaminants in food, the Expert Committee recommended the development of an internationally coordinated monitoring system of relevant data.

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<sup>1/</sup> The delegation of Argentina expressed its reservation to the recommendations in the report on account of the late receipt of various conference documents, making it difficult for its Government to give full consideration to the issues involved.

## 1.2 Toxicological evaluation

The Expert Committee not only established the principles of toxicological evaluation, but also evaluated available relevant information on individual food additives and contaminants. The major principles and results of evaluation were included in the reports. In addition, it also prepared monographs containing summaries of the biological evidence, comments thereon and evaluations. In evaluating the toxicity of food additive the concept of an acceptable daily intake was used to provide an indication of the safety in use of food additives and to enable regulatory authorities to develop adequate legislative controls of the use of food additives (for further details see Section 2).

## 1.3 Specifications for the purity and identity of food additives and other chemical considerations

During its work on the field of specifications, the Expert Committee followed the 'General Principles Governing the Establishment of Specifications' given in its tenth report.

The specifications compiled had three main objectives:

- (a) to identify the substance that has been subject to biological testing;
- (b) to ensure that the substance is of the quality required for safe use in food;
- (c) to reflect and encourage good manufacturing practice.

Specifications were normally prepared for the pure substance that could be described in chemical terms. There were, however, composite products, such as enzyme preparations, that contained one or more active components as well as diluents, preservatives, anti-oxidants and other substances used in food processing. As an example, the Expert Committee in its fifteenth meeting decided to prepare "General Specifications for Enzyme Preparations for Food Processing," setting out a number of criteria that would encompass all closely related products of the type in question. Wherever possible, additional requirements for individual enzyme products were also laid down in a separate specification, with the stipulation that these should be read in conjunction with the "General Specifications."

### Methods of analysis

The Expert Committee had been preparing the methods of analysis for the food additive per se. Methods of analysis of food additives in food are being considered by the Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling and the Expert Committee did not duplicate this effort, except in a few special cases, for example, antibiotics and solvents residues.

### Microbiological criteria

The Expert Committee had considered the question of microbiological criteria for proteinaceous substances such as gelatin and sodium caseinate and further stressed the need for such criteria in specifications of other substances derived from plant or animal sources - natural food colours, vegetable gums, pectin, modified starches, etc.

### Review of specifications and methods of analysis

The Expert Committee had been aware of the need to review the specifications and methods of analysis of food additives. A beginning was made in this direction with the review of specifications for antimicrobials, antioxidants, emulsifiers, anticaking agents, thickening agents and certain other substances which was carried out in the 17th meeting of the Expert Committee.

#### 1.4 Technological efficacy monographs

The Committee had studied the technological efficacy of food additives since the 14th meeting. Information on the technological efficacy of a number of antimicrobials and antioxidants and all relevant literature has been summarized in two monographs.

The Conference reviewed the work of the Expert Committee in the light of the recommendations made by the First and Second FAO/WHO Conferences on Food Additives. While regretting the delay in the publication of the reports and the monographs of the Expert Committee, the Conference agreed in general that the Expert Committee had carried out these recommendations satisfactorily with the exception of the recommendations dealing with coordination of programmes of investigation (see Recommendation 6.4.2 of this Conference, page 9). For future work of the Expert Committee recommended by the Conference, see para 7.2 (pp. 9)

## 2. PRINCIPLES OF TOXICOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF FOOD ADDITIVES AND CONTAMINANTS

2.1 The WHO Secretariat was invited to summarize briefly the principles of toxicological evaluation adopted by the Expert Committee. The early meetings of the Expert Committee had been devoted to formulating the general principles governing the use of food additives and to provide guidelines on safety testing and the interpretation of the results. Details could be found in the first and second reports of the Expert Committee. With progress in toxicology and related disciplines these guidelines were extended, refined and ultimately updated at the 17th meeting of the Expert Committee held in 1973. Brief comments were made on testing procedures, no-effect levels, the problem of extrapolation to man, the various types of ADIs (acceptable daily intake for man) now proposed, and a brief explanation was given of decisions and conclusions other than the setting of an ADI. In particular it was pointed out that the concept of two zones of an ADI was abandoned in favour of a single ADI, the concept of a conditional ADI being reserved for a few very special situations. Mention was made of the setting of a "group ADI" to cover chemically and toxicologically related substances. For certain contaminants the estimate of safety had been stated in the form of a provisional tolerable weekly intake and the basis for making such estimates was given in the 16th Report of the Expert Committee.

2.2 Some delegates considered that more precise guidance should be given on the animal experiments needed to establish a no-effect level. It was, however, agreed that it would not be feasible to do this because the conduct of the toxicological investigation had to be left to the discretion of the competent scientist in charge and could not be laid down rigidly for all types of food additives. The question was raised as to what phenomena observed in biological testing might be regarded as a physiological rather than toxic reaction and could therefore be disregarded in relation to the determination of a no-effect level. It was accepted by the Conference that no general principle could be stated on this aspect and that each case had to be considered on its merits. It was explained further that the Expert Committee also stated the length of time during which a temporary ADI could be accepted as valid. The concept had been found to be very useful in practice because it was sometimes difficult to set an ADI on the basis of available information for a substance which was nevertheless in wide use and which did not appear to create a significant hazard to health.

2.3 Many delegations disagreed with the statement by the Expert Committee that the ADI did not include the amounts of a substance naturally present in food. They pointed out that it seemed illogical to restrict the ADI only to the added portion of an additive since the ADI was based entirely on toxicological information and since the organism was unable to distinguish between a chemical that is added and that present naturally in food. The Conference therefore recommended that the Expert Committee should re-examine the statement in question in the Seventeenth Report.

2.4 Several delegations felt that some confusion had arisen over the phrase "ADI not limited." It was agreed that in practice technological, legal and other considerations impose limits to the use of a food additive even if there were no toxicological risks associated with its use. There was therefore a need to make it abundantly clear that the decision of the Expert Committee quoted as "ADI not limited" referred entirely to the toxicological appraisal. Certain delegations proposed as alternative phraseologies: (a) "setting of ADI not needed", (b) "ADI not limited from toxicological point of view", and (c) "no toxicological limit". The Conference invited the Expert Committee to consider the matter at a future session. These comments apart, the Conference agreed that the decisions of the Expert Committee were in general satisfactory and that these had a significant impact on the relevant authorities in many countries as well as on the industry.

2.5 Another problem raised at this juncture referred to the toxicological investigation of irradiated food. Uncertainty existed over the design of suitable protocols for determining wholesomeness, especially with respect to the establishment of a valid no-effect level and the safety factors to be employed in extrapolating the experimental data to man. It was pointed out that guidelines were included in the Reports of the 1964 and 1969 Joint FAO/WHO/IAEA Expert Committees on Irradiated Food and that a further meeting was planned to update the guidelines in relation to the biochemical changes in irradiated food which have recently become known. More progress might well be made once the substances resulting from irradiation could be isolated, synthesized and examined in the usual way for their toxicological properties.

The Conference recommended that the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives, as in the past, take account of latest advances in toxicology in making their evaluation, and also take into consideration the requirements of special groups at risk.

### 3. CALCULATION ON POTENTIAL INTAKE OF FOOD ADDITIVES AND CONTAMINANTS

3.1 The Secretariat presented a report outlining the major points of the WHO programme on the computerized calculation of potential food additive intake which was initiated in 1966 using the procedure described in the 6th and 10th reports of the Expert Committee. Following a successful pilot study the programme was continued and resulted in an examination and report on some 52 food additives. The programme was extended in 1968 to cover potential intakes of pesticide residues in food. These activities represented one important aspect of quantitative predictive toxicology. Although it was appreciated that the estimates obtained were not accurate, they provided, however, indication of the order of magnitude of the potential intake. Clearly more reliable figures could be obtained only if the average food consumption figures used hitherto could be replaced by more reliable national food consumption figures supplied by Member States.

3.2 As an illustration of the importance of estimating potential intakes of either food additives or contaminants, the Belgian delegation presented a paper on the probable intake of mercury in Belgium derived from food. Based on individual analyses of fish and other items in the diet and on a theoretical average mixed and representative diet, it was possible to calculate that the total mercury intake of the average Belgian adult may possibly reach about one half of the provisional tolerable weekly intake proposed by the 16th Expert Committee. The actual intake of total mercury from fish products corresponded to a minor proportion of the provisional tolerable weekly intake, the rest coming from other items of the diet.

3.3 Subsequent discussion revealed that similar surveys and estimates of dietary intake of mercury had been made in other countries such as Sweden, United Kingdom, Japan, U.S.A., Canada, etc., and highlighted the need for accumulating accurate food consumption data for a wide variety of food items. Often calculations were based on average consumption figures while interest frequently centred on population groups considered to be specially at risk. These were sections of the population either with high intakes of food additives or contaminants because of unusual patterns of food consumption, or which were exposed to under-nutrition and liable to react perhaps differently to the presence of food additives or

contaminants. Developing countries were more concerned with contaminants rather than food additives since most of the population was dependent on fresh, unprocessed food available locally. Populations in mining areas and infants presented other groups worthy of special consideration. In this connection, it was pointed out that FAO has been assisting developing countries in carrying out national food consumption surveys as these were very necessary for the development of suitable national food and nutrition policies. A number of such surveys had in fact been completed and the data processed or they were being processed. In addition a number of industrially developed countries had made their own surveys. The data from all these sources should be used for the calculation of food additives and contaminants intake where appropriate.

3.4 The Conference recommended that:

(a) Member States designate an appropriate office for the submission of relevant food consumption data to FAO/WHO;

(b) FAO, in cooperation with WHO, continue and expand its food consumption survey programme, especially in the developing countries, including intake studies to cover special population groups at risk;

(c) WHO, in cooperation with FAO, expand the present work on the computerized calculation of the potential intake of food additives and include additional countries in its programme;

(d) Member States contribute data on the estimated actual consumption of food additives and contaminants, wherever possible, to FAO and WHO.

#### 4. GENERAL PRINCIPLES REGARDING THE USE OF FOOD ADDITIVES - CONSIDERATIONS OF CONSUMER PROTECTION AND GOOD MANUFACTURING PRACTICES

4.1 Upon invitation by the Chairman, the FAO Secretariat reviewed the background information on this item. The First Joint FAO/WHO Conference on Food Additives recommended that FAO and WHO collect and disseminate information, among other things, on the methods of and reasons for use of food additives or the reasons for their limitation or prohibition. The first meeting of the Expert Committee had recommended general principles for the use of food additives. Later the Joint FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission adopted the "General Principles for the Use of Food Additives" based on the earlier recommendations of the Expert Committee: that food additives should be safe, effective for their intended use and should have demonstrable benefit or are unavoidable by good manufacturing practice under the prescribed conditions.

4.2 To consider whether the food additives were, in fact, used in accordance with the above General Principles, a distinction was drawn between technological efficacy and justification or necessity for the use of food additives, the latter term involving technological as well as social and economic factors. The Expert Committee had only recently started giving attention to the review of technological efficacy of food additives. The question of justification on the other hand lay within the domain of the Codex Committee on Food Additives and the relevant Codex Commodity Committees.

4.3 The delegation of the Federal Republic of Germany further elaborated in its paper the need for greater consideration of technological efficacy aspects of food additives so that, based on this purely scientific information, the authorities concerned would be in a better position to take the decision on the necessity or justification for the use of a particular additive in food.

4.4 A number of delegations expressed the view that the increasing use of chemicals in food and the increased public awareness of such use had created not only public health problems but also raised political issues for governments. Many governments and consumers were concerned whether food additives were in fact used in accordance with the general principles referred to above. It had, therefore, become prudent to further examine the concept of good manufacturing practice in terms both of the justification for the use of food additives and of their efficacy. One delegation, however, thought that the development of these concepts, whilst desirable, might result in value judgement which should best be left to the industry; it was pointed out that it was impractical and unreasonable to employ these concepts for certain classes of food additives. A fear was expressed by one delegation that the use of fewer additives might lead to greater intakes of such additives and it would therefore be necessary for the governments to keep this aspect in mind.

4.5 In this context, the role of the Codex Committee on Food Additives was discussed. The Conference noted that the present terms of reference of the Codex Committee allowed consideration of all aspects relating to food additives including the justification for their use. However, in practice the Codex Committee on Food Additives depended upon the advice of appropriate Codex Commodity Committees which drafted food standards including provisions for food additives based on the views of the experts with respect to the justification for the use of a particular food additive in a particular food.

4.6 The Conference agreed that the Codex Committee on Food Additives which had the responsibility of endorsing the provisions for food additives in food standards be requested through the Codex Alimentarius Commission to give further consideration to the technological aspects of food additives. The need was pointed out for the Codex Alimentarius Commission to ensure that the Codex Commodity Committees supply more information for the justification of the proposed use of food additives.

4.7 The Conference further agreed that it would be desirable to have background information on the technological efficacy of the substance involved. However, this work should not supplant the work on specifications of the Expert Committee.

4.8 In conclusion, the Conference, realising the need for the collection and collation of data on technological efficacy of food additives, recommended that:

1. Member States examine the technological efficacy and necessity to use already permitted or to be permitted food additives, in addition to their toxicological evaluation;
2. FAO collect the data on technological efficacy of appropriate classes of food additives; and
3. FAO and WHO provide necessary resources for an appropriate group of experts to evaluate the evidence for the technological efficacy of specific food additives and issue appropriate monographs.

#### 5. PROBLEMS OF FOOD CONTAMINATION AND PROPOSED INTERNATIONAL ACTION REGARDING THE INSTITUTION OF A COORDINATED MONITORING PROGRAMME IN THIS FIELD

5.1 The Secretariat reviewed briefly the reason for the increasing concern over the appearance of contaminants in food and over their significance as a potential hazard to human health as well as an impediment to world trade. Assessment of the health problems required a knowledge of the levels of chemical and biological contaminants occurring in food, air and water, thus enabling an estimate to be made of the total body load derived from all environmental sources. Today, many national monitoring schemes are being pursued, particularly on food, on total diet and on other environmental media to gauge the situation, to help with legislation where contemplated, to determine effects on trade, and to furnish background information on the epidemiological relationship between human exposure to a contaminant and the biological phenomena produced by it.

5.2 The aim of the coordination of monitoring in the food field is to achieve a rational use of studies now ongoing and to encourage others in an orderly manner. The objectives are in essence to assemble on an international scale all available data on intake and levels of contaminants in food, to discover whether the contamination of foods presents features giving rise to concern and to establish priorities for consideration of the contaminants, the foods and the methods of sampling and analysis. There are clear benefits in several areas to be gained from such activities. Total diets, staple foods, selected foods which accumulate contamination and selected microbiological surveys are to be included in the analytical programme, and a study of the relationship of this information to various groups of consumers, based on food consumption survey data, is envisaged.

5.3 FAO and WHO have planned to organize a joint internationally coordinated programme based on existing national monitoring surveys and on the establishment, by advice and aid, of similar surveys in countries which do not or are proposing to conduct such surveys. These efforts are the result of resolutions adopted at the United Nations Conference on Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972 and at the World Health Assembly in 1973. Proposals to implement these resolutions jointly by FAO and WHO are now before the Secretariat of the United Nations Environment Programme for funding.

5.4 While strictly not within the scope of the programme, attention was also drawn to the need for establishing the effects of environmental pollutants not only on healthy biological indicator species, but also to study the modification in toxicity arising from such factors as abnormal diets, malnutrition, adverse Ca/P ratios and other changes in environmental parameters often found in practice, but not regularly incorporated into normal testing procedures. This might be an area for research worthy of being supported by WHO. Similarly, it was pointed out that the list of priorities presented in the Secretariat paper was tentative.

5.5 The Conference was also appraised of the scope of the proposed 'global environmental monitoring system' of the United Nations Environmental Programme which instituted a global assessment of trends and changes in the environment by human activities which might cause harm to man or his environment. The food monitoring programme will be an essential component of the Global Environment Monitoring System so that the total load of contaminants borne by man can be adequately assessed. It was further noted that the Global Environment Monitoring system is part of an overall assessment programme 'Earthwatch', which would encompass monitoring, evaluation, research as well as the collection and dissemination of relevant information. Data collection on priority pollutants in various environmental media might be used to predict possible risks.

5.6 Many delegations applauded the institution of such an internationally coordinated monitoring programme in the field of food contamination and declared their readiness to contribute to the fullest extent possible information derived from their own national exercises. They offered advice based on their own experiences and pointed to a number of considerations which needed careful exploration in order to obtain the maximum value from such a complicated undertaking and to cover as many aspects as possible in the course of the same exercise. It was emphasized that developed countries bear special responsibility to aid developing countries in the establishment and organization of food monitoring programmes. Such programmes will provide an effective mechanism for the strengthening of national food control systems. Some delegations pointed out that the pollutants to be monitored might have to be varied depending on the priorities in the food field existing in their countries and that the extent of informational contributions to the monitoring programme which could be expected of them would have to be tailored to their national resources. Among the suggestions for inclusion in the monitoring programme were pesticide residues, toxic elements, antibiotic residues, naturally occurring food toxins, certain carcinogenic environmental contaminants and microbiological contaminants. There was much emphasis on the necessity to ensure really adequate coordination of all parts of this programme as well as with similar efforts made by other organizations such as SCOPE.

5.7 After having been given an outline of the approaches and preprogramme efforts to be made by FAO and WHO, the Conference recommended that:

1. Within the framework of the Global Environment Monitoring System being developed by the United Nations Environment Programme, FAO and WHO proceed with their plans to implement progressively an effective, well administered and coordinated, and properly funded monitoring programme of food contaminants.

2. UNEP give its full support to the two agencies in the development of the above programmes with particular emphasis on the progressive and phased planning and organization of the programme.

3. Member States cooperate to the fullest extent with the two agencies in the implementation of the programme.

6. ESTABLISHMENT OF APPROPRIATE PROCEDURES FOR RAPID INTERNATIONAL CONSULTATION AND COORDINATED ACTION CONCERNING FOOD ADDITIVES AND CONTAMINANTS

6.1 The Secretariat briefly described the existing arrangements for the dissemination of information on adverse toxicological results, related to food additives, to Member States in an effort not to create adverse publicity and unnecessary anxiety among the general public. Following a resolution of the Twenty-Third World Health Assembly (WHA23.50) a simple procedure of communication was devised. This consisted essentially of food additive information circulars pertaining to governmental decisions limiting or prohibiting the use of certain food additives. To date 24 circulars had been sent to Member States of WHO. Thirteen countries had submitted information on food additives and on the action taken, notification having been timed to coincide with national press releases. So far it had not been found necessary to convene a special group of experts to review the data submitted by Member States, although powers to take this course were available to WHO. One delegation expressed the view that WHO should convene a meeting of experts to study important toxicological evidence on food additives at the time when it becomes available and if the evidence is likely to trigger major action by Member States.

6.2 Subsequent discussion revealed that this procedure for the dissemination of information was considered a service of some use to Member States and that it could be made more effective if each Member State were to communicate more readily information for distribution by WHO. WHO had attempted to include a brief summary of the evidence for the particular action notified in the information circulars sent to Member States. A suggestion was made to broaden the scope of the exercise to include national action of contaminants. The Conference was also asked to consider whether the setting up of a registry of research in progress on toxicology of food additives would be useful. There was a possibility that this latter effort might be linked to the work of the national reference centres on environmental health criteria. It would then be part of this system to circulate such lists of work on toxicology of food additives and contaminants on a national basis to toxicologists involved in this field.

6.3 Reference was made to the U.S.A. review of substances "generally recognized as safe" (GRAS) and it was pointed out that the results of extensive scientific literature reviews and of surveys on usage would be available for purchase by interested parties from the National Technical Information Service. Mention was also made of the practice of alerting public health officials in different countries of hazards, especially microbiological ones, in relation to foods likely to be transported to or from various countries and of FAO and WHO efforts to sound opinions on the development of a Code of Ethics for international trade within the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

6.4 In conclusion the Conference recommends to:

1. WHO to continue their programme of issuing food additive information sheets and to expand their programme to include information on governmental action regarding contaminants;

2. WHO to establish a programme to set up a registry of toxicological research in progress on food additives and on contaminants, carried out in Member States and to distribute this information to Member States;
3. Member States to inform each other of any specific food shipment in transit between them which constituted a hazard to health;
4. WHO to prepare a master list of contact points in regulatory authorities to whom information on public health hazards could be transmitted.

7. FUTURE WORK OF THE JOINT FAO/WHO EXPERT COMMITTEE ON FOOD ADDITIVES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR PRIORITIES

7.1 Several suggestions were made during the discussions. These included the creation of an additional Expert Committee for contaminants, more frequent meetings, participation of observers, early and wider despatch of the agenda and more prompt publication of the reports and monographs, the more effective use of expertise from the governments and others. The Secretariat explained the administrative procedure and protocols existing in both Organizations which limited in many ways the action that could be taken especially by WHO on some of the issues mentioned. Attention had also to be paid to the financial implications of any suggested changes. It was explained that the experts selected to participate in Expert Committees were chosen at the discretion of the respective Directors-General as independent scientists free to express their personal opinions and were not regarded as representatives of governments or institutions to which they belonged. It was the practice of WHO to send the agenda of the Expert Committee to governments in advance of the meeting. Furthermore, members of the WHO Expert Advisory Panels were requested, well in advance of the meeting, to supply relevant data on the items on the agenda.

In view of the fact that some food additives and contaminants have been shown to be carcinogenic in animals, a delegate asked whether WHO had convened any meetings of experts on the subject of possible existence of threshold doses with carcinogens. The WHO Secretariat replied that a Scientific Group on the Assessment of Carcinogenicity and Mutagenicity of Chemicals was convened by WHO in August 1973. The Group considered this matter and agreed that threshold doses do exist with 'secondary carcinogens' whose carcinogenic activity is dependant on certain other activities. On the other hand, for other types of carcinogen, there was insufficient evidence to establish any threshold doses at present.

7.2 After considerable deliberation on the various suggestions above, the Conference recommended to:

1. FAO and WHO to continue with the convening of meetings of a single Expert Committee dealing with both food additives and contaminants and with the present practice about the attendance of observers;
2. FAO and WHO to increase the frequency of the meetings and to hold as far as possible separate meetings of the Expert Committee for the evaluation of food additives and contaminants;
3. the Directors-General of the two Organizations to make available the necessary resources for the more frequent meetings in order to deal with the large number of food additives and contaminants awaiting evaluation or re-evaluation;
4. the Directors-General of FAO and WHO to make available the necessary resources to publish more quickly the reports and monographs of the Expert Committee;
5. WHO and FAO to send out to governments the draft agenda of the Expert Committee meeting in good time to achieve a satisfactory inflow of relevant information and documentation;

6. FAO and WHO to give a high priority to the evaluation of contaminants. In continuing the work of the Expert Committee on Food Additives, besides the priority items suggested by the Codex Committee on Food Additives, food colours should be given a high priority.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

The problem of trace elements in food was raised, some of which had nutritional functions and yet were also contaminants of food. The Conference was informed of the decisions of the Expert Committee on Trace Elements recently convened by WHO which had considered some 14 trace elements and their nutritional, biological and toxicological significance. Summaries of the report of this Committee were made available to those interested.

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THIRD JOINT FAO/WHO CONFERENCE ON FOOD ADDITIVES AND CONTAMINANTS

Geneva, 22-26 October 1973

AGENDA

1. Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman and appointment of Rapporteurs.
2. Adoption of Agenda.
3. Report on the work of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (1955-72).
4. Principles of toxicological evaluation of food additives and contaminants.
5. Calculation on potential intake of food additives and contaminants - report on WHO computerized programme.
6. General principles regarding the use of food additives - considerations of consumer protection and good manufacturing practices.
7. Problems of food contamination and proposed international action regarding the institution of a coordinated monitoring programme in this field, in the light of the recommendations made by the UN Conference on Human Environment (June 1972, Stockholm).
8. Establishment of appropriate procedures for rapid international consultation and coordinated action concerning food additives and contaminants.
9. Future work of the FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives and suggestions for priorities.
10. Other business.
11. Adoption of the Report.