

February 2008



منظمة الأغذية
والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

联合国
粮食及
农业组织

Food
and
Agriculture
Organization
of
the
United
Nations

Organisation
des
Nations
Unies
pour
l'alimentation
et
l'agriculture

Organización
de las
Naciones
Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

E

COMMITTEE ON COMMODITY PROBLEMS

INTERGOVERNMENTAL GROUP ON TEA

Eighteenth Session

Hangzhou, China, 14 – 16 May 2008

REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON MAXIMUM RESIDUE LEVELS (MRLs)

Table of Contents

	Paragraphs
I. INTRODUCTION	1 - 5
II. GLOBAL PLANT PROTECTION INITIATIVE IN TEA	6 - 9
III. CONCLUSION	10 - 11

For reasons of economy, this document is produced in a limited number of copies. Delegates and observers are kindly requested to bring it to the meetings and to refrain from asking for additional copies, unless strictly indispensable.
Most FAO meeting documents are available on Internet at www.fao.org

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This document summarizes the report of the Working Group on Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs) which will be tabled in full at the session. Since the Thirteenth Session of the Intergovernmental Group (IGG) on Tea, harmonization of MRLs in tea has been an important activity of the Group. It has been recognized that the complexity in international regulations regarding pesticides implied a closer cooperation amongst tea producers, traders, boards, associations and other stakeholders involved in the tea supply chain.
2. At its Sixteenth Session, the Group recommended that the Working Group under the co-leadership of India and the United Kingdom co-ordinate, prioritise and accelerate submission on behalf of the industry for pesticide MRLs for tea. It was also agreed that co-operation was needed between producers and importers to generate the data required and address the challenges arising from recent MRL regulations in the major importing countries. The Group therefore supported and acknowledged the considerable efforts of the producing countries in preparing and collating MRL data for submission to the Joint FAO/WHO Meetings on Pesticide Residue (JMPR), and the “global initiative for pesticide management in tea” for consuming countries to “harmonize” the approach to legislators on tea MRLs.
3. India hosted a meeting of the producing countries in Kolkata on 30 September-1 October 2005. The objective was to list the problems encountered with pests (in the broadest definition) at the estate level in each country and to compare the methods of pest management used. A short-list of pesticides was drawn up which could be agreed for the management of pests on tea. A second meeting between a broader range of stakeholders, including those from producing countries, consumer importing countries, JMPR and Codex Alimentarius, took place in Rome on 6-7 December 2005 hosted by the FAO Secretariat. The meeting was facilitated by the United Kingdom, and was well attended, and led to the establishment of a work plan.
4. At its Seventeenth Session held in Kenya in December 2006, the Group agreed to update the producer work programme that was agreed at the Kolkata meeting in September 2005, with activities appropriate to meet the current regulatory environment and Codex Alimentarius, through JMPR. The Group further recommended an investigation of a possible transition period for these activities, as well as other initiatives that would support these key targets. The Group also insisted that the Working Group engage in discussions with regulatory authorities such as JMPR and the European Commission, to meet the objectives, identify the framework of the medium term action plan and provisions of the global information exchange between producing and consuming countries.
5. It was also recommended that the Working Group under the co-leadership of India and the United Kingdom co-ordinate, prioritize and accelerate submission on behalf of the industry for pesticide MRLs for tea. It was further noted that this effort should involve all stakeholders, as well as Codex Alimentarius, the European Commission and other standards-setting bodies.

II. GLOBAL PLANT PROTECTION INITIATIVE IN TEA

6. The tea associations of importing countries have drawn up programmes and briefings for their members on the main issues regarding the on-going discussions on the development of national and international legislative regulations. In addition, discussions have taken place with several regulatory authorities (including Canada, Australia, and initial discussions with the ETC and EU, etc) to clarify the current developments and understanding of the action plan of the Working Group on MRLs. In some instances, the exploration of opportunities for a move towards transition periods for MRLs in tea has been discussed to enable a more global approach.
7. Discussions between the Working Group and chemical companies have been initiated in an attempt to broaden the discussion and achieve the objectives of the action plan. This has led to

further discussions amongst the Working Group Coordinators, chemical companies and other stakeholders within countries in Asia, together with global experts, to identify a clear action plan to support work programmes of the tea producing countries with the prospect of moving towards improved plant protection methods.

8. Sri Lanka hosted the second meeting of tea producing countries and took place on 30 August 2007 in Colombo. The meeting was well attended with representatives from ten major tea producing countries. The meeting reviewed the important issues related to the effective management of all types of plant damage and reviewed the critical list of requirements. The work programme in each country was discussed and there was an agreement for a collaborative approach for investigative trials and the collection of data for submission to producing and importing country regulators, JMPR and Codex Alimentarius. The action plans have been brought together, circulated and opportunities for collaboration are being explored. A representative from the chemical companies engaged in preliminary discussions as the basis for developing opportunities in broadening the stakeholder group.

9. It was noted that data on MRLs in infusions should also be collected at the same time as the investigative trials to address several facets related to regulations in tea production.

III. CONCLUSION

10. The Seventeenth Session of the IGG on Tea recommended that:

- in the short-term to generate additional data on residue in the producing countries for the submission to national authorities and codex committees and investigate with regulatory authorities a transition period to allow time for work to be completed;
- in the short to medium-term the Working Group review the producing countries activities agreed upon in the first meeting in Kolkata, in 2005, and identify activities which are appropriate to meet the current regulatory environment and Codex Alimentarius; and
- pursue other activities identified in the report of the Working Group to broaden the stakeholder group and to ensure alignment.

11. The Action Plan agreed at the Seventeenth Session is being progressed and an updated report will be presented at the Eighteenth Session, by the Coordinators of the Working Group on MRLs.