

**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME  
CODEX COMMITTEE ON CONTAMINANTS IN FOODS  
CX/CF 13/7/5 February 2013**

**CCCF Proposed Draft Revision of the Maximum Levels for Lead in Fruit Juices, Milk, Infant Formula, Canned Fruits and Vegetables, and Cereal Grains (except buckwheat, cañihua and quinoa) AT STEP 3**

**1. About Grain Trade Australia**

Grain Trade Australia (GTA) is the focal point for the commercial grains industry within Australia. It facilitates trade and works to provide an efficient, equitable and open trading environment by providing leadership, advocacy and commercial services to the Australian grain value chain.

GTA members are responsible for over 95% of all grain storage and freight movements made each year in Australia. Over 95% of the grain contracts executed in Australia each year refer to GTA grain standards and/or trade rules.

GTA members are drawn from all sectors of the grain value chain from production to domestic end users and exporters. GTA members are involved in grain trading activities, grain storage, human and stock feed milling.

GTA also attracts membership from organisations to the side of the value chain in related commercial activities such as financial (banking, stock exchanges etc), communications, grain advisory services, and professional services (e.g. solicitors and accountants).

Within this context, GTA provides comment on the abovementioned document relating to CEREALS only.

**2. General Comments**

**a. Current Lead Levels**

We note the data indicates 97% of samples met the current Codex maximum level (ML) of 0.2 mg/kg (Table CL-4). This table also indicates that 92% of samples may meet a hypothetical ML of 0.1 mg/kg, 83% of samples may meet a hypothetical ML of 0.05 mg/kg, and 75% of samples may meet a hypothetical ML of 0.03 mg/kg.

While the report cites a somewhat limited dataset with little to no Australian data, this indicates a significant quantity of samples would not meet any hypothetical lower ML for lead in cereals. Currently 3% of samples do not meet the existing ML of 0.2mg/kg.

Data generated by cereal exporters in response to overseas regulatory requirements or individual marketing contracts indicates the current (ML) of 0.2mg/kg is able to be met for exports of Australian cereals.

## **b. Potential Lowering of Lead Levels**

GTA members support the current ML and would not support a lowering of the MLs for lead in cereals without further information and discussion on the need for such a change and data on lead levels in all regions where Australian cereal crops are grown. At present there is no food safety or market requirement that indicates such a change is warranted. As the Australian grain industry is heavily reliant on cereal exports, any lowering in the lead ML would have a significant negative impact on trade.

In addition, GTA does not support a breaking up of the cereal category to explore a separate ML by commodity. The reasoning for this proposal is unclear and requires further explanation. This approach would have a negative impact on the Australian grain industry via:

- Requires greater resources to sample, monitor and report on lead levels by commodity in order to meet regulatory and contractual requirements. Often the tonnage exported of some cereal commodities is relatively small. Thus any additional resources would effectively lower margins for that industry sector.
- As Australia relies on the export market, export regulations generally must be reflected in domestic regulations. Significant resources would be required to develop domestic regulations for lead in each commodity.
- Increase the risk of Australian cereals not meeting international regulations (either set nationally by individual countries or by Codex) if the MLs are lowered, without due consideration of the benefits of that decrease in ML.
- Potentially increase the risk of non-compliance for exports of smaller parcels of grain, or restrict that trade from certain areas. For example a significant container export market exists in Australia. Frequently for this market grain is sourced from a localised area which may be an area considered having a higher risk of background lead levels than from other areas. Conversely, bulk exports generally source grain from a wide area of the cropping region, effectively enabling any grain with a risk of higher lead levels to be diluted.

## **c. Monitoring Lead Levels in Australia**

We note little to no Australian data was provided into the abovementioned Codex discussion paper. As a major cereal producer and exporter, this situation is not acceptable. While we note Food Standards Australia New Zealand was on the Working Group, any potential changes to lead MLs will have a significant impact on Australia. Therefore Australian data must be used to develop any future international position.

We recognise there is no “central body” to coordinate and collect such data. In addition it is often difficult to “gather data that industry/Government may have generated and make sense of that data”, as much of that data may have been obtained from targeted testing programs in response to concerns in localised areas i.e., around the Port Pirie smelter).

GTA remains committed to work with and discuss with the Australian Government how such data can be generated and provided to develop an agreed Australian position on lead.

## **3. Specific Comments**

GTA has no specific comments on the discussion paper document.