

Science as the core principle for Codex Alimentarius decision-making process remains a challenge, notes IFAH

Geneva, 9 July 2011 – The debate on the adoption of proposed food safety standards for the veterinary drug ractopamine at the 34th session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission was dominated by national interests, which won out over science-based decision-making, says the International Federation for Animal Health (IFAH), as standards continue to be held at step 8 for another year.

The discussion at the 34th session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission again highlights the need to demonstrate the strength of the Codex process through decision-making based on the “principle of sound scientific analysis and evidence” (Codex Procedural Manual, 20th edition).

At the 33rd meeting of the Codex Alimentarius Commission in 2010 an informal negotiation process of the ‘Friends of the Chair’ was put in place. While the process was found to be useful to clarify the concerns of the different parties involved, and will be a useful tool for future Codex work, the Friends of the Chair could not resolve the underlying issue of national/regional policy interests hindering the adoption of the science-based standards for ractopamine.

The Codex Alimentarius Commission chose by vote at its 34th session that advancement of these standards should not be carried out through voting. In consequence, the standards remain held at step 8, though their scientific basis has been assessed and reconfirmed by Codex’s independent scientific advisory body, the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA)¹ several times.

“We regret that at this meeting yet again national/regional interests or preferences seem to have won out over the principle of science-based decision-making which is at the core of Codex. We recognize that the strength of the Codex process also resides in consensus decision-making, in addition to basing them on science. However, we strongly feel that the Codex Commission needs to be prepared to accept that situations can arise where all means of finding consensus have been exhausted and be prepared to make decisions by the prescribed Codex procedures which include voting.”, stated IFAH Executive Director Barbara Freischem. “Science-based decision-making is a critical component of an environment that ensures consumer protection while enabling our industry to make its vital contribution to society by ensuring animal health and wellbeing, and safe food for all of us.”

IFAH wishes to acknowledge the substantial and tireless efforts of the outgoing chairperson Dr Karen Hulebak, USA, to reach consensus on this matter in support of the principle of science-based decision making. IFAH will continue to work with all member countries to find a way forward that leaves the science-based decision making principle of Codex intact.

IFAH

Representing the Animal Health Industry

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IFAH wishes to take the opportunity to congratulate the incoming chair, Mr Sanjay Dave, India, and the vice-chairs Ms, Awilo Ochieng Pernet, Switzerland, Prof. Samuel Sefa-Dedeh, Ghana, and Dr Samuel Godfrey, Canada, on their appointments.

Notes for editors

IFAH

The International Federation for Animal Health (IFAH) is an organisation representing manufacturers of veterinary medicines, vaccines and other animal health products in both developed and developing countries across five continents. The mission of IFAH is to foster a greater understanding of animal health matters and promote a predictable, science-based regulatory environment that facilitates the supply of innovative and quality animal medicines, vaccines and other animal health products into a competitive market place. These products contribute to a healthy and safe food supply as well as a high standard of health and welfare for animals and people.

For further information on IFAH, please visit www.ifahsec.org

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