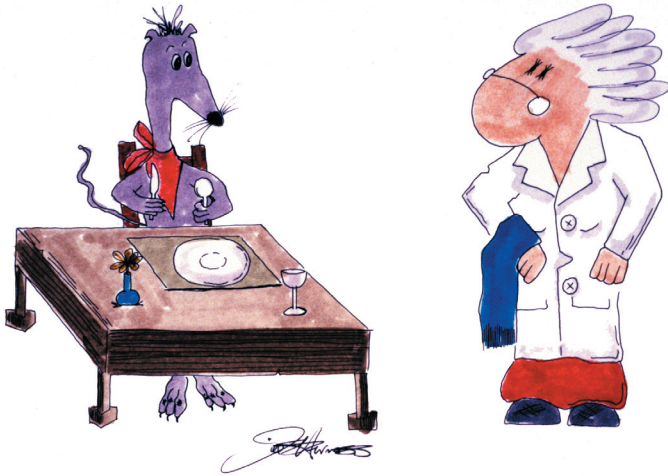


Communiqué from Budapest—Methods Chair Reports on Codex, HORRAT Values, Dietary Fiber, and More

ANNE BRIDGES
Melbourne, Australia



Five days of the Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling (CCMAS) and associated meetings, and I was questioning HORRAT values. Why were they even in the room?

We were in Budapest, a little chilled with the air blasting in from the Austrian Alps, enjoying the warm reception that the Hungarian Food Safety Authority shares with the 22nd Inter-agency Meeting (IAM-22), including representatives from ISO, AOAC International, AOCS, the International Dairy Federation (IDF), and AACC International among others—most, if not all, of the analytical methods standards organisations were in one place.

The IAM agenda was a preview and preparation for the upcoming CCMAS meetings, and AACC Intl. was expected to be an important contributor. On the agenda for CCMAS new methods endorsements was a full list of AOAC Intl. dietary fibre (DF) methods. As you know, AACC Intl. has equivalent methods for most of the AOAC International DF method list and together with the Nordic Committee on Food Analysis (NMKL) (a couple of methods) could expect to go forward with methods included on the proposed list. Methods are recommended by the Codex Alimentarius food committees to complement their standards. For DF standards and methods, this is the Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (CCNFSDU). Methods are reviewed by a pre-plenary CCMAS endorsement group and usually move forward with minimal discussions.

IAM discussed the measurement uncertainty paper and the anticipated positions around the guidance document for DNA and protein analysis, including the well known diverse opinions on the title and scope coming from Argentina and the United States on one side and the European Union on the other. New methods for endorsement, recommended for Natural Mineral Waters, were discussed, and then a surprise to me—the DF methods—they often report HORRAT values that are larger than

usually seen and the DF methods document prepared for the CCMAS appeared to have ambiguous provisions and applications. It was no longer clear that they would progress for endorsement without some questions. The HORRAT values in many methods of analysis recommended for larger molecules often include higher reported values than those seen for smaller molecules (and the traditional food chemistry analyte methods). It is an acknowledged situation, although not widely understood and appreciated, and this doesn't prevent the questions from being raised.

The CCMAS methods endorsement meeting raised all of the questions again and the DF methods went to the plenary meeting without the endorsement meeting recommendations. The plenary meetings covered the questions and the discussions again for all of the delegates and the end result was that the methods were endorsed as Type IV with an expectation that the CCNFSDU will review and provide more informative updates next year.

The discussions on the DNA and protein analysis paper were long and determined, spilling into overtime and late night sessions, reaching a final crescendo early on Wednesday evening. A compromise was reached, the title and scope were broadened to include most protein and DNA analysis methods, and the document was agreed upon line by line. After nine years, it was finally recommended for Step 5/8 of the Codex Procedure, and will progress to the 33rd Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

The final report, ALINORM 10/23/33, with all of the details and decisions for the 31st session of CCMAS, is available at www.codexalimentarius.net.

AACC International and Codex

AACC Intl. has a long history of participation in Codex and has applied for ongoing non-governmental organization (NGO) status. AACC Intl. is requesting to be represented on eight Codex committees important to our membership: Contaminants in Foods, Food Additives, Food Hygiene, Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems, Food Labeling, Methods of Analysis and Sampling, Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses, and Pesticide Residues.

Through collaboration with international NGOs, the Codex Alimentarius Commission receives expert advice and assistance from organizations like AACC Intl. In return, participation in Codex enables organizations like ours to present the views of our association's members and to play an important role in ensuring the harmonization of interests among the various methods-producing groups.

Anne Bridges received her academic training in Australia and Canada. She is chair of the AACC International Approved Methods Technical Committee and a member of the AACC Intl. Downunder Section. She is based in Australia and shares her time between consulting for food quality assurance and food biotechnology issues and humanitarian relief work. She can be reached at annebridges001@earthlink.net.