

Victory At Codex on the Melamine Issue!

Written by the National Health Federation
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At the first day's meeting of the 6th Session of the Codex Committee on Contaminants in Food (CCCF) yesterday in Maastricht, the Netherlands, the Committee unanimously agreed to cancel the blank check previously written to the food-packaging industry that would have allowed them to contaminate liquid infant formula with melamine-based packaging without any limits imposed upon such contamination.

Melamine is a man-made, cumulative toxin used in food equipment and packaging, as well as in an herbicide, which has killed thousands of pets and babies in years past and still continues to be a pervasive background contaminant. At previous Committee meetings, the food-packaging industry had won an "open skies" exemption from the Maximum Permitted Upper Level of melamine contamination of liquid infant formulas.

Scott Tips, NHF president and its Codex delegate, noted after yesterday's victory,

"It has been a long journey - not in terms of time as much as in terms of support - to arrive at this result, and amazingly enough with no opposition at the end. Three years ago, when the National Health Federation first began speaking out at CCCF against melamine contamination of our foods, NHF was the absolute lone voice at this Committee. I was looked at as if I were from the Moon. In 2010, NHF was again alone - not another delegation supported us. But by the 2011 CCCF meeting several important and outspoken delegations, such as Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Peru, had joined NHF in opposing melamine contamination. Over our most-vocal objections, though, the Committee adopted the standard, with the dangerous "sky's the limit" exemption, and sent it to the Commission for final approval. Fortunately, a groundswell of opposition had coalesced by that point - some three months later - to cause the Codex Commission Chairwoman to send the melamine standard back down to the CCCF for reconsideration."

At this week's Committee meeting, the groundswell became unanimous as the handwriting was clearly on the wall that numerous delegations were going to fight hard to eliminate the melamine exemption. First, the powerful EU delegation privately agreed that the exemption had to go. The United States then joined in publicly, and even New Zealand - formerly a strong supporter of the food-packaging exemption - actually asked the Committee to remove the exemption. Costa Rica, Ghana, Korea, the Philippines, Nigeria, India, Kenya, Cameroon, Columbia, and of course the NHF all spoke out strongly in favor of removing the exemption, and it was, without dissent.



Scott Tips & CCCF Chairman Martijn Weijtens after melamine victory

The standard now goes to the Commission meeting to be held in Rome this coming July, where it will almost certainly be adopted without the exemption. But for the NHF's strong and determined stand all by itself in 2009 and 2010, this exemption would have passed unhindered and would have resulted in a huge loophole for food producers to poison infants with melamine from food packaging.

For those who claim that a difference cannot be made at Codex meetings, here is yet more proof that positive change has been made, and validation for NHF's continuing efforts there as **your** voice for health freedom.

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