

CODEX ADMITS IT'S NOT ABOUT HEALTH

Codex Shoves Ractopamine Down Our Throats after Narrow Vote



Chairman of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, Mr. Sanjay Dave

After taking a vote by secret ballot on Thursday, July 5th, the Chairman of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, Mr. Sanjay Dave, announced the results of the voting on whether or not Ractopamine standards were adopted. (Ractopamine is a steroid-like vet drug, the residues of which remain in the slaughtered animal to then be consumed by meat-eaters.) Out of 143 ballots cast, the vote was 69 for Ractopamine, 67 against Ractopamine, with 7 abstaining. If only one vote had shifted from the “for” camp to the “against” camp, then the result would have been completely different and the Ractopamine standard would not have been adopted.

This voting was forced upon the Commission by the insistence of the United States, Costa Rica, and Brazil that the long stalemate over the adoption of a standard for Ractopamine MRLs (Maximum Residue Levels) could not be resolved through the Codex-preferred process of “consensus” but would, after all, have to be voted upon.

The European Union (EU) and other delegations – firmly opposed to the adoption of a standard for Ractopamine that would permit WTO trade challenges against existing Ractopamine bans – challenged the need for a vote, as they knew that the United States, Canada, and others had been lobbying Codex countries since last year to support Ractopamine use throughout the World. Nevertheless, in a late-evening Codex session held yesterday, the Commission voted to move forward on a vote, to be held today.

Numerous delegations had argued for and against the Ractopamine standard in yesterday’s session before the Chairman cut off discussion, leaving 36 country delegations and 2 INGOs (the National Health Federation and Consumers International) without any opportunity to share their views on this issue. This decision was especially unfortunate because both NHF and CI were prepared to speak out strongly against the World Health Organization representative’s unsupported comment that the science supported the safety of Ractopamine in the food supply. The Chairman’s abrupt decision to cut off discussion also stood in sharp

contrast with that of the previous Codex Chairwoman, Karen Hulebak, who had permitted a much fuller discussion of the delegates' views, no matter how unpopular they might have been.

The U.S. Ambassador here in Rome reportedly spent his time from 9:00 pm last night until 9:00 am this morning calling Codex delegates to lobby for their support. In some cases – our sources report – he, or someone, **instructed** countries (such as Georgia) to vote the U.S. way or else. Pro-Ractopamine lobbying had been particularly effective among African countries, with only staunch Kenya, Egypt, and Zimbabwe resisting the siren song of Ractopamine.

NHF president Scott Tips said this about the result, *“The narrow vote reflects the absurdity of this aspect of Codex. Here you have less than 30% of the World’s pork-consuming countries dictating standards to the other 70% plus of the World! The European Union, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey, Russia, Iran, and China correctly argued throughout that the science on Ractopamine was not settled, that this standard was not about health but about pushing commercial profits instead, and that Codex would be damaged by the adoption of this unhealthy standard. In fact, that is exactly what will unfold as a result of today’s decision: Codex has lost whatever scientific credibility it ever had, even amongst those who have been its biggest supporters. Despite especially the EU representatives’ herculean efforts – and they are truly the unsung heroines of the day – bad science and ill-health prevailed today, and the World is a worse place for it.”*

NHF predicts that Codex’s adoption of a standard for Ractopamine MRLs will lead to trade challenges by the United States against China and by Brazil against the European Union to crack open those consumer markets to Ractopamine-doped meat products. The victory of the United States at Codex in pushing the wishes of its commercial masters – and certainly not those of its citizens, most of whom oppose Ractopamine-doped foods – may very well backfire on that country and its minions as a chain reaction of events unfold, the full scope of which no one here yet knows.