Noting that he has been with the Public Health Service for 21 years, Angelotti called direct chlorine wash a "commendable practice." But he said that the new data implicating chlorine as a toxicological hazard will have to be weighed against the microbiological benefits derived from increased use of chlorine.

The report by Angelotti was an obvious disappointment to many members of the Salmonella Advisory Committee who were looking to increased use of chlorine as an important part of the Salmonella control program.

Meeting for the first time in Washington on Feb. 25, the committee reviewed

MONS 032850

Indicating current concern only with PCB levels in fish, FDA said that surveillance data collected by the agency and by the Agriculture Department "have shown that, with the exception of certain freshwater fish, the presence of PCBs in those individual foods subject to the tolerances continues to be sporadic, and that there has been an overall and substantial decline in frequency and levels." The data show "that the average daily dietary intake of PCBs is quite low and well within the margin of safety," FDA said.

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FDA BACKS NEW YORK MOVE TO BAN HUDSON RIVER FISHING 1800

The Food and Drug Administration on Feb. 26 endorsed action by New York State to ban commercial fishing in most of the Hudson River because of polychlorinated biphenyls (See FOOD CHEMICAL NEWS, Feb. 9, Page 9).

The State and the Federal agency have taken turns waiting for each other to do something, as the pressure resulting from PCB residues in fish has mounted. The FDA policy statement followed by one day New York State implementation of the proposals by its agencies.

State Environmental Conservation Commissioner Ogden R. Reid on Feb. 25 banned nearly all commercial fishing in the Hudson. Such a move was forecast by Reid the week before, and it was endorsed by the State Health Planning Commission. The ban on commercial fishing actually was proposed by the State Department of Environmental Conservation on Oct. 9, 1975, but action by Reid apparently awaited the support from FDA, which was given in the Feb. 26 policy statement.

FDA said it formally supported the proposal in a letter to the State on Feb. 11. Specifically, the Federal agency endorsed the proposals to: "(1) Ban commercial fishing, except for shad, from the Hudson River at or south of Fort Edward; (and) (2) Advise sportsfishermen and other persons not affected by the ban to restrict their intake of fish caught from these waters and to restrict their intake of salmon caught from Lake Ontario."

"When implemented, these actions will effectively eliminate the possibility that commercial fish contaminated with PCBs will enter interstate or intrastate commerce from these waters," FDA said, adding:

> "Should additional regulatory actions become necessary in the future, FDA will promptly take all appropriate steps, consistent with its regulatory authority, to protect the public from PCB-contaminated fish. Additionally, the State of New York plans to monitor closely the 1976 spring run of shad to determine what additional action may be required for this species of Hudson River fish."

MONS 032852

In a news release, the agency said, "FDA is investigating the extent of the PCB problem in freshwater fish in other areas of the country, and will encourage and support other states in taking action similar to New York's whenever significant problems of fish contaminated with PCBs exist."

The October, 1975, proposals from the New York agency had been to ban commercial fishing in the Hudson, advise the public not to consume fish from the Hudson and salmon from Lake Ontario, and to seize any Hudson River fish containing more than the 5 p.p.m. PCB temporary tolerance established by FDA.

FDA had already acted upon the recommendation regarding seizures. On Oct. 20, 1975, the agency told New York that it "would initiate seizure of interstate shipments of fish found to exceed the temporary tolerance and would support the State in taking similar action against intrastate shipments."

Noting that its jurisdiction is limited to interstate commerce, FDA last week said that "nonetheless" it is "concerned about the public health implications for sportsfishermen and others who may regularly consume fish that are caught from PCB-contaminated waters."

Tolerance Reduction in Future Held a Possibility

FDA made no move last week to lower the 5 p.p.m. temporary tolerance for PCBs in fish, but held out the possibility that tolerances may be lowered in the future. Since the 1973 temporary tolerance was set, FDA said, "additional toxicological data on PCBs have become available" which "have raised concern that PCBs may be more toxic than previously thought." The agency said:

> "The need to lower the temporary tolerances in light of these data, particularly the tolerance for fish, is under active consideration. Contemporaneously, sampling programs conducted by Federal and State authorities reveal that PCBs continue to be a significant contaminant of some species of fresh-water fish taken from certain rivers and lakes in the United States."

Noting reports that were presented at last year's National Conference on PCBs (See FOOD CHEMICAL NEWS, Nov. 24, Pages 2 and 31; and Dec. 1, Page 29), FDA said it is evaluating the reports to "determine if the information contained" in them "indicates that a reassessment of the temporary tolerances is warranted." The agency also said that it is "gathering and reviewing data from different sources on the extent to which PCBs occur in fish and other foods."

Recalling that the Environmental Defense Fund and the Natural Resources Defense Council have petitioned FDA to reduce gradually all of the PCB temporary tolerances to zero, FDA said "this petition and supporting information will be given full consideration and are included in the current review activities of the agency."

If FDA decides that lowering of any of the temporary tolerances "is warranted," the agency said it will issue a proposal, allowing time for comment.

FDA said that salt-water fish are "largely uncontaminated with PCBs," explaining that fish collected by commercial establishments contained an average of less than 0.2 p.p.m. PCBs, "substantially below levels that would pose a risk to health."

However, the agency said higher levels are being detected in such freshwater fish as coho and chinook salmon and lake trout, adding that it is "currently developing information to determine the exact extent of the problem."

In October, FDA told the New York Department of Environmental Conservation that evaluation was needed of the results of surveys of fish taken from the Hudson River and Lake Ontario. Since that time, the agency said, survey data collected by the State and by FDA had been evaluated.

Data on samples from the Hudson River showed "that 53 out of the 68 samples of fish collected at or below Fort Edward (approximately 7 miles below Glens Falls) contained PCBs in excess of 5 p.p.m.," with the average level of 31.3 p.p.m. Only trace levels were found in 13 samples obtained at Glens Falls.

A high proportion of fish and eels from points below Glens Falls contained PCBs over 5 p.p.m., FDA said, and the Fort Edward samples had the highest levels, ranging from 20.1 p.p.m. to 178 p.p.m.

Twenty-eight of 33 samples of salmon from Lake Ontario exceeded 5 p.p.m., with PCBs ranging from 2.1 p.p.m. to 24.6 p.p.m., FDA said, and 4 samples of lake trout showed PCBs ranging from 10 p.p.m. to 15 p.p.m. All other species of fish sampled from Lake Ontario had PCBs at 5 p.p.m. or less, the agency said. From this evaluation, FDA concluded:

> "... Fish caught in the Hudson River south of Fort Edward are likely to contain excessive levels of PCBs. Similarly, coho and chinook salmon caught in Lake Ontario are likely to contain excessive levels of PCBs. Since there are no data on current levels of PCBs in shad caught in the Hudson River, FDA is unable to make any conclusions about PCB contamination of that fish at this time. However, data obtained by the State of New York for past years, while limited, indicate that shad may contain relatively low levels of PCBs. There are insufficient samples to make any valid conclusions about lake trout caught in Lake Ontario at this time."

FDA stressed that PCB contamination of fish "will persist unless controls are initiated to curtail pollution of the environment with PCBs," adding that it has offered to the Environmental Protection Agency "the full scientific resources of FDA" for assisting EPA's efforts to control PCB discharges. FDA also offered to States "the full range of its scientific expertise in support of individual State actions aimed at controlling industrial pollution of the environment with PCBs."