

# CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



World Health  
Organization

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Agenda Item 10 (CX/FL 19/45/10)

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ORIGINAL LANGUAGE ONLY

## JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

### CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD LABELLING

Forty-fifth Session

Ottawa, Canada, 13-17 May 2019

#### LABELLING OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

(Comments from Argentina, Dominican Republic, European Union, FoodDrinkEurope, FIVS, OIV)

#### ARGENTINA

##### **Argentine Position (unofficial translation):**

Argentina wishes to reiterate its position regarding the labeling of alcoholic beverages.

In Argentina it is mandatory to place the label of alcoholic beverages on the main face and its alcoholic strength very visible, as well as to include in the list of ingredients of compound beverages the additives of permitted use and the presence of allergens.

However, nutritional labeling for this category of beverages is exempted in Res. GMC N ° 46/03.

Codex itself points out the energy labeling in alcoholic beverages is unusual, and this is why there are precisely no regulations that refer to portions or measures of alcoholic beverages (such as Res. GMC N ° 47/03 which applies for all other non-alcoholic foods and beverages).

The uses and practices make the consumer drink each beverage in different portions (eg high grade measure, glass, chopp, tin, bottle, etc.) or use the beverages as ingredients in drinks and cocktails. The differences in the frequency of consumption of the different categories are also marked.

For the case of non-alcoholic beverages, 200 ml (one glass) is used as a reference to calculate its nutritional properties (including calories). We believe that this would not apply to multiple alcoholic beverages, as explained above, which is why we consider that it could mislead the consumer.

Argentina has also incorporated in its legislation different health warnings aimed at prohibiting the sale to underage young people, avoiding consumption before driving a vehicle, related to advertising for alcoholic beverages, but we believe that it is not appropriate for Codex to deal with them, since all of these measures respond to national concerns, which go beyond the work of Codex on food labeling.

In accordance with the above-mentioned, and in accordance with the recommendations made in the document, Argentina supports Recommendation 5, "Do not initiate new work in relation to the labeling of alcoholic beverages".

- **Recommendation 1** ("start a new work to develop a Codex standard on labeling of alcoholic beverages"): in this first instance we deem it would not be appropriate given that it exceeds the competences of the CCFL.

- **Recommendation 2** ("start work related to the labeling of alcoholic content and nutritional information, including the energy value in alcoholic beverages").

We have doubts on this recommendation, given the explanations given previously. These are products whose portion is difficult to define because they vary in each beverage.

- **Recommendation 3** ("start work on the labeling of alcohol content"), Argentina has this issue regulated, which is why it would not pose a great challenge for our producers. However, the OIV has already provisions in this regard.

- **Recommendation 4:** ("Start new work to provide clarity in the General Standard for the Labeling of Prepackaged Foods (CXS 1-1985) and in the Guidelines on Nutrition Labeling (CXG 2-1985) in force on their applicability to alcoholic beverages").

This Recommendation is based on the opinion that the General Standard for the Labeling of Prepackaged Foods (CXS 1-1985) and the Current Guidelines on Nutrition Labeling (CXG 2-1985) apply to all pre-packaged foods, including alcoholic beverages, but they are not clear enough about whether they apply precisely to alcoholic beverages.

#### **-Recommendation 5, "Do not initiate new work in relation to the labeling of alcoholic beverages"**

In Argentina's view, the Codex addresses very few aspects related to alcoholic beverages, not only its work for these products in terms of labeling is limited. There are other international organizations, such as the OIV, which deal with the labeling of wines and alcoholic beverages of wine origin. So Argentina considers that the Codex should not be responsible for regulating alcoholic beverages.

### **DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

**República Dominicana** agradece a la Federación de Rusia, la Unión Europea, Ghana, la India y Senegal, por la preparación de este documento de debate, sin embargo, llamamos la atención a que se ha publicado con muy poco tiempo para la realización de un amplio debate con los sectores interesados, con vistas a lograr un adecuado consenso interno.

**Aún así, República Dominicana** sugiere que el CCFL apoye la Recomendación 5:

#### **Recomendación 5**

No iniciar un nuevo trabajo respecto al etiquetado de las bebidas alcohólicas

Ya que en **República Dominicana** compartimos la opinión de que la *Norma general para el etiquetado de los alimentos preenvasados* (CXS 1-1985) y las *Directrices sobre etiquetado nutricional* (CXG 2-1985) vigentes se aplican a todos los alimentos preenvasados, incluyendo las bebidas alcohólicas, y que son lo suficientemente claras para abordar el etiquetado de las bebidas alcohólicas

### **EUROPEAN UNION**

*Mixed Competence*

*European Union Vote*

The European Union and its Member States (EUMS) would like to make the following comments to the discussion paper on the labelling of alcoholic beverages.

The existing *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods* (CODEX STAN 1-1985) and the *Guidelines on Nutrition labelling* (CAC/GL 2-1985) apply to all prepackaged foods, including alcoholic beverages. Alcoholic beverages fall under the definition of 'food' and are therefore subject to the same requirements as other foods under these two Codex documents.

The only gap that has been identified is the requirement for the indication of the alcohol content of alcoholic beverages which is not addressed in these Codex texts and is considered as important information for the consumers to make an informed choice.

As regards the modalities to provide the information on alcoholic beverages, including the list of ingredients and nutrition information, the EUMS consider that they are sufficient and clear in the existing Codex documents. The same modalities indeed apply to alcoholic beverages as to other foods, as no exemptions are foreseen for alcoholic beverages in these Codex documents.

The EUMS therefore support pursuing work on the labelling of alcohol content on alcoholic beverages.

### **FOODDRINKEUROPE**

Given that the document was shared very late in the process, FoodDrinkEurope does not support new work on the 2abeling of alcoholic beverages for the time being.

### **FIVS**

The Conclusions and Recommendations section of this paper begins at the bottom of page 6 and contains 5 mutually exclusive recommendations (numbered 1 to 5) concerning any possible future new work by the CCFL.

Of the recommendations listed, Recommendation 5, "Not to initiate new work related to the labelling of alcoholic beverages," is the one that FIVS distinctly prefers, for the following reasons:

- As FIVS pointed out in FL/44 CRD/17, alcohol beverages are one of the most regulated food product categories worldwide and have very detailed national and international regulatory frameworks, which cover all aspects including definitions, standards of identity, production practices and rules for presentation and labelling. This very stringent set of rules and controls

leads to products of high quality and protection against deception of consumers. It was also noted that no less than 5 international government and industry bodies have already produced guidance, recommendations and even treaty-level agreements that address alcohol beverage labelling. Additional information on this activity was provided in FIVS's response to the alcohol beverage labelling questionnaire.

- FIVS is also of the opinion that the current Codex General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods and the Codex Guidelines on Nutrition Labelling are applicable to alcohol beverage labelling and adequate in the recommendations supplied. Not only is there an abundance of existing regulations and international recommendations in this area, but modifications and enhancements are under continual discussion in product-specific fora and in national and regional authorities as the market evolves. Such a situation implies that new work in this area by the CCFL is not required and indeed that it may duplicate existing recommendations or generate confusion if the products or proposals from all these different bodies are not taken into account.
- As FIVS indicated in its response to the alcohol beverage labelling questionnaire, our large database of national and international wine regulations and agreements (and one we have under development for spirituous beverages) show that alcohol content information is required, generally, by national regulations on all alcohol beverage labels and is also addressed by other international organisations. FIVS does not believe that there is a need for further work on alcohol content by the CCFL as current regulatory information on its labelling is sufficient.
- Currently, initiatives and projects concerning nutritional declaration of alcoholic beverages are underway at national and regional level, and FIVS is poised to assist with these efforts. Activity in this area by the CCFL would seem to be premature and potentially duplicative until the results of the initiatives are assessed.

Consequently, recommendation 5 is the preferred option for members of FIVS, given the information we are aware of, and that has been presented or expressed on this subject to date.

#### **International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV)**

The International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV) welcomes and appreciates the work on the discussion paper on the labelling of alcoholic beverages developed by the Russian federation with the assistance of the European union, Ghana, India and Senegal.

During the last 44<sup>th</sup> session of CCFL, it was indicated in the report that "*The Committee considered the items identified as potential work and noted broad support for them, and in particular for the following: internet sales/e-commerce; allergen labelling; innovation – use of technology in food labelling; alcoholic beverages labelling; criteria for the definition of "high in" nutritional descriptors for fats, sugars and sodium; and labelling of foods in multipack format.*

*While there was broad support for work on alcoholic beverages labelling, some concerns were raised on the proposed work on alcoholic beverages labelling, namely that some of the points raised in the WHO discussion paper were outside the mandate of CCFL, (e.g. health warnings on labels).*

*Some members indicated that these issues should be dealt with by national governments and should not be the subject of any future work taking into account that there was already considerable work on alcoholic beverages labelling being undertaken in other international fora such as the International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV) in particular, and Codex work was therefore not necessary at this time; and a comprehensive review of national legislation and work in international fora was needed."*

#### **OIV works on labelling in wines and spirituous beverages of vitivincultural origin**

The Member-states of the OIV are very concerned about the labelling of wines and spirituous beverages of vitivincultural origin since many years and have adopted different recommendations on this matter

- The OIV standard on wine and spirituous beverages of vitivincultural origin labelling is inspired by the standard established by the Codex Alimentarius for the labelling of foodstuffs and beverages.
- The OIV standard for labelling of wines has been gradually updated since 1983 through the progress of the relevant OIV group of experts in 1984, 1985, 1988, 1992, 1993 and in 2003 2005, 2006, 2010 and 2011.
- The initial resolution "International Standard for the labelling of spirituous beverages of vitivincultural origin" was adopted in 1991. Since then, this resolution has been updated several times (in 1992, 1997 and 1998)

- The provisions of the OIV standard for labelling of wines concern the compulsory information which appears on the labelling of pre-packed wines in view of their sale to the consumer, as well as optional information left to the discretion of manufacturers or Member States.

The labelling standard for wines applies to products fitting the definition of wine as laid down in the International Code of Oenological Practices of the OIV, namely: Wine is exclusively the beverage resulting from the complete or partial alcoholic fermentation of fresh grapes, whether crushed or not, and from the grape must. Its acquired alcoholic strength should not be less than 8.5 p. 100 vol.

- The OIV international standard for the labelling of spirituous beverages of vitivincultural origin is applied exclusively to the labelling of spirituous beverages of vitivincultural origin intended for direct human consumption and prepacked for sale to the end consumer, as defined in the OIV International Code of Oenological Practices (namely: wine spirits, brandy/weinbrand, grape marc spirits, wine lees spirits, grape spirits, raisin spirits).
- The current OIV labelling standard of wine and spirituous beverages of vitivincultural origin provides specifications regarding compulsory or optional information as mentioned in the following appendix:

#### **Points to be considered**

- Whatever the decision of the Committee, the OIV would like to draw the attention of the Committee of the complexity of labelling of alcoholic beverages.
- The OIV understands the necessity to inform the consumer on the elements related to health issues, however it is also important to inform the consumer on the specificity of the product in order to not mislead the consumer
- If the CCFL agrees to start new works on labelling standard for alcoholic beverages, It should be necessary
  - o To define the minimum alcohol content for alcoholic beverages for which the standard is applied
  - o to clarify the definition of the products for which the standard is applied in order to take into account the specificity of certain products as (wines, aromatised wines, brandies .....)

Therefore there is already considerable work on labelling in wines and wine spirits being undertaken at the OIV in particular, and Codex works should therefore take into account the OIV works on this issue, in order to avoid any duplication or inconsistency in different international standards in the future.

The OIV is willing to provide scientific expertise and additional information if necessary in accordance with the Guidelines on cooperation between the Codex Alimentarius Commission and International Intergovernmental Organizations in the elaboration of standards or related texts

Such cooperation may consist of:

- a) Cooperation at the initial drafting stages of a Codex standard or related text;
- b) Cooperation through mutual exchange of information and participation in meetings.

The OIV has observer status with the Codex Alimentarius Commission and complies with the Codex requirements in terms of the same principles of membership that form the basis for membership in the Codex Alimentarius Commission and equivalent principles of standards-setting

## Appendix

### A. The current OIV labelling standard of wines provides specifications regarding:

#### 1. The compulsory information includes

- The denomination of the product and the use of the word "wine".  
*An appropriate name or description of the beverage on a label is needed. Use of the names "Wine", "Sparkling Wine", "Fortified Wine" and "Brandy" must meet the conditions outlined in the OIV code of oenological Practices.*
- Recognised appellation of origin or recognised geographic indication
- Information on alcoholic strength
- Information on additives
  - *This indication only takes into account additives that are not present in wine in its natural state in significant amounts. It concerns actually*
    - *sulphur dioxide when this additive exceeds 10 mg/l expressed in total SO<sub>2</sub>,*
    - *sorbic acid.*
- Nominal Volume
- The country of origin  
*In international exchanges, the official or usual name of country of origin must be mentioned when the product comes from grapes harvested and vinified in this country.*
- The name and address of the person responsible for pre-packages
- Batch identification

The OIV is actually examining the modalities of labelling the presence of residues of potentially allergenic residues of fining agents in wines as part of compulsory information to be provided to consumers.

#### 2. The optional information includes

- Trademarks
- Parties participating in the marketing process
- Name of the viticultural holding
- Varietal name
- Vintage or harvest year
- Type of wine
  - Terms relating to the sugar content (Dry, Medium dry, Mellow or semi-sweet, Sweet)
- The ageing of wine
- Traditional terms of quality (cru, superior wine, classico, vino nobile, etc)
- Medals and Distinctions
- Other terms

#### 3. Requirements for presentation of information are also defined

### B. The current OIV labelling standard for the labelling of spirituous beverages of vitivicultural origin provides specifications regarding:

#### 1. The compulsory information includes:

- Sales denomination of the product.
- Alcoholic strength expressed as a % of the ethyl alcohol volume at 20°C.
- Nominal volume.
- Batch.

- Identification of the person responsible, whether the manufacturer, the packager or seller, and in all cases, the address.
- All information as required by law in the country where the beverage is being sold, especially indications regarding allergens

2. The optional information includes:

- Trademark.
- Vintage, specifying the year of harvest or year of distillation depending on the case.
- The list and/or amount of specified ingredients or category of ingredients, for ingredients mentioned on the label.
- A text referring to the history of the product or the business.
- Distillation, ageing, and production techniques.
- Particulars of ageing, including the duration of this ageing.
- The country of origin or provenance
- Other optional indications in accordance with national regulations on food labelling shall also be provided

3. Requirements for presentation of information are also defined