

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



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World Health
Organization

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Agenda Item 5

CRD5

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX COMMITTEE ON FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Twenty-second Session

Report of the Virtual Working Group on Proposed Draft Standard for Fresh Dates

(Chaired by India and co-chaired by Saudi Arabia)

Background

1. India introduced a new work proposal on a Codex standard for fresh dates at the 19th Session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (CCFFV, 2015). CCFFV19 agreed to establish an EWG on Fresh Dates, led by India¹.
2. The 39th Session of Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC39, 2016) agreed to initiate new work on Codex Standard for Fresh Dates and further mentioned to define the scope and other technical issues, encouraging countries concerned to actively participate in the development of the standard². CCFFV20 (2017) discussed the agenda and established an EWG chaired by India, and co-Chaired by Saudi Arabia.
3. The agenda was discussed under Agenda item 6³ at CCFFV21 (2019), presented by India. The Committee: (i) noted that the scope of the standard needed clarification and the proposed draft standard was not ready for advancement in the Step process; (ii) agreed to return the proposed draft Standard (CCFFV21/CRD14) to Step 2; and (iii) agreed to establish an EWG, chaired by India and co-chaired by Saudi Arabia, working in English, to consider the comments received and the discussions at CCFFV21 and to revise the proposed draft Standard for further consideration by CCFFV22. The report of the EWG should be made available to the Codex Secretariat at least three months before CCFFV22. CCFFV21 further agreed to inform CCFFV, that it was in the process of developing a standard for fresh dates; and to request CCFFV to provide clarification on whether CXS 143-1985 had covered all stages of fresh dates with different level of moisture content i.e. for khalal stage not exceeding 85%, rutab stage not exceeding 45% and tamer stage not exceeding 25%, which dates were freshly harvested and consumed without any processing, addition of ingredients and food additives.
4. In order to ensure a clear differentiation between the products covered under the existing *Standard for Dates* (CXS 143-1985) and the proposed draft standard for Fresh Dates, CCFFV29 recommended that the proposed draft standard for Fresh Dates include those unprocessed, fresh dates which have moisture levels greater than the levels specified in the existing *Standard for Dates* (CXS 143-1985). The existing *Standard for Dates* (CXS 143-1985) would continue to cover those dates with moisture levels at or below the maximum allowances in the existing *Standard for Dates* (CXS 143-1985). CCFFV29 noted that, in some cases, these will be dates to which no processes, such as drying or hydrating, have been applied.
5. A draft proposal was prepared by India and posted on EWG online forum for comments. One round of consultation was done to prepare the proposed revised draft. The EWG began its work by circulating the first consultative draft to EWG members for inviting comments keeping in view the discussions held in the CCFFV21.
6. In response, one member provided its comments (Algeria). Looking at less participation as comments have been received from only one member country, the provision of moisture content for tamer stage was kept in square bracket for discussion.

¹REP16/FFV, paras 84-90

²REP16/CAC, para 96

³CX/FFV 19/21/7

7. The EWG Chairs studied the proposed draft standard as presented in CCFFV21/CRD14 and taking into consideration the comments from EWG, made revisions wherever necessary for consideration at CCFFV22 (*Appendix I of CX/FFV 22/22/6*)

8. Comments were received through Online Commenting System (OCS) on the proposed draft standard for fresh dates as per *Appendix I of CX/FFV 22/22/6* from 10 member countries. The same were analyzed and accordingly proposed draft standard for fresh dates was again revised highlighting the modifications done. This document as per CRD2 was presented before the Virtual Working Group (VWG) meeting held for discussing "Proposed Draft Standard for Fresh Dates" on March 31, 2022 from 12:00 to 15:00 CET chaired by India. The list of participants is included in **Appendix II**.

Discussion and Outcomes

9. At the start of VWG, India briefed the working group about the specific issues identified based on received comments {viz (i) Provision of moisture content for tamer stage kept in square bracket, i.e. [10-25% and less for tamer stage]; (ii) Percentage of defects mentioned under section 3.2.2 "Class I" and 3.2.3 "Class II" vis-a-vis Quality Tolerances mentioned in table under section 5.1; (iii) Modification in the values of Quality Tolerances (Total, Individual and Additional Tolerance) specified in table under section 5.1; and (iv) The provision on the labelling for non-retail containers} along with their possible conclusions. Thereafter, the proposed draft standard was discussed section by section. Most of the modifications in CRD2 were accepted during the VWG.

10. While discussion, major deliberation was at the stages of fresh dates. Most of the member countries agreed to have the stages of khalal and rutab having moisture content within 30-85%. One member country proposed to include moisture content of tamer stage less than 30% as fresh dates at tamer stage are also traded internationally. However, VWG, to have common consensus and based on the suggestion of CCFFV agreed and included a sentence that "Moisture content of fresh dates ranges from 30-85%".

11. With regard to provision of Non-Retail Containers, based on comments from the member countries, it has been revised to include optional requirements viz (i) Name of the variety; (ii) Stage of ripeness; (iii) Origin of produce; (iv) Class; (v) Size (if sized) in accordance with the method applied; either on the container or in the accompanying documents.

12. Based on deliberation and suggestions provided by the member countries during VWG, the proposed draft standard for fresh dates have been revised and placed as CRD5.

13. CCFFV22 may consider the proposed draft standard for fresh dates at **Appendix I** of CRD5 with an intent to progress it to Step 5 or Step 5/8 for adoption by CAC45.

Proposed Draft Standard for Fresh Dates

1. SCOPE

The purpose of the standard is to define the quality requirements for fresh dates **which have not undergone any intentional or artificial process to adjust the moisture content**. When it is applied at stages following packaging, products may show in relation to the requirements of the standard:

- a slight lack of freshness and turgidity;
- a slight deterioration due to their development and tendency to perish.

The holder/seller of products may not display such products or offer them for sale, or deliver or market them in any manner other than in conformity with this standard. The holder/seller shall be responsible for observing such conformity.

2. DEFINITION OF PRODUCE

This Standard applies to commercial varieties, **cultivars or other commercial genotypes** of Fresh Dates (*Phoenix dactylifera* L. from Arecaceae family), to be supplied fresh and whole fruit to the consumer in unpitted form after preparation and packaging. Fresh Dates intended for industrial purposes are excluded.

3. PROVISIONS CONCERNING QUALITY

3.1 MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

In all classes, subject to the special provisions for each class and the tolerances allowed, the fresh dates shall be:

- intact;
- sound; produce affected by rotting or deterioration, which makes it unfit for consumption is excluded;
- clean, practically free of any visible foreign matter;
- free from **living** pests⁴, and their debris or excreta;
- Practically free of damage caused by pests;
- **free from mould filaments visible to the naked eye**
- ~~free of unripe fruit, i.e. fruit light in weight, stunted or distinctly rubbery in texture~~
- free of undeveloped and deformed fruits, as indicated by stunted growth, immature characteristics and naturally absence of pit;
- free of **blemishes, scars, discolouration, sunburnt and black nose affecting an area more than 7mm of the fruit surface** ~~blemished fruit; i.e. fruit scarred, discolored or sunburnt, or having black nose (noticeable darkening of the head, generally accompanied by severe checking or cracking of the flesh) or side-spot (a very dark patch extending into the flesh) or similar abnormalities affecting an area of not more than 7 mm of total surface area of the fruit;~~
- free of ~~abnormal~~ external moisture excluding condensation following removal from cold storage; and
- free of foreign smell and/or taste.

The development and condition of the fresh dates shall be such as to enable them to:

- withstand transportation and handling; and
- arrive in satisfactory condition at the place of destination.

3.1.1 Minimum maturity requirements

Fresh Date shall have reached an appropriate degree of development and/or maturity in accordance with criteria proper to the **commercial** variety, **cultivar or other commercial genotype**, to the time of harvesting and area in

⁴Provisions for pests and damage caused by pests apply without prejudice to the applicable plant protection rules applied by governments in line with the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)

which they are grown.

Fresh Dates shall have a moisture content, in accordance with criteria to the variety and stage of harvest/or commercial type and the area in which they are grown. **Moisture content of fresh dates ranges from 30-85%⁵.** ~~The moisture content should be within the following range:~~

- ~~• 50-85% for khalal⁵stage;~~
- ~~• 30-45 % for rutab⁶stage; and~~
- ~~• [10-25% and less for tamer⁷stage].~~

3.2 CLASSIFICATION

Classification of fresh dates is optional. When classified, the classification is done in accordance with Section 5 – Provisions concerning Tolerances, fresh dates are classified into the following classes.

- “Extra” Class, Class I and Class II.”

4. PROVISIONS CONCERNING SIZING

Fresh Dates may be sized by count or weight of the fruit or in accordance with existing trading practices. When sized in accordance with existing trade practice, the package shall be labelled with the count or size and method used. The following table may be used on an optional basis.

A. When sized by count, size is determined by the number of individual fresh date per package.

Size	Number of fresh dates per 500gram	
	Khalal and Rutab	Tamer
A (Extra Large)	≤45	≤55
B (Large)	46-70	56-83
C(Medium)	71-100	84-125
D (Small)	>100	>125

B. When sized by weight, size is determined based on the individual weight of the fruit as mentioned below.

Grade	Weight of individual fruit in the package(gram)	
	Khalal and Rutab	Tamer
A (Extra Large)	>11	>9
B (Large)	>7-11	>6-9
C(Medium)	>5-7	>4-6
D (Small)	≤5	≤4

5. PROVISIONS CONCERNING TOLERANCES

5.1 QUALITY TOLERANCES

At all marketing stages, tolerances in respect of quality shall be allowed in each lot for produce not satisfying the requirements of the class indicated. Produce that fail conformity assessment, may be allowed to be resorted and brought into conformity in accordance with the relevant provisions in the *Guidelines for Food Import Control System* (CXG 47-2003).

⁵khalal or basser (partially ripe) stage of date fruits at turning stage, but consumed fresh

rutab: Means soft or moist fully ripe stage, color changes to light brown and starts to lose weight and accumulate more sugars (mainly reducing sugars)

⁷tamer: Full ripe stage of development, more water loss and gains more sugars and depending on variety attains a high sugar-to-water ratio.

S. No.	Quality Tolerance	Tolerances allowed percentage of defective produce by count or weight (Not more than)		
		Extra Class	Class I	Class II*
1.	Total Tolerance not satisfying the quality requirement of which no more than, i.e. individual tolerance	5	10	10
	Individual Tolerance			
	-undeveloped	1	3	6
	-Damage by pest	3	8	8
	-Blemished/discolored	3	5	7
	-Sour/decayed/moldy	1	1	1
	-living pest	0	0	0
2.	Additional tolerances			
	(a) Size Tolerances-off size from what is indicated/ marked	5	10	10
	(b) Produce belonging to other similar varieties than marked	0	0	0
	(c) Loose dates among dates with stems or clusters	10	15	18
	(d) Mineral impurities g/kg	4	4	4

***Fresh Dates when unclassified, the provisions for Class II requirements apply.**

***When fresh dates are traded as unclassified, the minimum tolerance requirements for Class II shall apply.**

6. PROVISIONS CONCERNING PRESENTATION

6.1 UNIFORMITY

The contents of each package shall be uniform and contain only dates of the same origin, variety or commercial type, stage of ripeness, quality (if indicated) and size (if sized). The visible part of the contents of the package shall be representative of the entire contents.

Dates may be presented:

- in clusters (consisting mainly of the rachis and the stems to which the fruit is attached naturally);
- in stems (stems which are separated from the rachis and to which the fruit is attached naturally); and
- Separated in individual fruit, arranged in layers, or loose in the package.

Stems presented in clusters or separated from the rachis shall be at least 10cm in length and carry an average of four–six fruits per 10 cm of length.

6.2 PACKAGING

Fresh Dates shall be packed in such a way so as to protect the produce properly. The materials used inside the package shall be of food grade quality, clean and of a quality such as to avoid causing any external or internal damage to the produce. The use of materials, particularly of paper or stamps bearing trade specifications is allowed, provided the printing or labelling has been done with non-toxic ink or glue.

Fresh Dates shall be packed in each package in compliance with the appropriate sections of the *Code of Practice*

for Packaging and Transport of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (CXC 44-1995).

6.2.1 Description of containers

The containers shall meet the quality, hygiene, ventilations and resistance characteristics to ensure suitable handling, shipping and preserving of the dates. Packages shall be free of all foreign matter and smell.

7. PROVISIONS CONCERNING MARKING OR LABELLING

7.1 CONSUMER PACKAGES

In addition to the requirements of the *General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods* (CXS 1- 1985), the following specific provisions apply:

7.1.1 Name of produce

Each package shall be labelled as fresh dates (stage of dates as per 3.1.1) and may be labelled as to the name of the **commercial** variety, **cultivar** and/or commercial **genotype** type.

7.1.2 Origin of Produce

Country of origin⁶ and, optionally, district where grown or national, regional or local place name.

7.2 NON-RETAIL CONTAINERS

The labelling of non-retail containers should be in accordance with the *General Standard for the Labelling of Non-Retail Containers of Foods* (CXS 346-2021). In addition, the following particulars may be indicated **either on the each non-retail container or in the accompanying documents except the name of the product, identification, and the name and address of the manufacturer or packer shall appear on the container:-**

- (i) Name of the variety;
- (ii) Stage of ripeness;
- (iii) Origin of produce;
- (iv) Class;
- (v) Size (if sized) in accordance with the method applied.

8. FOOD ADDITIVES

No food additives are permitted in fresh dates.

9. CONTAMINANTS

9.1 The produce covered by this Standard shall comply with the maximum levels of the *General Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Food and Feed* (CXS193-1995).

9.2 The produce covered by this Standard shall comply with the maximum residue limits for pesticides established by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

10. HYGIENE

10.1 It is recommended that the produce covered by the provisions of this Standard be prepared and handled in accordance with the appropriate sections of the *General Principles of Food Hygiene* (CXC 1-1969), *Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables* (CXC 53-2003), and other relevant Codex texts such as Codes of Hygienic Practice and Codes of Practice.

10.2 The produce should comply with any microbiological criteria established in accordance with the *Principles and Guidelines for the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria related to Foods* (CXG21-1997).

⁶The full or a commonly used name should be indicated.

Appendix II

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