

# CODEX ALIMENTARIUS

INTERNATIONAL FOOD STANDARDS



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of  
the United Nations



World Health  
Organization

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## STANDARD FOR OKRA

CXS 318-2014

Adopted in 2014.

## 1. DEFINITION OF PRODUCE

This Standard applies to commercial varieties of okra grown from varieties of *Abelmoschus esculentus* (L.) Moench (*syn. Hibiscus esculentus* L.) of the Malvaceae family, to be supplied fresh to the consumer after preparation and packaging. Okra for industrial processing is excluded.

## 2. PROVISIONS CONCERNING QUALITY

### 2.1 Minimum Requirements

In all classes, subject to the special provisions for each class and the tolerances allowed, the okra must be:

- whole, with clean cut peduncle;
- fresh in appearance; sound, produce affected by rotting or deterioration such as to make it unfit for consumption is excluded;
- clean and practically free of any visible foreign matter;
- practically free of pests and damage caused by them affecting the general appearance of the produce;
- free of abnormal external moisture, excluding condensation following removal from cold storage;
- free of any foreign smell and/or taste;
- free from damage caused by low or high temperatures;

The development and condition of the okra must be such as to enable them:

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

#### 2.1.1 Maturity Requirements

The okra must be sufficiently developed, not fibrous.

## 2.2 Classification

Okra is classified in three classes defined below:

### 2.2.1 "Extra" Class

Okra in this class must be of superior quality. They must be firm and must be characteristic of the variety as regards shape, appearance and development. They must be free of defects, with the exception of very slight superficial defects, provided these do not affect the general appearance of the produce, the quality, the keeping quality and presentation in the package.

### 2.2.2 Class I

Okra in this class must be of good quality. The following slight defects, however, may be allowed, provided these do not affect the general appearance of the produce, the quality, the keeping quality and presentation in the package:

- a slight defect in shape and development;
- a slight defect in colouring not exceeding 5% of the total surface area;
- slight skin defects such as scars, blemishes, scratches and bruises not exceeding 2% of the total surface area.

### 2.2.3 Class II

This class includes okra which does not qualify for inclusion in the higher classes but satisfies the minimum requirements specified in Section 2.1 above. The following defects, however, may be allowed, provided the okra retains its essential characteristics as regards the quality, the keeping quality and presentation:

- defects in shape and development;
- a slight defect in colouring not exceeding 10% of the total surface area;
- skin defects such as scars, blemishes, scratches and bruises not exceeding 5% of the total surface area.

### 3. PROVISIONS CONCERNING SIZING

Size is determined by the length of the okra (in cm. without peduncle).

The following table is a guide and may be used on an optional basis.

Size Code	Length (cm)
1	2.0 – 4.0
2	> 4.0 – 6.0
3	> 6.0 – 8.0
4	> 8.0 – 10.0
5	> 10

### 4. PROVISIONS CONCERNING TOLERANCES

Tolerances in respect of quality and size shall be allowed in each package for produce not satisfying the requirements of the class indicated.

#### 4.1 Quality Tolerances

##### 4.1.1 "Extra" Class

Five percent by number or weight of okra not satisfying the requirements of the class, but meeting those of Class I or, exceptionally, coming within the tolerances of that class.

##### 4.1.2 Class I

Ten percent by number or weight of okra not satisfying the requirements of the class, but meeting those of Class II or, exceptionally, coming within the tolerances of that class.

##### 4.1.3 Class II

Ten percent by number or weight of okra satisfying neither the requirements of the class nor the minimum requirements, with the exception of produce affected by rotting, marked bruising or any other deterioration rendering it unfit for consumption.

#### 4.2 Size Tolerances

For all classes, 10% by number of okra corresponding to the size immediately above or below that indicated on the package.

### 5. PROVISIONS CONCERNING PRESENTATION

#### 5.1 Uniformity

The contents of each package must be uniform and contain okra of the same origin, variety or commercial type, quality and size. The visible part of the contents of the package must be representative of the entire contents.

#### 5.2 Packaging

Okra must be packed in such a way as to protect the produce properly. The materials used inside the package must be new<sup>1</sup>, 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.

Okra shall be packed in each container in compliance with the *Code of Practice for Packaging and Transport of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables* (CXC 44-1995).

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this Standard, this includes recycled material of food-grade quality.

### 5.2.1 **Description of Containers**

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

## 6. **MARKING OR LABELLING**

### 6.1 **Consumer Packages**

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

#### 6.1.1 **Nature of Produce**

If the produce is not visible from the outside, each package shall be labelled as to the name of the produce and may be labelled as to the name of the variety and/or commercial type.

### 6.2 **Non-retail Containers**

Each package must bear the following particulars, in letters grouped on the same side, legibly and indelibly marked, and visible from the outside, or in the documents accompanying the shipment.

#### 6.2.1 **Identification**

Name and address of exporter, packer and/or dispatcher. Identification code (optional)<sup>2</sup>.

#### 6.2.2 **Nature of Produce**

Name of the produce "okra" if the contents are not visible from the outside. Name of the variety and/or commercial type (optional).

#### 6.2.3 **Origin of Produce**

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

#### 6.2.4 **Commercial Identification**

- Class;
- Size (size code or minimum and maximum length in cm). If the size code is different from the Table, it should be labelled accordingly.

#### 6.2.5 **Official Inspection Mark (optional)**

## 7. **CONTAMINANTS**

The produce covered by this Standard shall comply with the maximum levels of the *General Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Food and Feed* (CXS 193-1995).

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

## 8. **HYGIENE**

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.

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* (CXG 21-1997).

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<sup>2</sup> The national legislation of a number of countries requires the explicit declaration of the name and address. However, in the case where a code mark is used, the reference "packer and/or dispatcher (or equivalent abbreviations)" has to be indicated in close connection with the code mark.