



**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
CODEX COMMITTEE ON SPICES AND CULINARY HERBS**

Second Session

Goa, India, 14 – 18 September 2015

Proposed Draft Standard for Oregano

Comments at Step 3

Prepared by an electronic working group led by the Argentina and Greece with assistance of: Australia, Brazil, Chile, China, Cyprus, European Union, Italy, India, Iran, Japan, Luxembourg, Mexico, Morocco, Norway, Russia, Spain, Thailand, UK, USA, Council for Responsible Nutrition, International Organisation Of Spice Trade Associations (IOSTA), FoodDrinkEurope

Governments and international organizations in Observer status with the Codex Alimentarius Commission wishing to submit comments at Step 3 on the Draft Standard (**Annex I**) are invited to do so no later than **31 July 2015** as follows: Secretariat, Spices Board (Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India), Email: ccsch@indianspices.com, with a copy to the Codex Contact Point of India, (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India) Email: codex-india@nic.in and the Secretariat, Codex Alimentarius Commission, Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, e-mail: codex@fao.org.

Format for submitting comments: In order to facilitate the compilation of comments and prepare a more useful comments document, Members and Observers, which are not yet doing so, are requested to provide their comments in the format outlined in the Annex 2 to this document.

Background

1. The 1st session of the Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH) (February 2014) agreed to establish an electronic Working Group (eWG), led by Argentina and co-chaired by Greece, and working in English and Spanish, to prepare a draft standard for oregano for circulation for comments at step 3 and consideration at its next session¹.
2. In May 2014, the Codex Secretariat sent out a kick-off message to all Codex member countries and observers inviting them to participate in the EWG. Eighteen member countries, one member organization and three observers expressed interest in participating in the EWG (refer to Appendix I).
3. The work on the development of a standard for oregano was approved at the 37th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Committee².

Electronic Working Group

4. The draft standard for oregano, as appended to the amended project document at the 1st session of CCSCH, was the base of the first document distributed to the members of eWG. The eWG reviewed the initial proposed draft and a second version was prepared by Argentina and Greece based on the comments received. The second draft was circulated to the eWG for a second round of comments. Overall, eleven member countries and observers (Argentina, Australia, Chile, European Union, India, Italy, Japan, Russia, USA, IOSTA, FoodDrinkEurope) provided inputs which were considered and incorporated as appropriate.
5. There was a request from few members of the eWG, and then agreed within the eWG, that the layout of the draft standard should follow the layout of the standards for processed fruit and vegetables as well as the format of the other standards under consideration at CCSCH. This proposal, introduced major rearrangements in the initial draft and new sections were incorporated (e.g. methods of analysis and sampling).

¹ REP14/SCH, para 69, Appendix IV

² REP14/CAC, Appendix VI, Job Number N06-2014

Unresolved issues

6. A point that needs to be discussed at CCSCH2 is related to the scope of the proposed draft standard since different concerns were raised within the eWG. According to one point of view, not all commercially available oregano comes from this genus and therefore the standard shall not be limited to *Origanum* L., but shall include also *Lippia* L. or other species of plants whose flavor and aroma are characteristic of “oregano”. According to a different point of view, the scope is very wide covering species with organoleptic properties different from *Origanum vulgare* L. These concerns were not tackled within the eWG because it was regarded as falling outside the remit of the eWG. It is worth noting that the initial proposal submitted by Argentina was to limit the standard to *Origanum vulgare* L., but after some discussion at CCSCH1 it was decided to broaden the scope to *Origanum* spp L.³

7. At the close of the eWG discussions, consensus was not reached at the following points, which may require further discussion by the CCSCH2:

- In section 2.2 “Styles” (i) whether whole leaf should be an appropriate style for oregano and (ii) whether the different styles should be bound to the aperture size of a sieve or to a standardized mesh.
- In section 3.2.2 “Odour, flavor and color” whether the flavor should be linked to the main chemical components of the volatile oil.
- In section 4.2.4 “Chemical and physical characteristics” alternative values were proposed, with more divergent views expressed in relation to the volatile content of the different oregano classes and styles.
- In section 5 “Contaminants”, CODEX STAN 193-1995 does not describe maximum contaminant levels for oregano or herbs in general. An option could be to seek the advice of the relevant Codex Committee whether herbs could be fall under category “leafy vegetables”.

8. In addition, suggestions submitted at the 2nd round of consultation, are left in square brackets since no time for comments within eWG was available. These suggestions may need to be discussed at CCSCH2 and are related to:

- In section 10 “Methods of analysis and sampling” alternative methods were proposed for the determination of moisture and volatile oils.
- In section 10 “Methods of analysis and sampling” questions were raised on the suitability of the proposed sampling plan. The proposed sampling plan is based on sampling plans from established Codex Standards for processed fruit and vegetables. However, a member of the eWG asked whether this sampling plan is simple to implement in the trade of spices, and proposed to consider the appropriateness of ISO 948-1980 Spices and condiments – Sampling for oregano.

Conclusion

9. Based on the comments received from members the second draft standard is submitted for comments at step 3.

Request for comments

10. The EWG invites members and observers to provide comments on the proposed draft Standard for oregano as presented in Annex I to this report.

³ REP14/SCH, para 67

PROPOSED DRAFT STANDARD FOR OREGANO**(*Origanum* L.)****N06-2014****(at Step 3 of the Procedure)****1. SCOPE**

This standard applies to dried leaves and flowers of species or hybrids of the genus *Origanum* L. from the *Lamiaceae* family, offered for industrial food production and for direct consumption including for catering purposes or for repackaging if required. It does not apply to the product when indicated as being intended for further processing.

2. DESCRIPTION**2.1 PRODUCT DEFINITION**

Dried oregano is the product:

- (a) obtained from the leaves and the flowering tops of *Origanum* L. from the *Lamiaceae* family, having reached appropriate development for processing
- (b) processed in an appropriate manner, having undergone operations such as cleaning, drying, rubbing, milling and sifting.

2.2 STYLES

Dried oregano may be offered in one of the following styles:

- (a) Whole leaf: intact leaves and/or flowering tops (flowers) of dried oregano.]
- (b) [Crushed/Rubbed: crushed or rubbed leaves and flowering tops (flowers) of dried oregano **[that are retained sieve of a nominal aperture size of 500 µm] OR [that are 100% retained by a 40 mesh].**
- (c) Ground/powdered: ground or powdered leaves and flowering tops (flowers) of dried oregano **[[that will pass completely through a sieve of nominal aperture size 500 µm] OR [that will pass completely through a 40 mesh].**

2.3 VARIETAL TYPES

Any wild grown species and hybrid or cultivated variety (cultivar) belonging to the genus of *Origanum* which are suitable for processing.

3 ESSENTIAL COMPOSITION AND QUALITY FACTORS**3.1 COMPOSITION**

Product as defined in Section 2.

3.2. QUALITY FACTORS**3.2.1 Infestation:**

Dried oregano shall be free from live insects and practically free from dead insects, insects fragments and rodent contamination visible to the naked eye (corrected, if necessary, for abnormal vision)

3.2.2 Odour, flavor and color:

Dried oregano shall have a characteristic odour and flavour (fragrant, warm, unpungent and bitter flavour) **[varying according to the chemical strain of the main components of the volatile oil (carvacrol and/or thymol)].** Dried oregano shall be free from any foreign odour or flavour and especially from mustiness. The colour ranges from pale greyish green to olive green.

3.2.3. Classification

In accordance with the Chemical and Physical Characteristics in section "3.2.4 styles of dried oregano are classified into the following grades:

- "Extra"

- Grade I/Class I, and
- Grade II/Class II.

The defects allowed must not affect the general appearance of the product as regards to its quality, keeping quality and presentation in the package.

3.2.4 Chemical and physical characteristics

3.2.4.1. Chemical characteristics

[Whole leaf,] crushed or rubbed/ground/powdered oregano shall comply with the chemical requirements as specified in Table 1.

Table 1

PARAMETERS	Requirements for [Whole or] Crushed/Rubbed styles			Requirements for Ground /Powdered styles		
	Extra	Class/ Grade I	Class/ Grade II	Extra	Class/ Grade I	Class/ Grade II
Moisture content (m/m,) maximum	11	12	12	11	12	12
Total ash (m/m, dry basis) maximum	9	10	10 [12]	9, [10]	10, [12]	10, [12]
Acid insoluble ash (m/m, dry basis) maximum	1.2 [1.5]	2	2	1.2, [1.5]	2, [2.5]	2, [3]
Volatile oil ml/100 g (dry basis) minimum	2,5	1.2 [1.5], [2.00]	1.0 [\leq 1.2], [1.75]	1.2, [1.5], [1.75]	[1], 1.1, [1.5], [1.50]	[0.8], 1, [$<$ 1.1]

3.2.4.2 Physical characteristics

[Whole leaf,] crushed or rubbed/ground/powdered oregano shall comply with the physical requirements as specified in Table 2.

Table 2

	PARAMETERS	Requirements for [Whole or] Crushed/Rubbed styles			Requirements for Ground/ Powdered styles		
		Extra	Class/ Grade I	Class/ Grade II	Extra	Class/ Grade I	Class/ Grade II
1	Extraneous matter ^(a) (maximum % mass fraction)	1	2	2	1	2	2
2	Foreign parts of other non-toxic plants (maximum % mass fraction)	2	2, [3]	2, [4]	2	2	2
3	Non-plant foreign parts (maximum % mass fraction)	0.1 [1]	0.1 [1]	0.1 [1]	1	1	1
4	Oregano powder ([smaller than 40 mesh/500 μ m] maximum %)	1, [5]	2, [10]	4 [2], [20]	N/A	N/A	N/A

^(a) All vegetable matter from the specific plant other than the required part. The proportion of stalks which have dimensions exceeding 7 mm in length and 3 mm in diameter shall not be more than 50% (w/w) of total extraneous matter content.

3.3 CLASSIFICATION OF DEFECTIVES

A container that fails to meet one or more of the applicable quality requirements, as set out in Section 3.2 (except those based on sample averages), should be considered as a “defective”.

3.4 LOT ACCEPTANCE

A lot should be considered as meeting the applicable quality requirements referred to in Section 3.2 when the number of “defectives”, as defined in Section 3.3, does not exceed the acceptance number (c) of the appropriate sampling plan, as described in Section 10. For factors evaluated on a sample average, a lot will be considered acceptable if the average meets the specified tolerance, and no individual sample is excessively out of tolerance.

4. FOOD ADDITIVES

No food additives and flavourings are permitted in the products covered by this standard.

5. CONTAMINANTS

5.1 The products covered by this standard shall comply with the maximum levels of the *General Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Food and Feed* (CODEX STAN 193-1995).

5.2. The products covered by this standard shall comply with the maximum residue limits (MRLs) established by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

5.3. Dehydration factors should be taken into consideration.

6. FOOD HYGIENE

6.1. The produce regulated by the provisions of this standard should be prepared and handled in accordance with the appropriate sections of the *General Principles of Food Hygiene* (CAC/RCP 1-1969), the *Code of Hygienic Practice for Spices and Dried Aromatic Plants* (CAC/RCP 42-1995) and other relevant Codex texts, such as codes of practice and codes of hygienic practice.

6.2. The produce must comply with microbiological criteria established in accordance with the *Principles for the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria Related to Foods* (CAC/GL 21-1997).

7. WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

Containers shall be as full as practicable without impairment of quality and shall be consistent with a proper declaration of contents for the product.

8. PACKAGING AND PRESENTATION

8.1 Uniformity

The contents of each package must be uniform, including particle size, and must only contain oregano of the same species, variety, cultivar and/or commercial type and quality. The visible part of the package must be representative of the entire contents.

9. LABELLING

9.1 The products covered by the provisions of this Standard shall be labelled in accordance with the *General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods* (CODEX STAN 1-1985). In addition, the following specific provisions apply:

9.2. NAME OF THE PRODUCT

9.2.1 The name of the product shall be as defined in Section 2 Product Definition. It may also include an indication of the varietal types and of the style as described in Section 2.2. as well as of the product classification, as described in Section 3.2.

9.2.2 Styles

The name of the product shall include the style (cut/description/presentation), as defined in Section 2.2.

9.3 LABELLING OF NON-RETAIL CONTAINERS

Information for non-retail containers shall be given either on the package or in accompanying documents, except that the name of the product, lot identification and the name and address of the manufacturer, packer, distributor or importer, as well as storage instructions, shall appear on the container. However, lot identification, and the name and address of the manufacturer, packer, distributor or importer may be replaced by an identification mark, provided that such a mark is clearly identifiable with the accompanying documents.

The processing method (e.g. dehydrated / air dried / freeze dried oregano) shall also be given.

10 METHODS OF ANALYSIS AND SAMPLING

Provision	Method	Principle	Type
Moisture	ISO 939:1980 AOAC 925.40 [ISO 760:1978] [AOAC 2001.12]	Gravimetry	I
Total ash	ISO 928:1997 AOAC 950.49	Gravimetry	I
Acid-insoluble ash	ISO 930:1997	Gravimetry	I
Non-volatile ether extract	ISO 1108:1992	Gravimetry	I
Volatile oils	ISO 6571:2008 [AOAC 948.22 OR [AOAC 962.17]	Gravimetry	I
Extraneous matter	ISO 927:2009	Visual examination	IV
Foreign matter	ISO 927:2009	Visual examination	IV

Sampling Plans

The appropriate inspection level is selected as follows:

Inspection level I - Normal Sampling

Inspection level II - Disputes, (Codex referee purposes sample size), enforcement or need for better lot estimate

[SAMPLING PLAN 1 (Inspection Level I, AQL = 6.5)

NET WEIGHT IS EQUAL TO OR LESS THAN 1 KG (2.2 LB)		
Lot Size (N)	Sample Size (n)	Acceptance Number (c)
4,800 or less	6	1
4,801 - 24,000	13	2
24,001 - 48,000	21	3
48,001 - 84,000	29	4
84,001 - 144,000	38	5
144,001 - 240,000	48	6
more than 240,000	60	7
NET WEIGHT IS GREATER THAN 1 KG (2.2 LB) BUT NOT MORE THAN 4.5 KG (10 LB)		
Lot Size (N)	Sample Size (n)	Acceptance Number (c)
2,400 or less	6	1
2,401 - 15,000	13	2
15,001 - 24,000	21	3
24,001 - 42,000	29	4
42,001 - 72,000	38	5
72,001 - 120,000	48	6
more than 120,000	60	7
NET WEIGHT GREATER THAN 4.5 KG (10 LB)		
Lot Size (N)	Sample Size (n)	Acceptance Number (c)
600 or less	6	1
601 - 2,000	13	2
2,001 - 7,200	21	3
7,201 - 15,000	29	4
15,001 - 24,000	38	5
24,001 - 42,000	48	6
more than 42,000	60	7

SAMPLING PLAN (Inspection Level II, AQL = 6.5)

NET WEIGHT IS EQUAL TO OR LESS THAN 1 KG (2.2 LB)		
Lot Size (N)	Sample Size (n)	Acceptance Number (c)
4,800 or less	13	2
4,801 - 24,000	21	3
24,001 - 48,000	29	4
48,001 - 84,000	38	5
84,001 - 144,000	48	6
144,001 - 240,000	60	7
more than 240,000	72	8
NET WEIGHT IS GREATER THAN 1 KG (2.2 LB) BUT NOT MORE THAN 4.5 KG (10 LB)		
Lot Size (N)	Sample Size (n)	Acceptance Number (c)
2,400 or less	13	2
2,401 - 15,000	21	3
15,001 - 24,000	29	4
24,001 - 42,000	38	5
42,001 - 72,000	48	6
72,001 - 120,000	60	7
more than 120,000	72	8
NET WEIGHT GREATER THAN 4.5 KG (10 LB)		
Lot Size (N)	Sample Size (n)	Acceptance Number (c)
600 or less	13	2
601 - 2,000	21	3
2,001 - 7,200	29	4
7,201 - 15,000	38	5
15,001 - 24,000	48	6
24,001 - 42,000	60	7
more than 42,000	72	8

Annex 2**GENERAL GUIDANCE FOR THE PROVISION OF COMMENTS**

In order to facilitate the compilation and prepare a more useful comments' document, Members and Observers, which are not yet doing so, are requested to provide their comments under the following headings:

- (i) General Comments
- (ii) Specific Comments

Specific comments should include a reference to the relevant section and/or paragraph of the document that the comments refer to.

When changes are proposed to specific paragraphs, Members and Observers are requested to provide their proposal for amendments accompanied by the related rationale. New texts should be presented in underlined/bold font and deletion in ~~strikethrough font~~.

In order to facilitate the work of the Secretariats to compile comments, Members and Observers are requested to refrain from using colour font/shading as documents are printed in black and white and from using track change mode, which might be lost when comments are copied / pasted into a consolidated document.

In order to reduce the translation work and save paper, Members and Observers are requested not to reproduce the complete document but only those parts of the texts for which any change and/or amendments is proposed.