

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
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Agenda Item 11

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME CODEX COMMITTEE ON FISH AND FISHERY PRODUCTS

Twenty-seventh Session
Cape Town, South Africa
28 February – 4 March 2005

DISCUSSION PAPER ON AN AMENDMENT TO THE LABELLING SECTION IN THE STANDARD FOR CANNED SARDINES AND SARDINE-TYPE PRODUCTS (Prepared by Morocco)

Background: mandate from CCFFP

1. During the 26th Session of the Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products, the Delegation of Morocco drew the attention of the Committee to the fact that the essential labelling issues that had been raised by the application of the Codex Standard for Canned Sardines had not been solved, and that this situation was a source of confusion for consumers since different species could be found under identical labels.
2. The Committee decided that the Delegation of Morocco would prepare a working document presenting the amendments it proposed to the Standard, for consideration by the next session of the Committee.

Introduction

3. The Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries elaborated by FAO recommends the liberalization of trade in fishery products and the elimination of unjustified barriers to trade in section 11.1 Responsible International Trade, in conformity with the principles established by the World Trade Organization. In this respect, such liberalization can occur only through transparency and improvement of the information presented to consumers, especially as regards product labelling.
4. The issue at stake with the labelling of species or families of species in a Codex standard is obviously the international recognition of a product, which is an entirely legitimate objective for a country that wants to add value to its resources and its know-how. This recognition appears in particular in the name of the product; the possibility to use a well known name in international trade is an important asset and therefore an important objective. While a large number of species aim at using a common name associated with high value, such common names are rather limited in number. Labelling provisions should therefore be precise enough to avoid confusing consumers, and to create fair trade practices in international trade.
5. The above considerations imply that products of the same nature should be found under the same marketing name, as regards consumer information as well as fair trade practices.
6. We are considering as a first stage the potential confusion created by the “Name of the Food” section in the Codex Standard for Canned Sardine and Sardine Type Products. We will put forward proposals in order to improve the precision of the information provided in this section.

“Name of the Food” section in the Codex Standard for Canned Sardines and Sardine Type Products- Potential Confusion

7. The name “X sardine” in the Standard for Canned Sardines and Sardine Type Products leads to inconsistencies with labelling provisions in other standards or draft standards. For example, *Sprattus sprattus* and *Clupea harengus* are “sprat” and “herring” in the Draft Standard for Salted Atlantic Herring and Salted Sprat but they can be named “X sardine” when they are canned. The species *Clupea bentincki* is candidate

species for the name “X sardine” but it could also be proposed as “herring” in the draft standard for “herring and salted sprat”; if other salted products made from *Clupeidae* under comparable conditions existed in the world, confusion would be still greater.

8. *Engraulis mordax*, *Engraulis anchoita* and *Engraulis ringens* are considered as “anchovies” in the draft standard for salted dried anchovies or as “X sardine” when they are canned; however the anchovy species *Engraulis crassicolus* is not classified as a canned sardine type product. In Europe the processing of some canned anchovies in oil is similar to sardine processing; these products are appreciated by consumers as canned anchovies but it would be unthinkable to present them as sardines; in addition, their marketing under the name “sardine-anchovies” would create confusion.

9. In other standards, the name of the product creates less potential ambiguity; for example shrimps are always named “shrimps” whether they are quick frozen or canned; in the standard for canned crab meat, quick frozen squid or lobsters or other crustaceans, products are well identified and cannot be found in various standards with different names.

Conclusion

10. The provisions concerning the name of the product are insufficient in the Codex Standard for Canned Sardines and Sardine Type products.

11. There are risks of confusion due to the fact that the same fish can be found under different names according to the standard applicable to the product (herring/sardine; anchovy/sardine); this risk of confusion can only increase with the number of species likely to be added to existing lists in the standards.

12. In order to limit this confusion, to provide better information to consumers and to facilitate fair trade practices, it is necessary to establish more precise labelling provisions.

13. The name of the product should be the common or usual name of the species used, in conformity with the law and custom of the country in which the product is sold, in a manner not to mislead the consumer; perception by the consumer of the identity of a species can be so different from one country to another that it is a good solution to limit confusion.

14. When no custom exist, in conformity with Codex labelling provisions, the name under which the product is sold should not create confusion for consumers with similar products that are available on the market.

15. The scientific name, which is the only universally recognized name of a species, should be part of the labelling; for products in international trade, this indication is necessary in order to undertake analyses as to the identity of the product.

16. In a world-wide market in which consumers ask for references concerning the origin of products, the indication of the origin of the product is an important information.

17. The following provisions should therefore be introduced in the Codex Standard for Canned Sardines and Sardine Type Products.

Proposed redrafting of point 6.1.1. in the labelling section:

6.1.1

i) “Sardines” (to be reserved exclusively for *Sardina pilchardus* (Walbaum));

ii) for other species:

- if the product is sold with a local common name on a specific market, this common name is used for this market, and may be followed or preceded by the indication “sardine type canned product”;
- if no custom exists as regards the name of the product on the market, the name of the product consists of the term “sardine type canned product” , with the addition of the common name or scientific name of the species, and possibly the country of origin or the fishing area.