

# codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE  
ORGANIZATION  
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WORLD  
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**Agenda Item 4 (c)**

**CX/FFV 06/13/9-Add.1**

## JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

### CODEX COMMITTEE ON FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

13<sup>th</sup> Session, Mexico City, Mexico, 25 - 29 September 2006

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### PROPOSED DRAFT CODEX STANDARD FOR BITTER CASSAVA

(AT STEP 3)

#### AUSTRALIAN

Please find below comments from Australia in response to CX/ FFV/ 06/13/9 on the proposed Draft Codex Standard for Bitter Cassava at Step 3. The Australian Government would like to thank the Commission for the opportunity to make comments.

#### 1. Proposed Draft Codex Standard for Bitter Cassava at Step 3

Australia notes that the document, as written, is largely identical to the Codex Standard for Sweet Cassava (except for the substitution of ‘bitter’ for ‘sweet’ and a footnote defining bitter cassava).

While the original project document stated that consumption of exported cassava is targeted to Fijians and Tongans overseas, diets are becoming increasingly multicultural and there is concern that an exported product may be consumed by those who are not familiar with the appropriate preparation of the product leading to public health and safety issues associated with the consumption of products that contain large amounts of cyanogens.

Following on from the above considerations, it is imperative that data are gathered for a ‘safe level’ of consumption to be determined for regulatory purposes. Australia is aware that to date, JECFA has not been able to set a safe level for hydrogen cyanide in plants (containing cyanogenic glycosides) used for food because of insufficient quantitative toxicological and epidemiological information. Given the inherent dangers involved in consumption of inadequately processed bitter cassava varieties (containing between 50-200 mg/hydrogen cyanide equivalents per kilogram fresh weight), Australia recommends that such studies should be undertaken before the Standard can be further considered by the committee.

Australia also supports the inclusion of a method (or methods) in the standard to determine cyanide content of raw cassava. An example of a sufficiently sensitive and unsophisticated method (picrate method) that may be considered is given by Haque & Bradbury (2002)<sup>1</sup>. Any method of analysis would need to be endorsed by CCMAS.

With regard to Quality and Sizing provisions included in Section 2 (Provisions Concerning Quality), Section 3 (Provisions Concerning Sizing) and Section 4 (Provisions Concerning Tolerances), Australia wishes to point out that such provisions should not be included in commodity standards as they place unnecessary limits on commercial trade, unless they have bearing on health and safety or eating quality. They are driven by consumer and market demand and they should be left to industry practice. In particular, the attention of the Committee is drawn to the recent deliberations at the CCFV Working Group Meeting in Chile where it was recognised, for apples, that size per se is not an issue and that restrictive sizing may stifle innovation.

<sup>1</sup> Haque, M. & Bradbury, J.H. (2002). Total cyanide determination of plants and foods using the picrate and acid hydrolysis methods. Food Chem 77: 107 – 114.

**EUROPEAN COMMUNITY**

The European Community and its Member States would like to submit the following comments:

**Section 2.1 Minimum Requirements:**

The mechanical damage mentioned in the 9<sup>th</sup> indent reading "**practically free of mechanical damage and bruising**" is already covered by the minimum requirement "whole" as well as by the defects (scraped areas and scarring) allowed in Classes I and II.

Therefore, the 9<sup>th</sup> indent should read:

"- practically free of bruising"

**Section 2.1.1**

In accordance with the standard layout the sentence should read as follows:

"The cassava must have been carefully harvested and reached an appropriate degree of physical development **in accordance with criteria characteristic** of the variety and the area in which they are grown."

**Section 2.2.3**

As the standard may be applied at all marketing stages, it is recommended to allow some defects of the pulp in Class II. Therefore the last sentence of this section should read as follows:

"The pulp must be free from major defects."