

# CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of  
the United Nations



World Health  
Organization

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**Agenda Item 6**

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

**First Session**

**Kochi, India, 11-14 February 2014**

**PROPOSALS FOR NEW WORK FOR THE CODEX COMMITTEE ON SPICES AND CULINARY HERBS**

**Reply to CL 2013/22-SCH and Comments of Argentina, Iran and Kenya**

## **ARGENTINA**

Argentina ya ha emitido opinión al respecto y remitido dos documentos generales y dos proyectos de norma para el pimentón y el orégano. Los países que han dado opinión hasta ahora, poseen coincidencias en algunas especies (EJ pimientas, tomillo, comino, chiles, jengibre), por lo que Argentina apoya que se priorice el tratamiento de pimienta por ser un producto de importación que necesita una norma de referencia para mejorar la calidad. Asimismo, se sugiere que para comenzar a consolidar la agenda del Comité se apoyen las propuestas y anteproyectos elaborados por Argentina para Pimentón o paprika y orégano teniendo en cuenta su importancia en el comercio la necesidad de establecer parámetros de calidad.

## **IRAN**

See Appendix I – Proposal for new work on a Codex standard for Saffron

## **KENYA**

Kenya is pleased to see many project documents from different countries for consideration at the forthcoming CCSC meeting. We would like to support all of them so that they can be advanced to the next step. However we would urge the committee to use Criteria for the Establishment of Work Priorities and balancing number of Herbs –Culinary and Spices standards based on the volume of production worldwide.

## **Appendix 1**

This Appendix compiles proposals (i.e. project document) for new work submitted by Iran

### **PROPOSAL FOR NEW WORK ON A CODEX STANDARD FOR SAFFRON**

The National Codex Alimentarius Commission of Iran appreciates the work of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs in the development of worldwide quality standards for Spices and Culinary Herbs and is pleased to submit the following project document for a Codex standard for SAFFRON for the protection of the consumer's health and fair practices in consideration of production and trade volume as a new work for the Committee.

#### **1. Purpose and the scope of the standard**

The scope of the work is to establish a worldwide quality standard for filaments and cut filaments or powder of Saffron obtained from *Crocus sativus* L. to facilitate international trade and consumer protection, which must be dried to the consumer after appropriate preparation. The objective of the standard is to consider the essential quality characteristics of Saffron for industrial food production and for direct consumption, including for catering purposes or for repackaging, as required to aid international trade in this product.

#### **2. Relevance and timeliness**

Due to the growing trend of worldwide Saffron production and trade, it is necessary to establish a commodity standard covering the safety, quality and hygiene and labeling in order to have a reference that has been internationally agreed by consensus between the main producing and trading countries across the world. More significantly, the present status of Saffron is not limited to any particular region and hence justifies the elaboration of an international standard commensurate with the Saffron's true standing as an increasingly valuable worldwide commodity. In addition, the drafting of a Codex standard for saffron will help to protect consumers' health and to promote fair trade in accordance with the international agreements in particular the WTO SPS and TBT Agreements.

The current and historical significance of Saffron shows, Saffron is a strategic product of Iran. Iran's share of Saffron from the world production and export is almost 92 %. Labor requirement for Saffron production is 200 man day per hectare. However, this figure is much higher in the processing and marketing sectors. DRC and SCB indices show that production of Saffron in Iran has comparative advantage. Marketing margin of Saffron is high so that producers receive less than 65 % of final price of consumer. Over 70 % of household income made by Saffron. It is of particular importance to point out that to date; Iran is considered the origin and one of the main genetic reservoirs of Saffron. Iran is the number one producer and exporter of saffron in the world. Furthermore, due to suitable climate, quality of Iranian saffron is the best among commercially available in international trade which is grown in an extreme climate; hot and dry weather in summer and cold in winter, that doesn't need more water. Considering its frequent use, special properties of this drug, its role in economic life of Khorasan, Fars and Kerman provinces farmers and high value added of Saffron, it is necessary to develop the production, export and marketing of this valuable crop. Other aspects of the importance of Saffron include high productivity of water in cultivated area of Saffron, employment, preventing of rural migration, non-oil export development due to government policy for increasing then on petroleum export. It has investigated the economics of Saffron from different dimensions like marketing, employment, household's income, globalization, return of research and comparative advantage. Saffron is used as a spice in many culinary products: Food products such as margarine, sausages, cake powder, and many desserts, dairy products such as butter and cheese. Saffron is also used in other products such as sweets, candy, ice cream, jelly, beverages, wine, chicken, rice, seafood, soup, bread, and cake.

#### **3. Main aspects to be covered**

The standard entails main aspects related to the definition of the produce, essential quality factors e.g. coloring strength, moisture and labeling requirements in order to provide certainty to the consumer on the nature and characteristics. The standard will supply high quality and safe products to protect consumer's health and against misleading practices by including all the necessary parameters such as coloring strength, moisture, proper labeling, etc.

The most relevant items which may be considered are related to:

- Establish the minimum requirements of saffron which shall be complied with, independently from the quality parameters and other requirements regardless of class.
- Define the categories to classify saffron in accordance with its characteristics.
- Establish the tolerance as regards quality and size that may be permitted of saffron contained in a package.
- Include the provisions to be considered relating to the uniformity of the packaged product and the packaging used.
- Include provisions for the labeling and marking of the product in accordance with the General Standard for the labeling of Prepackaged Foods.
- Include provisions for pesticides and contaminants with the reference to the General Standard for Contaminants and toxins in food.
- Include provisions for hygiene with the reference to the general principles of food hygiene and other relevant codes of hygiene practices.
- References to methods of analysis and sampling

#### **4. Assessment against the Criteria for the Establishment of Work Priorities**

##### **General criterion**

The elaboration of a Codex standard for saffron would be beneficial for developing countries in particular, because they are the major producers, exporters and consumers of saffron. It is necessary that the quality of produce meets consumer and needs minimum requirements of food quality and safety.

##### **Criteria applicable to commodities**

##### **(a) Volume of production and consumption in individual countries and volume and pattern of trade between countries**

Saffron is one of the most important export products and plays significant role in income and employment of Saffron producers. Iran, Greece, Morocco, Spain and Italy are among main countries dealing with Saffron production. Among these countries, Iran as the original home of Saffron has always had the largest area harvest and production area. According to statistics in recent years, the amount of Saffron production in Iran was 239 t which constitutes 93.7% of the world Saffron production. Greece with 5.7 tons and Morocco and India with 2.3 t come respectively in second and third positions regarding Saffron production. Iran has more than 96 % of the total world harvest areas among other major countries, having 79394 hectare harvest area of Saffron. Due to drought, Saffron yield has particularly decreased during the recent year while the price for Saffron has varied considerably. Historically, Iran has been the most important exporter of Saffron in the world; having 239 tons Saffron export and 84 % of the total export the world. In summary, Saffron is a traditional production of Iran and production share of this product is 93.7 % of the world total production, 84 % of it being exported. In fact, Iran is the largest producer and exporter of Saffron in international level. Major importer countries of Iran's Saffron are: The United Arab Emirates (UAE), Spain, Turkmenistan, France and Italy.

##### **(b) Diversification of national legislations and apparent resultant or potential impediments to International trade:**

Imports of Saffron take place for many applications. It goes for filaments and cut filaments or powder in the producing countries. The consignments are traded based on applications and customer requirement. However it would be preferred that the trade in the special form is carried under an International criteria based on Codex Standard. Therefore, the new work would provide internationally recognized specific standards in order to enhance international trade and to accommodate the importers requirements.

Any extra addition in production could be well absorbed by the global market on account of the continued demand by processing industries.

International organizations like the European Spice Association, American Spice Trade Association and ISO have been dealt with the standards for Saffron. Many conventions including that of the World Spice

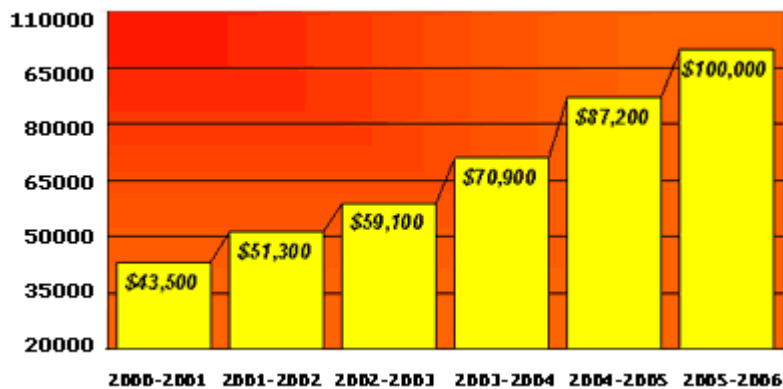
Congress and the World Spice Organization have addressed the issue of harmonization of grades and

specifications for Saffron. Therefore, the new work would provide internationally recognized specific standards in order to enhance international trade and to accommodate the exporter requirements.

**(c) International or regional market potential**

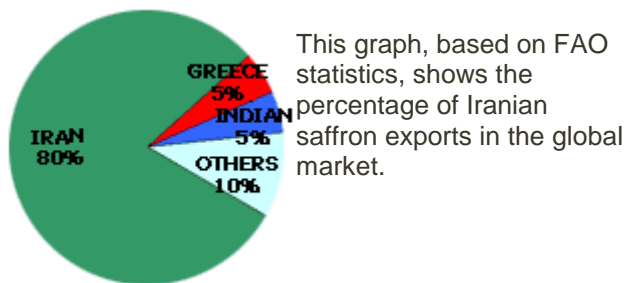
The import of Saffron by most countries is increasing. UAE is the largest customer with a total purchase of 78.8 t per year of Saffron. Spain is the second largest with 56.4 tons. Now, some 90 % of Iran’s Saffron exports are in bulk. Spain processes and re- exports some 40-50 % of Iran’s Saffron production. Values of Iran’s Saffron export have an increasing trend during 2000-2006. With respect to high price of Saffron in non- oil export, it has an important role in Iran’s economy. Saffron is exported to many countries nearly to 200 ton with value 500 million \$. Processing Saffron is processed in 70 SME units. The most frequency is in Khorasan Razavi Province, with 50 units. Processing of Saffron is drying, sorting, drying & packaging. Total processing capacity is 220 ton. We have 12 saffron national standards in Iran, which are about saffron specification, microbiology, sanitation manual ....and etc.

The statistics of Iranian saffron exports, according to the Customs Organization of Iran, are shown below (values are in millions of dollars):



Note: Statistics are from March of each year.

According to FAO statistics (2004), Iran is the number one exporter of saffron in recent years and Iranian saffron is exported to many countries.



This graph, based on FAO statistics, shows the percentage of Iranian saffron exports in the global market.

## Export of Saffron from Iran during 2001-2012

Year	Exports(Tons)	USD Value
2001	121	51
2002	125	56
2003	138.9	67
2004	172	95
2005	201	97
2006	140	76
2007	100	46
2008	100	78
2009	65.5	179
2010	108	331
2011	122	368
2012	139	419

Source: Ministry of Jahadekeshavari (Iran -2012)

**(d) Amenability of commodity to standardization**

The characteristics of Saffron from its cultivation to retail sale e.g. cultivar varieties, composition, quality characteristics, packaging, etc. all lead to adequate parameters for the standardization of the product. Using ISO standards as well as ASTA and ESA technical inputs from saffron producing countries shall be welcomed as the basis to develop a global harmonized standard by considering other countries / regions needs should therefore be amenable to / facilitate worldwide harmonization.

**(e) Coverage of the main consumer protection and trade issues by existing or proposed general standards**

There is no a commodity standard covering saffron. The proposed standard will heighten consumer protection and facilitate saffron trade by establishing an internationally agreed quality standard.

**(f) Number of commodities which would need separate standards including whether raw, semi-processed or processed**

A single standard for saffron will cover all varieties of saffron traded worldwide. The varieties of saffron like powder, filaments and cut filaments and its products will be examined under this individually.

**(g) Work already undertaken by other international organizations in this field and/or suggested by the relevant international intergovernmental body (ies)**

The existing standards which may be considered while developing a codex standard for saffron are:

- ISO international standard 3632-2003
- European Commission directives

**5. Relevance to the Codex strategic objectives**

The elaboration of a Codex standard for saffron will promote the maximum application of codex standards by countries in their national legislation and will consequently facilitate international trade. Likewise, the elaboration of this standard will help to protect consumer health against risks associated with these products. The new work contributes to state the essential quality requirements for saffron for human consumption with the purpose of protecting the consumer's health and achieving fair practices in the food trade. This proposal is relevant to Strategic Goal 1 – Establish international food standards that address current and emerging food issues and its corresponding Objectives of the Strategic Plan 2014-2019.

## 6. Information on the relation between the proposal and other existing Codex documents.

This proposal is for a new global standard and has no relation to any other existing Codex text on this item, except that this standard will make reference to relevant standards and related texts developed by General Subject Committees.

## 7. Identification of any need for any requirements for and availability of expert scientific advice

For the elaboration of this project document, the information generated by the research working group at national level for the characterization of saffron has been taken as reference. Therefore, in case of requiring further information in the course of elaboration of the standard, this group of experts may be consulted including the expertise available in other importing / exporting countries participating in the CCSCH.

## 8. Identification of any need for technical input to the standard from external bodies so that this can be planned for.

The technical inputs from ISO, EU, American Spice Trade Association, European Spice Association and World Spice Organization as well as from Saffron producing countries shall be welcomed as they have already done work related to the subject. Also ISO standards can be used as a step process to frame the codex standards for Saffron.

## 9. Proposed timeline for completion of the new work

DATE	PROCEDURES
February, 2014 CCSHC	Iran- Submit the proposal draft for saffron. CCSHC –Agreement to start new work on a proposal Codex Standard for Saffron.
June/July 2014 CCEXEC/CAC	CCEXEC – Critical Review Process: Recommendation to start new work on a proposed draft Codex Standard for Saffron. CAC – Approval of new work. Circulation of the proposed draft Standard for comments at Step 3.
May, 2015 CCSHC	CCSHC – Consideration of the proposed draft Standard at Step 4.
June/July, 2015 CCEXEC/CAC	CCEXEC – Critical Review Process: Recommendation for adoption at Step 5. CAC – Adoption at Step 5. Circulation for comments at Step 6. <u>Effort will be made for adoption of the proposed draft Standard at Step 5/8 in June/July 2015 depending upon relevant inputs and agreement from members.</u>
September, 2016 CCSHC	CCSHC - Consideration of the draft Standard At Step 7.
June/July, 2016 CAC	CCEXEC – Critical Review Process: Recommendation for adoption at Step 8. CAC – Adoption at Step 8 (Codex Standard for Saffron).