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SOFT DRINKS

(Prepared by the Government of the United Kingdom)

1. At the first session in Rome of the Codex Alimentarius Commission the United Kingdom Government offered to prepare a background paper on soft drinks for consideration and possible further action by the Commission at its next session (paragraph 65 of the Report of the First Session). The present paper has been prepared by the U. K. Government to serve this purpose, and to act as a guide for discussions by the Commission on this subject.

Definition and Description

2. For the purpose of this paper soft drinks are taken to exclude fruit juices (sweetened or unsweetened and concentrated or not) vegetable juices, alcoholic beverages (wine, spirits, beer, cider, etc.) and natural (or artificial) spring water (unsweetened and with or without added mineral substances).
3. The most important types of soft drinks are
- (i) Ready-to-drink essence flavoured beverages. These are practically always carbonated. The essences used in them may be of natural or of synthetic origin.
  - (ii) Ready-to-drink beverages containing fruit or fruit juice. These can be made from fruit juice or concentrated fruit juice with the addition of sweetening, citric acid, and water. The normal juice content is not generally sufficient to impart flavour, and essences are therefore added. This class is not therefore entirely distinct from class (i), since soft drinks are made with many differing ratios of fruit juice to essence. Ready-to-drink beverages can also be made by macerating whole fruit ("comminuted citrus drinks"). These beverages are composed of fruit juice and tissue with natural peel oil emulsion, thoroughly homogenized (i. e. with uniform dispersion of the solid matter throughout the drink.)

This class includes both carbonated and uncarbonated beverages.

Similar in some ways to these are the so-called "non-alcoholic wines" and other fermented beverages similar to alcoholic ones, but with a very-low alcohol content.

(iii) Beverages intended for drinking after dilution. These are un-carbonated, and usually have a fruit base, though flavouring essences may be added as well. They include citrus "squashes" (containing fruit juice with cells, sugar syrup, essences, and citric acid, and intended to be diluted four or five times before consumption), and concentrated comminuted citrus drinks, similar to those described in class (ii). This class also includes cordials containing non-citrus juices and flavoured cordials, as well as the "sirops" which are known on the continent of Europe.

4. The largest single ingredient of soft drinks is water, and their manufacture depends on a supply of good potable water. In addition to the water and the fruit juice or flavouring, most soft drinks, of all types, require sweetening. Either a sugar or an artificial sweetener can be used for this purpose. There is a certain demand, from diabetics and consumers wishing to achieve weight control, for soft drinks which contain no, or very little, added sugar.

5. Soft drinks, as such, are not of great importance in international trade. Their bulk is large in relation to their value, and most countries have their needs supplied by local manufacturers. In some cases firms establish factories abroad rather than export their products. There is, however, a considerable trade in concentrates, particularly those used for the cola-type drinks, fruit juice based and comminuted fruit drinks. Similarly many countries import considerable quantities of fruit juices for manufacture into soft drinks.

6. National trade statistics in general do not distinguish between the various classes of soft drinks. Significant export figures for 1963 were as follows:

| <u>Country</u> | <u>Value in Thousand U. S. dollars</u> |   |
|----------------|--|---|
| U. S. A.       | 7,855                                  | (including 7,014 "Flavouring and colouring syrups for beverages") |
| U. K.          | 5,998                                  |   |
| Netherlands    | 2,863                                  |   |
| France         | 879                                    |   |

#### National Standards for Soft Drinks

7. In many countries there are statutory standards for soft drinks. Standards shortly to be in force in the U. K. prescribe minimum contents of carbohydrate sweetener and maximum contents of artificial sweetener for all soft drinks, the amounts varying according to type of drink, and minimum fruit juice or potable fruit contents for the various soft drinks in which the consumer would expect some such content. They also prescribe which acids may be added to soft drinks. There are regulations concerned with nomenclature of citrus drinks, in particular for the use of the words "squash" (to describe beverages intended for dilution), "crush" (to describe ready-to-drink juice beverages), "drink" (to describe comminuted drinks), and ade (to describe essence flavoured drinks for example orangeade or lemonade). Artificial sweeteners, where used, are to be declared on the label. The U. K. also controls the use of preservatives and colouring in soft drinks.

8. There are regulations in most European countries covering ready-to-drink beverages, whether containing fruit juice or flavoured by means of essences. Many of these countries prescribe minimum fruit juice contents for those beverages which contain fruit juice (for citrus drinks the limits vary between 4% and 12%). Some prescribe minimum sugar contents - the most commonly prescribed amount being about 8%, and several countries prohibit the use of artificial sweeteners. Most countries prescribe the acids which may be used, though only in a few cases are maximum amounts prescribed in regulations. Three countries prohibit the use of added colouring matter in beverages containing fruit juices. Nearly all countries control the preservatives which may be used, though the particular preservatives and quantities allowed vary widely. Some countries do not allow the use of synthetic flavouring essences at all, and many prescribe the maximum amounts of quinine and caffeine which may be used in essence flavoured beverages. In several countries the use of fruit designs on the labels of these drinks is forbidden.

9. The United States of America have no federal regulations on soft drinks. Many of the States of the Union do however have standards for them which vary widely from State to State. The U. S. Federal Law requires the use of artificial sweeteners to be declared and some States forbid the use of a mixture of sugar and artificial sweetener in soft drinks and a few forbid the use of saccharine altogether. In Canada, neither the Federal nor the Provincial Governments have standards for soft drinks. Soft drinks, must however, conform to the general requirements of the Canadian Food and Drugs Act; preservatives must be declared on label, but no declaration of added colour, artificial flavouring, or other ingredients is required.

10. There are standards for soft drinks in Australia. These differ from State to State, but in general prescribe minimum fruit juice contents for ready-to-drink fruit juice beverages and for fruit juice beverages intended to be diluted, and prescribe minimum sugar contents (except for low-calorie drinks). Beverages flavoured with natural and artificial essences are also controlled, the latter being required to be labelled "imitation". The regulations also control the preservatives which may be used.

11. The South African Bureau of Standards has drawn up specifications for citrus squashes, with minimum fruit juice contents. Under these standards artificial flavours are not allowed, while artificial colours and preservatives are, and sucrose is the only sweetener allowed.

12. In New Zealand there are standards for Fruit Syrups, Flavoured Syrups, and artificial syrups, and for Fruit Non-Fermented Beverages, Flavoured Non-Fermented Beverages, and Artificial Non-Fermented Beverages. The standards for syrups (which also cover cordials) lay down a minimum for sugar or glucose, and, for fruit syrups, a minimum fruit juice content. Fruit syrups and non-fermented beverages must be composed of fruit juices, while flavouring ones may be flavoured with extracts and essences of fruits, and artificial ones with artificial flavourings. Sulphur dioxide or sodium benzoate are permitted as preservatives, and artificial colouring is permitted except for beverages labelled as "pure" or "real" fruit.

13. The Codigo Latinoamericano de Alimentos recommends minimum fruit juice contents for natural fruit syrups, maximum alcohol contents for soft drinks, and rules for the use of the terms "natural" and "Artificial".

### International Standards for Soft Drinks

14. The Codex Alimentarius Commission has said (paragraph 15(d) of the Report of its First Session) that, when international standards are being drawn up, "recipe" standards should be avoided as far as possible. This would be of particular significance in any work proposed on international standards for soft drinks. The number of different varieties of soft drinks produced in different countries is very large and is increasing rapidly as the industry expands in most countries. It would therefore be important that international standards should not unduly restrict the industry, particularly as soft drinks are rather more important for quenching the thirst of the consumer than as a source of nutrition. Soft drinks are however frequently consumed in large amounts by children, a vulnerable section of the community, and therefore minimum standards are considered necessary by most countries.

15. In view of the complexity of the industry and of the wide variety of national standards, as well as the relatively minor importance of soft drinks in international trade, the Codex Alimentarius Commission may consider that international standards for soft drinks should not be given priority in its work. If however it is decided to undertake work on soft drinks, it will be necessary to decide whether to concentrate on questions of labelling or whether, in view of the importance of soft drinks to children, who are better protected by minimum compositional standards than by labelling, to work towards minimum platform standards. Work on bacteriological standards would be essential and could be part of the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission Expert Committee on Food Hygiene under the Chairmanship of the United States of America. Careful examination would be needed before any international standards for sugar content could be laid down, in view of the growing demand in some countries for low-calorie drinks, but it might be useful to consider the position of glucose as an alternative to sucrose. Work on the acids, preservatives, colours, flavourings, frothing materials and brominated oils in soft drinks is very desirable and this could be carried out by Codex Alimentarius Commission Expert Committee on Additives under the Chairmanship of the Netherlands.