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REP14/SCH

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Thirty seventh Session

Geneva, Switzerland, 14-18 July 2014

REPORT OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE

CODEX COMMITTEE ON SPICES AND CULINARY HERBS

Kochi (Cochin), Kerala, India

11 -14 February 2014

NOTE: *This report contains Codex Circular Letter CL 2014/4-SCH*



To: Codex Contact Points
Interested International Organizations

From: Secretariat,
Codex Alimentarius Commission, Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
00153 Rome, Italy

Subject: **Distribution of the Report of the First Session of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (REP14/SCH)**

The report of the First Session of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs will be considered by the 37th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Geneva, Switzerland, 14-18 July 2014).

REQUEST FOR COMMENTS

Request for proposals for new work for the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (for consideration by the 2nd CCSCH) (REP14/SCH para. 34).

Governments and international organizations wishing to submit proposals for new work for the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH) should do so in writing, **by e-mail**, to (i) National Codex Contact Point of India (NCCP), Food Safety and Standards Authority of India, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, FDA Bhawan, Kotla Road, New Delhi -110002, INDIA, Tel: +91-11-23237439, Email: codex-india@nic.in; and (ii) Mr Gaurav Dwivedi, Liaison Officer, Secretariat, Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs, Email: ccsch@indianspices.com with a copy to the Secretariat, Codex Alimentarius Commission, Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy (E-mail: Codex@fao.org) **before 30 May 2015**.

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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The First Session of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs reached the following conclusions:

Matters for Approval by the 37th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission

Matters for Approval (New Work)

The Committee agreed to submit to the 37th Session of the Commission, through the Executive Committee, the proposals for the following new work:

- Standard for Black, White and Green Pepper (para. 62 and Appendix II);
- Standard for Cumin (para. 65 and Appendix III);
- Standard for Oregano (para. 68 and Appendix IV); and
- Standard for Thyme (para. 72).

Matters Referred / Interest to Codex Committees

Committees on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (CCFFV) and on Processed Fruits and Vegetables (CCPFV)

The Committee:

- Agreed to seek clarification from the upcoming sessions of CCFFV and CCPFV as to whether paprika was in their workplan (para. 60 and CX/SCH 14/1/6).

Matters Referred / Interest to Codex Committees

The Committee:

- Agreed that; (i) the CCSCCH would meet approximately every 18 months with five-days session depending on the workload (para. 29); (ii) the number of working documents related to standards on spices and culinary herbs would be flexible and to find a balance between the work on spices and culinary herbs depending on proposals submitted (para.31); (iii) at each session an in-session working group would review the proposals for new work, submitted in reply to a Circular Letter, against the prioritisation criteria in the Procedural Manual (para.34); (v) at its next session it would consider a proposal for grouping of spices and culinary herbs and to use the Codex *Format of Commodity Standards* for the development of new standards (paras 39-40); and (vi) it would use the Codex criteria to prioritise its work (para.49).
- Noted that India was prepared to co-host a session of CCSCCH with Nigeria after the first two or three session (para. 44).

INTRODUCTION

1. The Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH) held its First Session in Kochi (Cochin), Kerala, India from 11 to 14 February 2014, at the kind invitation of the Government of India. Dr M. R. Sudharshan, Director Research, Spices Board India, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, chaired the Session. The Session was attended by 101 delegates from 40 Member countries and one Member organization, Observers from six international organizations and WHO. The list of participants, including the Secretariats, is given in Appendix I to this report.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

2. The Honourable Governor of Kerala Mr Nikhil Kumar inaugurated the session and welcomed the delegates to India. In his opening remarks, the Governor pointed out that the holding of this session in Kochi, was bringing Codex activities closer to the people and enhanced India's commitment to raise awareness on the importance of food safety amongst its population. He stressed that the road map set by the First Session of the Committee would ensure high quality standards for spices and culinary herbs, assure consumer's health and promote fair trade. He urged the Committee to develop science-based standards, which would support increased productivity for the benefit of all. The Governor concluded by wishing the delegates fruitful deliberations and a pleasant stay in Kochi.

3. Dr A. Jayathilak IAS, Chairman of Spices Board India, while addressing the delegates, recalled that CCSCH had been established with an intention of protecting the health of consumers and ensuring the fair trade of spices and culinary herbs through better transparency. He called upon the Committee to look for viable solutions that would ensure production of safe and equitable distribution of food. The Chairman of Spices Board India thanked all Codex Members for choosing India to host the Committee.

4. Mr S. Dave, Chairperson of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, welcomed the delegates. He noted that the establishment of CCSCH coincided with the 50th anniversary of Codex and that spices and culinary herbs were a new sector for Codex work on commodity standards and that these commodities impact on every cuisine and every morsel of food consumed anywhere in the world. Mr Dave congratulated the Government of India for taking the responsibility of hosting CCSCH, noting that this responsibility required the support of all Members of Codex, including the Codex Secretariat.

5. Mr K. Chandramouli (IAS Retd.), Chairperson, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India, congratulated the Spices Board India for the commendable work to prepare the First Session of CCSCH in a short time. He noted that the production of spices and culinary herbs was mainly in developing countries and that the lack of standards was an impediment to the expanding trade. He called for increased awareness about Codex activities amongst key stakeholders, especially in developing countries, in order to further spread the benefits of the important work done by Codex. He finally wished the Committee fruitful deliberations.

6. Mr J. S. Deepak IAS, Additional Secretary, Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry of India, welcomed the delegates and recalled the long history of trade in spices, which originated in the region. He highlighted the importance of Codex as a key international platform for harmonization of food standards and the importance of the work of CCSCH to promote growth in the sector for the benefit of all stakeholders. He pointed out that developing countries, which are the main producers of spices and culinary herbs, continue to face a number of obstacles in accessing global markets, including imposition of quality parameters by importing countries and other non-tariff barriers. In concluding his remarks, Mr J.S Deepak IAS, mentioned that the setting of standards would pave way for enhancing quality of spices and culinary herbs and increasing monetary benefits for the farmers.

7. Dr Kunal Bagchi, Regional Advisor, Nutrition and Food Safety, WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia, speaking on behalf of WHO and FAO, addressed the delegates. He noted the increasing importance that spices and culinary herbs play in the livelihoods of smallholder farmers and the increasing global demand for and recognition of the health and culinary benefits of herbs and spices. He drew the attention of the Committee to the WHO and FAO programme to strengthen food safety and the health of consumers and reiterated the commitment of WHO and FAO to continue support to the work of Codex.

8. Ms Awilo Ochieng Pernet, Vice-Chairperson of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, also addressed the Committee and expressed her appreciation to the Government of India and the Spices Board India, for the great efforts to organise the First session of CCSCH.

9. Dr P. S. Sreekantan Thampi, Organizing Secretary CCSCH, gave a vote of thanks to the dignitaries and the delegates.

Division of Competence¹

10. The Committee noted the division of competence between the European Union and its Member States, according to paragraph 5, Rule II of the Procedure of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, as presented in CRD1.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Agenda Item 1)²

11. The Committee adopted the Provisional Agenda as its Agenda for the Session and agreed to:

- Establish an in-session Working Group, chaired by the United States of America, to consider proposals for new work submitted in reply to CL 2013/22-SCH and prepare recommendations for the Plenary (Agenda Item 6) taking into account the discussion of Agenda Item 5; and
- Consider the Agenda Items in the following order: 1, 2, 3, 5, 4, 6, 7 and 8.

12. The Committee noted that the in-session Working Group would be convened immediately after conclusion of the discussion of Agenda Item 5 in order to allow for the use of interpretation into English, French, Spanish and Arabic available for the Plenary. It further agreed that Agenda 4 would be considered on the second day along with the other agenda items.

MATTERS REFERRED BY THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER CODEX COMMITTEES (Agenda Item 2)³

13. The Committee noted the information presented in CX/SCH 14/1/2 concerning the decisions and discussions of the 36th Session of the Commission related to the establishment of CCSCH and the programme of the First Session.

14. The Committee also noted matters arising from the 45th Session of the Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH) regarding the work on the proposed draft Code of Hygienic Practice for Spices and Dried Aromatic Herbs and of the 45th Session of the Committee on Food Additives (CCFA) regarding the work on the alignment of food additive provisions in commodity standards and the *General Standard for Food Additives* (GSFA).

ACTIVITIES OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS RELEVANT TO THE WORK OF CCSCH (Agenda Item 3)⁴

FAO and WHO

15. The Representative of WHO, referring to CX/SCH 14/1/3 Add. 2, informed the Committee on recent activities undertaken by FAO and WHO in both scientific advice and capacity development relevant to the work of CCSCH. With regard to the provision of scientific advice, the 45th CCFH had requested FAO and WHO: (i) to undertake a risk assessment to determine whether there was a significant public health risk from *Salmonella* associated with consumption of spices and dried aromatic herbs; and (ii) provide scientific advice on which low-moisture foods were considered the highest priority and the associated microbiological hazards and information relevant to the risk management of microbiological hazards associated with the identified range of low-moisture foods. The Representative also noted the activities of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR).

16. The WHO Representative informed the Committee of the on-going technical capacity building activities in the Asia region, including support to the Government of Nepal for strengthening their capacity to export ginger and the development of a training manual on ASEAN Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) in fruits and vegetable sector.

International Pepper Community (IPC)

17. The Observer from IPC, referring to the submission in CX/SCH 14/1/3 Add.1, explained that IPC was an intergovernmental organization established under the United Nation Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP) in 1972 and that IPC, in consultation with its members, had already established standards for black and white pepper. The Observer also said that IPC was willing to work with Codex on the development of a standard for pepper.

¹ CRD 1 (Annotated Agenda – Division of competence between the European Union and its Member States).

² CX/SCH 14/1/1.

³ CX/SCH 14/1/2; CRD 3 (Comment of Cameroon).

⁴ CX/SCH 14/1/3; CX/SCH 14/1/3 Add.1; CX/SCH 14/1/3 Add. 2; CRD 3 (Comment of Cameroon).

International Organisation of Spice Trade Associations (IOSTA)

18. The Observer from IOSTA, referring to the submission in CX/SCH 14/1/3, explained that the focus to-date of their work was on the establishment of MRLs for pesticides in spices and on food safety issues. The Observer noted the work of some of the IOSTA members associations, in particular: (i) the American Spice Trade Association (ASTA), which had established cleanliness specifications that cover extraneous matter and filth, frequently referred to in the trade as 'ASTA quality'; and (ii) the European Spice Trade Association (ESA) which had established quality minima standards, whose details were presented in CX/CSH 14/1/3.

International Organization for Standardization (ISO)

19. The Observer from ISO, referring to the submission in CX/SCH 14/1/3 Add.1, explained that India had the Secretariat of Sub-Committee 7 "Spices, culinary herbs and condiments" of the Technical Committee 34 (ISO/TC 34) "Food Products". ISO/TC 34/SC 7 has a membership of 19 "participating countries" and 26 "observing countries" and had formulated 68 International Standards. The Observer stated that the Sub-Committee was willing to extend cooperation in this area to all.

Conclusion

20. The Committee thanked FAO and WHO and the other international organizations for the valuable information provided.

WORK MANAGEMENT MODALITIES OF THE CCSCCH (Agenda Item 4)⁵

21. The Delegation of India introduced CX/SCH 14/1/4 on working modalities of CCSCCH, which addressed the following points: (i) Frequency and length of the CCSCCH sessions; (ii) Provisional Agenda; (iii) Consideration for new work within CCSCCH; (iv) Grouping of commodities in general standards; (v) Provision for cross-committee interaction to conduct CCSCCH work; and (vi) Facilitation for co-hosting of sessions.

22. The Chairperson invited the Committee to consider each of the six points, noting that the purpose of this agenda item was to have an open discussion on the modalities of work of the Committee and not to establish new procedures. The Chairperson further noted that the discussion was intended to generate new ideas on how the Committee might work and inputs for the future.

23. The Committee discussed each of the six points and reached the following conclusions.

(i) Frequency and length of the CCSCCH sessions

24. With regard to the frequency of sessions, a number of delegations were of the opinion that the Committee should initially meet annually because it was recently established and had a large amount of work to be done. It was also noted that at this stage it was difficult to predict the volume of work and that more frequent sessions would allow the Committee to better define and plan its work.

25. Other delegations were of the opinion that holding the sessions every 18 months was adequate taking into consideration the financial implications for the host country and the schedule of other Codex meetings. The importance of preparatory work, "done at home" by delegations and the working groups to improve efficiency was also highlighted.

26. The Committee noted the recommendation of Brazil, in CX/SCH 14/01/4 Add.1, to adjust the sessions of CCSCCH on odd years and those of the committees on Processed Fruits and Vegetables (CCPFV) and on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (CCFFV) on even years to allow for broader participation of specialists in the meetings of these committees.

27. With regard to the length of the sessions, several delegations recommended that the sessions should last five days and that physical working groups be established to meet immediately before the session to improve the Committee's efficiency and expedite work.

28. The Committee noted that other commodity committees met every 18 or 24 months and that the frequency and duration of the committee's sessions had important financial implications not only for the host country but also for Codex Members and Observers. It was also noted that some committees, e.g. the Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL), had shortened the duration of their session (from five to four days) depending of their workload.

⁵CX/SCH 14/1/4; CX/SCH 14/1/4 Add.1 (Comments of Brazil, Canada, Egypt, Republic of Korea, United States of America and IOSTA); CX/SCH 14/1/4 Add. 2 (Comments of Argentina, European Union, Iran, Japan and Kenya); CRD 3 (Comment of Cameroon); CRD 5 (Comments of Thailand); CRD 6 (Comments of Indonesia); CRD 8 (Comments of India).

Conclusion

29. The Committee agreed that the CCSCCH meet approximately every 18 months and that the length of the session would be five-days, based on the workload. It was also noted that in planning the Committee's sessions, due consideration would be given to ensure a suitable interval with the sessions of CCFFV.

(ii) Provisional Agenda

30. Several delegations noted that it was premature to determine the number of documents related to standards on spices and culinary herbs in the Committee's agenda, including the quantity of new work items and the ratio of work between spices and culinary herbs, as this depended on the decisions taken at each session. A number of delegations, while supporting in-principle a balanced work between spices and culinary herbs, noted that it was premature to set a numerical proportion, as this depended on the proposals submitted and their compliance with the prioritization criteria set by the Committee (see Agenda Item 5).

Conclusion

31. The Committee agreed that the number of working documents related to standards on spices and culinary herbs in the agenda should not be rigid and to find a balance between the work on spices and culinary herbs depending on the proposals submitted.

(iii) Consideration for new work within CCSCCH

32. Several delegations supported the establishment of physical working group to consider proposals for new work. One delegation noted that it was important to adhere to the deadline for submission of proposals for new work and to consider only the proposals that have been submitted in advance of the session in order for Members and Observers to verify and comment on the proposals.

33. It was noted that the establishment of a physical working group to meet immediately before the session would have financial implication for both the host country and the delegations attending the meeting, and that an in-session working group could be established at the beginning of each session. It was also highlighted that the working group would only examine the proposals and make recommendations, while the decision on new work proposals remained with the Committee.

Conclusion

34. The Committee agreed to establish at each session an in-session Working Group to review the proposals for new work against the prioritization criteria (see Agenda Item 5) and prepare recommendations for the Plenary. The Committee further agreed that a Circular Letter requesting proposals for new work would be attached to the report of the session with a deadline for submission of proposals of three/four months before the session to give Members and Observers time to prepare and submit proposals for new work and the Secretariats to translate, compile the proposals and distribute working documents before the session.

(iv) Grouping of commodities in general standards

35. The Delegation of India drew the Committee's attention to CRD 8, which contained a revised proposal for grouping of spices and culinary herbs based on the comments submitted. The Committee noted that the topic of grouping was closely related to that of the development of a template for the standards.

36. Several delegations expressed support for the development of templates for the standards on spices and culinary herbs. One delegation was of the view that the use of a template would allow the development of clearer standards, which would facilitate compliance and make easier the work of competent authorities and regulators. Another delegation informed the Committee of the work of CCFFV on a standard layout, which contained standardized texts for those provisions that apply horizontally to a group of standards, e.g. for quick frozen fruits. The delegation was of the opinion that standard layout would assist the Committee in the efficient conduct of its work.

37. Another delegation was of the opinion that the Committee needed to develop some standards before starting work of standard layout/template.

38. The Committee noted that the Procedural Manual included a section "*Format of Commodity Standards*", which was intended to guide the committees in presenting their standards with the objective of achieving a uniform presentation of commodity standards. The section of the Procedural Manual provided the major headings of a commodity standard and for certain headings, e.g. hygiene and contaminants, standardized language.

Conclusion

39. The Committee agreed to establish an electronic Working Group, led by India and working in English only, to prepare a discussion paper for its Second session that will: (i) clarify the intent and purpose of the grouping of spices and culinary herbs, including the rationale; and (ii) propose grouping of spices and culinary herbs taking into account scientific and technical information and the work on classification and grouping used by other committees (e.g. CCPR).

40. The Committee further agreed to use the “*Format of Commodity Standards*” in the Procedural Manual for the development of the new standards (see Agenda Item 6) and to consider at its next session the need to develop specific standard layout for its work.

(v) Provision for Cross-Committee Interaction to conduct CCSCH work

41. The Committee agreed to the proposal in CX/CSH 14/1/4, noting that interaction between CCSCH and general subject committees should take place in accordance with the provisions in Section “*Relations between Commodity Committees and General Subject Committees*” of the Procedural Manual.

(vi) Facilitation for Co-hosting of sessions

42. The Delegation of Cameroon recalled that the 20th Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Africa (CAFRICA) had noted the offer of Nigeria to co-host CCSCH⁶ and that at the 36th Session of the Commission it was noted that CAFRICA had supported Nigeria to co-host the CCSCH with India, and that arrangement for co-hosting would be determined as per the provisions of the Procedural Manual.⁷

43. With regard to the offer of Nigeria, the Delegation of India stated that they were prepared to co-host a session of the Committee with Nigeria, after gaining sufficient experience through conducting two or three sessions of the Committee and invited Nigeria to start negotiations.

Conclusion

44. The Committee noted that India was prepared to co-host a session of the CCSCH with Nigeria after the first two or three sessions.

MECHANISMS FOR THE PRIORITIZATION OF THE WORK (Agenda Item 5)⁸

45. The Delegation of India recalled that the 36th Session of the Commission, while approving the establishment of CCSCH had agreed that at its first session the Committee would consider its programme of work, including prioritizing criteria.⁹ Consequently, India had prepared CX/SCH 14/1/5, which proposed a scheme for ranking and prioritizing commodities to be standardized based on six defined criteria. The criteria, which were based on the *Codex Criteria for the Establishment of Work Priorities*¹⁰ (‘Codex criteria’), were further divided into sub-criteria. Each sub-criterion was assigned a numerical score, the sum of which allowed prioritizing the proposals for future work by CCSCH.

46. The Delegation further noted that some of the comments submitted supported the development of defined criteria for CCSCH, with some amendments to the criteria and the “weight” given to them. Other comments indicated that the ‘Codex criteria’ were adequate and that there was no need/justification for developing defined criteria for the Committee.

47. The Delegation clarified that India had prepared the discussion document with the intent of having an open discussion on the CCSCH’s prioritization process and invited the Committee to consider if the “Codex criteria” were sufficient and, if not to (ii) revise the defined criteria and the proposed multi-criteria ranking system in CX/SCH 14/1/6.

48. A number of delegations were of the opinion that the “Codex criteria” were sufficient for CCSCH and noted that the use of these criteria would bring consistency with the work of other commodity committees, e.g. CCFFV and CCPFV, which had considered it not necessary to develop specific criteria for prioritizing

⁶ REP 13/AFRICA, para. 14.

⁷ REP 13/CAC, para. 152.

⁸ CX/SCH 14/1/5; CX/SCH 14/1/5 Add.1 (Comments of Canada, Egypt, Republic of Korea, United States of America and IOSTA); CX/SCH 14/1/5 Add. 2 (Comments of Argentina, Brazil, European Union, Iran, Japan and Kenya); CRD 3 (Comment of Cameroon); CRD 4 (Comments of Malaysia); CRD 5 (Comments of Thailand); CRD 6 (Comments of Indonesia).

⁹ REP13/CAC, para. 156.

¹⁰ Procedural Manual of the Codex Alimentarius, Section II: Elaboration of Codex texts.

their work. It was also noted that the proposed multi-criteria ranking system needed further elaboration and that it would be difficult to reach consensus on the score assigned to each criterion.

Conclusion

49. Based on the above discussion, the Committee agreed to use the *Codex Criteria for the Establishment of Work Priorities* to prioritise its work. The Committee further agreed that the in-session Working Group, established under Agenda Item 1, would use the “Codex criteria” to prioritise the proposals for new work submitted in response to CL 2013/22-SCH.

PROPOSALS FOR NEW WORK FOR THE CODEX COMMITTEE ON SPICES AND CULINARY HERBS (REPLIES TO CL 2013/22-SCH) (Agenda Item 6)¹¹

50. The Delegation of the United States of America, as Chair of the in-session Working Group, introduced the report (CRD 9) of the in-session Working Group on prioritization of proposals for new work and informed the Committee that the Working Group had considered eight project documents proposing new work, submitted in reply to CL 2013/22-SCH, on: oregano (Argentina), paprika (Argentina), pepper (India, United States of America and Indonesia), rosemary (India), cumin (India), thyme (India), saffron (Iran) and nutmeg (Indonesia). It was also noted that the replies to the CL 2013/22-SCH contained a number of expressions of interest in the development of standards for other commodities that might be subject to the development of project documents for consideration at future sessions.

51. The Delegation explained that the Working Group did not consider the proposal on nutmeg (CRD 6) because of its late submission and that Members and Observers were unable to study the project document in preparation for its discussion

52. The Committee noted that the Working Group had considered in detail, as a practical exercise, the entire project document on oregano (in CX/SCH 14/1/6) and had assessed Section 4 “Assessment against the Criteria for the Establishment of Work Priorities” of the other six project documents against the “Codex criteria” because this section was considered to be the most critical for the purpose of prioritization.

53. The Committee was informed that with regard to project documents on:

- Paprika, the Working Group noted that CCFFV had developed a *Standard for Chilli Pepper* (CODEX STAN 307-2011) and that there was a need to seek clarification from CCFFV and CCPFV as to whether paprika might be in their mandate;
- Rosemary and Saffron, the Working Group found that the project documents needed further work.

54. The Committee noted that the Working Group had recommended forwarding the remaining four proposals to the Commission for approval as new work in the following order: (i) black, white and green pepper; (ii) cumin; (iii) oregano; and (iv) thyme.

55. The Committee further noted that the Working Group had made several suggestions for amending the proposals and that revised project documents had been prepared for: (i) black, white and green pepper (CRD 10); (ii) cumin (CRD 11); and (iii) oregano (CRD 12) and that, due to time constraints, it had not been possible to prepare a revised project document for thyme.

56. The Committee considered the recommendations of the Working Group as follows:

Nutmeg, rosemary and saffron

57. The Committee endorsed the recommendation of the Working Group to request the originators of the proposals i.e. Indonesia (nutmeg), India (rosemary) and Iran (saffron) to revise and resubmit the project documents in response to the Circular Letter requesting proposals for new work (see Agenda Item 4) for consideration at its next session.

Paprika

58. Several delegations expressed the view that paprika was clearly a spice and that the development of a standard for this product was within the mandate of CCSCCH; that ISO had developed a standard for paprika (ISO 7540:2006); and that the term “dried” might lead to misinterpretation that the product is a processed

¹¹ CL 2013/22-SCH; CX/SCH 14/1/6 (Replies of Argentina, Egypt, India, Sudan, Thailand and United States of America); CX/SCH 14/1/6 Add.1 (Replies of Argentina, Kenya and Iran); CRD 3 (Comment of Cameroon); CRD 4 (Comments of Malaysia); CRD 5 (Comments of Thailand); CRD 6 (Comments of Indonesia); CRD 9 (Report of the In-session working group); CRD 10 (Project proposal for black, white and green pepper); CRD 11 (Project proposal for brown / black cumin); CRD 12 (Project proposal for Oregano).

one. These delegations were of the opinion that there was no need to delay consideration of the new work by consulting other committees.

59. Other delegations were of the view that it would be prudent to consult with CCFFV and CCPFV before taking a decision in order to avoid duplication of work. In this regard, the Committee noted that the next sessions of both CCFFV and CCPFV would be held in 2014 and thus allowing the Committee to take a decision regarding new work at its next session.

Conclusion

60. The Committee agreed to seek clarification from the upcoming sessions of CCFFV and CCPFV as to whether paprika was in their workplan. The Committee further agreed to hold the proposal for new work on paprika (as presented in CX/SCH 14/1/6) and to reconsider it at its next session in light of the clarification provided by CCFFV and CCPFV.

Black, White and Green Pepper (BWG Pepper)

61. The Committee considered in detail the proposal for new work in CRD 10 and, in addition to several editorial amendments, agreed to:

- Amend the scope of the standard (Section 1) to include crushed and cracked forms of dry and dehydrated pepper;
- Include reference to provisions for contaminants and pesticide residues of pre-existing Codex documents in Section 3; and
- Amend the last sentence of Section 4(c) to ensure consistency with the data in the tables on patterns of international trade, which showed that there was a high demand for black, white and green pepper in all forms.

Conclusion

62. The Committee agreed to the proposal of the Working Group on new work on the development of a Standard for black, white and green pepper (BWG Pepper) and to submit the project document (Appendix II) to 37th Session of the Commission for approval.

63. The Committee agreed to establish, subject to the approval of the Commission, an electronic Working Group, led by India and co-chaired by Cameroon and Indonesia and working in English only, to prepare the proposed draft standard for circulation for comments at Step 3 and consideration at its next Session.

Cumin

64. The Committee considered in detail the proposal for new work in CRD 11 and, in addition to several editorial amendments, agreed to:

- Limit the scope of the standard to brown cumin (*Cuminum cyminum*) as black cumin (*Nigella sativa*) belonged to a different family and had different characteristics; and
- Update the trade data to refer to brown cumin only.

Conclusion

65. The Committee agreed to the proposal of the Working Group on new work on the development of a standard for brown cumin and to submit the project document (Appendix III) to 37th Session of the Commission for approval.

66. The Committee agreed to establish, subject to the approval of the Commission, an electronic Working Group, led by European Union and co-chaired by India and working in English only, to prepare the proposed draft standard for circulation for comments at Step 3 and consideration at its next Session.

Oregano

67. The Committee considered in detail the proposal for new work in CRD 12 and, in addition to several editorial amendments, deleted reference to *Origanum vulgare* L. in the title and in other sections of the project document to align them with the scope of the standard (Section 1), which referred to all species of oregano, i.e. *Origanum* spp. L..

Conclusion

68. The Committee agreed to the proposal of the Working Group on new work on the development of a Standard for oregano and to submit the project document (Appendix IV) to 37th Session of the Commission for approval.

69. The Committee agreed to establish, subject to the approval of the Commission, an electronic Working Group, led by Argentina and co-chaired by Greece and working in English and Spanish, to prepare the proposed draft standard for circulation for comments at Step 3 and consideration at its next Session.

Thyme

70. The Chairperson recalled that the in-session Working Group had recommended revising the project document and, in particular, to remove several references to essential oils and health benefits, as they are outside the scope of work of this Committee, and to update the data and information. The Committee revised the other parts of the project document (as presented in CX/SCH 14/1/6) and, in addition to several editorial amendments, agreed to:

- Delete the entire Section "Introduction";
- Amend the scope (Section 1) to include: dehydrated or dried, ground or crushed thyme to be offered for industrial food production and for direct consumption, including for catering purpose or for repacking as required;
- Align the first two bullet points in Section 3 with the project document for oregano and delete the bullet points on process control and safety data; and
- Delete the first sentence of the first paragraph and the second paragraph of Section 4(b).

71. The Committee noted that it was not possible to update the data on volume of trade at the present session. With regard to the data on volume of trade, some delegations, noting that herbs were bulky but low in weight, expressed concern that the small volume of trade of thyme, as indicated in the project document and expressed in metric tons, might disqualify this product when assessed against the "Codex criteria", i.e. criteria (a) "Volume of production and consumption in individual countries and volume and pattern of trade between countries". They also noted that trade of herbs and spices were not comparable. These delegations were of the opinion that other criteria and data (e.g. monetary value) should be considered to prioritise work on thyme and other culinary herbs. It was pointed out that dried thyme and some other herbs do not have a Harmonised System (HS) code and, therefore, it is difficult to obtain updated trade data. It was also noted that trade data on thyme were not always commodity-specific as they were often associated with those of bay leaves.

Conclusion

72. The Committee agreed to initiate new work on the development of a Standard for thyme in view of the support of several delegations to develop such standard as soon as possible. In view of the impossibility to update the data on trade at the present session, the Committee agreed to request the European Union to: (i) revise the project document on the basis of the above discussion; (ii) review and update the data on trade and provide additional notes to explain the issue related to the small volume of trade of herbs; and (iii) to forward the project document to the 37th Session of the Commission for approval, through the Codex Secretariat. The Delegation of the United States of America offered to assist the European Union to update the project document.

73. The Committee agreed to establish, subject to the approval of the Commission, an electronic Working Group, led by European Union and co-chaired by Switzerland and working in English only, to prepare the proposed draft standard for circulation for comments at Step 3 and consideration at its next Session.

OTHER BUSINESS AND FUTURE WORK (Agenda Item 7)

74. The Committee noted that no other business had been put forward during the adoption of the Provisional Agenda.

75. The Committee further noted the interest of Mexico to co-host with India a future session of the CCSC.

76. The delegations expressed congratulatory messages to the Government and people of India on hosting this new Codex Committee and look forward to making the Committee a success.

DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT SESSION (Agenda Item 8)

77. The Committee noted that its Second Session was tentatively scheduled to be held in September 2015 in India, subject to further discussion between the Codex and India Secretariats.

SUMMARY STATUS OF WORK

SUBJECT	STEP	FOR ACTION BY:	DOCUMENT REFERENCE (REP14/SCH)
Standard for Black, White and Green Pepper	1,2,3	37 th CAC eWG (<u>India</u> and Cameroon & Indonesia)	Paras 62-63 and App. II
Standard for cumin	1,2,3	37 th CAC eWG (<u>European Union</u> and India)	Paras 65-66 and App. III
Standards for Oregano	1,2,3	37 th CAC eWG (<u>Argentina</u> and Greece)	Paras 68-69 and App. IV
Standard for Thyme	1,2,3	37 th CAC eWG (<u>European Union</u> and Switzerland)	Paras 72-73
Discussion paper on grouping of spices and culinary herbs	-	eWG (India) 2 nd CCSCH	Para. 39

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Appendix II**PROJECT DOCUMENT****PROPOSAL FOR NEW WORK ON A STANDARD FOR BLACK, WHITE AND GREEN (BWG) PEPPER****Introduction**

Black pepper and white pepper (*Piper nigrum* L. of the Piperaceae family) are among the oldest commodities traded internationally irrespective of geographical region. Recently, that trade has expanded to include green dehydrated pepper berries of the same family. Black, white and green pepper berries in this proposal will be referred to by BWG, to differentiate the common name pepper of *Piper nigrum* from pepper of *Capsicum annuum*. BWG pepper is either whole or ground pepper berries not pods as capsicum species. BWG Pepper is called the 'King of Spices' on account of its high global usage, more than any of the other spices. Dried black pepper berries are by monetary value, the most widely traded spice, accounting for almost 30 percent of all spice imports in the world. As one of the oldest traded commodities, BWG pepper berries have an impact on the economy and gastronomy of every producing and importing country.

Since there is no international standard concerning the quality of BWG pepper berries, trade is conducted using a range of national and private standards from both producing and/or importing countries. This collage of standards with different definitions and understandings of grades/specifications can complicate imports and exports. For instance, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam each have a national standard; additionally, the European Spice Association (ESA) has established quality minima standards, the Canadian Spice Association members must conform to government standards set in Division 7 of the Food and Drug Regulations, and the International Pepper Community has its own standards. Both the national standards and those of the industry groups have differences in some of the most important quality requirements such as moisture content, extraneous matter, and piperine.

1. The Purpose and Scope of the Standard

The purpose of this standard is to develop harmonized international quality criteria for styles of BWG pepper products obtained from *Piper nigrum* to facilitate international trade and consumer protection.

The scope of the standard is for dry and /or dehydrated pepper -*Piper nigrum*, i.e., Pepper berries whole, crushed or cracked or ground to be offered for industrial food production and for direct consumption, including for catering purposes or for repacking, as required. The objective is to develop a Codex standard based on measurable characteristics and any other factors to increase transparency in the trade.

2. Relevance and Timeliness

BWG pepper is one of the oldest commodities traded internationally. It is produced in many countries including Brazil, Cambodia, China, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. Small and marginal farmers in developing countries are engaged in pepper production, and establishment of a standard is important to enhance transparency and fair practices in trade. In 2011, the production of BWG pepper among the top 20 producing countries was estimated at 460,865 metric tonnes valued at almost \$960 million with an average value per metric tonne of \$2,084.28; while international trade by the top 20 trading countries amounted to 223,966 metric tonnes valued at \$1.3 billion, thus yielding an average value per tonne of \$5,835.60.

The current and historical significance of BWG pepper to producers, traders and consumers warrants the development of a Codex standard based on its organoleptic characteristics. This will remove discrepancies among the various national standards and different trade association standards and in still transparency in marketing from producing countries and re-exporting centers. As always, the Codex standard will be developed with the interests of all relevant parties taken into consideration. The proposed standard will be based on the principles of consumer protection and fair trade practices. This proposal lends support to international year of family farming, celebrated in 2014.

3. Main aspects to be covered

The main aspects of the product to be covered in the standard are the minimum quality and safety requirements to protect consumer's health and to ensure fair practices in food trade:

- Product Definition - Defining the product as "dry and/or dehydrated BWG peppers including a reference to the genus and the species and/or varietal types if necessary.

- Composition - Including provisions for basic ingredients and other permitted ingredients. Establish moisture content for whole peppercorns and other styles Piperine, essential oil content and other values.
- Styles - Listing/describing the different forms of presentation including sizes of whole peppercorns, pieces and/or powder and tolerances allowed.
- Classes/ Quality Criteria - Including provisions for colour, odour, taste, texture, classification of “defectives” vis-à-vis “lot acceptance based on the defects allowed.”
- Quality tolerances.
- Provisions for the labelling and marking of the product in accordance with the *General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods*.
- Provisions for hygiene, contaminants, pesticides residues, labelling and packaging with reference to pre-existing Codex documents.
- References to Methods of Analysis and Sampling.

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

General criterion

Consumer protection from the point of view of health, food safety, ensuring fair practices in the food trade and taking into account the identified needs of developing countries.

The proposed new standard will meet this criterion by:

- Promoting consumer protection and the prevention of fraudulent practices.
- Providing greater assurance of the quality of the product to meet consumer needs and the minimum requirements for food safety.
- Arriving at levels of standardization based on the properties of different varieties to meet industrial and consumer needs with exactness and credibility.

In addition, the elaboration of the standard would be to the benefit of many countries in general and more particular in the case of developing countries, for the developing countries are the major producers, exporters, and consumers of pepper.

Criteria applicable to commodities

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

The world's total BWG pepper production was recorded at 329,350 MT in 2012 as per International Pepper Community (IPC), of which black pepper constitutes 261,235 MT and white pepper 68,115 MT. BWG pepper is produced in a number of countries including Vietnam, Indonesia, India, Brazil, Cambodia, China, Ecuador, Madagascar, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The major producing countries, representing about 85% of the world pepper trade, participate in a regional intergovernmental organization called the IPC. The IPC was established in 1972 under the auspices of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP).

Pattern of International Trade

Export	World (In Metric Tons)
2009	291125
2010	290234
2011	279225
2012	265987

Source: ITC, Geneva

Import	World (In Metric Tons)
2009	266859
2010	306276
2011	280831
2012	255388

Source: ITC, Geneva

(b) Diversification of national legislations and apparent resultant or potential impediments to international trade

Though the BWG pepper trade continues to expand in the absence a harmonized international standard, one is needed to increase trading efficiency. BWG pepper trade is carried out using different national or industry standards. Each either reflects (i) domestic product characteristics resulting from geo-climatic conditions, variety grown, production or trade practices, or (ii) the desires of the trade group based on their interpretation of consumer demand. Other BWG pepper standards are mainly based on the type of final product, i.e. whole, for grinding, cracking, and powdering.

In the absence of a common trading language, producers and traders find it tedious and/or difficult to communicate with new clients. In some cases, the trade in BWG pepper is one- sided, based on either the buyer's or seller's requirements. Thus, the mutual settlement of quality disputes arising from trade is overly difficult and often results in a party being unsatisfied with the outcome. In this regard, would be helpful if the international BWG pepper trade could be carried out using a single harmonized Codex standard. The development of a Codex standard will allow the different stakeholders to harmonize their different requirements to facilitate international trade.

(c) International or regional market potential

Total export of pepper during 2012 as per International Trade Center (ITC), Geneva is 265987 MT. There is constant high demand for BWG pepper in all forms.

(d) Amenability of commodity to standardization

The characteristics of BWG pepper as traded, as whole peppercorns, desiccated or powder forms, color requirements, volatile oil, ash, maximum moisture content, and defects allowed are adequate parameters for the standardization of the product. Furthermore, the existence of several private and public standards with the same parameters and nomenclature enhance the potential for successful development of a Codex standard for this product.

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

Currently there is no international standard for BWG peppers with global public sector ownership. The public sector sets the rules, creates a favourable environment for trade, and is responsible for consumer protection. The proposed new standard will increase consumer protection and facilitate pepper trade by establishing an internationally agreed quality standard.

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

The standard will be for dry and dehydrated black, white, and green (BWG) pepper whole, crushed and cracked and ground forms.

(g) Work already undertaken by other international organization in this field

- i. International Pepper Community grades of treated whole pepper, black and white.
- ii. International Organization of Spice Trade Associations (IOSTA) (European Spice Association Quality Minima)
- iii. International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO)

The International Organization of Spice Trade Associations (IOSTA), International Pepper Community, World Spice Congress, and World Spice Organization previously discussed the necessity of an international standard for BWG pepper.

5. Relevance to Codex Strategic Objectives

The proposal is consistent with the Strategic Plan of the Codex Alimentarius Commission 2014- 2019, in particular, Strategic Goal 1 (Establish international food standards that address current and emerging food issues) and seeks to establish internationally accepted minimum quality requirements for BWG pepper for human consumption. This proposal is in accordance with Article 1 (a) of the Statutes of the Codex Alimentarius “*protecting the health of the consumer and ensuring fair practices in the food trade.*”

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

This proposal is for a new Codex standard and is not related to or based on any pre-existing Codex document. However, when completed, the standard will include references to relevant pre-existing Codex texts developed by general subject committees.

7. Identification of any requirement for and availability of expert scientific advice

There is no need for Codex Alimentarius to provide expert scientific advice at this stage and such advice is not expected to be required during the development of the standard. Published research documents by international bodies, the trade organizations and academia will be used and / or provide direct input in the development of the standard.

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

Technical inputs from external bodies such as the International Standards Organization (ISO), International Pepper Community (IPC), American Spice Trade Association (ASTA), European Spice Association (ESA) and from pepper producing countries as well as pre-existing standards will be sought and used in development of the standard.

9. Proposed Time Schedule

The following is the proposed timetable for the completion of the standard.

DATE	ADVANCE AND PROCEDURES
1 st CCSC	Consideration of new work by the 1 st CCSC
July 2014	Critical review of new work proposals by CCEXEC; Approval of new work proposal by the Commission
2 nd CCSC	Consideration at Step 3 by the 2 nd CCSC
July 2016	Adoption at Step 5 by CAC
3 rd CCSC	Consideration at Step 6 by the 3 rd CCSC
July 2017	Adoption at Step 8 by the CAC

Appendix III**PROJECT DOCUMENT****PROPOSAL FOR NEW WORK ON A STANDARD FOR CUMIN
(Whole and Ground)****Introduction**

Cumin (*Cuminum cyminum* L.) of the Apiaceae family is one of the world's most popular spices. It is indigenous to Egypt and India and is also grown in China, Iran, Mediterranean region and Syria.

Cumin is being produced in tropical regions and the world production is estimated 300,000 metric tonnes. Being an earliest known minor seed spice used by mankind, the typical pleasant aroma of cumin is due to their volatile oil content, the principal constituent of which is Cuminaldehyde.

1. The Purpose and Scope of the Standard

The Scope of the work is to establish a worldwide standard for cumin obtained from *Cuminum cyminum* of the Apiaceae family, which may be in whole or ground form. Cumin from different country sources are traded internationally and the prominent ones are from Egypt, India, Iran and Middle East.

The objective of a world-wide standard is to consider quality characteristics like colour, size of the seeds, purity of the seeds, active ingredients like Cuminaldehyde and any other factors for whole or ground consumption of cumin.

2. Relevance and Timeliness

Cumin is produced and traded worldwide and the major producing/ trading countries are: Egypt, India, Pakistan and Middle East.

Almost all the cumin producing countries are developing nations and major producers are small and marginal farmers. Hence, it is relevant to establish cumin standard covering quality characteristics especially active ingredients, bulk density, size etc.

3. Main aspects to be covered

The proposed standard for cumin will cover the following aspects:

- i. Establish the minimum quality requirements for cumin in addition to the quality parameters like the cleanliness of the seed, extraneous matter etc. ;
- ii. Define the categories to classify cumin according to quality parameters based on characteristics of the seeds;
- iii. Establish tolerances regarding quality and size permitted in packaged cumin in whole and powder form;
- iv. Include the provisions to be considered related to the uniformity of the packaged product and the packaging used;
- v. Include provisions for the labelling and marking of the product in accordance with the *Codex General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged foods*; and
- vi. Provisions for hygiene, contaminants, pesticide residues and method of analysis as per pre-existing Codex documents.

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

The elaboration of the standard for cumin would be to the benefit of many countries in general and more particular in the case of developing countries, as the developing countries are the major producers, exporters and consumers of cumin.

Criteria applicable to commodities

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

Country	Production (in Metric Tonnes)
India	250000
Syria	10000
Turkey	8000
Iran	7000
China	5000
Afghanistan	4000

Source: World Spices Congress 2012

Pattern of International Trade

Export	World (In Metric Tonnes)
2009	99496
2010	81401
2011	104991
2012	99362

Source: ITC, Geneva

Import	World (In Metric Tonnes)
2009	103771
2010	108884
2011	102621
2012	111318

Source: ITC, Geneva

The above data pertains to Afghanistan, China, Egypt, India, Israel, Lebanon, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Spain, Syria, Turkey, United Kingdom etc.

The major importers are Brazil, Canada, Colombia, EU, Ecuador, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, South Africa and USA.

(b) Diversification of national legislations and apparent resultant or potential impediments to international trade

Being a widely traded commodity, cumin has its relevance in day to day life across the globe. There are differences with regard to the quality of the product in terms of moisture levels, ash content, volatile oil, broken parts, extraneous matter etc across countries. Thus, each producing country has its own grades and specifications being followed over a period of time and so there are separately prevailing standards for instance in India, China, Egypt, Syria, Turkey etc.

Import of cumin takes place for many applications. It goes for direct culinary use in whole or ground form. Hence the trade takes shape based on customer requirement. Trade in cumin is based on producing and importing countries mutually agreed conditions in terms of grades and specifications. So it would be useful to have Codex Standard.

International organisation like ISO has standard for cumin. Many conventions including the World Spice Congress have addressed the issue of harmonisation of grades and specifications for cumin. Cumin being produced in developing countries and traded globally not only by the exporters but also through re-exports by importers is subject to various national legislations. To overcome the resultant or potential impediments to international trade, it is essential to incorporate all existing diverse standards in a single comprehensive standard acceptable across board internationally.

By eliminating the variable (sometimes conflicting) sets of rules and regulations, trade barriers will be reduced.

(c) International or regional market potential

The world market for imported spices and culinary herbs is valued at more than \$2.8 billion. Of the top varieties by value, cumin occupies a position with 2.8 percent. The major importers are Brazil, Canada, Colombia, EU, Ecuador, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, South Africa and USA. India alone accounts for more than 85% of the world production of cumin, followed by Syria (3.5%) and Turkey (2.8%).

Global demand for cumin is expected to increase in future, mainly on account of increased culinary applications that transcends borders.

(d) Amenability of commodity to standardization

The characteristics of cumin, from its cultivation through to harvest, fruit characteristics, cultivar varieties, composition, quality and packaging all lend to adequate parameters for the standardization of the product. This will include defining the seed according to its bulk density, size in its whole form, volatile oil content, and extraneous matter. There are existing standards in different countries as well as ISO, which indicates amenability to standardization through harmonization.

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

There is no general commodity standard covering cumin under Codex and so the new work will facilitate cumin trade by establishing an internationally agreed quality standard.

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

The proposed standard will be for cumin (whole and ground). The different forms of cumin like whole and ground will be examined under this individually.

(g) Work already undertaken by other international organizations in this field

- i. International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO)
- ii. American Spice Trade Association's Cleanliness specification for spices, seeds and herbs.

The need for setting up an international standard for cumin was discussed during various meetings of International Organization of Spice Trade Associations (IOSTA) and World Spice Congress (WSC). Except for ISO, there is no other international organization that has undertaken international standard for cumin.

5. Relevance to the Codex Strategic Objectives

The proposal is in line with the Strategic Vision Statement of the Strategic Plan 2014 - 2019, in particular, Objective 1.1, 1.3, 2.3 and 3.1 and aims at setting up internationally accepted minimum quality requirements of cumin for human consumption with the purpose of protecting the consumer's health and achieving fair practices in food trade. It also contributes to fair practices in trade wherein the farmers will be able to assess their produce with reference to the quality standards thereby empowering them to realize more monetary values.

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 requirement for and availability of expert scientific advice

No expert scientific advice is foreseen at this stage. Published research documents by international bodies will be referred in the process of preparing the standard, if found necessary.

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, American Spice Trade Association and IOSTA (European Spice Association) shall be welcomed as they have already done work related to the subject.

9. Proposed Time Schedule

The following is the proposed timetable for the completion of the standard.

DATE	ADVANCE AND PROCEDURES
1 st CCSCH	Consideration of new work by the 1 st CCSCH
July 2014	Critical review of new work proposals by CCEXEC; Approval of new work proposal by the Commission
2 nd CCSCH	Consideration at Step 3 by the 2 nd CCSCH
July 2016	Adoption at Step 5 by CAC
3 rd CCSCH	Consideration at Step 6 by the 3 rd CCSCH
July 2017	Adoption at Step 8 by the CAC

Appendix IV**PROJECT DOCUMENT****PROPOSAL FOR NEW WORK ON A STANDARD FOR OREGANO****1. Purpose and scope of the Standard**

This document advocates the development of a worldwide standard for dehydrated or dried, crushed or ground oregano (*Origanum* spp. L.) of the *Lamiaceae* family, to be supplied to consumers after appropriate preparation. The standard will cover all the species and varieties of oregano of commercial interest.

The purpose of the standard is to consider the identity and quality characteristics of oregano in the framework of international trade.

2. Relevance and Timeliness

In view of the growing production and global trade of oregano, there is a need to determine standards that will make reference to the identity and quality of this species in all aspects, including wholesomeness, hygiene, components, moisture content, particle size, extractable colour, ash and foreign bodies, thereby providing a frame of reference agreed by worldwide consensus among countries that produce, market and consume this commodity. Moreover, the development of a Codex standard for oregano will help protect consumer health and promote fair trade practices in accordance with current international agreements.

The genus *Origanum* originates in Europe and Asia. Within its distribution area, the eastern region of the Mediterranean has the richest taxonomic diversity as it contains 75% of the species of the genus, while there are only a few taxa in the western region of the Mediterranean.

About 70% of the species are endemic, existing in clearly defined zones within the distribution area, as in the case of *O. amanum* Post. In contrast *O. vulgare* L. and its subspecies have a broader geographical distribution in area of origin of the genus, extending from the Azores to Taiwan.

Oregano is one of the leading aromatic herbs grown in temperate environments because of its worldwide economic importance (Olivier, 1997). Global output is estimated at 60 000 t year calculated over a surface area of 34 000 hectares (SAGPYA, 2005). This output refers only to dried leaves and excludes fresh produce used for frozen products and to extract oils and oleoresins.

The main producer countries are United States, Mexico, Turkey, Greece, Israel and Morocco.

3. Main aspects to be covered

The standard will cover characteristics relating to identity and quality in all aspects, safety, wholesomeness, hygiene, constituents, moisture content, extractable colour, ash, foreign bodies and labelling in order to provide a product with the proper characteristics and to protect consumer health. The standard will therefore:

- Establish the minimum quality requirements for dehydrated or dried, crushed or ground oregano, including quality parameters and other requirements.
- Consider the possibility of defining classes of oregano according to its characteristics/quality and establish quality tolerances.
- Include provisions on the marking and labelling of the produce in accordance with the Codex *General Standard on the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods*.
- Include provisions on contaminants that refer to the Codex *General Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Food and Feed* and on MRLs for pesticides established by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.
- Include provisions that refer to the Codex *General Principles of Food Hygiene*.
- Methods of analysis.

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

Consumer protection from the point of view of health and the prevention of fraudulent practices. The quality of the produce will need to meet consumer needs and the minimum requirements of quality and food safety.

The drafting of a standard for oregano would benefit the developing countries as these are major producers, exporters and also consumers.

Criteria applicable to commodities

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

There is information which indicates that dehydrated or dried, crushed or ground oregano (*Origanum* spp. L.) ranks first in importance in the worldwide production and trade of aromatic herbs for culinary use. There are as yet no exact figures but these will naturally become available as the project advances.

Existing statistical information also indicates that the global trade of oregano is trending upwards as consumer habits turn increasingly towards natural, functional and wholesome foods. The following tables indicate the main countries involved in the global trade of this produce:

Table 1: Main oregano importing countries - 2012 (Source: COMTRADE)

	Importing country	USD million	% share
1	United States of America	272.48	16
2	Japan	198.51	10
3	Germany	224.55	10
4	Singapore	113.57	5
5	Hong Kong S.A.R	100.03	5
6	China	62.91	4
7	France	81.80	4
8	Republic of Korea	78.09	4
9	Malaysia	66.92	4
10	Canada	71.38	4
-	Other countries	743.47	34

Table 2: Main oregano exporting countries - 2012 (Source: COMTRADE)

	Exporting country	USD million	% share
1	China	652.81	36
2	India	165.03	10
3	Germany	143.26	7
4	Egypt	123.55	4
5	United States of America	87.79	4
6	Hong Kong S.A.R.	59.83	3
7	Poland	59.37	3
8	Singapore	61.74	3
9	France	51.69	3
10	Mexico	42.85	3
-	Other countries	546.16	25

Currently available information indicates that in 2009 it was the third most exported aromatic commodity, after camomile and coriander. The markets are generally Brazil, Spain, France and Uruguay.

(b) Diversification of national legislations and apparent resultant or potential impediments to international trade

At the moment there are no known impediments to the trade of oregano in the world, although there are increasing requirements concerning quality and safety parameters for all foods. This work will however provide recognized specific regulations that will help boost international trade of this commodity.

The interest shown by countries in seminars and other events in procuring genuine products of good quality, in terms of smell, taste and other characteristics.

At the same time countries producing and importing aromatic herbs and spices have various mandatory or private rules on identity and quality that have characteristics in common. We believe that a Codex standard will integrate these criteria into a single internationally accepted standard. This would reduce possible barriers to trade and would provide a comprehensive framework setting out the minimum internationally acceptable requirements for oregano.

(c) International or regional market potential

International demand for oregano has grown.

(d) Amenability of commodity to standardization

The characteristics of oregano from cultivation to harvest, the cultivar varieties, composition, quality and packing are conducive to the establishment of appropriate parameters for standardization of the commodity. Such a standard will include a definition of the produce in terms of classes, smell, taste, moisture, ash, ether extract, fibre, particle size, foreign matter, contaminants, packaging and presentation.

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

There is no general commodity standard specifically covering oregano. The new work will enhance consumer protection and will facilitate trade by establishing an internationally agreed and recognized quality standard.

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

A single standard for oregano of the genus *Origanum* L. will cover all the varieties traded worldwide.

(g) Work already undertaken by other international organizations in this field

Normative documents have been produced by other organizations such as International Standard ISO 7925 which defines identity and quality for dried oregano (*Origanum vulgare* L.): whole or ground leaves - specification.

5. Relevance to the Codex strategic objectives

The development of a Codex standard for oregano reflects the strategic objective of promoting the maximum application of Codex standards by countries in their national legislations, and facilitating international trade. This proposal is based on scientific considerations and helps stipulate minimum quality requirements for oregano (*Origanum* spp. L.) destined for human consumption, with the intention of protecting consumer health and ensuring fair practices in the food trade. The proposal corresponds to Objective 1.1: "Establish new and review existing Codex standards, based on priorities of the CAC" of the Codex 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. In fact, there is no comparable standard for oregano developed by any global body.

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

The information generated by the research working group charged at national level with the characterization of oregano has been used as reference. Should additional information be required during the preparation of this standard, this group or other groups of experts could be consulted.

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

There is not expected to be any need for technical input from external bodies on this matter.

9. Proposed timeline

DATE	ADVANCE AND PROCEDURES
1 st CCSC	Consideration of new work by the 1 st CCSC
July 2014	Critical review of new work proposals by CCEXEC; Approval of new work proposal by the Commission
2 nd CCSC	Consideration at Step 3 by the 2 nd CCSC
July 2016	Adoption at Step 5 by CAC
3 rd CCSC	Consideration at Step 6 by the 3 rd CCSC
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