

codex alimentarius commission

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD HEALTH
ORGANIZATION

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Agenda Item 8(b)

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX COMMITTEE ON MILK AND MILK PRODUCTS

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PROPOSAL FOR NEW STANDARD FOR CHEESE SPECIALTIES

BACKGROUND

The Committee at its Third Session considered a proposal from the Delegation of France¹ to commence work on standards for a new class of products similar in style and presentation to cheeses, but which for various reasons did not fall within the established standards for cheese. It was agreed that the proposal should be circulated to governments for comment with a view to determining at the Committee's next session, whether or not to undertake work in this area. (ALINORM 99/11, para. 97)

Noting this proposal by France in relation to Cheese Specialties, the Committee agreed that these products should be considered by the normal Codex process and that any possible amendments to the General Standard for Cheese would be taken up at that time. (ALINORM 99/11, para. 65)

The following text was prepared by France for consideration by the Committee at its Fourth Session.

CHEESE SPECIALTIES - JUSTIFICATION FOR REVIEW OF AN INTERNATIONAL STANDARD FOR THESE PRODUCTS (Prepared by France)

1) General Observations

At the third session of the CCMMP in Montevideo in 1998, the French Government put forward a proposed draft standard (CRD 16 – CX/MMP 98/13) for a range of products associated with cheese which it proposed to designate as “cheese specialties”.

Since then:

- Standard A6 was adopted by the Codex Commission at its 10th Session in July 1999,
- the Committee on Milk and Milk Products has been preparing a draft standard on unripened cheeses,
- the IDF has been working on a definition of "whey protein cheeses".

The French authorities welcome the adoption of Standard A6 and its text, which provides a clear representation of the notion of cheese. It thus fulfils the two major objectives of the Codex which are to protect a designation of great importance to consumers, worldwide, and to ensure the conditions of fair competition between manufacturers.

¹ CX/MMP 98/13 (CRD 16).

However, the French authorities wish to recall that the use of more modern industrial technologies has introduced new categories of products on to the market in recent years which, although associated with cheese, differ in certain respects to the products defined in Standard A6, for example:

- for technological reasons, the addition of whey proteins and the use of ultra-filtration procedures can produce relational changes between different milk proteins,
- non-milk ingredients such as gelatine or starch, which are correctly prohibited under Standard A6, can be employed in these products because of their technological properties and their effect on texture, at low doses and without being classified as milk ingredient substitutes,
- the same applies to additives (and to processing aids), where other substances than those specified in Standard A6 can be used: e.g. gelling agents, antioxidants ,
- finally, this type of product can be mixed with cheese.

In the opinion of the French authorities, these products are not cheese and cannot be referred to as such. They do however undeniably belong to the “world of cheese”, a perception shared by consumers.

The French request at the third session of the CCMMP in Montevideo aimed to draw the attention of the Committee on Milk and Milk Products to the need to study the introduction of a specific standard for these products, without in any way delaying adoption of General Standard A6 on Cheese. It was suggested that this type of product be called “cheese specialty” to reflect its close association with the world of cheese.

Ideally, this designation should be formalized by means of a new standard to avoid divergences that would be prejudicial to and incompatible with the General Standard for the Use of Dairy Terms.

In the lead-up to the fourth session of the CCMMP, the French authorities remain convinced of the need for the Codex to address this issue and to act accordingly.

The necessary deliberations could be entrusted to the IDF which has the necessary technical competence.

As part of its work on a particular standard, the IDF could look into other solutions and carefully examine related feasibilities.

A comparative study of the different standards in existence or under discussion could trigger comprehensive reflection on the need to ensure coherence in all texts dealing with “cheese products” (consistency between Standards A6, A7 and A19, individual standards and cheese specialties). An alternative approach could be to supplement existing standards with new provisions setting conditions for employment of the term “cheese specialty”.

2) Economic data:

The following economic information has been communicated by the manufacturers of products referred to as “cheese specialties”:

- There are at least 8 countries of production: United States, Austria, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Spain.
- At least 23 countries consume this type of product: United States, Canada, Brazil, Middle East, Austria, France, Germany? Greece, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Australia, New Zealand.
- At least three countries (Germany, Switzerland, and Austria) have introduced a definition of this type of product in their national legislation.
- In the case of France alone, production exceeds 30 000 tonnes of which at least 20 000 are exported.

Even though the “decision tree” principle (CX/MMP 98/6) referred to to determine these data might seem more justified for a product with an individual standard, this information taken together would appear to justify action on the part of Codex to introduce a new standard for these products or, at least, to open up debate on the status and protection of their designation.

With this in mind, the proposed draft standard put forward by the French delegation in Montevideo could serve as a useful springboard for discussion.

ANNEX

PROPOSED DRAFT CODEX STANDARD FOR CHEESE SPECIALITY

1. SCOPE

The present standard applies to all products for direct consumption or subsequent processing in accordance with the definition of cheese speciality in section 2 of the present standard. Nonetheless, the section on labelling of the present standard also contains provisions for the designation of cheese speciality containing flavouring foodstuffs, spices, herbs, natural flavours or artificial flavours identical to natural flavours.

Subject to the provisions of the present standard, the standards applicable to varieties of cheese speciality or to groups of varieties of cheese speciality may contain more specific provisions than those contained in the present standard.

2. DESCRIPTION

2.1. A cheese speciality is a ripened or non-ripened product that can be coated, of firm or semi-firm consistency, and obtained :

- a) by partial or complete coagulation of milk and/or other substances obtained exclusively from milk, alone or in combination, through the action of rennet or other appropriate clotting agents and by partial draining of the whey resulting from this coagulation; and/or
- b) by using techniques resulting in the coagulation of milk and/or other substances obtained exclusively from milk to produce a finished product with physical, chemical and organoleptic characteristics similar to those of the finished product described in indent a); and/or
- c) by mixing products obtained with the techniques described under a) and/or b), or by mixing the latter with cheese as specified in standard A6 or by mixing cheese.

2.1.1. Ripened cheese speciality is a cheese speciality that is not ready for consumption shortly after it is produced and that needs to be maintained for some time at the temperature and in the conditions necessary for the typical biochemical and physical changes characterising the cheese speciality to occur.

2.1.2. Non-ripened cheese speciality is a cheese speciality that is ready for consumption shortly after it is produced.

3. ESSENTIAL COMPOSITION AND QUALITY FACTORS

3.1. RAW MATERIALS

Milk and products obtained from milk.

3.2. PERMITTED INGREDIENTS

- harmless lactic bacteria (yeast) and/or taste-modifying agents, and other specific micro-organisms.
- rennet or other appropriate clotting enzymes,
- harmless and appropriate ripening enzymes,
- sodium chloride,
- calcium chloride,

- gelatine and/or starch up to 2% of the dry matter in the finished product,
- for the coating : cereals, protein crops or oil-seeds, fibres, in various forms,
- carbon dioxide,
- water

4. ADDITIVES (AND COLOURING AGENTS)

Only the following food additives may be used and only within the specified limits.

* non-ripened cheese speciality

As listed in the standard for non-ripened cheese, including fresh cheese (CODEX STAN A-19).

* cheese speciality in brine

As listed in the standard for cheese in brine (CODEX STAN A-17)

*Ripened cheese speciality including mould-ripened cheese

4.1. Colours

N°	Name of the additive	Maximum concentration
100	curcumin	limited by GMP for the rind of speciality cheese
101	riboflavin	limited by GMP
140	chlorophylls and chlorophyllins	”
141	copper-chlorophyll and chlorophyllin complexes	”
150a,b,c,d	caramels	”
153	medicinal vegetable charcoal	”
160a	vegetable carotene	600 mg/kg
160b	annatto, bixin, norbixin extracts - normal colour - orange colour	15 mg/kg) on the basis of 15 mg/kg) bixin/norbixin/annatto
160c	paprika oleoresin	limited by GMP
160e	-apocarotenal-8' (C30)	”
162	beet red, betanin	”
163	anthocyanins	”
170	calcium carbonate	”
171	titanium dioxide	”
172	iron oxide and hydroxide	”

4.2. PRESERVATIVES

Table of sorbates and sorbic acid

NAME	E200-E201-E202
cheese speciality in slices, pre-packed	1000 mg/kg
non-ripened cheese speciality	1000 mg/kg

4.3. OTHERS

N°	NAME	FOODSTUFFS	MAXIMUM QUANTITY
234	Nisin	ripened cheese speciality	12,5 mg/kg
235	Natamycin (pimaricin)	surface treatment: - of hard, semi-hard and semi-soft cheese speciality	1 mg/dm ² of surface (absent at 5 mm depth)

251	sodium nitrate	hard, semi-hard and semi-soft	50 mg residual in
252	potassium nitrate	cheese speciality	NaNO ₃
1105	lysozyme	ripened cheese speciality	quantum satis
315	erythorbic acid	cheese speciality	500 mg/kg expressed as erythorbic acid
316	sodium erythorbate	cheese speciality	1500 mg/kg expressed as erythorbic acid
338	orthophosphoric acid	non-ripened cheese speciality	2g/kg
339	sodium orthophos-phates		
340	potassium orthophos-phates		
341	calcium orthophos-phates		
450	diphosphates		
451	triphosphates		
452	polyphosphates		
420	sorbitol	cheese speciality	quantum satis
421	mannitol	cheese speciality	quantum satis
460	cellulose 1) microcristalline c. 2) c. powder	grated cheese speciality not intended for the final consumer	quantum satis
461	methycellulose		
463	hydroxypropylcellulose		
464	hydroxypropylmethylcelluose		
465	ethylmethylcellulose		
466	carboxyméthylcellulose sodium carboxymethyl- cellulose		
551	silicon dioxide	grated cheese speciality not intended for the final consumer	10 g/kg
552	calcium silicate		alone or mixed
553a	magnesium silicate magnesium trisilicate		
553b	talcum		
554	-sodium		
	-potassium		
555	-calcium		
556	aluminium silicate		
559	aluminium silicate		
620	glutamic acids	cheese speciality	10 g/kg
621	glutamates	cheese speciality	alone or mixed
622			
623			
624			
625			
626	guanylic acid	cheese speciality	500 mg/kg alone or mixed expressed as guyanylic acid
627			
628	guanylates		
629			
630	inosinic acid		
632			
633	inosinates		
634			
635			

4.4. GENERAL LIST

The substances mentioned in the following list may be added to any cheese speciality according to the "quantum satis" principle.

N°	NAME
170	calcium carbonates 1) calcium carbonate 2) acid calcium carbonate
260	acetic acid
261	potassium acetate
262	sodium acetates 1) sodium acetate 2) sodium diacetate
263	calcium acetate
270	lactic acid
290	carbon dioxide*
296	malic acid
300	ascorbic acid
301	sodium ascorbate
302	calcium ascorbate
304	ascorbic acid fatty acid esters 1) ascorbyle palmitate 2) ascorbyle stearate
306	tocopherol-rich extract
307	alpha-tocopherol
308	gamma-tocopherol
309	delta-tocopherol
322	lecithines
325	sodium lactate
326	potassium lactate
327	calcium lactate
330	citric acid
331	sodium citrates 1) monosodium citrate 2) disodium citrate 3) trisodium citrate
332	potassium citrates 1) monopotassium citrate 2) tripotassium citrate
333	calcium citrates 1) monocalcium citrate 2) dicalcium citrate 3) tricalcium citrate
350	sodium malates 1) sodium malate 2) acid sodium malate
351	potassium malate
352	calcium malates 1) calcium malate 2) acid calcium malate
354	calcium tartrate
380	triammonium citrate
400	alginic acid

401	sodium alginate
402	potassium alginate
403	ammonium alginate
404	calcium alginate
407	carraghenans
407a	transformed Euchema algae
410***	carob seed meal**
412***	gum guar**
413	gum tragacanth
414	gum acacia or arabic
415	gum xanthane**
418	gum gellane
422	glycerol
440	pectins 1) pectin 2) amidated pectin
470a	sodium, potassium et calcium fatty acid salts
470b	magnesium fatty acid salts
471	fatty acid mono-et diglycerids
472a	acetic esters of fatty acid mono- and diglycerids
472b	lactic esters of fatty acid mono- and diglycerids
472c	citric esters of fatty acid mono- and diglycerids
472d	tartaric esters of fatty acid mono- and diglycerids
472e	monoacetyltartaric and diacetyltartaric esters of fatty acid mono- and diglycerids
472f	mixed acetic et tartaric esters of fatty acid mono- and diglycerids
500	sodium carbonates 1) sodium carbonate 2) acid sodium carbonate 3) sodium sesquicarbonate
501	potassium carbonates 1) potassium carbonate 2) acid potassium carbonate
503	ammonium carbonates 1) ammonium carbonate 2) acid ammonium carbonate
504	magnesium carbonates 1) magnesium carbonate 2) acid magnesium carbonate
507	hydrochloric acid
508	potassium chloride
509	calcium chloride
511	magnesium chloride
524	sodium hydroxide
525	potassium hydroxide
526	calcium hydroxide
527	ammonium hydroxide
528	magnesium hydroxide
529	calcium oxide
530	magnesium oxide
570	fatty acids

574	gluconic acid
575	glucono-delta-lactone
576	sodium gluconate
577	potassium gluconate
578	calcium gluconate
640	glycine and its sodium salt
941	nitrogen
948	oxygen*
1200	polydextrose
1404	oxidised starch
1410	starch phosphate
1412	di-starch phosphate
1413	phosphate di-starch phosphate
1414	acetylated di-starch phosphate
1420	acetylated starch
1422	acetylated di-starch adipate
1440	hydroxypropylated starch
1442	hydroxypropylated di-starch phosphate
1450	sodium starch octenyl succinate

5. CONTAMINANTS

5.1. HEAVY METALS

The products falling under the scope of the present standard shall be subject to the maximum limits fixed by the Commission of Codex Alimentarius.*

5.2. PESTICIDE RESIDUES

The products falling under the scope of the present standard shall be subject to the maximum limits fixed by the Commission of Codex Alimentarius.

6. HYGIENE

It is advisable for the products covered by the provisions of the present standard to be prepared and handled in accordance with the appropriate sections of the recommended international Code of practice – General principles of food hygiene (CAC/RCP 1-1969, Rev. 3-1997), and other relevant Codex documents such as the codes of practice for hygiene and other codes of practice.

From the production of the raw materials to the point of consumption, the products covered by the present standard should be submitted to a combination of control measures, which may include, e.g. pasteurisation; these measures should be such as to achieve an appropriate level of public health protection.

The products should fulfil microbiological criteria fixed in accordance with the Principles ruling the establishment and application of microbiological criteria for foodstuffs (CAC/GL 21-1997).

7. LABELLING

The name or names indicated in section 7.1 of the present standard must be used only in accordance with the Code of principles for milk and dairy products.

The pre-packaged products covered by the provisions of the present standard are to be labelled in accordance with the general Codex standard concerning the labelling of pre-packaged foodstuffs (CODEX STAN 1-1985).

7.1. NAME OF THE FOOD

The products subject to the provisions of the present standard are to be designated as "cheese speciality". Only products subject to the provisions of an international individual or group standard or national legislation may carry the corresponding specific designation.

A product subject to the present standard, to which flavouring foodstuffs, spices, seasoning herbs, natural flavours, artificial flavours (see Volume IA of Codex Alimentarius) were added, may carry the designation "cheese speciality" with a precise description of the substances (or group of substances) added, provided these substances are not designed to replace any milk constituent and that the cheese speciality remains the essential part of the product. Such a description is not required if there is no risk for the consumer to be misled by its omission.

7.1.1 In case the product is not designated with the name of a variety, but with the sole designation "cheese speciality", the designation can be accompanied by the appropriate formulas contained in the following table :

Designations according to firmness and ripening characteristics		
according to firmness : formula 1		according to the degree of main ripening: formula 2
MFFB %	Designation	
< 51	extra-hard	ripened
49-56	hard	blue
54-69	firm/semi-hard	non ripened/fresh
> 67	soft	in brine

MFFB = percentage moisture on a fat-free basis, i.e. :

$$\frac{\text{weight of moisture in the cheese}}{\text{total weight of cheese - weight of fat in the cheese}} \times 100$$

Example :

a cheese speciality with a TEFD of 57% and ripened as Danablu. The name would then be :

"Firm, blue cheese speciality".

7.1.2. One or several words designating the animal or, in case of mixture, the animals the milk comes from are to be inserted immediately before or after the name of the product. This declaration is not necessary if there is no risk for the consumer to be misled by its omission.

7.2 COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

The country of origin (i.e. the country where the cheese speciality was made and not the country the cheese variety originates from) is to be declared if its omission could mislead the consumer), considering section 4.5 of the general standard for the labelling of pre-packaged foodstuffs.

7.3. DECLARATION OF FAT CONTENT

Fat content is to be declared in a satisfactory manner in the country of sale, either as percentage of weight, volume or as percentage of dry matter or in grams per portion, provided the number of portions is indicated.

* Fat in dry matter may be indicated as prefix % fat/dry matter, suffix % fat/dry matter or suffix +.

Moreover, the following expressions can be used or national standards be applied :

"extra fat" (or "double cream") : if fat/dry matter content is $\geq 60\%$

"full fat" (or "whole milk" or "cream") : if fat /dry matter content is $\geq 45\%$ and $< 60\%$

"half-fat" (or "semi-skimmed") : if fat/dry matter content is $\geq 25\%$ and $< 45\%$

"partially skimmed" : if fat/dry matter content is $\geq 10\%$ and $< 25\%$

"skim" : if fat/dry matter content is $< 10\%$

7.4 I INGREDIENTS LIST

Yeast, rennet or any other appropriate and harmless clotting enzyme, calcium chloride and glucono-delta-lactone do not need to be declared in the ingredients list.

7.5 DATE MARKING

Without prejudice to the provisions of section 477 of the labelling standard, it is possible not to declare the minimum durability date if the product is not intended for the final consumer.

7.6 LABELLING OF NON-RETAIL CONTAINERS

The information required under section 7 of the present standard and sections 4.1 to 4.8 of the general standard for the labelling of pre-packaged foodstuffs is to be indicated either on the container or in the accompanying documents. However, the name of the product, the identification of the batch, as well as the name and address of the producer or packager are to be indicated on the container or else on the cheese itself. The identification of the batch and the name and address may be replaced by an identification mark, provided this mark can be clearly identified with the accompanying documents.

8. METHODS OF SAMPLING AND ANALYSIS

8.1. SAMPLING

According to IDF standard 50C:1995/ISO DIS 707/AOAC 968.12.

8.2 DETERMINATION OF FAT CONTENT

According to IDF standard 5B:1986/ISO 1735-1987/AOAC 933.05.

8.3 DETERMINATION OF DRY MATTER CONTENT

According to IDF standard 4A:1982/ISO 5534:1985 or AOAC 926.08.