



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

40th Session

CICG, Geneva, Switzerland, 17 - 22 July 2017

PROPOSALS FOR NEW WORK¹

A list of proposals to elaborate new standards and related texts is presented below, including the reference of the project document in the relevant report. The Commission is invited to decide whether or not to undertake new work in each case, taking into account the critical review conducted by the Executive Committee, and to decide which subsidiary body or other body should undertake the work. The Commission is invited to consider these proposals in the light of its *Strategic Plan 2014-2019* and the *Criteria for the Establishment of Work Priorities and for the Establishment of Subsidiary Bodies*.

| Codex Body | Text | Reference and project document |
|------------|---|---|
| CCNASWP | New work on development of a regional standard for kava as a beverage when mixed with cold water | REP17/NASWP Para 76 See Annex I of this document |
| CCRVDF | Priority list of veterinary drugs requiring evaluation or re-evaluation by JECFA | REP17/RVDF Paras 113 and 138, Appendix VI Part A |
| CCSCH | The project documents for new work (dehydrated ginger, dried garlic, dried chili peppers and paprika, basil, saffron, nutmeg and cloves) | REP17/SCH Para 82, Appendices V-XI |
| CCFO | Revision of the <i>Standard for Named Vegetable Oils</i> (CODEX STAN 210-1999): Essential composition of sunflowerseed oils | REP17/FO Para 66, Appendix VII |
| | Revision of the <i>Standard for Named Vegetable Oils</i> (CODEX STAN 210-1999): Replacement of acid value with free fatty acids for virgin palm oil and inclusion of free fatty acids for crude palm kernel oil | REP17/FO Para 77, Appendix VIII |
| | Revision of the <i>Standard for Olive Oils and Pomace Olive Oils</i> (CODEX STAN 33-1981) | REP17/FO Para 89, Appendix X |

¹ Codex meetings held from April 2017, proposals for elaboration of new standards and related texts will be issued as Add. 1 to this document. Proposal from CCFO, i.e Revision of the *Standard for Named Vegetable Oils* (CODEX STAN 210-1999) (Inclusion of walnut oil, almond oil, hazelnut oil, pistachio oil, flaxseed oil and avocado oil) may be included in Add.1 to this document due to the availability of the project document.

PROJECT DOCUMENT

Proposal to develop a Regional Codex Standard for Kava Products for Use as a Beverage

1. The Purpose and Scope of the Standard

The purpose of this regional Codex standard for kava products intended for human consumption, is to protect the health of consumers and assure its quality to promote fair trade. The scope of the standard applies to kava products as defined in section 2 below. The standard is intended to cover kava products for use as a beverage when mixed with cold water and does not apply to kava beverage as such, or products used for medicinal purposes, or as ingredients in foods, or for any other purposes.

2. Product Definition

Kava products are derived from parts of the kava plant, *Piper methysticum*. The parts of the kava plant used to produce kava products include:

- a) Fresh and dried rhizomes and basal stems; and
- b) Fresh and dried roots.

The roots, basal stems or rhizomes are harvested and washed, and peeled when appropriate, dried, sliced or ground into powder.

2.1 Fresh Kava Products

Fresh kava products are prepared using part of the basal stem, rhizomes and/or roots.

2.2 Dried Kava Products

Dried kava products may be in the form of powder or chips or plant parts.

Dried kava products are prepared from kava plants (generally at least three years of age) and cultivated using Good Agricultural Practices.

Dried products have a maximum moisture content of 12% (water activity level not exceeding 0.6). The powder is mixed with potable water prior to consumption.

3. Its Relevance and Timeliness:

Kava has been cultivated in the Pacific region including Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu for hundreds if not thousands of years². The kava beverage, prepared from cold water extract of drinkable plant parts, has a long history of being consumed in social ceremonial events. More recently, the availability of dried kava has led to the proliferation of social kava consumption in areas where kava is not normally available. This includes urban centers, non-kava producing Pacific island countries (PICs) and in overseas countries where there is a strong presence of Pacific islands communities.

Kava products are traded throughout the region, but there is no regional or international standard for such products. There are a number of national standards within the region but they are not uniform. A regional standard will be helpful to promote regional harmonization.

Due to the increase in market demand that has resulted in an increase in volumes and value of the trade in kava products in the Pacific, it is timely and critical to establish a regional standard for kava to protect consumers and to guarantee product quality to promote fair trade.

4. The Main Aspects to be covered:

The Standard for Kava Products for Use as a Beverage will be drafted in accordance with the Codex uniform layout for food products.

The proposed standard will cover kava products according to the scope (section 1) and the definition (section 2), acceptable varieties, quality factors, processing including hygienic manufacturing practice, storage conditions, contaminants, methods of analysis and sampling, and labelling in order to provide certainty and assurance and usage advice to consumers.

² Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC). Pacific kava: a producer's guide. Suva, Fiji Islands, 2001.

5. An Assessment against the *Criteria for the Establishment of Work Priorities*:

(a) Volume, Value and Pattern of Trade of Kava from the Pacific Countries

Kava is an important agricultural commodity for PICs that engage in its cultivation, forming an integral part of cultural, social and economic life. The availability of tradeable forms has resulted in increased trade within and outside of the region in important quantities and value. While a number of the PICs produce and trade in kava products, Vanuatu and Fiji are the major producers and exporters in the Pacific region. The following tables show the value and quantity of kava exports from the mentioned countries:

TABLE 1
EXPORT OF KAVA FROM VANUATU 2015³

| Country of Export | Value (in USD) | Quantity (in tons) |
|--------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Fiji | 109,000 | 10 |
| Guam | 191,000 | 23 |
| Kiribati | 702,000 | 54 |
| New Caledonia | 510,000 | 56 |
| United States of America | 137,000 | 15 |

Source: Vanuatu National Statistics Office. Simplified; local currency converted December 2016

TABLE 2
EXPORT OF KAVA FROM FIJI 2015

| Country of Export | Value (in USD) | Quantity (in tons) |
|------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Canada | 63,000 | 0.2 |
| Christmas Island (Australia) | 140,000 | 7.6 |
| Guam | 92,000 | 0.1 |
| Kiribati | 940,000 | 24.2 |
| Marshall Islands | 51,000 | 1.0 |
| Nauru | 210,000 | 1.9 |
| New Zealand | 600,000 | 41.4 |
| Samoa | 24,000 | 2.0 |
| Tuvalu | 40,000 | 0.7 |
| United States | 1,800,000 | 32.6 |
| Wallis and Futuna Islands | 150,000 | 22.3 |

Source: Fiji Bureau of Statistics 2016. Simplified; local currency converted December 2016

(b) Diversity of national legislation and apparent resultant or potential impediments to international trade.

Current impediments to trade include the lack of an internationally accepted kava quality standard, which has contributed to the decline of trade of kava products in several countries.

The Pacific Island kava-producing countries are committed to establishing standards at national level⁴. Currently available standards include the following:

- In 2001, the Secretariat to the Pacific Community published a guidance document, Pacific Kava: A Producer's Guide.
- Vanuatu enacted the Kava Act 2002⁵, amended in 2008, with Samoa, Tonga and Fiji undergoing a similar process. The Act confines trade in kava to the 'noble' and medicinal varieties and potentially forms a model for the preparation of a standard for kava as a beverage that can be used more widely.

³ Vanuatu was affected by Category 5 Tropical Cyclone Pam in 2015, decimating its kava crop and reducing the export value to a quarter the value in 2014 and one sixth the value of 2016 exports

⁴ International Kava Executive Council (2008)

⁵ Kava Act No. 7 of 2002

- In 2013 Vanuatu published the Kava Quality Manual for the export of dry kava from Vanuatu, using information on the use of FTNIR and HPTLC⁶ and basing the quality criteria on a number of Codex Standards.
- The Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access (PHAMA) programme collaborated with FAO to deliver an awareness program on the use of the Kava Quality Guides in the kava growing islands in Vanuatu.
- Vanuatu developed and launched its National Kava Strategy and Quality Standard for Kava Exports in September 2016. The National Quality Standard for Kava Exports was endorsed by the Council of Ministers on 10 November 2016.
- Fiji will soon adopt its kava quality standard.
- Samoa's Food Regulations and Quality Standard for Ava Samoa was passed by Cabinet in November 2016.
- Australia and New Zealand have established a joint standard for kava (Standard 2.6.3 of the Food Standards Code) where it is a beverage obtained by the aqueous suspension of kava root using cold water only, and not using any organic solvent; or dried or raw kava root. The product must be labelled 'Use in moderation'; and 'May cause drowsiness'⁷.

(c) International or regional market potential

Kava is a major source of income for thousands of small farm holders in Pacific countries. Tables 1 and 2 show the total volume and value of export of kava by Vanuatu and Fiji. Vanuatu produces and exports an average of about 69% of total, Fiji about 27%, Tonga about 2% and Samoa about 1% of the total production and export. The value of these kava exports is also highest for Vanuatu with about the same proportion as for the volume. The export market price of kava fluctuates from approximately US\$ 3,658 in 2002 to the highest of US\$ 14,363 in 2008.

Approximately 86% of the total kava is exported to countries of the region. Recent data from the Vanuatu Statistics Office would indicate that exports from Vanuatu to Fiji (Vanuatu's largest export market) increased by almost 70% between 2009 and 2011.

With the increasing populations of Pacific Islanders now residing in New Zealand, the United States and other countries, export of kava products to these countries has steadily increased in the past 30 years to ensure that their traditional drink is readily available among the diaspora. Traditionally, males are the main consumers of kava, but socially, women also partake; the inclusion of women has contributed to the consumer base. The increased volume of exports has resulted in kava becoming a major export commodity and an important contributor to Pacific Island economies.

All dried kava being imported in developed countries of the region, such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada and USA, is sourced exclusively from the PICs. At present kava is produced and exported exclusively by only a handful of PICs. There is therefore a case for the development of a truly recognized regional standard in Codex Standard format.

Impediments to trade are the lack of uniform standardization which should eliminate the quality problems of the dry kava products considered as the concern for the safety of consumers. The proposed standard is expected to enhance trade opportunities for the kava producing/exporting countries by providing assurance to importing countries that they will receive safe, high quality kava and products derived from it.

The Codex standard will promote harmonization of national standards and thereby contribute to facilitate international trade in dry kava products.

The standard should be the basis of kava legislation to ensure the quality of kava products that do not threaten health, safety and trade and provide all stakeholders with the ability to make informed choices. The standard will ensure consumer health protection by identifying varieties of kava with a history of safe traditional use, and parts of the plant and the process of preparation that over centuries have not shown any undesirable health effects.

⁶ Lebot V, Do T and Legendre L (2014). Detection of flavokavins (A, B, C) in cultivars of kava (*Piper methysticum*) using high performance thin layer chromatography (HPTLC). *Food Chemistry* 151:554– 560

⁷ Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code – Standard 2.6.3 – Kava
<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2015L00466>

With a Codex Regional Kava Standard, the confidence of consumers and the demand in the kava products is expected to increase by two- to ten-fold. While the price is projected to fluctuate before stabilizing, a better coordinated and well organized supply chain that complies with a Codex Regional Standard will be better placed to meet an expected increase in demand and better financial returns to the farmers. The countries and the number of farmers producing kava in the Pacific may also increase correspondingly.

(d) Amenability of the commodity to standardization

It is possible to standardize kava products as evidenced by the standards already in place in some of the kava producing countries. It is also worth noting that kava products used for beverage purposes are uniform throughout all countries. The varieties that will be defined in the proposed standard are those that have been traditionally consumed in the Pacific for centuries and can be identified by standard taxonomical as well as chemical means. It is intended that the proposed regional standard will cover only the suitable varieties cultivated within the region.

A comprehensive review of the use and safety of kava commissioned jointly by the FAO and WHO is presented⁸. The weight of evidence from the long history of use of kava beverage and from more recent research findings indicates there is no evidence that occasional moderate use of kava beverage is associated with any long-term adverse effects, including effects on the liver. Appropriate risk minimization precautions, such as those listed above, include selection of kava varieties, method of beverage preparation, and label advice.

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

The Codex Alimentarius does not include any standards covering kava products.

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

The proposed regional kava standard will include relevant kava preparation techniques for different products of kava, including in the raw and dried forms and for different parts of the plant, namely the roots, rhizomes, and basal stems.

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

A huge volume of research and analysis on kava has been conducted internationally on the properties of kava considered as a drug, dietary supplement and as a beverage. The information available internationally is sufficient to initiate new work on a regional kava standard. No additional work is anticipated at this step.

6. Relevance to the Codex Strategic Objectives:

The proposed standard meets the criteria outlined in Goals 1 and 2 of the Codex Strategic Plan.⁹

Strategic Goal 1: It will contribute to fulfilling goal 1 by providing a basis for sound regulatory frameworks harmonized across countries of the region. The standard would address concerns about the quality and safety of kava and other emerging issues associated with the products of kava.

Strategic Goal 2: It will promote wide and consistent application of scientific principles and risk analysis, including promoting the collection of data from developing countries and from all regions of the world so that the risk analysis is based on global conditions and requirements. The standard will be based upon findings of the recent WHO/FAO review⁶ and on unequivocal scientific analytical data⁴.

7. Information on the Relation between the Proposal and Other Existing Codex Documents:

This proposal is an initiative of PICs to promote safe production of fresh and dried kava, as there is currently no such existing commodity standard within Codex. It will refer as appropriate to other general Codex standards (e.g. hygiene, labelling, food additive and contaminants, etc).

8. Identification of Any Requirement for and Availability of Expert Scientific Advice:

Considerable information is available on kava and its properties. This information will be kept under review during development of the standard to identify any areas where work may be needed to support the provisions of the standard.

⁸ Abbott P. (2014). Kava: a review of the safety of the traditional and recreational beverage consumption. WHO/FAO

⁹ Codex Alimentarius Commission Strategic Plan 2014–2019

9. Identification of Any Need for Technical Input to the Standard from External Bodies

Technical assistance by WHO and/or FAO might be needed according to the outcome of considerations under Section 8.

10. The Proposed Time-line for Completion the New Work, Including the Start Date, the Proposed Date for Adoption at Step 5, and the Proposed Date for Adoption by the Commission

Start date: 2017

Adoption at step 5: 2019

Adoption at step 8: 2021