

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

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Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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REP20/NE

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

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REPORT OF THE 10TH SESSION OF THE FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR THE NEAR EAST

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SUMMARY AND STATUS OF WORK

Responsible Party	Purpose	Text/Topic	Para.
FAO/WHO and Members	Action and information	<p><u>Keynote address – chemicals in food</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confirmed the need for ongoing engagement of all stakeholders to protect public health and ensure fair trade; recognized that risk management needs to build upon risk assessment that is grounded in sound science and that there were opportunities to work together for example on dietary exposure; - Noted that harmonization of MLs, MRLs and codes of practices for chemical contaminants in food remained a challenge at the international level; - recognized that the responsibility for harmonization resided with Members and noted that FAO and WHO remained ready and available to assist this process; - Noted the challenges related to communication about the risk of chemicals in food and that more efforts were needed 	10
FAO/WHO and Members CAC43	Action and information	<p><u>Food quality and safety situation in countries of the region: current and emerging issues</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agreed to inform CAC and its subsidiary bodies on the usefulness of the survey and on the emerging issues identified noting the necessity to encourage information exchange on emerging issues among Members - Highlighted the importance of prioritizing the issues identified and defining a follow-up strategy; - Noted the ongoing capacity challenges in the region and the need for support from the relevant international organizations. 	14
Members, FAO/WHO	Action and information	<p><u>Future of food safety</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Committed to making the Chairperson's Summary of the First FAO/WHO/AU International Food Safety Conference and the Joint FAO/WHO/WTO Statement of International Forum on Food Safety and Trade available to high level policy makers within their governments; and committed to actively engage in the implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025, - Noted the ongoing efforts to improve food safety at the national level, highlighted the importance of linking food safety to the achievement of the SDGs; and requested FAO and WHO to consider the areas for action identified by countries in their future work plans. 	21
FAO/WHO and Members	Action and information	<p><u>Food safety and quality situation in countries of the region – use of online platform</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Requested FAO and WHO to continue to maintain and improve the platform to serve the Members' interests, including increasing the visibility of the information provided by countries through the platform by creating links from other parts of the FAO and WHO webpages and requested Members to keep information on the platform up-to-date. 	25
Members and Codex Secretariat	Action and information	<p><u>Use of Codex standards in the region</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Noted the outcome of the survey, supported future surveys on a biennial basis, identified areas to be covered in future surveys; and noted the importance of having follow-up actions to address the findings of the survey. 	35
EWG (Saudi Arabia), Members CCNE,	Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consideration of the <u>alignment of food additive provisions</u> in the regional standards developed by CCNE (including mixed zaatar) 	39 80 87
CCPFV29	Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supported the ongoing work of <u>CCPFV</u> 	41
Members CCEXEC79, CAC43	Action and information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agreed to discontinue the work on a draft regional standard for labneh noting that the Committee could consider future work on labneh should there be sufficient interest by Members and a new work proposal presented. 	45

Responsible Party	Purpose	Text/Topic	Para.
FAO/WHO and Members	Action and information	<u>Codex work relevant to the region</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confirmed the areas of Codex work of interest to the region; - Agreed on the need to coordinate efforts in contributing to ongoing and future Codex work of relevance to the region, in particular prior to Codex committee meetings; - Urged Members to carefully review existing Codex standards prior to submitting proposals for new work; - Identified the main challenges preventing countries from better participation: and - Encouraged Members to use available tools (i.e. Codex Diagnostic Tool and the Food Control System Assessment Tool) with the support of FAO/WHO, where appropriate. 	53
Coordinator, Members, Codex Secretariat, CCEXEC	Action and information	<u>Codex Strategic Plan 2014-2019</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discontinued the use of a regional strategic plan during the period 2020-2025 and agreed to adhere to the Global Strategic Plan 2020-2025; - Agreed to provide information through the CCPs and/or the Regional Coordinator to facilitate the preparation of the final report of the Strategic Plan 2014-2019; and - Agreed to use the existing mechanisms within Codex (i.e. web tools) and strengthen regional coordination (i.e. through meetings before and during Committee sessions). 	62
		<u>Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agreed to support the implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025; - Agreed to focus on the implementation of activities aimed towards achieving Goals 2, 3 and 4 of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 over the next two years and submitted a list of activities and related information to the CCEXEC sub-committee on strategic planning for inclusion in the overarching work plan of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 (Appendix II). 	70
Coordinator, Members and Codex Secretariat	Action	<u>Codex communications work plan</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussed and adopted the Regional Communication Work Plan and other related supportive mechanisms for its execution. 	75
CCFA, Members, CCNE	Information and action	<u>Food additive provisions – Regional Standard for Doogh</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agreed that this work be undertaken at a future session, once the alignment of the food additive provisions for CXS 234-2003 with the GSFA was completed. 	80
CCFA52, CCMAS41, CCEXEC79, CAC43, CCFL46	Endorsement/ Comments/ Adoption	<u>Draft regional standard for mixed zaatar</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agreed to forward the draft regional standard for mixed zaatar to CAC43 for adoption at Step 8 noting that the food additive, labelling and methods of analysis provisions would be forwarded to CCFA, CCFL and CCMAS respectively for endorsement; and - Requested the EWG on alignment of food additive provisions in CCNE regional standards with the GSFA to also undertake the alignment of the standard for mixed zaatar after its adoption. 	87
Members and FAO/WHO	Action and information	<u>Discussion paper on a Codex text for ready-to-eat pre-packaged salads</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assess, with the support of FAO and WHO, the extent to which existing Codex standards already covered food safety and quality concerns related to the product and, if needed, present a proposal for a new work item at a future session of CCNE. 	91
Members CCNE11	Information	<u>Discussion paper on the development of a standard for halal products</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Referred to CCNE11 for further discussion 	98

Responsible Party	Purpose	Text/Topic	Para.
CCEXEC79, CAC43	Review Approval	- Proposal for the development of a regional standard for maamoul	109
Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and interested Members	Action	- Revise the project document on the development of a regional standard for maamoul in line with the discussion and to submit through the Codex Secretariat the revised project document to CAC43 for approval as new work;	109
EWG (Saudi Arabia) CCNE11	Drafting	<u>Preparation of a regional standard for maamoul</u> (subject to the approval of CAC)	109
CAC43	Appointment	- Recommended that Saudi Arabia be appointed as Coordinator for the Near East	110

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AMR	Antimicrobial Resistance
AU	African Union
CAC	Codex Alimentarius Commission
CCNE	FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for the Near East
CCEXEC	Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission
CCFA	Codex Committee on Food Additives
CCFICS	Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems
CCP	Codex Contact Point
CRD	Conference Room Document
CS	Codex Secretariat
CCPFV	Committee on Processed Fruits and Vegetables
EWG	Electronic Working Group
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GBD	Global Burden of Disease
GEMS/Foods	Global Environment Monitoring System
GMP	Good Manufacturing Practices
GSFA	General Standard for Food Additives
ISIRI	Institute of Standards and Industrial Research of the Islamic Republic of Iran
ML	Maximum Levels
MRL	Maximum Residue Limit
OCS	Codex Online Commenting System
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
RC	Regional Coordinator
RCCs	Regional Coordinating Committees or FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees
SAFE	Arab Food Safety Initiative for Trade Facilitation
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary
SMIIC	Standards and Metrology Institute for the Islamic Countries
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TBT	Technical Barriers to Trade
UN	United Nations
WG	In-session Working Group
WHA	World Health Assembly
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

INTRODUCTION

1. The FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for the Near East held its Tenth Session (CCNE10) at FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy, from 11 to 15 November 2019 in cooperation with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Mr Mohammad Hossein Shojajee Aliabadi, Senior Scientific Advisor, Institute of Standards and Industrial Research of the Islamic Republic of Iran (ISIRI), chaired the session, which was attended by 14 Member Countries from the Near East Region, five Member Countries and one Member Organisation from outside the Region, and Palestine. The list of participants is included in Appendix I.

OPENING¹

2. The Chairperson welcomed the delegates and opened the meeting.
3. Mr Mohammad Hossein Emadi, Ambassador, Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to FAO and the United Nations (UN) Organizations in Rome, delivered the inaugural address, recalling the extensive challenges faced by the region on all fronts and highlighting the importance of UN forums such as this Committee to enable Members to meet and work together for the benefit of the region. He further recalled the ongoing efforts of Iran to address food safety and highlighted the importance of different sectors working together to ensure food safety at the national level.
4. Mr Markus Lipp, Senior Food Safety and Quality Officer, FAO and Mr Philippe Verger, Advisor, Food Safety, WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, welcomed the attendees on behalf of FAO and WHO, respectively. The meeting was also addressed by Mr Guilherme Antonio da Costa Jr., Chairperson, Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) and Mr Tom Heilandt, Secretary, CAC.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Agenda Item 1)²

5. CCNE10 adopted the agenda and agreed to consider the following topic under Agenda Item 15 (Other Business) subject to the availability of time:
 - Communication with Palestine and mechanisms to enhance participation of Palestine in Codex work
6. CCNE10 further agreed to establish two In-Session Working Groups (WGs):
 - A WG open to all Members and Observers, chaired by Egypt and working in English, Arabic and French, to consider agenda item 7.2, taking into account written comments, and to prepare a report for consideration by the plenary.
 - A WG open to all Members and Observers, chaired by Lebanon and working in English and Arabic, to address the comments received on the draft standard for mixed zaatar and to prepare a revised draft for consideration by the plenary.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS ON CHEMICALS IN FOOD - THE INVISIBLE CHALLENGE, WHEN DO WE NEED TO BE WORRIED AND WHAT DO WE NEED TO KNOW? (Agenda Item 2)³

7. The Representative of WHO introduced the item on behalf of FAO and WHO, recalling the purpose of the keynote address to have discussions on issues of interest to the region and the importance of countries participation in the work of Codex. The Representative highlighted the significant challenges posed by chemical contaminants in food in the region as well as globally, and the impact in terms of human health, product rejection and trade.
8. Mr Mark Feeley, Associate Director, Bureau of Chemical Safety, Health Canada delivered the keynote address on chemicals in food. The keynote address highlighted that: safe food enhances individual and population health and improves economic growth in regions where food safety is practiced; chemical food contaminants (including amongst others aflatoxins, heavy metals, veterinary drug and pesticide residues) are identified and perceived as a concern by consumers; safety evaluation and risk management are an important part of the pre-market controls on the use of chemicals; food chemical safety begins with knowledge of the possible risks identified through dietary exposure information; and communication with stakeholders is a key element in the delivery of appropriate risk management of chemicals in food.

¹ CRD1 (Opening speeches)

² CX/NE 19/10/1 Rev.1

³ CX/NE 19/10/2; CRD5 (Egypt)

Discussion

9. During the discussion the following observations were made:
- There are a range of tools available to support countries in their efforts to prioritize and manage chemicals in food. These include the WHO Global Burden of Disease (GBD) project - a comparative description of the burden of diseases and injuries and the risk factors that cause them across 195 countries - which can serve as a reference for countries seeking to evaluate risks related to food consumption; the WHO Global Burden of Foodborne Diseases studies and the Global Environment Monitoring System (GEMS/Foods) database in which WHO are currently engaging with institutes in the region to increase the amount of regional data therein.
 - Harmonization of Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) for pesticide residues and residues of veterinary drugs and Maximum Levels (MLs) for contaminants, is crucial for food trade at the global level as it is difficult to comply with different food safety standards which may be tailored to specific national needs;
 - Risk communication can be an important contributor to harmonization, and working with communication specialists in both risk assessment and risk management could enhance consumer protection;
 - Engaging in Codex work including prioritization processes is an important step towards ensuring that Codex is developing/revising standards relevant to Members. Members were also encouraged to use the available risk assessments and if needed engage with the Secretariats of the FAO/WHO expert bodies for guidance.

Conclusion

10. CCNE10:
- (i) noted that mycotoxins (in particular aflatoxins) and heavy metals (in particular inorganic arsenic) are among the most important chemical contaminants affecting human health;
 - (ii) confirmed the need for ongoing engagement of all stakeholders in the monitoring, assessment and management of chemical contaminants in food to protect public health and ensure fair trade;
 - (iii) recognized that risk management needs to build upon risk assessment that is grounded in sound science;
 - (iv) noted that there were opportunities to work together as the dietary exposure of populations in countries in the region were similar;
 - (v) noted that harmonization of MLs, MRLs and codes of practices for chemical contaminants in food remained a challenge at the international level;
 - (vi) recognized that the responsibility for harmonization resided with Members and noted that FAO and WHO remained ready and available to assist this process; and
 - (vii) noted the challenges related to communication about the risk of chemicals in food with all stakeholders and that more efforts were needed that may require the engagement of communication experts.

FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY IN COUNTRIES IN THE REGION: CURRENT AND EMERGING ISSUES IN THE REGION (Agenda Item 3.1)⁴

11. The Representative of FAO, speaking on behalf of FAO and WHO, introduced the item, noting that its purpose was to draw the attention of Members to emerging issues of concern in the region and to discuss how these could be addressed. The Representative presented the major emerging issues identified through the survey, namely chemical contamination of food; weak food control systems/legal frameworks; antimicrobial resistance (AMR); innovation and novel foods; and food fraud. The Representative further noted the increased response to this survey compared to the previous round (53% versus 35%), noting that there was still room for improvement.
12. CCNE10 noted the information provided by the Representative of FAO, welcomed the survey and made the following observations:
- Adequate resources and capacities to adopt standards and implement food safety regulations remained a big challenge within the region.

⁴ CXNE 19/10/3; CRD5 (Egypt)

- International organizations needed to strengthen national food control systems and facilitate follow-up on these emerging issues.
- Building on ongoing initiatives and efforts in countries, awareness should be raised on the importance of food safety in order to address current and emerging issues.
- As follow-up to the survey results, more in-depth information on the issues should be identified to enable their prioritization and a process developed to address them.
- FAO and WHO needed to provide more guidance on how to respond to the questionnaire and in particular the approach and actions that needs to be taken at the national level to facilitate identification of emerging issues.

13. Recognizing the challenges that countries faced, the Representative of FAO stressed the importance of sharing information on emerging issues among countries as a means of building trust, promoting closer collaboration and providing the basis for working towards a common goal.

Conclusion

14. CCNE10:
- i) agreed to inform CAC and its subsidiary bodies on the usefulness of the survey and on the emerging issues identified within the region;
 - ii) noted the necessity to encourage information exchange on emerging issues among Members from the region using the available mechanisms and tools;
 - iii) highlighted the importance of prioritizing the issues identified and defining a follow-up strategy; and
 - iv) noted the ongoing challenges in the region in terms of capacity to implement food safety measures and the need for support from the relevant international organizations.

THE FUTURE OF FOOD SAFETY: OUTCOME OF THE FAO/WHO/AU INTERNATIONAL FOOD SAFETY CONFERENCE AND THE INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON FOOD SAFETY AND TRADE – WHAT'S NEXT? (Agenda Item 3.2)⁵

15. The Representative of FAO, speaking on behalf of FAO and WHO, introduced this item, drawing the committee's attention to the global trends in demographics, urbanization, food demand and on-going changes in food systems with the potential to impact food safety. The Representative recalled that two global food safety events had been held in 2019 under the overall theme *The future of food safety – Transforming knowledge into action for people, economies and the environment* with the aims of: (i) identifying key actions and strategies to address current and future challenges to food safety globally, and (ii) strengthening commitment at the highest political level to scale up food safety in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
16. The Representative of FAO noted that high-level participation in the First FAO/WHO/African Union (AU) International Food Safety Conference held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and the International Forum on Food Safety and Trade held in Geneva, Switzerland, ensured that food safety was seen as an important priority and essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)⁶. The events highlighted the increasing relevance of the Codex Alimentarius as the international reference for food trade and as a resource for national standards development. The importance of harmonization of national food safety requirements with Codex Alimentarius was stressed and Members were encouraged to continue engaging in Codex work to ensure standards remained relevant and up-to-date.
17. The Representative stressed that FAO and WHO were committed to building on the momentum created by the two international food safety events and working with Members to ensure food safety remained high on the political agenda.
18. Members expressed their appreciation for the efforts of FAO and WHO on food safety and the implementation of the two high level events in 2019. The importance of follow-up was highlighted and it was indicated that the development of a regional work plan under the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025 would contribute to this.
19. Members also identified a number of areas of action for the coming years as follows:
- i) implementing Codex Standards as the basis for national food safety risk management systems;

⁵ CX/NE19/10/4, CRD5 (Egypt); CRD 8 (Palestine)

⁶ <https://www.who.int/news-room/events/international-food-safety-conference>

- ii) raising awareness of all stakeholders along the food chain on the importance of food safety and adhering to food safety standards;
- iii) improving coordination on food safety at the regional level;
- iv) implementing a One Health approach and integrating food safety policy in other areas such as food security and phytosanitary management efforts;
- v) improving data generation and data sharing capacities and initiatives;
- vi) harmonizing food safety systems and standards, based on sound science;
- vii) providing additional information and guidance on new and emerging areas such as e-commerce and the impact of climate change on food safety;
- viii) implementing a regional food safety early warning system;
- ix) improving national capacities and infrastructure to support risk analysis, foodborne disease surveillance, laboratory capacities, food inspections systems and related areas; and
- x) improving consumer awareness /education.

20. The Representative of FAO highlighted the importance of working with FAO country offices to ensure that their food safety needs were included in the Country Programming Frameworks as this was an essential step to obtain FAO support on food safety issues.

Conclusion

21. CCNE10:

- i) took note of the Chairperson's Summary of the First FAO/WHO/AU International Food Safety Conference and the Joint FAO/WHO/WTO Statement of International Forum on Food Safety and Trade and committed to making these documents available to high level policy makers within their governments;
- ii) committed to actively engage in the implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025, and highlighted the importance of linking food safety to the achievement of the SDGs;
- iii) noted the ongoing efforts to improve food safety at the national level in an integrated manner and with multi-stakeholder engagement; and
- iv) noted the areas for action identified by countries in the region and requested FAO and WHO to consider these in their future work plans.

FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY SITUATION IN THE COUNTRIES IN THE REGION: USE OF THE ONLINE PLATFORM FOR INFORMATION SHARING ON FOOD SAFETY CONTROL SYSTEMS; STATUS OF INFORMATION AND FUTURE PLANS/PROSPECTS (Agenda Item 3.3)⁷

22. The Representative of FAO, speaking on behalf of FAO and WHO, introduced the item, highlighting the status of information on the online platform from countries in the region. The Representative recalled the purpose of the platform to share information on national food control systems and relevant regulations and legislation, noting that information sharing was of the utmost importance for the region as a basis for enhanced collaboration.

23. CCNE10 noted the information provided and the importance of the platform as a means of sharing information and made the following observations:

- the platform was an important support tool in efforts to harmonize regulations and thereby facilitate trade;
- further efforts were needed to make the platform more visible and its content more accessible;
- consideration should be given to the inclusion of information on emerging issues on the platform;
- while there were a lot of data being generated, the systems to collate and analyse data and undertake risk assessments were not always in place which meant it was difficult for countries to provide information on their risk assessment activities on the platform; and

⁷ CX/NE 19/10/5; CRD5 (Egypt)

- other challenges which prevented countries from providing information on the platform included the lack of awareness of the platform and the existence of multiple entities with food safety responsibilities in a country.

24. While noting the challenges, the Representative of FAO also highlighted that the platform already provided a cost-free mechanism to share information and facilitate collaboration.

Conclusion

25. CCNE10:

- i) noted the feedback provided by Members during the discussion, in particular, the value of information exchange, the important role of the platform, and the areas for improvement;
- ii) requested FAO and WHO to continue to maintain and improve the platform to serve the Members' interests, including increasing the visibility of the information provided by countries through the platform by creating links from other parts of the FAO and WHO webpages; and
- iii) requested Members to keep information on the platform up-to-date.

USE OF CODEX STANDARDS IN THE REGION (Agenda Item 4)⁸

26. The Codex Secretariat introduced the item and noted that the online survey focused on the use of the following Codex standards: MRLs for veterinary drugs in foods; two Codex texts on AMR; and the *Regional Code of Practice for Street-vended Foods*. The aim of the survey was to provide a better understanding of the extent of use and relevance of Codex Standards for the region; to offer an insight into the difficulties related to the use of Codex standards and to receive feedback from Members on the future implementation of the survey.

27. The Codex Secretariat highlighted the lower response rate to the survey (60%) as compared to the 2016 survey (82%), and drew the attention of CCNE10 to its outcome, inviting the Committee to share comments on the analysis, the feasibility of completing such surveys on a regular basis as well as any information on other ongoing efforts to assess the level of use of Codex standards.

Discussion

28. Members noted the results of the survey explaining that alignment with Codex MRLs for residues of veterinary drugs in foods was particularly challenging where MRLs of major export destinations (e.g. Members of the European Union) would diverge from those set by the CAC.

29. Members supported the continuation of the survey on a biennial basis acknowledging that the survey results were also linked to Goal 3 of the Strategic Plan for the period 2020-2025 (impact through use and recognition).

30. Some Members highlighted ongoing initiatives relevant for future assessments of the use of Codex standards such as:

- collection of national level data on the use of Codex standards based on the FAO/WHO Diagnostic Tool for National Codex Programmes in the frame of capacity building projects (e.g. SAFE- Arab Food Safety Initiative for Trade Facilitation); and
- the decision of the League of Arab States to encourage its members to harmonize national food safety legislation with the Codex Alimentarius.

31. Members furthermore stressed the urgency to follow-up on the survey(s) (e.g. in dedicated workshops) to develop recommendations that address the findings.

The contents of the next survey

32. Members identified the following areas to be considered in the next survey: (i) chemical and microbiological contaminants; (ii) pesticide residues; (iii) food additives; and (iv) food import and export certification.

33. The Codex Secretariat recalled that the 2016 survey on use of Codex standards already covered some of the areas identified, but noted that these areas could be revisited if Members saw a need in doing so.

34. Members stressed the need to complement the survey with a monitoring mechanism that would provide insights into the overall application of Codex standards at the global level.

⁸ CX/NE 19/10/6, CRD5 (Egypt); CRD9 (Information on the Arab Food Safety Initiative for Trade Facilitation (SAFE) and results achieved under the FAO-led components)

Conclusion

35. CCNE10:
- (i) noted the outcome of the survey and supported future surveys on a biennial basis;
 - (ii) identified standards on chemical and microbiological contaminants, pesticide residues, food additives and food import and export certification as areas to be covered in future surveys; and
 - (iii) noted the importance of having follow-up actions to address the findings of the survey (regional workshops and other activities as part of the regional work plan to support implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025).

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER CODEX COMMITTEES (Agenda Item 5)⁹

36. CCNE10 noted that some matters were for information only and others for action would be considered under relevant agenda items. In addition, CCNE10 took the following decisions:

Matters from CAC40Regular Review of Codex Work Management: Electronic Working Groups (EWGs)

37. CCNE10 noted the importance of discussing challenges and barriers to participation in EWGs and the need to identify potential solutions, and agreed to convene an informal meeting as input to a more expansive discussion under Agenda Item 7.1.

Matters from CCFA50Guidance on the alignment of food additive provisions and alignment plan

38. CCNE10 recalled that there were five regional standards developed by CCNE, namely the *Regional Standard for Canned Humus with Tehena* (CXS 257R-2007), the *Regional Standard for Canned Foul Medames* (CXS 258R-2007), the *Regional Standard for Tehena* (CXS 259R-2007), the *Regional Standard for Harissa (Red Hot Pepper Paste)* (CXS 308R-2011) and the *Regional Standard for Date Paste (Near East)* (CXS 314R-2013) which needed aligning with the *General Standard for Food Additives* (CXS 192-1995).
39. Given the effort needed for the alignment work and the need to consult with technical experts, CCNE10 agreed to establish an EWG, chaired by Saudi Arabia, working in English and Arabic, to consider the alignment of food additive provisions in the regional standards developed by CCNE.
40. The report of the EWG should be made available to the Codex Secretariat at least three months before CCNE11.

Matters from CCEXEC77Committee on Processed Fruits and Vegetables (CCPFV) on cashew kernels

41. CCNE10 noted the support for the ongoing work by CCPFV.

Matters not included in the documentDraft regional standard for labneh

42. The Codex Secretariat recalled that CCNE8 agreed to retain the proposed draft regional standard for labneh awaiting the advice of CAC on the possible amendment of the *Standard for Fermented Milks* (CXS 243-2003) and that it was further agreed that Lebanon, with the assistance of interested Members from the region, would continue to work on the technical provisions specific to labneh. The Secretariat explained that CXS 243-2003 included labneh as an example and that a technical justification regarding removal of the reference to the product in that standard was still pending. As a result the draft standard had remained frozen at Step 4 for four years.

Discussion

43. Lebanon explained that they were still investigating whether the provisions for sorbic acid, proportion of powdered milk and related microbiological specifications in CXS 243-2003 were appropriate for labneh.
44. Members noted that labneh as a fermented milk product was covered by the existing related standard (CXS 243-2003) and did not consider it necessary to develop a separate standard.

⁹ CX/NE 19/10/7

Conclusion

45. CCNE10 agreed to discontinue the work on a draft regional standard for labneh noting that the Committee could consider future work on labneh should there be sufficient interest by Members and a new work proposal presented.

CODEX WORK RELEVANT TO THE REGION (Agenda Item 6)¹⁰

46. The Codex Secretariat introduced the item noting that its purpose was to discuss which Codex work was of greatest relevance to Members from the region, to provide them with an opportunity to develop regional positions, and to understand challenges related to ongoing work as well as areas where they saw a need for optimising participation.

Discussion

47. Members confirmed the following matters as being of interest to the region:
- contaminants in food;
 - pesticide residues;
 - nutrition and foods for special dietary uses;
 - dried fruits; and further added;
 - olive oil; and
 - fresh fruits and vegetables, such as dates.
48. With regards to participation in the work of relevant Codex committees, Members noted the following challenges faced by some countries:
- lack of technical expertise and national data to participate effectively and contribute information about subjects of interest;
 - lack of financial resources to attend physical meetings;
 - visa issues (including cases where *ad hoc* financial support was provided by third parties, but too late to meet visa deadlines);
 - insufficient coordination between concerned authorities; and
 - lack of national awareness of the importance of participation in Codex work.
49. In response to some of the challenges identified by Members, the Representative of FAO noted that Codex Contact Points (CCPs) were not a single person, but rather an institution and therefore could consist of a team of people to adequately coordinate Codex work at the national level. In addition, countries could make use of the FAO/WHO Diagnostic Tool (available in all UN languages) to identify national gaps and needs and request technical support accordingly and the FAO/WHO Food Control System Assessment Tool (available in English and French, with Arabic in preparation).
50. The Representative of FAO and some Members stressed the importance of working with the Regional Coordinator and involving National Codex Committees well in advance of Codex meetings to prepare for and ensure effective participation both from an administrative and technical perspective.
51. Members noted that participation could also be improved through increased awareness of existing Codex standards and procedures, undertaking an analysis of needs before proposing new work and identifying priority areas for participation.
52. Members further noted that certain initiatives supporting enhanced participation in relevant Codex work could be implemented even with limited technical expertise and financial resources e.g. pesticide exposure assessments based on national lists of approved food products.

Conclusion

53. CCNE10:
- (i) confirmed the areas of Codex work of interest to the region as presented and added the work of the Codex Committee on Fats and Oils (olive oil) and Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (fresh dates) as relevant areas;

¹⁰ CX/NE 19/10/8, CRD5 (Egypt)

- (ii) agreed on the need to coordinate efforts in contributing to ongoing and future Codex work of relevance to the region, in particular prior to Codex committee meetings;
- (iii) urged Members to carefully review existing Codex standards prior to submitting proposals for new work;
- (iv) identified the following main challenges preventing countries from better participation: (a) lack of financial resources; (b) lack of awareness and/or coordination, particularly among relevant decision makers; (c) lack of technical expertise/ capacity to contribute to Codex work; and (d) visa issues; and
- (v) encouraged Members to use available tools (i.e. Codex Diagnostic Tool and the Food Control System Assessment Tool) with the support of FAO/WHO, where appropriate.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2014-2019 (INCLUDING STRATEGIC PLAN FOR CCNE 2014-2019) (Agenda Item 7.1)¹¹

54. The Codex Secretariat introduced the agenda item, noting that the term of the global Codex Strategic Plan 2014-2019 was ending and that there were many valuable lessons to be learned from the monitoring and implementation of the plan that needed to be carried forward when implementing the new strategic plan.
55. CCNE10 was informed that a final report on the implementation of the strategic plan (2014-2019) would be presented to CCEXEC79 and CAC43, for which input was required from the region.
56. As a follow up to the regular review of Codex work management on EWGs, the Codex Secretariat recalled the recommendation of CAC40 to work with Coordinators and Committees to examine barriers to active participation and identify possible solutions.

Discussion

Barriers to participation in EWGs

57. Discussions highlighted the following impediments to participation in EWGs:
- how the Codex Contact Point (CCP) coordinates EWG work (often with limited human resources)
 - the capacity and organization of the national structure, staff turnover;
 - the level of national coordination with relevant experts;
 - the ability to adequately respond to the volume of work associated with the number of active EWGs.
 - time management and timely participation:
 - for the CCP who is also coordinating national experts;
 - for countries leading EWGs in managing the work;
 - for participants in EWGs (registration and deadline management);
 - for the Codex Secretariat in ensuring effective and timely communication when publishing invitations.
 - technical issues on how to access and use the EWG platform ensuring that experts were also adequately trained even if infrequent users and subject to change;
 - language issues such as the availability of documents in respective languages on time; and
 - “other factors” such as lack of data to be able to contribute to an EWG and the perception that comments submitted may not be reflected in the final report of an EWG.
58. The Codex Secretariat clarified that each Codex committee report summarised EWGs established and that a comprehensive list of active and closed EWGs was also available on the Codex website.
59. Members noted the need to prioritise their participation to facilitate effective monitoring and follow-up to EWGs that are established on an ongoing basis by Codex committees.
- ##### Regional Strategic Plan of CCNE
60. Members noted that there was a need to have a separate work plan and a mechanism to monitor progress in the region, but that more commitment was needed to deliver and report on regional activities.

¹¹ CX/NE 19/10/9; CRD5 (Egypt)

61. Aligning the strategy for the region with the new global Strategic Plan 2020-2025 and adhering to a specific regional work plan was considered a sensible approach.

Conclusion

62. CCNE10:
- (i) agreed to discontinue the use of a regional strategic plan during the period 2020-2025 and adhere to the Global Strategic Plan 2020-2025 focusing efforts on activities identified in a region specific work plan;
 - (ii) requested Members to proactively provide information through their CCPs and/or the Regional Coordinator to facilitate the preparation of the final report of the Strategic Plan 2014-2019; and
 - (iii) acknowledged the ongoing challenges with participation in Codex meetings and in EWGs and agreed to use the existing mechanisms within Codex (i.e. web tools) and strengthen regional coordination (i.e. through meetings before and during Committee sessions).

CODEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025 – ROADMAP TO IMPLEMENTATION (Agenda Item 7.2)¹²

63. The Codex Secretariat introduced the item, recalling that CAC42 had adopted the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025 and noting the flexibility the new strategic plan afforded in terms of implementation. The Codex Secretariat emphasized the shared ownership and responsibility for implementation of the Strategic Plan among Codex Members and Observers, Codex subsidiary bodies and the Codex Secretariat, host country secretariat and chairpersons. The Codex Secretariat reminded CCNE that CAC42 had requested all coordinating committees to provide details on the activities they would undertake to support the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 over the next two years.
64. The Chairperson recalled that CCNE10 had established an In-Session Working Group (WG), chaired by Egypt, to address this request.

Discussion

65. Egypt, as Chairperson of the WG, summarized the outcome of the WG discussions as presented in CRD10, noted that the WG had prioritized activities under Goals 2, 3 and 4 for 2020-2021 and had identified a series of activities. The Chairperson of the WG also proposed that the Committee closely review the table in order to ensure the proposed activities were aligned with the goals and complemented by outputs and reporting mechanisms.
66. CCNE10 expressed appreciation for the work of the WG and reviewed the proposed activities and related information as presented in CRD8.
67. With regard to Goal 2, Members agreed:
- that activities for the region in the period 2020-2021 should focus on the collection of recent scientific information on monitoring of contaminants (e.g. mycotoxins);
 - that an expert working group should be established to address critical and emerging issues discussed in Codex committees. Such a group could also facilitate more adequate preparation for Codex meetings by Members and increase submission of information to technical committees; to work with regional organizations to source funding to support expert meetings in the region to develop national and regional positions; and
 - that the expected outputs from the above activities would be reported to CCNE11.
68. The activities proposed in CRD10 under Goal 3 were supported.
69. With regard to Goal 4, Members added the use of available tools (FAO/WHO Diagnostic Tool) to assess national Codex structures as an activity to enable sustainable national Codex structures in all Codex Member countries (objective 4.1), and agreed that the expected output from this activity was the application of this tool by 25 percent of Members from the region by 2021.

¹² CX/NE 19/10/10; CRD5 (Egypt)

Conclusion

70. CCNE10:
- (i) expressed commitment to support the implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025;
 - (ii) agreed that CCNE would focus on the implementation of activities aimed towards achieving Goals 2 (standards based on science and risk analysis), 3 (use of Codex standards) and 4 (participation) of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 over the next two years;
 - (iii) agreed to submit a list of activities and related information that would be undertaken by the region over the next two years to the CCEXEC sub-committee on strategic planning for inclusion in the overarching work plan of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 (Appendix II).

CODEX COMMUNICATIONS WORK PLAN (Agenda Item 8)¹³

71. The Codex Secretariat introduced the item, recalling CCEXEC74 (Rome, 2017) support for “the need for members to contribute [to the] development and implementation” of the current Codex communications work plan and “the potential for greater engagement and communication through tailored collaboration with the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees”¹⁴.
72. The Codex Secretariat highlighted the opportunities that both social and traditional media offered for raising awareness of Codex issues whether at the highest political level or when reporting, for example, on technical and capacity building initiatives. The Codex Secretariat noted the margin for improvement in communications activities in the region especially for the annual occurrence of World Food Safety Day (7 June). Reiterating the availability of the communications team to engage with Members to deliver on the communications work plan (Appendix III) and to ensure that news of the work in the region reached relevant audiences, the Codex Secretariat also noted the relevance of the communications work plan to the new Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025.
73. Representatives of FAO reinforced the need for effective communications from the region and the opportunities they presented to give visibility to Codex work for policy makers.
74. The European Union (EU) reported on a combined initiative with the United States of America to request that WHO add food safety to the agenda of the 146th Executive Board and the 74th World Health Assembly (WHA). A food safety resolution at the WHA would be critical for greater international coordination, scaling up national and regional efforts, and engaging Member States at the highest political level in promoting food safety. The EU urged CCNE delegates to inform their Geneva-based representatives to WHO to support this initiative.

Conclusion

75. CCNE10 acknowledged the importance of communications in Codex and agreed to:
- (i) adopt the regional communications work plan (Appendix III) and actively participate in its implementation; and
 - (ii) liaise with the Codex Secretariat to execute the communications work plan noting the role individual countries, FAO/WHO Regional Offices and the Regional Coordinator can play.

FOOD ADDITIVE PROVISIONS FOR THE REGIONAL STANDARD FOR DOUGH (Agenda Item 9)¹⁵

76. The Codex Secretariat introduced the item, in the absence of Iran, recalling that the food additive provisions for dough had not been endorsed by the Codex Committee on Food Additives (CCFA) and therefore been excluded from the standard when it was adopted by CAC40, with CAC41 noting that the provisions for food additives would be subject to further development.
77. Taking into consideration the comments from CCFA50, in particular whether a reference to the *General Standard for Food Additives* (GSFA, CXS 192-1995) was possible instead of specific food additive provisions, three options were proposed for consideration by CCNE10. These were: (i) include a general reference to the GSFA identifying the additive classes that could be used in dough; (ii) include a general reference to the GSFA identifying the additive classes that could be used in dough and a table indicating which additive classes applied to each type of dough; and (iii) wait until the alignment of the food additive provisions for the *Standard for Fermented Milk* (CXS 243-2003) was completed.

¹³ CX/NE 19/10/11

¹⁴ REP18/EXEC1 para 9

¹⁵ CX/NE 19/10/12; CRD4 (Iran); CRD6 (International Dairy Federation)

78. The Codex Secretariat further highlighted the comments received, namely the proposal of Iran to limit the food additive classes for doogh to carbonating agents; preservatives, stabilizers and sweeteners and the comments of the International Dairy Federation supporting option (ii).

Discussion

79. Members noted the ongoing work on alignment of the food additive provisions in CXS 243-2003 with the GSFA and the lack of specific expertise on this issue at the meeting and considered that they were not in a position to take a decision on food additive provisions for doogh at this session.

Conclusion

80. CCNE10 agreed that further work on the food additive provisions for doogh should be undertaken at a future session, once the alignment of the food additive provisions for CXS 243-2003 with the GSFA was completed.

DRAFT REGIONAL STANDARD FOR MIXED ZAAATAR (Agenda Item 10)¹⁶

81. Lebanon, as chair of the In-Session Working Group (WG) introduced its report (CRD7) noting that the WG had addressed comments received, made some structural changes to improve clarity and indicated that there was consensus among those that had attended. Following the proposal of the Chairperson, CCNE10 agreed to base their discussions on the revised draft standard as presented in CRD7.
82. CCNE10 considered the revised draft standard section by section, noted comments, made editorial corrections and amendments for purposes of clarity and took the following additional decisions.

Section 1 - Scope

- Agreed to delete reference to the use of mixed zaatar in food preparations and inclusion of country specific examples as its use can vary from country to country.

Section 2 - Description

2.1 Definition

- Agreed to include “dried” in the titles of sections 2.1.2 and 2.1.3 and in the definitions of raw zaatar and raw broadleaf zaatar, for consistency with the inclusion of “dried” in the definition for mixed zaatar.

2.2 Classification

- Renamed the different classes of mixed zaatar as Grade 1 (premium), Grade 2 (extra) and Grade 3 (regular) in order to provide a classification that was unambiguous, easily communicated and understood, and made consequential changes in the remainder of the standard.
- Revised the description of Grade 3 mixed zaatar to make reference to the optional ingredients outlined in section 3.1.2 for clarity and consistency.

83. Following the reduction of the maximum level of salt by the WG, CCNE10 noted that the level of 4% was based on specifications by the main mixed zaatar producing countries in the region and that salt was an ingredient contributing to the taste and texture of the product. Therefore a technological justification was not required.
84. It was also clarified that the levels of other ingredients were not specified as these vary from country to country according to local recipes.

Section 3 Essential composition and quality factors

3.2 Quality factors.

- Added “for mixed zaatar” to the title of section 3.2.2 “Physical and Chemical Characteristics” and then deleted the first sentence under 3.2.2.2 “Chemical Requirements” as it was redundant.

Section 4 - Food Additives

- Reinserted a sentence to clarify that food additives were not permitted in Grade 1 and 2 mixed zaatar.
- Confirmed that citric acid was the only food additive permitted in Grade 3 mixed zaatar.

85. CCNE10 reiterated that citric acid, being the only food additive permitted, also contributed to the taste of the product. It was noted that one of the ingredients (sumac) naturally contained citric acid and the addition of citric acid complimented or strengthened the natural taste characteristics of the product. Sumac was added to mixed zaatar to give a strong acid taste. Some sumac varieties from some specific origins had lower acidity levels and citric acid was added to maintain a consistent acidity and taste.

¹⁶ CX/NE 19/10/12; CRD4 (Iran); CRD5 (Egypt); CRD7 (Report of the In-Session Working Group on mixed zaatar)

86. With regards to food additive provisions, CCNE10 also recommended mixed zaatar be included in the Food Category 12.2.1 “Herbs and spices”.

Section 6 Hygiene

- Included a specific reference to the *Code of Hygienic Practice for Low-Moisture Foods* (CXC 75-2015) noting that this included more specific guidance on microbiological criteria for low-moisture foods such as mixed zaatar and had a specific annex addressing spices and culinary herbs, which included guidance on packaging of these types of products.

Section 7 - Labelling

7.1 Name of Product

- Deleted “or mixed thyme” from 7.1.1 as this did not reflect the product description.

Section 8 - Methods of analysis

- Reinserted the details of the methods of analysis including the method principle and type, noting that when the methods were endorsed by the Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling (CCMAS) and the standard was adopted by CAC the listing of methods of analysis would be removed and included in CXS 234-1999, with the appropriate cross reference remaining in the standard. As the template for sampling plans was still under development by CCMAS, section 8.2 could not be developed.

Conclusion

87. CCNE10:
- agreed to forward the draft regional standard for mixed zaatar (Appendix IV) to CAC43 for adoption at Step 8;
 - noted that the food additive, labelling and methods of analysis provisions would be forwarded to CCFA, Codex Committee on Food Labeling and CCMAS respectively for endorsement; and
 - requested the EWG on alignment of food additive provisions in CCNE regional standards with the GSFA to also undertake the alignment of the standard for mixed zaatar after its adoption.

DISCUSSION PAPER ON A CODEX TEXT FOR READY-TO-EAT PRE-PACKAGED SALADS (Agenda Item 11)¹⁷

88. Palestine, at the invitation of Lebanon, introduced the item recalling the request of CCNE9 to prepare a discussion paper to explore which option, whether a code of practice or a standard, would be more feasible for the development of a Codex text. Palestine further explained that due to lack of knowledge of Codex procedures a project document had yet to be developed and proposed to delay the discussion to the next session of CCNE.
89. Members noted that existing Codex standards contained provisions that could be applicable to pre-packaged salads, e.g. the *Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables* (CXC 53-2003), and should be considered before proposing any new work.
90. The Codex Secretariat further clarified that proposals for new work should carefully consider the relevance of existing standards, the relevant criteria on the establishment of work priorities and guidance on the preparation of draft standards as set forth in the Codex Procedural Manual.

Conclusion

91. CCNE10 encouraged Members interested in the development of a standard for pre-packaged salads to assess, with the support of FAO and WHO, the extent to which existing Codex standards already covered food safety and quality concerns related to the product and if needed, a proposal for a new work item could be presented at a future session of CCNE.

DISCUSSION PAPER ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A STANDARD FOR HALAL PRODUCTS (Agenda Item 12)¹⁸

92. Egypt introduced the item recalling that CCNE9 had requested the preparation of a discussion paper for a standard on halal products, for consideration at CCNE10, taking into account the halal standards issued by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) / Standards and Metrology Institute for the Islamic Countries

¹⁷ CX/NE 19/10/14

¹⁸ CX/NE 19/10/15; CRD3 (Algeria); CRD4 (Iran)

(SMIIC). Egypt noted that the proposed standard would cover aspects of production, traceability, packaging and hygiene, amongst others.

Discussion

93. CCNE10 deliberated on whether it would be appropriate to proceed with new work on halal products.
94. Delegations in support of having a Codex standard highlighted the importance of harmonizing halal products to facilitate global trade. More specifically, they noted that existing standards (developed by SMIIC) would not sufficiently ensure fair practices in international food trade with regards to halal food products, but could serve as a basis for a Codex standard in this area.
95. Delegations not supporting the development of a standard for halal products, amongst which were Iran and Tunisia, noted that:
- halal was a faith-based issue rather than a science-based food safety and quality issue and Codex was not the appropriate forum to negotiate such issues;
 - regional approaches to the development of halal standards would endanger the integrity of and convergence towards harmonized international regulation of halal products; and
 - SMIIC had already developed standards for halal products to facilitate international trade, had a broader membership than the CCNE committee, and involved representatives of the Islamic faith.
96. The Codex Secretary clarified that halal products would fall under on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreement of the World Trade Organization under which Codex standards were not explicitly referenced and therefore there was no added value in establishing a Codex standard in addition to other existing international standards. The Secretary also recalled that the development of Codex standards for halal products had been discussed at the level of the CAC as well as General Subject Committees without reaching agreement to progress such work.
97. The Committee acknowledged:
- the importance of having clear rules for halal in international trade;
 - that halal was a faith-based issue rather than a science-based food safety and quality issue;
 - that halal was a TBT rather than a Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) issue and in this regard Codex would not have a special status. Other standard setting organizations could serve as reference in case of a trade dispute;
 - the existence of SMIIC halal standards;
 - that halal was not a regional issue and regional approaches could adversely affect harmonized international regulation of halal products.

Conclusion

98. As CCNE10 did not agree on how to progress on the matter it was referred to the next session.

DISCUSSION PAPER ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A REGIONAL STANDARD FOR MAAMOUL (Agenda Item 13)¹⁹

99. Saudi Arabia introduced the item noting that it had a large national production of date-filled maamoul and exported to many countries.

Discussion

100. Members welcomed the proposal to develop a regional standard for maamoul and confirmed that the product was produced and exported by several Members from the region. The project document for the development of a regional standard therefore required a more elaborate description of the regional volume of production, consumption and patterns of trade.
101. Members noted that Saudi Arabia would engage with other countries from the region to obtain more information on the regional production and trade of maamoul.

¹⁹ CX/NE 19/10/16

The identification of the product

102. Members noted that the filling of maamoul varied from country to country with some Members producing the product mainly with a date-based filling, while others produced maamoul filled with other types of fruits and/or nuts (e.g. pistachios or walnuts).
103. Some Members also noted that maamoul without filling existed but this was primarily produced at a local level and not traded regionally. Members therefore confirmed that the standard would refer to a pastry filled with a sweet chewy paste based on dates and/or other fruits and/or nuts, noting that a clear description needed to be included in the project document to ensure that the identity of the product could be clearly distinguished from other types of cookies/pastries.

The main aspects to be covered

104. Members requested clarification regarding the composition of the product, noting that the description of the filling of maamoul should take account of national variations within the region to ensure that any future standard would cover such variations and hence not cause impediments to regional trade. It was also stressed that vegetables not be included in the description of potential fillings as this was a sweet product.
105. The Codex Secretariat recalled that the quality factors essential for the identity of the product (e.g. its composition, shape or texture) would have to be more clearly defined as they were pivotal to any decision on the product's amenability to standardisation.
106. Some Members considered more information on the shelf-life of maamoul useful in order to better determine the specifications of the standard.

National legislations and potential impediments

107. While some Members noted that they had either implemented or were in the process of developing national standards/regulation specific to maamoul, others noted that this commodity would fall under regulations for biscuits.

Other existing standards

108. Members noted that both the work already undertaken by other relevant international organizations as well as other existing Codex standards (e.g. *Regional Standard for Date Paste* CXS 314R-2013) should be further reviewed to ensure better understanding of potential complementarities, gaps, duplication, or conflicts with a new standard for maamoul.

Conclusion

109. CCNE10 agreed to:
- (i) start new work;
 - (ii) request Saudi Arabia with support of Lebanon and other interested Members to revise the project document in line with the discussion and to submit through the Codex Secretariat the revised project document to CAC43 for approval as new work at least three months in advance of the meeting; and
 - (iii) establish an EWG, chaired by Saudi Arabia, working in English and Arabic, to prepare, subject to the approval of CAC, the proposed draft regional standard for circulation for comments at Step 3 and consideration at CCNE11. The EWG report should be submitted to the Codex Secretariat at least three months prior to CCNE11.

NOMINATION OF THE COORDINATOR (Agenda Item 14)²⁰

110. CCNE10 agreed to recommend to CAC43 that Saudi Arabia be appointed as the next Coordinator for the Near East recalling the importance of the role of the Coordinator and the need to strengthen coordination among countries in the region between CCNE sessions and in preparation for other Codex committees.
111. Saudi Arabia thanked all delegations for their support and expressed their strong commitment to fulfil the duties of Coordinator.

²⁰ CX/NE 19/10/17

OTHER BUSINESS (Agenda Item 15)**Communication with Palestine and mechanisms to enhance participation of Palestine in Codex work**

112. Palestine noted that although communication mechanisms had been put in place to facilitate its participation in Codex activities, it was not receiving documents. The Codex Secretariat clarified that all Codex documents were available on the Codex website, recalling that Palestine had been added to the Codex distribution list and inviting the delegation to further inform the Secretariat whether the provided contact was still valid.

DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT SESSION (Agenda Item 16)

113. CCNE10 was informed that its next Session would be held in approximately two years' time and that more detailed arrangements would be communicated to Members following the appointment of the Coordinator by CAC43 and subsequent discussions between the Coordinator and the Codex Secretariat.

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APPENDIX II

ACTIVITIES TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE CCNE REGION IN 2020-2021 TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025

Priority Goal	Priority objective	Activities for the period 2020-2021	Rationale for proposed activities	Responsible or lead party	Expected output by 2021	Reporting mechanism
Goal 2 Develop standards based on science and Codex risk based principles	2.1. Use scientific advice consistently in line with Codex risk analysis principles	2.1.1 Collect recent scientific information on monitoring of contaminants in food in Member countries in the region e.g. mycotoxin 2.1.2 Establish an expert working group to address critical and emerging issues discussed in Codex Committees 2.1.3 Work with regional organizations to source funding to support expert meetings in the region to develop national and regional positions	The project documents, standards and comments should be based on scientific evidence and data from the Member countries	Member countries (CCPs), Regional Coordinator	Report on available data on specific contaminants in the region Technical advisory group to exchange scientific data from the region established	Report of activities undertaken prepared by the Coordinator for CCNE11
Goal 3 Increase impact through the recognition and use of Codex standards	3.1 Raise the awareness of Codex standards	3.1.1. Organizing awareness raising programmes on the importance of Codex on a periodic basis targeting different levels from decision-makers to all stakeholders	Weak level of commitment and lack of knowledge among decision-makers and stakeholders Lack of knowledge of national Codex teams on the working mechanisms of the Codex Alimentarius	CCPs) National Codex Committees, FAO and WHO regional and country offices	Increase in level of participation and contribution in different Codex committees Achievement of a national commitment to Codex Alimentarius as a reference for food safety and quality standards Harmonization between national standards and regulations against Codex texts initiated	Biannual survey reported to CCNE

Priority Goal	Priority objective	Activities for the period 2020-2021	Rationale for proposed activities	Responsible or lead party	Expected output by 2021	Reporting mechanism
Goal 4 Facilitate the participation of all Codex Members throughout the standard setting process	4.1. Enable sustainable national Codex structures in all Codex Member countries	4.1.1 Use available tools (FAO/WHO Diagnostic Tool) to assess national Codex structures 4.1.2 Increase the number of and access to training sessions on the working procedures of the CAC and its subsidiary bodies, based on available guidelines and tools in Arabic	To ensure members know the working mechanisms in countries and have a strong Codex infrastructure in countries (i.e. to prepare national positions, develop national policies regarding Codex, have a strong and well-functioning CCP etc.)	FAO and WHO with the Regional Coordinator and Member countries	25% of Members from the region have applied the FAO/WHO Diagnostic Tool 10% increase in participation in Codex work by Members from the region by 2021	Reports on participation by the Codex Secretariat
	4.2 Reduce barriers to active participation by developing countries.	4.2.1 Establish a list of countries that have difficulties to participate in Codex work and try to identify some parties/organizations to support their participation (virtually and physically), and assist in related aspects such as facilitating the visa process.	Improve participation of developing countries, especially those facing particular challenges	Host country secretariats, Codex Secretariat, Other Members in the region, Regional Coordinator	List of countries requiring support, processes to assist in visa (e.g. requesting invitation letters). Workshop on virtual participation and possible funding sources to support physical participation identified	Statistics on EWG, OCS and Committee meeting participation

APPENDIX III

REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS WORK PLAN 2020-2025

The table shows the objectives, activities, targets and indicators for the CCNE Regional Communications Work plan. These elements derive from Strategic Goal 3 in the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025 “Increase impact through the recognition and use of Codex standards”, in particular objective 3.1 “Raise the awareness of Codex standards”.

Objective	Activities	Responsible Party	Targets	Indicators
1. Establish clear, communication channels	1.1. Consolidate and improve information flow and exchange between countries and Codex Secretariat (CS) 1.2. Establish simple and rapid communications methods (e.g. WhatsApp communications group, or discussion group on Codex EWG forum)	1.1 Countries and CS 1.2 RC, Countries and CS	By CCNE11 (2021) 75% of Members/Observers surveyed indicate timeliness, accessibility and quality of Codex regional communications “excellent” or “good”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of survey responses rating regional communications “excellent” or “good”
2. Communicate the value of Codex standards in the region	2.1. Provide CS with monthly drafts of web stories capturing food safety, standards work or capacity building initiatives in the region 2.2. Promote regional success stories and initiatives in conjunction with CS and FAO/WHO	2.1 Countries, RC 2.2 CS, RC, FAO/WHO	By CAC43 10 news items from countries in the region published By CCNE11 25 news items from countries in the region By CCNE11 50% of countries in the region have made a contribution to codex news on the regional webpage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of CCNE news stories published Number of countries who have made a published contribution

DRAFT REGIONAL STANDARD FOR MIXED ZAAATAR**1. SCOPE**

This standard determines the requirements and characteristics that shall be present in mixed zaatar intended for direct human consumption.

2. DESCRIPTION**2.1 DEFINITION****2.1.1 Mixed Zaatar**

It is a mix consisting of dried raw zaatar and dried raw broadleaf zaatar, as defined below, and the husk of sumac, and sesame seeds, to which other ingredients may be added. The classification of mixed zaatar shall be as shown in Section 2.2.

2.1.2 Dried Raw Zaatar

It is composed of the leaves and/or blossoms of the following wild and cultivated plants, which are dried and then manually or mechanically crumbled but not powdered.

- *Origanum* spp.
- *Thymbra* spp.
- *Thymus* spp.
- *Satureja* spp.

2.1.3. Dried Raw Broadleaf Zaatar

It is composed of the leaves and/or blossoms of the wild or cultivated broadleaf zaatar, namely *Origanum syriacum* (at least 75%) or constitutes a mix (25% maximum) of the leaves and blossoms of the following varieties, which are dried and then manually or mechanically crumbled but not powdered.

- *Origanum ehrenbergii*
- *Thymbra spicata*
- *Coridothymus capitatus*
- *Thymus syriacus*
- *Satureia thymbra*

2.2 CLASSIFICATION

Mixed zaatar is classified as follows:

2.2.1 “Grade 1” Mixed Zaatar

It shall consist of at least 40% raw broadleaf zaatar mixed exclusively with sesame seeds and sumac husk, with the possibility of adding salt to a maximum level of 4%.

2.2.2 “Grade 2” Mixed Zaatar

It shall consist of at least 30% raw zaatar or raw broadleaf zaatar mixed with sesame seeds and sumac husk, with the possibility of adding grains, nuts, spices and condiments, as well as salt to a maximum level of 4%.

2.2.3 “Grade 3” Mixed Zaatar

It shall consist of at least 15% raw broadleaf zaatar or raw zaatar mixed with sesame seeds and sumac husk which should be added to a level of at least 5%, with the possibility of adding salt to a maximum level of 4% and citric acid according to Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP). Optional ingredients as listed in section 3.1.2 may be added provided they all meet GMP.

3. ESSENTIAL COMPOSITION AND QUALITY FACTORS

3.1 COMPOSITION

3.1.1 Main ingredients for mixed zaatar

Dried raw zaatar as defined in Section 2.1.2, dried raw broadleaf zaatar, as defined in Section 2.1.3, the husk of sumac, and sesame seeds.

3.1.2 Optional ingredients for Grade 3 mixed zaatar only

- Legumes
- Grains
- Culinary herbs
- Spices and condiments (e.g. cumin)
- Pomegranate molasses
- Vegetable oil
- Nuts
- Wheat bran

3.2 QUALITY FACTORS

3.2.1 General Requirements

The following characteristics shall be observed in mixed zaatar:

- All the ingredients used in the preparation of the mixed zaatar shall be in conformity with their corresponding Codex Alimentarius standards.
- The final product shall not be in a powder form in order to ensure its main ingredients are recognizable by microscopic inspection (leaves, blossoms, straws, etc.) or visible to the naked eye, to avoid fraud and concealing of impurities therein, and to ensure that higher levels of volatile oils are maintained.
- The product must have a special flavour and smell and be free of any extraneous odours and flavours, including rancidity and mouldiness, as well as of any extraneous substances.
- The product should be stored in a cool and dry place.

3.2.2 Physical and Chemical Characteristics of Mixed Zaatar

3.2.2.1 Physical requirements

Mixed zaatar shall be free of living insects and spiders, any visible mouldiness, dead insects and parts thereof, contamination by rodents, birds and snails waste¹. In addition, mixed zaatar shall comply with the physical requirements specified in Table 1.

Table 1: Physical Requirements for mixed zaatar

Parameter	Requirement
Extraneous vegetable matter ¹ , maximum % mass fraction	2.0
Foreign matter ² content, maximum % mass fraction	1.0

¹ Vegetative matter associated with the plant from which the product originates - but is not accepted as part of the final product.

² Any visible objectionable foreign detectable matter or material not usually associated with the natural components of the product; such as sticks, stones, burlap bagging, metal etc.

¹ Magnifications might be used for detection in some cases and the magnifying power used should be indicated in the test results report.

3.2.2.2 Chemical Requirements

Table 2: Chemical Requirements for mixed zaatar

Parameter	Requirement		
	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
Moisture, % mass fraction (dry basis), maximum	12.0	12.0	12.0
Total table salt, % mass fraction (dry basis), maximum	4.0	4.0	4.0
Acid-insoluble ash, % mass fraction (dry basis), maximum	1.0	1.0	1.0

4. FOOD ADDITIVES

No food additives are permitted in Grade 1 and Grade 2 mixed zaatar. Only the following food additive is permitted in Grade 3 mixed zaatar (Table 3).

Table 3: Food additives in Grade 3 mixed zaatar

INS No.	Name of Additive	Maximum Level
Acidity Regulators		
330	Citric acid	GMP

5. CONTAMINANTS

5.1 The products covered by this standard shall comply with the maximum levels of the *General Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Food and Feed* (CXS 193-1995).

5.2 The products covered by this standard shall comply with the maximum residue limits for pesticides established by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

6. HYGIENE

6.1 It is recommended that the products covered by this standard be prepared and handled in accordance with the appropriate sections of the *General Principles of Food Hygiene* (CXC 1-1969) and other relevant Codex texts such as the *Code of Hygienic Practice for Low-Moisture Foods* (CXC 75-2015).

6.2 The products should comply with any microbiological criteria established in accordance with the *Principles and Guidelines for the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria Related to Foods* (CXG 21-1997).

7. LABELLING

The products covered by this standard shall be labelled in accordance with the *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods* (CXS 1-1985). Any health claims shall be in conformity with the *Guidelines for Use of Nutrition and Health Claims* (CXG 23-1997), when necessary. In addition, the following specific provisions apply:

7.1 NAME OF PRODUCT

7.1.1 The name of the product shall be "mixed zaatar".

7.1.2 The classification shall be indicated according to Section 2.2 next to the product name.

7.2 LABELLING OF NON-RETAIL PACKAGES

Information for non-retail containers shall be given either on the container or in accompanying documents, except that the name of the product, lot identification, and the name and address of the manufacturer, packer, distributor or importer, as well as storage instructions, shall appear on the container. However, lot identification, and the name and address of the manufacturer, packer, distributor or importer may be replaced by an identification mark, provided that such a mark is clearly identifiable with the accompanying documents.

8. METHODS OF ANALYSIS AND SAMPLING²

For checking the compliance with this standard, the methods of analysis and sampling contained in the *Recommended Methods of Analysis and Sampling* (CXS 234-1999) relevant to the provisions in this standard, shall be used.

Table 4: Methods of analysis for mixed zaatar

Provision	Method	Principle	Type*
Sodium chloride	AOAC 960.29	Titrimetry (Mohr: determination of chloride, expressed as sodium chloride)	
Moisture	AOAC 925.10	Gravimetry, drying at 130°C	
Acid-insoluble ash	AOAC 941.12	Gravimetry, Furnace, 550°C (for the HCl insoluble ignited residue)	
Extraneous Matter	ISO 927	Visual Examination, followed by Volumetry	I
Foreign Matter	ISO 927	Visual Examination, followed by Volumetry	I
Insects/Excreta/Insect Fragments	Method appropriate for particular spice from AOAC Chapter 16, subchapter 14 [ISPM 08 Determination of Pest Status in an area]	Visual Examination	IV
Mould damage	Method V-8 Spices, Condiments, Flavors and Crude Drugs (Macroanalytical Procedure Manual, FDA, Technical Bulletin Number 5)	Visual examination (for whole)	IV
Excreta Mammalian,	Macroanalytical Procedure Manual, USFDA, Technical Bulletin V.39 B (For whole)	Visual Examination	IV
Excreta Other	AOAC 993.27 (For Ground)	Enzymatic Detection Method	IV

* According to the Procedural Manual of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, Section II: Elaboration of Codex texts – Principles for the establishment of Codex methods of analysis.

² The listing of methods of analysis and sampling will be removed when the standard is adopted by CAC and included in CXS 234-1999.