

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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Agenda Item 4.10

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Forty-sixth Session

WORK FROM CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD LABELLING (CCFL) FOR ADOPTION OR APPROVAL
BY THE COMMISSION

1. The Commission is invited to adopt standards and related texts submitted for adoption at Step 5. The relevant texts from CCFL are listed in **Part 1** of this document and, if adopted, will be advanced to Step 6 for further comments and consideration by CCFL48.
2. Comments received regarding draft standards and related texts from CCFL are contained in CX/CAC 23/46/12 Add.1.
3. The Commission is furthermore invited to approve new work proposals from CCFL. These are listed in **Part 2** of this document, including the reference of the project document in the relevant report. The project documents are also compiled in this document for ease of reference and to ensure availability in all six languages. The Commission is invited to consider these proposals in the light of its *Strategic Plan 2020-2025* and the *Criteria for the Establishment of Work Priorities* and *Criteria for the Establishment of Subsidiary Bodies of the Codex Alimentarius Commission*.
4. The critical review of these texts was undertaken by the 84th Session of the Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CCEXEC84).

Part 1 – Standards and related texts submitted for adoption at Step 5

Codex body	Standards and Related Texts	Reference	Job No.	Step
	Revision to the <i>General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods</i> (CXS 1-1985): Provisions relevant to allergen labelling	REP23/FL, Paragraph 53(i), Appendix II	N10-2019	5
CCFL	Guidelines on the Provision of Food Information for Pre-packaged Foods to be Offered via E-Commerce	REP23/FL, Paragraph 101(i), Appendix III	N09-2019	5
	Guidelines on the Use of Technology to Provide Food Information	REP23/FL, Paragraph 135(i), Appendix IV	N07-2021	5

Part 2 –Proposals to undertake new work or revise a standard

Codex body	Text	Reference and project document
CCFL	Amendments to the <i>General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods</i> (CXS 1-1985): Labelling of pre-packaged foods in joint presentation and multipack formats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • REP23/FL, Appendix V • Annex I of this document

PROJECT DOCUMENT

Amendments to the *General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods (CXS 1-1985): Labelling of pre-packaged foods in joint presentation and multipack formats*

(FOR APPROVAL)

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE NEW WORK

The purpose of having a standard that harmonizes the labelling of pre-packaged foods in multipack formats (secondary container that includes units of the same or different products, where each unit is individually labelled) and of foods in joint presentation (contains units of different products where they are labelled jointly and the intention of its trade/sale is to present the consumer with a single label that lists the foods that compose it, which are complementary to each other or mixed for consumption), it is to provide the consumer with the information of each of the products that are being acquired, to avoid subjective interpretations and to facilitate communication between the food manufacturer and the consumer.

In addition to the above, there are no international guidelines nor work carried out regarding the labelling of foods presented jointly or in multipack formats, in general, there is no difficulty in their implementation.

The new work aims to amend the *General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods (CXS 1-1985)* to address the labelling of pre-packaged foods in multipack formats.

2. RELEVANCE AND TIMELINESS

Currently there is a growing trend in the marketing of food in multipack formats and in joint presentation, while the current rules for food labelling are oriented to the requirements for individual units.

It is worth highlighting the lack of harmonization of the definitions of multipack formats and joint presentation, as part of the current problems with the labelling of these forms of food marketing. As well, also the difficulties that arise when part of the labelling information of the individual presentations is covered by the secondary packaging, making it difficult to review the general and/or nutritional labelling and limiting, for the buyer and the consumer, the possibilities of making informed decisions.

3. MAIN ASPECTS TO BE COVERED

- i. The proposed work includes the consideration of amendment of the *General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods (CXS 1-1985)* (GSLPF) in at least the following aspect:
 - Definitions of terms, to formulate and study the relevance of including the definitions of joint presentation and multipack formats.
- ii. Consider updating the GSLPF to clarify aspects related to pre-packaged foods in joint and/or multipack presentations that would allow any future revision of the GSLPF to apply equally to pre-packaged foods in joint presentations and/or multipack formats.

4. ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE CRITERIA FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW WORK PRIORITIES

General Criterion

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

The marketing of pre-packaged foods in joint presentation and/or multipack formats is a growing trend in food marketing that poses challenges around consumer protection, such as access to the information declared on the label of each of the pre-packaged foods.

Likewise, this work is aimed at standardizing the labelling requirements of pre-packaged foods in joint presentation and/or multipack formats, guaranteeing fair practices in the food trade.

Criteria Applicable to General Issues:

- a) **Diversification of national legislations and apparent resultant or potential impediments to international trade**

Currently there are no known international guidelines or work carried out regarding the labelling of foods marketed in joint presentation and/or in multipack formats. The new proposed work will provide a standard for the labelling of pre-packaged foods marketed in the referred presentations, which will favour international trade.

b) Scope of work and establishment of priorities between the different sections of the work

It is proposed that the amendment of the Standard and related texts (as appropriate) focus on its applicability to foods marketed in joint presentation and/or multipack formats in order to amend the *General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods*.

c) Work already undertaken by other international organizations in this field and/or suggested by the relevant international intergovernmental bodies

Currently there are no known international guidelines or work carried out regarding the labelling of foods marketed in joint presentation and/or multipack formats.

The labelling of food in multipack formats is regulated. In the case of Canada, there is recent legislation corresponding to the new Safe Food Canadian Regulations (SFCR) effective since January 2019.

d) Amenability of the subject of the proposal to standardization

The absence of regulations and harmonization of the relevant information that must be visible to the food consumer in multipack formats and in joint presentations, is limiting the possibilities of the buyer and the consumer to make informed decisions. An example of this is that information as relevant as that of the general and nutritional labelling is covered by the secondary packaging, preventing its review, as well as the limited identification of the main display panel (central panel) when several units are labelled in multipack formats. The purpose of the new work is to amend the *General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods* and define specific requirements for the labelling of foods marketed in joint presentation and/or in multipack formats.

e) Consideration of the global magnitude of the problem or issue

Currently there is a growing trend in the marketing of food in multipack formats and in joint presentations. This is a regular and significant practice in countries like Chile, Guatemala, India, and Mexico. The European Union states that this type of format is common at special times such as Christmas and Easter.

The current standards for food labelling are geared towards the requirements for individual units.

Regarding containers covered by wrapping, health legislation generally refers to the application of the label to the container in a way that allows an easy reading of the information through it, or the declaration of the information on the wrapper, which implies in the first instance, that the general and nutritional labelling information presents difficulties in its visibility and/or is not always available and/or is not sufficient and clear enough for the consumer.

5. RELEVANCE TO THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES OF CODEX

The proposed work is in line with the Commission's mandate for the development of international standards, guidelines, and other recommendations for protecting the health of consumers and ensuring fair practices in food trade. The proposed work will contribute to advancing the Codex Strategic Goals 1 and 3.

Strategic Goal 1. Address current, emerging, and critical issues in a timely manner.

The proposed new work addresses a growing trend in the food trade for which labelling requirements are not covered in the *General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods*.

Strategic Goal 3. Increase impact through recognition and use of Codex standards.

The definition of a standard in Codex regarding the labelling requirements of pre-packaged foods in joint presentation or in multipack formats will favour the recognition and implementation of Codex standards since there are no known guidelines or works on the subject and it is currently a common food marketing practice in various countries.

6. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PROPOSAL AND OTHER EXISTING CODEX DOCUMENTS

The proposal is to review and then amend the *General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods*, and subsequently assess the need to amend further Codex documents. Updating the GSLPF to also cover pre-packaged foods in joint presentations and/or multipack formats would allow any future revision of the GSLPF to apply equally to pre-packaged foods in joint presentations and/or multipack formats instead of requiring a separate standalone guideline.

The relevant labelling provisions for the marketing of pre-packaged foods in joint presentation or multipack formats, in the *General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods* are horizontally applicable across all pre-packaged foods marketed in the referred presentations.

7. NEED AND AVAILABILITY OF SCIENTIFIC ADVICE

None identified at this stage. There will be opportunities to consult with relevant bodies, if necessary, throughout the process.

8. NEED FOR TECHNICAL INPUT TO THE STANDARD FROM EXTERNAL BODIES

None identified at this stage. There will be opportunities to consult with relevant bodies, if necessary, throughout the process.

9. PROPOSED TIMETABLE

Subject to approval by the Codex Alimentarius Commission in 2023.

The development of the proposed work will be submitted for consideration by the CCFL in 2023 and is expected to take three sessions of the CCFL or less, depending on the relevant inputs and the agreement of the Members. Final adoption by the Codex Alimentarius Commission is scheduled for 2028.