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PROJECT DOCUMENT PROPOSAL FOR NEW WORK ON
CODEX STANDARD FOR SWEET MARJORAM

(Submitted by Egypt)

Introduction

Sweet marjoram (*Oreganum majorana* L. syn. *Majorana hortensis* Moench.) Lamiaceae family, is one of the important medicinal and aromatic plants. Sweet marjoram is a bushy herbaceous plant grown as a culinary herb, it is indigenous to the Mediterranean, Turkey, Western Asia, it grows well in Upper Egypt. The subtle and delicate flavour of sweet marjoram is due to essential oil, the principal components of which are terpinene and terpineol. The active principles are found chiefly in the aerial parts (herb). Dried sweet marjoram herb and the oil are used as spices in the food industry, as well as for their preservative and medicinal properties. This herb has generated a lot of interest from the researchers that has led to a series of publications since 1960, also it is considered as an important economic agricultural export crop. Sweet marjoram was known to the ancient Greeks and Romans as a symbol of happiness.

1. The Purpose and Scope of the Standard

The scope of the work is to establish a worldwide standard for dried whole, crushed and ground sweet marjoram to be offered for industrial food production and direct consumption, including for catering purposes or for repacking, as required.

The objective is to develop a Codex standard based on measurable characteristics, specifically quality criteria, and any other factors for developing an international document to protect consumer's health and facilitate the international trade.

2. Relevance and Timeliness

Sweet marjoram is native to the Mediterranean region and Southern Europe and is intensively cultivated in Europe, North Africa, Asia and both North and South America. Today, sweet marjoram is used largely for consumption, it is particularly appreciated for the taste it lends meat dishes, poultry, fish, sausages, pizzas, salads, egg and vegetable preparations.

Developing a worldwide standard will help to protect consumer's health and to facilitate fair trade. Increases of international tourism all over the world, the migrations flow, and globalization, the rise of low-fat and low-salt diets, which require more seasoning, as well as increasing the food trade worldwide have increased the demand on the spices and herbs resulting in developing and growth in their international trade continuously.

3. Main aspects to be covered.

The standard will cover characteristics related to identification and quality in all aspects as well as safety requirements:

- Product definition: Defining the product as dried sweet marjoram herb including the common, trade and scientific names.
- Style: Listing the different forms of the dried sweet marjoram (whole, crushed, and powdered). • Composition: Including provisions for basic ingredients and other permitted ingredients. Establishing moisture, ash, and volatile oil content as well as other values of the dried sweet marjoram. • Quality criteria: Including provisions for colour, odour, flavour ...etc
- Provisions for the labeling and marking of the product in accordance with the CODEX standard for the labeling of pre-packaged foods.

- Provisions for hygiene, contaminants, and pesticides residues with reference to pre-existing Codex documents.
- References to Methods of Analysis and Sampling.

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

General Criterion

Consumer protection from the point of view of health, food safety, ensuring fair practices in food trade and considering the identified needs of developing countries. The proposed new standard will meet this criterion by: REP17/SCH Appendix VIII 58 i.e.

- Promotion of consumer protection and the prevention of fraudulent practices.
- Providing greater assurance of the product to meet consumer needs and the minimum requirements for food safety
- Arriving at levels of standardization based on the properties of different to meet industrial and consumer needs with exactness and credibility. In addition, the elaboration of the standard would be to the benefit of many countries in general and more particularly for producers, exporters, and importers of sweet marjoram.

Criteria applicable to commodities

Overview of Global Sweet marjoram Market top exporting and importing countries 2021, The top 10 exporting countries of Sweet marjoram 2021 were China, Spain, Belgium, Mexico, Poland, Netherland, Ecuador, France, Egypt, and Türkiye respectively , table (1) . And The top 10 importing countries of Sweet marjoram 2021 were United States, Japan, France, Germany, South Korea, United Kingdom, Belgium, Italy, Netherlands, and Canada respectively (table 2) , each based on HS code 071080

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

Table 1 - Top 10 exporting countries of Sweet marjoram with a summary of price and seasonality data for each market. 2021

Country	Share Export 2021	in Value	Export Value2021 USD	1-Year Growth in Export Value 2020-2021	3-Year Growth in Export Value 2018-2021
China	22.53%		\$865.73M	+3.56%	+6.36%
Spain	13.10%		\$503.23M	+9.09%	+6.33%
Belgium	12.08%		\$463.95M	-13.12%	-19.48%
Mexico	10.02%		\$384.78M	-2.18%	+13.56%
Poland	5.54%		\$212.93M	+2.54%	-8.87%
Netherland	5.39%		\$206.93M	+19.30%	+25.20%
Ecuador	4.16%		\$159.92M	+0.82%	+33.08%
France	2.83%		\$108.63M	-6.05%	-16.07%
Egypt	2.69%		\$103.35M	+2.76%	+29.73%
Türkiye	2.23%		\$85.58M	+44.97%	+19.22%

<https://www.tridge.com/trades>

Table 2 - Top 10 Importing countries of Sweet marjoram with a summary of price and seasonality data for each market (2021).

Country	Share Import Value2021	in Import Value 2021, USD	1-Year Growth in Import Value 2020-2021	3-Year Growth in Import Value 2018-2021	5-Year Growth in Import Value 2016-2021
United States	20.40%	\$795M	-1.62%	+10.64%	+22.67%

Japan	14.28%	\$556.49M	+10.08%	+14.45%	+35.79%
France	9.01%	\$350.99M	+1.04%	-3.87%	+11.50%
Germany	8.83%	\$344.06M	-1.98%	-2.67%	+4.49%
South Korea	6.33%	\$246.78M	+0.65%	+4.93%	+19.66%
United Kingdom	5.68%	\$221.54M	-1.03%	-10.24%	-0.27%
Belgium	5.41%	\$210.79M	-12.37%	-18.13%	-16.37%
Italy	4.50%	\$175.24M	-1.68%	-5.53%	+15.10%
Netherlands	2.91%	\$113.61M	+7.83%	+5.51%	+11.71%
Canada	2.55%	\$99.58M	+0.07%	+19.71%	+53.19%

<https://www.tridge.com/trades>

Table 3 - List of importing markets for a product exported by Egypt.

Product: 1211900027 Sweet marjoram (Bardacoch), fresh or dried, whether or not cut, crushed or powdered

Unit: US Dollar thousand

Importers	Exported value 2016	Exported value 2017	Exported value 2018	Exported value 2019	Exported value 2020
World	6678	5861	5462	4526	4642
Germany	1347	1230	1172	1212	1585
Poland	1402	1136	1400	1052	786
Austria	405	98	262	307	446
USA	1715	1338	723	295	352
Slovenia	91	13	96	275	210
Belgium	158	109	191	117	170
Latvia	75	32	57	68	150
Algeria	33	63	42	13	119
United Kingdom	61	57	81	54	83
Türkiye	73	228	182	137	74

<https://www.trademap.org/Index.aspx>

Table 4 - List of importing markets for a product exported by Egypt

Product: 1211900027 Sweet marjoram (Bardacoch) fresh or dried, whether or not cut, crushed or powdered

Importers	Exported quantity, Kilograms 2016	Exported quantity, Kilograms 2017	Exported quantity Kilograms 2018	Exported quantity Kilograms 2019	Exported quantity Kilograms 2020
World	1416	1365	1332	1250	1237
Poland	341	318	346	299	325
Germany	279	280	2600	311	302
Austria	91	29	54	82	99
USA	258	197	140	58	83
Latvia	34	16	31	27	54

Slovenia	2	6	23	68	52
Belgium	32	24	42	26	34
Algeria	11	19	17	6	29
United Kingdom	19	19	20	42	14
Türkiye	10	55	55	32	16

<https://www.trademap.org/Index.aspx>

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

Imports and exports of sweet marjoram take place for many applications. However, it would be preferred that the trade in sweet marjoram is carried out under an international criterion based on Codex Standard. Therefore, the new work would provide internationally recognized specific standard to enhance international trade and to accommodate the importer's requirements. The ISO has developed a standard for sweet marjoram and other associations as the European Spice Association (ESA) and the American Spice Trade Association (ASTA) have dealt with some sweet marjoram specification. To overcome the resultant or potential impediments to international trade, it is essential to incorporate all existing different standards in a single improved comprehensive standard acceptable across the board internationally. This warrants the establishment of a Codex standard as per the Procedural Manual.

(c) International or regional market potential

Dried sweet marjoram herb and leaves are the most important utilization form of sweet marjoram after sweet marjoram oil due to its popularity, sweet marjoram is intensively cultivated and grown in temperate zones in North Africa, Southern Europe and Asia.

Egypt is one of the most suppliers for the sweet marjoram. Egypt exports the commodity to many countries (Germany, USA, Poland, Brazil, Austria, Russia...)(*)

(*)<http://www.nfsa.gov.eg>, National Food Safety Authority (NFSA)

(d) Amenability of commodity to standardization

The standard will include the characteristics of dried sweet marjoram, composition, quality and packaging criteria.

The characteristics of sweet marjoram cultivated to retail sale e.g composition, quality characteristics, processing, packaging, etc., all lead to adequate parameters for the standardization of the product. Considering of technical information available and a certain degree of harmonization that has already been achieved at national level and international levels on certain aspects relevant to consumer's protection and trade facilitation as mentioned in point b), it is therefore, timely to develop an international harmonized standard for sweet marjoram.

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

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

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

The proposed standard will cover the dried sweet marjoram in its different styles (whole, crushed, and powdered).

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

- i. ISO Standard for Dried sweet marjoram (*Origanum majorana* L.) - Specification (ISO 10620:1995),
- ii. Guidance from the American Spice Trade Association 2017(Clean Safe Spices), iii. Quality Minima Document of ESA (Rev. 5 2018).

5. Relevance to CODEX strategic objectives

The proposal is consistent with the Strategic Plan of the Codex Alimentarius Commission 2020-2025, adopted by the 42nd Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, in particular strategic objectives 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1 and 3.2. and aims at setting up internationally accepted minimum quality requirements of dried sweet marjoram for human consumption.

6. Information on the relation between the Proposal and other existing CODEX document

This proposal is a new Codex Standard and is not related to or based on any pre-existing Codex document. This standard will include references to relevant pre - existing Codex texts developed by general subject committees, as follows:

- *Principles and Guidelines for the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria for Foods (CAC/GL 21 – 2013).*
- *General Principles of Food Hygiene.* Codex Alimentarius Code of Practice, (CXC 1-1969). FAO and WHO. 2023 Codex Alimentarius Commission. Rome. Revised and renamed 2022.
- Data bases related to the maximum limits for pesticides residues issued by Codex Committee on Pesticides Residues in Food (CCPR)
- *General Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Food and Feed (CODEX STAN 193-1995) last am*
- *Code of Hygienic Practice for Spices and Dried Aromatic Herbs (CAC/RCP 42-1995) Revised 2014*
- *Code of Hygienic Practice for Low-Moisture Foods (CXC 75-2015)*
- *Code of Practice for the Prevention and Reduction of Mycotoxins in Spices (CXC 78-2017)*
- *General Standard for the Labeling of Pre-packaged Foods (CXS 1-1985)*
- *General Standard for the Labelling of Non-Retail Containers of Foods (CXS 346-2021)*
- *Recommended Methods of Analysis and Sampling (CXS 234-1999)*
- *General Standard for Food Additives (CXS 192-1995)*

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

No need for expert scientific advice is foreseen at this stage. Published research documents by international bodies will be referred to in the process of preparing the standard.

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

Technical input from the International Standards Organization (ISO), American Spice Trade Association (ASTA), and European Spice Association (ESA) while through developing this standard may be sought when developing this standard.

9. Proposed Time Schedule The following is the proposed timetable for the completion of the standard.

It is expected that the development of this standard would be conducted in three CCSCH sessions or less, depending on the agreement reached by the Committee.