

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION



JOINT OFFICE: Viale delle Terme di Caracalla 00153 ROME Tel: 39 06 57051 www.codexalimentarius.net Email: codex@fao.org Facsimile: 39 06 5705 4593

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8

CX/FL 09/37/12-ADD.1

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD LABELLING
THIRTY-SEVENTH SESSION
CALGARY, CANADA, MAY 4 - 8, 2009

DISCUSSION PAPER ON THE NEED TO AMEND THE *GENERAL STANDARD FOR THE LABELLING OF PREPACKAGED FOODS* (CODEX STAN 1-1985) IN LINE WITH OIML RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE DECLARATION OF THE QUANTITY OF PRODUCT IN PREPACKAGES

COMMENTS FROM:

CANADA

DISCUSSION PAPER ON THE NEED TO AMEND THE *GENERAL STANDARD FOR THE LABELLING OF PREPACKAGED FOODS* (CODEX STAN 1-1985) IN LINE WITH OIML RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE DECLARATION OF THE QUANTITY OF PRODUCT IN PREPACKAGES

CANADA:

Canada is pleased to provide comments on the discussion paper prepared by OIML concerning proposed new work to amend subsection 4.3 Net Contents and Drained Weight and some definitions in Section 2, Definition of Terms, in the *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods* (GSLPF).

The GSLPF contains labelling standards related to a number of aspects, mandatory and optional, of the food: the name, list of ingredients, net contents and drained weight, name and address, lot identification, date marking and storage, quantitative ingredient declaration, and country of origin labelling. It clearly states in the General Principles, 3.1 that “prepackaged food shall not be described or presented on any label or in any labelling in a manner that is false, misleading or deceptive or is likely to create an erroneous impression regarding its character in any respect”. As can be seen, the standard considers labelling from a wide perspective and its construction and definitions reflect this.

Canada understands the value in consistency between international standards. We have reviewed the discussion paper and the project document prepared by the International Organization of Legal Metrology and note that there are some significant conceptual changes proposed for the definitions section within the GSLPF that could affect more than net quantity and drained weight and could raise some challenges for consistency between labelling elements. For example, it is not clear how the proposed definition of “prepackage” considers the existing definitions for “food” and “ingredient”. The changes could have a fundamental effect on how packaging and ingredients are determined. The proposed amendments to subsection 4.3, Net Contents and Drained Weight, where it is proposed that the inclusion of liquid mediums such as water, fruit juices, or vinegar be considered as packing material rather than ingredients, would result in considerable changes to this Codex standard, other Codex standards, and national legislation. If they are considered packaging material, are they declared in the ingredients list?

Canada also notes that the distinction between ingredients as packing material and ingredients as foods appears to be established by “not being a decisive factor for the purchase” (which appears to be a decision by the consumer), and by “what is intended to be left over” (which implies intention for use as determined by the manufacturer). Canada would be interested in more information on this, such as the consumer or social research conducted to make such determinations and how such distinctions, which appear to be subjective, can consistently be determined. Our concern is that the approach will not promote fair practices in food trade due to differences in interpretation of use and what is “intended to be left over” and the variation in what constitutes the “decisive factors for the purchase”.

At this time, Canada is not aware of any examples where the current approach taken by Codex is problematic. Canada believes that further information and research on the scope of the issue is required before new work can be considered.