CODE OF HYGIENIC PRACTICE FOR CANNED FRUIT AND VEGETABLE PRODUCTS (CAC/RCP 2-1969)

SECTION I - SCOPE

This code of hygienic practice applies to fruit and vegetable products which are packed in hermetically sealed containers and which are processed by heat either before or after being filled into the containers.

SECTION II - DEFINITIONS

A. ***Hermetically sealed*** means air-tight.

B. ***Container*** means any hermetic enclosure for food including, but not limited to, metal, glass or laminated plastics.

C. ***Heat processed*** means processed by heat to an extent which results in a product that is safe and will not spoil under normally expected temperatures of non-refrigerated storage and transportation.

SECTION III - RAW MATERIAL REQUIREMENTS

A. Environmental Sanitation in Growing and Food Production Areas

(1) **Sanitary disposal of human and animal wastes**. Adequate precautions should be taken to insure that human and animal wastes are disposed of in such a manner as not to constitute a public health or hygienic hazard, and extreme care should be taken to protect all food products from contamination with these wastes.

(2) **Sanitary quality of irrigation water**. Water used for irrigation should not constitute a public health hazard to the consumer through the product.

(3) **Animal, plant pest and disease control**. Where control measures are undertaken, treatment with chemical, biological or physical agents should be done only in accordance with the recommendations of the appropriate official agency, by or under the direct supervision of personnel with a thorough understanding of the hazards involved, including the possibility of toxic residues being retained by the crop.

B. Sanitary Harvesting and Production of Raw Food Materials

(1) **Equipment and product containers**. Equipment and product containers should not constitute a hazard to health. Containers which are re-used should be of such material and construction as will facilitate thorough cleaning, and should be so cleaned and maintained as not to constitute a source of contamination to the product.

(2) **Sanitary techniques**. Harvesting and production operations, methods and procedures should be clean and sanitary.

(3) **Removal of obviously unfit materials**. Unfit products should be segregated during harvesting and production to the fullest extent practicable and should be disposed of in such a place and in such a manner that they cannot result in contamination of the food and water supplies or other crops.

(4) **Protection of product from contamination**. Suitable precautions should be taken to protect the raw product from being contaminated by animals, insects, vermin, birds, chemical or microbiological contaminants or other objectionable substances during handling and storage. The nature of the product and the methods of harvesting will indicate the type and degree of protection required.

C. **Transportation**

(1) **Facilities**. Conveyance for transporting the harvested crop or raw product from the production area, place of harvest or storage should be adequate for the purpose intended and should be of such material and construction as will permit thorough cleaning and should be so cleaned and maintained as not to constitute a source of contamination to the product.

(2) **Handling procedures**. All handling procedures should be such as will prevent the product from being contaminated. Extreme care should be taken in transporting perishable products to prevent spoilage or deterioration. Special equipment - such as refrigeration equipment - should be used if the nature of the product or distances involved so indicate. If ice is used in contact with the product, it should be of sanitary quality as required in Section IV - A - 2(c).

SECTION IV - PLANT FACILITIES AND OPERATING REQUIREMENTS

A. **Plant Construction and Layout**

(1) **Location, size and sanitary design**. The building and surrounding area should be such as can be kept reasonably free of objectionable odours, smoke, dust, or other contamination; should be of sufficient size for the purpose intended without crowding of equipment or personnel; should be of sound construction and kept in good repair; should be of such construction as to protect against the entrance and harbouring of insects or birds or vermin; and should be so designed as to permit easy and adequate cleaning.

(2) **Sanitary facilities and controls**

(a) ***Separation of processes***. Areas where raw materials are received or stored should be so separated from areas in which final product preparation or packaging is conducted as to preclude contamination of the finished product. Areas and compartments used for storage, manufacture or handling of edible products should be separate and distinct from those used for inedible materials. The food handling area should be completely separated from any part of the premises used as living quarters.

(b) ***Water supply***. An ample supply of hot and cold water should be available. The water supply should be of potable quality. Standards of potability shall not be less than those contained in the "International Standards for Drinking Water" World Heath Organization, 1971.

(c) ***Ice***. Ice should be made from water of potable quality and should be manufactured, handled, stored and used, so as to protect it from contamination.

(d) ***Auxiliary water supply***. Where non-potable water is used - for such purposes as fire control - it must be carried in completely separate lines, identified preferably by colour and with no cross-connection or back-siphonage with the lines carrying potable water.

(e) ***Plumbing and waste disposal***. All plumbing and waste disposal lines (including sewer systems)

must be large enough to carry peak loads. All lines must be watertight and have adequate traps and vents. Disposal of waste should be effected in such a manner as not to permit contamination of potable water supplies. The plumbing and the manner of waste disposal should be approved by the official agency having jurisdiction.

(f) ***Removal of solid or semi-solid wastes*** from the product preparation and canning areas should be on a continuous or near continuous basis using water and/or appropriate equipment so that these areas are kept clean and there is no danger of contaminating the product. Also they should be disposed of in a way that they cannot be used for human food. Waste materials should be disposed of in a place and in such a manner that they cannot contaminate food and water supplies and cannot offer harbourages or breeding places for rodents, insects or other vermin.

(g) ***Lighting and ventilation***. Premises should be well lit and ventilated. Special attention should be given to the venting of areas and equipment producing excessive heat, steam, obnoxious fumes or vapours, or contaminating aerosols. Good ventilation is important to prevent both condensation (which may drip into the product) and mould growth in overhead structures - which growth may fill into the food. Light bulbs and fixtures suspended over food in any step of preparation should be of the safety type or otherwise protected to prevent food contamination in the case of breakage.

(h) ***Toilet-rooms and facilities***. Adequate and convenient toilets should be provided and toilet areas should be equipped with self-closing doors. Toilet-rooms should be well lit and ventilated and should not open directly into a food handling area. They should be kept in a sanitary condition at all times. There should be associated hand-washing facilities within the toilet area and notices should be posted requiring personnel to wash their hands after using the toilet.

(i) ***Hand-washing facilities***. Adequate and convenient facilities for employees to wash and dry their hands should be provided wherever the process demands. They should be in full view of the processing floor. Single-use towels are recommended, where practicable, but otherwise the method of drying should be approved by the official agency having jurisdiction. The facilities should be kept in a sanitary condition at all times.

B. Equipment and Utensils

(1) **Materials**. All food contact surfaces should be smooth; free from pits, crevices and loose scale; non toxic; unaffected by food products; and capable of withstanding repeated exposure to normal cleaning; and non-absorbent unless the nature of a particular and otherwise acceptable process renders the use of a surface, such as wood, necessary.

(2) **Sanitary Design, construction and installation**. Equipment and utensils should be so designed and constructed as will prevent hygienic hazards and permit easy and thorough cleaning. Stationary equipment should be installed in such a manner as will permit easy and thorough cleaning.

(3) **Equipment and utensils**. Equipment and utensils used for inedible or contaminating materials should be so identified and should not be used for handling edible products.

C. Hygienic Operating Requirements

While additional and more specific requirements may be established for certain products, the following should apply as minimal in all food production, handling, storage and distribution.

(1) **Sanitary maintenance of plant, facilities and premises**. The building, equipment, utensils and all

other physical facilities of the plant should be kept in good repair and should be kept clean and maintained in an orderly, sanitary condition. Waste materials should be frequently removed from the working area during plant operation and adequate waste receptacles should be provided. Detergents and disinfectants employed should be appropriate to the purpose and should be so used as to present no hazard to public health.

(2) **Vermin control**. Effective measures should be taken to protect against the entrance into the premises and the harbourage on the premises of insects, rodents, birds or other vermin.

(3) **Exclusion of domestic animals**. Dogs, cats and other domestic animals, should be excluded from areas where food is processed or stored.

(4) **Personnel health**. Plant management should advise personnel that any person afflicted with infected wounds, sores, or any illness, notably diarrhoea, should immediately report to management. Management should take care to ensure that no person, while known to be affected with a disease capable of being transmitted through food, or known to be a carrier of such disease microorganisms, or while afflicted with infected wounds, sores, or any illness, is permitted to work in any area of a food plant in a capacity in which there is a likelihood of such person contaminating food or food contact surfaces with pathogenic organisms.

(5) **Toxic substances**. All rodenticides, fumigants, insecticides or other toxic substances should be stored in separate locked rooms or cabinets and handled only by properly trained personnel. They should be used only by or under the direct supervision of personnel with a thorough understanding of the hazards involved, including the possibility of contamination of the product.

(6) **Personnel hygiene and food handling practices**

(a) All persons working in a food plant should maintain a high degree of personal cleanliness while on duty. Clothing including suitable headdress should be appropriate to the duties being performed and should be kept clean.

(b) Hands should be washed as often as necessary to conform to hygienic operating practices.

(c) Spitting, eating and the use of tobacco or chewing gum should be prohibited in food handling areas.

(d) All necessary precautions should be taken to prevent the contamination of the food product or ingredients with any foreign substance.

(e) Minor cuts and abrasions on the hands should be appropriately treated and covered with a suitable waterproof dressing. Adequate first-aid facilities should be provided to meet these contingencies so that there is no contamination of the food.

(f) Gloves used in food handling should be maintained in a sound, clean and sanitary condition; gloves should be made of an impermeable material except where their usage would be inappropriate or incompatible with the work involved.

D. **Operating Practices and Production Requirements**

(1) **Raw material handling**

(a) ***Acceptance criteria***. The raw material should not be accepted by the plant if known to contain decomposed, toxic or extraneous substances which will not be removed to acceptable levels by normal plant procedures of sorting or preparation.

(b) ***Storage***. Raw materials stored on the plant premises should be maintained under conditions that will protect against contamination and infestation and minimize deterioration.

(c) ***Water***. Water used for conveying raw material into the plant should be from a source or suitably treated as not to constitute a public health hazard and should be used only by permission of the official agency having jurisdiction.

(2) **Inspection and sorting**. Prior to introduction into the processing line, or at a convenient point within it, raw materials should be inspected, sorted or culled as required to remove unfit materials. Such operations should be carried out in a clean and sanitary manner. Only clean, sound materials should be used in further processing.

(3) **Washing or other preparation**. Raw materials should be washed as needed to remove soil or other contamination. Water used for such purposes should not be recirculated unless suitably treated to maintain it in a condition as will not constitute a public health hazard. Water used for washing, rinsing, or conveying final food products should be of potable quality.

(4) **Preparation and processing**. Preparatory operations leading to the finished product and the packaging operations should be so timed as to permit expeditious handling of consecutive units in production under conditions which would prevent contamination, deterioration, spoilage, or the development of

infectious or toxigenic microorganisms.

(5) **Packaging of finished product**

(a) ***Materials***. Packaging materials should be stored in a clean and sanitary manner and should not transmit to the product objectionable substances beyond limits acceptable to the official agency having jurisdiction and should provide appropriate protection from contamination.

(b) ***Techniques***. Packaging should be done under conditions that preclude the introduction of contamination into the product.

(6) **Preservation of the finished product**

(a) ***Heat processing***. Products packaged in hermetically sealed containers should be so processed by heat as to result in a product that is safe and will not spoil under normally expected temperatures of non-refrigerated storage and transportation. Processing conditions for specific formulations of canned foods should be based on the recommendation of technical specialists competent in canning technology. Such processing should be supervised in the cannery by technically competent personnel and be subject to check by the official agency having jurisdiction. Processing records adequate to identify the processing history should be kept and made available for inspection.

(b) ***Cooling of processed containers***. Where processed containers are cooled in water, the water should be of potable quality or suitably treated so as not to constitute a public health hazard. If cooling water is recirculated it should be effectively disinfected by chlorine or otherwise before use or each re-use.

(c) ***Decrating and handling of processed containers***. After processing and cooling, containers should be handled n such a manner as to avoid contamination of the product. Rough handling of processed cans, especially while they are still wet, should be avoided. Belts, runways and other processed can-conveying equipment should be maintained in good hygienic condition.

(d) ***Inspection of processing containers***. Containers should be inspected before labelling and casing and defective containers withdrawn.

(7) **Storage and transport of finished product**. The finished product should be stored and transported under such conditions as will preclude the contamination with, or development of pathogenic or toxigenic microorganisms or infestation and protect against deterioration of the product or of the container.

E. **Sanitation Control Programme**

It is desirable that each plant in its own interest designates a single individual, whose duties are preferably divorced from production, to be held responsible for the cleanliness of the plant. His staff should be a permanent part of the organization and should be well trained in the use of special cleaning tools, methods of disassembling equipment for cleaning, and in the significance of contamination and the hazards involved. Critical areas, equipment and materials should be designated for specific attention as part of a permanent sanitation schedule.

F. **Laboratory Control Procedures**

In addition to any control by the official agency having jurisdiction, it is desirable that each plant in its own interest should have access to laboratory control of the sanitary quality of products processed. The amount and type of such control will vary with the food product as well as the needs of management. Such control should reject all foods that are unfit for human consumption. Analytical procedures used should follow recognized or standard methods in order that the results may be readily interpreted. For certain products it may also be desirable to check the process by incubation of samples.

SECTION V - END PRODUCT SPECIFICATIONS

Appropriate methods should be used for sampling and analysis or determination to meet the following specifications.

A. To the extent possible in good manufacturing practice the products should be free from objectionable matter.

B. The products should not contain any pathogenic microorganisms or any toxic substance originating from microorganisms.

C. The products should comply with the requirements set forth by the Codex Committees on Pesticide Residues and Food Additives as contained in permitted lists or Codex Commodity Standards.

D. Products with an equilibrium pH above 4.5 should have received a processing treatment sufficient to destroy all spores of *Clostridium botulinum*, unless growth of surviving spores would be permanently prevented by product characteristics other than pH.