

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
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Organization

Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy - Tel: (+39) 06 57051 - E-mail: codex@fao.org - www.codexalimentarius.org

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Discussion paper on development of a standard for canned congee

(Prepared by CHINA)

Introduction

Canned congee is a kind of canned food produced from fresh or dried grains and/or rice and may contain other edible ingredients. It is packed in hermetically sealed containers and shall have received a processing treatment sufficient to ensure commercial sterility.

The regional proposed standard for canned congee will specify product classification, requirements, hygiene, contaminant, labelling, storage and transportation, so as to improve product quality and solve food safety problems. It is also important to protect the health of consumers and facilitate fair practices in international trade.

Necessities to develop the standard

Canned congee is a common food in Asian countries and has a broad market prospect. It is widely traded among some countries and regions such as China, Japan, Myanmar, Cambodia, South Africa, Tanzania, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Italy, Australia, Spain, Laos, Germany, Malaysia and Portugal, etc. The international trade volume of canned congee increased steadily, between 2015 and 2019, averaging about \$1 billion annually.

The Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) has not developed a standard for canned congee yet. It will lead to impediments in the industry develop and international trade without uniform canned congee's standard.

Therefore, to establish a regional Codex standard will unify the requirements of canned congee, improve its quality and safety, protect the customers' health, and reduce the barriers to trade.

Recommendation

China proposes to invite CCASIA to consider the new project on the development of regional standard for canned congee. The project document is attached as Annex I.

PROJECT DOCUMENT

Proposal for New Work on standard for Canned Congee

1. The purpose and scope of the standard

The purpose of the canned congee regional standard is to protect the health of the consumers, embrace the quality of canned congee and promote fair practices in trade and industry development. This standard applies to canned congee. It does not apply to Instant rice.

2. The relevance and timeliness

According to the estimated statistics of relevant industries in China, the annual output of canned congee is about 1 million tons. In recent years, there is a great demand for canned congee in the global market. Canned congee is being consumed and traded globally in more than 20 countries, such as Singapore, Japan and Republic of Korea, etc.

As for canned congee, there is no national standards in many trading countries and regions. It may cause various barriers to trade and quality issues among trading countries and regions due to the lack of uniform standards. Therefore, it's necessary to develop a regional standard for Canned congee. It will ensure fair practices in trade, satisfy the consumers and expand the international market in the future. This will effectively promote food conservation and fulfil the objectives of the United Nations, which aim at eliminating hunger and realizing sustainable development goals.

3. The main aspects to be covered

The standard for canned congee will be developed according to the CODEX Procedure Manual. The main contents in this standard includes:

- Scope
- Product definition
- Basic composition and quality factors
- Food additives
- Contaminants
- Hygiene
- Packaging, labelling, transportation and storage,
- Method of analysis and sampling

4. An assessment against the Criteria for the establishment of work priorities

General Criterion

The proposed standard will protect consumers from the perspective of health and food safety, ensure fair food trade practices, and consider developing countries' needs. It will cover the following points to comply with the above demands:

- Protecting consumers from fraud
- Improving food quality and solving consumers' concerns about food safety
- Solving trade barriers

Criterion applicable to commodities

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

In recent years, China has had a vast and expanding demand for canned congee. There are more than 50 enterprises producing canned congee in China, and their products are exported to more than 20 countries and regions. According to the estimated statistics of relevant Chinese Industry Associations, the average annual total sale of canned congee between 2015 and 2019 was about \$1 billion (see Table 1).

In the international market, canned congee is increasingly popular among consumers because of its ease of consumption and rich nutrition. China, Japan and Republic of Korea are the main producers, exporters and consumers in the world. Relevant data shows that the total export of canned congee from a leading Chinese enterprise has been rising since 2016 (see Table 2).

Table 1 – Chinese canned congee volume and value between 2015 and 2019

Year	Total volume (ton)	Total value (100 million/USD)
2015	1,188,402	10.21
2016	1,026,482	10.95
2017	1,155,414	10.98
2018	1,128,013	10.17
2019	1,013,340	9.98

Source: estimated statistics of relevant Chinese industries

Table 2 – Chinese export volume and value of canned congee in 2019

Countries	Total volume (ton)	Total value (USD)
Republic of Korea	63.6	77,350
Italy	65.6	87,667
Australia	26	33,750
Spain	32.8	41,623
Germany	31.6	37,562
Japan	65.6	65,330
Portugal	30.8	38,938
Malaysia	8.6	11,000

Source: estimated statistics of relevant Chinese industries

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

Countries have different requirements for canned congee about quality factors, food additives, packaging, etc. Some countries do not even have national standards. All these factors will hinder the fair food trade practices, quality improvement and industrial development.

c) International or regional market potential

The international market of caned congee is expanding. Recent data shows the steadily increasing of international trade volume of canned congee averaging about \$1billion annually.



Figure 1 - canned congee products in the market

d) Amenability of the commodity to standardization

China developed the industry standard for canned congee in 2018. The implementation of the standard for canned congee plays a positive role in the healthy development of the industry and the improvement of the quality of canned congee.

The proposed standard will specify characteristics of the canned congee, including classification, quality factors, processing, methods of sampling and analysis, storage and transportation, labelling, packaging and so on. The use of food additives and the limit of contaminants should conform to the requirements of relevant current CAC documents.

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

There is no international standard for canned congee. The current hygienic operation specifications for low-acid canning, and prevention and reduction of inorganic tin contamination in canning hygiene practices, are mainly for some hygiene requirements of canned products during processing, not related to the raw materials, technology, indicators, additives, processing, hygiene and quality requirements of canned congee. This proposed standard will specify above contents and requirements.

f) A separate standard is required to indicate the quantity of raw materials, semi-processed or processed goods

There is no need for any separate standard.

g) Work already undertaken by other international organizations in this regard or recommended by relevant international intergovernmental bodies

None anticipated at this stage.

5. Relevance to the Codex strategic objectives:

The proposal meets the identification of needs and new issues in the goal 1.1 and goal 1.2 presented in the

Codex Strategic Plan 2020 – 2025.

6. Information on the relation between the proposal and other existing Codex documents

This work will take into account current Codex documents as follows.

- Code of practice on food hygiene (CXC1-1969)
- Code of practice on measures to reduce direct sources of food contamination by chemicals (CXC49-2001)
- General standard for label of prepackaged food (CXS1-1985)
- General standard for food additives (CXS192-1995)
- Recommended analysis and sampling methods (CXS234-1999)
- Hygienic operation specification for canned food with low acidity (CAC/RCP 23-1979, Rev.2-1993)
- Operation specification for preventing and reducing tin pollution in canned food (CAC/RCP 60-2005)

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

None anticipated.

8. Identification of any need for technical input to the standard from external bodies

None anticipated.

9. Proposed time-line for completion of the new work:

According to the review results of CCASIA22, the standard development plan will be submitted to CAC for review and approval in 2023. According to the proposed timetable, this process will take approximately five years.

No.	Steps Proposed to be Covered	Proposed Timelines
1	considered the proposal in CCASIA22	2022
2	The new work was strictly reviewed by the Executive Committee and approved by the CAC	2023
3	Preparation of the standard draft and circulation of opinions	2023-2024
4	Review the standard draft in the 23 rd CCASIA	2024
5	CAC accept the standard draft	2025
6	Review the standard draft in the 24 th CCASIA	2026
7	CAC adopts the regional standard	2027