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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

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REPORT OF THE FIFTH SESSION

OF THE

CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD LABELLING

Rome, Italy
6 April 1970

CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD LABELLING
Report of the Fifth Session
Rome, Italy, 6 April 1970

1. The Fifth Session of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling, under the chairmanship of the Government of Canada, was held in Rome, Italy, on 6 April 1970. The session was opened by His Excellency, the Canadian Ambassador, Mr. Benjamin Rogers. Dr. D.G. Chapman, Food and Drug Directorate, Department of National Health and Welfare, was the Chairman of the session and welcomed in particular the Chairman of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, Mr. J.H.V. Davies and the three Vice-Chairmen, Mr. E. Mortensen, Mr. I.H. Smith and Professor O. Högl. Representatives from 33 countries were present. Observers were present from 4 international organizations (see Appendix I for the List of Participants).

2. The Committee adopted the provisional agenda with the deletion of the item concerning the labelling of sugars which it considered could best be treated by the Codex Alimentarius Commission as a whole.

Recommendations to Committees in the General Standard

3. The delegate of Sweden suggested to the Committee that the Recommended General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods (Ref. No. CAC/RS 1-1969) should contain the recommendations to Codex Commodity Committees contained in Appendix III of the Report of the Fourth Session of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (ALINORM 69/22) as being the most appropriate means of bringing to the attention of Commodity Committees these recommendations. The Committee considered that the recommendations in Appendix III were not appropriate for inclusion in the Recommended General Standard but agreed that they should be circulated separately to Codex Commodity Committees for their information.

STANDARDS AT STEP 8 - DECISIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

4. The labelling sections of the Step 8 standards before the Committee were endorsed as amended below. However, in the case of the fruit juice standards, the Committee was unable to reach agreement on a list of ingredients. Please see paragraphs 14 and 15 of this Report.

Canned Pineapple (CX/FL 70/3)

5. In considering the specific provisions needed in the Standard for Canned Pineapple there was considerable discussion as to whether dimethyl-polysiloxane should appear in the list of ingredients. Although as a matter of principle a number of delegates were of the opinion that since the substance was there even in small quantities, it should be declared, the majority felt that this was a substance not present in significant quantities and agreed with the decision of the Commodity Committee that this material need not be declared. Water was excepted from the list of ingredients since the name of the product indicates the packing medium, which can be water in some cases.

General Decisions

6. In the light of the discussions and decisions taken on the Canned Pineapple Standard, the Committee agreed that the following decisions would be of general application to the standards which it was going to examine at Step 8.

The introductory sentence to the labelling section of commodity standards which applied provisions of the General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods by cross-reference was amended to delete reference to section 5 of the General Standard. The Committee concluded that section 5.1 was an indication to Codex Committees as to the type of labelling provisions which might be incorporated in the standards, and section 5.2, which dealt with irradiated foods, would only need to be applied in specific cases, to be determined on a case by case basis by Commodity Committees.

7. During the examination of the standards, the Committee decided to recommend to the Codex Commodity Committees that they should exercise a decision as to whether to require the declaration of country of origin or not. The delegation of the U.S.A. and Argentina informed the Committee that all food products imported into their countries must bear an indication of the country of origin. The delegation of the United Kingdom considered that it was sufficient in commodity standards merely to attract the provisions of the General Standard concerning country of origin.

8. The Committee considered that Commodity Committees, when requiring a declaration of a complete list of ingredients, should have regard to whether water should or should not be declared in the list of ingredients.

Olive Oil (ALINORM 70/11, Appendix II)

9. The Committee next considered the labelling provisions in the Standard for Olive Oil. It was noted that under the name of the food there had been an omission in the standard and 1(v) should read "refined residue olive oil". The delegation of Portugal raised the question of net contents of this product, indicating that it should also be possible to declare it in terms of weight. In this connection, the meeting was referred to paragraph 15(e) (iii) in the Report of the Sixth Session of the Codex Committee on Fats and Oils which reads as follows:

"Net Contents

The Committee noted that, in the case of large containers of oils, sales sometimes took place by weight, but sales of small containers by retail were generally by volume. The Committee did not consider there was any reason to include a different provision for olive oils than for other fats and oils and agreed not to include a different provision from that contained in the General Labelling Standard."

On this basis, the Committee agreed to leave the labelling provisions as in the standard, which is in conformity with the declaration required for other oils. It was pointed out to the Committee that the Codex Committee on Fats and Oils had agreed to the non-declaration of tocopherols only on the ground that the amount was limited and that it was used for the purpose of restoring natural tocopherol lost in processing. A declaration of tocopherols had been required in all the other standards for oils.

Mustardseed Oil (ALINORM 70/11, Appendix III)

10. The Committee agreed to the labelling provisions given in the Standard for Mustardseed Oil with the application of the usual general decisions indicated in paragraphs 6 to 8 above, and also amended section VI.2, List of Ingredients, to make the reference more generally to 3.2(c) rather than to 3.2(c)(ii) only.

Quick Frozen Guttled Pacific Salmon (ALINORM 70/18, Appendix II)

11. With regard to the name "Quick Frozen Guttled Pacific Salmon", the question was raised as to whether this product could be called "frozen" when it was in fact "quick frozen". It was decided that this matter of substance should be referred to the Commission as a whole since it came up in many other standards for quick frozen foods. In section 5.2 of the standard, the designation "chum salmon" was amended by adding the words "or Keta salmon".

Canned Shrimps and Prawns (ALINORM 70/18, Appendix IV)

12. The Committee agreed that, in line with differing usage in English-speaking countries, the name of the product should be either shrimp, shrimps or prawns, and noted that consequential amendments would need to be made in other parts of the standard. The U.S. and several other delegations indicated that a drained weight requirement should be mandatory but that net contents was not meaningful for this product and therefore should not be mandatory. Some other delegations expressed the view that in this case both declarations would be informative. The Committee, after considerable discussion of the question of the mandatory requirement for drained weight in canned shrimps and the lack of a mandatory requirement for net contents as demanded by the General Standard, agreed to leave the labelling provisions as they were in this standard but decided that this should not establish a precedent for omitting declarations of net contents. The heading "net contents" in section 8.3 of this standard was changed to read "quantity of contents". However, the delegation of the Federal Republic of Germany was of the opinion that in general the consumer would be better informed, if instead of the "drained weight", the weight of the ingoing quantity of the food item in question were declared - in this case, shrimps and prawns, or in other cases the fruits or vegetables going into the package at the time of filling. In their opinion, the drained weight would be an important element of the standards for control purposes, but would not be meaningful information for the consumer. In connection with this product, the delegation of the Federal Republic of Germany made a statement on date-marking, which is reproduced in Appendix II. The delegation of Sweden noted that it supports in principle the position of the Federal Republic of Germany on date-marking and will be introducing mandatory durability marking in 1971.

Nectars (ALINORM 70/14, Appendix II)

13. Concerning labelling for nectars, the Federal Republic of Germany and the Netherlands would have preferred that the name of the product should only be pulpy fruit nectar but the Committee decided to keep the alternatives since this allowed the names presently in use for these products in various countries.

The Committee endorsed the declaration of water in this product, noting the objection of the Netherlands to this declaration. The Committee retained the various declarations for ascorbic acid, taking note of the objections of the delegations of the Federal Republic of Germany and Switzerland who would have preferred to have no compulsory declaration since ascorbic acid is added as an antioxidant and may not be present at all in the product by the time it is consumed, or may be interpreted as being an indication of the clear presence of vitamin C. The optional provisions concerning coded dates of production and information for utilization (7.6.4(a) and (c) of the standard) were deleted since any optional information could be given by virtue of paragraph 6.1 of the General Standard. Similarly, in all other standards discussed after this point, such optional statements were deleted. The mandatory statement in this same section under (b) was revised to read "There shall be information on the storage temperature for this product" since this product is not frozen, and provisions for "keeping and thawing" are inapplicable.

Apple Juice (ALINORM 70/14, Appendix II)

14. After considerable discussion, the Committee endorsed the name "sweetened apple juice" (in Spanish: jugos or zumos) for the product with added sugars. The provision under 7.5.4 in this standard was editorially corrected to read "No fruit or fruit juice may be represented pictorially on the label except apples or apple juice". The Committee did not require that reconstituted products be labelled as reconstituted. A large number of delegates agreed that all these fruit juice standards needed a list of ingredients. Such a provision would eliminate the requirement that the addition of sugars shall be declared on the label in 7.5.1 and also would in effect require that reconstituted juices would have a list of ingredients including water and fruit juice concentrate. The Committee agreed, as the labelling provisions were closely related to the compositional provisions in the standards, that these suggested changes should be reported to the Codex Alimentarius Commission which should decide between the version suggested by this Committee and the original version recommended by the Joint ECE/Codex Alimentarius Group of Experts on the Standardization of Fruit Juices. The Netherlands, Portugal and Switzerland were opposed to the listing of ingredients in this product, especially when the added amount of water was equal to the normal content of water in the juice, and pointed out that the reconstituted product could not be differentiated analytically from the non-reconstituted product.

Other Fruit Juices (ALINORM 70/14, Appendices IV, V and VI)

15. The decisions on apple juice were also applied to the other fruit juices, that is, orange juice, lemon juice and grapefruit juice (in Spanish: toronja or pomelo) except that the designation "sweetened" was not used for orange juice or grapefruit juice and it was suggested that all these standards should have a list of ingredients. The delegate of Israel was of the opinion that there was no reason why, in the case of orange juice, the word "sweetened" should not appear on the label. Here again the Commission was to decide between the labelling provisions suggested by this Committee and those originally before the Committee (ALINORM 70/14).

Edible and Dried Fungi (ALINORM 70/19, Appendices II and III)

16. Concerning the General Standard for Edible Fungi the Committee agreed to make the declaration as to method of processing mandatory as had been proposed in the previous version of the standard. The paragraph 1.6 concerning the labelling of products with stalks was left out accidentally and was reinstated. The list of ingredients was considered not to be needed in dried fungi. It was also agreed that in the case of chanterelles the name of the product shall be "chanterelles" and Cantharellus cibarius. In all standards for fungi the optional requirement of an official control stamp was deleted, it having been decided to rely on paragraph 6.1 of the General Standard.

Natural Mineral Waters (ALINORM 70/19, Appendix V)

17. The Committee considered the standards for Natural Mineral Waters and made the following editorial changes: In Section VI A(vii) the word "same" was deleted in the English text and in Section VI A(viii) the last sentence was revised to read "there must not be any reference to properties favourable to health". The Committee noted that Section VI A(i) referred to the definition of the product and therefore to the provision contained therein in respect of properties favourable to health. In endorsing this section, the Committee emphasized that it was taking no position on the value of the provision in the definition and the Committee deleted Section VI E in line with its decision on optional labelling requirements. The delegation of the Federal Republic of Germany also stated that before accepting the provisions laid down in Section VI A(i), objective criteria would have to be defined.

Quick Frozen Peas (ALINORM 70/25, Appendix III)

18. Concerning quick frozen peas, it was indicated in paragraph 7.1 of the standard that the name of the food should read "the name of the product shall only include ..." in order to restrict the names to the designations given. The delegations of the Federal Republic of Germany, Netherlands and New Zealand were of the opinion that the addition of sugar to peas should be indicated in the name, possibly as a characterizing flavouring.

STANDARDS AT STEP 5

19. In view of the lack of time, the Committee agreed not to consider Labelling provisions in the standards at Step 5 (Item 4 of the Agenda).

Labelling of Bulk Containers

20. The labelling of products in bulk containers was considered in the light of those included in the standards for fruit juices, e.g. 7.6 in Apple Juices. It was agreed that it might be appropriate to consider the whole question of such labelling at a future meeting but that, meanwhile, the following additional provision should be included in the standard for frozen gutted Pacific salmon:

"In addition to the particulars in 5.1 and 5.2 the name and address [... 3.4 (a) of the General Standard] and the country of origin should be declared on the container or be given in the accompanying documents."

Clarification of the Meaning of Net Contents

21. The question of clarification of the net contents statement as requested by the Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products was discussed. The Committee agreed that difficulties had arisen about the declaration of "net contents" on canned Pacific salmon. The Committee supported the explanation given in paragraphs 60 to 62 of the report of the 4th Session of the Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products (ALINORM 70/18) that the net contents meant the entire contents of the container, i.e. fish plus liquid. It was pointed out that this explanation applies only to canned Pacific salmon.

Other Business

22. Under this heading the delegation of Denmark requested an interpretation of the net contents declaration in the General Standard and enquired:

1. as to whether it referred to average or minimum contents;
2. as to what the declaration should be on non-homogeneous products packed in a liquid which was consumed; and
3. as to whether products to which paragraph 3.3 (b) applies must carry a declaration of the net contents as well as of the drained weight.

It was felt that these questions of interpretation of the General Standard would require some consideration and only opinions were given at this stage.

Date, Place and Agenda for Future Sessions

23. The question of the date and place of future meetings and the nature of future work was discussed briefly. Regret was expressed that the Committee did not have time to consider labelling provisions for Step 5 standards this year, and thus it was indicated that a two or three day meeting would be needed in 1971 to endorse labelling provisions. This meeting might be in Ottawa in conjunction with other North American Codex Committee meetings or possibly in connection with next year's meeting of the Commission in Geneva. It is possible that in 1972 a full scale meeting in Ottawa would be desirable to consider such subjects as labelling of foods in bulk containers, claims, date marking and other topics connected with labelling as well as endorsing labelling provisions in Codex standards. Members were invited to contribute papers on these subjects.

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Figuran en primer lugar los Jefes de las delegaciones; los Suplentes, Asesores y Consultores aparecen por orden alfabético.

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NOTE BY THE DELEGATION
OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY ON DATE-MARKING

In the opinion of the delegation of the Federal Republic of Germany one of the important features of modern methods of marketing prepackaged foods is presentation and labelling. In view of the emphasis which consumer and manufacturer put on good keeping qualities and freshness of foods on a very competitive market, declaration of the date of manufacture or date of expiry has become a well-established practice on a voluntary or legal basis with certain perishable foods. In the Federal Republic of Germany regulations requiring the declaration of the date have been in force for certain perishable foods for a number of years with good results. Difficulties which are sometimes mentioned in arguments against date marking were not found to materialize. Prepackaged foods which require date marking in the Federal Republic of Germany include meat and meat products, including compounded products containing meat; fish and other cold blooded animals, and products thereof including compounded products, crustaceae and molluscs and products thereof including compounded products; and milk and milk product conserves. The date of manufacture may be replaced by the date of packaging if the product is not packaged immediately after manufacture, or in any case by the date of expiry. These remarks apply to canned shrimps, frozen fillets of plaice and ocean perch, canned hams, corned beef, luncheon meat and chopped meat and quick frozen gutted Pacific salmon.

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