



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
CODEX COMMITTEE ON FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES
18th Session
Phuket, Thailand, 24 – 28 February 2014
PROPOSED DRAFT CODEX STANDARD FOR OKRA
(Prepared by the Electronic Working Group on Okra led by India)
(AT STEP 4)

Codex Members and Observers wishing to submit comments on this proposal should do so in conformity with the *Uniform Procedure for the Elaboration of Codex Standards and Related Texts* (Codex Alimentarius Procedural Manual) as presented in the [Annex I](#) before **20 January 2014** to: the Codex Contact Point of Mexico, Dirección General de Normas (DGN), Av. Puente de Tecamachalco 6, 2do piso, Lomas de Tecamachalco Sección Fuentes, C.P. 53950 Naucalpan de Juárez, Estado de México, México (Tels.: +52 (55) 57 29 94 80, +52 (55) 57 29 91 00, Ext.: 43220, E-mails: codexmex@economia.gob.mx, codxmex1@economia.gob.mx), with a copy to the Secretariat, Codex Alimentarius Commission, Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, FAO, Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy (Fax: +39 (06) 5705 3057; E-mail: codex@fao.org)

Format for submitting comments: In order to facilitate the compilation of comments and prepare a more useful comments document, Members and Observers, which are not yet doing so, are requested to provide their comments in the format outlined in Annex III to this document.

BACKGROUND

1. At the 17th session of Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (CCFFV) held in Mexico in September 2012, the delegation of India introduced a new work proposal on a Codex Standard for Okra and gave a summary information based on the project document submitted to the CCFFV. Following the presentation several countries indicated that they were interested in developing a Codex standard for okra. The Committee agreed to establish an electronic working group (EWG) led by India to prepare a draft for consideration at its next session (see Annex II for the List of Participants).¹ The 36th Session of the Codex Alimentarius (July 2013) approved the elaboration of a Codex standard for okra as proposed by the CCFFV.²

2. The EWG commenced its deliberations in May, 2013 with the goal of completing the assigned task for consideration by the CCFFV at its 18th session to be held in February 2014. The draft submitted to the 17th session of CCFFV as part of the project document was distributed to members of the EWG on 23rd May 2013, with the request to submit the comments by 27th August, 2013. The revised draft was circulated to the EWG members on 14th November, 2013 with 29th November, 2013 as the deadline for sending the comments. The draft has been revised and finalized in the light of comments received from the two round of comments and it is presented for comments by the Codex members and observers in Annex I.

3. Main amendments that have been made to the draft presented to the 17th Session of the CCFFV are as follows:

- provisions concerning sizing, where the unit of length of okra is now changed from millimeters into centimeters.
- maturity requirements as okra is not a fruit that undergoes maturation and ripening process is removed.
- for all classes of okra amendment was submitted to quantify slight defects in colour.

REQUEST FOR COMMENTS

4. Codex Members and Observers are kindly invited to submit comments on the proposed draft Codex Standard for Okra as prepared by the electronic working group (Annex I).

¹ REP13/FFV, paras. 107-110 and Appendix V.

² REP13/CAC, Appendix VI.

ANNEX I

PROPOSED DRAFT CODEX STANDARD FOR OKRA

1. DEFINITION OF PRODUCE

This Standard applies to commercial varieties of okra grown from varieties of *Abelmoschus esculentus* (L.) Moench (*syn. Hibiscus esculentus* L.) of the *Malvaceae* family, to be supplied fresh to the consumer after preparation and packaging. Okra for industrial processing is excluded.

2. PROVISIONS CONCERNING QUALITY

2.1 MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

In all classes, subject to the special provisions for each class and the tolerances allowed, the okra must be:

- whole, with peduncle and intact tip;
- sufficiently developed;
- sound, produce affected by rotting or deterioration such as to make it unfit for consumption is excluded;
- clean and practically free of any visible foreign matter;
- practically free of pests and damage caused by them affecting the general appearance of the produce;
- free of abnormal external moisture, excluding condensation following removal from cold storage;
- free of any foreign smell and/or taste;
- free of bruising;
- free from damage caused by low or high temperatures;
- free of cracking.

2.1.1 The development and condition of the okra must be such as to enable them:

- to withstand transport and handling; and
- to arrive in satisfactory condition at the place of destination.

2.1.2 Maturity Requirements

The okra must be sufficiently developed with appropriate maturity.

2.2 CLASSIFICATION

Okra is classified in three classes defined below:

2.2.1 "Extra" Class

Okra in this class must be of superior quality. They must have firm flesh and must be characteristic of the variety as regards shape, appearance and development. They must be free of defects, with the exception of very slight superficial defects, provided these do not affect the general appearance of the produce, the quality, the keeping quality and presentation in the package.

2.2.2 Class I

Okra in this class must be of good quality. The following slight defects, however, may be allowed, provided these do not affect the general appearance of the produce, the quality, the keeping quality and presentation in the package:

- a slight defect in shape and development;
- a slight defect in colouring not exceeding 5% of the total surface area;
- slight skin defects such as scars, blemishes, scratches, bruises, scraps not exceeding 2% of the total surface area.

2.2.3 Class II

This class includes okra which does not qualify for inclusion in the higher classes but satisfies the minimum requirements specified in Section 2.1 above. The following defects, however, may be allowed, provided the okra retains its essential characteristics as regards the quality, the keeping quality and presentation:

- defects in shape and development;
- a slight defect in colouring not exceeding 10% of the total surface area;
- skin defects such as scars, blemishes, scratches, bruises, scraps not exceeding 5% of the total surface area.

3. PROVISIONS CONCERNING SIZING

Size is determined by the length of the okra (in cm. without peduncle) in accordance with the following table:

The table is a guide and may be used on an optional basis.

Size Code	Length in cm
A	4.0 – 6.5
B	6.51 – 9.0
C	9.1 – 11.5
D	11.51 and above

4. PROVISIONS CONCERNING TOLERANCES

Tolerances in respect of quality and size shall be allowed in each package for produce not satisfying the requirements of the class indicated.

4.1 QUALITY TOLERANCES

4.1.1 “Extra” Class

Five percent by number or weight of okra not satisfying the requirements of the class, but meeting those of Class I or, exceptionally, coming within the tolerances of that class.

4.1.2 Class I

Ten percent by number or weight of okra not satisfying the requirements of the class, but meeting those of Class II or, exceptionally, coming within the tolerances of that class.

4.1.3 Class II

Ten percent by number or weight of okra satisfying neither the requirements of the class nor the minimum requirements, with the exception of produce affected by rotting, marked bruising or any other deterioration rendering it unfit for consumption.

4.2 SIZE TOLERANCES

For all classes, 10% by number of okra corresponding to the size immediately above or below that indicated on the package.

5. PROVISIONS CONCERNING PRESENTATION

5.1 UNIFORMITY

The contents of each package must be uniform and contain okra of the same origin, variety or commercial type, quality and size (if sized). The visible part of the contents of the package must be representative of the entire contents.

5.2 PACKAGING

Okra must be packed in such a way as to protect the produce properly. The materials used inside the package must be new³, clean, and of a quality such as to avoid causing any external or internal damage to the produce. The use of materials, particularly of paper or stamps bearing trade specifications is allowed, provided the printing or labeling has been done with non-toxic ink or glue.

Okra shall be packed in each container in compliance with the *Code of Practice for Packaging and Transport of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables* (CAC/RCP 44-1995).

5.2.1 Description of Containers

The containers shall meet the quality, hygiene, ventilation and resistance characteristics to ensure suitable handling, shipping and preserving of the okra. Packages must be free of all foreign matter and smell.

6. MARKING OR LABELLING

6.1 CONSUMER PACKAGES

In addition to the requirements of the *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods* (CODEX STAN 1-1985), the following specific provisions apply:

³ For the purposes of this Standard, this includes recycled material of food-grade quality.

6.1.1 Nature of Produce

If the produce is not visible from the outside, each package shall be labeled as to the name of the produce and may be labeled as to the name of the variety and/or commercial type.

6.2 NON-RETAIL CONTAINERS

Each package must bear the following particulars, in letters grouped on the same side, legibly and indelibly marked, and visible from the outside, or in the documents accompanying the shipment.

6.2.1 Identification

Name and address of exporter, packer and/or dispatcher. Identification code (optional)⁴.

6.2.2 Nature of Produce

Name of the produce "okra" if the contents are not visible from the outside. Name of the variety and/or commercial type (optional).

6.2.3 Origin of Produce

Country of origin and, optionally, district where grown or national, regional or local place name.

6.2.4 Commercial Identification

- Class;
- Size (size code or minimum and maximum length in mm).

6.2.5 Official Inspection Mark (optional)

7. CONTAMINANTS

7.1 The produce covered by this Standard shall comply with the maximum levels of the *General Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Food and Feed* (CODEX STAN 193-1995).

7.2 The produce covered by this Standard shall comply with the maximum residue limits for pesticides established by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

8. HYGIENE

8.1 It is recommended that the produce covered by the provisions of this Standard be prepared and handled in accordance with the appropriate sections of the *General Principles of Food Hygiene* (CAC/RCP 1-1969), *Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables* (CAC/RCP 53-2003), and other relevant Codex texts such as Codes of Hygienic Practice and Codes of Practice.

8.2 The produce should comply with any microbiological criteria established in accordance with the *Principles for the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria for Foods* (CAC/GL 21-1997).

⁴ The national legislation of a number of countries requires the explicit declaration of the name and address. However, in the case where a code mark is used, the reference "packer and/or dispatcher (or equivalent abbreviations)" has to be indicated in close connection with the code mark.

ANNEX II
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS
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ANNEX III

GENERAL GUIDANCE FOR THE PROVISION OF COMMENTS

In order to facilitate the compilation and prepare a more useful comments' document, Members and Observers, which are not yet doing so, are requested to provide their comments under the following headings:

- (i) General Comments
- (ii) Specific Comments

Specific comments should include a reference to the relevant section and/or paragraph of the document that the comments refer to.

When changes are proposed to specific paragraphs, Members and Observers are requested to provide their proposal for amendments accompanied by the related rationale. New texts should be presented in underlined/bold font and deletion in ~~strikethrough font~~.

In order to facilitate the work of the Secretariats to compile comments, Members and Observers are requested to refrain from using colour font/shading as documents are printed in black and white and from using track change mode, which might be lost when comments are copied/pasted into a consolidated document.

In order to reduce the translation work and save paper, Members and Observers are requested not to reproduce the complete document but only those parts of the texts for which any change and/or amendments is proposed.