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FOOD AND AGRICULTURE  
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JOINT OFFICE: Viale delle Terme di Caracalla 00100 ROME Tel: 39 06 57051 www.codexalimentarius.net Email: codex@fao.org Facsimile: 39 06 5705 4593

Agenda Item 4 (q)

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(English only)

## JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME CODEX COMMITTEE ON MILK AND MILK PRODUCTS

Seventh Session

Queenstown, New Zealand, 27 March - 1 April 2006

PROPOSED DRAFT STANDARD FOR PROCESSED CHEESE

COMMENTS AT STEP 3

**Comments from: Canada, France, India, Thailand and United States of America**

### *General*

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#### FRANCE

The French authorities would like to thank the IDF for leading the Codex working group.

There are a certain number of inaccuracies or omissions in the French translation:

#### Section 2 – 1<sup>st</sup> bullet point

The first reference to Standard A6 is badly placed.

The examples of processed cheese with a varietal name and should be expressed [in French] as follows: fromage de cheddar fondu, cheddar fondu.

#### Section 3.1, 7.1.2 and 7.1.3

Replace “à tartiner” with “tartinable”

#### Section 7.1.4

Replace “fromage fondu de-----” and “fromage fondu au-----” with “fromage de ---- fondu” or “X fondu” (for example “Emmental fondu”).

#### Section 7.1.5

The term “fromage fondu avec-----” should include another possibility with the following wording “or ‘fromage fondu au -----’”.

#### Section 7.4

In the French version, the beginning of the sentence has been omitted: “Si le consommateur est induit en erreur par cette omission...” [If the consumer would be misled by the omission]

#### Section 7.5

Replace “fromage” by “fromage fondu”

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**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

The U.S. supports the horizontal approach in the development of milk and milk product standards whenever possible. The Codex Alimentarius Commission's Procedural Manual recognizes this approach and only allows for deviations from horizontal standards when those deviations are fully justified and supported by available scientific evidence and other relevant information. This includes the food additive and contaminant provisions developed by the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants, the hygiene provisions developed by the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene, and the labeling provisions established by the Codex Committee on Food Labeling. The U.S. recommends that milk and milk product standards reference the work of these groups to identify additive, contaminant, hygiene and labeling provisions within the standards whenever possible rather than duplicate their work within milk and milk products standards.

The United States recognizes and appreciates the significant amount of work that the drafting group has done in preparing the Proposed Draft Standard for Processed Cheese and the related information. We believe that even though some progress was made, there continues to be no consensus on the amount of cheese needed as an ingredient, other permitted ingredients, composition, food additives, or labeling of the food. This is best demonstrated by the many square brackets in key areas of the proposed standard. At the 6<sup>th</sup> Session of the CCMMP, we addressed the difficulties the committee was facing in revising the standards for process cheese and suggested that because of these difficulties, process cheese did not lend itself to international standardization. We suggested that the committee discontinue its work on this standard and rescind the existing standard which does not adequately reflect products in international trade. Nevertheless, the decision of CCMMP was to make yet another effort to reach agreement on a revised standard and requested that a Drafting Group be given an opportunity to reconcile these differences. Even though the drafting group worked constructively and demonstrated the ability to make compromises, many global differences still exist as demonstrated by the many countries that hold reservations.

The drafting group did agree that despite the weaknesses in the existing standards 8 (a), (b), (c) no problems currently or in the recent past exist in international trade with regard to processed cheese. With this in mind, the U.S. suggests that the CCMMP re-evaluate the need for a processed cheese standard based on the "Criteria for the Establishment of Work Priorities" established in the Codex Alimentarius Commission Procedural Manual. Processed Cheese may no longer meet the criteria necessary for the establishment of a standard.

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***Section 1. Scope of the Standard***

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**CANADA**

Canada disagrees with the inclusion of the footnote since some examples of the designations appear to conflict with the GSUDT Section 4.5.

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***Section 3.1 Raw Materials***

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**CANADA**

Canada believes that this whole section should be more clearly formatted – perhaps separate headings could be used recognizing various compositional and quality factors of different process cheeses. For example, three headings covering the three different types of process cheeses: Process(ed) Cheese; Process(ed) Cheese qualified as spreadable; Named Variety Process(ed) Cheese.

Canada believes that the description of high fat process cheese is confusing and that the cheese content is not clearly described. Canada proposes the wording be changed to read "in the case of process cheese where the content of FDM is greater than 50%, additional category (b) materials may be added provided that ....."

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**INDIA**

On raw materials India has 2 comments.

(a) The first sentence of the first paragraph after the listing of 3 permitted raw materials mentions that cheese shall constitute the largest category. This means cheese could be as low as 34% and non-cheese milk ingredients as high as 66%. As the processed cheese is essentially a type of cheese, it is justified that out of all the three types of proposed ingredients used for making processed cheese, the ingredient cheese(s) constitutes at least 50% of the total ingredients.

(b) India supports the proposal that the cheese variety indicated in the processed cheese with the named variety should constitute at least 60% (m/m) of the ingoing milk ingredients, and hence the square bracket [ ] from [60] be removed.

**THAILAND**

We agree that milk product composition in processed cheese shall be at least 60% m/m, so the square brackets should be deleted.

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

The U.S. does not agree with the approach that “cheese shall constitute the largest category” of raw materials. Under this approach, the minimum amount of cheese required could be as low as 34%, which is not consistent with the majority of the processed cheese produced in the world.

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***Section 3.2 Permitted Ingredients***

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**CANADA**

Canada recommends the addition of sugars (any carbohydrate sweetening matter). Sugars may be required to control water activity along with the emulsifying salts and may be used to adjust the brix/acid ratio for some cheeses. This is similar rationale to allowing vinegar as an ingredient.

**THAILAND**

We suggest removing the square brackets from Gelatin and Starch.

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

The U.S. recommends removing Gelatine and Starches from the permitted ingredients. These two ingredients are added to replace dairy ingredients (cheese) in order to achieve the same physical characteristics.

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***Section 3.3 Composition***

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**INDIA**

The standard proposes fat in dry matter as maximum 75% (m/m). It is noted that the IDF would provide a table giving details of minimum dry matters at different ranges of fat in dry matter. Our comment would depend on the table the IDF provides.

**THAILAND**

We are of opinion that the composition should be complied with the technologically justified approach.

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

The U.S. believes that the maximum content of milkfat in dry matter of 75% is too high. The U.S. recommends 65%.

The U.S. is concerned with the approach taken by the drafting group to categorize processed cheese as spreadable. The term “spreadable” is not well defined in the standard. For instance should the product be spreadable at room temperature or refrigeration temperature and how is acceptable spreadability determined?

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The U.S. does not support 60% for the minimum amount of a named variety cheese needed in processed cheese in order for the named variety to be used in the name of the processed cheese. The U.S recommends that “process cheese be made exclusively from cheese(s) included in the name of the product with dairy ingredients used only to standardize the fat content and other food additives allowed in the food additive section of this standard.”

### ***Section 6. Hygiene***

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#### **INDIA**

In Section 6.1 the reference to the Recommended International Code of Practice for General Principles on Food Hygiene should be changed from CAC/RCP 1 - 1969 Revision 3 - 1997 to CAC/RCP 1 - 1969 Revision 4 - 2003.

### ***Section 7.1 Name of the Food***

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#### **Section 7.1.1**

#### **CANADA**

7.1.1 Canada recommends that Section 7.1.4 be moved into this part to clearly indicate that both these names can be used.

#### **Section 7.1.3**

#### **CANADA**

7.1.3 Canada suggests the following rewording of this part to meet the intention of the optional labeling term “spreadable”:

“When the texture of Process(ed) Cheese is suitable for spreading, the term “spreadable” may be indicated on the label.

#### **Section 7.1.5**

#### **INDIA**

Section 7.1.5 suggests another designation of the product similar to the named varieties suggested in section 7.1.4, just by permitting use of insignificant quantity of specific variety of cheese. Since the designations are similar, it would be difficult for the consumer to differentiate between the two, and hence he would be misled particularly by the designation under 7.1.5. Either the percentage of such cheese variety be mentioned on the label or this provision be deleted.

#### **UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

The U.S. is concerned that the name of a variety of cheese may be used if present at a minimum of 2%. This value could be misleading to consumers. It is more important to consider what amount of a specific variety of cheese is needed to provide a characterizing flavor rather than setting a value of 2% for all named varieties of cheese.

### ***Section 7.3 Declaration of Cheese Content***

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#### **INDIA**

Processed cheese is made of different varieties of cheese, fat rich dairy products and other dairy products. Since the product designation uses the term cheese, the consumer would be misled if he does not know how much cheese content has been used in making the product (processed cheese). Therefore, India considers that the declaration of percentage of cheese in the product is necessary, and hence proposes to delete the second phrase, which reads "if so required in the country of retail sale", from the paragraph.

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***Section 7.4 Declaration of Milk Protein Content***

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**INDIA**

As stated earlier, the consumer associates cheese, including processed cheese, as a high protein product. Therefore, the consumer has a right to know how much protein content is present in the processed cheese. Otherwise he would be misled. Therefore, India proposes to revise the paragraph as follows:

"If the consumer would be misled by the omission the milk protein content shall be declared in a manner acceptable in the country of sale to the final consumer, either as (i) a percentage by mass, or (ii) grams per serving as quantified in the label provided the number of serving is stated."

***Additional Section 7.6***

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**INDIA**

To add a new Section 7.6: There are sections of consumers who do not consume food which contains non-milk animal products such as animal rennet, gelatin etc. It is, therefore, necessary that if such ingredients / additives / processed aids are used in food product, then these should be clearly labelled so that the consumer is appropriately and adequately informed. Therefore, India proposes to include a new Section 7.6 as follows:

"7.6: Declaration of Non-Milk Animal Origin Ingredients / Additives If non-milk ingredients / additives of animal origin are used, an additional declaration as under 'contains gelatin / animal rennet' should appear on the label."