Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

World Health Organization

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS
INTERNATIONAL FOOD STANDARDS

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS
STANDARD

STANDARD FOR FRESH DATES
CXS 363-2025

ADOPTED 2025 | CXS 363-2025

History of the standard

Adopted in 2025.

1 Scope

The purpose of the standard is to define the quality requirements for fresh dates after preparation and packaging. When it is applied at stages following packaging, products may show, in relation to the requirements of the standard:

- a slight lack of freshness and turgidity; and/or
- a slight deterioration due to their development and tendency to perish.

The holder or seller of products may not display such products or offer them for sale or deliver or market them in any manner other than in conformity with this standard. The holder or seller shall be responsible for observing such conformity.

2 Definition of produce

This standard applies to commercial varieties, cultivars or other commercial types of fresh dates (*Phoenix dactylifera* L. from the Arecaceae family), to be supplied as fresh and whole fruit to the consumer in unpitted form. Fresh dates shall not have undergone any intentional or artificial process including the process mentioned in Section 1.1 (3), (4) and (5) of Annex B of the *General standard for dried fruits* (CXS 360-2020),[1] after harvesting. Fresh dates intended for industrial purposes are excluded.

3 Provisions concerning quality

3.1 Minimum requirements

In all classes, subject to the special provisions for each class and the tolerances allowed, the fresh dates must display the following characteristics, deviations from which shall be observed by the naked eye or corrected 20/20 vision when appropriate:[i]

- intact;
- sound; produce affected by rotting or deterioration, which makes it unfit for consumption is excluded;
- clean, practically free of any visible foreign matter;
- free from living pests,[ii] and their debris or excreta;
- practically free of damage caused by pests;
- free from mould filaments visible to the naked eye;
- free of undeveloped and deformed fruits, as indicated by stunted growth, immature characteristics and the natural absence of a pit;
- free of blemishes, scars, discolouration, sunburnt and black nose affecting an area more than 7 mm^2 of a fruit's surface;

i Loupe, binocular or other magnifying equipment should not be used when assessing defects.
ii Provisions for pests and damage caused by pests apply without prejudice to the applicable plant protection rules applied by governments in line with the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC).

- free of external moisture excluding condensation following removal from cold storage; and
- free of foreign smell and/or taste.

The development and condition of the fresh dates shall be such as to enable them to:

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

3.1.1 Minimum maturity requirements

Fresh dates shall have reached an appropriate degree of development and/or maturity in accordance with criteria proper to the variety, cultivar or other commercial type, at the time of harvesting and area in which they are grown.

Fresh dates shall have a moisture content, in accordance with criteria to the variety and stage of harvest or commercial type and the area in which they are grown. Moisture content of fresh dates shall not exceed 85 percent.

3.2 Classification

Classification of fresh dates is optional. When classified, classification is done in accordance with Section 5: "Provisions concerning tolerances", and fresh dates are classified into the following classes:

- extra class, class I and class II.

When fresh dates are traded as unclassified, the minimum tolerance requirements for class II shall apply.

4 Provisions concerning sizing

Fresh dates may be sized by count or by weight of the fruit or in accordance with existing trade practices. When sized in accordance with existing trade practice, the package shall be labelled with the count or size and method used.

5 Provisions concerning tolerances

5.1 Quality tolerances

At all marketing stages, tolerances in respect of quality shall be allowed in each lot for produce not satisfying the requirements of the class indicated. Produce that fail a conformity assessment may be allowed to be re-sorted and brought into conformity in accordance with the relevant provisions in the *Guidelines for food import control system* (CXG 47-2003).[2]

Table 1: Quality tolerances of fresh dates

Serial No.	Quality tolerance	Tolerances allowed percentage of defective produce by count or weight (not more than)		
		Extra class	Class I	Class II
1	**Total tolerance** not satisfying the quality requirement of which no more than i.e. individual tolerance	5	10	10
	Individual tolerance			
	Undeveloped	1	3	6
	Damage by pest	3	8	8
	Blemished/discoloured	3	5	7
	Sour/decayed/mouldy	1	1	1
	Living pest	0	0	0
2	**Additional tolerance**			
	Off size from what is indicated or marked	5	10	10
	Produce belonging to other similar varieties than marked	0	0	0
	Loose dates among dates with stems or clusters	10	15	18

6 Provisions concerning presentation

6.1 Uniformity

The contents of each package shall be uniform and contain only fresh dates of the same origin, variety or commercial type, stage of ripeness, quality (if indicated) and size (if sized). The visible part of the contents of the package shall be representative of the entire contents.

Fresh dates may be presented:

- in clusters (consisting mainly of the rachis and the stems to which the fruit is attached naturally);
- in stems (stems which are separated from the rachis and to which the fruit is attached naturally); and
- individual fruit, arranged in layers or loose in the package.

Stems presented in clusters or separated from the rachis shall be at least 10 cm in length and carry an average of four to six fruit per 10 cm of length.

6.2 Packaging

Fresh dates shall be packed in such a way as to protect the produce properly. The materials used inside the package shall be of food-grade quality, clean and of such a quality 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 labelling has been done with non-toxic ink or glue.

Fresh dates shall be packed in each package in compliance with the appropriate sections of the *Code of practice for packaging and transport of fresh fruits and vegetables* (CXC 44-1995).[3]

6.2.1 Description of containers

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

7 Provisions concerning marking or labelling

7.1 Consumer packages

In addition to the requirements of the *General standard for the labelling of pre-packaged foods* (CXS 1-1985),[4] the following specific provisions apply:

7.1.1 Name of the produce

Each package shall be labelled as fresh dates and may be labelled as to the name of the variety, cultivar and/or commercial type.

7.1.2 Origin of the produce

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

7.2 Non-retail containers

The labelling of non-retail containers should be in accordance with the *General standard for the labelling of non-retail containers of foods* (CXS 346-2021).[5] In addition, the following specific requirements shall apply:

7.2.1 Origin of the product

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

In the case of a mixture of distinctly different species and/or varieties of fresh dates of different origins, the indication of each country of origin shall appear next to the name of the species and/or variety concerned.

7.2.2 Commercial specifications

- class (optional);
- variety and/or commercial type; and
- weight or size (if sized) in accordance with the method applied.

iii The full or commonly used name should be indicated.
iv The full or commonly used name should be indicated.

8 Food additives

No food additives are permitted in foods conforming to this standard.

9 Contaminants

The produce covered by this standard shall comply with the maximum levels of the *General standard for contaminants and toxins in food and feed* (CXS 193-1995).[6]

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

10 Hygiene

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* (CXC 1-1969),[7] the *Code of hygienic practice for fresh fruits and vegetables* (CXC 53-2003),[8] and other relevant Codex texts such as codes of hygienic practice and codes of practice.

The produce should comply with any microbiological criteria established in accordance with the *Principles and guidelines for the establishment and application of microbiological criteria related to foods* (CXG 21-1997).[9]

Referenced texts

1 *General standard for dried fruits* (CXS 360-2020).

2 *Guidelines for food import control system* (CXG 47-2003).

3 *Code of practice for packaging and transport of fresh fruits and vegetables* (CXC 44-1995).

4 *General standard for the labelling of pre-packaged foods* (CXS 1-1985).

5 *General standard for the labelling of non-retail containers of foods* (CXS 346-2021).

6 *General standard for contaminants and toxins in food and feed* (CXS 193-1995).

7 *General principles of food hygiene* (CXC 1-1969).

8 *Code of hygienic practice for fresh fruits and vegetables* (CXC 53-2003).

9 *Principles and guidelines for the establishment and application of microbiological criteria related to foods* (CXG 21-1997).

Codex Alimentarius

A collection of international food standards developed to protect consumer health and ensure fair practices in the food trade. Codex standards are adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, an intergovernmental body with 189 Members, established by FAO and WHO. The standards are recognized by the World Trade Organization as the benchmark for the safety of internationally traded food.

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FAO and WHO. 2026. *Standard for fresh dates*.
Codex Alimentarius Standard, No. CXS 363-2025. Codex Alimentarius Commission. Rome.
https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/cd9083en

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