



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

CODEX
ALIMENTARIUS
INTERNATIONAL FOOD STANDARDS

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS
STANDARD

**STANDARD FOR
CANNED TUNA
AND BONITO**
CXS 70-1981



ADOPTED 1981
AMENDED 2026

CXS 70-1981

History of the standard

This publication was reformatted and published in 2026.

2026 Amendments

Following the Forty-ninth Codex Alimentarius Commission in 2026, Section 2.1: "Product definition" was updated by changing *Euthynnus pelamis* to "formerly known as"; Section 5: "Contaminants" was added to include a reference to the *General standard for contaminants and toxin in food and feed* (CXS 193-1995); and the title of Section 8: "Sampling, examination and analysis" was changed to "Methods of analysis and sampling" in accordance with the *Codex Alimentarius Commission Procedural Manual*.

2026 Corrigenda

Two spelling errors in Section 2.1: "Product definition" were corrected, where "*Euthynnus alleteratus*" was replaced with "*Euthynnus alletteratus*" and "*Sarda chilensis*" was replaced with "*Sarda chiliensis*".

2024 Amendments

Following the Forty-seventh Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission in November 2024, Section 6.2: "Labelling of non-retail containers" was added to include a reference to the *General standard for the labelling of non-retail containers of foods* (CXS 346-2021); and Section 7: "Sampling, examination and analysis" was amended by replacing methods of analysis and numeric performance criteria with a reference to the *Recommended methods of analysis and sampling* (CXS 234-1999).

Amendments and revisions made prior to 2024:

Amended in 2011, 2013, 2016 and 2018.

Revised in 1995.

Adopted in 1981.

1 Scope

This standard applies to canned tuna and bonito. It does not apply to speciality products where the fish content constitutes less than 50 percent m/m of the contents.

2 Description

2.1 Product definition

Canned tuna and bonito are the products consisting of the flesh of any of the appropriate species listed below, packed in hermetically sealed containers.

• <i>Thunnus alalunga</i>	• <i>Euthynnus affinis</i>
• <i>Thunnus albacares</i>	• <i>Euthynnus alletteratus</i>
• <i>Thunnus atlanticus</i>	• <i>Euthynnus lineatus</i>
• <i>Thunnus obesus</i>	• <i>Katsuwonus pelamis</i> (formerly known as <i>Euthynnus pelamis</i>)
• <i>Thunnus maccoyii</i>	• <i>Sarda chiliensis</i>
• <i>Thunnus thynnus</i>	• <i>Sarda orientalis</i>
• <i>Thunnus tonggol</i>	• <i>Sarda sarda</i>

2.2 Process definition

The products shall have received a processing treatment sufficient to ensure commercial sterility.

2.3 Presentation

The product shall be presented as:

Solid (skin-on or skinless) – fish cut into transverse segments which are placed in the can with the planes of their transverse cut ends parallel to the ends of the can. The proportion of free flakes or chunks shall not exceed 18 percent of the drained weight of the container.

Chunks – pieces of fish, most of which have dimensions of not less than 1.2 cm in each direction and in which the original muscle structure is retained. The proportion of pieces of flesh of which the dimensions are less than 1.2 cm shall not exceed 30 percent of the drained weight of the container.

Flake or flakes – a mixture of particles and pieces of fish most of which have dimensions less than 1.2 cm in each direction but in which the muscular structure of the flesh is retained. The proportion of pieces of flesh of which the dimensions are less than 1.2 cm exceed 30 percent of the drained weight of the container.

Grated or shredded – a mixture of particles of cooked fish that have been reduced to a uniform size, in which particles are discrete and do not comprise a paste.

Any other presentation shall be permitted provided that it:

- is sufficiently distinctive from other forms of presentation laid down in this standard;
- meets all other requirements of this standard; and
- is adequately described on the label to avoid confusing or misleading the consumer.

3 Essential composition and quality factors

3.1 Raw material

The products shall be prepared from sound fish of the species in Section 2.1: “Product definition” and of a quality fit to be sold fresh for human consumption.

3.2 Other ingredients

The packing medium and all other ingredients used shall be of food-grade quality and conform to all applicable Codex standards.

3.3 Decomposition

The products shall not contain more than 10 mg/100 g of histamine based on the average of the sample unit tested.

3.4 Final product

Products shall meet the requirements of this standard when lots examined in accordance with Section 9: “Lot acceptance” comply with the provisions set out in Section 8: “Definition of defectives”. Products shall be examined by the methods given in Section 7: “Sampling, examination and analysis”.

4 Food additives

Acidity regulators used in accordance with Table 1 and Table 2 of the *General standard for food additives* (CXS 192-1995)¹ in food category 09.4 (Fully preserved, including canned or fermented fish and fish products, including molluscs, crustaceans, and echinoderms) and only certain acidity regulators, emulsifiers, gelling agents, stabilizers and thickeners as indicated in Table 3 of the *General standard for food additives* (CXS 192-1995) are acceptable for use in foods conforming to this standard.

The flavourings used in products covered by this standard should comply with the *Guidelines for the use of flavourings* (CXG 66-2008).² Only natural flavouring substances, natural flavouring complexes and smoke flavourings are permitted in products covered by this standard.

5 Contaminants

The products covered by this standard shall comply with the maximum levels of the *General standard for contaminants and toxin in food and feed* (CXS 193-1995).³

The products covered by this standard shall comply with the maximum residue limits for pesticides and/or veterinary drugs established by the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC).

6 Hygiene

It is recommended that the products 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),⁴ the *Code of practice for fish and fishery products* (CXC 52-2003),⁵ the *Code of hygienic practice for low acid and acidified low-acid canned foods* (CXC 23-1979)⁶ and other relevant Codex codes of hygienic practice and codes of practice.

The products 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).⁷

The final product shall be free from any foreign material that poses a threat to human health.

When tested by appropriate methods of sampling and examination as prescribed by the CAC, the product:

- shall be free from microorganisms capable of development under normal conditions of storage;
- no sample unit shall contain histamine that exceeds 20 mg per 100 g;
- shall not contain any other substance including substances derived from microorganisms in amounts which may represent a hazard to health in accordance with standards established by the CAC; and
- shall be free from container integrity defects which may compromise the hermetic seal.

7 Labelling

In addition to the provisions of the *General standard for the labelling of pre-packaged foods* (CXS 1-1985),⁸ the following specific provisions apply:

7.1 Name of the food

The name of the product as declared on the label shall be “tuna” or “bonito” and may be preceded or followed by the common or usual name of the species, both in accordance with the law and custom of the country in which the product is sold, and in a manner not to mislead the consumer.

The name of the product may be qualified or accompanied by a term descriptive of the colour of the product, provided that the term “white” shall be used only for *Thunnus alalunga* and the terms “light”, “dark” and “blend” shall be used only in accordance with any rules of the country in which the product is sold.

7.1.1 Form of presentation

The form of presentation provided for in Section 2.3: “Presentation” shall be declared in close proximity to the common name. The name of the packing medium shall form part of the name of the food.

7.2 Labelling of non-retail containers

The labelling of non-retail containers should be in accordance with the *General standard for the labelling of nonretail containers of foods* (CXS 346-2021).⁹

8 Methods of analysis and sampling

8.1 Sampling

- Sampling of lots for examination of the final product as prescribed in Section 3.3: “Decomposition” shall be in accordance with an appropriate sampling plan with an AQL of 6.5.
- Sampling of lots for examination of net weight and drained weight where appropriate shall be carried out in accordance with an appropriate sampling plan established by the CAC.

8.2 Examination

8.2.1 Sensory and physical examination

Samples taken for sensory and physical examination shall be assessed by persons trained in such examination and in accordance with the procedures set out in the *Recommended methods of analysis and sampling* (CXS 234-1999)¹⁰ and the *Guidelines for the sensory evaluation of fish and shellfish in laboratories* (CXG 31-1999).¹¹

8.3 Analysis

For checking compliance with this standard, the methods of analysis and sampling contained in the *Recommended methods of analysis and sampling* (CXS 234-1999) relevant to the provisions in this standard shall be used.

9 Definition of defectives

A sample unit shall be considered defective when it exhibits any of the properties defined below:

9.1 Foreign matter

The presence in the sample unit of any matter, which has not been derived from fish, does not pose a threat to human health, and is readily recognized without magnification or is present at a level determined by any method including magnification that indicates non-compliance with good manufacturing practices and sanitation practices.

9.2 Odour/flavour

A sample unit affected by persistent and distinct objectionable odours or flavours indicative of decomposition or rancidity.

9.3 Texture

- excessively mushy flesh uncharacteristic of the species in the presentation; or
- excessively tough flesh uncharacteristic of the species in the presentation; or
- honey-combed flesh in excess of 5 percent of the drained contents.

9.4 Discolouration

A sample unit affected by distinct discolouration indicative of decomposition or rancidity or by sulphide staining of the meat exceeding 5 percent of the drained contents.

9.5 Objectionable matter

A sample unit affected by struvite crystals greater than 5 mm in length.

10 Lot acceptance

A lot shall be considered as meeting the requirements of this standard when:

- the total number of defectives as classified according to Section 8: “Definition of defectives” does not exceed the acceptance number (c) of an appropriate sampling plan with an AQL of 6.5;
- the total number of sample units not meeting the presentation and colour designation as defined in Section 2.3: “Presentation” does not exceed the acceptance number (c) of an appropriate sampling plan with an AQL of 6.5;
- the average net weight or the average weight of drained meat of all sample units examined is not less than the declared weight, and provided there is no unreasonable shortage in any individual container; and
- the food additives, hygiene and labelling requirements of Section 4: “Food additives”, Section 5: “Hygiene” and Section 6: “Labelling” are met.

Referenced texts

- 1 *General standard for food additives* (CXS 192-1995).
- 2 *Guidelines for the use of flavourings* (CXG 66-2008).
- 3 *General standard for contaminants and toxin in food and feed* (CXS 193-1995).
- 4 *General principles of food hygiene* (CXC 1-1969).
- 5 *Code of practice for fish and fishery products* (CXC 52-2003).
- 6 *Code of hygienic practice for low acid and acidified low-acid canned foods* (CXC 23-1979).
- 7 *Principles and guidelines for the establishment and application of microbiological criteria related to foods* (CXG 21-1997).
- 8 *General standard for the labelling of pre-packaged food* (CXS 1-1985).
- 9 *General standard for the labelling of non-retail containers of foods* (CXS 346-2021).
- 10 *Recommended methods of analysis and sampling* (CXS 234-1999).
- 11 *Guidelines for the sensory evaluation of fish and shellfish in laboratories* (CXG 31-1999).

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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