

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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WORK OF THE CODEX COMMITTEES ON FATS AND OILS (CCFO) AND METHODS OF ANALYSIS AND SAMPLING (CCMAS)

(Comments of the International Olive Council (IOC))

The International Olive Council (IOC)

Background

The International Olive Council ([IOC](#)) is the intergovernmental organization dedicated to olive oil and table olives, created under the auspices of the United Nations in 1959. Headquartered in Madrid, Spain, the IOC is tasked with administering the [UN international agreement](#) negotiated over the past 65 years, with the aim of defending and promoting olive growing and olive products. The sixth agreement, the International Agreement on Olive Oil and Table Olives 2015, was adopted in Geneva at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and came into force on 1 January 2017.

At present, the IOC has [20 members](#) (46 countries): Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Egypt, Georgia, European Union (with its 27 Member States: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Republic of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden), Iran (Islamic Republic), Israel, Jordan, Libya, Montenegro, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, State of Palestine, Tunisia, Türkiye, Uruguay and Uzbekistan. These countries represent 95% of world production and 92% of the international trade of olive products.

One of the activities assigned to the IOC to expand [international trade](#) is to draw up and adopt trade standards for olive oils, olive pomace oils and table olives, and to devise methods for testing their physico-chemical and organoleptic characteristics. Regarding the regulation of international trade, the IOC established the definitions and analytical characteristics of each of the denominations of olive oils, olive pomace oils and table olives traded, as mentioned in the trade standards adopted by the IOC's members, which are mandatory in international trade. Moreover, the [IOC methods and standards](#) are universally used by laboratories worldwide specialized in olive oil products. These resources are free and can be readily accessed and implemented.

Furthermore, the IOC organizes a proficiency test for physico-chemical analysis laboratories and two for sensory analysis laboratories on a yearly basis with a view to their recognition by the IOC, open to laboratories from both member and non-member countries. During the ongoing proficiency test for IOC recognition for the period 2024/2025, 130 physico-chemical from 21 countries and 120 sensory laboratories from 27 countries were recognized from Asia, Africa, North America, South America, Europe and Oceania. The [list](#) of recognized laboratories is available on the IOC's website.

The IOC's methods are continuously reviewed by its [groups of experts](#) and observers from the five continents and drafted based on scientific studies. Each IOC method includes validation data determined by means of collaborative trials in collaboration with IOC recognized laboratories from all continents.

Collaboration with Codex

From the beginning of the standardization of olive oil products, the IOC collaborated with the Codex Alimentarius for 60 years towards the harmonization of international standards to improve quality and authenticity, facilitate international trade and protect consumers across the board. The collaboration and harmonization between the IOC Trade Standard (of mandatory application for around 95% of the world's olive oil producing countries) and the Codex Alimentarius Standard is necessary in order to facilitate international trade, ensure fair practices, prevent fraud and protect consumer rights.

The IOC is grateful to the Codex Alimentarius Secretariat, chairs, co-chairs, and all those who contributed and worked on the eWG for standards harmonization.

The IOC emphasizes that any changes to the standard should be approached cautiously and based on scientific evidence. As the only intergovernmental organization specializing in olive oils, the IOC is committed to collaborating and sharing its expertise with the Codex Alimentarius. This partnership aims to avoid duplication of efforts and align with the shared objectives of both organizations. Harmonizing the two international standards is crucial to effectively facilitating international trade.