

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
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Agenda Item 3

CRD3

Original language only

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX COMMITTEE ON FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Twenty-second Session

PROPOSED DRAFT STANDARD FOR ONIONS AND SHALLOTS

Prepared by the Chair of the Virtual Working Group on onions and shallots

BACKGROUND

The Virtual Working Group (VWG) on shallots and onions met on 8 April 2022 to further address the comments received on the draft standard and revise the text accordingly. The session was chaired by Iran. The complete list of participants is included in Appendix II.

The Chair of the VWG provided an overview of the document, noting that some comments received on CL 2021/84/OCS-FFV had been addressed and included in the new draft presented to the meeting. The VWG agreed to most recommendations, presented new comments and asked for further deliberation on several issues as noted below. The edited version of the document in track changes is available in Appendix I.

SCOPE

The VWG recommended using “when it is” in place of “if” for conformity with the layout CCFV standards.

DEFINITION OF PRODUCE

In the introductory paragraph, the VWG suggested to correct the botanical names of onions and shallots as presented below:

This standard applies to onion bulbs of varieties grown from *Allium cepa* L. Cepa group ~~of the Amarillidaceae family~~ and shallot bulbs grown from *Allium cepa* spp. Aggregatum group ~~and grey shallots grown from~~ *Allium oschaninii* O Fedtsch ~~and~~ *Allium ascalonicum* group, to be supplied fresh to the consumer. Green onions and green shallots with full leaves as well as onions and shallots intended for industrial processing are excluded.

The VWG also included the colour “cream” among the list of the skin colours included in the standard.

PROVISIONS CONCERNING QUALITY

3.1 Minimum Requirements

Based on the proposal of one delegation, to avoid potential confusion between the different translations of the text, the VWG agreed to replace the term “stems” with “pseudostems”.

The VWG further discussed the deletion of the indent “free of damage caused by frost or sun” as it appeared to be a repetition of “free of damage caused by low and/or high temperature”. One delegation and the Chair of the VWG clarified that these indications referred to two different types of damage that could happen at harvest and/or post-harvest level and should therefore be maintained. The VWG agreed to retain both indents.

Some delegations proposed to broaden paragraph 3.1.1 mentioning that onions and shallots must reach an appropriate degree of development in accordance with the criteria proper to the variety and the commercial type and to the area in which they are grown:

Onions and shallots must have reached an appropriate degree of development in accordance with criteria proper to variety and/or commercial type and to the area in which they are grown~~be sufficiently developed.~~

They must be firm, not soft or spongy and ~~present have outer scales that dry outer skins that~~ are dry and papery.

The VWG also discussed the possibility of including “[Minimum Maturity Requirements]” in the title of the section, and decided to keep it in squared brackets, requesting CCFFV22 to further decide on the proposal.

3.2.1 “Extra” Class

The VWG decided to delete the first three indents of Extra Class and to include a new indent as follows:

practically free of root tufts; however, for onions and grey shallots harvested before complete maturity, root tufts shall be allowed.

The VWG agreed to use “type” in place of “denomination” in paragraph one, to align the text with the CCFFV layout.

3.2.2 Class I

The VWG agreed to delete the last indent under Class I.

3.2.3 Class II

The VWG agreed to include “Extra Class” in paragraph one for clarification and to delete the third bullet point.

PROVISIONS CONCERNING TOLERANCES

5.1.1 “Extra” Class

The VWG agreed to include the tolerance 0.5% in square bracket and requested CCFFV make a decision on the appropriate percentage for tolerance.

PROVISIONS CONCERNING SIZING

(b) Shallots:

Considering the changes proposed in Section II, the VWG recommended using “all shallots” rather than using “grey, pink, red, purple” and to delete the second indent for consistency:

- 10 mm for ~~grey, pink, red, purple~~ all shallots, ~~and~~
- ~~15 mm for other shallots.~~

PROVISIONS CONCERNING PRESENTATION

6.1 Uniformity

One delegation proposed to include a line in paragraph one, i.e.

The contents of each package must be uniform and contain only onions or shallots of the same origin, variety or commercial type, quality and size. [Onions and shallots may be presented with tops braided or interlaced on strings].

Based on a common presentation of the products that could be found in rural areas. After an initial debate, the VWG agreed to keep it in squared brackets, requesting CCFFV22 to take a final decision of the proposal.

PROVISIONS CONCERNING MARKING OR LABELLING

7.1.1 Name of produce

Reflecting the decisions taken on Section II, the VWG recommended adding all colours previously indicated under “Name of produce”.

7.2 Non-retail Containers

The VWG proposed to delete “or in the documents accompanying the shipment” in the text in squared brackets:

[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.~~

The Codex Secretariat reminded the VWG, that based on the recently adopted *General Standard for the Labelling of Non-Retail Containers of Foods* (CXS 346-2021), CCFFV22 would need to determine whether provisions are still necessary and, if not, that CCFFV would look at the layout and revise it accordingly.

7.2.4 Commercial Specifications

The VWG agreed to include in the third indent (if sized) to align the text with the CCFFV layout:

- Size [\(if sized\)](#) expressed as minimum and maximum diameters or in accordance with the method used.

RECOMMENDATION

CCFFV22 is invited to consider the proposed draft standard for onions and shallots as included in Appendix I, in particular those provisions in square bracket and to send it to CAC45 for adoption at Step 5 or 5/8.

PROPOSED DRAFT CODEX STANDARD FOR ONIONS & SHALLOTS
(as edited during the VWG)

1. SCOPE

The purpose of the standard is to define the quality requirements for onions and shallots after preparation and packaging. However, ~~when it is~~ applied at stages following packaging, onions and shallots may show in relation to the requirements of the standard:

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

The holder/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/seller shall be responsible for observing ~~with standard~~ such conformity.

2. DEFINITION OF PRODUCE

This standard applies to onion bulbs of varieties grown from *Allium cepa* L. Cepa group ~~of the Amarillidaceae family~~ and shallot bulbs grown from *Allium cepa* spp. Aggregatum group ~~and grey shallots grown from~~ *Allium oschaninii* O Fedtsch ~~and *Allium ascalonicum* group~~, to be supplied fresh to the consumer. Green onions and green shallots with full leaves as well as onions and shallots intended for industrial processing are excluded.

- Onions and shallots may be ~~distinguished~~ of the following shapes: round, oval/elongated, long or demi-long.
- Onions and shallots may be of the following skin colours: white, purple, ~~cream,~~ pink, red, grey, ~~or yellow,~~ ~~and or~~ brown.

3. PROVISIONS CONCERNING QUALITY

3.1 Minimum Requirements

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

- ~~___~~ whole;
- ~~___~~ firm;
- ~~___~~
- sound; produce affected by rotting or deterioration such as to make it unfit for consumption is excluded;
- clean, practically free of any visible foreign matter;
- practically free from pests¹;
- free from damage caused by pests affecting the flesh;
- ~~without free from~~ hollow ~~and/or~~ tough ~~pseudo~~-stems;
- free ~~from of externally~~ visible shoot growth;
- ~~___~~ firm;
- free of abnormal external moisture excluding condensation following; removal from cold storage;
- free of any foreign smell and/or taste;
- free of damage caused by low and/or high temperature;

¹ The provisions for pests apply without prejudice to the applicable plant protection rules applied by governments in line with the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC).

- free of damage caused by frost or sun;
- sufficiently dry for the intended use (in the case of onions for storing, at least the first two outer [layers of](#) skins and the [pseudo](#)stem must be fully dried); and
- the [pseudo](#)stems of onions and shallots must be twisted or clean cut and must not exceed 6 cm in length; except for onions or shallots presented in strings that must be braided with their own stems and tied with string, raffia or any other appropriate material.

3.1.1 [Sufficiently Developed](#)/[Minimum Maturity Requirements](#) [Sufficiently Developed](#)

Onions and shallots must [have reached an appropriate degree of development in accordance with criteria proper to variety and/or commercial type and to the area in which they are grown](#)~~be sufficiently developed~~. They must be firm, not soft or spongy and [present](#)~~have outer scales that~~ ~~dry outer skins that~~ are dry and papery.

The development and condition of the onions and shallots must be such as to enable them to:

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

3.2 Classification

Onions and shallots may be classified into three classes defined below:

3.2.1 “Extra” Class

Onions and shallots in this class must be of superior quality. They must be characteristic of the variety and/or commercial [denomination](#)~~type~~. They must be free from 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 the presentation of the package.

The following slight defects, however, may be allowed, provided that they do not affect the general appearance of the produce, the quality, the keeping quality and presentation in the package:

- ~~a very slight defect in shape;~~
- ~~very slight defects in colouring;~~
- ~~very light staining, provided it does not cover more than one fifth of the bulb's surface;~~
- for onions, bulbs should be free from doubles and/or double centres and more and
- ~~for shallots, bulbs should be free from doubles or three bulbs.~~
- [practically free of root tufts; however, for onions and grey shallots harvested before complete maturity, root tufts shall be allowed;](#)

3.2.2 Class I

Onions and shallots in this class must be of good quality and characteristics of the variety and/or the commercial type.

The following slight defects, however, may be allowed, provided that they do not affect the general appearance of the produce, the quality, the keeping quality and presentation in the package:

- a slight defect in shape;
- slight defects in colouring;
- superficial cracks in and partial absence of the outer skins, provided the flesh is protected;
- light staining, provided it does not cover more than one third [of](#) the bulb's surface; and
- for onions, slight glassiness /translucence not exceeding the outer fleshy ring.
- practically free of root tufts; however, for onions and grey shallots harvested before complete maturity, root tufts shall be allowed; and

- ~~• onion bulbs should be free from doubles~~

3.2.3 **Class II**

This class includes onions and shallots that do not qualify for inclusion in [Extra Class and Class I](#) but satisfy the minimum requirements specified in section 3.1 above.

The following defects may be allowed, provided the onions and shallots retain their essential characteristics as regards the quality, the keeping quality and presentation:

- defects in shape;
- defects in colouring;
- ~~• slight marking caused by pests or disease;~~
- slight bruising;
- healed mechanical damage;
- root tufts;
- stains, provided they do not cover more than one half the bulb's surface;
- cracks in the outer skins and partial absence of the skins on a maximum of one third of the bulb's surface, provided the flesh is not damaged; and
- for onions, slight glassiness /translucence not exceeding the two outer fleshy ring;

4. **PROVISIONS CONCERNING SIZING**

4.1 Onions and shallots may be sized by the maximum diameter of the equatorial section in accordance with existing trade practices. When sized in accordance with existing trade practices, the package must be labelled with the size and method used. The following sizing provisions are a guide and may be used:

(a) Onions:

The minimum diameter shall be 25 mm.

To ensure uniformity in size, the range in size between onions in the same package shall not exceed:

- 15 mm where the diameter of the smallest onion is 25 mm and over but under 40 mm;
- 20 mm where the diameter of the smallest onion is 40 mm and over but under 70 mm; and
- 30 mm where the diameter of the smallest onion is 70 mm or over.

(b) Shallots:

The minimum diameter shall be:

- 10 mm for ~~grey, pink, red, purple-all~~ shallots; ~~and~~
- ~~• 15 mm for other shallots.~~

The maximum diameter shall be:

- 55 mm for round shallots; and
- 60 mm for demi-long and long shallots.

To ensure uniformity in size, the range in size between shallots in the same package shall not exceed:

- 10 mm where the diameter of the smallest bulb is 10 mm and over but under 15 mm;
- 15 mm where the diameter of the smallest bulb is 15 mm and over but under 20 mm; and

- 20 mm where the diameter of the smallest bulb is 20 mm or over.

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 conformity assessment, may be allowed to be resorted and brought into conformity in accordance with the relevant provisions in the *Guideline for Food Import Control System (CXG 47-2003)*.

5.1.1 “Extra” Class

Five per cent, by number or weight, of onions and shallots not satisfying the requirements of the class, but meeting those of Class I is allowed. Within this tolerance not more than 1 [\[0.5\]](#)% in total may consist of produce satisfying neither the requirements of Class I quality nor the minimum requirements, or of produce affected by decay.

5.1.2 Class I

Ten per cent, by number or weight, of onions and shallots not satisfying the requirements of the class, but meeting those of Class II is allowed. Within this tolerance not more than 1% in total may consist of produce satisfying neither the requirements of Class II quality nor the minimum requirements, or of produce affected by decay.

[\[In addition, 4.0%, by weight, of bulbs may present externally visible shoot growth not exceeding 1 cm\].](#)

5.1.3 Class II

Ten per cent, by number or weight, of onions and shallots satisfying neither the requirements of the class nor the minimum requirements is allowed. Within this tolerance not more than 2% neither in total may consist of produce affected by decay.

[\[In addition, 10.0%, by weight, of bulbs may present externally visible shoot growth not exceeding 1 cm\].](#)

5.2 Size Tolerances

For all classes, (if sized), ten percent (10.0%) by number or weight of onions and shallots not corresponding to the size indicated on the package.

6. PROVISIONS CONCERNING PRESENTATION

6.1 Uniformity

The contents of each package must be uniform and contain only onions or shallots of the same origin, variety or commercial type, quality and size. [\[Onions and shallots may be presented with tops braided or interlaced on strings\].](#)

However, a mixture of onions or shallots of distinctly different commercial types and/or colours may be packed together in a consumer package, provided they are uniform in quality and, for each commercial type and/or colour concerned, in origin. However, in case of those mixtures, uniformity in size is not required.

The visible part of the contents of the package or lot for produce presented in bulk must be representative of the entire contents.

6.2 Packaging

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

Onions and shallots shall be packed in each package in compliance with the appropriate section of the *Code of Practice for Packaging and Transport of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables* (CXC 44-1995).

6.2.1 **Description of Containers**

The containers shall meet the quality, hygiene, ventilation and resistance characteristics to ensure suitable handling, shipping and preserving of the onions and shallots.

Packages must be free of all foreign matter and smell.

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), the following specific provisions apply:

7.1.1 **Name of produce**

If the produce are not visible from the outside, each package shall be labelled as to the name of the produce (“Onions”, “Shallots” or “~~white, purple, cream, pink, red, grey, yellow or brown~~ ~~Grey, Pink, Purple, Red~~ shallots”) and may be labelled as to name of the variety and/or commercial type (“long”, “demi-long” or “round”).

7.1.2 **Origin of produce**

Country of origin² and, optionally, district where grown, or national, regional or local place name.

In the case of a mixture of distinctly different varieties of onions or shallots of different origins, the indication of the country of origin shall appear next to the name of the variety and/or colour concerned.

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).

[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~~.

For onions and shallots transported in bulk, these particulars must appear on a document accompanying the good, and attached in a visible position inside the transport vehicle, unless the document is replaced by an electronic solution. In that case the identification must be machine readable and easily accessible.]

7.2.1 **Identification**

Name and address of exporter, packer and/or dispatcher. Identification code ~~_~~(optional)³.

7.2.2 **Name of the Produce**

- Name of the produce, [if the contents are not visible from the outside].
- Name of the variety and/or commercial type (optional).

“Mixture of onions” or “mixture of shallots”, or equivalent denomination, in the case of a mixture of distinctly different commercial types and/or colours of onions or shallots. If the produce is not visible from the outside, the commercial types and/or colours and the quantity of each in the package must be indicated.

² The full or commonly used name should be indicated.

³ 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, and the code mark should be preceded by the ISO 3166 (alpha) country/area code of the recognizing country, if not the country of origin.

7.2.3 *Origin of the Produce*

Country of origin⁴ and, optionally, district where grown, or national, regional or local place name.

In the case of a mixture of distinctly different commercial types and/or colours of onions or shallots of different origins, the indication of each country of origin shall appear next to the name of the commercial types and/or colours concerned.

7.2.4 *Commercial Specifications*

- Class;
- Variety and/or commercial type (optional);
- Size ([if sized](#)) expressed as minimum and maximum diameters or in accordance with the method used.

7.2.5 *Official Inspection Mark (optional)*

8. CONTAMINANTS

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

8.2 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).

9. HYGIENE

9.1 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* (CXC 1-1969), *Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables* (CXC 53-2003), and other relevant Codex texts such as Codes of Hygienic Practice and Codes of Practice.

9.2 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).

⁴ The full or commonly used name should be indicated.

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