

# CODEx ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
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World Health  
Organization

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Agenda item 5

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**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE ONLY**

## JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME CODEX COMMITTEE ON FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Twenty-third Session

Mexico City, Mexico

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### COMMENTS ON THE POTENTIAL APPROACH FOR REVIEWING THE EXISTING FFV STANDARDS

*Prepared by the Codex Secretariat*

#### 1. Introduction and background

The 22nd Session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (CCFFV22) agreed on the proposal submitted by the European Union to review existing pre-2017 CCFFV standards to ensure their alignment with the layout for FFV standards and consider necessary updates. However, based on the presentation of the proposal and following discussion, there were questions regarding the lack of a specific timeline and whether the work was supposed to include revisions to standards of a substantial nature.

During CCFFV22, it was further clarified that the work, which would be carried out by an EWG, would first concentrate on the editorial changes for consistency with the layout for FFV standards, and afterwards identify those areas needing technical updates. CCFFV22 could then discuss possible new work proposals for revision of the standards identified as not being up to date.

Following agreement on the proposal, an EWG was consequently established by CCFFV22 to undertake this work. The EWG randomly selected two standards - the *Standard for avocado* (CXS 197-1995) and the *Standard for asparagus* (CXS 225-2001) as examples for this exercise. As presented in document CX/FFV 25/23/06, the EWG noted that both editorial and “substantial” changes were needed, to ensure consistency with the layout for FFV standards and also to ensure the standards were technically up to date.

In view of the work of the EWG limited to two standards it would appear that alignment with the layout if more than editorial and would require also substantive changes possibly also to the other remaining standards for review. Therefore, CCFFV might need to consider an alternative approach to review existing standards, not necessarily against the layout but to consider whether these standards are technically up to date or fit for purpose. CCFFV might consider, given the workload and importance of this task, a structured/systematic approach is recommended. To ensure a comprehensive review, it would be helpful to first establish clear criteria to prioritize the standards for review and revision.

This document proposes a structured prioritization framework and identifies potential criteria for the development of a priority list for the review and revision of existing FFV standards. The document builds upon discussions and outcomes held at CCFFV22 and on the results of the work carried out by the EWG on the review of existing FFV standards and should be read in conjunction with these two documents<sup>1</sup>.

#### 2. Proposed prioritization criteria

The following criteria are proposed for establishing a priority list for the alignment and revision of existing FFV standards<sup>2</sup>.

##### *Trade volume*

Commodities with high international trade volumes could be identified and consequently further prioritized in the list of standards to be reviewed. Standards for these commodities have a significant impact on global trade and their update will facilitate smoother trade flows and ensure that they reflect current market realities. Data on trade volumes can be obtained from sources such as FAO Statistics<sup>3</sup> and national/regional trade statistics.

<sup>1</sup> REP22/FFV, paras 89-94; CX/FFV 25/23/06

<sup>2</sup> A complete list of adopted FFV standard is available at <https://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/committees/committee/related-standards/en/?committee=CCFFV>

<sup>3</sup> FAO Statistics: <https://www.fao.org/statistics/en>

#### *Year of adoption and latest revision*

Prioritizing the alignment and revision of older FFV standards is crucial to ensure they remain relevant and effective to meet the aims of the Commission in protecting consumer health and facilitate fair practices in the food trade. In this sense consideration could be given to the year of adoption and latest revision of the standards by CCFFV.

#### *Use and impact of FFV standards*

Another criterion that could contribute to establishing a priority list is the use and impact of FFV standards. This information might be gathered through surveys, consultations with member countries and stakeholders, and analysis of references in national regulations and industry practices.

#### *Harmonization with other international standards*

As set forth in the Codex Procedural Manual, *the publication of the Codex Alimentarius is intended to guide and promote the elaboration and establishment of definitions and requirements for foods to assist in their harmonization and in doing so to facilitate international trade*. In this sense, consideration can be given to FFV standards for commodities that may have been also addressed by other international organizations, such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). For the purposes of promoting harmonization these could be prioritized for revision.

### **3. Implementation of the prioritization framework**

Once the criteria for the development of a prioritized list of FFV standards for review and revision have been agreed upon, CCFFV, for example via the establishment of an EWG, should draft a clear process for applying them. Based on similar activities carried out by Codex bodies and working groups, this procedure should include:

- Data collection: gathering relevant data on trade volumes, year of adoption and latest revision of FFV standards, use and impact, and potential need for harmonization with FFV standards developed by other international organizations.
- Consultation: engaging with Codex Members and Observers, international organizations, and relevant stakeholders to obtain their input.
- Assessment: evaluating the data and feedback received to determine a priority level for each standard and create a list accordingly.
- Prioritization: creation of the prioritized list of FFV standards which would then be discussed at the next session of CCFFV (CCFFV24).

### **4. Streamlining the standardization process**

Once CCFFV has reviewed the outcome of the prioritization, CCFFV would need to develop a project document that would encompass all necessary information, including *inter alia* the rationale for the review, the scope of the revision, the proposed changes and the FFV standards involved and the related timeframe. This streamlined approach will facilitate the work of CCFFV enabling a thorough consideration of the proposal by CCEXEC and CAC and will also assist in taking a holistic consideration of standards, ensuring consistency and coherence in the process.

### **5. Conclusion and Recommendation**

By adopting a structured prioritization framework, the Committee can optimize its resources and focus on the most critical standards, proceeding with the work as deemed necessary. This approach however does not preclude the submission of any new work proposals outside the current proposed framework. CCFFV23 is invited to discuss and endorse the proposed prioritization criteria and framework and identify a way forward.

the further work, which could be carried out by an EWG, would also entail the active participation of different members at the latter stage, when the identified standards will go under review.

CCFFV23 may consider establishing an EWG with the following terms of reference:

- Develop a priority list of standards for revisions based on the information collected; and
- Prepare a discussion paper along with a project document covering all standards requiring revision.

CCFFV24 could then review the EWG report and subsequently establish separate EWGs for the revision of the respective standards.