



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

Twenty-third Session

Mexico City, Mexico

25 February - 1 March 2025

Comments by the European Union

Agenda item 3: Draft Standard for Fresh Dates at Step 7

The European Union and its Member States would like to congratulate the chairs of the EWG (India and Saudi Arabia) on the progress and work carried out on the draft Standard for fresh dates.

Background

It is acknowledged that the moisture content specified in the existing standard for dates (CXS 360-2020, Annex B), overlaps with that of fresh dates. However, this overlap is not a concern, as moisture content should not be used as the defining factor to distinguish 'fresh dates' from 'dates.'

In the 'Definition of terms for application in the layout for Codex standards for fresh fruits and vegetables' the term "fresh" does not refer to moisture content. Instead, it means that the product was recently harvested and has not been altered or processed in a way that changes its physical or textural characteristics.

Moreover, in the template layout for fresh fruit and vegetables the moisture content is not mentioned as a parameter to be standardised.

Recommendation

Given the above, it should be underlined that it is essential to provide consumers with clear and accurate information on the nature of the produce. To clarify what the difference between 'fresh dates' and 'dates' is, it is recommended to revise the existing standard for dates (CXS 360-2020, Annex B) as follows:

1. Clarification in section « 1. Description – 1.1 Product description » as follows:

« (4) ~~may be~~ dried or hydrated to adjust moisture content; »

2. Clarification in section « 4. Labelling - 4.1 Name of the food » as follows:

«The name of the product shall be "**dried** dates", "**re-hydrated dates**" ~~or optionally~~ and supplemented where appropriate with the words "dates coated with glucose syrup".

Thus, the main distinction between these two standards should be whether the dates have been dried, re-hydrated or processed with added ingredients, rather than the moisture content. At the same time, consumers should have access to this information.

As a result, the two standards may overlap in terms of moisture content but not in whether the dates have undergone any process.

Taking the opportunity that Codex experts on dates are present at this 23rd session of CCFFV, a discussion on the proposed changes is possible and the revision of the existing Standard for dates could be carried out by this committee.