

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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Agenda Items 3

CRD30

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE ONLY

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 Egypt

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

This Conference Room Document (CRD) presents comments on behalf of Egypt regarding **Agenda Item 3** of the 23rd Session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (CCFFV23), which addresses the **Draft Standard for Fresh Dates at Step 7**.

Egypt would like to express appreciation to the Electronic Working Group (EWG), chaired by India and co-chaired by Saudi Arabia, for their dedicated efforts in developing the draft standard, and values their continued commitment to facilitating discussions following CAC45's decision to adopt the draft standard at Step 5, allowing for further deliberation on this matter.

Furthermore, Egypt acknowledges the significant efforts undertaken, particularly within the Arab region, after the CAC45 decision. This includes the establishment of an Arab Working Group under the Arab Codex Initiative, coordinated by the Arab Industrial Development, Standardization, and Mining Organization (AIDSMO). Chaired by the Kingdom of Morocco, and comprising 13 Arab countries, this group played a pivotal role in advancing discussions through a data-driven approach, with eight major producing countries from the region sharing valuable data.

As CCFFV23 considers the draft standard at Step 7, this stage presents a crucial opportunity to finalize a standard that is scientifically sound, trade-inclusive, and reflective of market realities, while ensuring broad applicability to all fresh date varieties.

In this regard, Egypt offers the following observations:

- Setting the minimum moisture content at 30% would prevent a significant number of widely traded date varieties, particularly dry and semi-dry varieties that are classified and marketed as fresh dates, to be called "fresh dates" internationally — these varieties account for over 80% of products surveyed by a dedicated Expert Working Group, set by the Arab Codex Initiative.
- The definition of freshness is based on the statement in CODEX (2022): Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme CODEX Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables. Twenty-second Sessions/FFV 22/22/7 March 2022, Prepared by the United States of America and Ghana
- The data collected (see figure below) reports a broad range of moisture content for "fresh dates", therefore calling for the position to remove the lower end of moisture content from the standard.

Descriptive statistics_Egypt					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Moyenne	Ecart type
Min Moisture Content %	19	11,00	25,00	18,4474	4,11263
Max Moisture Content %	19	15,00	28,00	21,5263	4,16825

Descriptive statistics_Morocco					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Moyenne	Ecart type
Min Moisture Content %	13	7,00	28,40	17,8838	7,41943
Max Moisture Content %	7	18,30	34,00	27,4714	5,88974

Descriptive statistics_Algeria					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Moyenne	Ecart type
Min Moisture Content %	64	9,00	44,00	26,6253	7,72491
Max Moisture Content %	6	16	39	29,79	7,884

Descriptive statistics_UAE					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Moyenne	Ecart type
Min Moisture Content %	14	7,20	32,10	20,1786	8,47005
Max Moisture Content %	1	21,30	21,30	21,3000	.

Descriptive statistics_Tunisia					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Moyenne	Ecart type
Min Moisture Content %	5	11,00	12,00	11,2000	,44721
Max Moisture Content %	5	24,00	32,00	29,2000	3,34664

Descriptive statistics_Libya					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Moyenne	Ecart type
Average Moisture Content %	6	10,00	27,00	16,5000	6,28490

Descriptive statistics_All Countries					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Moyenne	Ecart type
Min Moisture Content %	121	7,00	44,00	22,5166	8,39819
Max Moisture Content %	38	15,00	38,75	24,9305	6,12486

Descriptive Graphic of Minimum Moisture Content in Date Cultivars

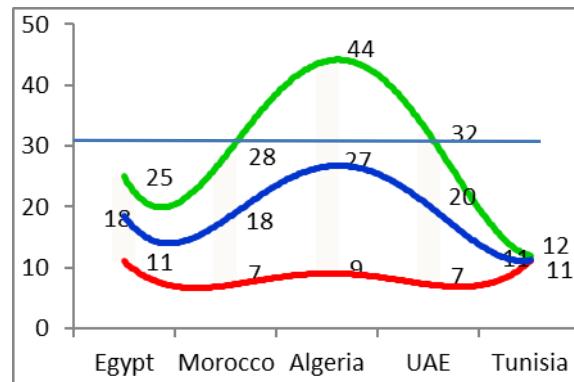


Figure: Descriptive analysis of minimum and maximum moisture content in date cultivars across producing countries.

Therefore, Egypt proposes the following re-drafting of paragraph 3.1.1 on Minimum Maturity Requirements:

Fresh dates shall [will] have a moisture content, not exceeding 85%, and in accordance with criteria to the variety and stage of harvest/or commercial type and the area in which they are grown Moisture content of fresh dates ranges from 30-85%. As such, moisture levels should not be considered as a determining factor to confer the status of freshness for dates#.

This addition could also be considered in the form of a footnote set at the end of this paragraph, stating:

“Moisture levels should not be considered as a determining factor to confer the status of freshness for dates”.

The definition of freshness is based on the statement in CODEX (2022): Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programmer CODEX Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables. Twenty-second Sessions/FFV 22/22/7 March 2022, Prepared by the United States of America and Ghana

The proposed re-drafting offers to:

- 1- Delete the mention of minimum moisture levels as the minimum is well below 30% for most of the data collected on dates marketed as fresh from the major producing countries, depending on the variety, maturity level and farming practices (i.e. fresh dates that are dry or semi-dry - dry before harvest and without artificial intervention).
- 2- Develop a definition of freshness based on “Definition of terms for application in the layout for codex standards for fresh fruits and vegetables” and can be referred to in the footnote or can be added as a definition in the definitions clause.
- 3- The definition of fresh dates should include: “fresh dates must not be subjected to any intentional or artificial process to control the moisture content” which changes their physical and textural characteristics by processing them in any way that changes those characteristics, and that they may be subjected to post-harvest practices to maintain their freshness and shelf life and facilitate transportation, storage and handling without affecting their raw nature as it was at harvest.

At the end, Egypt would like to thank the committee members for their consideration and wishes to reach consensus on this very important standard.