

# C O D E X   A L I M E N T A R I U S

INTERNATIONAL FOOD STANDARDS



**Food and Agriculture  
Organization of  
the United Nations**



**World Health  
Organization**

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## **STANDARD FOR FAT SPREADS AND BLENDED SPREADS**

**CXS 256-1999**

**Adopted in 1999. Revised in 2007 and 2009. Amended in 2017, 2019, 2021 and 2024.**

**2024 Amendment**

Following decisions taken at the Forty-seventh Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission in November 2024, Section 7.2 Labelling of non-retail containers was added to include a reference to the *General standard for the labelling of non-retail containers of foods* (CXS 346-2021); and Section 8 Sampling, examination and analysis was amended by replacing methods of analysis and numeric performance criteria with a reference to the *Recommended methods of analysis and sampling* (CXS 234-1999).

## 1. SCOPE

This standard applies to fat products, containing not less than 10 percent and not more than 90 percent fat, intended primarily for use as spreads. However, this standard does not apply to fat spreads derived exclusively from milk and/or milk products to which only other substances necessary for their manufacture have been added. It only includes margarine and products used for similar purposes and excludes products with a fat content of less than 2/3 of the dry matter (excluding salt). Butter and dairy spreads are not covered by this standard.

## 2. DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 Fat spreads and blended spreads

The products covered by this standard are foods that are plastic or fluid emulsions, principally of water and edible fats and oils.

### 2.2 Edible fats and oils

“Edible fats and oils” means foodstuffs composed of glycerides of fatty acids. They are of vegetable or animal (including milk) or marine origin. They may contain small amounts of other lipids such as phosphatides, of unsaponifiable constituents and of free fatty acids naturally present in fat or oil. Fats of animal origin must, if originating from slaughtered animals, be obtained from animals in good health at the time of slaughter and fit for human consumption as determined by a competent authority recognized in national legislation. Fats and oils that have been subjected to processes of physical or chemical modification including fractionation, inter-esterification or hydrogenation are included.

## 3. ESSENTIAL COMPOSITION AND QUALITY FACTORS

### 3.1 Composition

#### 3.1.1 Fat spreads

3.1.1.1 For these products, any milk fat content must be no more than 3 percent of the total fat content.

3.1.1.2 The fat content shall be as follows:

(a)	Margarine	≥ 80%
(b)	Fat spreads <sup>i</sup>	< 80%

#### 3.1.2 Blended spreads

3.1.2.1 These are blended spreads in which milk fat is more than 3 percent of the total fat content. However a higher minimum percentage of milk fat may be specified in accordance with the requirements of the country of the retail sale.

3.1.2.2 The fat content shall be as follows:

(a)	Blends	≥ 80%
(b)	Blended fat spread	< 80%

### 3.2 Permitted ingredients

3.2.1 The following substances may be added:

Vitamins:       Vitamin A and its esters  
                       Vitamin D  
                       Vitamin E and its esters

Maximum and minimum levels for vitamins A, D and E should be laid down by national legislation in accordance with the needs of each individual country including, where appropriate, the prohibition of the use of particular vitamins.

Sodium chloride

Sugars (any carbohydrate sweetening matter)

Suitable edible proteins

3.2.2 Use of other ingredients, including minerals, may be permitted in national legislation.

<sup>i</sup> The term “margarine” may, in some cases, be used in the name of the food as provided for in Section 7.1.1.

#### 4. FOOD ADDITIVES

Acidity regulators, antifoaming agents, antioxidants, colours, emulsifiers, flavour enhancers, preservatives, stabilizers and thickeners used in accordance with Table 1 and Table 2 of the *General standard for food additives* (CXS 192-1995)<sup>1</sup> in food category 02.2.2 (Fat spreads, dairy fat spreads and blended spreads) are acceptable for use in foods conforming to this standard. Additionally, packaging gases used in accordance with Table 3 of the *General standard for food additives* are acceptable for use in foods conforming to this standard.

The flavourings used in products covered by this standard should comply with the *Guidelines for the use of flavourings* (CXG 66-2008).<sup>2</sup>

#### 5. CONTAMINANTS

##### 5.1 Heavy metals

The products covered by the provisions of this standard shall comply with maximum limits being established by the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC), but in the meantime the following limits will apply:

##### Maximum permissible concentration

Lead (Pb)	0.1 mg/kg
Arsenic (As)	0.1 mg/kg

##### 5.2 Pesticide residues

The products covered by the provisions of this standard shall comply with those maximum residue limits established by the CAC for these commodities.

#### 6. HYGIENE

6.1 It is recommended that the products 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),<sup>3</sup> and other relevant Codex texts such as codes of hygienic practice and codes of practice.

6.2 The products 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).<sup>4</sup>

#### 7. LABELLING

The product shall be labelled in accordance with the *General standard for the labelling of pre-packaged foods* (CXS 1-1985),<sup>5</sup> *Guidelines for use of nutrition and health claims* (CXG 23-1997)<sup>6</sup> and other relevant food labelling guidelines. The product designations should be translated into other languages in a meaningful way and not strictly word by word.

##### 7.1 Name of the food

The name of the food to be declared on the label shall be as specified in Section 3.1.1 and Section 3.1.2.

7.1.1 In accordance with requirements acceptable in the country of retail sale, fat spreads defined in Section 3.1.1.2 with a fat content of less than 80 percent may incorporate the term "margarine" in the name of the food, provided that the term is qualified to make clear the lower fat content. Fat spreads with a fat content of 39 percent to 41 percent may be designated as "minarine" or "halvarine".

7.1.2 For Section 3.1, the name of the product may incorporate the name of the fats and oils in a generic or specific manner.

##### 7.2 Labelling of 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).<sup>7</sup>

##### 7.3 Declaration of fat content

7.3.1 The product shall be labelled to indicate fat content in a manner found acceptable in the country of sale.

7.3.2 The milkfat content, when present shall be indicated in a manner that is clear and not misleading to the consumer.

**7.4 Declaration of salt content**

**7.4.1** The product should be labelled to indicate salt content in a manner found acceptable in the country of retail sale.

**8. METHODS OF ANALYSIS AND SAMPLING**

For checking the compliance with this standard, the methods of analysis and sampling contained in the *Recommended methods of analysis and sampling* (CXS 234-1999)<sup>8</sup> relevant to the provisions in this standard, shall be used.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> FAO and WHO. 1995. *General standard for food additives*. Codex Alimentarius Standard, No. CXS 192-1995. Codex Alimentarius Commission. Rome.

<sup>2</sup> FAO and WHO. 2008. *Guidelines for the use of flavourings*. Codex Alimentarius Guideline, No. CXG 66-2008. Codex Alimentarius Commission. Rome.

<sup>3</sup> FAO and WHO. 1969. *General principles of food hygiene*. Codex Alimentarius Code of Practice, No. CXC 1-1969. Codex Alimentarius Commission. Rome.

<sup>4</sup> FAO and WHO. 1997. *Guidelines for the establishment and application of microbiological criteria related to foods*. Codex Alimentarius Guideline, No. CXG 21-1997. Codex Alimentarius Commission. Rome.

<sup>5</sup> FAO and WHO. 1985. *General standard for the labelling of pre-packaged foods*. Codex Alimentarius Standard, No. CXS 1-1985. Codex Alimentarius Commission. Rome.

<sup>6</sup> FAO and WHO. 1997. *Guidelines for use of nutrition and health claims*. Codex Alimentarius Guideline, No. CXG 23-1997. Codex Alimentarius Commission. Rome.

<sup>7</sup> *General standard for the labelling of non-retail containers of foods*. Codex Alimentarius Standard, No. CXS 346-2021. Codex Alimentarius Commission. Rome.

<sup>8</sup> FAO and WHO. 1999. *Recommended methods of analysis and sampling*. Codex Alimentarius Standard, No. CXS 234-1999. Codex Alimentarius Commission. Rome.