



## JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

### CODEX COMMITTEE ON FATS AND OILS

Twenty-ninth Session

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

9-13 February 2026

## ACTIVITIES OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS RELEVANT TO THE WORK OF CCFO

### International Olive Council activities

#### Introduction

The [International Olive Council](#) (IOC) is the only international, intergovernmental organisation dedicated to olive oils and table olives. Headquartered in Madrid, Spain, it was established in 1959 under the auspices of the United Nations. The IOC administers the International Agreement on Olive Oil and Table Olives, 2015. Among its current members are the world's main international producers and exporters of olive oil and table olives, representing approximately 94% of the world's olive oil production, 72% of the world's table olive production, and 96% of global exports.

Currently, the IOC has [47 members](#): Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Egypt, Georgia, the European Union (with its 27 Member States: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden), Iran, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Montenegro, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, State of Palestine, Tunisia, Türkiye, Uruguay and Uzbekistan.

The IOC is a decisive player in the sustainable and responsible development of the olive sector. It performs various functions aimed at modernising olive production, coordinating olive sector-related policies and defending its quality, improving international trade regulations, and promoting olive oil and table olives to increase their consumption.

Additionally, the IOC develops and updates trade standards for olive oil and table olives, working to achieve the harmonisation of international and national legislation to prevent trade barriers. The IOC draws up and adopts [trade standards](#) for olive oils, olive-pomace oils and table olives, as well as [methods](#) for testing their physico-chemical and organoleptic characteristics. The IOC established the definitions and analytical characteristics of each of the denominations of olive oils, olive-pomace oils and table olives traded internationally. These are outlined in the trade standards adopted by IOC member countries. Said standards are mandatory in international trade in order to control the quality of olive products, protect consumer rights, and avoid fraudulent and misleading practices and adulteration.

To this end, the IOC organises forums for discussing scientific issues based on the work of an international group of experts. They tackle both current and future sector challenges, coordinating studies and research on the chemical, organoleptic and nutritional properties of olive oil and table olives. Limits for quality and purity parameters are fixed and/or updated on the basis of years of scientific research conducted by experts from a range of countries and following a thorough evaluation of the data obtained. They are put forward on a consensuated basis by researchers and chemists involved in official testing activities. Quality and purity limits are persistently revised in the light of scientific progress, such as studies, surveys and ring tests that are discussed by the expert groups. A relevant method must be scientifically validated and based on solid hypotheses and multiple testing, and any changes must be carefully reviewed to prevent the existence of fraud.

For over 60 years and from the onset of the standardisation of olive products, the IOC has collaborated with the Codex Alimentarius to ensure the harmonisation of international standards aimed at improving product quality and authenticity, facilitating international trade and protecting consumers.

## 1. Background

Since the 28th session of the Codex Committee on Fats and Oils (CCFO) held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from 19 to 23 February 2024, the IOC conducted research and investigations with a view to revise methods of analysis currently in place and to validate new ones.

The list of decisions adopted by the IOC Council of Members since the last CCFO session is as follows:

- DECISION DEC-III.1/119-VI/2024 - Method of analysis on the determination of the content of waxes and fatty acid ethyl esters by capillary gas chromatography, COI/T.20/Doc. No 28/Rev. 3 Corr 1.
- DECISION DEC-III.2/119-VI/2024 - Revising the method for the organoleptic assessment of virgin olive oil, COI/T.20/Doc. No. 15/Rev. 11.
- DECISION DEC-III.3/119-VI/2024 - Revising the rules of the IOC Mario Solinas Quality Award for Extra Virgin Olive Oils in the Southern Hemisphere, COI/T.30-1/Doc. No. 1.
- DECISION DEC-III.1/120-VI/2024 - Revising the Trade Standard Applying to Olive Oils and Olive-Pomace Oils, COI/T.15/NC No. 3/Rev. 20.
- DECISION DEC III.5/120-VI/2024 - Adopting the revised guide for the selection, training and quality control of virgin olive oil tasters – qualifications of tasters, panel leaders and trainers, COI/T.20/Doc. No. 14/Rev. 9.
- DECISION DEC-III.2/120-VI/2024 - Concerning the method for the determination of the content of waxes, fatty acid ethyl esters by capillary gas chromatography, COI/T.20/Doc. No 28/Rev. 4.
- DECISION DEC-III.3/120-VI/2024 - Adopting the method for determining diglycerides and triglycerides, COI/T.20/Doc No. 32.
- DECISION DEC-III.4/120-VI/2024 - Adopting the method of analysis for the determination of volatile compounds in virgin olive oils by SPME-GC/MS, COI/T.20/Doc No. 37.
- DECISION DEC-III.6/120-VI/2024 - Revising the rules of the IOC Mario Solinas Quality Award for Extra Virgin Olive Oils in the Northern Hemisphere, COI/T.30/Doc. No. 27.
- DECISION DEC-III.1/121-VI/2025 - Revising the Trade Standard Applying to Olive Oils and Olive-Pomace Oils, COI/T.15/NC No. 3/Rev. 21.
- DECISION DEC-III.2/121-VI/2025 - Adopting the internal quality control guidelines for sensory analysis laboratories, COI/T.20/Doc. No 17/Rev2.
- DECISION DEC-III.3/121-VI/2025 - Adopting guidelines for the hedonic tasting of extra virgin olive oils for consumers in the restaurant, hospitality and culinary education sectors, COI/GHTH/Doc. No 1.
- DECISION DEC-III.4/121-VI/2025 - Revising the rules of the IOC Mario Solinas Quality Award for Extra Virgin Olive Oils in the Northern Hemisphere, COI/T.30/Doc. No. 28.
- DECISION DEC-III.6/121-VI/2025 - Revising the rules for granting IOC institutional patronage to national extra virgin olive oil-quality competitions organised by the competent authorities of member countries, COI/T.30-2 /Doc. No. 5.

## 2. Ongoing IOC activities

### 2.1. Study on the composition of oils with non-standard parameters

In 2008, the Council of Members decided to establish a restricted electronic working group (eWG) focused on studying the composition of olive oils with non standard parameters, where certain of the parameters they expressed did not comply with the limits set forth in the IOC Trade Standard. This working group, which meets on a yearly basis, examines cases of authentic olive oils produced from autochthonous varieties, thus safeguarding authenticity.

#### 2.1.1 Survey on sterols (total and individual)

A survey on the content of total and individual sterols was launched in 2021, with priority being given to total sterol content. Both IOC member and non-member producing countries were invited to submit oils and relevant data.

The conclusions of the survey on total sterols will be included in the next revision of the IOC Trade Standard.

#### 2.1.2 Study on olive-pomace oils displaying non-standard parameters

The IOC Executive Secretariat (ES) launched a study on olive-pomace oils (crude and refined) in 2024. All olive producing countries, both IOC members and non-members, were invited to submit data and samples to

be analysed in order to tackle the issue of non-standard parameters. The study is programmed to run for a three-year period following the established protocol.

## **2.2. Work of the expert chemist group**

The IOC group of expert chemists, which meets twice a year, is made up of representatives from public administrations (ministries, competent authorities, laboratories...) from IOC member countries. It leads and coordinates discussions based on scientific evidence regarding potential updates to the IOC standards or methods. One meeting day is dedicated solely to representatives of the private sector and the olive industry, as well as to representatives of non-IOC member countries, such as Australia, Canada and the United States of America (USA).

### **2.2.1. Study on pyropheophytins (PPP) and diglycerides (DAG)**

During CCFO 28, it was agreed to establish an eWG for the collection and submission of scientific data and information on olive oil. It was chaired by Italy and vice-chaired by Australia, Canada, Saudi Arabia, and the USA.

To complement the work of this eWG, the IOC also established an eWG for the study of the PPP and DAG issue. The IOC ES developed a questionnaire that was sent to all producing member and non-member countries of the organisation in which samples and data on PPP and DAG were requested. The established deadline for responses was 30 April 2024, after which the IOC sent a scientifically-based report to the Chair of the CCFO eWG explaining why these two parameters are not included in the IOC Trade Standard.

Prior to that, the IOC had sent a detailed report on PPP and DAG to the Codex Alimentarius in 2020. As early as 2006, PPP and DAG and their related methods of analysis have been presented at IOC expert meetings, where it was decided, following in-depth analyses and scientific discussions, that these parameters should not be included in the IOC Trade Standard.

### **2.2.2. Follow up of IOC eWG**

The work of the IOC eWG has continued, including: the revision of methods of analysis and their nomenclature, phenolic compounds, detection of copper chlorophylls, halogenated solvents, revision of the method for determining the peroxide value, revision of the Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling (CCMAS) proposals, review of the IOC Trade Standard, contaminants, etc.

### **2.2.3. Ring tests**

The IOC organised two ring tests to validate two new methods of analysis, an exercise in which IOC-recognised laboratories participated actively:

- Method for determining the composition and content of sterols, triterpenic dialcohols and aliphatic alcohols by capillary column gas chromatography.
- Method on the determination of volatile compounds in virgin olive oil.

### **2.2.4. Coordination with other international organisations**

- Collaboration with Codex Alimentarius

In recognition of the importance of collaboration among international organisations pursuing similar objectives and the critical need for harmonised international standards, a dedicated session of the meeting of chemistry experts is focused on the ongoing work of the Codex Alimentarius. This agenda item includes updates from the CCFO, CCMAS and the Codex Alimentarius Commission. It is presented jointly by the representative of the Codex Alimentarius Secretariat and the Chair of the CCFO eWG.

The IOC plays an active role in the work of the Codex Alimentarius, submitting scientific comments to support the revision of the Standard for Olive Oils and Olive Pomace Oils (CODEX STAN 33-1981). The IOC also advocates for the inclusion of its own analytical methods—developed on the basis of rigorous scientific research—which are widely used by laboratories specialising in olive oil analysis across all five continents. These methods are freely accessible, enabling their implementation by laboratories worldwide, regardless of geographic location or resource constraints.

For over 60 years, the IOC has cooperated closely with the Codex Alimentarius in the identification and study of specific chemical markers—such as linolenic acid, delta-7-stigmastenol, and campesterol—which have subsequently been incorporated into CODEX STAN 33-1981. As the reference organisation in the field of olive oil, the IOC has led scientific discussions and coordinated data collection from both its member countries and other producing nations.

In 2020, the IOC established five electronic Working Groups (eWGs) to contribute scientific reports to the Codex Alimentarius, specifically addressing the following areas:

- Fatty acid composition
  - Median of the predominant defect
  - "Ordinary virgin olive oil" category
  - Ethyl esters
  - 1,2-diacylglycerols (DAGs) and pyropheophytins (PPPs)
- Collaboration with the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO)

During the meeting of IOC chemist experts also includes a presentation of the ongoing work of ISO Subcommittee TC34 SC11 on Animal and Vegetable Fats and Oils. The IOC has upheld a close collaboration with ISO since 2008. In fact, ISO adopts IOC methods through its fast track procedure to ensure the harmonisation of international methods and standards.

- Collaboration with other organisations

The IOC continuously follows up on the work of the World Customs Organisation (WCO) and other international entities to ensure standard harmonisation and avoid barrers to international trade.

### **2.3. Group on the organoleptic assessment of virgin olive oil**

The method for the organoleptic assessment of virgin olive oil and its accompanying standards and guidelines are reviewed on an ongoing basis, with recent revisions having been adopted to improve the harmonisation of panels and expert training. A variety of eWG are working on diverse topics, including: accreditation, reference materials, statistics, ring tests, borderline oils, olive oils from different international varieties, study of the origin of the gas odour in olive oils, revision of the documents related to the organoleptic assessment method, development of guidelines for the hedonic tasting of extra virgin olive oils for consumers in the restaurant, hospitality and culinary education sectors, volatile compounds, Mario Solinas Quality Awards (northern and southern hemisphere), patronage rules for national competitions organised by competent authorities, and organisation committee for the harmonisation workshop of IOC-recognised sensory panels.

The IOC reiterates the importance of harmonization of international standards to improve quality and authenticity, facilitate international trade and protect consumers. It also emphasises that any normative change should be based on scientific evidence, drawn from verified datas and analysed samples, and take into account all producing countries worldwide.