

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy - Tel: (+39) 06 57051 - E-mail: codex@fao.org - www.codexalimentarius.org

Agenda Items 3

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ORIGINAL LANGUAGE ONLY

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

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REPORT OF THE IN-SESSION WORKING GROUP ON THE DRAFT STANDARD FOR FRESH DATES CHAIRIED BY INDIA AND CO-CHAIRIED BY SAUDI ARABIA

1. India as chair of the EWG, alongside co-chair Saudi Arabia have revised the draft standards for fresh dates upon consideration of comments and recommendations received in response to CL 2023/84/OCS-FFV as compiled in CX/FFV 25/23/4. The amendments and editorial changes based on comments are including the edits suggested by codex secretariat to enhance clarity and consistency were displayed in the in-session working group as per FFV23/CRD04.

Summary

2. The chair of IWG proposed to discuss the main issue related moisture content in the fresh date standards. It was informed about the modification done in the section 3.1.1 that a separate section 3.1.2 is inserted regarding the moisture content based on the comments as the moisture content is not the minimum maturity requirement. In the revised section 3.1.2 the moisture content of fresh dates has been proposed as maximum of 85%.

3. While there was consensus on the deletion of minimum moisture content in the standards for fresh dates, members provided their views;

- to list the moist moisture content range of fresh fruits at various ripen stage for each major cultivated variety and to add an internal quality indicators such as the content of soluble solids, in the section 3.2 which we which will reflect the sugar degree depending on the cultivated variety and the ripening stage.
- to add footnote saying or specifying that fresh dates Are going to be cropped at different ripening stages depending on the consistency, the texture and variety.
- Water content should not be used as a most important factor to differentiate these two standards. In fact, in definition of terms for application in the layout for Codex standards for fresh fruits and vegetables, the term Fresh does not refer to water content, but rather to the fact that the product has been recently harvested and that has not undergone any changes or processing that alter its physical or textural characteristics. Proposed the moisture conten range of limit between 12 and 85.
- Necessity for specific equipment measuring the moisture content and the suitable methodology to determine this parameter.
- Feasibility having group standards for different standards for dates

4. For these proposals, the chair of the IWG explained and reiterated that the inclusion of foot note, name of the stages were very well deliberated in the last meeting CCFFV22 and ther was no consensus. Further as the discussion on the draft standards are at step 7 and difficult to include at this stage being the substantial modification. Finally, based on the deliberation there was no objection for the proposal on elimination of the minimum moisture content specifically and hence the same was adopted by the IWG.

5. The other editorial comments related to the section '2' regarding the reference to the General standsrds for direed fruits(CXS 360-2020); re framing of the section 3.1 as per the standards lay out; change of wording as "moisture content of fresh dates shall note exceed 85% " in section 3.1.2 ; and the section 8 related to food additives are accepted by the IWG.

6. Some Member countries, raised concern on the moisture content of dates and its sizing under the section 4 relating to provision concerning sizing stating that we have different varieties a genetic diversity in our country. Dates have very different characteristics physical, chemical and morphologic from one variety to another. Further, When these standard are prepared specifications Regarding weight, size, are considered and we differentiated dates according to the maturity stages or ripening stages. Therefore the member proposed to have separate sizing requirement to cover the tamr stage.

7. One member clarified that the provisions concerning sizing related to both sizing tables by count and by weight, It's a range with an upper end or a lower end or both. It's not fixed and it is an optional requirement. Further, When this standard was being developed the first time around, we ended up having lots of tables based on variety, based on different moisture content, and then the table even further and say based on geographical location. So it was agreed that to have a table as a guide and all of the countries can do the Sizing as necessary to meet the varieties or the different stages of maturity, or even the different packaging methods or the different trade practices.

8. However, after due deliberation, it was proposed to delete the table A and B under the Section 4 related provisions concerning sizing as these requirements are optional and the countries may trade the fresh dates without mentioning the Size. Further, few standards under this committee (CCFFV) do not have this provision. Member countries agreed with the proposal of deleting the table A and B under the Section 4.

9. As there were no pending unresolved issues, The IWG recommends the CCFFV23

- i. To consider the changes/modification made in the draft standard for fresh dates as per the annexure 1 of CRD02 (as highlighted/differentiated)
- ii. To forward the draft standard for fresh dates as per the annexure 1 to CAC48 to adopt at step 8.

DRAFT STANDARD FOR FRESH DATES**(At Step 7)****1. SCOPE**

The purpose of the standard is to define the quality requirements for fresh dates after preparation and packaging. When it is applied at stages following packaging, products may show, in relation to the requirements of the standard:

- a slight lack of freshness and turgidity; and/or
- a slight deterioration due to their development and tendency to perish.

The holder or /seller of products may not display such products or offer them for sale, or deliver or market them in any manner other than in conformity with this standard. The holder or /seller shall be responsible for observing such conformity.

2. DEFINITION OF PRODUCE

This standard applies to commercial varieties, cultivars or other commercial types of fresh dates (*Phoenix dactylifera* L. from Arecaceae family), to be supplied as fresh and whole fruit to the consumer in unpitted form. Fresh dates shall not have undergone any intentional or artificial process including the process mentioned in Section 1.1 (3) (4) and (5) of the Annex B of the *General standard for dried fruits* (CXS 360-2020), after harvesting. Fresh dates intended for industrial purposes are excluded.

3. PROVISIONS CONCERNING QUALITY**3.1 Minimum requirements**

In all classes, subject to the special provisions for each class and the tolerances allowed, the fresh dates must display the following characteristics, deviations from which shall be observed by the naked eye or corrected 20/20 vision¹ when appropriate:

- intact;
- sound; produce affected by rotting or deterioration, which makes it unfit for consumption is excluded;
- clean, practically free of any visible foreign matter;
- free from living pests², and their debris or excreta;
- practically free of damage caused by pests;
- free from mould filaments visible to the naked eye;
- free of undeveloped and deformed fruits, as indicated by stunted growth, immature characteristics and the natural absence of a pit;
- free of blemishes, scars, discolouration, sunburnt and black nose affecting an area more than 7mm² of a fruit's surface;
- free of external moisture excluding condensation following removal from cold storage; and
- free of foreign smell and/or taste.

The development and condition of the fresh dates shall be such as to enable them to:

- withstand transportation and handling; and
- arrive in satisfactory condition at the place of destination.

¹ Loupe, binocular or other magnifying equipment should not be used when assessing defects.

² Provisions for pests and damage caused by pests apply without prejudice to the applicable plant protection rules applied by governments in line with the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC).

3.1.1 Minimum maturity requirements

Fresh dates shall have reached an appropriate degree of development and/or maturity in accordance with criteria proper to the variety, cultivar or other commercial type, at the time of harvesting and area in which they are grown.

3.1.2 Fresh dates shall have a moisture content, 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 shall not exceed 85 percent.

3.2 Classification

Classification of fresh dates is optional. When classified, classification is done in accordance with Section 5: Provisions concerning tolerances, and fresh dates are classified into the following classes.

- “Extra” class, Class I and Class II.

When fresh dates are traded as unclassified, the minimum tolerance requirements for Class II shall apply.

4. PROVISIONS CONCERNING SIZING

Fresh dates may be sized by count or by weight of the fruit or in accordance with existing trade practices. When sized in accordance with existing trade practice, the package shall be labelled with the count or size and method used.

5. PROVISIONS CONCERNING TOLERANCES

5.1 Quality Tolerances

At all marketing stages, tolerances in respect of quality shall be allowed in each lot for produce not satisfying the requirements of the class indicated. Produce that fail a conformity assessment, may be allowed to be re-sorted and brought into conformity in accordance with the relevant provisions in the *Guidelines for Food Import Control System (CXG 47-2003)*.

Table: Quality tolerances of fresh dates

S. No.	Quality tolerance	Tolerances allowed percentage of defective produce by count or weight (nNot more than)		
		Extra Class	Class I	Class II ^z
1.	Total Tolerance not satisfying the quality requirement of which no more than, i.e. individual tolerance	5	10	10
	Individual Tolerance			
	Undeveloped	1	3	6
	Damage by pest	3	8	8
	Blemished/dicoloured	3	5	7
	Sour/decayed/mouldy	1	1	1
	Living pest	0	0	0
2.	Additional tolerance			
	Off size from what is indicated or marked	5	10	10
	Produce belonging to other similar varieties than marked	0	0	0
	Loose dates among dates with stems or clusters	10	15	18

6. PROVISIONS CONCERNING PRESENTATION

6.1 UNIFORMITY

The contents of each package shall be uniform and contain only fresh dates of the same origin, variety or commercial type, stage of ripeness, quality (if indicated) and size (if sized). The visible part of the contents of the package shall be representative of the entire contents.

Fresh dates may be presented:

- in clusters (consisting mainly of the rachis and the stems to which the fruit is attached naturally);
- in stems (stems which are separated from the rachis and to which the fruit is attached naturally); and
- individual fruit, arranged in layers, or loose in the package.

Stems presented in clusters or separated from the rachis shall be at least 10cm in length and carry an average of four to six fruit per 10 cm of length.

6.2 PACKAGING

Fresh dates shall be packed in such a way so as to protect the produce properly. The materials used inside the package shall be of food grade quality, clean and of a quality such as to avoid causing any external or internal damage to the produce. The use of materials, particularly of paper or stamps bearing trade specifications is allowed, provided the printing or labelling has been done with non-toxic ink or glue.

Fresh dates shall be packed in each package in compliance with the appropriate sections of the *Code of Practice for Packaging and Transport of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables* (CXC 44-1995).

6.2.1 Description of containers

The containers shall meet the quality, hygiene, ventilations and resistance characteristics to ensure suitable handling, shipping and preserving of the fresh dates. Packages shall be free of all foreign matter and smell.

7. PROVISIONS CONCERNING MARKING OR LABELLING

7.1 CONSUMER PACKAGES

In addition to the requirements of the *General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods* (CXS 1-1985), the following specific provisions apply:

7.1.1 Name of produce

Each package shall be labelled as fresh dates and may be labelled as to the name of the variety, cultivar and/or commercial type.

7.1.2 Origin of Produce

Country of origin³ and, optionally, district where grown or the national, regional or local place name.

7.2 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).

7.2.1 Origin of Produce

Country of origin² and, optionally, district where grown, or the national, regional or local place name.

In the case of a mixture of distinctly different species and/or varieties of fresh dates of different origins, the indication of each country of origin shall appear next to the name of the species and/or variety concerned.

7.2.2 Commercial Specifications

- Class (optional);
- Variety and/or commercial type;
- Weight or size (if sized) in accordance with the method applied.

8. FOOD ADDITIVES

No food additives are permitted in foods conforming to this standard.

³ The full or commonly used name should be indicated.

9. CONTAMINANTS

9.1 The produce covered by this standard shall comply with the maximum levels of the *General Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Food and Feed* (CXS193-1995).

9.2 The produce covered by this Standard shall comply with the maximum residue limits for pesticides established by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

10. HYGIENE

10.1 It is recommended that the produce 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), *Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables* (CXC 53-2003), and other relevant Codex texts such as Codes of Hygienic Practice and Codes of Practice.

10.2 The produce 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* (CXG21-1997).