

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



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United Nations



World Health
Organization

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Agenda Item 3

CRD16

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE ONLY

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

Twenty-third Session

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Comments by Algeria

Agenda Item 3: Draft standard for fresh dates (at Step 7)

Comments on The latest version of the standard for fresh dates, proposed by the EWG, FFV23/CRD04

❖ Concerning the Scope of the draft standard:

The following redaction is suggested:

- “This standard applies to “fresh dates” as defined in section 2, ~~The purpose of the standard is to define the quality requirements for fresh dates ...rest unchanged-... » ;~~
- Complete the Scope with a paragraph written as follows: “This standard does not apply to dried dates governed by the *General standard for dried fruits (CXS 360- 2020)* ».

Arguments: the scope of the present standard covers not only the definition of quality requirements for fresh dates, but all specifications for fresh dates from definition to hygiene (several requirements).

It should also be pointed out that this standard does not apply to dried dates, to further clarify the scope of application.

- #### ❖ Concerning the point (3.1.2 minimum maturity requirements):
- As such, it’s proposed to add a footnote, stating that:

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

- #### ❖ Concerning the point (2. DEFINITION OF PRODUCE) :

The meaning of « **Fresh dates shall not have undergone any intentional or artificial process including the process mentioned in the Annex B of the General standard for dried fruits (CXS 360- 2020), after harvesting** »

The process mentioned in the Annex B of the General standard for dried date are not clear and can be confusing. For example, with regard to the **point 1.1 product definition (Annex B of the standard CXS 360-2020)**, some process could be used for both dates (dried and fresh) such as mentioned in :

Point (2): is sorted and cleaned to remove defective fruit and extraneous material;

Point (6) : is packaged in suitable containers to assure preservation and protection of the product.

We need to specify the processes that distinguish dried dates from fresh dates.

- #### ❖ Concerning the point (4. PROVISIONS CONCERNING SIZING) :

By suggesting the deletion of the lower limit of water content (less than 30%) that characterizes particularly dates at the “Tamr” stage, the ffv23/CRD04 missed to insert the PROVISIONS CONCERNING SIZING related to “Tamr” dates already discussed and established by the working group of the present standard. In fact, in the latest version of the proposed standard ffv23/CRD04, the working group applied the sizing values of the khalal and rutab stages to dates of the “Tamr” stage. Remember that, scientifically and technically, dates at “khalal, rutab” stages and those at “Tamr” stage have different distinctive

characteristics. For this reason, the specific sizing values characterizing “Tamr” dates should be reincluded. Hereafter the values agreed by the working group

Table 1 A. Fresh dates by count

Size	Number of fresh dates per 500grams*	
	Khalal and Rutab	Tamar
A (Extra Large)	≤45	≤55
B (Large)	46-70	56-83
C(Medium)	71-100	84-125
D (Small)	>100	>125

*Size is determined by the number of individual fresh dates per package.

Table 2 B. Fresh dates by weight,

Size	Weight of individual fruit in the package(gram)*	
	Khalal and Rutab	Tamar
A (Extra Large)	>11	>9
B (Large)	7-11	6-9
C(Medium)	>5-7	4- 6
D (Small)	≤5	≤4

* Size is determined based on the individual weight of the fruit.

• **Scientific and Technical Justifications :**

There is no scientific or technical basis to support the designation of dates with a water content higher than 30% as fresh, for the simple reason that these dates are already scientifically and technically designated as “soft”.

1. Definition of the Term "Fresh" Applied to Dates

- The term "fresh" refers to dates at different stages of ripening (Kimri, Khalal, Rutab, Tamr), without a strict link to a 30% moisture content.
- Several scientific sources confirm that dates are considered fresh regardless of their moisture level:
 - *"Objective Color Measurement of Fresh Date Fruits and Processed Date Products"* mentions four ripening stages considered fresh.
 - *"The Production of Aflatoxins in Fresh Date Fruits"* classifies Kimri, Rutab, and Tamr dates as fresh.
 - The IPGRI (2005) date palm descriptor lists fresh dates at the Bser, Rutab, and Tamr stages.
 - Other studies confirm the distinction between fresh and dried (processed, transformed) dates.

2. Classification of Dates Based on Consistency

- Scientifically and technically, dates are classified into three categories:
 - Soft (>30% moisture)
 - Semi-soft/semi-dry (20-30% moisture)
 - Dry (<20% moisture)
- The current « **GENERAL STANDARD FOR DRIED FRUITS CXS 360-2020, Annex B : dates** », which replaced the « **codex standard CXS 143-1985 :dates** », has merged the semi-soft and dry classes, causing confusion and negative impacts on marketing.

3. Correspondence with the Definitions of Fresh Fruits

- According to the Codex Committee's glossary of fresh fruits and vegetables, a fresh fruit is a product whose physical characteristics have not been altered (absence of drying or processing).
- Dates with a moisture content below 30% meet this definition.

4. Impacts of the Current Standard on Marketing and Storage

- The codex standard « **CXS 360-2020, Annex B : dates** » standard limits the availability of semi-soft and dry dates by assimilating them to dried/processed/ transformed products.
- The presence of fermentable sugars in dates with more than 20% moisture affects their quality during storage, necessitating a more relevant and appropriate classification.
- Several countries around the world are introducing date palm cultivars for cultivation aiming to increase their production, and the main cultivars used are those of the "Tamr" stage.

*Fresh dates with a moisture content of less than 30% represent two dates categories: semi soft/semi dry dates and dry dates, however, they are considered and classified by importing countries as dried fruits (are presented for sale at room temperature, which is not appropriate for their conservation and preservation of their quality from any alteration (fermentation, microbiological quality, etc.). However, these fresh dates (with water content less than 30%) must be kept cold in appropriate packaging while respecting the chain of cold until to the final consumer.

This discrepancy in classification of fresh dates with water content less than 30% between exporting countries and importing countries will cause many refusals of cargo and considerable financial losses.

5. Environmental and Genetic Consequences

- The devaluation of dates at the Tamr stage (characterized by moisture content <30%) threatens genetic diversity and the balance of crops adapted to arid climates.
- Tamr-stage dates (<30% moisture), being more resilient, less water-demanding, and better suited for food security, withstand export conditions more effectively.