

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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Agenda Items 3

CRD24

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE ONLY

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

Twenty-third Session

Mexico City, Mexico

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Comments by Oman

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

This Conference Room Document (CRD) presents comments on behalf of *Oman* 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**.

Oman 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, *Oman* 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, *Oman* 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 concept of "freshness" should not be determined by moisture content but rather by the Codex Alimentarius definition of fresh fruits and vegetables. As a corollary, only artificial interventions to dates would remove the characteristic of "freshness".
- 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

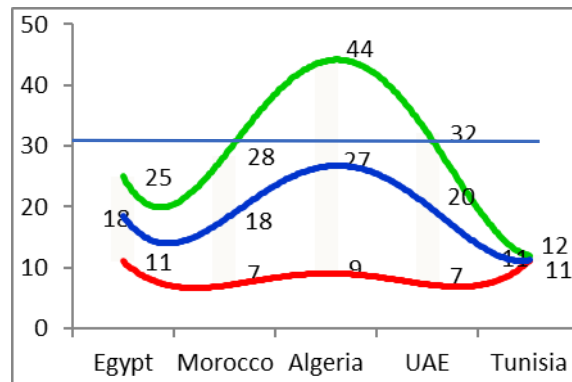


Figure: Descriptive analysis of minimum and maximum moisture content in date cultivars across producing countries.

Therefore, *Oman* 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 Proposed re-drafting offers to:

- 1- Delete the mention of the range in moisture content and to remove the mention of the lower end of moisture levels (considering that this lower end is well below 30% for most of the data gathered for dates commercialized as fresh from the largest producing countries, depending on variety, level of maturity and agriculture practice i.e. dry or semi dry fresh dates – dryness before harvest and with no artificial intervention).
- 2- Emphasize the notion that moisture is NOT a parameter that determines the fact that dates are considered “fresh” – This is already indicated in Section 2 of this same standard:

Definition of Produce: “*Fresh dates shall not have undergone any intentional or artificial process to adjust the moisture content*” as well as in the Codex definition of freshness:

This notion is in line with the definition of “freshness” outlined in the DEFINITION OF TERMS FOR APPLICATION IN THE LAYOUT FOR CODEX STANDARDS FOR FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES, stating:

Fresh Fruit and Vegetable: Fruits and vegetables whose physical and textural characteristics have not been changed or processed in any manner including by salting, freezing, cooking, juicing, sugaring, hydrating, smoking dehydrating or drying. They may undergo post-harvest practices to maintain freshness, shelf life and to facilitate transportation, storage and handling without affecting their raw nature as when harvested.

However, the addition of the sentence could serve as a reiteration of this notion in the body of this standard.

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