



## JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME CODEX COMMITTEE ON SPICES AND CULINARY HERBS

### Eighth Session

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### DRAFT STANDARD FOR DRIED SWEET MARJORAM

#### (At Step 3/4)

(Report of the electronic working group chaired by Egypt<sup>1</sup>)

Codex members and Observers wishing to submit comments at Step 3/4 on Appendix of this draft standard should do so as instructed in CL 2025/55-SCH available on the Codex webpage/Circular Letters:

<http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/circular-letters/en/>

### Background

1. The Seventh Session of the Codex Committee for Spices and Culinary herbs (CCSCH7) considered a proposal submitted by Egypt on the development of a standard for sweet marjoram under the group for culinary herbs and agreed to start new work to elaborate the specific requirements for the sweet marjoram.
2. CCSCH7 furthermore agreed to establish an electronic working group (EWG) chaired by Egypt, subject to the approval by the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) of the respective new work proposal, working in English, to develop the draft standard for the dried and dehydrated sweet marjoram, for circulation for comments at Step 3 and consideration by CCSCH8. The EWG was further mandated to use the SCH template, in a group format, when preparing the respective proposed draft standard and to ensure alignment with the already published SCH standards, and to submit the EWG Report at least three months before CCSCH8.
3. CAC47 (2024) approved the new work proposal.

### Participation and methodology

4. The EWG conducted its work on the Codex EWG platform. Thirteen (13) countries registered to participate in EWG including Canada, the European Union, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Kenya, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. During the deliberations of the EWG, only five (5) countries submitted their comments; Brazil, Canada, the European Union, Japan, and the United States. Brazil sent comments by email.
5. Two rounds of consultations were undertaken by the EWG as follows:
  - a) The first draft was uploaded on 1st July 2024, and comments were received from five (5) Members; Canada, Brazil, the European Union, Japan, and the United States. These comments were considered, and a second draft was prepared.
  - b) The second draft was uploaded on 15th September 2024, and comments were received from four (4) Members; Canada, the European Union, Japan, and the United States.

### Analysis of responses

6. The EWG members submitted both editorial and technical comments and/or proposals, and based on these, the following changes were made to the draft standard:
  - a) **Title:** The title of the draft was revised with the deletion of the words “herb” and “dehydrated” noting that the plant is used only in the dried form. Therefore, the title of the standard should read “*Standard*

<sup>1</sup> Members of the EWG included: Brazil, Canada, European Union, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Kenya, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, United Kingdom and United States)

for dried sweet marjoram". Based on this proposal, the words i.e. "herb" and "dehydrated" were also deleted from all the text of the draft standard to ensure consistency with other existing standards for culinary herbs such as basil, oregano and thyme.

- b) **Table (1):** Common, trade and scientific names of dried sweet marjoram were aligned to other SCH standards to ensure consistency between the column headings i.e. starting with "common name", followed by "trade name" and then "scientific name". This will allow marjoram to be the common name aligned with Section 8.2.1 and allow (sweet marjoram - knotted marjoram - garden marjoram) to be the trade names.
- c) **Styles:** Styles for the whole, rubbed and ground/powdered of dried sweet marjoram were rephrased to more accurately reflect the actual forms in which marjoram is available.
- d) **3.2.2 Odour, flavour and colour:** The requirement for the colour, i.e. "*The colour varies from green to greyish depending on the origin of the plant*" was included in this provision.
- e) **Methods for analysis AOAC:** AOAC methods of analysis were included under the provision for "acid insoluble ash", "mould visible", "extraneous" and "foreign matter".
- f) **Annex Tables A1 and A2:** Chemical and physical characteristics new parameters were added and other parameters for which there were no consensus were put in square brackets for further consideration.

### Conclusion and recommendation

CCSCH8 is invited to consider the draft standard as presented in the **Appendix** to this document with the intent to progressing it to further step noting that the values of Table 2 and 3 would need further discussion.

## APPENDIX

## DRAFT STANDARD FOR DRIED SWEET MARJORAM

(At Step 3/4)

## 1. SCOPE

This standard applies to dried culinary herbs, as defined in Section 2.1 below offered for direct human consumption, commercial food processing or for repackaging if required. It excludes the product for industrial processing.

## 2. DESCRIPTION

## 2.1 Product definition

Dried sweet marjoram is a product obtained from the plant *Origanum majorana* L. Lamiaceae family as described in Table 1.

Table 1. Common, trade and scientific name of dried sweet marjoram

Common name	Trade name(s)	Scientific name
Marjoram	Sweet marjoram Knotted marjoram Garden marjoram	<i>Origanum majorana</i> L <b>Synonyms:</b> <i>Majorana hortensis</i> Moench

## 2.2 Styles

Dried sweet marjoram may be:

- whole/intact (bunches /bouquets): the whole dry plant without the root.
- crushed/rubbed/flaked: the whole plant including flowers processed to varying degrees, ranging from a coarse to fine crush.
- ground/powdered: dry leaves with or without a small proportion of the flowering tops.

The particle size of ground/powdered styles is determined by contractual agreement between buyer and seller.

Other styles distinctly different from the above three are allowed, provided they are labeled accordingly.

## 2.3 Sizing (optional)

## 3. ESSENTIAL COMPOSITION AND QUALITY FACTORS

## 3.1 Composition

Dried sweet marjoram as defined in Section 2 above, shall conform to the requirements contained in Annex I.

## 3.2 Quality factors

## 3.2.1 General

Dried sweet marjoram shall be safe and suitable for human consumption. It shall be free from live insects.

## 3.2.2 Odour, flavour and colour

Dried sweet marjoram as indicated in Section 2.1 shall have a characteristic odour and flavour which can vary depending on geo-climatic factors/conditions, varieties and the main chemical components of the volatile oil indicated in Annex I, Table A1: Chemical characteristics. It shall be free from any foreign odour, flavour especially from rancidity and mustiness. The colour shall vary from "green to grayish" depending on the origin of the plant.

## 3.2.3 Chemical and physical characteristics

Dried sweet marjoram shall comply with the chemical and physical characteristics specified in Annex I (Table A1 Chemical characteristics and Table A2 Physical characteristics).

The defects allowed must not affect the general appearance of the product as regards its quality, keeping quality and presentation in the package.

### 3.2.4 Classification (optional)

When dried sweet marjoram as described in Section 2.1 is traded as classified/graded, the provisions in Annex I shall apply as minimum requirements.

## 4. FOOD ADDITIVES

Anticaking agents listed in Table 3 of the *General standard for food additives* (CXS 192-1995) are acceptable for use in ground/powdered form of the product

## 5. CONTAMINANTS

The products covered by this standard, shall comply with the maximum levels specified in the *General standard for contaminants and toxins in food and feed* (CXS193-1995), and shall be produced in accordance with the *Code of practice for weed control to prevent and reduce pyrrolizidine alkaloid contamination in food and feed* (CXC74-2014) and other relevant Codex Alimentarius texts.

The products covered by this standard shall comply with the maximum residue limits for pesticides established by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

## 6. HYGIENE

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* (CXC1-1969), the *Code of hygienic practice for low-moisture foods* (CXC 75-2015) Annex III on spices and dried culinary herbs, and other relevant Codex Alimentarius texts.

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* (CXG21- 1997).

## 7. WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

Containers shall be as full as practicable without impairment of quality and shall be consistent with a proper declaration of contents for the product.

## 8. LABELLING

The products covered by the provisions of this standard shall be labelled in accordance with the *General standard for the labelling of pre-packaged foods* (CXS1-1985). In addition, the following specific provisions apply:

### 8.1 Name of the product

8.1.1 The common name of the product shall be as described in Section 2.1.

8.1.2 The name of the product shall include an indication of the style as described in Section 2.2

8.1.3 Trade name, variety or cultivar may be listed on the label.

### 8.2 Country of origin and country of harvest.

8.2.1 Country of origin shall be declared.

8.2.2 Country of harvest **may be declared** (optional).

8.2.3 Region of harvest and year of harvest **may be declared** (optional).

### 8.3 Commercial identification

- Style
- Class/grade, if applicable.
- Particle size (optional).

### 8.4 Net weight

### 8.5 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).

## 9. METHODS OF ANALYSIS AND SAMPLING

### 9.1 Methods of analysis

The methods of analysis as described in Table 2: Methods of Analysis below, will be included in CXS 234-1999 after endorsement by CCMAS and the following text will replace the table.

“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) relevant to the provisions in this standard, shall be used.”

**Table 2. Methods of analysis**

<b>Provision</b>	<b>Method*</b>	<b>Principle</b>	<b>Type**</b>
Moisture	ISO 939	Distillation	I
Volatile Oil	ISO 939 and ISO 6571	Distillation followed by volumetric method	II
Total Ash	ISO 939 and ISO 928	Distillation and volumetric method	II
Acid Insoluble Ash	ISO 930 AOAC 941.12 B	Distillation and gravimetric methods Gravimetric Methods	II
Extraneous Matter	ISO 927	Visual Examination followed by gravimetric method	I
Foreign Matter	ISO 927	Visual Examination followed by gravimetric method	I
Insect fragments, whole dead insects, live insects	ISO 927	Visual examination followed by gravimetric method	I
Insects damage/defiled/infested	ISO 927	Visual Examination followed by gravimetric method	I
Mammalian or/and other excreta	Macro-analytical Procedures Manual (MPM) A. General Method for Spices, Herbs, and Botanicals Version 2 - January 2025 CPG Sec. 525.900 Whole Plant (Unprocessed)	Visual examination followed by Gravimetric method	I
Mould visible	Macro-analytical Procedures Manual (MPM) A. General Method for Spices, Herbs, and Botanicals Version 2 - January 2025 CPG Sec. 525.900 Whole Plant (Unprocessed)	Visual Examination followed by Gravimetric method	I
Rodent filth	AOAC 975.49 and AOAC 985.39	Flotation	I

Notes:

\* Latest edition or version of the approved method should be used

\*\* According to the definition of “types of method of analysis” as per Codex Procedural Manual Section II

## 9.2 Sampling plan

To be developed.

## ANNEX I

Table A1: Chemical characteristics for dried sweet marjoram

Product name	Style	Moisture content % w/w (max.)	Total ash, on dry basis % w/w (max.)	Acid insoluble ash on dry basis % w/w (max.)	Volatile oils* ml/100g on dry basis (min.)
Marjoram	Whole	12	16	4.5	0.3
	Crushed/rubbed/flaked	12	16	4.5	0.7
	Ground/powdered	[12] [10]	16 [15]	[4.5] [4]	[0.6]

Note: \*Volatile oils values are related to natural SCH. It does not apply to SCH that are heat treated or subjected to other processes which may reduce the natural content of volatile oil.

Table [A2]: Physical characteristics for dried sweet marjoram

Product name	Style	Extraneous matter %w/w (max) <sup>1</sup>	Foreign matter % w/w (max) <sup>2</sup>	Mould % w/w (max)	Dead whole insects count/100 g (max)	Insect damage % w/w (max) whole only	Insect fragments count/10 g (max) (ground only)	Live insects	Mammalian excreta mg/kg (max)	Other Excreta mg/kg (max) <sup>3</sup>	Rodent filth count/25 g/ [10 g]	Other Factors
Marjoram	Whole	1	1 [0.1]	1	3	[5] [1]	NA [250]	0	1 [2.2]	10 [22]	[2]	
	Crushed/Rubbed/Flaked	1 [2]	3 [NA]	NA	3 [1/25g]		NA	0				
	Ground/powdered	NA*	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0	NA	NA	NA	

**Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> Vegetative matter associated with the plant from which the product originates but not accepted as part of the final product. In rubbed marjoram, the proportion of stalks and other parts, excluding flower tops, whose dimensions exceed 10 mm in length or 1 mm in diameter shall not be more than 1 % (m/m).

<sup>2</sup> Any visible/detectable objectionable foreign matter or material not usually associated with the natural components of the spice plant, such as sticks, stones, burlap bagging, metal, etc.

<sup>3</sup> Excreta from other animals such as reptiles and birds.

[NA: Not applicable, means that the style of the above product has not been evaluated for this provision, and currently does not have value. N/A does not refer to zero