

# CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

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Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



World Health  
Organization

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REP23/NE

## JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

### CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

*46th Session*

Rome Italy

27 November – 2 December 2023

## REPORT OF THE 11th SESSION

### OF THE FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR THE NEAR EAST

Rome, Italy

18 - 22 September 2023

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## SUMMARY AND STATUS OF WORK

Responsible Party	Purpose	Text/Topic	Code	Step	Para.
CCEXEC85 and CAC46	Critical Review Adoption	<i>Draft Regional Standard for Maamoul</i>	N06-2020	5	58 App II
CAC46	Appointment	Recommended that Saudi Arabia be reappointed as Coordinator for the Near East			102
Members	Action and information	<p><u>Keynote address – Transformation of Food Systems</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recognized the complexity of addressing the issue of food safety and nutrition in the context of food system transformation and the need to engage various stakeholders; highlighted that communication and education were critical elements to achieve the desired outcomes.</li> <li>- Engage directly with FAO and WHO to ensure FAO and WHO their programmes, activities and assessment tools are in line with Members needs and key policy directions;</li> <li>- Confirmed the importance of ongoing discussion on these topics to ensure a harmonized approach across the region; requested FAO, WHO and the Codex Secretariat in collaboration with the Regional Coordinator</li> <li>- Actively engage in relevant Codex discussions e.g. TFA discussions in CCFO and CCFL</li> </ul>			15
FAO, WHO, Regional coordinator and Codex Secretariat	Action and information	<p><u>Keynote address – Transformation of Food Systems</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• collate and share existing information and guidance related to healthy diets and food systems;</li> <li>• prepare a progress report on the identified follow-up to the keynote address be presented to CCNE12 under the agenda item on food safety and quality in the region</li> </ul>			15
EWG (Saudi Arabia and Lebanon) Members and Observers CCNE12	Revision Comments Consideration	- <i>Draft Regional Standard for Maamoul</i>	-	5	58 ii
EWG (Saudi Arabia and Oman), Members and Observers Codex Secretariat CCNE12	Review Discussion Revision Comments Consideration	- Provisions on labelling of non-retail containers in the regional commodity standards, and prepare a proposal for each of the regional standards for consideration by CCNE12			25 iii
Members	Action	<u>Respond to the 2023 survey on the use and impact of Codex texts</u>			25 ii
CCFA54	Action	Alignment of the food additive provisions in the Regional Standards with the General Standard for Food Additives			33, 34 CX/NE 23/11/3 Add.1.

Responsible Party	Purpose	Text/Topic	Code	Step	Para.
FAO/WHO Members CCRVDf	Action Information	<u>Food Safety and Quality in the Region including current and emerging issues – country updates</u> - Confirmed data collection, collation and analysis as a priority for the region, and requested FAO and WHO to support regional initiatives including capacity building on the establishment of database on contaminants; - Invited Members to provide data on veterinary drug used in camelids to the relevant EWG of CCRVDf to facilitate the development of necessary MRLs			71
Members CCFFV23	Action and information	<u>Codex work relevant to the region</u> - Agreed priority areas of work for the region - Requested Members to further review the data on the moisture levels of fresh dates and support the ongoing work of EWG on the draft standard for fresh dates for CCFFV23			82
EWG (Saudi Arabia) Coordinator Members Codex Secretariat	Proposal Consideration Action	<u>Implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025</u> - Adopted the regional communications workplan 2024-2025 (Appendix IV) - Agreed to develop the regional workplan for 2024 and 2025 to support implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan			90
Coordinator Members	Action and information	<u>Discussion paper on the development of a standard for halal products</u> - Noted the challenges in addressing the issue of halal within Codex, and requested the support of the Regional Coordinator to organize informal consultations with other regions			100
United Arab Emirates, FAO and WHO Members Coordinator CCNE12	Action Consideration	<u>Proposal for the development of a regional standard for pasteurized camel milk</u> - Agreed that further work should be undertaken to define the next steps under the leadership of FAO, WHO and UAE - A report and proposal to be forwarded to CCNE12			108
Egypt CCNE12	Action Consideration	<u>Proposals for the development of a regional standard for mejdool dates and a regional standard for black honey</u> - Noted that Egypt would prepare discussion papers for CCNE12			109

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMR	Antimicrobial Resistance
CAC	Codex Alimentarius Commission
CCEXEC	Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission
CCFA	Codex Committee on Food Additives
CCFFV	Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables
CCFL	Codex Committee on Food Labelling
CCFO	Codex Committee on Fats and Oils
CCGP	Codex Committee on General Principles
CCMAS	Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling
CCNE	FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for the Near East
CCRVDF	Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods
CCSCH	Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs
CL	Circular Letter
CRD	Conference Room Document
EWG	Electronic Working Group
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FC	Food Category
GEMS	Global Environment Monitoring System
GHP	Good Hygiene Practices
GIFT	Global Individual Food consumption data Tool
GMO	Genetically Modified Organism
GSFA	General Standard for Food Additives
HACCP	Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points
HFS	Healthy Food Strategy
InFARM	International FAO Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring
INFOSAN	Joint FAO/WHO International Food Safety Authorities Network
IUFoST	International Union of Food Science and Technology
MLs	Maximum Levels
MRLs	Maximum Residue Limits
NCDs	Noncommunicable diseases
NE	Near East
NFPS	New Food Sources and Production Systems
PM	Codex Procedural Manual
RCCs	FAO/WHO Regional Coordinating Committees
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SFDA	Saudi Food and Drug Authority
SoP	Statements of Principle Concerning the Role of Science in the Codex Decision-Making Process
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary
SSA	Standards and Scientific Advice on Food and Nutrition
TBT	Technical Barriers to Trade
TFA	Trans-fatty acids
UAE	United Arab Emirates
USA	United States of America
WG	In-session Working Group
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

## INTRODUCTION

1. The FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for the Near East held its Eleventh Session (CCNE11) at FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy, with the option of remote participation, from 18 to 22 September 2023 in cooperation with the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Mr Khalid AlZahrani, Head, International Communication for Food Standards Section, Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA) chaired the session, which was attended by 17 Member Countries from the Near East Region, 4 Member Countries and one Member Organization from outside the Region, 3 Observer Organizations and Palestine. The list of participants is included in Appendix I.

### OPENING<sup>1</sup>

2. The Chairperson welcomed the delegates and opened the meeting.
3. Dr Mohammed Al Nasser, Vice President, Food Sector, SFDA, Saudi Arabia, delivered the inaugural address, recalling the support of Saudi Arabia to Codex-related activities in the region and the important contribution of Codex standards to ensuring food safety, consumer health and fair practices in the food trade. He further recalled that 2023 marked the 60th anniversary of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, which had become the international reference body for food standards.
4. Mr Divine Nije, Deputy Director of the Food Systems and Food Safety Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and Mr Moez Sanaa, Unit Head, Standards and Scientific Advice on Food and Nutrition (SSA), World Health Organization (WHO), welcomed the attendees on behalf of FAO and WHO, respectively. The meeting was also addressed by Mr Allan Azegele, Vice Chairperson, Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) and Ms Sarah Cahill, Senior Food Standards Officer, Codex Secretariat.

### ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Agenda Item 1)<sup>2</sup>

5. CCNE11 adopted the provisional agenda as its agenda for the session and agreed to consider the following topics under Agenda Item 10 (Other Business) subject to the availability of time:
  - Proposal for the development of a regional standard for pasteurized camel milk;
  - Proposal for the development of a regional standard for mejdool dates; and
  - Proposal for the development of a regional standard for black honey.
6. CCNE11 further agreed to establish an In-Session Working Group (WG) open to all Members and Observers, working in English, Arabic and French, to consider agenda item 7, Implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025, and to prepare a report for consideration by the plenary.

### KEYNOTE ADDRESS: “TRANSFORMATION OF FOOD SYSTEMS FOR SUSTAINABLE FOOD FOR BETTER HEALTH” (Agenda item 2)<sup>3</sup>

7. Mr Faisal BinSunaid, Director of Healthy Food, SFDA, delivered the keynote address on “Transformation of Food Systems for Sustainable Food for Better Health”. The keynote address highlighted that: food security and food safety are inextricably linked; malnutrition in all its forms takes a heavy toll on the health and there was an urgent need to find a balance in diets; the situation regarding noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) in the region was alarming; several countries from the region had strengthened their national capacities for preventing and controlling nutrition related NCDs; the SFDA had launched a Healthy Food Strategy (HFS) with a vision of “A healthy nutrition pattern contributes to the promotion of public health” which would also contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs) by 2030; a whole food system approach was required to successfully address NCDs and related problems; the need for a multipronged approach which encouraged consumers to make healthy food choices; Saudi Arabia was willing to share relevant information, expertise and data with the Members of the region; Codex was also a forum to address a range of issues related to the prevention of nutritional deficiencies and NCDs and to develop new food systems; and there was an opportunity to develop and share scientific expertise between more and less experienced countries in the region.
8. The Representative of WHO, in reiterating the importance of healthy diets, highlighted the principles of adequacy, balance, moderation, diversity and safety. The Representative further stressed the need to move away from a silo-based approach and consider food safety and nutrition together in the context of food system transformation.

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<sup>1</sup> CRD01 (Opening speeches)

<sup>2</sup> CX/NE 23/11/1; CRD05 (UAE)

<sup>3</sup> CX/NE 23/11/2; CRD03 Rev.1 (Egypt)

## Discussion

9. Members highlighted the importance of this topic noting its complexity and the need to involve all stakeholders in addressing healthy diets and combatting NCDs.
10. In sharing their experiences and efforts to date, Members and Observers made the following comments:
  - It was important to raise awareness on the impact of NCDs in the region and collaborate with the private sector to both draft and implement guidelines and policies for healthy food products;
  - Risk communication could contribute to reducing the impact of NCDs, and working with youth and schools would create a new generation of informed consumers;
  - A science and risk-based approach was also considered to have an important role when developing national policies and regulations;
  - Labelling was identified as an important tool to reach consumers, not only for packaged foods but also in the food service sector through for example informative menus;
  - Academia provided a resource that could further facilitate research, education and awareness raising on measures to be taken to promote behavioural change;
  - Sharing national experiences and related information through relevant fora within the region could support the development of new regional approaches and the efforts of other countries;
  - There was a need to identify or develop tools similar to the FAO/WHO food control system assessment tool that could be applied at national level to identify gaps and opportunities with regards to nutrition, healthy diets and combatting NCDs, and their use could facilitate a food system approach to better health;
11. There was a strong interest from the region to continue discussion and information sharing on these issues, as well as working together to more efficiently tackle NCDs. It was considered CCNE could play a crucial role in this context providing the right forum for discussing standards and guidelines that could support regulatory and non-regulatory tools.
12. The Codex Secretariat highlighted the value of this discussion noting that sharing information on issues of relevance to the region was an important function of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees (RCCs). The Secretariat also recalled that there were two discussion paper on Trans-fatty acids (TFA) under preparation for the Codex Committee on Fats and Oils (CCFO) and the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL) respectively to better understand if and how Codex could support Members to address TFA, noting that such discussions increased awareness and understanding of these issues.
13. The Representative of WHO highlighted that food safety and nutrition touched every aspect of our food system and had a key role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Representative also noted that while national food control systems provided a critical contribution to establishing sustainable food systems, their main goal was to protect consumer health and ensure fair practices in the food trade. The Representative further stressed that partnership with public and private sector was important, information campaigns needed to be targeted and needs focused, and the regional exchange of information, challenges and success stories to inspire further actions among Members in the region promoted.
14. The Representative of FAO noted the many different aspects within a food system needed to achieve what delegates referred to as a healthy and safe diet. The Representative further noted that the food systems approach enlarged the scope of those actors involved in contributing to a successful outcome of nutrition policies. The Representative encouraged delegates to engage with FAO and WHO to ensure that activities designed by these organizations in the countries/region consider and contribute to the priority nutrition goals.

## Conclusion

15. CCNE11:
  - i. expressed appreciation to Saudi Arabia and the Keynote speaker Mr Faisal BinSunaid for the keynote address and to the participants for their active discussion which centered on the concerns of many countries in the region on the issue of nutrition and healthy diets;
  - ii. recognized the complexity of addressing this issue in the context of food system transformation and thus the need to involve many stakeholders including the private sector, consumers and academia;
  - iii. highlighted that communication and education were critical elements to achieve the desired outcomes of these nutrition and healthy food policies, starting from primary education;

- iv. noted the importance of Members engaging directly with FAO and WHO in sharing their concerns so that both organizations can design their programmes, activities and assessment tools in line with Members needs and key policy directions;
- v. recognized the importance of maintaining ongoing discussion on these topics to share expertise and approaches, to learn from each other, to ensure a complementary or harmonized approach across the region and find ways of monitoring the impact;
- vi. requested FAO, WHO and the Codex Secretariat in collaboration with the Regional Coordinator to collate and share existing information and guidance;
- vii. expressed appreciation to Saudi Arabia for their willingness to convene workshops and other forms of training in collaboration with FAO and WHO and requested a meeting with the organizations to have more in-depth discussion on this topic;
- viii. encouraged Members to actively engage in relevant Codex discussions e.g. TFA discussions in CCFO and CCFL; and
- ix. requested that a progress report on the above follow-up be presented to CCNE12 under the agenda item on food safety and quality in the region.

### **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER CODEX COMMITTEES (Agenda Item 3)<sup>4</sup>**

#### **Matters for Information**

16. CCNE11 took note of the matters for information provided in document CX/NE 23/11/3 Rev 2. and noted the following additional information.

#### Codex Strategic Planning 2026 – 2031

17. The Codex Secretariat advised that CCEXEC84 had initiated work on the development of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026 – 2031 and Members were invited to respond to CL 2023/65/OCS-EXEC requesting comments on the development of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031 – Part 1 – how Codex works as part of the multilateral system on food and trade, noting that the deadline was 25 September 2023.

#### Monitoring the Use and Impact of Codex texts

18. The Codex Secretariat highlighted the results of the 2022 survey on the use and impact of Codex standards noting that there had been a 47% response rate from Members in the region and among the barriers identified to implementing Codex texts were lack of awareness of Codex provisions at national level, language barriers and lack of infrastructure or expertise to implement the standards. The Codex Secretariat also reflected on the recommendations resulting from the survey among which were the need for increased efforts on awareness raising, communication on and dissemination of Codex texts and improved capacity building and training. Moving forward the Codex Secretariat advised CCNE11 that the 2023 survey would be launched on 25 September, would be open for four weeks and encouraged all Codex Contact Points to work with national stakeholders to complete the survey with the aim of getting a higher response rate this year. CCNE11 was also informed that there would be a side event on 3 October in the margins of the upcoming CCGP33 which would focus on the efforts of the three sisters on monitoring the use and impact of their respective standards and also launch the report of the 2022 survey.

#### Ongoing work in CAC

19. In recalling the efforts in the Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CCEXEC) over the past few years, the Codex Secretariat informed CCNE11 that work in the Application of the Statements of Principle Concerning the Role of Science in the Codex Decision-Making Process (SoP) and the extent to which other factors were taken into account, as well as discussions on ways to address New Food Sources and Production Systems (NFPS) would continue at CAC46. These would be based on the comments received in response to circular letters on both these topics, a compilation of which would be published shortly on the CAC46 webpage.

#### Revision of the *General guidelines on sampling* (CXG 50-2004)

20. In informing CCNE11 about the completion of the revision of the *General guidelines on sampling* (CXG 50-2004), which would require committees to review their sampling plans to ensure compliance with CXG 50-2004, it was highlighted that the Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling (CCMAS) was continuing to develop guidance and software applications that would facilitate application of this guidance.

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<sup>4</sup> CX/NE 23/11/3 Rev. 2



## Matters for action

### Adoption of the *General Standard for the labelling of non-retail containers of foods* (CXS 346-2021) and consequential amendments to the Procedural Manual

21. In response to the request of CAC44 to review the labelling provisions for non-retail containers in existing texts and texts under development in order to align with the newly adopted *General standard for the labelling of non-retail containers of foods* (CXS 346-2021), CCNE11 considered the proposed revision presented by the Codex Secretariat for the labelling provisions of non-retail containers in the eight regional commodity standards. Noting that currently six of these standards did not contain any provisions for labelling of non-retail containers, discussions highlighted that these commodities might well be distributed in non-retail containers, but additional time and expertise would be needed to confirm this and therefore address this request.
22. Some Members highlighted that in their view non-retail containers were used as a form of distribution for these commodities and therefore a provision related to labelling of non-retail containers could be added to the regional standards, to avoid further delays.
23. The Codex Secretariat highlighted that there were several questions to be addressed in considering this issue: i) whether a provision for labelling of non-retail containers was needed for those standards that did not currently contain such a provision; ii) if so whether a cross-reference to the CXS 346-2021 was sufficient or additional provisions were necessary; and iii) for those two regional commodity standards that already contained a provision, if that could be fully replaced by a cross-reference to CXS 346-2021 or whether some elements of the existing provision were not covered by the general standard and therefore needed to be maintained.
24. In light of this discussion CCNE11 agreed that more time was needed to consider this issue and agreed that this work could be undertaken by an Electronic Working Group (EWG).

## Conclusion

25. CCNE11:
  - noted the information provided in the relevant paragraphs;
  - encouraged Members to respond to the 2023 survey on the use and impact of Codex texts, noting the 25 October 2023 deadline; and
  - agreed to establish an electronic working group chaired by Saudi Arabia and co-chaired by Oman, working in Arabic and English, open to all Members and Observers, to:
    - i. review the existing provisions, or the need for provisions, on labelling of non-retail containers in the regional commodity standards;
    - ii. where a provision on labelling of non-retail containers was needed or was being reviewed, consider whether a cross-reference to CXS 346-2021 was sufficient or other provisions not included in CXS 346-2021 needed to be developed or retained; and
    - iii. prepare a report including a proposal for each of the regional standards to be submitted to the Codex Secretariat three months before CCNE12 for circulation for comments.

### **ALIGNMENT OF THE FOOD ADDITIVE PROVISIONS IN THE REGIONAL STANDARDS WITH THE GENERAL STANDARD FOR FOOD ADDITIVES (Agenda Item 3.1)<sup>5</sup>**

26. Saudi Arabia, as the EWG Chairperson, introduced this item and provided details on the progress of the work carried out within the EWG. It was emphasized that the final proposal had been prepared by the EWG Chairperson, given the absence of any comments received from the EWG.

## Discussion

27. CCNE11 considered the recommendations outlined in Section 3 of CX/NE 23/11/3 Add.1, one by one.

### Regional standard for halwa tehenia (CXS 309R-2011)

28. One Member<sup>6</sup> raised the following points with regard to this standard: (i) The food additives permitted for use in Food Category (FC) 05.2.2, "Soft candy" in the *General Standard for Food Additives* (GSFA, CXS 192-1995), were not applicable for use in halwa tehenia; and (ii) according to the definition and nature of halwa tehenia it should not be categorized as FC 05.2.2 "Soft candy" but rather as a new category under FC 16.0, "Prepared foods."

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<sup>5</sup> CX/NE 23/11/3 Add.1; CRD03 Rev.1 (Egypt)

<sup>6</sup> CRD03 Rev.1 (Egypt)

29. The Codex Secretariat provided clarification noting that: (i) The food category system in the GSFA was designed as a tool for assigning food additive uses. The title of the FC should be considered in conjunction with the relevant Food Category Descriptors. FC 05.2.2 includes a range of different products as listed in the descriptor, and among them halwa tehenia had been explicitly included by name; (ii) The alignment of the GSFA with the CXS 309R-2011 had been completed, implying that the appropriate FC for halwa tehenia had been further confirmed; and (iii) Notes had been incorporated into Tables one and two of the GSFA, clarifying that food additives permitted for use in the FC "soft candy" could not be applied equally to halwa tehenia.
30. CCNE11 agreed to maintain halwa tehenia within FC 05.2.2.

#### Regional Standard for Mixed Zaatar (CXS 341R-2020)

31. In response to a question about the restriction of citric acid (INS 330) for use only in Grade 3 mixed zaatar and not in Grades 1 and 2, the EWG Chairperson clarified that this decision had been taken during CCNE10 based on the proposal of the relevant EWG.
32. Considering the product's composition and characteristics, CCNE11 agreed with the proposal of the EWG that mixed zaatar should be categorized as herbs, and it was more appropriate to classify it under FC 12.2.1. "Herbs and spices".

#### **Conclusion**

33. CCNE11:
- confirmed that the FCs listed in the cross-reference table of the GSFA for products conforming to CXS 257R-2007, CXS 258R-2007, CXS 259R-2007, CXS 308R-2011, CXS 309R-2011, CXS 314R-2013, and CXS 332R-2018 were accurate;
  - proposed a change in the FC for products conforming to CXS 341R-2020 to FC 12.2.1, indicating that these products are classified as herbs; and
  - supported all the recommendations outlined in Sections 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, and 3.9 of CX/NE 23/11/3 Add.1.
34. CCNE11 agreed to forward the above information for consideration by the 54th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Additives (CCFA54).

#### **PROPOSED DRAFT STANDARD FOR MAAMOUL (Agenda Item 4)<sup>7</sup>**

35. Saudi Arabia, as Chair of the EWG, introduced the item, highlighting the approach that had been undertaken and noting that there had been two rounds of consultations to develop the proposed draft standard. The Chair of the EWG further noted that the comments received in response to CL 2023/64/OCS-NE had been reviewed and a revised version of the standard prepared and published as CRD06. CCNE11 agreed to consider CRD06 as the basis for discussion of this item.

#### **Discussion**

36. CCNE11 considered the proposed draft standard section by section, introduced editorial corrections as appropriate, aligned the format with the format for Codex commodity standards as outlined in Section 2 of the Codex Procedural Manual (PM, 28<sup>th</sup> edition) and made the following comments and decisions on respective sections.

##### 1. Scope

37. Clarification was sought on the inclusion of the term "intended for human consumption" due to concerns that this suggested there could also be another intended use even though this product was ready-to-eat. Following clarification that this term was regularly used in Codex texts, often to distinguish between product ready for direct human consumption compared to product that required further processing or preparation before consumption, the scope was simplified to read "maamoul for direct human consumption".

##### 2. Description

38. The subheading "product definition" was included for clarity.
39. The product definition was revised after extensive discussion to clarify that this was a baked product rather than a type of pastry, to focus on the most critical aspects of the product i.e., that the dough was made of a combination of wheat flour and /or semolina and fat with optional ingredients excluded from the definition.

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<sup>7</sup> CX/NE 23/11/4; CX/NE 23/11/4 Add.1; CRD03 Rev. 1 (Egypt); CRD06 (Proposed updates to the regional proposed draft standard on maamoul based on comments received)

40. Following a proposal to include a definition on extraneous matter, it was agreed that this was more appropriately addressed under section 3.2 quality factors.

### 3. Essential Composition and Quality Factors

#### 3.1. Composition

41. Recognizing that the recipes for maamoul varied across the region, and that certain ingredients commonly used in one country might not be used in another, it was agreed that this section identify both essential ingredients and optional ingredients for the dough, acknowledge the range of fillings which can be included in maamoul, noting that a filling was an essential part of the product and provide examples of coatings that may be used. In this context the list of essential ingredients was reduced to cereal products, a fat/oil substance and essential technological ingredients. Following an extensive discussion regarding sugar and salt it was agreed that these were not essential for the dough and should be part of the optional ingredient list.
42. Regarding the inclusion of ingredients of a technological nature i.e. food additives, in the essential ingredients list, the Codex Secretariat highlighted that as section 4 explicitly addressed food additives it was not necessary to include food additives such as raising agents or dough enhancers in the ingredients list. Rather CCNE11 should consider if all food additives permitted in Food Category 07.2.1 were allowed in maamoul and if not to advise CCFA accordingly to ensure alignment with the GSFA, noting that this work would need to be undertaken before the standard could be finalized.
43. CCNE11 noted that baking powder, yeast and enzymes were essential in the production of maamoul.
44. As the optional ingredients varied extensively across the region it was agreed that this list should be indicative of the range of optional ingredients with some examples but should not be considered exhaustive.
45. CCNE11 confirmed that coatings were optional and therefore only a short list of possible coating ingredients was included.

#### 3.4 Quality factors

46. Members agreed that maamoul was a unique product of specific cultural significance in the region. Several Members therefore indicated the need to include specific characteristics in this section that could be used to confirm a product was indeed maamoul. Other Members noted that this presented particular challenges due to variations in the composition linked to optional ingredients and that any definition of specific characteristics should to be overly descriptive as this may restrict rather than facilitate trade. While some potential characteristics were identified it was agreed that this sub section needed further development and it was proposed that Members should consult with producers in their region to help clarify the unique characteristics of maamoul.
47. With regard to basic quality criteria for the finished product, reference was made to extraneous matter, a description of which was also included. Further basic quality criteria may be identified in consultation with maamoul producers.

### 4. Food additives, 5. Contaminants and 6. Hygiene

48. CCNE11 agreed with the text as proposed in CRD06.

#### 7. Labelling

49. One Member proposed the inclusion of an additional optional provision of including the number of servings or units in the pack on the label as this may be more appropriate than the net weight in certain cases. It was noted that in line with the provisions for the *General standard for the labelling of prepackaged foods* (CXS 1-1985) the inclusion of net weight was mandatory and could not be replaced with the number of servings or units. However, it was further noted that CXS 1-1985 did provide for some exceptions including small packages (less than 10cm<sup>2</sup>), and this would allow Members to indicate serving rather than net weight on individually packaged maamoul.
50. Another Member noted that as the number of servings or units was not mandatory under CXS 1-1985, individual Members or producers could decide whether they wished to include this as additional information.
51. In response to a proposal to add a provision relating to allergen labelling, the Codex Secretariat clarified that this was covered in CXS 1-1985 and therefore not needed here.
52. Several Members proposed that as the filling was an essential characteristic of maamoul, it was important to state the percentage filling on the label and that the standard should provide an indication as to what the minimum percentage filling should be.

53. One Member highlighted that this was in line with CXS 1-1985 (section 5) which required the disclosure of the ingoing percentage of an ingredient at the time of manufacture when that ingredient is emphasized as present on the label, which was the case for maamoul since it should be part of the name. It was further recalled that the percentage should be included when it was essential to characterize the food, which in the Members' view was one of the unique aspects of maamoul.
54. The EWG Chair proposed that the inclusion of the nature of the filling in the name of product as indicated in the additional provision in section 7 was sufficient for the purpose of this guidance and as the amount of filling varied according to type of maamoul and from one producer to another, definition of a minimum percentage was challenging, and its inclusion may lead to trade restrictions.
55. While CCNE11 did not agree on the inclusion of any additional text on the proportion of filling, it was noted that this could be added based on more data and consultation with producers.
56. One Member proposed the inclusion of optional names for the product. However, there were concerns expressed that this inclusion could impact the scope of the standard and for clarity the permitted name should only be "maamoul".

#### 8. Methods of analysis and sampling

57. As completion of this section was dependent on the elements included under section 3.5. Quality Factors it was agreed to keep this in square brackets until section 3.4 was completed.

#### **Conclusion**

58. CCNE11 agreed that good progress had been made on the standard, agreement had been reached on many of the provisions and those areas that needed further work had been clearly defined. In this context CCNE11 agreed to:
  - i. forward the Proposed Draft Standard for Maamoul to CAC46 for adoption at Step 5 (Appendix II); and
  - ii. re-establish the EWG, chaired by the Saudi Arabia, and co-chaired by Lebanon, working in Arabic and English, open to all Members and Observers, to further develop the Standard, focussing on the text in square brackets, namely on quality factors and related methods of analysis (sections 3.5 and 8 respectively), and taking into account the discussions at this session;
  - iii. prepare a report including the proposed revisions to the draft standard to be submitted to the Codex Secretariat three months before CCNE12 for circulation for comments at step 6; and
  - iv. encouraged all Members to actively engage in the work of the EWG.

#### **FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY IN THE REGION INCLUDING CURRENT AND EMERGING ISSUES - COUNTRY UPDATES (Agenda Item 5)<sup>8</sup>**

59. The Representatives of FAO and WHO presented the working document, providing an overview of their respective strategy documents on food safety that were developed to meet the continuously changing drivers impacting food safety. The Representative of WHO presented the "WHO Global Strategy for Food Safety 2022-2030"<sup>9</sup>, highlighting the strategic priorities and the global indicators for 2030 as contained in the Strategy. The Representative of WHO also emphasized the role of WHO in supporting Member States in integrating food safety in their health and development agendas, in generating evidence and normative guidance, as well as in building and supporting technical capacities in the region. The Representative further advised Member States to implement the Strategy by initially conducting a situational analysis, developing national strategies to achieve global progress and impact indicators.
60. The Representative of WHO also emphasized that there was unique knowledge in the region on food safety for mass gathering events, mentioning positive examples such as Hajj and the FIFA World Cup held in 2022 in Qatar, and that the region could consider developing guidance on best practices for catering during mass gathering events to share with the wider food safety community. The Representative of WHO also presented the "WHO Food Safety Community of Practice"<sup>10</sup>, a peer-to-peer online forum for global professionals, inviting CCNE Members to actively participate in the Community.
61. The Representative of FAO presented the four Strategic Outcomes of the "FAO Strategic Priorities for Food Safety" within the "FAO Strategic Framework 2022-2031"<sup>11</sup>, explaining how the approach differed from the WHO Strategy, which provided guidance on how countries should work on food safety, while the FAO document provided Members with information on how FAO would deliver on food safety.

<sup>8</sup> CX/NE 23/11/5

<sup>9</sup> <https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/363475>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.whofoodsafety.org/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cc4040en>; <https://www.fao.org/strategic-framework/en>

62. The Representative of FAO also presented activities carried out in the region, jointly with WHO and/or national competent authorities, such as the Second Global Meeting of INFOSAN in the United Arab Emirates. The Representative also highlighted available resources, in particular “The GHP and HACCP Toolbox for Food Safety”<sup>12</sup>, a toolbox containing guidance documents to strengthen food safety capacities, both public and private, inviting CCNE Members to review and use it as necessary.

### Discussion

63. Members expressed appreciation for the working document, presentations and efforts of FAO and WHO in the region and made the following points:

#### Technical assistance on the establishment of a database on contaminants

64. Several Members articulated the need for the establishment of a database on contaminants and related food safety issues that could collate data from countries of the region, and that while some mechanisms were already in place to facilitate this process, such as the Arab Initiative for Food Safety, technical assistance from FAO and WHO to build capacities at country level was still deemed as necessary. Members also noted the need for a regional strategy for food safety and a network of experts and reference laboratories to support data collection.
65. The Representatives of FAO and WHO, recalled the challenges associated with establishing and maintaining new databases, recalling at the same time the existence of databases such as GIFT<sup>13</sup> and GEMS<sup>14</sup>, that already provided a source of information on food safety and contaminants, and encouraged Members to contribute to these existing databases. The Representative of WHO further clarified that the GEMS platform had a data sharing agreement that facilitated data collection from countries.
66. In response to a request for information on the existing activities carried out at regional level to collect relevant information on contaminants, the delegation from IUFOST, described a pilot project in the region aimed at enhancing the capacity of countries to collect data, identify existing gaps and contribute to GEMS Food without creating a separate database. The delegate noted that the challenge in the region related to access to rather than absence of data and supporting countries to enter data in GEMS food would facilitate Members in responding to calls for data to support Codex standards setting in the future.
67. The Codex Secretariat invited countries to highlight their specific needs and priorities within the wider work of Codex so that consideration could be given as to whether these could be addressed through existing mechanisms or new approaches might be required. In this context, the Codex Secretariat recalled the CRD presented at the 26th Session of the Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods (CCRVDF26) on the extrapolation of maximum residue limits (MRLs) for veterinary drugs for camelids, explaining that this document was an example on how CCNE Members could share and address their specific needs at Codex level.
68. The USA delegation speaking as the CCRVDF Secretariat invited CCNE Members to identify which veterinary drugs were being used in camelids and share this information with the relevant EWG so that CCRVDF could have the necessary data to prioritize the needs and develop the necessary MRLs.

#### Technical assistance on the establishment of a database on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)

69. While initiatives were underway in some countries in the region, the lack of national and regional data on AMR and resources and expertise to generate such data and related areas such as residues in foods was highlighted. The need for FAO and WHO to support countries in their efforts, not only in terms of national capacities but also through the collection and analysis of data at regional level was emphasized.
70. The Codex Secretariat informed CCNE of the development of the International FAO Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring (InFARM) System<sup>15</sup>, a platform that would support countries in collecting data for AMR surveillance at national level and further share it for international advocacy and action.

### Conclusion

71. CCNE11:
- i) noted with appreciation the information provided and the efforts underway by FAO and WHO;
  - ii) confirmed data collection, collation and analysis as a priority for the region;
  - iii) noted the existing databases (e.g. GEMS food, InFARM) and regional initiatives on data collection;

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.fao.org/good-hygiene-practices-haccp-toolbox/en>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.fao.org/gift-individual-food-consumption/en>

<sup>14</sup> <https://extranet.who.int/gemsfood/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.fao.org/antimicrobial-resistance/resources/database/infarm/es/>

- iv) requested FAO and WHO to support regional initiatives, including capacity building undertaken in a coordinated manner; and
- v) invited Members to provide data on veterinary drugs used in camelids to the EWG on the extrapolation of maximum residue limits of veterinary drugs to one or more species, to facilitate work on the development of relevant MRLs.

### **CODEX WORK RELEVANT TO THE REGION (Agenda item 6)<sup>16</sup>**

72. The Regional Coordinator presented the item and explained the importance of the matters included in the document for the region.

#### **Discussion**

73. Members expressed appreciation for the work carried out by the Regional Coordinator in preparing the document, and confirmed the importance and relevance of the Codex work identified therein for the region. Some Members requested the inclusion of the following additional items in the list of priorities identified in the document:

- Maximum levels (MLs) for aflatoxins in peanuts, recalling the work carried out in the Arab Codex Initiative to prepare a regional position on these MLs.
- The development of standards for products that could promote commodity products from the region, contribute to their definition and facilitate their trade in regional and international markets.
- The development of a regional standard for date molasses
- The conversion of the *Regional standard for harissa (Red hot pepper paste)* (CXS 308R-2011) into an international standard.

74. Noting that several of the requests related to new work proposals, rather than ongoing Codex work, the Codex Secretariat informed CCNE11 about the existing procedures for the conversion of a regional standard into an international standard, recalling that such a proposal could be presented directly to CCEXEC. Regarding the proposals for new standards, the Secretariat highlighted the necessity to prepare a discussion paper and project document to facilitate consideration of new work by CCNE, noting that every proposal should follow and include the provisions for the elaboration of Codex texts as set forth in the PM. The Codex Secretariat further mentioned the need to address amenability to standardization while considering existing Codex standards that could already be applied to these products.

#### Standard for Dried Floral Parts – Saffron

75. A Member recalled the proposal of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH) that both the country of origin and country of harvest should be declared mandatory in the Standard for Dried Floral Parts – Saffron. The Member highlighted the importance of having both in labels to provide relevant information to consumers, including type and nature of the plant and requested CCNE to support such a position.

76. The Codex Secretariat recalled that this matter had been discussed by CCFL47, which had referred the provisions back to CCSCH for clarification on the distinction between country of origin and country of harvest and to provide the rationale to include country of harvest as a mandatory provision and how such a declaration would be beneficial for fraud prevention.

#### Proposed draft standard for fresh dates

77. Several Members highlighted the importance of adopting a standard for fresh dates for the CCNE region, recalling at the same time the extensive discussions held at the 22nd Session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (CCFFV22) and CAC45 which focused on the requirement for moisture content.

78. An Observer Member presented the results of a working group that collected data on the moisture content of fresh dates in several countries from the region. The results, as presented in CRD07, showed a huge variation in moisture content in fresh dates across the region with the results indicating a moisture range of 12% - 85% as reflective of moisture content in fresh dates.

79. Members appreciated the study and made the following comments:

- this was the first effort to collect such a large amount of data on moisture content in fresh dates;
- the wide range in results could reflect differences in the methodology used in data collection and that it was necessary to carefully review this aspect;

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<sup>16</sup> CX/NE 23/11/6; CRD03, Rev.1 (Egypt); CRD07 (Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, Algeria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan, Iraq, Oman, State of Libya, Yemen, Palestine and AIDSMO)

- the need for Members of the region to provide relevant data that could further facilitate the discussion;
  - given the moisture range, some Members proposed consideration could be given to deleting the provision to moisture content;
  - the need for more time to carefully consider the document and subsequently contribute to it, as the results had been presented only a few days before the meeting;
  - there may be other parameters to be considered in the provisions concerning quality of fresh dates; and
  - the data should be provided as an input to the work of the EWG and be distributed to the wider membership of CCFFV.
80. The Codex Secretariat mentioned that CCNE Members could also contribute to the work of CCFFV on fresh dates by providing comments in response to a Circular Letter that was being prepared in collaboration with the Chairs of the EWG, which would explicitly seek inputs on the minimum moisture content. The Secretariat also noted that it would be important to accompany the data from the study with details of the methods used to generate the data to facilitate its analysis and comparison. In response to a question related to the standard on dates and the standard for fresh dates being under the responsibility of two different Codex Committees, which was a further challenge for aligning data on moisture content, the Secretariat clarified the availability of new data or evidence can be an appropriate justification to submit a proposal to revise an existing Codex text. If the relevant committee is adjourned such requests can be sent directly to CCEXEC.

### **Conclusion**

81. CCNE11:
- agreed to support the work presented in CX/NE 23/11/6 and to include in the region's priority list the MLs for aflatoxins in peanuts;
  - commended the work on the minimum moisture content for fresh dates, requested countries from the region to further review and study the data, include any additional data from any Members in the region, and agreed to share the results; and
  - invited all countries from the region to present data on the moisture levels of fresh dates in response to the upcoming CL on the proposed draft standard, engage informally with the Chairpersons of the EWG, and to prepare relevant documents for the next session of CCFFV (CCFFV23).

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025 (Agenda Item 7)<sup>17</sup>**

#### Workplan implementation 2020-2023

82. The Regional Coordinator presented the item highlighting the work that had been undertaken since CCNE10 to support the implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025. Recalling that efforts had focussed on Goals 2, 3 and 4 of the Strategic Plan, the Regional Coordinator noted the use of occasions such as World Food Safety Day to build awareness of, and promote the work of Codex and highlighted the implementation of a series of workshops and events to address specific needs in the region. The Regional Coordinator encouraged Members to engage in the side events in the margins of CCNE11 as they addressed some of their priority areas e.g. data collection.
83. Several Members highlighted their national initiatives and efforts including sharing experiences on specific topics, such as remote audit, and also indicated past and upcoming events in celebration of the 60th anniversary of Codex.

#### Regional communications workplan

84. The Codex Secretariat presented the progress that had been made on implementation of the regional communications workplan noting that despite the new reality due to the COVID-19 pandemic, good progress had been made on improving communications with virtual meetings and a regional WhatsApp Group facilitating regular communication and experience sharing. This was reflected in the positive ratings in the survey on communication efforts in the region (Appendix III). The Codex Secretariat noted the upward trend in sharing stories on the regional website and encouraged Members to continue to share positive experiences as a means of inspiration to others.
85. Moving forward Members agreed with the proposed communications workplan for the next two years which aimed to sustain and build on the positive progress of recent years.

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<sup>17</sup> CX/NE 23/11/7

Workplan for 2024-2025

86. The Regional Coordinator, in referring to Annex II of the working document, reminded Members of the need to develop a regional workplan for the next two years, and to determine which strategic goals they should focus on. The Regional Coordinator highlighted the importance of identifying priorities, taking into account the discussions in earlier agenda items on, for example, healthy diets and tools to support their development and promotion, data generation and collection, and increasing knowledge on the Codex standard setting process.
87. In the course of the discussions, Members shared a range of views and proposals as follows:
- the importance of building on the unique strength of CCNE which provided a linkage between FAO, WHO, Members and the Codex Secretariat;
  - development of a yearly implementation plan which could be easily updated in line with needs and took into consideration discussions at CCNE;
  - sharing experiences among countries in the region to help accelerate understanding of and engagement in Codex work;
  - the need to focus on data collection and scientific studies to build the evidence base for those standards needed by Members;
  - promoting knowledge sharing and data collection in all those areas relevant to the region, building on the experience with data collection on dates; and
  - the importance of identifying activities under all 4 strategic goals as all were important to the region.
88. As the planned In-Session Working Group was cancelled due to time constraints, and given the need for more time to develop a meaningful and prioritised workplan, it was proposed to establish an EWG to move the work forward.

**Conclusion**

89. CCNE11:
- i) noted the progress that had been made on implementation of the workplan 2020 – 2023 despite the challenges encountered;
  - ii) adopted the regional communications workplan 2024-2025 (Appendix IV);
  - iii) agreed to establish an EWG chaired by Saudi Arabia and co-chaired by Egypt, working in Arabic and English open to all Members and Observers from the region to develop the regional workplan for 2024 and 2025 to support implementation of the Codex Strategic Plan;
  - iv) congratulated Egypt on the 50th anniversary of Codex in Egypt; and
  - v) noted the events celebrating the 60th anniversary of Codex across the region.

**DISCUSSION PAPER ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A STANDARD FOR HALAL PRODUCTS (Agenda item 8)<sup>18</sup>**

90. Egypt, as the author of the discussion papers, introduced the item, recalling that discussions on a possible Codex standard for halal dated back to 2011. Due to the lack of consensus on how to proceed on the basis of the paper presented to CCNE10, discussions had been extended to CCNE11. Egypt noted that they had updated the document submitted to CCNE10 to focus on the development of guidelines for general requirements for halal food emphasizing that the lack of a common understanding of halal was causing problems as evidenced by the many WTO notifications related to halal products.
91. Egypt considered that there was a need for an open-ended working group on this topic that would enable all Codex Members to share their views and highlighted some of the technical issues to be addressed, such as a common understanding of the terminology, and halal in the context of recent developments such as GMO's. Egypt also highlighted the importance of discussions in Arabic to avoid misinterpretation of halal and related requirements. Noting the existence of CXG 24-1997, Egypt indicated that in their view this work would fall within the mandate of Codex.

**Discussion**

92. Members expressed appreciation for the work of Egypt and their efforts to further elaborate the proposal. Members further acknowledged the importance of this topic considering the global production and trade of halal products.

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<sup>18</sup> CX/NE 19/10/15; REP20/NE (paragraphs 92-98); CRD04 (Egypt)



93. Some Members highlighted challenges related to the absence of globally applied standards defining halal requirements for some food products. The need to clearly define the scope on any Codex work on halal to support and facilitate global trade and the added value of a Codex text in this regard was expressed.
94. A number of challenges and issues were raised including:
- the need for both technical and religious knowledge in the development of any standard or guideline related to halal;
  - the need for a whole food chain approach to ensure a product was halal;
  - the breadth of products to be covered;
  - that Codex was a science-based body while halal falls within the domain and expertise of religious authorities;
  - the existence of other standard setting bodies with both the religious and technical expertise to address halal;
  - the challenges with aligning a standard for halal with other Codex standards;
  - the challenges already experienced at both country level and other standard setting organizations in reaching agreement on standards for halal products; and
  - the need for any standard to take into account differences between regions or countries with regard to halal.
95. Some Members were of the view that Codex was not the appropriate forum for consideration of this work while others sought to understand what could be done within the mandate of Codex. Members also recognized that the issue of halal went beyond CCNE and there was a need to seek the views of other countries and asked if this could be done within the framework of Codex.
96. Responding to the request for guidance the Codex Secretariat recognized the importance of this issue for the region. While recalling the unique reference to Codex texts in the WTO SPS agreement, the Codex Secretariat noted that halal fell within the domain of the TBT agreement in which Codex texts were not explicitly referenced and therefore if relevant international standards existed, the addition of a Codex text did not necessarily provide an added value. Recognizing that the work of Codex was Member driven, the Codex Secretariat referred to the criteria for the establishment of new work priorities in the Codex Procedural Manual noting the importance of clearly identifying the problem or issue to be addressed, considering work already undertaken, and amenability to standardisation, among others.
97. Reflecting on the discussion thus far, the Codex Secretariat noted that Members had highlighted the challenges in determining the scope of any work on halal to be undertaken by Codex and recalled that to date there had been over a decade of discussions in multiple Codex fora. The difficulties in developing standards for halal as expressed through national experiences and those of other standard setting bodies should not be ignored. The Codex Secretariat also recalled the importance of clarifying how any Codex text on halal would relate to the many Codex guidelines and codes of practice that already addressed food safety along the food chain, noting the importance of ensuring consistency across Codex texts. Referring to the existing Codex *General Guidelines for the use of the term 'halal'* (CXG 24-1997) the Codex Secretariat noted that it acknowledged the religious nature of halal and did not attempt in any way to address differences in religious interpretations as this was not within the scope of Codex.
98. With regard to possible mechanisms of continuing discussions, the Codex Secretariat noted the most common approach for the development of discussion papers and new work proposals was the use of informal discussions among Members and suggested that informal consultations with other regions could be organized with the support of the regional coordinators.
99. Some Members, while recalling the ongoing importance of the topic, acknowledged the need to further study the issue and that different opportunities for consultation with Members from other regions would need to be explored.

### **Conclusion**

100. CCNE11:
- i) expressed appreciation to Egypt for the work undertaken to support discussion on this topic, noting its relevance and importance to Members in the region;
  - ii) noted the challenges faced previously;

- iii) recognizing that this was not only a regional issue, requested the support of the Regional Coordinator to organize informal meetings with other regions to seek their views on, and interest in this topic; and
- iv) noted that any new work proposal needed to carefully consider the criteria for new work proposals as outlined in the Codex Procedural Manual.

#### **NOMINATION OF THE COORDINATOR (Agenda Item 9)<sup>19</sup>**

101. The Codex Secretariat introduced the item recalling that Saudi Arabia had been appointed as Coordinator for NE by CAC43, and having served for one term, was eligible for re-appointment.
102. CCNE11 acknowledged the excellent work of Saudi Arabia and unanimously agreed to recommend CAC46 to reappoint Saudi Arabia for a second term as Coordinator for NE.
103. Saudi Arabia thanked the Members of CCNE for their support and accepted the nomination.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS (Agenda item 10)<sup>20</sup>**

##### Proposal for the development of a regional standard for pasteurized camel milk

104. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) introduced the proposal to develop a regional standard for pasteurized camel milk of the species *Camelus dromedarius* (one-humped camel), highlighting the increase in camel milk production, inside and outside the region, and the product specific characteristics and noted that existing Codex texts on milk and milk products did not consider camel milks' unique characteristics. The UAE noted that any standard should include compositional requirements for camel milk like the existing Codex standards for dairy products. Reflecting on the needs of Members in the region and gaps in existing Codex milk related texts, the Member proposed several ways of moving forward including new work on a regional standard for camel milk (including compositional requirements); an update of current Codex documents related to milk and milk products to address gaps related to camel milk; or a code of practice related to camel milk that would address some of the unique production and product characteristics.
105. Members expressed high interest and were very supportive of Codex work on camel milk highlighting its relevance to the whole region, the high levels of regional consumption, the fat content which presented particular processing challenges different to milk from other species and its unique composition. Some Members indicated the availability of studies on camel milk and their readiness to provide data to support work.
106. The Representative of FAO noted the timely nature of the work proposal given the upcoming FAO Global Conference on Sustainable Livestock Transformation<sup>21</sup>. The Representative indicated their willingness to work with UAE to explore how work on camel milk could be progressed within a food systems approach, combining normative work to inform Codex processes with value chain, agribusiness, trade, gender, nutrition, and food safety aspects.
107. An Observer suggested that a gap existed regarding methodology for the identification of camel milk in mixtures of milk, particularly and as part of fraud prevention efforts and noted that Codex texts addressing hygiene and labelling already existed. It was also suggested the work consider other forms of heat-treatment, in addition to pasteurization, that extend product shelf-life.

#### **Conclusion**

108. Noting the high interest in the topic, but the lack of time to discuss the project proposal and the range of options for moving forward CCNE11 agreed that:
  - further work should be undertaken to define the next steps and that an analysis of the options and definition of the way forward be undertaken under the leadership of UAE, FAO, WHO and the Regional Coordinator noting its willingness to organize informal discussions as required, and working with other interested members; and
  - a report of the analysis and proposals on the way forward be considered by CCNE12.

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<sup>19</sup> CX/NE 23/11/8

<sup>20</sup> CRD05 (UAE)

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.fao.org/events/detail/fao-global-conference-on-sustainable-livestock-transformation/en>

Proposals for the development of a regional standard for mejdool dates and a regional standard for black honey

109. Due to time constraints, it was not possible to discuss these two proposals and CCNE11 noted that Egypt would prepare discussion papers for CCNE12. The Codex Secretariat reminded Members that in preparing discussion papers and new work proposals, particular attention should be given to existing related Codex standards and that proposals should address whether in fact a new standard was required or a revision to an existing standard might be sufficient.

**DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT SESSION (Agenda Item 11)**

110. CCNE11 was informed that the next session of the Committee would be held in approximately two years' time, with final arrangements subject to discussion between the Regional Coordinator and the Codex Secretariat.

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**PROPOSED DRAFT CODEX REGIONAL STANDARD FOR MAAMOUL**  
**(For adoption at Step 5)**

**1. SCOPE**

This standard applies to maamoul for direct human consumption as defined in section 2.

**2. DESCRIPTION**

**Product definition**

Maamoul: a type of baked product prepared from a wheat flour and/or semolina and fat-based dough, which is filled as described in section 3.3 and coated as described in section 3.4.

**3. ESSENTIAL COMPOSITION AND QUALITY FACTORS**

**3.1 Essential dough ingredients**

- 3.1.1 Cereal products such as: wheat flour (different extraction ratios), and/or semolina, wheat germ, maize germ, wheat bran, malt flour, barley flour, oat flour, rice flour, and rye flour.
- 3.1.2 Fat/oil substance such as: animal fats and/or vegetable oil
- 3.1.3 Other ingredients such as: baking powder, yeast, enzymes.

**3.2 Optional dough ingredients**

- 3.2.1 Food grade salt.
- 3.2.2 Water, flavoured water (e.g. rose water).
- 3.2.3 Sugar and its products, honey, molasses (e.g. date).
- 3.2.4 Milk and milk products such as: milk, milk powders, and its solids, casein, sweetened condensed milk, liquid or whey powder.
- 3.2.5 Edible starches such as: maize starch, rice starch, potato starch, tapioca starch, wheat starch.
- 3.2.6 Spices such as: Ginger, saffron, cardamom, cumin, anise
- 3.2.7 Miscellaneous such as: Cocoa powder, coffee powder, chocolate, egg products, nuts,

**3.3 Filling ingredients**

- 3.3.1 Filling ingredients such as:
- Fruits, and their products such as: dried fruits, desiccated coconut, fruit paste and date paste
  - Nuts and their products.
  - Sugar based fillings e.g. molasses, halwa (e.g. starch based halwa, halwa tehenia, etc.)

**3.4 Coating ingredients**

- 3.4.1 Coating ingredients such as: cocoa powder, coffee powder, chocolate, and icing sugar.

**3.5 [Quality factors**

- 3.5.1. The product shall be free from extraneous matter (organic (e.g. insects) and inorganic (e.g. stones, sand, dust) components)

**Texture and colour**

Maamoul shall have crumbly texture and always be filled with ingredients as described in section 3.3.

The colour should be pale and do not have any dark pieces.

The maamoul crumb should have a 1 to 1 ratio of fat to cereal ingredients.]

**4. FOOD ADDITIVES**

Food additives used in accordance with Tables 1 and 2 of the *General Standard of Food Additives* (CXS 192-1995) in food category 07.2.1 (Cakes, cookies and pies (e.g. fruit-filled or custard types)) or listed in Table 3 of the *General Standard for Food Additives* are acceptable for use in foods conforming to this Standard.

**5. CONTAMINANTS**

- 5.1 The products covered by this Standard shall comply with the maximum levels of the *General Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Food and Feed* (CXS 193-1995).
- 5.2 It is recommended that the products covered by the provision of this standard prevent and reduce formation of acrylamide in accordance with *Code of Practice for the Reduction of Acrylamide in Foods* (CXC 67 – 2009).

**6. HYGIENE**

- 6.1 It is recommended that the products covered by the provisions of this Standard be prepared, packed, transported, storage and handled in accordance with the appropriate sections of the Recommended International Code of Practice – *General Principles of Food Hygiene* (CXC 1-1969) the *Code of Hygienic Practice for Low Moisture Foods* (CXC 75-2015) and other relevant Codex texts such as codes of hygienic practice and codes of practice.
- 6.2 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* (CXG 21-1997).

**7. LABELLING**

The products covered by the provisions of this Standard shall be labelled in accordance with the *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods* (CXS 1-1985) and *General Standard for the labelling of non-retail containers of foods* (CXS 346-2021). In addition, the following specific provisions apply:

- 7.1 Name of the product (maamoul, type of filling).

**8. [METHODS OF ANALYSIS AND SAMPLING**

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.

Provision	Method	Principle	Type
Extraneous materials			

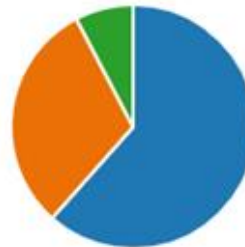
]

**CCNE11 SATISFACTION SURVEY ON REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS**

The survey received 15 responses from 13 Members in the region.

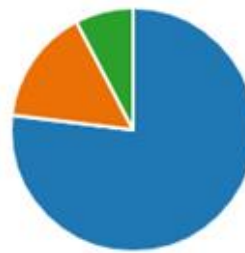
Timeliness of Codex regional communications

● Excellent	8
● Good	4
● Fair	1
● Poor	0



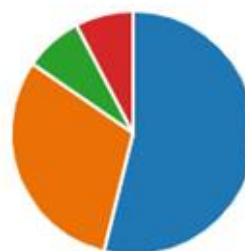
Accessibility of Codex regional communications

● Excellent	10
● Good	2
● Fair	1
● Poor	0



Quality of Codex regional communications

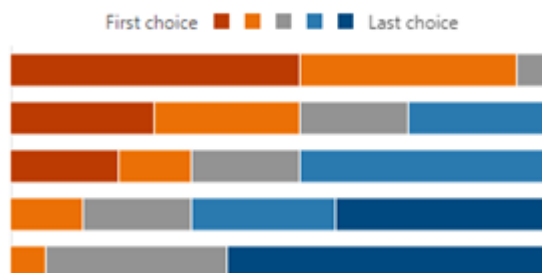
● Excellent	7
● Good	4
● Fair	1
● Poor	1



Rank the current Codex communication tools that are most accessible for you?

Rank Options

1	Email
2	Codex website
3	WhatsApp
4	Codex-L mailing list
5	Twitter



**11. What other communication tools would increase accessibility?**

I don't have access to WhatsApp

Workshops on defined subjects

Nothing

Whatsapp

More actual meetings

Physical regional meetings to be held in one of the countries in the region

Podcast

Maybe Facebook

Telegram

Phone , sms

Sms with links to information

Codex website

E-mail

**12. Please provide any additional suggestions on how to further improve the timeliness, accessibility and quality of Codex regional communications**

Newsletter

- Maybe the coordinator organize calls, meetings... with every member country or with every 2 countries
- exchange expertise with other regional committees

Having more than one focal point in each country because the internal communication between different sectors in one country may take a time

Everything is good except in the CoS, we are still facing problems to response

Arrange a regional meeting in the middle east

Keep it up

Podcast

The timing is good finding another means of communication, for example, via google meet or Webex  
For improving timeliness, I would suggest having pre-session in every important item of agenda before the plenary for making consensus among members.

Nothing

Establish platform for regional communication

## APPENDIX IV

## REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS WORK PLAN 2024-2025

The table shows the objectives, activities, targets and indicators for the CCNE Regional Communications Work plan. These elements derive from Strategic Goal 3 in the Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025 “Increase impact through the recognition and use of Codex standards”; in particular objective 3.1 “Raise the awareness of Codex standards”.

Objectives	Activities	Targets	Indicators
1. Reinforce and expand existing communication channels and establish clear additional channels as needed e.g. for specific work streams	<p>1.1. Consolidate and improve information flow and exchange between countries and the Codex Secretariat (CS)</p> <p>1.2. Expand and strengthen existing simple and rapid communications methods (e.g. Regional. WhatsApp communications group)</p>	By CCNE12 80% of Members/Observers surveyed indicate timeliness, accessibility and quality of Codex regional communications as “excellent” or “good”	<p>Number of survey responses rating regional communications “excellent” or “good”</p> <p>Communicate the value of Codex standards in the region</p>
2. Communicate the value of Codex engagement and use of standards in the region	<p>2.1. Provide the CS with monthly drafts of web stories capturing food safety, standards work or capacity building initiatives in the region</p> <p>2.2. Promote regional success stories and initiatives in conjunction with CS and FAO/WHO</p>	<p>By CCNE12 24 news items from countries in the region</p> <p>By CCNE12 50% of countries in the region have contributed to Codex news on the regional webpage</p>	<p>Number of CCNE news stories published</p> <p>Number of countries who have made a published contribution</p>