

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

E



Food and Agriculture
Organization of
the United Nations



World Health
Organization

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REP13/NEA

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Thirty sixth Session
Rome, Italy, 1-5 July 2013

REPORT OF THE SEVENTH SESSION OF THE FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR THE NEAR EAST

Beirut, Lebanon
21 – 25 January 2013

NOTE: This report contains Codex Circular Letter CL 2013/1-NEA.

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CL 2013/1-NEA

January 2013

TO: Codex Contact Points
Interested International Organizations

FROM: Secretariat, Codex Alimentarius Commission
Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme

SUBJECT: Distribution of the Report of the Seventh Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for the Near East (REP13/NEA)

The report of the Seventh Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for the Near East will be considered by the 35th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Rome, Italy, 1-5 July 2013).

MATTERS FOR ADOPTION BY THE 36th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION:

- Draft Regional Code of Practice for Street-vended Foods **at Step 8 of the Procedure** (para. 46 and Appendix II).
- Proposed Draft Regional Standard for Date Paste **at Steps 5/8 of the Procedure** (para. 75 and Appendix III)

Governments and interested international organizations wishing to comment on the above documents should do so in writing, **preferably by e-mail**, to the Secretariat, Codex Alimentarius Commission, Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy (e-mail: codex@fao.org; Fax +39 06 570 54593), before **30 April 2013**.

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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Seventh Session of the Codex Coordinating Committee for the Near East reached the following conclusions:

Matters for consideration by the 36th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission

Draft and Proposed Draft Standards and Related Texts for adoption at Steps 8 or 5/8 of the Procedure

The Coordinating Committee forwarded the:

- Draft Regional Code of Practice for Street Vended Foods for adoption at Step 8 (para. 46) and Appendix II) (revision of the hygiene provisions following endorsement by CCFH);
- Proposed Draft Regional Standard for Date Paste for adoption at Steps 5/8 (para. 89 and Appendix III).

Other matters for information

The Coordinating Committee:

- Supported further Codex work on processed cheese and noted that the number of emerging diverging national standards for these products in the absence of a Codex standard could lead to problems in international trade and made proposals for the scope of possible future work (para 20).
- Supported the creation of a new Codex Committee for Spices, Aromatic Plants and their Formulations (para 26).
- Clarified questions from the Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling (para 47).
- Considered the Draft Strategic Plan 2014 – 2019 and made a number of comments and suggestions (paras 48 – 69).
- Returned the proposed draft Standard for Doogh to step 2 for redrafting by an electronic working group (para 81);
- Exchanged information on updates since the last session on national food control systems, and consumer participation in food standard setting, use of Codex standards at national and regional level and nutritional issues within the region and members indicated training needs (paras 100 – 104)
- Decided that more information was needed before requesting new work on a standard for camel milk (para. 99).
- Noted information for the coding, classification and registration of foods (paras 105 -110)
- Decided to submit project documents for new work on halal food, labneh, zaatar and refrigerated and frozen meat (paras 117, 122 and 125).
- Decided to start the development of a regional strategic plan (para 127).
- Requested the Codex Secretariat to make Codex Special Publications available in print also in Arabic language (para 131).
- Nominated Lebanon as Coordinator for the Near East region for a second term (para 118).

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

(Used in this Report)

CAC	Codex Alimentarius Commission
CCNEA	FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for the Near East
CCEXEC	Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission
CCFL	Codex Committee on Food Labelling
CCGP	Codex Committee on General Principles
CCMAS	Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling
CCMMP	Codex Committee on Milk and Milk Products
CCNEA	FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for the Near East
CCNFSDU	Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses
CTF	Codex Trust Fund
EMPRES Food Safety	Emergency Prevention System for Food Safety
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GIFSA	Global Initiative for Food-related Scientific Advice
GSFA	General Standard for Food Additives
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

INTRODUCTION

1. The FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for the Near East held its seventh Session in Beirut, Lebanon, from 21 to 25 January at the kind invitation of Lebanon. The Session was chaired by Ms Mariam Eid (Head of Agro-industries Department Ministry of Agriculture, Lebanon). The Session was attended by 71 delegates representing 11 Member Countries, 2 observer countries from outside the Region and 2 international organizations. A complete list of participants, including the Secretariat and the representatives of FAO and WHO, is provided in Appendix I to this report.

OPENING

2. The Chairperson welcomed the delegates and highlighted the history of the Committee, which started with Egypt and moved to Jordan and after to Tunisia and now today to Lebanon. She noted the achievements of the Committee in the field of setting regional standards but she also said that those achievements cannot match the level of the challenges facing the countries of the region in confronting globalization and open markets. She concluded her speech by inviting all member countries to make maximum effort for ensuring the success of the Committee now in Lebanon and in the future wherever it is hosted.

3. Dr Mohamed Elmi, Regional Adviser for food and chemical safety of WHO/EMRO, on behalf of Dr Ala Alwan, Regional Director of WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region, thanked Lebanon for hosting the Committee and reiterated that WHO is committed to food safety by recognizing that foodborne diseases significantly affects people's health and well-being and have economic consequences, not for individuals but for communities and countries as well. He also mentioned that chemical hazards represent a significant source of foodborne illness, and we must also recognize the impact that certain ingredients in our food, such as salt and certain types of fat, may have on the development of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The United Nations Political Declaration resulting from the high-level meeting on prevention and control of NCDs tasked WHO and Member States with developing action plans to reduce exposure to risk factors. He encouraged the delegations to work actively within the Codex system, as well as in their national capacities, to promote and adopt standards that contribute to the protection of public health.

4. In his welcome address, the FAO representative in Lebanon, Mr. Ali Moumen, highlighted the importance of the Regional Coordinating Committee for the Near East, especially in light of the free trade environment that became a reality since the establishment of the WTO in 1994, and the obligations that countries have for harmonizing their food control systems with international standards. He stressed on the link between food production systems and human health and the important place food safety has in the national politics of food security. He also highlighted that food security and nutrition is one of the five priority areas that the countries of the Near East have agreed on in the regional priority framework that was adopted in the Near East Regional Conference in 2010. With these priorities in mind, he called upon the Governments of the region to participate more effectively in the works of the three sisters in charge of setting standards (ie. Codex, IPPC, and OIE), which was important for trade and for defending the interests of the countries. He highlighted the economic cost of the non-compliance with international standards, and the importance of participating in the setting of these standards to avoid such situations. He ended his address by reiterating the readiness of FAO to support the countries of the Region in their work to improve their food control systems and to enhance their participation in Codex.

5. H.E. Minister of Industry of Lebanon Mr. Freij Sabounjian greeted the participants to the seventh session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for the Near East and stressed in his speech that the challenges the region faces in ensuring the safety of food requires good coordination and synergy. H.E. stressed that ensuring food safety is a shared responsibility and called for coordination and cooperation between the public and private sectors and wished the guests a pleasant stay in Lebanon.

6. H.E. Minister of Public Health of Lebanon, Professor Ali Hassan Khalil pointed out that the hosting this important event in Lebanon emphasizes its role in coordination between the countries of the region and noted the high priority accorded to the issue of food safety in Lebanon.

7. H.E. Minister of Agriculture of Lebanon Dr Hussein Hajj Hassan welcomed the attendees and participants of this session and stressed the central role of the Codex Alimentarius Commission in light of the challenges faced by the governments to ensure the safety of food. H.E. called upon member countries to promote the effective participation in the work of Codex and develop the priorities of the region within a strategic plan for the next five years. The minister mentioned the role of governments in ensuring food security and the relation to food safety, which required no less effort and attention. The Minister mentioned that in addition to the role of governments, international organizations, private sector and civil society in ensuring food safety, they face the task of ensuring food security which is no less important and requires great efforts from everyone in order to provide the food in appropriate quantity and prices in light of climate impacts, global economic crisis and wars in some regions of the world. Multiple efforts from all concerned stakeholders are required to meet this challenge. As for the near East region the current emerging challenge is the increasing risk and declining investments due to political and security developments during past years which increased the pressure on regional food security. In light of this, the Minister invited governments to assume their responsibilities in the food sector, which is the first and most important human needs. H.E. closed his speech by wishing the delegations success at the session.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Agenda Item 1)¹

8. The Committee agreed to consider Item 3a “FAO/WHO Activities complementary to the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission” and Item 3b “FAO/WHO Project and Trust Fund for enhanced participation in Codex” before Item 2a “Matters of interest arising from the Codex Alimentarius Commission and other Codex Committees.

9. The Committee agreed to consider the following issues under Item 11 “Other business and future work”:

- Strategic Plan for the Near East for 5 years
- Special publications in Arabic
- Establishment of the regional standard on:
 - Labneh
 - Mixed **Zaatar**
 - Rose water
 - Orange blossom water
 - Refrigerated and frozen meat

10. The Committee adopted the provisional agenda with these amendments as the agenda for this session.

11. The Committee agreed to establish the in-session working groups on:

- Proposed draft regional standard for doogh (chaired by Iraq)
- Proposed draft regional standard for date paste (chaired by Tunisia)

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER CODEX COMMITTEES (Agenda Item 2a)²

Proposed draft Standard for Processed Cheese³

12. The Committee recalled that the Commission had agreed to discontinue work on the development of a standard for processed cheese and had further requested the Codex Secretariat to prepare a Circular Letter asking Members to identify the gaps in the safety and quality provisions of Codex texts that would justify new work on processed cheese and describe the scope of any new work to be considered to address such gaps. The Commission had further agreed to request the upcoming sessions of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees to further discuss the need for a standard for processed cheese and document the scope of the work that might be needed in this area and to report back to the 36th Session of the Commission.

13. The Committee is invited to discuss the need for a standard for processed cheese as requested by the 35th Session of the Commission.

¹ CX/NEA 13/7/1

² CX/NEA 13/7/2, CX/NEA 13/7/2-Add.1.

³ REP12/CAC para. 163; CRD11 (Lebanon)

14. The Delegation of Lebanon introduced CRD 11 in which they had summarized what was in their view the need for further Codex work on processed cheese and what could be the scope to be addressed: processed cheese is a product with a large trade volume not produced in Lebanon but imported and largely consumed by the general population and especially by young people; processed cheese is also a product subject to trade within countries in the region and at the international level; standardization bodies, in order to ensure the protection of Human health and to ensure fair trade practices have developed national standards for this product since the essential composition and quality factors of processed cheese and the specific labeling requirements are not covered by specific Codex standards. The delegation believes that codex members in the region should highlight the need of having a codex standard for processed cheese, and if consensus has not been possible to achieve at the international level, a regional standard could be developed to cover certain aspects that are the main reasons that could mislead consumers: description, essential composition and quality factors and labeling.

15. The delegation also said that diversified national standards could lead to trade problems in the future and it could be considered to have a regional standard in the first place. Different possibilities could be considered such as combining in one document all the different provisions applicable to processed cheese and then analyzing the gaps that still existed.

16. Other delegations supported the need for further work on processed cheese. The following reasons were mentioned: It is difficult to distinguish between processed cheese and other similar products; there are ambiguities concerning fat levels; the variation between the products is big and some have nothing to do with processed cheese and could be harmful to health especially to young children who consume it a lot.

17. Several countries reported that they differentiated the products on the basis of national standards and stressed the need to protect the consumer.

18. The delegation of Egypt said that they had no problems with processed cheese knowing that they are subject to two local standards one for to cheese made from natural milk fat and one made from natural vegetable fat taking into consideration the general Codex standards to guarantee the safety and quality of the final product.

19. The observer from the IDF reported on a survey that had been presented to the 35th Session of the Commission which came to the conclusion that the large number of different products traded under this name did not make it amenable to standardization and that the general safety and consumer information issues were well covered by general Codex standards. The delegation also reported on the various attempts made by the CCMMMP in 9 sessions and numerous working groups to make progress on this issue however the necessary consensus had not been achieved on how the content of cheese in processed cheese can be established and how to differentiate between processed cheese and products based on this. Also additives and compositional matters did not achieve consensus as well as attempts to differentiate between spreadable and sliceable cheeses.

20. The Committee supported the analysis from Lebanon (see para 13) on the need for further Codex work on processed cheese. The Committee specifically noted that the number of emerging diverging national standards for these products in the absence of a Codex standard could lead to problems in international trade. The Committee supported the proposals made by Lebanon (see para 13) for areas of possible future work. The Committee finally agreed to suggest to the Commission that that as a first step a study could be undertaken to combine in one document all vertical and horizontal Codex standards that currently apply to processed cheese and related products and to analyze what are the gaps.

Proposal for the establishment of a subsidiary body of the Codex Alimentarius Commission⁴

21. The Committee noted that the 35th Session of the Commission considered a proposal from the delegation of India to establish a new subsidiary body on spices, aromatic herbs and their formulations and that the Commission had agreed to request the views of FAO/WHO coordinating committees on this proposal to assist Codex members in taking a decision on this matter. The next session of the Commission would further consider this request based on a discussion paper to be prepared by India as well as the views of coordinating committees.

⁴ CRD 1 (Egypt)

22. The delegation of India introduced the rationale for the establishment of a Codex Committee on Spices, Aromatic Herbs and their Formulations. A broad range of widely different national standards existed for these products; the lack of harmonized standards could result in trade barriers; trade in these products was growing fast and developing countries were the main producers, exporters and consumers. The standards would cover different forms of presentation (fresh, processed, whole, mixtures, etc.) and essential composition and quality factors, i.e. physico-chemical characteristics, while safety aspects would be cross-referenced to the relevant Codex texts.

23. The delegation explained that these products could not be addressed in the Codex Committees on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables and/or Processed Fruits and Vegetables, as spices and aromatic herbs could not be considered as a fresh or processed fruit or vegetable since raw spices and herbs were ingredients providing flavour or aroma to the food and they were processed to develop or fix their flavour and aroma as opposed to fruit and vegetables that were processed to extend their shelf life and for convenience. The delegation also showed the discrepancies among quality provisions in different standards applied by importing countries or regions, which might pose barriers to international trade.

24. The delegation also explained that a permanent committee should be established instead of a time-limited task force, as the work on the range of products to be standardized was too extent to allow its completion by a time-bound task force. The delegation further explained that the benefits of having these products standardized within Codex as opposed to other organizations, was that Codex was the only relevant international intergovernmental body with broad participation of governments and interested stakeholders that would allow comprehensive harmonization of quality and safety aspects of these products in a transparent and inclusive way to protect consumers' health and ensuring fair trade practices. Work already done by other relevant organizations such as ISO would be taken into account in the preparation of the standards. The delegation further said that if the Commission established such a committee, India would be willing to host it.

25. The Committee agreed on the importance of Codex work on spices, aromatic plants and their formulations as these being widely traded on the international market and highly produced and consumed within the region. Several countries indicated that they had national standards for a number of these products and that harmonization at international level would improve the overall quality of the products while ensuring fair trade practices. It was also noted that collaboration with other international organizations active in the standardization of these products, such as ISO, should be encouraged to avoid overlapping or conflicting standards and facilitate international trade.

26. The Committee further agreed that, in view of the vast amount of work envisaged for the development of standards for the various spices, aromatic herbs and their formulations being marketed in international trade, a permanent subsidiary body, i.e. a committee, as opposed to a time-bound task force should be established in order to carry out work in a systematic way. The Committee also noted that, given the wide range of spices, aromatic herbs and their formulations being produced or marketed in international trade, prioritization of work on these products would be defined by the subsidiary body, if established by the Commission, in accordance with the *Criteria for the Establishment of Work Priorities* as laid down in the Procedural Manual of the Commission.

Proposed draft Regional Code of Practice for Street Vended Foods (Near East)

27. The Committee recalled that the 34th Session of the Commission adopted the proposed draft Code at Step 5, held it at Step 8 and submitted the hygiene provisions for endorsement to the Committee on Food Hygiene with a view to its final adoption by the 36th Session of the Commission following further consideration of these provisions by the 7th Session of the Coordinating Committee for the Near East.

28. The Committee noted that discussions would be focused on the hygiene provisions that had been endorsed by the CCFH as other non-hygiene provisions had already been adopted by the Commission and held at Step 8 awaiting the endorsement and finalization of the hygiene provisions in the CCFH and the CCNEA respectively.

29. The Committee generally agreed with the changes proposed by the CCFH (see Annex I of CX/NEA 13/7/2) and, in addition, made a number of comments and amendments as indicated below. The Committee also made a number of adjustments to the Arabic version to better match the changes made to the hygiene provisions.

Section 2.3.8 – Perishable food

30. The Committee agreed that “freezing”, in addition to “refrigeration”, should be included as a method that certain foods might require to control growth of pathogenic microorganisms.

Section 2.3.11 – Ready to eat food

31. The Committee noted that the CCFH did not provide any justification for the deletion of the definition of “ready to eat food” and that this term appeared in other sections of the proposed draft Code therefore, the definition should be retained to facilitate the interpretation of the relevant provisions in the proposed draft Code. It was further noted that the definition, as presented in the proposed draft Code, was in line with corresponding definitions in other regional codes of practice for street vended foods developed within the Codex framework.

Section 2.3.12 – Relevant authority

32. The Committee made editorial amendments to better reflect that the relevant authority could also be any local officially recognized authority.

Section 4.1 - Health conditions of the vendors

33. The Committee had an exchange of views as to the best term to be used to describe symptoms of diseases that food handlers, vendors or assistants should not present when performing activities related to street vended foods.

34. The Committee agreed that the term “suffering” better reflected the intent of the provision in the Arabic version and thus decided to retain this word in this version while maintaining the term “showing” in the English version as proposed by the CCFH.

Section 4.2.2

35. The Committee agreed that in addition to “clean” also “appropriate” clothing should be worn for completeness of the personal hygiene requirements that food handlers, vendors or assistants should observe during the conduct of their business.

Section 4.4 Vendor associations

36. A delegation noted that the revised provision did not take into account the situation in some countries of the region where vendor associations might not yet have been established and suggested that this condition be considered in the section.

37. The Committee noted that this section was not directly linked to hygiene requirements and that the original provision should be retained as better describing the intent of the section.

Section 5.2.1

38. The Committee agreed that there was merit in retaining the term “impervious” as an essential property of materials used for the street food stall and that these materials “can” as opposed to “shall” be cleaned and disinfected since the provision referred to the possibility to clean and disinfect the materials for their safe and continuous use rather than requirements inherent to the nature of such materials.

Section 5.3.5 Toilets

39. The Committee agreed to refer to “sanitary facilities” for better clarity as to the type of facility referred to under this section.

Section 6.5

40. The Committee noted the request of the CCFH on the scientific basis for the measures prescribed for the cleaning of utensils.

41. The Committee recalled that this provision was in line with corresponding requirements in other regional codes of practice for street vended foods developed within the Codex framework e.g. Regional Code of Practice for Street Vended Foods (Africa) and therefore agreed to retain the provisions as drafted.

Section 7.1.1

42. The Committee had an exchange of views on the proper qualifier for sources of raw food and ingredients including ice used in the elaboration of street foods. Several terms were proposed as an alternative to “reputable sources” as this term might not cover all the necessary elements to ensure the quality and safety of the food source.

43. The Committee noted that providers of such sources could not always be certified by the relevant national or locally recognized authority although inspection and certification procedures were in place in countries of the region to certify food (raw and processed) intended for further preparation, packaging and selling. The Committee agreed to retain the initial term “reliable” as more encompassing of the elements ensuring the overall quality of the food sources for street foods.

General consideration

44. The Committee noted that there was a mixture of provisions using “shall” and “should” and agreed that, although Codex standards and related texts were of advisory nature, the provisions therein must be clear as to the intent of the requirement which would facilitate uptaking of the standard or its relevant part into the national regulations hence facilitating enforcement of the provisions at national and/or regional level.

45. The Committee thus agreed to maintain both terms in the English version but to align the Arabic version to with the term “**yajeb** (=must)” across the proposed draft Code.

Conclusion

46. The Committee agreed to forward the proposed draft Regional Code of Practice for Street Vended Foods (Near East) with the relevant revision to the hygiene provisions to the 36th Session of the Commission for adoption at Step 8 (Appendix II).

Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling

47. The Committee agreed to delete the references to the hunter scale in the section “Sensory factors” and the method of analysis for colour from the regional standard for harissa. The Committee also agreed that the methods of analysis for sugars and acidity in halwa tehenia should be AOAC 930.36 and AOAC 930.35J, respectively. The Committee also agreed to delete the section on sampling in the regional Standards for Humus with Tehena, for Tehena and for Foul Madames.

DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION 2014-2019 (Agenda Item 2b)⁵

48. The Committee recalled that a revised draft of the strategic plan had been considered by the 67th CCEXEC and the 35th Session CAC⁶ and that the 67th CCEXEC⁷ had agreed to establish a subcommittee, chaired by CAC Vice-Chairperson Dr. Samuel Godefroy (Canada), with the mandate to:

- Complete the draft Strategic Plan 2014-2019, taking into account the discussion at the 35th Commission (including performance indicators and a work plan) (by end of July 2012);
- Send the draft to the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees for discussion and input;
- Finalise the Strategic Plan 2014-2019 based on the inputs from the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees (by mid March 2013) for circulation and comments and consideration and adoption by the 68th CCEXEC and the 36th CAC.

49. The draft developed by the subcommittee is contained in CX/NEA 13/7/3 and a compilation of the comments provided to the 67th Session of the Executive Committee together with the input from the 35th CAC is contained in CX/LAC 13/7/3 Add.1.

50. Vice-Chairperson Dr Samuel Godefroy introduced the revised draft, which includes a work plan describing for each activity the responsible party, time line, expected outcome and measurable indicator(s). He clarified that the sub-committee had not made any changes to the four strategic goals and that most of the objectives were kept unchanged from the version reviewed by the 35th Session of the Commission. Some objectives and a number of activities had been amended to take into account comments, to clearer identify expected outcomes and measurable/concrete indicators and to avoid duplication.

51. The Vice-Chairperson explained that the first strategic goal focuses on the core business of the Commission, to develop food standards and the second on how this is undertaken with an emphasis on risk analysis principles. The third strategic goal relates to support to capacity building, recognising that Codex is not directly responsible for this work but FAO and WHO. The fourth strategic objective is “inward” looking, focusing on improving the efficiency of Codex’s work.

52. The Vice-Chairperson suggested focusing comments on suggestions and/or directions for the draft Strategic Plan rather than on specific wording, as the sub-committee will continue working on it.

53. The Committee reviewed the draft text and made comments or proposed amendments as follows.

Strategic Goal 1: Establish international food standards that address current and emerging food issues

54. The Vice-Chairperson explained that this goal aimed at ensuring that the Commission Deal with existing and emerging issues that come from drivers of change.

⁵ CX/NEA 13/7/3 and CX/NEA 13/7/3-Add.1; CRD 13 (Egypt)

⁶ REP12/CAC, paras 183-202

⁷ REP12/EXEC2; paras 57-60

55. One delegation suggested that regarding activity 1.2.3 (Develop a mechanism measuring the implementation of Codex standards by member governments), there should be formal yearly reports from members on the status of implementation of standards and any obstacles.

56. It was noted that the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees already had a standing item on their agenda where members reported on implementation of Codex standards.

57. The Vice-Chairperson said that a number of mechanisms were available to get this information and that the comment could be taken into account when further working on the measurable indicators for this activity.

Strategic Goal 2: Ensure the application of risk analysis principles in the development of Codex standards.

58. One delegation remarked that the indicator for 2.2.1 (Encourage FAO and WHO governing bodies to identify the provision of scientific advice as a high priority and allocate sufficient resources for the FAO/WHO expert bodies) was presently only mentioning the intervention of members in the governing bodies of FAO and WHO (FAO conference and World Health Assembly) and could possibly be improved.

59. Another delegation remarked that FAO and WHO should give priority to the support and capacity building (training and workshops) for the implementation of risk analysis in the region as many countries still lacked the relevant policies. Concerning 2.3.4 (Encourage the establishment of networks of developing member countries to enhance collaboration in the generation of data that can be submitted for review by expert committees) they remarked that the support of data collection should be included in the objective of FAO and WHO.

60. The Vice-Chairperson explained that the indicators and outputs concerning all activities were still under discussion in the sub-committee and could still be improved.

Strategic Goal 3: Facilitate the effective participation of all Codex Members.

61. One delegation suggested that the establishment of national Codex committees should be included as well as the establishment of guidelines on this question. Another delegation suggested the increased use of electronic means for capacity building.

62. The representative of FAO explained that Codex guidelines on this issue had been issued and that FAO had undertaken a number of projects in different countries, assisting them to build national Codex structures, e.g. in Syria, Sudan, Yemen, Morocco, Tunisia. A new project was being launched in Lebanon. The representative clarified that in all cases it was necessary that countries apply for assistance as the situation was different in each country and the support could only take place through projects.

63. Concerning action 3.1.2 (Encourage the use of partnership initiatives to increase effectiveness of participation of developing countries, such as co-hosting of committees and working groups, including the development of guidance documents, building on lessons learned.), the Vice-Chairperson clarified that it was meant to increase participation and capacity on the one hand through traditional training measures and on the other through the way Codex conducts its business by increasing co-hosting which had shown to be particularly effective.

64. One delegation raised the issue of late availability of documents in all working languages and that this prevented in many cases an effective participation. They also asked for clarification on activity 3.2.3 (Where practical, use Codex meetings as a forum to effectively conduct educational and technical capacity building activities.)

65. The Vice-Chairperson clarified that deficiencies in the work organization were addressed under strategic objective 4. Concerning 3.2.3 he said that in margin of participation of delegations in Codex meetings it is possible to organize capacity building activities.

Strategic Goal 4: Implement effective and efficient work management systems and practices.

66. One delegation mentioned regarding objective 4.2 (Enhance capacity to arrive at consensus in standards setting process), the need to take all possible measures to avoid voting except in exceptional cases. Draft standards should be submitted to the Commission only after achieving consensus.

67. The Vice-Chairperson said that already in the present procedures voting was the last resort in Codex and that the objective aimed at giving the tools to Chairpersons and delegations to further increase the possibility to find a consensus.

68. Concerning 4.1.4 (Enhance timely distribution of all Codex working documents) it was mentioned it was important that the working documents should be distributed in all working languages in a timely manner to prepare the feedback in a timely manner. It was also suggested that the timeframe for this activity should be ongoing.

69. The Vice-Chairperson thanked the Committee for the discussion and said that all contributions would be taken into account in the further drafting of the document.

FAO/WHO ACTIVITIES COMPLEMENTARY TO THE WORK OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION (Agenda Item 3a)⁸

70. The Representative of FAO presented document CX/NEA13/7/4 on activities of FAO and WHO in relation to capacity building and scientific advice, which are complementary to the work of CAC.

71. The Committee commended the work of both organizations in the Region, and requested them to continue with their assistance to the countries in the identified priority areas that were highlighted in the document. There was a specific interest in developing the capacity of member countries in risk analysis, especially in relation to inspection and standards setting.

72. The Representative of FAO explained that both organizations will continue to develop the human and institutional capacity to improve food safety in the region, and explained to the delegations the means through which they could request technical assistance from FAO. She also highlighted the importance of using the regional coordinating committee as a forum through which they could request scientific advice from Codex in addition to it being a forum for discussing issues of relevance to the region. She also emphasized the need for the Region to become more active in providing data to the international community and encouraged the countries to nominate experts to relevant Codex committees and to the FAO roster of food safety experts. The representative of WHO agreed with the statement of FAO and said that human resources capacity building was also a priority for WHO.

FAO/WHO PROJECT AND TRUST FUND FOR ENHANCED PARTICIPATION IN CODEX (Agenda Item 3b)⁹

73. The representative of WHO/EMRO presented CX/NEA 13/7/5 and emphasized the importance of understanding the objectives of Codex Trust Fund (CTF).

74. The Committee appreciated the support of the CTF and the donors and would like this process to continue as many countries had graduated from the CTF and could not sustain attending the meetings and also had the need for continuing capacity building to enhance their participation in Codex.

PROPOSED DRAFT REGIONAL STANDARD FOR DOUGH (Agenda Item 4)¹⁰

75. The delegation of Iraq as the chair of the in-session working group said that due to time constraints, the working group had considered the proposed draft standard only up to Section 3.2.

76. The Committee noted that it was difficult to consider the proposed draft standard in detail at this session because Iran, which had prepared the proposed draft, was absent. The Committee, therefore, agreed to establish an eWG, led by Lebanon and working in Arabic and English, to redraft the proposed draft standard, taking into consideration the discussions of the in-session working group.

77. The Committee noted that FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Europe (CCEURO) was developing a regional standard for ayran, which was a very similar product but doogh could be carbonated and having spices and flavours added. In addition, the Committee noted that ayran is also produced and marketed in large quantities in the Near East region. One delegation proposed that it should be considered to develop an international standard for ayran and similar products.

78. The Secretariat recalled the conclusions of the 9th Session of Committee for Milk and Milk Products (CCMMP) to the proposals from Turkey and Iran regarding ayran and doogh. The CCMMP had not supported the inclusion of ayran and doogh into the *Standard for Fermented Milks* but had considered that regional standards for these products could be developed¹¹.

79. After some discussion the Committee agreed that it should closely follow the work of the CCEURO and encouraged the Members of the region to participate in the working group for ayran and the CCEURO as observers.

80. The Committee also agreed to request the advice of the Commission on the possibility to establish a joint working group between CCEURO and CCNEA on ayran to avoid confusion and duplication of work and to establish a harmonized regional standard.

⁸ CX/NEA13/7/4

⁹ CX/NEA 13/7/5; CRD 10 (Egypt)

¹⁰ CX/NEA 13/7/6; CRD 9 (Egypt); CRD 12 (Lebanon)

¹¹ ALINORM 10/33/11 paras 35 and 36

Status of the Proposed Draft Regional Standard for Doogh

81. The Committee agreed to return the proposed draft at Step 2, establish the above-mentioned eWG for redrafting, circulate at Step 3 and consider at the next session.

PROPOSED DRAFT REGIONAL STANDARD FOR DATE PASTE (Agenda Item 5)¹²

82. The Delegation of Tunisia, as the chair of the in-session working group, introduced the work of the WG, which had generally reached the consensus on the document. The Committee agreed to consider the amended text paragraph by paragraph. In addition to the editorial changes, the Committee agreed the following amendments to CX/NEA 13/7/7.

Section 3 Quality Factors

83. The Committee agreed to delete the reference to the Standard for Dates because some of the quality factors in the Standard were not applicable to this product and to include the necessary provisions on total ash and acid insoluble ash content instead.

Section 3bis Food Additives (new section)

84. The Committee agreed that the products should contain no food additives.

Section 4 Contaminants and 5 Hygiene

85. The Committee agreed to replace the texts with the standard texts in the Procedural Manual.

Section 6 Packaging

86. The Committee agreed to delete Section 6.5 as it was overlapping with other sections.

Section 7 Methods of Analysis

87. The Committee agreed that the methods of analysis for moisture, mineral matter content, ash and acid insoluble ash content should be AOAC 934.06, ISO 762:1982, AOAC 940.26 and AOAC 900.02D, respectively.

Section 8 Labelling

88. The Committee agreed to remove Section 8.2.

Status of the Proposed Draft Regional Standard for Date Paste

89. The Committee agreed to forward to the Commission the proposed draft standard as contained in Appendix III to this report for adoption at Step 5/8, with omission of Steps 6 and 7 and to forward it to CCMAS, CCFA and CCFL for endorsement.

PROJECT DOCUMENT FOR A REGIONAL STANDARD FOR CAMEL MILK (Agenda Item 6)¹³

90. The delegation of the United Arab Emirates introduced the proposal indicating that camel milk was a product highly consumed in the Gulf countries and the Near East region due to its nutritional and healthy properties with a growing demand in foreign markets hence there was a need to address the identity and overall quality of this product to protect consumers' health and ensure fair trade practices.

91. Many delegations supported the development of regional standards for camel milk (raw and treated) as the product was widely consumed in the Near East region both in rural and urban areas including neighbouring countries within the Sahel region in Africa. In addition, there was an increasing demand for this product in other regions showing the international market potential for this product. The delegations noted that in some countries of the region camel milk was the major source of milk for the population and in certain areas it could also substitute the consumption of other milks and their products.

92. The delegations indicated that the standard should take into account relevant Codex texts in particular those related to milk and milk products in order to further develop specific provisions for camel milk to address issues relating to definition, composition and essential quality factors, labelling and analytical methods to preserve the quality, safety, nutritional and health characteristics of the product.

93. It was however recognized that nutritional and health claims made on camel milk might yet need further studies in order to provide for the scientific basis for such claims but that advice could be sought from the relevant Codex committees i.e. Committees on Food Labelling and Nutrition and Food for Special Dietary Uses in this regard.

¹² CX/NEA 13/7/7; CRD 5 (Egypt)

¹³ CXNEA 13/7/8.

94. The delegations also indicated that standards for camel milk and related products had been established in several countries of the region and there was a need for harmonization of the requirements in order to facilitate trade. It was further noted that, in addition to matters relating to nutrition and health claims, there were an urgent need to address misleading labelling practices i.e. product not containing or containing only partially camel milk but sold as camel milk taking into account that camel milk was more expensive than milks produced from other milking animals and its wide consumption within the region.

95. The Codex Secretariat noted that Codex had not established worldwide standards for milks (raw or treated) however there were general Codex texts developed by the Committee on Milk and Milk Products and other relevant horizontal food safety committees that might address issues related to the safety of the product. In addition, misleading labelling practices could already be covered by the relevant provisions in the General Standard for the Use of Dairy Terms (CODEX STAN 206-1999) where the different animals from which the milk had been derived shall be inserted immediately before or after the designation of the product if their omission would mislead consumers.

96. The Representative of FAO raised concerns about the proposed work for the establishment of a regional standard for camel milk. The Representative noted that, in light of the absence of Codex standards for other types of milk, the setting of a standard for camel milk in a region where this milk was being used by some people as a remedy for chronic illnesses including cancer might reinforce the idea of camel milk being of superior or higher quality than other milks and the claims of its therapeutic properties without scientific basis. In addition, the Representative highlighted that camel milk was consumed and traded in countries that belonged to regions other than the near east and raised a question about the appropriateness of having a regional standard for this commodity.

97. The Representative of WHO/EMRO stated that delegates were asking on how to differentiate between camel milk from other milks. In this regard, he indicated that the Committee could request the Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling to find a method to identify camel milk from milks of other milking animals.

98. The Observer of IDF indicated that labelling provisions in the General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods (CODES STAN 1-1995) and the General Standard for the Use of Dairy Terms were sufficient to address misleading labelling practices. In addition, issues related to mixtures of camel milk with milks from other milking animals could be resolved through the identification of appropriate analytical methods. Food safety issues related to hygiene, the presence of residues of pesticides, veterinary drugs, contaminants or the addition of food additives were covered in the relevant Codex horizontal food safety texts or could be addressed in the pertinent Codex general food safety committees. The Observer also noted that there were no individual Codex standards for milk from each milking animal with the exception of some dairy products where the raw material provisions specific milk from named animals as the horizontal texts related to milk and milk products combined with other relevant Codex texts sufficiently covered those trade and consumers' health protection matters related to fair practices in trade of milk. The Observer also noted that if a standard for camel milk were to be developed, account should be taken of the different species of camels producing milk or the standard should clearly scope the specie of camel to which the provisions for milk applied to. The Observer further noted that comprehensive information and comments were provided by the IDF at the 6th session of the Committee in CRD 1 available for consultation at: <ftp://ftp.fao.org/codex/meetings/ccnea/ccnea6>

99. The Chair of the Committee noted the comments made and recommended that the decision on the development of a standard for camel milk should be deferred to a later stage when more scientific information became available as to the properties of the product and after a complete review of the available Codex texts and other relevant FAO and WHO documents (references to be included in final report) compiling information and practices on camel milk and derived products, be carried out in order to determine whether work in the CCNEA was needed and what aspects of the product should be covered and the type of document that should be developed to this purpose. The delegation of the UAE would carry out this task and present the results to the next session. The Committee concurred with the suggestion of the Chair.

UPDATES SINCE THE LAST SESSION (Agenda Item 7)¹⁴

100. The Committee noted that the information on the update of the national food control systems, national codex structures, priority areas for implementation and training needs, use of Codex standard and national priorities and interests, scientific and data collection activities, issues related to nutrition in the region and cooperation with relevant international and regional organizations in the Member countries were summarized in the working documents and CRDs.

¹⁴ CX/NEA 13/7/9 (Algeria, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Oman, Sudan); CRD 2 (Egypt); CRD 3 (Lebanon)

101. Many Members thanked FAO and WHO for the assistance given but that further assistance was needed, especially to establish national risk analysis frameworks including guidance for practical implementation and to improve the capacity of testing laboratories. It was also noted that workshops, training programs and other capacity building activities, in particular those focusing on specific objectives, were beneficial to the Members and necessary to enforce their food safety systems and ensure their active participation in Codex.

102. The Representative of FAO mentioned that these points should be prioritized and that FAO would assist the Members if assistance was requested officially. The Representative highlighted that even though FAO and WHO would give assistance, it would still be the governments' responsibility to set priorities, select activities, and to implement the main part of the improvements. She said further that the FAO programs for 2013 would include the main issues in capacity building: Risk assessment, food control systems and establishing food standards and also there would be training programs in cooperation with the coordinator in the region. Any specific requests should be addressed to FAO.

103. The Representative of WHO/EMRO agreed with the opinion of FAO and indicated that countries must set priorities and contact the country representatives of FAO and WHO. He also indicated that the national Codex Committees must collaborate with their food safety authorities and that WHO would offer technical training in the laboratories, epidemiology, and risk analysis in food. He stressed the importance of indicating the food safety focal points in each country. In 2013 an important meeting on food chemical risk analysis would be held in Jordan and two countries of the region had been chosen to participate in an assessment of the burden of food borne diseases by looking at the cost. He stressed that the good functioning of internal cooperation, communication and organization was an important factor in determining the feasibility and effectiveness of any assistance given to countries.

104. The Committee noted that information sharing among the Members was important. With regard to the website of the Committee which might be used for this purpose the Committee agreed that it would be best if FAO could host the website on the understanding that the information would be uploaded by the coordinator. Hosting the site on FAO servers would ensure continuity and avoid any issues when one coordinator took over from the previous.

PROPOSALS FOR THE CODING, CLASSIFICATION AND REGISTRATION OF FOODS (Agenda Item 8)¹⁵

105. The Delegation of the UAE introduced the document and explained their system of coding and registration for the purpose of facilitating food inspection, tracing and enforcing rules. They said that the system of coding was linked to the HS code used by customs. The Delegation said that it would be beneficial to exchange the experiences about the coding system and that it would be possible for Members to consider using the system in their country.

106. Several delegations noted that a harmonized coding system in the region could be beneficial however there were many different coding systems possible for different purposes (e.g. customs code, Codex food classification systems for food additives or pesticides). Several delegations reported that similar systems were used in their countries.

107. The Representative of FAO said that the experience in Dubai could be beneficial to all countries in the region and informed the Committee that FAO was working on capacity building for food control systems and specifically workshops on the means of collecting data and classifying products based on risk analysis. She emphasized that it was important to take into account the consumption patterns in each country when introducing any classification system as exposure assessment is essential when it is used for risk analysis. When transferring this to another country, the consumption patterns of this country would have to be taken into account.

108. The Committee thanked the United Arab Emirates for preparing the document and noted that it was only for information at this stage and that further information on these systems could be exchanged at future sessions under the standing item on national food control systems.

109. One delegation mentioned that such systems could also be beneficial in the exchange of emergency information.

110. The Representatives of FAO and WHO/EMRO noted that INFOSAN and EMPRES Food Safety were the international systems hosted by FAO and WHO for the exchange of emergency information and that it was important that those responsible for food control were in touch with the INFOSAN emergency officers in the country to allow them to directly convey any information on emerging issues which would then be classified in the INFOSAN system and messages to all relevant INFOSAN contact points would be sent so that related products could be recalled.

¹⁵ CX/NEA 13/7/10

DISCUSSION PAPER ON A STANDARD FOR HALAL FOOD (Agenda Item 9)¹⁶

111. The Committee recalled that at its 6th Session the Delegation of Saudi Arabia had proposed new work on development of Codex guidance on halal products, which should address all issues related to the international trade of halal food products. The 6th Session had noted that a WHO report of a two-year research project on Halal had been prepared and would be made available and that Codex already had *General Guidelines for Use of the Term Halal* (CAC/GL 24-1997).

112. The Delegation of Egypt had been of the view that the Codex Guidelines only covered labelling, and that a regional or international standard dealing with other issues was necessary because of the importance of Halal food trade. The 6th Session had thus requested the delegation of Egypt to prepare a discussion paper on the issue for the next session.

113. The delegation of Egypt introduced their discussion paper outlining first the growing trade volume of halal products world wide due to several factors i.e. that the number of Muslims is growing and the term “halal food products” is no longer restricted to meat from animals slaughtered in accordance with Islamic law, but has come to include numerous other products as well. They also outlined current efforts on standardization done by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, that has 57 member States on four continents and has in 2009 approved final drafts of three fundamental documents in the domain of halal food products, namely: OIC Standard – general guidelines on halal foods, Guidelines for bodies providing halal certification, and Guidelines for the authorized accreditation body accrediting halal certification bodies. They reported also of other efforts for harmonization in addition to many existing national regulations for halal foods and considered that it is essential for Codex to develop standards, directives and guidelines for halal food products. This would help lower barriers to intraregional trade among Codex member States, not only at the regional level but also at the international level. They suggested that Codex work should start where OIC work had ended and to use the results of the OIC work.

114. The Representative of WHO/EMRO presented the WHO document on halal, which had been announced at the 6th session of the Committee. He reiterated that the issues related to halal were ethical and religious issues and also related to fair practices in trade and labelling but were not related to food safety. The Representative also was of the opinion that in any discussion on halal, the existing Codex halal guidelines and the Arab halal guidelines 2012-2563 produced by Arab Industry and Standardization should be taken into account.

115. Several delegations reported on their experience with regulating halal foods and supported the general idea for Codex work on halal especially to prevent fraud in this growing market area and said that the existing criteria were not sufficient to ensure this. It was mentioned that what had originally been a religious issue had now also become a promotional label to which consumers attributed a certain quality. It was mentioned that all current international work should be taken into account.

116. The Codex Secretariat recalled that if the existing Codex *General Guidelines for the Use of the Term Halal* were considered inadequate, a relevant project document should be drafted in accordance with the Codex procedural manual, outlining the need for revision of the guidelines.

117. After some discussion the Committee agreed that the delegation of Egypt taking into account the OIC documents and other relevant documents would prepare a project document for submission to the next session of the Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission outlining the gaps in the current *General Guidelines for Use of the Term Halal* (CAC/GL 24-1997) and the scope for a revision to update them to include any relevant new guidance. When drafting the scope care should be taken that an international consensus could be reached on the issues in question.

NOMINATION OF THE COORDINATOR (Agenda Item 10)¹⁷

118. On the proposal of the Delegation of Egypt, the Coordinating Committee unanimously agreed to recommend to the 36th Session of the Commission that Lebanon be reappointed for a second term as Coordinator for the Near East. The Delegation of Lebanon thanked all the Countries for their support and accepted the nomination.

¹⁶ CX/NEA 13/7/11

¹⁷ CX/NEA 13/7/12

OTHER BUSINESS AND FUTURE WORK (Agenda Item 11)**Proposals for new regional standards on labneh, zaatar, orange blossom water and rose water¹⁸**

119. The delegation of Lebanon introduced proposals for new work on regional standards for “labneh” and “zaatar” and informed the Committee that work on orange blossom water and rose water would be considered at the next session. The delegation indicated that the main aspects to be covered by these standards related to identity, essential composition and quality factors, labelling and analytical methods while aspects related to food safety would be address through the relevant Codex horizontal food safety texts.

120. The Committee agreed with rationale provided in the project documents but requested Lebanon in consultation with other interested countries to provide further data on volume of production and consumption in member countries and volume and pattern of trade between countries of the region for consideration by the Executive Committee.

121. The Committee agreed to forward proposals for new work on regional Codex standards for “labneh” and “zaatar” for approval by the 36th Session of the Commission.

122. The Committee further agreed that after the Commission had approved new work on these items, the delegation of Lebanon would develop the proposed draft standards in collaboration with other interested countries of the region for circulation at step 3 and consideration by the 8th session of the CCNEA. The Committee further agreed that the standards would be developed in Arabic and English.

Proposals for regional or international standards for frozen and refrigerated meat¹⁹

123. The delegation of Egypt introduced the proposal for the development of standards for frozen and refrigerated meat as there were no Codex standards for these products, they were traded worldwide; and were a important commodity in several countries of the Near East region.

124. The delegation indicated that further details on the need for regional or international standards in this product could be presented in a project document for consideration by the Executive Committee under the Critical Review which would take into consideration all relevant Codex texts currently available for meat and meat products; would identify gaps in these texts; would make proposals how address these gaps e.g. by either revising existing Codex texts or by further developing additional Codex texts to address quality and safety characteristics of the final product and/or other aspects relating to the production, processing, handling, storage, transport, etc. of these products.

125. The Committee agreed that the delegation of Egypt with the assistance of interested countries of the region would present a project document addressing the points described in the above paragraph to the Executive Committee for consideration as to the best way to move forward with the development of these standards i.e. either within the CCNEA or at international level. The Committee further agreed that the project document would be developed in Arabic and English.

Development of a Regional Strategic Plan for the Near East Region²⁰

126. The delegation of Lebanon referred to the usefulness a regional strategic plan for the region in order to better accomplish the mandate of the CCNEA in particular related to exchanging information on and identifying the problems and needs of the region concerning food standards and food control systems, participation in the work of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies and enhancing the quality and safety of their food products. The delegation indicated that the regional plan would take into account relevant provisions in the Strategic Plan of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (2008-2013) and proposed Strategic Plan for 2014-2019.

127. The Committee agreed to establish an electronic working group led by Lebanon and working in English and Arabic languages to prepare a draft Regional Strategic Plan for the Near East Region for 2015-2020 for consideration by the 8th session of the CCNEA.

Availability of Codex documents in Arabic²¹

128. The delegation of Lebanon referred to the need to have Codex standards and related texts available in Arabic including reports and working documents of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies in order to facilitate active participation of countries of the region in the work of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies.

¹⁸ CRD 4 (Lebanon)

¹⁹ CRD 5 (Egypt)

²⁰ CRD 7 (Lebanon)

²¹ CRD 6 (Lebanon)

129. Many delegations agreed with this proposal as it would assist countries of the region in developing national positions in a timely manner; facilitate the integration of Codex standards into the national regulations; and would assist in disseminating information about Codex amongst academia, industry, and other stakeholders; and would enhance overall quality of the products as producers would have relevant information available in their own language.

130. The Committee noted that printed copies of the Arabic version of the special publications and other relevant Codex texts would be very useful for regulators, experts, industry, etc. as access to internet was not always available.

131. The Codex Secretariat informed the Committee that there was ongoing work in translating all Codex standards and related texts in the official languages of the Commission and that they were available free of charge on the Codex website for consultation. In addition, reports of the Commission and the Executive Committee as well as most of their working documents were available in Arabic. However, translation of Codex working documents including report of the meetings of technical bodies of the Commission remained the responsibility of the Codex member hosting the Secretariat of the committee or task force. Printed copies of special publications would be included in the Codex publication plan and become available subject to sufficient funds in the second half of 2013.

DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT SESSION (Agenda Item 12)

132. The Committee was informed that its 8th Session would be held in approximately two years time and that more detailed arrangements would be communicated to Members following the appointment of the Coordinator by the 36th Session of the Commission.

Summary Status of Work

SUBJECT MATTER	STEP	ACTION BY:	DOCUMENT REFERENCE (REP13/NEA)
Regional Code of Practice for Street-Vended Foods	8	CAC36 Governments	para.46 Appendix II
Regional Standard for Date Paste	5/8	CAC36 Governments	para.89 Appendix III
Regional Standard for Doogh	2/3	eWG led by Lebanon Governments CCNEA8	para.81
Standard for Halal Food	1/2/3	Egypt CAC36	para.117
Regional Standard for Labneh	1/2/3	Lebanon CAC36	para. 122
Regional Standard for Mixed Zaatar	1/2/3	Lebanon CAC36	para. 122
Standard for Refrigerated and Frozen Meat	1/2/3	Egypt CAC36	para. 125
Preparation of the Strategic Plan for CCNEA 2015-2020	-	eWG led by Lebanon CCNEA8	para. 127

APPENDIX I

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APPENDIX II**DRAFT REGIONAL CODE OF PRACTICE FOR STREET-VENDED FOODS
(NEAR EAST REGION)****INTRODUCTION**

Street-vended ready-to-eat foods constitute an important link of the food supply chain as they have spread at a rather fast rate in many countries due to socioeconomic changes. In fact, people opt for such foods for their special taste and affordability. These foods are also necessary to certain societies, namely in developing countries as they offer ready-to-eat meals that even the poorest can afford. Despite this important aspect, these foods represent on the other hand a possible health threat.

Due to the potential chemical and bacterial contamination out on the streets, the present guidelines recommend raising the awareness of the people working in the ready-to-eat foods sector and improving the environmental conditions in which those foods are vended. They also recommend providing the necessary services to help the vendors guarantee the safety of such foods.

In addition to tackling the role of authorities and entities regulating street food vending, the present examines the standards of this important sector of the food system, and sheds the light on the principles of hygiene that should be respected in every step of the process.

SECTION 1 – OBJECTIVES

The present directives tackle the conditions that should be taken into consideration when setting street food standards. They include legal provisions, accurate implementation and practice.

They also aim at helping the relevant authorities in improving the level of these foods' preparation and vending processes in way that guarantees safe, healthy and nutritional foods to the consumers, in accessible locations.

SECTION 2 – SCOPE, USAGE AND DEFINITIONS**2.1 Scope**

The present guidelines define the general hygienic requirements and recommended practices concerning the preparation and vending of street foods.

2.2 Usage

Each Section of the present document indicates the goals to be achieved and the justifications of such goals, as far as food hygiene is concerned.

2.3 Definitions

For the purposes of the present guidelines, the terms used herein shall have the following definitions:

2.3.1 Appliances

The whole or any part of any utensil, machinery, instrument, apparatus or article used or intended for use, in or for making, preparing, keeping, selling or supplying of food.

2.3.2 Clean water

Water that does not compromise food safety in the circumstance of its use.

2.3.3 Crockery

All tools used for food serving and consumption (whether non-disposable or disposable), and they include cups (glasses), plates, trays, mugs, spoons, forks and ladles.

2.3.4 Disposable articles

Any appliance, container, implement, utensil or wrapper that is intended for use only once in the preparation, storage, display, serving or sale of food.

2.3.5 Impermeable

Preventing the passage/absorption of water and/or fluids.

2.3.6 Microorganisms

Any microscopic living organism that can cause disease or food spoilage.

2.3.7 Street food vendor

Individual selling street foods in street food stalls or centres.

2.3.8 Perishable food

Any food that needs to be kept refrigerated or frozen to minimize or prevent growth of food poisoning organisms (and/or food spoilage) (e.g. food that consists wholly or in part of milk, milk products, eggs, meat, poultry, fish or shellfish).

2.3.9 Potable/Drinking water

Treated water, which shall comply with WHO Guidelines for Drinking Water Quality.

2.3.10 Ready-to-eat foods

Any food (including beverages) which is normally consumed in its raw state or any food handled, processed, mixed, cooked, or otherwise prepared into a form in which it is normally consumed without further processing.

2.3.11 Relevant authority

Any ministry having competent responsibility or any local officially recognized authority.

2.3.12 Sealed containers

Food grade containers such as:

- (a) hermetically sealed containers;
- (b) sealed jars, with anchor and crown type closures;
- (c) milk bottles sealed with aluminium caps;
- (d) glass jars and bottles with screw caps; and
- (e) cans and similar containers with seals.

2.3.13 Street Food Centre

Any public place or establishment designated by the relevant authority for the preparation, display and sale of street foods by multiple vendors.

2.3.14 Street Foods

Wide range of ready-to-eat foods sold and sometimes prepared in public places, notably streets.

2.3.15 Street Food Stall

A place where street food is prepared, displayed, served or sold to the public. It includes carts, tables, benches, baskets, chairs, vehicles with or without wheels and any other structure approved by the relevant authority where on it or in it, any street foods are displayed for sale.

2.3.16 Waste Water

Waste water means sullage water arising as a result of the activity of vendors.

2.3.17 Water containers

Any form of food grade container which is used solely for the purpose of storing and serving water and has not been used previously for any other purposes which could cause contamination of the water stored in it.

SECTION 3 – GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

3.1 Rules and regulations

3.1.1 Appropriate rules and regulations should be drafted in order to be easily endorsed with the possibility of controlling the street foods industry as an integral part of the food preparation process. Such legislations can be either elaborated separately or for incorporation into existing food regulations.

3.1.2 The general hygienic requirements and practices to be followed by the vendors should be translated by the relevant authorities into Codes of practice which are recognized as cost effective tools for the control of street foods, by fully taking into account local conditions including specific risk factors that are relevant to each operation.

3.2 Licensing/ Registration of vendors

No vendor shall conduct his/her business of preparation, packing, storage, display and sale of any street foods unless he/she is licensed/ registered under the relevant food regulations.

3.3 Conditions for licensing

3.3.1 No relevant authority shall issue or renew the license of any vendor who does not commit himself to comply with all the requirements of the Code of Practice established by the officially recognized authorities within a determined period of time.

3.3.2 It is essential that basic training in food hygiene is carried out by the relevant authorities prior to issuing or renewing the license/ registration of street food vendors.

3.4 Display of notices

3.4.1 Every licensed vendor shall at all times display visibly his/her vendor's License/ Registration and any other notices that are required by the relevant authorities to be displayed.

3.5 Pest and animal control

3.5.1 Every vendor shall at all times take appropriate measures to keep his/her stall free from animals (e.g. cats and dogs) and pests (e.g. rodents or insects) to prevent contamination of the food.

3.5.2 Every vendor shall, on becoming aware of the presence of any such pest or harbourage, immediately take all practicable measures to get rid of the pest or harbourage and to prevent re-infestation.

3.5.3 Any food found to have become contaminated by pests shall be appropriately disposed of in a hygienic manner.

3.5.4 The direct or indirect contamination of food with pest control materials such as poisons must be prevented.

SECTION 4 – VENDORS

4.1 Health condition of the vendors

4.1.1 No vendor, assistant or food handler shall be allowed to perform his/her job if showing any of the following symptoms: jaundice, diarrhoea, vomiting, fever, sore throat with fever, discharge from ear, eye and nose, visibly infected skin lesions (boils, cuts, etc.) In such cases, he/she shall cease from handling food in any capacity and seek medical treatment.

4.1.2 Any vendor, helper or food handler who has been identified as or is known to be or has previously been a carrier of food borne disease organisms, shall not be involved in any food handling activity until certified by a Medical Officer of Health or any other medical practitioner as a non-carrier.

4.1.3 Any vendor, helper or food handler shall be required to be immunized as required by the relevant authority.

4.2 Personal hygiene and behaviour

Every vendor, helper or food handler, during the conduct of his business, shall observe the following:

4.2.1 Wear an identification tag if issued and required by the relevant authority.

4.2.2 Wear clean and proper clothing.

4.2.3 Wash hands thoroughly with soap and running clean water before and after handling food, after visiting the toilet, after handling unsanitary articles, touching animals, touching raw food, after handling toxic and dangerous materials as and when necessary. If running clean water is not available, an acceptable alternative hand washing method should be agreed to by the relevant authority.

4.2.4 Finger nails should be kept short and clean at all times, and avoid wearing jewellery or ornaments during food preparation.

4.2.5 Hair should be kept clean and tidy and should be covered during operation.

4.2.6 Non-infected cuts shall be completely protected by a waterproof dressing which is firmly secured and routinely changed.

4.2.7 Shall not smoke or chew chewing-gum while preparing or serving food.

4.2.8 Refrain from any unhygienic practices such as spitting and cleaning nose, ears or any other body orifice or touching any body part while handling food.

4.2.9 Shall not sneeze or cough over or onto the food.

4.2.10 No vendor is allowed to use the stall as a sleeping or dwelling place, or for any other personal activity.

4.3 Training of vendors

4.3.1 The vendor shall ensure that he/she and all food handlers and helpers have completed basic food hygiene training by the competent authority or other institution recognised or approved by the competent authority.

4.4 Vendors associations

The formation of street food vendor associations or cooperatives should be encouraged to provide a liaison point with the relevant authorities in view of facilitating the implementation of control measures.

SECTION 5 – DESIGN AND STRUCTURE

5.1 Location

5.1.1 The location of street food stall(s) should be suitable for the purpose of avoiding contamination of the food prepared and served or sold at or from the stall. Stalls shall be located in areas designated by the relevant authorities.

5.1.2 The area where the stall is located and immediate surroundings should be easily cleaned and capable of withstanding repeated washing and scrubbing.

5.1.3 The space in and around the street food stall shall be free of unnecessary stored goods or articles and discarded articles in order to permit easy access for cleaning.

5.1.4 The stall should have a convenient access to an inlet of a drainage system or any suitable means of disposing waste water in a sanitary manner.

5.2 Structures

5.2.1 Street food stall shall be of a type approved by the competent authority and shall be made of impervious materials that can be cleaned and disinfected and maintained in a good state of repair.

5.2.2 Food preparation areas and food contact surfaces should be made of a smooth and impermeable food grade material.

5.2.3 All cooking ranges, washing equipment, working tables, shelves and cupboards on or in which food is placed should be at least 45 cm above the ground.

5.2.4 There should be adequate provision of artificial light of sufficient intensity to ensure a reasonable standard of illumination for every part of the stall.

5.3 Sanitation

5.3.1 Water supply

Vendors should ensure sufficient supply of potable water at all times. Where necessary, such as in the case of mobile vendors or where potable water supply is not yet available, potable water should be stored in clean water containers.

5.3.2 Waste water disposal

Vendors' stalls should have an efficient waste water disposal system which should be maintained in a good state of repair and working order. The system should be large enough to carry peak loads and be provided with traps to ensure only liquid waste is discharged into the drain/sewer.

5.3.3 Solid waste disposal

Solid waste material should be handled in such a manner as to avoid contamination of food and/or potable water. Waste should be removed from the working area of the stall as often as necessary and at least daily. All solid waste should be properly disposed into suitable containers which are secured with tight fitting lids or placed in rubbish bins or central rubbish bins.

Waste receptacles, equipment which has come into contact with the waste and waste storage areas should be cleaned and disinfected when required by the relevant authority. Only appropriate and suitable sanitizing agents should be used.

In areas without garbage collection service, solid waste is to be disposed of in a sanitary manner, as recommended or approved by the competent authority.

5.3.4 Cleaning

All food contact surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected and floors and surrounding areas should be thoroughly cleaned at least daily.

Immediately after disposal of the waste, receptacles used for storage and any equipment which has come into contact with the waste should be cleaned using one of the methods described in paragraph (6.5). The waste storage area should also be cleaned daily.

5.3.5 Toilets

Every vendor, helper or food handler should have easy access to sanitary facilities which are kept at all times in a clean and operational condition.

SECTION 6 – APPLIANCES

6.1 The appliances should be kept clean. The equipment, including containers for storing drinking water, should be made of materials which do not transmit toxic substances, odour or taste, are not absorbent (unless its use is intended for that purpose and will not result in food contamination), are resistant to corrosion and capable of withstanding repeated cleaning and disinfection.

6.2 Every cutting surface used in the preparation of food should be free from cracks and crevices, with only reasonable wear and tear, and should be cleaned using one of the methods described in Section 6.5 at least on the following occasions:

- (f) before and after daily operations; and
- (g) immediately after being used to prepare raw food.

6.3 Cooked and uncooked food should be handled with separate utensils.

6.4 Every vendor should ensure that all defective, damaged, cracked, rusted, chipped and unsuitable appliances and crockery are removed from use and discarded.

6.5 All non-disposable utensils should be regularly cleaned by thoroughly washing them in warm water containing adequate amount of soap or other suitable detergents and then either immersing them for one-half (30 seconds) minute in boiling clean water and draining them or, for two (2) minutes in potable water at a temperature of not less than 77°C and draining them.

In the case where non-disposable crockery is used and water at 77°C or boiling temperatures is unavailable, potable water, wash soap or detergent and running water rinse is allowed. However, this method is not preferred.

6.6 Disposable crockery shall be used only once and properly disposed of. In the case where non-disposable crockery is used, the crockery is to be cleaned after each use using the method described for utensils in paragraph 6.5.

6.7 All appliances are to be maintained in good state of repair and working order.

SECTION 7 – FOOD PREPARATION

7.1 Requirements for ingredients

Every vendor should ensure the following

7.1.1 Supply of all raw materials, other ingredients, including ice, must be from known and reliable sources.

7.1.2 Freshness and wholesomeness of ingredients to maintain quality and safety of food.

7.1.3 Transportation of ingredients should be made in a manner so as to prevent exposure to the environment, spoilage and contamination.

7.1.4 Only permitted food additives should be used and the amount added should follow the specifications provided.

7.2 Cooking and handling

7.2.1 Thoroughly wash fresh vegetables and fruit whether for cooking or consuming raw, with sufficient running potable water, to remove adhering surface contamination. For any soaking, potable water should be used.

7.2.2 Where appropriate, wash raw food before using in food preparation to reduce the risk of contamination. Never wash raw food with other foods that will be consumed raw or in a semi-cooked state.

7.2.3 There should be an area for handling, storing, cleaning and preparing raw food ingredients, separate and apart from the cooked, street food display, handling and serving areas.

7.2.4 Thawing: large pieces of meat or large poultry carcasses often need to be thawed before cooking. When thawing is carried out as an operation separated from cooking this should be performed only in:

- (h) a refrigerator or purpose-built thawing cabinet maintained at a temperature of 4°C; or
- (i) a commercial microwave oven only when the food will be immediately transferred to conventional cooking units as part of a continuous cooking process or when the entire, uninterrupted cooking process takes place in the microwave oven.

NOTE: Hazards associated with thawing include cross-contamination from drip and growth of micro-organisms on the outside before the inside has thawed. Thawed meat and poultry products should be checked frequently to make sure the thawing process is complete before further processing or the processing time should be increased to take into account the temperature of the meat.

7.2.5 The time and temperature of cooking should be sufficient to reduce to safe levels any pathogens that may be present in the food.

7.2.6 Water used for the purpose of drinking, preparation of hot or cold drinks and beverages should be potable.

7.2.7 Ice should be made from potable water. Ice should be handled and stored so as to protect it from contamination. Containers used to transport or store ice should meet the requirements for water containers prescribed by Section 2.3.18.

7.2.8 Food should not be re-heated more than once and only the portion of the food to be served should be re-heated. A temperature of at least 75°C should be reached in the centre of the food within one hour of removing the food from refrigeration.

7.2.9 Utensils used for tasting food should be washed immediately after each use.

7.3 Serving food

Every vendor should observe the following:

7.3.1 All vendors purchasing street foods for the purpose of serving or selling must assure that such food is from licensed and reliable sources.

7.3.2 Cooked street foods should not be handled with bare hands. Clean tongs, forks, spoons or disposable gloves should be used when handling, serving or selling food.

7.3.3 All crockery used should be clean and dry and not handled by touching the food contact surfaces.

7.3.4 Plates filled with food should not be stacked one on top of the other during display, storing or serving.

7.3.5 Food grade packing materials should be used.

7.3.6 Printed material should preferably never be used to serve food. Only food grade aluminium foil, waxed paper, food grade plastic and any other suitable material should be used for packing and serving food.

7.3.7 Never blow into plastic bags, wrappers or packages used for food.

7.3.8 All beverages offered for sale should be dispensed only in their individual original sealed containers or from taps fitted to bulk containers and made of food grade plastic or other suitable material. Bulk containers should be covered with tight fitting lids.

7.3.9 Cut fruit or other foods ordinarily consumed in the state in which they are sold may be set out in an enclosed display case, cabinet or similar type of protective device and should be displayed in a manner to protect the food from contamination.

7.3.10 Food handlers should avoid handling money. If this is unavoidable, the food handler should wash his hands before handling food again.

7.3.11 Ready-to-eat foods intended for continuous serving should be protected from environmental contamination and kept at the following holding temperatures:

- (j) for food served hot above 60°C;
- (k) for food served cold below 5 °C;
- (l) for food served frozen -18°C or below.

7.3.12 A food warmer should be used to maintain continuous holding temperatures (Section 7.3.11 (i)), and should not be used for re-heating purposes (Section 7.2.8).

7.4 Unsold Food

All unsold cooked food and prepared beverages that cannot be properly preserved should be safely disposed of at the end of the day.

7.5 Transportation of street foods

7.5.1 Street foods which require transportation to the point of sale/stall should be placed in a well protected, covered and clean container to avoid contamination

7.5.2 Any vehicle used in transporting food should be clean and in good condition, appropriately equipped to accommodate any special requirements of the food being transported and provide protection from environmental contamination.

7.5.3 Perishable food should be transported under temperature control

7.5.4 Street foods should not be transported together with raw food and ingredients, animals, toxic substances and any other materials which may contaminate the food.

7.6 Food storage

7.6.1 The food should at all times be kept clean and free from contamination, and be adequately protected from pests, environmental contaminants and stored at proper temperatures where appropriate.

7.6.2 Readily perishable food should be placed or stacked so that it is not likely to be contaminated by contact with raw food, pet food, toxic materials or any other materials which may cause contamination. The bulk of readily perishable foods should be stored in clean containers under temperature control. Quantities displayed for continuous serving should be handled according to the requirements listed in Section 7.3.11.

7.6.3 All dry ingredients should be stored and maintained in their original labelled commercial container or subsequent containers and should be properly labelled as to the content and designed to prevent moisture absorption.

7.6.4 All non-perishable food should be stored in a clean, protected and closed container/cupboard to prevent cross contamination by pests.

7.6.5 Once cleaned, following the requirements of Sections 7.2.1 and 7.2.2, the bulk of perishable raw food including wet milled legumes, cereals or pulses should be stored in clean separate containers preferably placed in a clean ice box, a refrigerator or a freezer to prevent spoilage.

7.6.6 Refrigerators and freezers should not be overloaded and their temperatures should be maintained at a maximum of 4°C and -18°C or below, respectively.

7.6.7 All enclosed spaces, cupboards, shelves and racks used for the storage of food should be constructed so as to be easily cleaned and to protect the food from pests.

7.6.8 All food stored in bulk should be stored in an orderly fashion and should be placed so as to facilitate ventilation, inspection and the detection of pests.

7.6.9 All food should be stored and handled separately from toxic, poisonous, deleterious and injurious substances.

7.6.10 The principle "First in, first out" should be applied to stock rotation.

7.6.11 Date marking on all food containers shall be checked before the food is used. Expired food shall not be sold or used for the preparation of food.

SECTION 8 – STREET FOOD CENTRES

8.1 General requirements

All vendors located in a street food centre should comply with all provisions stated in the officially recognized regulations applicable to street food vendors.

8.2 Location, design and construction and facility

8.2.1 The location of any street food centre is to be approved beforehand by the relevant authority, having taken into consideration the provisions stated in Section 5.1 - Location, of these Guidelines.

8.2.2 The design of the street food centre shall:

- (m) be reviewed and approved beforehand by the relevant authority;

- (n) provide sufficient and adequate space and orderly placement of vendor stalls, carts, display cases, food preparation, handling, storing, serving and selling areas;
- (o) allow for the orderly flow of materials and goods, in and out of the centres, which will prevent possible routes of food contamination;
- (p) Allow for the proper placement of client facilities, such as toilets, hand washing and eating facilities and be located or arranged in a manner that prevents routes of food contamination;
- (q) provide suitable, sufficient and properly placed areas for solid waste storage and crockery and appliance cleaning, washing and sanitizing;
- (r) be adequately ventilated to remove hazardous obnoxious gases and odours, cooking fuel fumes and other offensive airborne materials and provide a continuous and sufficient supply of fresh air to support the activities within the centre;
- (s) be provided with sufficient and adequate electrical power supply to support the vendors in the centre to operate appliances, equipment and other implements used in the preparation, handling, storage, serving and selling of food; and
- (t) have available an ample supply of potable water, under adequate pressure and of suitable temperature, with adequate facilities for its storage, where necessary, and distribution, and with adequate protection against contamination.

NOTE: Samples should be taken regularly, but the frequency should depend upon the origin and the usage of the water, e.g. more frequent from private supplies than from public supplies. Chlorine or other suitable disinfectants may be used. If chlorination has been employed checks should be made daily by chemical tests for available chlorine. The point of sampling should preferably be at the point of usage, but occasionally it would be useful to sample at the point of entry of the water to the establishment.

8.2.3 Street food centres shall be properly constructed in a manner using materials approved by the relevant authority, taking into consideration the provisions stated in the paragraph on "Structure, of these Guidelines. In addition to these provisions, street food centres should:

- (u) have smooth cement, glazed tile or tarmac paved floors, equipped with properly placed floor drains for the purpose of removing surface water and to facilitate cleaning and sanitizing;
- (v) have, where applicable, smooth non-permeable surface walls or partitions, such as glazed tile, to facilitate cleaning and sanitizing;
- (w) have, if applicable, a smooth non-absorbent ceiling to facilitate cleaning;
- (x) provide sufficient artificial lighting, properly placed to facilitate food preparation, handling, storage, serving and selling for each vendor located at the centre;
- (y) provide for smoke hoods and flues above cooking ranges to enable the removal of fuel and cooking gases, smoke and fumes from the centre into the open air.
- (z) provide centralized or individualized appliance, crockery, utensil and other implement washing facilities, equipped with hot and cold running potable water, wash basins or sinks with appropriate drains to an approved sewer or drain system, detergent and sanitizing agents to satisfy the proper sanitary and complete cleaning needs of the vendors in the centre; and
- (aa) comply with any other requirement of the relevant authority related to the structure of street food centres.

8.3 Liquid and solid waste

8.3.1 Pertaining to liquid waste disposal, street food centres are to:

- (bb) be equipped with an efficient centralized or individual (for each vendor in the centre) liquid waste disposal system(s) approved by the relevant authority and of suitable size and design to exceed the level of demand for liquid waste disposal at peak levels of activity by the vendors in the centre;
- (cc) maintain the liquid sewage disposal system in good working condition;
- (dd) ensure that the liquid waste disposal system exits to a relevant authority approved sewage drain system capable of efficiently carrying away the liquid waste from the centre; and
- (ee) comply with any other relevant authority requirements related to liquid waste disposal.

8.3.2 Regarding solid waste disposal, street food centres are to have an efficient system for disposal of solid waste complying with all solid waste disposal requirements of the relevant authority, to include:

- (a) the allocation of an appropriate and separate amount of space for solid waste storage, located at a convenient but suitably distant location from food preparation, storage, handling, serving or selling areas to prevent contamination;
- (b) sufficient number of suitably designed and constructed waterproof solid waste containers with tight fitting lids to adequately contain the volume of accumulated solid waste produced by vendor activity in one day. Containers should be lined with suitable disposable liners or inner containers for securing waste and which are easy to handle at time of disposal;
- (c) the daily, and more often if necessary, disposal of solid waste from the street food centre to:
 - (i) rubbish bins approved, designed and intended for the centralized collection of solid waste by garbage service agencies;
 - (ii) approved sanitary land fill; or
 - (iii) other disposal methods authorized and approved by the relevant authority.
- (d) routine inspection of solid waste disposal areas for the presence or harbourage of pests, taking any and all practical measures to eliminate and further prevent any infestation; and
- (e) compliance with any other requirement of the relevant authority related to solid waste disposal.

8.4 Customer hygiene facilities

Street food centres should have sufficient toilet facilities for each gender to accommodate the vendors, their employees and the clientele, conveniently located but separate and apart from food preparation, handling, storage, serving and selling areas, in order to prevent contamination of the food. The toilet facilities should be approved and subject to all requirements for such facilities by the relevant authority. Among other requirements the facilities should:

- (a) have smooth walls of glazed tile to a height of at least two (2) meters;
- (b) should be clean, free of bad odours and provided with a flushing system;
- (c) be well lit, ventilated, and routinely cleaned and sanitized and maintained in good working condition;
- (d) include hand washing and drying facilities and properly supplied with soap and other needed supplies;
- (e) contain posters instructing vendors and employees to wash hands thoroughly after each use of the toilet facilities before returning to work; and
- (f) have doors which are equipped with self-closing devices.

APPENDIX III

Proposed Draft Regional Standard for Date Paste (Near East)
(Step 5/8)

1. Scope

This standard applies to date paste prepared from fruits of the date palm (*Phoenix dactylifera*).

2. Definitions

- 2.1 Date paste: a food product prepared from fruits of the date palm (*Phoenix dactylifera*) that are sound, consistent in colour, harvested at the appropriate stage of maturity, washed, pitted and capped.
- 2.2 Parthenocarpic dates: dates produced without pollination, characterized by thin flesh, immature characteristics and absence of pits.
- 2.3 Unripe dates: dates that are light in weight, pale in colour, with shrivelled or little flesh and rubbery in texture.

3. Quality factors

- 3.1.1 dates used for making date paste shall be free from diseases and contain no parthenocarpic or unripe fruits;
- 3.1.2 shall be free from insects or insect fragments, eggs, larvae or frass.
- 3.2 The characteristics of date paste shall be as follows:
 - 3.2.1 It shall be soft, consistent in colour and texture, free of blackness or dryness and no alteration in smell or flavour;
 - 3.2.2 It shall contain no whole, broken pits, stalks or extraneous fragments;
 - 3.2.3 It shall be free of dirt and foreign matter;
 - 3.2.4 It shall contain no added colouring material;
 - 3.2.5 It shall be free of fermentation and mould;
 - 3.2.6 It may be made from a single variety of dates or a blend of several varieties, provided to specify those varieties;
 - 3.2.7 Moisture content shall not exceed 20%;
 - 3.2.8 Mineral matter content shall not exceed 1 gram per kilogram;
 - 3.2.9 Total ash content shall not exceed 1.2%;
 - 3.2.10 Dissolved in acid Ash content shall not exceed 0.1%.

4. Food Additives

No additives are allowed in the products covered by this Standard.

5. Contaminants

- 5.1 The products covered by this Standard shall comply with the maximum levels of the Codex General Standard for Contaminants and toxins in Food and Feed (CODEX STAN 193-1995).
- 5.2 The products covered by this Standard shall comply with the maximum residue limits for pesticides established by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

6. Hygiene

- 6.1 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 Code of Practice — General Principles of Food Hygiene (CAC/RCP 1-1969) 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 for the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria for Foods (CAC/GL 21-1997).

7. Packaging

Date paste shall be packaged in containers having the following characteristics:

- 7.1 They shall preserve the organoleptic characteristics and quality of the product;
- 7.2 Materials used in their manufacture shall be fit for food use and compatible with the characteristics of date paste;
- 7.3 They shall protect the product from contamination;
- 7.4 They shall protect the product from desiccation, leakage, spoilage and discoloration.

8. Methods of sampling and analysis

- 8.1 Moisture
According to AOAC 934.06.
- 8.2 Mineral matter content
According to ISO 762:1982.
- 8.3 Ash
According to AOAC 940.26.
- 8.4 Acid insoluble ash content
According to AOAC 900.02D.

9. Labelling

The product shall be labelled in accordance with the Codex General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods (CODEX STAN 1-1985, Rev. 2010), with the additional provisions that the label shall not be placed directly on the date paste, and that the following information shall appear on the container:

- 9.1 the name of variety and, if more than one varieties of dates have been used, the names of each variety.

10. Storage

The transport and storage of the product shall be subject to the following requirements:

- 10.1 During transport, it shall not be put at risk of mechanical damage, contamination or spoilage;
- 10.2 It shall be stored in refrigerated facilities, or facilities that are well ventilated, and kept away from heat sources, moisture, insects and rodents.