

# CODEX ALIMENTARIUS

INTERNATIONAL FOOD STANDARDS



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of  
the United Nations



World Health  
Organization

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## STANDARD FOR PROCESSED CEREAL-BASED FOODS FOR INFANTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN

**CXS 74-1981**

**Adopted in 1981. Revised in 2006. Amended in 2017, 2019, 2023.**

**2023 Amendments**

Following decisions taken at the Forty-sixth Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission in December 2023, the food additives provisions were amended in this standard and have been included in the *General Standard for Food Additives* (GSFA) (CXS 192-1995)<sup>1</sup> in line with the process of alignment of all food additive provisions with the GSFA. Amendments were also made in Section 3 Essential composition and quality factors.

## 1. SCOPE

This standard covers processed cereal-based foods intended for feeding infants as a complementary food generally from the age of 6 months onwards, taking into account infants' individual nutritional requirements, and for feeding young children as part of a progressively diversified diet, in accordance with the *Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding and World Health Assembly Resolution WHA54.2 (2001)*.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. DESCRIPTION

Processed cereal-based foods are prepared primarily from one or more milled cereals, which should constitute at least 25 percent of the final mixture on a dry weight basis.

### 2.1 Product definitions

Four categories are distinguished:

- 2.1.1 products consisting of cereals which are or have to be prepared for consumption with milk or other appropriate nutritious liquids;
- 2.1.2 cereals with an added high protein food which are or have to be prepared for consumption with water or other appropriate protein-free liquid;
- 2.1.3 pasta which are to be used after cooking in boiling water or other appropriate liquids; and
- 2.1.4 rusks and biscuits which are to be used either directly or, after pulverization, with the addition of water, milk or other suitable liquids.

### 2.2 Other definitions

- 2.2.1 The term infant means a person not more than 12 months of age.
- 2.2.2 The term young children means persons from the age of more than 12 months up to the age of 3 years (36 months).

## 3. ESSENTIAL COMPOSITION AND QUALITY FACTORS

### 3.1 Essential composition

- 3.1.1 The four categories listed in Sections 2.1.1 to 2.1.4 are prepared primarily from one or more milled cereal products, such as wheat, rice, barley, oats, rye, maize, millet, sorghum and buckwheat. They may also contain legumes (pulses), starchy roots (such as arrow root, yam or cassava) or starchy stems or oil seeds in smaller proportions.
- 3.1.2 The requirements concerning energy and nutrients refer to the product ready for use as marketed or prepared according to the instructions of the manufacturer, unless otherwise specified.

### 3.2 Energy density

The energy density of cereal-based foods should not be less than 3.3 kJ/g (0.8 kcal/g).

### 3.3 Protein

- 3.3.1 The chemical index of the added protein shall be equal to at least 80 percent of that of the reference protein casein or the protein efficiency ratio (PER) of the protein in the mixture shall be equal to at least 70 percent of that of the reference protein casein. In all cases, the addition of amino acids is permitted solely for the purpose of improving the nutritional value of the protein mixture, and only in the proportions necessary for that purpose. Only natural forms of L-amino acids should be used.
- 3.3.2 For products mentioned in Sections 2.1.2 and 2.1.4, the protein content shall not exceed 1.3 g/100 kJ (5.5 g/100 kcal).
- 3.3.3 For products mentioned in Section 2.1.2 the added protein content shall not be less than 0.48 g/100 kJ (2 g/100 kcal).
- 3.3.4 For biscuits mentioned in Section 2.1.4 made with the addition of a high protein food, and presented as such, the added protein shall not be less than 0.36 g/100 kJ (1.5 g/100 kcal).

### 3.4 Carbohydrates

- 3.4.1 If sucrose, fructose, glucose, glucose syrup or honey are added to products mentioned in Sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.4:
  - the amount of added carbohydrates from these sources shall not exceed 1.8 g/100 kJ (7.5 g/100 kcal); and
  - the amount of added fructose shall not exceed 0.9 g/100 kJ (3.75 g/100 kcal).

**3.4.2** If sucrose, fructose, glucose, glucose syrup or honey are added to products mentioned in Section 2.1.2:

- the amount of added carbohydrates from these sources shall not exceed 1.2 g/100 kJ (5 g/100 kcal); and
- the amount of added fructose shall not exceed 0.6 g/100 kJ (2.5 g/100 kcal).

### 3.5 Lipids

**3.5.1** For products mentioned in Section 2.1.2 the lipid content shall not exceed 1.1 g/100 kJ (4.5 g/100 kcal). If the lipid content exceeds 0.8 g/100 kJ (3.3 g/100 kcal):

- the amount of linoleic acid (in the form of triglycerides = linoleates) shall not be less than 70 mg/100 kJ (300 mg/100 kcal) and shall not exceed 285 mg/100 kJ (1200 mg/100 kcal);
- the amount of lauric acid shall not exceed 15 percent of the total lipid content; and
- the amount of myristic acid shall not exceed 15 percent of the total lipid content.

**3.5.2** Product categories described in Sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.4 shall not exceed a maximum lipid content of 0.8 g/100 kJ (3.3 g/100 kcal).

### 3.6 Minerals

**3.6.1** The sodium content of the products described in Sections 2.1.1 to 2.1.4 of this standard shall not exceed 24 mg/100 kJ (100 mg/100 kcal) of the ready-to-eat product.

**3.6.2** The calcium content shall not be less than 20 mg/100 kJ (80 mg/100 kcal) for products mentioned in Section 2.1.2.

**3.6.3** The calcium content shall not be less than 12 mg/100 kJ (50 mg/100 kcal) for products mentioned in Section 2.1.4 manufactured with the addition of milk and presented as such.

### 3.7 Vitamins

**3.7.1** The amount of vitamin B1 (thiamine) shall not be less than 12.5 µg/100 kJ (50 µg/100 kcal).

**3.7.2** For products mentioned in Section 2.1.2, the amount of vitamin A and vitamin D shall be within the following limits:

	µg/100 kJ	µg/100 kcal
<b>vitamin A</b> <b>(µg retinol equivalents)</b>	14–43	60–180
<b>vitamin D</b>	0.25–0.75	1–3

These limits are also applicable to other processed cereal-based foods when vitamins A or D are added.

**3.7.3** Reductions of the maximum amounts for vitamin A and vitamin D referred to in Section 3.7.2 and the addition of vitamins and minerals for which specifications are not set above shall be in conformity with the legislation of the country in which the product is sold.

**3.7.4** Vitamins and/or minerals added should be selected from the *Advisory Lists of Nutrient Compounds for Use in Foods for Special Dietary Uses intended for Infants and Children* (CXG 10-1979).<sup>3</sup>

### 3.8 Optional ingredients

**3.8.1** In addition to the ingredients listed under Section 3.1, other ingredients suitable for infants who are more than 6 months of age and for young children can be used.

**3.8.2** Products containing honey or maple syrup should be processed in such a way as to destroy spores of *Clostridium botulinum*, if present.

**3.8.3** Only L(+) lactic acid producing cultures may be used.

### 3.9 Quality factors

**3.9.1** All ingredients, including optional ingredients, shall be clean, safe, suitable and of good quality.

**3.9.2** All processing and drying should be carried out in a manner that minimizes loss of nutritive value, particularly protein quality.

**3.9.3** The moisture content of the products shall be governed by good manufacturing practice for the individual product categories and shall be at such a level that there is a minimum loss of nutritive value and at which microorganisms cannot multiply.

### 3.10 Consistency and particle size

**3.10.1** When prepared according to the label directions for use, processed cereal-based foods should have a texture appropriate for the spoon-feeding of infants or young children of the age for which the product is intended.

**3.10.2** Rusks and biscuits may be used in the dry form so as to permit and encourage chewing or they may be used in a liquid form, by mixing with water or other suitable liquid that would be similar in consistency to dry cereals.

### 3.11 Specific prohibition

The product and its components shall not have been treated by ionizing radiation.

The use of partially hydrogenated fats for these products is prohibited.

## 4. FOOD ADDITIVES

**4.1** Acidity regulators, anticaking agents, antioxidants, carriers, emulsifiers, packaging gases, raising agents and thickeners used in accordance with Table 1 and Table 2 of the *General Standard for Food Additives* (CXS 192-1995)<sup>1</sup> in food category 13.2 (Complementary foods for infants and young children) are acceptable for use in foods conforming to this standard.

**4.2** Only the food additives listed in food category 13.2 (Complementary foods for infants and young children) of the *General Standard for Food Additives* (CXS 192-1995)<sup>1</sup> may be present in the foods conforming to this standard, as a result of carry-over from a raw material or other ingredient (including food additive) used to produce the food, subject to the following conditions:

- a) the amount of the food additive in the raw materials or other ingredients (including food additives) does not exceed the maximum level specified; and
- b) the food into which the food additive is carried over does not contain the food additive in greater quantity than would be introduced by the use of the raw materials or ingredients under good manufacturing practice, consistent with the provisions on carry-over in the preamble of the *General Standard for Food Additives* (CXS 192-1995).<sup>1</sup>

### 4.3 Flavourings

Name of flavouring	Maximum use level
Natural fruit extracts and vanilla extract	Good manufacturing practice
Ethyl vanillin	70 mg/kg
Vanillin	70 mg/kg

## 5. CONTAMINANTS

### 5.1 Pesticide residues

The product shall be prepared with special care under good manufacturing practices, so that residues of those pesticides which may be required in the production, storage or processing of the raw materials or the finished food ingredient do not remain, or, if technically unavoidable, are reduced to the maximum extent possible.

These measures shall take into account the specific nature of the products concerned and the specific population group for which they are intended.

### 5.2 Other contaminants

The product shall be free from residues of hormones, antibiotics as determined by means of agreed methods of analysis and practically free from other contaminants, especially pharmacologically active substances.

## 6. HYGIENE

It is recommended that the products covered by the provisions of this standard be prepared and handled in accordance with the appropriate sections of the *General Principles of Food Hygiene* (CXC 1-1969),<sup>4</sup> and other relevant Codex texts such as codes of hygienic practice and codes of practice.

The product should comply with any microbiological criteria established in accordance with the *Principles and Guidelines for the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria Related to Foods* (CXG 21-1997).<sup>5</sup>

## 7. PACKAGING

**7.1** The product shall be packed in containers which will safeguard the hygienic and other qualities of the food.

- 7.2** The containers, including packaging material, shall be made only of substances which are safe and suitable for their intended use. Where the Codex Alimentarius Commission has established a standard for any such substance used as packaging material, that standard shall apply.

## **8. LABELLING**

- 8.1.1** The requirements of the *General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods* (CXS 1-1985),<sup>6</sup> the *Guidelines on Nutrition Labelling* (CXG 2-1985)<sup>7</sup> and the *Guidelines for Use of Nutrition and Health Claims* (CXG 23-1997)<sup>8</sup> apply to this standard. With specific reference to Section 7 of the *General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods* (CXS 1-1985),<sup>6</sup> national jurisdictions may further restrict the use of pictorial devices.
- 8.1.2** Taking into account Section 1.4 of the *Guidelines for Use of Nutrition and Health Claims* (CXG 23-1997),<sup>8</sup> nutrition claims may be permitted under national legislation for the foods that are the subject of the standard provided that they have been demonstrated in rigorous studies with adequate scientific standards.
- 8.1.3** Any indication required in the labelling should be made in the appropriate language(s) of the country in which the product is sold.

### **8.2 The name of the food**

The name of the food shall be "Dry cereal for infants (and/or young children)", "Rusks for infants (and/or young children)" or "Biscuits (or "milk biscuits") for infants (and/or young children)" or "Pasta for infants (and/or young children)", or any appropriate designation indicating the true nature of the food, in accordance with national legislation.

### **8.3 List of ingredients**

- 8.3.1** A complete list of ingredients shall be declared on the label in descending order of proportion, except in the case of added vitamins and minerals, where these may be arranged as separate groups for vitamins and minerals, respectively and within these groups the vitamins and minerals need not be listed in descending order of proportion.
- 8.3.2** The specific name shall be declared for ingredients and food additives. In addition, appropriate class names for these ingredients and additives may be included on the label.

### **8.4 Declaration of nutritive value**

- 8.4.1** The declaration of nutrition information shall contain the following information which should be in the following order:
- a) the energy value, expressed in kilocalories (kcal) and kilojoules (kJ), and the amount of protein, carbohydrate and fat expressed in grammes (g) per 100 g or 100 ml of the food as sold, and where appropriate, as per specified quantity of the food as suggested for consumption;
  - b) the average amount of each vitamin and mineral for which specific levels are defined in Sections 3.6 and 3.7 expressed in numerical form per 100 g or 100 ml of the food as sold and, where appropriate, as per specified quantity of the food as suggested for consumption; and
  - c) any other nutritional information required by national legislation.
- 8.4.2** The labelling may bear the average amount of the vitamins and minerals when their declaration is not covered by the provisions of Section 8.4.1 (b) expressed in numerical form per 100 g or 100 ml of the product as sold and, where appropriate, per specified quantity of the food as suggested for consumption.

### **8.5 Date marking and storage instructions**

- 8.5.1** The date of minimum durability (preceded by the words "best before") shall be declared by the day, month and year in uncoded numerical sequence except that for products with a shelf-life of more than three months, the month and year will suffice. The month may be indicated by letters in those countries where such use will not confuse the consumer. In the case of products requiring a declaration of month and year only, and the shelf-life of the product is valid to the end of a given year, the expression "end (stated year)" may be used as an alternative.
- 8.5.2** In addition to the date, any special conditions for the storage of the food shall be indicated if the validity of the date depends thereon.
- 8.5.3** Where practicable, storage instructions shall be in close proximity to the date marking.

### **8.6 Information for utilization**

- 8.6.1** Directions as to the preparation and use of the food, and its storage and keeping before and after the container has been opened, shall appear on the label and may also appear on the accompanying leaflet.

- 8.6.2** For products covered by Section 2.1.1, directions on the label shall state “Milk or formula but no water shall be used for dilution or mixing” or an equivalent statement.
- 8.6.3** When the product is composed of gluten-free ingredients and food additives, the label may show the statement “gluten-free”.<sup>i</sup>
- 8.6.4** The label shall indicate clearly from which age the product is recommended for use. This age shall not be less than 6 months for any product. In addition, the label shall include a statement indicating that the decision when precisely to begin complementary feeding, including any exception to 6 months of age, should be made in consultation with a health worker, based on the individual infant’s specific growth and development needs. Additional requirements in this respect may be made in accordance with the legislation of the country in which the product is sold.
- 8.7 Additional requirements**  
The products covered by this standard are not breastmilk substitutes and shall not be presented as such.

## 9. METHODS OF ANALYSIS AND SAMPLING

See section on methods in the *Standard for Infant Formula and Formulas for Special Medical Purposes Intended for Infants* (CXS 72-1981).<sup>9</sup>

In addition:

Detection of irradiated foods

Codex general methods.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> FAO and WHO. 1995. *General Standard for Food Additives*. Codex Alimentarius Standard, No. CXS 192-1995. Codex Alimentarius Commission. Rome.

<sup>2</sup> WHO and UNICEF. 2001. *The Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding and World Health Assembly resolution WHA54.2*. Geneva. [9241562218.pdf \(who.int\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> FAO and WHO. 1979. *Advisory Lists of Nutrient Compounds for Use in Foods for Special Dietary Uses Intended for Infants and Young Children*. Codex Alimentarius Guideline, No. CXG 10-1979. Codex Alimentarius Commission. Rome.

<sup>4</sup> FAO and WHO. 1969. *General Principles of Food Hygiene*. Codex Alimentarius Code of Practice, No. CXC 1-1969. Codex Alimentarius Commission. Rome.

<sup>5</sup> FAO and WHO. 1997. *Principles and Guidelines for the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria Related to Foods*. Codex Alimentarius Guideline, No. CXG 21-1997. Codex Alimentarius Commission. Rome.

<sup>6</sup> FAO and WHO. 1985. *General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods*. Codex Alimentarius Standard, No. CXS 1-1985. Codex Alimentarius Commission. Rome.

<sup>7</sup> FAO and WHO. 1985. *Guidelines on Nutrition Labelling*. Codex Alimentarius Guideline, No. CXG 2-1985. Codex Alimentarius Commission, Rome.

<sup>8</sup> FAO and WHO. 1997. *Guidelines for Use of Nutrition and Health Claims*. Codex Alimentarius Guideline, No. CXG 23-1997. Codex Alimentarius Commission. Rome.

<sup>9</sup> FAO and WHO. 1981. *Standard for Infant Formula and Formulas for Special Medical Purposes Intended for Infants*. Codex Alimentarius Standard, No. CXS 72-1981. Codex Alimentarius Commission. Rome.

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<sup>i</sup> *Standard for Foods for Special Dietary Use for Persons Intolerant to Gluten* (CXS 118-1979).