



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

**CODEX
ALIMENTARIUS**
INTERNATIONAL FOOD STANDARDS

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS
STANDARD

**STANDARD FOR
DRIED FLORAL
PARTS – SAFFRON**
CX5 351-2022



ADOPTED 2022
AMENDED 2026

CX5 351-2022

History of the standard

2026 Amendments

This publication was reformatted and published in 2026.

Following decisions taken at the Forty-ninth Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission in 2026, amendments were made in Section 8.2: “Country of origin and country of harvest” to replace “To be developed”.

2025 Amendments

Following decisions taken at the Forty-eighth Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission in November 2025, amendments were made in Section 4: “Food additives” to align with the *General standard for food additives* (CXS 192-1995).

2024 Amendment

Section 8.2: “Country of origin and country of harvest” was updated to “To be developed.”

Adopted in 2022.

1 Scope

This standard applies to plant products in their dried or dehydrated form, as spices defined in Section 2.1: “Product definition”, offered for direct consumption as an ingredient in food processing or for repackaging if required. It excludes products for industrial processing.

2 Description

2.1 Product definition

Dried floral parts of saffron (*Crocus sativus* L.): saffron is obtained from a portion of the pistils (i.e. stigmas with part of style) of the *Crocus sativus* L. flower belonging to the Iridaceae family.

The “stigma” is the upper section of the aerial part of the pistil. The “style” is the part of the pistil between stigma and the ovary. The stigma is trumpet shaped, serrated or indented at the top and joined to the style at the end.

2.2 Styles

Saffron may be offered in one of the following styles:

- filaments;
- cut filaments;
- powdered; and
- other styles distinctly different from the three above are allowed, provided they are labelled accordingly.

Filament is the dried stigma with a part of style of the *Crocus sativus* L. flower; cut filament is the dried stigma of the *Crocus sativus* L. flower (with styles removed completely detached from each other); and powdered is the particles obtained by crushing the filaments of the *Crocus sativus* L. flower.

3 Essential composition and quality factors

3.1 Composition

Dried floral parts as described in Section 2: “Description”.

3.2 Quality factors

3.2.1 Odour, flavour and colour

The product shall have a characteristic odour, flavour and colour which may vary depending on geoclimatic factors/conditions, and shall be free from any foreign odour, flavour and colour, especially from rancidity and mustiness.

3.2.2 Chemical and physical characteristics

The product shall comply with the requirements specified in Annex I (Table A1: “Chemical characteristics of dried floral parts – saffron”, and Table A2: “Physical characteristics of dried floral parts – saffron”). The defects allowed must not affect the general appearance of the product as regards to its quality, keeping quality and presentation in the package. There shall not be any form of adulteration in the product.

Saffron powder shall be safe and suitable for human consumption, free from living insects and practically free from extraneous and foreign matter in amounts which may represent a hazard to human health.

3.2.3 Classification

In accordance with the chemical and physical characteristics in Section 3.2.2: “Chemical and physical characteristics”, the product may be classified into one of the following classes:

- extra class;
- grade I/class I;
- grade II/class II; or
- grade III/class III.

When saffron is traded as unclassified/ungraded, the provisions for grade III/class III shall apply as the minimum requirements.

4 Food additives

Food additives are not permitted in products conforming to this standard.

5 Contaminants

The products covered by this standard shall comply with the maximum levels of the *General standard for contaminants and toxins in food and feed* (CXS 193-1995)¹ and any other relevant Codex texts.

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

6 Hygiene

It is recommended that the products covered by the provisions of this standard be prepared and handled in accordance with the appropriate sections of the *General principles of food hygiene* (CXC 1-1969),² Annex III: “Spices and dried culinary herbs” of the *Code of hygienic practice for low-moisture foods* (CXC 75-2015),³ and other relevant Codex texts such as codes of hygienic practice and other codes of practice.

The products should comply with any microbiological criteria established in accordance with the *Principles and guidelines for the establishment and application of microbiological criteria related to foods* (CXG 21-1997).⁴

7 Weights and measures

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

8 Labelling

The products covered by the provisions of this standard shall be labelled in accordance with the *General standard for the labelling of pre-packaged foods* (CXS 1-1985).⁵ In addition, the following specific provisions apply:

8.1 Name of the product

- a) The name of the product shall be “dried saffron” as described in Section 2.1: “Product definition”.
- b) The name of the product may include an indication of the style as described in Section 2.2: “Styles”.
- c) The variety or cultivar may be listed on the label.

8.2 Country of origin and country of harvest

- a) Country of origin shall be declared.ⁱ
- b) Region of harvest and year of harvest (optional).

8.3 Commercial identification

Grade/Class, if applicable.

8.4 Labelling of non-retail containers

The labelling of non-retail containers should be in accordance with the *General standard for the labelling of non-retail containers of foods* (CXS 346-2021).⁶

9 Methods of analysis and sampling

For checking compliance with this standard, the methods of analysis and sampling contained in the *Recommended methods of analysis and sampling* (CXS 234-1999)⁷ relevant to the provisions in this standard shall be used.

ⁱ For this standard, the country of origin is the same as the country of harvest.

Table A1: Chemical characteristics of dried floral parts – saffron

ANNEX I

General name	Class/ Grade	Moisture content % w/w (max)		Total ash on dry basis % w/w (max)	Acid insoluble ash on dry basis % w/w (max)	Soluble extract in cold water on dry basis % w/w (max)	Taste strength	Aroma strength		Colouring strength
		Filament and cut filament style	Powdered style				Picrocrocin	Safranal		Crocin
							Min	Min	Max	Min
Saffron	Extra class	12.0	10.0	8.0	1.0	65	80	30	50	230
	I	12.0	10.0	8.0	1.0	65	70	20	50	200
	II	12.0	10.0	8.0	1.0	65	55	20	50	170
	III	12.0	10.0	8.0	1.5	65	40	20	50	120

Table A2: Physical characteristics of dried floral parts – saffron

Product	Class/ Grade	Extraneous matter % w/w (max)*	Foreign matter % w/w (max)**	Insect fragment, count/10 g (max)	Rodent filth max number of hairs/10 g	Mould visible % w/w (max)	Dead whole insects, count/10 g (max)	Mammalian excreta mg/kg (max)	Other excreta mg/kg (max)	Insect damage % w/w (max)
Saffron filament and cut filament	Extra class	0.25	0.1	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0
	I	0.5	0.1	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0
	II	3	0.5	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0
	III	5	1.0	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0

Notes:

* Extraneous matter: vegetative matter associated with the plant from which the product originates but not accepted as part of the final product (i.e. floral and plant waste).

** Foreign matter: any visible/detectable objectionable foreign matter or material not usually associated with the natural components of the spice plant, such as sticks, stones, burlap bagging, metal etc.

N/A: Not applicable – means that this form of the above product has not been evaluated for this provision, and currently we do not have values. N/A does not mean zero.

Referenced texts

- 1 *General standard for contaminants and toxins in food and feed* (CXS 193-1995).
- 2 *General principles of food hygiene* (CXC 1-1969).
- 3 *Code of hygienic practice for low-moisture foods* (CXC 75-2015).
- 4 *Principles and guidelines for the establishment and application of microbiological criteria related to foods* (CXG 21-1997).
- 5 *General standard for the labelling of pre-packaged foods* (CXS 1-1985).
- 6 *General standard for the labelling of non-retail containers of foods* (CXS 346-2021).
- 7 *Recommended methods of analysis and sampling* (CXS 234-1999).

Codex Alimentarius

A collection of international food standards developed to protect consumer health and ensure fair practices in the food trade. Codex standards are adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, an intergovernmental body with 189 Members, established by FAO and WHO. The standards are recognized by the World Trade Organization as the benchmark for the safety of internationally traded food.

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