

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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CL 2026/23-CAC
February 2026

TO: Codex Contact Points
Contact Points of international organizations having observer status with Codex

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

SUBJECT: Request for Comments on the development of a Codex standard for cashew kernels

DEADLINE: 30 April 2026

BACKGROUND

1. The 40th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC40, 2017) approved¹ proposals to develop new Codex standards for cashew kernels (submitted by India) and dried sweet potatoes (submitted by the Republic of Korea) as new work for the Codex Committee on Processed Fruits and Vegetables (CCPFV). However, this work did not advance because, by 2019, CCPFV was phasing out its activities: most reviews of existing processed fruit and vegetable standards—including the conversion of regional standards into worldwide standards—had been completed, and the Committee needed first to take stock of outstanding review work alongside emerging proposals before considering additional tasks and determining its reactivation and working modalities. In light of these circumstances, CAC43 decided² in 2020 to adjourn the Committee, resulting in the suspension of progress on developing the proposed new standards.
2. Between 2019 and 2020, some regions and countries expressed their support for the development of a Codex standard for cashew kernels. Discussions held during the 2019 rounds of regional coordinating committees highlighted continued interest in advancing standards for processed fruits and vegetables, including cashew kernels. In particular, CCNE10³ expressed general support for such work, while CCASIA21⁴ and CCAFRICA23⁵ specifically endorsed the development of a commodity standard for cashew kernels. In 2020, CAC43 also took note⁶ of the support from a group of African producing countries for establishing a standard for cashew kernels.
3. In 2024, CAC47 agreed⁷ that, before deciding whether to initiate the new work, India should provide updated information on current trade volumes, food safety concerns, and the alignment of the proposal with the goals of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026–2031. This information was considered essential for assessing the relevance and timeliness of starting work on a standard for cashew kernels. In response to this guidance, India submitted an updated proposal in 2025 to support the initiation of the new work.
4. CAC48, noting the ongoing interest in this area of work, also considered other factors relevant for the development of this standard, i.e., the designation of a new host country for CCPFV, the transition period needed between the current and incoming host secretariats for the handover of CCPFV's work, and the upcoming discussions on the most appropriate operationalization of CCPFV's terms of reference (ToR) in relation to pending reviews of existing standards for processed fruits and vegetable standards vis-à-vis new work proposals that arrived or may arrive since the adjournment of the Committee for deliberation at CAC49 in 2026.
5. In light of the above considerations, CAC48 agreed⁸ that it would be premature to take any decision on changing the status of CCPFV. Accordingly, the Commission requested the Codex Secretariat to issue a Circular Letter (CL) to solicit comments from Members and Observers to support the initiation of the new work by the Executive Committee at its 90th Session (CCEXEC90) and CAC49 in 2026.

1 REP17/CAC para. 86
2 REP20/CAC para. 132
3 REP20/CCNE para. 41
4 REP20/ASIA para. 58
5 REP20/AFRICA para. 43
6 REP20/CAC para. 128
7 REP24/CAC para. 254
8 REP25/CAC para. 193

REQUEST FOR COMMENTS

6. Based on the updated information presented at CAC48 on the initiation of work on a new Codex standard for cashew kernels, Codex Members and Observers are invited to provide comments on the following points.
7. **Need for this work**
 - i. Whether the issue at hand is clearly described, i.e., the food safety concern(s) and/or commercial quality aspect(s) requiring attention; and
 - ii. whether Codex is the appropriate forum to address these in line with its mandate to protect consumer health and ensure fair practices in international trade. This includes whether there is a clear link between the proposal for new work and the goals of the Codex Strategic Plan 2026–2031, particularly Goal 1: Address current, emerging and critical issues in a timely manner; Objective 1.2: Prioritize needs and emerging issues.
8. **Compliance with the criteria for prioritization of work**
 - iii. Whether global trade volumes, existing market demand, and any gaps in current international standards for cashew kernels justify the development of a worldwide Codex standard.
 - iv. Whether developing a Codex standard for cashew kernels would provide clear evidence of, or contribute to, increased market access for producing countries and mitigate trade disruptions caused by divergent national, or other regional or international standards.
 - v. How harmonization with relevant standards (e.g., ISO, UN/ECE) can be ensured to avoid overlaps, inconsistencies, or contradictory provisions that could negatively impact trade.
 - vi. How could cooperation with existing standard-setting bodies (e.g., ISO, UN/ECE) be strengthened to ensure that the standards remain harmonized and mutually complementary
9. **Nature of the work to be undertaken**
 - vii. Based on the information provided in the Appendix to this CL and the considerations above,
 - a. Whether a Codex standard—as opposed to a Code of practice or another type of Codex text—would be the most appropriate means of addressing the identified concerns; and
 - b. If a standard is to be developed, whether it should take a horizontal approach covering all aspects of the presentation and processing of cashew kernels, in line with CAC’s recommendation to move toward more general and simplified commodity standards where possible.
 - viii. Whether comparison with other Codex standards for nuts, such as the *Standard for Unshelled Pistachio Nuts* (CXS 131-1981), could help identify common provisions applicable to nuts, thereby facilitating the development of a standard for cashew kernels that may support future consolidation into a single standard for nuts; and, in this regard, whether templates from other standard-setting bodies such as the UNECE layout for standards for dry and dried produce⁹ could support harmonization and focused discussion within the Committee.
10. **Mechanism for undertaking any future work**
 - ix. If considered a priority and approved by CAC, what the appropriate mechanism would be for undertaking the proposed new work.
11. **Relevance and timeliness of Codex work on a standard for cashew kernels**
 - x. Based on the replies to the above points, whether the development of a worldwide Codex standard for cashew kernels is a priority for your country or organization.
 - xi. If so, whether your country or organization would be willing to participate in this work should the Commission agree to undertake new work on cashew kernels.
12. **Any additional relevant issues**
 - xii. Any other issues that Members or Observers wish to bring to the attention of CCEXEC90 or CAC49 in relation to this proposal.

⁹ <https://unece.org/trade/wp7/DDP-Standards>

GUIDANCE ON THE PROVISION OF COMMENTS

13. Comments should be submitted through the Codex Contact Points of Codex Members and Observers using the OCS.
14. Contact Points of Codex Members and Observers may login to the OCS and access the document open for comments by selecting “Enter” in the “My reviews” page, available after login to the system.
15. Contact Points of Codex Members and Observers organizations are requested to provide general comments at the document level. Additional guidance on the OCS comment categories and types can be found in the OCS [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#).
16. Other OCS resources, including the user manual and short guide, can be found at the following link: <http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/resources/ocs/en/>.
17. For questions on the OCS, please contact Codex-OCS@fao.org.

PROJECT DOCUMENT

(For information in reply to paragraphs 7-12 of CL 2026/23-CAC)

Proposal for New Work on a Standard for Cashew Kernels

(Prepared by India)

1. Purpose and scope of the Standard

The purpose of the new work is to establish a worldwide quality standard for cashew kernels prepared from sound matured fruits of suitable varieties of *Anacardium occidentale* L. The proposed scope is that cashew kernels may be presented in whole, split or broken style offered to the consumer for direct consumption, including for repacking or for catering purposes.

2. Relevance and timeliness

There are national standards for cashew kernels in different countries, and some variance has been noted in the national legislations both in terms of quality and safety. Due to the growing trend of worldwide cashew production and trade as well as consumption in different forms, it is necessary to establish a globally harmonized standard covering quality and safety aspects as well as labelling provisions in order to have a standard that has been internationally agreed to by consensus between the producing, consuming and trading countries. Development of a Codex standard for cashew kernels will, therefore, help to protect consumer health and to promote fair practices in food trade.

3. Main aspects to be covered

It is proposed to cover the essential quality and safety in the standard. The relevant factors which may be considered are:

- (a) Minimum requirements of cashew kernels.
- (b) Classification of cashew kernels in accordance with its characteristics.
- (c) Provisions concerning quality, defects, sizes and their tolerance levels as well as weight, shape and presence of broken kernels.
- (d) Provisions concerning uniformity of the packaged product and the package used.
- (e) Provisions concerning additives, contaminants and pesticide residue limits as well as for hygiene.
- (f) Provisions concerning labelling and marking.

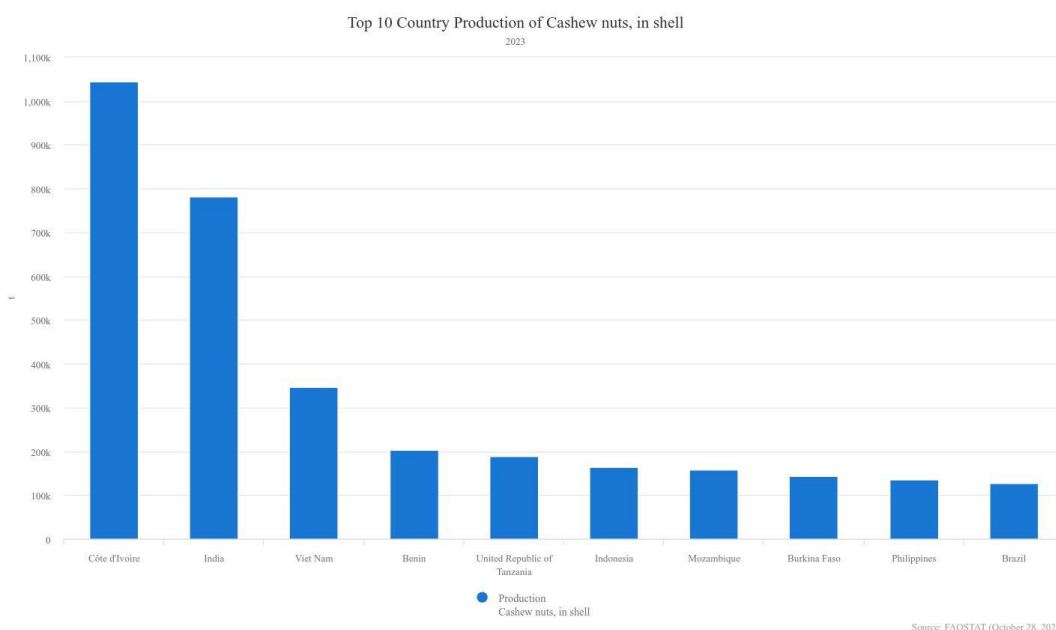
4. Assessment against the Criteria for the Establishment of Work Priorities**a) Volume of production and consumption in individual countries and volume and pattern of trade between countries**

Cashew kernel is an important export product that plays a significant role as a source of income and employment for its producing countries. As per data reported by the Global Cashew Council, world production of cashew ranges between 720,000 and 790,000 metric tons (kernel basis) per year. India annually produces 170,000-195,000 metric tons ranks first followed by Côte d'Ivoire, Vietnam and Tanzania averaging 149,000; 82,000 and 53,000 MT, respectively. The world production of cashew nuts as per FAO is as follows:

Table 1: Worldwide Production Data

Year	Production Quantity	Area Harvested (ha)
2013	2944186	5668302
2014	2932157	5657660
2015	3335039	6123954
2016	3069921	5631506
2017	3388501	5826998
2018	3705182	6636738
2019	3483974	5467094
2020	3651540	5897837
2021	3884523	5940582
2022	3922280	6243871
2023	3934839	6163897

(Source: FAOSTAT)



b) Diversification of national legislation and apparent resultant or potential impediments to international trade:

Cashew kernels are traded commodity across the globe with differences in the quality of the product such as moisture, total ash etc. The size and colour of cashews vary largely depending on cultivar and variety. Trade in cashew depends on the mutual agreement between producing and importing countries in terms of grades and specifications. There are national standards of different countries, and some variance has been noted in the national legislations both in terms of quality and safety. Absence of harmonised global standards potentially results in unnecessary questions about non-compliances at the import end. To overcome the resultant or potential impediments to international trade, it is appropriate to develop a single comprehensive standard acceptable internationally. Harmonized Codex standards for cashew kernels will help to protect the health of consumers and promote fair practices in the food trade. Development of the standard is expected to benefit consumers and major producing / exporting countries, most of whom are developing countries.

c) International or regional market potential

The import of cashew by most countries is increasing. The trade can be further streamlined and enhanced by developing quality and grading standards for cashew kernels.

Table 2: Worldwide Export data of Cashew Nut Shelled

Year	Quantity in Tonnes	Value in '1000 US\$
2013	429119	2647667
2014	533794	3534377
2015	555210	3951321
2016	561825	4489290
2017	584320	5606890
2018	497397	5041508
2019	688700	4712491
2020	682873	4355866
2021	757084	4745222
2022	664358	3976584
2023	781503	4004322

Table 3: Worldwide Import data of Cashew nut Shelled

Year	Quantity in Tonnes	Value in '1000 US\$
2013	408534	2753268
2014	457106	3018184
2015	500652	3590727
2016	485471	3819391
2017	503090	4872313
2018	500968	4780619
2019	585397	4431955
2020	624386	4173290
2021	698827	4546341
2022	631470	4085363
2023	710144	4118918

(Source: FAOSTAT)

In terms of global representation of trade, it is seen that cashew kernels are traded across the world as may be seen from the following data:

Table 4: Import Data of various Continents

Year	Continents	Asia	Africa	Americas	Europe	Australia & New Zealand
2013	Quantity (tonnes)	98283	7490	146908	137491	18332
	Value (1000 US\$)	581129	35204	1029592	984246	122966
2014	Quantity (tonnes)	100404	9889	153442	173069	20287
	Value (1000 US\$)	566724	55720	1044321	1219346	131935
2015	Quantity (tonnes)	120078	9630	169330	180677	20904
	Value (1000 US\$)	736718	59179	1293502	1351306	149766
2016	Quantity (tonnes)	106903	7088	163373	188443	19490
	Value (1000 US\$)	712585	43136	1368244	1540683	153220
2017	Quantity (tonnes)	109280	5117	169639	200067	18252
	Value (1000 US\$)	890905	42302	1741551	2011018	178934
2018	Quantity (tonnes)	116783	3695	170804	193215	16434
	Value (1000 US\$)	1007178	30856	1636307	1956642	149362
2019	Quantity (tonnes)	157407	6486	174747	227211	19515
	Value (1000 US\$)	1109364	44211	1346200	1791749	140145
2020	Quantity (tonnes)	159471	9475	184723	249428	21257
	Value (1000 US\$)	979586	60325	1224830	1779079	129249
2021	Quantity (tonnes)	193007	13120	204745	268840	19079
	Value (1000 US\$)	1162933	81795	1363238	1817798	120309
2022	Quantity (tonnes)	193946	13110	169026	236300	19047
	Value (1000 US\$)	1139088	82080	1108453	1638079	117397
2023	Quantity (tonnes)	244554	13289	165909	266292	20040
	Value (1000 US\$)	1317812	70471	965816	1653179	111059

(Source: FAOSTAT)

Table 5: Export Data of various Continents

Year	Continents	Asia	Africa	Americas	Europe	Australia & New Zealand
2013	Quantity (tonnes)	322167	41767	23727	41190	266
	Value (1000 US\$)	2054016	115913	152339	324128	1266
2014	Quantity (tonnes)	443553	17838	20625	51616	166
	Value (1000 US\$)	2946664	75282	131745	379543	1137
2015	Quantity (tonnes)	463542	16088	16783	58661	136
	Value (1000 US\$)	3303710	72768	129206	444717	919
2016	Quantity (tonnes)	449298	29255	21009	62112	151
	Value (1000 US\$)	3669711	119706	165805	533165	896
2017	Quantity (tonnes)	458398	42582	17274	65797	268
	Value (1000 US\$)	4566163	204898	157287	676886	1656
2018	Quantity (tonnes)	387157	31288	16343	62558	50
	Value (1000 US\$)	4003696	208002	152649	676818	338
2019	Quantity (tonnes)	507988	84852	21083	74701	76
	Value (1000 US\$)	3715121	212617	154020	630103	629
2020	Quantity (tonnes)	542789	39482	20065	80475	48
	Value (1000 US\$)	3426265	171911	122673	634574	435
2021	Quantity (tonnes)	597933	52857	20083	86175	41
	Value (1000 US\$)	3743724	246552	130079	624456	409
2022	Quantity (tonnes)	511964	58990	15415	77901	70
	Value (1000 US\$)	3025020	276005	100006	574783	666
2023	Quantity (tonnes)	563153	117975	15674	84669	31
	Value (1000 US\$)	2954254	351415	90481	608009	156

(Source: FAOSTAT)

d) Amenability of the commodity to standardization:

The characteristics of cashew kernels from its cultivation to retail sale such as cultivar varieties, composition, quality and packaging all lead to adequate parameters for the standardization of the product. There already exists a UNECE standard for cashew kernels. Taking into account that technical information is available and certain degree of work at regional / international level has already been achieved on certain aspects as mentioned in point (g). This product is amenable to standardization.

e) Coverage of main consumer protection and trade issues:

The standard needs elaboration of product coverage to match the provisions concerning quality, defects, sizes and their tolerance levels as well as weight, shape and presence of broken kernels. Classification of cashew kernels in accordance with its characteristics needs to be covered in the standard. Alignment of food safety parameters in respect of additives, contaminants, pesticides, hygiene as well as labelling requirements is also required to be carried out.

f) Number of commodities, which would need separate standards including whether raw, semi- processed or processed

A single standard for cashew kernel will cover all forms of cashew traded worldwide. The different forms of cashew kernel such as whole and broken are proposed to be covered in this standard.

g) Work already undertaken by other international organizations in this field and/or suggested by the relevant international intergovernmental body (ies)

The existing standards developed by other international organizations are given below:

- ISO 6477:1988, Cashew Kernels- Specifications
- UNECE standard DDP-17 for Cashew Kernel
- ASEAN Standard for Cashew Kernels (ASEAN Stan 20:2011)
- Global Cashew Council, Standard for Cashew Kernels
- Indian Standard, IS 7750:1975, Specifications for Cashew Kernels
- Philippine National Standard PNS/BAFPS No. 59: 2007- Specifications for Cashew Kernels
- Tanzania Regulations (G.N. No. 369 of 1996): Cashew nut (Marketing)
- Vietnam National Technical Regulation on Food Safety and Hygiene for Cashew Kernel (QCVN 01- 27: 2010/BNNPTNT).
- Association of Food Industries (AFI) Cashew kernel specifications. 2023

5. Relevance to Codex strategic objectives

The development of standard for Cashew kernel is in line with the strategic objective to promote the maximum application of codex standard by countries in their national legislation and to facilitate international trade by protecting health of the consumers. This proposal is in line with the following objectives of Codex Strategic Plan 2026-2031:

- Goal 1: Address current, emerging and critical issues in a timely manner; Objective 1.2: Prioritize needs and emerging issues.

6. Information on the relation between the proposal and other existing Codex documents

The work has relations with GSFA and GSCTFF and relevant endorsements might be required from CCFA and CCCF, respectively. For specific hygiene/microbiological provisions, if any, endorsement from CCFH might be required.

7. Identification of any requirement for and availability of expert scientific advice

None foreseen at this stage.

8. Identification of any need for technical input to the standard from external bodies

None foreseen at this stage.

9. Proposed timeline for completion of the new work

It is expected that the relevant subsidiary body will require two sessions to complete this work subject