

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
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Organization

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Agenda item 1

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DISCUSSION PAPER ON THE INCLUSION OF 'SEAWEED' IN THE TERMS OF REFERENCE OF CODEX COMMITTEE ON FISH AND FISHERY PRODUCTS (CCFFP)

(Prepared by Republic of Korea)

Background

Seaweed (e.g., laver, wakame, kelp) has traditionally been considered a hygienically safe and nutritionally excellent food. As such, it has been widely used in many foods in Asia and is regarded as an essential food ingredient.



Laver



Wakame



Kelp

Since seaweed is traditionally produced in the sea, it is natural and appropriate for the Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products (CCFFP), which elaborates Codex documents related to fishery products, to be responsible for seaweed.

The Republic of Korea believes that including 'seaweed' in the terms of reference of CCFFP is most suitable for the following reasons.

Seaweed has been an essential part of Asian cuisine, both in its fresh and processed forms, for many years. In contrast, in Western countries, seaweed was traditionally used for non-food purposes, such as animal feed or soil fertilizers. However, in recent decades, global interest in the use of seaweed as food has risen, with its addition to soups, salads, sushi wrappings, and more. As a results, the market in the West has reached an annual growth rate of 7-10 percent (Dawczynski *et al.*, 2007; FSAI, 2020).

In 2017, global seaweed production exceeded 33 million tonnes, tripling from about 11 million tonnes in 2000. In 2019, seaweed production amounted to approximately 36 million tonnes, and according to the *Report of the expert meeting on food safety for seaweed* published by FAO/WHO, global trade in seaweed and seaweed products amounted to USD 5.6 billion.

Table 1. Global production of seaweed from 2009 to 2019 (in tonnes)

Year	Total seaweed production
2009	19,769,797
2010	21,245,293
2011	22,907,429
2012	25,813,920
2013	29,299,837
2014	30,261,591

2015	32,142,378
2016	32,760,907
2017	33,741,592
2018	33,341,168
2019	35,762,504

Sources: FAO. 2020a. FAO yearbook: Fishery and Aquaculture Statistics 2018. In: FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture. Rome. Cited 9 August 2021. fao.org/fishery/static/Yearbook/YB2018_USBcard/index.htm; FAO. 2021. FAO Global Fishery and Aquaculture Production Statistics – FishStatJ, March 2021. In: FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture. Rome. Cited 30 October 2021. fao.org/fishery/statistics/software/fishstatj/en.

Major exporters of edible seaweed include China, the Republic of Korea, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Japan in Asia; Canada in the Americas; and France and the United Kingdom in Europe. In addition, Table 2 shows the import values of edible seaweed for some countries, indicating that the import amounts have been increasing each year.

Table 2. Edible seaweed import value by country (Unit : 1000 USD)

	2020	2021	2022
China	195,510	234,205	393,048
Japan	178,525	187,831	219,258
USA	56,188	63,713	71,030

Sources: Korea trade-investment promotion agency

Moreover, given the challenge posed by the increasing global population and the impact of climate change on food production, the utilization of seaweed as a sustainable food resource is being emphasized.

As global interest in seaweed continues to grow, the need to develop relevant international documents on seaweed safety has become increasingly important. In 2021, the FAO/WHO published the *Report of the expert meeting on food safety for seaweed* and the need for Codex guidance on seaweed safety was raised during CCFFP35. In 2024, CCCF17 agreed to initiate new work on a *code of practice for the prevention and reduction of cadmium contamination in foods*, which will include methods to reduce cadmium levels in seaweed products.

Collectively, the Republic of Korea believe that the aforementioned trade status and commitments provide a solid basis for the CCFFP to begin discussions on including ‘seaweed’ in its terms of reference.

Recommendation

Codex committee on fish and fishery products is invited to consider including ‘seaweed’ in the terms of reference.