



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD LABELLING

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DISCUSSION PAPER ON THE LABELLING OF PREPACKAGED FOODS IN JOINT PRESENTATION AND MULTIPACK FORMATS

(Prepared by Colombia)

I. BACKGROUND

1. During the 44th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL44), held in Asunción, Paraguay from 16-20 October 2017, in the framework of future work, the Committee agreed to prepare, among other discussion documents, the one on food labelling in joint presentation and multipack formats, under the leadership of Colombia, a country that expressed interest in the proposal of this document.
2. As a result, during the CCFL45, held in Ottawa, Ontario (Canada) from May 13-17, 2019, in the framework of future work, Colombia presented the first discussion paper on the labelling of foods in joint presentation and in multipack formats.
3. At CCFL45 Colombia presented the paper based on replies to Circular Letter, CL 2018/24-FL¹, which described that the absence of international guidelines and the lack of harmonized definitions for labelling in multipack formats and joint presentation.
4. Since the justification for undertaking the new work was not clear, Colombia proposed to the Committee to defer discussion of the document to its next meeting, for the purpose of allowing delegates to reflect carefully on the issues highlighted in the document.
5. CCFL45 agreed on the need to update the discussion paper submitted by Colombia, taking into account the following aspects:
 - a) *To request Colombia to:*
 - *update the discussion paper, taking into account the comments made at the session.*
 - *identify gaps in the General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods (CXS 1-1985) (GSLPF) for consideration at CCFL46, and*
 - *consider the need for amendments to the GSLPF as opposed to a stand alone standard.*
6. At CCFL46, held virtually from September 27 to October 1 and October 7, 2021, Colombia presented the topic describing what were considered prepackaged foods presented jointly and in multipack formats, highlighting that labelling information, such as date marking and list of ingredients, of individual foods in these packaging formats could be hidden from consumers.
7. The Committee held a general discussion on the item, and agreed to:

¹ Replies received from Algeria, Australia, Canada, Chile, United States, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Poland, Thailand and the European Union, as well as the International Council of Beverage Associations (ICBA).

- (i) retain the topic on labelling of prepackaged foods in joint presentation and prepackaged multipackaged foods in the inventory of potential CCFL future work.
 - (ii) request Colombia to prepare a discussion paper to identify gaps in the *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods (CXS 1-1985)* and/or identify where clarity and interpretation may be required; and
 - (iii) issue a circular letter requesting information to support the development of discussion papers, and that Colombia would work with the Codex Secretariat to develop appropriate questions for the CL.
8. In developing this discussion paper, Colombia took into account the observations made by the Committee, replies to CL 2022/10-FL² and considered the gaps in the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985), which are presented in Appendix I.

II. JUSTIFICATION

9. The trade of food for human consumption brings with it innovative processes on the part of manufacturers, distributors, importers, and exporters, aimed at making their products more attractive to consumers and also to achieve benefits in terms of the price of the final product to the customer.
10. As part of these innovations are the commercial presentations of the products, which are moving from individual presentations to become, in some markets, joint or multipack presentations, which facilitate the buyer to acquire several products in the same transaction, sometimes obtain cheaper products when acquiring several units, or to make promotions or discounts.
11. Prepackaged foods in multipack format are those marketed sold in a secondary package that contains several units of the same or different products, where each unit is labelled individually.
12. Foods in joint presentation contain units of different products labelled together, where the intention of their trade is to present to the consumer a single label that indicates a relationship between the foods in the multipack or joint presentation format, where they are intended either to be consumed in a complementary way, or mixed together before consuming.
13. These types of packages of food products often do not allow to clearly see the complete labelling information for each unit of sale (such as expiration date marking, nutritional information, or allergen information, among others), and this information is very important for the buyer to make an informed choice.
14. The GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) contains provisions that are mostly geared towards the presentation of information on labels of individually prepackaged foods. The same provisions would also apply to foods presented in joint presentations and/or in multipack formats, but such information should be presented in a form that allows consumers to read that information.
15. For the purposes of the above, Colombia presents the study of those provisions of the *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods (CXS 1-1985)* in which gaps are evident in the face of the labelling requirements of prepackaged foods in multipack formats or joint presentation (Appendix I).

III. CONCLUSION

16. Given that the objective of the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) is to provide information that enables consumers to make informed choices, and that such information applies equally to prepackaged foods sold in individual presentation as well as those sold in joint presentation and/or multipack formats, it can be concluded that the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) should be revised to address the labelling of prepackaged foods in joint presentation and/or multipack formats. Therefore, a proposal is made for the CCFL to consider amending the GSLPF to address the above. The gaps highlighted in the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) are presented in Appendix I of this document.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

17. The Committee is invited to Initiate new work on amending the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) to address the labelling of foods presented in multipack formats (the project document is presented in Appendix II) taking into account the gaps highlighted and presented in Appendix I.

² Replies were received from Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Cuba, Egypt, European Union, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, South Africa, Switzerland, Thailand, United Kingdom, Uruguay, USA and ALAIAB, Food Industry Asia, FoodDrinkEurope, ICBA and ICUMSA.

APPENDIX I

GAPS IN THE GENERAL STANDARD FOR THE LABELLING OF PREPACKAGED FOODS (CXs 1-1985) AND NEED FOR CLARITY IN THE INTERPRETATION OF THE LABELLING OF PREPACKAGED FOODS IN JOINT PRESENTATION AND MULTIPACK FORMATS

1. As agreed by CCFL46, a Circular Letter, CL 2022/10-FL, was issued in March 2022 which requested information on labelling of prepackaged foods in joint presentation or multipack formats. Responses were received from twenty three (23) countries³.
2. Among the main conclusions of the information provided are:
3. As a general comment, opposing positions were expressed regarding whether or not to support the new work proposed by Colombia.
4. **In response to the question whether prepackaged foods in joint presentation or multipack formats are defined separately from prepackaged foods.**
 - Prepackaged foods in multipack formats are not defined in all countries. In some countries, the regulations around food labelling are under review and these definitions were included among the topics of study, while in other countries this modality of the sale of these prepackaged foods exists but there is no definition. In certain countries, labelling requirements are established, but without a definition for this type of product.
 - Brazil, Canada, Honduras, India, Mexico, Australia and New Zealand, the Philippines, South Africa, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Uruguay have the labelling of prepackaged foods in joint presentation or multipack formats specified in their current food labelling regulations.
5. **In response to the question of whether to specify the labelling of prepackaged foods in joint presentation or in multipack formats is specified in the current food labelling regulations of their country/region**
 - There are different requirements in the regulations of each country/region that stated that it has labelling specifications for prepackaged foods in joint presentation or in multipack formats in their current food labelling regulations, for example:
 - In Brazil, it only applies to those products that require nutrient declaration or nutritional labelling.
 - In Canada, criteria are established for requirements such as net content and nutrition information but not for other criteria.
 - In Australia and New Zealand there are requirements for single portion packages within a multipack, and these single portion packages do not require full labelling (as it already on the outer package/container), but each individual portion pack must be labelled with required warnings and/or declarations, including allergen declarations.
 - In the Philippines for retail packages of multiple units, a statement in the outer package/container regarding the content amount, must include the number of individual units, the net content of each individual unit and, in parentheses, the total amount of content of the multi-unit package, but do not refer to other requirements.
 - Costa Rica, Egypt, the European Union, Indonesia, Japan, Kenya, Malaysia, Paraguay and Peru stated that they do not have specific labelling specifications for prepackaged foods in joint presentation or in multipack formats in their current food labelling regulations. Costa Rica, the European Union and Japan said that the same requirements apply to prepackaged foods. Paraguay said it does not have specifications but is in the process of including them.

³ Replies received from: Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Cuba, Egypt, European Union, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, South Africa, Switzerland, Thailand, United Kingdom, Uruguay, United States of America and five (5) international organizations: Latin American Alliance of Food and Beverage Industry Associations (ALAIAB), Food Industry Asia, Food Drink Europe, ICBA and ICUMSA.

6. Regarding the experiences of national governments and industry in proposing, implementing or complying with regulations on the labelling of prepackaged foods in joint presentation or in multipack formats.

The following challenges are highlighted:

- Lack of clarity regarding what will be the expiration date of the multipack when it contains different prepackaged foods with different shelf-life periods.
- The fact of having the information declared in the container or larger packaging that includes the products, but that these are marketed sold individually, and the primary containers are not labelled and therefore the information is not provided to the consumer.
- The excess or lack of information declared on the labels can hinder the work of verification by the health authorities.

Regarding the experiences and challenges of the industry in the labelling of prepackaged foods and in joint presentation, it is relevant to mention:

- For those industries serving local and export markets, harmonising labelling standards is a real challenge.
- Specific designs for nutrition facts and the long ingredient list statement take up most of the space on the back of container labels.
- Space/surface limitations are one of the challenges, as smaller packages/containers are more in demand in the market. Designing a larger package/container may not be, at the same time, economical and sustainable.
- Consumers are also looking at the carbon footprint of the product and this poses some problems to reflect the requirements on the label.

7. Gaps in the *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods (CXS 1-1985)* and Need for Clarity in the Interpretation of the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods in joint presentation or in multipack formats

The following gaps were identified in the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) around labelling requirements for prepackaged foods in joint presentation or in multipack formats:

a. Scope

There were different positions in the countries that responded to the Circular Letter (CL 2022/10-FL) about this question.

The majority agreed that the scope does include prepackaged foods in joint presentation or in multipack formats, motivated among other aspects by:

- The scope of the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985), that states that it applies to all prepackaged foods and prepackaged foods include prepackaged foods in multipack formats and joint presentations,
- In the provisions 8.1.2 and 8.1.3. of the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) and its definitions of prepacked, packaging and label.

Among the countries that consider that prepackaged foods in joint presentation or multipack formats are included in the scope of the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985), positions were received indicating that, although they are included, additional definitions and guidance regarding the labelling of these products are required.

Responses were also received stating that prepackaged foods in joint presentation or multipack formats are not included in the scope of the GSLPF, motivated due by the fact that it is not possible to explicitly say whether or not the current scope covers both joint presentation and multipack formats. The scope is directed to the single unit available to the consumer.

These countries are considering including foods prepackaged or in joint presentation within the scope of the GSLPF.

b. Definitions

In response to the question of whether specific definitions are needed in the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) for the international food trade of prepackaged foods in joint presentation or multipack **formats**, most of the responses were that they are needed, motivated mainly by for the following reasons:

- The GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) and other Codex labelling texts have some gaps in relation to labelling requirements for prepackaged foods in joint presentations or multipack formats. These gaps could motivate national authorities and food businesses to adopt different approaches, which could create barriers to trade or restrict consumers' access to labelling information.
- In the case of an exemption granted under the provision of section 6 of the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) where said exemption should be mentioned in the joint presentation or multipack formats.
- There could be foods of very different nature and quality that could be used in this type of presentation.

Other countries mentioned that they were flexible to include the definitions in question if the Committee agreed to start the new work.

Those countries that stated that specific definitions are not needed for prepackaged foods in joint presentation or multipack formats in the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985), gave the following reasons:

- The definitions of "prepackage" and "container" in the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) include prepackaged foods that are sold in joint presentation and multipack formats. It may not be necessary to define "multipack" or "joint presentation" to provide additional clarity in the various sections of the standard to explain any specific labelling requirements for this type of prepackaged food.
- An example of a CCFL text providing additional clarity without a definition is the General Standard for the Labelling of Non-Retail Containers of Food (CXS 346-2021), section 5.1.1.5, which states: *Where the non-retail container contains multiple types of food, the names of all the foods contained therein and/or a commonly understood descriptor that best explains the foods present together in the container shall be provided on the label, as allowed by the competent authority in the country in which the product is sold.*
- In any case, it may be too early to comment on the need for definitions, as this can be determined once the gaps in the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) are confirmed and after assessing whether specific terms are needed to develop a text addressing those gaps.
- It is not considered necessary to add specific definitions for prepackaged foods in joint presentation or multipack formats to the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985). We believe that the provisions in 8.1.2 and 8.1.3 are sufficient guidance and that no further work is needed.

Observations were made regarding the definitions proposed by Colombia for multipack formats and joint presentation that are summarized as follows:

- Some member countries stated that it was too early to review the definitions, given that the work had not been approved and therefore, further discussion is required, but the proposal was a good starting point for discussions.
- Other member countries agreed with the definitions with some amendments.
- One member country expressed it does not support the proposed definitions. This member does not believe in the need for new work or new definitions. However, if definitions for multipack and joint presentation are to be developed, they propose edits to the suggested definitions.
- One member country stated that the text requiring each unit contained in the multipack formats to be individually labelled should not be part of the definition because it is a specific labelling requirement and there might be certain exceptions.
- Various considerations were received regarding the lack of clarity whether Codex labelling texts should deal with promotional objects other than food. It was therefore suggested that this text should be deleted. Another member country suggested that the words "other elements" at the end of the definition of multiple packages/containers should be further clarified to ensure that "other elements" do not contaminate food.
- One member country considered that guidance for multipack labelling should be consistent with the recently adopted *General Standard for the Labelling of Non-Retail Containers of Food* (CXS 346-2021). In particular, the provision in Section 7.3 of the Standard provides guidance on the labelling of prepackaged multipack foods in non-retail packaging.

c. Name of the Food

As to whether the requirements contained in paragraph 4.1 ("Name of the Food") of the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) apply to prepackaged foods in joint presentation or multipack formats, most responses were inclined to affirm that they do apply, arguing for the following reasons:

- Since prepackaged foods in joint presentation or multipack formats are prepackaged foods, and the text on mandatory labelling requirements in section 4 of the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) applies to labels of prepackaged foods, paragraph 4.1 of the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) already applies to these and all other types of prepackaged foods.
- Prepackaged foods in joint presentation are considered a single food, containing some prepackaged foods of different nature. Therefore, the name of these should be labelled as a single food and paragraph 4.1 applies to prepackaged foods in joint presentation.
- One member country considered all requirements of the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985), including 4.1. "Name of the Food" applies to prepackaged foods in joint presentation or multipack formats. Where individual packages/containers are not visible through the secondary packaging, the secondary packaging must provide the name of the food(s) for identification and consumer information purposes. This is already covered by 4.1 in combination with 8.1.3 of the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985).
- A Member Organization considers paragraph 4.1.2. of the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) clarifies that additional words or phrases may be necessary to avoid misleading or confusing the consumer as to the true nature of the food. Therefore, if different elements are presented together in a multipack, this provision should be interpreted as requiring that additional details of each element be readily available near the name of the food.

One member country considers that the requirements contained in paragraph 4.1 ("Name of the Food ") of the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) do not apply to prepackaged foods in joint presentation or multipack formats, since it is not clearly specified that it applies to multipacks or joint presentations; However, if the scope were changed, it would include them.

8. In response to the question whether there are other gaps in the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) with respect to food labelling in joint presentation or multipack formats, the following conclusions were drawn:

- It is unclear whether the mandatory labelling requirements for prepackaged foods in the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) apply to prepackaged foods that are in joint presentations or multipack formats.
- It is not clear whether mandatory information should be presented on the labels of prepackaged food units contained in a multipack, as well as on the label of multipacks.
- There are gaps regarding if the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) is sufficiently clear as to how mandatory labelling requirements apply to prepackaged foods sold in joint presentation or multipack formats. The *General Standard for the Labelling of Non-Retail Containers of Food* is more specific than the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) as to how to identify the name of the food on the label of jointly presented foods. There may be other areas that could benefit from greater clarity, such as the ingredient list and net content, particularly for foods in joint presentation. For other requirements, it may depend on the variability between foods within the multipack or joint presentation.
- Considering that the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) applies to prepackaged foods in joint presentations and multipack formats, it is also important to consider the appropriate place to include any specific details on the application of mandatory labelling requirements for these foods. National authorities, or if necessary to include them in an international standard. One member country urges an exploration of whether the absence of such provisions in the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) is currently affecting Codex's overall objectives of public health and fair trade practices and, if so, how, to resolve the issue.
- Prepackaged food units in joint presentation or contained in a multipack may be intended to be combined and consumed together and this could influence the way certain information is presented (e.g. nutrient claim for the final product).
- It is important for a member country to take into account information on ingredients that cause hypersensitivity, which should be readily available to food-allergic consumers, especially in cases where the list of ingredients is placed only on the outer packaging and not on individual foods, which could be distributed separately.
- Foods offered to the final consumer in multiple packages/containers lack clarity within the current Codex provisions, which allow them to be sold. It is suggested that this requirement be within the Standard, so as to improve its application.
- One member country considers that there may be challenges in the traceability of each unit of food products presented in a joint submission. Another challenge is for foods presented in multipack formats, as it could

be difficult to adjust the labelling on the secondary package/container if there are changes to the primary package/container labelling information.

- One member country proposes these sections of the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) that may require clarification:
 - There is no specific provision in the GSLPF (CXS 1-1885) on how to declare the net weight/net content of prepackaged foods in multipack formats, i.e. the declaration of the number of units.
 - The declaration of the name of the food(s), the identification of the batch and the date marking must be clarified.

9. Responses were received to the effect that there were no other gaps in the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) with respect to food labelling in a joint presentation or multipack formats, supported by the following justifications:

As a country we have no experience with both practices.

- We do not believe that there are gaps in the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) regarding food labelling in joint presentation or multipack formats. It is considered that the current guidance provided in the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) covers food labelling in both multipack and joint presentation formats and that there is no need for new work.
- There are no other gaps in the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) regarding food labelling in joint presentation or multipack formats. The requirements of the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) apply to all prepackaged foods to be offered as such to the consumer or for catering purposes, whether offered in single packages/containers or in joint presentations or multipack formats.
- Section 8.1 of the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) addresses the issue of mandatory reporting. It may not refer explicitly to foodstuffs sold in multipack formats but it states that, when the container is covered by packaging, the packaging must bear the necessary information, or the label on the container must be easily legible through the outer packaging. Food products in multiple packages/containers must meet this same requirement of the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985).
- No gaps have been identified in the GSLPF. Further information is expected on gaps that may have been identified by other Codex members.

10. The last question referred in the Circular Letter (CL 2022/10-FL) formulated by Colombia, was to receive opinions regarding what other sections of the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) may require clarification and interpretation regarding the labelling of food in joint presentation or in multipack formats. Responses were received about which sections may require revision, which are summarized as follows:

- Subsections: 4.1 NAME OF THE FOOD, 4.2. LIST OF INGREDIENTS, 4.4. NAME AND ADDRESS, 4.6 LOT IDENTIFICATION and 4.7 DATE MARKING AND STORAGE INSTRUCTIONS of Section 4 MANDATORY LABELLING OF PREPACKAGED FOOD.
- In Subsection 4.3 of the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985), NET CONTENT, the labelling provision and the specific exemption for multipack and joint presentation need clarification with respect to food labelling in joint and/or multipack formats.
- Section 6 EXEMPTIONS FROM MANDATORY LABELLING REQUIREMENTS and Section 8 SUBMISSION OF MANDATORY INFORMATION of the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985), could be amended to address exemptions and general requirements for prepackaged foods in joint presentation or multipack formats.
- Add the proposed definition of prepackaged foods in joint presentation or multipack formats to the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) Section 2; DEFINITION OF TERMS.
- Add an additional section for prepackaged foods in joint presentation or multipack formats to establish the requirements handled by their labelling, for example: In the case of prepackaged foods in joint presentation or in multipack formats, they will be sold as a single final unit of sale to the consumer;
 - Add all mandatory labelling referred to in section 4 MANDATORY LABELLING OF PREPACKAGED FOODS to be declared on the secondary packaging;
 - Add a sentence that highlights that this is the final unit of sale to customers; example: To be sold as a unit or, Not to be sold individually;

- At least the product name, date marking, storage instructions and batch number shall be indicated on the individual units in the primary packaging.
- Adding a phrase on individual units highlighting that they will not be sold individually; Example: Do not sell individually or as part of the promotion.
- The following provision regarding joint presentation/assorted packaging/containers can be included in section 4.7.1: "The shelf life declared on the assorted packages/containers must be that of the product having the earliest declared shelf life among the different prepackaged foods packaged inside."

Likewise, responses were received indicating that there are no other sections in the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) that require clarification and interpretation regarding the labelling of foods in joint presentation or multipack formats, motivated by:

- The current guidance provided in the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) covers food labelling in both multipack formats and joint presentation and is clear and easy to interpret. Consultation with stakeholders in our industry also confirms that they consider the requirements of the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) regarding food labelling in joint presentation or multipack formats to be clear and easy to follow.
- The requirements of the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) apply to all foods prepackaged to be offered as such to the consumer or for catering purposes, whether offered in individual packages/containers or in joint presentations or multipack formats.

PROJECT DOCUMENT

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE NEW WORK

The purpose of having a standard that harmonizes the labelling of prepackaged foods in multipack formats (secondary container that includes units of the same or different products, where each unit is individually labelled) and of foods in joint presentation (contains units of different products where they are labelled jointly and the intention of its trade/sale is to present the consumer with a single label that lists the foods that compose it, which are complementary to each other or mixed for consumption), it is to provide the consumer with the information of each of the products that are being acquired, to avoid subjective interpretations and to facilitate communication between the food manufacturer and the consumer.

In addition to the above, there are no international guidelines nor work carried out regarding the labelling of foods presented jointly or in multipack formats, in general, there is no difficulty in their implementation.

The new work aims to amend the *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods* (CXS 1-1985) to address the labelling of prepackaged foods in multipack formats.

2. RELEVANCE AND TIMELINESS

Currently there is a growing trend in the marketing of food in multipack formats and in joint presentation, while the current rules for food labelling are oriented to the requirements for individual units.

It is worth highlighting the lack of harmonization of the definitions of multipack formats and joint presentation, as part of the current problems with the labelling of these forms of food marketing. As well, also the difficulties that arise when part of the labelling information of the individual presentations is covered by the secondary packaging, making it difficult to review the general and/or nutritional labelling and limiting, for the buyer and the consumer, the possibilities of making informed decisions.

3. MAIN ASPECTS TO BE COVERED

- 1) The proposed work includes the amendment of the *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods* (CXS 1-1985) in at least the following aspects:
 - a. Scope of application, to include prepackaged foods in joint presentation and multipackaged prepackaged foods, for the purposes of this work.
 - b. Definitions of terms, to formulate and study the relevance of including the definitions of joint presentation and multipack formats.
 - c. Mandatory requirements for prepackaged foods, in order to propose additions of requirements that are considered to be appropriate for prepackaged foods in joint presentation and prepackaged foods in multipack formats.
- 2) Updating the GSLPF to also cover prepackaged foods in joint and/or multipack presentations would allow any future revision of the GSLPF to apply equally to prepackaged foods in joint presentations and/or multipack formats instead of the need to have a separate standalone guideline.

4. ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE CRITERIA FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW WORK PRIORITIES

General Criterion

Consumer protection from the point of view of health, food safety, ensuring fair practices in the food trade and taking into account the identified needs of developing countries.

The marketing of prepackaged foods in joint presentation and/or multipack formats is a growing trend in food marketing that poses challenges around consumer protection, such as access to the information declared on the label of each of the prepackaged foods.

Likewise, this work is aimed at standardizing the labelling requirements of prepackaged foods in joint presentation and/or multipack formats, guaranteeing fair practices in the food trade.

Criteria Applicable to General Issues:

- a) **Diversification of national legislations and apparent resultant or potential impediments to international trade**

Currently there are no known international guidelines or work carried out regarding the labelling of foods marketed in joint presentation and/or in multipack formats. The new proposed work will provide a standard for the labelling of prepackaged foods marketed in the referred presentations, which will favour international trade.

b) Scope of work and establishment of priorities between the different sections of the work

It is proposed that the amendment of the Standard and related texts (as appropriate) focus on its applicability to foods marketed in joint presentation and/or multipack formats in order to amend the *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods*.

c) Work already undertaken by other international organizations in this field and/or suggested by the relevant international intergovernmental bodies

Currently there are no known international guidelines or work carried out regarding the labelling of foods marketed in joint presentation and/or multipack formats.

The labelling of food in multipack formats is regulated. In the case of Canada, there is recent legislation corresponding to the new Safe Food Canadian Regulations (SFCR) effective since January 2019.

d) Amenability of the subject of the proposal to standardization

The absence of regulations and harmonization of the relevant information that must be visible to the food consumer in multipack formats and in joint presentations, is limiting the possibilities of the buyer and the consumer to make informed decisions. An example of this is that information as relevant as that of the general and nutritional labelling is covered by the secondary packaging, preventing its review, as well as the limited identification of the main display panel (central panel) when several units are labelled in multipack formats. The purpose of the new work is to amend the *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods* and define specific requirements for the labelling of foods marketed in joint presentation and/or in multipack formats.

e) Consideration of the global magnitude of the problem or issue

Currently there is a growing trend in the marketing of food in multipack formats and in joint presentations. This is a regular and significant practice in countries like Chile, Guatemala, India, and Mexico. The European Union states that this type of format is common at special times such as Christmas and Easter.

The current standards for food labelling are geared towards the requirements for individual units.

Regarding containers covered by wrapping, health legislation generally refers to the application of the label to the container in a way that allows an easy reading of the information through it, or the declaration of the information on the wrapper, which implies in the first instance, that the general and nutritional labelling information presents difficulties in its visibility and/or is not always available and/or is not sufficient and clear enough for the consumer.

5. RELEVANCE TO THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES OF CODEX

The proposed work is in line with the Commission's mandate for the development of international standards, guidelines, and other recommendations for protecting the health of consumers and ensuring fair practices in food trade. The proposed work will contribute to advancing the Codex Strategic Goals 1 and 3.

Strategic Goal 1. Address current, emerging, and critical issues in a timely manner.

The proposed new work addresses a growing trend in the food trade for which labelling requirements are not covered in the *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods*.

Strategic Goal 3. Increase impact through recognition and use of Codex standards.

The definition of a standard in Codex regarding the labelling requirements of prepackaged foods in joint presentation or in multipack formats will favour the recognition and implementation of Codex standards since there are no known guidelines or works on the subject and it is currently a common food marketing practice in various countries.

6. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PROPOSAL AND OTHER EXISTING CODEX DOCUMENTS

The proposal is to review and then amend the *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods*, and subsequently assess the need to amend further Codex documents. Updating the GSLPF to also cover prepackaged foods in joint presentations and/or multipack formats would allow any future revision of the GSLPF to apply equally to prepackaged foods in joint presentations and/or multipack formats instead of requiring a separate standalone guideline.

The relevant labelling provisions for the marketing of prepackaged foods in joint presentation or multipack formats, in the *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods* are horizontally applicable across all prepackaged foods marketed in the referred presentations.

7. NEED AND AVAILABILITY OF SCIENTIFIC ADVICE

None identified at this stage. There will be opportunities to consult with relevant bodies, if necessary, throughout the process.

8. NEED FOR TECHNICAL INPUT TO THE STANDARD FROM EXTERNAL BODIES

None identified at this stage. There will be opportunities to consult with relevant bodies, if necessary, throughout the process.

9. PROPOSED TIMETABLE

Subject to approval by the Codex Alimentarius Commission in 2023.

The development of the proposed work will be submitted for consideration by the CCFL in 2023 and is expected to take four sessions of the CCFL or less, depending on the relevant inputs and the agreement of the Members. Final adoption by the Codex Alimentarius Commission is scheduled for 2028.