



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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CL 2025/07-FL
February 2025

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

FROM: Secretariat, Codex Alimentarius Commission
FAO, Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON THE USE OF “COUNTRY OF HARVEST” IN THE LABELLING OF SPICES.

DEADLINE: 31 May 2025

BACKGROUND

1. The 48th Session of the Codex Committee on Food labelling (CCFL48) could not reach consensus on endorsement of Section 8.3.2, Country of harvest shall be declared, of the *Standard for dried floral parts – dried saffron* and thus referred the matter to the Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CCEXEC87) and the 47th Session of the Codex Commission (CAC47) for consideration.
2. Based on recommendations from CCEXEC87¹, CAC47²:
 - (i) requested the Codex Secretariat to issue a circular letter (CL) to Members and Observers seeking potential solutions to the use of country of harvest (COH) in food labelling of spices, recognizing the concerns that had been expressed by Codex Members;
 - (ii) established an electronic working group (EWG), reporting to CCFL, jointly chaired by Iran and Canada and co-chaired by India and Madagascar, working in English and French, with the following terms of references (ToRs):
 - to review the information gathered from the comments to the CL, and discussions at the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH), CCFL and CAC47 to:
 - provide potential options which recognize Members' perspectives on the use of COH in addition to the mandatory declaration of country of origin (COO) in food labelling of spices, including saffron and vanilla;
 - review options for a definition for COH and consider how it differs from COO; and
 - consider whether any clarifications are needed to application of labelling provisions.
 - to prepare a report for consideration of CCFL49;
 - (iii) invited CCSCH8 to also consider responses to the CL and make its own observations to CCFL49;
 - (iv) strongly encouraged Codex Members to ensure that discussions in the EWG, CCSCH8 and CCFL49 be informed by all relevant interests; and
 - (v) invited CCFL49 to consider issues related to the use of COH in food labelling of spices.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

3. To assist in addressing the potential solutions to the use of COH in food labelling of spices, Codex Members and Observers are requested to provide information on the following issues:
 - a. Noting the content of Section 4.5 on Country of origin in the *General standard for the labelling of pre-packaged foods* (XCS 1-1985), provide information on situations where processing of spices might change the nature of spices, including saffron and vanilla which might require changes to the “country of origin” for the purposes of labelling.
 - b. Experiences and examples related to inaccurate or misleading origin labelling of spices.
 - c. Challenges related to fraudulent or false origin declarations on dried saffron or other spices.

¹ REP24/EXEC2 paragraph 95.

² Full discussion in REP24/CAC paragraphs 182 – 189 and 190 – 196.

- d. Inspection and enforcement activities related to both “country of origin” and “country of harvest” and how inspectors verify labelling.
 - e. Concerns or issues related to mandatory “country of harvest” labelling such as setting a precedent, and consistency with CXS 1-1985.
 - f. Potential positive or negative impacts on trade should “country of harvest” be a mandatory requirement.
 - g. Any other information relevant to the labelling provisions for spices including saffron and vanilla.
4. The response to the CL will be considered by the EWG, and the EWG will prepare a report for consideration by CCFL49.
 5. Member and Observers are invited to submit information on the questions in this CL (see para. 3).
 6. The questions are uploaded to the Codex Online Commenting System (OCS): <https://ocs.codexalimentarius.org/>, as per the guideline below.

GUIDANCE ON THE PROVISION OF COMMENTS

7. Information should be submitted through the Codex Contact Points of Codex Members and Observers using the OCS.
8. 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.
9. Contact Points of Codex Members and Observers 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).³
10. Other OCS resources, including the user manual and short guide, can also be found on the Codex website⁴.
11. For questions on the OCS, please contact Codex-OCS@fao.org.

³ http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/codexalimentarius/doc/OCS/Codex_OCS_FAQs_2017-11-06.pdf

⁴ <https://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/resources/ocs/en/>