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**CODEX  
ALIMENTARIUS**  
INTERNATIONAL FOOD STANDARDS

# CCSCH5

Codex Committee  
on Spices and Culinary  
Herbs Fifth Session

**20, 21, 22, 26,  
27 & 29 April 2021  
10:30-13:30 CET**

“**But in truth, should I meet  
with gold or spices in great quantity,  
I shall remain till I collect as  
much as possible, and for this  
purpose I am proceeding solely  
in quest of them.**”

*Christopher Columbus*



The Codex Spices Committee is the youngest group in the Codex Alimentarius, but although only in existence since 2014 it deals with a commodity that has for centuries defined economies, trade and perhaps the start of globalization itself.

Hosting the Spices Committee is India, a country whose spice-producing history is mainly due to its varied climate ideal for producing the many different types of spice crops. From the tropical climes producing turmeric to the drier and cooler sub-tropical regions for cumin.

The Committee has been hosted in Goa, Chennai and twice in Kerala, the heartland of the pepper trade. However, in 2021 the meeting will be virtual and it will be the first time a technical commodity committee will have met this way and worked in real time on standard development.

This newsletter captures some of the work of the Committee and with contributions from the hosts, as well as from countries leading the work on the spices and culinary herbs moving closer towards adoption, describes the flavour of an agenda that will require dialogue and collaboration to ensure the meeting's success.



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CCSCH Secretariat  
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## Welcome message

Dear Delegates,

It was in 2013 that the CAC approved the formation of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH), with India as the host country and Spices Board as the secretariat. The committee was tasked with elaborating worldwide standards for spices and culinary herbs in their dried and dehydrated state in whole, ground, and cracked or crushed form, in consultation as necessary with other international organizations.

Since its inception, through four sessions over a period of six years, this committee has been able to complete work on four Codex standards for spices and culinary herbs, viz. black, white & green pepper, cumin, thyme and garlic. This makes CCSCH one of the most productive Codex Committees currently in operation, and this was possible only by the wholehearted involvement of the members of this committee.

The world is still in the throes of combating the global pandemic. While it has thrown at us many challenges, new strategies continue to evolve globally, adapting to the new normal and addressing the challenges. Continuing to work effectively even in the midst of the pandemic is a challenge before CCSCH and we chose to carry on the regular work on the virtual platform.

You may recall that the CCSCH5 session was originally planned to be conducted in 2020 as a physical session. As this became impractical due to the spread of COVID-19, the session had to be deferred. I am happy that we are going to have the session virtually from the 20 to 29 April 2021. CCSCH5 will be the first Codex Commodity Committee session to be held virtually. With seven draft standards and two new work proposals awaiting discussion, the session will have a tightly packed schedule.

It is very likely that organizing this session virtually will be demanding. Virtual sessions are constrained by time and their effectiveness depend on the state of technical facilities available at all points of participation. We are still not fully aware of all the nuances that can emerge when sustained technical discussions are conducted in a virtual setting.

As in all notable endeavours in life, here too, ample preparation will be the key to success. The better prepared we are, the more effectively and efficiently we can take part in each day's deliberations in the session. I sense that, with the full support and cooperation from all the participants we are going to have a highly productive CCSCH5.

I wish all the delegates to CCSCH5 a great session full of constructive deliberations.

D. Sathiyar IFS, Secretary, Spices Board



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## A note from the Chair

Hello everyone,

I have the pleasure of inviting you all to the 5th Session of CCSCH being held in a virtual mode. This is the first Codex commodity committee to hold its session virtually, this is new to us and may to you too, let us make this journey together.

The world of Spices and Culinary Herbs is interesting, exciting and flavorful, to elaborate standards these commodities have been very fruitful so far.

In this 5th Session, the Committee is going consider three spices, ginger, cloves, saffron and two culinary herbs oregano and basil at step 7 and also two spices nutmeg and chili peppers and paprika at step 4. There are three proposals for new work, cardamom, turmeric and prioritized group standard for spices in the form of dried fruits and berries.

At the 4th Session held in Kerala, India in January 2019, the Committee took the approach of elaboration of group standards for spices and culinary herbs in order to adapt and optimize its work, instead of going ahead with individual standards. This approach not only would shorten the time required for elaboration of standards for all the spices and culinary herbs but also put the time and resources to maximum use. This approach is being fine-tuned to be taken to the next level at this session.

This may look simple but given the not-so-homogenous nature of spices and culinary herbs, finding common ground and moving forward has been challenging. I am pleased to note that the committee took up this challenging approach and is moving forward.

I look forward for a very fruitful session ahead, with your support and cooperation, I am confident the committee can achieve the expected results.

Welcome once again.

Sudharshan

Dr.M.R.Sudharshan

Former Director Spices Board.

(Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India)

Chairman, Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs



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**SPICES BOARD INDIA**  
Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Govt. of India

🕒 **20, 21, 22, 26, 27  
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# CCSCH5

## Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs Fifth Session (Virtual)

DATE	AGENDA ITEM	SUBJECT MATTER
Tuesday 20 April		Opening and Housekeeping
	1	Adoption of Agenda
	2	Matters Referred by the Codex Alimentarius Commission and its subsidiary bodies
	3	<b>OREGANO</b> Draft Standard for dried oregano (Step 7)
Wednesday 21 April	4	<b>DRIED ROOTS, RHIZOMES AND BULBS</b> Draft Standard for dried or dehydrated ginger (Step 7)
	5.1	<b>DRIED FLORAL PARTS</b> Draft Standard for dried cloves (Step 7)
	5.2	<b>DRIED FLORAL PARTS</b> Draft Standard for saffron (Step 7)
Thursday 22 April	6	<b>DRIED HERBS</b> Draft Standard for dried basil (Step 7)
	7	<b>DRIED FRUITS AND BERRIES</b> Proposed draft Standard for dried chilli peppers and paprika (Step 3)
Monday 26 April	8	<b>DRIED SEEDS</b> Proposed draft Standard for dried nutmeg (Step 3)
	9	<b>PROPOSALS FOR NEW WORK AND LAYOUT FOR SCH STANDARDS</b>
Tuesday 27 April	10	Other business
	11	Date and Place of Next Session
Thursday 29 April	12	Adoption of the Report



CODEX ALIMENTARIUS

# Spices trade and Covid-19 - India

## What has been the impact of the pandemic on the sector and what is the way ahead?

Spice trade is ubiquitous in the modern world. All nations and cultures have their own traditional cuisines designed around unique combinations of spices, and it is no wonder that trading of spices has flourished unabated for centuries throughout the world. Yet the global pandemic, COVID-19, almost caused a serious disruption to the global spice trade, just as it did for many other commodities in the food sector.

When the severity of the pandemic was recognized towards the end of March 2020, most countries across the world went into lockdown and imposed strict control measures. With this, the carefully orchestrated network that produces, transports, processes and packages spices - what we could call the spice value chain - was thrown into disarray. Coincidentally, this was also the time when the interest in therapeutic and nutraceutical properties of spices was increasing worldwide, creating a high global demand for high quality spices. The two conflicting scenarios combined to pose a unique challenge to the global spices sector.

## Impact of the pandemic on the spices sector


The COVID-19 pandemic situation either disrupted or stressed the value chain across the globe. Major spice production hubs spread across developing countries of the world were severely affected, causing raw material shortages in the spice industry. Lockdown imposed travel restrictions which affected the movement of agricultural workforce in these countries, leading to labour shortages, impacting harvesting operations and logistics. Continuing normal operations in the spice industry became a major challenge in the midst of the requirements for social distancing, ensuring the safety of employees and products.

Trade disruptions due to offices closures, the suspension of wholesale markets and auctions, additional border control measures imposed by governments of various countries, all combined to produce a precarious scenario in the spices sector during the period when the spread of pandemic was at its highest. All this was happening at a time when global demand for spices was increasing steadily. This posed a secondary challenge of ensuring the quality and safety of spices at a time when food testing laboratories were also facing the challenges due to the pandemic.

As the pandemic situation eased subsequently, many countries gradually implemented un-lock down strategies to come out of the restrictions/control measures imposed, and the situation on the ground at the level of spice production, manufacture and exports has greatly improved. In the face of challenges that arose due to the pandemic, new methods of coping with the challenges have been evolved and adapted worldwide, and roadmaps for emerging into a post-COVID world have been prepared. We could say that the spices sector has adapted to the challenges well.

Industries in spices sector were keen to adopt and deploy automation in operations both as a measure to enhance food safety and to address labour issues. Many industries have experimented successfully with leveraging information technology solutions and mobile applications to augment or replace physical interactions in scenarios like supervised cultivation and contract farming. As the pandemic brought into sharp focus the importance of food safety, spice industries across the world, like other food industries, have taken renewed interest in rigorous implementation of HACCP and Food Safety Management Systems, with additional checkpoints for microbiological contamination. There have been notable advances in deployment of rapid testing technologies that provide quick and reliable test results for major quality and safety parameters in spices.





The positive changes implemented along the spice value chain for adjusting to the pandemic situation are now adding great value to the growth of the sector, and it can indeed be hoped that the crisis in spice trade has now been met and addressed successfully. However, even after more than a year since the onset, the pandemic situation remains a matter of concern to the global community, with indications for a second wave of the disease emerging in many parts, despite the emergence of vaccines. There is a likelihood that some countries may experience another phase of lockdown and restrictions and it is expected that the lessons learnt and the roadmaps developed so far will serve to tide over the difficulties.

### The way ahead

The lessons learnt during the pandemic times point to a world that is rapidly changing. The future will pose challenges that will require ingenuity, proactiveness and adaptability from stakeholders in the spice sector. In the post-covid world, the spices that are known to have health benefits are in high demand. Food safety and quality of spices have come into renewed focus and their benchmarks are getting increasingly stringent. Sustainable production and traceability, though challenging in the spices sector, are acquiring renewed importance. Modernization of wholesale markets have already become a global trend to ensure food safety. Spice producing countries that embrace changes and adapt quickly will emerge as leaders in the spices sector. In addition to all this, the present crisis has also brought in enhanced situational awareness to countries and industries alike: in the post-pandemic world, having better crisis management protocols for greater preparedness to deal with unforeseen crises will be a part of normal operation protocol.

### CCSCH and Worldwide Spice Standards

Standards bring clarity and purpose to counter confusion and chaos in times of crises; thus the work of CCSCH in developing Codex standards for spices and culinary herbs is even more relevant in the present scenario. Unfortunately, like many other Codex Committee sessions, CCSCH5 was also affected due to the pandemic situation, and after a deferment of nearly a year, this session will now be held online during April 2021.

The additional time gained by the postponement was put to good use by this committee, even in the face of all the challenges of the times. The seven EWGs, working on five standards at Step 6 (saffron, cloves, basil, ginger and oregano) and two standards at Step 3 (chilli/paprika and nutmeg) continued their work to refine the draft documents as much as possible, and it is expected that the draft standards have achieved higher quality and consistency. Hopefully, this extra effort will be useful to address the outstanding issues in the draft standards, thus helping to bring about their speedy adoption as Codex standards.

CCSCH5 presents the stakeholders of the global spices sector with a unique opportunity on the virtual platform, to engage in constructive deliberations and contribute to successfully develop global standards for more spices to support global trade.

**The merchants, led by lucre, run  
To the parch'd Indies, and the rising sun:  
From thence, hot pepper and rich drugs they bear,  
Bartering for spices their Italian ware**

- John Dryden -

# Nigeria hopes work on ginger can lead to adoption at Step 8

## How far has the work progressed?

The work has progressed well. The electronic working group members had fruitful discussions and reviewed the draft accordingly, which is now ready for CCSCH5 consideration/ recommendation for Step 8.

## What was the response like in the EWG?

Out of the 16 Member Countries and two Observer Organizations who registered their interest to participate in the EWG, only six members and one observer submitted inputs.

## What needs to be resolved?

1. The provision in the standard for substances used as food additives in bleaching ginger;
2. Mould visible/ Insect defiled/ infested %w/w (max) value for ground ginger
3. Necessity of Section 8.5 – Inspection mark (optional)

## What should a new delegate to CCSCH know to follow this issue at the session?

At the last session the committee agreed to re-establish an EWG (chaired by Nigeria), to continue work on the draft Standard for dried roots, rhizomes and bulbs - dried or dehydrated ginger, noting the comments received at Step 6. The Terms of Reference were extended to include the consideration of matters referred by CCFL (REP19/FL, paras 19-22) and CCMAS (REP19/MAS paras 12-13). Members who indicated interest in the work were registered on the Codex online platform, where the revised draft standard was posted four times between August 2019 and October 2021, for Ewg members' inputs. All inputs were considered while coming up with the latest draft.

## What would be a good outcome?

To see all outstanding issues resolved and the progression of the draft for adoption at Step 8.

## Behind-the-scenes photographs of CCSCH EWG Team



Mrs. Chinyere V.  
Egwuonwu | Team Lead



Mr. Babajide E. Jamodu



Mrs. Fyne U. Okita



**Did you know ?** Nigeria is one of the top 5 ginger producing countries in the world.

**Which are the others ?** China India Nepal Thailand Argentina Australia

**About ginger :** Ginger has been used for thousands of years for the treatment of numerous ailments, such as colds, nausea, arthritis, migraines, and hypertension.

# Egypt reports on dried basil

## How far has the work progressed?

The EWG on Dried Basil (Dried Leaves group) began immediately after the Second Session of the (CCSCH) in 2015 continuing work for two sessions until now, and we have progressed more than 85% of the draft standard.

## What was the response like in the EWG?

We received responses from many Members and Observers with rich comments helping us to make real changes in the draft standard; as well as them accepting our responses to their comments.

## What needs to be resolved?

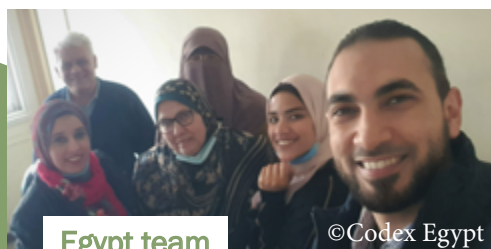
The correspondence system on forum has to be set for the final approved comments, but discussions may be held virtually with EWG members by any approved application.

## What should a new delegate to CCSCH know to follow this issue at the session?

New delegates have to take a brief on the terms of references of the CCSCH, review the updated template of spices, understand how the committee works, be aware of the scope of CCSCH and the final results of what has been agreed.

## What would be a good outcome?

- Developing final drafts of the standards;
- Updating the template of the CCSCH;
- Understanding the requirements of both CCFL and CCMAS;
- Updating the grouping tables of the CCSCH.



Egypt team

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## DID YOU KNOW?

Basil is native to India, China, Southeast Asia and Iran. It was originally domesticated in India, having been cultivated there for more than 5 000 years, now it is found in most tropical parts of the world. The major exporters are China, India, Madagascar, Egypt, and Mexico.



“After the year 1500, there was no pepper to be had at Calicut that was not dyed red with blood.”

- Voltaire -

# Rationale for CCSCH group standards - The United States

## What is the reasoning behind the grouping of spices?

Grouping spices into categories will save time and allow the Committee to develop standards for more spices and herbs more quickly, compared to developing individual standards.

CCSCH has identified 116 named spices and culinary herbs and placed them into groups based on parts of the plant they are derived from. CCSCH1 agreed to limit itself to working on four (4) standards per session and convening sessions biennially. Therefore, it would take a minimum of 29 sessions and more than 58 years to complete the standardization task if the committee took the approach of developing individual standards.

CCSCH was formed to cater to the needs of the SCH trade and Codex member governments in a timely manner. Spices and culinary herbs are condiments or ingredients that are used for imparting taste/flavor and not caloric content. The grouping format allows for simplification by consolidating basic General Provisions that apply to all spices and culinary herbs in each group, and allowing the committee to focus individually on the two most important requirements for spices and culinary herbs: chemical characteristics (taste/flavor) and physical characteristics (defects allowed (safety and quality)).

CCSCH previously agreed to adopt a grouping strategy, and CCSCH2 identified the appropriate groups. The Executive Committee and the Commission also agreed to this approach, “with a view to optimizing the use of resources and expediting the Committee’s work.”

## How close is the work to completion? What needs to be done?

This is only the 5th CCSCH Session, so the work has just really begun. Three standards were completed and published in 2017 (cumin, dried thyme, and black, white, and green peppers). The grouping format is aimed at developing a standard for a group of spices at once rather than individual standards. Five Draft Standards are at Step 7, and two are at Step 3. It would be beneficial if Member Countries would cooperate in the development of group standards by providing important information related to trade for the spices and herbs listed in each grouping. In the available trade data, many commodities are combined under one tariff code and the data for each individual spice is hard to discover without input from those countries that produce and trade those culinary herbs and spices.

## What can we hope to achieve at CCSCH? What would be a good outcome?

Ideally, we could complete the development of at least four of the five standards that are currently at Step 7, for consideration by CAC44, and then move to the development of only group standards in the future. The United States would like to see another delegation take the lead on the development of a second group standards.

# Turkey provides an update on oregano

Oregano is an important spice which is used around the world. Since 2014, CCSC has been continuing the work of standard preparation for oregano. Establishing a standard for oregano will provide the protection of industrial and commercial property rights and the prevention of unfair competition. In this manner, the trade will be equal, fair, safe and transparent. As the chair of the EWG on Oregano, we hope to reach consensus on the draft standard for oregano.

## Where do we need to reach consensus?

The main area to be agreed on is section 2. 1 Product definition. where oregano has been classified in three ways:

General name	Trade name	Scientific name
Oregano	Oregano	<i>Origanum</i> spp. L., except ( <i>Origanum majorana</i> L.)
Sword oregano	Turkish sword oregano	<i>Satureja</i> spp. L.
Mexican oregano	Mexican oregano	<i>Lippia</i> spp. <i>Poliomintha longiflora</i>

## What work did the EWG consider?

The EWG on oregano held its informal virtual meeting in December, 2020 and only considered and clarified the following issues:

- Section 2.1. Product Definition (the Draft Standard covers oregano, sword oregano and Mexican oregano)
- Section 5. Contaminants (The reference to the related code of practice about Pyrrolizidine Alkaloids has been added)
- Section 8. Labelling (the phrase "Inspection mark optional" has been deleted)
- Section 9. 1. Methods of analysis (This part has been amended according to the REP16/ MAS and comments of members)

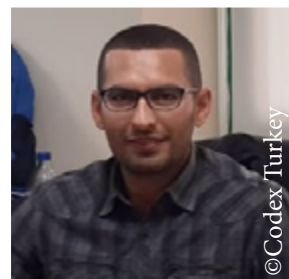
## Turkey's Oregano EWG team members



Ahmet Güngör-  
EWG Chairperson



Emel Molla - Head of  
Codex Department



Recep Aritürk -  
KÜTAŞ Group



Nilüfer Dural -  
Turkey Codex  
Contact Point

Did you know?

Turkey attended the first meeting of the Codex Alimentarius in 1963 and has remained a strong supporter of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme.

# Experience developing proposed draft standard on dried seeds - Indonesia

## How far has the work progressed ?

The 3rd CCSCH Session (2017) approved new work on Proposed Draft Standard on dried seeds (nutmeg) and established an electronic working group (EWG) led by Indonesia. The proposed draft standard was considered by CCSCH4 (2019) and returned to Step 2/3 for redrafting and comments.

Indonesia further coordinated discussion in the EWG taking into account comments made during CCSCH4 and other concerns raised by members of the EWG. The result of discussions was circulated by the Codex Secretariat for comments. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the CCSCH session was delayed and we had time to consider all comments and then prepared a revised version of the proposed draft standard.

## What was the response like in the EWG?

We have received responses from members in the EWG after every circulation of the draft. For example, Nigeria, Brazil, Mexico and USA submitted comments for circulation on September 2019 and Peru, India and Iran for the next circulation on March 2020. Furthermore, 12 countries provided comments in response to the Circular Letter. We considered all comments received for improving the proposed draft standard.

## What needs to be resolved?

There are some issues to be resolved for progressing the proposed draft standard especially clauses in square brackets, for example 2.1.2; 2.1.3; 2.2 and 3.2.3.

## What should a new delegate to CCSCH know to follow this issue at the session?

The updated draft as presented in CX/SCH 21/5/9-REV provides the history and some issues to be further considered that a new delegate needs to know in order to follow the discussion at the session.

## What would be a good outcome?

As chair of the EWG, Indonesia is hoping that good progress will be made by the committee. We have prepared an update of the proposed draft standard, taking into account all comments received. We will propose that CCSCH forward the documents to Step 5, and look to the possibility of Step 5/8 if there are no substantial issues to be further discussed.



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– John Milton, Paradise Lost , bk IV –  
**Oft at sea north- east winds blow  
 Sabaeans odours from the spicy shore  
 Of Araby the blest**

## Spices quiz

- Spices were so sought-after in medieval time, that they contributed to change world history for ever. What event of the 15th century was also driven by the need for spices?
- What system is used to measure the pungency of chili peppers?
- What fresh herb commonly used in modern cooking, was eaten by gladiators to enhance their strength, cunning and agility?

## Photo game



In our 21st century society, we sometimes don't know what the plants that produce our most beloved spices look like. Test your knowledge.

What is the name of the plant collected by the man in this photo?

Thyme      Oregano      Lavender      Saffron

## Did you know?



To make the most of their flavours and aromas, spices like pepper or cinnamon should be added early on while cooking, while herbs like basil and parsley should be added almost at the end.



The word oregano is derived from Greek *ορίαννον* meaning “the splendour of the mountain”. Legend holds that the Greek goddess Aphrodite created oregano as a symbol of happiness and planted it in her garden on Mount Olympus.



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7 June 2021 World Food Safety Day

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# CCSCH Secretariat



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Sudharma K. V, Chemist

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## QUIZ ANSWERS

Ginger quiz :  
China / India / Nepal / Thailand

Spices quiz :  
Columbus lands in the Caribbean /  
The Scoville scale / Parsley

Photo game :  
Thyme

“ – Geoffrey Chaucer, Canterbury Tale -  
**Their spryngen herbes grete and smale,  
The lycorys and cetewale  
And many a clowe-gylofre:  
And notemugge to putte in ale,  
Whether it be moyste or stale ,  
Or for to leye in cofre.** ”



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