

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of
the United Nations



World Health
Organization

Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy - Tel: (+39) 06 57051 - Fax: (+39) 06 5705 4593 - E-mail: codex@fao.org - www.codexalimentarius.org

REP16/FL
May 2016

JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Thirty-ninth Session

FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy

27 June – 1 July 2016

REPORT OF THE FORTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD LABELLING

Ottawa, Canada

9 – 13 May 2016

NOTE: This report includes Circular Letter CL 2016/16-FL

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CL 2016/16-FL
May 2016

TO: Codex Contact Points
Interested International Organizations

FROM: Secretariat
Codex Alimentarius Commission
Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
00153
Rome, Italy
E-mail: codex@fao.org

SUBJECT: Distribution of the Report of the 43rd Session of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (REP16/FL)

The Report of the 43rd Session of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling is attached. It will be considered by the 39th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Rome, Italy, 27 June – 1 July 2016).

MATTERS FOR ADOPTION BY THE 39TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

Proposed Draft texts at Step 5 of the Codex Procedure

1. Proposed Draft Revision of the *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods*: Date marking (Para. 49 and Appendix II).

Governments and international organizations wishing to comment on the above document should do so in writing, in conformity with the *Procedure for the Elaboration of Codex Standards and Related Texts* (Procedural Manual of the Codex Alimentarius Commission) **by email**, to the above address, **before 10 June 2016**.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The summary and conclusions of the 43rd Session of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling are as follows:

Matters for Adoption by CAC39

The Committee:

- Advanced the proposed draft revision of the *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods: Date Marking to Step 5* for adoption by CAC39 (para 49, Appendix II).

Matters for approval by CAC39

Forwarded the following project document for approval as new work:

- Guidance for the labelling on non-retail containers (para.54 and Appendix III).

Other matters of interest to CAC39

The Committee:

- proposed that CAC39 identify an appropriate forum to continue work on the proposed draft revision of the *Guidelines for the Production, Processing, Labelling and Marketing of Organically Produced Foods: Organic Agriculture* or to discontinue this work (para. 27);
- discontinued discussion on issues related to internet sales of food (para. 55);
- agreed to not proceed with the revision of the *General Guidelines for the Use of the Term "Halal"* (CAC/GL 24-1997), but to consider a discussion paper on issues surrounding consumer preference claims (paras 62 – 63).
- agreed to prepare discussion papers on front-of-pack labelling (para. 70) and future work of CCFL (para. 71).

Matters for other subsidiary bodies

The Committee:

Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CCEXEC)

- agreed there was no need to develop a particular work management approach, but could consider such an need in the future (para. 6).

CCASIA, CCSCH, CCFFV, CCFA

- endorsed the labelling provisions in the standards submitted by CCASIA, CCSCH, CCFFV and CCFA (paras 11 - 22).

Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS)

- agreed not to consider the matter of food integrity/food authenticity, but to wait for discussion and decision from CCFICS (para. 7).

Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH)

- agreed to request advice from CCFH on the appropriateness of the food safety criterion 1 to exempt foods from date marking (para. 42, Appendix II).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.....	Page ii
REPORT OF THE 43 RD SESSION OF THE CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD LABELLING	Page 1
SUMMARY STATUS OF WORK	Page 10
	Paragraph
Introduction	1
Opening of the Session.....	2 - 3
Adoption of the Agenda (Agenda Item 1).....	4
Matters Referred to the Committee (Agenda Item 2)	5 - 10
Consideration of labelling provisions in draft Codex standards (Agenda Item 3).....	11 - 22
Revision of the <i>Guidelines for the Production, Processing, Labelling and Marketing of Organically Produced Foods: Organic Aquaculture</i> (Agenda Item 4).....	23 - 27
Revision of the <i>General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods:</i> Date Marking (Agenda Item 5).....	28 - 49
Labelling of Non-retail Containers (Agenda Item 6).....	50 - 54
Issues related to Internet Sales of Food (Agenda Item 7)	55
Proposal to revise the <i>General Guidelines for the Use of the Term "Halal"</i> (CAC/GL 24-1997) (Agenda Item 8)	56 – 63
Other Business and Future Work (Agenda Item 9)	
a) Front-of-Pack nutritional labelling	64 – 70
b) Future work of the Committee	71
Date and Place of the Next Session (Agenda Item 10)	72

APPENDICES

	Page
Appendix I List of Participants	11
Appendix II Proposed draft Revision to the <i>General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods</i>	30
Appendix III Project Document: Development of guidance for the labelling of non-retail containers of food	32

INTRODUCTION

1. The Codex Committee on Food Labelling held its Forty-third Session in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada from 9 - 13 May 2016, at the kind invitation of Government of Canada. Ms Lyzette Lamondin, Acting Executive Director Food Import, Export and Consumer Protection Directorate, Canadian Food Inspection Agency chaired the Session. Appendix I contains a complete list of participants.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

2. Mr. Anil Arora, the Assistant Deputy Minister, Health Products and Food Branch, Health Canada, opened the Session and welcomed delegates to Ottawa. He noted that food safety and nutrition were of global concern and impacted on social economic development worldwide. He underscored the importance of evolving robust approaches towards other emerging challenges in food supply chains such as globalization of food trade; rapid product innovation and technologies; evolving science and public expectations. He called upon the Committee to carefully reflect on its future work within the rapidly changing environment and in the context of the Codex Strategic Plan (2014 - 2019).

DIVISION OF COMPETENCE¹

3. The Committee noted the division of competence between the European Union and its Member States, according to paragraph 5, Rule II of the Rules of Procedure of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, as presented in [CRD 1](#).

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Agenda Item 1)²

4. The Committee adopted the Provisional Agenda as the Agenda for the session.

The Committee also agreed to:

- a) Discuss the following:
 - Matters arising from FAO and WHO under Agenda Item 2.
 - Harmonisation of Principles and Labelling under Agenda Item 9 (proposed by Costa Rica).
 - Front-of-Pack Interpretive Labelling under Agenda Item 9 (proposed by IACFO).
- b) Remove Agenda Item 7 from the Agenda as no paper had been submitted.

MATTERS REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE (Agenda Item 2)³

a) Matters referred by CAC and other Codex Subsidiary Bodies

5. The Committee noted that some matters were for information and others were for consideration under relevant Agenda Items.

Work management

6. The Committee noted that there was no need to develop an approach for the management of the work of CCFL similar to CCFH, as at present, the existing work load did not warrant such a workplan. However the Committee could consider this need in the future.

Food Integrity/Food Authenticity

7. The Committee noted that the matter was due for further consideration by the 23rd session of Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) and agreed not to consider this matter further, but to wait for the discussion and a decision from CCFICS.

Revision of Section 4.2.3.4 of CODEX STAN 1-1985

8. The Committee agreed to consider this request from CCFA under Agenda Item 3.

¹ [CRD 1](#) (Division of competence between the European Union and its Members States)

² [CX/FL 16/43/1](#); comments of Egypt ([CRD8](#)).

³ [CX/FL 16/43/2](#); [CX/FL 16/43/2 Add.1](#); comments of the European Union ([CRD4](#)); Kenya 9 ([CRD5](#)); Egypt ([CRD8](#)); Codex Secretariat ([CRD9](#)); Matters arising from the FAO and WHO ([CRD 18](#)).

b) Matters of Interest arising from FAO and WHO

9. Referring to [CRD/18](#), the Representative of FAO informed the Committee of new publications, in particular the FAO Handbook on Food Labelling to be published in the second half of 2016 which follows guidance from the *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods (CODEX STAN 1-1985)*.
10. The Representative of WHO drew the attention of the Committee to relevant activities of WHO of interest to CCFL in particular: i) the implementation of the “*WHO guideline on sugars intake for adults and children*” (issued in March 2015) by WHO Member States through a number of policy actions. In this respect, the Representative noted that the on-going work of the Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (CCNFSDU) on the development of NRVs-NCD includes: saturated fatty acids, sodium and potassium, but not total sugars, and proposed that CCFL may wish to consider the need for developing the NRV-NCD for total sugars, given the availability of the WHO updated guidelines; ii) the development of guiding principles and guidance framework for implementing “front-of-pack” labelling. The Representative further informed the Committee that a background evidence review paper, and the report of *WHO Technical Meeting on Nutrition Labelling for Promoting Healthy Diets* held in Lisbon (December 2015) were being finalized for publication; and that a guidance framework manual was being developed to serve as a tool for countries in implementing front-of-pack labelling systems. This was scheduled to be field-tested during the second half of 2016.

CONSIDERATION OF LABELLING PROVISIONS IN DRAFT CODEX STANDARDS (Agenda Item 3)⁴

11. The Committee considered the labelling provisions in the standards and proposed draft standards, endorsed the labelling provisions in the Proposed Draft Standard for Cumin, and considered others as follows:

Regional Standard for Non-Fermented Soybean Products

12. The Committee agreed to endorse the labelling provisions with the following amendments to section 8:
 - Para 1: deleted the words “latest edition” and clarified that references made to Codex standards always refer to the latest edition of such standards;
 - Para 2: replaced the words “genetically modified” with “soya bean derived from modern biotechnology” to ensure consistency with existing Codex texts.
13. On the use of the term “soybean milk” in the footnote under section 2, the Codex Secretariat clarified that the use of the term had been extensively discussed, and that CCASIA had agreed to remove the term from the main text of the regional standard but to retain it in the footnote. The use of this term in the footnote does not contradict section 4.6 of the *General Standard for the Use of Dairy Terms (CODEX STAN 206-1999)* and would therefore not represent an endorsement of the name “soybean milk”; and would not lead to the confusion of consumers in the region where the product was produced or sold.
14. The Committee noted the reservation of the Delegation of Argentina on the decision to endorse the labelling provision in para 2 as in their view there was no reason to single out specific production methods.

Proposed Draft Standard for Dried Thyme

15. The Committee endorsed the labelling provisions and proposed to delete the word “dried” from section 8.2.1 to ensure consistency with the *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods (CODEX STAN 1-1985)*, which requires the name of the food to be supplemented by words or phrases on the true nature or physical condition of the food only when it is necessary to avoid misleading or confusing consumers. For this type of product there was no risk of misleading consumers. The Committee agreed to inform the CCSCH accordingly.

⁴ [CX/FL 16/43/3](#); comments of European Union ([CRD 4](#)); Kenya ([CRD 5](#)); Ecuador ([CRD 7](#)).

Proposed Draft Standard for Aubergines

16. The Committee endorsed the labelling provisions and agreed to amend sections 6.1.1 and 6.2.2 to read “Name of Produce”.
17. The Codex Secretariat clarified that the terms as used in draft standard were consistent with those in the standard layout used by CCFFV.

Draft revision to the *General Standard for the Labelling of Food Additives when Sold as Such* (CODEX STAN 107-1981); and the proposed revision to the *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged foods* (CODEX STAN 1-1985)

18. The Committee considered both the proposed revisions to section 4.1 c and 5.1 c of the *General Standard for the Labelling of Food Additives When Sold As such* ([CODEX STAN 107-1981](#)), and the recommendation by CCFA to CCFL on the revision of section 4.2.3.4 of the *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods* ([CODEX STAN 1-1985](#)), and noted the following general views expressed by delegations on whether to endorse the revised labelling provisions in [CODEX STAN 107-1981](#) and the consequential revision of [CODEX STAN 1-1985](#):
 - Consistency between the two Codex standards was essential as they were closely interlinked; and such revision should take into account the recommendations of CCFA;
 - Establishing such consistency between the two standards needed careful consideration to avoid any negative impact that could arise from the removal of flexibility on the use of the term “flavour” and/or “flavourings”. Both terms are in use and are well understood by consumers, therefore there is a need to examine the impact of the removal of the term flavour from a consumer point of view;
 - The proposed draft revisions in [CODEX STAN 107-1981](#) were expected to have no negative impact and CODEX STAN 107-1981 did not take into account the general understanding of the terms “flavours” and “flavourings” by consumers.
19. The Codex Secretariat clarified that the proposed draft revisions to section 4.1 c and 5.1 c of [CODEX STAN 107-1981](#) addressed: (i) the inconsistent use of terms e.g. flavour, flavourings, natural and artificial flavouring, in line with the *Guidelines for the Use of Flavourings* ([CAC/GL 66-2008](#)); and (ii) ingredient declaration in situations where food (e.g. spices) is used as part of the flavouring. These changes were presented for endorsement by CCFL.
20. The Committee also noted the inconsistency between [CODEX STAN 1-1985](#) and paragraphs 4.1 d and 5.1 d of [CODEX STAN 107-1981](#) regarding the words to introduce date marking. The Committee noted that the work on date marking was under discussion and that this matter could be addressed in future once the work on date marking was completed.
21. The Codex Secretariat further clarified that in case of [CODEX STAN 1-1985](#), CCFL would have to consider the appropriateness of the proposed revision to this standard.

Conclusion

22. The Committee agreed to:
 - i. endorse the proposed draft revision of the *General Standard for the Labelling of Food Additives when Sold as Such* ([CODEX STAN 107-1981](#)); and
 - ii. consider the recommendation by CCFA to revise section 4.2.3.4 of the *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods* ([CODEX STAN 1-1985](#)) at a future date after examining the likely impact of the proposed changes.

ORGANIC AQUACULTURE (REVISION OF THE *GUIDELINES FOR THE PRODUCTION, PROCESSING, LABELLING AND MARKETING OF ORGANICALLY PRODUCED FOODS*) (AGENDA ITEM 4)⁵

23. The Delegation of the European Union, as chair of the PWG, introduced the item and informed the Committee that the PWG had:
- focused primarily on Annex I of the proposed draft text, and in particular on the specific production rules for aquatic organisms;
 - considered some of the definitions; and
 - agreed on most of the issues discussed at PWG, but that there were still seven outstanding issues on which there were diverging opinions as outlined in [CRD3](#).
24. The Committee considered whether it was possible to develop broader outcome-oriented principles rather than continue to try to find consensus on very specific and prescriptive provisions with regards to the seven outstanding issues. This approach could allow the work to be finalised, acknowledging the good results achieved thus far. More specific guidance could be developed in a second phase if needed.
25. While there was some support for the proposed approach, there was also the opinion that a certain level of detail was needed and the new approach would leave the guidelines too broad to be truly meaningful. The Committee could therefore not reach consensus.

Conclusion

26. The Committee recognized that considerable effort had gone into this work and that progress had been made, but that it could not reach consensus on a number of important very technical issues and other general principles.
27. The Committee noted that it may not be the appropriate forum to discuss the very technical provisions and proposed that the Commission either: (i) identify a different subsidiary body to continue the work; or (ii) discontinue work.

DATE MARKING (REVISION OF THE *GENERAL STANDARD FOR THE LABELLING OF PREPACKAGED FOODS*) (Agenda Item 5)⁶

28. The Chairperson, noting that CCFL42 had made tremendous progress and had reached agreement on several issues, proposed that the Committee focus the discussion on the three outstanding issues: namely, date marking and storage conditions, the list of foods exempt from date marking; and the information that should appear on small packages.

General Discussion

Approach to date marking: safety and quality date marks

29. Several delegations, while noting that there had been agreement at CCFL42 to follow the approach for two date marks (safety and quality), reiterated their concerns to this approach as expressed at CCFL42 ([REP15/FL](#), paragraph 62). Several other delegations reiterated their support for two separate date marks for the reasons expressed at CCFL42 ([REP15/FL](#), para. 63).
30. As a compromise, those delegations in favour of only one date mark agreed to retain the two separate date marks (safety and quality), but to extend the current definition on the “safety” date mark i.e. “use by date” / “expiration date”, to also cover quality, as this would allow flexibility for countries who wished to continue using only one date mark.

⁵ [REP15/FL, Appendix III](#); comments of Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, EU, India, Iran, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Norway and USA ([CX/FL 16/43/4](#)); Ecuador, Japan, Nigeria ([CX/FL 16/43/4 Add.1](#)); Revised Guidelines for consideration by the PWG on Organic Aquaculture prepared by EU ([CRD2](#)); Report of the PWG ([CRD3](#)); comments of Philippines ([CRD11](#)); Thailand ([CRD12](#)).

⁶ [REP15/FL, Appendix IV](#); comments of Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, European Union, India, Iran, Jamaica, Malaysia, New Zealand, Paraguay, Peru, United States of America, FIVS, ICGMA, IDF and IFT ([CX/FL 16/43/5](#)); Ecuador, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, FIVS, FoodDrinkEurope and ICGA ([CX/FL 16/43/5 Add.1](#)); Philippines ([CRD11](#)); Thailand ([CRD12](#)); Indonesia ([CRD13](#)); Argentina ([CRD15](#)); Republic of Korea ([CRD19](#)); Senegal ([CRD21](#)); El Salvador ([CRD22](#)).

Conclusion

31. The Committee agreed to proceed with two separate date marks and to amend the definition for “use by date” / “expiration date” to cover both safety and quality aspects of the food.

Definition of terms**“Date of manufacture” and “date of packaging”**

32. The Committee confirmed its agreement with the definitions.

“Sell by date”

33. The Committee confirmed its decision to delete “sell by date”.

“Date of minimum durability” or “best before date” or “best quality before date”

34. The Committee amended the definition to clarify that the date mark applies to unopened products when stored under stated storage conditions. The Committee further agreed to use only “best before date” / “best quality before date”, noting that the number of synonyms should be limited. Concerns were expressed on the deletion of “date of minimum durability” as this term was widely used in other Codex standards.

“Use-by-date” or “use or consume by date” or “expires by” or “expiration date”

35. Similarly, the Committee agreed to limit the definition to the terms “use by date” / “expiration date”; and to indicate that it could be used to denote both safety and quality as agreed above (para 31).

Date marking and storage instructions⁷**4.7.1 (iii)**

36. The Committee discussed whether it was necessary to include the year in the date mark for products with a short shelf life (i.e. not more than three months).
37. Delegations supporting the deletion of the year, stated that it was unnecessary and burdensome for short shelf life products, especially “fresh foods”.
38. Delegations supporting retaining the year were of the opinion that this was necessary for food importing countries, for import control purposes; and would be especially useful at the end of the year.

Conclusion

39. The Committee agreed to allow flexibility for the inclusion of the year in a date mark by indicating that it would be up to competent authorities to decide whether the date mark also required inclusion of the year in those cases where it could mislead the consumer.

4.7.1 (vi)

40. The Committee noted that the declaration of the year and the day in uncoded numbers should be mandatory, and therefore agreed to retain “shall” rather than “may”; and agreed that the date could be presented in different formats, e.g. “yyyy/dd/mm” or “dd/mm/yyyy”, in order to accommodate the different presentations currently in use and understood by consumers.

4.7.1(vii)

41. There was general agreement that:
- the list of foods exempted from date marking should be illustrative;
 - the list of foods in the current standard was sufficient; and
 - criteria should be developed for exempting foods from date marking.
42. In addition, the Committee agreed:
- to amend the list to (i) replace “potatoes” with “tubers”; (ii) clarify that salt refers to “non-iodized salt” and sugar to “non-fortified solid sugar”, as fortificants (iodine and vitamin A, respectively) easily deteriorate during storage;

⁷ The section numbering refers to those in Appendix II.

- on the draft criteria for exempting foods from date marking (see Appendix II) and to request the advice from the Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH) on the appropriateness of the food safety criterion 1; and
- to allow “date of manufacture” or “date of packaging” to provide flexibility for countries using such date marks.

4.7.1 (viii)

43. The Committee agreed to indicate that “date of manufacture” or “date of packaging”, when used in combination with other date marks, should follow the same format as for other date marks.
44. The Committee did not agree to include an additional special provision on the format for presenting the declaration of “best before date” or “best quality before” in relation to the “date of manufacture” or “date of packaging”, since the agreed amendment to 4.7.1 (vi) provided the flexibility to use different formats for presentation of date marks.

4.7.2

45. The Committee agreed to amend this provision to clarify that special storage conditions should be declared on the label to support the integrity of the food and (in cases where a date mark was used) to indicate that the validity of the date depended on it.
46. Concerns were raised on the meaning of “integrity”, but it was clarified that it could be understood to mean the “*wholesomeness, safety and quality*” of the food.

Information on small packages

47. The Committee did not develop any specific requirements for small packages.

Conclusion

48. The Committee agreed that progress had been made, that the only outstanding issue that needed further consideration was the draft criteria for exemptions from date marking and agreed that the document could be advanced in the Step process.

STATUS OF THE PROPOSED DRAFT REVISION OF THE GENERAL STANDARD FOR THE LABELLING OF PREPACKAGED FOODS: DATE MARKING

49. The Committee agreed to forward the proposed draft revision to CAC39 for adoption at Step 5 (Appendix II).

LABELLING OF NON-RETAIL CONTAINERS (Discussion paper) (Agenda Item 6)⁸

50. The Delegation of India introduced the item and highlighted the need for general guidance on the labelling of non-retail containers as presented in [CX/FL 16/43/6](#).

Discussion

51. The Committee considered the proposal and noted the following views expressed by delegations in support for the new work:
 - new work was needed as not all standards had specific labelling regimes dealing with non-retail containers; as such the new work would assist in addressing the existing gap on non-retail and bulk containers irrespective of the food commodity; and would support traceability and enhance food safety along the food supply chain;
 - the new work should focus on general guidelines that would facilitate trade and better communication between business, and between governments. Such guidelines should provide broad principles and criteria to allow innovative approaches in food trade.
52. Two delegations not in favour of the new work, expressed their concern that such guidelines would affect the smooth flow of products and be difficult to enforce. They noted that business to business operations normally had their own supply chain control mechanisms.
53. With strong support for the new work confirmed, the Committee proceeded to examine the Project Document and took the following decisions:

⁸ [CX/FL 16/43/6](#); comments of European Union ([CRD4](#)); Kenya ([CRD5](#)); Ecuador ([CRD7](#)); Egypt ([CRD8](#)); Nigeria ([CRD10](#)); Philippines ([CRD11](#)); Thailand ([CRD12](#)); Indonesia ([CRD13](#)).

- i) amended the title, section 1 (scope) and section 3 (main aspects to be covered) to provide for development of outcome based guidelines that would be broad enough to enable stakeholders to take advantage of innovative approaches/practices;
- ii) agreed to decide on the location of the guidelines (either as a stand-alone document or otherwise) at a future date when the work had progressed;
- iii) clarified that the current definition for the term “labelling” in [CODEX STAN 1-1985](#) was broad enough to allow for innovative approaches/practices other than providing information on labels only.

Conclusion

54. The Committee agreed to:

- i) start new work on guidance for the labelling of non-retail containers of food;
- ii) submit the project document to CAC39 for approval (Appendix III);
- iii) establish, an eWG, chaired by India and co-chaired by the United States of America, working in English only to develop a proposed draft guidance for the labelling of non-retail containers of food for comments at Step 3 and consideration at the next session of the Committee;
- iv) consider convening a PWG at the next session to prepare a revised proposal on the basis of the comments submitted; and
- v) inform commodity committees of the new work.

ISSUE RELATED TO INTERNET SALES OF FOOD (Agenda Item 7) ⁹

55. This agenda item was not discussed as no paper had been provided for consideration. The Committee noted that this work could be taken up by CCFLin future when the paper would be ready

PROPOSAL TO REVISE THE *GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF THE TERM “HALAL”* (CAC/GL 24-1997) (Agenda Item 8) ¹⁰

56. The Delegation of Egypt introduced the item and highlighted the need for the revision of the *General Guidelines for the Use of the Term “Halal”*.
57. The Delegation noted that such a revision was timely as the trade in halal foods was increasing and would assist in facilitating international trade.
58. The Delegation further informed the Committee that the work would be a limited revision of the guidelines, mainly to include new definitions and to restructure the document to be more comprehensive and applicable for international trade ([CX/FL 16/43/8](#), para 9); the revision would also take into account the work of OIC/SMIIC¹¹.
59. The Committee considered the proposal and noted the following views expressed by some delegations:
- A revision of the Guidelines is not necessary as the current Guidelines are sufficient in that they provide common principles for labelling foods as “halal”;
 - A revision would result in a duplication of work developed by OIC/SMIIC and possible inconsistency among different international texts could lead to confusion in international trade;
 - Codex does not have the competency to interpret religious texts;
 - While the Committee might not be the appropriate forum for consideration of religious aspects of “halal”, competent authorities could benefit from guidance on the appropriate use of “halal” labelling on packages in international trade so as not to mislead consumers;

⁹ CX/FL 16/43/7 (not issued).

¹⁰ [CX/FL 16/43/8](#); comments of Egypt ([CRD8](#)); Thailand ([CRD12](#)); Indonesia ([CRD13](#)); Turkey ([CRD14](#)); Chile ([CRD16](#)); Senegal ([CRD21](#)); Egypt ([CRD23](#)).

¹¹ SMIIC – Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries / OIC – Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

- “Halal” is one among many types of claims related to consumer preferences. The issues around its use in international trade would extend to many other such claims.
60. The Committee agreed not to proceed with the revision as proposed, however, the proposal raised a question on how to deal with consumer preference claims in a broader way.
61. The Committee considered whether the Commission should be requested to provide guidance on how to proceed, but agreed that further work could be done in the Committee to understand and define the problems relating to consumer preference claims on food in international trade.

Conclusion

62. The Committee agreed not to proceed with the revision as proposed and agreed that the Delegations of Iran and Turkey would prepare a discussion paper on the issues surrounding consumer preference claims (within the context of the CCFL mandate) for consideration at the next session.
63. The Committee noted that there were issues related to this matter which were beyond the mandate of CCFL and noted that it did not preclude discussion by CAC/CCEXEC with regards to potential wider implications for Codex.

OTHER BUSINESS AND FUTURE WORK (Agenda Item 9)

a) Front-of-pack nutritional labelling¹²

64. The Committee noted that the two papers i.e. Harmonisation of Principles and Labelling, proposed by Costa Rica ([CRD6](#)) and Front-of-Pack Interpretive Labelling, proposed by IACFO ([CRD17](#)) generally addressed the same issues; and that Costa Rica together with New Zealand had prepared a project document ([CRD20](#)) for consideration by the Committee.
65. The Delegation of Costa Rica presented a summary of the proposal ([CRD20](#)) and noted that the purpose of the work was to assist consumers in making more informed healthy decisions/choices through the use of simplified science-based nutrition information on the front of a pack. Harmonization of principles on front-of-pack labelling was necessary and would facilitate international food trade.
66. The Committee expressed unanimous support for the work and noted the following views expressed by delegations:
- The work provided an opportunity towards: realisation of a real public health outcome by assisting consumers to make healthier choices; and fighting NCDs;
 - The proposed revision of the *Guidelines on Nutrition Labelling* ([CAC/GL 2-1985](#)) should go beyond section 5 (Supplementary Nutrition Information) as all sections of the guidelines were interrelated;
 - Careful examination of the benefits and limitations of the existing programmes/schemes (mandatory/voluntary) on front-of-pack labelling should be undertaken through a comprehensive review;
 - The work should be undertaken on the understanding that the already ongoing work in countries on the front-of-pack labels would not stop.
67. The Representative of FAO supported the new work and expressed their availability to assist in the work.
68. The Representative of WHO supported the new work and indicated that the report of the Technical Meeting held in Lisbon in December 2015 and the background evidence review paper prepared for the meeting, as well as the scoping work carried out to review which countries are implementing what kind of front-of-pack labelling systems, could provide valuable information and a starting point for the proposed eWG. The Representative highlighted WHO’s strong support and willingness to work closely with the Chairs of the eWG.
69. The Representative of WHO and the Codex Secretariat emphasized that while the Committee starts to initiate the proposed work, the countries that have started or are planning to implement

¹² Comments of Costa Rica ([CRD6](#)); IACFO ([CRD17](#)); Costa Rica and New Zealand ([CRD20](#)), El Salvador ([CRD22](#)).

the front-of-pack labelling would still be able to proceed with their work. Furthermore, the Codex Secretariat clarified that the absence of a Codex standard does not prevent a country from developing their own national requirements.

Conclusion

70. The Committee agreed to establish an eWG chaired by Costa Rica and co-chaired by New Zealand and working in English and Spanish to:
- i. take stock of the current front-of-pack nutrition labelling schemes existing in different countries;
 - ii. consider the need for development of global principles to underpin front-of-pack nutrition labelling.
 - iii. prepare a discussion paper, taking into account the WHO work on this matter and a draft project document for consideration at the next session of the Committee.

b) Future work of the Committee

71. The Committee noted that there was a need to investigate future direction and work for CCFL and agreed:
- i. that the Delegation of Canada would prepare a paper summarizing some of the previously identified work that had not gone forward in the Committee; the currently ongoing work; and emerging issues;
 - ii. the Codex Secretariat would issue a Circular Letter requesting members and observers to provide information on emerging issues for inclusion in the paper;
 - iii. a prioritization approach could be considered once this paper has been developed; and
 - iv. the paper would be kept current at each session with a different delegation taking on responsibility each time.

DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT SESSION (Agenda Item 10)

72. The Committee was informed that its 44th Session would be held in approximately 18 months time, the final arrangements being subject to confirmation by the Host Country and the Codex secretariats.

SUMMARY STATUS OF WORK

SUBJECT MATTER	STEP	ACTION BY	DOCUMENT REFERENCE (REP 16/FL)
Revision of the <i>General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods</i> : Date marking (proposed draft)	5	CAC39 CCFL44	para 49 Appendix II
Revision of the <i>Guidelines for the Production, Processing, Labelling and Marketing of Organically Produced Foods</i> : Organic Aquaculture (proposed draft)	4	CAC39	para 27
Guidance for the labelling of non-retail containers	1/2/3	CAC39 EWG (India/USA) CCFL44	para 54 Appendix III
Consumer preference claims (discussion paper)	-	Iran / Turkey CCFL44	para 62
Front-of-pack labelling (discussion paper)	-	EWG (Costa Rica / New Zealand) CCFL44	para 70
Future work (discussion paper)	-	Canada	para 71
Issues related to internet sales of food	discontinued	-	para 55
Proposal to revise the <i>General Guidelines for the Use of the Term "Halal"</i> (CAC/GL 24-1997)	discontinued	-	para 62

**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS
LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS
LISTA DE PARTICIPANTES**

CHAIRPERSON

Ms Lyzette Lamondin
Acting Executive Director
Food Import Export and Consumer Protection Directorate
Canadian Food Inspection Agency
1400 Merivale Road
Ottawa
Canada
Tel: 613-773-6189
Email: Lyzette.Lamondin@inspection.gc.ca

**MEMBERS NATIONS AND MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS
ÉTATS MEMBRES ET ORGANISATIONS MEMBRES
ESTADOS MIEMBROS Y ORGANIZACIONES MIEMBROS**

ARGENTINA – ARGENTINE

Dr Andrea Nilda Calzetta Resio
Supervisor Técnico de Aprobación de
Productos Alimenticios
Coordinación Gral. de Aprobación de
Productos Alimenticios
Servicio Nacional de Sanidad y Calidad
Agroalimentaria
Azopardo 1020 2nd. Floor (1107)
Ciudad de Buenos Aires
Ciudad Autonoma de Buenos Aires
Argentina
Tel: +54-11-5222-5975
Email: acalzet@senasa.gov.ar

Mr Franco Senilliani Melchior
Sección Económica y Comercial
Embassy of Argentina
Tel: 613.852.1164
Email: sen@mrecic.gov.ar

Ms Maria Cristina Lopez
Coordinación de Oleaginosas
Centro de Agroalimentos
Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Industrial
(INTI)
Colectora de Avenida General Paz 5445
San Martín
Buenos Aires
Argentina
Tel: Tel.: +54 11 4724 6433
Email: kitty@inti.gov.ar

Dr Pablo Moron
Director de agroindustrias
Secretaria de agregado de valor
Ministerio de agroindustria
Av. Paseo Colón 922
Ciudad Autonoma de Buenos Aires
Argentina
Tel: +54 11 4349-2253
Email: pmoron@magyp.gob.ar

ARMENIA – ARMÉNIE

H.E. Zohrab Malek
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the Republic of
Armenia to the UN FAO
Republic of Armenia
151 Bay Street , Apt 1004
Ottawa
Canada
Tel: 1 613 291 8500
Email: zohrab.malek@gmail.com

AUSTRALIA – AUSTRALIE

Ms Elizabeth Flynn
Assistant Secretary
Preventive Health Policy Branch
Commonwealth Department of Health
MDP 707 GPO Box 9848
Canberra ACT
Australia
Tel: +61 2 6289 7291
Email: elizabeth.flynn@health.gov.au

Ms Ann Backhouse
Director Codex International Standards
Department of Agriculture and Water
Resources
GPO Box 858
Canberra ACT
Australia
Tel: +61 2 6272 5692
Email: ann.backhouse@agriculture.gov.au

Mr Greg Read
First Assistant Secretary, Exports Division
Department of Agriculture and Water
Resources
GPO Box 858
Canberra ACT
Australia
Tel: +61 2 6272 3594
Email: greg.read@agriculture.gov.au

AUSTRIA – AUTRICHE

Dr Amire Mahmood
Deputy Head of the Department for Food
Law, Food Safety and Food Quality
Federal Ministry of Health
Radetzkystrasse 2
Vienna
Austria
Tel: +43/1-71100-4741
Email: amire.mahmood@bmg.gv.at

BELGIUM - BELGIQUE – BÉLGICA

Mr Luc Ogiers
Director
General directorate international economy
FPS Economy, SME
Rue du Progrès, 50
Bruxelles
Belgium
Tel: +3222777481
Email: luc.ogiers@economie.fgov.be

Mr Jean Pottier
Regulatory Expert Food Labelling, Nutrition
and Health Claims
Food, Feed and other consumption product
FPS Health, Food Chain Safety and
Environment Animal, Plant and Food
Directorate
Eurostation | Place Victor Horta, 40/10
Brussels
Belgium
Tel: +32 2 524 73 62
Email: Jean.Pottier@health.belgium.be

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA - BOSNIE-HERZÉGOVINE - BOSNIA Y HERZEGOVINA

Mr Fuad Didic
Head of Mission
Embassy of Bosnia and Herzegovina
17 Blackburn Avenue
Ottawa
Canada
Tel: 613-236-0028, ext. 225
Email: counsellor@bhembassy.ca

BRAZIL - BRÉSIL – BRASIL

Dr Rodrigo Vargas
Specialist on Regulation and Health
Surveillance
Brazilian Health Regulatory Agency
SIA, TRECHO 5, ÁREA ESPECIAL 57,
BRASÍLIA-DF
Brasília
Brazil
Tel: +55(61)3462-6514
Email: rodrigo.vargas@anvisa.gov.br

Ms Ana Paula Bortoletto Martins
Researcher and Nutritionist
Instituto Brasileiro de Defesa do Consumidor -
Idec
Rua Desembargador Guimarães, 21. São
Paulo - SP
São Paulo
Brazil
Tel: +55 11 38742163
Email: anapaula@idec.org.br

Ms Kelly Dias Botelho
Specialist on Regulation and Health
Surveillance
Brazilian Health Regulatory Agency
Sia, Trecho 5, Área Especial 57, Brasília-Df
Brasília,
Brazil
Tel: +55(61)3462-5329
Email: kelly.botelho@anvisa.gov.br

Dr Kleber Jose Trinta Moreira E Lopes
General Coordinator of Technical Consultancy
and Administrative Proceedings
Justice Ministry
Brasília
Email: kleber.lopes@mj.gov.br

Mr Ricardo Ossamu Maehara
Official Veterinarian, Technical Advisor
Ministério da Agricultura, Pecuária e
Abastecimento
Secretaria de Relações Internacionais do
Agronegócio – SRI/MAPA
Departamento de Negociações Não Tarifárias
– DNNT/SRI/
Coordenação-Geral de Disciplinas Não
Tarifárias no Comércio Internacional -
CGNT/DNNT
Esplanada dos Ministérios, Bloco D, Sala 349
Brasília, Brazil
Email: ricardo.maehara@agricultura.gov.br

CAMBODIA - CAMBODGE – CAMBOYA

Mr Oun Phan
Deputy Director General
Cambodia Import Export Inspection and Fraud
Repression Directorate General
Ministry Of Commerce
National Road No 1/ Str 18, Phum Kdey
Takoy, Sangkat Vielsbov, khan Chbar
Ampoeu, Phnom Penh
Cambodia
Tel: +855-12568356
Email: oun.phan@yahoo.com

CANADA – CANADÁ

Ms Kathy Twardek
National Manager
Consumer Protection and Market Fairness
Division
Canadian Food Inspection Agency
1400 Merivale Road T2-6-141
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada
Tel: 613-773-5489
Email: kathy.Twardek@Inspection.gc.ca

Mrs Hélène Couture
Chief, Evaluation Division
Bureau of Microbial Hazards
Health Canada
251 Sir Frederick Banting Dr. P.L 2204E
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada
Tel: +1-613-957-174
Email: Helene.Couture@HC-SC.gc.ca

Prof Etienne Dako
Professor/Food Microbiologist
Université de Moncton
18 Antonine-Maillet Université de Moncton
Moncton, N.B.
Canada
Tel: 506-858-4080
Email: etienne.dako@umoncton.ca

Mr Benoît Dubé
Regulatory and Standards Officer
Canadian Food Inspection Agency
Tower 2, 6th Floor, Room 253
1400 Merivale Road
Ottawa, Ontario,
Canada
Tel: 613-773-5244
Email: Benoit.Dube@Inspection.gc.ca

Dr Brad Hicks
Director
Pacific Organic Seafood Association
21222 24th Avenue
Langley, B.C.
Canada
Tel: 604-788-4752
Email: BHicks@Firstmate.com

Ms Anne-Christine Poulin
Senior Trade Policy Analyst
Technical Trade Policy Division
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
1305 Baseline Road Tower 5, Floor 5
Room 343
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada
Tel: 613-773-3561
Email: Anne-Christine.Poulin@AGR.GC.CA

Mrs Grace Ramos
Senior Program Officer
Canadian Food Inspection Agency
1400 Merivale Road
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada
Tel: 613-773-5464
Email: Grace.Ramos@Inspection.gc.ca

Ms Andrea Spencer
Trade Policy Officer
Global Affairs Canada
111 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada
Tel: 343-203-4260
Email: Andrea.Spencer@international.gc.ca

Ms Maya Villeneuve
Associate Director
Bureau of Nutritional Sciences
Health Canada
251 Sir Frederick Banting Driveway, A.L.
2203B, room B333
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada
Tel: 613-960-4740
Email: Maya.Villeneuve@HC-SC.gc.ca

Mrs Alison Wereley
Senior Program Officer
Canadian Food Inspection Agency
1400 Merivale Road, Tower 2
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada
Tel: 613-773-6450
Email: Alison.Wereley@Inspection.gc.ca

CHILE – CHILI

Dr Michel Leporati Néron
Secretario Ejecutivo
Agencia Chilena para la Inocuidad y Calidad
Alimentaria, ACHIPIA
Ministerio de Agricultura
Nueva York 17, piso 4
Santiago
Chile
Tel: +56 2 27979900
Email: michel.leporati@achipia.gob.cl

Mrs Karla Carmona Araya
Asesor
Agencia Chilena para la Inocuidad y Calidad
Alimentaria, ACHIPIA
Ministerio de Agricultura
Nueva York 17, piso 4
Santiago
Chile
Tel: +56 2 27979900
Email: karla.carmona@achipia.gob.cl

CHINA – CHINE

Mr Wai-yan Chan
Scientific Officer (Risk Management)
Centre for Food Safety, Food and
Environmental Hygiene Department, HKSAR
Government
43/F, Queensway Government Offices, 66
Queensway, HongKong
Hongkong
China
Tel: +852-28675134
Email: waychan@fehd.gov.hk

Mr Kwok Wai Ho
Scientific Officer (Nutrition Labelling)
Centre for Food Safety, Food and
Environmental Hygiene Department, HKSAR
Government
43/F, Queensway Government Offices, 66
Queensway, HongKong
Hongkong
China
Tel: +852-39622068
Email: kwho@fehd.gov.hk

Dr Zhigang Song
Associate Professor/PhD
Research Center of International Inspection
and Quarantine Standards and Technical
Regulations, AQ
R909 Sanyuan Mansion, No 18 Xibahedongli,
Chaoyang District, Beijing China
Beijing
China
Tel: +86-010-84603871
Email: songzhg@263.net

Ms Liang Wang
Clerk
Shanghai Entry-Exit Inspection and
Quarantine Bureau
8 Shuntong Road, Pudong New
District, Shanghai, China
Shanghai
China
Tel: +86-021-68281936
Email: wangliang@shciq.gov.cn

Ms Lan Wu
Section Chief
Guangdong Entry-exit Inspection and
Quarantine Bureau of the P.R.C
66 Huacheng Avenue, Zhujiang New
City, Tianhe District, Guangzhou, China
Guangzhou
China
Tel: +86-020-38297960
Email: wul@gdcqi.gov.cn

Mr Jie Yin
Assistant Researcher
Chinese Academic of Inspection and
Quarantine (CAIQ)
Room A1109, No. 9, Madian East Road,
Haidian District, Beijing
Beijing, China
Tel: +86-010-82260351
Email: 13581808788@163.com

COLOMBIA – COLOMBIE

Prof Alba Rocio Jimenez Tovar
Profesional Especializada
Instituto Nacional de Vigilancia de
Medicamentos y Alimentos - INVIMA
Carrera 10 No. 64 - 28
Tel: 57-1-2948700 ext 3924
Email: ajimenezt@invima.gov.co

COSTA RICA

Mrs Mónica Elizondo Andrade
Directora Asuntos Científicos y Regulatorios
Cámara Costarricense de la Industria
Alimentaria (CACIA)
Costa Rica
Tel: (506) 2220 3031
Email: melizondo@cacia.org

CUBA

Mr Angel Manuel Casamayor León
Especialista en Regulaciones Técnicas y
Calidad
Dirección Regulaciones Técnicas y Calidad
Ministerio de Comercio Exterior y la Inversión
Extranjera
Infanta y 23, Vedado
La Habana
Cuba
Tel: 5378300022
Email: gabriel.lahens@mincex.cu

Mrs Marileydy Herrera Olmo
Directora de Calidad y Tecnología
Calidad y Tecnología del Ministerio de la
Industria Alimentaria (MINAL)
Ministerio de la Industria Alimentaria (MINAL)
Avenida 41 No. 4455 %48 y 50, Playa. La
Habana
La Habana
Cuba
Tel: 53-78300022
Email: nc@ncnorma.cu

Mrs Olga Maria Valdes Almaral
Jefa del Departamento de Registro de
alimentos del INHEM
Registro de alimentos
Ministerio Salud Pública de Cuba (MINSAP)
Infanta No. 1158 entre Llinás y Clavel. Cerro
La Habana
Cuba
Tel: 53-78300022
Email: nc@ncnorma.cu

DENMARK - DANEMARK – DINAMARCA

Ms Pernille Lundquist Madsen
Deputy Head, Chemicals and Food Quality
Division
Danish Veterinary and Food Administration
Stationsparken 31
Glostrup
Denmark
Tel: +45 7227 6662
Email: plum@fvst.dk

ECUADOR – ÉQUATEUR

Mrs Elizabeth Moreano
Minister, Embassy of Ecuador to Canada
99 Bank Street, Suite 230
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
Tel: 613-261-0759
Email: elizabethmoreao70@yahoo.com

Mr Oscar Ismael Ramirez Lama
Second Secretary of Embassy of Ecuador
99 Bank Street, Suite 230
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
Tel: 613-263-0704
Email: oramirez@gmail.com

EGYPT - ÉGYPTE – EGIPTO

Dr Nermeen El Fadeel
Scientific and Regulatory Affairs Manager ,
Egypt Region, Coca- Cola
1 Amin Elrahany St., Nasr City- Cairo- Egypt
Cairo
Egypt
Tel: 00222722187
Email: nermeenkhalifa@outlook.com

Mr Mohamed Abd Elhamid Naser
Food standards Specialist
Organization: Egyptian Organization for
Standardization and Quality (EOS)
16 tadreeb el motderbeen , cairo ,Egypt
Egypt
Tel: 0201281337667
Email: atch_toto3@yahoo.com

Mr Ahmad El Buckley
Diplomat
Embassy of Egypt
454 Laurier Ave. East
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
Email: egyptemb@sympatico.ca

Dr Dalia El Din
General Manager of Imported Food Control
General Organization for Export Import Control
Cairo
Egypt
Tel: 01006676205
Email: daliashehabeldin@yahoo.com

Mr Amr El Kilany
Commercial Consul
Egyptian Consulate in Montreal
Rene Levesque Boul., Suite 3200
Montreal, Quebec, Canada
Tel: 514-861-6340
Email: egyptemb@sympatico.ca

Ms Salwa El Mowafi
Diplomat
454 Laurier Ave. East
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
Email: egyptemb@sympatico.ca

Mr Amr Koraiem
Diplomat
Egyptian Embassy
454 Laurier Ave. East
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
Tel: 613-890-7369
Email: dr_amr_koraiem@hotmail.com

**EUROPEAN UNION - UNION EUROPÉENNE
- UNIÓN EUROPEA**

Ms Barbara Moretti
Administrator
DG Sante
European Commission
Rue Froissart 101
Brussels
Belgium
Email: barbara.moretti@ec.europa.eu

Mr Christophe Didion
Administrator
DG Sante
European Commission
B 232
Brussels
Belgium
Email: christophe.didion@ec.europa.eu

Mr Dario Dubolino
Administrator
DG Mare
European Union
Brussels
Belgium
Tel: +32 229-86031
Email: dario.dubolino@ec.europa.eu

FINLAND - FINLANDE – FINLANDIA

Ms Anne Haikonen
Legislative Counsellor
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
P.O.Box 30 FI-00023 Government
Helsinki
Finland
Tel: +358-50-3697618
Email: anne.haikonen@mmm.fi

FRANCE – FRANCIA

Mrs Sophie Dussours
Chargée de Mission
Bureau 4D
DGCCRF
France
Email: sophie.dussours@dgccrf.finances.gouv.fr

Ms Margaux Denis
DGAL - Service de l'alimentation
Ministère de l'agriculture, de l'agroalimentaire
et de la forêt
251 rue de Vaugirard
PARIS
France
Tel: +33149555386
Email: margaux.denis@agriculture.gouv.fr

Mrs Annie Loch
EU Public affairs Director
Affaires Publiques Européennes
DANONE
17 boulevard Haussmann
Paris
France
Tel: +33 1 44 35 24 32
Email: annie.loch@danone.com

GERMANY - ALLEMAGNE – ALEMANIA

Dr Katrin Stolle
Deputy Head of Division
Food Labelling
Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture
Wilhelmstraße 54
Berlin
Germany
Tel: +49 30 18529 4172
Email: katrin.stolle@bmel.bund.de

Dr Susanne Kettler
Senior Director Scientific & Regulatory Affairs
Europe, Middle East and Africa
Scientific and Regulatory Affairs
Coca-Cola s.a.
Chaussee de Mons 1424
Brussels
Belgium
Tel: +32 471 989045
Email: skettler@coca-cola.com

Mr Bernd Kurzai
 Legal Counsel Food Law
 Central Department Quality Affairs
 Südzucker AG Mannheim/Ochsenfurt
 Gottlieb-Daimler-Straße 13
 Mannheim
 Germany
 Email: bernd.kurzai@suedzucker.de

Ms Angelika Mrohs
 Managing Director
 German Federation for Food Law and Food
 Science (BLL e.V.)
 Claire-Waldoff-Straße 7
 Berlin
 Germany
 Tel: +49 30 206 143-133
 Email: amrohs@bll.de

Dr Jörg Rieke
 Executive Director
 Association of the German Dairy Industry
 (MIV)
 Jägerstraße 51
 Berlin
 Germany
 Tel: +49 30 – 40 30 44 5-22
 Email: rieke@milchindustrie.de

Dr Alexander Tolkach
 R&D Director
 BMI e.G. (Bavarian Dairy Industrie coop)
 Kloetzlmuehlerstr. 140
 Landshut
 Germany
 Email: a.tolkach@bmi-eg.com

GHANA

Mrs Isabella Mansa Agra
 Ag. Deputy Chief Executive (FID)
 Food Inspection (FID)
 Food and Drugs Authority
 P.O.Box CT 2783 Cantonments Accra
 Accra
 Ghana
 Tel: +233 244 337249
 Email: isabella.agra@fdaghana.gov.gh

Ms Gifty Aidoo
 Senior Regulatory Officer
 Food Evaluation And Registration
 Food And Drugs Authority
 P. O. Box Ct 2783, Cantonments
 Accra
 Ghana
 Tel: +233 207 741152
 Email: giftieonline@yahoo.com

Ms Cynthia Adwoa Dapaah
 Corporate Attorney
 Legal
 Food And Drugs Authority
 P. O. Box Ct 2783 Cantonments
 Accra
 Ghana
 Tel: +233 244 212791
 Email: Cynthia.dapaah@fdaghana.gov.gh

GREECE - GRÈCE – GRECIA

Ms Pely Sousiopolou
 Counsellor for Economic & Commercial
 Affairs, Head of Economic & Commercial
 Office
 Embassy of Greece in Ottawa
 80 MacLaren St.
 Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
 Tel: +1-613 238 6271
 Email: soussiopoulou@mfa.gr

GUINEA – GUINÉE

Mrs Mariama Barry
 Directrice Générale
 Ministère du Commerce
 Office National du Contrôle de Qualité
 Ministère du Commerce Quartier Almamy
 Commune Kaloum BP 13
 Conakry
 Guinea
 Tel: 00 224 628 13 13 81
 Email: mariamabellabaryy@yahoo.fr

Mrs Safiatou Diallo
 Directrice Generale
 Ministere de l'Environnement des Eaux et
 Foret
 Direction Nationale Assainissement et Cadre
 de Vie
 Quartier Coleah Lanseboundji BP 3318
 Conakry
 Guinea
 Tel: 00 224 622 15 38 52
 Email: safiatoudial56@gmail.com

HUNGARY - HONGRIE – HUNGRÍA

Ms Beatrix Kuti
 Quality Expert
 Department of Food Processing
 Ministry of Agriculture
 Kossuth Lajos tér 11.
 Budapest
 Hungary
 Tel: 00 36 1 795 3481
 Email: beatrix.kuti@fm.gov.hu

INDIA – INDE

Mr Bimal Kumar Dubey
 Director (Imports)
 Food Safety And Standards Authority Of India
 FDA Bhawan, Near Bal Bhawan
 Email: bkdubey@fssai.gov.in

Mr Aditya Jain
 Senior Manager
 National Dairy Development Board
 Anand, Gujarat, India
 Email: aditya@nddb.coop

INDONESIA – INDONÉSIE

Mrs Dini Gardenia
 Head of Sub Directorate of Food and Food
 Additives Evaluation
 Directorate of Food Safety Evaluation
 National Agency of Drug and Food Control
 Jl. Percetakan Negara No.23
 Jakarta
 Indonesia
 Tel: +62 21 42800221
 Email: ditpkp_bpom@yahoo.com

Mr Christophorus Barutu
 Trade Attaché
 Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia
 55 Parkdale Avenue
 Ottawa, Ontario K1Y 1E5, Canada
 Tel.: (613) 724-1100, ext. 306
 Fax: (613) 724-7932
 Email: c.barutu@indonesia-ottawa.org

Mr Evi Noviarsyah Latief
 Head Section Food Halal Labelling Inspection
 Directorate of Food Inspection and
 Certification
 National Agency of Drug and Food Control
 Jl. Percetakan Negara No. 23
 Jakarta
 Indonesia
 Tel: +6221 42803255
 Email: noviarsyah@gmail.com

Mrs Ati Widya Perana
 Head Section for Codex
 Directorate of Food Products Standardization
 National Agency of Drug and Food Control
 Jl. Percetakan Negara No.23
 Jakarta
 Indonesia
 Tel: +62 21 42875584
 Email: codexbpom@yahoo.com

Mrs Lasrida Yuniaty
 Head of Section Food Product Standardization
 Directorate of Food Products Standardization
 National Agency of Drug and Food Control
 Jl. Percetakan Negara No.23 Jakarta Pusat
 Jakarta
 Indonesia
 Tel: +62 21 42875584
 Email: subditspo2@yahoo.com

**IRAN (ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF) - IRAN
 (RÉPUBLIQUE ISLAMIQUE D') - IRÁN
 (REPÚBLICA ISLÁMICA DEL)**

Dr Mohammad Hossein Shojaee Aliabadi
 Senior Scientific Adviser
 Institute of Standard & Industrial Research of
 Iran
 No: 96; Parcham Street Tohid Square;
 1457844393 Tehran I.R.Iran
 Tehran
 Iran (Islamic Republic of)
 Tel: +0989121591766
 Email: faroughlab@gmail.com

ITALY - ITALIE – ITALIA

Mrs Raffaella Fiora
 Director of Food Law
 Soremartec Italia S.r.l.
 Piazzale Pietro Ferrero, 1
 Alba
 Italy
 Tel: +39 0173 313065
 Email: raffaella.fiora@ferrero.com

Mr Ciro Impagnatiello
 Codex Contact Point
 Department of the European Union and
 International Policies and of the Rural
 Development
 Ministry of Agricultural Food and Forestry
 Policies
 Via XX Settembre, 20
 Rome
 Italy
 Tel: +39 06 46654058
 Email: c.impagnatiello@politicheagricole.it

Dr Giuseppe Lembo
 Senior Researcher - Organic aquaculture
 expert
 COISPA - Stazione Sperimentale per lo Studio
 delle Risorse del Mare
 Via Dei Trulli, 18/20
 Bari
 Italy
 Tel: +39 080 5433596
 Email: lembo@coispa.it

Mr Luca Ragaglini
Vice Director
AIDEPI
Viale del Poggio Fiorito, 61
Rome
Italy
Tel: +39 06 80910720
Email: luca.ragaglini@aidepi.it

JAPAN - JAPON – JAPÓN

Dr Toshitaka Masuda
Deputy Director
Food Labelling Division
Consumer Affairs Agency
3-1-1 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku,
Tokyo
Japan
Tel: +81-3-3507-8800
Email: g.codex-j@caa.go.jp

Prof Hiroaki Hamano
Adviser
International Life Sciences Institute Japan
Nishikawa Bldg 5F, 3-5-19 Kojimachi,
Chiyoda-ku,
Tokyo
Japan
Tel: +81-3-5215-3535
Email: hhamano@ilsijapan.org

Prof Satoshi Ishizuka
Adviser
Laboratory of Nutritional Biochemistry
Research Faculty of Agriculture
Hokkaido University
Kita 9, Nishi 9, Kita-ku, Sapporo
Hokkaido
Japan
Tel: +81-11-706-2811
Email: g.codex-j@caa.go.jp

Mr Hiroyuki Okochi
Associate Director
Fish Ranching and Aquaculture Division
Fisheries Agency
1-2-1, Kasumigaseki, Chiyodaku
Tokyo
Japan
Tel: +81-3-3501-1961
Email: hiroyuki_okochi230@maff.go.jp

Ms Aya Orito-nozawa
Section Chief
Food Safety Policy Division, Food Safety and
Consumer Affairs Bureau
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
1-2-1, Kasumigadeki, Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo
Japan
Tel: +81-3-3502-8732
Email: aya_orito460@maff.go.jp

Mr Kinya Tokunaga
Official
Food Labelling Division
Consumer Affairs Agency
3-1-1 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku,
Tokyo
Japan
Tel: +81-3-3507-8800
Email: g.codex-j@caa.go.jp

Mr Makoto Yamauchi
Assistant Director
Fisheries Processing Industries and Marketing
Division
Fisheries Agency
1-2-1 Kasumigaseki, Chiyodaku
Tokyo
Japan
Tel: +81-3-3501-1961
Email: makoto_yamauchi620@maff.go.jp

MALAYSIA - MALAISIE – MALASIA

Ms Ruhana Abdul Latif
Principal Assistant Director
Food Safety and Quality Division
Ministry of Health Malaysia
Level 4, Menara Prisma No.26, Jalan
Persiaran Perdana, Precint 3 62675 Putrajaya
Malaysia
Putrajaya
Malaysia
Tel: +603-8885 0797 ext 4003
Email: ruhana_latif@moh.gov.my

Mr Ahmad Shanizam Ab Ghani
Trade Commissioner
Malaysia External Trade Development
Corporation (MATRADE)
Consulate of Malaysia (Trade Office), First
Canadian Place, 100 King Street West, Suite
5130, P.O Box 389
Toronto
Malaysia
Tel: 416 504 6111
Email: toronto@matrade.gov.my

Ms Rohaya Mamat
 Director
 Regulatory Affairs
 Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers
 Wisma FMM, No. 3, Persiaran Dagang PJU 9,
 Bandar Sri Damansara 52200 Kuala Lumpur
 Malaysia
 Kuala Lumpur
 Malaysia
 Tel: +603-6286 7200
 Email: rohaya.mamat@mjn.com

MEXICO - MEXIQUE – MÉXICO

Ms Pamela Suárez Brito
 Gerente de Asuntos Internacionales en
 Inocuidad Alimentaria
 Dirección Ejecutiva de Operación
 Internacional
 Comisión Federal para la Protección contra
 Riesgos Sanitarios (COFEPRIS)
 Monterrey #33 Piso 2, Col. Roma Delegación
 Cuauhtémoc
 Mexico Distrito Federal
 Mexico
 Tel: 525550805389
 Email: psuarez@cofepris.gob.mx

Ms Sandra Herrero Cagigas
 Vicepresidenta de la Comisión de Salud de la
 Confederación de Cámaras Industriales de los
 Estados Unidos Mexicanos (CONAMIN)
 Ciudad de México
 México
 Tel : +52 (55) 5752-0043
 Email: sandra.herrero@hecaservicios.net

Mr Álvaro Israel Perez Vega
 Comisionado de Operación Sanitaria
 Secretaría de Salud
 Comisión Federal para la Protección contra
 Riesgos Sanitarios
 Oklahoma no. 14, Colonia Nápoles,
 Delegación Benito Juárez C.P. 03810
 Ciudad de México
 Mexico
 Tel: +(5255) 5080 5200
 Email: aiperez@cofepris.gob.mx

Mr Raúl Gerardo Portillo Aldrett
 Director de Asuntos Científicos y Regulatorios
 y Presidente de la Rama 17
 Asuntos Científicos y Regulatorios
 Cámara Nacional de la Industria de
 Transformación (CANACINTRA)
 Mexico, DF
 Mexico
 Tel: +52 55 52 62 23 86
 Email: rportillo@coca-cola.com

MOROCCO - MAROC – MARRUECOS

Mr Oussama Nadifi
 Chef de division de la réglementation et
 normalisation
 Agriculture
 Office National de Sécurité Sanitaire des
 Produits Alimentaires
 Avenue Hadj Ahmed Cherkaoui, Agdal
 Rabat
 Morocco
 Tel: +212673997816
 Email: Oussama.Nadifi@onssa.gov.ma

MOZAMBIQUE

Dr Maria Carolina Virgilio Omar
 Confederation of Business Association of
 Mozambique
 Rua dos Desportistas Number 833 3rd Floor
 Maputo
 Maputo
 Mozambique
 Tel: +258 843030840
 Email: Maria.Omar@MZ.nestle.com

NETHERLANDS - PAYS-BAS – PAÍSES BAJOS

Ms Inge Stoelhorst
 Policy Coordinator
 Nutrition, Health Protection and Prevention
 Department
 Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport
 Parnassusplein 5
 Den Haag
 Netherlands
 Tel: +31 6 31753465
 Email: i.stoelhorst@minvws.nl

Ms Gieta Mahabir
 Senior Policy Advisor
 Ministry of Economic Affairs
 Bezuidenhoutseweg 73
 Den Haag
 Netherlands
 Tel: +31 70 3784198
 Email: g.mahabir@minez.nl

Mr Alexander Rogge
 administrator
 DGB 2B
 General Secretariat of the Council
 Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat 175
 Brussels
 Belgium
 Email: alexander.rogge@consilium.europa.eu

Ms Melanie Van Vugt
Legal policy officer
Nutrition, Health Protection and Prevention
Department
Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport
Parnassusplein 5
The Hague
Netherlands
Tel: +31 6 21160669
Email: ma.vugt@minvws.nl

NEW ZEALAND - NOUVELLE-ZÉLANDE - NUEVA ZELANDIA

Ms Jenny Reid
Manager, Food Science & Risk Assessment
Ministry for Primary Industries
25 The Terrace
Wellington
New Zealand
Email: jenny.reid@mpi.govt.nz

Ms Phillipa Hawthorne
Senior Adviser
Ministry for Primary Industries
25 The Terrace
New Zealand
Email: Phillippa.hawthorne@mpi.govt.nz

NIGERIA – NIGÉRIA

Mrs Eva Obiageli Edwards
Assistant Director
Food Safety and Applied Nutrition
National Agency for Food and Drug
Administration and Control
Plot 1, Isolo Industrial Estate, Apapa/Oshodi
Express Way
Lagos
Nigeria
Tel: + 234-8023109251
Email: edwards.eo@nafdac.gov.ng

Mr Fred Nduka Chiazor
Scientific and Regulatory Affairs Director
Coca-Cola Nigeria Limited
16 Gerrard Road, Ikoyi
Lagos
Nigeria
Tel: +2348035352226
Email: fchiazor@coca-cola.com

NORWAY - NORVÈGE – NORUEGA

Mrs Lise Charlotte Rokkones
Head of Section
Norwegian Food Safety Authority
Seafood Section
Postboks 383
Brumunddal
Norway
Tel: + 47 22 77 85 96
Email: Lise.Torkildsen@mattilsynet.no

PARAGUAY

Mrs Zuny Mabel Zarza De Riquelme
Coordinadora del CCFL
Unidad De Asuntos Regulatorios
Instituto Nacional De Alimentación Y Nutrición
- INAN- MSPyBS
Stma. Trinidad esquina Itapua Asunción -
Asunción
Paraguay
Tel: 595 21 294073
Email: zmzarza@hotmail.com

Ing Rodolfo Grau Brizuela
Miembro del Comité Nacional del Codex
Paraguay
Privado
Asociación Rural del Paraguay
Ruta Troperos del Chaco Km 14 Mariano
Roque Alonso - Paraguay
Mariano Roque Alonso
Paraguay
Tel: (+595) 021 754 412
Email: rudygrau@hotmail.com

POLAND - POLOGNE – POLONIA

Mr Tomasz Kijewski
Third Secretary, Economic Affairs
Economic Section
Polish Embassy in Canada
443 Daly Avenue
Ottawa
Poland
Tel: +1 613 7890468
Email: Tomasz.Kijewski@msz.gov.pl

REPUBLIC OF KOREA - RÉPUBLIQUE DE CORÉE - REPÚBLICA DE COREA

Dr Seog Youn Kang
 Director
 Food Consumption and Safety Division
 Ministry of Food and Drug Safety
 Osong Health Technology Administration
 Complex, 187 Osongsaengmyeong2(i)-ro,
 Osong-eup, Heungdeok-gu cheongju-si,
 Chungcheongbuk-do, Korea
 Cheong ju-si
 Republic of Korea
 Tel: 82-43-719-2851
 Email: kingsaveyou@korea.kr

Dr Yong Jae Kim
 Food Policy Coordination Division
 Ministry of Food and Drug Safety
 Osong Health Technology Administration
 Complex, 187 Osongsaengmyeong2(i)-ro,
 Osong-eup, Heungdeok-gu cheongju-si,
 Chungcheongbuk-do, Korea
 Cheongju-si
 Republic of Korea
 Tel: 82-43-719-2030
 Email: kyj1214@korea.kr

Ms Hye Min Na
 Codex Researcher
 Food Consumption and Safety Division
 Ministry of Food and Drug Safety
 Osong Health Technology Administration
 Complex, 187 Osongsaengmyeong2(i)-ro,
 Osong-eup, Heungdeok-gu cheongju-si,
 Chungcheongbuk-do, Korea
 Cheongju-si
 Republic of Korea
 Tel: 82-43-719-2859
 Email: rana9861@korea.kr

Ms Hyun Young Oh
 Assistant Director
 Agri-Food Certification & Management
 National Agricultural Products Quality
 Management Service
 Republic of Korea
 Tel: 82-54-429-4178
 Email: hyunyoung@korea.kr

RUSSIAN FEDERATION - FÉDÉRATION DE RUSSIE - FEDERACIÓN DE RUSIA

Mr Yaroslav Fedosov
 Centre of Risk Analysis Director
 The All-Russian State Center for Quality and
 Standardization of Veterinary Drugs and Feed
 (VGNKI)
 Email: yaroslavfk@hotmail.com

Mrs Olga Ivanova
 Chief Expert
 Assessment division of veterinary risks and
 risk-oriented forecasting in the field of
 monitoring res
 Rosselkhoznadzor
 Email: helga8705@mail.ru

Mr Anatoly Kutysenko
 Vice-chair
 Optimal Foods Committee
 Russian Union of Industrialists and
 Entrepreneurs (RUIE)
 Kotelnicheskaya nab., 17
 Moscow
 Russian Federation
 Tel: +7-495-642-6140
 Email: Anatol-k@rambler.ru

Dr Alexey Petrenko
 Consultant
 Optimal Nutrition Commission
 Russian Union of Industrialists and
 Entrepreneurs
 Kotelnicheskaya nab., 17
 Moscow
 Russian Federation
 Email: asp@me.com

Dr Elena Smirnova
 Scientific Secretary
 Institute of Nutrition
 Ustyinskiy proezd 2/14
 Moscow
 Russian Federation
 Tel: +7 495 698 53 42
 Email: smirnova@ion.ru

SINGAPORE – SINGAPOUR - SINGAPUR

Ms Peik Ching Seah
 Deputy Director
 Regulatory Administration Group
 Regulatory Programmes Department
 Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority of
 Singapore
 Singapore

SLOVAKIA - SLOVAQUIE – ESLOVAQUIA

Ms Mária Birešová
 Attaché
 Agriculture and Fisheries Unit
 Permanent Representation of the Slovak
 Republic to the EU
 Avenue de Cortenbergh 107
 Bruxelles
 Belgium
 Tel: +32 475 530 316
 Email: maria.biresova@mzv.sk

SPAIN - ESPAGNE – ESPAÑA

Mr Agustin Palma Barriga
Nutritional Risks Officer
Subdirector-General for Food Safety
Promotion
Spanish Agency for Consumer Affairs, Food
Safety and Nutrition
C\ Alcalá, 56
Madrid
Spain
Email: apalma@msssi.es

SWEDEN - SUÈDE – SUECIA

Mrs Kristina Lagestrand Sjölin
Principal Regulatory Officer
National Food Agency
Box 622
Uppsala
Sweden
Tel: +46 18175500
Email: kristina.sjolin@slv.se

SWITZERLAND - SUISSE – SUIZA

Mrs Sandra Di Medio Steinmann
Scientific Officer
Food and Nutrition
Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office
FSVO
Bern
Switzerland
Email: sandra.dimedio@blv.admin.ch
Mrs Marie-France Pagerey
CT-Regulatory and Scientific Affairs & EUR
RSA Head
Nestec Ltd.
Avenue Nestlé 55 Post Box
Vevey
Switzerland
Email: MarieFrance.Pagerey@nestle.com

THAILAND - THAÏLANDE – TAILANDIA

Ms Oratai Silapanaporn
Advisor of the National Bureau of Agricultural
Commodity and Food Standards
National Bureau of Agricultural Commodity
and Food Standards
Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives
50 Phaholyothin Road Ladyao Chatuchak
Bangkok
Thailand
Tel: +662 561 2277
Email: oratai_si@hotmail.com

Dr Paisarn Dunkum
Deputy Secretaries-General
Food and Drug Administration
Ministry of Public Health
Ministry of Public Health Mueang Nonthaburi
District
Nonthaburi
Thailand
Email: paisarn@fda.moph.go.th

Dr Panisuan Jamnarnwej
Honorary President
Thai Frozen Foods Association
150 Rajbopit Rd., Wat Rajbopit sub-District,
Pranakhorn District
Bangkok
Thailand
Tel: 662 622 1860-76
Email: panisuan@yahoo.com

Ms Malee Jirawongsy
(Acting) Expert in Food Standard
Food and Drug Administration
Ministry of Public Health
Ministry of Public Health Mueang Nonthaburi
District,
Nonthaburi
Thailand
Tel: 6625907214
Email: fdamasy@fda.moph.go.th

Ms Dawisa Paiboonsiri
Standards Officer
National Bureau of Agricultural Commodity
and Food Standards
Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives
50 Phaholyothin Road Ladyao
Bangkok
Thailand
Tel: +6625612277 ext. 1427
Email: dawisa.p@gmail.com

Ms Kwantawee Paukatong
Food Processing Industry Club
The Federation of Thai Industries
Queen Sirikit National Convention Center,
Zone C, 4th Floor, 60 New Rachadapisek Rd.,
Klongtoey
Bangkok
Thailand
Tel: +6629550777
Email: Kwantawee.paukatong@th.nestle.com

Ms Chanikan Thanupitak
Trade and Technical Manager of Fisheries
Products
Thai Food Processors' Association
170 / 21 -22 9th Floor Ocean Tower 1 Bldg.,
New Ratchadapisek Rd., Klongtoey
Bangkok
Thailand
Tel: +662 261 2684-6
Email: fish@thaifood.org

TUNISIA - TUNISIE – TÚNEZ

Mr Riadh Essid
Ambassador
Embassy of Tunisia
515 O'Connor Street
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
Tel: 613-263-3617
Email: ambtun13@bellnet.ca

Mr Borhene El Kamel
Deputy Chief of Mission
Embassy of Tunisia
515 O'Connor Street
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
Tel: 613-237-0330
Email: ambtun13@bellnet.ca

TURKEY - TURQUIE – TURQUÍA

Mrs Ferda Bitlislioglu
Engineer
The General Directorate of Food and Control
The Ministry of Food, Agriculture and
Livestock
Eskisehir Yolu 9. km Lodumlu
Ankara
Turkey
Tel: 00903122587758
Email: ferda.bitlislioglu@tarim.gov.tr

Ms Burcu Sari
Engineer
The General Directorate of Food and Control
The Ministry of Food, Agriculture and
Livestock
Eskisehir Yolu 9. km Lodumlu
Ankara
Turkey
Tel: 00903122587751
Email: burcu.sari@tarim.gov.tr

Mr Abdurrahman Uz
Director
Directorate of Food Laboratory
Turkish Standards Institute (TSE)
Necatibey Caddesi No: 112 Bakanliklar
Ankara
Turkey
Tel: 00903124166412
Email: auz@tse.org.tr

Mr Murat Çalışkan
Assistance Expert
General Directorate of Product Safety and
Inspection
Ministry of Economy
T.C. Ekonomi Bakanlığı İnönü Bulvarı No:36
Ankara
Turkey
Email: caliskanmu@ekonomi.gov.tr

UNITED KINGDOM - ROYAUME-UNI - REINO UNIDO

Ms Pendi Najran
Senior Scientific Officer
Department for Environment, Food and Rural
Affairs
Area 1A, Nobel House 17, Smith Square
London
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)20 8026 3867
Email: pendi.najran@defra.gsi.gov.uk

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA - ÉTATS- UNIS D'AMÉRIQUE - ESTADOS UNIDOS DE AMÉRICA

Ms Felicia B Billingslea
Director, Food Labeling and Standards D
Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition
U.S. Food and Drug Administration
5100 Paint Branch Parkway, HFS-820
College Park
United States of America
Tel: +1-240-402-2371
Email: Felicia.Billingslea@fda.hhs.gov

Dr Douglas Balantine
Director, Office of Nutrition and Food
Labeling
Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition
U.S. Food and Drug Administration
5100 Paint Branch Parkway, HFS-800
College Park
United States of America
Tel: +1-240-402-2373
Email: Douglas.Balantine@fda.hhs.gov

Dr Lisa Brines
Agricultural Marketing Specialist
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Marketing Service, National
Organic Program
1400 Independence Ave SW Room 2646-
South, Stop 0268
Washington, DC
United States of America
Tel: +1-202-821-9683
Email: lisa.brines@ams.usda.gov

Mr Jeff Canavan
Deputy Director, Labeling and Program
Delivery Division
Food Safety and Inspection Service
Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue., SW
Washington, DC
United States of America
Tel: +1-301-504-0879
Email: Jeff.canavan@usda.gov

Ms Katherine Dimatteo
Managing Partner
Wolf, DiMatteo and Associates
49 Race Street
New Castle, VA
United States of America
Tel: +1413-624-5569
Email: kdimatteo@organicspecialists.com

Ms Marsha Echols
Attorney/Professor of Law
3286 M Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C
United States of America
Tel: +1-202-625-1451
Email: echols@marshaechols.com

Ms Mari Kirrane
Wine Trade and Technical Advisor
International Trade Division
Alcohol & Tobacco Tax & Trade Bureau
490 N. Wiget Lane
Walnut Creek, CA
United States of America
Tel: +1 5136843289
Email: Mari.Kirrane@ttb.gov

Dr Andrea Krause
Food Technologist
Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition
U.S. Food and Drug Administration
5100 Paint Branch Parkway, HFS-820
College Park
United States of America
Tel: +1-240-402-3719
Email: Andrea.Krause@fda.hhs.gov

Dr Catherine Kwik-Urbe
Global Director of Applied Scientific Research
and Scientific Regulatory Affairs
Mars, Inc.
20425 Seneca Meadows Parkway
Germantown
United States of America
Tel: +1301 444 7951
Email: Catherine.Kwik-Urbe@mss.ffmpeg.com

Mrs Barbara McNiff
Senior International Issues
Food Safety and Inspection Service; Office of
Codex
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave; SW
Washington, DC
United States of America
Tel: 202-690-4719
Email: Barbara.McNiff@fsis.usda.gov

Ms Farah Naim
International Trade Specialist
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Foreign Agriculture Service/Office of
Agreements and Scientific Affairs
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC
United States of America
Tel: +1-202-649-3859
Email: Farah.Naim@fas.usda.gov

Mr Daniel Reese
International Policy Analyst
U.S. Food and Drug Administration
Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition
5100 Paint Branch Parkway, HFS-820
College Park, MD
United States of America
Tel: +1-240-402-2126
Email: Daniel.reese@fda.hhs.gov

URUGUAY

Mrs Gervaz Trilce
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
Tel: +16132995538
Email:
negociaciones.organismos@mrree.gub.uy

FOODDRINKEUROPE

Mr Dirk Jacobs
Deputy Director General
FoodDrinkEurope
9-31 Av. des Nerviens
Brussels
Belgium
Email: d.jacobs@fooddrinkeurope.eu

INTERNATIONAL GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS – ORGANISATIONS GOUVERNEMENTALES INTERNATIONALES – ORGANIZACIONES GUBERNAMENTALES INTERNACIONALES

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONSUMER FOOD ORGANIZATIONS (IACFO)

Mr Bill Jeffery
Executive Director
Centre for Health Science and Law
International Association of Consumer Food Organizations
International Association of Consumer Food Organizations (IACFO) c/o Centre for Health Science and Law Suite 740, One Rideau Street
Ottawa
Canada
Tel: 6132447337
Email: billjeffery@healthscienceandlaw.ca

INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF DIETARY/FOOD SUPPLEMENT ASSOCIATIONS (IADSA)

Dr Tomoji Igarashi
IADSA member
Rue de l'Association 50 1000 Brussels
Brussels
Belgium
Email: secretariat@iadsa.org

INTERNATIONAL BABY FOOD ACTION NETWORK (IBFAN)

Ms Elisabeth Sterken
Director
INFACT Canada/IBFAN North America
International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN)
63 Burtch's Lane Rockport Ontario Canada K0E 1V0
Rockport, Ontario
Canada
Email: esterken@infactcanada.ca

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATIVE ALLIANCE (ICA)

Mr Kazuo Onitake
Head of Unit
Safety Policy Service
Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union
Co-op Plaza, 3-29-8, Shibuya, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo
Japan
Tel: +81 3-5778-8109
Email: kazuo.onitake@jccu.coop

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON AMINO ACID SCIENCE (ICAAS)

Dr Eyassu Abegaz
ICAAS - International Council on Amino Acid Science
Email: ICAAS@kelleneurope.com

Dr Kaori Ono
ICAAS - International Council on Amino Acid Science
Email: ICAAS@kelleneurope.com

Mr Hiromi Ota
ICAAS - International Council on Amino Acid Science
Email: ICAAS@kelleneurope.com

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF BEVERAGES ASSOCIATIONS (ICBA)

Mr Robert Earl
Advisor
International Council of Beverages Associations
1101 16th St NW
Washington DC
United States of America
Email: robertearl@coca-cola.com

Mr Hiroshi Kono
Japan Soft Drinks Association
3-3-3 Nihonbashi-Muromachi, Chuo-ku
Tokyo
Japan
Email: Hiroshi_Kono@suntory.co.jp

Dr Hugh Lippman
Advisor
International Council of Beverages Associations
1101 16th Street NW
Washington, D.C.
United States of America
Email: lippman@coca-cola.com

INTERNATIONAL CHEWING GUM ASSOCIATION (ICGA) (ICGA)

Mr Rick Mann
ICGA
1001 G Street N.W Suite 500 West
Washington
United States of America
Tel: +1 202 434 4100
Email: mann@khlaw.com

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF GROCERY MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATIONS (ICGMA)

Ms Kimberly Wingfield
Director, Science Policy, Labeling and

Standards
Grocery Manufacturers Association
1350 I Street, NW Suite 300
Washington, DC
United States of America
Tel: 202 637 8064
Email: kwingfield@gmaonline.org

Mr Jonathan Clifford
Country Regulatory Affairs Manager, Canada
Unilever
160 Bloor St East Suite 1400
Toronto, ON
Canada
Email: jonathan.clifford@unilever.com

Ms Donna Courtney
Senior Manager, Regulatory Services
The Hershey Company
25 Reese Ave.
Hershey, Pennsylvania
United States of America
Email: dcourtney@hersheys.com

Ms Sunney Mahalak
Regulatory and Scientific Affairs Specialist
Nestle USA
5750 Harper Road
Solon, OH 44139
United States of America
Email: sunney.mahalak@us.nestle.com

Ms Paula Martin
Associate Director, Regulatory Affairs,
Nutrition
Abbott Nutrition
200 Abbott Park Road
Abbott Park, IL
United States of America
Email: paula.martin@abbott.com

Ms Teresa Mastrodicasa
Director, Nutrition Policy
Food and Consumer Products Canada
100 Sheppard Ave East Suite 600
Toronto, ON
Canada
Email: teresam@fcpc.ca

INTERNATIONAL DAIRY FEDERATION (IDF/FIL)

Ms Luisa Candido
Nutrition and Technical Manager
Dairy UK
United Kingdom
Email: lcandido@dairyUK.org

Ms Cary Frye
Vice President of Regulatory Affairs
International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA)
United States of America
Email: cfrye@idfa.org

Ms Pamela Harrod
General Counsel
Dairy Farmers of Canada
21, rue Florence Street
Ottawa
Canada
Email: pamela.harrod@dfc-plc.ca

INTERNATIONAL FOOD ADDITIVES COUNCIL (IFAC)

Mr Yan Wen
Regulatory Affairs Senior Manager
International Food Additives Council
18/F Tower A, Gemdale Plaza No 91 Jianguo
Toad Chaoyang District
Beijing
China
Email: yan.wen@dupont.com

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE MOVEMENTS (IFOAM)

Mr David Gould
IFOAM - Organics International
6720 Se Yamhill Street
Portland, OR
United States of America
Tel: 5032357532
Email: d.gould@ifoam.bio

INSTITUTE OF FOOD TECHNOLOGISTS (IFT)

Mr Robert Conover
Assistant General Counsel, Kikkoman Foods,
Inc.
Institute of Food Technologists
Kikkoman Foods, Inc. P.O. Box 69 Walworth,
WI 53184
Walworth
United States of America
Tel: 262-275-1651
Email: rconover@kikkoman.com

**INTERNATIONAL LIFE SCIENCES
INSTITUTE (ILSI)**

Dr Ryuji Yamaguchi
ILSI Japan
Nishikawa Building 5F 3-5-19, Kojimachi
Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo
Japan
Tel: 81-3-5215-3535
Email: ryamaguchi@ilsijapan.org

**INTERNATIONAL NUT AND DRIED FRUIT
COUNCIL FOUNDATION (INC)**

Ms Julie G Adams
Vice Chair of the Scientific Committee
International Nut & Dried Fruit Council
Carrer de la Fruita Seca, 4 Poligon Tecnoparc
Reus
Spain
Tel: +34 977 331 416
Email: jadams@almondboard.com

**INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF THE
FLAVOR INDUSTRY (IOFI)**

Dr Thierry Cachet
Regulatory and Advocacy Director
IOFI
Avenue des Arts 6
Brussels
Belgium
Tel: +3222142052
Email: tcachet@iofi.org

**INTERNATIONAL FOOD POLICY
RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

Dr Anne Mackenzie
Head of Standards and Regulatory Issues
HarvestPlus
IFPRI
HarvestPlus c/o IFPRI 2033 K Street, NW
Washington, DC
United States of America
Tel: 613.692.0211
Email: a.mackenzie@cgiar.org

**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED
NATIONS –
ORGANISATION DES NATIONS UNIES
POUR L'ALIMENTATION ET
L'AGRICULTURE –
ORGANIZACIÓN DE LAS NACIONES
UNIDAS PARA LA ALIMENTACION Y LA
AGRICULTURA**

Ms Maria Xipsiti
Nutrition Officer
Nutrition and Food Systems Division
FAO
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
Rome
Italy
Tel: +39 0657056060
Email: Maria.Xipsiti@fao.org

**WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION –
ORGANISATION MONDIALE DE LA
SANTÉ – ORGANIZACIÓN MUNDIAL DE
LA SALUD**

Dr Chizuru Nishida
Coordinator
Nutrition Policy and Scientific Advice
World Health Organization (WHO)
20, avenue Appia
Geneva 27
Switzerland
Tel: +41227913317/+41792493549
Email: nishidac@who.int

**CANADIAN SECRETARIAT –
SECRETARIAT CANADIENS –
SECRETARIADO CANADIENSE**

Mrs Marie-Pierre Parenteau
Manager and Deputy Codex Contact Point
International, Interagency and
Intergovernmental Affairs and Office of the
Codex Contact Point for Canada
Bureau of Policy, Intergovernmental and
International Affairs (BPIIA) Food
Directorate, Health Canada
251 Sir Frederick Banting Driveway (2204C)
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
Tel: 613-941-4616
Email: marie-pierre.parenteau@hc-sc.gc.ca

Ms Reem Barakat
Deputy Director
International Standard Setting Section
Canadian Food Inspection Agency
1400 Merivale Road
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
Tel: 613-773-5658
Email: Reem.Barakat@inspection.gc.ca

Ms Nancy Ing
Senior Advisor
International, Interagency and
Intergovernmental Affairs and Office of the
Codex Contact Point for Canada
Bureau of Policy, Intergovernmental and
International Affairs (BPIIA) Food
Directorate, Health Canada
251 Sir Frederick Banting Driveway (2204C)
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
Tel: 613-941-5163
Email: nancy.ing@hc-sc.gc.ca

Mrs Amélie Vega
Senior Policy Analyst - Codex
Canadian Food Inspection Agency
1400 Merivale Road, T1-4-301
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
Tel: 613 -773 -6018
Email: amelie.vega@inspection.gc.ca

Mr Jordan Miller
Manager, Codex Program Services
International, Interagency and
Intergovernmental Affairs and Office of the
Codex Contact Point for C
Bureau of Policy, Intergovernmental and
International Affairs (BPIIA) Food
Directorate, Health Canada
251 Sir Frederick Banting Driveway (2204C)
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
Tel: 613-957-1749
Email: jordan.a.miller@hc-sc.gc.ca

Ms Crystal Martin
Conference and Process Coordinator, Codex
Program Services
International, Interagency and
Intergovernmental Affairs and Office of the
Codex Contact Point for Canada
Bureau of Policy, Intergovernmental and
International Affairs (BPIIA) Food
Directorate, Health Canada
251 Sir Frederick Banting Driveway (2204C)
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
Tel: 613-952-7354
Email: crystal.martin@hc-sc.gc.ca

Ms Diane M. Carmanico
Assistant, Codex Program Services
International, Interagency and
Intergovernmental Affairs and Office of the
Codex Contact Point for Canada
Bureau of Policy, Intergovernmental and
International Affairs (BPIIA) Food Directorate,
Health Canada
251 Sir Frederick Banting Driveway (2204C)
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
Tel: 613-957-8894
Email: diane.carmanico@hc-sc.gc.ca

**CODEX SECRETARIAT –
SECRÉTARIAT DU CODEX –
SECRETARIA DEL CODEX**

Mr Tom Heilandt
Secretary, Codex Alimentarius
Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
Rome
Italy
Tel: +39 06 5705 4384
Email: tom.heilandt@fao.org

Ms Verna Carolissen-Mackay
Food Standards Officer
Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
Rome
Italy
Tel : +39 06 5705 5629
Email : verna.carolissen@fao.org

Mr Sekitoleko Patrick
Food Standards Officer
Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
Rome
Italy
Tel: +39 06 5705 6626
Email: Patrick.Sekitoleko@fao.org

Mr Kyoungmo Kang
Food Standards Officer
Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
Rome
Italy
Tel: +390657054796
Email: kyoungmo.kang@fao.org

Appendix II

**PROPOSED DRAFT REVISION TO THE GENERAL STANDARD FOR THE LABELLING OF
PREPACKAGED FOODS (CODEX STAN 1-1985)**

(At Step 5)

2. DEFINITION OF TERMS:

For use in Date Marking of prepackaged food:

“Date of Manufacture” means the date on which the food becomes the product as described. This is not an indication of the durability of the product.

“Date of Packaging” means the date on which the food is placed in the immediate container in which it will be ultimately sold. This is not an indication of the durability of the product.

“Best Before Date” or “Best Quality Before Date” means the date which signifies the end of the period, under any stated storage conditions, during which the unopened product will remain fully marketable and will retain any specific qualities for which implied or express claims have been made. However, beyond the date the food may still be acceptable for consumption.

“Use-by Date” or “Expiration Date” means the date which signifies the end of the period under any stated storage conditions, after which the product should not be sold or consumed due to safety and quality reasons.

4.7 Date marking and storage instructions

4.7.1 If not otherwise determined in an individual Codex standard, the following date marking shall apply, unless clause 4.7.1(vii) applies:

- (i) When a food must be consumed before a certain date to ensure its safety and quality the “Use-by Date” or “Expiration Date” shall be declared¹.
- (ii) Where a “Use-by Date” or “Expiration Date” is not required, the “Best-Before Date” or “Best Quality Before Date” shall be declared.
- (iii) The date marking should be as follows:
 - On products with a durability of not more than three months; the day and month shall be declared and in addition, the year when competent authorities consider consumers could be misled.
 - On products with a durability of more than three months at least the month and year shall be declared.
- (iv) The date shall be introduced by the words:
 - “Use-by <insert date>” or “Expiration Date <insert date>” or “Best before <insert date>” or “Best Quality Before <insert date>” as applicable where the day is indicated; or
 - “Use-by end <insert date>” or “expiration date <insert date>” or “Best before <insert date>”; or “Best Quality Before <insert date>” as applicable in other cases.
- (v) The words referred to in paragraph (iv) shall be accompanied by:
 - either the date itself; or
 - a reference to where the date is given.
- (vi) The day and year shall be declared by uncoded numbers with the year to be denoted by 2 or 4 digits, and the month shall be declared by letters or characters or numbers. Where only numbers are used to declare the date or where the year is expressed as only two digits, the competent authority should determine whether to require the sequence of the day, month, year, be given by appropriate abbreviations accompanying the date mark (e.g. DD/MM/YYYY or YYYY/DD/MM).

¹ Consideration should be given to other Codex texts

(vii) Notwithstanding 4.7.1 (i) and 4.7.1 (ii), a date mark shall not be required for a food if one or more of the following criteria apply:

1. Where safety is not compromised and quality does not deteriorate
 - 1.1 because of the preservative nature of the food is such that it cannot support microbial growth (e.g. alcohol, salt, acidity, low water activity); and/or
 - 1.2 under stated storage conditions;
2. Where the deterioration is evident to the consumer;
3. Where the key/organoleptic quality aspects of the food are not lost;
4. Where the food is intended to be consumed within 24 hours of its manufacture.

For example, foods such as:

- fresh fruits and vegetables, including tubers, which have not been peeled, cut or similarly treated;
- wines, liqueur wines, sparkling wines, aromatized wines, fruit wines and sparkling fruit wines;
- alcoholic beverages containing at least 10% alcohol by volume;
- bakers' or pastry-cooks' wares which, given the nature of their content, are normally consumed within 24 hours of their manufacture;
- vinegar;
- non-iodized food grade salt;
- non-fortified solid sugars;
- confectionery products consisting of flavoured and/or coloured sugars;
- chewing gum.

In such cases, the "Date of Manufacture" or the "Date of Packaging" may be provided.

(viii) A "Date of Manufacture" or a "Date of Packaging" may be used in combination with 4.7.1 (i) or (ii). It shall be introduced with the words "Date of Manufacture" or "Date of Packaging", as appropriate, and use the format provided in clause 4.7.1 (vi).

4.7.2 Any special conditions for the storage of the food shall be declared on the label if where they are required to support the integrity of the food and, where a date mark is used, the validity of the date depends thereon.

Appendix III

PROJECT DOCUMENT

Development of guidance for the labelling of non-retail containers of food**1. Purpose and Scope**

The proposal seeks to initiate work on development of guidance for labelling of non-retail containers of food that are not meant for direct sale to the consumer. The proposal does not seek to open discussion on labelling of pre-packaged food as outlined in Codex STAN 1-1985.

The work will consider and seek to provide guidance to competent authorities, where appropriate, with regard to information provided business to business through labelling of non-retail containers and other means with due regards to ensuring innovative practices and focussing on risk areas identified by the competent authority.

Where appropriate, the work will also consider and seek to provide guidance on labelling requirements of non-retail containers to competent authorities with regards to international trade, with a view to reducing inconsistent and burdensome labelling practices and promoting fair practices in the international trade of food.

2. Relevance and timeliness

Inappropriate labelling of non-retail containers of food is a matter of significant concern in a number of countries. Lack of guidance which could be considered as the reference in this context causes several issues including operational issues and cost implications and contributes to food wastage. Lack of guidance may also negatively impact food safety in certain situations and has the potential to result in unfair practices (non-tariff barriers) in food trade.

It is anticipated that development of the proposed guidance will be extremely useful to all the countries to address several operational issues in the context of their exports and imports of bulk packaged food.

3. The main aspects to be covered

The development of a clear understanding of the term non-retail container of food not intended to be sold directly to the consumer that the guidance will apply to. The Guidance may also include the following aspects:

- a) Scope - clearly outlining the areas of application of the guidance
- b) Purpose - the intended outcome to be sought through the application of the guidance
- c) Principles - a clear expression of the key elements addressed within the guidance
- d) If required, elaborate guidance (including if necessary appropriate definitions) and identify necessary means to distinguish such containers of food from prepackaged food intended to be sold directly to the consumer.

Taking into account the needs of member countries and food business operators, it is intended that the guidance developed will not be prescriptive and burdensome but rather outcome based with a focus upon the areas of greatest risk.

4. Assessment against the Criteria for the Establishment of New Work Priorities:**General criterion**

The Codex Alimentarius Commission has a twin mandate of protecting consumer's health and ensuring fair practices in the food trade.

There has been an increase in trade of raw materials and intermediary ingredients between businesses which are not meant for direct sale to consumers. Lack of a global reference standard for such non-retail containers of foods results in several trade related operational issues, has undue cost implications and contributes to food wastage. It may also negatively impact food safety in certain situations and has the potential to result in unfair practices (non-tariff barriers) in food trade.

Development of the proposed guidance can address the above issues and thereby contribute to fulfilling the mandate of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

Criteria applicable to general subjects

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

Lack of reference guidance on labelling requirements for non-retail containers of food has resulted in diversity of national legislations. Different approaches being adopted across countries force exporters to meet multiple sets of labelling provisions based on the requirements of the importing partners. This leads to feasibility issues and has cost implications for the exporters apart from confusion among the concerned authorities. The proposed guidance will provide a harmonized approach in the context that the countries can follow.

(b) Scope of work and establishment of priorities between the various sections of the work.

All the aspects of the work, as detailed in the Section 3 above, can be undertaken simultaneously.

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

Codex is the relevant international organization responsible for developing international standards in this area and we are not aware of any other international organization working in this area.

(d) Amenability of the subject of the proposal to standardization

Most member countries base their labelling requirements on relevant Codex standards. The purpose of the new work is to develop labelling requirements for non-retail containers of food that are not meant for direct sale to the consumer. The labelling requirements of non-retail containers can be effectively standardized with the involvement of and inputs from the Codex members.

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

Experience with regard to labelling of non-retail containers indicates that different importing partners call for different labelling requirements on the business to business traded food commodities making it extremely difficult for the industry to comply. Lack of appropriate labelling, in the absence of clear labelling guidelines for non-retail containers, is one of the leading causes for delays in import clearances and rejections which in turn lead to reduction in the available shelf life and/or wastage of food. It may also negatively impact food safety in certain situations and has the potential to result in unfair practices (non-tariff barriers) in food trade. These problems extend beyond particular regions and solution to the same is of global relevance and interest.

5. Relevance to Codex Strategic Objectives

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. To fulfil the objective of fair practices in food trade, it is also essential to distinguish between prepackaged and non-retail containers, and provide unambiguous guidance on labelling of the latter that are not intended to be sold directly to the consumer.

The proposed work will contribute to advancing the following Codex Strategic Goals in the Codex Strategic Plan 2014-2019:

Strategic Goal 1: Establish international food standards that address current and emerging food issues.

Lack of appropriate labelling of non-retail containers of food, owing to lack of a reference standard in the context, is a matter of significant concern in international food trade. The proposed development of a General guidance for the Labelling of Non-Retail Containers of Food is consistent with the direction elaborated under Goal 1, that is, establish international food standards that address current and emerging issues.

Strategic Goal 3: Facilitate the effective participation of all Codex Members.

The development of the General guidance for the Labelling of Non-Retail Containers of Food is expected to generate interest in participation from all countries. The work on development of the draft guidance can be initiated through an electronic working group to foster increased participation.

6. Information on the relation between the proposal and other existing Codex documents as well as other on-going work

This document will be developed taking into account the relevant guidance from the following:

- *Codex Alimentarius Commission Procedural Manual (Format for Codex Commodity Standards-Labelling)*
- *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods (CODEX STAN 1-1985)*;
- *General Standard for the Labelling of Food Additives When Sold As Such (CODEX STAN 107-1981)*;
- Relevant Codex commodity standards that include labelling provisions for non-retail containers/bulk containers.

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

No requirement of expert scientific advice is envisaged at this stage. Interaction may be needed with the relevant Codex commodity committees concerning the commodity standards that contain labelling provisions for non-retail containers.

8. Identification of any need for technical input to the standard from external bodies so that this can be planned for

No need for technical input from external bodies is envisaged at this stage.

9. Proposed timeline for completion of the new work including the start date, the proposed date for adoption at Step 5, and the proposed date for adoption by the Commission; the time frame for developing a standard should normally not exceed five years.

Owing to the general nature of the work and its importance to member countries, a timeline is proposed as follows:

Proposed timeline*

May 2016: Endorsement of the proposed new work by the 43rd Session of Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL).

July 2016: Approval of the new work by the 39th session of Codex Alimentarius Commission.

July 2018: Adoption by CAC at Step 5.

July 2019: Adoption by CAC at Step 8.

*Considering CCFL meets in approximately 18 months interval