

**REPORT OF THE UNITED STATES DELEGATE
TO THE 7th SESSION OF THE
CODEX COMMITTEE ON SPICES AND CULINARY HERBS (CCSCH7)**

**January 29 –February 3, 2024
Kochi, India**

The 7th Session of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH7) met January 29-February 3, 2024, in Kochi, India. CCSCH7 was chaired by India and attended by 30 Member Countries, one Member Organization (the European Union, EU), and one observer organization. The United States was represented by the U.S. Delegate, Mr. Dorian Lafond from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS); the U.S. Alternate Delegate, Dr. Aparna Tatavarthy from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA); and a representative from the U.S. Codex Office.

The physical working groups (PWGs) on the Draft Standard for Dried Fruits and Berries – Vanilla and the update to the Standard Spices Template were chaired by the United States on January 30. The PWGs on dried turmeric and new work proposals met on January 29 and January 30, respectively.

HIGHLIGHTS

The 7th Session of CCSCH agreed to:

- Respond to questions from the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL47, 2023) regarding the proposed mandatory provisions for country of harvest as well as country of origin labeling of saffron
- Publish the glossary of terms for CCSCH standards as an information document on the Committee website
- Forward the Draft Standard for Dried Small Cardamom to the 47th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC47, scheduled for November, 2024) for final adoption at Step 8
- Forward the Draft Standard for Dried for Spices in the Form of Dried or Dehydrated Fruits and Berries (Allspice, Juniper Berry, and Star Anise) to CAC47 for final adoption at Step 8
- Forward the Draft Standard for Dried for Spices in the Form of Dried or Dehydrated Fruits and Berries (Vanilla) to CAC47 for interim adoption at Step 5
- Forward the Draft Standard for Dried Turmeric to CAC47 for final adoption at Step 5/8

In addition, the United States volunteered to prepare a discussion paper on the challenges of obtaining sufficient disaggregated trade data for spices and culinary herbs to support new work proposals, to facilitate discussion of this issue at the next session.

A summary of the meeting is given below. The official report of CCSCH7 is posted on the Codex website at the following link: [CCSCH7 Report](#).

NEXT SESSION OF CCSCH

The 8th Session of CCSCH is tentatively scheduled to take place in approximately 18 months, in India.

MEETING SUMMARY

MATTERS REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION AND OTHER SUBSIDIARY BODIES

To Be Presented for Adoption at the Next CAC? Possibly
Have the United States' Objectives Been Met? Partially
Is it anticipated that this item will or should be raised at the CAC? Yes

United States Objectives: Most of the matters referred were for information only, except for questions related to the Standard for Saffron and issues related to methods of analysis in CCSCH standards.

Saffron: Country of Harvest Labeling and Questions from CCFL

The U.S. objective was for CCSCH to agree to follow existing precedents and adopt a compromise provision that would make country of harvest labeling optional. The United States noted that “country of harvest” is not a requirement of international trade and is not defined in any of the international trade organizations and should therefore remain optional. As a practical matter, it is also not possible for authorities to verify compliance. Canada, host country for CCFL, supported the U.S. position at CCSCH7, as did Brazil and Jamaica.

Background:

The 45th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC45, 2022) adopted the Standard for Saffron despite reservations from the United States and Canada on the mandatory requirement for country of harvest labeling, which is inconsistent with the *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods* (CXS 1-1985) and other standards developed by CCSCH and other Codex committees. The provisions were referred to CCFL for consideration and endorsement.

The Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL47, 2023) declined to endorse the provision for mandatory country of harvest labeling and returned the matter to CCSCH for reconsideration. CCFL47 requested CCSCH to respond to questions to “clarify the distinction between country of origin and country of harvest; provide the rationale why the provision for country of harvest should be mandatory and how such a declaration would be beneficial for fraud prevention.”

Methods of Analysis

The United States also led preparation and consideration of responses to questions referred by the Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling (CCMAS) pertaining to methods of analysis for some completed standards and standards under development by CCSCH.

Outcome/ Conclusions

Saffron: CCSCH7 agreed to forward a response to CCFL (Appendix II of the CCSCH7 report). In the U.S. view, the response does not fully answer the questions. It does not provide a justification for “why the provision for country of harvest should be mandatory” or “how such a declaration would be beneficial for fraud prevention,” as requested by CCFL

The response describes what “country of harvest” means as it is included in the CCSCH’s internal glossary of terms, and notes further that “Some operators may think that the treatment of saffron, including mixing of saffron from different countries, can qualify to change the label even though this process does not change the nature of the product. Therefore, CCSCH6 [2022] recommended the standard for saffron for adoption and the provision for labelling for endorsement.” The response does not include any conclusions from CCSCH7.

The matter will be taken up again at the next session of CCFL (CCFL48, October, 2024) and, depending on the outcome, may require consideration by the Codex Executive Committee (CCEXEC87, November, 2024).

CCMAS: The methods of analysis issues were resolved by an in-session working group co-led by India and the United States.

Other Comments

Standard for Saffron: The plenary agreed that in most instances there is no difference between country of origin and country of harvest for spices and culinary herbs, but did not reconsider the saffron provision as requested by CCFL.

DRAFT STANDARD FOR DRIED SMALL CARDAMOM

To Be Presented for Adoption at the Next CAC? Yes
Have the United States’ Objectives Been Met? Yes
Is this contentious? No

United States Objective: The United States supported advancing the draft standard for final adoption by CAC47 at Step 8.

Outcome/ Conclusion: Draft standard completed and advanced to Step 8.

DRAFT STANDARD SPICES IN THE FORM OF DRIED FRUITS AND BERRIES PART A- REQUIREMENTS FOR ALLSPICE, JUNIPER BERRY, AND STAR ANISE

To Be Presented for Adoption at the Next CAC? Yes
Have the United States' Objectives Been Met? Yes
Is it anticipated that this item will or should be raised at the CAC? No

United States Objective: Completion of this first group standard as a guide for future group standards to expedite development of CCSCH standards.

Outcome/ Conclusion: Draft standard completed and advanced for final adoption by CAC47 at Step 8.

DRAFT STANDARD FOR SPICES IN THE FORM OF DRIED FRUITS AND BERRIES PART B – REQUIREMENTS FOR VANILLA

To Be Presented for Adoption at the Next CAC? Yes
Have the United States' Objectives Been Met? Partially
Is this contentious? Yes

United States Objective: The United States' objective was to develop a standard that reflects global trade practices and advance the draft text for interim adoption by CAC47 at Step 5, which will allow for another round of comment and consideration by CCSCH at its next session.

Outcome/ Conclusion: Draft standard advanced for interim adoption by CAC47. Some key issues remain, as described further below, and require additional consideration to be resolved in a manner consistent with other Codex texts and global trade practices. The United States also continues to support folding the requirements for vanilla into the group standard on dried fruits and berries, perhaps as an annex, when completed.

Other Comments

1. Late submission of numerous comments restricted decision making at the CCSCH7.
2. Insistence by some members for chemical characteristics to be evaluated based on vanilla species, thus two tables are included in the draft.
3. Insistence by major producing countries (notably, Mexico and Madagascar) and the EU on mandatory indication of country of harvest.
4. Some countries (including EU member states) do not support any use of food additives in ground/powdered types of vanilla.

The United States will consult further with stakeholders and policy makers on legal/trade implications of (i) mandatory indication of country of harvest and (ii) evaluating vanilla chemical characteristic per species, and work with other member countries to seek resolution at the next session of CCSCH.

PROPOSED DRAFT STANDARD FOR DRIED TURMERIC

To Be Presented for Adoption at the Next CAC? Yes
Have the United States' Objectives Been Met? Partially
Is this contentious? No

United States Objective: The United States objective was to complete a draft standard that reflects international trade practices and advance it to CAC47 for final adoption at Step 5/8.

Outcome/ Conclusion: Draft standard completed and advanced for final adoption at Step 5/8. The United States joined in the consensus, despite disappointment on the issue of levels for certain allowable defects.

Other Comments: The levels of certain allowable defects in the physical characteristics table were reduced by half to match the ginger standard despite the lack of data to support the change. The United States pointed this out and urged the Committee to use the values based on the American Spice Trade Association's (ASTA) cleanliness specifications since they are based on validated data and would help avoid any potential trade barriers. However, ASTA values were not applied, and values were incorporated based on the ginger standard.

LAYOUT FOR SPICES AND CULINARY HERB STANDARDS

To Be Presented for Adoption at the Next CAC? No
Have the United States' Objectives Been Met? No
Is this contentious? Yes

United States Objective: The United States objective was to revise the standard layout and reach agreement at CCSCH7.

Outcome/ Conclusion: Late submission of comments and time constraints prevented discussions at CCSCH7. Therefore, this item will remain on the agenda for the next CCSCH session.

Other Comments: The United States was requested to revise the standard layout taking into consideration points raised during discussions on standards and comments submitted to CCSCH7 on the standard layout.

FUTURE WORK

To Be Presented for Adoption at the Next CAC? Yes

Have the United States' Objectives Been Met? Yes

Is this contentious? No

CCSCH7 agreed to submit the following proposals for new work for approval by CAC47:

- Development of a standard for sweet marjoram, led by Egypt.
- Development of a standard for dried seeds – coriander, led by India.
- Development of a standard for large cardamom, led by Bhutan and Nepal.
- Development of a standard for cinnamon, led by Brazil.
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United States Objective: Support from additional members to share in the development of CCSCH standards since the majority of the developed standards were drafted by only two member countries.

Outcome/ Conclusion: The United States supports the development of draft standards.

Other Comments: The United States volunteered to prepare a discussion paper on the difficulty of obtaining sufficient disaggregated trade data for spices and culinary herbs to support new work proposals to facilitate discussion of this issue at the next session of CCSCH.