



Delegate's Report, 16th Session, Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

May 1-6, 2011

Mexico City, Mexico

The United States believes the 16th Session of the [Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables \(CCFFV\)](#) was a productive Session, with the Committee completing work on three items, discussing four additional documents that are in process, and initiating one new work item. The Committee:

- Completed work on the Tree Tomato standard, recommending adoption by the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) at Step 8.
- Completed work on the Pomegranate standard, recommending adoption by the CAC at Step 5/8.
- Completed work on the Chili pepper standard, recommending adoption by the CAC at Step 5/8.
- Continued work on the Avocado standard, recommending retaining the standard Step 7 pending the completion of the sizing provision.
- Agreed to not develop a standard for Chanterelles.
- Continued work on the proposed layout for Codex standards for fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Continued work on the background document on point of application of Codex standards for fresh fruits and vegetables including quality tolerances at import/export control points.
- Agreed to recommend new work on Passion Fruit.
- Noted that Okra, Vanilla and Cashew would be submitted for consideration for new work.

The 16th Session of CCFFV was attended by more than 90 participants representing 40 Member countries, one Member organization (the European Union (EU)), and four international organizations. The United States was represented by the Alternate Delegate, Mr. Dongmin Mu, FDA Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition.

A summary of the results of the 16th Session of CCFFV is given below. The full report of the Session can be found on the Codex Website, www.codexalimentarius.net

MEETING SUMMARY

Proposed work on Tree Tomato standard

The proposed draft standard was presented for consideration of advancing the



document to Step 8. The Committee revised the provisions to reflect that tree tomatoes could be sized by diameter, weight, and count to provide for flexibility in the application of the sizing requirement. The United States asked that the requirement "must be carefully picked" be removed and obtained a consensus for doing so. The footnote relating to foreign smell and/or taste was also removed for consistency with the decision taken on a similar provision for avocado.

The Committee recommended forwarding the document for adoption by the Commission at Step 8.

Proposed work on Chili Pepper standard

The proposed draft standard was presented for consideration of advancing it to Step 5/8. Many countries stressed that different varieties of chili peppers with different characteristics are grown and traded all over the world, and a Codex standard should be open to new varieties without the need to amend it frequently. They also commented that the specified six varieties in the proposed standard were meant to be indicative rather than prescriptive. The Committee agreed to the standard being applied to chili peppers with a pungency level of 900 Scoville units and above. The existing annex was replaced by a new annex to allow a wide variety of chili peppers to be included in the standard. The annex contains a classification of chili peppers by pungency levels through four established classes (mild, medium, hot and extra hot) based on four ranges of Scoville unit and their corresponding capsaicinoid contents. The U.S. request that the term "commercial type" be replaced by "variety" and the requirement of "free of sign of dehydration" be deleted from the minimum requirement was accepted. The Committee agreed to revise the size tolerance for Extra class, Class I and Class II to 10% from 5% calculated by number or weight of chili peppers corresponding to the size immediately above and/or below that indicated on the packages.

The Committee recommended forwarding the document for adoption by the Commission at Step 5/8 with the omission of Steps 6/7.

Proposed work on Pomegranate standard

The proposed draft standard was presented for consideration of advancing the document to Step 5/8. The U.S. request that the requirement of "free of cracking" be deleted from the minimum requirement was accepted. Moreover, "cracking" was added specifically as one of the defects allowed in Class I and Class II fruits. The U.S. led a working session trying to resolve differences on various proposals on sizing provisions but the working group could not gain consensus. They agreed to continue to work on the issue within a U.S. led electronic working group. The Committee agreed that size tolerance for all classes be revised to 10% from 5% by number or weight of pomegranate corresponding to the size immediately above and/or below that indicated



on the packages.

The Committee recommended forwarding the document for adoption by the Commission at Step 5/8 with the omission of Step 6/7.

Proposed work on Avocado standard

The proposed draft standard was presented for consideration of advancing the document to Step 8. The U.S. requests for deletion of the requirement for maturity on dry matter content of 18% for Antillean/West Indian/Guatemalan varieties of Avocados, and "carefully picked" from the minimum requirement were accepted. The U.S. disagreed with the introduction of tolerances for decay as provided for in the UNECE layout and applying it consistently in individual UNECE standards. It was explained that tolerances for decay as generally applied in UNECE standards were not sufficient to address the particular characteristics of avocados. Therefore, higher tolerance percentages for decay including internal breakdown were necessary to provide for flexibility in the implementation of the standard. This view was supported by some delegations who indicated that tolerances for decay and internal breakdown were a realistic recognition of common practice with shipping of fresh fruits and vegetables and also reflected current industry and marketing practices. The U.S. delegation clarified that decay and internal breakdown were associated with the senescence of the fruit and non-pathogenic microbial activities; therefore, these provisions were not contradictory with the international phytosanitary standards developed by the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) or the national plant protection regulations in force. The Committee could not agree on the introduction of tolerances for decay and internal breakdown and agreed to reconsider this issue at its next session. Both the European Union and the United States were requested by the Committee to provide technical justification and statistical data for the inclusion of their specific levels of tolerances. In addition, the Committee noted that this was a general issue that should also be addressed in the framework of the discussion of the layout. The Committee agreed that the next session will focus its discussion on the finalization of the sizing provisions and provisions on tolerances and labeling as well as the possibility of including tolerances for internal breakdown and decay in the quality classes with a view toward finalizing the Standard for adoption by the Commission in 2013. The Committee agreed to inform the Executive Committee accordingly.

The Committee recommended retaining the standard Step 7.

PROPOSED LAYOUT FOR CODEX STANDARDS FOR FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENT ON POINT OF APPLICATION OF CODEX STANDARDS FOR FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES INCLUDING QUALITY TOLERANCES AT IMPORT/EXPORT CONTROL POINTS



The Committee noted that issues relating to the point of application of Codex standards for fresh fruits and vegetables were closely linked to the layout, particularly the inclusion of different quality tolerances at the shipping/destination point.

The U.S. delegation expressed its view that Codex standards are voluntary and nothing prevents member countries from adopting or adapting them as their national legislation. The delegation further emphasized that Codex standards for fresh fruits and vegetables were developed for application at the export control stage with no adjustments made in the quality tolerances for arrival at destination. Therefore, when standards intended for application at the shipping point are applied throughout the distribution channels, without added tolerances for some deterioration in quality due to the perishable nature of fresh fruits and vegetables, such applications could become a trade barrier. For this reason, the United States believes that quality tolerance adjustments in the standards are necessary.

During the discussion of the section of the Committee's Terms of Reference related to consultation with the UNECE, the U.S. delegation pointed out that harmonization between the UNECE and Codex works both ways, and that the UNECE should be able to make changes to its standard layout to align it with that of Codex. Further, there are more Codex members than UNECE members, and based on their own situations, Codex members are free to recommend or make changes to Codex standard layout without consulting the UNECE. Moreover, the changes proposed on the table of tolerances are not new to the UNECE, and these levels exist in UNECE standards for Dry and Dried Produce. In addition, the U.S. delegation indicated it will make the same proposal to the UNECE FFV Specialized Section. The U.S. delegation also mentioned that over the past three years the UNECE had revised its fresh fruit and vegetable standard format independently of the CCFFV. Therefore, the CCFFV can do the same with Codex standards. Many delegations supported the position stated by the United States. In response to these comments, both UNECE and EU delegates expressed their intentions to collaborate with Codex on these topics. The Committee agreed that, to facilitate the work at its next session, the Codex and UNECE secretariats could work together on a draft layout taking into account the 2010 revision of the UNECE layout and showing the differences between the standard language used currently in Codex standards and the revised UNECE layout.

OTHER MATTERS

Workshop

Prior to the Committee meeting, a UNECE/Codex workshop was conducted on Commercial Quality Standards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables including apple, table grape, and citrus fruit.

Recommended New Work for CCFFV



CCFFV agreed to undertake one new item of work, the Standard for Golden Passion Fruit. Columbia presented a project document for developing a Codex standard for Golden Passion Fruit. Several countries suggested the scope should not be limited to golden passion fruit due to its low volume, but should include other varieties commonly traded. An electronic working group working in English and Spanish and led by Columbia was established subject to approval by the Commission.

New work proposals for Okra, Vanilla and Cashew will be submitted for consideration at the next session of the Committee.

NEXT SESSION OF CCFFV

The 17th Session of CCFFV is tentatively scheduled in approximately 18 months. The exact date and venue will be decided later.