



Report of the U.S. Delegate, Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables, 15th Session

The 15th Session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (CCFFV) was held in Mexico City, Mexico, from 19 to 23 October 2009. The Session was attended by delegates from 51 Member countries, one Member Organization and an observer from an international organization. An increased attendance by developing countries was largely attributed to the Codex Trust Fund.

The United States was represented by the U.S. Delegate, Mr. Dorian LaFond, USDA Agriculture Marketing Service (AMS), and the U.S. Alternate Delegate, Dongmi Mu, FDA Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (CFSAN).

Below are some of the highlights of the meeting:

Codex Standard for Apples

After more than seventeen years of development, the Codex Apple Standard was adopted at Step 8. The committee made only two amendments to the draft text:

- i. reinserting "firm" as a minimum requirement and
- ii. deleted uniformity provisions based on National Legislation.

The standard was adopted at Step 8, while retaining the rest of the text developed by the Apple Working Group led by the United States.

The United States led two physical meetings of the Codex Apple Working Group on September 2007 and on August 2009 and in conjunction, held Apple inspection workshops to ensure that the standard text that was being developed was consistent with global industry and standard application practices. The U.S. and international fresh apple industry provided key roles in both the development and adoption of this standard.

Draft Revised Codex Standard for Avocado

The committee agreed:

- i. To delete the list of commercial types of avocado from the standard for it did not cover all commercial varieties traded internationally.
- ii. Continue negotiations on the minimum maturity (dry matter and /or oil content) and sizing requirements for Antillean/ West Indian/ Florida Avocado varieties.

The revised standard for avocados was advanced to Step 5 with the specific sections left open for discussion and comments.



Draft Codex Standard for Hot Chilli Peppers

This standard was not advanced due to differences in the nomenclature of chilli peppers/hot peppers and overly prescriptive requirements in the draft text. This delay also provided the U.S. Delegation the opportunity for more consultation with the domestic chilli pepper industry.

Draft Codex Standard for Tree Tomatoes (Tamarillo)

The draft standard was advanced to Step 5 except for the sizing requirements. The U.S. indicated that sizing by "count" tied to codes and tray sizes as presented in the draft standard text was too prescriptive, limits packing practices and was contrary to global trading practices. The U.S. plans to submit proposals on this issue to the working group led by Colombia.

Proposal for a Codex Standard for Pomegranate

Over the past year, the U.S. Delegate and the U.S. pomegranate industry actively participated in the development of the draft text which began as the Regional Codex Standard, but advanced to the international level by the Codex Commission. Therefore,

- i. The U.S. supported the development of this standard led by Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Codex Committee for the Near East (CCNEA), and
- ii. Encouraged the CCFFV to use Codex Uniform Accelerated Procedure for the Elaboration of Codex Standards and Related texts to develop this standard within two to three CCFFV sessions.
- iii. The U.S. supports and is a member of the electronic working led by the Islamic Republic of Iran to develop this standard for pomegranate.

Proposed Revised CCFFV Standard Layout

The U.S. noted the following issues in the proposed standard layout that must be addressed in the revision:

- i. The definition of produce should address the point of application of the standard (export and/or import) control stages;
- ii. The establishment of specific quality tolerances for decay and internal breakdown, which may occur in fresh products during transport and storage due to their development and perishable nature;
- iii. References to relevant sections of the Guidelines for Food Import Control Systems (CAC/GL 47-2003) to address acceptance, rejection, re-grading, etc. at inspection level;
- iv. Linkages among quality provisions and quality tolerances and essential quality provisions that should be listed in the quality classes;
- v. Clarifying defects in quality classes, e.g. quantitative as opposed to qualitative qualifiers (numerical values, percentages instead of use of terms like "practically"; "very slight", "slight", etc.);



- vi. Approaches to maturity requirements, sizing provisions e.g. sizing tables, codes, ranges and linkages with uniformity.

The Committee agreed to consider the proposed Layout for Codex Standards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables at its next session, taking into consideration all the comments submitted and discussion points raised. The Glossary of Terms being developed that is directly linked to the provisions applied in the Layout was suspended pending further development and finalization of the provisions in the Layout.

Priority List

The committee noted that (new or revised) fresh fruits and vegetables standards are based on the submitted project document consistent with the Codex Procedural Manual supported by the Codex Commission and decided discontinuation and/or maintenance of the priority list.

Matters Arising From Other International Organizations on the Standardization of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

The most important matter discussed under this agenda item came from the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

The Committee also noted the decision of the Working Party to remove the reference to the "UNECE" from the cover pages of the standards, thereby changing the nomenclature from the title of "UNECE" standards to "UN" standards.

Some delegations questioned the international coverage of the standards developed by the Working Party, expressing concern that the UNECE Working Party operates under the terms of reference of the UNECE, a regional commission of the United Nations, and works for the economic development and integration of a particular region. Among the points raised in support of that view included was the "Codex standards might require different provisions from those of the UNECE to accommodate the needs of Codex broader membership and in view of the different mandates and goals of Codex and UNECE."

The Codex Secretariat drew the attention of the Committee to previous discussions on this issue in the Codex Alimentarius Commission and the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables and the decision of the 54th Session of the Working Party to withdraw the proposal to change the title of the "UNECE standards" to "UN standards" in response to the Legal Counsel of the United Nations concerns on the global status of Codex standards as related to UNECE standards.

Summary and Conclusion

The outreach activities of AMS, the U.S. Codex Office, and the U.S. apple industry and through the recent two AMS workshops led to the adoption of the Codex Apple



Standard. This was a very successful meeting for the United States and for the CCFFV as well.