



U.S. Delegate's Report, 21st Session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (CCFFV)

Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico

October 7-11, 2019

The 21st Session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (CCFFV21) was held in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico from October 7 -11, 2019. The Session was attended by delegates from 38 Member countries, one Member organization (the European Union) and one Observer organization.

The United States was represented by Delegate Dorian LaFond, Agricultural Marketing Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Alternate Delegate Dr. David Ingram, Office of Food Safety, Center for Food Safety and Nutrition, Food and Drug Administration.

The United States achieved most of its objectives at the 21st CCFFV Session. U.S. leadership was effective on working with delegations to resolve issues and finalize several items on the CCFFV agenda, such as the standards on kiwifruit, garlic, yams and ware potatoes.

HIGHLIGHTS:

At this session, CCFFV completed work on four draft standards for submission for final adoption at the 43rd Session of Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC 43) scheduled for July 2020;

- *Draft Standard for Kiwifruit*
- *Draft Standard for Garlic*
- *Draft Standard for Ware Potatoes*
- *Draft Standard for Yams*

There were two recurring issues in the plenary discussion across all draft standards. First was the issue of tolerances for soft rot decay and internal breakdown. A few delegations, notably the European Union (EU), objected to the inclusion of such tolerances for produce classified Extra Class. Second was the issue of allowing mixtures of different colors/varieties of the same produce in consumer packages. Delegations, notably, Thailand and Colombia, proposed including provisions for this trade practice because different fresh fruits and vegetable varieties may have different respiration rates and/or undergo different post-harvest treatments, resulting in different levels of maturity or ripeness, which affects shelf life and quality of the entire package.

The following is a brief summary of major issues discussed at the session. A full report of the 21st Session of the CCFFV can be found in REP 20/FFV, posted on the Codex website at:

www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/meetings-reports/en/

Meeting Summary:

Standards Recommended for Final Adoption

Proposed Draft Standard for Kiwifruit: The outstanding issue for this standard was determining the tolerances for decay in Extra Class. An intra-sessional working group discussed the matter and submitted a proposal for a 0.5% tolerance for decay. The proposal was adopted, with the following reservations:

- The United States expressed a reservation based on longstanding trade practices, noting further that a tolerance of 1.0% has been applied to the equivalent class/grade in their domestic standard and in trade for more than 36 years, and observing that fractional tolerances when applied by count are logistically and statistically difficult to apply as they could result in a fraction of a fruit (e.g. 0.5% of 100 fruits = ½ fruit). When a fruit is decayed, typically the entire fruit is rejected. The U.S. position was supported by Canada, Costa Rica, Chile, and Jamaica.
- The European Union opposed any tolerances for decay in fresh fruits and vegetables (FFV) Extra Class.
- Colombia and Thailand opposed including tolerances for decay in CCFFV standards.

Proposed Draft Standard for Garlic: The European Union member countries that previously supported the inclusion of smoked garlic in the standard for fresh produce did not object to its exclusion at the 21st CCFFV session, clearing the path to advancing this standard.

Proposed Draft Standard for Ware Potatoes: The discussion of this standard focused on (i) Classification/Grades, and (ii) Quality Tolerances. Citing the threat of disease transmission, most developing countries objected to allowances for soil in all classes. However, eventually CCFFV reached consensus on setting 0.25% by weight in Extra Class and 0.50% percent by weight in Classes I and II, with a footnote acknowledging the applicable plant protection rules applied by governments consistent with the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC).

Proposed Draft Standard for Yams (*Dioscorea spp*): The committee agreed to advance this standard to the CAC for final adoption at Step 5/8. The provisions concerning sizing and quality tolerances were the main topics of discussion. Colombia and the European Union expressed reservations on the allowance of 1.0% for decay in Extra Class, and Costa Rica expressed a reservation to the inclusion of 1.0% allowance for dirt and impurities for all three classes. The rapid advancement of this standard to final adoption significantly benefits producing and exporting countries, especially those from tropical regions.

Proposed Draft Standards Returned for Redrafting

Proposed Draft Standard for Onion and Shallots: After an in-depth discussion, CCFFV agreed to continue to work on a joint draft standard for onions and shallots, with separate provisions for the two commodities where necessary, such as for sizing and class requirements. CCFFV agreed

to return the draft standard to Step 2 for redrafting by an electronic working group chaired by Iran and co-chaired by India and review at its next session.

Proposed Draft Standard for Berry Fruits: There were varying views on the products covered by this proposed standard as berries species and varieties differ by geoclimatic zones. Some delegations sought to include small fruits, while others questioned including berries that are not traded internationally. The committee reached consensus to retain the berries listed in the approved project document and evaluate any proposed additions as they are submitted. The committee agreed to return the draft standard to Step 2 for redrafting by an electronic working group chaired by Mexico and co-chaired by Argentina and review at its next session.

Proposed Draft Standard for Fresh Dates: CCFFV concluded that there is a need for greater clarity on several points: the definition of “fresh;” moisture levels for fresh dates and dried dates; and differentiation among products at the khalal, rutab, and tamar stages and from those covered in the existing *Codex Standard for Dried Dates* (CXS 143 -1985). The committee agreed to request the Codex Committee on Processed Fruits and Vegetables (CCPFV) to clarify the scope of CXS 143 – 1985. Bilateral discussions were held on possibly revising CXS 143-1985 to include dates at the tamar stage as part of the ongoing revision of dried fruit standards within the CCPFV. The committee agreed to return the draft standard to Step 2 for redrafting by an electronic working group chaired by India and co-chaired by Saudi Arabia and review at its next session.

Discussion Paper on Glossary of Terms Used in the Layout for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables:

The meeting accepted the U.S. recommendation that the *Discussion Paper* should be further developed for consideration at the committee’s next session, which would allow more time to consider comments received at this session. The United States will continue to lead this work.

Other Business

The late availability of comments/addendum documents (responses to the circular letters) was raised as an issue as it limited national and/or internal consultations in preparation for the meeting. The comments were available only a week before the 21st CCFFV session. Members proposed that in the future, documents should be available at least three weeks prior to the plenary session.

Proposals New Work

No proposals for new work were submitted.

Date and Place of the Next Session

The date and place of the 22nd Session of the CCFFV were not set and will be determined by the host government (Mexico) in consultation with the Codex Secretariat.