

C O D E X A L I M E N T A R I U S

INTERNATIONAL FOOD STANDARDS



Food and Agriculture
Organization of
the United Nations



World Health
Organization

E-mail: codex@fao.org - www.codexalimentarius.org

GENERAL STANDARD FOR THE LABELLING OF FOOD ADDITIVES WHEN SOLD AS SUCH

C O D E X S T A N 1 0 7 - 1 9 8 1

Adopted in 1981. Revision: 2016.

1. SCOPE

This standard applies to the labelling of “food additives” sold as such whether by retail or other than by retail, including sales to caterers and food manufacturers for the purpose of their businesses. This standard also applies to food “processing aids”; any reference to food additives includes food processing aids.

2. DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purpose of this standard:

- (a) **food additive** means any substance not normally consumed as a food by itself and not normally used as a typical ingredient of the food, whether or not it has nutritive value, the intentional addition of which to food for a technological (including organoleptic) purpose in the manufacture, processing, preparation, treatment, packing, packaging, transport or holding of such food results, or may be reasonably expected to result, (directly or indirectly) in it or its by-products becoming a component of or otherwise affecting the characteristics of such foods. The term does not include contaminants, or substances added to food for maintaining or improving nutritional qualities, or sodium chloride;
- (b) **processing aid** means a substance or material not including apparatus or utensils and not consumed as a food ingredient by itself, intentionally used in the processing of raw materials, foods or its ingredients to fulfil a certain technological purpose during treatment or processing and which may result in the non-intentional but unavoidable presence of residues or derivatives in the final product;
- (c) **contaminant** means any substance not intentionally added to food, which is present in such food as a result of the production (including operations carried out in crop husbandry, animal husbandry and veterinary medicine), manufacture, processing, preparation, treatment, packing, packaging, transport or holding of such food or as a result of environmental contamination;
- (d) **label** includes any tag, brand, mark, pictorial or other descriptive matter, written, painted, stencilled, marked, embossed or impressed on, or attached to, a container;
- (e) **labelling** includes the label and any written, printed or graphic matter relating to and accompanying the food additives. The term does not include bills, invoices and similar material which may accompany the food additives;
- (f) **container** means any form of packaging of food additives for sale as a single item, whether by completely or partially enclosing the food additives, and includes wrappers;
- (g) **ingredient** means any substance, excluding a food additive, used in the manufacture or preparation of a food and present in the final product;
- (h) **sale by retail** means any sale to a person buying otherwise than for the purpose of resale but does not include a sale to caterers for the purposes of their catering business or a sale to manufacturers for the purposes of their manufacturing business.

3. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Food additives¹ shall not be described or presented on any label or in any labelling in a manner than is false, misleading or deceptive or is likely to create an erroneous impression regarding their character in any respect.

Food additives shall not be described or presented on any label or in any labelling by words, pictorial or other devices which refer to or are suggestive, either directly or indirectly, of any other product with which such food additives might be confused, or in such a manner as to lead the purchaser or consumer to suppose that the food additive is connected with or derived from such other product; provided that the term “x flavour” may be used to describe a flavour which is not derived from, but reproduces the flavour of “x”.

4. MANDATORY LABELLING OF PREPACKAGED FOOD ADDITIVES SOLD BY RETAIL

The labels of all food additives sold by retail shall bear the information required by sub-sections 4.1 to 4.5 of this section, as applicable to the food additive being labelled.

4.1 Details of the food additive

- a. The name of each food additive present shall be given. The name shall be specific and not generic and shall indicate the true nature of the food additive. Where a name has been established for a food additive in a Codex list of additives, that name shall be used. In other cases the common or usual name shall be listed or, where none exists, an appropriate descriptive name shall be used.
- b. If two or more food additives are present, their names shall be given in the form of a list. The list shall be in the order of the proportion by weight which each food additive bears to the total contents of the

¹ The term includes “processing aids” as defined (see Scope).

container, the food additive present in the greatest proportion by weight being listed first. Where one or more of the food additives is subject to a quantitative limitation in a food covered by a Codex standard, the quantity or proportion of that additive may be stated.

- c. In the case of mixtures of flavourings, the name of each flavouring present in the mixture need not be given. The generic expression "flavouring" may be used, together with an indication of the organoleptic properties (e.g. "apple flavouring") and/or the origin or source of the product. When indicating the origin or source of the product, the generic expression may be qualified by the words "natural" in the case of natural flavourings as defined in CAC/GL 66-2008, "artificial" in the case of synthetic flavourings as defined in CAC/GL 66-2008, or a combination of these words, as appropriate.
- d. Food additives with a shelf-life not exceeding 18 months shall carry the date of minimum durability using words such as "will keep at least until".
- e. The words "For Food Use" or a statement substantially similar thereto shall appear in a prominent position on the label.
- f. If food ingredients are part of the preparation, they shall be declared in the list of ingredients in descending order of proportion. Ingredients for which class names are set out in section 4.2.3.1 in the *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods* (CODEX STAN 1-1985) may be declared by the applicable class name, except for those ingredients that are identified in section 4.2.1.4 of the *General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods* (CODEX STAN 1-1985) as foods or ingredients that are known to cause hypersensitivity.

4.2 Instructions on keeping and use

Adequate information shall be given about the manner in which the food additive is to be kept and is to be used in food.

4.3 Net contents

The net contents shall be declared in either the metric (Système International Units) or avoirdupois or both systems of measurement as required by the country in which the food additive is sold. This declaration shall be made in the following manner:

- (a) For liquid food additives, by volume or weight;
- (b) For solid food additives, other than those sold in tablet form, by weight;
- (c) For semi-solid or viscous food additives, either by weight or volume;
- (d) For food additives sold in tablet form, by weight together with the number of tablets in the package.

4.4 Name and address

The name and address of the manufacturer, packer, distributor, importer, exporter or vendor of the food additive shall be declared.

4.5 Country of origin

- (a) The country of origin of a food additive shall be declared if its omission is likely to mislead or deceive the consumer.
- (b) When a food additive undergoes processing in a second country which changes its chemical or physical nature, the country in which the processing is performed shall be considered to be the country of origin for the purposes of labelling.

4.6 Lot identification

Each container shall be marked in code or in clear to identify the producing factory and the lot.

5. MANDATORY LABELLING OF PREPACKAGED FOOD ADDITIVES SOLD OTHER THAN BY RETAIL

The labels of all food additives sold other than by retail shall bear the information required by sub-sections 5.1 to 5.5 of this section, as applicable to the food additive being labelled; except that, where the food additives in non-retail containers are solely destined for further industrial processing, the required information, other than that described in sections 5.1(a) and 5.1(d), may be given on the documents relating to the sale.

5.1 Details of the food additive

- (a) The name of each food additive present shall be given. The name shall be specific and not generic and shall indicate the true nature of the food additive. Where a name has been established for a food additive in a Codex list of additives, that name shall be used. In other cases, the common or usual name shall be listed or, where none exists, an appropriate descriptive name shall be used.
- (b) If two or more food additives are present, their names shall be given in the form of a list. The list shall be in the order of the proportion by weight which each food additive bears to the total contents of the container, the food additive present in the greatest proportion by weight being listed first. Where one or more food additives is subject to a quantitative limitation in a food in the country in which the food additive is to be used, the quantity or proportion of that additive and/or adequate instruction to enable the compliance with the limitation shall be given.
- (c) In the case of mixtures of flavourings, the name of each flavouring present in the mixture need not be given. The generic expression "flavouring" may be used, together with an indication of the organoleptic properties (e.g. "apple flavouring") and/or the origin or source of the product. When indicating the origin or source of the product, the generic expression may be qualified by the words "natural" in the case of natural flavourings as defined in CAC/GL 66-2008, "artificial" in the case of synthetic flavourings as defined in CAC/GL 66-2008, or a combination of these words, as appropriate.
- (d) Food additives with a shelf-life not exceeding 18 months shall carry the date of minimum durability using words such as "will keep at least until ...".
- (e) The words "For Food Use" or a statement substantially similar thereto shall appear in a prominent position on the label.
- (f) If food ingredients are part of the preparation, they shall be declared in the list of ingredients in descending order of proportion. Ingredients for which class names are set out in section 4.2.3.1 in the General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods (CODEX STAN 1-1985) may be declared by the applicable class name, except for those ingredients that are identified in section 4.2.1.4 of the General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods (CODEX STAN 1-1985) as foods or ingredients that are known to cause hypersensitivity.

5.2 Instructions on keeping and use

Adequate information shall be given about the manner in which the food additive is to be kept and is to be used in food. This information may be given on the label or in the documents relating to the sale.

5.3 Net contents

The net contents shall be declared in either (a) metric units or "Système International" units or (b) avoirdupois, unless both systems of measurement are specifically required by the country in which the food additive is sold. The declaration shall be made in the following manner:

- (i) for liquid food additives, by volume or weight;
- (ii) for solid food additives, by weight;
- (iii) for semi-solid or viscous food additives, either by weight or volume.

5.4 Name and address

The name and address of the manufacturer, packer, distributor, importer, exporter or vendor of the food additive shall be declared.

5.5 Country of origin

- (a) The country of origin of a food additive shall be declared if its omission is likely to mislead or deceive the user.
- (b) When a food additive undergoes processing in a second country which changes its chemical or physical nature, the country in which the processing is performed shall be considered to be the country of origin for the purposes of labelling.

5.6 Lot identification

Each container shall be marked, in code or in clear, to identify the producing factory and the lot.

6. PRESENTATION OF MANDATORY INFORMATION

6.1 General

Statements required to appear on the label by virtue of this standard or any other Codex standard shall be clear, prominent and readily legible by the consumer under normal conditions of purchase and use. Such information shall not be obscured by designs or by other written, printed or graphic matter and shall be on contrasting ground to that of the background. The letters in the name of the food additive shall be in a size reasonably related to the most prominent printed matter on the label. Where the container is covered by a wrapper, the wrapper shall carry the necessary information, or the label on the container shall be readily legible through the outer wrapper or not obscured by it. In general the name and net contents of the food additive shall appear on that portion of the label normally intended to be presented to the consumer at the time of sale.

6.2 Language

The language used for the declaration of the statements referred to in paragraph 6.1 shall be a language acceptable to the country in which the food additive is intended for sale. If the language on the original label is not acceptable, a supplementary label containing the mandatory information in an acceptable language may be used instead of relabelling.

7. ADDITIONAL OR DIFFERENT REQUIREMENTS FOR SPECIFIC FOOD ADDITIVES

Nothing in this standard shall preclude the adoption of additional or different provisions in a Codex standard, in respect of labelling, where the circumstances of a particular food additive would justify their incorporation in that standard.

7.1 Irradiated food additives

Food additives which have been treated with ionizing radiation, shall be so designated.

8. OPTIONAL LABELLING

8.1 General

Any information or pictorial device may be displayed in labelling provided that it is not in conflict with the mandatory requirement nor would mislead or deceive the consumer in any way whatsoever in respect of the food additive.