

32nd Meeting of the Codex Contact Points in the Arab Region

PREPARATION FOR THE 23rd SESSION OF THE Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

(CCFFV23)

Presenter Name, Country

February 04, 2025

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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Agenda Item 1

CX/FFV 25/23/1
December 2024



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME CODEX COMMITTEE ON FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Twenty-third Session

Mexico City, Mexico

25 February - 1 March 2025

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

Agenda Item 3



Draft standard for fresh dates (At Step 7)

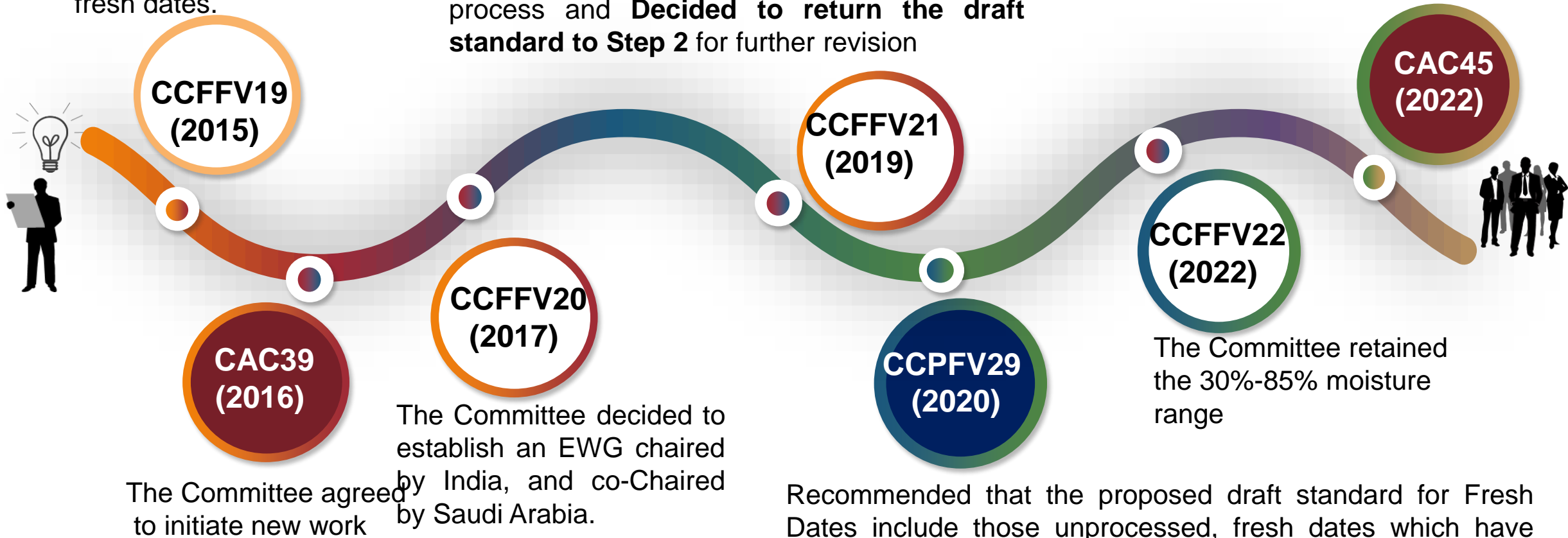


BACKGROUND

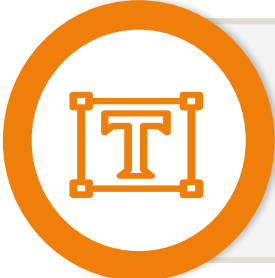
India introduced a new work proposal on a Codex standard for fresh dates.

The Committee noted the need for clarification and determined that the proposed draft standard was not ready to progress in the Step process and **Decided to return the draft standard to Step 2** for further revision

CAC45 adopted the draft standard for fresh dates at Step 5

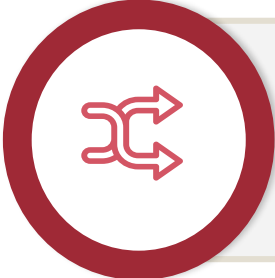


HIGHLIGHTS AND DISCUSSIONS FROM CCFFV22



Title Debate

Agreement to include "fresh" in the title to differentiate it from the existing CXS 143-1985 standard for dates



Scope Revision

Clarifications were made to exclude intentionally processed dates, aligning with Codex standards.



Moisture Content Controversy

- Divergent views on **retaining the 30%-85% range**
- Arguments included the importance of differentiating fresh and dried dates and accommodating all maturity stages (khalal, rutab, tamar).
- Proposals to lower the minimum to 20% or 25% or set specific values based on cultivation types



Packaging

Proposal to limit package weight to 5-6 kg to prevent crushing was rejected.



Labelling

Agreement to revise labelling requirements, replacing "genotype" with "type" for clarity



Quality Tolerances

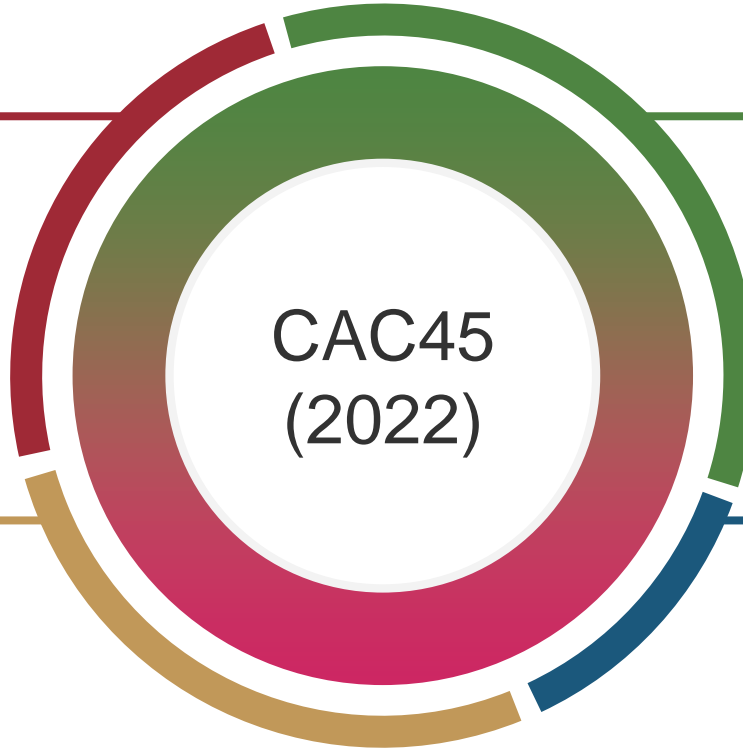
Discussions on tolerances for defects, including pest damage and decay



OTHER CONSIDERATIONS FROM THE CAC45 DISCUSSION

The minimum moisture content of **30% lacks robust scientific justification** and appears arbitrarily chosen to prevent overlap with existing dried date standards.

Soft and semi-soft varieties were considered as fresh fruits and had a moisture content between **20% to 30%**, which should be taken into account to avoid excluding such dates in the standard;



CAC45
(2022)

Adopting the standard at Steps 5/8, would exclude some date cultivars and not reflect the reality in the marketplace with negative effects on production and international trade;

The draft standard should harmonize with other Codex standards, such as the General Standard for Dried Fruits and the existing Standard for Dates (CXS 143-1985).

Establishment of the Arab Working Group (April 2023)

► **The Arab Codex Initiative** established a Working Group (WG) led by Morocco, with active participation from 13 Arab countries, to address fresh date standards.

► The objective is to define a **regional consensus** on moisture content for fresh dates to present during CCFFV23.

► **Data Collection:**

Participating countries submitted production, import/export data, and scientific research on moisture content in fresh dates.

► **Two data submission phases:**

Phase 1: Focused on production, export, and import data (June 8–27, 2023).

Phase 2: Gathered scientific studies on moisture content (June 30–July 24, 2023).

► **Analysis and Meetings:**

Data from 11 countries were analyzed to identify trends and align views.

Experts from 4 countries (Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia) presented proposals for the moisture content range.

A virtual meeting (September 14, 2023) finalized the regional position.



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR THE NEAR EAST

Eleventh Session

Rome, Italy, FAO Headquarters

18 - 22 September 2023

CRD presented by Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, Algeria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Sudan, Iraq, Oman, Palestine, Libya, Yemen and AIDSMO

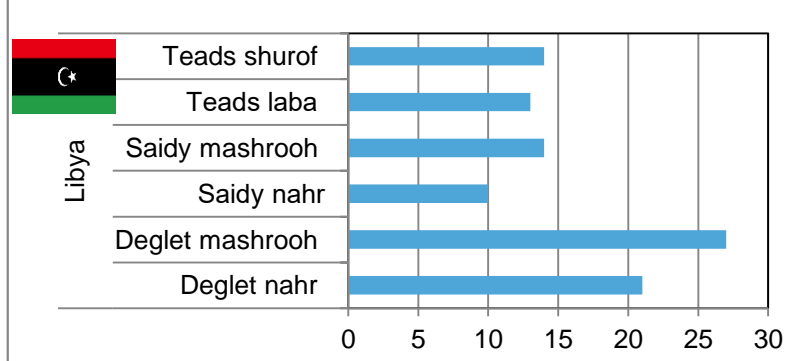
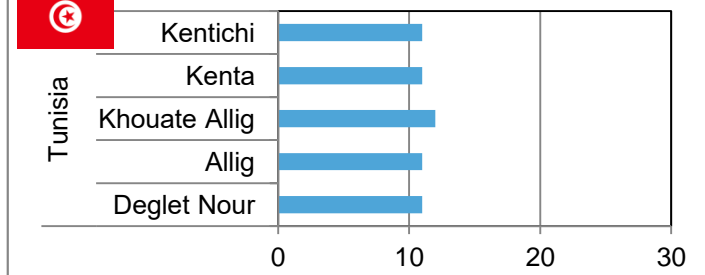
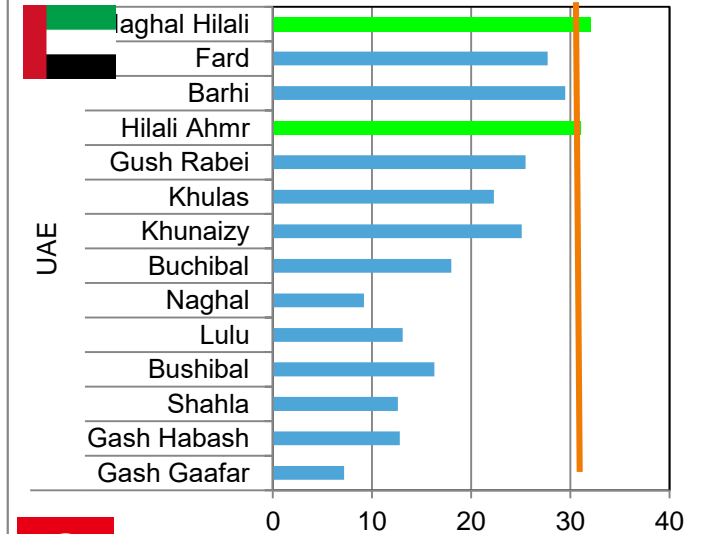
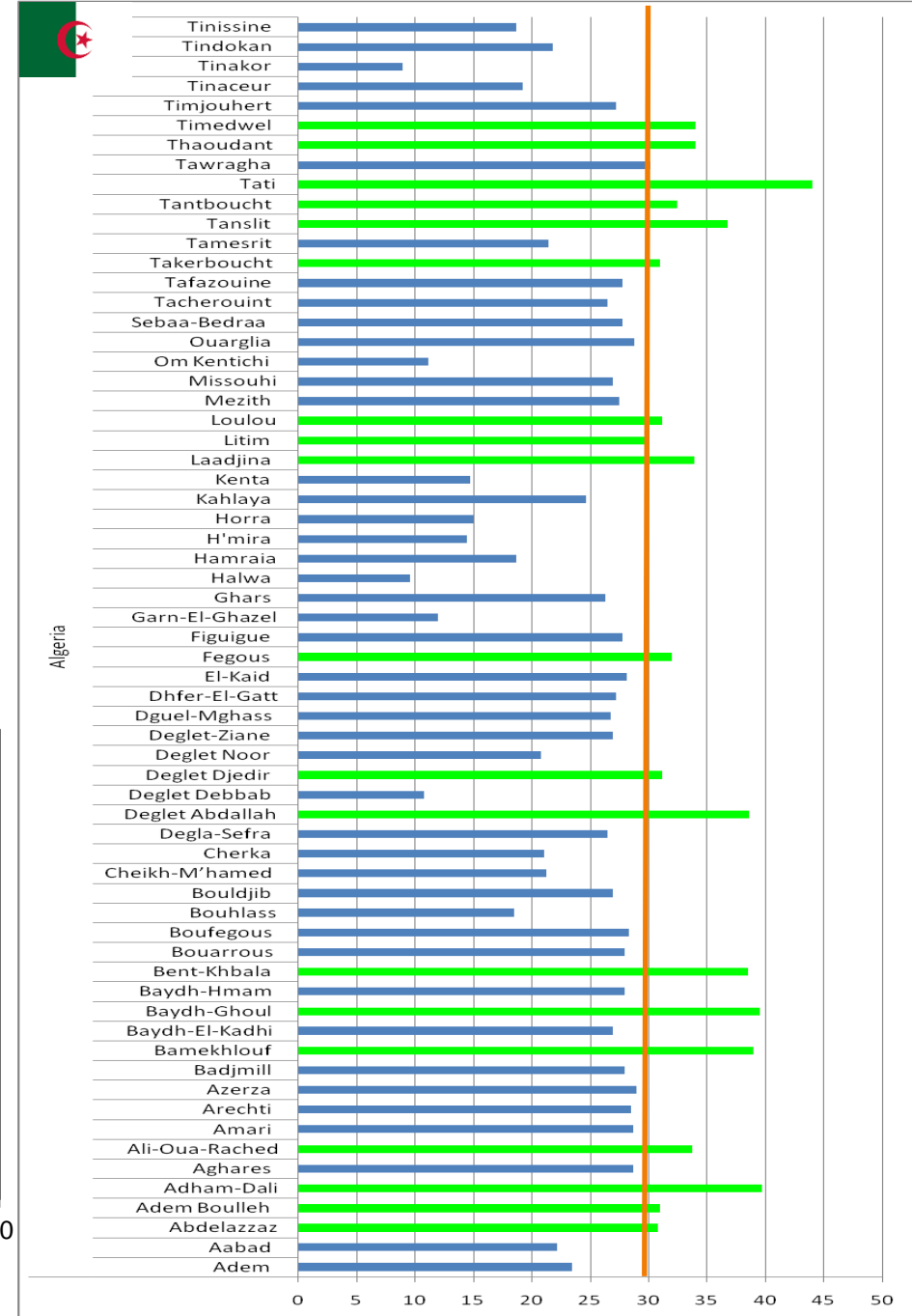
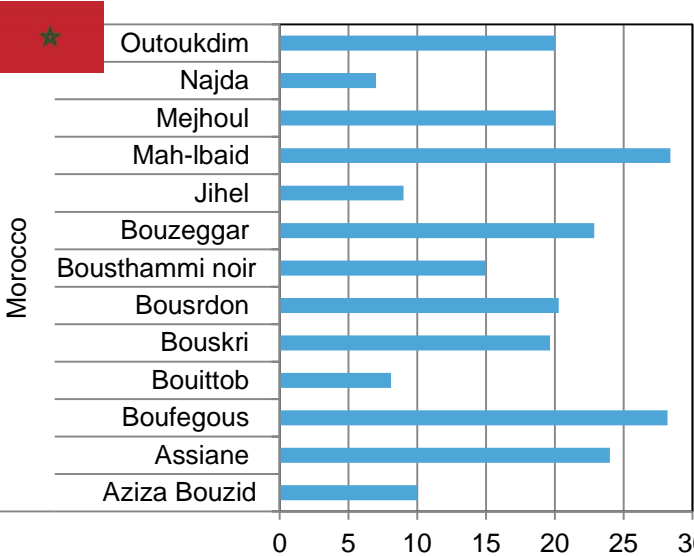
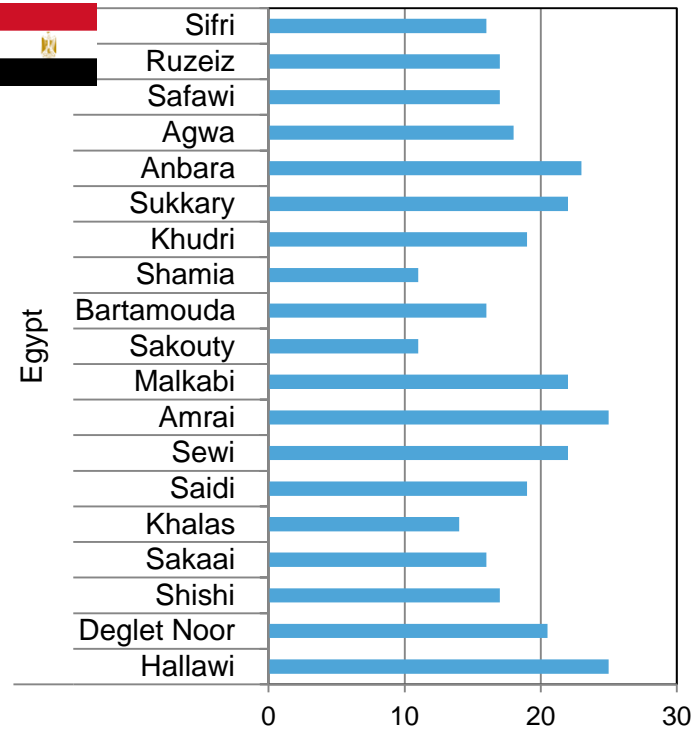
► **Proposed Moisture Range:**

The WG proposed a moisture content range of **12%-85%** for fresh dates, ensuring inclusivity of all commercial varieties and stages.

► **Focus Areas:**

Highlighted the importance of differentiating fresh dates from dried dates (CXS 143-1985).

Proposed that moisture content should not be the sole defining parameter for fresh dates, emphasizing the need to include genetic, physiological, and environmental factors.



Descriptive Analysis of Minimum and Maximum Moisture Content in Date Cultivars Across Countries

Descriptive statistics_Egypt

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Moyenne	Ecart type
Min Moisture Content %	19	11,00	25,00	18,4474	4,11263
Max Moisture Content %	19	15,00	28,00	21,5263	4,16825

Descriptive statistics_Morocco

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Moyenne	Ecart type
Min Moisture Content %	13	7,00	28,40	17,8838	7,41943
Max Moisture Content %	7	18,30	34,00	27,4714	5,88974

Descriptive statistics_Algeria

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Moyenne	Ecart type
Min Moisture Content %	64	9,00	44,00	26,6253	7,72491
Max Moisture Content %	6	16	39	29,79	7,884

Descriptive statistics_UAE

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Moyenne	Ecart type
Min Moisture Content %	14	7,20	32,10	20,1786	8,47005
Max Moisture Content %	1	21,30	21,30	21,3000	.

Descriptive statistics_Tunisia

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Moyenne	Ecart type
Min Moisture Content %	5	11,00	12,00	11,2000	,44721
Max Moisture Content %	5	24,00	32,00	29,2000	3,34664

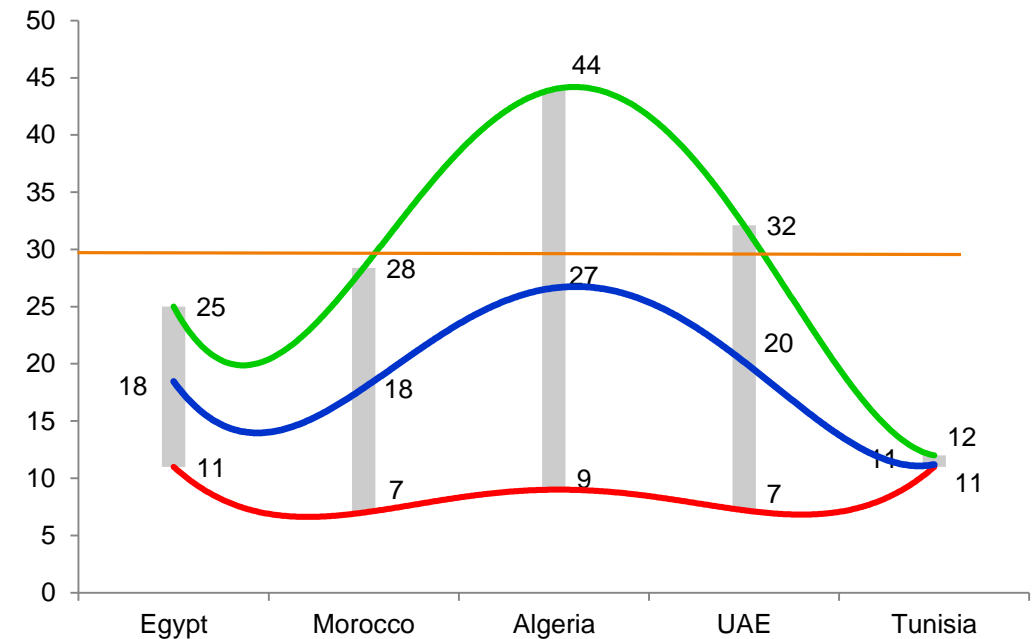
Descriptive statistics_Libya

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Moyenne	Ecart type
Average Moisture Content %	6	10,00	27,00	16,5000	6,28490

Descriptive statistics_All Countries

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Moyenne	Ecart type
Min Moisture Content %	121	7,00	44,00	22,5166	8,39819
Max Moisture Content %	38	15,00	38,75	24,9305	6,12486

Descriptive Graphic of Minimum Moisture Content in Date Cultivars



Justification for Setting 12% as the Minimum Moisture Content for Fresh Dates

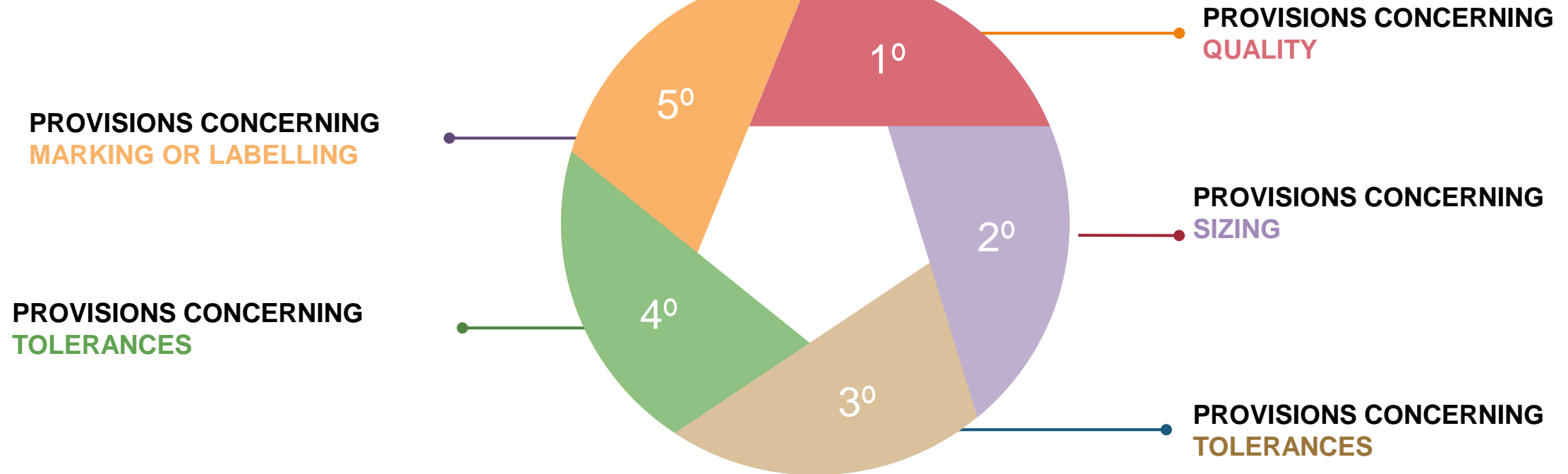
Scientific and Statistical Validation: Inclusivity Based on Statistical Distribution

- Statistical analysis of moisture content across diverse date cultivars demonstrates that 85% of the data supports a moisture content range starting at **12%**, making this an evidence-based threshold.
- By using the 85th percentile, the standard ensures inclusion of a wide variety of dates without relying on arbitrary thresholds, aligning with evidence-based Codex principles (Codex aims to create standards that are **scientifically valid**, **inclusive**, and **practical** for global trade).
- The 12% minimum, derived from statistical distribution and the 85th percentile, ensures inclusivity and fairness across diverse regions and cultivars.
- Dates with moisture levels between 12%-85% include a wide range of cultivars, from semi-dry to soft varieties, which are all traded as fresh dates.
- Semi-dry dates with moisture content between are widely consumed and traded due to their **longer shelf life**, **reduced spoilage risk**, and suitability for transport.
- A lower threshold provides flexibility to accommodate natural variability in moisture levels due to environmental, varietal, or harvesting factors. This avoids penalizing producers of semi-dry varieties, ensuring sustainability and equity in trade.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS IN REPLY TO CL 2023/84/OCS-FFV

[Issued in October 2023]

Comments submitted by Algeria, Canada, Chile, Egypt, Eritrea, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Panama, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, USA and ICUMSA



SUMMARY OF COMMENTS IN REPLY TO CL 2023/84/OCS-FFV

1. Provisions Concerning Quality

Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, UAE, suggested moisture content is **12-85%**.

Eritrea, Qatar, Senegal, Tanzania suggested Moisture content of fresh dates ranges from **20-85%**.

India **removing minimum content requirement** Suggested **the moisture** entirely and retaining only the maximum of **85%**.

Saudi Arabia Support retaining moisture range (30%-85%) for the content

Indonesia: Suggested minimum moisture of **26% for cane sugar varieties** and **30% for invert sugar varieties**, based on CXS 143-1985.



SUMMARY OF COMMENTS IN REPLY TO CL 2023/84/OCS-FFV

2. Provisions Concerning Sizing

- **Canada:** Highlighted the **optional nature of sizing** by count or weight and emphasized clearer labeling for size methods.
- **Eritrea:** Supported optional sizing in line with trading practices but suggested ensuring proper labeling.

Provisions Concerning Tolerances

- **Algeria:** Argued for reconsidering tolerances for quality defects to align with trade practices.
- **Eritrea:** Proposed:
 - Zero tolerance for live insects instead of "living pests."
 - Re-sorting failed produce to meet conformity requirements.
 - Adding tolerances for glossiness, skin separation, and inert matter.
- **Canada:** Recommended defining additional tolerances clearly, especially for Class II, and specifying minimum requirements instead of treating them as tolerances.



SUMMARY OF COMMENTS IN REPLY TO CL 2023/84/OCS-FFV

3. Provisions Concerning Presentation

- **Eritrea:** Proposed containers that are clean, suitable, and not impermeable to moisture to protect product quality and natural properties.
- **Canada:** Recommended clear guidelines on presentation standards to align with other Codex FFV standards.

4. Provisions Concerning Marking or Labelling

- **Algeria:** Stressed the need for clear labeling to distinguish fresh and processed dates.
- **Canada:** Recommended using the **General Standard for the Labelling of Non-Retail Containers of Foods (CXS 346-2021)** and ensuring legible, visible markings on packages.
- **India:** Suggested labeling produce explicitly as "Fresh Dates" to differentiate from dried dates under CXS 143-1985.
- **Eritrea:** Highlighted the importance of consistent labeling with Codex standards for clarity in trade practices.



Approaches to Resolve Divergent Views on Moisture Content

01

Scientific Justification

Apply **statistical analysis** (85th percentile) to establish an **evidence-based** minimum moisture threshold.

02

Trade and Market Considerations

Ensure the standard promotes **fair market access** for all date-producing regions

03

Consensus Building

Organize **technical meetings** with Codex members, experts, and producers before CCFFV23 to discuss the proposed **footnote and scientific rationale**



04

Inclusive Standard

Option 1: Eliminate the minimum moisture limit and introduce a footnote for an inclusive fresh date definition.

Option 2: Set 12% as the minimum, ensuring the inclusion of semi-dry varieties while distinguishing from dried dates (CXS 143-1985).

05

Alignment with Codex Principles

Maintain consistency with Codex objectives of **scientific validity, inclusivity, and harmonization** of international standards.

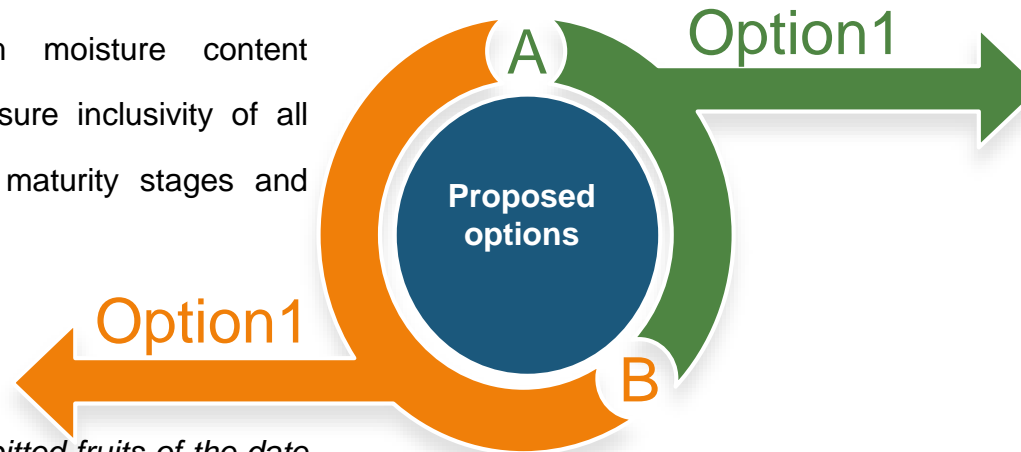
Proposed options

Option 1: Remove the Minimum Moisture Content Level and Add a Footnote for Fresh Date Definition

Proposal: Eliminate the minimum moisture content requirement from the standard to ensure inclusivity of all fresh date varieties across different maturity stages and regions.

Proposed Footnote :

"Fresh dates are defined as whole, unpitted fruits of the date palm (Phoenix dactylifera L.), naturally harvested at various maturity stages (e.g., Kimri, Khalal, Rutab, Tamar) without artificial drying or rehydration. The definition encompasses diverse varieties, including semi-dry and soft dates commonly traded for direct consumption, with moisture levels naturally determined by the variety, maturity stage, and regional practices".



Option 2: Set 12% as the Minimum Moisture Content for Fresh Dates Based on a Scientific Approach

Proposal: Establish 12% as the minimum moisture content threshold for fresh dates using a scientifically robust approach derived from statistical analysis (85th percentile) of moisture content distributions across diverse cultivars.

Justification:

- Statistical data analysis confirms that 85% of fresh date samples globally have moisture content above 12%.
- This threshold ensures inclusivity of semi-dry and soft varieties while preventing misclassification with dried dates (CXS 143-1985).
- Aligns the standard with scientific evidence and trade practices, ensuring global applicability and fairness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Further **technical discussions** are required to refine critical parameters such as moisture content and quality criteria
- ▶ Ensuring the standard is inclusive of diverse date varieties and reflects the realities of production and trade and meet the needs of all regions
- ▶ Avoiding negative trade and market impacts by including semi-soft dates with moisture below 30% to prevent their misclassification as dried dates and associated storage issues.
- ▶ Ensuring the minimum moisture content is based on robust scientific data rather than arbitrary thresholds.
- ▶ Recognizing and accommodating regional terminology and classification practices based on harvest stages.



A word cloud of "thank you" in various languages including:

 danke, 謝謝, ngiyabonga, teşekkür ederim,

 спасибо, merci, dank je, gracias, tapadh leat,

 thank you,

 obrigado,

 sukriya, terima kasih, merci,

 and the Arabic word "شكرا" (Shukran) in calligraphy.