

FAO/WHO CODEX COORDINATING COMMITTEE
NEAR EAST



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

41st Joint Coordination Meeting of Arab and CCNE Codex Contact Points

PREPARATION FOR THE 8th SESSION OF THE CODEX COMMITTEE ON SPICES AND CULINARY HERBS

(CCSCH8)

Eng. Issam Krid, Tunisia

October 09, 2025

AGENDA ITEM 2.1

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON THE USE OF “COUNTRY OF HARVEST” IN THE LABELLING OF SPICES

REPLIES TO CL 2025/07-FL

(CX/SCH 25/8/2 ADD.1)

BACKGROUND

CAC 40 (2017)	Approved the development of the standard for saffron
CCSCH6 (2022)	- Forward the draft Standard for dried floral parts - saffron to CAC45 for adoption at Step 8 - Forward the provisions on labelling and methods of analysis to CCFL and CCMAS for endorsement
CAC45 (2022)	- Adopted the Standard for dried floral parts – Saffron at Step 8 - Publication subject to the endorsement of the food additives and food labelling provisions by CCFA and CCFL
CCFL47 (2023)	- Agreed to endorse all the labelling provisions in the Standard for Dried Floral Parts – Saffron <u>except the country of origin (8.3.1) and the country of harvest (8.3.2)</u> <u>Request CCSCH to clarify the distinction between country of origin and country of harvest and provide the rationale why the provision for country of harvest should be mandatory and how such a declaration would be beneficial for fraud prevention.</u>
CCSCH7 (2024)	“Country of origin” as contained in (CXS 1-1985) was generally broad and therefore applicable to all foods - Noted that there was no definition in Codex for “country of harvest”.

BACKGROUND

CCFL48 (2024)	• Agreed to endorse Section 8.3.1 “Country of origin shall be declared”. • <u>Noted that the Committee could not reach an agreement on Section 8.3.2 - the mandatory declaration of Country of harvest and was unable to endorse the provision and agreed to refer the matter to CCEXEC87 and CAC47 for consideration.</u>
CAC47 (2024)	• Requested the Codex Secretariat to issue a CL to Members and Observers <u>seeking potential solutions to the use of “Country of Harvest” in food labelling of spices.</u> • Established an EWG, reporting to CCFL, jointly chaired by Iran and Canada and co-chaired by India and Madagascar to provide potential options.

CCSCH8 is requested to consider the responses to the CL and make observations to CCFL49 as requested by CAC 47

REMINDER

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS

INTERNATIONAL FOOD STANDARDS



Food and Agriculture
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GENERAL STANDARD FOR THE LABELLING OF PRE-PACKAGED FOODS CXS 1-1985

Adopted in 1985. Amended in 1991, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2008 and 2010.
Revised in 2018 and 2024.

4.5 *Country of origin*

- 4.5.1 The country of origin of the food shall be declared if its omission would mislead or deceive the consumer.
- 4.5.2 When a food undergoes processing in a second country which changes its nature, the country in which the processing is performed shall be considered to be the country of origin for the purposes of labelling.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

Comments were received from 19 countries:

Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, **Egypt**, Honduras, India, **Iran**, Madagascar, New Zealand, **Saudi Arabia**, Thailand, Uganda, **United Arab Emirates**, the United States of America (USA), Uzbekistan, Zambia.

The European Union

and 3 observers:

Food Drink Europe, International Organization of Spice Trade Associations (IOSTA), Tea & Herbal Infusions Europe (THIE).

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

Iran

- Strongly supports including *Country of Harvest (CoH)* on labels for saffron and other spices.
- Argues it improves **transparency, fraud prevention, and consumer trust**.
- Notes widespread **misrepresentation of saffron origin**, harming producers and brands.
- Believes CoH declaration enhances market value and authenticity.

Madagascar

- Calls for **mandatory CoH** declaration for vanilla.
- Views it as essential for **fair trade, producer protection, and consumer confidence**.
- Highlights CoH as key for:
 - **Authenticity and traceability** (detecting blending or synthetic vanilla).
 - **Food safety** and recall efficiency.
 - **Preserving cultural and human heritage** of smallholder vanilla farmers.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

United States

- **Does not support mandatory CoH** labelling.
- Argues no **validated methods** exist to verify CoH.
- Warns it could **duplicate or conflict** with existing *Country of Origin* rules.
- Says **fraud prevention** should be handled through enforcement of current Codex and CCFICS guidance.
- Notes **no demonstrated consumer benefit or risk** that justifies new CoH requirements.
- Highlights the risk of **confusion and increased trade burdens**.

India

- Notes *Country of Origin* already **mandatory for imports** and verified via documentation.
- Supports **keeping both “Country of Origin” and “Country of Harvest” provisions** in Codex standards, with CoH as **optional or case-specific**.
- Emphasizes that CoH and CoO have **coexisted in CCSCH format since early sessions**.
- Sees CoH declaration as relevant mainly for **high-value spices (e.g., saffron, vanilla)**, consistent with Codex principles.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

European Union

- **Does not support introducing a separate “Country of Harvest” (CoH) declaration.**
- Considers that the existing “**Country of Origin**” (CoO) requirements in CXS 1-1985 are sufficient and already ensure **transparency and consumer protection**.
- Notes that **post-harvest operations** (drying, sorting, packaging) do **not change the nature** of most spices; therefore, the **CoO and CoH are often the same**, particularly for saffron.
- Acknowledges that **vanilla** may undergo additional processes (e.g., fermentation, grinding) that could occur outside the harvest country, but says this can already be handled under existing CoO provisions.
- Warns that introducing a mandatory CoH requirement could **create confusion, inconsistency with Codex standards**, and potential **trade complications**.
- Supports maintaining the current CoO approach while improving **clarity and enforcement** of existing origin labelling rules rather than adding a new labelling element.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Arab and CCNE delegations could support that the declaration of the “**Country of Harvest**” (CoH) in the labelling of spices be treated as **voluntary rather than mandatory**.

Enabling the use of this provision on a voluntary basis would allow jurisdictions to apply it whenever they wish to highlight the importance of the Country of Harvest (CoH), which can serve as an indicator of quality and a factor that attracts consumer interest.

Conversely, making CoH labelling mandatory could be challenging to enforce and may increase the risk of fraudulent practices.

[illegible]