

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)

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AGENDA ITEM 6.1

DRAFT STANDARD FOR HERBS REQUIREMENTS FOR SWEET MARJORAM DOCUMENT

(CX/SCH 25/8/7 - CX/SCH 25/8/7 ADD.1)

(Prepared by the Electronic Working Group, chaired by Egypt)

BACKGROUND



1. The Seventh Session of the Codex Committee for Spices and Culinary herbs (CCSCH7) considered a proposal submitted by Egypt, on the development of a standard for sweet marjoram under the group for culinary herbs and agreed to start new work to elaborate the specific requirements for the sweet marjoram.
2. CCSCH7 furthermore agreed to establish an Electronic Working Group (EWG) chaired by Egypt, subject to the approval by CAC of the respective new work proposal, working in English, to develop the proposed draft standard for the dried and dehydrated Sweet Marjoram, for circulation for comments at Step 3 and consideration by CCSCH8

Participation and methodology

- ❖ EWG conducted its work on the Codex EWG platform. Thirteen countries registered to participate in EWG.
- ❖ During the deliberations of the EWG five (5) countries submitted their comments.
- ❖ Two rounds of consultations were undertaken by the EWG. The first draft was uploaded on 1st July 2024, and The second draft was uploaded on 15th September 2024.

Analysis of responses

The EWG members submitted both editorial and technical comments and/or proposals, and based on these, the following changes were made to the proposed draft standard:

a) The title of the draft was revised with the deletion of the words “**herb**” and “**dehydrated**” noting that the plant is used only in the dried form, therefore the title of the standard should read “**Standard for dried sweet marjoram**”.

Based on this proposal, the words. “herb” and “dehydrated” were deleted from the whole body of the draft standard.

Analysis of responses



b) Styles: Styles for the whole, rubbed and Ground/Powdered of dried sweet marjoram were rephrased to more accurately reflect the actual forms in which marjoram is available.

Colour: The requirement for the was included in this provision.

c) Methods for analysis AOAC: AOAC methods of analysis were included under the provision for “ acid Insoluble ash”, “mould visible”, “extraneous” and “foreign matter”.

d)Annex –Tables1 & 2 : Chemical and physical characteristics new parameters were added and other parameters for which there were no consensus put in square brackets for further consideration.

ANNEX 1

TABLE A1: CHEMICAL CHARACTERISTICS FOR DRIED SWEET MARJORAM



Product name	Styles	Moisture content % w/w(max)	Total ash, on dry basis% w/w (max)	Acid insoluble ash % w/w (max) on dry basis	* Volatile oils ml/100g (min) on dry basis
Marjoram	Whole	12	16	4.5	0.3
	Crushed/ rubbed/ flaked	12	16	4.5	0.7
	Ground / powdered	[12] [10]	16 [15]	[4.5] [4]	[0.6]

ANNEX I–TABLE [A2] : PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS FOR DRIED SWEET MARJORAM



Product name	Style	Extraneous matter %w/w (max) ¹	Foreign matter % w/w (max) ²	Mould % w/w (max)	Dead whole insects count/100 g (max)	Insect damage % w/w (max) whole only	Insect fragments count/10 g (max) (ground only)	Live insects	Mammalian excreta mg/kg (max)	Other Excreta mg/kg (max) ³	Rodent filth count/25 g/ [10 g]	Other Factors
Marjoram	Whole	1	1 [0.1]	1	3	[5] [1]	NA [250]	0	1 [2.2]	10 [22]	[2]	
	Crushed/Rubbed/Flaked	1 [2]	3 [NA]	NA	3 [1/25g]		NA	0				
	Ground/powdered	NA*	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0	NA	NA	NA	

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

- ❖ CCSCH8 is invited to consider the proposed draft standard as presented in the Appendix to this document with the intent to progressing it to further step noting that the values of Table 2 and 3 would need further discussion



AGENDA ITEM 7.1

DISCUSSION PAPER ON TRADE DATA AVAILABILITY FOR SPICES AND CULINARY HERBS (CX/SCH 25/8/8)

(Prepared by the United States of America)

BACKGROUND



ISSUE AND CONTEXT



CCSCH7, 2024

CCSCH8, 2025

The persistent lack of disaggregated trade data for Spices and Culinary Herbs (SCH) continues to hinder progress in the development of both individual and group standards and has been a recurring challenge discussed at every session of the CCSCH.

- ✓ **Codex Requirements:** According to the Codex Procedural Manual, proposals for new work must include information on production, consumption, and trade patterns.
- ✓ **Impact on Standardization:** Due to the absence of reliable SCH-specific trade data, it is unlikely that all 109 SCH items identified by the Committee can be effectively standardized.

The committee accepted the proposal from the United States to prepare a Discussion Paper on SCH trade data availability. The paper aims to facilitate future standard-setting by identifying and addressing data limitations that have obstructed progress.

Delegates are invited to consider the discussion paper prepared by the USA, and specially the following areas suggested for the Committee's consideration to support more efficient development of standards across the 109 identified SCH items:

Focus on developing group standards, starting with those groups that already include several standardized products.

For each group standard, ensure there is enough information to complete: Annex I (Chemical and physical characteristics) and Annex II (Methods of analysis and sampling)

Work process

❑ In response to the request made during the 7th session of the CCSCH (2024),

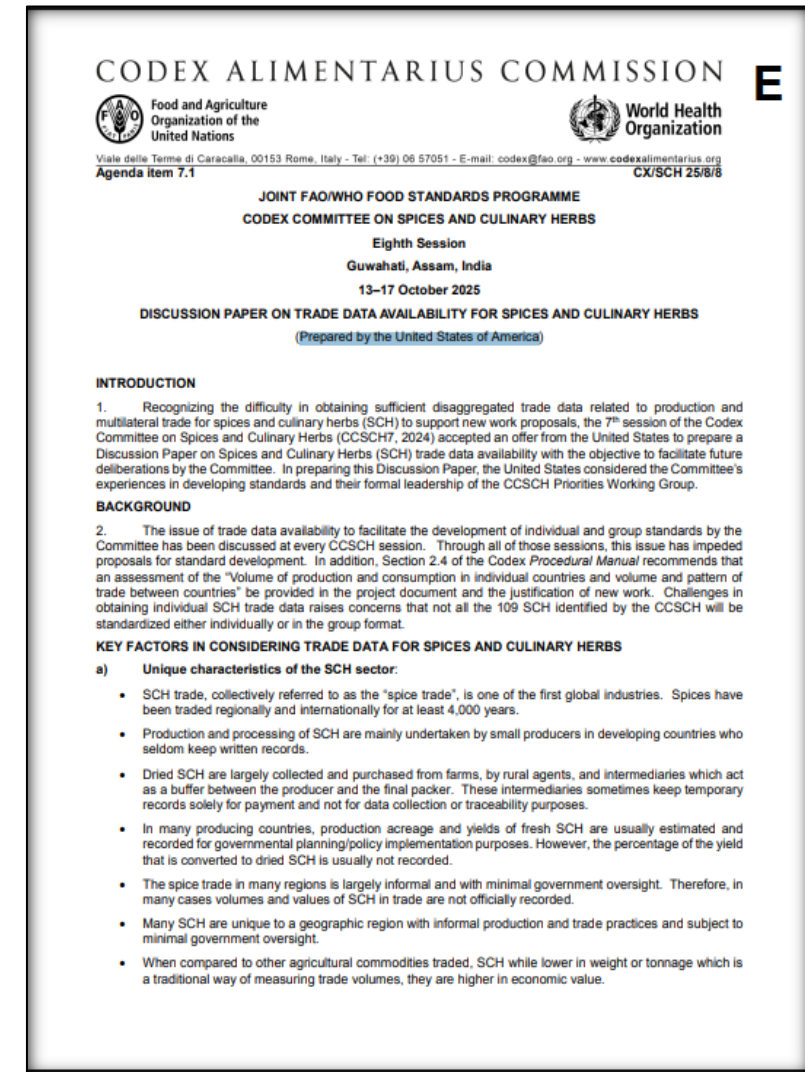
- ✓ The United States prepared a discussion paper addressing the main barriers to accessing reliable, disaggregated trade data for Spices and Culinary Herbs (SCH).
- ✓ It highlights the impact of these data gaps on the Committee's ability to prioritize and develop international standards in line with its mandate.

❑ Experience and involvement

- ✓ The U.S. based its input on the Committee's past challenges and outcomes.
- ✓ It also drew from its leadership in the CCSCH Priorities Working Group to guide recommendations that are realistic and implementable.

❑ U.S's Propositions and recommendations

- ✓ The paper recommends adapting Codex priorities to reflect the realities of SCH trade.
- ✓ A key proposal includes shifting toward group standard development, where data is more accessible and work can advance more efficiently.



Key Factors and Challenges Identified on SCH Trade Data Availability

Category	Key Aspects and Issues Identified
1. Characteristics of the SCH Sector	- SCH trade is one of the oldest global trades, often informal and under-recorded. - Production mainly by smallholders in developing countries with limited record-keeping. - Trade often involves intermediaries who keep temporary or no records. - Conversion from fresh to dried SCH is not documented. - Many SCH are region-specific and informally traded. - SCH have high value but low volume, making trade harder to quantify.
2. Growing Global Demand	- Global consumption of SCH is expanding beyond traditional markets. - International standards are increasingly needed for safety and trade facilitation. - Market projected to grow from \$3.22B in 2025 to \$5.12B by 2029 (CAGR: 12.3%).
3. Codex Data Requirements	- Codex Procedural Manual requires volume of production, consumption, and trade data. - This is difficult to meet for SCH due to informal trade and limited official data. - Low volume but high value makes traditional trade metrics misleading.
4. Lack of Reliable Data	(i) SCH-specific data missing: Most countries aggregate SCH data under general headings ("spices", "culinary herbs"). (ii) Lack of International Trade Data Collected by the United Nations FAO (FAOSTAT gaps): FAO does not cover many SCH or provides incomplete data. (iii) Lack of Individual Harmonized Tariff Codes (HTCs): Missing Harmonized System (HS) codes; only 41 of 109 SCH have individual (HS) Code; 68 SCH (60%) lack trade traceability. (iv) WTO data: Relies on HS codes, which are often missing for SCH.
5. Informal and Unrecorded Trade	- Much of SCH trade is informal, not reflected in national or international statistics. - Online trade (e.g., 1.2 billion retail units sold in 2020) is often unrecorded. - Physical Characteristics of Dried SCH: Drying reduces SCH mass by 65–90%, leading to underrepresentation in volume-based trade metrics. Light weight and dried form of SCH often lead to underreporting in trade statistics.
6. Risk to Standard Development	- Strict adherence to Codex data requirements may prevent standardization of most SCH. - This affects rural producers, importers, and consumers dependent on SCH trade. - Incomplete data risks stalling Codex efforts to develop necessary safety standards.

Analysis

The paper provides a comprehensive examination of the structural, technical, and practical challenges facing SCH data collection and reporting.

- The unique characteristics of SCH production and trade, including informality, smallholder dominance, and regional specificity, significantly hinder the availability of accurate and disaggregated data.
- Despite a growing global demand for SCH, most trade data remain underreported or aggregated under broad categories like “spices” or “culinary herbs,” making it unsuitable for Codex requirements.
- Existing international data sources, such as FAOSTAT, and trade classification systems, such as the Harmonized System (HS) codes, do not adequately reflect the diversity of SCH commodities in international trade.



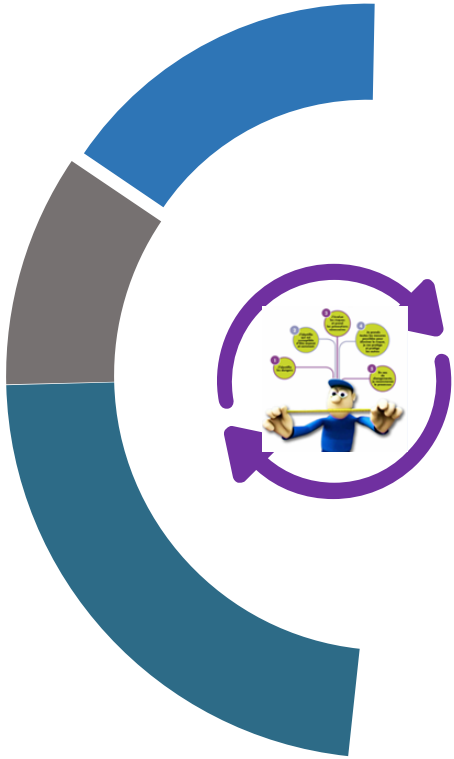
As a result, strict adherence to Codex’s current data requirements may restrict or delay the development of essential standards, undermining the Committee’s goal of standardizing SCH for global markets.

The paper supports the need to adapt Codex processes to better align with the realities of SCH trade.

This may include a shift toward group standard development.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The United States identified major barriers to accessing disaggregated trade data for Spices and Culinary Herbs (SCH), which continue to limit Codex standard development, especially for individual commodities. Given the growing importance of SCH in Arab markets, the following actions are recommended to strengthen regional engagement:

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1. **Prioritizing group standard development**, focusing on SCH relevant to Arab trade and consumption.
 2. **Sharing national or industry data** to fill gaps where official trade statistics are lacking.
 3. **Participating actively** in CCSCH sessions and electronic working groups (EWGs).
 4. **Coordinating regionally** through the Arab Codex Initiative to align priorities and technical inputs.
 5. **Promoting flexibility** in Codex data requirements to reflect the informal nature of SCH trade.
 6. **Building regional capacity** through training in Codex procedures, data reporting, and analysis.

[illegible]