

FAO/WHO CODEX COORDINATING COMMITTEE NEAR EAST



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

Report of the 41st Meeting of Arab Countries Codex Contact Points - Chaired by the CCNE Coordinator

Preparation and Discussion of the Agenda Items of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs

(CCSCH8)

As part of the preparations for the Eighth Session of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH8), scheduled to be held in India on 13 October 2025, the 41st Meeting of Arab Countries /CCNE Codex Contact was held virtually on Thursday, October 9, 2025, the meeting was chaired by the CCNE Coordinator and attended by representatives from the following countries :

1. Arab Republic of Egypt
2. Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
3. Kingdom of Bahrain
4. Kingdom of Morocco
5. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
6. Republic of Tunisia
7. Republic of Yemen
8. State of Libya
9. State of Qatar
10. Sultanate of Oman
11. Syrian Arab Republic
12. United Arab Emirates

In addition to representatives of the following organizations:

- The Arab Codex Initiative – Arab Industrial Development, Standardization and Mining Organization (AIDSMO)
- The Global Food Regulatory Science Society (GForSS)
- The Gulf Standardization Organization (GSO)

Dr. Intisar Al-Ghareebi, the Regional Coordinator for the Near East, opened the meeting with a welcoming speech, in which she greeted the participants and expressed her gratitude and appreciation for accepting the invitation and taking part in this important meeting. In her remarks, she noted that this meeting is part of the preparations and discussions of the agenda items of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH8). She also expressed her thanks to the committee members who participated in the Twelfth Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for the Near East (CCNE12), which was held in Muscat, Sultanate

Following this, Eng. Ahmed Eddouaicer, Coordinator of the Arab Codex Initiative, welcomed the participants, expressing his thanks to Dr. Al-Ghareebi for her remarks and wishing success to the meeting and the presentations. He also emphasized the importance of this meeting and the value of active participation by the member countries; while commending the efforts of the experts of the Arab Codex Initiative and the support they have provided in the coordinating meetings.

Finally, Dr. Intisar Al-Ghareebi gave the floor to Eng. Ahmed Al-Bashah, who expressed his gratitude for the invitation to participate in this meeting. He also congratulated the participants on the successful Twelfth Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for the Near East (CCNE12) and commended the active participation of the member countries in these meetings.

Following that, the agenda of the meeting was reviewed and its items approved as follows:

Fr	En	Ar	رقم البند
Remarques d'ouverture et adoption de l'ordre du jour • Coordinateur du CCNE • Coordinateur de l'Initiative Arabe du Codex	Opening Remarks and adoption of Agenda • CCNE Coordinator • Arab Codex Initiative Coordinator	كلمة افتتاحية واعتماد جدول الأعمال • المنسق الإقليمي للشرق الأدنى • منسق المبادرة العربية للدستور الغذائي	البند الأول
Présentation des points à l'ordre du jour de la 8^e session du Comité du Codex sur les épices et herbes culinaires (CCSCH8) Présentée par : • Eng. Issam Krid (République tunisie) Élément (2.1) • Dr. Balsam Jreikous / / Dr Maissa Abou al Shamet/ Dr Mohamed Al Shihabi (République arabe syrienn) Éléments (3.1, 3.2, 4.1, 5.1) • Dr. Mervat Fouad (République arabe d'Égypte) Éléments (6.1,7.1)	Presentation of the Agenda Items for the 8th Session of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH8) Presented by: • Eng. Issam Krid (Tunisia) Item (2.1) • Dr Balsam Jreikous / Dr Maissa Abou al Shamet/ Dr Mohamed Al Shihabi (Arab Republic of Syria) Items (3.1, 3.2, 4.1, 5.1) • Dr Mervat Fouad (Arab Republic of Egypt. Items (6.1, 7.1)	عرض بنود جدول الأعمال الدورة الثامنة للجنة الدستور الغذائي المعنية بالتوابل وأعشاب الطهي CCSCH8 يقدم من قبل: • المهندس عصام كريد (الجمهورية التونسية) البند (2.1) • الدكتورة بلسم جريكوس والدكتورة ميساء أبو شمات والدكتور محمد الشهابي (الجمهورية العربية السورية) البنود (3.1، 3.2، 4.1، 5.1) • الدكتورة ميرفت فؤاد (جمهورية مصر العربية) البنود (6.1، 7.1)	البند الثاني

Actualités et examen des prochaines réunions de coordination régionales dans le cadre des préparatifs de la 48^e session du Codex Alimentarius • Coordinateur du CCNE	Updates and Review of Upcoming Regional Coordination Meetings in Preparation for the 48th Session of the Codex Alimentarius. • CCNE Coordinator	المستجدات واستعراض الاجتماعات التنسيقية الإقليمية القادمة في إطار التحضيرات للدورة 48 لهيئة الدستور الغذائي. • المنسق الإقليمي للشرق الأدنى	البند الثالث
--	--	--	---------------------

Item 2: Presentation of the Agenda Items for the 8th Session of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH8)

1. Presentation of Agenda Item 2.1 of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH8) concerning the “Country of Harvest” by the Republic of Tunisia

Eng. Issam Krid presented Agenda Item 2.1 of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH8) concerning the “Country of Harvest,” which corresponds to the response to Circular Letter No. 2025/07-FL.

He noted that responses to this circular had been received from 19 countries and three observers, recommending that Arab and Near East delegations could support making the declaration of the country of harvest on spice labeling optional rather than mandatory. He highlighted that this item could be applied on a voluntary basis, allowing legislative authorities to implement it if desired, as an indicator of quality and a factor attracting consumer interest. He also pointed out that making the country of harvest mandatory could be difficult to enforce and might increase the likelihood of improper practices.

Following this, the United Arab Emirates emphasized the importance of declaring the country of harvest, considering that mandatory labeling is a logical approach that enhances transparency in trade and promotes fair practices. This position was supported by Mr. Ahmed Al-Basha, the Coordinator of the Arab Codex Initiative, and representatives from the Kingdom of Morocco, the Syrian Arab Republic, the State of Libya, and the Republic of Yemen.

The discussion on this item concluded with a recommendation from Dr. Intisar, urging member countries to actively participate in the electronic working groups to express their views on contentious issues, reflecting the perspectives of the region and contributing to the development of a unified Arab position.

2. Presentation of Agenda Item 3.1 of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH8) – Syrian Arab Republic

Dr. Mohamed Al-Shihabi presented Agenda Item 3.1 of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH8) concerning the vanilla specification. He explained that the draft vanilla specification had been submitted to Step 7, retaining the term “Vanilla Caviar” as a name recognized in international trade, with clarification in the specification that it refers to vanilla pulp and seeds. He also distinguished between the terms “ground vanilla” and “powdered vanilla” as two separate types, specifying differences in moisture limits and characteristics for each type.

Additionally, the optional use of anti-caking agents in powdered vanilla was supported, in line with the General Standard for Food Additives (GSFA), to meet technical requirements while maintaining product safety.

Regarding the naming of vanilla, the Arab Republic of Egypt proposed labeling it as “vanilla pulp and seeds” with “Vanilla Caviar” in parentheses or including the phrase “also known as Vanilla Caviar.”

3. Presentation of Agenda Item 3.2 of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH8) – Syrian Arab Republic

Dr. Balsam Jreikous presented Agenda Item 3.2 of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH8) concerning the requirements for large cardamom. In her presentation, she endorsed the recommendations, which included adopting the draft specification, addressing the issues identified in parentheses and finding solutions for them, and, finally, having experts review the chemical and physical characteristics.

4. Presentation of Agenda Item 4.1 of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH8) – Syrian Arab Republic

Eng. Maisaa Abo Alshamat presented Agenda Item 4.1 of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH8) concerning cinnamon requirements.

Regarding the recommendations, the Syrian Arab Republic proposed approving the advancement of the draft specification to the next step (Step 5) and adopting clarifications on the differences between Ceylon cinnamon and Chinese cinnamon. It also recommended clarifying and distinguishing between dry and dehydrated cinnamon, as well as defining peeled and unpeeled products in accordance with Codex standards. The Syrian Arab Republic expressed its support for retaining the term “Country of Harvest” in the specification as an element that enhances transparency and credibility and limits misleading practices in trade, a position supported by the Kingdom of Morocco.

Following this, the representative of the United Arab Emirates expressed a preference for maintaining a single cinnamon specification and including any classifications or features within it, a position supported by the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Republic of Tunisia, and the Kingdom of Morocco.

The Syrian Arab Republic also expressed its readiness to review and endorse its recommendations, provided that member countries agree to maintain a unified cinnamon specification.

5. Presentation of Agenda Item 5.1 of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH8) – Syrian Arab Republic

Eng. Maisaa Abo Alshamat presented Agenda Item 5.1 of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH8) concerning coriander requirements. She expressed support for advancing the draft specification for coriander seeds to the next step and endorsed aligning the physical categories and chemical grades to ensure consistency and avoid confusion in trade and regulatory procedures. She also recommended establishing clear limits for moisture and essential oils, ensuring the standard’s consistency with Codex and ISO standards.

In response, the Arab Republic of Egypt suggested noting in the coriander specification that, while it is referred to as coriander seeds, scientifically it represents the fruit.

6. Presentation of Agenda Item 6.1 of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH8) – Arab Republic of Egypt

Dr. Mervat Fouad presented Agenda Item 6.1 of the codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH8) concerning sweet marjoram. A recommendation was made for this item to advance the draft specification to the next step as presented in the annex, noting that the values in Tables 2 and 3 still require further discussion.

7. Presentation of Agenda Item 7.1 of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH8) – Arab Republic of Egypt

Dr. Mervat Fouad presented Agenda Item 7.1 of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH8), which is a discussion paper concerning the trade of spices and culinary herbs.

The analysis of this discussion paper addressed several points, including that, despite the increase in global demand for spices and culinary herbs, most trade data remain unreported or are aggregated under broad categories such as “spices” or “culinary herbs,” making them insufficient to meet Codex requirements. The presentation also highlighted the challenges in data collection and standard-setting, with a proposal to establish an electronic working group to address the data gaps.

Item 3: Updates and Review of Upcoming Regional Coordination Meetings in Preparation for the 48th Session of the Codex Alimentarius.

The team discussed the ongoing preparations for the Forty-Eighth Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC48), tentatively scheduled for 16–21 October. Participants highlighted the importance of advance coordination on the agenda items to ensure effective participation of member countries in the Commission’s deliberations.

Additional coordinating meetings with other regions are being planned to exchange views on the session’s agenda items and to promote alignment among regional positions.

Member countries were reminded of the necessity to engage and respond to electronic communications directed to them as part of the follow-up on ongoing activities within Codex initiatives.

Lastly, the following recommendations were adopted:

All scientific documents and presentations shared during the meeting are to be uploaded to the interactive platform of the Arab Codex Initiative at www.Arabcodex.com as well as on the website of the Global Food Regulatory Science Society (GFoRSS) <https://gforss.org/networks/arabcodex/>

