

49th Joint Coordination Meeting of Arab and CCNE Codex Contact Points

**PREPARATION FOR THE 49th SESSION OF THE
CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMITTEE ON FOOD LABELLING (CCFL)**

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May 5, 2026

Agenda item 2.1: THE USE OF “COUNTRY OF HARVEST” IN ADDITION TO THE MANDATORY DECLARATION OF COUNTRY OF ORIGIN IN FOOD LABELLING OF SPICES

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Background

- Start at the **CAC 40 on 2017**, when the labelling provisions for 6 CCSCH draft standards (dried garlic at step 5/8) and (oregano, basil, ginger, cloves, saffron at step 5), were referred to CCFL for endorsement.
- **CCFL45 (2019)**: Back to CCSCH for further consideration that the phrase “Country of Origin/Country of Harvest” was not clear whether should be declared both or only one was required.
- **CCSCH5 (2021)**:
 - Forward 5 standards (oregano, ginger, basil, nutmeg and cloves) to CAC for adoption at Step 8, and to CCFL46 (2021) for endorsement, with “Country of Origin” being mandatory and “Country of Harvest” being optional.
 - Saffron standard returned to Step 6 for further discussion and reach a consensus in CCSCH5

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➤ CCFL46 (2021):

- Endorsed the labelling provisions in the 5 draft standards (oregano, ginger, cloves, basil and nutmeg) at Step 8, with “Country of Origin” being mandatory and “Country of Harvest” being optional.

➤ CCSC6 (2022):

- Chair proposed that labelling provisions should remain as proposed by the EWG, and therefore the country of harvest shall be declared mandatory.
- Forwarded the standard for adoption at Step 8, and endorsement by CCFL and the Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling (CCMAS).
- **Three delegations expressed reservations.**

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➤ CAC 45 (2022):

- Adopted the saffron at Step 8, subject to endorsement by CCFL of the labelling provisions on country of origin and country of harvest.
- Two members had reservations, noting that the provision for the mandatory declaration of country of harvest was contrary to the advice provided to CCSCH by CCFL.

➤ CCFL47 (2023):

- For the draft standard of dried saffron. Divergent opinions were once again voiced by members on this issue, mandatory country of harvest labelling).
- Refer the labelling provisions to CCSCH for reconsideration, and to clarify the:
- Distinction between COO and COH, why the COH should be mandatory, and how such a declaration would be beneficial for fraud prevention.

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- **CCSCH7 (2024):**
 - The definition for “country of origin” as contained in (CXS 1-1985) was generally broad and applicable to all foods.
 - No definition in Codex for “country of harvest”, however, the glossary of terms facilitate CCSCH work. The country of origin and the country of harvest may be the same for many herbs and spices, these are two different terms.
- **CCFL48 (2024):**
 - CCFL48 was unable to reach consensus to endorse mandatory declaration of country of harvest and thus referred the matter to **CCEXEC87(2024)** and **CAC47(2024)** for consideration.

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➤ CAC47 (2025):

1. Requested the Codex Secretariat to issue a (CL) seeking potential solutions for the use of COH in food labelling of spices
2. Established an (EWG), reporting to CCFL, with review the information gathered from comments to the CL, and discussions at CCSC & CCFL, and CAC47 to:
 - Provide potential options which recognize Members perspectives on the use of COH in addition to the mandatory declaration of country of origin (COO) in food labelling of spices, including saffron and vanilla;
 - Review options for a definition for COH and consider how it differs from COO;
 - consider whether any clarifications are needed to the application of labelling provisions; and
 - Prepare a report for consideration of CCFL49

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Analysis

The information gathered from the specific questions posed in both the **CL and EWG** have enabled the identification of **3 key labelling issues** affecting discussions on country of harvest labelling:


- a) Inconsistent interpretation and application of country-of-origin labelling**
- b) Lack of specificity in Codex texts regarding blends of spices of the same type from different origins**
- c) Interest by some Members in using labelling for marketing based on qualities or characteristics associated with origin.**

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Analysis

a) Inconsistent interpretation and application of country-of-origin labelling

- The purpose of this question was to better understand where the COO of spices and culinary herbs may differ from the COH, and used in addition to the mandatory labelling of country of origin.
- The general consensus: Given the overall agreement of EWG members on the relevance of “change in nature” to clarifying labelling provision. Based of This consensus  The EWG then proposed tow options to achieve this :
 - a. CCFL developing additional guidance about process what would change the nature of the food and therefore the country of origin for the purposes of labeling.
 - b. CCFL providing advice to CCSCH to support the development of guidance within its texts.

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a) Inconsistent interpretation and application of country-of-origin labelling:

Summary of views

	Supports option a)	supportive option b)	Hybrid approach	Other
views	Some member supported the development of general guidance by CCFL applicable to all foods.	Some member this may unnecessarily broaden the scope of the work.	Some suggested a hybrid approach that reflects each Committee’s expertise	-Some members suggested that CCSCCH could benefit from capacity building workshop or side events -CCFL could provide targeted guidance from its existing texts for CCSCCH
Raisons	They believe this is where guidance could be helpful in distinguishing between the country of origin and country of harvest	This have unintended consequences on other commodities, and instead suggested	To avoids conflict and duplication between committees	-To increasing understanding on horizontal Codex texts that apply to all food. - To apply to the high-value spices for which there may be existing labelling issues or concerns (<i>Exemple:HC can be recognized as a claim, for which CCFL already has guidance (CXG 1-1979)</i>)
Implementation method	Development of a new general guidance by CCFL and apply to all foods.	The CCSCCH and other commodity committees have the expertise on the processes that affect those specific commodities and their nature	The CCFL identifying general principles and labelling implications to ensure consistency with the GSLPF (CXS-1-1985), and that CCSCCH defines what constitutes a “change in the nature” in the context of spices.	

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a) Inconsistent interpretation and application of country-of-origin labelling

A general agreement emerged that in the case of saffron, the country of origin is the same as the country of harvest (+ A member proposed that this could be addressed in the dried saffron Codex standard with a footnote stating that for the purposes of labeling the country of origin is the country of harvest).

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b) Lack of specificity in Codex texts regarding blends of spices of the same type from different origins

CL’s question: if they thought there was sufficient Codex guidance on the labelling of a single type of spice mixed from more than one origin?

General remark: The mainly comments to the CL indicated that blending of a single spice from multiple countries presents unique considerations regarding origin labelling.

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Specific views	View 1: Many members consider this as a gap in existing country of origin labelling texts	View 2: While some members believe that existing general requirements are sufficient or do not preclude the labelling of multiple origins when that is the case.	Some members pointed out that this gap applies to more foods than spices and that other single types of foods from multiple origins can be blended prior to packaging, such as honey and grains. Given this, some members suggested CCFL was best placed to address this issue broadly
General recognition	Codex texts are not explicit about the labelling of blends of a single type of food from multiple origin.		

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b) Lack of specificity in Codex texts regarding blends of spices of the same type from different origins: Others suggestions in the EWG:

- Included consideration of new work by CCFL to add specificity to the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) on the labelling of blends of a single type of food from multiple origins, noting that this would be applicable to all foods.
- CCFL could also provide guidance to CCSCCH on how to label such spices while remaining consistent with the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985).
- The blends of different spices (for example a saffron and paprika blend) would not fall under the dried saffron Codex standard or other CCSCCH standards. Therefore, these products are not in scope of these discussions and would be subject to the horizontal labelling requirements of the GSLPF (CXS 1-1985) as well as the General Guidelines on Claims (CXG 1-1979) and other applicable Codex standards.

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c) Interest by some Members in marketing based on qualities associated with origin:

The EWG’S Question: to comment on the appropriate tool to address interests in promoting foods from specific countries or regions, and to what extent this falls within the mandate of Codex.

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c) Interest by some Members in marketing based on qualities associated with origin:

- Some members indicated the interest in country of harvest labeling **as a means to promote products from certain desirable regions**: That promoting foods from specific countries, regions or heritage for economic advantage falls outside the Codex mandate (By voluntary labeling or Geographical Indication, by national or regional frameworks, or by international bodies other than Codex)
- Some members indicated **their support for mandatory country of harvest labelling as a tool to promote foods from specific regions** (such declarations would be subject to the General Guidelines on Claims (CXG 1-1979).

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Conclusions

1. CCFL is the CAC’s subsidiary body established to prepare standards and related texts on food labeling and is well placed to support commodity committees to understand food labelling in general.
2. All labelling information, whether mandatory or voluntary, is subject to the General Principles outlined in Section 3 of the General Standard on the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods (CXS 1-1985), which prohibits false, misleading, and deceptive labeling.
3. When considering the labelling of foods, it is important to understand at what point the food came into being in the form in which it is packaged and sold to consumers, as this step determines the COO for the purposes of labeling.
4. When the COH and the COO of a spice is the same, one statement of origin is sufficient as it avoids redundancy and potential confusion and minimizes burden on industry.

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Conclusions

5. When COO and COH of a spice or culinary herb are different, the country of origin is the country in which the change of nature occurred.
6. The meaning of COH is generally understood to be the country where a spice or culinary herb is grown and harvested. And the root issue is not the understanding of the term, but rather the implications for labelling when COO and COH are the same, and when they are not.
7. Products may exist in international trade that are blends of a single type of spice or culinary herb from multiple origins, packaged together.
8. In general, optional or voluntary statements or claims can be made on food labels, provided that such statements are not false or misleading.
9. Labelling provisions are established by Codex with the intent to address health and safety matters and fair practices in trade. Codex does not establish labelling requirements related to promoting food or for competitive benefit of food business operators or producing countries.

Recommendations :

2 General recommendations for all conclusions

- ✓ Consider referring to CCSCCH the above conclusions 1-9, which outline key labelling principles to consider when determining commodity specific labelling related to origin.
- ✓ Consider promoting a workshop or side session at CCSCCH on CCFL labelling texts, including conclusions 1-9.

Recommendations

3 Specific recommendations for conclusions 3,6 and 7

Conclusion	Recommendation
3-When considering the labelling of foods, it is important to understand at what point the food came into being in the form in which it is packaged and sold to consumers, as this step determines the COO for the purposes of labeling	Noting conclusion 3, consider if this information offers sufficient guidance on what constitutes a “change of nature” of a food, and therefore the country of origin for the purposes of labelling.
6-The meaning of COH is generally understood to be the country where a spice or culinary herb is grown and harvested. And the root issue is not the understanding of the term, but rather the implications for labelling when COO and COH are the same, and when they are not.	Noting conclusion 6 that summarizes EWG members’ understanding of the meaning of country of harvest, conclude that if country of harvest is to be defined, CCFL is not the suitable Codex body to do so.
7-Products may exist in international trade that are blends of a single type of spice or culinary herb from multiple origins, packaged together.	Noting conclusion 7, consider exploring possible work to clarify the labelling of blends of a single spice from multiple origins. An interested Member could prepare a proposal for inclusion in the Agenda Item on Future Work.

1 Recommendation related to the standard for dried floral parts –saffron (CX351-2022)

- ❑ Consider whether the information gathered through the EWG can be used to finalize the provisions of Section 8.2 of the Standard for dried floral parts – saffron (CXS 351-2022), and if so, provide any specific text proposals.

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(2) Recommendation's Experts related to the CCSCCH committee:

❑ The Standard for dried floral parts – saffron (CXS 351-2022),

➔ *We believe that including the mandatory country of harvest in the labeling alongside the country of origin remains contingent upon a deeper understanding of the practical implications of this approach compared to the objectives of the Codex Alimentarius. Therefore, capacity building is urgently needed to clarify the use of existing definitions and to further elaborate the general labeling standards or, where necessary, the individual standards of the CCSCCH Committee.*

