



Report of the 48th Meeting of the Codex Contact Points of Arab and Near East Countries

Chaired by the CCNE Coordinator

As part of the preparations for the 56th session of the Codex Committee on Food Additives (CCFA56), scheduled to be held from 13 to 17 April 2026 in Chongqing, People's Republic of China, a coordination meeting was held on Tuesday, 7 April 2026 for the Codex Contact Points of the Arab countries and the Near East region. The meeting, chaired by the Regional Coordinator, was conducted virtually and was 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. Republic of Iraq
6. Republic of the Sudan
7. Republic of Tunisia
8. State of Libya
9. State of Qatar
10. Sultanate of Oman
11. Syrian Arab Republic
12. United Arab Emirates
13. Republic of Yemen

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-Gharibi, Regional Coordinator for the Near East, welcomed the participants and expressed her appreciation for their active participation and commitment to strengthening regional cooperation. She noted that the meeting was convened as part of the preparations for the 56th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Additives (CCFA56), emphasizing the importance of regional coordination and the harmonization of positions among the countries of the region.

She also highlighted the pivotal role played by the Codex Committee on Food Additives and expressed her expectation that the meeting would lead to constructive and fruitful discussions, contributing to the achievement of its objectives and strengthening the region's effective participation in the work of the Committee.

She then gave the floor to Eng. Ahmed Eddouaicer, Coordinator of the Arab Codex Initiative, who opened his remarks by greeting the participants and expressing his wishes for peace across the Arab region. He welcomed the representatives of the Near East countries and the experts responsible for analyzing the agenda items of the 56th Session of the Committee, scheduled to be held on 13 April 2026 in the People's Republic of China. He highlighted the importance of the technical and scientific issues included on the agenda, particularly those related to the safety assessment of food additives, the review of maximum permitted levels, and the updating of relevant specifications.

He emphasized that the analysis of these agenda items provides an important opportunity to strengthen regional coordination and harmonize perspectives on priority issues that have a direct impact on international and regional trade in food products. He stressed the importance of exchanging expertise and coordinating Arab positions in order to enhance the effective participation of the Arab countries and the countries of the region in the work of the Committee.

He also underscored the importance of engaging relevant stakeholders, including the private sector, recognizing its pivotal role in enriching technical discussions and supporting effective decision-making that ensures consumer health protection while maintaining practical applicability.

He concluded by affirming that the meeting represents an important milestone in strengthening cooperation among government authorities, the private sector, and other stakeholders, and in developing common approaches that support the strategic objectives of the region. He wished the participants every success in their deliberations and expressed his hope that the meeting would produce constructive outcomes.

Eng. Ahmed Al-Basha, Head of the Standards Department at the Gulf Standardization Organization (GSO), then took the floor. He opened his remarks by welcoming the participants and expressing his pleasure at taking part in the meeting. He also extended his appreciation to the Regional Secretariat for its efforts in organizing these meetings. Furthermore, he commended the efforts of the Member Countries in preparing the working papers for the meeting of the Codex Committee on Food Additives, emphasizing the importance of cooperation and coordination among all parties.

He concluded his remarks by wishing everyone success and expressing his hope for the continued spirit of joint cooperation and strengthened coordination among the Member Countries.

This was followed by remarks from Eng. Naela Al-Hinai, Coordinator of the Expert Working Group, who welcomed the participants and expressed her pleasure in taking part in the Forty-Eighth Meeting of the Codex Contact Points of the Arab Countries and the Near East Region for the Codex Committee on Food Additives (CCFA).

At the outset of her remarks, she extended her sincere appreciation to the Expert Working Group on Food Additives for their dedicated efforts and tireless work in analyzing the agenda items and preparing the technical presentations. She emphasized that their scientific and technical contributions had formed a fundamental pillar in supporting the work of the Near East Region and in preparing for the 56th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Additives (CCFA56).

She further noted that the team's thorough analyses, constructive discussions, and objective recommendations reflected a strong sense of responsibility. She also indicated that the Expert Working Group comprised 19 members from countries across the region, including Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Oman, Qatar, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, and Yemen. During the working group meetings, the priority agenda items for the region were identified based on the evaluations submitted by the National Codex Contact Points and subsequently allocated among the members of the Expert Working Group for detailed analysis.

She also highlighted that a bilateral technical consultation was held with Singapore, during which the topics discussed by the Electronic Working Group on the development of guidelines for the food safety assessment of cell culture media components used in the production of cell-based foods were reviewed. The consultation also covered the proposed work outputs, the related technical considerations, and the comments submitted by the Near East Region.

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

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Remarques d'ouverture et adoption de l'ordre du jour • Coordinateur du CCNE • Coordinateur de l'Initiative Arabe du Codex • Organisation de normalisation du Conseil de coopération du Golfe (GSO)	Opening Remarks and adoption of the agenda • CCNE Coordinator • Arab Codex Initiative Coordinator • Gulf Cooperation Council Standardization Organization (GSO)	كلمات افتتاحية واعتماد جدول الأعمال • المنسق الإقليمي للشرق الأدنى • منسق المبادرة العربية للدستور الغذائي • هيئة التقييس لدول مجلس التعاون الخليجية	البند الأول
Remarques des coordinateurs du groupe de travail d'experts des pays arabes et de la région du Proche-Orient, concernés	Remarks by Coordinators of the Expert Working Group from the Arab countries and the Near East region,	كلمة منسقي فريق عمل الخبراء من الدول العربية وإقليم الشرق الأدنى	البند الثاني

par le Comité du Codex sur les additifs alimentaires (CCFA).	concerned with the Codex Committee on Food Additives (CCFA).	المختص بلجنة الدستور الغذائي المعنية بالمواد المضافة إلى الأغذية (CCFA).	
Analyse des points à l'ordre du jour de la 56^e session du Comité du Codex sur les additifs alimentaires (CCFA) : • Élément 3.B: République arabe d'Égypte, Royaume hachémite de Jordanie • Élément 4.A: République arabe d'Égypte • Élément 4.B: République du Yémen • Élément 5.B: État de Libye • Élément 8: République tunisienne, République arabe syrienne • Élément 10: République tunisienne, État du Qatar.	Analysis of the agenda items of the 56th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Additives (CCFA): • Item 3.B: Arab Republic of Egypt, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan • Item 4.A: Arab Republic of Egypt • Item 4.B: Republic of Yemen • Item 5.B: State of Libya • Item 8: Tunisian Republic, Syrian Arab Republic • Item 10: Tunisian Republic, State of Qatar	تحليل بنود جدول اعمال الدورة 56 للجنة الدستور الغذائي المعنية بالمواد المضافة إلى الأغذية (CCFA) : • البند 3.ب : جمهورية مصر العربية، المملكة الاردنية الهاشمية • البند 4.أ : جمهورية مصر العربية • البند 4.ب: الجمهورية اليمنية • البند 5.ب: دولة ليبيا • البند 8: الجمهورية التونسية، الجمهورية العربية السورية • البند 10: الجمهورية التونسية، دولة قطر	البند الثالث
Session de discussion ouverte entre les représentants du secteur industriel et les points de contact, animée par le coordonnateur régional pour le Proche-Orient	Open discussion session between representatives of the industrial sector and contact points, moderated by the Regional Coordinator for the Near East.	جلسة نقاشية مفتوحة بين ممثلي القطاع الصناعي ونقاط الاتصال بإدارة المنسق الإقليمي للشرق الأدنى	البند الرابع

Item 3: Analysis of the agenda items of the 56th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Additives (CCFA):

❖ Presentation of Agenda Item (3.B) by the Arab Republic of Egypt, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

The Arab Republic of Egypt presented Agenda Item 3(b) concerning the proposed specifications for the identity and purity of food additives arising from the 100th Meeting of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA), submitted for consideration at Step 3 of the Codex procedure. It explained that, during its meeting held in Rome from 10 to 19 June 2025, the Committee evaluated the safety of five food additives and seven processing aids. As a result, full specifications were prepared for four food additives, while the specifications for two additional food additives were revised. In particular, the maximum level of lead in locust bean gum (INS 410) was reduced from 2 mg/kg to 0.5 mg/kg, especially for products intended

for infants, including infant formula and foods for special medical purposes, in order to strengthen safety levels for vulnerable population groups.

In light of the above, support was expressed for advancing the adoption of the proposed specifications, while emphasizing the importance of ensuring their alignment with the scientific evaluations issued by JECFA and maintaining stringent limits for contaminants, particularly in foods intended for infants and young children.

❖ **Presentation of Agenda Item (4.A) by the Arab Republic of Egypt**

The Arab Republic of Egypt presented Agenda Item 4(a) concerning the adoption and/or revision of maximum levels for food additives and processing aids in Codex standards, based on the relevant documents submitted to the 56th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Additives (CCFA56).

It explained that this agenda item falls within the provisions of the Codex Procedural Manual, which stipulates that all provisions relating to food additives, including processing aids, contained in commodity standards shall be referred to the Codex Committee on Food Additives (CCFA) for consideration before their adoption at the advanced steps of the Codex procedure, without affecting the progress of the commodity standards themselves.

The food additive provisions referred to CCFA56 by several Codex committees for consideration and adoption were also reviewed, including those submitted by the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Asia, the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for the Near East, and the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs. These included regional standards for a number of products such as frozen dumplings, dough, maamoul, as well as certain spices and culinary herbs.

It was further explained that the document focuses on reviewing the consistency of food additive provisions with the General Standard for Food Additives (GSFA), taking into account the technological justification for the use of food additives, safety assessments based on the Acceptable Daily Intake (ADI), and international scientific references, including the evaluations of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA).

The review identified varying degrees of consistency with the GSFA, and the food additive provisions were classified into three main categories: provisions consistent with the Codex General Standard, provisions requiring further clarification, and provisions requiring reconsideration.

In this context, it was emphasized that the proposed amendments are generally intended to support product stability, extend shelf life, improve sensory characteristics, and enhance manufacturing efficiency, while ensuring consistency between the actual use of food additives and food labelling requirements.

With regard to microbial omega-3 oils, a proposal to establish a new food category within the GSFA Food Category System was presented to cover oils and fats of microbial origin, given that no existing category currently accommodates such products. The importance of maintaining the consistency of the food classification structure and avoiding non-systematic classifications was also emphasized.

The discussion also addressed the recent direction of Codex work toward adopting a simultaneous approach that combines the adoption of food additive provisions in commodity standards with corresponding amendments to the GSFA. This approach is intended to strengthen regulatory consistency and avoid discrepancies among Codex standards, while recognizing the challenges associated with limited time available for review and the need for greater coordination among Codex committees. In light of the above, support was expressed for the adoption of food additive provisions that are consistent with the GSFA and supported by adequate scientific justification. Emphasis was also placed on addressing implementation challenges, strengthening consistency between food categories and food additive uses, and continuing to develop the regulatory framework to accommodate emerging food products.

❖ **Presentation of Agenda Item (5.B) by State of Libya**

The State of Libya delivered an analytical presentation on Agenda Item 5(b) concerning proposals for the General Standard for Food Additives (GSFA), as part of the preparations for the 56th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Additives (CCFA56). The presentation covered proposals submitted by several Members, including Japan, the Republic of Korea, the European Union, as well as international organizations. These proposals included the inclusion of new food additives, the revision of existing provisions, and the expansion of permitted uses.

The presentation focused on the analysis of three key food additives: Gardenia Blue (INS 165), Steviol Glycosides (INS 960), and Rosemary Extract (INS 392). It was noted that these proposals were based on the safety evaluations conducted by the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA), together with the technological justifications supporting their use.

The technological benefits of each additive were also reviewed, along with the potential challenges, particularly those related to cumulative exposure levels, the need for ongoing monitoring, and ensuring consistency with similar substances. The presentation concluded by outlining preliminary positions in support of these proposals, while emphasizing the importance of conducting additional exposure assessments, strengthening labelling requirements, and clarifying maximum use levels where appropriate.

❖ Presentation of Agenda Item (8) by Tunisian Republic, Syrian Arab Republic

This agenda item was presented by the Syrian Arab Republic. It addressed Agenda Item 8 concerning the preparation of the Draft Standard for Baker's Yeast at Step 4, based on document CX/FA 26/56/11 prepared by Tunisia and the Syrian Arab Republic. It was explained that the purpose of this draft standard is to develop a Codex standard for baker's yeast that ensures a harmonized product definition, meets food safety and quality requirements, aligns with the General Standard for Food Additives (GSFA), and facilitates international trade. The draft has progressed through several stages, beginning with its submission to the Codex Alimentarius Commission in 2021, followed by its review during sessions of the Codex Committee on Food Additives (CCFA), leading to its approval as new work and the establishment of an Electronic Working Group chaired by China, with France and Türkiye serving as co-chairs.

The scope of the standard covers baker's yeast intended both for direct sale and for use in food manufacturing, recognizing that yeast is a food ingredient rather than a ready-to-eat product. Baker's yeast is defined as a unicellular fungal organism of the species *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, produced through the propagation of pure strains and used as a biological leavening agent in bakery products to generate carbon dioxide and flavor compounds. Baker's yeast is classified into two main types according to its physical form and moisture content: fresh yeast and dry yeast. Fresh yeast includes several forms, such as compressed yeast, crumbled yeast, and liquid yeast, while dry yeast includes active dry yeast, instant dry yeast, and semi-dry yeast, each having specific physical characteristics and methods of use.

With regard to quality factors, the draft specifies moisture content requirements for each type of yeast, in addition to establishing a pH range for liquid yeast. The product consists primarily of yeast, with the possible inclusion of optional ingredients that remain under discussion. The use of certain food additives is permitted in accordance with the GSFA, including antioxidants, emulsifiers, preservatives, and stabilizers, following a functional class approach. Processing aids must comply with the relevant Codex guidelines, and maximum levels for contaminants must conform to the established Codex standards. In addition, the General Principles of Food Hygiene must be followed, and the applicable microbiological criteria must be met. With respect to labelling, the name "yeast" or "baker's yeast" shall be used, provided that it is not misleading, and the relevant standards applicable to non-retail containers shall be observed. Packaging materials must protect the product from contamination, preserve its quality, and be free from any odor.

The presentation concluded that the draft standard reflects the discussions of the Electronic Working Group and the comments submitted by Member Countries, and that it is ready to advance through the Codex procedure. It was therefore

recommended that the Committee consider its adoption and further review, including the amendments related to the General Standard for Food Additives (GSFA).

Item 4: Open discussion session between representatives of the industrial sector and contact points, moderated by the Regional Coordinator for the Near East.

Representatives of the food industry sector were invited to join this discussion session with the aim of strengthening coordination and integration between industry representatives and the Codex Contact Points under the leadership of the Regional Coordinator for the Near East. This approach plays an important role in harmonizing views and facilitating the exchange of expertise and technical observations. It also provided a direct opportunity to discuss the challenges facing the food industry and to present practical proposals that contribute to improving the implementation of food standards and enhancing compliance, thereby supporting the quality and safety of food products while keeping pace with regional and international trade requirements.

During the session, the Secretariat of the Coordinating Committee for the Near East Region delivered a brief presentation on the key outcomes of the Committee's work during previous meetings. The presentation reviewed the preparations for the meeting of the Codex Committee on Food Additives (CCFA56), scheduled to be held in Chongqing, China, from 13 to 17 April 2026. It also outlined the agenda items, including the adoption of the agenda, matters referred by the Codex Alimentarius Commission and its subsidiary bodies, issues related to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), and the outcomes of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA).

The presentation further addressed other technical agenda items, including the proposed specifications for the identity and purity of food additives, the adoption and review of maximum levels for food additives and processing aids, the alignment of food additive provisions in commodity standards, the General Standard for Food Additives (GSFA), proposals for the addition or amendment of food additive provisions, the review of the International Numbering System (INS), the priority list of substances proposed for evaluation, the Draft Standard for Baker's Yeast, proposed working practices, the development of guidelines for the food safety assessment of foods produced using cell culture technology, and the work programme of the Codex Contact Points.

It was also explained that the agenda items of regional importance had been identified, prioritized, and allocated among the Member Countries for analysis. Egypt and Jordan jointly analyzed Agenda Item 3(b), recommending support for the adoption of the proposed specifications while addressing implementation challenges. Egypt analyzed Agenda Item 4 and recommended supporting the proposals and ensuring consistency with the General Standard for Food Additives (GSFA). Yemen analyzed

Agenda Item 4(b), recommending support for harmonization and strengthened coordination. Libya analyzed Agenda Item 5(b), emphasizing support for scientifically based proposals. With regard to Agenda Item 8 on the Draft Standard for Baker's Yeast, Tunisia and the Syrian Arab Republic conducted the analysis and recommended continuing the advancement of the draft through the Codex adoption process. Tunisia and Qatar analyzed Agenda Item 10 and recommended the adoption of the new work proposal, the request for scientific advice, and the establishment of a database.

At the conclusion of the presentation, the floor was opened for representatives of the food industry sector to raise their questions and observations. It was emphasized that the countries responsible for analyzing the respective agenda items would respond to these comments and inquiries, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of the dialogue and strengthening integration between the technical and industrial sectors.

Closing Remarks

Dr. Intisar Al-Gharibi, Regional Coordinator for the Near East, delivered the closing remarks, in which she expressed her sincere appreciation to all participants for their active contributions, which enriched the discussions and reflected a strong commitment to strengthening coordination and joint cooperation among the Member Countries. She also commended the efforts of the Expert Working Groups, the experts of the Arab Codex Initiative, the experts from international organizations, and the representatives of the Arab countries who delivered distinguished presentations on the various agenda items of the 56th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Additives (CCFA56). She emphasized the importance of these efforts in supporting unified regional positions and strengthening the participation of the countries of the region in the work of the Committee.

She also praised the participation of representatives from the food industry sector, recognizing the practical insights they provided, which contributed to enhancing the quality of the meeting's outcomes. In concluding her remarks, she emphasized the importance of following up on the implementation of the recommendations resulting from the meeting and building upon them during the next phase, in order to strengthen the continuity of joint efforts and achieve the desired objectives.

For his part, Eng. Ahmed Eddouaicer delivered the closing remarks, expressing his sincere appreciation to the coordinators and experts of the Expert Working Groups for their dedicated efforts, which contributed to the development of objective outcomes and recommendations. He also thanked the supporting teams responsible for organizing and preparing the meeting, as well as the representatives of the food industry sector for their active participation. He emphasized the importance of the discussions and interventions presented during the meeting in achieving its objectives and stressed the need to follow up on its outcomes during the coming period. He further underscored the importance of continuing to work in a spirit of cooperation and integration

to support the achievement of the common objectives and concluded by wishing everyone continued success and further fruitful cooperation in future meetings.

