



Report of the 49th Meeting of the Codex Contact Points of Arab and Near East Countries

Chaired by the CCNE Coordinator

As part of the preparations for the 49th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL49), scheduled to be held from 11 to 15 May 2026 in Ottawa, Canada, a coordination meeting was held on Tuesday, 5 May 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 Palestine
10. State of Qatar
11. Sultanate of Oman
12. Syrian Arab Republic
13. United Arab Emirates
14. 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, opened the meeting by welcoming the participants to the Forty-Ninth Meeting and expressing her sincere appreciation for their active participation and continued commitment to strengthening food safety and protecting consumer health. She emphasized that these meetings serve as an important platform for exchanging views and expertise and for discussing the technical and regulatory issues related to the Codex Alimentarius, thereby contributing to the development of food systems and standards and enhancing the efficiency of collaboration among the various stakeholders across the region.

She further stressed the importance of continued coordination, cooperation, and working in a spirit of shared responsibility and partnership to reach scientific recommendations and outcomes that support the intended objectives and respond to emerging developments and challenges in the field of food safety and quality. She also expressed her hope that the meeting would result in constructive discussions and positive outcomes that would further strengthen regional efforts in this field.

She then gave the floor to Eng. Ahmed Eddouaicer, Coordinator of the Arab Codex Initiative, who welcomed the Codex Contact Points of the Arab countries, Dr. Intisar Al-Gharibi, Regional Coordinator for the Near East, as well as all experts and participants. He expressed his pleasure at opening the Forty-Ninth Meeting of the Codex Contact Points of the Arab Countries, held as part of the preparations for the meeting of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL49).

He emphasized that the continued organization of coordination meetings under the activities of the Arab Codex Initiative reflects the commitment of the countries of the region to strengthening coordination, integration, and the harmonization of views and positions on the technical and regulatory issues related to food labelling. He also extended his sincere appreciation to the experts who contributed to the preparation of the technical presentations and the analysis of the agenda items, commending their distinguished efforts, which reflect their expertise and dedication to supporting joint Arab cooperation.

He also expressed his appreciation to the Member Countries that would be presenting analyses of the agenda items, recognizing their important role in enhancing the quality of the meeting's outcomes and enriching the technical discussions. He further commended the efforts of Dr. Intisar Al-Gharibi in coordinating and following up on the preparations, noting the positive impact of her leadership on the success of the meetings. In addition, he acknowledged the continued support provided by the international organizations, the experts of the Arab Codex Initiative, and the Gulf Standardization Organization (GSO) in supporting the Initiative's activities and strengthening regional cooperation.

Eng. Ahmed also referred to the upcoming meeting of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL49), noting that its agenda includes a number of issues of importance to the Arab region as well as many other countries, given their significance in strengthening regulatory frameworks and keeping pace with global developments in the field of food labelling.

In concluding his remarks, he expressed his hope that the meeting would achieve its intended objectives and contribute to strengthening the participation of the countries of the region in the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission in a manner that serves the interests of the Arab peoples and keeps pace with international developments in food safety and food labelling.

Eng. Ahmed Al-Basha, Head of the Standards Department at the Gulf Standardization Organization (GSO), then delivered a welcoming address in which he welcomed Dr. Intisar Al-Gharibi, Regional Coordinator for the Near East, Eng. Ahmed Eddouaicer, the coordinators of the Expert Working Group on the Codex Committee on Food Labelling, and all members and Codex Contact Points participating in the meeting. He expressed his appreciation to Dr. Intisar Al-Gharibi and the coordinators of the Arab Codex Initiative for the invitation to participate, emphasizing the importance of holding coordination meetings in advance and ensuring thorough preparation for the technical committee meetings, particularly in view of the forthcoming meeting of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling scheduled for the following week.

He further noted that he had reviewed the meeting documents and the methodology adopted for preparing conference room documents, commending the decision to share them with all members, as this plays an important role in strengthening institutional knowledge, harmonizing working methods, and enhancing effective participation in the work of the Committee. He concluded by expressing his appreciation to all members and speakers participating in the Forty-Ninth Meeting, wishing them every success and expressing his hope that the deliberations would result in positive outcomes and constructive recommendations that would support the objectives of joint regional cooperation and enhance the effectiveness of the Committee's work.

This was followed by remarks from Dr. Mustafa Sultan, Coordinator of the Expert Working Group, who expressed his sincere appreciation to the Expert Working Group on Food Labelling for their dedicated efforts and tireless work in advancing the objectives of the Codex Alimentarius. He commended their scientific and technical contributions, which have supported the work of the Committee and contributed to strengthening food safety and quality, thereby positively impacting consumer health across the region.

He noted that the technical analyses, constructive discussions, and recommendations prepared by the Expert Working Group reflected a strong sense of responsibility and professional commitment. He explained that 11 countries from the region participated in the work of the Group through 18 experts, and that three meetings were held during which the evaluations submitted by the National Codex Contact Points were reviewed, regional priority agenda items were identified, and the analysis of those items was assigned to the members of the Group.

He added that the prioritization process resulted in the identification of five key agenda items to be presented during the meeting, together with the preparation of detailed technical analyses of those priority items, the review of progress achieved, the development of the related presentations, and the preparation for the coordination meeting of the National Codex Contact Points.

In concluding his remarks, he renewed his appreciation to the Regional Expert Working Group on Food Labelling, wishing everyone continued success and further progress in supporting joint Arab cooperation.

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 • 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 par le Comité du Codex sur l'étiquetage des denrées alimentaires (CCFL).	Remarks by Coordinators of the Expert Working Group from the Arab countries and the Near East region, concerned with the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL).	كلمة منسقي فريق عمل الخبراء من الدول العربية وإقليم الشرق الأدنى المختص بلجنة الدستور الغذائي المعنية بتوسيم الأغذية (CCFL).	البند الثاني
Analyse des points à l'ordre du jour de la 49 ^e session du Comité du Codex sur l'étiquetage des denrées alimentaires (CCFL): • Élément 2.1: République tunisienne, République arabe d'Égypte • Élément 4: État de Libye, République arabe d'Égypte	Analysis of the agenda items of the 49th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL): • Item 2.1: Tunisian Republic, Arab Republic of Egypt. • Item 4: State of Libya, Arab Republic of Egypt.	تحليل بنود جدول أعمال الدورة 49 للجنة الدستور الغذائي المعنية بتوسيم الأغذية (CCFL): • البند 2.1: الجمهورية التونسية جمهورية مصر العربية • البند 4: دولة ليبيا، جمهورية مصر العربية • البند 5: الجمهورية اليمنية، الجمهورية التونسية.	البند الثالث

• Élément 5: République du Yémen, République tunisienne • Élément 6: Émirats arabes unis, État du Qatar, Le Royaume hachémite de Jordanie. • Élément 7: État du Qatar, Royaume de Bahreïn.	• Item 5: Republic of Yemen, Tunisian Republic. • Item 6: United Arab Emirates, State of Qatar, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. • Item 7: State of Qatar, Kingdom of Bahrain.	• البند 6: الامارات العربية المتحدة، دولة قطر ، المملكة الاردنية الهاشمية. • البند 7: دولة قطر، مملكة البحرين.	
Présentation de l'annexe (3) relative à la méthodologie de préparation des documents de salle de conférence (CRD) dans le cadre de l'initiative arabe du Codex Alimentarius.	Presentation of Annex (3) on the methodology followed for the preparation of Conference Room Documents (CRDs) within the framework of the Arab Codex Initiative.	استعراض الملحق (3) الخاص بالمنهجية المتبعة لإعداد وثائق قاعات المؤتمرات (CRDs) ضمن إطار المبادرة العربية للدستور الغذائي.	البند الرابع

Item 3: Analysis of the agenda items of the 49th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL):

❖ Presentation of Agenda Item (2.1) by Tunisian Republic, Arab Republic of Egypt

During the meeting, the analysis of Agenda Item 2.1 concerning the use of the term “country of harvest” in addition to the mandatory declaration of the country of origin in the labelling of spices was presented. The presentation reviewed the historical background of the discussions within the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL) and the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH) since 2017, as well as the developments related to the Codex Standards for saffron and various spices. It also highlighted the key issues discussed by the Electronic Working Group, including the differing interpretations and implementation of country of origin requirements, the lack of clarity in the current provisions regarding spice blends of the same type originating from multiple sources, and the use of origin declarations for promotional and marketing purposes.

The presentation also addressed the main views and proposals submitted by Members, including the need to develop additional guidance to clarify the concept of a “change in the nature of the food”, which determines the country of origin for labelling purposes, and to consider the development of either general or specific guidance to address the labelling of spice blends originating from multiple countries. It was further emphasized that any mandatory or voluntary declarations should be consistent with the Codex General Principles concerning the prevention of misleading or deceptive labelling.

The presentation concluded by outlining the principal conclusions and recommendations, most notably the importance of strengthening capacity building and raising awareness of the horizontal Codex provisions on food labelling, encouraging the organization of workshops or side events within CCSCCH, and emphasizing that any move toward making the declaration of the country of harvest mandatory on food labels still requires a deeper understanding of its practical implications and its consistency with the objectives of the Codex Alimentarius.

❖ **Presentation of Agenda Item (4) by State of Libya, Arab Republic of Egypt.**

The presentation addressed Agenda Item 4 of the agenda for the 49th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL49), concerning the consideration of labelling provisions contained in draft Codex standards submitted by the various commodity committees for adoption. The presentation explained that this agenda item aims to ensure the consistency of labelling requirements with the General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods (CXS 1-1985) and the Standard for the Labelling of Non-Retail Containers of Foods (CXS 346-2021), while allowing for the inclusion of additional product-specific requirements where clearly justified.

The presentation also reviewed the draft standards submitted by several Codex committees, including those for fresh curry leaves, quick frozen dumplings, maamoul, and a number of spices such as vanilla, black cardamom, coriander, and sweet marjoram, in addition to microbial omega-3 oils. It noted that the labelling requirements varied according to the nature of the products. In some cases, they were limited to the basic identification of the product and its origin, while in others they included more detailed information such as storage conditions, type of filling, country of harvest, year of harvest, commercial grade, and compositional information such as the EPA and DHA content.

The presentation indicated that the proposed provisions are largely consistent with Codex principles and contribute to enhancing coordination and harmonization among the various Codex standards. It also noted that expanding detailed labelling requirements may present practical challenges related to implementation and compliance by both competent authorities and the food industry. The presentation therefore recommended supporting the adoption of provisions that are consistent with the applicable general standards, ensuring that any additional requirements are scientifically and technically justified, promoting clarity and simplicity, and avoiding the unnecessary duplication of existing provisions.

❖ **Presentation of Agenda Item (5) by Republic of Yemen, Tunisian Republic.**

The presentation addressed Agenda Item 5 of the agenda for the 49th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL49), concerning the draft Annex to the General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods (CXS 1-1985) on the Guidelines for the Use of Precautionary Allergen Labelling (PAL) at Step 7.

The presentation explained that the draft represents a shift from a precautionary legal approach to a science-based risk management approach, thereby enhancing the protection of consumers with food allergies, promoting greater harmonization in international trade, and reducing the excessive use of precautionary statements on food labels. It further clarified that the scope of the draft is limited to cases of unintended cross-contact with food allergens and does not affect the mandatory declaration requirements for food ingredients.

The presentation also reviewed the evolution of the work in this area, beginning with the absence of an internationally harmonized framework for the management of food allergens prior to 2020, followed by the adoption of the Code of Practice on Food Allergen Management for Food Business Operators (CXC 80-2020), and culminating in the development of the current guidelines through a Joint Electronic Working Group. It explained that the ongoing technical discussions focus on several key issues, most notably the establishment of reference doses for food allergens, the determination of the circumstances under which precautionary allergen labelling should be applied, and the requirements and rules governing the presentation of precautionary statements on food labels.

The presentation emphasized that the use of precautionary allergen labelling should be based on risk assessment and should not replace Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), while limiting the use of the statement "May contain." It also noted that reference doses have been established for certain food allergens, while allowing limited flexibility for national competent authorities.

With regard to the proposed approach, the presentation recommended that precautionary statements be displayed clearly and in close proximity to the list of ingredients, that terminology be harmonized, that specific provisions be applied to products that are not required to bear an ingredient list, and that awareness-raising and training activities be strengthened.

The presentation concluded that the draft represents a significant step forward in the global regulation of food allergen labelling. However, it also recognized that its implementation may present challenges, particularly in developing countries, thereby necessitating transitional periods, technical assistance, and capacity-building to facilitate effective compliance.

❖ **Presentation of Agenda Item (6) by United Arab Emirates, State of Qatar, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.**

This agenda item addressed the developments in the work of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling concerning the labelling of prepackaged foods in composite packaging formats, including multipacks and joint presentation, within the framework of the revision and updating of the General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods (CXS 1-1985). The presentation was based on the discussions and decisions arising from the Forty-Seventh and Forty-Eighth Sessions of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL47 and CCFL48). It explained that the work aims to support effective participation in CCFL49, strengthen technical preparedness for Agenda Item 6, facilitate the development of coordinated national and regional positions, and identify aspects requiring further clarification to ensure consistent implementation.

The presentation explained that the current developments seek to address the regulatory ambiguity surrounding the application of the general principles for the labelling of these complex packaging formats. It noted that differences in interpretation among countries have arisen due to the lack of sufficient detail in the existing provisions, particularly with regard to the placement of mandatory information, ingredient declarations, the declaration of net quantities, and the indication of date marking.

It further noted that the proposed provisions are intentionally flexible in order to achieve a balance between harmonization and practical implementation. However, this flexibility may also result in differences in national implementation and reduce the overall level of international consistency.

With respect to ingredient declarations, the presentation explained that the draft text permits the use of either separate ingredient lists or a single consolidated ingredient list. This represents a compromise between the differing views of Members but requires clearer guidance to avoid inconsistent interpretations, particularly in cases involving the redistribution of products.

Regarding the declaration of quantities, the draft adopts a flexible approach that allows the declaration of the total net content of the package, the net content of each individual unit, or both. This approach provides greater flexibility for manufacturers. However, several Members noted that it may affect consumers' ability to compare products easily and may result in variations in the way information is presented. The presentation also emphasized the importance of using the earliest date marking among the individual units contained within the package as a measure to enhance consumer protection and reduce the potential for misleading practices, while noting the need for further clarification on how this approach should be applied in cases involving different types of date markings or dates related to food quality and food safety.

With regard to definitions, it was agreed not to introduce new definitions for multipacks or joint presentation, but instead to clarify their scope and labelling requirements within the proposed regulatory provisions, in order to avoid any unintended interpretative or regulatory consequences that might arise from modifying the existing definitions.

The discussions concluded by noting that these amendments represent a positive step toward improving the clarity of the regulatory framework governing the labelling of prepackaged foods marketed in these new presentation formats. They are expected to contribute to greater consistency in implementation and enhanced consumer protection, while recognizing that further technical discussions remain necessary on certain implementation details to ensure effective and practical application across different regulatory systems.

❖ **Presentation of Agenda Item (7) by State of Qatar, Kingdom of Bahrain.**

The presentation addressed Agenda Item 7 of the agenda for the 49th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL49), concerning the draft Guidelines on the Application of Food Labelling Requirements in Emergency Situations (CX/FL 26/49/7). The draft aims to provide a guidance framework that allows for the flexible application of certain food labelling requirements during emergency situations that result in significant disruptions to food supply chains, while ensuring the continued availability of safe and adequate food without compromising consumer safety or resulting in misleading labelling.

The presentation explained that the draft allows competent authorities to adopt temporary regulatory flexibilities based on risk assessment where necessary, provided that such measures are justified, proportionate to the exceptional circumstances, and limited to the period required to address the consequences of the emergency. It emphasized that food safety remains the highest priority and that these flexibilities do not constitute a permanent relaxation of regulatory requirements. The scope of the draft covers both prepackaged foods and non-retail containers, and it permits the application of such flexibilities in international trade, provided that the importing country gives its prior approval.

The presentation further noted that the draft guidelines emphasize the temporary nature of these regulatory flexibilities, the need to preserve fair competition, and the importance of effective communication with relevant stakeholders and the public. They also recognize the possibility of using appropriate technological solutions to provide food information where necessary. The presentation also highlighted the particular relevance of this agenda item for the countries of the Arab region, given that many of them rely heavily on imported food and are vulnerable to crises and disruptions in food supply chains. It further

referred to a number of observations concerning the need to clarify certain implementation concepts and to ensure the continued availability of essential food safety information, particularly allergen declarations, date marking, and instructions for use, in a language that enables consumers to understand the information clearly.

The presentation concluded by noting that the regional position supports the draft guidelines in principle, while calling for further clarification of key concepts, the establishment of a mandatory minimum set of information requirements, the provision of non-digital alternatives for conveying food information, and the strengthening of notification and traceability mechanisms during emergency situations.

Item 4: Presentation of Annex (3) on the methodology followed for the preparation of Conference Room Documents (CRDs) within the framework of the Arab Codex Initiative.

Annex (3), concerning the methodology adopted for the preparation of Conference Room Documents (CRDs) within the framework of the Arab Codex Initiative, was presented by the Secretariat of the Coordinating Committee for the Near East.

The presentation explained that the preparation of harmonized CRDs is a voluntary process intended to support the development of coordinated regional positions based on scientific evidence, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of the participation of the countries of the region in the work of the Codex Alimentarius.

The methodology is based on a progressive consultative process that begins with the identification of technical priorities by the Regional Expert Working Groups in accordance with the approved work plan. This is followed by the presentation of the findings and recommendations during regional coordination meetings with the objective of reaching common positions. The designated facilitators then prepare a draft CRD and circulate it to the Expert Working Group for review and comments before forwarding it to the Member Countries to conduct their national consultations and complete the necessary approval procedures for those wishing to be listed as co-sponsors of the document. In the final stage, the Conference Room Document (CRD) is submitted to the Codex Secretariat on behalf of the countries officially participating as co-sponsors.

This framework aims to strengthen technical coordination among the Arab countries and the countries of the Near East region and to ensure more organized and effective participation in Codex meetings.

Recommendations

I. Technical Recommendations

- Support the adoption of provisions that are consistent with the applicable Codex General Standards, while ensuring clarity and providing appropriate justification for any additional requirements included in draft commodity standards.
- Support the adoption of the science-based risk management approach to precautionary allergen labelling (PAL), while providing transitional periods and technical assistance for developing countries.
- Support the continued development of provisions relating to the labelling of multipacks and joint presentation to ensure harmonized implementation and consistency among countries.
- Support the draft Guidelines on the Application of Food Labelling Requirements in Emergency Situations, while establishing a mandatory minimum set of information requirements and ensuring the availability of such information in Arabic.
- Support the strengthening of notification and traceability mechanisms during emergency situations to ensure the safety of food products and the continuity of food supplies.
- Support the strengthening of national and regional capacity-building in the field of food labelling and the implementation of Codex requirements.

II. General Recommendations

- Strengthen regional coordination and harmonize Arab positions on the agenda items of the 49th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL49).
- Continue the preparation of joint technical analyses through the Regional Expert Working Groups to enhance the technical preparedness of the Member Countries.
- Support the voluntary use of harmonized Conference Room Documents (CRDs), subject to the agreement of the Member Countries, to present coordinated regional positions.
- Continue cooperation among the Member Countries and the experts of the Arab Codex Initiative to strengthen the effective participation of the Arab region in the work of the Codex Alimentarius.

Closing Remarks

At the conclusion of the meeting, Eng. Ahmed Eddouaicer expressed his sincere appreciation to all participants for their valuable interventions and contributions, which enriched the discussions and supported the achievement of the meeting's objectives. He commended the high level of professionalism and commitment reflected in the discussions, as well as the commitment of the countries of the region to strengthening coordination and harmonizing positions within the framework of the work of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling.

He also extended his appreciation to Prof. Samuel Godefroy for his participation and for the distinguished scientific contribution he provided and thanked the experts and participating countries for their efforts in preparing and analyzing the agenda items. He expressed his particular appreciation to the Regional Coordinator, Dr. Intisar Al-Gharibi, for her excellent leadership in chairing the meeting, as well as to the Global Food Regulatory Science Society (GForSS) and the experts of the Arab Codex Initiative.

He concluded his remarks by emphasizing that the meeting's outcomes represent an important step toward strengthening regional coordination and enhancing the effective participation of the Arab region in the work of the Codex Alimentarius, while expressing his aspiration for continued joint cooperation.

The meeting was also concluded with remarks by Eng. Ahmed Al-Basha, who expressed his appreciation to Dr. Intisar Al-Gharibi for her effective management of the meeting and for the positive outcomes that had been achieved. He also commended the efforts of all speakers who contributed by delivering the technical presentations and background papers. He expressed his appreciation to the GForSS team for their technical and organizational support and wished the delegation participating in the forthcoming Committee meeting every success, concluding by thanking all participants for their valuable contributions.

Dr. Intisar Al-Gharibi then delivered the closing remarks, expressing her sincere appreciation to the Expert Working Group for their continuous efforts throughout the previous period, which contributed to achieving these distinguished outcomes. She also acknowledged the important role of the GForSS team in supporting the organization and preparation of the meeting, as well as the efforts of the Coordination Secretariat in the Sultanate of Oman and the coordinators of the Expert Working Group. She further commended the active participation and constructive contributions of the Member Countries, which enriched the discussions, and emphasized the importance of continuing coordination and cooperation among all stakeholders to strengthen regional collaboration and translate the outcomes of the meeting into tangible practical actions. She concluded by wishing everyone continued success.

