

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
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World Health
Organization

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME CODEX COMMITTEE ON FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Twenty-second Session

PROPOSED DRAFT STANDARD FOR FRESH DATES

Prepared by the Chairs of the EWG based on the comments received on CL 2021/86/OCS-FFV

1. SCOPE

The purpose of the standard is to define the quality requirements for fresh dates ~~at the export control stage~~ after preparation and packaging. ~~However, if~~ **When it is** applied at stages following packaging, products may show in relation to the requirements of the standard:

- a slight lack of freshness and turgidity;
- a slight deterioration due to their development and tendency to perish.

The holder/seller of products may not display such products or offer them for sale, or deliver or market them in any manner other than in conformity with this standard. The holder/seller shall be responsible for observing such conformity.

2. DEFINITION OF PRODUCE

This Standard applies to commercial varieties of Fresh Dates (*Phoenix dactylifera L.* from Arecaceae family), to be supplied fresh and whole **fruit to** the consumer in unpitted form after preparation and packaging. **Fresh** Dates intended for industrial purposes are excluded.

3. PROVISIONS CONCERNING QUALITY

3.1 MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

In all classes, subject to the special provisions for each class and the tolerances allowed, the **fresh** dates ~~must~~ **shall** be:

- intact;
- sound; produce affected by rotting or deterioration, which makes it unfit for consumption is excluded;
- clean, practically free of any visible foreign matter;
- free from pests¹, and their debris or excreta;
- Practically free from pest damage **of damage caused by pests**;
- free of unripe fruit, i.e. fruit light in weight, stunted or distinctly rubbery in texture
- free of undeveloped and deformed fruits, as indicated by stunted growth, immature characteristics and naturally absence of pit;
- free of blemished fruit; i.e. fruit scarred, discolored or sunburnt, or having blacknose (noticeable darkening of the head, generally accompanied by severe checking or cracking of the flesh) or side- spot (a very

¹Provisions for pests and damage caused by pests apply without prejudice to the applicable plant protection rules applied by governments in line with the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)

dark patch extending into the flesh) or similar abnormalities affecting an area of not more than 7 mm of total surface area of the fruit;

- free of abnormal external moisture excluding condensation following removal from cold storage; and
- free of foreign smell and/or taste.

The development and condition of the **fresh** dates ~~must~~ **shall** be such as to enable them to:

- withstand transportation and handling; and
- arrive in satisfactory condition at the place of destination.

3.1.1 Minimum maturity requirements

Fresh Date fruits ~~must be sufficiently developed and~~ **shall** have reached an appropriate degree of development and ripeness according to the varieties or cultivar **and/or maturity in accordance with criteria proper to the variety, to the time of harvesting and area in which they are grown.**

- **Fresh** Dates shall have a moisture content ~~not exceeding 85%~~, in accordance with criteria to the variety and stage of harvest/or commercial type and the area in which they are grown. ~~Moisture content should not exceed~~ **The moisture content should be within the following range:** 50-85% for khalal²stage;
- 30-45 % for rutab³stage; and
- [10-25% ~~and less~~ for tamer⁴stage].

3.2 CLASSIFICATION

Classification of fresh dates is optional. When classified, the classification is done in accordance with Section 5 – Provisions concerning Tolerances, fresh dates are classified into the following classes.

- **“Extra” Class, Class I and Class II.”**

Dates are ~~may be classified~~ in three classes defined below **according to the quality tolerances as specified in section 5.1 and as defined below. When unclassified, the provisions for Class II requirements apply.**

3.2.1 “Extra” Class

Dates in this class ~~must be of superior quality and they must be characteristics of the variety and/or commercial type. They must be free from defects, with the exception of very slight superficial defects, provided these do not affect the general appearance of the produce, the quality, the keeping quality and presentation in the package.~~

3.2.2 Class-I

Dates in this class ~~must be of good quality and characteristics of the variety and/or commercial type.~~

The following slight defects, however, may be allowed, provided that they do not affect the general appearance of the produce, the quality, the keeping quality and presentation in the package:

- ~~slight defects in shape and colour; and~~
- ~~slight skin defects such as scratches, and blemishes not exceeding 5% of the total surface area of an individual fruit for maximum 5% of the fruits.~~

The defects ~~must not, in any case, affect the flesh of the produce.~~

3.2.3 Class II

Dates in this class ~~must be of good quality and satisfying the minimum requirements as specified in Section 3.1. The following defects, may be allowed, provided the dates retain their essential characteristics as regards the quality, the keeping quality and presentation in the package:~~

²khalal or basser (partially ripe) stage of date fruits at turning stage, but consumed fresh

³rutab: Means soft or moist fully ripe stage, color changes to light brown and starts to lose weight and accumulate more sugars (mainly reducing sugars) ~~(water content 30-45%).~~

⁴tamer: Full ripe stage of development, more water loss and gains more sugars and depending on variety attains a high sugar-to-water ratio ~~(low moisture content 10-25%).~~

- ~~defects in shape and colour; and~~
- ~~skin defects such as scratches, scars, scrapes, bruises and blemishes shall not exceed 10% of the total surface area of an individual fruit for maximum 10% of the fruits.~~

The defects must not, in any case, affect the flesh of the produce.

4. PROVISIONS CONCERNING SIZING

Fresh Dates may be sized by count or weight of the fruit or in accordance with existing trading practices. When sized in accordance with existing trade practice, the package ~~must~~ **shall** be labelled with the count or size and method used. The following table may be used on an optional basis.

A. When sized by count, size is determined by the number of individual **fresh** date per package.

Size	Number of fresh dates per 500 gm gram	
	Khalal and Rutab	Tamer
A (Extra Large)	≤45	≤55
B (Large)	46-70	56-83
C (Medium)	71-100	84-125
D (Small)	>100	>125

B. When sized by weight, size is determined based on the individual weight of the fruit as mentioned below.

Grade	Weight of individual fruit in the package(gm gram)	
	Khalal and Rutab	Tamer
A (Extra Large)	>11	>9
B (Large)	>7-11	>6-9
C (Medium)	>5-7	>4- 6
D (Small)	≤5	≤4

5. PROVISIONS CONCERNING TOLERANCES

5.1 QUALITY TOLERANCES

At all marketing stages, tolerances in respect of quality shall be allowed in each lot for produce not satisfying the requirements of the class indicated. Produce that fail conformity assessment, may be allowed to be resorted and brought into conformity in accordance with the relevant provisions in the *Guidelines for Food Import Control System* (CXG 47-2003).

S. No.	Quality Tolerance	Tolerances allowed percentage of defective produce by count or weight (<u>Not more than</u>)		
		Extra Class	Class I	Class II*
1.	Total Tolerance not satisfying the quality requirement of which no more than: of which no more than, i.e. individual tolerance.	5	10	10
	Individual Tolerance			
	-undeveloped	1	3	6
	-Damage by pest	3	8	8
	-Blemished/discolored	3	5	7

	-Sour/decayed/moldy	1	1	1
	-living pest	0	0	0
2.	Additional tolerances			
	(a) Size Tolerances-off size from what is indicated/ marked	5	10	10
	(b) Produce belonging to other similar varieties than marked	0	0	0
	(c) Loose dates among stems or clusters	10	15	18
	(d) Mineral impurities g/kg	1	1	1

***Fresh Dates when unclassified, the provisions for Class II requirements apply.**

6. PROVISIONS CONCERNING PRESENTATION

6.1 UNIFORMITY

The contents of each package ~~must~~ **shall** be uniform and contain only dates of the same origin, variety or commercial type, **stage of ripeness**, quality (**if indicated**) and size (if sized). The visible part of the contents of the package ~~must~~ **shall** be representative of the entire contents.

Dates may be presented:

- in clusters (consisting mainly of the rachis and the stems to which the fruit is attached naturally);
- in stems (stems which are separated from the rachis and to which the fruit is attached naturally); and
- Separated in individual fruit, arranged in layers, or loose in the package.

Stems presented in clusters or separated from the rachis ~~must~~ **shall** be at least 10cm in length and carry an average of four–six fruits per 10 cm of length.

6.2 PACKAGING

Fresh Dates ~~must~~ **shall** be packed in such a way so as to protect the produce properly. The materials used inside the package ~~must~~ **shall** be of food grade quality, clean and of a quality such as to avoid causing any external or internal damage to the produce. The use of materials, particularly of paper or stamps bearing trade specifications is allowed, provided the printing or labelling has been done with non-toxic ink or glue.

Fresh Dates shall be packed in each package in compliance with the appropriate sections of the *Code of Practice for Packaging and Transport of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables* (CXC 44-1995).

6.2.1 Description of containers

The containers shall meet the quality, hygiene, ventilations and resistance characteristics to ensure suitable handling, shipping and preserving of the dates. Packages ~~must~~ **shall** be free of all foreign matter and smell.

7. PROVISIONS CONCERNING MARKING OR LABELLING

7.1 CONSUMER PACKAGES

In addition to the requirements of the *General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods* (CXS 1- 1985), the following specific provisions apply:

7.1.1 Name of produce

Each package shall be labelled as to the name of the produce **fresh dates (stage of dates as per 3.1.1)** and may be labelled as to the name of the variety and/or commercial type.

7.1.2 Origin of Produce

Country of origin⁵and, optionally, district where grown or national, regional or local place name.

7.2 NON-RETAIL CONTAINERS

~~Each package must bear the following particulars, in letters grouped on the same side, legibly and indelibly marked, and visible from the outside, either printed on the package itself or on a label (if the labels are placed inside the packages), this should be done in such a way that the indications concerning marking are readable from the outside); or in the documents accompanying the shipment and attached in a visible position inside the transport vehicle.~~

7.2.1 Identification

~~Name and address of exporter, packer and/or dispatcher. Identification code (optional)⁶.~~

7.2.2 Nature of produce

- ~~• Name of the produce “semi dry” or “semi dry” and/or dry”.~~
- ~~• Name of the variety and/or commercial type.~~
- ~~• Presentation such as clusters, in stems or individual (optional).~~

7.2.3 Origin of Produce

~~Country of origin and, optionally, district where grown or national, regional or local place name.~~

7.2.4 Commercial Specifications

- ~~• Class;~~
- ~~• Size (if sized);~~
- ~~• Crop year; and~~
- ~~• Fruit and seed length and width, pulp weight /fruit weight ratio, fruit shape (oval, round, elongated), Epicarp (goffered, smooth, wrinkled) and color of the fruit (optional).~~

7.2.5 Official Inspection Mark (optional)

The labelling of non-retail containers should be in accordance with the *General Standard for the Labelling of Non-Retail Containers of Foods (CXS 346-2021)*. In addition, the following particulars may be indicated on each non-retail container:-

- (i) Name of the variety;**
- (ii) Stage of ripeness;**
- (iii) Origin of produce;**
- (iv) Class;**
- (v) Size (if sized) in accordance with the method applied.**

8. FOOD ADDITIVES

No food additives are permitted in fresh dates.

9. CONTAMINANTS

9.1 The produce covered by this Standard shall comply with the maximum levels of the *General Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Food and Feed (CXS193-1995)*.

9.2 The produce covered by this Standard shall comply with the maximum residue limits for pesticides established by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

⁵The full or a commonly used name should be indicated.

⁶The national legislation of a number of countries requires an explicit declaration of the name and address. However, in the case where a code mark is used, the reference “packer and/ or dispatcher (or corresponding acronyms) should be recorded very accurately.

10. HYGIENE

10.1 It is recommended that the produce covered by the provisions of this Standard be prepared and handled in accordance with the appropriate sections of the *General Principles of Food Hygiene* (CXC 1-1969), *Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables* (CXC 53-2003), and other relevant Codex texts such as Codes of Hygienic Practice and Codes of Practice.

10.2 The produce should comply with any microbiological criteria established in accordance with the *Principles and Guidelines for the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria related to Foods* (CXG21-1997).