

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD
HEALTH
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JOINT OFFICE: Viale delle Terme di Caracalla 00100 ROME Tel: 39 06 57051 www.codexalimentarius.net Email: codex@fao.org Facsimile: 39 06 5705 4593

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4(C)

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD LABELLING
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GUIDELINES FOR THE PRODUCTION, PROCESSING, LABELLING AND
MARKETING OF ORGANICALLY PRODUCED FOODS:
PROPOSED DRAFT AMENDMENT: ADDITION OF ETHYLENE
(CL 2006/48-FL)

GOVERNMENT COMMENTS AT STEP 3

COMMENTS FROM:

COSTA RICA
EUROPEAN COMMUNITY
GUATEMALA
JAPAN
PANAMA
PERU
PHILIPPINE
THAILAND
UNITED STATES

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE MOVEMENTS (IFOAM)

**GUIDELINES FOR THE PRODUCTION, PROCESSING, LABELLING AND
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(CL 2006/48-FL)**

GOVERNMENT COMMENTS AT STEP 3

COSTA RICA:

Costa Rica has taken into consideration the results of the 34th Session of the CCFL and the mandate of the 29th session of the Codex Alimentarius, as well as the arguments and technical justifications presented by the Delegation of New Zealand in the CX/FL 06/34/11, and has reached the conclusion that it shares those opinions in the sense that ethylene is a non toxic substance obtained from the ripening of fruits and its use in organic production does not contravene the organic production principles due to its natural condition.

Ethylene used for ripening is important to evenly maintain essential characteristics of fruits, and its use is recognized in international markets. It is important for Costa Rica to extend ethylene's acceptance in Codex to its use for the organic production of other tropical fruits including plantains, pineapples, melons and mangoes, among others.

Taking into account that ethylene may be included in paragraph 82 of Section C. HANDLING, STORAGE, TRANSPORTATION, PROCESSING AND PACKAGING, Costa Rica recommends that the proposal to include it should not be optional, as the wording of such proposal suggests, but that it should instead cover other tropical fruits as the title of this proposed draft standard indicates:

Ethylene may be used for ripening of kiwifruit, bananas and other tropical fruits.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY:

The European Community (EC) supports the use of ethylene in organic farming for ripening of kiwifruits and bananas.

The EC however does not support the use of ethylene for ripening of 'other tropical fruits' as proposed by New Zealand, as the use of this substance has not been justified in all cases.

The EC thus would accept the following sentence to be added in Annex 1, Principles of Organic Production, Section C – Handling, Storage, Transportation and Packaging, Paragraph 82:

"Ethylene may be used for ripening of kiwifruit and bananas".

GUATEMALA:

Through this communication, in response to Circular Letter CL 2006/48-FL, we present to the Codex Alimentarius Commission Guatemala's comments regarding the document titled

Amendment to the Guidelines for the Production, Processing, Labelling and Marketing of Organically Produced Foods (N10-2006) (At Step 3 of the Procedure).

Guatemala supports the use of ethylene for ripening organically produced kiwifruit, plantain, bananas, and other tropical fruits. In Guatemala, the use of ethylene for the organic production of plantains is authorized in the Organic Agriculture Technical Manual, of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food of Guatemala, developed on the basis of the approval of Ministerial Agreement 1317-2002 –Organic Agriculture Regulations (*Acuerdo Ministerial 1317-2002 – Disposiciones sobre Agricultura Orgánica*).

We consider that, in organic agriculture, it is very important to evaluate the source of ethylene used, as ethylene for this purpose must have been obtained from natural sources, such as *Ripening Gas*TM, which is the commercial name of the ethylene mentioned by New Zealand in their proposal (CX/FL 06/34/11). We suggest that the wording of the amendment should mention that the ethylene to be used must be certified for its use in organic agriculture, taking into account the system through which it was obtained and the source of such ethylene.

JAPAN:

Japan appreciates the opportunity to make comments on CL 2006/48-FL.

Japan agrees with the addition of ethylene to ripen organic kiwifruit and banana, because its use on them is consistent with the principles of organic production, while its use on tropical fruits other than kiwifruit and banana should be carefully evaluated on an individual basis. Japan considers that its use should be evaluated against the criteria set out in Section 5 of *the Guidelines*.

(Rationale)

1. Ethylene is a natural substance which ripens fruit by acting as a plant hormone and it is produced by fruit. The necessity of its use on kiwifruit is justified in CX/06/34/11 prepared by New Zealand.
2. Banana produces ethylene and is able to fully ripen by itself. However, some countries, including Japan, only permit imports of green banana for preventing fruit flies entering their territories. In addition, banana ripened in exporting countries is likely to be rotten, when it is delivered to consumers in importing countries. Therefore, banana for export must be usually harvested before maturity and treated with ethylene after they are imported.
3. Regarding the use of ethylene on other tropical fruits, Japan emphasizes that tropical fruit does not always require ripening after harvest. If its use to all tropical fruits is permitted, it may be used in cases where full ripening by fruit itself is necessary. Its use is likely to deceive consumers concerning the nature, substance and quality of the product, which does not meet Section 5.1 (c) of *the Guidelines*.

PANAMA:

The Republic of Panama, through the General Directorate of Standards and Industrial Technology (DGNTI) of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, as Contact Point for the Codex Alimentarius,

issues the following comments regarding the CL 2006/48-FI of November 2006: *Proposed Draft Amendment to the Guidelines for the Production, Processing, Labelling and Marketing of Organically Produced Foods* (N10-2006) (at Step 3), which was presented for consultation to the organic producers and to the competent organic agriculture authorities (the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agricultural Development) regarding the use of ethylene in organic products, with the conclusion that there are no objections to the use of ethylene, as it is a natural substance produced by fruit species.

It was decided that the application methods should be specified, as there are several potential applications of ethylene, in liquid form or as a gas, and it is important to know if it is being used jointly with other substances, and which are those substances as well as their effects on health and on the environment.

These methods should be evaluated by the national authorities.

Therefore, we have no objection to the application of ethylene in fruit ripening and it can be included in the list of substances allowed in organic agriculture.

PERU:

Peru is of the opinion that, legally, in our country, the use of ethylene gas is allowed for ripening (Art. 57 regarding storage conditions, in the Technical Regulations for Organic Products, approved by D.S. No. 044-2006-AG, published 14/07/2006).

D.S. 044-2006-AG

TECHNICAL REGULATIONS FOR ORGANIC PRODUCTS

Article 57: Storage conditions

The following conditions are allowed for storage in addition to room temperature storage (See Annex 4):

- Controlled atmosphere
- Modified atmosphere
- Cooling
- Freezing
- Drying
- Humidity control
- Ethylene gas is allowed for ripening.

Annex 2

PRODUCTS ALLOWED FOR PHYTOSANITARY MANAGEMENT

These products must be used only when it is essential to do so, and they should be selected having in mind their environmental impact.

("Restricted" means that the certification program must establish conditions and procedures for their use).

• <i>Azadirachta indica</i> (<i>Neem</i>)	Restricted
• Vegetable oils (such as mint oil, pine oil, caraway oil).	Free
• Light mineral oils	Restricted
• Clays (such as Bentonite, Perlite, Vermiculite, Zeolite)	Free
• Sulphur	Restricted
• Sodium bicarbonate	Restricted
• Caustic soda and calcium sulphur (polysulphur of calcium)	Restricted
• Calcium chlorate / sodium chlorate	Restricted
• CO ₂	Free
• Pheromones (only in traps and dispensers)	Free
• Gelatine	Free
• Tobacco infusion <i>Nicotiana tabacum</i> (water solution)	Restricted
• Lecithin	Free
• Potassium salts rich in fatty acids (soft soap)	Free
• Release of parasites and predators of insect pests	Restricted
• Potassium permanganate, potash alum (aluminium potassium sulfate - Kalinite)	Restricted
• Microorganisms (bacteria virus fungi), such as <i>Bacillus thuringiensis</i> , <i>Baculovirus</i> , etc.	Restricted
• Animal and vegetable preparations	Restricted
• Propolis	Free
• Pyrethrins extracted from <i>Chrysanthemum sp.</i> and from <i>Pyrethrum sp.</i>	Restricted
• <i>Quassia amara</i>	Restricted
• Rotenone extracted from <i>Derris spp.</i> , <i>Lonchocarpus spp.</i> and <i>Terphrosia spp.</i>	Restricted
• Plant origin repellents	Free
• <i>Ryania</i>	Restricted
• Copper salts, such as copper hydroxide, copper oxychloride, tribasic copper sulphate or cuprous oxide	Restricted
• Quartz sand and silicates	Free
• Diatomaceous earth	Restricted
• Chromatic traps	Free
• Mechanical traps	Free
• Bee wax	Free
• Diamonic phosphate as bait (only in traps)	Restricted
• Metaldehyde (only in traps)	Restricted
• Ethylene	Free
• Paraffin oil	Free

Thus, our legal regulations allow the use of ethylene, and with the purpose of maintaining the organic principles for the production organic foods, and based on the research conducted for its use in kiwifruit, we agree with its usefulness for such fruit.

PHILIPPINE:

Codex Provision	Comments	Justification
<p>Annex 1-Principles of organic production</p> <p>C. HANDLING, STORAGE, TRANSPORTATION, PROCESSING AND PACKAGING</p> <p>82. The integrity of the organic product must be maintained throughout the processing phase. This is achieved by the use of techniques appropriate to the specifics of the ingredients with careful processing methods limiting refining and the use of additives and processing aids. Ionizing radiation should not be used on organic products for the purpose of pest control, food preservation, elimination of pathogens or sanitation.</p> <p><u>Ethylene may be used for ripening of kiwifruit, bananas or other tropical fruits.</u></p>	<p>We support the use of ethylene and its inclusion to the Annex 2, Permitted Substances for the production of Organic Foods, Table 4, Processing Aids and agree to the addition of the sentence/statement</p> <p><u>“Ethylene may be used for ripening of kiwifruit, bananas or other tropical fruits.”</u></p>	<p>The use of ethylene to tropical fruits as ripening aid</p> <p>a. is an enhanced natural post-harvest processing technique which is basically consistent with the organic processing principles</p> <p>b. Ethylene is a natural occurring gas.</p> <p>c. Ethylene is considered a safe and permissible processing aid</p> <p>d. There is no evidence of having adverse effect on health, presents no toxicity issues, and dissipates quickly</p>

THAILAND:

We support an inclusion of Ethylene into the Table 4 as it is appropriately used to ripen bananas.

UNITED STATES:

Regarding CL 2006/48-FL – Addition of Ethylene, the United States does not object to the consideration of Ethylene as an addition to Annex 2, Permitted Substances for the Production of Organic Foods, Table 4, Processing Aids. The United States acknowledges that Annex 2 is an indicative list and is not designed to take the place of individual country lists. For Annex 2 to have credibility as an initial benchmark among member countries, including or removing substances from Annex 2 must occur through a fair, scientifically-based and transparent determination process.

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE MOVEMENTS (IFOAM):

IFOAM supports the inclusion of ethylene in the Codex Organic Guidelines as a permitted substance for the ripening of produce. For many years IFOAM Basic Standards have permitted the use of ethylene gas for ripening. Ethylene gas is omitted naturally during the ripening process for produce. Ethylene gas is employed in minute quantities during produce handling to trigger the ripening of fruits, particularly tropical fruits such as banana and pineapple, which are picked green for handling and transported over long distances.

At this time, IFOAM is not submitting a formal analysis of this substance against the Codex Criteria. However, should approval of the substance warrant further analysis, we are willing to do so at a later date.