

codex alimentarius commission

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FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
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Agenda Item 3(b)

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

Fifteenth Session

Mexico City, Mexico, 19 – 23 October 2009

**DRAFT STANDARD FOR BITTER CASSAVA
SECTION 6 “MARKING OR LABELLING”**

Comments at Step 6 in response to CL 2008/17-FFV

(Australia, Brazil and Kenya)

AUSTRALIA

Australia wishes to provide the following comments with regard to CL 2008/17-FFV Draft Section 6 - Marking or Labelling of the Draft Codex Standard for Bitter Cassava (ALINORM 08/31/35, Appendix III)

- Safe traditional consumption of cassava is dependent on adequate processing to minimise the cyanogenic glycoside content. If cassava is eaten after inadequate processing then toxicity in humans may be observed. More extensive and longer processing is required for bitter cassava varieties than sweet cassava in order to reduce the cyanogenic glycoside content to a safe level. The cyanogenic glycoside content of cassava could theoretically be reduced to near zero or very minimal levels if the extent of processing is adequate for the levels in the raw cassava.
- Australia is concerned that consumption of bitter cassava by those populations not familiar with appropriate preparation methods for the product, may lead to public health and safety issues associated with the consumption of products containing high levels of cyanogens.
- Australia notes that the revised draft standard for bitter cassava indicates that cassava must be peeled and fully cooked before consumption. This has strengthened the preparation instructions on packages destined to the consumer. However, no evidence has been provided as to whether the preparation instructions will sufficiently reduce the level of hydrogen cyanide contained in bitter cassava for the end product to be safe.
- Australia suggests that sufficient evidence be obtained to support the extent of processing required for cassava with different cyanogenic content (i.e. how much processing is required for cassava with 50 mg/kg HCN compared with cassava with 200 mg/kg HCN in order to protect public health and safety). Based on such evidence, further risk management measures may need to be considered for inclusion in the Draft Standard for Bitter Cassava. Australia notes that current work being undertaken by CCCF should go some way towards answering that question.
- Therefore, Australia prefers to hold off progression on the Standard for Bitter Cassava until CCCF (and possibly JECFA) evaluations of cyanogenic glycosides in cassava have been finalised. Australia notes that CCCF have agreed to recommend to CAC that cyanogenic glycosides be added to the priority list for JECFA.
- Any changes to the proposed labelling requirements in the Draft Codex standard for bitter cassava that might be agreed upon by CCFFV should then be referred to CCFL for endorsement.

BRAZIL

Brazil suggests the following to read:

“6.12. Each recipient must show the following information in print:

- cassava must not be eaten raw;
- cassava must be peeled and submitted to an appropriate thermal processing (by heat) prior to consumption; and
- the water used for washing or thermal processing must not be consummated or reused for other foods processing”.

KENYA**6.1.2 Preparation Instructions****Comment**

We would like to propose that section clause mentioned above to read:

6.1.2 Preparation Instructions

“A statement indicating the following is required:

- Cassava shall be peeled, *de-pithed, cut into pieces*, washed and
- Fully cooked before consumption; and
- Cooking or rinsing water must not be consumed or used for other food preparation purposes but disposed immediately.”

Justification

- The pith has a high concentration of hydrogen cyanide. Therefore, in addition to the removal of the peel, it is necessary to remove it to further reduce the amount of hydrogen cyanide in the cassava.
- Cutting of cassava into pieces increases the surface area of the cassava exposed to water during washing. This increases the amount of hydrogen cyanide dissolved in the water and its subsequent removal.

General Comments

Kenya would like to thank the codex committee for the good job done and for soliciting our views concerning the bitter cassava since we grow quite a bit of it and also consume it after processing (e.g cooking and roasting). We have some death incidences which occurred two years back due to its consumption when raw therefore we would like members to support each others on amending the clause and we also would like to request JECFA to do research on hydrogen cyanide content on the following so we can know which cooking process is safer for consumption.

1. Its pith
2. Raw bitter cassava
3. Boiled bitter cassava
4. Roasted bitter cassava (crisps and French fries cassava)

This should be along term issue and should not prevent the committee from amending the clause. It has been noted in our country that bitter cassava has much higher yield than sweet cassava so farmers grow it widely.