



PROJECT DOCUMENT

ESTABLISHMENT OF A DEFINITION OF ADDED SUGARS

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE NEW WORK

The purpose and scope of the proposed work is to develop a definition of the term "added sugars" for labelling purposes ~~as well as to consider the inclusion of the added sugars declaration in section 3.2 on listing of nutrients of the Guidelines on Nutrition Labelling (CAC/GL 2-1985)~~ to support governments in implementing regulations on nutrition labelling, ensuring that information on added sugars is clear, thus promoting greater transparency and consumer protection and at the same time accurate, harmonized, and applicable in international trade.

2. RELEVANCE AND TIMELINESS

The *Guidelines on Nutrition Labelling (CAC/GL 2-1985)* require the declaration of total sugars as part of the nutrient declaration, without distinguishing between naturally occurring sugar and sugar added during the production or preparation of food and beverages. However, the WHO recommends implementing measures at the global level to reduce the consumption of sugars because excessive consumption of added sugars has been linked to obesity, diabetes and other chronic diseases.

The establishment of a definition of "added sugar" in the Codex Alimentarius is crucial, as there is growing interest from both consumers and national regulators in the labelling of these components and their inclusion in the nutrition claim. The absence of a clear definition of added sugars complicates CCFL's efforts to harmonize nutrition labelling globally. A harmonized definition ~~would not only make it easier to assess their impact on public health but~~ would reduce the risk of misinterpretations that could confuse consumers, contributing significantly to improving the clarity and consistency of nutrition labelling around the world. It is vital to provide consumers with accurate information about the sugar content in foods, allowing them to make more informed choices and encouraging manufacturers to follow recommendations to reduce the amount of added sugars in their products. Without a clear definition of added sugars, consumers face difficulties in making informed decisions about the amount of sugars they are consuming. In addition, a clear and uniform definition of added sugars will facilitate the harmonization of regulations and policies related to labelling and nutrition information on foods, thereby improving consumer protection and promoting healthy eating.

This initiative is in line with the agreement of the 83rd Session of the Executive Committee reflected in REP22/EXEC2 para. 154: "*v. At the request of the WHO representative, agreed to request that Codex committees, when prioritising and undertaking work on new standards or the review of standards and guidelines relating to composition of foods, to have due regard to on-going global efforts to achieve health and nutrition related goals through reducing noncommunicable diseases (NCD) risk factors such as sodium intake.*"

3. MAIN ASPECTS TO BE COVERED

The work will include the development of a definition of the term "added sugars" as well as considering the *Guidelines for Use of Nutrition and Health Claims (CAC/GL 23-1997)*, with respect to claims of no added sugars.

It is proposed that the work covers at least the following aspects:

- i. Develop a harmonized definition of the term "added sugars" based on available scientific information, for consumer information purposes.
- ~~ii. Revise the Guidelines on Nutrition Labelling (CAC/GL 2-1985) to incorporate the definition of added sugars in section "2. Definitions" and consider the inclusion of this ingredient in the nutrient declaration in section "3.2 Listing of nutrients".~~
- iii. Review the *Guidelines for Use of Nutrition and Health Claims (CAC/GL 23-1997)*, with respect to claims of no added sugars in order to determine the need for subsequent amendments to the adopted definition to ensure consistency with the new definition, ~~between the two purposes (claims and nutrition facts panel statement).~~

- ~~iv. Determine whether the definition of "added sugars" applies only to their quantification in the nutrition facts or also to claims such as "no added sugars" on packaging.~~
- ~~v. [Decide where the definition of "added sugars" should be incorporated].~~

4. ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE CRITERIA FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW WORK PRIORITIES

General criterion

- **Consumer protection from the point of view of health, food safety, ensuring fair practices in the food trade and taking into account the identified needs of developing countries.**

Simplified nutrition information may have a role to play in facilitating a greater understanding of the nutritional content of foods by consumers. This can also help guide consumers toward healthier eating choices. Simplified nutrition information, especially on the front of the package, can also encourage food manufacturers to reformulate their food products to obtain a profile that will improve the nutritional quality of foods available to consumers. Improving people's nutrition through a food supply with healthier choices would improve the risk profile for a number of noncommunicable diseases worldwide.

Criteria applicable to general matters

(a) Diversification of national legislations and apparent resultant or potential impediments to international trade

The lack of a harmonized definition of "added sugars" has led to different countries adopting their own interpretations, complicating comparison and compliance with food regulations. This disparity can create trade barriers, generate confusion among consumers, and difficulties for producers seeking to access global markets resulting in delays in the import and export of products, as well as additional costs for companies that must adapt their labelling and formulas to comply with multiple national regulations. Therefore, it is crucial to move towards a common definition that facilitates international trade and ensures greater consistency and transparency in nutrition information at the global level.

In addition, it has been identified that "added sugars" are not chemically different from sugars that are naturally present in foods such as fruits and milk, making it difficult to distinguish between added sugars and natural sugars using analytical methods. Therefore, there are important considerations regarding standard methods for testing for added sugars in foods and beverages, as well as ensuring regulatory compliance.

(b) Scope of work and establishment of priorities between the various sections of the work

Conduct a revision of the *Guidelines on Nutrition Labelling (CAC/GL 2-1985)* and the *Guidelines for Use of Nutrition and Health Claims (CAC/GL 23-1997)*, in order to incorporate a definition of "added sugars" as appropriate.

(c) Work already undertaken by other international organizations in this field and/or suggested by the relevant international intergovernmental body(ies)

Some works have been identified that could serve as a reference for the development of the proposal, among which the following can be mentioned: [Guideline: Sugars intake for adults and children](#): World Health Organization, 2015; Code of Federal Regulations. [General Provisions on Food Labeling](#) Section 101.9(c)(6)(iii). Food Drug Administration (FDA); [Scientific Opinion on Tolerable upper intake level for dietary sugars](#). The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). Panel. 2021.

(d) Amenability of the subject of the proposal to standardization

Standardizing the definition of "added sugars" is essential to ensure consistency and clarity in international food regulation. Codex Alimentarius standards, referred to in the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS), play a crucial role in resolving trade disputes. A standardized definition would help reduce non-tariff barriers, protect consumers with accurate labels, and allow for a scientific justification for stricter measures taken by countries, in line with the SPS Agreement.

(e) Consideration of the global magnitude of the problem or issue

Promoting healthier diets for consumers and encouraging manufacturers to improve the nutritional quality of the food supply are areas where proper guidance could have a significant impact globally.

5. RELEVANCE TO CODEX STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The proposed new work is in line with the Codex Alimentarius Commission's mandate to develop international standards, guidelines and other recommendations for protecting the health of consumers and ensuring fair practices in food trade. The new work proposal will contribute to the advancement of Strategic Objectives 1 and 4, as described below.

Strategic Goal 1: Address current, emerging and critical issues in a timely manner

The inclusion of a clear definition of added sugars in the *Guidelines on Nutrition Labelling* can facilitate the harmonization of international regulations and standards. This simplifies international food trade by reducing technical barriers to trade and promoting coherence between the policies and regulations of different countries.

Additionally, clear information about the content of added sugars on food labels can help consumers make healthier choices and reduce their consumption of added sugars. This can have a positive impact on public health by helping to prevent diet-related diseases.

Strategic Goal 4: Facilitate the participation of all Codex Members throughout the standard setting process

Bringing this issue to the CCFL gives all Codex members a solid basis to participate in discussions and decisions related to nutrition labelling. This ensures that all members have the opportunity to contribute and express their opinions effectively, thus promoting an equitable and transparent decision-making process.

By clearly defining the term "added sugars" in the nutrition labelling guidelines, a common basis of understanding is established among all Codex members. This ensures that there is transparency in the information provided on food labels and that consumers can easily understand the added sugar content in the products they consume.

6. RELATION BETWEEN THE PROPOSAL AND OTHER EXISTING CODEX DOCUMENT

The development of the definition of added sugars relates to the *Guidelines on Nutrition Labelling (CAC/GL 2-1985)* and the *Guidelines for Use of Nutrition and Health Claims (CAC/GL 23-1997)*. These guidelines are applicable horizontally to all pre-packaged foods.

7. REQUIREMENT FOR AND AVAILABILITY OF EXPERT SCIENTIFIC ADVICE

None identified at this stage. There will be an opportunity to consult throughout the process with the relevant bodies if necessary.

8. NEED FOR TECHNICAL INPUT TO THE STANDARD FROM EXTERNAL BODIES

None identified at this stage. There will be an opportunity to consult throughout the process with the relevant bodies if necessary.

9. PROPOSED TIMELINE

If approved by the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC47) to be held in November 2024, the work is expected to take at least two sessions to complete.