



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
CODEX COMMITTEE ON SPICES AND CULINARY HERBS
4th Session

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**REPORT OF THE ELECTRONIC WORKING GROUP ON THE PROPOSED DRAFT STANDARD
FOR OREGANO**

(Prepared by the Electronic Working Group chaired by Turkey and co-chaired by Mexico)

Codex members and Observers wishing to submit comments at Step 3 on this draft should do so as instructed in CL 2018/54/OCS-CCSCH available on the Codex webpage/Circular Letters 2018:

<http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/circular-letters/en/>

INTRODUCTION

1. The 1st session of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH)¹, which was held from February 11 to 14, 2014, in Kochi, India, considered the proposal for new work on standard for oregano prepared by Argentina (CRD12) and in addition to several editorial amendments, deleted reference to *Origanum vulgare* L. in the title and in other sections of the project document to align them with the scope of the standard (Section 1), which referred to all species of oregano, i.e. *Origanum* spp. L.
2. CCSCH1 agreed to establish, subject to the approval of the Commission, an Electronic Working Group (EWG), led by Argentina and co-chaired by Greece and working in English and Spanish, to prepare the proposed draft standard for circulation for comments at Step 3 and consideration at its next Session.
3. At CCSCH2², which was held from September 14 to 18, 2015, in Goa, India, the European Union introduced the item and summarised the outcomes of the work, which was led by Argentina and co-chaired by Greece. CCSCH2 noted that several provisions still required considerable review and that the standard was not ready for advancement in the Step process. Therefore, it was agreed to establish an EWG, led by Argentina and co-chaired by Turkey, working in English, to redraft the proposed draft Standard taking into account the earlier discussions, written comments and related decisions regarding the format of the other standards currently under elaboration.
4. CCSCH2 agreed to return the proposed draft standard to Step 2/3 for redrafting by the aforementioned EWG, circulation for comments and consideration at the following Session.
5. The draft Standard for Oregano, with the amendments proposed at CCSCH2, was the basis for the first document circulated to EWG members. The EWG reviewed the initial draft proposal and second version prepared by Argentina and Turkey based on the comments received. The second draft was circulated to the EWG for a second round of comments. In total, eleven member countries and two observers: (Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Greece, Japan, Mexico, Turkey, the United States of America, IOSTA and Food Drink); submitted comments that were considered and incorporated in every case.
6. Although CCSCH only agreed on development of a draft Standard on oregano L. excluding Marjoram or Thyme or Lippia. some members (Mexico and USA) requested after the due date that Lippia spp. be included in the draft standard.
7. At CCSCH³, which was held from February 6 to 10, 2017, in Chennai, India, Turkey summarised the outcomes of the EWG and asked the Committee that which way should be followed although the scope (including Lippia) is not approved by the Committee, before. Turkey proposed that Oregano and Lippia are classified in different taxonomy and they have different physical/chemical properties. Therefore, separate standard should be prepared. And this comment was supported by some delegates.

¹ REP14/SCH, paras 67-69

² REP16/SCH, paras 26, 29-31

³ REP17/SCH, paras 44-54

8. The Committee agreed to establish an EWG, led by Turkey and co-chaired by Mexico, working in English and taking into account discussion and comments to prepare revised proposed draft Standard for all products traded as oregano.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

9. The Committee agreed to establish an EWG, hosted by Turkey and co-hosted by Mexico, working in English and taking into account discussions and comments at the present Session:

- i. to examine the documents already developed in the Committee;
- ii. to prepare a revised proposed draft standard for all products traded as oregano;
- iii. to consider how a draft standard could be subsequently incorporated into a grouping under the new system being developed in the Committee.

PARTICIPATION AND METHODOLOGY

10. The EWG started its work on June 1, 2017 and 1st, 2nd and 3rd round comments that were sent by members (Appendix II) were compiled on November 9, 2017, on April 20, 2018 and on June 1, 2018, respectively. Based on the responses provided, draft Standards were developed and submitted for consideration to the EWG for all rounds.

ANALYSIS

11. The Chairs of EWG submitted the draft Standard and requested for comments of members. In general, the following points remained outstanding:

- i. science based classification of Oregano and Lippia; and
- ii. whether the draft Standard should be prepared according to the grouping template or as a separate stand-alone product

12. Since EWG was not in favour of this proposal for a grouping standard, all EWG members - except one - sent their comments on prior existing draft Standard on Oregano. The proposed draft standard was circulated and reviewed three times by the EWG. There was general consensus on most of the issues in the proposed draft as indicated in Appendix I. However the EWG could not reach consensus on some of the physical/chemical parameters in Table 1 and 2; and these are indicated in [square brackets] in the draft. The parameters in **bold** and underline were the most accepted/preferred parameters by EWG members.

CONCLUSIONS

13. The Chairs of EWG have completed the task as per the terms of references and their programme of work. The main task of the EWG were to development a draft Standard on Oregano. Significant amount of information has been gathered during three rounds of comments with mostly consultation with the EWG and it is prepared the draft in Appendix I.

RECOMMENDATIONS

14. The Committee is invited to the draft Standard in Appendix I to this Report.

PROPOSED DRAFT STANDARD FOR DRIED OREGANO

(At Step 3)

1 SCOPE

This Standard applies to dried leaves/flowers of oregano defined in Section 2.1 below offered for direct consumption, as an ingredient in food processing or for repackaging if required. It excludes dried oregano intended for industrial processing.

2 DESCRIPTION**2.1 Product Definition**

Dried oregano is the product obtained from the leaves and the flowering tops of plants listed in Table 1 and processed in an appropriate manner, undergoing operations such as cleaning, drying, rubbing, and sifting.

Table 1. Dried Culinary Herbs covered by this standard

General name	Specific name	Scientific name
Oregano		
		<i>Origanum vulgare</i> L.
	Italian oregano	<i>Origanum x majoricum</i> Cambess.
	Turkish oregano Cretan oregano Oikea oregano	<i>Origanum onites</i> L.
	Turkish oregano Greek oregano	<i>Origanum vulgare</i> subsp. <i>virens</i> (Hoffmanns. & Link) Letsw. <i>Origanum vulgare</i> subs <i>hirtum</i> .
	Syrian oregano	<i>Origanum syriacum</i> L.
	Turkestan oregano	<i>Origanum vulgare</i> sub sp. <i>viride</i> (Boiss.) Hayek <i>Origanum vulgare</i> sub sp. <i>vulgare</i>
	Turkish sword oregano	<i>Satureja montana</i> L.
Lippia		
	Mexican oregano	<i>Lippia graveolens</i> Kunth <i>Lippia berlandieri</i> Schauer <i>Lippia</i> spp <i>Lippia palmeri</i> <i>Poliomintha longiflora</i>

2.2 Styles

Dried oregano may be offered in one of the following styles:

- a) Whole
- b) Crushed/Rubbed: processed into varying degrees ranging from a coarse to fine crush
- c) Ground/Powdered: processed into powders

3 ESSENTIAL COMPOSITION AND QUALITY FACTORS**3.1 Composition**

Product as defined in Section 2.

3.2 Quality Factors

3.2.1 Moisture Content

Dried oregano (whole, crushed or ground) shall not contain more than 12% moisture.

3.2.2 Odour, flavor and colour

Dried oregano shall have a characteristic odour and flavor (fragrant, warm, unpungent and bitter flavor) varying according to the chemical strain of the main components of the volatile oil (carvacrol and/or thymol), which can vary depending on geo-climatic factors/conditions. Dried oregano shall be free from any foreign odour or flavor and especially from mustiness. Dried oregano shall have a characteristic colour varying from pale greyish yellow green to dark green.

3.2.3 Classification

Whole, Crushed/Rubbed oregano are classified in three classes/grades according physical and chemical requirements as specified in Table 2 and 3, respectively.

- Extra
- Class/ Grade I
- Class/Grade II

3.2.4 Physical Characteristics

Whole, Crushed/Rubbed and Ground oregano shall comply with the physical requirements specified in Table 2.

Table 2. Physical requirements for whole/crushed/rubbed and ground oregano

Parameter	Whole, Crushed/rubbed Oregano			Ground Oregano
	Extra	Class /Grade I	Class/Grade II	
Extraneous vegetable matter ⁽¹⁾ (maximum % mass fraction)	[1] [0.5]	[2] [0.5]	[2] [0.5]	NA
Foreign matter content ⁽²⁾ (maximum % mass fraction)	0.1	0.1	0.1	NA
Oregano powder (smaller than 40 mesh/420 µm maximum %)	5	10	20	NA
Dead insects, insects fragments, maximum % mass fraction	[3] [1]	[3] [1]	[3] [1]	NA
Live insects	0	0	0	0
Mammalian excreta maximum (mg/Kg)	[2.2] [1.0]	[2.2] [1.0]	[2.2] [1.0]	[2.2] [1.0]

(¹): Vegetative matter associated with the plant from which the product originates - but is not accepted as part of the final product such as stems, sticks.

(²): Any visible objectionable foreign detectable matter or material not usually associated with the natural components of the spice plant; stones, burlap bagging, metal, foreign leaves etc.

3.2.5 Chemical Characteristics

Whole/crushed/rubbed oregano and ground-oregano shall comply with the chemical requirements specified in Table 3.

Table 3. Chemical requirements for whole/crushed/rubbed oregano and ground oregano

Parameter	Whole/Crushed/Rubbed oregano			Ground oregano
	Extra	Class/ Grade I	Class/ Grade II	
Total ash, % mas fraction (dry basis), maximum	9	10	12	10 12
Acid-insoluble ash, %mass fraction (dry basis), maximum	1.2	2	2	2.5
Volatile oils (*), ml/100 g (dry basis), minimum	2.5	[2.0] [1.7]	[1.8] [1.5]	1.5

(*) For oregano, the volatile oil markers are carvacrol and/or thymol.

3.3 Classification of “Defectives”

A lot sample that fails to meet one or more of the applicable quality requirements, as set out in Section 3.2 (except those based on sample averages), should be considered as a “defective”.

3.4 Lot Acceptance

A lot should be considered as meeting the applicable quality requirements referred to in Section 3.2 when the number of “defectives”, as defined in Section 3.3, does not exceed the acceptance number of the appropriate sampling plan. For factors evaluated on a sample average, a lot will be considered acceptable if the average meets the specified tolerance, and no individual sample is excessively out of tolerance.

4 FOOD ADDITIVES

No food additives, flavorings and processing aids are permitted in the products covered by this standard.

5 CONTAMINANTS

5.1 The products covered by this Standard shall comply with the maximum levels of the *General Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Food and Feed* (CXS 193-1995).

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

6 FOOD HYGIENE

6.1 It is recommended that the products 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), *the Code of Hygienic Practice for Low-Moisture Foods* (CXC 75-2015), Annex III (Spices and Dried Aromatic Herbs)) and other Codes of Practices..

6.2 The products shall comply with any microbiological criteria established in accordance with the *Principles for the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria for Foods* (CXG 21-1997).

7 WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

Containers shall be as full as practicable without impairment of quality and shall be consistent with a proper declaration of contents for the product.

8 LABELLING

8.1 The products covered by the provisions of this Standard shall be labelled in accordance with the *General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods* (CXS 1-1985). In addition, the following specific provisions apply:

8.2 Name of the Product

8.2.1 The name of the product shall be “dried oregano or oregano” when the omission of the word dry would not mislead or confuse the consumer.

8.2.2 The name of the product shall include an indication of the species, varietal types described in Table 1 and the style as described in Section 2.2.

8.2.3 Country of harvest/origin

8.2.4 Inspection mark (Optional)

8.3 Labelling of Non-Retail Containers

Information for non-retail containers shall be given either on the package or in accompanying documents, except that the name of the product, lot identification and the name and address of the manufacturer, packer, distributor or importer, as well as storage instructions, shall appear on the container. However, lot identification, and the name and address of the manufacturer, packer, distributor or importer may be replaced by an identification mark, provided that such a mark is clearly identifiable with the accompanying documents.

9. METHODS OF ANALYSIS AND SAMPLING

9.1 Methods of Analysis

Table 4. Methods of Analysis

Provision	Method	Principle
Moisture	ISO 939:1980 ISO 760:1978 AOAC 2001.12	Titration Distillation
Total ash	ISO 928:1997	Gravimetry
Acid-insoluble ash	ISO 930:1997	Gravimetry
Volatile oils	ISO 6571:2008	Distillation/Volumetric
Extraneous vegetable matter	ISO 927:2009	Visual examination / Gravimetry
Foreign matter	ISO 927:2009	Visual examination / Gravimetry
Mammalian excreta	Macroanalytical procedure manual USFDA technical bulletin V.39 B (for whole) and AOAC 993.27 (for ground)	Visual examination (for whole) Enzymatic Detection method (for ground)
Whole dead insect	AOAC 969.44-1996	Flotation method
Insect fragments	AOAC 975.49-1988(2001)	Flotation method

9.2 Sampling Plan

Sampling plan for thyme and cumin is used for also dried oregano.

APPENDIX II**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

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