

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX COMMITTEE ON MILK AND MILK PRODUCTS

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CHEESE PRODUCTS OTHER THAN CHEESE

STUDY DATA FOR INTERNATIONAL STANDARDISATION OF THESE PRODUCTS

(Prepared by France)

1. GENERAL REMARKS

During the 3rd session of the CCMMP in Montevideo in 1998, the French authorities suggested introducing (CRD 16, CX/MMP 98/13) a standard to cover a diverse range of cheese-related products which, for various reasons, are not covered by the Codex General Standard for Cheese (A6).

In 2000, during the 4th session, the CCMMP considered the proposal by the French delegation to begin work on drawing up a standard for this new category of products for the second time.

Before studying this proposal, the CCMMP wished to have more detailed information on these products. It therefore asked France to provide it with information before the 5th session, in order to arrive at a decision during this session.

The French authorities completed the task with the help of the IDF, which surveyed its members. Nineteen member countries of the IDF replied to the survey and a summary of the results was sent to France. The information requested by the CCMMP during the fourth session is set out below. As agreed, France based its report on the summary provided by the IDF.

2. INFORMATION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE

The IDF explained that collecting such information was generally quite difficult because there are no precise statistics currently available and these products are classified under different customs categories in different countries. In addition, the customs classification does not include categories relating specifically to these products.

Because of these difficulties, it seems that the information provided by the IDF somewhat under-estimates the true situation. However, it still represents the most significant research yet undertaken in the area of economic data.

2.1 Production for domestic markets

Ten of the nineteen countries surveyed told the IDF that they were developing a number of products which did not conform to the definition of cheese described by standard A6, and which were considered to be in a

different category of products from cheese. This category was recognised on the domestic market either through use, regulations or industry definitions.

These countries are:

- Belgium
- Canada
- Denmark
- Germany
- Spain
- France
- Hungary
- United States
- Latvia
- Switzerland

2.2 Total domestic production

Total production on domestic markets for the countries which provided figures to the IDF is 30,000 tonnes.

Some countries, including Canada, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland and the United States, indicated that these products are present on the domestic market, without being able to give precise figures.

Therefore the overall production figure of 30,000 tonnes must be seen as an under-representation of the true situation.

2.3 Exports

Because the customs identity of these products is not consistent, it has been difficult for some countries to respond to this part of the IDF survey. For the countries able to respond, the total volume of exports is at least 7,500 tonnes. It therefore seems likely that the true export volume is higher.

These products are exported to more than 20 countries: United States, Canada, Brazil, Middle East, Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Australia, New Zealand.

As far as the trends in this area of trading activity are concerned, the fact that these products are new in particular has meant a continuing increase in trade.

2.4 Problems encountered in international trade

The differences in legislation relating to these products and their lack of status at the international level create difficulties for international trade.

3 . NATIONAL LEGISLATION

3.1 Official status for these products

Six countries told the IDF they had either specific regulations, professional codes, national requirements or ad hoc descriptions specifying the characteristics of these products.

These countries are:

- Switzerland
- Germany
- Hungary
- Canada
- France (practice and specific regulations currently being developed)
- Latvia

Other countries using the general labelling and composition rules to define the legal status of these products are: New Zealand, Denmark and the United States (the United States specifically indicated that they had no general legal definition for cheese).

The IDF pointed out in its conclusion that national regulations and requirements differ to a high degree, which may create technical barriers to trade.

3.2 Sales description of products

The most frequently used sales description of these products is: "cheese preparation". Other sales descriptions include: "cheese products", "cheese speciality" or the word "cheese" together with a precise description aimed at the consumer.

4. IDENTIFICATION AND COMPOSITION CRITERIA FOR THESE PRODUCTS

4.1 Identification criteria

These products are generally developed from dairy raw materials and are therefore required to meet the general standard on the use of dairy terms.

The information gathered by the IDF reveals the huge diversity in the characteristics of these products. The way in which they differ from the definition of cheese set out in standard A6 may be categorised as follows:

- The use of manufacturing processes (for example: ultrafiltration together with the use of dairy ingredients) which result in a higher final ratio of whey protein to casein than is found in milk.
- The development of technologies not usually used for cheeses (for example, the use of microfiltration or nanofiltration to preserve the nutritional ingredients of milk in the final product).
- The use of ingredients and/or additives other than those permitted in cheese (standard A6), for example to obtain varieties of product with low milk fat content.
- The development of technology together with the use of ingredients and/or additives to meet new consumer uses.

4.2 Composition

The IDF summary shows a number of peculiarities which are listed according to country:

- The use of ingredients other than those covered by standard A6: Canada, France, Hungary and the United States in particular use gelatine and starch as ingredients in these products.
- The use of ingredients other than those covered by standard A6: Canada, Denmark, France, Hungary and the United States use gelling agents, modified starch and pectin as supplementary additives in these products.
- Dairy protein enrichment: Canada, Denmark, France and the United States use whey proteins as ingredients, which, through the use of technology such as ultrafiltration, can result in a higher ratio of whey protein to casein than in milk.
- Mixing cheese with other dairy products: Canada, France, Germany, Hungary, Spain and the United States have products on their domestic markets which are made up of mixed cheeses or of cheese mixed with other dairy products, e.g. cold pack cheese foods in the United States.

5. CONCLUSION

These increasingly important dairy products are part of a fast-growing market, both in terms of domestic production and international trade.

These products need to be considered separately from cheese.

Different levels of economic development, diverse regulatory environments, differences in the accepted definitions, and problems with trade between countries, where, in some cases, real barriers have been created, make it important for the CCMMP to develop a standard specifically aimed at these products, or, at least, regulatory measures covering this category of products.