

CODEX Standards related to milk and milk products

At its 23rd Session in Rome, from 28 June to 3 July 1999, the Codex Alimentarius Commission adopted at the final stage of its procedure the following 9 Codex standards related to milk and milk products:

Codex General Standard for the Use of Dairy Terms, Codex standards for:

Butter, Milkfat Products, Evaporated Milks, Sweetened Condensed Milks, Milk Powders and Cream Powder, Cheese, Whey Cheese and Cheeses in Brine.

This adoption is the culmination of 6 years' hard work by IDF experts who formulated the texts and nursed their passage through the Codex system.

The new Codex Standards are important in international trade because they provide the benchmark for product specifications in cases of trade dispute. Any government whose import regulations comply with the Codex Standards needs no further defence if challenged before the World Trade Organization (WTO) under the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures Agreement (SPS) or Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement (TBT).

The General Standard for the Use of Dairy Terms (GSUDT) is of a very high value for the dairy industry as it protects and defines the use of dairy terms for foodstuff in international trade. The main issues addressed in the course of the discussion on the GSUDT were the introduction of protein adjustment of drinking milk (if labelled) and preserved milk products (no labelling requirement). Furthermore, there has been considerable pressure from South East Asian countries to allow the use of dairy terms for imitation products. The issue has been referred to the Codex Committee on Milk and Milk Products and the Codex Coordinating Committee for Asia for future consideration.

Until last June the old Codex Standards for milk and milk products, dating back to 1973, were still valid. Milk products and international trade in milk products have changed enormously in the meantime and further changes can be expected as the liberalization of trade negotiated in the WTO develops further. The new Codex Standards reflect today's conditions.

Plenty of other issues may give rise to trade disputes between governments but from now on product specifications will not be among them.

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Understanding Codex Alimentarius

Please take note of the appended link to the Codex Alimentarius homepage. There you will find a very useful booklet explaining Codex Alimentarius in either English, French or Spanish. Particular attention should be drawn to the section "Origins of the Codex Alimentarius" where IDF receives a special appreciation as "important catalyst in the conception of Codex Alimentarius".

The information booklet "Understanding Codex Alimentarius" is now available on-line at the following URLs:

English: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/w9114e/w9114e00.htm>

French: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/w9114f/w9114f00.htm>

Spanish: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/w9114s/w9114s00.htm>

It may also be accessed in the three languages from the Codex Home page at <http://www.fao.org/esn/es/codex>