CODEX STANDARD FOR DATES

(CODEX STAN 143-1985)

1. SCOPE

This standard applies to commercially prepared whole dates in pitted or un-pitted styles packed ready for direct consumption. It does not apply to other forms such as pieces or mashed dates or dates intended for industrial purposes.

2. DESCRIPTION

2.1 Product Definition

Dates are the product prepared from sound fruit of the date tree (*Phoenix dactylifera* L.),which fruit:

(a) is harvested at the appropriate stage of maturity;
(b) is sorted and cleaned to remove defective fruit and extraneous material;
(c) may be pitted and capped;
(d) may be dried or hydrated to adjust moisture content;
(e) may be washed and/or pasteurized; and
(f) is packaged in suitable containers to assure preservation and protection of the product.

2.2 Varietal Types

Varietal types are classified as:

(a) **Cane sugar varieties** (containing mainly sucrose) such as Daglat Nuur (Deglet Noor) and Daglat Beidha (Deglet Beidha).

(b) **Invert Sugar varieties** (containing mainly invert sugar - glucose, and fructose) such as Barhi (Barhee), Saiidi (Saidy), Khadhraawi (Khadrawy), Hallaawi (Halawy), Zahdi (Zahidi), and Sayir (Sayer).

2.3 Styles

Styles may be classified as:

(a) unpitted; and
(b) pitted.

2.4 Sub-styles

Sub-styles are as follows:

(a) **Pressed** - dates which are compressed into layers using mechanical force.

(b) **Unpressed or Loose** - dates which are free-flowing or packaged without mechanical force or compression.

(c) **Clusters** - dates with the main bunch stem attached.

2.5 **Size Classification** (Optional)

Dates may be designated as to size names in accordance with the following charts:

(a) **Unpitted dates**

Size	No. of dates in 500 g
Small	More than 100
Medium	80 to 100
Large	less than 80

(b) **Pitted dates**

Size	No. of dates in 500 g
Small	More than 110
Medium	90 to 110
Large	less than 90

3. ESSENTIAL COMPOSITION AND QUALITY FACTORS

3.1 Composition

3.1.1 Optional Ingredients

Glucose syrup, sugars, flour, vegetable oils.

3.2 Quality factors

3.2.1 General Requirements

Dates shall be prepared from such fruit and under such practices that the finished product shall possess a characteristic colour and flavour for the variety and type, be of proper stage of ripeness, be free of live insects and insect eggs and mites and meet the following additional requirements:

(a)	**Moisture content**	**Maximum**
	Cane Sugar varieties	26%
	Daglat Nuur	30% (not processed in accordance with 2.1(d)(e))
	Invert Sugar varieties	30%
(b)	**Size (minimum)**	
	Unpitted Dates	- 4.75 grammes
	Pitted Dates	- 4.0 grammes
(c)	Pits (Stones) (in Pitted Style)	- Not more than two pits or 4 pieces of pit per 100 dates
(d)	**Mineral impurities**	- Not more than 1 g/kg

3.2.2 **DEFINITION OF DEFECTS**

(a)	**Blemishes**	-	Scars, discoloration, sunburn, dark spots, blacknose or similar abnormalities in surface appearance affecting an aggregate area greater than that of a circle 7 mm in diameter.
(b)	**Damaged**	-	(Unpitted dates only) - dates affected by mashing and/or tearing of the flesh exposing the pit or to such an extent that it significantly detracts from the visual appearance of the date.
(c)	**Unripe Dates**	-	Dates which may be light in weight, light in colour, have shrivelled or little flesh or a decidedly rubbery texture.
(d)	**Unpollinated Dates**	-	Dates not pollinated as evidenced by thin flesh, immature characteristics and no pit in unpitted dates.
(e)	**Dirt**	-	Dates having embedded organic or inorganic material similar to dirt or sand in character and affecting an aggregate area greater than that of a circle 3 mm in diameter.
(f)	**Insects and mites**	-	Dates damaged by insects or mites or contaminated by **damage and contamination** the presence of dead insects or mites, fragments of insects or mites or their excreta.
(g)	**Scouring**	-	Breakdown of the sugars into alcohol and acetic acid by yeasts and bacteria.
(h)	**Mould**	-	Presence of mould filaments visible to the naked eye.
(i)	**Decay**	-	Dates that are in a state of decomposition and very objectionable in appearance.

3.2.3 **Allowance for Defects**

The maximum allowances for the defects defined in 3.2.2 shall be:

A total of 7% by count of dates with defect (a)
A total of 6% by count of dates with defects (b), (c) and (d)
A total of 6% by count of dates with defects (e) and (f)
A total of 1% by count of dates with defects (g), (h) and (i)

3.3 **Lot Acceptance**

A lot will be considered as meeting the quality criteria requirements of the standard when:

(a) there is no evidence of live infestation; and

(b) the sub-sample, as taken in conformity with Sub-samples for Examination and

Testing in Codex Alimentarius Volume 13, meets the general requirements of subsection 3.2.1 and does not exceed the allowances for the respective defects in sub-sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3, except that, with respect to size requirements, 5% by count (5 dates out of 100) may weigh less than the specified minimum.

4. FOOD ADDITIVES

			Maximum Level
4.1	Glycerol	)	In accordance with GMP (see also Section 3.1.1)
4.2	Sorbitol	)	

5. HYGIENE

5.1 It is recommended that the product covered by the provisions of this standard be prepared and handled in accordance with the appropriate sections of the Recommended International Code of Practice - General Principles of Food Hygiene (CAC/RCP 1-1969, Rev. 2 (1985) Codex Alimentarius Volume 1), and other Codes of Practice recommended by the Codex Alimentarius Commission which are relevant to this product.

5.2 To the extent possible in Good Manufacturing Practice, the product shall be free from objectionable matter.

5.3 When tested by appropriate methods of sampling and examination, the product:

- shall be free from microorganisms in amounts which may represent a hazard to health;

- shall be free from parasites which may represent a hazard to health; and

- shall not contain any substance originating from microorganisms in amounts which may represent a hazard to health.

6. 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.

7. LABELLING

In addition to the requirements of the General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods (CODEX STAN 1-1985), the following specific provisions apply:

7.1 The Name of the Food

7.1.1 The name of the product shall be "Dates" or "Dates coated with Glucose Syrup".

7.1.2 The style shall be indicated as "pitted" or "unpitted", as is applicable.

7.1.3 The name of the product may include the name of the varietal type, such as "Hallawi", "Saher", "khadhrawi", "Daglat", "Noor", "Barhee", or others, the sub-style as "pressed" or "unpressed", and the size designation as "small", "medium" or "large".

8. METHODS OF ANALYSIS AND SAMPLING

See relevant Codex texts on methods of analysis and sampling.

8.1 Special Provisions for Sampling of Dates

8.1.1 Gross Sample

Select at random not less than 2 individual packages per each 1,000 kg portion of the lot. From each individual package draw a sample of 300g and in any case sufficient to obtain a gross sample of not less than 3,000g. Use the gross sample for checking carefully for live infestation and general cleanliness of the product prior to its examination for compliance with other provisions of the standard.

8.1.2 Sub-samples for Examination and Testing

Mix the gross sample well and take small quantities at random from many different places as follows:

For moisture test	- 500 grammes
For pits (in pitted style)	- 100 dates
For specified defects and size requirements	- 100 dates