
**Definitions and technical criteria for
foods and food ingredients suitable
for vegetarians or vegans and for
labelling and claims**

*Définitions et critères techniques pour denrées alimentaires et
ingrédients de denrées alimentaires adaptés à l'alimentation des
végétariens ou des végétaliens, ainsi que pour l'étiquetage et les
allégations*

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Contents

	Page
Foreword	iv
Introduction	v
1 Scope	1
2 Normative references	1
3 Terms and definitions	1
4 Technical criteria for foods and food ingredients suitable for vegetarians and vegans	3
4.1 General.....	3
4.2 Foods and food ingredients suitable for ovo-lacto-vegetarians.....	3
4.3 Foods and food ingredients suitable for ovo-vegetarians.....	3
4.4 Foods and food ingredients suitable for lacto-vegetarians.....	4
4.5 Foods and food ingredients suitable for vegans.....	4
5 Labelling and claims	5
Bibliography	6

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see www.iso.org/patents).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 34, *Food products*.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide the technical criteria for foods and food ingredients suitable for vegetarians (including ovo-lacto-, ovo- and lacto-vegetarians) or vegans for use by the food and beverage industry at a global level, as well as technical criteria for food labelling and claims.

The document specifies technical criteria to all food and beverage companies, applicable to all organizations, regardless of size or complexity. This document is intended for use in business-to-business communications, relationships in the global food supply chain, the international trade of food products, and food labelling and claims.

Conformity to this document helps to ensure a level-playing field and fair practices in business-to-business relationships, international trade, and food labelling and claims.

NOTE Legally required information, food labelling or claims, or other applicable legal requirements can apply.

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Definitions and technical criteria for foods and food ingredients suitable for vegetarians or vegans and for labelling and claims

1 Scope

The document specifies the definitions and technical criteria to be fulfilled for foods and food ingredients to be suitable for vegetarians (including ovo-lacto-, ovo- and lacto-vegetarians) or vegans as well as for food labelling and claims.

It is applicable to business-to-business communication (B2B), to the food trade, and to food labelling and claims. The definitions and technical criteria apply only post-harvest/collecting.

It does not apply to human safety, environmental safety, socio-economic considerations (e.g. fair trade, animal welfare), religious beliefs and the characteristics of packaging materials.

2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>

3.1

animal

any being belonging to the taxonomic classification Kingdom Animalia, that is all vertebrates and all multi-cellular invertebrates

3.2

carrier

substances used to dissolve, dilute, disperse or otherwise physically modify a *food additive* (3.5) or a flavouring, food enzyme, nutrient and/or other substance added for nutritional or physiological purposes to a *food* (3.4) without altering its function (and without exerting any technological effect themselves) in order to facilitate its handling, application or use

[SOURCE: EU Regulation 1333/2008]

3.3

claim

any representation which states, suggests or implies that a *food* (3.4) has particular characteristics relating to its origin, nutritional properties, nature, production, processing, composition or any other quality

[SOURCE: CODEX CXG 1-1979]

**3.4
food**

any substance, whether processed, semi-processed or raw, which is intended for human consumption, and includes drinks, chewing gum and any substance which has been used in the manufacture, preparation or treatment of “food” but does not include cosmetics, tobacco or substances used only as drugs

[SOURCE: Codex Alimentarius, *Codex Alimentarius Commission Procedural Manual*]

**3.5
food additive**

any substance not normally consumed as a *food* (3.4) by itself and not normally used as a typical *ingredient* (3.7) of the food, whether or not it has nutritive value, the intentional addition of which to foods for a technological (including organoleptic) purpose in the manufacture, processing, preparation, treatment, packing, packaging, transport or holding of such foods results, may be reasonably expected to result (directly or indirectly) in it or its by-products becoming a component of or otherwise affecting the characteristics of such foods

Note 1 to entry: The term does not include contaminants or substances added to foods for maintaining or improving nutritional qualities.

[SOURCE: Codex Alimentarius, *Codex Alimentarius Commission Procedural Manual*]

**3.6
food business operator
FBO**

natural or legal persons responsible for ensuring that the requirements of food law are met within the food business under their control

[SOURCE: EU Regulation 178/2002]

**3.7
ingredient**

substance, including a *food additive* (3.5), used in the manufacture or preparation of a *food* (3.4) and present in the final product although possibly in a modified form

[SOURCE: CODEX CXS 1-1985]

**3.8
label**

tag, brand, mark, pictorial or other descriptive matter, written, printed, stencilled, marked, embossed or impressed on, or attached to, a container of *food* (3.4)

[SOURCE: CODEX CXS 1-1985]

**3.9
labelling**

written, printed or graphic matter that is present on the *label* (3.8), accompanies the *food* (3.4) or is displayed near the food, including that for the purpose of promoting its sale or disposal

[SOURCE: CODEX CXS 1-1985]

**3.10
processing aid**

any substance or material, not including apparatus or utensils, and not consumed as a food ingredient by itself, intentionally used in the processing of raw materials, *foods* (3.4) or its *ingredients* (3.7), to fulfil a certain technological purpose during treatment or processing, and which may result in the non-intentional but unavoidable presence of residues or derivatives in the final product

[SOURCE: Codex Alimentarius, *Codex Alimentarius Commission Procedural Manual*]

4 Technical criteria for foods and food ingredients suitable for vegetarians and vegans

4.1 General

Foods and food ingredients shall be considered suitable for vegetarians (including ovo-lacto-, ovo- and lacto-vegetarians) or vegans provided the technical criteria given in 4.2 to 4.5 are fulfilled.

4.2 Foods and food ingredients suitable for ovo-lacto-vegetarians

These are foods and food ingredients (including additives, flavourings, enzymes and carriers) or processing aids that are not products of animal origin and in which, at no stage of production and processing, use has been made of food ingredients (including additives, flavourings, enzymes and carriers) or processing aids that are of animal origin, except for the following and/or their components or derivatives:

- milk or dairy products or colostrum;
- eggs or egg products obtained from living animals;
- honey or bee products (e.g. beeswax, propolis);
- products derived from the wool of living animals (e.g. lanolin).

In the case of compound food ingredients, each food ingredient shall meet the technical criteria of this document to be suitable for ovo-lacto-vegetarians.

To avoid the unintended presence of non-ovo-lacto-vegetarian substances, all stages of production, processing and distribution shall be designed to take the appropriate precautions in conformity with good manufacturing practices (GMPs).

If the same production line is shared with non-ovo-lacto-vegetarian products/ingredients, thorough cleaning or comparable measures in conformity with GMPs shall be carried out before starting the production of ovo-lacto-vegetarian products. This extends to all associated machinery, equipment, utensils and surfaces. Appropriate precautions in conformity with GMPs shall be taken before ovo-lacto-vegetarian products are prepared, produced or packaged.

Food business operators (FBOs), companies working on their behalf or companies over which the FBO has effective control shall not have carried out tests of any kind on animals for the final product available to the consumer bearing an ovo-lacto-vegetarian claim.

However, for single ingredient foods and individual ingredients including processing aids, FBOs, companies working on their behalf or companies over which the FBO has effective control shall not have carried out tests of any kind on animals, except when required by public authorities' regulatory procedures.

4.3 Foods and food ingredients suitable for ovo-vegetarians

These are foods and food ingredients (including additives, flavourings, enzymes and carriers) or processing aids that are not products of animal origin and in which, at no stage of production and processing, use has been made of food ingredients (including additives, flavourings, enzymes and carriers) or processing aids that are of animal origin, except for the following and/or their components or derivatives:

- eggs or egg products obtained from living animals;
- honey or bee products (e.g. beeswax, propolis);
- products derived from the wool of living animals (e.g. lanolin).

In the case of compound food ingredients, each food ingredient shall meet the technical criteria of this document to be suitable for ovo-vegetarians.

To avoid the unintended presence of non-ovo-vegetarian substances, all stages of production, processing and distribution shall be designed to take the appropriate precautions in conformity with GMPs.

If the same production line is shared with non-ovo-vegetarian products/ingredients, thorough cleaning or comparable measures in conformity with GMPs shall be carried out before starting the production of ovo-vegetarian products. This extends to all associated machinery, equipment, utensils and surfaces. Appropriate precautions in conformity with GMPs shall be taken before ovo-vegetarian products are prepared, produced or packaged.

FBOs, companies working on their behalf or companies over which the FBO has effective control shall not have carried out tests of any kind on animals for the final product available to the consumer bearing an ovo-vegetarian claim.

However, for single ingredient foods and individual ingredients including processing aids, FBOs, companies working on their behalf or companies over which the FBO has effective control shall not have carried out tests of any kind on animals, except when required by public authorities' regulatory procedures.

4.4 Foods and food ingredients suitable for lacto-vegetarians

These are foods and food ingredients (including additives, flavourings, enzymes and carriers) or processing aids that are not products of animal origin and in which, at no stage of production and processing, use has been made of food ingredients (including additives, flavourings, enzymes and carriers) or processing aids that are of animal origin, except for the following and/or their components or derivatives:

- milk or dairy products or colostrum;
- honey or bee products (e.g. beeswax, propolis);
- products derived from the wool of living animals (e.g. lanolin).

In the case of compound food ingredients, each food ingredient shall meet the technical criteria of this document to be suitable for lacto-vegetarians.

To avoid the unintended presence of non-lacto-vegetarian substances, all stages of production, processing and distribution shall be designed to take the appropriate precautions in conformity with GMPs.

If the same production line is shared with non-lacto-vegetarian products/ingredients, thorough cleaning or comparable measures in conformity with GMPs shall be carried out before starting the production of lacto-vegetarian products. This extends to all associated machinery, equipment, utensils and surfaces. Appropriate precautions in conformity with GMPs shall be taken before lacto-vegetarian products are prepared, produced or packaged.

FBOs, companies working on their behalf or companies over which the FBO has effective control shall not have carried out tests of any kind on animals for the final product available to the consumer bearing a lacto-vegetarian claim.

However, for single ingredient foods and individual ingredients including processing aids, FBOs, companies working on their behalf or companies over which the FBO has effective control shall not have carried out tests of any kind on animals, except when required by public authorities' regulatory procedures.

4.5 Foods and food ingredients suitable for vegans

These are foods and food ingredients (including additives, flavourings, enzymes and carriers) or processing aids that are not products of animal origin and in which, at no stage of production and

processing, use has been made of ingredients (including additives, flavourings, enzymes and carriers) or processing aids that are of animal origin.

In the case of compound food ingredients, each food ingredient shall meet the technical criteria of this document to be suitable for vegans.

To avoid the unintended presence of non-vegan substances, all stages of production, processing and distribution shall be designed to take the appropriate precautions in conformity with GMPs.

If the same production line is shared with non-vegan products/ingredients, thorough cleaning or comparable measures in conformity with GMPs shall be carried out before production of vegan products commences. This extends to all associated machinery, equipment, utensils and surfaces. Appropriate precautions in conformity with GMPs shall be taken before vegan products are prepared, produced or packaged.

FBOs, companies working on their behalf or companies over which the FBO has effective control shall not have carried out tests of any kind on animals for the final product available to the consumer bearing a vegan claim.

However, for single ingredient foods and individual ingredients including processing aids, FBOs, companies working on their behalf or companies over which the FBO has effective control shall not have carried out tests of any kind on animals, except when required by public authorities' regulatory procedures.

5 Labelling and claims

Prepackaged food shall not be described or presented on any label or in any labelling in a manner that is false, misleading or deceptive, or is likely to create an erroneous impression regarding its character in any respect^{[2][3]}.

If foods and/or food ingredients (including additives, flavourings, enzymes and carriers) or processing aids are labelled as "vegetarian", "vegan", "suitable for vegetarians (including ovo-lacto-, ovo- and lacto-vegetarians)", or "suitable for vegans", or any other wording with similar meaning, they shall meet the relevant technical criteria given in [Clause 4](#).

The unintended presence of non-vegetarian or non-vegan substances should not be an obstacle to labelling a product as vegetarian (including ovo-lacto-, ovo- and lacto-vegetarian) or vegan, provided that appropriate precautions in conformity with GMPs have been taken. An allergen declaration due to cross-contact applicable to non-vegetarian and non-vegan ingredients is not an obstacle to use the claim vegetarian (including ovo-lacto-, ovo- and lacto-vegetarian) or vegan.

The terms "vegetarian (including ovo-lacto-, ovo- and lacto-vegetarian)" or "vegan" or any other wording with similar meaning should be indicated in the same field of vision as the commercial name of the product.