

DRAFT CARICOM STANDARD

**Specification for the
Grading of Sweet Peppers**

COMMITTEE DRAFT

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0.0 FOREWORD**0.1** This Standard is designed to:

Improve the regional and international market competitiveness of Sweet Pepper and to address critical concerns relating to quality in the production of the Sweet Peppers in the region.

- (a) Avoid misunderstanding and confusion among those involved in the marketing chain
- (b) Provide an objective basis for relating price with quality
- (c) Encourage better selection, packaging and presentation of produce as a means of obtaining greater income overall
- (d) Assist exporters and their countries in meeting export market requirements and thereby enhancing their reputation and market position.

0.2 In the development of this standard reference was made to:

- (a) UNECE Standards FFV-28 concerning the marketing and commercial quality control of Sweet Pepper moving in international trade between and to UNECE member countries.
- (b) Botswana Fruit and Vegetables – Specification for Sweet peppers
- (c) Sweet pepper- Specifications AFD1 (267) D20
- (d) United States Standards for Grades of Sweet peppers

1.0 SCOPE

This standard applies to **Sweet pepper** of varieties (cultivars) grown from *Capsicum annuum L. var. grossum* to be supplied fresh to the consumer market and excludes products for industrial processing.

The purpose of this standard is to define specifications for quality requirements of sweet pepper at the export or import control stages, after preparation and packaging.

However, if applied at stages following export, products may show in relation to the requirements of the standard:

- A slight lack of freshness and turgidity
- For products graded in classes other than the Class I, a slight deterioration due to their development and their tendency to perish.

The holder/seller of products may not display such products or offer them for sale, or deliver or market them in any manner other than in conformity with this standard. The holder shall be responsible for observing such conformity.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this standard, the following definitions shall apply:

- 2.1 Blemish:** means any physical injury affecting the surface of the fruit, such as scars, scratches, healed cracks or discoloured spots, which detracts from its natural appearance, but will not significantly affect its shelf life.
- 2.2 Clean:** means that the sweet peppers are free from dirt, foreign material and odours.
- 2.3 Damage:** any injury or defect caused by insects, diseases or any mechanical means, which affects the appearance and marketing qualities of the sweet pepper.
- 2.4 Diameter:** the greatest dimension of the sweet pepper measured at right angles to the longitudinal axis.
- 2.5 Firm:** the sweet pepper is not soft, shriveled, limp or pliable, although it may yield to slight pressure.
- 2.6 Length:** the greatest dimension of the sweet pepper measured from the base to the blossom end.
- 2.7 Mature:** the sweet pepper has reached the full stage of development that will withstand normal handling and shipping.

Similar varietal characteristics: means that each pepper is of the same general type (except when more than one variety and/or color are marked on the container.) For example, thin walled types and thick walled types of the same color shall not be mixed within the container.

Not seriously misshapen: means that the pepper is not badly indented, crooked, constricted or otherwise badly deformed.

2.8 Shape: shall be typical of the variety

2.9 Similar varietal characteristics: that the sweet pepper in each container shall have the same general characteristics of the variety.

2.10 Well-shaped: the sweet pepper is not more than slightly curved, slightly indented or not otherwise more than slightly misshapen.

2.11 Well trimmed: Stalk is cut to the shoulder of the fruit or 10 mm in length

3.0 PROVISIONS CONCERNING QUALITY

The purpose of the standard is to define the quality requirements for sweet peppers after preparation and packaging.

3.1 Minimum requirements

In all classes, subject to the special provisions for each class and the tolerances allowed, the sweet peppers must be:

- (a) Intact
- (b) Sound; produce affected by rotting or deterioration such as to make it unfit for consumption is excluded
- (c) Clean, practically free of any visible foreign matter
- (d) Fresh in appearance
- (e) Practically free from pests
- (f) Free from damage caused by pests
- (g) Mature
- (h) Free from damage caused by frost
- (i) Free from unhealed injuries
- (j) Free from sunburn
- (k) With peduncles attached
- (l) Free from external moisture
- (m) Free of any foreign smell
- (n) Firm

The development and condition of the sweet peppers must be such as to enable them:

- To withstand transport and handling, and
- To arrive in satisfactory condition at the place of destination.

3.2 Classification

Sweet peppers are classified in two classes, defined below:

3.2.1 Class I

Sweet peppers in this class must be of good quality. They must be characteristic of the variety and/or commercial type as regards development, shape and colour with due regard to the degree of maturity .

They must be:

- (a) Practically free of blemishes.
- (b) The stalk should be well trimmed with the calyx intact.

Total aggregate blemishes shall not exceed 2% of the surface area of individual fruits

3.2.2 Class II

This class includes sweet peppers which do not qualify for inclusion in Class I but satisfy the minimum requirements as specified in 3.1.

The following defects may be allowed provided the peppers retain their essential characteristics as regards the quality, the keeping quality and presentation:

- Defects in shape and development
- sunburn or slight healed injuries, with a limit of 2 cm in length for defects of elongated shape, and 1 cm² of the total area for other defects
- Slight dry superficial cracks not exceeding an overall cumulative length of 3 cm.

- (a) Total aggregate blemishes shall not exceed 5% of the surface area of individual fruit
- (b) The stalk may be slightly damaged with the calyx intact.

4.0 PROVISIONS CONCERNING SIZING

4.1 Class I

The diameter of each pepper shall not be less than 3 inches and the length of each pepper shall be not less than 3 ½ inches.

4.2 Class II

The diameter of each pepper shall not be less than 2 ½ inches and the length of each pepper shall be not less than 2 ½ inches.

5.0 PROVISIONS CONCERNING TOLERANCES

Tolerances in respect of quality and size shall be allowed in each package for produce not satisfying the requirements of the class indicated.

5.1 Class I

Not more than 10 per cent of sweet peppers in any lot may fail to meet the requirements of this class and not more than 5% shall be allowed for peppers which are seriously damaged, including therein not more than 2% for peppers affected by decay affecting calyxes and/or walls.

Not more than 10 percent of peppers in any lot shall fail to meet the size specifications not satisfying the requirements of the class, but meeting those of Class II or, exceptionally, coming within the tolerances of that class.

5.2 Class II

Not more than 10 per cent of sweet peppers in any lot may fail to meet the requirements of this class and not more than 5% shall be allowed for peppers affected by sunscald or affected by decay affecting stems only, including therein not more than 2% for peppers affected by decay affecting calyxes and/or walls.

6.0 PROVISIONS CONCERNING PRESENTATION

6.1 Uniformity

The contents of each package must be uniform and contain only sweet peppers of the same origin, variety or commercial type, quality, size (if sized) and, in the case of Class I, of appreciably the same degree of development and slight variation in colouring.

However, a mixture of sweet peppers of different colours is allowed as long as origin, variety or commercial type, quality and size (if sized) are uniform.

The visible part of the contents of the package must be representative of the entire contents.

6.2 Packaging

The sweet peppers must be packed in such a way as to protect the produce properly.

The materials used inside the package must be new, clean and of a quality such as to avoid causing any external or internal damage to the produce. The use of materials, particularly paper or stamps bearing trade specifications is allowed, provided the printing or labelling has been done with non-toxic ink or glue.

Packages must be free of all foreign matter.

7.0 PROVISIONS CONCERNING LABELING

7.1 Packaging

Sweet pepper of the same class, colour and shape shall be packaged in suitable containers that are nontoxic, non-hazardous to health and which shall be so constructed as to allow proper ventilation of the packed produce and afford optimum protection from normal handling and transportation. Whilst packing, care should be taken that the sweet peppers are not unduly pressed.

7.2 Labeling

Each container shall be marked legibly and indelibly or a label shall be attached to the container, with the following information:

- (a) Name of produce
- (b) Class and size designation
- (c) Net weight
- (d) Name and address of supplier and/or exporter
- (e) Country of origin

8.0 CONTAMINANTS

8.1 Heavy metals

Sweet pepper shall comply with those maximum levels for heavy metals established by the Codex Alimentarius Commission for this commodity.

8.2 Pesticide residues

Sweet pepper shall comply with those maximum pesticide residue limits established by the Codex Alimentarius Commission for this commodity.

9.0 HYGIENIC AND SANITARY REQUIREMENTS

It is recommended that the produce covered by the provisions of this Standard be prepared and handled in accordance with the appropriate sections of the latest edition of the Recommended International Code of Practice – General Principles of Food Hygiene (CAC/RCP 1-1969, Rev. 4-2003), Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (CAC/RCP 53-2003), and other relevant Codex texts such as Codes of Hygienic Practice and Codes of Practice. The produce should comply with any microbiological criteria established in accordance with the Principles for the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria for Foods (CAC/GL 21-1997).