

GENERAL GUIDELINES ON CLAIMS

CAC/GL 1-1979¹

1. SCOPE AND GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 1.1** These guidelines relate to claims made for a food irrespective of whether or not the food is covered by an individual Codex Standard.
- 1.2** The principle on which the guidelines are based is that no food should be described or presented in a manner that is false, misleading or deceptive or is likely to create an erroneous impression regarding its character in any respect.
- 1.3** The person marketing the food should be able to justify the claims made.

2. DEFINITION

For the purpose of these guidelines, a claim is any representation which states, suggests or implies that a food has particular characteristics relating to its origin, nutritional properties, nature, production, processing, composition or any other quality.

3. PROHIBITED CLAIMS

The following claims should be prohibited:

- 3.1** Claims stating that any given food will provide an adequate source of all essential nutrients, except in the case of well defined products for which a Codex standard regulates such claims as admissible claims or where appropriate authorities have accepted the product to be an adequate source of all essential nutrients.
- 3.2** Claims implying that a balanced diet or ordinary foods cannot supply adequate amounts of all nutrients.
- 3.3** Claims which cannot be substantiated.
- 3.4** Claims as to the suitability of a food for use in the prevention, alleviation, treatment or cure of a disease, disorder, or particular physiological condition unless they are:
 - (a) in accordance with the provisions of Codex standards or guidelines for foods under jurisdiction of the Committee on Foods for Special Dietary Uses and follow the principles set forth in these guidelines. or,
 - (b) in the absence of an applicable Codex standard or guideline, permitted under the laws of the country in which the food is distributed.
- 3.5** Claims which could give rise to doubt about the safety of similar food or which could arouse or exploit fear in the consumer.

4. POTENTIALLY MISLEADING CLAIMS

The following are examples of claims which may be misleading:

- 4.1** Meaningless claims including incomplete comparatives and superlatives.
- 4.2** Claims as to good hygienic practice, such as "wholesome", "healthful", "sound".

¹ The Codex *General Guidelines on Claims* were adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission at its 13th Session (1979) and revised by its 19th Session (1991).

5. CONDITIONAL CLAIMS

- 5.1** The following claims should be permitted subject to the particular condition attached to each:
- (i) An indication that a food has obtained an increased or special nutritive value by means of the addition of nutrients, such as vitamins, minerals and amino acids may be given only if such an addition has been made on the basis of nutritional considerations according to the Codex *General Principles for the Addition of Essential Nutrients to Foods*. This kind of indication should be subject to legislation by the appropriate authorities.
 - (ii) An indication that the food has special nutritional qualities by the reduction or omission of a nutrient should be on the basis of nutritional considerations and subject to legislation by the appropriate authorities.
 - (iii) Terms such as “natural”, “pure”, “fresh”, “home made”, “organically grown” and “biologically grown” when they are used, should be in accordance with the national practices in the country where the food is sold. The use of these terms should be consistent with the prohibitions set out in Section 3.
 - (iv) Religious or Ritual Preparation (e.g. Halal, Kosher) of a food may be claimed provided that the food conforms to the requirements of the appropriate religious or ritual authorities (see also the *General Guidelines for the Use of the Term “Halal”, CAC/GL 24-1997*).
 - v) Claims that a food has special characteristics when all such foods have the same characteristics, if this fact is apparent in the claim.
 - (vi) Claims which highlight the absence or non-addition of particular substances to food may be used provided that they are not misleading and provided that the substance:
 - (a) is not subject to specific requirements in any Codex Standard or Guideline;
 - (b) is one which consumers would normally expect to find in the food;
 - (c) has not been substituted by another giving the food equivalent characteristics unless the nature of the substitution is clearly stated with equal prominence; and
 - (d) is one whose presence or addition is permitted in the food.
 - (vii) Claims which highlight the absence or non-addition of one or more nutrients should be regarded as nutrition claims and therefore should invoke mandatory nutrient declaration in accordance with the Codex *Guidelines on Nutrition Labelling*.