**Group Standard for un-ripened cheese including fresh cheese — Specification**

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This African Standard was prepared by the ARSO Technical Committee on Milk and milk products (ARSO/TC 04)

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## AFRICAN STANDARD

**Group Standard for un-ripened cheese including fresh cheese - Specification**

1 Scope

This Standard applies to the requirements, sampling and test methods for un-ripened cheese including fresh cheese, intended for direct consumption or further processing. Subject to the provisions of this Standard, ARSO Standards for individual varieties of un-ripened cheese may contain provisions, which are more specific than those in this Standard and in these cases; those specific provisions shall apply.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this standard. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

CXS 221- *Group Standard for Un-ripened Cheese including fresh cheese*

CODEX STAN 192-*General Standard for Food Additives*

CXS 193-*General Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Food and Feed*

CXC 1-*General Principles of Food Hygiene*

CXC 57-*Code of Hygienic Practice for Milk and Milk Products*

CXG 21-*Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria Related to Foods*

CXS 234, Recommended Methods of Analysis and Sampling

ARS 56, *Pre-packaged foods — Labelling*

*ARS 1073, Cheese- Specification*

ISO 6579-1, Microbiology of the food chain. Horizontal method for the detection, enumeration and serotyping of Salmonella Part 1: Detection of *Salmonella* spp

ISO 11290-1, Microbiology of the food chain. Horizontal method for the detection and enumeration of *Listeria monocytogenes* and of *Listeria* spp. Part 1: Detection method

3 Terms and definitions

Un-ripened cheeses including fresh cheeses are products in conformity with ARS 1073, which are ready for consumption shortly after manufacture.

4 Requirements

4.1 Raw materials

**4.1.1 Essential Raw materials**

Milk and/or products obtained from milk

Note: Indicate the source of milk if it is not cow milk

**4.1.2 Optional Raw Materials**

– Starter cultures of harmless lactic acid and/ or flavour producing bacteria and cultures of other harmless micro-organisms

– Rennet or other safe and suitable coagulating enzymes

– Sodium chloride

– Potable water complying to WHO guidelines

– Gelatine and starches: Notwithstanding the provisions in ARS 1073, these substances can be used in the same function as stabilizers, provided they are added only in amounts functionally necessary as governed by Good Manufacturing Practice taking into account any use of the stabilisers/thickeners up on Codex food additives reference.

– Vinegar

– Rice, corn and potato flours and starches: Notwithstanding the provisions in the ARS 1073, these substances can be used in the same function as anti-caking agents for treatment of the surface of cut, sliced, and shredded products only, provided they are added only in amounts functionally necessary as governed by Good Manufacturing Practice taking into account any use of the anti-caking agents up on Codex food additives reference.

4.2 General requirement

Cheese shall be free from dirt and foreign matter

4.3 Compositional Requirements

**Table 1: Milk Fat content**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Fat Content** | **FDM %** |
| **High fat** | above or equal to 60% |
| **Full fat** | above or equal to 45% and less than 60% |
| **Medium fat** | above or equal to 25% and less than 45%) |
| **Partially skimmed** | above or equal to 10% and less than 25%) |
| **Skim** | FDM is less than 10%) |

**Note**: FDM% means fat in the dry matter

5 Food Additives

Food additives may be used and only within the limits specified in General Standard for Food Additives (CODEX STAN 192-1995) – Category 01.6.1 (Unripened cheese), also the ones in Table 3 considering its Annex

6 Contaminants

The products covered by this African Standard shall comply with the Maximum Levels for contaminants that are specified for the product in the General Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Food and Feed (CXS 193).

**6.1** When tested in accordance with ISO 14501, the level of aflatoxin M1 shall not exceed 0.50 μg/kg.

7 Hygiene

It is recommended that the products covered by the provisions of this standard be prepared and handled in accordance with the appropriate sections of the General Principles of Food Hygiene (CXC 1-1969), the Code of Hygienic Practice for Milk and Milk Products (CXC 57-2004) and other relevant Codex texts such as Codes of Hygienic Practice and Codes of Practice. The products should comply with any microbiological criteria established in accordance with the Principles and Guidelines for the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria Related to Foods (CXG 21-1997).

**Table 2: Microbiological limits for un-ripened cheese including fresh cheese**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Food Category** | **Micro-organisms** | **Sampling plan** | **Limits** | **Test method reference** |
| n | c | m | M |
| Un-ripened cheese  | Salmonella | 5 | 0 | Absence in 25 g | ISO 6579-1 |
| Listeria monocytogenes | 5 | 0 | Absence in 25 g | ISO 11290-1 |
| Brucella- For un-ripened cheese made from Raw milk | 5 | 0 | Absence in 25 g | ELISA Milk Ring test / any other official international method |
| Pathogenic E Coli  | 5 | 0 | Absence in 25 g | ISO/TS 13136 |
| Coagulase-positive staphylococci | 5 | 0 | 102 cfu/gm | 103cfu/gm | ISO 6888-1 |
| Staphylococcal entero-toxins | 5 | 0 | Not detected in 25 g | ISO 19020 |
| Escherichia Coli | 5 | 1 | 102 cfu/g | 103cfu/g | ISO 16649-1 |

Where:

n = number of samples or units analyzed.

c = maximum allowable number of sample units yielding marginal results, i.e. results between m and M.

m = microbiological level that separates good quality from defective, or in a three-class plan good from marginally acceptable quality.

M = microbiological level in a three-class plan that separates marginally acceptable from unacceptable (defective) quality. Note: In a two-class plan M is assimilated to m.

8 Labelling

In addition to the provisions of the ARSO standard ARS-56 and the General Standard for the Use of Dairy Terms (CXS 206-1999), the following specific provisions apply:

8.1 Name of the food

The name of the food shall be un-ripened cheese. However, the words “un-ripened cheese” may be omitted in the designation of an individual un-ripened cheese variety reserved by a ARS standard for individual cheeses, and, in the absence thereof, a variety name specified in the national legislation of the country in which the product is sold, provided that the omission does not create an erroneous impression regarding the character of the food.

In case the product is not designated by an alternative or a variety name, but with the designation “un-ripened cheese”, the designation may be accompanied by a descriptive term such as provided for in Cheese – Specification, ARS 1073.

Un-ripened cheese may alternatively be designated “fresh cheese” provided it is not misleading to the consumer in the country in which the product is sold.

8.2 Declaration of milkfat content

The milk fat content shall be declared in a manner found acceptable in the country of sale to the final consumer, either (i) as a percentage by mass, (ii) as a percentage of fat in dry matter, or (iii) in grams per serving as quantified in the label provided that the number of servings is stated.

Additionally, terms may be used as per table (1).

8.3 Declaration of milk protein

If the consumer would be misled by the omission, the milk protein content shall be declared in a manner acceptable in the country of sale to the final consumer, either as

1. a percentage by mass,
2. or grams per serving as quantified in the label provided the number of servings is stated.

8.4 Additional Mandatory Requirements.

1. List of ingredients
2. Name and physical address of manufacturer or distributor or packer.
3. Net weight in metric unit.
4. Country of origin.
5. ‘Best before date’ (dd/mm/yy).
6. Storage conditions and instructions.
7. Lot identification, batch or code number.
8. Allergen information

8.5 Labelling of non-retail containers

Information required in Section 8 of this Standard and Sections 4.1 to 4.8 of the General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods ARS-56, and, if necessary, storage instructions, shall be given either on the container or in accompanying documents, except that the name of the product, lot identification, and the name and address of the manufacturer or packer shall appear on the container. However, lot identification, and the name and address of the manufacturer or packer may be replaced by an identification mark, provided that such a mark is clearly identifiable with the accompanying documents.

**9 Packaging**

A container or outer container in which the un-ripened including fresh cheese is packed shall:

(a) be made from a material that :

 (i) is suitable for this purpose;

(ii) will protect the contents thereof from contamination; and

(iii) will not impart any undesirable flavour or taste to the contents thereof;

(b) be so strong that it will not be damaged or deformed during normal storage, handling and transport practices;

(c) in the case of a container that is re-used, be thoroughly cleaned and sterilized before the un-ripened including fresh cheese is packed therein;

(d) be intact; and

(e) be closed properly in a manner permitted by the nature thereof.

**10 Methods of Sampling and Analysis**

For checking the compliance with this standard, the methods of analysis and sampling contained in the Recommended Methods of Analysis and Sampling (CXS 234-1999) relevant to the provisions in this standard, shall be used.

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