

6th June 2019. The technical regulation/ standard are being implemented by the Ministry of Health under its Food Act 2015 with the assistance of members of the Codex Committee.

The efforts of the stakeholders from the relevant Ministries of the Government of Samoa and the private sector including Farmer Associations will ensure that the Ava and Ava products from Samoa have been processed in accordance to an agreed quality food safety standard. For example: Ava quality is defined as outlined below. Furthermore, any issues relating to quality can be traced back to the origins of the Ava product. A copy of the Samoa Ava Quality Standard is attached for your information and records.

Ava Definition

'Ava is defined as the plant species *Piper methysticum* Frost consisting of known noble 'Ava varieties and the traditional and ceremonial beverage 'Ava extracts made by mixing water and the plant's organs such as roots, peeled rhizome or stump or peeled stems.

The noble 'Ava varieties in Samoa are:

- i. 'Ava Le'a
- ii. 'Ava La'au
- iii. 'Ava Loa
- iv. 'Ava Talo
- v. 'Ava Mumu

Ava products offered for direct consumption and have a history of safe traditional use in Samoa are:

- Roots unpeeled (uso)
- Stump or rhizomes- always peeled (aano fisi)
- Basal stem- always peeled (aka fisi)

Traceability

Ava and Ava products shall be identified by variety, location and farmer established at all stages of the production, processing and distribution of Ava and Ava products. Ava business operators shall have in place systems and procedures, which allow information to be available to the competent authorities on demand. The requirements for Ava products under this standard are outlined in Appendix 1.

Name of the product

The village or place of cultivation, the island of origin the product type: peeled basal stems (aka fisi), peeled stumps (aano fisi), or peeled roots (uso) must be appear on the labels and the bags.

The date the Ava is processed and packaged must be stated and clearly identified on the labels and bags contained 'Ava and 'Ava products.

Name of the Ava species

Scientific or common name of the 'Ava that is used as raw materials must appear on the label of all 'Ava or 'Ava products

Labelling of non-retail container

Information about non-retail containers must be on the container or in enclosed documents, but the name of the Ava product, lot identification and the name and address of the

manufacturer, packer or distributor, as well as storage instructions must appear on the container.

Increase to 4 kilograms of kava for personal use

The Samoa 'Ava technical regulation/standard 2018 applies to all 'Ava products used as food or beverage for human consumption within its jurisdiction scope. Therefore, the MCIL supports the proposed increase in quantity of kava for personal consumption, from 2 to 4 kilograms. The increase would double the benefit to kava growing families (old and new) when they send to their relatives in Australia. It will also assist and support the Pacific regions to push for commercialization and increased exportation of 'Ava products into overseas markets in the future. The Samoan 'Ava technical regulation/standard was developed for all people involved in 'Ava production to be responsible for ensuring an efficient chain of control is maintained from planting to production of 'Ava based products and ensuring appropriate hygiene practices are applied.

Pilot Period

The duration of the trial is reduced to 6 months if the increase to Ava being exported is from 2-4kg, or 12 months if the increase is from 2kg to 5 or 10kgs. It should be noted that for a similar import into Australia (herbs for therapeutic use) permits the importation of such items provided they do not exceed more than 3 months' supply in normal use during any 3 month period. Based on the calculation around 100g of Ava powder will provide 1.5litres of Ava beverage.

Recommendations

The Samoa National Codex Committee recommends that:

1. Reliable data and information are collected at key points of this suitcase trade to assist with the evaluation of this trial;
 - a) Prior to departure from Samoa, the passenger may be asked if they are taking any Ava in their luggage as they check-in at the airline counter or at the immigration/customs check point.
2. Australia also considers the commercial export of Ava and Ava products following the successful completion of this trial. It should be noted that the German ban that also triggered the initial ban of commercial exports of Ava into Australia was considered unlawful and inappropriate and was lifted in 2015. Sadly, the lifting of the ban has not been reflected in the Australia's position on Ava exports from its neighboring, Pacific Island Countries. It can be argued that Ava has been consumed in the Pacific Island communities for thousands of years without any health issues. Ava is an important part of our culture, identity and ceremonies. From the income generated through the sale and export of Ava and Ava products, these have helped our people to meet their family, religion and village obligations.