



NSAI
Standards

Irish Standard
I.S. EN 16104:2012

Food data - Structure and interchange format

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I.S. EN 16104:2012

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I.S. xxx: Irish Standard – national specification based on the consensus of an expert panel and subject to public consultation.

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SWIFT xxx: A rapidly developed recommendatory document based on the consensus of the participants of an NSAI workshop.

This document replaces:

This document is based on:
EN 16104:2012

Published:
11 January, 2013

This document was published
under the authority of the NSAI
and comes into effect on:
11 January, 2013

ICS number:

35.240.60
67.040

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Údarás um Chaighdeáin Náisiúnta na hÉireann

ICS 35.240.60; 67.040

English Version

Food data - Structure and interchange format

Données sur les aliments - Structure et format d'échange

Lebensmitteldaten - Struktur und Austauschformat

This European Standard was approved by CEN on 3 November 2012.

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Foreword

This document (EN 16104:2012) has been prepared by Technical Committee CEN/TC 387 “Food data”, the secretariat of which is held by SIS.

This European Standard shall be given the status of a national standard, either by publication of an identical text or by endorsement, at the latest by June 2013, and conflicting national standards shall be withdrawn at the latest by June 2013.

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Introduction

The term *food* generally refers to substances intended for human consumption, normally with exceptions for e.g. medicines, and includes raw or processed food products and substances used in the manufacture. The exact definition, however, may vary depending on legislation and cultural differences. This standard can be used regardless of such variations.

This standard uses *food properties* as a general term when describing food constituents such as nutrients, heavy metals, micro-organisms, but also when describing various physico-chemical properties of foods.

Food data address description and identification of foods and their food properties. They are needed and used for many purposes, e.g. labelling, product development, dietary treatment, nutritional treatment, consumer information, and research. Thus, there are many types of parties that need to generate, compile, interchange, or access detailed information about foods. These include:

- Food manufacturers
- Food analysis laboratories
- Authorities
- Researchers
- Resellers
- Retailers
- Nutritionists/dieticians
- Food distributors
- Consumers
- Restaurants/food service operators
- Software developers

The ability and need to manage food information vary between these parties. There are multiple instances of all parties mentioned, which means that the information is interchanged in a large number of relations between parties. For example, a food manufacturer may have the need to communicate food information with multiple resellers, multiple retailers, multiple distributors and multiple authorities in multiple countries, and so on.

Currently, there are differences among member states and parties in the way food data are expressed with respect e.g. food description, definition of nutrients and other food properties, and methods used to generate compositional values. A common European Standard, established within the CEN framework, is a key tool enabling unambiguous identification and description of food data and its quality in e.g. databases, for dissemination and interchange.

Several European and international initiatives have focused on improving and harmonising food data description and interchange. This standard is based on two initiatives: the EuroFIR project [11] (an EC Network of Excellence funded by the 6th Framework Programme for Research and technological Development) 2005-2010 and Food and Beverage Extension to the GS1 GDSN Trade Item standard [14].

The Eurofir project mainly concerned specifications for documentation and interchange of data on nutrients and bioactive substances in food composition databases, while the GS1 standard was intended for use by trading partners in both the food service as well as the food retail sector. In addition, a set of use cases were developed and analysed. This standard was also aligned with the EFSA Standard Sample Description [17], and certain elements and specifications were incorporated. As a result, this standard is more innovative and broader in scope - in so far as it should be fit for the purposes of all these parties.

The main aim of the standard is to provide a framework that facilitates and enables generation, compilation, dissemination and interchange of food data that are comparable and unambiguous with respect to the identity of foods, the description of foods and food property measures including their quality. The standard is structured to be robust and flexible enough to incorporate future extensions with respect to various types of data.

This standard will make it possible for any party in a community to send understandable food data to any other receiving party in that community. However, this standard does not include all definitions that are required. For example, the set of food properties that can be used, such as contents of various nutrients and heavy metals, is not included in the standard. These and all other so called controlled vocabularies will be agreed upon within the community. An annex of the standard provides examples of required controlled vocabularies.

The reasons for not including the controlled vocabularies are:

- Most controlled vocabularies, for example with new food properties, will be constantly updated.
- Communities around the world are maintaining and using their own controlled vocabularies.

The exchange of food data among different parties requires an agreement on not only what data to exchange but also on the encoding of the data. This standard includes data encoding rules based on XML which today is the most recognised general technique for data encoding.

Figure 1 illustrates a case where food data is exchanged between databases of partners (1) in some kind of community. They want to use this standard to set up a mutual agreement (2). Apart from selecting the standard (3), such an agreement will contain selections of controlled vocabularies and restrictions on data. Most of the data specified in the standard require a controlled vocabulary to be specified (5). Such controlled vocabularies are maintained by various organisations. An agreement will select the controlled vocabularies to use. Restrictions on data will be defined (4). For example, an agreement may state that a scientific name has to be provided for all foods, despite the fact that it is not required in the standard. In addition, an agreement may specify requirements on what food properties are to be exchanged or what language to use.

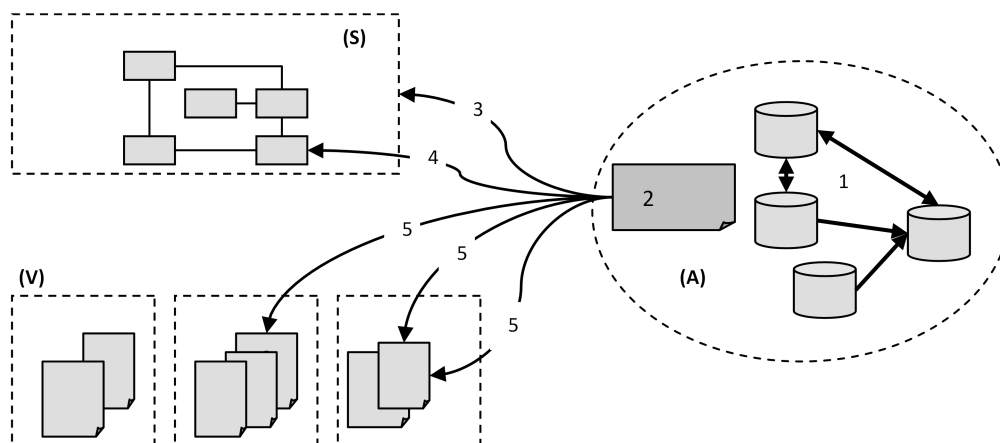


Figure 1 — Agreement for food data exchange (A) that are based on this standard (S) will also specify a set of controlled vocabularies (V).

1 Scope

This European Standard specifies requirements on the structure and semantics of food datasets and of interchange of food data for various applications.

Food data refers to information on various food properties and includes various steps in the generation and publication of such data, e.g. sampling, analysis, food description, food property and value description.

The standard regards food data as datasets covering:

- identification, description and classification of foods including food ingredients,
- qualitative and quantitative food properties that can be measured, calculated or estimated,
- data quality values and other metadata,
- specifications of methods used for obtaining these values,
- references to sources for the information reported.

This standard includes requirements on:

- semantics and data structure for food data,
- content of referenced controlled vocabularies,
- XML encoding for interchange of food data.

This standard does not include:

- food description methods,
- quality assessment methods,
- content of controlled vocabularies, for example controlled vocabularies for nutrients,
- database implementation.

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