In late May 2020, the North American Olive Oil Association submitted a citizen petition to FDA, asking the Agency to adopt science-based, enforceable standards for olive oil. In its petition to FDA, the group stated that standards would ensure that consumers know the quality of the olive oil that they purchase. The North American Olive Oil Association’s petition is in addition to one filed in November 2019 by the American Olive Oils Producers Association and Deoleo, the world’s largest olive oil processor. There is currently no nationally-mandated standard of identity (SOI) to define olive oil and its various categories and grades in the United States.

In its citizen petition, the North American Olive Oil Association noted that “an SOI will promote honesty and fair dealing in a product that is prized for its potential health benefits, and thus exposes consumers to the risks of bad actors looking to take unfair advantage of a largely unregulated industry.” The North American Olive Oil Association also stated that the U.S. SOI for olive oil should be based on the Codex Alimentarius standard, as FDA has suggested that “a proposal for a new SOI should reflect “[h]armonization with existing international food standards to the extent feasible.” The Codex Alimentarius Commission is a standards-setting body recognized by the World Trade Organization, through which member countries formulate and harmonize international food standards.
Over 40 years ago, FDA solicited public comment on the adoption of a standard of identity for olive oils and olive-pomace oils based on the Codex Alimentarius Commission’s ("CAC’s") international standard; however, FDA concluded there was “not sufficient need” to warrant a U.S. standard, citing a lack of data. We will continue to monitor any developments.

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