

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe UNECE

The development of standards for fruit and vegetables



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International Workshop on Commercial Quality Standards for
Fresh Fruit and Vegetables
Dubrovnik, Croatia, 17 to 20 October 2011

Five Regional Commissions of the United Nations



UNECE was set up in 1947

56 Member States

All UN Member States may participate in its work

Over 70 international non-governmental and professional organizations take part in UNECE's activities



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UNECE and Agricultural Quality Standards

Historical legacy - Period after World War II in UNECE region:

- National quality standards regulated trade in agricultural products within each country's national borders

Existing national regulations were often barriers to the growing international trade

Against this background:

1949 UNECE – Europe's only functioning pan-European body –

establishes Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

- To harmonize national standards into international standards
- To provide a mechanism for their practical enforcement



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UNECE and Agricultural Quality Standards – International standards

International standards

Build common trading language

- Standards are developed and agreed by exporting and importing countries (including all trading partners)
- Make business contacts and communication between buyers and sellers easier along the whole supply chain
- Allow produce to be traded long distance without inspection prior to making the business deal
- Build trust

Facilitate fair international trade

- Increase transparency on international and national markets
- Base competition on uniform minimum standards
- Open markets and new export opportunities
- Establish price-quality relationship



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UNECE and Agricultural Quality Standards - International standards

International standards help

Guide producers, improve and keep overall quality of products

They set minimum quality requirements which do not destroy competition

Increase profitability of the sector

- Producers' profitability depends to a large extent on trading volume and price. Both are influenced by quality.

Protect consumers' interests

STANDARDS ensure consistent quality; help groups of growers to offer homogenous products to buyers; encourage high quality production and help establish lasting trading relations



UNECE and Agricultural Quality Standards - Commercial quality

In sum:

- **There is no quality without safety!**
- **And quality is safety plus more.....**

Commercial quality is a set of parameters describing internal (taste, maturity, etc.) and external (cleanliness, color, freshness, shape, presentation, packing, etc.) characteristics of the produce, which are necessary to ensure transparency in trade and good eating quality



UNECE and Agricultural Quality Standards – Assuring quality and standardizing agricultural produce within UNECE

Since 1954 UNECE standards follow a simple structure and set **uniform minimum** quality criteria, definitions and classifications and produce –specific tolerances.

UNECE Standard Layout for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

Definition of produce

Minimum requirements

Maturity requirements

Classification (Extra, class I, class II)

Sizing provisions

Tolerances (quality, size)

Presentation (uniformity, packaging)

Marking

Annexes: Definitions, Lists of varieties, Testing and Sampling procedures



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UNECE and Agricultural Quality Standards

Principles for the Development of UNECE Standards

Inclusive, transparent process:

- All UN member countries participate with the same rights
- All relevant actors (public and private) in the supply chain participate (i.e. traders, producers, consumers etc.) from producing and importing countries
- All relevant international organizations cooperate

Flexible, inter-active, responsive process

- All UNECE standards are demand-driven standards: their development and revision reflect changing production, marketing, trading and regulatory conditions. Standardization only when internationally traded volumes justify existence of a standard or when a product is of such importance

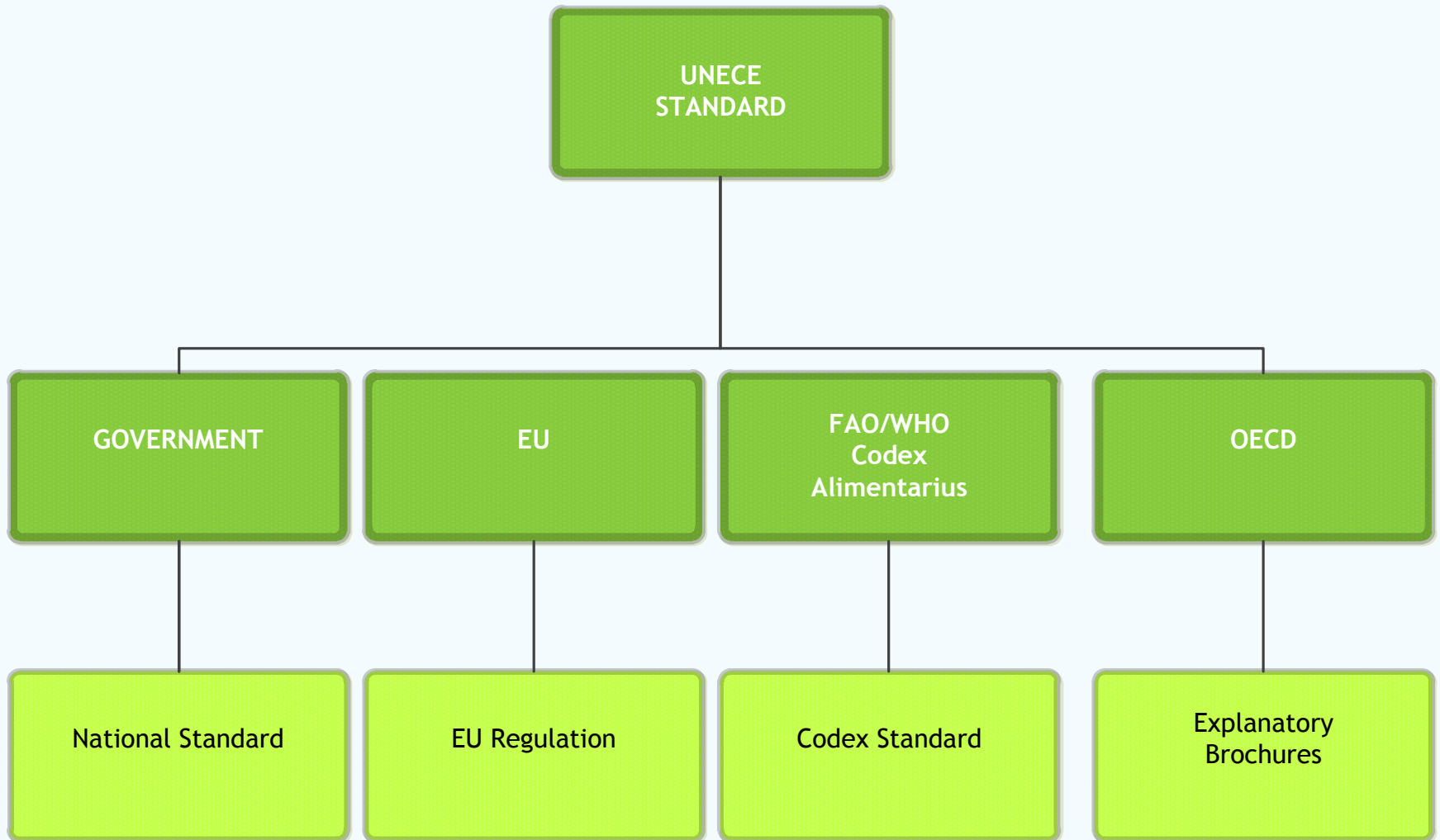
Final Decisions are taken on a consensus basis – reviewed by Working Party – Recommendation on trial basis for industry – feedback to adjust the Standard as required – final adoption



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Implementing a UNECE Standard



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UNECE standards - the legal context: the national level

UNECE standards are tools created to be used on a voluntary basis to make trading easier

UNECE standards can be incorporated into national legislation

- As an export requirement to ensure that the produce have a certain quality level
- As a requirement for the domestic, export and import markets

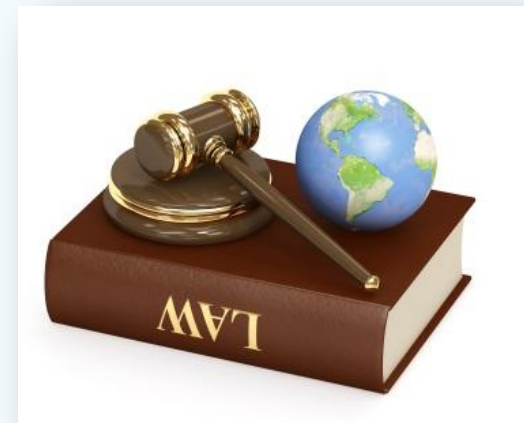
BUT

- International trade rules do not allow higher requirements for imported produce than for domestic produce
- principle of national treatment-



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UNECE standards- the legal context: EU level

UNECE Standards are enshrined in EU legislation

EU standards are fully harmonized with UNECE standards

For other products - compulsory product specific standards

For other fruits and vegetables - General Marketing Standard



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UNECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

Four Specialized Sections

- Fresh Fruit and Vegetables
- Dry and Dried Produce
- Seed Potatoes
- Meat

Mission

- Develop quality standards setting minimum requirements (commercial quality, maturity, sizing, tolerances, presentation, marking)
- Prepare explanatory material
- Promote UNECE standards worldwide

Participation

- Global



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UNECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

UNECE Standards for Agricultural Produce:

Fresh fruit and vegetables (over 50 standards)

Dry and dried produce (over 20 standards)

Seed Potatoes (1)

Meat (11)

Eggs (2 updated standards)

Cut Flowers (8 – dormant 1994)



UNECE Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

Activities:

- **Standardizing:**
currently 54 standards

<http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/standard/fresh/FFV-standards.htm>
- **Drafting explanatory brochures in coordination with OECD**
(UNECE - sweet peppers, pineapples, chilli peppers)
- **Organizing capacity-building worldwide**



UNECE Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce

- **Elaborates Standards**

 - 2010 Inshell Macadamia Nuts and Macadamia Kernels

 - 2011 working on new standards for Whole Dried Chilli Peppers, Brazil Nut Kernels, Pine Nuts, Dried Mangoes

- **Develops explanatory brochures**

 - for example Walnut Kernels, Whole Dried Chilli Peppers

- **Organizes workshops and trainings on dry and dried produce**

 - Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Moldova, Tajikistan



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UNECE Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat

Develops Standards detailing agreed specifications for meat items commonly traded internationally

Standards:

- Bovine meat - carcasses and cuts
- Caprine meat - carcasses and cuts
- Chicken meat - carcasses and parts
- Duck meat - carcasses and parts
- Edible meat co-products
- Llama/alpaca meat - carcasses and cuts
- Ovine meat - carcasses and cuts
- Porcine meat - carcasses and cuts
- Turkey meat - carcasses and parts



New standards:

- Horse meat, Goose meat, Veal,
- On-going: Retail meat cuts, Rabbit meat and deer meat



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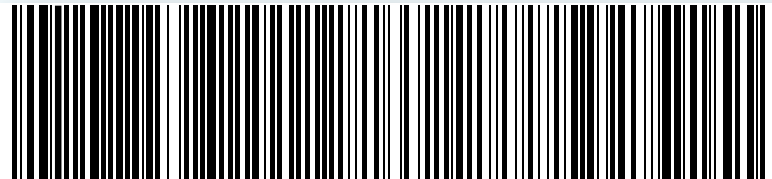
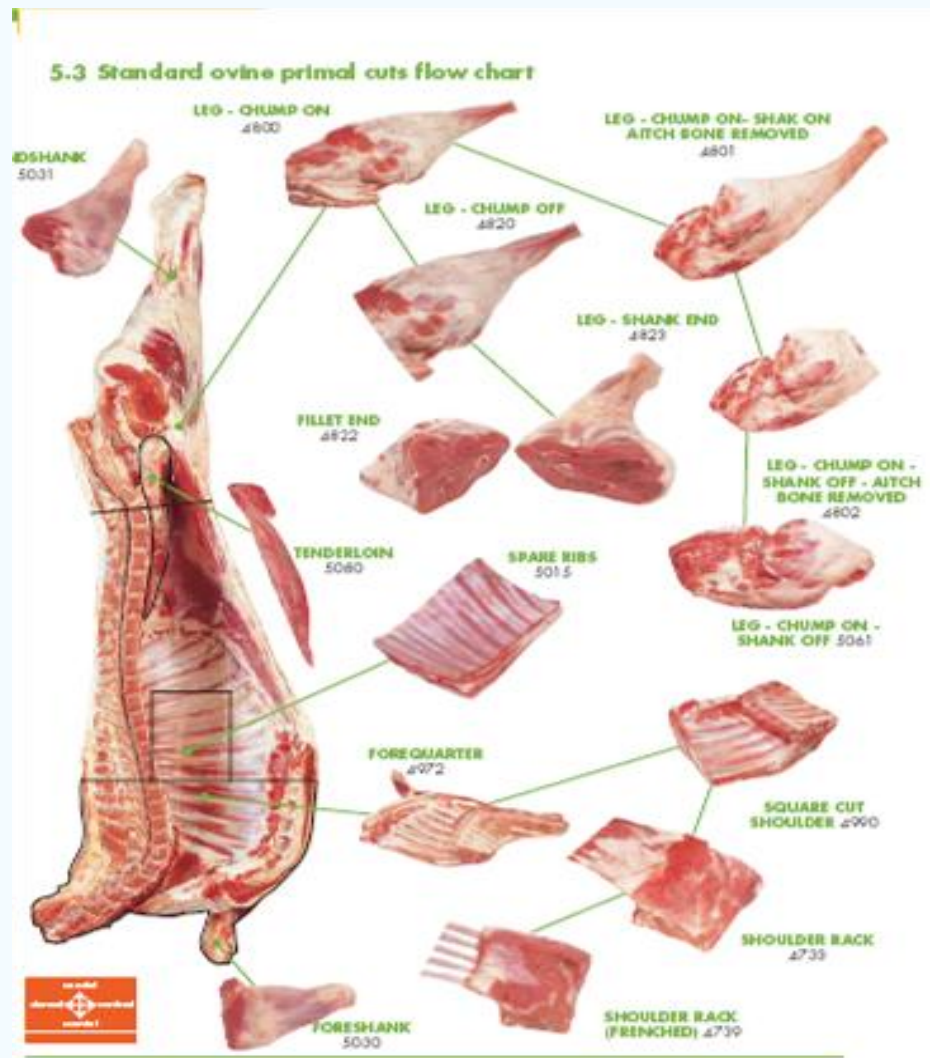
UNECE Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat

More than a Standard.....

- Explanatory Brochure

and a defined

- Coding System for communication and electronic trade with information combined in 20 digits



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UNECE Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes

UNECE Standard for Seed Potatoes

- Unique reference covering all aspects of seed potato certification
- List of Diseases and Pest (35 Diseases, 85 Pictures)

	Agent	Status in UNECE Standard	Recommended diagnostic method	General disease description	Tuber symptoms	Plant symptoms
Potato wart disease	<i>Synchytrium endobioticum</i>	Zero tolerance	Disease	Tuber: tumours Plant: tumours and galls on stolons and stem base		



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UNECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

Worldwide promotion and training on development, implementation and interpretation of UNECE standards

2010/2011 South Africa, Indonesia, Tajikistan, Croatia, Chile, Ghana, Moldova, Thailand

Purpose:

- help understand the quality requirements that have to be met for exporting to major agricultural markets esp. in UNECE region
- outline legal, institutional and technical infrastructure required for their practical use
- help understand the importance of quality and its control in an overall agricultural policy agenda
- explain the role of the private sector



Situation today – some of the challenges

Main challenges – new market realities

- Capturing market realities means looking beyond traditional import (Europe and US) and export markets
- Diversification of players with more trade from countries from around the world
- Quality requirements do not decrease – new entrants have to learn to use them and learn to help them shape

Main challenges in standardization work

- Differences in appreciation
- Differences in defects
- External vs. internal criteria (maturity requirements definition, determination, size/no size)
- Emergence of new varieties from new production zones



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Some conclusions – standards and quality

Needed:

- comprehensive, balanced input from all regions concerned to ensure that standards reflect actual market realities, include new production areas (their problems, their produce)
- Public-private sector delegations

Stake:

- Standards are instruments that facilitate trade and help open opportunities. Not being there to shape standards can have serious consequences (e.g. changes in tolerances can result in the de-classification of produce, or loss in market shares)
- Standards need to be applied correctly to make them work

**Cooperation for
comprehensive, inclusive global standards
and their uniform application**



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