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## Seminar held on standards for eggs and egg products

International and national experts gathered in the Nizhny Novgorod region (Russian Federation) on 22-26 September to revise and consolidate the UNECE international standards for eggs-in-shell and egg products. The new standards will reflect EU legislation, as well as industry practices in different countries and regions.

The seminar was organized jointly by the All-Russian Research Institute for Poultry Processing of the Russian Academy of Agricultural Sciences (VNIIPP), UNECE and the European Union.

Russia's annual egg production has been climbing steadily since 1998 and this year is expected to reach a record high of 40 billion. To expand its markets, Russia is bringing its own Regulation into line with international standards. The seminar presented a perfect opportunity for such a task.

Participating experts represented Belarus, Poland, the United States and the European Commission, the Russian Agency for Technical Regulation, specialized research institutes, and major Russian egg- and egg-products producing enterprises. The seminar was hosted by the giant poultry- and egg-producing company *Seimovskaya*, which boasts a daily production of 2 million eggs.



The Russian Academy of Agricultural Sciences translated and printed the draft standards in English and Russian, enabling the participants to work on the texts in both languages at the same time.

A technical visit to the production site of the company *Seimovskaya* gave participants an opportunity to test the provisions of the standards against industry practices in Russia. The seminar also offered the Russian partners an opportunity to collect ideas for developing their national egg standard and regulation and for harmonizing them with the internationally agreed norms.



## Environment for Europe reform

The decision to reform the "Environment for Europe" (EfE) process taken by the Ministers of Environment at the Sixth Ministerial Conference (Belgrade, October 2007) will be followed up next week at a special session of the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP).

The meeting, on 13-15 October, will review the draft reform plan prepared by the UNECE secretariat in close consultation with all interested stakeholders with a view to finalizing the reform plan for endorsement by the Commission at its spring session in 2009.



The current draft reform plan is based on the outline developed and discussed by the extended CEP Bureau in June in Geneva. The plan focuses on the possible objectives and priorities, general principles and modalities of the EfE process and addresses issues related to future EfE Ministerial Conferences, such as their preparatory process, format and outcomes.

The plan also examines ways to attract broader interest and a more active engagement on the part of all stakeholders, in particular the private sector, as well as avenues to expand the use of partnerships.

A notable feature of the upcoming special session will be a roundtable discussion on enhancing private-sector involvement in UNECE environmental activities. Representatives of influential business associations including the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, the World Economic Forum and the International Chamber of Commerce, together with representatives of leading industrial corporations such as Nestlé, Coca-Cola, and Rio Tinto Alcan, will share their views and engage in constructive discussions with member States with the aim of identifying the nature, modalities and possible key areas for active private-sector engagement in CEP activities and the EfE process. ❖

For more information contact Christina von Schweinichen ([christina.schweinichen@unece.org](mailto:christina.schweinichen@unece.org)) or visit <http://www.unece.org/env/cep/2008SpecialSession.html>.

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## Work starts on practical guide to Water Convention

Georgia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia recently requested support to accede to and implement the *UNECE Water Convention*\*. This presented an entirely new challenge, as never before had a country requested "pre-accession" assistance. The two countries' requests underlined the real need for concrete guidance on the legal, practical and economic implications of accession and implementation.

The Convention's Bureau agreed that the most effective way to handle these and possible future requests would be through a practical guide designed to support both accession and implementation by providing directions for work at the national level.

Developing such a guide is no simple task, however. It will entail coming up with clear, easy-to-follow explanations of the Convention's provisions. It will need to be a multilateral exercise, involving both Parties and non-Parties. As the guide is an extremely strategic product, it must be designed carefully. One of the major challenges will be to find the right balance between a practical tool responding to country-specific needs, and one that at the same time is general enough to be applied in many different situations.

The completed guide will offer Parties the opportunity to share their views on what the Convention means in practice, as well as the good practices they have developed in the 16 years since the Convention's adoption.

\* *Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes*



continued

The UNECE secretariat presented a report on the requirements and opportunities for CIS countries willing to export eggs and egg products to the EU region. The seminar received financial support from the Russian Voluntary Contribution Fund. ❖

For more information contact *Serguei Malanitchev* ([agristandards@unece.org](mailto:agristandards@unece.org)).

It will provide explanations on legal issues related to the Convention, such as the polluter-pays principle and international liability. Finally, it will be an important tool for promoting the Convention outside the UNECE region.

The Bureau has entrusted the Convention's Legal Board and the Working Group on Integrated Water Resource Management with preparation of the guide. The Legal Board began work last week, at its fifth meeting. The guide is expected to be submitted for adoption to the Convention's Parties at their fifth meeting (Geneva, 10-12 November 2009). ❖

For more information contact *Francesca Bernardini* ([water.convention@unece.org](mailto:water.convention@unece.org)).

## Facts and Figures

### Large differences in adolescent fertility levels among UNECE countries

The latest figures available for 2006 confirm the very large differences existing in levels of adolescent fertility across UNECE countries.

The adolescent fertility rate, that is the number of children born alive to women aged 15-19 per 1000 women, reaches the highest levels in the United States and Bulgaria (above 40 per 1000), but it is very high also in Georgia and Romania.

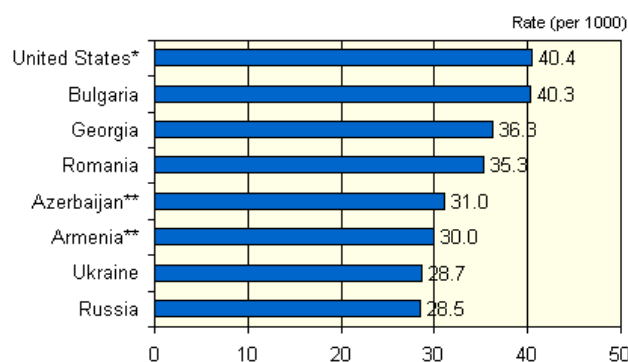
The lowest levels are recorded in Switzerland and Slovenia (less than 5 per 1000), and in the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, Cyprus and Italy (around 6 per 1000).

Slovenia is the country in the UNECE region where adolescent fertility decreased most rapidly over the last decades: the rate dropped from 56 per 1000 in 1980 to less than 5 per 1000 in 2006. In the same period adolescent fertility decreased significantly also in other UNECE countries, such as Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary and Iceland. ❖

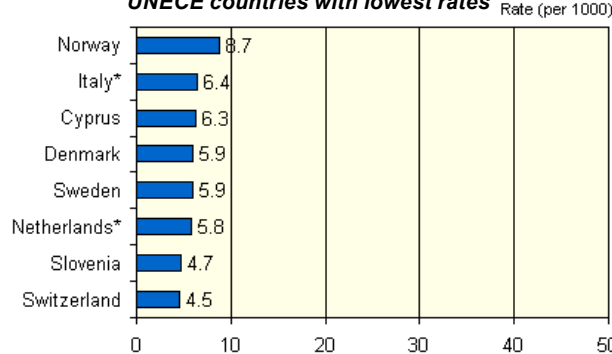
Source: UNECE Gender Statistics Database ([www.unece.org/stats/data](http://www.unece.org/stats/data))

### Adolescent fertility rates - 2006

#### UNECE countries with highest rates



#### UNECE countries with lowest rates



\* Data refer to 2005 \*\* Data refer to 2004