
UNECE STANDARD FFV-15

concerning the marketing and
commercial quality control of

CUCUMBERS

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NOTE

Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

The commercial quality standards developed by the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) help facilitate international trade, encourage high-quality production, improve profitability and protect consumer interests. UNECE standards are used by Governments, producers, traders, importers and exporters, and other international organizations. They cover a wide range of agricultural products, including fresh fruit and vegetables, dry and dried produce, seed potatoes, meat, cut flowers, eggs and egg products.

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The present revised Standard for Cucumbers is based on document ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2021/20, reviewed and adopted by the Working Party in 2021 (followed by a silence procedure in line with the special procedures during the COVID-19 period).

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UNECE standard FFV-15 concerning the marketing and commercial quality control of cucumbers

I. Definition of produce

This standard applies to cucumbers of varieties (cultivars) grown from *Cucumis sativus* L. to be supplied fresh to the consumer, cucumbers for industrial processing and gherkins being excluded.

II. Provisions concerning quality

The purpose of the standard is to define the quality requirements for cucumbers after preparation and packaging.

However, if applied at stages following export/dispatch, products may show in relation to the requirements of the standard:

- a slight lack of freshness and turgidity
- for products graded in classes other than the “Extra” Class, a slight deterioration due to their development and their tendency to perish.

The holder/seller of products may not display such products or offer them for sale, or deliver or market them in any manner other than in conformity with this standard. The holder/seller shall be responsible for observing such conformity.

A. Minimum requirements

In all classes, subject to the special provisions for each class and the tolerances allowed, the cucumbers must be:

- intact
- sound; produce affected by rotting or deterioration such as to make it unfit for consumption is excluded
- clean, practically free of any visible foreign matter
- fresh in appearance, and firm
- practically free from pests
- free from damage caused by pests affecting the flesh
- free of bitter taste (subject to the special provision for Class II under the heading “IV. Provisions concerning tolerances”)
- free of abnormal external moisture
- free of any foreign smell and/or taste.

Cucumbers must be sufficiently developed but their seeds must be soft.

The development and condition of the cucumbers must be such as to enable them:

- to withstand transportation and handling
- to arrive in satisfactory condition at the place of destination.

B. Classification

Cucumbers are classified in three classes, as defined below:

(i) “Extra” Class

Cucumbers in this class must be of superior quality. They must be characteristic of the variety and/or commercial type.

They must be:

- well developed
- well-shaped and practically straight (maximum height of the inner arc: 10 mm per 10 cm of length of the cucumber).

They must be free from defects, including all deformations and particularly those caused by seed formation, with the exception of very slight superficial defects, provided these do not affect the general appearance of the produce, the quality, the keeping quality and presentation in the package.

(ii) Class I

Cucumbers in this class must be of good quality. They must be characteristic of the variety and/or commercial type.

They must be:

- reasonably developed
- reasonably well-shaped and practically straight (maximum height of the inner arc: 10 mm per 10 cm of length of the cucumber).

The following slight defects, however, may be allowed, provided these do not affect the general appearance of the produce, the quality, the keeping quality and presentation in the package:

- a slight defect in shape, but excluding that caused by seed development
- slight defects in colouring; but the light-coloured part of the cucumber, where it touched the ground during growth, is not considered a defect
- slight skin defects.

(iii) Class II

This class includes cucumbers that do not qualify for inclusion in the higher classes but satisfy the minimum requirements specified above.

The following defects may be allowed, provided the cucumbers retain their essential characteristics as regards the quality, the keeping quality and presentation:

- defects in shape, but excluding those by serious seed development; slightly crooked cucumbers having a maximum height of the inner arc of 20 mm per 10 cm of length are allowed
- defects in colouring up to one third of the surface; but the light-coloured part of the cucumber, where it touched the ground during growth, is not considered a defect
- skin defects.

Crooked cucumbers having a height of the inner arc of more than 20 mm per 10 cm of length are allowed, provided they have no more than slight defects in colouring and have no defects or deformation other than crookedness, and are separately packed.

III. Provisions concerning sizing

Size is determined either by weight or by a combination of diameter and length.

Uniformity in size is compulsory for Classes “Extra” and I.

To ensure uniformity in size between produce in the same package, one of the following two options should be applied:

(a) Sizing by weight

The range in weight shall not exceed:

- 150 g where the smallest cucumber weighs 400 g or more
- 100 g where the smallest cucumber weighs between 180 g and less than 400 g

Cucumbers below 180 g should be reasonably uniform in weight.

(b) Sizing by diameter and length

The range in length must not exceed 5 cm, and cucumbers should be reasonably uniform in diameter.

IV. Provisions concerning tolerances

At all marketing stages, tolerances in respect of quality and size shall be allowed in each lot for produce not satisfying the requirements of the class indicated.¹

A. Quality tolerances

(i) “Extra” Class

A total tolerance of 5 per cent, by number or weight, of cucumbers not satisfying the requirements of the class but meeting those of Class I is allowed. Within this tolerance not more than 0.5 per cent in total may consist of produce satisfying the requirements of Class II quality.

(ii) Class I

A total tolerance of 10 per cent, by number or weight, of cucumbers not satisfying the requirements of the class but meeting those of Class II is allowed. Within this tolerance not more than 1 per cent in total may consist of produce satisfying neither the requirements of Class II quality nor the minimum requirements, or of produce affected by decay.

(iii) Class II

A total tolerance of 10 per cent, by number or weight, of cucumbers satisfying neither the requirements of the class nor the minimum requirements is allowed. Within this tolerance not more than 2 per cent in total may consist of produce affected by decay or of produce with tips having bitter taste.

B. Size tolerances

For all classes (if sized): a total tolerance of 10 per cent, by number or weight, of cucumbers not satisfying the requirements as regards sizing is allowed.

V. Provisions concerning presentation

A. Uniformity

The contents of each package must be uniform and contain only cucumbers of the same origin, variety or commercial type, quality and size (if sized).

¹ A conformity check shall be made by assessing primary or composite samples. It is based on the principle of presumption that the quality of the randomly taken samples is representative of the quality of the lot. The OECD Operating Rules for Conformity Checks are recommended for application – also by operators – at the stages of dispatch as well as in wholesale and distribution centres and storerooms of food retail.

The visible part of the contents of the package must be representative of the entire contents.

B. Packaging

The cucumbers must be packed in such a way as to protect the produce properly.

The materials used inside the package must be clean and of a quality such as to avoid causing any external or internal damage to the produce. The use of materials, particularly of paper or stamps bearing trade specifications, is allowed, provided the printing or labelling has been done with non-toxic ink or glue.

Stickers individually affixed to the produce shall be such that, when removed, they neither leave visible traces of glue nor lead to skin defects. Information lasered on single fruit should not lead to flesh or skin defects.

Packages must be free of all foreign matter.

VI. Provisions concerning marking

Each package² must bear the following particulars, in letters grouped on the same side, legibly and indelibly marked, and visible from the outside:

A. Identification

Packer and/or dispatcher/exporter:

Name and physical address (e.g. street/city/region/postal code and, if different from the country of origin, the country) or a code mark officially recognized by the national authority³ if the country applying such a system is listed in the UNECE Code Mark Registry⁴. In the case where there is no street address available, the physical address can be made up of the name of the farm or facility, the nearest village, town, region, and postal code; or GPS coordinates and a PO Box address together with nearest town, region and country shall be accepted as a physical address.⁵

B. Nature of produce

- “Cucumbers” if the contents are not visible from the outside
- “Crooked cucumbers”, where appropriate.

C. Origin of produce

- Country of origin⁶ and, optionally, district where grown, or national, regional or local place name.

² These marking provisions do not apply to sales packages presented in packages bearing these particulars. However, they do apply to sales packages (pre-packages) presented individually.

³ The national legislation of a number of countries requires the explicit declaration of the name and address. However, in the case where a code mark is used, the reference “packer and/or dispatcher (or equivalent abbreviations)” has to be indicated in close connection with the code mark, and the code mark should be preceded by the ISO 3166 (alpha-2) country/area code of the recognizing country, if not the country of origin.

⁴ See <http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/codemarkregistry.html>.

⁵ Reservation by the United States of America on the use of a PO Box address, as it may not allow facility inspections or rapid intervention in case of recalls, and is not part of its national labelling requirement related to packer and/or dispatcher/exporter.

⁶ The full or a commonly used name should be indicated.

D. Commercial specifications

- Class
- Size (if sized) expressed as:
 - minimum and maximum weights or minimum and maximum lengths
 - alternatively, in case of cucumbers below 180 g, number of cucumbers
- Number of units (optional).

E. Official control mark (optional)

Adopted 1964

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Aligned with the Standard Layout 2023

The OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables has published an explanatory illustrated brochure on the application of this standard. The publication may be obtained from the OECD bookshop at: www.oecdbookshop.org.
