



# UNECE Weekly

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

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## UNECE's Standards — Their impact

Since its formation in 1947, the UNECE has been striving to encourage economic cooperation and integration among all of its member States. Many of its sectoral committees have made substantial progress towards these goals. One of the most significant advancements has been the creation, and increasing acceptance, of the UNECE's international standards and conventions. These regulations range from rules on the quality of fruits and vegetables and auto-emission standards, to safety regulations governing the trade of electronics, such as microwaves and televisions. In fact, the UNECE has designed regulations for international trade, environment, human settlements, transport, agriculture, energy, timber, and statistics.

### Why do we need regulations for international trade?

As globalization continues to open new possibilities for trade, many countries,

despite having goods available for trade, are not yet able to enter into the new global marketplace because of the need for their products to meet divergent national health and safety regulations in different countries. These national standards, which are implemented by countries to protect their citizens' health and well-being, often create invisible barriers to international trade by preventing the exchange of goods between two nations with differing regulations.

International standards provide a common language that harmonizes these divergent national standards and removes the invisible barriers to trade. In other words, if two or more countries can agree upon referencing the same international standard(s) this removes invisible barriers to trade by applying a shared set of specifications that all manufacturers can use to meet the regulatory requirements in all participating countries.

## Agriculture



As of 2006, the UNECE's international quality standards have been accepted for 84 different types of commercial agriculture products including: fresh fruit and vegetables, dry and dried fruit, potatoes, meat products, eggs and egg products and cut flowers. These standards provide common trading language for buyers and sellers on the world market as well as a benchmark for quality. In many cases, depending on the goods, as many as thirty countries from across the UNECE region enforce the standard.



## Albania joins E-road agreement

On 2 August, Albania acceded to the European Agreement on Main International Traffic Arteries (AGR), increasing the number of States Contracting Parties to this Agreement to thirty-five.

The AGR, which was done in 1975, provides the legal framework for the construction and development of a



coherent international road network, the E-road network. The Agreement identifies the E-roads, or arteries that channel major international traffic flows throughout the UNECE region and establishes the minimum uniform technical conditions those roads must respect as well as a distinguishing number for each E-road.

In addition to the major road-traffic arteries in Western, Central, Eastern and South-eastern Europe, the AGR now includes main international roads in the Caucasus and Central Asia. \*

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## The E-road network

The international E-road network consists of a grid system of reference roads having a general north-south and west-east orientation; it includes also intermediate roads located between the reference roads and branch, link and connecting roads.

North-south reference roads have two-digit odd numbers terminating in the figure 5 and increasing from west to east. East-west reference roads have two-digit even numbers terminating in the figure 0 and increasing from north to south.



Intermediate roads have two-digit odd (north-south) and two-digit even (west-east) numbers between the numbers of the reference roads between which they are located. Branch, link and connecting roads have three-digit numbers.

E-road signs consist of the letter E, followed by the number attributed to the road. They have a green background with white inscription. In principle, they should be integrated into (or combined with) the system of direction signs of the country.



*cont.*

This amount is greater than the GDP of 150 countries and approximately equal to the GDP of Romania (\$183 billion in 2005)!

Almost three-fourths (72.5%) of all artichokes consumed worldwide are bought and sold in countries that apply the UNECE's standards. This sum amounts to almost one million (939,990) metric tons of artichokes a year covered by UNECE standards.

Slightly more than two-thirds (68.6%) of all strawberries and 66 per cent of all cherries consumed worldwide are traded in countries that utilize UNECE standards. This represents 2.5 million metric tons of strawberries and 1.2 million metric tons of cherries.

More than half (52.5%) the blueberries and 44.4 per cent of the dry peas consumed in 2004 were from countries that upheld UNECE standards. \*✳

### What does it all mean? \*

Worldwide, almost one-quarter (23.4%) of the most common fruits and vegetables – like apples, asparagus, beans, lettuce, peaches, peas, tomatoes and others – are bought and sold in countries which uphold the UNECE's quality standards.

In 2004, 184,363,645 metric tons of fruits and vegetables consumed worldwide were covered by the UNECE's standards.

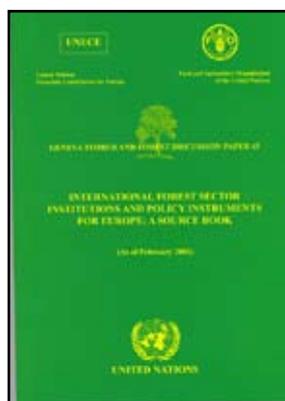
The market value for these products is approximately \$172 billion.



\* Note: All data are from the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, at: <http://www.faostat.org>.

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### Forest Sector Institutions



**International Forest Sector Institutions and Policy Instruments for Europe: A Source Book**, just issued, provides an overview of the institutional landscape with relevance to forest sector policies in Europe.

It introduces 43 major international, intergovernmental,

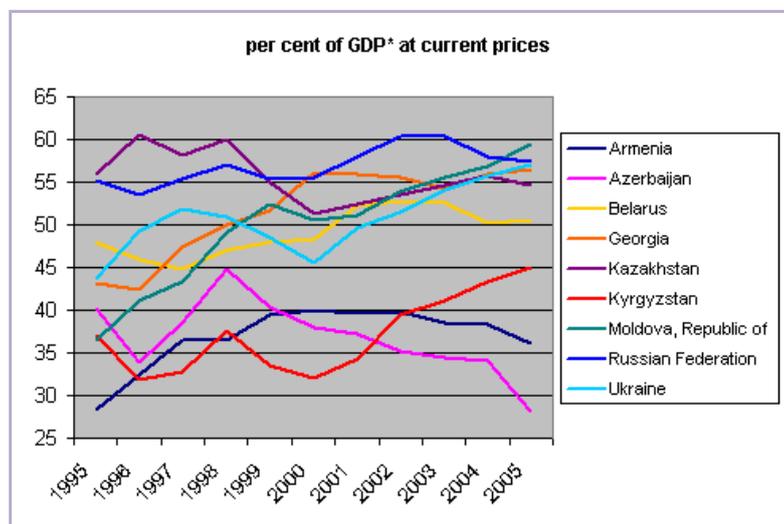
private and non-governmental as well as research institutes, and presents their multiple activities.

Following a brief description of each institution, the report provides information on international policies, policy instruments, programmes and publications that could have an impact on the future development of the forest and forest industry sector in Europe. The information contained in the paper is based on the World Wide Web and a broad review of existing literature. \*✳

This *Geneva Timber and Forest Discussion Paper No.43* is available on the *Timber Section website* at <http://www.unece.org/trade/timber>, or contact [info.timber@unece.org](mailto:info.timber@unece.org).

### Facts and figures

#### The role of services in selected economies, 1995-2005



\* Gross Domestic Product at basic prices. Above results for some countries could be affected by changes to their activity classifications.

Source: UNECE Statistical Database.

The share of services in the value of total output in these economies between 1995 and 2005 has been in general on an upward trend, with the exception of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan where the industrial output has been growing faster than the services.

In general, the change in the share of services reflects the relative growth of services output and prices compared to the other sectors of the economy, notably industry and agriculture.

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