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Global remit for UNECE agricultural quality standards setting

With effect from this year, all United Nations Member States and specialized agencies may participate on an equal basis in the activities of the UNECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards. New terms of reference were recently approved to reflect the global aspect of its work in developing, interpreting and promoting the practical application of international standards for agricultural produce. *

Other developments

A number of important developments have taken place over the past few months.

The Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes met in March to advance the work on the Standard for Seed Potatoes. This sets out common terminology and minimum commercial-quality requirements for certifying high-quality seed potatoes for international



marketing. A unique international reference, it covers all aspects relating to certification: varietal identity and purity, genealogy and traceability, diseases and pests, external quality, sizing, and labelling.

The group also updated the List of potato diseases and pests. The List, which complements the Standard, briefly describes each disease, and contains illustrative colour photographs. **

Plant vigour...

A valuable message for potato growers this year was the conclusions reached on plant "vigour", a very important quality aspect of seed potatoes, especially in the southern regions with higher temperatures.



** http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/info/ToR_eng.doc

*** http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/standard/potatoes/pot_e.htm

After the Belgrade Conference: the way forward



The proceedings of the Sixth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" (Belgrade, 10-12 October 2007), attended by Ministers and high-level officials from 51 UNECE member States and the European Commission, international organizations, NGOs

and other stakeholders, are available online at http://www.unece.org/env/efe/Belgrade/conference_proceedings.html.

The proceedings contain information about the preparatory process, discussions held and outcomes of each session of the Conference, as well as all documents considered and approved by the Ministers.

A major decision taken by the Ministers in Belgrade – to reform the "Environment for Europe" process – is now being followed up. A first discussion of possible elements of the EfE reform was held on 21-23 April 2008 during the fifteenth session of the Committee on Environmental Policy. The Committee broadly agreed on the main approaches to reform the process. Its extended Bureau will meet on 23-24 June to further discuss an outline of the reform plan (<http://www.unece.org/env/cep/ExtendedBur.html>).



Another important message of the Conference was that the EfE process should stay transparent and inclusive for all stakeholders. Partnerships with civil society, in particular with the private sector, should be strengthened to reinforce the efforts of the UNECE member States in effecting change to improve environmental conditions in the region. ✓

More information about the EfE reform may be found at <http://www.unece.org/env/efe/EfEreform/reformEfEmain.htm>.

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continued

It was concluded that genotype determines loss of vigour; some varieties are very susceptible, while others are more tolerant; that growing and storage conditions, especially temperature, influence plant vigour, and determining plant vigour is still very difficult in seed lots.

The only indirect reference to vigour in the UNECE Standard is a tolerance for shrivelled tubers, and stricter requirements for plant vigour cannot yet be prescribed by the Standard.

... meat and eggs

At its April session, the Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat made progress in drawing up new standards for duck, edible meat co-products (also referred to as offal, fancy meats, variety meats and edible by-products), veal, and for eggs and egg products.

The draft standards on eggs and egg products will be presented and examined by experts at the forthcoming international seminar to be organized jointly by UNECE and the European Commission in September in Nizhniy Novgorod, Russian Federation.

Representatives of the European Commission attended the April meeting to coordinate their work on a new regulation for eggs and egg products with the related work of UNECE.

Under discussion is a new Standard for retail meat cuts, aimed at extending the practical use of UNECE meat standards to the retail sector, which would be a natural progression of current UNECE work and would prompt retailers to use UNECE definitions and codes for their products.

Worldwide promotion

This year the Working Party and the secretariat will embark on a large-scale campaign to promote UNECE standards worldwide.

The activities, financed from the UN Development Account and other sources, will include several seminars and training workshops carried out jointly with other regional commissions, Codex Alimentarius, UNCTAD, as well as other international public and private partners. ✎

UNECE agricultural quality standards are cost-free and can be downloaded in English, French and Russian from our website: <http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/welcome.htm>.

Those interested in taking part in developing the standards and promoting them are invited to contact the secretariat: serguei.malanitchev@unece.org or claudio.meza@unece.org.

Facts and Figures

The financial sector is more attractive to women than to men

In general women are more present in services activities, while men are predominantly involved in agricultural and industrial sectors. This is confirmed with the financial sector as shown in the chart.

A higher preference for the financial sector is noticed among female employees, compared to their male counterparts. In almost all countries in the UNECE region, the rate of women employed in financial services to all employed women exceeds by far that of men. It frequently reaches twice the rate for men.

Portugal constitutes an exception where the proportion of men employed in the financial sector is higher than the proportion of women.

However, women are more numerous in lower positions in the hierarchy compared to men, who occupy more frequently the managerial and most skilled positions. ✎

Source: Compiled from Laborsta (ILO Database) data.
* Data refers to 2005.

