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EXPLANATORY BROCHURE ON THE UNECE STANDARD FOR SWEET PEPPERS



UNECE has just published its first Explanatory Brochure on an agricultural quality standard. In this Brochure, the text of the UNECE international Standard for Sweet Peppers is complemented by an interpretative text and illustrated by 86 full-colour photographs.

Explanatory brochures are intended for harmonizing the practical interpretation of standards by producers, traders and inspection authorities. This first issue was prepared by experts in the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables, and the secretariat.

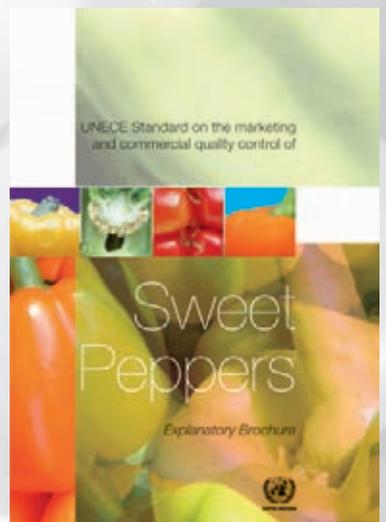
The brochure forms part of the follow-up to the decision by member States during the 2005 reform to strengthen UNECE work in agricultural quality standards. The secretariat was asked to start consultations with the OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables "to concentrate the activities of the two organizations within UNECE". As part of these consultations, UNECE was also asked to prepare one or more brochures in order to demonstrate UNECE's capabilities in this area.

While the OECD Scheme, in the end, decided to reject the transfer of its activities to UNECE, our Executive Committee, at its meeting on 31 March, confirmed the interest of our member countries in having us continue to work on explanatory brochures, in close cooperation and coordination with OECD. The reasons given include the much broader membership and participation in UNECE work, the greater efficiency created by working on both the standards and the brochures at the same time, and the availability of our brochures in three languages.

At its annual session last month, the Specialized Section decided to start work on a second brochure, for pineapples, and asked the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards to approve this decision. The delegations of Germany, Kenya, Mexico, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States have already volunteered to work on this brochure but other interested countries and organizations are also welcome to join the group. □

The brochure is available in English, French and Russian, and can be obtained free of charge from the secretariat. The electronic versions can be downloaded from:

http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/promotion/Brochures/SweetPeppers_HighResolution.pdf



ALBANIA RENEWS COMMITMENT TO JOIN 3 AIR CONVENTION'S PROTOCOLS

On May 26-27 2010, the UNECE secretariat of the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (LRTAP), in cooperation with Albania's Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration, held a kick-off meeting in Tirana to initiate the country's participation under the Netherlands-funded Balkans Project. The 2 year project's aim is to assist Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in implementing and ratifying the POPs, Heavy Metals and Gothenburg Protocols under the LRTAP Convention.

pollution in the region, in addition to the benefits of joining the three Protocols. Under the project, Albania will commit to developing a National Action Plan – a strategic document outlining policy and legislative needs, in addition to technical requirements, providing them with a step-by-step guide towards implementation and ratification. After the Plan is developed, the project will assist Albania in following-up on the necessary actions they have identified and provide them with the capacity to systematically reduce harmful pollutants covered under the Protocols, including lead, mercury, sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide, amongst others.

The meeting introduced representatives from Albania's key Ministries to the important role the Convention has played in actively reducing air

The meeting was a step forward for Albania, who ratified the Convention in 2005, but has yet to sign on to these key legally binding Protocols. Their commitment to the

project was supported by Ms. Myrvete Pazaj, Secretary General of the Ministry, who emphasized the value of the project and the priority Albania has placed upon improving air quality.

The Balkans Project is one of a series of initiatives under the Convention aimed at assisting countries with economies in transition in developing the capacity to effectively monitor and reduce air pollutants within the UNECE region. □

COMPILING NATIONAL ACCOUNTS IN A GLOBALISED WORLD



National accounts are intended to provide a comprehensive record of the economic activity within a country. Compiling national accounts is a complex procedure that is becoming

increasingly challenging with the growing globalisation and economic integration. These challenges were discussed at a recent meeting in Geneva, which attracted more than 100 experts from all over the world, both within and outside the UNECE region.

Since the late 1990s, globalisation has been a major issue in the field of statistics. An unprecedented increase in cross-border movement of goods, services, income and financial flows has made it more difficult to measure national economies. Companies operate in several countries, spreading their production across national borders. The trading of goods, services and intellectual property between affiliated enterprises is also growing significantly. The behaviour of multinational enterprises raises a number of problems for statisticians, such as how

All papers and presentations from the meeting are available at:
<http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2010.04.sna.htm>.
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to allocate income to national economies, how to treat international transactions in intellectual property and foreign investments or how to record international processing and merchandising of goods.

Globalisation not only affects enterprises, but also you and me. People travel, spend money and buy dwellings abroad. Cross-border remittances (i.e. household income from foreign economies) have grown rapidly in recent years. For some countries, they represent a major source of household income that may exceed the size of foreign aid. International labour mobility is also increasing, making the measurement of labour input and productivity more problematic.

To help countries deal with these problems, the Conference of European Statisticians Group of Experts on the Impact of Globalisation on National Accounts agreed to prepare a publication with practical guidance and best practices, to be published in 2011.

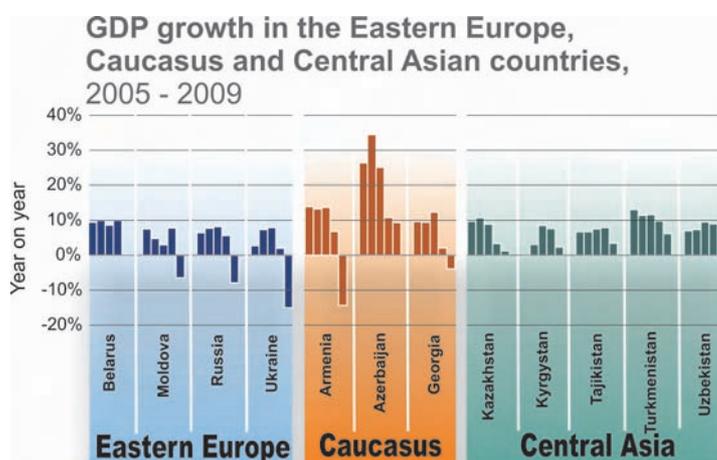
The meeting also addressed challenges of special interest to countries with transition economies. One of the major challenges in the forthcoming years will be the implementation of the latest international standard, the 2008 System of National Accounts. The meeting discussed how to better coordinate the efforts of countries and international donors. It agreed on technical assistance activities that the UNECE Statistical Division would undertake in cooperation with partner organisations. □

FACTS AND FIGURES

CENTRAL ASIA SEEMS LESS AFFECTED BY THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

Over the last two years, despite the global crisis, the gross domestic product (GDP) continued to grow in all five Central Asian countries, albeit at a slower pace. In 2009, the two less globally integrated economies, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, have reported their GDP growing at relatively high, 6-8 percent, rates. As the chart attests, the Central Asian economies fared better during the crisis than many emerging economies in Eastern Europe or the Caucasus. Oil-rich Azerbaijan was the only country truly growing in addition to the Central Asian region: its GDP grew about 10 percent in both 2008 and 2009.

The crisis hit hardest Armenia and Ukraine. In real terms, their GDP fell by 14-15 per cent in 2009 from the previous year. The dramatic collapse of the construction sector was a common factor in these two countries. At the same time, the Russian economy shrank by 8 per cent, partly because of its dependence on oil and other commodity exports, which declined as global demand dried up; the huge corporate debt and capital flight also played a role. In Belarus, the GDP stayed practically at the level of the previous year, growing only by 0.2 per cent in 2009. □



Source: UNECE Statistical Database (www.unece.org/stats/data), CISSTAT and national statistics.

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