Plan for inter-sessional implementation of the programme of work

Submitted by the Secretariat

Summary

This document contains the implementation plan for activities under the responsibility of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards, which will be undertaken between the 2016 and 2017 annual sessions.

The document covers activities, including meetings and technical assistance projects, under the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6) and the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP. 7).

It also covers activities associated with the demand-driven national studies on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade.

Delegates are invited to consider this document for approval.
I. Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP. 6)

1. The Working Party will hold its annual session in Geneva on 30 November - 2 December 2016. The secretariat continues to develop and maintain a knowledge dissimilation system for WP.6 activities, including through newsletters, and support the work under the sectoral initiatives:
   (a) Earth-moving machinery
   (b) Explosive environments
      (i) Revision of the CROs (Common Regulatory Objectives)
      (ii) Development of Market surveillance guidelines
   (c) Telecoms
   (d) Pipelines

2. Support is also provided to the Advisory Group on Market Surveillance (MARS Group), which seeks to promote an integrated and coherent approach to market surveillance based on best practices and international standards, with a special emphasis on best practices for countering sub-standard and counterfeit goods, exchange best practices between the region’s market surveillance authorities.

3. The secretariat is also supporting the Group of Experts on Risk Management in Regulatory Systems (GRM), which seeks to develop guidance and best practices on establishing regulatory frameworks for addressing the risks that confront consumers, citizens and communities. This includes participation as liaison member in the ISO/TC 262 on “Risk Management” and ISO/TC 292 on “Security and Resilience”. The GRM will be continuing work on a recommendation aimed at improving the effectiveness, and consistency across countries, of risk management legislation.

4. In addition, the secretariat is supporting the activities of the STARTed Group on “Education on Standards-related issues”, which seeks to bring the toolbox of standards to Universities and higher education institutions. In this context, the secretariat is working on strengthening cooperation with key universities and educational networks and institutions in the ECE region.

5. The above comes in addition to advocacy activities for promoting the use of standards by governments, especially in relation to the implementation of UN-wide frameworks. This includes advocating the use of standards in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sendai Framework of Action. Special emphasis is also given to advocating the use of international standards in civil society and education and research networks.

6. The secretariat will also organize webinars on topical issues in areas covered by WP.6 in collaboration with the MAR, GRM and STARTed Groups.

II. Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP. 7)

7. WP.7 will hold its seventy-second session on 9-11 November 2016 in Geneva, Switzerland. The session will feature a conference on “Food Waste and Food Loss in International Trade of Agricultural Produce”, which will be held on 10 November 2016.
8. In total, the secretariat will be organizing six meetings between the Steering Committee’s 2016 and 2017 annual meetings in order to support the development of agricultural quality standards. The tentative dates for these meetings are provided below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specialized Section on Dry and Dried Produce</td>
<td>27-29 June 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specialized Section on Meat with Seminar on eating quality, meat standards and trade</td>
<td>29-31 August 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specialized Section on Seed Potatoes</td>
<td>31 August - 2 September 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards, with Conference on food waste and food loss</td>
<td>9-11 November 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialized Section on Seed Potatoes</td>
<td>20-23 March 2017 (tbc)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specialized Section on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables</td>
<td>24-27 April 2017 (tbc)</td>
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9. In addition, the secretariat is working with experts to finalize an Explanatory Brochure on walnut kernels and develop a poster layout to illustrate the provisions of selected standards and facilitate their use in various languages and locations.

10. Technical assistance activities will be undertaken within the context of the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) funded project “Strengthening the capacity of transition and developing economies to participate in cross-border agricultural food supply chains”, which was launched in September 2014 and is being implemented in collaboration with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

11. This project, which ends in December 2017, targets countries with economies in transition and developing countries from the Western Balkans, Central Asia, South Asia and South East Asia, with a view to strengthening the capacity of the selected target countries to improve the planning, management and regulation of cross border agricultural food supply chains as a prerequisite for enhancing competitiveness and improving food security conditions.

12. The project works to strengthen national capacities in the target countries to use international best practices, tools and instruments in developing integrated strategies for enhanced cross-border agri-food trade. In so doing, it puts decision makers and practitioners in an advantageous position to increase exports through better governance, increased business opportunities, and better regulatory compliance, including through the use of electronic information exchange, enhanced and simplified processes and improved quality of agricultural produce.

13. The targeted countries were selected following a demand-driven approach, with a priority for Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) in these sub-regions. Listed by sub-region, the selected countries include:
• Western Balkan countries\textsuperscript{1}: Albania; Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as well as Kosovo\textsuperscript{2};

• Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan;

• South Asia: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka;

• South East Asia: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Timor-Leste, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic (the), Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines (the), Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam.

14. Activities target line ministries, government agencies (food inspectorates, customs authorities) as well as private agri-food trade associations grouping rural producers and intermediaries of agricultural products, logistics operators, single window and paperless trade service entities. They combine the development of training and guidance materials with capacity-building events (learning and practical training on gap-and business process analysis; implementation and use of tools). New material will focus on helping countries assess the shortcomings of their agricultural supply chains as well as on recent advancements in regulatory best practice to manage risk in agricultural trade. Currently, there is no dedicated training material in the areas of agricultural quality standards, risk management in agri-trade and conformity certificates for countries looking to simplify processes and improve the quality and volume of their agricultural exports. Case studies, business process analyses and implementation action plans will be developed for one pilot country per sub-region. The workshops will be held on sub-regional levels to foster the peer-to-peer approach for the exchange of best practice and learning among policy-makers and sub-regions.

15. In implementing these activities, ECE will also collaborate with other relevant organizations, including the United Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), UNDP, World Trade Organization (WTO) and International Trade Center (ITC), Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), OECD and APEC as well as bilateral donor and technical assistance agencies. In addition, ECE will connect and establish sub-regional, regional and international networks of experts (with among others, the support of the United Nations Network for Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (UNNExT) platform) to ensure continuity beyond the project’s life-cycle. Planned activities during 2016 and 2017 are provided below.

2016

• Sub-regional workshop for Central Asian countries on “Agri-Food Supply Chains in Cross-Border Trade of Nuts and Dried Fruit”, Central Asia, May 2016.

• Sub-regional workshop for the Western Balkan countries on Agri-food supply chains in cross-border trade of fresh fruit and vegetables, October 2016 (venue to be decided)

• Joint ECE/ESCAP workshop on agri-food supply chains in Central, South and South East Asia, Bangkok, Thailand, September 2016

• Development and dissemination of training material in ECE and ESCAP regions

• Preparation of three case studies on exports of a priority agricultural produce (Central Asia, Balkan and South Asia)

\textsuperscript{1} Collaboration with neighbouring countries, Bulgaria and Croatia, is envisaged during the sub-regional workshops.

\textsuperscript{2} References to Kosovo are to be understood in the context of the UN Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).
2017

- 2 sub-regional workshops organized by ESCAP for targeted countries from Asia (venues and dates to be decided)
- 1 international workshop on agri-food supply chains (venue and date to be decided)
- Development and dissemination of training material in the ECE and ESCAP regions.

III. Studies on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade

16. The secretariat has finalized its assessment study on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in the Republic of Albania, which was discussed with national counterparts during a stakeholder meeting in April 2016. The meeting, which was organized in Tirana, brought together representatives of relevant State agencies, market support institutions, export-oriented enterprises, transport operators and logistics service providers, and their comments were integrated into the study before publication.

17. Work is underway to complete the assessment study on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in the Republic of Moldova, which was launched in October last year with funds from the Swiss Government. Progress to date has involved the completion of the traders’ survey, which entailed face-to-face interviews with 42 enterprises from across the country using the ECE Evaluation Methodology. Interviews with Government officials were completed in April 2016, along with business process analysis of selected products. The results will be consolidated in a comprehensive study that will be published in 2016.

18. Follow-up on completed studies will involve assisting the Governments of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan to implement the recommendations emerging from their national studies, within the context of a technical assistance project titled “Removing Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade in Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan”.

19. The Russian Federation has expressed interest in supporting this project. Subject to the approval of the ECE Executive Committee, it will be implemented over the period May 2016 – April 2018, in cooperation with other UN agencies, and will involve:

- Preparation of a comprehensive road map for each of the targeted countries, which would include activities on preparing a single strategy for eliminating trade barriers, as well as the development and implementation of specific policy and normative documents;
- Establishment of a collaborative network of experts to exchange views on the implementation of the project;
- Establishment of an electronic database of best international practices to eliminate regulatory and procedural barriers to trade and ensure continuous monitoring to avoid the appearance of new barriers;
- Organization of validation workshops for the strategy papers in Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan;
- Organization of roundtables for Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan on removing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade; to be held in Geneva, Switzerland as part of the annual session of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards.

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3 The studies were launched pursuant to the Albanian Government’s request to the secretariat dated 15 July 2014 and the Government of the Republic of Moldova’s request dated September 2014.