

INF.11 (Canada)

March 1, 2005

Subject: Draft UN/ECE Apple Standard - Maturity Criteria

The Canadian Horticultural Council (CHC) is a voluntary, not-for-profit organization representing more than 20,000 horticultural producers across Canada. The CHC's members are involved in the production, packing and processing of over 120 horticultural crops comprised of fruits, vegetables, flowers and ornamental plants. The CHC includes among its members, representatives from all sectors of the Canadian apple industry. I chair the Apple and Fruit Committee, which is a Standing Committee of the Council.

In follow up to the request made at the 49th Specialized Section Fruit and Vegetable meeting, Canadian government officials have consulted the Canadian apple industry regarding the initiative New Zealand has undertaken to draft a paper on the wording within the UN/ECE Apple Standard as it relates to provisions concerning apple size and relevant maturity criteria.

Canadian government officials have provided opportunities for consultation and discussion with our industry on several occasions, most recently at a national industry meeting in February 2005, with respect to the possible use of brix levels as an indicator of maturity for apple varieties produced in Canada.

The position of the Canadian apple industry is that brix levels do not provide an accurate basis upon which to assess apple maturity and would not be the appropriate measure to apply in the proposed standard.

We provided the following comments to Canadian government officials:

- * We unanimously agree that measuring starch levels in apples to assess maturity is much more accurate than brix levels.
- * Our experience shows that brix levels can vary significantly from one side of an apple to the other and is very variable from year to year.
- * Some of our exporters identified that they are providing brix readings when marketing apples to certain markets in the United Kingdom, noting buyers may include brix specifications in their contracts.
- * We largely rely upon measuring starch or ethylene levels of the apples and pressure test readings as indicators of maturity.
- * We understand the intended purpose of a maturity standard as being the prevention of marketing soft fruit (apples). In our view, brix readings are more an indication of taste than maturity.
- * We noted the difference between marketing practices in Canada and New Zealand or other countries. Canada harvests apples, places them in long term storages and markets them over an extended period of time, while we believe that New Zealand harvests, packs and markets product without storage (e.g., pick, pack and ship). Canada's marketing practices for apples would be more similar to that of Chile. We are in fact quite interested in any comments

(including brix levels) that Chile may have submitted to New Zealand under the UN/ECE initiative.

Given the above, we strongly feel that the draft standard must consider measures other than brix levels to determine apple maturity.

We appreciate the opportunity to bring a Canadian perspective to the discussion, and trust that our experience and views will be taken into account.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Levasseur', written in a cursive style.

Steve Levasseur
Chair, Apple and Fruit Committee
Chair, Apple Working Group
Canadian Horticultural Council

cc. Helen Zohar-Picciano, Canadian Food Inspection Agency
Canadian delegate to the United Nations/Economic Commission for Europe