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UNECE STANDARD FFV-25

concerning the marketing and
commercial quality control of

ONIONS

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NOTE

Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

The commercial quality standards developed by the UNECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards help facilitate international trade, encourage high-quality production, improve profitability and protect consumer interests. UNECE standards are used by governments, producers, traders, importers and exporters, and other international organizations. They cover a wide range of agricultural products, including fresh fruit and vegetables, dry and dried produce, seed potatoes, meat, cut flowers, eggs and egg products.

Any member of the United Nations can participate, on an equal footing, in the activities of the Working Party. For more information on agricultural standards, please visit our website <www.unece.org/trade/agr>.

The present revised Standard for ~~Melons~~ Onions is based on document ECE/TRADE/WP.7/2001/9/Add.4, reviewed and adopted by the Working Party at its session.

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~~NOTE BY THE SECRETARIAT: This text is based on document TRADE/WP.7/2001/9/Add.4. It includes the changes adopted at the 59th session of the Working Party (TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2003/26/Add.3).~~

~~English version editorially corrected 4/12/2003.~~

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ONIONS

I. DEFINITION OF PRODUCE

This standard applies to onions of varieties (cultivars) grown from *Allium cepa* L. to be supplied to the consumer in the natural state, green onions with full leaves and onions for industrial processing being excluded.

II. PROVISIONS CONCERNING QUALITY

The purpose of the standard is to define the quality requirements for onions at the ~~export~~export-control stage, after preparation and packaging.

However, if applied at stages following export, products may show in relation to the requirements of the standard:

- a slight lack of freshness and turgidity
- a slight deterioration due to their development and their tendency to perish.

The holder/seller of products may not display such products or offer them for sale, or deliver or market them in any manner other than in conformity with this standard. The holder shall be responsible for observing such conformity.

A. Minimum requirements

In all classes, subject to the special provisions for each class and the tolerances allowed, the bulbs must be:

- intact;
- sound; produce affected by rotting or deterioration such as to make it unfit for consumption is excluded
- clean, practically free of any visible foreign matter
- free from damage due to frost

- sufficiently dry for the intended use (in the case of ~~pickling~~ onions for storing, at least the first two outer skins and the stem must be fully dried)
- without hollow or tough stems
- practically free from pests
- ~~practically~~ free from damages caused by pests affecting the flesh
- free of abnormal external moisture
- free of any foreign smell and/or taste.

In addition the stems must be twisted or clean cut and must not exceed 6 cm in length (except for stringed onions).

The development and condition of the onions must be such as to enable them:

- to withstand transportation and handling~~, and~~
- to arrive in satisfactory condition at the place of destination.

B. Classification

The onions are classified in two classes defined below:

(i) Class I

Onions in this class must be of good quality. They must be characteristic of the variety and/or commercial type. ~~Their characteristics must be typical of the variety.~~

The bulbs must be:

- firm and compact
- unsprouted (free from externally visible shoots)
- free from swelling caused by abnormal vegetative development
- practically free of root tufts; however, for onions harvested before complete maturity, root tufts are allowed.

The following slight defects, however, may be allowed, provided ~~they~~ these do not affect the general appearance of the produce, the quality, the keeping quality ~~or~~ and presentation in the package:

- a slight defect in shape
- ~~a~~ slight defects in colouring
- light staining which does not affect the last dried skin protecting the flesh, provided it does not cover more than one fifth of the bulb's surface
- superficial cracks in, and partial absence of the outer skins, provided the flesh is protected.

(ii) *Class II*

This class includes onions ~~which~~ that do not qualify for inclusion in Class I, but satisfy the minimum requirements specified above.

~~They~~ The bulbs must be reasonably firm.

The following defects may be allowed, provided the onions retain their essential characteristics as regards the quality, the keeping quality and presentation:

- defects in shape
- defects in colouring
- early evidence of externally visible shoot growth (no more than 10 per cent by number or weight by unit of presentation) {proposal to move to tolerances}
- traces due to rubbing
- slight marking caused by parasites or disease
- small healed cracks
- slight healed bruising, ~~healed, unlikely to impair keeping qualities~~ {already covered by 1. paragraph}
- root tufts
- stains which do not affect the last dried skin protecting the flesh, provided they do not cover more than half the bulb's surface
- cracks in the outer skins and partial absence of over a maximum of one third of the bulb's surface, provided the flesh is not damaged.

III. PROVISIONS CONCERNING SIZING

Size is determined by the maximum diameter of the equatorial section.

The minimum diameter is fixed at 10 mm.

~~The difference between the diameters of the smallest and largest onions in the same package must~~ To ensure uniformity in size, the range in size between produce in the same package shall not exceed:

- 5 mm where the diameter of the smallest onion is 10 mm and over but under 20 mm. However, where the diameter of the onion is 15 mm and over but under 25 mm, the difference may be 10 mm
- 15 mm where the diameter of the smallest onion is 20 mm and over but under 40 mm
- 20 mm where the diameter of the smallest onion is 40 mm and over but under 70 mm

- 30 mm where the diameter of the smallest onion is 70 mm or over.

~~The minimum diameter is fixed at 10 mm.~~

IV. PROVISIONS CONCERNING TOLERANCES

~~At all marketing stages, t~~Tolerances in respect of quality and size shall be allowed in each lot package (or in each batch, for onions in bulk) for produce not satisfying the requirements of the class indicated.

A. Quality tolerances

(i) *Class I*

A total tolerance of 10 per cent, by number or weight, of onions not satisfying the requirements of ~~this the~~ class, but meeting those of Class II is allowed. Within this tolerance not more than 1 per cent in total may consist of produce satisfying neither the requirements of Class II quality nor the minimum requirements, or of produce affected by decay.

(ii) *Class II*

A total tolerance of 10 per cent, by number or weight, of onions satisfying neither the requirements of the class nor the minimum requirements is allowed. Within this tolerance not more than 2 per cent in total may consist of produce affected by decay.

B. Size tolerances

For all classes: a total tolerance of 10 per cent, by number or weight, of onions not satisfying the size identified, but with a diameter of no more than 20 per cent below or above it.

V. PROVISIONS CONCERNING PRESENTATION

A. Uniformity

The contents of each package (or lot for produce presented in bulk [in the transport vehicle]) must be uniform and contain only onions of the same origin, variety or commercial type, quality and size.

However, a mixture of onions of distinctly different colours and/or commercial types may be packed together in a ~~package and/or sales unit~~¹, provided they are uniform in quality and, for each colour and/or commercial type concerned, in origin.

~~However, sales packages, of a net weight not exceeding three kilogrammes, may contain mixtures of onions of different colours, provided that they are uniform in quality, and, for each colour concerned, in origin, variety and size.~~

The visible part of the contents of the package (or lot for produce presented in bulk [in the transport vehicle]) must be representative of the entire contents.

B. Packaging

Onions must be packed in such a way as to protect the produce properly.

The materials used inside the package must be clean and of a quality such as to avoid causing any external or internal damage to the produce. The use of materials, particularly of paper or stamps bearing trade specifications, is allowed, provided the printing or labelling ~~is has been~~ done with non-toxic ink or glue.

Stickers individually affixed ~~on to~~ the produce shall be such that, when removed, they neither leave visible traces of glue, nor lead to skin defects.

Packages (or lots for produce presented in bulk [in the transport vehicle]) must be free of all foreign matter.

~~C. Presentation~~

~~Onions may be presented:~~

- ~~— arranged in layers~~
- ~~— loose in a package (including bulk bins)~~
- ~~— transported in bulk~~
- ~~— in strings:~~
 - ~~— either of a certain number of bulbs, in which case the strings must contain at least six onions (with fully dried stems)~~
 - ~~— or of a certain net weight.~~

~~For stringed onions, the characteristics of the strings in any one package (number of bulbs or net weight) must be uniform.~~

VI. PROVISIONS CONCERNING MARKING

¹ The sales unit should be designed to be purchased in its entirety.

Each package² must bear the following particulars, in letters grouped on the same side, legibly and indelibly marked, and visible from the outside.

~~(For onions transported in bulk (direct loading into a transport vehicle) these particulars must appear on a document accompanying the goods, and attached in a visible position inside the transport vehicle.)~~

A. Identification

Packer and/or dispatcher/shipper:

Name and physical address (e.g. street/city/region/postal code and, if different from the country of origin, the country) or a code mark officially recognized by the national authority³.

B. Nature of produce

- "Onions" if the contents are not visible from the outside.
- "Mixture of onions", or equivalent denomination, in the case of packages and/or sales units containing a mixture of distinctly different colours and/or commercial types of onions. If the produce is not visible from the outside, the colours or commercial types of the sales unit must be indicated.
 - ~~— In the case of sales packages containing a mixture of different colours of onions:~~
 - ~~— 'Mixed onions' or equivalent denomination,~~
 - ~~— If the contents are not visible from the outside, the indication of each of the colours present in the package and of the minimum number of pieces of each of the colours concerned.~~

C. Origin of produce

- Country of origin and, optionally, district where grown, or national, regional or local place name.
- In the case of packages and/or sales units containing a mixture of distinctly different colours and/or commercial types of onions of different origins, the indication of each country of origin shall appear next to the name of the colour and/or commercial type concerned.~~In the case of sales packages containing a~~

² According to the Geneva Protocol, footnote 2, "Package units of produce prepacked for direct sale to the consumer shall not be subject to these marking provisions but shall conform to the national requirements. However, the markings referred to shall in any event be shown on the transport packaging containing such package units".

³ The national legislation of a number of countries requires the explicit declaration of the name and address. However, in the case where a code mark is used, the reference "packer and/or dispatcher (or equivalent abbreviations)" has to be indicated in close connection with the code mark, and the code mark should be preceded by the ISO 3166 (alpha) country/area code of the recognizing country, if not the country of origin.

~~mixture of onions of different colours and different origins, the indication of each country of origin shall appear next to the name of the colour concerned.”~~

D. Commercial specifications

- Class
- Size expressed by minimum and maximum diameters
- Net weight.

E. Official control mark (optional)

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