

**Economic and Social Council**Distr.: General
18 June 2012

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe**Committee on Trade****Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards****Specialized Section on Standardization
of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables****Sixtieth session**

Geneva, 29 May - 1 June 2012

Report**I. Introduction**

1. The meeting was opened by Ms. Virginia Cram-Martos, Director of the UNECE Trade and Sustainable Land Management Division. She presented the new Chief of the Trade Policy and Governmental Cooperation Section, Mr. Mika Vepsäläinen.
2. She pointed out the considerable amount of work carried out by the Specialized Section. In 2011, the delegations had reviewed 16 standards; and the 2012 agenda included 19 texts. The standards developed by the Specialized Section were being used by producers, traders and inspection services all over the world.
3. She said she appreciated the active participation of countries in the UNECE work standards. She welcomed the delegations of Malaysia, Philippines and Tajikistan who had come for the first time to Geneva to take part in the work of the Specialized Section.
4. The growing number of countries contributing to the work had been prompted by the intensive promotional and capacity-building efforts of the Specialized Section and the secretariat in the past four years. The evaluation report on the results and impact of the promotional activities had been submitted to the session. It had been prepared by an independent consultant and contained a very positive assessment of the achieved results. Ms. Cram-Martos invited the delegations to think about how to raise funds to continue the training and capacity-building work for which there was a very strong demand in different parts of the world.
5. She stressed the importance of the Specialized Section's work on explanatory brochures. Regional workshops in Ghana and Thailand in September and November 2011, respectively, had helped make good progress on the UNECE brochures for pineapples and fresh chilli peppers by taking into account growing and trading practices in these two important regions.

6. She said that UNECE work on agricultural quality standards and explanatory material was done in English, French and Russian. The availability of documents in Russian was particularly appreciated by the countries of the EurAsian Economic Community (EurAsEC) who were setting up their normative base by using UNECE standards. It was expected that by the end of 2013 practically all UNECE standards for fresh fruit and vegetables would become national standards in the Russian Federation and other EurAsEC countries.

7. The meeting was chaired by Mrs. Ulrike Bickelmann (Germany).

II. Attendance

8. Representatives of the following countries attended the meeting: Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Malaysia, Morocco, Netherlands, Philippines, Poland, Russian Federation, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America.

9. The European Union was also represented.

10. The following specialized agencies/programmes participated in the session: Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme.

11. Representatives of the following intergovernmental organizations participated in the session: the OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables.

12. A representatives of the following non-governmental organization participated in the session: COLEACP (Europe-Africa-Caribbean-Pacific Liaison Committee), National Council of Producers of Chilli Peppers of Mexico.

III. Adoption of the agenda

Documentation: ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.1/2012/1

13. The delegations adopted the provisional agenda with the proposal of the delegation of the United States to consider under agenda item 9 (Other business) the revision frequency of UNECE standards.

IV. Matters of interest since the last session

(a) UNECE and subsidiary bodies

14. The secretariat informed the Specialized Section of the forthcoming fifth session of the UNECE Committee on Trade (18 and 19 June 2012), where particular focus would be on analysing the results of two trade needs assessment studies on Belarus and Kazakhstan.

15. The Committee would also prepare for a review by the Executive Committee (EXCOM) of the Sub-programme 6 on Trade, as part of a general UNECE review. The review would begin immediately after the Committee session and was expected to be completed in September. The results would be communicated to the November session of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards.

(b) Other organizations

16. The representatives of the secretariat of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme informed the meeting about the seventeenth session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables to take place in Mexico City from 3 to 7 September 2012. That meeting would finish the revision of the Codex Standard for Avocado, namely sizing and sizing-related provisions including maturity requirements in relation to identifying analytical methods for measuring the dry matter content, and the allowance of quality tolerances concerning decay. The meeting would consider the Codex Standard for Pomegranate, in particular provisions on sizing and sizing-related requirements. It would also consider the Codex Standards for Golden Passion Fruit and Durian, the latter as to whether there should be either an international or regional standard for this product to be developed by the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Asia. New commodities for standardization would also be examined. In addition to standard-setting activities, the harmonization of Codex/UNECE layouts for commercial quality standards for fresh fruits and vegetables would be discussed. The representative of the secretariat also informed the meeting that all Codex standards for fresh fruit and vegetables were available on the Codex website in English, French, Spanish, Chinese, Arabic and would also be available shortly in Russian, these being all the official languages of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

17. The representative of OECD informed the meeting about the latest activities of the OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme. The Scheme celebrated its 50th anniversary this year and, at the invitation of France, the host country of the OECD and a founding member of the Scheme, the Plenary Meeting would be held in Montpellier from 4 to 7 December.

18. In 2011, the OECD had published explanatory brochures on hazelnuts (inshell and kernel), the revised asparagus brochure and the mangoes e-brochure. It had published the explanatory brochure on onions in 2012. All were available from the OECD online bookstore and from the Scheme's official website. The 2011 Plenary Meeting adopted the explanatory brochure on watermelons. A clarification was needed from UNECE on the standard text as regards miniature watermelons. The development of explanatory brochures on melons, shallots, garlic, fresh figs, pomegranates and watermelons continued.

19. The Scheme undertook a peer review of the Dutch Fruit and Vegetables Quality Inspection System in 2011. The report would be published in the coming weeks and would become available on the Scheme's website.

20. The Scheme made progress in revising the OECD Operating Rules for the Conformity Checks of Produce Exported under the Scheme (inspection methods). In parallel, an OECD Guidelines on Quality Inspection was under development. Those documents would be discussed at the next Plenary Meeting, in December 2012.

21. The development of a new OECD layout for explanatory brochures was also in progress and would be discussed further at the next Plenary Meeting. The Scheme's Members had already agreed that the new layout would be a combination of the traditional and the "range concept" layouts.

22. The Scheme supported the cooperation with UNECE and Codex on an informal basis. The international organizations could organize joint workshops in the future to share costs and to cover all aspects of fruit and vegetables quality and inspection.

23. The Scheme had held or was planning to hold several workshops in 2012: Kenya (April), Montenegro (June), Slovakia (September) and possibly Turkey (autumn 2012). The OECD Secretariat invited UNECE members to participate in these events.

24. The representative of the European Commission reported that a revision of Regulation (EU) No 543/2011 relating to marketing standards of fruit and vegetables was under way. It aimed at aligning standards for apples and pears with the latest changes in the

UNECE standards, as well as at revising some provisions to reflect market changes and to improve traceability and market transparency. The latter modifications would mainly concern the general marketing standard and provisions related to approved third countries.

25. Linguistic corrections for certain language versions of Regulation (EU) No 543/2011 were also foreseen in addition to the above-mentioned amendments. The revision was expected to be carried out in the next three months.

V. New UNECE standards

(a) Persimmon

Documentation: Draft Standard for Persimmon (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.1/2012/3)

26. The delegation of Tajikistan presented a draft Standard for Persimmon. The corrections, amendments and comments on the draft were reflected in the post-session document placed on the UNECE website. The Specialized Section decided to complete the standard at its next session. It also asked the Working Party to approve its recommendation to start work on a UNECE explanatory brochure on persimmon.

(b) Quince

Documentation: Draft Standard for Quince (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.1/2012/4)

27. The Specialized Section reviewed the draft standard on quince presented by the delegation of Tajikistan and decided to continue working on it at its 2013 session. In the meantime countries were asked to look at provisions on skin defects, as well as at those marked in square brackets in the reviewed text placed on the website as a post-session document. The draft standards for persimmon and quince were expected to be adopted as recommendations in 2013.

(c) Lambs lettuce

Documentation: Draft Standard for Lambs Lettuce (INF.23, Informal document)
Proposal by France on tolerances (INF.24, Informal document)

28. The Specialized Section agreed on the text presented by the Working Group (post-session document INF.23) and decided to submit it to the Working Party for approval as a recommendation for a one-year trial period. The delegations were informed that the method to determine the percentage of defects was included as a remark in the recommendation. The delegation of France would check whether the OECD sampling plan was appropriate for small produce such as lambs lettuce.

VI. Revision of UNECE Standards

(a) Apples

Documentation: Standard for Apples (FFV-50)

Proposal on sizing by the informal November 2011 meeting (INF.7, Informal document)

Proposal by Germany on the list of varieties (INF.22, Informal document)

Proposal by France on the list of varieties (INF.13, Informal document)

29. The delegations confirmed the existing marking provisions on varieties, mutants and trade names. The delegation of Germany pointed out that some mutants had received varietal protection in some countries and that those varieties should appear on the label. Some other countries' practice was to ignore the varietal status of mutants and to label only the name of the source variety. The Specialized Section could not agree on what to accept as recommended practice. It decided to include the following clarifying sentence to the annex containing the list of varieties: "The mutant column may include names which might have received a varietal protection in some countries. However, it remains only mandatory to indicate the source variety."

30. The delegation of the United States expressed concern about the high level of specificity in the list of varieties, which they regarded as being beyond the scope of inspection services and also resulting in frequent amendments to the standard. Several delegates pointed out that the lists of varieties represented a useful source of information, particularly when the labelling of the variety was obligatory. In their view, as long as a standard referred to varietal characteristics, the list of varieties was considered as a necessary part of the standard.

31. The Specialized Section asked the Bureau and the secretariat to update the list of apple varieties before submitting the revised standard to the Working Party for approval. It was recommended that the list could also be checked for correctness by the World Apple and Pear Association (WAPA).

32. With regard to the sizing provisions, the delegations considered four options: those of the existing UNECE and Codex standards, the one agreed at the informal Working Group meeting in November 2011, and the one resulting from the discussion at the session. Some delegations pointed out that they would prefer to have different sizing criteria for presentation in layers or loose. The proposed changes would not prevent the industry from establishing stricter requirements in commercial contracts (e.g. 5 mm if packed in rows and layers). In Poland, for example, when retailers demanded stricter provisions, the grading could be at 2 mm. In Belgium, the range in size was established at 5 mm. In the United States, the grading did not normally go beyond 10 mm.

33. To help countries decide on sizing, the Specialized Section asked the secretariat to put the four options proposed into one post-session document and circulate it together with the report of the session. To help decide on their preferred option, the delegations were asked to consult the industry.

34. Following the request by Germany, the Specialized Section decided to continue the discussion on sizing and labelling mutants at its 2013 session.

(b) Pears

Documentation: Standard for Pears (FFV-51)

Proposal on sizing by the informal November 2011 meeting (INF.8,
Informal document)

35. The Specialized Section agreed to change the sizing provisions in accordance with the proposals by the informal Working Group presented in document INF.8. Setting sizing criteria irrespective of the type of packaging was regarded to be in line with the new types of packaging appearing on the market.

36. The Specialized Section submitted the revised Standard for Pears to the Working Party for approval.

(c) **Cherries**

Documentation: Standard for Cherries (FFV-13)

Proposals by Turkey on the list of varieties and lot number (INF.9, Informal document)

37. The Specialized Section decided not to add a list of varieties to the Standard for Cherries. The indication of variety was optional in that standard and its text did not contain any variety-related provisions. The existing marking provisions under section VI. B (“Sour Cherries”) were considered to be sufficient to accommodate the sour cherry varieties proposed by Turkey.

38. The Specialized Section was of the opinion that the indication of the lot number should not be regulated in the UNECE standards, because that was part of regulations on traceability and could be country-specific. In the European Union, the lot number must be indicated on pre-packs; for other types of packages it may be indicated on the package or in the accompanying documents.

(d) **Sweet chestnuts**

Documentation: Standard for Chestnuts (INF.3 of the May 2011 session)

Chestnut sizing (INF.12 of the May 2011 session)

39. The delegations reviewed the draft text of the standard presented in document INF.3. The Specialized Section decided not to include *Castanea mollissima* in the definition of produce, as that species was already covered under “hybrids” and was not a commercially important product. It was also decided to leave the definition of sizing in terms of the number of fruits (125 per kg).

40. The delegations took note of the common French names “marrons” for *Castanea sativa* Mill. and “châtaignes” for *Castanea crenata* Siebold et Zucc. The two French terms “marrons” and “châtaignes” were understood in English as “sweet chestnuts”.

41. The Specialized Section asked the secretariat to convert the text of the Standard for Chestnuts into the Standard Layout for Dry and Dried Produce in view of deciding, at the next session of the Specialized Section, whether this standard could be transferred to the Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce.

(e) **Witloof chicory**

Documentation: Standard for Witloof Chicory (INF.1, Informal document)

42. The delegations considered the proposals by Germany to amend the text of the standard. The Specialized Section decided to: (a) add the red type of chicory, as the second commercial type, to the definition of produce; (b) align the wording of “clean, practically free of any visible foreign matter” in the minimum requirements with the Standard Layout; (c) add the following provisions: “slight reddish discolouration”, “slight bruising” and “slight glassy to grey or reddish discolouration of the axis” in Class I, and “reddish discolouration”, “bruising” and “glassy to grey or reddish discolouration of the axis” in Class II; (d) delete “slightly” in “slightly irregular shape” to allow for marketing of sprouts of irregular shape in Class II.

43. The sizing provisions were simplified by deleting the minimum and maximum sizes. The uniformity in size was restricted to Classes “Extra” and I, leaving more flexibility to Class II. The deletion of minimum sizes would allow the marketing of miniature produce.

44. The Specialized Section recommended the revised text of the standard for adoption by the Working Party.

(f) Other standards

- Documentation:* Tomatoes – Proposal by Germany to delete reference to cherry tomatoes in the section on marking (INF.2, Informal document)
- Tomatoes – Position of Italy regarding the German proposal on cherry tomatoes (INF.25, Informal document)
- Tomatoes – Position of France regarding the German proposal on cherry tomatoes (INF.26, Informal document)
- Leafy vegetables – Proposal by Germany on root tufts (INF.3, Informal document)
- Plums - Proposal by Turkey on the list of varieties and lot number (INF.10, Informal document)
- Mangoes – COLEACP comments on sizing of mangoes (INF.11, Informal document)
- Mangoes – Proposal by Germany on healed bruises and lenticels (INF.21, Informal document)
- Watermelons – Proposal by Slovakia on miniature produce (INF.12, Informal document)
- Cultivated mushrooms – Proposal by Germany on the list of defects for Class I (INF.15, Informal document)
- Carrots – Proposal by Germany on frost damage (INF.16, Informal document)
- Citrus fruit – Proposal by Germany on simplification of marking (INF.17, Informal document)
- Melons – Proposal by Germany on mixtures (INF.18, Informal document)
- Leeks – Proposal by Germany on deleting the marking requirement for “Size (if sized)” (INF.19, Informal document)
- Lettuces – Proposal by Germany on deleting the marking requirement for “Little gem” (INF.20, Informal document)

45. **Tomatoes.** The delegations clarified the sizing provisions for cherry and cocktail tomatoes in the Standard for Tomatoes by agreeing on the following text: “The following provisions shall not apply to trusses of tomatoes and are optional for cherry and cocktail tomatoes, tomatoes below [35/40] mm in diameter and for Class II.” Countries were asked to check this provision with the industry. The revised standard was submitted to the Working Party for approval.

46. **Leafy vegetables.** The Specialized Section agreed to the proposal by Germany to simplify the provisions concerning “roots” and “trimming” for Classes I and II in the Standard for Leafy Vegetables. For Class I, the provision would read: “Leafy vegetables presented as rosettes must be free of root tufts”. For Class II that provision was deleted. The revised version of the standard was submitted to the Working Party for approval.

47. **Plums.** The Specialized Section supported the proposal by Turkey to add four new varieties to the list of large-fruited varieties in the Standard for Plums and submitted the amended text to the Working party for approval. Some countries thought it would be appropriate to see descriptions of new varieties when they were added to the list.

48. **Mangoes.** The Specialized Section reviewed sizing provisions in the Standard for Mangoes. The delegations agreed to lower the minimum weight from 150 to 100 g and to introduce corresponding corrections to the table on size uniformity. Section VI. D (Commercial specifications) was restructured to read:

- Class
- Size expressed by at least one of the following:
 - minimum and maximum weight
 - size code
 - number of fruit.

49. The delegations revised the provisions related to bruises and lenticels for Classes I and II as follows:

Class I

- slight skin defects due to rubbing or sunburn and suberized stains due to resin exudation (elongated trails included) not exceeding 3, 4, 5, 6 cm² for size groups A, B, C, D respectively
- slight bruising
- scattered rust-coloured lenticels.

Class II

- skin defects due to rubbing or sunburn and suberized stains due to resin exudation (elongated trails included) not exceeding 3, 4, 5, 6 cm² for size groups A, B, C, D respectively
- bruising
- scattered rust-coloured lenticels.

The delegations decided there was no need to undertake a complete revision of the standard. The Specialized Section submitted the revised standard to the Working Party for approval.

50. **Watermelons.** The delegations agreed to delete references to the minimum weight in the sections on sizing provisions and size tolerances in the Standard for Watermelons. That would allow the miniature produce to be covered by the standard. The Specialized Section submitted the revised standard to the Working Party for approval.

51. The delegation of Malaysia pointed out that in their region the Brix level for watermelons of 8°, currently in the UNECE standard, was considered too low and suggested it be increased to 10°. Other delegations were asked to think about that proposal and, if necessary, the Specialized Section would revisit the maturity provisions at its next session.

52. **Cultivated mushrooms.** For the Standard for Cultivated Mushrooms, the delegations agreed to the proposal by Germany to add, for clarification purposes, the following provision to the list of defects allowed in Class I: “very slight internal moisture of the stalk”. The Specialized Section submitted the revised standard to the Working Party for approval.

53. **Carrots.** The delegations considered the proposals by Germany regarding “frost damage” and “cracks” in the Standard for Carrots. The Specialized Section agreed not to mention frost damage in classes, since that defect was covered by the provision “sound”. It was also recalled that cracks were already covered in the standard. The Specialized Section decided not to introduce any changes to the standard.

54. **Citrus fruit.** To simplify the marking provisions in the Standard for Citrus Fruit, the delegations agreed to reword section VI. B (Nature of produce) to read:

- Common name of the species if the produce is not visible from the outside, but obligatory for satsumas and clementines
- "Mixtures of citrus fruit" or equivalent denomination and common names of the different species, in case of a mixture of citrus fruit of distinctly different species
- Name of the variety for oranges, all hybrids of the mandarin group and mandarins other than satsumas and clementines, for which the indication is optional
- "With seeds" for clementines with more than 10 seeds per fruit
- "Seedless" (optional)
- For grapefruit and hybrids: the indication "pink" or "red" where appropriate
- For pummelos and hybrids: the indication "pink" or "red" where appropriate.

The Specialized Section submitted the revised version of the standard to the Working Party for approval.

55. **Melons.** To allow for mixtures in the Standards for Melons, the Specialized Section decided to amend the text of the standard as follows:

Section V. A (Uniformity)

“However, a mixture of melons of distinctly different varieties and/or commercial types may be packed together in a package provided they are uniform in quality and, for each variety or commercial type concerned, in origin.”

Section VI. B (Nature of Produce)

“Mixture of melons”, or equivalent denomination, in the case of a mixture of distinctly different varieties or commercial types of melons. If the produce is not visible from the outside, the varieties and/or commercial types and the quantity of each in the package must be indicated.”

Section VI. C (Country of Origin)

“In the case of a mixture of distinctly different varieties and/or commercial types of melons of different origins, the indication of each country of origin shall appear next to the name of the variety or commercial type concerned.”

The Specialized Section submitted the amended text of the standard to the Working Party for approval.

56. **Leeks.** The Specialized Section decided to delete “Size (if sized)” from the provisions on commercial specifications (section VI. D) in the Standard for Leeks, and to submit the revised standard to the Working Party for approval.

57. **Lettuces.** As the provision on the specific minimum size for "Little gem" had been deleted in 2010 from the Standard for Lettuces and since no other provisions specific to "Little gem" were included, the Specialized Section decided to delete the reference to “Little gem” from section VI. B (Nature of Produce). The revised text of the standard was submitted to the Working Party for approval.

58. As regards the amendments to the UNECE standards for tomatoes and mangoes, the Codex Secretariat drew the attention of the Specialized Section to the corresponding Codex standards. It would be useful if the Working Party considered whether the current provisions in the Codex standards sufficiently addressed the revised provisions in the

UNECE standards or whether they needed to be revised and if so, to determine the appropriateness to request the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables to consider the possible amendment or revision of these Codex standards, as provided for in the working procedures between Codex and the UNECE in the Terms of Reference of the CCFFV.

VII. Explanatory brochures and standards for chilli peppers and pineapples

(a) UNECE explanatory brochure and Standard for Pineapples

Documentation: Draft brochure (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.1/2012/6)
Revised Standard (INF.4, Informal document)

Colouration and maturity of pineapples – Note by COLEACP (INF.14, Informal document)

Comments on the standard and draft brochure by COLEACP members (INF.27, Informal document)

Pineapples brochure – presentation

59. The delegations reviewed the draft UNECE explanatory brochure and the standard for pineapples. The comments made during the discussion were reflected in the PowerPoint presentation and the text of the standard, which were both placed on the website as post-session documents. The countries were asked to send missing photographs for the brochure to the secretariat by the end of June, so that the brochure could be laid out and its final draft circulated to countries in September.

60. The use of the term “label”, in addition to stickers, in the provisions on packaging in the Standard for Pineapples was noted by the representative of the Codex secretariat. Such labels attached to the crown on a string were increasingly used by the industry. That was an amendment specific to pineapples only.

61. The Specialized Section decided to submit the revised standard and the brochure for pineapples to the Working Party for approval.

62. The representative of the Codex secretariat asked if the September 2012 session of the CCFFV could be informed about the UNECE work on the standard and the brochure for pineapples.

(b) UNECE explanatory brochure and Standard for Fresh Chilli Peppers

Documentation: Revised Standard (INF.5, Informal document)

Draft fresh chilli peppers brochure

63. The delegations reviewed the text and photographs of the draft brochure for fresh chilli peppers. The corrections and comments were reflected in the text of the brochure placed on the website as a post-session document. The countries were asked to send missing photographs to the secretariat at their earliest convenience so that the text of the standard and the brochure could be completed in 2013. The Specialized Section decided to extend for one more year the trial period of the 2011 recommendation for fresh chilli peppers.

VIII. Glossary of terms

Documentation: Glossary of terms (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.1/2011/2)

64. The Specialized Section decided to revisit the text of the glossary at its next session. Countries were asked to send their comments to the delegation of France who would continue working on the document.

IX. Promotion and capacity-building

Documentation: UNDA evaluation report

65. The Specialized Section took note of the UNDA evaluation report, which assessed very positively the activities carried out under this project from 2008 to 2011.

66. The delegation of the United Kingdom reminded the Specialized Section about the eighteenth UK Harmonization Meeting to be held from 12 to 14 June 2012.

67. The delegation of Germany informed the Specialized Section about the 29th International Meeting on Quality Control of Fruit and Vegetables to be held in Bonn from 25 to 27 February 2013.

X. Future work

68. The Bureau and the secretariat would draw up a provisional agenda for the next session of the Specialized Section, provisionally planned for 30 April – 3 May 2013.

XI. Other business

69. The delegations discussed the important issue of periodicity in revising the standards. To ensure certain stability of the texts and to facilitate their practical application, the Specialized Section decided to recommend to the Working Party to include in its Working Procedures a provision stipulating that the standards should not be revised earlier than three years after the latest revision unless there was an urgent and well-substantiated need to do so. Between the revisions, proposals that were submitted to the secretariat by countries would be considered by the Specialized Section as work in progress.

XII. Election of officers

70. The Specialized Section elected Ms. Ulrike Bickelmann (Germany) as Chair and Ms. Kristina Mattsson (Sweden) as Vice-Chair.

XIII. Adoption of the report

71. The Specialized Section adopted the report of the session.
