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Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Trade

Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

Specialized Section on Standardization
of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

Sixty-second session

Geneva, 28 April - 1 May 2014

Report

I. Introduction

1. The meeting was chaired by Ms. Ulrike Bickelmann (Germany). The Chief of the Trade Policy and Governmental Cooperation Section of the UNECE Economic Cooperation, Trade, and Sustainable Land Management Division greeted the participants on behalf of the Acting Executive Secretary of ECE and the Director of the Economic Cooperation, Trade, and Land Management Division.

II. Attendance

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

3. The European Union was also represented.

4. The following specialized programme participated in the session: Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme.

III. Adoption of the agenda

Documentation: ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.1/2014/1

5. The delegations adopted the provisional agenda, as revised on 23 April 2014, with proposed changes and amendments.

IV. Matters of interest since the last session

Documentation: Report of the Working Party (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2013/2)

6. The secretariat reported on recent developments at the UNECE. The Review of the 2005 Reform of ECE was completed in early 2013 and the former Trade and Sustainable Land Management Division and the Economic Cooperation and Integration Division had been merged into the Economic Cooperation, Trade, and Land Management Division. The Executive Committee of the ECE was looking into synergies between the Trade Committee and the Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration in order to decide by the end of 2014 whether or not to merge the two Committees. These changes were not expected to have any impact on WP.7 or its Specialized Sections, as these had been unanimously supported in the Review outcome document.

7. The secretariat had also started to prepare a draft publications programme for the biennium 2016-2017 where the number of printed publications would be reduced from the current budget. The secretariat would inform the Working Party in November 2014 of the planned budget provisions and called for ideas and support for strengthening the online publication of standards and explanatory brochures.

V. Revision of UNECE Standards

(a) Quince

Documentation: Standard for Quince (FFV-62)

8. The delegations reviewed the text of the Standard for Quince. The Specialized Section decided to establish “the minimum size at 40 mm or 100 grams”. It also introduced three weight categories in the section on sizing and allowed for mixtures of quince of distinctly different varieties in the presentation and marking sections. The colour uniformity requirement for “Extra” Class fruit was deleted. The Specialized Section submitted the revised text to the Working Party for adoption as a new Standard.

(b) Apples, pears and plums

Documentation: Standard for Apples (FFV-50)
Standard for Pears (FFV-51)
Standard for Plums (FFV-29)
Proposals on sizing (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.1/2014/3)
List of Varieties (INF.1, Informal document)
WAPA position on mutants (INF.2, Informal document)
Plums, definition of produce, proposal by Germany (INF.7, Informal document)
Miniature apple varieties, proposal by New Zealand (INF.13, Informal document)
Miniature apple varieties, letter from WAPA (INF.16, Informal document)

9. The delegations discussed the provisions on sizing in the Standard for Apples, drawing on the four options presented in document ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.1/2014/3. The majority of the delegations preferred to keep the current wording in the Standard (option 1), as they thought that size uniformity differentiation by quality classes and presentation was important from the marketing point of view. However, several delegations pointed out that the uniformity requirement of 5 mm for “Extra” Class fruit and for Classes I and II fruit packed in rows and layers was costly and difficult to apply in practice. The delegation of the United States maintained its reservation with regard to the current provisions on uniformity in size. The Specialized Section agreed that, at the next revision of the Standard in 2017, options 4 or 2 should be considered.

10. The Specialized Section agreed to the proposal made by the delegation of New Zealand to exempt miniature apple varieties from the minimum size and uniformity in size requirements in the Standard. This proposal was supported by the World Apple and Pear Association (WAPA) and the Southern Hemisphere Association of Fresh Fruit Exporters (SHAFFE). To allow miniature apples in the Standard, the Specialized Section decided to include the following provision in the section on sizing:

“Varieties of miniature apples, marked with an “M” in the Annex to this Standard, are exempted from the sizing provisions. These miniature varieties must have a minimum Brix level of 12°.”

and in the section on marking:

“Miniature apples”, where appropriate.

11. The delegation of New Zealand presented two miniature apple varieties, Rockit™ and TiddlyPomme™, for inclusion in the List of Varieties.

12. The delegations took note of the position of WAPA with regard to including mutant varieties in the “variety” list.

13. The delegation of Germany presented a concept on how the List of Varieties could be restructured.

14. The Specialized Section updated the List of Varieties bearing in mind their economic importance. It deleted varieties Alice, Katja and Kim, as proposed by the delegation of Sweden, and added 17 varieties, as proposed in document INF.1, including two miniature apple varieties. The colour group for “Stark Delicious”, “Starking”, “Starkspur” was changed from A to C, and the colour group for “Red Jonaprince” from C to A. The column “Russeting” was renamed to “Additional specifications”, where miniature apple varieties, russeting, as well as parentage of mutants would be indicated. In the marking requirements, the reference to mutants was deleted.

15. The Specialized Section decided to assign colour group “D” to varieties having no colour requirement, and amended the “Classification” section with the following provision for Classes “Extra” and I: “no minimum colour requirement in case of colour group D”.

16. The revised List will be sent to WAPA to seek their members’ opinion on whether the varieties with mutant origin proposed for deletion because of their low economic importance should be implemented in the Standard. The changes introduced to the Standard and the List of Varieties can be found in the post-session document, “Standard for Apples (FFV-50)”. The Specialized Section decided to submit the revised text of the Standard and the List of Varieties to the Working Party for approval, provided that the secretariat does

not receive any objections from countries to the revised List. Otherwise, the changes, other than the restructured List, will be submitted to the Working Party for approval.

17. In the Standard for Plums, the Specialized Section decided to amend the last bullet point in the section on, "Definition of produce," to read: "... inter-specific hybrids derived from plums (*Prunus domestica* or *Prunus salicina*) and apricots (*Prunus armeniaca*) showing plum characteristics ...", because the cross parents for the respective hybrids are mainly *Prunus salicina*, but could also be *Prunus domestica*. The Specialized Section submitted the amended text to the Working Party for approval.

18. The Standard for Pears was not discussed.

(c) Sweet chestnuts

Documentation: Standard for Sweet Chestnuts (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.1/2014/4)
Sweet chestnuts, proposals by France (INF.4, Informal document)

19. The Specialized Section revisited the text of the Standard reviewed at the May 2013 session. It amended the "Minimum requirements" section, grouped quality tolerances in a table and made other changes to the text, which can be viewed in the post-session version of document ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.1/2014/4. The delegation of the United States will check the tolerances for "slight surface mould" before the next session of the Working Party, which would then adopt the text either as a new standard or a recommendation for a one-year trial.

(d) Citrus fruit

Documentation: Marking provisions, proposal by South Africa (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.1/2014/5)
Lineage in the mandarin group, note by the United Kingdom (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.1/2014/6)
Citrus marking, proposal by the United Kingdom (INF.15, Informal document)

20. The Specialized Section noted that, in some markets, traders were labelling soft citrus, particularly hybrids of the mandarin group, as clementines or satsumas. The advantage being that demand and prices were both higher for these than for soft citrus labelled as mandarins. It is very difficult to establish the genetic lineage in order to dispute a trader's argument that the variety concerned is a clementine or satsuma.

21. The Specialized Section formed a Working Group composed of the delegations of France, Italy, South Africa (Rapporteur), Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom and the United States and asked them to prepare proposals on labelling provisions which would minimize confusion in the market and ensure that citrus fruit varieties are correctly identified and labelled. It was suggested that a list of mandarin varieties would assist their classification as clementines, satsumas or hybrids. A similar list could be compiled for oranges. The Working Group would present its recommendations at the 2015 session of the Specialized Section.

(e) Lambs lettuce

Documentation: Recommendation for Lambs Lettuce (FFV-60)
Lambs lettuce, proposals by France and Germany (INF.11, Informal document)

22. The delegations reviewed the proposals made by the delegations of France and Germany based on their experience in applying the draft standard. The Specialized Section

submitted the revised text of the Standard, available as post-session document “Lambs Lettuce (FFV-60)”, to the Working Party for approval as a recommendation for a one-year trial period. The Specialized Section also decided to develop an electronic version of an explanatory brochure for lambs lettuce and would ask the Working Party to approve this decision.

(f) Watermelons

Documentation: Standard for Watermelons (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.1/2014/7)

23. The delegations agreed to: introduce provisions related to “Extra” Class into the Standard; allow watermelons of all quality classes to be presented in bulk; and make the provision on the number of units optional. The delegations agreed not to increase the 8° Brix currently in the Standard. The Standard does not prevent the application of higher minimum Brix levels by traders, provided the produce meets them. In accordance with the Working Procedures, the Specialized Section decided to retain the revised text of the standard as the post-session version of document ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.1/2014/7.

(g) Early and ware potatoes

Documentation: Standard for Early and Ware Potatoes
(ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.1/2014/8)

24. The delegations reviewed the provisions on minimum requirements and quality tolerances proposed by the delegation of Hungary at the 2013 session. For the time being, it was decided not to change the quality tolerances, as they are used in the 2012 RUCIP Rules, although some delegations thought that, in the absence of quality classes, an increase in tolerances would be justified. The text of the Standard will be revisited at the 2015 session of the Specialized Section, particularly the minimum requirement on sub-epidermal stains with regard to their depth and surface area. The delegation of Hungary was asked to provide more information to substantiate their proposals for revising the Standard.

(h) Tomatoes

Documentation: Standard for Tomatoes (FFV-36)
Commercial types, proposal by France (INF.3, Informal document)

25. The delegation of France suggested that “oxheart tomatoes” (“coeur de boeuf” in French) be included as a commercial type in the “Definition of produce” section. It was clarified that “coeur de boeuf” was not a variety, but a trade name for similar-looking varieties. The Standard does not prevent the indication of trade names. The Specialized Section decided to postpone the discussion on deleting “cherry tomatoes” from the commercial types listed in the section, “Definition of produce” to its 2015 session.

(i) Chicory

Documentation: Standard for Chicory (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.1/2014/9)
Witloof chicory, proposals by France (INF.5, Informal document)

26. The Specialized Section reviewed the provisions for red chicory, as well as for frost damage and chilling injury. The changes and amendments made to the Standard are presented in the post-session version of document ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.1/2014/9. The Specialized Section decided to submit the revised Standard to the Working Party for approval.

(j) Fresh figs

Documentation: Standard for Fresh Figs (FFV-17)

27. The delegations amended the Standard to reflect the work on the OECD explanatory brochure for figs. The amendments concerned the introduction of maturity requirements and skin defects caused by pests (see post-session document “Standard for Fresh Figs (FFV-17)”). The Specialized Section decided to submit the revised text of the Standard to the Working Party for approval.

(k) Other standards

Documentation: Standard for Chanterelles (FFV-55)

Chanterelles, proposals by France (INF.6, Informal document)

Truffles, proposals by France (INF.9, Informal document)

Apricots, definition of produce, proposal by Germany (INF.8, Informal document)

Chinese cabbage, proposals by Germany (INF.12, Informal document)

28. The Specialized Section added the *Craterellus lutescens* species to the section on “Definition of produce”. Linguistic corrections were made to the common names and commercial types of chanterelles in the English and French versions of the standard.

29. In the section on “Definition of produce” of the Standard for Truffles, the Specialized Section added the mesenteric truffle (*Tuber mesentricum* Vittad.) to the list of species, as its organoleptic characteristics differ from *Tuber aestivum*. It added “Autumn truffle” to the common name of “*Tuber uncinatum* Chatin”.

30. In the Standard for Apricots, the Specialized Section decided to amend the section on “Definition of produce” to read: “... and inter-specific hybrids derived from apricots (*Prunus armeniaca*) and plums (*Prunus domestica* or *Prunus salicina*) showing apricot characteristics ...”, because the cross parents for the respective hybrids are mainly *Prunus salicina*, but could also be *Prunus domestica*.

31. The Specialized Section revised the Standard for Chinese Cabbage to provide an updated text for the OECD work on their explanatory brochure (see post-session document “Chinese cabbage (FFV-44)”).

32. The Specialized Section decided to submit to the Working Party for approval the texts of the standards for chanterelles, truffles, apricots and Chinese cabbage.

VI. Explanatory brochures and standards for persimmons

Documentation: Standard for Persimmons (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.1/2014/10)

Draft brochure (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.1/2014/11)

Draft brochure (PowerPoint presentation)

33. The delegations started to review the draft of the brochure for persimmons. The Working Party will be asked to extend the trial period of the Recommendation for one more year. To advance work on the brochure, two workshops were planned: in Italy in the second half of October and in Tajikistan in mid-November 2014. The Specialized Section decided to reserve one day at its next session to discuss the draft brochure and the Recommendation.

VII. Coordination of work with other international organizations

34. The Representative of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme reported on the outcome of the 18th Session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (CCFFV). The report of this meeting can be found on the Codex website under "related meetings" at: <http://www.codexalimentarius.org/committees-and-task-forces>.

35. He explained that the deletion of the reference to the UNECE from the revised terms of reference of the CCFFV did not mean a termination of the cooperation with the UNECE but the acknowledgement of a broader cooperation scheme encompassing the long-standing and fruitful collaboration with the UNECE, as well as with other international organizations active in the area of standardization of fresh fruits and vegetables.

36. The UNECE secretariat briefed the delegates on ongoing cooperation with the OECD. The UNECE participates regularly in the work of the Fruit and Vegetable Scheme. Further cooperation is being developed in the form of joint workshops to help countries and regions implement agricultural quality standards and use the brochures developed by the two organizations.

37. The UNECE participates in the work of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables and in joint workshops. The secretariat had met with the new FAO Regional Representative for Europe and Central Asia to discuss further cooperation in capacity-building in transition economies of Europe and Central Asia.

VIII. Promotion and capacity-building

38. The delegation of the Russian Federation informed the Specialized Section about the results of the UNECE capacity-building activities in Russia and other CIS countries. The Specialized Section noted that, as a result of these activities, a large number of UNECE standards for fresh fruit and vegetables have been converted into Russian and CIS-wide standards. The Russian Federation asked the UNECE to provide more training for producers and traders in the interpretation and practical application of standards. The UNECE secretariat was also asked to assist in translating the OECD explanatory brochures into Russian.

39. The delegations took note of the following international meetings and activities:

- The OECD meeting of the Heads of National Inspection Services (Poland, 20-23 May 2014)
- The 19th UK Harmonization Meeting (Edinburgh, 8-10 July 2014)
- International Meeting on Quality Control of Fruit and Vegetables (Bonn, 9-11 March 2015)
- Development of training materials in cooperation with FAO, OECD and other partners from mid 2014 onwards
- Workshop on FFV in Macedonia in September/October 2014 in cooperation with FAO REU Budapest, OECD, and other partners
- As part of the ECE Support to the Greek Trade Facilitation Strategy funded by the European Union, a series of events related to FFV:
 - a training workshop (Nafplio, Greece, May 2014)
 - a study tour (France, July 2014)
 - a study tour (Spain, November 2014).

IX. Future work

40. The Specialized Section decided to consider, at its 2015 session, the texts of the standards for citrus fruit, early and ware potatoes, persimmons (including the brochure), garlic, cherries, leeks, as well as the draft brochure for lambs lettuce. It will decide on its work with regard to fresh herbs.

41. The Specialized Section took note of the current and planned OECD work on the brochures for garlic, cherries, Chinese cabbage, plums, chicory, table grapes, pears, leeks, tomatoes and bananas.

X. Other business

Documentation: Glossary of terms (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2014/12)
Food waste (INF.10, Informal document)
Food waste and standards, note by Sweden (INF.14, Informal document)

42. The delegations decided to form a Working Group, composed of France (Rapporteur), Germany, New Zealand, Poland, United Kingdom and the United States, to advance work on the Glossary of terms used in UNECE standards on fresh fruits and vegetables. The Group will report to the 2015 session of the Specialized Section.

43. The delegation of Sweden presented a report on food waste related to the use of standards called "Why do we throw away edible fruit and vegetables?". The report is available at: <http://webbutiken.jordbruksverket.se/sv/artiklar/nya-trycksaker/index.html>. The Specialized Section set up a Working Group, composed of the delegations of France, Germany, Malaysia, Sweden (Rapporteur), United Kingdom and the United States, which would try to identify the reasons why the standards may cause waste.

XI. Election of officers

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

XII. Adoption of the report

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