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## Economic Commission for Europe

### Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

#### Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

##### Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

##### Sixty-fourth session

Geneva, 18-21 April 2016

## Report

### I. Introduction

1. Ms. Ulrike Bickelmann (Germany) chaired the meeting and opened the session. She welcomed delegates and newly participating countries including Albania, Brazil, India, Iran and Namibia, as well as several trade associations.
2. The Director of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division stressed the high quality work of the Specialized Sections and welcomed the many regular as well as new participants. She noted the large number of delegations and participants in this year's meeting and the many written contributions which showed the increased interest in ECE's work and the standards. She mentioned that the Codex secretariat had sent their regrets and that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) who had sent a written note would report later in the week. As there was a lot of complementarity between the work of these organizations, coordination and collaboration were crucial.
3. She also highlighted the discussions on other relevant topics related to the standards as well as the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. These discussions include the relationship between agricultural standards and food loss in value chains as well as the traceability of agricultural produce. She encouraged delegations to bring forward other topics of interest where the Specialized Section could help find a solution or define the issues to be discussed. Pointing to the good progress made with finalizing the Glossary of Terms, she stressed the multilingual character of ECE's work. She thanked all experts for their coming and their important and valuable work over many years. She also invited delegates to the culinary event organized as a side event of the session together with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and Permanent Missions in Geneva, to celebrate the International Year of Pulses.

## **II. Attendance**

4. Representatives of the following countries attended the meeting: Albania, Belgium, Brazil, Finland, France, Germany, India, Iran, Italy, Kenya, Malta, Morocco, Namibia, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, and United States.
5. The European Commission was also represented.
6. A representative of the following intergovernmental organizations participated in the session: the OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables.
7. A representative of the following non-governmental organizations participated in the session: COLEACP (Europe-Africa-Caribbean-Pacific Liaison Committee for promotion of horticultural products) EUCOFEL (European Fruit and Vegetables Trade Association).
8. At the invitation of the secretariat, professors and students from Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (Geneva, Switzerland) attended the session as observers.

## **III. Adoption of the agenda**

9. The delegations adopted the provisional agenda with amendments.

## **IV. Matters of interest since the last session**

### **(a) UN, UNECE and subsidiary bodies**

10. The Chief of the Market Access Section reviewed the budget and resource allocation discussions held at the United Nations General Assembly in December 2015. He mentioned that the work done at regional levels, especially the normative work of ECE, had been in the focus of attention. While no final decision was taken on standards setting, the allocation of resources might arise again in future budget discussions.

11. He noted that the first session of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards was held from 31 August to 2 September 2015 and had reviewed the study on regulatory barriers to trade in Kyrgyzstan which also included agricultural issues. At the next session (in May 2016), the Steering Committee will discuss studies on Albania and Moldova. He also reviewed the November 2015 session of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7), noting the large number of participants and the Conference on Traceability of Agricultural Produce, which had resulted in the establishment of a discussion group. He emphasized the group's strong engagement in this work (which was complementary to the work of UN/CEFACT), the results of which would be reported to the next WP.7 meeting in November 2016. He also informed the Section that WP.7 had decided to make food loss and waste in relation to standards the topic of a special conference held with its meeting in November 2016.

### **(b) Other organizations**

12. The representative of the OECD reported that in 2015 and early 2016, OECD had published explanatory brochures on fresh figs, cherries and Chinese cabbage (available in electronic and hard copy format). In 2016, the OECD will publish electronic updates of the draft brochure on apples, table grapes, pears, plums and chicory. The work on the explanatory brochures on tomatoes and leeks was ongoing. The garlic brochure, which had

been finalized, would be available in electronic format and be printed only once UNECE had updated the standard and amendments had been incorporated into the brochure and approved by OECD. The priority list for future work on brochures included passion fruit, root vegetables, berry fruit, bananas, as well as electronic updates of the draft brochures on mangos and avocados. The representative of the OECD also noted that the OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme had approved its Draft Strategic Plan to guide the work in the coming years. In 2015, the Scheme peer reviewed the French Fruit and Vegetables Quality Inspection Service (the report on the review would be published in the coming months). Currently, the Scheme was revising the format of the Peer Reviews with preliminary discussions scheduled for the December 2016 Plenary Meeting.

13. The Scheme had also adopted the Draft OECD Guidelines on Conformity Checks of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables, which would be updated and amended, as needed. The tolerances for decay in the document would be aligned with the outcome of discussions held at the relevant OECD and UNECE Specialized Section and Working Party meetings. The 17th OECD Meeting of the Heads of National Inspection Services will be hosted by Italy in Rome (12-14 October 2016). The Meeting will focus on traceability, tolerances, management of food after a nuclear accident, conformity checks for internet sales, risk-based inspection methodologies, as well as optoelectronics and biophotonics for quality of fruit and vegetables. The Italian fresh fruit and vegetables sector will also be presented at the meeting and a technical visit on kiwi production and inspection will be organized.

## V. Revision of UNECE standards

14. In order to avoid that proposed revisions or drafts were being rejected at the level of the Working Party, the Section adopted the Chair's suggestion that all delegations should voice their disagreement before 30 June 2016. The rejected proposals would not be submitted to the Working Party and kept as on-going work on the agenda of the Specialized Section.

### (a) Truffles

15. At its November 2015 session, the Working Party had decided to return the proposed non-exhaustive list of commercialized truffles to be included in the UNECE Standard for Truffles to the Specialized Section for further review. The French delegation had raised concerns about the list's English version, namely the use of the common name "Burgundy truffle" for two different species. It was therefore decided to remove the common name for "Burgundy truffle" as a common name for *Tuber aestivum* Vittad and to use only "Summer Truffle". In the English version, for Burgundy Truffle, it was decided to introduce the full scientific name *T. aestivum* var *uncinatum* Chatin. In the French version, the scientific name was changed to list only the last botanist's name, i.e. *T. aestivum* var *uncinatum* Chatin. In the English version, the explanatory sentence in the Reference "This name is used commercially but from a scientific point of view this is the same species as *Tuber aestivum* (*T. aestivum* is the older name and therefore has priority)" was deleted.

16. The Specialized Section decided to submit the text of the revised standard to the Working Party in November 2016 for adoption as a revised UNECE Standard for Truffles, provided the delegation of Italy could agree to the proposed changes.

### (b) Garlic

17. At the November 2015 session of the Working Party, the delegation of Sweden had expressed concern about the tolerances for physiological damage included in the proposed

new text of the standard (Class II) and the proposed changes had been returned to the Specialized Section.

18. Discussions focused on several issues including the inclusion of mechanical damage; the potential non-progressive nature of physiological damage currently described in the standard; as well as the limits of missing and damaged cloves in a bulb as a percentage or a number. The Specialized Section also reviewed the definition of the limit used in the proposed new draft Codex Standard and discussed possible limits for missing (one fifth) and physiologically damaged cloves (2 cloves). The proposed new wording is reflected in the post-session document.

19. In addition, the Chair briefly outlined other differences between the current version of the draft Codex standard and the ECE standard and proposed several amendments. The Section decided to adopt in Minimum Requirements a new indent "intact; covered with outer skin" and an amendment to footnote 1 to read "Fresh garlic" means produce with a "fresh" stem and with the outer skin of the bulb still fresh" (see post-session document).

20. The Chair also drew delegates' attention to the discussion on "smoked garlic" at the October 2015 session of the Codex Committee for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables which several Codex delegations considered processed produce. The French delegation proposed to develop a definition of "smoked garlic" and the United States asked for a draft disclaimer for countries where it is not considered fresh produce within the next weeks so that it could be included in the consultation process (i.e. until 30 June 2016).

21. Delegates were invited to consult with their industries whether they could accept the new proposals (see post-session document) by 30 June 2016. The Specialized Section would submit the revised text to the Working Party in November 2016 provided all delegations agreed to the changes. The results would be communicated to the Codex Committee.

**(c) Headed Cabbage**

22. The delegation of Germany explained that headed cabbages could show in all classes a beginning development of floral stems. The existing definition, it was explained, did not take into account that varieties showed heads of different heights which resulted in stems of different lengths. The German delegation therefore proposed to change the wording from "total length of the floral stem" to "total length of stem and floral stem". In addition, the German delegation proposed to increase the total length of stem and floral stem allowed in Class I from one quarter to one third. The Specialized Section discussed the proposal and decided to adopt the new wording "stem and floral stem" in both classes. The delegation of the United States would check with their industry if they could accept a change to one third.

23. Depending on the outcome of the consultations either both amendments or only the first (with the current numbers) would be submitted to the Working Party for adoption in November 2016.

**(d) Table Grapes**

24. At the April 2015 session of the Specialized Section on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables, the Specialized Section decided to review the UNECE Standard for Table grapes and focus on the tolerance for loose berries i.e. berries detached from the bunch/cluster. The delegation of Germany explained that loose berries were a frequent occurrence in table grapes. South Africa added that this was particularly the case for seedless varieties. Currently, the standard allowed a few loose berries on marketing stages following dispatch, provided the loose berries were sound and intact.

25. Lengthy discussions took place on the actual tolerances for loose berries. The German delegation's proposal of 5 per cent in Class I and 10 per cent in Class II was considered too low. South Africa proposed 10 per cent and 15 per cent respectively; the Netherlands proposed 10 per cent for seedless varieties. The Italian delegation agreed that the tolerance for the seedless varieties should be different; however, it should not be forgotten that the presentation was in a bunch. The United States explained that its national standard allowed 12 per cent of loose berries in both classes provided there were no other defects in the sample. The Brazilian national standard allowed 10 per cent in Class I and 25 per cent Class II.

26. Slovakia, supported by France, noted that there should not be any numeric limit (tolerance) at all. In order to limit food waste, it should be possible to allow loose berries provided they were sound and intact. Setting a numeric tolerance could be interpreted as a wrong signal.

27. The Section took note of these concerns and decided to adopt the 12 per cent tolerance for both classes. Unless disagreement was voiced by 30 June 2016, the proposal would be submitted for adoption by the Working Party in November 2016. In the French version of the standard, the term "grains" used for berries should be replaced by the term "baies".

**(e) Annonas**

28. In order to accommodate larger sizes of soursops currently not covered by the size codes of the standard, the Specialized Section decided to include the following sentence "Size codes/ranges other than those indicated are allowed provided that the code/range used is labelled accordingly."

29. The Specialized Section submitted the amendment for adoption by the Working Party in November 2016.

**(f) Sweet Peppers**

30. The delegation of Germany outlined the proposal to add in the Explanatory Brochure (electronic version) an addition to footnote 1 (Definition of Produce: "Some of the sweet pepper varieties may have a hot taste."). The proposal was meant to give some examples of varieties with hot taste that fell under the provisions of the Standard for Sweet Peppers. It was therefore decided to include the following addition "Examples of occasional hot tasting commercial types and varieties are Sivri and Padrón" to the footnote in the explanatory brochure. Other commercial types and varieties could be added. Delegations were invited to send photos to the secretariat by 30 August 2016. The secretariat would add the text and the photos to the electronic version of brochure.

31. The Netherlands presented their proposal to include sizing by weight, which was supported by many delegations. The Specialized Section therefore agreed to amend the current standard and include sizing by weight and the following wording:

For sweet peppers sized by weight:

- 30 g where the heaviest piece weighs 180 g or less,
- 80 g where the lightest piece weighs 180 g but less than 260 g
- no limit where the lightest piece weighs 260 g or more

32. The delegation of the United States expressed concern over prescriptive sizing requirements, which, in their view, were not flexible enough over time. This issue would be taken into consideration during the revision of the Standard Layout.

33. The Netherlands also proposed to revise the tolerance for silvering noting that there were two types of silvering: one type due to strong growth and the other caused by thrips. In addition, the Netherlands also proposed to include a tolerance for dried skin in both classes I and II.

34. The Specialized Section agreed to include in Class I slight silvering due to strong growth covering not more than 50 per cent of the total surface. In Class II, the Specialized Section added an indent referring to silvering due to strong growth. It was also decided to include “dried skin” among the list of slight skin defects. The indent referring to “blossom end deterioration not more than 1 cm” was deleted as this was already covered by the Minimum requirement “sound”. The delegation of the Netherlands would send new photos depicting these defects to the secretariat by 30 August 2016.

35. Unless disagreement was voiced by 30 June 2016, the proposal would be submitted for adoption by the Working Party in November 2016.

**(g) Tomatoes**

36. The delegate from France outlined a reference document on the segmentation of tomatoes, which had been prepared by all stakeholders in France and validated by her office, and resulted in the definition of 13 optional commercial designations. The document was prepared to help avoid the wrong labelling of tomatoes allegedly of the ox heart variety. This document specifies that the variety ox heart belongs to the elongated type. The Specialized Section took note of the chart and decided to spread it among their trade. Furthermore, it was recommended to reflect on the development of a poster and to recommend to OECD to add this information as an annex to their tomato brochure. The Section also took note of concerns raised by Kenya as to the optional labelling of the variety, which could lead to royalty payment issues.

37. At the November 2015 session of the Working Party, several delegations had asked for further discussions on the proposed new text referring to cherry tomatoes. The Working Party therefore decided to return the proposal to the Specialized Section for review. After lengthy discussions, the Section decided to amend the Definition of produce to read: “Tomatoes may be classified into the following commercial types:

- “round”
- “ribbed”
- “oblong” or “elongated”
- Cherry/cocktail tomatoes (miniature varieties) of all shapes”

38. The Specialized Section also discussed the maximum diameter for cherry tomatoes presented loose and in trusses. As no agreement could be reached, it was decided to submit two options to industry for consultations: “III. Provisions concerning sizing: Size is determined by the maximum diameter of the equatorial section, by weight or by count.

Option 1

- cherry/cocktail tomatoes shall have a maximum diameter of 40 mm loose or in trusses; and no cherry/cocktail tomatoes within trusses shall be greater than 47 mm

Option 2

- cherry/cocktail tomatoes shall have a maximum diameter of:
- 40 mm presented loose
- 47 mm presented in trusses

Both options would be followed by the wording: ..”The following provisions

- shall not apply to trusses of tomatoes

and are optional:

- for Class II
- For cherry and cocktail tomatoes”

39. The first indent in Section B. Nature of produce was amended to read: “Tomatoes” or “trusses of tomatoes” and the commercial type, or “cherry/cocktail tomatoes” or “trusses of cherry/cocktail tomatoes” or equivalent denomination for other miniature varieties if the contents are not visible from the outside.” The size indent in D. Commercial specifications was shortened to read “Size (if sized) expressed in accordance with Section III”. Delegations were asked to consult with their trade on the definition of cherry tomatoes and the sizing options and send their comments to the secretariat by 30 June 2016. Unless disagreement was voiced by 30 June 2016, the proposals would be submitted for adoption by the Working Party in November 2016.

**(h) Leeks**

40. At the April 2015 session of the Specialized Section, delegates decided to review the UNECE Standard for Leeks and take into account the work on an explanatory brochure by the OECD for this product. In addition, delegates decided to examine this standard in an attempt to identify possible areas of food loss/waste caused by the application of the standard. The Specialized Section decided to adopt an amendment to A. Minimum requirements (“clean, practically free of any visible foreign matter; however, the roots may have remnants of soil adhering to them and traces of soiling within the sheathed part are allowed”). In addition, changes were adopted in B. Classification (see post-session document) as well as in the method of size determination. The minimum size was removed and references to “early leeks” were deleted. At the suggestion of India, delegations would look into the correct botanical name for leeks (i.e. *Allium porrum* L or *Allium ampeloprasum* var. *porrum*).

41. Unless disagreement was voiced by 30 June 2016, the proposals would be submitted for adoption by the Working Party in November 2016.

**(i) Citrus fruit**

42. At the 2015 session of the Specialized Section, delegates decided to postpone discussions on the amendment of the Standard for Citrus Fruit to the 2016 session. Lengthy discussions took place on the proposed changes (Definition of produce for mandarins); the marking of satsumas and clementines; the replacement of the variety name by a synonym; and the mandatory labelling of varieties for oranges (all changes are reflected in the post-session document). The United States delegation explained that inspectors could not certify varieties, and, therefore, only the labelling of the species should be mandatory. As Spain could not agree with the sentence “Citrus hybrids are classified according to their fruit characteristics of the respective species”, it was removed from the standard and noted in the report for future reference.

43. The delegation from India suggested developing several standards to cover the major groups of citrus fruit currently contained in one standard. The United States delegation noted that the integrity of the citrus fruit standard could be kept, however, it could contain separate annexes for each species. At the suggestion of Sweden and several other delegations and in line with the approach taken by Codex, India agreed to develop a concept /discussion paper for the November 2016 Working Party meeting.

44. Unless disagreement was voiced by 30 June 2016, the proposal would be submitted for adoption by the Working Party in November 2016.

45. The delegation of South Africa presented the first draft of the non-exhaustive list of citrus fruit varieties, which would eventually be posted as a post-session document on the UNECE web site. Delegations thanked South Africa for developing this first draft and decided to continue the revision in an electronic working group coordinated by the secretariat until November 2016. Contributions should be sent to the secretariat by 30 August 2016. The existing list would be posted as a post-session document and contain all changes agreed during the revision of the citrus fruit standard.

**(j) Other standards**

*Chicory*

46. The delegation of Germany outlined the proposed changes, which the Specialized Section adopted. They will be published in the post-session document and submitted to the Working Party for approval.

*Sweet Chestnuts*

47. The Specialized Section agreed to delete the reference to “surface mould” in Minimum requirements as “surface mould” had already been deleted in the table of tolerances during the 2015 revision. The change will be submitted to the Working Party for adoption.

*Avocados*

48. Lengthy discussion took place on the introduction of mini avocados (i.e. smaller than 80 gr Hass variety avocados) which were traded internationally and currently did not meet the standard’s sizing requirements.

49. The Specialized Section, recognizing that the standard should not prevent a product of good quality from being marketed, decided to delete the minimum sizes and classify the small produce according to maturity requirements. The change will be submitted to the Working Party for adoption.

50. The United States and other delegations, while supporting this proposal, expressed concern over the inclusion of miniature varieties in standards and the resulting difficulties in applying tolerances and calculating defects. Due consideration should be given to other options such as excluding them from the standard.

*Fresh Figs*

51. The delegate from Brazil outlined the proposal to include a footnote (“Some figs intended for direct consumption are generally not washed after harvest and may present a white coat as regard to primary production practices”) to the bullet point “clean, practically free of any visible foreign matter”, in the Standard’s Minimum requirements. The delegation from Brazil explained that in subtropical and tropical climates, fig rust occurred frequently and that Bordeaux mixture was used by a number of countries during cultivation against the rust. Figs were not washed before packaging and, as a result of this, figs may be covered heavily or lightly by a white coating mostly due to the carrier material used. For this reason, it was difficult to meet the cleanliness provision of the UNECE standard.

52. While several delegations supported Brazil’s request noting that this was a widely used practice and within authorized residue levels also for organic production, other delegations expressed their reservations as to food law implications; consumer acceptance of white coated figs; or implications of granting an exemption in standards for other highly

perishable fruit from similar production areas. The delegation from Brazil stressed that the export of figs was the country's third largest agricultural export item. It was destined mostly for Europe and had been traded for a long time without disturbances. It filled the demand for figs when there is no production there. In addition, the figs travelled long distance and washing would ruin them during transport.

53. As no solution could be found after lengthy discussions, it was agreed to establish a working group (Brazil, India, Italy, South Africa, Turkey, United States and United Kingdom,) on how to address this issue, including finding photos showing acceptable limits of white coating which could be allowed under the Minimum requirement "clean". The working group would consult other standards (especially for sweet peppers, persimmons and mushrooms) and propose a possible new wording for a footnote to the Specialized Section within the next months. The Specialized Section would be consulted via an inter-sessional approval procedure.

**(k) Apples**

54. At the 2015 session of the Specialized Section, it was decided to ask delegations to send to the secretariat a list of those varieties that were of commercial importance to their countries. The list presented in the document was compiled by the secretariat based on contributions received from delegations. The Chair led a team that validated the submitted names/ varieties. Care had been given to ensure that protected trademarks did not appear as varieties. The missing variety "Maigold" submitted by Switzerland would be added. The list was still open for additions and Sweden indicated their intention to send a contribution.

55. The Specialized Section discussed in great length the merit of short versus long lists as well as the new structure of this table. As a compromise it was agreed to retain in the first column the "Variety" (whose marking was mandatory) and in the second column "Mutants with patented variety" which would include only those with varietal protection and those without protection but linked to a registered trademark (the latter would be marked with an asterisk).

56. The body of the standard was amended in the section "Nature of produce" to read: "In the case of mutants with varietal protection, this variety name can be replaced by the original variety. In case of mutants without varietal protection, this mutant name can only be indicated in addition to the original variety."

57. The post-session document would reflect these changes and include two examples on how to label mutants in the future. The table would be re-organized and delegations were asked to check it. Delegations were invited to send their recommendations and comments on the structure of list by the end of June 2016. Unless disagreement was voiced by 30 June 2016, the new list of varieties would be submitted for adoption by the Working Party in November 2016.

**(l) Aubergines**

58. At the 2015 session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables, it was decided to recommend to the Codex Alimentarius Commission to advance the standard for aubergines for final adoption in June 2016. The Specialized Section compared the draft Codex and the UNECE standards and harmonized several sections (see post-session document) including for example a more elaborate shape description in Definition of produce; the introduction of "Extra class" using the appropriate UNECE Standard Layout text; as well as sizing by count and the addition of smaller fruit in the sizing by weight section. The uniformity requirement was kept for both Extra Class and Class I ; the requirement for uniformity in length for elongates varieties was deleted.

59. The delegate from Iran who had introduced a proposal for adding new shapes of aubergines (club-shaped, cylindrical, ellipsoid and pear shaped) was invited to send to the secretariat photos of these new shapes, which would be included as references in an annex.

60. The changes would be submitted to the Working Party for adoption at the November 2016 session.

## **VI. Food loss/waste related to the use of standards**

61. The Working Party, at its 2015 session, asked the Specialized Sections to continue their work on food loss/waste related to the use of standards. The Specialized Section therefore reviewed the discussion paper prepared by the Rapporteur (Sweden). In the ensuing discussion, delegations considered whether standards or provisions therein provoked food loss; and whether certain standards or the Standard Layout in general should allow for more defects.

62. Many delegations observed that standards were not the driving force for food loss. In the Northern European countries, 90 per cent of the produce was sold in Class I and food waste was a much bigger issue at the end of the supply chain, i.e. at the retail and consumer levels. It was also pointed out that not all harvested fruit or vegetables could be sold as fresh products but that a certain percentage went to the processing industry. In the European Union, for example, produce of all shapes could be sold directly from the farm to consumers although they could not be traded internationally. Some delegations noted that in the absence of international standards, there would be an even higher proliferation of private standards with even stricter provisions.

63. The Kenyan delegation pointed to the fact that for countries less advanced than the European Union countries, meeting the requirements of the standards required processes that led to food loss. It might therefore well be that standards could be a contributing factor. While the processing industry absorbed a certain amount of discarded fruit or vegetables, the price paid to producers was not the same. In addition, there were also consumers who needed or wanted to buy good quality ugly products at a lower price. UNECE should look into how these products could be marketed while their quality was kept.

64. India presented a study which, for the first time had managed to give clear indications on the level of post-harvest losses in the country's fruit and vegetables sector varying roughly between 7 and 15 per cent. Such scientific evidence allowed the country to better plan interventions and the reduction of losses. France presented a study by their fresh fruit and vegetable industry which, too, focused on just one sector. The French delegate would provide further clarifications on the methodology and scope of the study. It was also pointed out that it would be interesting to assess the food loss which occurred for example in Kenya because of trying to meet the requirements of the European markets.

65. The delegate from the United States noted that in his country, standards on the internal market were voluntary. The application of this resulted in a reduction of food loss as not all produce was graded and checked. The United States industry is encouraged to use alternative methods of disposing produce for human consumption that has failed quality inspection.

66. Preliminary reports pointed out that standards were not the primary source of food loss but the Specialized Section noted that they should be drafted and applied with care. The issue would be re-discussed during the review of the Standard Layout and the discussion on tolerance levels. It was also pointed out that there was a difference between marketing practices and quality standards. Meeting a quality standard did not mean automatic entry into markets and, even less, super market shelves.

67. The delegate from the United Kingdom suggested looking into different options: extending the allowance of produce in Class II; introducing a new Class III or developing a UNECE general marketing standard with lower tolerances. The latter could be of particular use for countries developing regulation of their internal markets. In addition, such measures could signal that UNECE was working on food loss reduction. A similar proposal (introduction of a Class III) had also been outlined in the proposal by Sweden and could result in a guided lower quality on the market. The Specialized Section invited delegations to send contributions, topics and potential speakers to the secretariat to plan for the November 2016 Conference on Food Loss.

## **VII. Discussion on quality tolerances in marketing standards**

68. At its 2015 session, the Specialized Section had started discussions on quality tolerances for decay in UNECE marketing standards. The Rapporteur (Netherlands) introduced the proposed increase of tolerance levels for decay. While several delegations agreed that allowing more defects at export control stage might cause significant lowering of quality during shipment, at import stage, an increase to 3 per cent, taking into consideration the highly perishable nature of certain produce and long distance of transport could be feasible. Other delegations noted that the tolerance should be increased only at wholesale stage whereas the delegation from the United Kingdom noted that they used a 3 per cent tolerance for decay at all stages of the marketing chain (export, import, retail). Producing countries trading over long distances such as Kenya or Namibia expressed their support for an increase of the tolerance level. A possible compromise solution proposed by Sweden could be an increase of the tolerance to 2 per cent.

69. It was also pointed out that there was a difference of view between producers, traders and inspectors. The latter were more in favour of an increase than the former as traders in particular had to resell the produce. The delegate from the Netherlands stressed that the Specialized Section should attempt to analyse what was best for the whole supply chain and all actors including producers, traders and inspectors.

70. The Specialized Section will re-discuss this issue at its 2017 session in the context of the revision of the Standard Layout in an informal working group meeting preceding the formal session.

## **VIII. Traceability**

71. The secretariat explained that following the Conference on Traceability of Agricultural Produce organized under the auspices of the Working Party in November 2015 a discussion group had been established which currently has over 20 members. The discussion group is open for new membership and the delegations from Kenya and South Africa indicated their interest in joining.

72. During a first round of consultations including a conference call, the following focus areas were identified for further discussions: UNECE Labelling provisions (explore possibility of harmonizing code marks; explore the possible use of other optional codes; and try to improve the exchange of information on wrongly labelled consignments among inspection bodies); as well as small-scale farmers (in transition and developing countries) and their concerns with regard to implementing and maintaining traceability (compiling existing initiatives, sectoral good practices etc. to possibly prepare guidelines on more good practice).

## **IX. Revision of the Standard Layout for UNECE Standards on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables**

73. The delegation from Germany presented their proposed changes. The Specialized Section discussed the possible deletion or rewording of the reference to the “export-control stage” in the first paragraph of the Standard Layout (see ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.1/2016/11) as UNECE standards were applied at all stages of marketing. The adoption of the change will be decided at the 2017 session of the Specialized Section. Discussions also took place on the replacement of the indication of the packer/dispatcher by the indication of name and address of the importer or seller, while any code to indicate the packer/dispatcher could be given in addition. The Specialized Section took note of the comments outlined by the delegation of the United States on simplifying Section IV (Provisions concerning tolerances) as well as the definition of tolerances based on the characteristics of the produce and new tolerances for decay.

74. Delegates were invited to send to the secretariat further proposals by 31 December 2016 to allow for discussions at the 2017 session which will be preceded by an informal working group meeting on the revision of the Standard Layout. All proposed amendments will be compiled in a post-session document as “work in progress”.

## **X. Glossary of terms used in UNECE standards**

75. The Rapporteur (France) informed delegates that the work of the informal working group had been finalized and that a new draft (which was briefly reviewed) was now open for consultation until the end of June 2016 as a post-session document. Should there be no objections, the Glossary of Terms used in UNECE Standards on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables would be presented to the Working Party for adoption in November 2016 and subsequently sent to the Codex secretariat for input into the draft Glossary currently developed by the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables.

## **XI. Promotion and capacity-building**

76. The delegations and the secretariat shared information about their promotional and capacity-building activities. The secretariat informed delegates that the secretariat is collaborating with WTO/UNCTAD International Trade Centre (ITC) on the dissemination of training and guidance material on the Sustainability Xchange web platform (<https://www.sustainabilityxchange.info/en/institutions/unece-united-nations-economic-commission-europe>) as well as the inclusion of UNECE standards in the Standards Map (<http://www.standardsmap.org/>). The following training activities are scheduled to take place in the coming months:

- UNECE Workshop on cross-border nuts and dried fruit supply chains, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 11-13 July 2016
- UNECE Workshop for cross-border supply chains for fresh fruit and vegetables, October 2016 (exact venue to be communicated)
- UK Harmonization Meeting, Edinburgh, United Kingdom, 7-9 June 2016.

## **XII. Other business**

77. The delegate from Iran gave a presentation on his country’s agricultural (focus horticulture) production and trade in his country.

78. The Specialized Section recommended discussing at the level of the Working Party the possibility of organizing together with other organizations a workshop/seminar on the different ways of organizing risk analysis in quality inspection and a compilation of case studies.

79. Delegations were invited to review the foreign language versions of standards contained on the UNECE web site for fresh fruit and vegetables standards (<http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/standard/fresh/ffv-standardse.html>). The secretariat was invited to eventually remove all non-updated versions of standards.

80. The next session of the Specialized Section will take place from 2 to 5 May 2017.

### **XIII. Future work**

81. The Specialized Section decided to place the following items on the agenda for 2017:

- Ware potatoes (Rapporteur India) – comparison between Codex draft and UNECE standard
- Citrus fruit standard (possible new structure)
- Standard layout
- Development of a poster for tomatoes
- Items that impact on UNECE work as a result of decisions taken by the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

82. Any further requests should be sent to the secretariat by mid-January 2017.

### **XIV. Election of officers**

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

### **XV. Adoption of the report**

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

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