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COMMITTEE FOR TRADE, INDUSTRY AND
ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Working Party on Standardization of
Perishable Produce and Quality Development

Specialized Section on Standardization of
Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

Forty-eighth session, 23-26 April 2002, Geneva

Item 8 of the Provisional Agenda

PROPOSAL TO CREATE AN INTERNATIONALLY
RECOGNIZED LIST OF TRADE DESCRIPTIONS
AND CLASSIFICATION CODES FOR FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Note by the secretariat

The secretariat reproduces in this document the summary of the discussions held at the working group session in November.

Report of the working group on codification, 1st session, 14 November 2001.

Participants: Belgium, France, Finland, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States and the European Community.

Background

EAN International is a non-profit organization, operating worldwide in the area of electronic commerce (supply chain management, article numbering, bar codes, modelling). Its standards are used to manage supply chains in different fields of trade.

UNECE cooperates closely with EAN International in electronic commerce (UN/CEFACT) and the UNECE Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat where a UNECE code for meat has been developed.

EAN International informed the secretariat about the issue of generic coding for fruits and vegetables. In addition to company product-specific codes, both national and quasi-international classification code lists are currently linked to EAN/UCC standards. As a result, EAN members are often confused by the variety of codes used, and dissatisfied with the lack of "internationally recognized" trade descriptions and classification codes for fruits and vegetables.

EAN International suggested negotiating a code list for fruits and vegetables under the auspices of the UN/ECE. This coding system should enable bar coding of UNECE trade descriptions for fresh produce and through this facilitate efficient international electronic trading. Together with recent developments in labelling technology which have now made it possible to label individual fruit with bar codes which would offer many more possibilities to the users than the PLU number (4 digit number to identify fresh produce) presently used e.g. in the area of traceability.

The proposal was discussed by the Working Party (TRADE/WP.7/2000/11 paras. 71-76) and the Specialized Section (see TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2001/19 paras. 117-126). Many delegations expressed a great interest in the matter and it was decided to form a working group to further explore this subject.

Results of the discussions of the first session

Goals of the first meeting were, to evaluate current practice (codes, trade descriptions) in order to get clear information about the status of the codes used and then to explore possibilities of international harmonization of these codes.

At the moment in effect different retailers use different codes so that for packing houses it is important to know for whom they pack. The information included in the code is not harmonized for fresh produce and it should be decided which information is important to travel along the supply chain, which will depend on the intended use of the code.

The group decided work on the codification of the information contained in the UNECE standards on the assumption that the code would be used in quality control or electronic export certification to integrate conformity inspection in the supply chain

The sequence of tasks to be undertaken was identified as follows:

- Starting from the standard, identify the attributes to be codified
- Coding the attributes
- Defining an application identifier
- Defining applications

The following table contains the attributes identified by the group and the number of digits necessary:

No.	Name	Digits
1	Commodity	3
2	packing type	2
3	net weight	2
4	country of origin	3 (ISO)
5	company/supplier packer or dispatcher	5-6
6	packing date	6
7	lot number (tie it in with specific attributes eg 6, 5, make sure that everyone defines lot the same way)	7-10 ?
8	grade or class	1
9	size or pack count	2
10	variety (could be tied in with 1)	3
11	commercial type	2
12	crop year	2
13	Treated with	?

Future work

The next session for the group will take place on Thursday, 25th April 2002. At the next session the group will:

- give a values for each attribute and to put them together into a code which should not exceed 31 digits.
- code one standard as an example eg. asparagus
- review a document from Italy concerning produce coding and supply chain management;

Once the group has sufficiently advanced, a meeting with CIMO and the International Federation for Produce Coding (IFPC) will be organised. The IFPC is working on the definition of the international PLU, which could be included in the UNECE code to avoid duplication