

Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards
Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes

Forty-first session

Geneva, 11-13 March 2013

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

Information on the results of the meetings of the Bureau

**Meeting of the Bureau of the Specialized Section
on Standardization of Seed Potatoes, Changins,
Switzerland, 17 January 2013**

Note by the Chairman

At the invitation of the Swiss Authorities, the Bureau held its meeting on 17 January 2013 at the premises of the Agroscope research station Changins-Wädenswil in Changins. The following persons participated: Pier Giacomo Bianchi (Italy), John Kerr (United Kingdom), Brice Dupuis (Switzerland), Henri Gilliland (Switzerland), Alissa Mayor (UNECE) and Serguei Malanitchev (UNECE).

The Bureau went through the provisional agenda and the documents for the March 2013 meeting of the Specialized Section and made the following points.

2. Matters of interest since the last session

At its November 2012 session, the Working Party took note of the UNOG Senior Legal Adviser's opinion on the legal status of the Geneva Protocol and on the legal standing of UNECE standards. UNECE develops its commercial quality standards in full agreement with the WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT). The international character of UNECE standards depends on their adoption by countries and on their use in international trade. Their legal status and international nature is similar to those developed, for example, by the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables.

The Working Party decided to reconsider the text of the draft Geneva Agreement at its 2013 session taking into account the positions of the specialized sections who may wish to revisit the text of the Geneva Agreement in view of the Legal Adviser's opinion on the status of the Geneva Protocol.

3. Information on the results of the meetings of the Bureau

The Bureau reviewed the changes proposed by the Extended Bureau meetings in Prague (2011) and Edinburgh (2012). The Bureau made the following additional proposals with regard to external defects in annexes III and VII.

“Annex III (External defects):

- All categories 3 per cent by weight

Tubers are countable, if for:

- Mechanically-damaged tubers: more than 20 per cent of the tuber is affected
- Severe cracks: one or more cracks exceeding 5 mm in depth which in total exceed 100 mm in length
- Pressure bruises: spots of more than 20 mm in diameter with discolouration of the flesh with more than 5 mm in depth
- Misshapen tubers: if likely to be damaged during sorting/planting”

“Annex VII (External defects):

Any tuber defect which can be detected externally. Countable tubers are those with damage which may have a negative impact on yielding capacity, storability or which is likely to lead to secondary infection. Included in countable external defects are: mechanical damage, severe cracks, pressure bruises, misshapen tubers (including secondary growth). Tubers with less than 20 per cent mechanical damage which are fully healed are not countable.”

The Bureau suggested that the tolerances for severe cracks and other external defects be revisited to decide on their allowed limits. Annex VIII could be amended to include photographs of the limits allowed for severe cracks, mechanically-damaged, misshapen and shrivelled tubers.

The Bureau thought that item 9 in annex III (Tuber moth) could be extended to cover other types of pest damage, for example caused by wireworms or slugs, provided they are not specifically regulated in the Standard.

To make the structure of section C (Tuber inspection procedures) in annex III similar to that of section B (Field inspection procedures) in annex II, the Bureau proposed to change section C as follows:

“C. Tuber inspection procedures

1. Scope of inspection

All seed potato lots to be certified under the Standard must be inspected before marketing.

2. Inspection method

A randomly collected sample representative of the seed potato tubers from the lot to be inspected should be gathered and set aside for tuber size, grade and quality inspection. The tubers need to be sufficiently clean to allow for a visual inspection, no caked dirt.

During the inspection process some tubers of the sample may be cut to establish the presence or absence of internal defects. If tuber samples are to be assessed for internal defects and diseases, they should be cut along the longitudinal axis, drawn through the widest part of the tuber (i.e. from the stem end to the bud end), and examined.

3. Calculation of results

During the inspection process a tuber should only be counted once for a defect or damage. Calculate total counts and percentages for each disease, defect, or condition and compare with the tuber standard tolerance to determine if the lot meets the tuber standard.

4. Additional measures

If the sample exceeds the tolerance for any of the categories, an inspector may proceed to either increase the sample size and/or re-grade the lot as required to make sure it complies with the specified standard.

5. Second opinion inspections

Growers will be entitled to ask for a confirmatory inspection to be conducted by another inspector in the case of a disputed inspection.”

4. List of diseases and pests

The Bureau asked the secretariat to remind the rapporteur countries to bring photographs to amend the list.

At the July 2012 training course for inspectors and growers at the Lorkh Institute in Moscow, the delegations of the United Kingdom, Russian Federation and Switzerland suggested that a Guide for Seed Potato Inspectors be developed on the basis of the UNECE List of diseases and pests. The delegation of the United Kingdom has put together a first draft, which will be submitted to the Specialized Section for consideration (see item 4 of the revised provisional agenda).

5. Cooperation between UNECE and IPPC

The specificity of the UNECE Standard for Seed Potatoes, as compared with other UNECE agricultural quality standards, is that it touches upon phytosanitary issues. The WTO Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement identifies the IPPC as the organization providing international standards on phytosanitary measures to protect plant health.

The UNECE Standard for Seed Potatoes does not decide on the status of plant diseases. The Standard considers different types of potato diseases and pests from the certification point of view only.

The Bureau agreed that whenever the WTO-SPS Agreement or the IPPC are mentioned in the Standard, it would be appropriate to discuss the corresponding text with the IPPC secretariat in order to find mutually acceptable wording. The Bureau asked the delegations of Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom to make proposals to the Specialized Section on how to improve the text related to IPPC.

6. Demonstration trials and guidelines on training inspectors

The delegation of the United Kingdom, in consultation with the delegations of Australia, Finland and New Zealand, will present a revised version of the “Crop-inspection training field” paper considered by the Specialized Section at its 2011 session.

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The Bureau asked the secretariat to send individual reminders to the rapporteur countries responsible for the preparation of discussion under the above items.

14. Other topics of interest

The Bureau requested that the secretariat ask the:

- delegations of New Zealand and the United States if they would update the Specialized Section on zebra chip disease;
- delegation of Switzerland to make a presentation on the activities of the research groups “PVYwide organization” and “EUPHRESKO Dickeya”, and on the results of the workshop “Laboratory tools for seed potato certification”;
- representative of the European Commission to update the Specialized Section on the revision of the annexes to Directive 2002/56/EC on the marketing of seed potatoes.

16. Future work

The next Extended Bureau meeting in Fargo, North Dakota has been confirmed for 30 September – 2 October 2013.

The Specialized Section will decide on the meetings programme for 2014 and 2015 depending on invitations for and timing of the Extended Bureau meetings for those years.
