

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

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Item 9 of the provisional agenda

Requirements on sprouted tubers

Sprouted Tubers

Note submitted by the delegation of the United Kingdom

Seed potato tubers which have sprouted present a potential problem for the certifying authority. Sprouts can be damaged during transport, handling and planting and excessive sprouting can result in the tubers being commercially unacceptable.

De-sprouting tubers (running the potatoes over a grading line to knock sprouts off the tubers) can also be detrimental to tuber quality as this process can lead to spread pathogens symptomlessly.

Pre-sprouting (or chitting) seed potatoes can be used to promote dormancy breaking and manage early emergence in crops. Where pre-sprouting (chitting) is well managed sprouts will be short and have well-formed robust growth points capable of withstanding the handling processes involved in mechanical planting.

In common with seed cutting, seed pre-sprouting carries a certain risk and this should be borne by the seed user rather than the seed producer (i.e. post certification). However both these activities may be conducted by the seed producer as they may have the facilities and expertise to achieve the desired tuber growth stage; this is likely to bring the activity to a point in the process before certification.

The question is to what extent the UNECE standard should cover this aspect of tuber quality.

We propose that sprouting be covered within the tolerance for external defects (3% by weight) and that we amend the text within annex III (along with the existing proposed amendments to read as follows:

3. External defects (e.g. excessively sprouted, misshapen or damaged tubers).

All categories 3% by weight

Countable damage is damage which is likely to lead to secondary infection. Tubers which are fully healed are not countable. Tubers are countable, if for:

- Mechanically-damaged tubers: more than 20 per cent of the tuber is affected.
- Severe cracks: more than 5 cracks exceeding 20 mm in length and 5 mm in depth.

- 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.

Sprouted tubers are deemed to be countable if the sprouts are likely to be broken off or damaged during handling prior to or at planting.


