**Economic Commission for Europe**

Committee on Trade

**Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards**

###### Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes

###### Meeting of the Extended Bureau

###### Melbourne, Australia, 1 - 4 April 2014

**Sprouted tubers**

**Background**

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 is well managed sprouts will be short and well-formed robust growth points capable of withstanding the handling process involved in mechanical planting.

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 pre-sprouting 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.

**Proposal for regulation**

UNECE Standard for Seed Potatoes, Section III, Provisions concerning quality / A. Minimum requirements.

“Lots of seed potatoes shall not be certified if they present more than 10 % tubers having sprouts

longer than 20 mm and/or 50 % of tubers having sprouts longer than 10 mm.”