

**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

**REPORT**

At the invitation of ViCSPA, Australia, the meeting of the Extended Bureau took place at the AgriBio plant science facility in Bundoora, Melbourne, from 1 to 4 April 2014. AgriBio is the largest agricultural R&D organisation in Victoria. It brings together La Trobe University's world-class research and the work of the Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI). The delegations of Australia, Finland, Italy, New Zealand, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States and the United Kingdom. A representative of the European Union also participated. Dr. Nigel Crump, General Manager at ViCSPA welcomed the participants on behalf of Mrs. Kay Spierings, The Independent Chair of the ViCSPA Board of Management.

ViCSPA is an independent provider of Seed Potato Certification and other services to the Australian Potato Industry. The head office of ViCSPA is at the Toolangi Research Station.

**1. UNECE Guide to Seed Potato Field Inspection. Recommended Practices  
UNECE Guide to Seed Potato Tuber Inspection. Recommended Practices**

*Documentation:* Draft Guide to Field Inspection (GE.6/BUR/2014/2)  
Draft Guide to Tuber Inspection (GE.6/BUR/2014/5)

The Extended Bureau reviewed the text of the Draft Guide to Field Inspection presented by the delegation of the United States. Most of the meeting was spent on amending, correcting and restructuring the Guide. The Extended Bureau asked the delegation of the United States and the secretariat to prepare a clean copy of the text to submit it to the October 2014 session of the Specialized Section.

The Extended Bureau did not have time to consider the draft Guide to Tuber Inspection and decided to discuss it at the October session of the Specialized Section.

**2. External defects including sprouted tubers**

*Documentation:* A paper on sprouted tubers (GE.6/BUR/2014/3)

The Extended Bureau decided not to establish a minimum requirement for sprouted tubers. Practices with regard to sprouted tubers vary across countries and regions. Some countries regulate the length of sprouts and their percentage in the lot, other countries' regulations stipulate that sprouting should not be excessive leaving it to the discretion of the inspector on whether to accept or reject the lot. Some clients in South-East Asia are willing to buy sprouted tubers. Sprouts may grow during export. What to consider "excessive" sprouting depends on the time of the year and varieties. De-sprouting may have a negative effect on germination and lead to contamination of tubers.

The Extended Bureau asked the delegations of Finland and the United Kingdom to prepare a position paper on sprouted tubers for consideration by the Specialized Section at its October meeting.

### **3. Tolerances for mild and severe virus symptoms**

*Documentation:* Report of the Extended Bureau meeting in Fargo (GE.6/BUR/2013/11)  
Mild and severe virus symptoms, proposal by United States (GE.6/BUR/2014/6)

At the October session of the Specialized Section, the delegation of the United States will submit a proposal on new tolerances for viral diseases which would not distinguish between mild and severe symptoms. For some varieties the visual observation of symptoms on plants during inspection does not allow to determine whether these symptoms have been caused by severe viruses (PVY, PVA, PVM, PLRV) or mild viruses (PVS and PVX). For example, the PVY severe mosaic virus now often shows mild symptoms.

The Specialized Section may also wish to review the definitions of “Mild virus diseases”, “Potato leaf roll disease”, “Severe mosaic” and “Severe virus diseases” in annex VII.

### **4. Definition of tolerances by weight or by number**

The delegation of Sweden presented statistical results of calculating tolerances by weight of the sample or by number of tubers in the sample, for different types of diseases and pests. The results did not show any significant differences between the two methods of calculation. That should have been expected knowing that lots of seed potatoes for export normally contain tubers of a relatively homogeneous size range. The Extended Bureau recommended that the Specialized Section make a short statement along the following lines to be reflected in the report of its October 2014 session:

“Tolerances of tuber faults are calculated by weight in most national certification schemes. The UNECE Standard for Seed Potatoes follows this convention. The Specialised Section has noted that there is limited available data to compare results of inspections conducted by tuber weight to those conducted by tuber number, but where such data exists there is relatively little evidence of a significant difference between the two methods.”

### **5. Update on the revision of the Council Directive 2002/56/EC**

The representative of the European Commission provided information on the changes to the annexes to Council Directive 2002/56/EC on the marketing of seed potatoes. As compared to EU Regulations which are applied directly in all EU countries, Directives suggest that each country has to develop its own legislation to implement them. The deadline for implementing the changes to Council Directive 2002/56/EC had been fixed for 1 January 2016.

### **6. Cooperation between UNECE and IPPC**

*Documentation:* UNOG Senior Legal Advisor opinion on legal status of UNECE standards  
Note on Codex standards (by Codex Secretariat in consultation with the FAO and WHO Legal Departments)

The Extended Bureau took note of the information provided in the Codex Secretariat’s note on Codex standards. The Extended Bureau’s opinion was that cooperation with the IPPC could be beneficial for the Specialized Section’s work on the UNECE Standard for Seed Potatoes.

### **7. Other business**

Mr. Brendan Larkin (Senior Market Manager, ASEAN, Victoria Department of Environment and Primary Industries) made a presentation on the Government of Victoria’s approach to regional food security. He stressed the importance of having one world standard on seed potatoes to use in trade negotiations.

Mr. Ben Dowling (Dowling AgriTech) spoke about seed potato exports from Australia to South-East Asia. He said that trade in seed potatoes was based on the requirements of the importing country. In trade negotiations it is more efficient to refer to an internationally agreed standard.

Mr. Brendan Rodoni (AgriBio, DEPI Bioscience Research Division, La Trobe University) made a presentation on PVY and other pests.

The participants in the Extended Bureau meeting visited:

- the AgriBio plant science facility in Bundoora. AgriBio is the largest agricultural R&D organisation in Victoria. It brings together La Trobe University's world-class research and the work of the Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI).
- Cummaudo Farms Pty Ltd at Mirbo North VIC 3871, Abel Agrico International at Shady Creek, VIC 3821, and GMT Trading Pty Limited at Cora Lynn, Victoria.

The Hon. Peter Walsh MP, Minister for Water Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, Victoria, gave a dinner for the members of the Extended Bureau and representatives of the Victorian seed potato industry.

The Extended Bureau thanked the delegation of Australia for the excellent organization of the meeting in Melbourne and for the opportunity to learn more about seed potato production in their country.