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Economic Commission for Europe**Committee on Trade****Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards****Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat****Twenty-third session**

Geneva, 29-30 September 2014

**Report of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat
on its Twenty-third session****I. Introduction**

1. The 2014 session of the Specialized Section organized together with the secretariat on the first day of its session a Symposium which focused on international meat trade, international meat supply chains, traceability, and practical examples of the implementation of UNECE standards by member states as well as collaborative research into eating quality. The Symposium, which was opened by the Executive Secretary of the UNECE, Mr. Christian Friis Bach, brought together a large number of representatives from leading meat-producing countries as well as international experts. The programme and the presentations which are available on <http://www.unece.org/agr/ge11/meatsymposium.html> covered topics ranging from an analysis of current trends in the meat industry to traceability issues, labelling and fraud as well as marketing claims and the role of standards in providing safer and traceable products in the meat supply chain. For the first time at UNECE, researchers from all over the world explained to delegates their consumer research on eating quality and invited UNECE to reflect on a possible new role the organization could play in this area. The symposium "Meet/Meat the Challenge" had successfully reached out to the private sector, experts, producers, traders, exporters and the public sector and provided a platform for meat experts to discuss these new developments and opportunities for collaboration.

2. Mr. Ian King (Australia), the Chair of the Specialized Section, chaired the formal part of the session on 30 September 2014.

3. The Director of the Economic Cooperation, Trade and Land Management Division, Ms. Virginia Cram-Martos, opened the meeting stressing the importance of the Symposium in bringing to the attention of participants key issues influencing trade and the market for meat products in the future. She thanked all regular and new delegates for their attendance and support noting that the Specialized Section had over many years contributed in a

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meaningful way to the facilitation of trade in meat products. She also noted that new and innovative work items had been proposed and encouraged delegates to discuss their relevance to their work keeping in mind all stakeholders: government agencies, producers, consumers, traders and retailers. She also stressed the continued relevance of this group and the importance of countries' involvement in the international standardization processes for influencing future outcomes.

4. She recalled that Mr. Bach in his opening speech had stressed that "bringing into focus the latest scientific, commercial and regulatory developments has always been the strength of UNECE, even in difficult times, and this has made it possible, time and again, for our stakeholders to emerge with renewed energy and possibilities." UNECE's role, she noted, was to facilitate these discussions and bring together its experienced, knowledgeable and dedicated pool of experts as well as new participants. This allowed the Specialized Section to remain innovative and inclusive.

5. The Chief of the Governmental Cooperation Section, Mr. Mika Vepsäläinen, explained that he had received authorization from the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to represent Kosovo¹ and introduced the technical expert who had been nominated to take part in the discussions.

II. Attendance

6. Representatives of the following United Nations member countries attended the meeting: Albania, Argentina, Australia, Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, France, Ireland, Italy, Mongolia, Montenegro, New Zealand, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Tajikistan, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay.

7. The European Union (EU) was also represented.

8. Representative from the following observer organizations; NGOs; Associations and private sector groups also attended: GS-1 Global Office; AUS-QUAL Pty Ltd, Confédération Nationale de la Triperie Française; French National Institute for Agricultural Research (INRA) Institut de l'Élevage-France; Centro Ricerche Produzioni Animali-Italy; UNICARVE - Associazione Produttori Carni Bovine - Italy; Slow Food-Italy; Fundació Privada d'Indústries de la Carn-Spain; Meat and Livestock Australia; Texas Tech University, U.S. Meat Export Foundation; Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute - United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South East Europe; and Gira Consulting.

9. A representative from the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) Kosovo¹ also attended.

III. Adoption of the agenda

10. The meeting adopted the agenda.

¹ References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999)

IV. Matters of interest since the last session

UNECE and subsidiary bodies

11. The Chief of the Governmental Cooperation Section informed delegates about the ongoing restructuring exercise of two committees serviced by the Division. He briefly explained the three proposed options stressing that none of them would impact the work of the Specialized Section, given that member States had unanimously indicated their continued satisfaction with the work on standards setting and agricultural quality standards. He also informed delegates about the upcoming retirement of the secretary of WP.7. The Chairman, in expressing his good wishes for the retirement, thanked him for his work over the past years.

12. After a short introduction by all participants, the Chairman outlined the work of the Specialized Section and its major achievements over the years. He stressed the importance of this work and the continued participation of public and private delegates that had proven to be one of the group's particular strengths. He also emphasized the much-valued contributions of the group to all stakeholders in the international meat trade as well as UNECE.

V. Outcome of the meat symposium (29 September 2014)

13. The Chair congratulated the Secretary of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat and her team for the organization of the Symposium and briefly summed up the previous day's discussions. He noted that the forum had provided among others new and very valuable factual and statistical information on trade and emerging growth markets; potential future changes, outlooks and challenges. He also noted the much-appreciated presentations on traceability and on fraud and recent crisis situations, which although detrimental to the meat industry, had triggered closer cooperation between the public and the private sector.

14. He noted the good combination of interesting presentations in the area of implementation of standards, as well as the presentations on eating quality - a new topic that had been presented at the Symposium. In this regard, the Specialized Section took note of proposals made at the Symposium which included, for example, the development of a collaborative way to collect and record information or the development and keeping of protocols or procedures under the auspices of UNECE in the area of research into eating quality. Work under UNECE could be initiated to facilitate for example the sharing of scientific information.

15. It was agreed that these suggestions needed further consultations and a special working group for formal presentation at the 2015 meeting of the Specialized Section would develop a draft proposal. This was supported by many delegations that stressed the importance of bringing scientific results together and opening this research for the meat industry and other stakeholders to satisfy consumers worldwide. Delegations emphasized that this work was complementary to the standards, and not a new standards' or grading system. The Specialized Section decided to set up a working group (coordinated by the secretariat) with the participation of Poland (lead Rapporteur), Argentina, Australia, France, Ireland, United States, Uruguay and the Head of the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute, UK, Ms. Linda Farmer.

VI. Proposal for new UNECE standards

Processed poultry meat including ready-to-cook preparations and ready-to-eat products

16. The Specialized Section asked the secretariat to review the code numbering used in the UNECE egg standards to avoid the duplication of codes 80 and 90 which also refer to meat species.

17. The Rapporteur (United States) reviewed the revised draft standard for Processed Poultry Meat, including ready-to-cook preparations and ready-to-eat products. The delegate of France asked for a review of the currently used codes in the standard to avoid confusion between the raw meat and the actual final product, i.e. the processed product item. He also noted that EU legislation contained a different classification for processed products and different definitions – citing as examples mechanically separated meat and different cooking methods – which were currently not included in the standard. The Rapporteur explained that detailed cooking methods would be determined between the buyer and the seller.

18. It was decided to change the heading of Section 1.3. entitled “Definition” to “Glossary” with a footnote indicating that the terms had to conform to the legislation of the importing countries which prevailed. In addition, the Specialized Section amended the vegetable category to add “fruit”, and included a definition for the minimum requirement “free of fecal contamination”. The Rapporteur was asked to also define the terms “food addition” and “food ingredient”. In Section “1.4. Application”, it was decided to make it compulsory for contractors to work under a quality control system. The minimum requirement “free of fecal contamination” was amended to read “free of visual fecal contamination and digestive tract secretions”.

19. The heading of Section 3.2 “Species” was amended to read “Species (poultry products)” and the text amended to read: “The code for ready-to-cook (RTC) or ready-to-eat (RTE) products in data field 1 as defined in section 1.1 is 70, 71, 72, or 73 or a combination thereof”. In addition, the heading of “3.4. Refrigeration” was changed to “Post processing refrigeration”. In the same section but only in the French and Russian language versions, the word “meat” was replaced by “product”.

20. As the text in sections 3.5.2 to 3.5.8 referred to the raw meat, i.e. the base product, which was already defined in other standards, the Specialized Section, decided to delete those and renumber subsequent sections. Section 3.5.1 “Traceability” was reinforced and the traceability section now provides for a mandatory traceability system. In Section 3.5.8, the Specialized Section decided that, given the vast number of options, buyers and sellers had to declare their choice of the additives used.

21. The Specialized Section discussed in length Section 3.5.9 “Product meat type” and agreed to amend the table to include “05 Chopped and formed meat without MSM”; “06 MSM”; and “07 Trimmings”. The heading of Section 3.5.11 was changed to read “Treatments” and codes 02 for “boiling” and 03 for “dry-cured” were added. In Section 3.6, the table was removed from the draft and a phrase was added to indicate that the quality levels had to conform to the importing countries’ requirements. In section 3.7.2, the Specialized Section added as mandatory information, the indication of the “ingredient/composition” and the number of the lots. The delegate of France stated that mixtures of raw materials, for example, mixtures of muscle and Mechanically Separated Meat (MSM) should also be included in the mandatory information. In Section 3.8, it was decided to make it clearer that third party product traceability certification referred to the

final product and was done on the basis of the final product batch identification. Table 4.1 was modified to accommodate the removal of Sections 3.5.2 to 3.5.8, decided earlier. Given the many changes, the Rapporteur would provide a new example under Section 4.2.

22. The Rapporteur also indicated that the commonly traded preparations and products contained in Section 5.2 were only examples and a non-exhaustive list, which could evolve over time. The Specialized Section noted that several items included in Section 5.2 still needed clarification and it was decided that a working group would review the list of examples.

23. The Specialized Section decided to submit the revised Standard for approval by the Working Party (and subsequent publication on the Internet) subject to the agreed changes within the next 2 weeks and without the list of examples included in Section 5.2 which required further work.

VII. 2014 Amendments to UNECE Standards

(a) Deer meat - illustrations and photos

24. The rapporteur (Russian Federation) had not yet been able to submit the required photos and illustrations to finalize the standard. The Specialized Section agreed to review the photos at its 2015 session.

(b) Edible meat co-products

25. The rapporteurs from the United States and Australia noted that the standard required a more thorough review. The United States was in the process of reviewing its own co-products standard and would therefore be able to provide new photos. France indicated that it would submit more comments supported by their industry (as well as by other European countries' industries) and noted that the proposed deletion of several items and incorrect photos needed to be addressed at the next session. The rapporteur stressed that items that were proposed for deletion were already included in other UNECE standards.

26. It was agreed that an electronic working group (led by the United States and including Argentina, Australia, France, and Uruguay) would start work on this standard in the coming months. The secretariat would help with the coordination.

(c) Bovine meat

27. At the request of several delegations, it was agreed to place the full review of the Standard for Bovine Meat on the 2015 agenda of the Specialized Section (rapporteur Australia). The review will include the cut descriptions and their possible simplification. France offered to review the specific European cuts. The secretariat indicated that during the course of the year, comments had been received from Australia, Poland and the United States and several amendments had already been made or will be made to the 2012 version of the Standard.

VIII. Periodic revision of existing UNECE Standards

28. The Specialized Section agreed that before decision could be taken to revise the standard for duck meat (which would be up for revision), the secretariat should find out if this standard was still used. The information would help determine the way forward.

IX. Future work

29. Upon request by the Chair, the delegation of the Russian Federation provided more information on its traceability project currently in a pilot phase at an egg-producing company (with a minor meat production). He noted that work would be expanded in the future but needed to be defined more clearly. A meeting in the coming weeks with representatives from Belarus and Kazakhstan would also determine how these countries could be involved. The intent of the project was to develop a broad traceability system, which would eventually cover the whole sector.

30. The Specialized Section agreed to place on next year's agenda: Bovine meat, Processed bovine products, Edible co-products, Processed poultry products (list of examples only), Deer meat (photos only) as well as discussions on eating quality. The Chairman suggested using teleconferences during the year to prepare the discussions at the next session in 2015.

X. Other business

31. France reported that a new regulation on retail meat cuts had just been published in his country and the system would come into force on 13 December 2014. France would circulate the text of this regulation via the secretariat. The US indicated that in 2014 they had implemented a new, more consumer-friendly regulation on meat cuts. The United States delegation suggested placing the UNECE Standard for Retail Meat Cuts on the Specialized Section's 2016 agenda to discuss the inclusion of lamb and veal cuts. The US delegation also drew attention to the current review in their country of eating quality that was open to comments (the web page would be sent to delegates via the secretariat).

32. The Chairman thanked all delegates for their constructive contributions and repeated his appreciation of the organization of the meat symposium. It was envisaged to organize a similar symposium at the next session. However, given the long list of items on the 2015 agenda, the symposium would be shorter and focus on lesser topics.

XI. Election of officers

33. The Specialized Section elected Mr. Ian King (Australia) as Chairperson, and Mr. Craig Morris (United States) as Vice-Chairperson until the next elections in 2015.

XII. Adoption of the report

34. The Specialized Section adopted the report (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.11/2014/2) on its twenty-third session. The next session is scheduled to take place in Geneva from 28 to 30 September 2015.