



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
21 November 2017

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat

Twenty-sixth session

Geneva, 6 November 2017

Report of the twenty-sixth session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat

I. Introduction

1. Mr. Ian King (Australia), Chairman of the Specialized Section, chaired the session. The Chief of the Market Access Section of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), Mr. Mika Vepsäläinen, opened the session, noting that UNECE served as a platform to develop standards and to facilitate technical discussions and training. He stressed that the relevance and quality of UNECE's work depended on its excellent pool of experts representing the public and private sector to reflect the latest developments in international trade. He extended his gratitude to the outgoing Vice-Chair, Mr. Craig Morris (United States) for over 20 years of meeting attendance as a delegate of the United States and as Vice-Chair of the Specialized Section. He also thanked the current Chair, Mr. Ian King (Australia), for his 20 years of service as both delegate and Chair, noting that under his guidance, the Specialized Section had elaborated many new standards, revised existing ones and trained participants around the world in their use and implementation. He also reviewed the events organized in 2017 including the Workshop on Sustainable Meat Markets, Cross-border Trade and Eating Quality held in Dublin, Ireland with 130 participants from the public and private sector; and joint UNECE-Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) workshops held in Nanjing and Tianjin, China (September 2017) on meat markets and electronic certification. Over 70 participants from the UNECE and the ESCAP regions had attended the two events which were much appreciated by participants. He thanked all those who had contributed to the workshops, in particular, the Government of Ireland, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority (Teagasc), Nanjing Agricultural University, and Tianjin Entry-Exit Inspection and Quarantine Bureau for the excellent organization of those successful and educational workshops.

2. He also emphasized that the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015 continued to strongly influence

the work done at the United Nations. Currently, all United Nations agencies, including the UNECE, were aligning their work to the 17 SDGs. He mentioned that the other Specialized Sections had reviewed how their work supported the achievement of the SDGs and he invited the Specialized Section on Meat to carry out a similar exercise.

3. The Chief of the Market Access Section explained that he had received authorization from the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to represent UNMIK Kosovo¹ and introduced the technical expert who had been nominated to take part in the discussions.

II. Attendance

4. Representatives of the following United Nations member countries attended the meeting: Australia, Belarus, France Poland, Russian Federation, Serbia, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and United States of America.

5. Representatives from the following observer organizations; NGOs; associations, academia and private sector groups also attended: All-Russian Scientific Research Institute for Poultry Processing Industry, Argentine Beef Promotion Institute (IPCVA), University of Novi Sad.

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

III. Adoption of the agenda

7. The meeting adopted the agenda with some agreed changes.

IV. Matters arising since the last session

(a) UNECE and subsidiary bodies

8. The secretariat announced that in Spring 2017, the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres had appointed Ms. Olga Algayerova of Slovakia as the next Executive Secretary of the UNECE. He mentioned that UNECE had taken important budget cuts in this and the next biennium (2018-2019) including posts, consultancy, printing and travel funds. He noted that, at the moment, the secretariat of the Working Party still availed of project funds, which covered some of the losses. At the last session of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards (12-13 April 2017), the work of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7) had been well received and several delegations had shown their interest in getting more involved in its work as well as linking WP.7's work to other bodies such as the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization (WP.6) as well as other UNECE Divisions. He also mentioned that the 70th anniversary session of UNECE had featured an agricultural side event on the activities of WP.7, a farmer's market organized by the secretariat that had attracted a large international audience and contributed to the success of the Commission session.

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

(b) Other organizations

9. The representative of the Argentine Beef Promotion Institute (IPCVA) informed the Specialized Section that the International Meat Secretariat's Executive Council had acknowledged the usefulness of the Specialized Section's work and the UNECE standards, and had voiced its willingness to work more closely with UNECE's Specialized Section.

V. Workshops and rapporteurs meeting

10. The Secretariat presented the 2017 workshops and the rapporteurs meeting (duck and goose carcasses and parts):

- Workshop on Sustainable Meat Markets, Cross-border Trade and Eating Quality, Dublin, Ireland, with 130 participants from the public and private sector, organized back-to back with the International Congress of Meat Science and Technology. The workshop focused on eating quality and advanced discussions and guidance on this work. In addition, a parallel workshop on meat standards implementation and meat markets trained 30 professionals (public and private sector) from Central Asia and interested other countries in theoretical and practical sessions.
- Workshops on Cross-border Trade of Meat and Electronic Certification organized with ESCAP (Nanjing and Tianjin, China) in September 2017 together with a rapporteurs meeting (Nanjing) on duck and goose meat with theoretical and practical sessions and a study visit. The second workshop, which took place in Tianjin port, focused on traceability, the use of e-certificates in meat trade, inspection and quarantine procedures. Over 70 participants from the UNECE and the ESCAP regions attended the two events which were much appreciated by participants.

11. The secretariat thanked all those who contributed to these events, in particular, the government of Ireland, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority (Teagasc), Nanjing Agricultural University, and the Tianjin Entry-Exit Inspection and Quarantine Bureau.

12. The Chair stressed the importance of capacity-building to ensure the standards' practical application and relevance for international trade in meat. He highlighted the importance of meeting documentary and labelling requirements and stressed that all three events had trained a large number of people. The workshops and practical trainings had shown the importance of technology and innovation and their impact on the speed of transactions, as well as inspection and clearance procedures in international meat trade. He thanked all organizers and the Specialized Section's delegates who played a key role in the training and the eating quality part of the workshops.

VI. Eating quality

13. The Chair of the eating quality scientific reference group from Poland reviewed the 2017 meetings which had taken place in Milan, Italy, in February 2017 and in Dublin at the Workshop in August 2017. He also presented the group's recommendations (summarized in document ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.11/2017/3-ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2017/26). He stressed that all the proposed evaluation methods and tools already existed. Their compilation in a set of methodologies and the training materials for their implementation was meant to help reach a better consistency of research results in the area of eating quality research for bovine meat. Several delegations suggested to look into using the freely available evaluation tools and measurements and to include all large bovine meat producers in this work, including those in South America.

14. After detailed discussions, it was clarified that the new proposals were not meant to be included in the UNECE Standard for Bovine meat (i.e. to be used for commercial grading). They were meant for inclusion in new guidelines to provide uniform and consistent guidance to researchers working on eating quality research. Although this work had been on-going for a long time, coherence was needed to improve and allow for the comparability of results. The scientific reference group therefore proposed to standardize the research methodology for eating quality of bovine meat at UNECE level and to publish this methodology at UNECE level.

15. The Specialized Section discussed the proposals and several delegations opposed the proposal on not allowing untrained individuals to purchase some of the standards materials. The Specialized Section therefore asked the Rapporteur (Poland) to draft “Guidelines for eating quality research referring to the UNECE bovine standard” as a separate document and include in this work interested parties worldwide. UNECE provides participants with an opportunity to break down research barriers which would allow more consistent and comparable research results worldwide. Participation of research work carried out in South America and other countries should also be encouraged.

16. The Rapporteur also presented a newly established not-for profit foundation (under Polish law) which will host the research data, thus safeguarding the individual research projects’ proprietary rights. The latter would not have been possible by their hosting at UNECE where data would have been in the public domain. It was stressed that the foundation was a forum where - subject to its rules - interested parties and groups from around the world could join.

17. The draft guidelines will be circulated for comments before April 2018 and submitted for discussion to the Specialized Section in July 2018.

VII. Amendments to UNECE Standards

(a) Eggs-in-shell and egg products

18. The Specialized Section reviewed the Standard for Eggs-in-shell (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.11/2017/5-ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2017/24) including proposals by the 2016 Rapporteurs meeting as well as proposals by delegations. It was agreed to retain paragraph 18 on incubated eggs as well as its reference on paragraph 10. It was also agreed to make the editorial change and express all numbers in numerical format. Paragraphs 43 and 44 were merged; paragraph 52 was shortened and all reference to producer codes moved to paragraph 53. In paragraph 60, the word “must” was re-introduced to ensure the adequate level of consumer protection intended by the former wording. All detailed temperature and humidity requirements were removed throughout the standard and replaced by “depending on the national legislation of the importing countries”. The title “Eggs in shell” was retained as the new title of this standard.

19. The Specialized Section reviewed the Standard for Egg Products (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.11/2017/6-ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2017/25) and the proposals made by the rapporteurs and other delegations. It was agreed to remove “direct” from paragraph 4 and adopt the changes in paragraphs 12 and 14. Discussions took place on the level of moisture content allowed in dried egg products (deductible from Annex I) and it was agreed not to include a specific moisture minimum level in paragraph 17. It was also agreed to add a footnote to the table in Annex I reading: “Humidity levels (moisture content) in dried egg products should be controlled to meet country-of-import requirements”. The Specialized Section included a new definition for “pasteurization” and amended paragraph 47 (g)

“Labelling”, to specify that the country of origin was the country where the egg was laid and the country of processing where the egg product was made.

20. The Specialized Section reviewed in detail the table in Annex I and it was agreed to set the minimum solids matter content at 43 per cent for liquid and frozen egg yolks. The minimum protein content was retained at the original 75 per cent. The amendments in Annex II were adopted.

21. The Specialized Section decided to submit the amendments to the Standard for Eggs-in Shell and for Egg Products to the November 2017 session of the Working Party.

(b) Duck meat

22. The Specialized Section reviewed the proposals by the Rapporteurs (Nanjing, China, September 2017) as well as comments submitted by Serbia. The Specialized Section approved all proposed amendments

23. The Specialized Section decided to submit the amendments for adoption by the November 2017 session of the Working Party.

(c) Goose meat

24. The Specialized Section took note of the comments submitted by Serbia and the changes proposed at the Rapporteur meeting. As the delegation from China (Rapporteur) was not present at this session and the comments could not be discussed in China, it was agreed to postpone the review of the proposed changes to the 2018 session of the Specialized Section. The secretariat was requested to incorporate the changes into the existing standard and circulate the document well before the July 2018 session for review. A Rapporteurs meeting would be organized prior to the 2018 formal session to discuss the proposed changes with the aim to submit amendments for adoption to the November 2018 session of the Working Party.

VIII. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the Specialized Section on Meat

25. The Specialized Section took note of the work by the other Specialized Sections on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) presented by the secretariat and initiated discussions on how their own work contributed to the achievement of the SDGs. It was highlighted that food loss was not an issue in the case of meat. On the contrary, the meat and other industries used all by-products and provided value addition and income generation. UNECE’s standard for by-products which standardized many of these products, had helped add value to the by-products at producer, trader and consumer levels.

26. It was also pointed out that the meat sector provided employment in developing countries; and that meat was a source of high-quality protein (directly and in processed form) and improved nutrition using otherwise non-utilized resources (grass). The delegation from the United States mentioned that its ministry had summarized their contribution in four main points: Satisfying human needs; Enhancing environmental quality, the resource base, and ecosystem services; Sustaining the economic viability of agriculture; and Enhancing the quality of life for farmers, ranchers, forest managers, workers and society as a whole.

27. The Specialized Section decided to initiate a review of links between its work and the SDGs with emphasis on linkages to the meat sector's economic role; the reduction of environmental impacts and better resource utilization; the product's use for food and non-food purposes; the production of high-value protein with otherwise non-utilized resources (grass); and the Specialized Section's standardization of by-products for consumption and further processing. The comments will be circulated by the secretariat prior to the July 2018 session.

IX. Future work

28. The Specialized Section stressing the link between sustainability, integrity and relevance of standards; the use of land and water and the expectations of more concerned consumer groups; the importance of the poultry sector; and case studies on the utilization of standards, decided to organize a meat symposium at the July 2018 session and focus on those links. Symposia in previous years had added value to the Specialized Section's work through linkages with other subjects and also increased participation.

29. The Specialized Section agreed to place on the 2018 agenda:

- Eating quality (Rapporteur Poland)
- Porcine Standard (coordinated by the United States and Poland)
- Ovine Standard (coordinated by Australia)
- Goose (coordinated by China)
- Rabbit (coordinated by China)
- Case studies of utilization of standards

X. Other business

30. Delegations asked the secretariat to ensure that documents were translated well in advance of the meetings into Russian and French.

31. Delegations were informed that the next World Meat Congress would take place in Dallas, United States on 30 May to 1 June 2018 and focus on trade. The next International Congress of Meat Science and Technology (ICoMST) would take place in Melbourne, Australia, from 12 to 17 August 2018 with the theme of "Quality and Integrity for Global Consumers".

XI. Election of officers

32. The Specialized Section elected Mr. Ian King (Australia) as Chairperson, and Mr. Bucky Gwartney (United States) as Vice-Chairperson. The Specialized Section thanked the outgoing Vice-Chairperson, Mr. Craig Morris (United States), for his many years of servicing as a delegate and as Vice-Chair and his much appreciated support for the work and the events organized by the Specialized Section.

XII. Adoption of the report

33. The Specialized Section adopted the report (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.11/2017/2) on its twenty-sixth session. The next session will take place in Geneva from 2-4 July 2018.