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COMMITTEE FOR TRADE, INDUSTRY AND
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Working Party on Standardization of
Perishable Produce and Quality Development
Fifty-seventh session, Geneva, 12-14 November 2001

REPORT OF THE FIFTY-SEVENTH SESSION

Addendum 12

**Statement by the representative of the Organization for
Economic Cooperation and Development**

Note by the secretariat

This document contains the statement made by the representative of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) at the fifty-seventh session of the Working Party on Standardization of Perishable Produce and Quality Development.

**STATEMENT BY THE OECD REPRESENTATIVE AT THE
FIFTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE WORKING PARTY
ON STANDARDIZATION OF PERISHABLE PRODUCE
AND QUALITY DEVELOPMENT**

A. Publications

The latest publication of the OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables ("the Scheme") is the explanatory brochure on the asparagus standard. Explanatory brochures on plums, tomatoes, lettuces, curled-leaved endives and broad-leaved (Batavian) endives will be published next year.

B. Work in progress

In addition to the work already under way on the explanatory brochures on standards for citrus fruit, strawberries, apples and pears, table grapes, cucumbers and beans, the Plenary Meeting of the Scheme decided at its most recent session to begin work on explanatory brochures for kiwi fruit, hazelnuts, pistachio nuts, cultivated mushrooms and early and ware potatoes.

It also decided to revise the guide to quality controls for exported fruit and vegetables, in particular so that it would include sampling methods for inspecting the quality of nuts and the internal quality of fruit, as well as the criteria for defining inspection priorities.

The document to facilitate exchange of information between national inspection services of exporting and importing countries on non-conformity of fruit and vegetables is also being revised so that it specifies in detail the information to be supplied in the document.

The Plenary Meeting is currently carrying out work on the internal quality of fruit. There was a discussion at the later session of the Plenary Meeting on the timeliness of determining minimum and/or optimum levels of maturity of the fruit and of including them in the standards and/or explanatory brochures. Representatives of many of the countries participating in the Scheme said it would be desirable to include the minimum levels in the standards, or to include in the text a breakdown by gustative quality according to the existing quality categories (Extra, I and II). They pointed out that the discussions on the minimum levels of ripeness, determined according to different objective criteria, should be discussed on a product-by-product basis during the drafting and revision of standards, not, therefore, within OECD but exclusively within the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). The Plenary Meeting of the Scheme therefore requests the Working Party to consider taking these concerns into account in its programme of work. However, discussions on ways to determine the ripeness of fruit and on sampling methods to check the internal quality should be the sole preserve of OECD. Agreement on these points would show the spirit of cooperation between OECD and ECE and would be consistent with the aim of having the work on developing standards carried out by ECE and the work on the interpretation and application of the standards by OECD.

C. Meetings of Heads of National Inspection Services

The 10th Meeting of Heads of National Inspection Services was held from 4 to 6 June 2001, at the kind invitation of the Government of Slovakia. Delegations discussed the implementation of export and import quality controls, the interface between those controls and other inspections to which fruit and vegetables were subject, priorities in quality controls, and quality management and the use of hazard analysis critical control point (HACCP) risk analysis by companies in the fruit and vegetable industry. Technical visits were paid to companies representing different links in the fruit and vegetable chain, from production to retail.

The next meeting will be held on 3 and 4 September 2002 in the Netherlands, at the kind invitation of the Netherlands Government.

D. Strengthening cooperation between the international organizations involved in the standardization of fruit and vegetables

The Plenary Meeting, at its fifty-ninth session, requested its chair and the secretariat to make informal contacts with ECE and with FAO/WHO, with a view to obtaining a commitment from those organizations:

- (i) To recognize the duplication of work inputs by the three organizations currently working on grade standards development;
- (ii) To agree on a course of action to limit duplication of work inputs as far as possible.

An informal meeting was organized between the chairs and secretariats of the Scheme, the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables (CCFFV) and the ECE Specialized Section on Coordination of Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables. The meeting led to a number of proposals for improving cooperation between the international organizations involved in the standardization of fruit and vegetables.

These proposals, which can be found in document TRADE/WP.7/2001/7, are as follows:

- (1) Members of the secretariats of the three organizations should meet to compare the texts of Codex Alimentarius standards on the one hand and ECE and OECD standards on the other, with a view to identifying differences between the two sets of standards (and determining which differences are of a linguistic nature only and which ones constitute potential barriers to trade). The standards to be compared are those adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the ECE Working Party and the OECD Council respectively (for mangoes, avocados, pomelos, grapefruit, oranges, Persian limes and asparagus), and those adopted by one of these organizations for which there are corresponding draft standards in one of the others (for table grapes, tomatoes, apples and pineapples);

- (2) To improve the compatibility of the standards developed by the three organizations, the scope of the standards should be harmonized, that is, the scope of application of the ECE and OECD standards should be extended to all levels of distribution;

(3) To ensure recognition of the ECE and OECD standards in accordance with the CCFFV Procedure Manual, the representative of FAO/WHO proposed that whenever CCFFV began work on a standard for a product for which an ECE standard already existed, the text of the ECE standard should be circulated for comments at step 3 of the Codex Alimentarius procedure and should form the basis for the corresponding Codex Alimentarius standard. It may be necessary to redraft footnote 17 of the terms of reference for CCFFV, to authorize this procedure;

(4) To increase the number of countries providing comments and to ensure the greatest possible harmonization of the three organizations' standards, when ECE standards are adopted as a recommendation for a two-year trial period, OECD and CCFFV could be informed and invited to submit comments. CCFFV could consider whether a trial period would also be appropriate for recommendations in the context of the work on the Codex Alimentarius;

(5) To increase the number of countries using the standards and to facilitate the application of the standards, the OECD Scheme could envisage adopting Codex Alimentarius standards as OECD standards so that they could be used as a basis for explanatory material.

It should be noted that proposals (3) and (4), which are directly concerned with the working procedures of CCFFV, were discussed by the Codex Alimentarius Commission at its twenty-fourth session but no consensus was reached on them.

The Plenary Meeting of the Scheme, before holding further discussions on these proposals or implementing them, wished to bring them to the attention of the ECE Working Party and, at a later date, CCFFV, so that these bodies could discuss them.
