Summary

Following a decision of the UNECE Committee on Trade at its second session, (ECE/TRADE/C/2007/19 para. 47), this document presents an overview of priorities and challenges of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards in the framework of UNECE biennial performance evaluations to be implemented by each Sectoral Committee at the request of the Commission.
PRIORITIES AND CHALLENGES 2009

1. The priorities and challenges for the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7) and its four specialized sections for 2008-2009 are as follows:

   (a) Develop new standards and revise the existing standards. It is expected that the European Commission decision to reduce the number of obligatory marketing standards to ten will increase demand for UNECE standards. Traders in many European Union countries have indicated that they would use UNECE standards. To meet this demand, the specialized sections and the secretariat would need more resources.

   (b) Work with UNECE and OECD Task Teams responsible for examining the possible transfer of the work of the OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables and assist them in finalizing their reports in the fourth quarter of 2009.

   (c) Develop explanatory material for implementation of the standards. The first UNECE explanatory brochure on sweet peppers should be ready, at least in electronic form, by the end of 2009. This activity is part of the implementation of the UNECE reform plan recommendation to concentrate work on agricultural quality standards within UNECE.

   (d) Promote UNECE standards as global United Nations standards. Several regional promotional and capacity-building activities have been planned for 2008-2009. These activities will be financed from the United Nations Development Account and voluntary Russian contribution funds.

   (e) Discuss ways of making the work of the Working Party more effective and efficient to accelerate the development and adoption of standards. One possible way of doing that might be by giving the authority of approving the standards to the specialized sections, while the Working Party annual sessions could concentrate on items of general and policy-making nature.