
UNECE STANDARD FFV-58

concerning the marketing and
commercial quality control of

LEAFY VEGETABLES

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NOTE

Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

The commercial quality standards developed by the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) help facilitate international trade, encourage high-quality production, improve profitability and protect consumer interests. UNECE standards are used by Governments, producers, traders, importers and exporters, and other international organizations. They cover a wide range of agricultural products, including fresh fruit and vegetables, dry and dried produce, seed potatoes, meat, cut flowers, eggs and egg products.

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The present revised Standard for Leafy Vegetables is based on document ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2022/5, reviewed and adopted by the Working Party in 2022 (followed by a silence procedure in line with the special procedures during the COVID-19 period).

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UNECE standard FFV-58 concerning the marketing and commercial quality control of leafy vegetables

I. Definition of produce

This standard applies to leafy vegetables of varieties (cultivars) grown from the following species to be supplied fresh to the consumer, leafy vegetables for industrial processing being excluded:

- watercress (*Nasturtium officinale* R. Br.)
- rocket (*Eruca sativa* Mill., *Diplotaxis tenuifolia* (L.) DC. and *Diplotaxis muralis* (L.) DC.)
- spinach (*Spinacia oleracea* L.)
- turnip tops or turnip greens (*Brassica rapa* L. Rapa Group)
- broccoli raab or ruvo kale (*Brassica rapa* L. Broccoletto Group)
- chard (*Beta vulgaris* subsp. *cicla* (L.) W.D.J. Koch Flavescens Group)
- pak choi (*Brassica rapa* L. subsp. *chinensis* (L.) Hanelt).

II. Provisions concerning quality

The purpose of the standard is to define the quality requirements for leafy vegetables after preparation and packaging.

However, if applied at stages following export/dispatch, products may show in relation to the requirements of the standard:

- a slight lack of freshness and turgidity
- a slight deterioration due to their development and their tendency to perish.

The holder/seller of products may not display such products or offer them for sale, or deliver or market them in any manner other than in conformity with this standard. The holder/seller shall be responsible for observing such conformity.

A. Minimum requirements

In all classes, subject to the special provisions for each class and the tolerances allowed, the leafy vegetables must be:

- intact; leafy vegetables may be presented as single leaves or as rosettes; when presented as rosettes the outer leaves and roots may be removed
- sound; produce affected by rotting or deterioration such as to make it unfit for consumption is excluded
- clean, practically free of any visible foreign matter; however, unwashed leafy vegetables (if indicated) may have traces of earth or other growing material
- practically free from pests
- practically free from damage caused by pests
- fresh in appearance and turgid
- not running to seed, except for broccoli raab
- free of abnormal external moisture

- free of any foreign smell and/or taste.

The development and condition of the leafy vegetables must be such as to enable them:

- to withstand transportation and handling
- to arrive in satisfactory condition at the place of destination.

B. Classification

Leafy vegetables are classified in two classes, as defined below:

(i) Class I

Leafy vegetables in this class must be of good quality. They must be characteristic of the variety and/or commercial type.

Leafy vegetables presented in rosettes must be free from root tufts.

The following slight defects, however, may be allowed, provided these do not affect the general appearance of the produce, the quality, the keeping quality and presentation in the package:

- slightly damaged leaves, such as cracks, holes or tears
- slight defects in colouring.

(ii) Class II

This class includes leafy vegetables that do not qualify for inclusion in Class I but satisfy the minimum requirements specified above.

The following defects may be allowed, provided the leafy vegetables retain their essential characteristics as regards the quality, the keeping quality and presentation:

- damaged leaves, such as cracks, bruises, holes or tears
- defects in colouring
- slight lack of freshness
- small root tufts
- slight ribbiness.

III. Provisions concerning sizing

There is no sizing requirement for leafy vegetables.

IV. Provisions concerning tolerances

At all marketing stages, tolerances in respect of quality shall be allowed in each lot for produce not satisfying the requirements of the class indicated.¹

¹ A conformity check shall be made by assessing primary or composite samples. It is based on the principle of presumption that the quality of the randomly taken samples is representative of the quality of the lot. The OECD Operating Rules for Conformity Checks are recommended for application – also by operators – at the stages of dispatch as well as in wholesale and distribution centres and storerooms of food retail.

A. Quality tolerances

(i) Class I

A total tolerance of 10 per cent, by weight, of leafy vegetables not satisfying the requirements of the class but meeting those of Class II is allowed. Within this tolerance not more than 1 per cent in total may consist of produce satisfying neither the requirements of Class II quality nor the minimum requirements, or of produce affected by decay. In addition, 10 per cent, by weight, of single leaves are allowed when presented as rosettes.

(ii) Class II

A total tolerance of 10 per cent, by weight, of leafy vegetables satisfying neither the requirements of the class nor the minimum requirements is allowed. Within this tolerance not more than 2 per cent in total may consist of produce affected by decay. In addition, 20 per cent, by weight, of single leaves is allowed when presented as rosettes.

V. Provisions concerning presentation

A. Uniformity

The contents of each package must be uniform and contain only leafy vegetables of the same origin, variety or commercial type and quality.

In Class I, leafy vegetables must be uniform in shape and colour.

However, a mixture of leafy vegetables of distinctly different species may be packed together in a sales package, provided they are uniform in quality and, for each species concerned, in origin.

The visible part of the contents of the package must be representative of the entire contents.

B. Packaging

Leafy vegetables must be packed in such a way as to protect the produce properly.

The materials used inside the package must be clean and of a quality such as to avoid causing any external or internal damage to the produce. The use of materials, particularly of paper or stamps bearing trade specifications, is allowed, provided the printing or labelling has been done with non-toxic ink or glue.

Packages must be free of all foreign matter.

VI. Provisions concerning marking

Each package² must bear the following particulars, in letters grouped on the same side, legibly and indelibly marked, and visible from the outside:

A. Identification

Packer and/or dispatcher/exporter:

Name and physical address (e.g. street/city/region/postal code and, if different from the country of origin, the country) or a code mark officially recognized by the national authority³

² These marking provisions do not apply to sales packages presented in packages bearing these particulars. However, they do apply to sales packages (pre-packages) presented individually.

³ The national legislation of a number of countries requires the explicit declaration of the name and address. However, in the case where a code mark is used, the reference "packer and/or dispatcher (or

if the country applying such a system is listed in the UNECE Code Mark Registry⁴. In the case where there is no street address available, the physical address can be made up of the name of the farm or facility, the nearest village, town, region, and postal code; or GPS coordinates and a PO Box address together with nearest town, region and country shall be accepted as a physical address.⁵

B. Nature of produce

- “Watercress”, “rocket”, “spinach”, “turnip tops”, “turnip greens”, “broccoli raab”, “chard” if the contents are not visible from the outside
- “Mixture of leafy vegetables”, or equivalent denomination, in the case of a mixture of leafy vegetables of distinctly different species.

C. Origin of produce

- Country of origin⁶ and, optionally, district where grown, or national, regional or local place name.

In the case of a mixture of distinctly different species of leafy vegetables of different origins, the indication of each country of origin shall appear next to the name of the species concerned.

D. Commercial specifications

- Class
- “Unwashed”, where appropriate
- “Wash before use” (optional).

E. Official control mark (optional)

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equivalent abbreviations)” has to be indicated in close connection with the code mark, and the code mark should be preceded by the ISO 3166 (alpha-2) country/area code of the recognizing country, if not the country of origin.

⁴ See <http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/codemarkregistry.html>.

⁵ Reservation by the United States of America on the use of a PO Box address, as it may not allow facility inspections or rapid intervention in case of recalls, and is not part of its national labelling requirement related to packer and/or dispatcher/exporter.

⁶ The full or a commonly used name should be indicated.