
UNECE STANDARD FFV-44

concerning the marketing and
commercial quality control of

CHINESE CABBAGE

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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 revised Standard for Chinese Cabbage is based on document ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2021/19, reviewed and adopted by the Working Party in 2021 (followed by a silence procedure in line with the special procedures during the COVID-19 period).

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UNECE standard FFV-44 concerning the marketing and commercial quality control of Chinese cabbage

I. Definition of produce

This standard applies to Chinese cabbage of varieties (cultivars) grown from *Brassica rapa* subsp. *pekinensis* (Lour.) Hanelt to be supplied fresh to the consumer, Chinese cabbage for industrial processing being excluded.

There are two commercial types, long and round, of Chinese cabbage.

II. Provisions concerning quality

The purpose of the standard is to define the quality requirements for Chinese cabbage 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 Chinese cabbage must be:

- intact; however some of the outer leaves may be removed and the leaves may be trimmed
- sound; produce affected by rotting or deterioration such as to make it unfit for consumption is excluded
- clean, i.e. practically free of any visible foreign matter
- fresh in appearance
- practically free from pests
- practically free from damage caused by pests
- not running to seed
- free of abnormal external moisture
- free of any foreign smell and/or taste.

The butt should be cut slightly below the lowest point of leaf growth, but the leaves should remain firmly attached. The cut should be clean.

A slight colouration of the vascular bundles of the cut surface due to storage is admitted.

The development and condition of the Chinese cabbage must be such as to enable them:

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

B. Classification

Chinese cabbage is classified in two classes, as defined below:

(i) Class I

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

They must be compact and closed.

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:

- a slight defect in shape
- slight defects in colouring
- small cracks in the outer leaves.

(ii) Class II

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

They must have reasonably compact heads, the leaves may be less closely attached.

The total length of the floral stem should not exceed one-third of the length of the head.

The following defects may be allowed, provided the Chinese cabbage retains its essential characteristics as regards the quality, the keeping quality and presentation:

- defects in shape
- defects in colouring, including slight discolouration due to chilling injury
- slight bruising of the outer leaves
- cracks in the outer leaves
- slight leaf edge necrosis.

III. Provisions concerning sizing

Size is determined by the weight of the head.

To ensure uniformity in size, the range in size between produce in the same package shall not exceed:

- the heaviest head must not be more than 1.5 times the weight of the lightest head for Class I
- the heaviest head must not be more than twice the weight of the lightest head for Class II.

IV. Provisions concerning tolerances

At all marketing stages, tolerances in respect of quality and size 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 number or weight, of Chinese cabbage 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.

(ii) Class II

A total tolerance of 10 per cent, by number or weight, of Chinese cabbage 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.

B. Size tolerances

For all classes: a total tolerance of 10 per cent, by number or weight, of Chinese cabbage not satisfying the requirements as regards sizing is allowed.

V. Provisions concerning presentation

A. Uniformity

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

Chinese cabbage of Class I must be nearly the same colour and of appreciably the same length.

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

B. Packaging

Chinese cabbage 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:

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.

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 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

- “Chinese cabbage” if the contents are not visible from the outside.

C. Origin of produce

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

D. Commercial specifications

- Class
- Number of heads (optional).

E. Official control mark (optional)

Adopted 1991

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Aligned with the Standard Layout 2023

The OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables has published an explanatory illustrated brochure on the application of this standard. The publication may be obtained from the OECD bookshop at: www.oecdbookshop.org.

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 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.