



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
21 December 2023

Original: English

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## Economic Commission for Europe

Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

### Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

#### Seventy-eighth session

Geneva, 13–15 November 2023

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

#### Terms of Reference and Working Procedures of the Working Party

## Revised Terms of Reference of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

Submitted by the secretariat

### *Summary*

The document contains the revised Terms of Reference of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards, as agreed by the Working Party at its seventy-eighth session.



## Terms of Reference

1. Mission Statement: The Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards develops and interprets internationally agreed commercial quality standards for meat and eggs, seed potatoes, fresh fruit and vegetables, and for dry and dried produce and promotes their application. It may also develop explanatory guidance for the agricultural produce standards to facilitate national and international trade of agricultural products.
2. The Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (hereinafter referred to as WP.7), acts within the framework of the mandates and policies of the United Nations and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), and is subject to the general supervision of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards. It is entrusted with the implementation of the work under the Trade subprogramme covering agricultural quality standards. This includes related guidance material, training, sustainable production and consumption patterns for an inclusive economic growth, as well as promotion of greater uptake of international standards by countries in order to enable the implementation of internationally harmonized regulatory processes.
3. To contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), WP.7 considers the needs of Governments, the private sector and consumers. Its activities along with those of its Specialized Sections contribute directly to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and SDGs. The normative work of WP.7 is primarily technical in nature and complements that of its member countries. WP.7 work is undertaken and carried out in partnership with other international policy- and standard-setting bodies, where appropriate.
4. The aim of its work is to enhance:
  - Market transparency – define a common trading language, with minimum quality requirements for agricultural produce that facilitates fair and sustainable trade, reduces technical barriers to trade and contributes to economic growth [SDG 8].
  - Food security – through the development and application of quality standards, recommendations and guides to promote the sustainable production, trade, and consumption of quality agricultural produce, including practices to prevent and/or reduce food loss and waste [SDG 2, 12].
  - Collaboration – undertake capacity-building activities in cooperation with other public and private sector international bodies (in support of the previous two activities) [SDG 17].
5. The Working Party operates under the ECE Rules of Procedure and the Guidelines on procedures and practices for ECE bodies, as agreed in Commission Decision A(65) (E/2013/37-E/ECE/1464, Annex III, Appendix III).
6. All United Nations Member States can participate in the Working Party, in compliance with the accreditation process contained in the Guidelines on procedures and practices for ECE bodies.
7. Relevant international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector can also be invited as observers in compliance with the relevant United Nations rules and practices.
8. The Working Party defines its working procedures and those of its Specialized Sections.
9. The Working Party shall:
  - Develop internationally agreed commercial quality standards for agricultural produce taking into consideration national standards and industry and trade practices for fresh fruit and vegetables (including early and ware potatoes); dry and dried produce (dried fruits and nuts); seed potatoes; meat; and eggs. The Working Party develops standards and explanatory guidance on request from member countries. Some of this work is subject to the availability of resources.

- Revise and amend existing standards to reflect changing production, trading and marketing conditions, taking SDG targets into consideration.
- Undertake activities to harmonize the international application of its standards by developing and disseminating interpretative and guidance material.
- Collect, analyse, and communicate, when appropriate, production, trade and inspection practices and other areas relevant to sustainable development, implementation and promotion of its standards and guidance material.
- Undertake training activities targeted at public and private sectors to support sustainable development of agricultural production and trade.
- Promote harmonization of inspection methods, quality-control procedures and the use of a common quality conformity certificate, in cooperation with governmental, intergovernmental and other organizations implementing standards to achieve comparability of results.
- To avoid duplication of work and divergence in standards and their interpretation, cooperate with other international organizations and standard-setting bodies that develop and interpret agricultural quality standards for trade facilitation and consumer protection. This includes relevant commodity committees of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables.
- Ensure that the standard-setting process is consistent with relevant international rules such as those by the World Trade Organization and the International Plant Protection Convention.
- Facilitate communication between private and public stakeholder organizations with an interest in the ECE agricultural standards, to promote transparent, fair and sustainable trade.

10. The Working Party shall review its Terms of Reference every five years and submit it for approval to the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards and the Executive Committee of ECE.

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