



Terms of Reference of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (2018) *

Mission Statement

The Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards develops, interprets and promotes the application of internationally agreed commercial quality standards for meat and eggs, seed potatoes, fresh fruit and vegetables, and dry and dried produce and guidance material for agricultural produce to facilitate national and international trade of agricultural products. The Working Party takes account of the needs of Governments and the private sector to deliver the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Terms of Reference

1. The Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (hereinafter referred to as WP.7), acting within the framework of the mandates and policies of the United Nations and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), and subject to the general supervision of the UNECE Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards, is entrusted with the implementation of the work under the UNECE Trade Subprogramme covering agricultural quality standards, related guidance material, training and sustainable production and consumption patterns for an inclusive economic growth. The activities of WP.7 and its Specialized Sections contribute directly to the United Nations Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The work being primarily of a technical nature complements and is carried out in partnership with policy-related work undertaken by other international bodies.
2. The aim of its work is to develop:
 - Market transparency - define a common trading language, with minimum quality requirements for agricultural produce that facilitate fair and sustainable trade, prevent technical barriers to trade and contribute to economic growth [SDG 8]
 - Food security - Promote the sustainable production and consumption of quality agricultural produce, including the prevention of food loss [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]
3. 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).
4. The Working Party is open for participation by all UN member States in compliance with the accreditation process contained in the guidelines on procedures and practices for ECE bodies (E/2013/37 E/ECE/1464).
5. In addition, representatives from relevant international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector, can also be invited as observers, in compliance with the UN rules and practices in this respect.

6. The Working Party defines its working procedures and those of its Specialized Sections.

7. 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; seed potatoes; meat; and eggs. The Working Party may develop standards, on request from countries, for other agricultural products, 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, communicate, and analyse, when necessary, 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 sector to support sustainable development of production and trade.
- Promote uniform quality-control procedures and the use of the model quality conformity certificate through the Specialized Sections and in cooperation with governmental, inter-governmental and other organizations implementing standards to achieve uniformity of inspection methods and comparability of results.
- Cooperate with other international organizations and standard-setting bodies, such as the Codex Alimentarius Commission and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables, to avoid duplication of work and divergence in standards and interpretation. Ensure that the standard-setting process is consistent with relevant international rules such as from the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC).
- Facilitate communication between private and public stakeholder organizations with an interest in the standards to provide a basis for transparent, fair and sustainable trade.

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

** Note: The Working Party revised its revised Terms of Reference (document ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2018/3) at its November 2018 session and adopted them in an intersessional-approval procedure in January 2019. They will be submitted for adoption to the Trade Capacity and Standards and the Executive Committee of the UNECE in May 2019.*