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Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce

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Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda

Review of existing standards

Prunes

Document submitted by France

The comments and proposals contained in the document below are submitted herewith to the Specialized Section by the French delegation.

The Specialized Section is invited to review and discuss this revised text. It is prepared according to ECE/CTCS/2017/10 (sect. II. A. (c)) and ECE/CTCS/2018/2 (sect. VII. (a)).



Prunes/dried plums¹

Comment from the French delegation: For the French version, only the term “*Pruneaux*” should be used and not “*Prunes séchées*”, which are not finished products.

I. Definition of produce

This standard applies to prunes of varieties (cultivars) grown from *Prunus domestica* L. intended for direct consumption or for food when they are to be mixed with other products for direct consumption without further processing. This standard does not apply to prunes that are processed by salting, sugaring, flavouring or roasting or for industrial processing.

Prunes may be presented in one of the following styles:

- Whole, unpitted
- Whole, pitted

Comment from the French delegation: Information on variety seems necessary to avoid expedient deviations. (For example, in France, for prunes, only the prune d’Ente (at the international level it is an Agen cultivar) is allowed.) We cannot use varieties like Stanley, quetsch, etc. An exchange on this point would be welcome.

II. Provisions concerning quality

The purpose of the standard is to define the quality requirements for prunes at the export-control stage, after preparation and packaging.

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

A. Minimum requirements²

In all classes, subject to the special provisions for each class and the tolerances allowed, the prunes must display the following characteristics:

The prunes must be:

Comment from the French delegation: France wishes to maintain the previous version of the provision which contains the indication “prepared from physiologically ripe fruit”. An objective measurement of ripeness can be made by determining the acidity of the prunes.

- Intact, without peduncles; however, slight superficial damage is not considered as a defect; the fruit may be pitted

¹ Either “prunes” or “dried plums” may be used. For ease of reading, the word “prunes” is used throughout the text. Anywhere it appears in the standard, the words “dried plums” can be substituted, including in the marking provisions.

² Definitions of terms and defects are listed in annex III of the Standard Layout, Recommended terms and definition of defects for standards of dry (inshell nuts and nut kernels) and dried produce. See www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/agr/standard/dry/StandardLayout/StandardLayout DDP_e.pdf.

Comment from the French delegation: The annex on the “Definition of terms and defects” has been deleted in this version, which refers to the Standard Layout. However, some defects specific to prunes are not included in the Standard Layout where the dimensions of the size of the defaults are no longer found. For example, “end cracks”, the size in mm of “mechanical damage” and the size in mm of “calluses”, which were in the previous version “Callosities”.

Comment from the French delegation: The term “slight superficial damage” is ambiguous. It is necessary to clarify or withdraw this provision.

- Fleshly, the flesh being elastic and pliable
- Covered with a wrinkled skin
- Sound; produce affected by rotting or deterioration such as to make it unfit for consumption is excluded
- Clean; practically free of any visible foreign matter³
- Free from living pests, whatever their stage of development
- Free from damage caused by pests, including the presence of dead insects and/or mites, their debris or excreta
- [Free from damage to skin and/or flesh such as:

Comment from the French delegation: To be maintained.

- Callous growth cracks, occurring at the ends of prunes, scars, splits or breaks
- Splits or breaks exposing a substantial part of the flesh and seriously affecting the appearance of the fruit
- [Cracks, splits or breaks down to the stone in unpitted prunes]

Comment from the French delegation: To be maintained.

- Affecting in aggregate more than 20 mm in diameter]

Comment from the French delegation: To be maintained.

- Free from mould filaments visible to the naked eye
- Free of fermentation
- Free of abnormal external moisture
- Free of foreign smell and/or taste, except for a taste of sodium chloride and a slight smell of preservatives/additives

Comment from the French delegation: To accept “a taste of sodium chloride (salted prune) or a slight smell of preservatives/additives” represents a decline in quality. This could eventually allow any additive or preservative other than sorbic acid (or its salt, potassium sorbate) which, at the authorized dose, remains odourless.

The condition of the prunes must be such as to enable them to:

- Withstand transportation and handling
- Arrive in satisfactory condition at the place of destination

B. Moisture content⁴

Comment from the French delegation: France wishes to maintain the following provision of the current standard: “The moisture content of prunes must not exceed 35%.” “Prunes with a higher moisture content should be labelled as high moisture or equivalent denomination.” “Preservatives may be used, taking into consideration the regulations applicable in the importing country.” Moreover, it does not seem possible to preserve prunes with a moisture content higher than 23% without additional treatment for preservation.

³ Added ingredients are not considered as foreign material, provided they are not prohibited by the legislation of the importing country.]

⁴ The moisture content is determined by one of the methods given in annex I of the Standard Layout – Determination of the moisture content for dried produce. See www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/agr/standard/dry/StandardLayout/StandardLayout DDP_e.pdf. The laboratory reference method shall be used in cases of dispute.

Untreated prunes shall have a moisture content not exceeding 35.0 [30.0, 25.0] %.

Prunes with a moisture content exceeding 35.0 [25.0] % and treated with preservatives or preserved by other means (e.g. pasteurization) should be labelled as high moisture or equivalent denomination.

C. Classification

In accordance with the defects allowed in section “IV. Provisions concerning tolerances”, prunes are classified into the following classes:

“Extra”, Class I and Class II.

Comment from the French delegation: There is no information in the standard on the “Extra” class.

The defects allowed must not affect the general appearance of the produce as regards quality, keeping quality and presentation in the package.

III. Provisions concerning quality

Sizing of prunes is done by the number of prunes in 500 g (or in 1 lb (453 g)),

Pitted prunes must be sized after pitting. To ensure uniformity in size, one of the following must be applied.

Comment from the French delegation: The French delegation does not agree with the proposal, “Pitted prunes must be sized after pitting.” On the contrary, the size of pitted prunes is always measured before pitting.

A. Size nomenclature

Comment from the French delegation: The text should indicate whether they are whole or pitted prunes.

Designation per 500 g

Designation	Number of prunes per 500 g
Super giant	Not more than 33 prunes
Giant	From 34 to 44 prunes
Very large	From 44 to 55 prunes
Large	From 55 to 66 prunes
Medium	From 66 to 77 prunes
Small	From 77 to 99 prunes
Very small	More than 99 prunes

Comment from the French delegation on the designation “Super giant”: The corresponding number is incorrect. In accordance with French regulations, we propose: “Super giant: Not more than 32 prunes”.

Comment from the French delegation on the designation “Giant”: The corresponding number is incorrect. In accordance with French regulations, we propose: “Giant: From 33 to 44 prunes”.

Designation per pound

<i>Designation</i>	<i>Number of prunes per pound (453 g)</i>
Extra large	From [36] to [43] prunes
Large	From [43] to [53] prunes
Medium	From [53] to [67] prunes
Small	From [67] to [85] prunes

Comment from the French delegation on Designation per pound: France does not agree with this presentation. If maintaining this is desired, it would be preferable to use the term “American designations”. In addition, “Designation per pound” creates confusion by calling “Large”/”gros” different sizes: the “Large” size expressed by 500g (55 to 66) should give 50 to 60 per lb and not 43 to 53, as presented.

B. Numerical categories

Size categories may also be described numerically by the range of average count per 500 g or per pound (453g), for example: 30/40; 35/45; 90/120; etc.

C. “Pressure-pitted prunes”

Sizing of pressure-pitted prunes is optional.

Comment from the French delegation: France would like to maintain the provision “unless they are sold in small packages intended for the consumer”.

Prunes packed in accordance with the sizing methods established in this standard must be reasonably uniform in size.

Comment from the French delegation: The notion of uniformity in size should be applicable to all types of prunes, with or without pits.

In a sample of 5 kg of fruit taken from a given consignment, the difference between the number of the smallest prunes and that of the largest prunes per 500 g must not exceed:

- 25 for consignments of prunes of sizes ranging from 44 to 55 prunes per 500 g
- 35 for consignments of prunes of sizes ranging from 55 to 77 prunes per 500 g
- 45 for consignments of prunes of sizes containing more than 77 prunes per 500 g

The difference is calculated by reference to 10% (by weight) of the sample for the smallest prunes and 10% (by weight) for the largest.

Comment from the French delegation: We note that the method for measuring uniformity in size, which appeared in the annex to the previous version, now only applies to pressed pitted prunes. This new text requires uniformity of size (V. A. Uniformity) while removing the method of measurement. This clearly constitutes a decline in quality.

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 minimum requirements of the class indicated.

[A. Quality tolerances]

Comment from the French delegation: There is an inconsistency, if not a contradiction, between paragraph “II. A. Minimum requirements” and this paragraph. For example, II. A reads “Free of fermentation” and here a tolerance of 1% or 2% is granted; the same goes for “mould”, etc.

Defects allowed (percentages by weight or number)	Unpitted prunes		Pitted prunes	
	Class I	Class II	Class I	Class II
(a) Tolerances for produce not satisfying the minimum requirements	10	[15]	10	15
Of which no more than:				
Non-characteristic colour and texture	10	15	10	15
End cracks	10	15	10	15
Rot, deterioration, mould	1	2	0.5	2
Skin or flesh damage, calluses, heat injury	[6	10	2	4]
Damage caused by pests	2	4	2	4
Fermentation	1	2	1	2
Living pests	0	0	0	0
(b) Size tolerances	10	10	10	10
For produce not conforming to the size indicated, if sized	10	10	10	10
(c) Tolerances for other defects				
Foreign matter (of vegetable origin)	1	1	1	1
Foreign matter (of mineral origin)	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Among pitted prunes, whole pits and pieces of pits			[0.5] [2]	[2.0] [4]

Comment of the French delegation on the defects allowed in percentages by weight or number: There is ambiguity between weight and number: we propose that “percentage by weight” only be maintained.

Comment from the French delegation on the tolerances allowed for the presence of rot, deterioration, mould: French legislation (Order No. 28/08/1972) specifies: “No tolerance is allowed for the presence of mould, rot, live or dead insects or live mites.” It should therefore be specified in a footnote.

Comment of the French delegation on size tolerances: Is the size tolerance related to uniformity in size?

V. Provisions concerning presentation

A. Uniformity

The contents of each package⁵ must be uniform and contain only prunes of the same origin, quality and size (if sized) and variety or commercial type (if indicated).

⁵ Proposal to include definitions in the glossary of terms:

Package: Individual packages conceived to facilitate handling and transport of a number of sales packages or of produce loose or arranged, in order to prevent damage caused by handling, transport, or contaminants (for example cartons, plastic bags, pallet boxes, etc.). The package may constitute a sales package. Road, rail, ship and air containers are not considered as packages.

Sales package: Individual packages conceived to constitute a sales unit to the final user or consumer at the point of purchase.

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

Prunes in Class I must be of the same variety or the same commercial type.

B. Packaging

Prunes must be packed in such a way so as to protect the produce properly.

The materials used inside the package must be clean and of a quality so 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 in accordance with the table of tolerances in section “IV. Provisions concerning tolerances”.

VI. Provisions concerning marking

Each package⁶ 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:

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 authority.⁷

B. Nature of produce

- Name of the produce: the words “prunes” “dried plums”, “unpitted prunes” “prunes with pits” “pitted prunes” or “pressure-pitted prunes”

Comment from the French delegation: France would like to maintain the reference to the maximum moisture content: “Maximum moisture content XX per cent”.

C. Origin of produce

- Country of origin⁸ and, optionally, the district where grown or the national, regional or local place name

D. Commercial specifications

- Class
- Size expressed in accordance with the provisions of section III:

Pre-packages are sales packages such as the packaging enclosing the foodstuff completely or only partially, but in such a way that the contents cannot be altered without opening or changing the packaging. Protective films covering a single produce are not considered as pre-packages.]

⁶ These marking provisions do not apply to sales packages presented in packages.

⁷ The national legislation of a number of countries requires the explicit declaration of the name and address. However, in cases 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 with the ISO 3166 (alpha) country code of the recognizing country, if it is not the country of origin.

⁸ The full or a commonly used name should be indicated.

- As the minimum and maximum number of prunes contained in 500g or 1 lb (453 g), by “X/Y prunes per 500 g”; or
- By the corresponding designation, followed by the minimum and maximum number of prunes contained in 500 g or 1 lb (453 g)
- Crop year (optional)
- “Best before” followed by the date (optional).
- Net weight

E. Official control mark (optional)
