



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.6/2007/3
28 December 2006

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

COMMITTEE ON TRADE

Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes

Thirty-seventh session
Geneva, 19-21 March 2007
Item 4(c) of the provisional agenda

REVIEW OF THE UNECE STANDARD FOR SEED POTATOES

Concept of Homogeneity of Lot

Submitted by the United Kingdom

This document is to support discussion on the amendment of the provision concerning quality with reference to homogeneity of the lot.

I. BACKGROUND

1. Provision VI(C) on presentation says: "A lot should be sufficiently homogenous". Homogenous is defined in the glossary as "uniform in composition and appearance". The Standard does not, however, define "sufficiently" in the context of homogenous. Discussions on this issue have taken place over a number of meetings of Specialized Section and the Extended Bureau.

2. The only outcome, so far, is a proposal that no sample should exceed double a tolerance. In many cases, importing countries do not have the resources to examine many containers from a crop. Applying this guidance, there would be a real risk to the exporting country that selection of such a container could result in rejection at the point of import. Also, this proposal does not address the general issue of wide variability within a lot when samples are within this "tolerance".

3. Progress on this issue might be made, particularly in terms of "quality" diseases, by considering the amount of heterogeneity within a lot which is likely to be acceptable to the buyer rather than homogeneity of the lot. Rather than considering rejection at a "tolerance" above a specified tolerance, excessive heterogeneity should be considered in the context of sampling practice.

4. All seed potato certification schemes recognize that there will be a degree of heterogeneity within any lot and that this will increase with the variability of the land on which a crop was grown, the size of the crop and the size of the lot. Acceptable heterogeneity (sufficiently homogenous) could be defined as meaning that the seed potatoes within different containers are as uniform as is practical to provide assurance that the seed potatoes will, on average, comply with prescribed tolerances and will not vary excessively in performance.

5. In practice in certification, this probably means that samples from any container should rarely exceed a prescribed tolerance by any significant margin and that a discernable difference between any individual samples should be a signal to an inspector to sample additional containers to confirm overall compliance with a tolerance. This latter action should be a key part of the sampling practice in which an inspector responds to evidence of excessive heterogeneity amongst samples by increasing the number of containers sampled from a lot. For example, a difference between samples of more than 75 per cent of a prescribed tolerance might be set as the guideline for initiating sampling of additional containers.

6. A further measure to minimize unacceptable heterogeneity might be a requirement that seed potatoes from different fields cannot be marketed in one lot, i.e. bulked. In addition, it might also be required that crops of one variety grown in one field from seed of different origins should not be bulked for marketing. In the latter scenario with a seed-transmitted disease, e.g. black scurf, it is possible that the health of planted seed of different origins could differ, with one origin being infected and the other being free. This difference could then be reflected in the health of daughter crops. If seed potatoes from these crops were amalgamated, then the seed from one origin might perform differently from seed of another origin when planted, resulting in an overall uneven crop performance.

II. PROPOSALS

A. Add new definition to glossary or to provision VI(C)

Sufficiently homogenous (acceptable heterogeneity) means that the seed potatoes within different containers are as uniform as is practical to provide assurance that the seed potatoes will, on average, comply with prescribed tolerances and will not vary excessively in performance.

B. Text for inclusion in provisions for sampling

An inspector should sample additional containers if individual samples from a lot exceed the prescribed tolerance by any significant margin or if there is a discernable difference between any individual samples. For the purpose of guidance, a difference between the samples of more than 75 per cent of a prescribed tolerance might be considered a sufficient basis for requiring the sampling of additional containers.

C. Bulking of crops of a single variety

Unless the Certifying Authority is content that this procedure would not pose a minimal risk of excessive heterogeneity, seed potatoes from different fields and seed potatoes grown from one field but from different seed origin should not be bulked for marketing because this may create seed lots with excessive heterogeneity and subsequent uneven crop performance.