

Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Trade

Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes

Meeting of the Extended Bureau

Oulu, Finland, 8-11 September 2015

Report of the meeting

Technical visits and scientific discussions

Monday, 7 September:

Meeting with potato researchers at the University of Helsinki, Minna Pirhonen covered current thinking on bacterial diseases (Soft rots: *Pectobacterium*, *Dickeya* and the various novel and old types of these organisms currently causing disease particularly the Finnish experience. and *Liberibacter*: including carrot yellows and the infection of potatoes by EU strains of *Liberibacter* (strains (haplotypes)) present elsewhere cause zebra chip of potatoes).

Jari Valkonen discussed virus diagnostics including new prospects for use of RNA deep sequencing for quarantine and nuclear stock testing to assure freedom from virus diseases which has started to be used now in Finland.

Kristina Himanen gave the delegation a tour of the university's new automated imaging (RBG/Chlorophyll Luminescence/thermal) growth chambers.

Wednesday, 9 September:

The group visited seed potato production companies and farms in Tyrnävä: The Finnish Seed Potato Centre Ltd (SPK), managing director Ms. Paula Ilola and production manager Mr. Jukka Pekka Palohuhta and saw the micropropagation facilities including the aeroponic production. HZCP Kantaperuna, production manager Mr. Samuli Läspä and farmer Mr. Lauri Rahko took the group on a tour of their potato storage facilities and then visited the field where harvesting was in progress.

Thursday, 10 September:

The group received talks from and had discussion with the potato researchers from the Natural Resources Institute Finland: Dr. Elina Virtanen, Dr. Lea Hiltunen and Dr. Yeshitila Degefu. The discussion covered hydroponic microtuber production, PVY transmission by aphids and blackleg diagnostics.

Meeting of the Extended Bureau

1. Review of the definitions of “field”, “crop”, “lot” and “origin”

The Extended Bureau proposed the following definitions for “crop” in the standard:

Crop:

A defined area of seed potatoes that is limited to one variety and class and is registered as a single unit for certification. The origin is documented.

The Extended Bureau proposed the following amendment for “lot” in the standard:

Lot:

A quantity of seed potatoes of the same variety and class, derived from the same crop and bearing the same a unique reference number. There may be multiple lots per crop, which has been prepared for marketing, and being of the same variety, category, class, size and origin.

The section proposed the following amendment to the definition of “origin”:

Origin:

~~Officially defined area where a lot of seed potatoes was grown.~~ The crop from which the seed potatoes are derived and which can be identified.

2. UNECE Guide to Seed Potato Tuber Inspection

The Extended Bureau discussed and amended the text for the guide up to mid-way through the section on “External Faults”.

See Document: “GE.6_BUR_2015_3_Rev_Oulu_final.doc”

3. Review of the definitions of virus diseases

The specialised section proposed to delete the definitions of “Mild Virus”, “Severe Virus” and “Severe Virus Diseases”

and to replace them with the following definition of “Virus Disease”

Virus diseases:

Manifest themselves by deformations of the foliage with or without discolouration. Determination of the count is based on the observed presence/absence of virus symptoms in a crop at the time of the inspection. Simple diagnostic field kits are available that can aid identification of many of the viruses and there are laboratories that offer comprehensive testing, if required. If a virus is suspected the inspector may seek confirmation using approved diagnostic tests.

Virus symptoms in potato plants can be discolouration, mottling, rugosity, crinkling, rolling and brittleness of the leaves or dwarfing of the plant, as with mosaic or/and potato leaf roll disease. It is

important to note that the actual virus, virus strain, potato variety, environmental conditions all may affect the expression of the virus symptoms

The following viruses or virus combinations are normally associated with symptoms of virus PLRV, PVY, PVA or PVM

PVY + PVX, PVA + PVX or PVX + PVS.

PVS, PVX, and other viruses, depending on the strain and variety, may be latent or show mild symptoms.

4. Risk-based inspections

This item was postponed as the Rapporteur was not present.

5. UNECE Guide to Operating a Seed Potato Certification Service

The delegation of New Zealand presented the draft Guide for a short outline discussion and sought feedback from the members of the Extended Bureau. The Bureau proposed a more detailed discussion be held on this topic at the next meeting.

6. Specialized Section's website

The delegations discussed the UNECE web site including the List of Diseases, Pests and Defects. The group supported maintenance of the trilingual list. The chair asked for more detailed proposals regarding continuation of the list and delegations undertook to provide comments.

Members of the Bureau commented that it was not easy to find the documents on the UNECE site and felt some were missing, notably the Promotional Leaflet.

The Bureau wished to have direct links to the recently prepared Guides. The chair undertook to follow this up with the Secretariat.

Delegations wished to receive further copies of the Leaflet and the Guides.

7. Sample sizes

The meeting proposed the following changes to the standard In Annex 2B:

“2. Level and timing of inspection

A minimum of two inspections is recommended for growing plants. Where possible, inspections should start at or shortly before the flowering stage.

The DA shall specify the inspection procedures. In general, the procedures should allow the inspector to inspect at random a representative sample of plants from a crop.

The number of plants inspected should be sufficient to ensure that, with an appropriate level of confidence, the tolerances given in Annex II A are not

exceeded. Table YY in Annex IX provides guidance on the number of plants to sample and maximum allowable number of each fault in each sample size.

The number of plants affected by the diseases listed in annex II, section A, points 2 and 3 and those not true to variety or of another variety (annex II, section A, point 4) should be recorded separately in the field inspection report and each expressed as a percentage of the total number of plants inspected in the ~~crop sample~~.

Observation of symptoms of the diseases specified in Annex II A 5, during inspection, or at any other time, will result in the crop being rejected, if confirmed by appropriate diagnostics.

During each crop inspection the inspector should verify the purity and identity of the variety. The first generation derived from Pre-basic TC class seed potatoes should be inspected at a more intensive rate to identify off-types.”

The Bureau proposed to continue with this work to establish a more inclusive approach to statistical methods in Annex IX. Specifically to extend the scope of annex IX to include statistical aspects applicable to field inspections. The Delegation of New Zealand is the rapporteur assisted by Finland, UK and USA

8. Requirement on “physiology”

This topic was postponed to a future meeting.

9. PCR techniques for virus testing

The discussion was postponed as the rapporteur was not present. However the Extended Bureau discussed increasing the scope of this item to include harmonisation of virus testing diagnostic methods. Reference was made to the approach taken by ISTA for development and use of testing methods.

There was a proposal to survey participating countries to ask what the current practices are for virus testing.

The delegations Sweden, Finland and Czech Republic volunteered to join the existing group which comprises of Switzerland (rapporteur), the Netherlands, France and Denmark.

10. Definition of tolerance by weight or by number

The Bureau Closed this item.

11. Promotion of the Standard

The delegations discussed ways of promoting the Standard, including related technical assistance and capacity-building activities.

The following activities were proposed:

- The Extended Bureau discussed inviting delegations from the region to attend the Extended Bureau meeting in South Africa.

- Conduct a survey of the list server, ESA and other interested parties to establish what is sought by participating countries in terms of capacity building.
- There was a proposal to co-ordinate the extended bureau meetings to coincide with the World Potato Congress (WPC) and if possible secure an opportunity to speak at the WPC in order to raise the profile of the standard with those participating in the WPC meeting (this had been very Successful in the Edinburgh meeting). The next WPC is in Peru in 2018.
- Potential sources of funding were discussed, in particular WTO funding.
- The guides were seen as a key instrument for capacity building.
- There was a request from delegations to print further copies of the promotional leaflet and guides.
- The delegation of Australia is developing an app version of the disease guide (IOs, Android and Windows).

12. Future work and other business

The section has the following ongoing work:

- Guide to Seed Potato Tuber Inspection
- Risk-based inspections
- Guide to Operating a Seed Potato Certification Service
- Specialized Section's website
- Sample sizes
- physiology
- PCR techniques for virus testing
- Promotion of the Standard
- Capacity Building activities
 - Including a survey of interested parties

The following topics were proposed for addition to the work of the Specialised Section

- Ask ESCAA to conduct a review of the EU schemes to update the tables of participating country schemes. the delegations of Germany and France undertook to progress this topic.
- True Potato Seed. The delegations of France and Netherlands would take this topic forward.

13. Future meetings

March 2016: South Africa (confirmed) (Extended Bureau)

August 31 – 2 September 2016: Geneva (specialised Section)

March 2017: New Zealand (invitation received) (Extended Bureau)

2018 Peru to coincide with World Potato Congress (proposal) (Extended Bureau)