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### **Economic Commission for Europe**

Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

**Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards**

Specialized Section on Standardization  
of Seed Potatoes

**Forty-third session**

Geneva, 31 August (p.m.) – 2 September 2016

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

**Information on the Bureau and Rapporteurs' meetings  
held in 2015 and 2016**

### **Information on the Bureau and Rapporteurs meetings held in 2015 and 2016**

The following document contains the reports of the Bureau and Rapporteurs' meetings that took place in Oulu, Finland, in September 2015 and Kimberley, South Africa, in March 2016. Both reports contain new proposals, amendments and suggestions for the Specialized Section's future work. Particular attention is drawn to the report from the meeting in Oulu where changes to the UNECE Standard for Seed Potatoes were proposed (i.e. new definitions for "field", "crop", "lot" and "origin")

## I. Meeting of the Bureau and Rapporteurs - Oulu, Finland, 8-11 September 2015

### 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 Bureau and Rapporteurs

#### Review of the definitions of “field”, “crop”, “lot” and “origin” (changes are highlighted)

The meeting proposed the following definition 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 meeting proposed the following amendment for “lot” in the standard:

“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 meeting 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.”

### **UNECE Guide to Seed Potato Tuber Inspection**

The meeting 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”

### **Review of the definitions of virus diseases**

The meeting 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.”

### **Risk-based inspections**

This item was postponed as the Rapporteur was not present.

### **UNECE Guide to Operating a Seed Potato Certification Service**

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

### **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.

### **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 participant from New Zealand is the Rapporteur assisted by Finland, United Kingdom and the United States.

### **Requirement on “physiology”**

This topic was postponed to a future meeting.

### **PCR (polymerase chain reaction) techniques for virus testing**

The discussion was postponed as the Rapporteur was not present. However, the meeting 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 the Czech Republic volunteered to join the existing group which comprises Switzerland (Rapporteur), Denmark, France and the Netherlands.

### **Definition of tolerance by weight or by number**

The Bureau closed this item.

### **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 Bureau and the Rapporteurs discussed inviting delegations from the region to attend the informal 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 informal Bureau and Rapporteurs 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).

#### **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 Specialized 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.

#### **Future meetings**

March 2016:	South Africa (confirmed) (informal meeting)
August 31 – 2 September 2016:	Geneva (Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes)
March 2017:	New Zealand (invitation received) (informal meeting)
2018:	Peru - to coincide with World Potato Congress (proposal – informal meeting)

## **II. UNECE Bureau and Rapporteurs Meeting on Seed Potatoes, Kimberly, South Africa, 15, 17 and 18 March 2016**

### **Technical Visits**

#### **First field visit day: Meeting with Griekwaland-Wes Korporatief (GWK) in Douglas, testing facility, minituber production facility and seed potato production farms.**

The group received an introduction to the GWK system from André Coetzee and Ruben Rens, including their vision that farmers make rockets which is to say all of human activity can only happen because people are well fed.

The group also visited the farm of Frank Lawrence where we saw a seed potato centre pivot and the group discussed sampling to assure freedom from bacterial wilt (brown rot, *Ralstonia solanacearum*). The group also discussed eligibility of fields in particular crop rotations, isolation distances and volunteer control. Gideon Truter (regional manager) and Frank Osler (technical manager) for Potato Certification Service explained the field inspection process as well as the post haulm destruction field tuber sampling process.

The group then visited the Northern Cape Laboratory where Anél Esbach Technical Manager of Plantovita (the official supervisory testing laboratory) explained the virus and bacterial wilt testing process. The group toured the lab and had a discussion on testing methods.

The group also visited the GWK minituber production facility (tunnel houses) which was introduced by the manager Nico DuToit.

#### **Second field visit day: Technical visit to Wesgrow, quarantine and tissue culture facility, minituber production plant, visit to a seed potato production farms and packing facility.**

The group visited the Rascal Nuclear Stock facility. This facility is the quarantine, genebank, micropropagation and minituber production site for the WesGrow group. The group toured the contained microplant handling facility with Margaret Rebombo the lab manager and then the minituber production tunnels with Dawie Ras, the managing director, and DD Joshi, the production manager. They have two systems for minituber production: aeroponics and vermiculite based production.

The group went to the Agrivan farm field production and pack house (part of the WesGrow farming group) where Werner Du Plessis explained their operation. Gerhard Posthumus explained the WesGrow group operation including how they voluntarily control the quality and diligence of their growers particularly with regard to volunteer control. In South Africa the growers produce high yielding crops where the crop is used for both seed and ware production.

### **Meeting of the Bureau and Rapporteurs**

#### **Specialized Section Publications**

(a) Guide to Seed Potato Tuber Inspection:

The group finalized the guide and will submit it to the Specialized Section for approval.

(b) Guide to Operating a Seed Potato Certification Service:

The group finalized the guide and will submit it to the Specialized Section for approval.

#### **Risk-based inspections**

The delegation of the Netherlands gave an update on risk based inspection. The Dutch industry and certification service is having discussions about the Scheme in the Netherlands

and about where more or less frequent intensity or frequency can be applied to field and tuber inspection according to risk. The group asked that the Netherlands provide further information at the next meeting.

### **Sample sizes**

The group discussed field inspection sample sizes in relation to Annex IX of the standard and proposed the working group add a table for field inspections to the Standard at Annex IX. The working group is New Zealand (rapporteur), EU Commission, United Kingdom and the United States.

### **True Potato Seed**

The delegations of the EU Commission and the Netherlands updated the group on developments regarding the listing and marketing of potential varieties derived from true potato seed. The EU has no legislation to cover the marketing of true potato seed. The group also noted that the scope of the UNECE standard does not cover true potato seed. The delegations of the EU Commission and the Netherlands agreed to update the group of further developments at the next meeting.

### **Promotion of the Standard, and capacity-building activities**

- The promotional leaflet is available on the web site and from the Secretariat in hard copy in English, French and Russian. The secretariat is taking forward translation into further languages including Spanish. The Chair undertook to check whether an Arabic translation is available. Secretariat and Chair to report at the next meeting.
- The group discussed attendance at the World Potato Congress in Peru in 2018. The Chair and Vice Chairs will pursue this in conjunction with the Secretariat and report to the next meeting.
- The delegation of Kenya indicated that the East African region is currently discussing customisation of seed marketing legislation for the region and it would be helpful to have further input from the UNECE group. The Chair undertook to work with the delegation of Kenya to promote use of the UNECE standard in East Africa.
- The delegation of Australia gave an update on converting the Tuber Disease Guide into a mobile device app (Windows, Android and Apple).

### **Specialized Section's website**

- The group discussed the trilingual list of pests and concluded that this should be kept as it is with no further work on formatting.
- The delegation of Germany informed the group that the EU countries were in the process of updating the comparison tables of scheme tolerances and were reporting to the European Seed Certification Agencies Association (ESCAA) meeting. The group wished to be informed of the conclusion of this work and would then consider conducting a similar exercise of the non-EU schemes.
- The group discussed collection and publication of each Designated Authorities' (DA) scheme rules or a link to these rules via the UNECE web pages.
- The group noted that the List of DAs and the contact details therein was not up-to-date and asked that the Secretariat review the list.
- The Delegation of the United States suggested that the group conduct a survey of the DAs to update the work done in 2001 and undertook to work with the delegation of Italy to introduce this work at the next meeting. Note that this covers items III and IV above.

### **PCR techniques for virus testing**

The delegation of Finland presented the work of the working group on the PCR survey. The group revised the document and asked the working group to finalize the survey and present it to the next meeting. The working group is Finland (Rapporteur), Australia, Czech Republic, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

### **Future work and other business**

- Specialized Section Publications:
  - Guide to Seed Potato Tuber Inspection
  - Guide to Operating a Seed Potato Certification Service
  - The group discussed the printing of the guides and would seek an update from the Secretariat at the next meeting.
- PCR techniques for virus testing
- Risk-based inspections
- Sample sizes
- True Potato Seed
- Promotion of the Standard, and capacity-building activities
- Specialized Section's website
- Discussion paper on the need for a guide on Tissue Culture and Minituber production with particular reference to ISPM 33. New Zealand (Rapporteur) with Australia, South Africa, United Kingdom and the United States.
- The group noted that it may wish to conduct a survey of bacterial testing methodologies to follow on from the work on virus methods. Agenda item for general discussion.

### **Future meetings**

31 August – 2 September 2016	Geneva
29 – 31 March 2017	Geneva
Autumn 2017	Germany or France, to be confirmed.
2018	Meeting possibly to coincide with the World Potato Congress in Peru.

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