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**Economic Commission for Europe****Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards****Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards****Seventy-fifth session**

Geneva, 19-21 November 2019

Item 7 of the provisional agenda

**Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat****Report submitted by the Chairman of the Specialized Section  
on Standardization of Meat**

The following document is submitted to the Working Party for adoption. The document is prepared according to ECE/CTCS/2017/10 section II c and ECE/CTCS/2018/2 section VII a.

**I. Introduction**

1. The Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat met during the international meeting on “Meat Quality for a Sustainable Future” of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in Potsdam, Germany. All items reviewed and discussed are summarized in this report. The result of the discussions requires further work and consultations during 2019 and 2020. They will be placed on the agenda of the 2020 session of the Specialized Section.

**II. Standards of the United Nations Economic Commission for  
Europe and their implementation and utilization worldwide**

2. The Chair of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat, Mr. Ian King (Australia) introduced the work of the Specialized Section highlighting the role and importance of the meat standards and the eating quality work. He noted that UNECE standards for meat provided trust, facilitated fair international trade, prevented technical barriers to trade, defined common trading language for seller and buyers, promoted high quality sustainable production and created market transparency for buyers and consumer. International best practice, standards, guides and training can help countries to ensure consistent quality and establish trusted and sustainable trade relations. The fast-evolving work on eating quality initiated in 2014 has led to the first training sessions for Chiller Assessors this year in Europe (Wales and France). He also explained that the UNECE held regular training sessions, technical meetings and symposia on emerging issues.

He also provided an update on the use of the standards by countries in the UNECE region and beyond and stressed the role of the standards and the included cut descriptions in the international trade and control of meat traded worldwide. In order to broaden the overview of countries using UNECE standards for meat, countries were invited to report to the secretariat on their use of the UNECE cut descriptions.

### **III. Proposal to develop an Economic Commission for Europe marketing/quality standard for fish meat**

3. The discussion on the possible development of marketing standards for fish meat was introduced by the UNECE secretariat who highlighted the following:

- Existence of a Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products (CCFFP -adjourned sine die but operating electronically) with many standards for various fish species
- Existence of regional standards – e.g. EU
- Existence of national standards

4. Prior to this meeting, the UNECE secretariat had initiated consultations with members states and experts. During these consultations some countries had expressed their strong interest in developing such standards, others had opposed it (pointing to the existence of standards listed above), and a third group had been undecided.

5. She also stressed that any new work required the establishment of a new group of fish experts, with countries and designated Rapporteurs driving this work. In addition, the scope of the work, i.e. which species, wild or aquaculture fish needed to be defined.

6. In ensuing discussions, participants noted that there were also widely used industry standards in addition to the ones listed by the secretariat. It was also pointed out that more information needed to be collected on the challenges inspectors and industry were facing, including the naming and description issues. Furthermore, it was also suggested that the ramifications of developing UNECE fish meat standards should be examined.

7. As a way forward, it was suggested that the UNECE secretariat contact the Secretary of the Codex Alimentarius Commission to obtain more information on the existing Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products and to explore possible collaboration. It was also suggested that the secretariat send out a note and a short questionnaire to the Working Party members, already identified fish experts and relevant authorities, to inquire about their need to develop a marketing standard for the international trade of fish meat with the emphasis on quality as opposed to food safety, and obtain information on:

- sourcing- scope (wild or/and aquaculture)
- species
- volume exported or imported (if relevant)
- decision to develop a quality/marketing standard for the international trade of fish meat (yes/no)
- if pro development, how could the authority contribute to the development of a UNECE quality/marketing standard for the international trade of fish meat.

### **IV. Aligning the Economic Commission for Europe cut codes with Harmonized System codes**

8. Several participants reported on the problems and challenges they faced when including detailed descriptions of meat cuts into the much less detailed HS coding system used by customs. It was pointed out that in practice, most of the not-included cuts were added to HS code “Others”.

9. Some participants stressed that it was very difficult to align the very well-functioning and widely used international trade codes defined by UNECE into less defined HS codes. Alignments might even impose additional burden and adjustment costs on operators and inspectors.

10. Other participants noted that this could be done through the linking of the two codes instead of an alignment. Such an exercise, it was stressed, required the collaboration of all parties including customs authorities.

11. It was therefore decided that more information was needed before any decision could be taken. It was recommended that a subgroup would be established to lead this work including a representative from a customs agency to assist with scoping a potential project. The Specialized Section would be informed in due course.

## **V. Economic Commission for Europe standard for ovine meat – update by the delegation from Australia**

12. The Chair of the UNECE Specialized Section provided an update on recent amendments to the Australian Standard for ovine meat. He showed an explanatory video on the adoption by Australia of a new definition of “lamb” which so far had been following the wording of the UNECE standard. The new definition deviates slightly in determining dentition from the UNECE standard (see <https://youtu.be/3UkKyfsWNWg>)

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