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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

COMMITTEE FOR TRADE, INDUSTRY AND
ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

Specialized Section on Standardization of
Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

Fiftieth session, Geneva, 10 - 14 May 2004

REPORT ON ITS FIFTIETH SESSION

Executive summary:

Participation: 23 country delegations and 7 organizations participated.

Texts proposed to the Working Party for adoption as UNECE Recommendations for a two-year trial period:

- Cherries (see TRADE//WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.1).
- Peaches and Nectarines (Maturity requirements) (see TRADE//WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.4).
- Truffles (new recommendation) (see TRADE//WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.8).

Plums: The text concerning interspecific hybrids was amended and it will be proposed to the Working Party that the trial period be extended for one further year.

Texts proposed to the Working Party for adoption as revised UNECE Standards:

- Cultivated Mushrooms (TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.2).
- Kiwi Fruit (TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.3).
- Peaches and Nectarines (Marking) (see TRADE//WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.4).
- Pears (additions to the list of varieties only).
- Bilberries and Blueberries (see TRADE//WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.5).
- Plums (additions to the list of varieties only).
- Watermelons (see TRADE//WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.6).
- Citrus Fruit (maturity requirements aligned with Codex Standard) (see TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.7).

Early and ware potatoes: It was decided to merge the two standards into one and to propose to the Working Party that it adopt the resulting standard as a new UNECE Standard for Early and Ware Potatoes (FFV-52).

Executive summary (cont'd):

Table grapes: No changes were agreed at the session. A working group meeting will be held in autumn in connection with the OECD Plenary meeting.

Apples: The trial will be continued until 2005 without changing the recommendation. During that time, work on the definition of maturity requirements and sizing will continue.

Shallots: The item will be discussed at the next session if a new proposal is available.

Ceps: A proposal will be submitted to the next session.

New terms of reference for the Working Party and the specialized sections: The item will be discussed at the Working Party on the basis of a new proposal by the secretariat.

Compatibility of the control certificate with the UN layout key: The item will be discussed at the Working Party on the basis of information from UN/CEFACT.

Template for requesting inclusion of apples varieties: The template was amended in accordance with the experiences made. (See TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.9)

Use of code marks: The item will be discussed at the next session on the basis of a proposal from delegations.

Cooperation with the OECD Scheme: The item will be discussed in the Working Party on the basis of a proposal from the plenary meeting of the OECD Scheme.

Harmonized produce coding: The Specialized Section agreed the conclusions of the working group. Several delegations announced that they would prepare documents on the subject for the Working Party.

Stickers fixed directly on the fruit: The Specialized Section decided that the relevant phrase from the standard layout should be included in all standards.

WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health: The Specialized Section was informed

of the progress made with the Strategy and possible cooperation with UNECE.

Opening of the session

1. The meeting was held in Geneva from 10 to 14 May 2004 and chaired by Mr. David Holliday (United Kingdom).

2. The session was opened by the Special Assistant to the Executive Secretary of UNECE, Mr. Hans Hansell, who welcomed the delegations to Geneva for their 50th session.

3. He said that this was a busy week for UNECE and the Trade Development and Timber Division specifically with two other events taking place concurrently:

- The Committee for Trade Industry and Enterprise Development where the Chairman of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards, Mr. David Priester would report on the activities during last year;
- The Executive Forum on "Competing in a changing Europe" Opportunities and Challenges for Trade and Enterprise Development, 11-12 May 2004, focusing on consequences of EU enlargement, especially for the countries in the UNECE region that will not accede to the EU in May 2004. He said the chairman of the Specialized Section, Mr. David Holliday, would give a speech on "Building Competitiveness through the use of Common Agricultural Standards" and invited delegations to participate in this session.

4. He said that European enlargement brought challenges and opportunities to the agricultural sector of many non-acceding countries, especially to those whose agriculture had been struggling

with the loss of traditional markets after 1989 and the emergency of and new borders and trade barriers. UNECE standards and recommendations as well as other international instruments could help to overcome these barriers but only if they were known and applied. Mr. Hansell stressed the importance of implementation activities to the work of the Specialized Section and the Working Party.

5. He informed the meeting that the secretariat organized in cooperation with the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Moldova a three-day seminar on the development of international trade in Moldovan agricultural products, which had been held in Chisinau from 28-30 April 2004.

6. In participatory sessions and roundtable discussions during the seminar, participants identified the development potential and competitive advantages of Moldovan agricultural products, as well as obstacles to their export and possible solutions. Presentations from the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), World Trade Organization (WTO), Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Société Générale de Surveillance (SGS) and EAN International offered information on a range of tools available which could contribute to overcome obstacles to trade.

7. The results of the seminar were very encouraging and showed that events like this were needed in countries in transition. On the basis of the results an action plan would be drafted by the Government of the Republic of Moldova. This action plan would be submitted to relevant UNECE intergovernmental bodies (Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards and Working Party on Technical Harmonization and Standardization Policies), requesting their assistance in the implementation of follow-up activities (as feasible with the resources available).

8. Mr. Hansell closed his introduction by thanking delegations for their contributions and assistance over the last year and wished them success for the discussions.

Participation

9. The session was attended by delegations of the following countries: Belgium; Bulgaria; Canada; Denmark; Finland; France; Ghana; Germany; Greece; Hungary; Ireland; Italy; Morocco; Netherlands; New Zealand; Poland; Slovakia; Spain; Sweden; Switzerland; Turkey; United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; and United States of America.

10. The European Community was also represented.

11. The following specialized agencies/programmes participated in the session: Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, World Health Organization.

12. A representative of the OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables also participated in the session.

13. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations participated in the session: CLAM (Comité de Liaison de l'Agrumiculture Méditerranéenne) COPA/COGECA and FRESHFEL.

Adoption of the agenda

Document: TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/1

14. The provisional agenda as contained in TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/1 was adopted with the following changes:

- Documents TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/10, 13, 14, 15, 19, 22, 23 were deleted from the agenda.
- The following documents were added to the agenda (all informal documents where not otherwise mentioned are in English only):

INF.1	European Commission Services	Brix levels for apples – English and French
INF.2	South Africa	Interspecific hybrids
INF.3	Secretariat	Compatibility of the control certificate and the UNECE layout key for trade documents
INF.4	Secretariat	WHO Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health (English, French, Spanish and Russian)
INF.5	Secretariat	Application of UNECE Standards
INF.6	Israel Sun World	Comments on grapes
INF.7	Israel	Comments on maturity of citrus
INF.8	COPA-COGECA	Apples: Minimum sizes and Brix levels - English French
INF.9	Turkey	Apples: List of varieties
INF.10	European Community	Apples: List of varieties
INF.11	European Community	Pears : List of Varieties
INF.12	Europatat	Letter of the Secretary General
INF.13	Turkey	Cherries
INF.14	Turkey	Grapes – Brix levels
INF.15	France	Bilberries and Blueberries – French only
INF.16	Working Group on Truffles	Truffles – English and French
INF.17	OCAB European Commission	Stickers fixed directly on fruit and vegetables
INF.18	France	Conversion table for apple sizing
INF.19	Working Group on Truffles	Updated draft standard

Item 2: Matters of interest arising since the last session

Document: TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/2

UNECE

15. The Specialized Section took note of the outcome of the seventh session of the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development and the fifty-ninth session of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards.

European Community

16. The delegation of the European Community informed the meeting that seven Community standards had been updated: onions, artichokes, courgettes, citrus fruit, apples, pears and cherries. Provisions concerning stickers fixed directly on the product had been introduced. Some of the countries covered under the agreement on recognition of inspections in third countries had entered the European Union. There were 5 non-EU countries for which the possibility of approval of quality controls in accordance with regulation 1148/2001 has been implemented: India, Israel, Morocco, South Africa and Switzerland.

Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) and Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (CCFFV)

17. The delegation of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme said that they had no additional activities to report beyond those mentioned in their report to the Working Party (see paras. 42 to 45 of TRADE/WP.7/2003/6).

OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables

18. The delegation of the OECD Scheme reported that the explanatory brochure for avocados had been published in English, French and Spanish on paper and electronic support. Brochures for the following products were being prepared: Citrus Fruit, Strawberries, Kiwis, Apples, Pears, Table Grapes, Cucumbers, Beans, Cultivated Mushrooms, Potatoes, Pistachios, Hazelnuts and Prunes.

19. Work was also continuing on a revised guide to the implementation of quality control especially concerning sampling for internal quality, the priority of controls and the control certificate. The document for exchange of non-conformity information was also being revised.

20. The Plenary Meeting has decided to carry out a reform of the Scheme. One of the objectives of the reform is to strengthen cooperation with the other international organizations dealing with fruit and vegetable standardization.

21. The next plenary meeting of the Scheme will be held in Paris from 4 to 8 October 2004.

3. Proposals to revise UNECE Standards***3(a) Cherries***

TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/20 (European Community)

INF.13 (Turkey)

22. The delegation of the European Community introduced their document, which was aimed at clarifying the status of cherry varieties that naturally lose the stems at harvest – proposing a definition and tolerances for cherries without the stem in classes I and II.

23. The delegation of the United States said that this issue might become even more important in the future. In the United States companies were trying out such varieties, especially when harvesting mechanically.

24. The delegation of Turkey introduced their document and said that in their opinion quality class II should be deleted because such cherries were not fit to withstand international transport and

arrive in satisfactory condition to the consumer. In order to protect the consumer, such cherries should not be exported.

25. They also proposed lower tolerances for cherries losing their stems and stated that their producers were taking care to produce cherries with the stem attached.

26. Other delegations felt that Class II as currently defined for cherries was strict and was needed for different purposes (e.g. organic produce). They also felt that it was the exporters' responsibility to ensure that the produce could withstand transport.

27. After some discussion, the paper presented by the European Community was agreed. The delegation of Turkey, which had first preferred lower values for the tolerances, agreed to the values proposed for a trial period of two years.

28. The text will be proposed to the Working Party for adoption as a UNECE Recommendation for a two-year trial period. (See TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.1)

3(b) *Cultivated Mushrooms*

TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/21 (European Community)

29. The delegation of the European Community introduced their document, saying that it aimed at separating the definition of "cut mushrooms" from the requirements of the cuts by introducing those into the definition of the quality classes.

30. The delegation of Poland said that their producers had informed them that the requirement for the cut to be "approximately perpendicular" was difficult to achieve. They proposed that this requirement be deleted or that the meaning of "approximately perpendicular" be clearly defined.

31. The proposal of the European Community was agreed with the following additions:

- In the definition, before processing insert the word "industrial" to align with the standard layout.
- In the minimum requirements, replace the indent for intact with the following:
 "- intact, in the case of cut mushrooms the cut must be clean;"

32. The text will be proposed to the Working Party for adoption as a revised standard. (See TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.2)

3 (c) *Early and Ware Potatoes*

TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/7 (Germany)

TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/8 (France)

INF.12 (EUROPATAT)

33. Work on early and ware potatoes was included in the work programme of the Specialized Section following the decision of the Working Party to abolish the Specialized Section on Standardization of Early and Ware Potatoes.

34. The delegation of Germany, introducing their document, explained that the idea to join the standards for early and ware potatoes had arisen during work on the OECD brochure for these products. The differences between the standards were very small and it had been felt that it would be clearer to have just one standard. They said that in their document no further changes were proposed.

35. The organization Europatat, with members of trade from 18 countries, had asked the Specialized Section not to take any decision on the standards at this session as they would like to consult with their members at their annual session taking place from 3 to 4 June.

36. The Specialized Section decided that the decision to join the standards should not be delayed because it contained no change to the contents of the standards. It was decided to propose the text as contained in the German proposal to the Working Party for adoption as a UNECE Standard for Early and Ware Potatoes. The secretariat was asked to inform Europatat about this decision and the possibility of making comments on it after their annual session. These comments could still be taken into account by the Working Party.

37. The delegation of France said that they would resubmit their document to the next session so that it would be available in all official languages. They also offered to host a working group meeting to discuss their proposals before the next session.

3(d) *Kiwi fruit*

TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/3 (New Zealand)

TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/4 (New Zealand)

38. The delegation of New Zealand presents in their documents the results of a meeting of the working group on kiwi fruit - 2004/3 and a new consolidated text of the standard. Following the consensus reached at that meeting, the Working Party had decided not to adopt the text agreed at the last meeting of the Specialized Section to the Working Party but to wait for a new consolidated text.

39. The Specialized Section agreed the text in 2004/4, with the following changes:

- The maturity requirements will be included in a specific subsection of the text as foreseen in the standard layout and amend the text (presently footnote 1) to read as follows:
“In order to satisfy this requirement, the fruit at packing must have attained a degree of ripeness of at least 6.2° brix or an average dry matter content of 15% which should lead to 9.5° brix when entering the distribution chain.”
- II, B(i): At the end, add the following text which was agreed at the last session:
“The ratio of the minimum/ maximum diameter of the fruit measured at the equatorial section must be 0.8 or greater.”
- II, B(ii): At the end, add the following text which was agreed at the last session:
“The ratio of the minimum/ maximum diameter of the fruit measured at the equatorial section must be 0.7 or greater.”
- VI D: amend the last indent to read: “Number of fruits (optional)”.

40. The text will be proposed to the Working Party for adoption as a revised standard. (See TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.3)

41. The delegation of the United States will prepare a proposal on sizing by diameter for the next session.

3(e) *Peaches and Nectarines*

TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/24 (European Community)

42. The delegation of the European Community introduced their document, which aimed at introducing maturity requirements to avoid problems with immature fruit at the beginning of the marketing period and at simplifying the marking requirements.

43. There was a lengthy discussion on the maturity requirements because several delegations were of the opinion that the requirements as contained in the paper were not sufficiently clear and might lead to manipulation; e.g. it was mentioned that indicating the point of the fruit flesh for measuring the brix value was important as well as indicating the method to measure the firmness.

44. It was decided to include the text concerning the maturity requirements in a specific subsection as foreseen in the standard layout and to amend the text as follows: "The refractometric index of the pulp measured at the middle point of the fruit flesh at the equatorial section must be greater than or equal to 8° Brix and the firmness must be lower than 6.5 kg measured with a plunger of 8 mm diameter (0.5cm²) at two points of the equatorial section of the fruit, with the skin intact.

45. It was decided that the proposal concerning maturity requirements (as amended) should be tried out in practice. It will be proposed to the Working Party for adoption as a UNECE Recommendation for a two-year trial period. The text concerning marking will be proposed to the Working Party for adoption as a revised UNECE Standard. (See TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.4 for both texts)

3(f) Pears – List of Varieties

INF.11 (European Community)

46. The additions to the list of varieties for the large-fruited varieties: Klapa Mīlule, Suvenirs, Vasarine Sviestine were agreed.

47. The delegation of the United States said that in the future it would be interesting to have information about the trade volume of any new varieties proposed to see if they should be included in an international standard. The Chairman said that this issue could be raised when discussing templates for proposing new varieties.

48. The text will be proposed to the Working Party for adoption as a revised standard.

3(g) Table grapes

TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/5(South Africa)

INF.6 (Israel, SUN WORLD), INF.14 (Turkey)

49. The delegation of South Africa had prepared an updated list of maturity requirements for table grapes listed according to variety. A new version of this list is contained in 2004/5.

50. In INF.6 the delegation of Israel states that they could agree with the table as proposed by South Africa.

51. In the same document the company Sun World states that for the Sugraone variety, if marketed under the protected name Superior Seedless®, special maturity requirements apply.

52. In document INF.14 Turkey proposed the addition of a number of Turkish grape varieties, as well as some changes to varieties already included in the list.

53. The Specialized Section commended South Africa on their excellent work on the table.
54. It was felt that in the further development of the list and effort should be made to keep the standard as simple as possible i.e. a grouping of about 3-5 different levels of maturity into which the different varieties could be grouped was preferred to a list by variety.
55. Several delegations indicated that the values in the list at present (and the values in the present UNECE Standard) were rather low and could be reviewed.
56. The delegation of Greece felt that the sugar/acid ration was not a reliable maturity indicator as it varied too much according to region.
57. The delegation of France reported that they used 18:1 sugar/acid ratio for all varieties and did not have any problems in applying this value.
58. The delegation of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme reported that no new document was yet available from the Codex working group on table grapes, which was led by Chile.
59. It was decided:
- To propose no changes to the standard at present.
 - To ask South Africa to prepare a new proposal based on the comments made and by merging in the list proposed by Turkey.
 - To ask all other delegations to send any further comments on the issue to South Africa.
 - To deal with the issue of trade-marked varieties with special requirements once the list was completed.
 - To hold a working group meeting in connection with the OECD plenary meeting in the first week of October.

3(h) Watermelons

TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/6 (European Community)

60. The delegation of the European Community introduced their document, which stated that the changes made concerned the introduction of maturity requirements, alignment with the standard layout, lowering of the minimum size and marking provisions and a definition for seedless watermelons.
61. The text was agreed with the following changes:
- Footnote 1 in the proposal should be deleted.
 - The text concerning maturity requirements to be included in a separate section "B. Maturity requirements". Existing section B. to be renamed C.
 - In the last indent under (ii) Class II amend the word "parasites" to read "pests" (French: "parasites")
 - Amend the definition of seedless watermelons to read: "Seedless watermelons may contain underdeveloped seeds and occasional developed seeds."
62. The text will be proposed to the Working Party for adoption as a revised standard. (See TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.6)

3(i) Bilberries and Blueberries

INF.15 (France)

63. In their document France proposed to amend the marking provisions for these products such as to require the marking of the name of the produce in all cases, and not just if the contents are not visible from the outside, in order to avoid any confusion in trade because of the similar appearance of the products.

64. They propose to amend the first indent in VI B as follows:
“- ‘Bilberries’ or ‘Blueberries’, where appropriate.”

65. The proposal was agreed and the text will be proposed to the Working Party for adoption as a revised standard. (See TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.5)

4. Review of UNECE Recommendations

4(a) Apples

TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/9 (New Zealand)

INF.1 (European Commission Services), INF.8 (Copa-Cogeca), INF.9 (Turkey), INF.10 (European Union), INF.18 (France)

66. The UNECE recommendation for Apples will finish its trial period in November 2005.

67. The Chairman summed up the issues under discussion related to the recent introduction of weight sizing in the standard:

- The relationship of weight and diameter for determination of minimum size and uniformity provisions;
- Maturity requirements needed to avoid unsatisfactory produce on the markets;
- Additions to the lists of varieties.

68. Before entering into discussion the Chairman gave the floor to COPA-COGECA, (Committee of Agricultural Organizations in the European Union and General Confederation of Agricultural Co-operatives in the European Union) to get their view on the issues.

69. *Weight sizing:* Copa-Cogeca welcomed the introduction of provisions concerning the co-existence of a grading system by diameter and weight. However, because of differences in the specific weight for the same diameter for different varieties, they were of the opinion that it would be necessary to determine the correlation between the diameter and the weight, and to divide the varieties into homogeneous groups so as to adjust the current provisions on grading by weight to those concerning the diameter, in order to guarantee the uniformity of packages.

70. *Maturity requirements:* As sugar contents and/or firmness vary considerably according to the varieties and production areas and according to the climate, Copa-Cogeca believed that more research work (about 2 years) was needed to assess these new criteria, and to carry out research over a complete and exhaustive period, in order to avail of reliable historical data for all apple varieties produced in the EU.

71. *List of varieties:* Copa-Cogeca are concerned with the proposal by Turkey (INF.9) because in that proposal a number of major traditional varieties are defined as russetting varieties which might lead to confusion in trade. They said that in the future they will propose a third group of varieties for small conic apples such as Braeburn or Gala.

72. Copa-Cogeca were of the general opinion that the recommendation should not be changed now because the producers need more time to study the proposals made.

Discussion on maturity requirements

73. The delegation of the European Community introduced document INF.1. They said that the new EC standard for apples includes the provisions on weight sizing and uniformity as in the UNECE recommendation. The minimum sizes in the standard have also been aligned with those in the UNECE standard. The old sizes will continue to apply until 31 July 2005 to allow establishment of maturity requirements in the standard. They said that there was a link between size and maturity and it had to be ensured that immature produce could be kept from the market. They propose to include the parameters minimum Brix and flesh firmness in the standard as soon as possible.

74. They also propose a three-step approach for sampling based on the following principles:

- To verify the criteria only if there is a suspicion that they are not met;
- In this case to check on a reduced sample;
- If the suspicion remains or is confirmed, to check a less reduced sample.

75. They stressed that the goal of the introduction of maturity requirements was to define the minimum values below which apples would no longer be satisfactory to any consumer. They believed that this definition did not relate to the climate.

Discussion on flesh firmness

76. In their document (INF.1) the European Community proposes including a parameter for minimum firmness 4.5 kg/cm² at export stage (to exclude overripe fruit) and a maximum firmness 9-12 kg/cm² (varying according to variety)(to exclude immature fruit).

77. In the discussion no major objections were raised to including a minimum firmness. Some delegations said that a value of 4.5 kg/cm² was rather soft and that their industry preferred 5 kg/cm². Others said that the value depended on the environmental conditions and that they would need more time to check the available data to see if the values were realistic.

78. Many delegations considered it unnecessary to include a maximum firmness because immature fruit could be excluded through a minimum brix value.

Discussion on brix values

79. In their document (INF.1) the European Commission Services propose three levels according to variety while concentrating on a minimum list of varieties covering the majority of international trade.

80. There were no objections raised in principle to including a minimum brix value in the standard nor to the figures proposed in INF.1, although many delegations felt that more time was needed to check with their industry. Sweden informed of major concerns and skepticism expressed by Swedish producers and traders.

81. New Zealand supports a simple approach, and that criteria for Brix should allow fruit to mature in the market place.

82. Many interventions focused on the importance of defining how to test the criteria and the testing equipment (e.g. non destructive testing).

83. The OECD delegation informed the meeting that they were currently revising their document on sampling and methods to include methods for testing of internal quality. They hoped that that progress will be made on this issue at the plenary meeting of the Scheme in October.

Conclusion

84. All interested delegations were invited to provide data on brix values and flesh firmness to the secretariat as had been done by New Zealand in document 2004/9.

85. The subject will be re-discussed at the next session on the basis of the information received and a summary document prepared by the Chairman and the secretariat, which will be published in an addendum to this report.

Weight sizing/ uniformity

86. In their document New Zealand presents three different options:

- To maintain the existing wording with some clarifications on determination of the average weight and changes to the marking provisions.
- Specific weight limits i.e. use of a fixed weight as a suitable limit for uniformity. They do not recommend this option as it is considered to be too complicated.
- To use the diameter uniformity limits for weight and diameter.

87. The delegation of the European Community said that they did not favour the third option because it would mean that sizing would not be by weight but still be done by diameter. Concerning the first option they said that they had noted the problems with determination of the average weight, and proposed to use the “median weight” (term to be clarified) instead, which could be considered as a fourth option.

88. The delegation of France presented a table (INF.18), which had been created by their producers to facilitate the application of weight sizing.

89. The delegation of New Zealand said that more time was needed to study the options available.

90. It was decided to continue the trial without changing the recommendation.

List of varieties

91. The document from Turkey contained proposals to amend the entries to a number of varieties already contained in the standard concerning russetting, colour group or size, as well as the introduction of four varieties which are at present not included in the standard.

92. The Specialized Section thanked Turkey for providing the information in the format of the template.

93. Concerning the amendment to characteristics of varieties already included in the list, the general view of the Specialized Section was that the changes were not justified, as the varieties were listed with the characteristics that correspond to the majority of produce grown from these varieties.

94. Concerning the addition of new varieties, the Specialized Section regretted that some important information concerning parentage, breeder and trade volume was not available. It was felt that the template might need to be revised to clarify which information was requested.

95. The European Community presented a number of varieties to be added to the list that had been transmitted by Latvia and Estonia.

96. It was agreed to provisionally admit the new varieties proposed by Turkey and the European Community into the standard. They will be added to the recommendation in a trial period until 2005. After the trial they will be included in the standard if the information concerning parentage and breeder becomes available to make sure that they will be added at the correct place in the list.

4(b) Citrus fruit

TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/11 (South Africa)

INF.7 (Israel)

97. The text of the recommendation will finish its trial period in November 2004. At the last session, a working group on Citrus Fruit was formed (Israel, South Africa, Germany United Kingdom, Spain, Turkey and the European Community) to further discuss maturity requirements and the simplification of the sizing provisions.

98. Proposals for inclusion of minimum sugar acid ratio and changes to the minimum juice content had been submitted by Israel and South Africa.

99. The delegation of CLAM recalled that at the last session and then later at the CCFFV, an important consensus had been found on the maturity requirements and the question of green oranges. They felt that there was no need to change anything now in the standard. The research on sensory acceptance of Citrus that had been carried out in Spain had shown that the minimum sugar/acid ratio was not a reliable parameter to predict acceptance. They said that further tests were carried out in this season enlarging the trial also to citrus coming from other regions. They strongly recommended maintaining the existing maturity requirements (colour and juice content). They feel that the existing text had successfully facilitated trade of citrus. Any further discussion should be held on the basis of the scientific data which would become available at the end of 2004.

100. The position of CLAM was supported by many other delegations.

101. The delegation of the European Community said that they were not against looking into the inclusion of additional maturity requirements into the standard.

102. It was decided to come back to this issue at the next session when the scientific data would be available.

Sizing

103. The delegation of Germany said that the sizing requirements in the standard were very complicated and should be simplified. They would prefer a solution without size codes.

104. The delegation of CLAM said that the industry was accustomed to these provisions and applied them without problems.

105. The delegation of Germany was invited to present a proposal to the next session.

Proposal to the Working Party

106. It was agreed to align the text of the UNECE Recommendation with the text that had been adopted at the last CCFFV meeting in Mexico and to propose to the Working Party to adopt it as a revised UNECE Standard.

4(c) Plums

TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/12 (European Community)

INF.2 (South Africa)

List of varieties

107. The addition of the varieties proposed by the European Community was agreed.

Interspecific hybrids

108. The text concerning inter-specific hybrids will end its trial period in November 2004. The delegation of South Africa has sent a presentation giving more information on these products.

109. The problem is that for these hybrids the name of the species is protected and it is not clear how to refer to them in the standard.

110. The Specialized Section thanked South Africa for preparing of this presentation.

111. The delegation of the United States said that in their country these hybrids were treated according to their appearance and characteristics either as plums or as apricots.

112. Several delegations felt that the hybrids should be included in the standard in order to give an indication to inspectors how to deal with them, especially for sizing. It was also mentioned that this problem might arise in the future for other products.

113. It was decided that:

- Aprium should be removed from the recommendation, as this product is closer to apricots than to plums.
- The secretariat should write to South Africa asking them if they could contact the producers of these products to get a clarification on how they should be included in the standards especially from the sizing point of view.
- The Working Party should be asked to extend the trial period for the amended recommendation for one further year.

5. Proposals for new UNECE Standards

5(a) Draft UNECE Standard for Shallots

114. No new information was available on this item. It will be included on the agenda of the next session if a new draft is available.

5(b) Draft UNECE Standard for Truffles

INF.16 (France, Spain, European Commission)

INF.19 (France, Spain, European Commission)

115. The working group presented a new draft for this standard as contained in INF.16. The text was revised during the session based on the comments made by other delegations (INF.19). The revised text was agreed by the Specialized Section to be proposed to the Working Party for adoption as a new UNECE Recommendation for a two-year trial period. (See TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.8)

5(c) Draft UNECE Standard for Ceps

116. The working group (Finland, France, United States, Bulgaria, European Community) has met during the meeting and will transmit a proposal for a draft standard to the next session.

6. Amendments to the general texts**(a) Proposal for a layout of new terms of reference for the Working Party and its Specialized Sections (Geneva Protocol, Standard Layout, Working Procedures)**

TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.12

TRADE/WP.7/2001/6

TRADE/WP.7/2001/9, paras. 75 to 81

TRADE/WP.7/2003/6 paras. 128-137

117. The secretariat will prepare for the Working Party the layout for new terms of reference of the Working Party and the specialized sections combining texts which are at present contained in the Geneva Protocol, the Standard Layout and the Working Procedures.

118. The questions concerning the point of application and consumer packages (working group: European Community and United States) will be left open in the document as more information on this question is expected from delegations at the Working Party session.

6(b) Compatibility of the control certificate and the UNECE layout key for trade documents

INF.3 (Secretariat)

119. The delegation of the United Kingdom introduced the document. They said that the trade facilitation organization, SITPRO, had informed them that the present UNECE control certificate was not harmonized with the layout key for international trade documents recommended by the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT). They also said that one of the problems with the present certificate was that it allowed only a limited number of products to be included on each certificate and they would welcome a revision of the certificate allowing more products to be included.

120. The delegations of the European Community, and the OECD Scheme said that harmonized versions of the UNECE certificates were used by their organizations, and indicated their interest in cooperating with UNECE on the revision.

121. The delegation of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme said that the CCFFV was considering guidelines for the quality control of fresh fruit and vegetables, which include a model control certificate form based on the relevant UNECE and OECD text.

122. As a first step, the secretariat was invited to try to get some information from the UN/CEFACT secretariat on how to apply the Layout Key. The information will be transmitted to the Working Party at its next session and to the OECD Plenary meeting.

6(c) *Template for application for inclusion of apple varieties*

TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2003/26/Add.2

INF.9

123. At the last session a template was created for amendments to the list of varieties of the UNECE Standard for Apples. The delegation of Turkey used this template in their document (see TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/INF.9).

124. The content of the proposal from Turkey was discussed under the agenda item concerning apples.

125. Experience showed that the template needed to be clarified to enable applicants to correctly fill in all necessary fields.

126. Many delegations felt that at least the information on parentage and breeder needed to be included to ensure that the variety was correctly placed in the standard. They said that much work had been done by a working group two years previously to establish consistency in the list, which should be maintained by requesting relevant information before including varieties in the list.

127. It was stressed that the list of varieties was a non-exhaustive one, which means that fruits of varieties that are not part of the list may be marketed and should be graded according to their varietal characteristics. It was the intention to include those varieties in the list which are of economic importance in international trade and show red colouring, are large fruited and/or show russeting characteristics (see also footnote 3 to the template and footnote 10 to the standard)

128. It was decided to clarify in the template:

- The terms “parentage” and “breeder”
- That all information requested in the template was essential for admitting varieties into the standard to ensure that they are included in the right place.
- That the commercial importance of the variety should be indicated by stating the production volume.

129. An updated version of the template will be included in an addendum to this report. (See TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.9).

6(d) *Stickers fixed directly on the fruit/vegetable*

INF.18 (OCAB)

130. At the last session the standard layout was changed to include a sentence concerning stickers directly fixed on the individual fruit/vegetable. Since then the question arose as to which standards this sentence applies or if it should be included in all standards.

131. The Specialized Section decided that the sentence should be included in all standards because it was a general statement on how stickers should be in case they are used, and neither an indication that stickers had to be used nor an interdiction to do so.

7. Use of codes in UNECE Standards

(a) *Use of code marks, possibility for internationally harmonized marks*

132. At the last session it was pointed out that the use of code marks was increasing and that sometimes it was difficult to discern out from the code who the packer/dispatcher was because the country of the packer/dispatcher need not be the same as the country of origin of the produce.

133. It had been suggested to request in the standard that if code marks were used, the country code of the country that has issued the mark should be added to allow identification of the packer/dispatcher.

134. The delegation of the International Federation for Produce Coding said that different organizations were at present working on codes in trade and advised caution before adding a new requirement to the standards, which might seem practical now from the regulators point of view but could result in a heavy burden to operators.

135. It was decided that delegations would discuss this issue with trade and prepare a proposal for the next session.

(b) *Working Group on internationally harmonized produce coding* TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/16 (Secretariat)

136. The Specialized Section agreed on the conclusions of the draft report of a meeting of the working group held at the invitation of EAN International and the European Community in Brussels in January 2004.

137. It thanked the working group for its work and having helped to achieve a better insight into the issue of produce coding and stressed that further work on this subject would depend on clear objectives and messages received from industry and government in which area the Specialized Section could assist the work.

138. The delegation of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme informed that the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) had at its last session decided to put the item: "Proposed draft Principles for Electronic Certification" on the agenda (see ALINORM 04/27/30, para. 88 c) ii.) subject to approval as new work by the Codex Alimentarius Commission or its Executive Committee.

139. The delegation of Turkey informed the meeting that their Chamber of Commerce is implementing a project on produce coding for food safety purposes and it was intended to include quality requirements and electronic control certificate. They also said that they believe that harmonized produce coding was important for the exchange of non-conformity information. They will report on their activities in this area in a paper to the Working Party.

140. The delegation of France recalled that the current EU regulation on traceability does only contain requirements on what needs to be traced without prescribing any specific coding system. They said that they would send a letter on this issue to the secretariat explaining the French position.

141. The delegation of Slovakia said that there was interest in using codes for quality issues and that they would prepare a document for the Working Party.

142. The delegation of the United States, speaking in their capacity as President of the International Federation for Produce Coding (IFPC), said that while the coding for packaged goods was already well established, present work concentrated on how to code fresh produce sold in bulk.

143. The delegation of Canada, speaking in their capacity as Chair of the Technical Committee of IFPC, gave an overview of the work of IFPC. The IFPC is responsible for the international harmonization of the PLU codes (i.e. price look-up number which is used to identify bulk produce at point-of-sale), which is used by retailers in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, United States, Canada, Sweden and Norway. In France the “Casino” plans to use PLU numbers and companies in South Africa are interested in these codes. A number of export countries (e.g. Spain and Chile) are using the numbers for export.

144. They said that IFPC was currently preparing on a survey to assess the current coding situation at retail stage in different countries. A questionnaire will be sent to all 101 EAN member organizations worldwide for distribution to retailers. The results of the survey will be discussed at the next IFPC meeting.

145. They said that the PLU codes were available as public domain on the Internet at: www.plucodes.com. This site was currently in English only but French and Spanish translations were being prepared.

146. They encouraged the use of templates such as the one for the introduction of new apples varieties and said that a lot of thought had gone into the items required from applicants for new PLU numbers.

147. They said that current and emerging traceability requirements were creating a lot of “best practices” also in the area of coding and that it would be helpful if delegations could encourage the groups working in their countries to give input to IFPC so that it would be possible to harmonize.

148. They said that they worked closely with EAN in the Global Standards Management Process (GSMP) and the Global Commerce Initiative (GCI) but that it was necessary to encourage more representatives from the fresh produce industry to participate in these global processes to avoid the different regions coming to different solutions.

149. They clarified that the PLU numbers coded only products and varieties and that at present no system existed to put all information contained in the standards on bulk products.

8. WHO strategy on diet, physical activity and health

INF.4 (Secretariat)

150. A representative of the World Health Organization, Ms Ingrid Keller, gave a presentation on the status of the adoption of the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health.

151. Ms. Keller, responsible for the Fruit and Vegetable initiative recalled the reasons for the development of the strategy: an alarming increase worldwide of deaths due to non-communicable diseases (NCDs), e.g. cardiovascular disease (CVD) and cancers. There is also an alarming increase in obesity worldwide, especially among children.

152. The strategy had been developed on the basis of an extensive consultation process with member countries, other UN agencies, NGOs, industry associations and high-level company representatives. The strategy had now been completed by the WHO secretariat and was being submitted to the World Health Assembly in May 2004 for adoption.

153. The foundations of the strategy are the prevention of NCDs through measures impacting multiple NCDs and through multi-sectoral action. The approach to the strategy is different from the WHO approach towards tobacco by being non-binding and non-prescriptive, leaving implementation to the member States.

154. The strategy gives as one of major risk factors for NCDs worldwide the inadequate intake of fruit and vegetables and:

- Recommends to increase the consumption of fruit and vegetables.
- Suggests that international standards could include steps to increase fruit and vegetable consumption.

155. The World Health Report states that 2.7 million lives could potentially be saved each year if fruit and vegetable consumption were increased and up to 30% of the upper gastro-intestinal track cancers could be prevented, as well as cardiovascular diseases and obesity.

156. Implementing the strategy and thus promoting healthy diet and physical activity is in the WHO's view:

- For the individual an effective way to prevent disease and promote health;
- For society a cost-effective and sustainable way to improve public health;
- Could lead to one of the largest and sustained improvements in population health ever seen;
- Could rarely be matched by other possible measures.

157. Ms. Keller said that WHO cooperated with national 5-a-day organizations responsible for campaigns to increase fruit and vegetable consumption. She said that these organizations were about to form an international organization to globalize their initiative. She informed that the next International 5-a-day symposium would be held from 8-10 August 2004 in Christchurch, New Zealand.

158. Replying to questions from delegations, Ms. Keller said that:

- The strategy also recommended limiting the intake of fats (especially saturated fats), sugar and salt.
- WHO realized that national or regional agricultural policies (e.g. the EU CAP) were a key to the implementation of the strategy and was therefore working in close cooperation with FAO on this issue.
- The strategy also gave recommendations on marketing.

159. Several delegations indicated that they had experience with school feeding programmes:

- In the United Kingdom there has been cooperation between the quality inspection services and the agency responsible for the school feeding programme to get the quality of the produce right for children's taste.
- In France the installation of vending machines for fruit and vegetables is being tried out.

- In the United States “institutional grades” have been introduced to standards to allow small sizes to be traded for special purposes (e.g. small size apples; small packages of grapes).
- It was also mentioned that prepared products (e.g. carrot sticks) were more easily accepted by children.

160. The delegation of Sweden said that in their country the price of fruit and vegetables was a limiting factor for consumption, especially in low-income groups.

161. The secretariat said that there was a clear link between the quality of produce available and consumption, which showed the importance of quality standards in the promotion of the strategy. The UNECE Secretariat plans to cooperate with WHO on a series of postcards promoting consumption of fruit and vegetables and healthy nutrition.

162. The Specialized Section thanked Ms. Keller for her presentation and expressed the wish to be kept informed of the progress made with the implementation of the strategy.

9. Cooperation with the OECD Scheme

TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/17 (OECD)

163. At the last session, the secretariat had proposed to consider if OECD brochures could be adopted as official interpretations of UNECE Standards, as the practice of adopting OECD texts had already been established (e.g. exchange of information on non-conformity cases). The proposal was further discussed in the Working Party, where concerns due to the different membership of the bodies had been raised. No decision had been taken.

164. In order to begin a discussion on different practical possibilities on how the adoption of an OECD brochure as an official interpretation of UNECE could work, the secretariat had, as an experiment, transmitted the existing text of the OECD brochure for tomatoes. The secretariat clarified that the document was for information only and that no decision was expected at this stage.

165. A number of delegations felt that it was premature to start discussing practical issues before taking a decision on the principle of cooperation, especially the amount and moment of interaction between the two bodies during the adoption process.

166. The delegation of the United States said that countries not belonging to the OECD Scheme but participating at UNECE should have the possibility of commenting on brochures before their completion if it was intended to adopt them as official interpretations of UNECE Standards.

167. Other delegations felt that the possibility for non-members of the OECD Scheme to comment on brochures at UNECE should not become equivalent to being a member because then there would be no incentive to become a member of the Scheme. This could jeopardize its functioning because the Scheme depended on the financial contributions of its members.

168. The possibility of trying to adopt one brochure and then evaluate the experience was put forward.

169. The representative of the OECD Secretariat recalled the will expressed by the Plenary Meeting of the Scheme of strengthening cooperation with the other international organizations dealing with fruit and vegetable standardization and said that the Plenary Meeting would certainly favourably welcome the same will coming from these organizations. However, she cautioned the

Specialized Section that the adoption of the OECD explanatory brochures by the UNECE should not delay the elaboration of brochures which is already dependent on the adoption of the standards by the UNECE. She also recalled that the present OECD procedure did not allow countries not belonging to the OECD Scheme to participate in the explanatory brochure work.

170. The delegation of France declared that they were not in favour of the adoption of OECD brochures by the Specialized Section.

171. The Chairperson of the OECD Scheme announced that the OECD Plenary Meeting of the Scheme would prepare a proposal on cooperation for the next session of the Working Party.

172. It was decided to continue the discussion at the Working Party level on the basis of the proposal from the OECD

10. List of authorities for exchange of information on non-conformity cases

TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/18 (Sweden)

173. The secretariat had reproduced a list of authorities for exchange of non-conformity information prepared by Sweden. The delegation of Germany said that they would prefer a list containing more information for the contacts and suggested that the OECD list could be used as a basis.

174. In order to have only one list that needs to be updated it was decided that the UNECE secretariat would check with the OECD if a link to their list could be established on the website and if the list could be further extended with contacts from countries that are not members of the OECD Scheme.

11. Application of UNECE Standards

INF.5 (Secretariat)

175. The secretariat had prepared a draft document concerning the status of application of UNECE standards. In the list the application of standards by members of the European Community and the OECD Scheme had been indicated.

176. The delegation of Turkey said that as a candidate for entering the European Union Turkey had aligned its legislation with the relevant legislation of the European Community and their application of the standards should be mentioned in such a way.

177. The delegation of Germany said that the use of the term “applying” had to be reviewed.

178. All delegations were invited to check the list carefully and send any comments both on structure and contents of the list to the secretariat. The updated document will be submitted to the Working Party.

12. Workshops, seminars, training courses and other activities concerning capacity building for the application of quality standards

179. The delegation of Slovakia informed about the 3rd OECD sponsored training course, which will be held in Mojmirovce on 27 and 28 September 2004 and include discussions on the interpretation of OECD quality standards, different presentations from national experts and technical

visits. Detailed information will be available shortly on the OECD website and invitations will be sent out.

180. The delegation of Germany informed that the next Geisenheim meeting would be held from 28 February to 2 March 2005 in Bonn. Further information will be provided.

181. The delegation of the United Kingdom informed about the next Guildford Harmonization Meeting, which will be held from 22 to 24 June. The following products will be discussed: Artichokes, Apples, Citrus Fruit, Courgettes, Kiwi Fruit, Cultivated Mushrooms, Peaches and Nectarines. Other topics include combined packages, prepared products, risk assessment in the United Kingdom and the Community Directive 1148/01.

13. Other business

182. The delegation of Switzerland said that in the UNECE Standard for Melons it appeared not to be sufficiently clear what was meant by “commercial type”. They said that because the commercial types mentioned in the standard are used in the marking and maturity requirements it would be useful to elaborate their description in more detail.

183. Other delegations said that they were in favour of a clarification if this would not complicate the standard and that they should prepare a proposal for the next session.

184. The delegation of France said that they would contribute to that proposal.

14. Future work and meetings

(a) Date and place of the next session

185. The next meeting of the Specialized Section has been tentatively scheduled from 7 to 11 March 2005.

(b) Future work

186. See TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.10 for the draft agenda for the next meeting.

15. Election of officers

187. The Specialized Section re-elected Mr. D. Holliday (United Kingdom) as Chair and Ms. U. Bickelmann (Germany) as its Vice-Chair.

16. Adoption of the report

188. The Specialized Section adopted the report of its fiftieth session on the basis of a draft prepared by the secretariat.

Addenda published separately from this report:

TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.1	Draft UNECE Recommendation on Cherries
TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.2	Draft revised UNECE Standard for Cultivated Mushrooms
TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.3	Draft revised UNECE Standard for Kiwi Fruit
TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.4	Draft revised UNECE Standard/ Draft UNECE Recommendation for Peaches and Nectarines
TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.5	Draft revised UNECE Standard for Bilberries and Blueberries
TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.6	Draft revised UNECE Standard for Watermelons
TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.7	Draft revised UNECE Standard for Citrus Fruit
TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.8	Draft new UNECE Recommendation on Truffles
TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.9	Updated template for requesting inclusion of apple varieties
TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.10	Draft agenda for the next meeting