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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

COMMITTEE FOR TRADE, INDUSTRY AND  
ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Working Party on Standardization of  
Perishable Produce and Quality Development  
Fifty-fifth session, 3 - 5 November 1999, Geneva

Item 9 of the provisional agenda

PREPARATION OF EXPLANATORY MATERIAL ON UN/ECE STANDARDS

Note by the secretariat

**Background**

1. Currently, most of the work on the interpretation of UN/ECE standards is done in the framework of the OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables. Exceptions are the UN/ECE Standards on Meat (Poultry, Pork, Beef) and the colour chart for Walnut Kernels.
2. Because of uncertainties concerning the future of the OECD Scheme, the European Commission initiated a discussion on this question at the second session of the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development. At the third session of the Committee in 1999, the European Commission requested the secretariat to prepare a study on the modalities of preparing explanatory brochures to UN/ECE standards in the framework of WP.7 and its specialized sections. This request was supported by the United States and subsequently agreed by the Committee.
3. The current document outlines the secretariat's understanding of the goals of the interpretative work and how this work could be integrated into current work programmes, describing also the costs for personnel and production of the brochures and how they could be financed. It is a working document intended for delegations and to serve as a basis for further discussion.

### **Goals of the interpretative work**

4. UN/ECE standards for perishable produce have been developed to facilitate international trade. They represent a harmonization of national commercial quality standards. The UN/ECE standards are applied by the national control services in each country. Explanatory material on UN/ECE standards provides countries with visual and textual aids to ensure a harmonized interpretation by their control services.
5. The material, in the form of brochures or electronic systems, contains pictures and texts that clarify the terms used in the standards.
6. This explanatory material should be easily available to participating countries without any additional costs so that it can be translated and integrated into their quality control systems.

### **Output**

7. As material will be used by the control services of the different countries in their national language, the UN/ECE publication should facilitate the creation of other language versions.
8. It is suggested that this publication could be in the form of a two-part brochure with the interpretative texts in the first part and the pictures/graphics in the second (this will facilitate printing and reduce costs). The texts will be available in English, French and Russian.

### **Distribution**

9. The master copies (in paper format, to ensure harmonized colours, and in electronic format) will be distributed free of charge to participating countries (x copies per country).
10. Participating countries could then create their own language versions on the basis of the UN/ECE master copy. This could be done through publication by the Government or by private publishing houses. The origin of the text and photographs should be referenced in the national publications.

### **Integration into the work programme of WP.7 and its specialized sections**

#### *General*

11. The detailed work on explanatory brochures will be done in informal working groups (or by countries offering to serve as rapporteurs). The informal groups will develop draft brochures and present them to the relevant specialized section.
12. Meetings of the informal groups can be held externally (on invitation (and costs) of rapporteurs) or in parallel to meetings of the specialized sections as frequently as necessary.
13. After the specialized section has adopted the brochure, it would be presented to the Working Party and for approval for publication.
14. It is the participants' prerogative to decide which brochures should be developed.

15. At present no additional sessions of the Working Party or of the specialized sections are envisaged. The only exception might possibly be one additional session of the Working Party to decide on the detailed modalities of the work and the financing. Additional sessions of specialized sections might become necessary depending on the number of brochures to be prepared.

*Additional tasks for the secretariat*

- Coordinating and attending meetings of informal working groups on the brochures
- Preparing documentation on the brochures for the specialized sections
- Publication of the brochures (in paper and electronic format)

The amount of additional work is directly related to the number of brochures worked on per year.

*Additional Staff*

One junior professional

**Profile of the additional staff member to be employed**

Tasks:

- preparing, coordinating and servicing meetings of working groups (external or in parallel to those of specialized sections)
- attending meetings of specialized sections as needed
- preparing the brochures for printing
- preparing the brochures for CD-ROM and Internet

Background:

- EDP user capabilities (especially desktop publishing design, web page design)
- communication skills
- Languages: English and French, with excellent drafting capabilities in at least one.

**Costs**

16. The secretariat estimates an additional cost of approximately US\$ 150,000 a year. This would include the new staff member, a contribution to travel costs, and printing of the brochures. (The printing estimate assumes that 5 brochures (50 pictures, 70 pages) would be printed per year. These additional costs are related to the reproduction of the colour photographs.

**Financing**

17. The additional costs cannot be financed within the UN/ECE regular budget. It is possible to create a trust fund into which participating countries can pay contributions. The modus operandi for this trust fund remains to be discussed with the United Nations administration.