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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

Forty-ninth session, 17-20 June 2003, Geneva

Item 2 of the Provisional Agenda

MATTERS OF INTEREST ARISING SINCE THE FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION

Note by the secretariat

This document sums up the relevant outcome of the sixth session of the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development and the fifty-eighth session of the Working Party on Standardization of Perishable Produce and Quality Development.

1. SIXTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE FOR TRADE, INDUSTRY AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

The following excerpt is taken from the report of the Committee (ECE/TRADE/300, paragraphs 46 to 52):

Item 10 – Agricultural quality standards

Documentation:

TRADE/2002/8

Summary of WP.7 progress achieved since the November 2001 session

TRADE/WP.7/2001/9

Report of the fifty-seventh session of the Working Party on Standardization of Perishable Produce and Quality Development (WP.7)

46. The Secretary to the Working Party on Standardization of Perishable Produce and Quality Development (WP.7) presented documents TRADE/2002/8 and TRADE/WP.7/2001/9. As additional information to the revised and new standards listed in these documents, he reported that during the last year a number of standards had been updated to adapt them to new trade practices. New standards for pineapples and ovine carcasses and cuts were close to completion. A solution to the mentioning of trade marks in UNECE Standards had been adopted and work on the review of the Geneva Protocol (which defines the context of the Standards) and the harmonization of produce coding had started.

47. The Committee had, at previous sessions, discussed possible support by UNECE for the work on explanatory brochures which is currently done under the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Scheme. The secretariat reported that, at present, the UNECE was not able to allocate the additional resources necessary for undertaking this work to the Agricultural Standards Unit, but that the cooperation with the OECD Scheme functioned very well.

48. A seminar on Safe and High-quality Food for International Trade had been co-organized on 4 and 5 April 2002 in New Delhi by the UNECE with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and EAN India, at the invitation of the Government of India. The seminar had focused on building the capacity of small and medium-sized enterprises to apply international standards and participate in international supply chains. The seminar was well received and it is planned to organize a follow-up event in 2003 in Bangkok together with ESCAP and, possibly, further seminars, one of which could be in a central Asian member State of the UNECE.

49. The delegation of the European Community said that it continued to consider the UNECE work on agricultural standards as very important and relevant. Many EC standards within the framework of the Common Agricultural Policy are based on these UNECE standards. The delegation also indicated its encouragement for making the standards better known in other parts of the world. It noted the excellent cooperation with the FAO and the OECD Scheme. However, it hoped that it would be possible for UNECE to support the development of explanatory brochures to speed up this work in the future.

50. The delegation of Switzerland said that the work of WP.7 and its specialized sections was a positive example of how the UNECE and the Committee could make a contribution that was recognized in international trade.

51. The delegation of the Russian Federation thanked the Chairman of WP.7, Mr. Vilchez-Barros, for his contribution to UNECE work on agricultural standards, which had helped WP.7 become a global forum in this area, with participation of experts from all continents. He particularly stressed the importance for his country of the standards for seed potatoes and meat and the use of UNECE agricultural standards in negotiations with trading partners. He also expressed the wish to see more operational work by the UNECE secretariat, i.e. the organization of training courses on how to apply the standards.

52. The Committee **endorsed** TRADE/WP.7/2001/9 and **noted** TRADE/2002/8. The points raised by the European Community and the Russian Federation would be discussed by the WP.7 bureau.

B. 58TH SESSION OF THE WORKING PARTY ON STANDARDIZATION OF PERISHABLE PRODUCE AND QUALITY DEVELOPMENT

Note by the secretariat: Please note that the Working Party decided to change its name to “Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards”.

The following excerpt is taken from the report of the Working Party (see TRADE/WP.7/2002/9, paras. 26 to 57).

Item 3: Specialized Section on Coordination of Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables
Document: *TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2002/20 (Report of the 48th session)*

26. The Chairman of the Specialized Section, Mr. David Holliday (United Kingdom), introduced the report of the 48th session held in Geneva from 23 to 26 April 2002 (see. TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2002/20).

27. The Working Party decided to refer document TRADE/WP.7/2002/8 on Latvian fruit varieties of apples, pears and plums to the Specialized Section because it was felt that more information especially on the relevant colour and size groups was needed before they could be included in the relevant standards. The secretariat will get in touch with Latvia to invite them to complete their document and to participate in the next session of the Specialized Section. If possible they should supplement their document with photographs of the varieties in question.

Items 3(a) and (b): Decisions concerning texts recommended for adoption as revised or new UNECE standards or UNECE Recommendations

28. **Annonas:** The text contained in document TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2002/20/Add.1 was adopted as a revised UNECE Standard and will be published in Addendum 2 to this report (TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.2).

29. **Apples, Pears:** The texts contained in document TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2002/20/Add.2 and Add.3 were adopted as new UNECE Standards for Apples and Pears respectively and will be published in Addenda 3 and 4 to this report (TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.3 and Add.4).

30. **Citrus Fruit:** The delegation of Israel was not in favour of adopting the text contained in document TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2002/20/Add.5. They felt that the way sizing by count had been newly included in the standard would lead to loss of uniformity. They also feared that the possibility of using two adjacent size codes might be abused.

31. Other delegations were of the opinion that uniformity provisions were as strict as before and that the compromise reached, which had also been adopted by the Codex Committee for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables, was reasonable and should not be changed.

32. The delegation of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) pointed out that the same sizing provisions as in the UNECE standard had been adopted for the Codex Standards for limes, pummelos and grapefruits which were forwarded to the Codex Alimentarius Commission for final adoption. She said that in order to keep the standards harmonized with the UNECE Standard, proposals could still be sent to the Commission until 28 February 2003.

33. It was suggested that interested parties discuss this question informally outside of the meeting to see if an easy solution could be found which could be communicated directly to all interested parties.

34. The delegation of Israel also pointed out that the requirement concerning “the same degree of ripeness” for mixed packages of citrus fruit might be misunderstood to mean the same degree of ripeness between species, which was not possible. It was clarified that the requirement concerned only fruit of the same species and the text was amended to make this clearer.

35. The delegation of Greece stated that they were not in favour of sales packages of a net weight not exceeding 3kg of different species of citrus fruit.

36. It was agreed to adopt the text as a UNECE recommendation for a one-year trial period and to discuss it again in the Specialized Section to improve the text while maintaining the principle of the compromise concerning sizing. The text of the recommendation is reproduced in Addendum 5 to this report (see TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.5).

37. The proposals for harmonization with the Codex standards which the secretariat had included in the document were forwarded to the Specialized Section for discussion.

38. **Leeks, Melons and Plums:** The amendments contained in TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2002/20/Add.7 concerning leeks, melons and plums were adopted. The revised standards for leeks and melons will be published in Addenda 6 and 7 to this report (TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.6 and Add.7). For plums the amendments concerned both the standard in force as well as the recommendation in a trial period. The text is published in Addendum 8 to this report (TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.8).

39. **Table Grapes:** The delegations of Greece felt that the minimum brix values were too low.

40. The delegation of Israel said that as the UNECE Standards were considered to be minimum standards, the present brix values should be retained. They also felt that the sentence concerning “appropriate sugar acid levels” should not be included unless values were given.

41. It was clarified that the present text was proposed for trial and that the working group on maturity requirements for table grapes continued to work on this text under the lead of South Africa and should be contacted directly for comments and suggestions.

42. It was clarified that the text concerning late harvest varieties was also still in a trial period.

43. The proposals for harmonization with the Codex standards and other editorial amendments, which the secretariat had included in the document were forwarded to the Specialized Section for discussion. One consequential amendment at the beginning of section II was agreed.

44. The text contained in document TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2002/20/Add.9 was adopted as a revised UNECE Recommendation concerning maturity requirements and late harvest grapes and as a revised UNECE Standard for all other amendments. The text will be published in Addendum 9 to this report (TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.9).

45. **Strawberries:** The text contained in document TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2002/20/Add.8 was adopted as a revised UNECE Standard and will be published in Addendum 10 to this report (TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.10).

46. **Avocados:** The delegation of France said that changing again the minimum size for the Hass variety would lead to confusion for quality inspectors in the field who were not sure which version to apply. This is why this recommendation will not be tried out in France.

47. Other delegations felt that a further reduction in minimum size of the Hass variety to 80g was reasonable and were in favour of trying it out for a year.

48. The delegation of Israel felt that for the size 100 - 125g for the Hass variety the difference of 25g might have a negative effect on uniformity.

49. The text contained in document TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2002/20/Add.4 was adopted as a revised UNECE Recommendation for a one-year trial period and will be published in Addendum 11 to this report (TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.11).

50. **Pineapples:** The secretariat had included a number of questions in the text included in TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2002/20/Add.10, which had been answered by COLEACP in document INF.2. As a result no change was made to the maturity requirements and the section concerning "description of containers" was deleted. The text was adopted as a new UNECE Recommendation and will be published in Addendum 12 to this report (TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.12).

Item 3 (c) Numbering system of the standards

51. In document TRADE/WP.7/2002/4 the secretariat presented an example of a new legal numbering system that might be used in UNECE Standards on the basis of the Apples standard in order to:

- make references to all parts of the text more easily;
- avoid using letters in the numbering (which led to problems in the Cyrillic translations);
- bring the standards in line with ISO standard 2145:1978 on "Numbering of divisions and sub-divisions in written documents".

52. While delegations found the principle of the new system interesting, they felt that more discussion was needed in the specialized section concerning the implementation, which should be consistent and only use numbers.

53. It was suggested to look at the OECD Seed Scheme, which uses a similar system.

54. The discussion on this question and other related amendments to the standard layout was referred to the Specialized Section.

Item 3 (d): Use of trademarks in UNECE standards

Documents: TRADE/WP.7/2002/5
INF.1 (Comments from INTA)

55. At the request of the Specialized Section the secretariat prepared a proposal to amend the standard layout to include provisions for lists of varieties and the mentioning of trademarks.

56. The secretariat introduced the comments from the International Trade Mark Association and said that in his opinion some of them were already included in the proposal. He mentioned that there were two additional proposals as follows:

- To include a statement in footnote 2 (of both options) indicating that upon receipt of the information from the trademark owner UNECE will amend the annex within a certain period of time.
- To include at the end of the first paragraph of the Annex of the three-column option a paragraph stating that:

“The presence of any trademarks in the third column does not constitute any licence or permission to use that trademark - such licence must come directly from the trademark owner. In addition, the absence of a trademark in the third column does not constitute any indication that there is no registered/ pending trademark for such a variety.”

57. It was decided to adopt the text proposed in document 2002/5 concerning the annex to the standard layout. The secretariat discussed the additional proposals from INTA with the legal advisor who agreed that they presented only clarifications to the adopted text which could be included without problems. The secretariat will contact INTA to communicate this decision and thank them for the information provided. All other amendments proposed by the secretariat in the main text of the document were referred to the Specialized Section. The revised text of the standard layout will be published in Addendum 13 to this report (TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.13).

The Working Party adopted the following new standards, revised standards and recommendations at its 58th session :

TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.2	Revised UNECE Standard for Annonas
TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.3	New UNECE Standard for Apples, FFV-50
TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.4	New UNECE Standard for Pears, FFV-51
TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.5	UNECE Recommendation for Citrus Fruit
TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.6	Revised UNECE Standard for Leeks
TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.7	Revised UNECE Standard for Melons
TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.8	Revised UNECE Standard/ Recommendation for Plums
TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.9	Revised UNECE Standard/ Recommendation for Table Grapes
TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.10	Revised UNECE Standard for Strawberries
TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.11	Revised UNECE Recommendation for Avocados
TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.12	New UNECE Recommendation for Pineapples
TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.13	Revised Standard Layout for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables