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Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

Specialized Section on Standardization of
Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

Fiftieth session, 10-14 May 2004, Geneva

Item 3(d) of the Provisional Agenda

**REPORT OF THE UNECE WORKING GROUP ON
KIWIFRUIT**

Transmitted by New Zealand

Note by the secretariat : The delegation of New Zealand presents in this document the report of the working group on kiwifruit. For the consolidated text of the standard see TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/4.

**REPORT OF UNECE KIWIFRUIT WORKING GROUP
HELD AT RUNGIS MARKET, PARIS
ON 23 OCTOBER 2003**

Opening

1. The meeting was held at the Rungis market in Paris on 23 October 2003. It was chaired by Mr Tim Knox (New Zealand).

Participation

2. The meeting was attended by delegations representing the following countries: France; Greece; New Zealand; Spain and Switzerland.

Invitations had been sent to all members of the Kiwifruit Working Group. Apologies were received from Chile, Italy and United States.

3. The European Commission and the UN/ECE Secretariat were also represented.

Proposal for Revision of the Kiwifruit Standard

Document: TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2003/26/Add.5

4. It was proposed at the forty-ninth session of the Specialised Section that the Kiwifruit Working Group would meet during the OECD Scheme's October meeting in Paris to consider changes to the maturity section of the Kiwifruit Standard. IKO have not been able to reach agreement on changes to the maturity section for the Hayward variety of *A. deliciosa*. It was delaying the revision of the Standard and the Specialised Section wanted a resolution so the Standard could be adopted.
5. The delegation of New Zealand backgrounded the options for maturity that had been considered over the last few years, with particular emphasis on improving the taste of kiwifruit for consumers. The 6.2% Brix measurement at harvest was no longer considered appropriate, although it was agreed that Brix measurement is a simple measurement to carry out. However, this harvest level was not able to be confirmed during border inspections. New Zealand's original proposal was to have a dry matter level, along with other criteria, but such a methodology was considered too difficult to perform at production level in many countries and also at border inspection level.
6. The delegation of France agreed with the background, adding that the French industry had an interprofessional agreement not to market kiwifruit in the EU until 15 November or to export by sea before 1 November. Papers from a recent meeting of Italian industry representatives were tabled indicating an agreement for 2003 for an earliest date for exports by sea from Italy of 10 October (with a minimum Brix of 6.2%) and a 9.5% Brix for the European markets.

7. The delegation of the European Commission said UN/ECE Standards were clearly applied at the export stage. Therefore the 9.5% Brix in the distribution chain was more of an issue to each country than a UN/ECE one. The EU wanted to retain the 6.2% Brix at the export stage, but fruit could and should be able to be selected on the basis of other criteria if appropriate. UN/ECE Standards are minimum standards, but if kiwifruit can be of good quality at less than 6.2% Brix using other criteria, such kiwifruit should be able to be marketed. Dry matter is much harder to measure than Brix, but it was noted that the recent UN/ECE meeting had adopted dry matter as a measurement of avocado maturity, so it is not impossible to implement now.
8. The delegation of France said 6.2% Brix is too precise for measurement at control level, for example in the wholesale markets. It was noted that several countries used two tier systems, one for export by sea and one for internal market distribution, which were easier to check than at the harvest stage. Sampling to check the 6.2% Brix is also an issue. The Working Group had seen shrivelled kiwifruit in the market that morning which is not acceptable fruit.
9. The delegation of New Zealand commented that the 6.2% Brix was an average value of 20 fruit and the Standard already did not allow shrivelled fruit (in the Minimum Requirements).
10. The delegation of Spain said that it was a positive approach to allow two levels, one for exports and one for distribution. However, it was not appropriate for a UN/ECE Standard to have two levels of maturity. A UN/ECE Standard is applied at the export stage, but the fruit condition needs to provide for satisfactory taste experiences for consumers. Sugar and firmness measurements were the most appropriate to avoid poor eating quality in many fruits.
11. The delegation of Greece said that quality is increasingly important. Now, every year, the Greek Ministry of Agriculture makes a decision on the date after which fruit can be harvested. This year, it is 21 October, which represents approximately 6.5% at harvest, but with the variations on the vine, it is difficult to measure accurately. In addition, a Brix of 8.5% has been set at the export stage (out of Greece) by regulation.
12. The delegation of New Zealand said that there are different perspectives although clearly we all agree that there must not be unacceptable fruit on the market. It is necessary to start within the context that UN/ECE Standards are to facilitate trade and are applied at export. The second point is if Standards are to be applied at the export stage, importing countries will require verification of harvest maturity when kiwifruit arrives at their borders. This is not in the UN/ECE Standard, but should be in the OECD interpretation of the Standard. It will need to take into account the differences in travelling time with the differing distances, for example, the 4 weeks shipping time from New Zealand to the European market and, say, the short distance from Greece to the French market.
13. The delegation of the European Commission agreed, suggesting that for the EU Standard, the points of import and export would be the same for internal distribution within the EU. So we have to work out a compromise. The EU would like to keep Brix measurement as it is easy to measure.
14. The delegation of Spain proposed that the compromise could be the deletion of the words “when harvested” from Footnote 1 in the Standard with the addition, at the end of the Footnote, of “which should lead to a Brix level of 9.5% when entering the distribution chain.”.
15. The delegation of France agreed it was not possible to control Brix at the orchard level, but it was easier to control as the fruit left a coolstore to enter the distribution chain.

16. The delegation of the European Commission agreed and confirmed that the addition of a 9.5% Brix in the distribution chain could be adopted for the EU Standard for Kiwifruit.

17. It was agreed that Footnote 1 in the draft revision of the Kiwifruit Standard would be revised and will be forwarded to the Working Party for adoption as a revised UN/ECE Standard for kiwifruit as follows:

““In order to satisfy this requirement, the fruit must have attained a degree of ripeness of at least 6.2 per cent assessed by the Brix test (or the New Zealand system: average dry matter content of 15%), which should lead to a Brix level of 9.5 when the fruit enters the distribution chain.”

The detail can be further expanded in the revision of the OECD brochure on kiwifruit.

18. The delegation of New Zealand had discussed an alternative measurement for maturity of the new yellow-fleshed *A. chinensis* kiwifruit from New Zealand, Hort16A, at earlier sessions of the Working Party. When confirmation of such an addition to the Standard was sought from the Secretariat, it was realised that the Working Party had not formally adopted a recommendation for the maturity of a different variety, only for *A. deliciosa*.

19. The delegation of France said that there would be other new varieties coming forward, and there should not have to be revisions of both the UN/ECE Standard and the OECD brochure for each of these new varieties which may have, quite possibly, different maturity requirements.

20. The delegation of New Zealand agreed and proposed that the newly proposed maturity measurement for *A. deliciosa* in Footnote 1 should apply to all varieties of *Actinida deliciosa* and *chinensis*.

21. The proposal was accepted by all the delegations and the amendment will be forwarded to the Working Party for adoption.

22. The delegation of the European Commission said that there was no consistency of the size designation for kiwifruit. Each producing country has a different fruit weight for a given fruit size, based on the number of kiwifruit in a single layer tray, the weight of which varies with each producing country.

23. The delegation of New Zealand said that this had been discussed at earlier sessions of the Specialised Section, with a proposal to have, in the Provisions Concerning Sizing section, a specific weight range for kiwifruit in each size/count. However, this had been discounted in favour of tightening the differences in weight between the largest and the smallest kiwifruit in each package, which would improve presentation.

24. The delegation of France said that due to the good growing conditions in Europe this summer, there was a significant volume of fruit which exceeded 150g in weight and for which the proposed weight differentials of 20g in the revision of the Provisions Concerning Sizing section would present difficulties.

25. It was agreed that Section III. Provisions Concerning Sizing in the draft revision of the Kiwifruit Standard would be revised and forwarded to the Working Party for adoption as a revised UN/ECE Standard for kiwifruit as follows:

- 10g for fruit of weight up to 85g
 - 15g for fruit weighing between 85g and 120g
 - 20g for fruit weighing between 120g and 150g
 - 40g for fruit weighing 150g or more.
26. The delegation of the European Commission raised the issue of marking the minimum and maximum fruit weights on each package (not just on bulk packs as in the current version of the Kiwifruit Standard in section VI. Provisions Concerning Marking). As an alternative to having specified weight bands in the Standard, it was agreed that the Marking provisions should be consistently applied to each package, not just to bulk packs.
27. It was agreed that Section VI. Provisions Concerning Marking, D. Commercial specifications in the draft revision of the kiwifruit Standard would be revised and forwarded to the Working Party for adoption as a revised UN/ECE Standard for kiwifruit as follows:
- Class
 - Size expressed by the minimum and maximum weight of the fruit
 - Number of fruits if packed in rows.
28. The UN/ECE Secretariat described the process following agreement at this meeting on the further changes to the draft Kiwifruit Standard. The forty-ninth session had proposed to the Working Party that the Standard agreed at that session be approved. Now the Secretariat will inform the Working Party at its next meeting in November 2003 that the proposal has been withdrawn and a new proposal, including these revisions, will be considered by the fiftieth session of the Specialised Section.
29. The report of this meeting will be circulated to those members of the Working Group who were not able to attend for their information.
30. The delegation of New Zealand was asked to commence work on the revisions to the OECD interpretative brochure on kiwifruit for presentation at the next meeting of the OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables, as the need is urgent.