

UNECE STANDARD DF-08

concerning the marketing and commercial
quality control of

WHOLE DATES

moving in international trade between and to
UNECE member countries

I. DEFINITION OF PRODUCE

This standard applies to whole unpitted dates in their natural state or processed ¹ from varieties (cultivars) grown from *Phoenix dactylifera L.* It does not apply to dates for processing, pressed dates, or frozen dates.

II. PROVISIONS CONCERNING QUALITY

The purpose of the standard is to define the quality requirements of dates at the export control stage, after preparation and packaging.

A. Minimum requirements

- (i) In all classes, subject to the special provisions for each class and the tolerances allowed, the dates must be:
- intact
 - sound; produce affected by rotting or deterioration such as to make it unfit for consumption is excluded
 - ripe, plump and plastic where applicable
 - clean, practically free of any visible foreign matter ²
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¹ Processed dates: dates prepared from fruit in its natural state by drying, hydration, washing or pasteurization.

² Coating ingredients such as glucose syrup, etc., are not considered as foreign material provided they are not prohibited by the legislation of the importing country.

- free from living insects or any living parasites
- free from visible damage by insects, mites or other parasites
- free from mould
- free from foreign smell and/or taste
- free from fermentation.

The condition and development of the dates must be such as to enable them:

- to withstand transport and handling, and
- to arrive in satisfactory condition at the place of destination.

(ii) **Moisture content**

The dates shall have a moisture content ³ of not greater than 26 per cent for cane sugar varieties or 30 per cent for invert sugar varieties ⁴. In their natural state, however, for the variety Daglat Noor the maximum moisture content shall be 30 per cent.

B. Classification

Dates are classified into three classes defined below :

(i) **"Extra" class**

Dates in this class must be of superior quality. They must have the shape, development and colour characteristic of the variety and/or commercial type. They must be amber-coloured to brown and the flesh must be abundant, fat or semi-fat, and greasy. The epicarp must be translucent and, according to the variety, adhere to the flesh. They must be practically free from defects with the exception of very slight superficial defects provided that these do not affect the general appearance of the produce, the quality, the keeping quality or its presentation in the package.

³ The moisture content is determined by placing 50 g of shredded pitted dates in a drier for four hours at 100 °C ± 2°C, using as adjuvants 90 ° alcohol and sand washed in hydrochloric acid and then dried.

⁴ A list of varieties classified by the nature of their principal sugar component is given in the Annex of this standard.

(ii) **Class I**

Dates in this class must be of good quality. They must be characteristic of the variety and/or commercial type. The flesh must be sufficiently abundant, fat or semi-fat, according to the variety.

The following slight defects may be allowed provided that these do not affect the general appearance of the produce, the quality, the keeping quality or its presentation in the package.

- a slight flaw in the epicarp which does not affect the pulp
- a slight defect in form or development
- slight wrinkles.

(iii) **Class II**

This class includes dates which do not qualify for inclusion in the higher classes but which satisfy the minimum requirements specified above.

The following defects may be allowed provided that the dates retain their essential characteristics as regards general appearance, quality, keeping quality and presentation:

- defects of the epicarp not affecting the pulp
 - defects in form or development
 - defects of colouration.
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III. PROVISIONS CONCERNING SIZING

Sizing is determined by the unit weight of the fruit. Irrespective of the variety, the minimum weight of dates shall be 4.75 g.

IV. PROVISIONS CONCERNING TOLERANCES

Tolerances in respect of quality and size, shall be allowed in each package for produce not satisfying the requirements of the class indicated.

A. Quality tolerances

Permitted defects ^a	Tolerances allowed (percentage by number or weight)		
	Extra	Class I	Class II
Total tolerance	5	10	20
Specific defect tolerances			
Within the limits of the total tolerances the maximum allowed are :			
(a) Sour, decayed or mouldy fruit ⁵	0	0	1
(b) Dirty fruit, or fruit contaminated by insects or mites ⁶	3	5	8
(c) Damaged, immature or unpollinated fruit	2	4	6
(d) Blemished fruit	3	5	7

^a Definitions of defects are listed in the Annex attached to this Standard.

⁵ The national legislations of Germany and Switzerland do not permit tolerances for produce affected by mould or decay or the presence of dead or living insects.

⁶ Reservations of Germany, Poland, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, which wish to retain the former tolerances : Extra, 2 per cent; Class I, 4 per cent; Class II, 6 per cent.

B. Mineral Impurities

Not greater than 1 g/kg. However, for whole dates in a natural state, not more than 2 g/kg.

C. Size tolerances

For all classes, 10 per cent by weight of dates being less than 4.75 g, minimum weight, but not less than 4 g.

V. PROVISIONS CONCERNING PRESENTATION

A. Uniformity

The contents of each package must be uniform and contain only fruit of the same origin and quality.

The visible part of the contents of the package must be representative of the entire contents. For "Extra" class and Class I the fruit must be of the same variety and/or commercial type, and for Class II, of the same commercial type.

B. Packaging

Dates must be packed in such a way so as to protect the produce properly.

The materials used inside the package must be new, clean and of a quality such as to avoid causing any external or internal damage to the produce. The use of materials, particularly of paper or stamps bearing trade specifications is allowed provided the printing or labelling has been done with non-toxic ink or glue.

In wooden packages the fruit must be separated from the wall of the package by paper or other means of protection.

Clusters must be protected individually by a strong bag, preferably transparent, and must be placed inside firm packaging material to prevent their deformation during transport.

Packages must be free of all foreign matter with the exception of that used to complete the presentation (rachis, stems, plastic forks, etc.).

C. Presentation

Dates may be presented:

- In clusters (consisting mainly of the rachis and the stems to which the fruit is attached naturally)
- In stems (stems which are separated from the rachis and to which the fruit is attached naturally)
- Separately, arranged in layers, or in bulk.

Stems presented in clusters or separated from the rachis must be at least 10 cm in length and carry an average of four fruits per 10 cm of length.

Where the dates are presented in stems or clusters, there may be a maximum of 10 per cent of loose dates.

The ends of the stems must be cleanly cut.

Dates in clusters and stems may only be presented in "Extra" Class and Class I.

Dates must be packed in strong new packaging and in accordance with the following provisions. Other packages not conforming to these weights may, however, be used at the request of the importer:

For all classes:

- compartmented cardboard, wood, metal, or plastic packing, or packaging under cellulose film into packages weighing 0.125, 0.25, 0.5 and 1 kg, or in the avoirdupois system 0.5 lb and multiples thereof; or
 - packages of 1 to 20 kg net.
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VI. PROVISIONS CONCERNING MARKING

Each package must bear the following particulars in letters grouped on the same side, legibly and indelibly marked and visible from the outside:

A. Identification

Packer) Name and address or
and/or) officially issued or
Dispatcher) accepted code mark. ⁷

B. Nature of the produce

- "DATES", when the contents are not visible from the outside
- name of the variety or the word "common" when the variety is not defined or cannot be guaranteed. The name of the variety must be given for "Extra" Class and Class I. If the variety is not specified or is not one of those listed in annex I, the words "cane sugar variety(ies)" or "invert sugar variety(ies)"
- the word "cluster" or "stems" for dates packed in those forms.

C. Origin of the produce

- country of origin and, optionally, district where grown or the national, regional or local place name.

D. Commercial specifications

- class
- crop year (optional)
- net weight, or number of package units, followed by the net unit weight in the case of packages containing such units.

E. Official control mark (optional)

Adopted 1987

⁷ The national legislation of a number of European countries requires the explicit declaration of the name and address.

ANNEX I

PARTIAL LIST OF CANE SUGAR AND INVERT SUGAR VARIETIES OF DATES

A. Cane sugar varieties :

Varieties which contain mainly sucrose, including :

- Dajlat Noor (Deglet Noor)
- Dajlat Beidha (Deglet Beidha)

B. Invert sugar varieties

Varieties which contain mainly invert sugar (glucose and fructose), including :

Barhi	(Barhee)
Saiidi	(Saidy)
Khadhraawi	(Khadrawy)
Hallaawi	(Halawy)
Zahdi	(Zahidi)
Sayir	(Sayer)
Amri	
Deri	
Alig	
Majhoul	
Akhaout Alig	

ANNEX II

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED IN THE STANDARD FOR WHOLE DATES

- (a) **Sour fruit:**
fruit in which there has been a breakdown of the sugars into alcohol and acetic acid by the action of yeasts and bacteria. Detected by a characteristic sour taste. Fruit with incipient fermentation but with only a very slight sour taste is not considered as defective.
- (b) **Decayed fruit:**
fruit in a state of decomposition and quite unacceptable in appearance.
- (c) **Mouldy fruit (mould):**
fruit with visible mould filaments.
- (d) **Dirty fruit:**
fruit having organic or inorganic material such as dirt or sand embedded in it and affecting an area greater than 3 mm in diameter.
- (e) **Damage or contamination by insects or mites:**
fruit with insect or mite damage which can be seen by the naked eye, or fruit contaminated with dead insects or mites, fragments of insects or mites, or their excreta.
- (f) **Unripe fruit:**
fruit light in weight, stunted or distinctly rubbery in texture.
- (g) **Unpollinated fruit:**
fruit not pollinated, as indicated by stunted growth, immature characteristics and absence of pit.
- (h) **Damaged fruit:**
fruit affected by mashing, tearing, breaking of the skin, leaving the kernel visible so that the appearance of the fruit is noticeably affected.

- (i) **Blemished fruit:**
fruit scarred, discoloured or sunburnt, or having blacknose or side-spot or similar abnormalities affecting an area at least as large as a circle of 7 mm diameter.
 - (j) **Blacknose:**
noticeable darkening of the head, generally accompanied by severe checking or cracking of the flesh.
 - (k) **Side-spot:**
a very dark patch extending into the flesh and having an area at least as large as a circle of 5 mm diameter.
 - (l) **Sunburnt fruit:**
fruit which has very evident blemishes, at least 7 mm in the shortest dimension.
 - (m) **Mineral impurities:**
acid insoluble ash.
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