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Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

Working Party on Agricultural Quality StandardsSpecialized Section on Standardization
of Dry and Dried Produce

Sixty-fifth session

Geneva, 25-27 June 2018

**Report of the sixty-fifth session of the Specialized Section on
Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce****I. Introduction**

1. Mr. Dorian LaFond (United States) chaired the meeting of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce

2. The Chief of the Market Access Section of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), Mr. Mika Vepsäläinen, welcomed the delegates to the sixty-fifth session. He expressed his appreciation for the Section's active engagement which had resulted in a large portfolio of standards used and implemented at national, regional, and international levels, and with impact worldwide. He welcomed the large delegation from Central Asia noting the progress made in these countries in the areas of nuts and dried fruit and the work which had started on just one standard (dried apricots) several years ago and led to so many new initiatives. He mentioned that the Central Asian countries have not only improved their collaboration, they have established an informal Central Asian working group that acts as coordinator and helps the countries and their private sector in striving towards better quality produce and better integration into international value chains. He emphasized that the adoption of standards, the preparation of guidance material, and the training were important and encouraging steps and UNECE will ensure that countries indicating their interest will be accompanied in the implementation phases. He thanked the Specialized Section for helping the secretariat organize the symposium and the tasting event--stressing that without the generous contributions from many countries, the private sector and the International Nut and Dried Fruit Council (INC), these events could not be held.

3. He also stressed the importance of safeguarding the quality of nuts and dried fruit which was not only a service to the buyer or consumer but essential to prevent food loss and to ensure also that domestic markets received safe and nutritious produce. The work of the Specialized Section on the standards, and, hence, improved quality along the entire supply

chain, will reinforce this. He also noted that the secretariat had obtained funds to work on quality and food-loss reduction. This project also provided this Specialized Section with the opportunity to share knowledge, exchange best practices and develop capacities at the national level. Preventing food loss, he said, was one of the key targets of Goal 12 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on responsible consumption and production. The work of the Specialized Section carried a realistic potential to become a key contribution for achieving that goal. In the past years the work of the Specialized Section had offered new possibilities to help countries integrate into international trade in a sustainable way which, he stressed, was very important to bring about real impact in a food system faced with the challenges of the future, including climate change, population growth, and declining resources.

4. He thanked the Specialized Section for advancing its work in many areas closely related to standardization and stressed the relevance of this group for other UNECE programmes and countries outside the UNECE region.

5. He thanked all participants for their active participation throughout the year and for their support in training events, stressing that this helped advance the quality agenda worldwide and was an essential contribution to the sustainable development of all countries.

II. Attendance

6. Representatives of the following countries attended the meeting: Afghanistan, Georgia, Germany, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, Oman, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Spain, Tajikistan, Turkey, United States of America, Uzbekistan.

7. The following specialized programmes and intergovernmental organization participated in the session: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); International Trade Center (ITC), Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), World Food Programme (WFP)

8. Representatives from the following observer organization, non-governmental organizations, associations, academia and private sector groups attended the session: Aegean Exporters Associations, Alimkhan Exim Group, Association of Fruit and Vegetable Enterprises, Austrian NGO "Hilfswerk International", Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), DFA of California/Safe Food Alliance, International Association of Producers and Exporters of Agriproducts of Tajikistan, The International Nut and Dried Fruit Council (INC), Kut" Consulting, Jahon Exim Group, Oro Isfara, Quality Management Centre – Tajikistan, Vitaina, Warenverein der Hamburger Börse.

III. Adoption of the agenda

9. The delegations adopted the provisional agenda with amendments.

IV. Matters arising since the last session

(a) United Nations, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and subsidiary bodies

10. The Chief of the Market Access Section explained that all United Nations bodies, including UNECE, had taken significant budget cuts in their 2018-2019 budgets including

posts and a significant reduction of operational budgets which includes printing, travel and consultancies. This resulted in the need to use available resources more efficiently. Some of the resource gaps will be bridged through project funds for capacity-building. He informed delegations that the last session of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards took place from 3 to 4 May 2018 and focused on the review of a new study on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in Georgia and the follow-ups to previous countries studies on Kazakhstan; Kyrgyzstan, and the Republic of Moldova. He informed delegations that the previous UNECE capacity-building project, which ended in December 2017, had been very positively assessed in an external evaluation. Linking the Specialized Section's work with other projects and organizations will intensify partnerships, increase the work's impact, strengthened its connection to the SDG targets and allowed for greater financial efficiency.

11. He also mentioned that at UNECE level, an institutional mapping was currently being carried out to identify the focus of the organization on 8 SDGs to allow for more effective results and impact. The work of the UNECE on agricultural standards is meant to contribute mainly to SDG 12 on sustainable production and consumption, SDG 17 on global partnerships and SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth. SDG 12 had been the topic of the conference on "Rooting for Sustainable Food" organized at the November 2017 session of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7) together with FAO.

(b) Recent developments in other organizations

12. The representative of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme informed the delegates about the decisions of 40th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC40) in 2017 with respect to dry and dried produce i.e. CAC 40 had approved new work on the standards for cashew kernels; dried sweet potatoes; dried fruits (under the Codex Committee on Processed Fruits and Vegetables (CCPFV)); dehydrated ginger; dried garlic; dried chili peppers and paprika; basil; saffron; nutmeg and cloves (under the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH)). The CAC40 had agreed to take into account the SDGs in its new Codex Strategic Plan 2020-2025 due to their significance in advocacy and their synergies to the work of Codex. Finally, the meeting was informed that the CAC41 will be held 2- 6 July 2018 in Rome, and will, among others, consider the draft work plan for CCPFV. It will hold high level discussion panels for both International Inter-Government Organizations (IGOs) and the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) on the important subject of food authenticity and food fraud.

13. The representative of the International Nut and Dried Fruit Council (INC) introduced her organization which represents the interest of the nuts and dried fruit industry worldwide. She explained that the INC's vision was to be the international source for information on nuts and dried fruit on health, nutrition, production statistics, trade and consumption, food safety, government standards and regulations and agricultural quality standards to stimulate and facilitate the sustainable growth in the global nut and dried fruit industry. She noted that the INC represented 815 companies from 77 countries on five continents. As an observer, the INC collaborates with the UNECE in the review of the quality standards and participates in meetings and workshops. In May 2018, the INC helped organize a practical workshop to validate the UNECE Sampling Plan for Tree Nuts and Dried Produce that was hosted by one of the INC's members. Also, in May 2018, the Chair of the UNECE Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce participated in the INC Congress in Sevilla, Spain, to give a report on UNECE's activities and cooperation. The representative from the INC also drew attention to the INC's new "World Nut and Dried Fruit Trade Map", which was available online and provided a comprehensive overview of the main trade flows among exporting and importing countries at a glance.

V. Review of existing standards

14. The Specialized Section reviewed in the revised draft Standard for Prunes which France had aligned with the Standard Layout. In addition, the delegation from France had also proposed the inclusion of new size designations. The Specialized Section also reviewed in detail the text of the standard and agreed on several amendments, some of which were placed in square brackets for further discussion. All agreed changes are reflected in the post-session document.

15. The Specialized Section decided to submit the revised draft to the Working Party session in November 2018 for adoption as a recommendation for a 1-year trial period.

VI. Sampling plan for tree nuts and dried produce and guidelines for inspections of dry and dried produce

16. The Chair of the Specialized Section introduced the work on the sampling plan which had been a work in progress for several years. At its 2017 session, the Specialized Section had decided to organize a small practical workshop which was held on 4 May 2018 at a company facility in Naples, Italy, with the assistance of the INC. This workshop had provided experts with the opportunity to test the sampling plan's provisions for almond kernels, dried grapes, and walnuts in practice. The delegate from Germany gave a detailed presentation of the sampling verification and showed the photos taken to illustrate the process (the presentation will be made available on the UNECE web site). During the exercise, it had been decided that a sequence of inspection needed to be included in the final plan, the illustrated guideline and the film. The delegate from Germany noted that during the workshop, several questions on the provisions of the standards had emerged which would require clarification by the Specialized Section, namely mould filaments vs duvet in walnut kernels; and scratch marks on almonds.

17. As it had not been possible to finalize the work on the sampling plan at the May 2018 workshop, the Specialized Section decided to organize a second small workshop in November 2018 to validate the plan for other produce. The date and venue will be communicated in the next months. It was also pointed out that once the sampling plan had been finalized, it would be useful to organize a training workshop for a larger audience.

VII. Development of new standards

(a) Dried coconut pieces

18. The Specialized Section reviewed in detail the Recommendation adopted by the Working Party in November 2017 for a 1-year trial period and the comments received from Brazil, the Philippines and other delegations. The Specialized Section changed the title of the Recommendation to "Dried Coconut Kernel pieces" and introduced amendments which are reflected in the post-session document. Lengthy discussion took place on the moisture content. It was decided to reflect on the currently included value of 3.5% until 30 July 2018. Should there be any new proposal, the Specialized Section would decide on its adoption in an inter-sessional approval procedure.

19. Depending on the outcome of the consultations and, possibly, the inter-sessional approval procedure, the Specialized Section decided to submit the revised Recommendation to the November 2018 session of the Working Party for either a 1-year extension of the trial period, or as a new UNECE Standard for Dried Coconut Kernel pieces.

(b) Dried bananas

20. The Specialized Section reviewed the Recommendation adopted by the Working Party in November 2017 for a 1-year trial period. The Specialized Section took note of the comments submitted by the Philippines. The Specialized Section introduced several amendments which are reflected in the post-session document. The Specialized Section discussed the possible inclusion of a moisture content for dried green bananas. Delegations should send their proposals and comments on the moisture content for dried green bananas to the secretariat by 30 July 2018. They will be shared and submitted for inter-sessional approval.

21. The Specialized Section decided to submit the revised Recommendation to the Working Party at its November 2018 session for adoption as a new UNECE Standard for Dried Bananas pending agreement on the moisture content for dried green bananas. In case no agreement could be reached, the revised text will be submitted to the Working Party for a 1-year extension of the trial period.

(c) Dried ripe papayas

22. The Specialized Section continued to work on the development of a draft standard for dried ripe papayas and adopted several amendments which are reflected in the post-session document. The Specialized Section took note of the comments submitted by the Philippines.

23. The Specialized Section decided to submit the draft to the Working Party session in November 2018 for adoption as a Recommendation for a 1-year trial period.

(d) Dried melons

24. The delegation from Uzbekistan gave a presentation on the origin, production and trade of fresh and dried melons in Uzbekistan and Central Asia to support their proposal for the development of a standard for dried melons. The Specialized Section reviewed the proposal submitted by the delegation from Uzbekistan and amended the text to reflect the format and terms used in the UNECE Standard Layout. The Specialized Section also adjusted the table of tolerances as well as other parts of the proposed draft. Many of the provisions were placed in square brackets to allow for further reflection and consultation during the trial period. Should problems arise during the trial period, delegations were asked to contact the Specialized Section members via the secretariat.

25. It was decided to submit the revised text to the Working Party for adoption as a Recommendation for a 1-year trial period. The delegation from Kyrgyzstan offered to review the Russian translation of the Recommendation and suggest editorial amendments, if necessary.

(e) Dried berries

26. The Specialized Section postponed discussion on the development of a standard for dried berries to the 2019 session provided the countries that had proposed the development of the standard would submit a draft.

VIII. Explanatory materials

(a) Pistachio nuts

Kernel content and shell ratio

27. The delegation from Iran gave a presentation on a research study in Iran on the ratio between kernel content and the shell. The presentation and the upcoming research paper will be made available to delegates and published on the UNECE web site for other pistachio producing countries to consult and review. The item will be placed on the agenda of the 2019 session for further discussion.

Pistachio poster

28. The Specialized Section reviewed the explanatory poster prepared by the delegation from Iran with input from other delegations. Given the limited space on the poster and the small size of the pistachio nut, the Specialized Section decided to depict each defect in one photo to increase its educational value for users. The only exception would be the photos for “damage by pests” where the infestation on the kernel and the shell would be shown. The photo for rancidity was removed. The delegation from Turkey presented photos of their varieties with defects which would be sent to the secretariat and Iran for inclusion in the poster.

29. The secretariat will coordinate the finalization of the poster and work with Iran on a new version including the photos presented by Turkey and comments received by delegations. In addition, it was decided to slightly change the layout to allow for the inclusion of larger photos. Delegations were invited to send their comments to the secretariat by 30 September 2018 so as to allow the delegation from Iran to prepare a final version for adoption by the Specialized Section in an inter-sessional approval procedure in October 2018. If approved the draft poster would be submitted to the November 2018 Working Party session for adoption.

(b) Walnuts

Explanatory brochure for walnut kernels

30. The secretariat informed delegates that the explanatory brochure for walnut kernels had been printed in English and French and copies could be obtained from the secretariat. The Specialized Section thanked the delegation from the United States and the California Walnut Board for their support in the development of the brochure and its printing.

Posters for walnut kernels and inshell walnuts

31. Following the publication of the two walnut brochures, it was decided to explore the possibility to develop the related posters. The development of the walnut posters would be coordinated by the secretariat and the United States delegation.

(c) Proposal for new posters

32. The delegation from Turkey proposed to develop new posters for dried figs and dried grapes for review prior to the 2019 session. Delegations were invited to send photos and comments to the delegation from Turkey via the secretariat on the first drafts. It was stressed that like all posters, they were meant to depict the defects described in the table of quality tolerances independently from the variety and growing region.

(d) Dried apricots*Explanatory brochure for dried apricots (Central Asia)*

33. The delegation from Tajikistan, on behalf of the Central Asian working group, presented their newly developed dried apricot brochure which is based on the UNECE explanatory brochure format and for use by the Central Asian region. The brochure outlines the provisions of the UNECE Standard for Dried Apricots and was developed with the guidance from Turkey and input from Poland and Germany.

34. The Specialized Section congratulated the Central Asian working group for the development of this brochure and welcomed their agreement to make this draft available for comments. It was also agreed to add the review of the brochure to the 2019 agenda of the Specialized Section in view of an adoption as a UNECE brochure.

IX. Sustainable Development Goals and the work of the Specialized Section

35. In the coming months, the secretariat will circulate the promotional poster on the work of the Specialized Section related to the SDGs and ask for comments on the layout and text.

36. The Specialized Section thanked contributors and the secretariat for the excellent organization of the symposium on “sustainable trade of nuts and dried fruit” noting its concrete and practical focus on the SDGs. The symposium had shown that importance of sustainability in the international trade of these products as well as the relevance of the Specialized Section’s work for producing countries worldwide. All symposium presentations have been made available at: <http://www.unece.org/ddp-65th-2018.html>

37. Given the success of the symposium and the valuable information provided, it was decided to organize another symposium in 2019.

X. Other business

38. The secretariat informed the Specialized Section about the upcoming workshop in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, during the week of 10 September 2018 which would focus on improved quality in the nut, dried fruit, and fresh fruit and vegetables production and trade.

39. The delegate from Tajikistan informed delegates that the next session of Central Asian working group would be in Central Asia in December 2018 to discuss the promotion and changes to commercial standards. He invited the members of the Specialized Section and the UNECE to attend this event.

XI. Future work

40. The Specialized Section decided to place the following items on the agenda for 2019:

- Recommendations for prunes, dried melons, papayas
- New Standard for dried berries
- New Standards for peanuts and pecan nuts
- Revision of the standard for inshell pistachios (kernel content and shell ratio)
- Revision of the Standard Layout

- Finalization of the Sampling plan, guidelines and video
 - Review of the explanatory posters (inshell walnuts, walnut kernels, dried figs, dried grapes and inshell pistachios),
 - Review of the central Asian explanatory brochure for dried apricots in view of an adoption as a UNECE brochure
 - Sampling and inspection event
 - Symposium on sustainable trade in cashew nuts and other produce
 - Development of a brochure on cashew kernels and a cashew kernel colour chart
41. Any other proposals for future work should be sent to the secretariat as early as possible, preferably by 1 February 2019.

XII. Election of officers

42. The Specialized Section elected Mr. Dorian LaFond (United States) as Chair of the Specialized Section and Ms. Aysegül Uluhan (Turkey) and Mr. Umed Aslanov (Tajikistan) as Vice-Chairs.

XIII. Adoption of the report

43. The Specialized Section adopted the report of the session. The tentative dates of the next session are: 24 to 26 June 2019.
