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COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Working Party on Standardization of
Perishable Produce and Quality Development

Meeting of Experts on Co-ordination of
Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables
Forty-Second session, 4-6 November 1996, Geneva

Item 7 of the Provisional Agenda

CONSIDERATION OF A PROPOSAL TO INCLUDE PROVISIONS
FOR MINIATURE FRUIT AND VEGETABLES IN UN/ECE STANDARDS

Note by the secretariat

This document presents proposals by the secretariat on how provisions concerning miniature produce could be incorporated in UN/ECE Standards. The document also contains a proposal by Germany on the possible incorporation of miniature product in the UN/ECE Standard Layout and comments by the United Kingdom delegation concerning the incorporation of the EU Gentleman's Agreement or provisions on miniature fruit and vegetables in UN/ECE standards.

1. Proposal by the Secretariat concerning the incorporation of provisions on miniature produce in UN/ECE Standards:

The following non-exhaustive list of options for the incorporation of provisions on miniature produce has been identified by the secretariat. Delegates are invited to discuss these options. Proposals and comments are invited.

a) Reference to the elaboration of standards for miniature produce in the Geneva Protocol. This option requires a formal revision of the Geneva Protocol, approval by the Working Party and the Committee on the Development of Trade.

b) Incorporation of provisions on miniature produce in the Standard Layout for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables. This option requires a revision of the Standard Layout and approval by the Working Party.

c) Incorporation of the Gentleman's Agreement (in its current or expanded form) as an Annex to the Standard Layout. This option requires revision of the Standard Layout and approval by the Working Party.

d) Elaboration of an exhaustive list of miniature produce and incorporation of definitions etc. either in an annex to specific standards or within the specific standard. This option requires revisions of specific standards and approval by the Working Party.

2. Proposal by Germany on the incorporation of miniature products in the UN/ECE Standard Layout:

III. Provisions Concerning Sizing:

Proposal to insert a last paragraph reading:

"The sizing requirement shall not apply to mini...." _/ footnote

Footnote: **"Mini-product means a variety of (parthenocarpic) fruit or vegetables developed through plant breeding and/or special cultivation techniques but does not include immature or undersize specimens of non-miniature varieties. Sizing requirements do not apply to mini-... provided they are presented separately in homogenous packages and fulfil all the other requirements laid down for the class specified."**

3. Comments by the United Kingdom delegation concerning the incorporation of the EU's Gentleman's Agreement or provisions on miniature fruit and vegetables in UN/ECE standards.

On the subject of miniature or baby fruit and vegetables, the United Kingdom does not consider that the EU's Gentleman's Agreement should be incorporated into ECE standards as this subject area now needs more careful consideration. Originally the Gentleman's Agreement was intended to cover a specific but exhaustive list of products. However, since then trade developments have grown and there is a market demand for a wider range of miniature or baby products. The United Kingdom delegation therefore feels that the need should be considered in relation to each UN/ECE standard and specific details incorporated into that standard. This approach seems to the United Kingdom delegation to be more relevant to market needs than attempting to maintain a single list of products.

The proposal to include miniature products in the Standard Layout has merit but the United Kingdom delegation feels there is also a case to be made that for some products this could lead to the marketing of underdeveloped or immature produce that may result in damage to trade or at least a loss of confidence.

The delegation of the United Kingdom therefore considers this subject needs further discussion before decisions are finalized.