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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

COMMITTEE FOR TRADE, INDUSTRY AND
ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Working Party on Standardization of
Perishable Produce and Quality Development

Specialized Section on Coordination of
Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables
Forty-sixth session, Geneva, 23 to 26 May 2000

REPORT OF THE FORTY-SIXTH SESSION

Note by the Secretariat

This document contains the paper presented by the representative of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development at the forty-sixth session of the Specialized Section.

PAPER PRESENTED ON BEHALF OF THE ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC
CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT AT THE FORTY-SIXTH SESSION OF
THE SPECIALIZED SECTION ON COORDINATION OF STANDARDIZATION
OF FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLES

A. Review of the Council Decision

On 8 April 1999, the Council, the highest body of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), adopted Decision C(99)10/FINAL, which revised the roles and operation of the OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables. The main objectives of the Scheme are now thus:

- To encourage the establishment of a single international standards body; and
- In the meantime, as in the past, to facilitate the implementation and harmonization of international standardization activities by category.

Under the Scheme, once the standards adopted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe have been ratified by the Plenary Meeting, they are applicable under the Scheme.

Furthermore, it has been made easier for new countries to join the Scheme insofar as, henceforth:

- The Scheme is open not only to any country that is a member of the United Nations or its specialized agencies, but also to any country that is a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) wishing to take part in the Scheme in respect of all products for which an OECD standard exists or in respect of some of them only;
- Moreover, new participating countries now have a period of three years after they have joined the Scheme to set up a system for checking the quality of products before export.

B. Programme of work of the Scheme

At its fifty-ninth session, held from 13-15 May 2000, the Plenary Meeting of the Scheme adopted its programme of work. The programme consists of two main types of work.

I. Quality standards and how to interpret them

It was decided to prepare explanatory brochures on the standards for apples and pears, citrus fruit, plums, beans, tomatoes, strawberries, table grapes and cucumbers.

II. Quality assurance and quality control

II.1 Guides for the application of quality-assurance and quality-control systems

II.1.1. Guides to the implementation of controls

(a) Interface between quality assurance and control and the other systems for checking fruit and vegetables

(b) Guides to control

– packaging

– labelling

(c) Guides to methods using objective tests and limiting values

– determining the ripeness of fruit

II.1.2. Guides to the concept of quality

– internal quality

II.1.3 Guides to quality-assurance issues

– good handling practices

– quality assurance

II.2 Standardization meetings

II.2.1 Meetings of Heads of National Monitoring Services

II.2.2. Workshops/training courses

II.2.3. Joint quality assessments

C. Publications

The explanatory brochure on the carrot standard and the colour gauge for cauliflowers have just been published. The explanatory brochures on the broccoli and asparagus standards should also be available before the end of the year. The brochure on carrots, as well as those on broccoli and asparagus, have been or will be published both in hard copy and in electronic form. These publications are on sale and available from the OECD bookshop and from the OECD Web site at <http://www.oecd.org>.

D. Meeting of Heads of National Monitoring Services

Under the OECD Scheme and at the kind invitation of the Israeli authorities, the 9th meeting of Heads of National Monitoring Services was held in Herzlia from 11 to 13 October 1999. The following specific points were discussed:

- Exchange of information between national monitoring services;
- Use of information technology and other electronic systems for quality control, particularly for developing non-destructive monitoring methods;
- Quality-assurance systems in the sector of fresh fruit and vegetables;
- The role of official monitoring services vis-à-vis private monitoring bodies;
- Appropriateness of official quality standards to trade requirements.

Fact-finding visits were also carried out to the loading bays for fruit to be exported from the port of Ashdod and to packaging plants.
