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COMMITTEE FOR TRADE, INDUSTRY AND
ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

Specialized Section on Standardization of
Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

Fifty-first session, Geneva, 8 - 11 March 2005

REPORT ON ITS FIFTY-FIRST SESSION

Executive summary

Participation: 20 country delegations and 6 organizations participated.

Texts proposed to the Working Party for adoption as UNECE Recommendations for a trial period:

- Table Grapes (one-year trial until 2006) (see TRADE//WP.7/GE.1/2005/18/Add.1).
- Apples(Maturity requirements) (two-year trial until 2007) (see TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2005/18/Add.2).
- Bilberries and Blueberries (extension of the trial for one year until 2006)
- Potatoes (extension of the trial for one year until 2006)
- Cherries (one-year trial) (until 2006)(see TRADE//WP.7/GE.1/2005/18/Add.3).
- Peaches and Nectarines (correction to the maturity requirements trial remains until 2006)
- Ceps (new recommendation for a two-year trial period until 2007)

Texts proposed to the Working Party for adoption as revised UNECE Standards:

- Melons (TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2005/18/Add.1).
- Apples (Sizing) (TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2005/18/Add.2).

Other decisions concerning standards:

- Plums: The existing recommendation was deleted.
- Kiwi fruit: The delegation of the United States presented their method of sizing by diameter.
- Truffles: The recommendation has been integrated into an interprofessional agreement in France. The trial period continues until 2006.

Executive summary (cont'd):

Compatibility of the control certificate with the UN Layout Key: The Working Group presented a proposal that was prepared in cooperation with SITPRO. The draft will be updated in line with the comments made, discussed in GE.2 and then transmitted to the Working Party.

Point of application: The Specialized Section discussed how to acknowledge that UNECE Standards are used in different stages of marketing. There was agreement that this issue should be dealt with in the Geneva Protocol rather than in the individual standards. The question will be discussed in other specialized sections and the Working Party.

Template for requesting inclusion of apple varieties: The Specialized Section discussed what could be done to reduce the list of apples varieties in the standard. Delegations were asked to provide the names of the most important varieties (up to a maximum of 30) to the delegation of the United Kingdom who would prepare a proposal for the next session.

Use of code marks: The proposal to require adding the ISO country code to each code mark will be discussed in the Working Party.

WHO global strategy on diet, physical activity and health: The Specialized Section discussed different ways of promoting the consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables.

General conditions of sale/arbitration rules

The secretariat will scan these publications and put them on the website.

Acceptances

The Specialized Section welcomed the proposal from Germany for how to report on the acceptance and application of standards. After clarification of some legal issues the proposal will be discussed in the other Specialized Sections and transmitted to the Working Party.

Participation

1. The session was attended by delegations of the following countries: Belgium, Bulgaria, Chile, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; and United States of America.
2. The European Community was also represented.
3. The following specialized agencies/programmes participated in the session: FAO.
4. A representative of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables also participated in the session.
5. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations participated in the session: COPA/COGECA, Deciduous Fruit Producers' Trust (South Africa), and FRESHFEL.

Opening of the session

6. The session was opened by the Director of the Trade Development and Timber Division, Ms. Carol Cosgrove-Sacks, who welcomed the delegations to Geneva on behalf of the Executive Secretary of UNECE, Ms. Brigita Schmögnerová.

7. She reported on the outcome of the annual session of the Economic Commission for Europe and the external, independent evaluation of the Commission, which was taking place in 2005. This review had been initiated to establish how the different areas of the UNECE add value in achieving the overall goals of the United Nations. She said that it was a positive sign that in the first round of statements, several countries and organizations had mentioned the usefulness of the work on agricultural quality standards. The review team would be in touch with all members and it was likely that delegations would be asked their opinion on the work by their administration.

8. She said that the UNECE annual session had requested all intergovernmental bodies to reflect on how they could be more active in capacity building. In the area of agricultural quality standards, a number of useful seminars had been organized in recent years and that was aware that with just one professional staff member, one programme assistant, and a limited travel budget, more could only be done in direct cooperation with countries or organizations and if there was an external budget available.

9. She noted that this year would be even more difficult because one staff member would be on extended sick leave. She informed the delegations that on several occasions, additional funds for the work on agricultural quality standards had been requested and a new effort would be made in 2005.

10. The Director informed the Specialized Section about a meeting with Mr. Tontisirin, Director of the Food and Nutrition Division of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) on possible synergies between the work on agricultural standards and the electronic business applications being developed by the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) for applications in tracking and tracing produce along the supply chain.

11. She proposed to discuss these questions further with the bureau members of GE.1 and WP.7 and mentioned the possibility of organizing a high-level round-table on tracking, traceability and chain of custody in cooperation with other organizations (e.g. FAO, World Health Organization (WHO), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and European Article Numbering (EAN) (now GS1)).

12. She concluded by saying that she hoped that all topics on the busy agenda of the meeting could be treated and especially that progress could be made on the standard for apples which could serve as an important input for the forthcoming meeting of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables (CCFFV) in Mexico.

Item 1: Adoption of the agenda

Document TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2005/1

13. The provisional agenda as contained in TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2005/1 was adopted with the following changes:

- Documents TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2005/3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 15 were deleted from the agenda.
- Document 2005/12 was withdrawn by Belgium.

- The following documents were added to the agenda (INF.6, INF.13 and 14 are not mentioned because they were withdrawn at the session):

INF.1	France	Commercial types for melons
INF.2	France	Apples
INF.3	France	Table Grapes
INF.4	Hungary	Table Grapes
INF.5	Copa-Cogeca	Apples
INF.7	Switzerland	Commercial types for melons
INF.8	Switzerland	Commercial types for melons
INF.9	United States	Kiwi fruit / sizing by diameter
INF.10	European Commission	Apples
INF.11	Canada	Apples
INF.12	United States	Cherries
INF.15	Canada	Apples
INF.16	Europatat	Potatoes
INF.17	United Kingdom	Control Certificate
INF.18	Secretariat	Matters of interest
INF.19	Deciduous Fruit Producers' Trust – South Africa	Apples
INF.20	Copa Cogeca	Apples

Item 2: Matters of interest arising since the last session

INF.18 (Secretariat)

2(a) Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

14. The Specialized Section took note of the discussion on its work held at the level of the Working Party.

2(b) Codex Alimentarius Commission and Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

15. In addition to the information given at the Working Party (see TRADE/WP.7/2004/10, paras. 15 and 18), the delegation of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme informed delegations that the invitations to the 12th session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables to be held in Mexico from 16 to 20 May 2005 had been sent and that the documents were available on the website

(www.codexalimentarius.net). Comments on maturity requirements, small-berried varieties for table grapes, apples and rambutan may be sent until 15 April 2005.

2(c) European Union

16. In addition to the information given at the Working Party (see TRADE/WP.7/2004/10, paras. 19 and 20), the delegation of the European Commission reported that the standards for avocados and plums would be amended shortly. The EU Commission has published a list of coordinating authorities for the control of conformity in fruit and vegetables.

2(d) OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables

17. In addition to the information given at the Working Party (see TRADE/WP.7/2004/10, paras. 21 to 26), the delegation of the OECD Scheme informed delegations that the draft summary report of the last plenary meeting, held in Bonn in October 2004, would be available shortly.

Item 3: Proposals to revise UNECE Standards

3(a) Kiwi fruit

INF.9 (United States)

18. The delegation of the United States introduced document INF.9, containing an explanation of how kiwi fruit are sized by diameter in the United States. The document did not contain any proposal and was intended merely to inform other delegations about the procedure used in that country.

3(b) Melons

INF.1 (France)

INF.7 (Switzerland)

INF.8 (Switzerland)

19. At the last session the delegations of Switzerland and France proposed that the commercial types in the standard be clarified, since they were used more than varieties for marking and labelling purposes because melon varieties change frequently and are difficult to determine. The Specialized Section agreed to the proposal to undertake this work but stressed that it should not complicate the standard.

20. The delegation of Switzerland proposed the following amendments to the standard:

- To include a non-exhaustive list of commercial types in the definition of produce;
- To make the marking of the commercial type mandatory and the marking of the variety optional.

21. To supplement this proposal the delegation of France presented a draft guide containing photos and descriptions of a number of commercial types, which was prepared in cooperation with le Centre technique interprofessionnel des fruits et légumes (CTIFL). This guide, which will be completed in autumn 2005, will contain presentations of the commercial types of melons representing almost 100% of the melons marketed in the world. The document was also presented at the OECD meeting in October 2004 and had been received favourably but no decision had been taken on the publication format and whether it would be free of charge or for sale.

22. Many delegations said that they were, in principle, in favour of the proposal but there was no consensus on including a list of commercial types at present. Some delegations felt that including such lists would create a lot of work in this and other standards. They felt that the issue could be better dealt with in explanatory brochures.

23. It was decided to amend the standard as follows:

- To include the text on maturity and footnote 2 in a new section “Minimum maturity requirements” as in the amendment to the standard layout (see item 6(b)).
- To amend VI B. to make marking of the commercial type mandatory and marking of the variety optional.

24. It was also decided that at the next session:

- The completed the guide of commercial types should be reviewed to decide if a list of commercial types harmonized with the guide should be included in the standard.
- It should be clarified if “Galia” has to comply with the “Charentais” maturity requirements.

25. The amendments to the standard will be published in addendum 1 to this report.

3 (c) *Table grapes*

INF.3 (France)

INF.4 (Hungary)

26. Document INF.3 contains the French proposal to the Codex working group on table grapes. The proposal contains major simplifications of the standard:

- Only two levels of maturity requirements for brix values and one level for sugar/acid ratio which means that no list of varieties with maturity requirements is necessary.
- Only one minimum weight for all varieties – which means that the exhaustive list of small-berried varieties could be deleted.

27. Most delegations were in favour of the proposed maturity requirements as a much simpler solution than having a list with all varieties and maturity requirements, which would be difficult to maintain and to control.

28. The delegation of Chile felt that the brix levels and sugar/acid ratio proposed were rather low but could agree to the approach of having brix levels listed by groups of varieties.

29. It was clarified by other delegations that the maturity requirements in the UNECE standards should only define a minimum level of quality. Usually the values reached by grapes in trade were much higher than the values proposed.

30. The representative of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme informed that the proposal of the Codex drafting group followed the guidelines given to the group at the last session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables (CCFFV), which were to establish a list of maturity requirements by variety and a list of small-berried varieties based on the list contained in the UNECE

standard. Thus, the French proposal had not been retained in the proposal of the working group but is contained in the background information document CX/FFV/05/12/7.

31. The delegation of Hungary clarified that its document had been a contribution to the original South African paper and that beyond maturity requirements it also contained some amendments to the list of varieties. The delegation of Switzerland also proposed a correction to the list of varieties.

32. The Specialized Section decided to propose the amendments to the maturity requirements, as contained in INF.3, to the Working Party for adoption for a one-year trial period and to amend the list of varieties as proposed by Hungary and Switzerland.

33. The Specialized Section also decided to discuss the simplification of the sizing provisions and the possible deletion of the list of small-berried varieties at the next session.

34. The amendments to the standard will be published in addendum 1 to this report.

4. UNECE Recommendations in trial period

4 (a) Apples

TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/9 (New Zealand)

TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2005/7 (New Zealand)

INF.2 (France)

INF.5 (Copa-Cogeca)

INF.10 (European Commission Services)

INF.11 (Canada)

INF.15 (Canada)

INF.19 (Deciduous Fruit Producers Trust - South Africa)

INF.20 (Copa-Cogeca)

35. The text of the recommendation will finish its trial period in November 2005. The following issues were discussed at the session:

- Sizing: Weight/diameter relationship for the determination of the minimum size and uniformity provisions
- Maturity requirements
- List of varieties

Sizing

36. A meeting of the working group on apples had been held the day before the Specialized Section led by the delegation of New Zealand who reported on the outcome. The working group recommends adopting the minimum sizes by weight as they stand in the present recommendation. Concerning uniformity, the working group felt that this was a visual issue, which could be assured more easily by diameter regardless of how the apples had been sized.

37. The delegation of France said that it was using a sizing table as a tool to ensure uniformity by weight and that it preferred the uniformity requirements for weight to be included in the standard. It will transmit this table to the next session of the Specialized Section.

38. After some discussion, the Specialized Section decided to propose to the Working Party to adopt the provisions concerning minimum sizes as in the present recommendation. The delegation of the European Community said that by the time of the adoption of the text in October, the minimum sizes in the Community standard would be aligned with those in the UNECE standard. For this reason, footnote 4 could be deleted.

39. New Zealand considered that the footnote containing a reservation from New Zealand, Chile and South Africa could be deleted as minimum sizes by weight had now been introduced in the standard. The secretariat will confirm if Chile and South Africa agree to this change.

Maturity

40. The delegation of the European Commission introduced its document (INF.10) and clarified that this represented the opinion of a large number of Member States and would be voted on shortly.

41. The delegation explained that the proposal was a response to concerns of producers and trade associations that the harmonization of the minimum sizes for apples in the Community standard with those in the UNECE Standard could lead to immature produce on the markets. The proposal contained easily applicable maturity requirements to give quality inspectors a tool to remove immature produce from the markets.

42. The delegation of Copa-Cogeca gave a presentation on their research on maturity and quality of apples that they had done in Italy and Belgium for six different cultivars. It believed that the results of its work indicated a correlation between the size and the brix value, which means to them that the current provisions in the standard are for the time being the most simple and accurate quality parameters.

43. Their research has also shown that the brix value in apples depends highly on the application of good agricultural practices and they felt that ensuring these on a global level would be more effective in ensuring good quality of apples than regulated minimum brix values.

44. They said that it was difficult to define quality with just one value and that if a minimum brix level would be included this should take into account the high variability of these values because of seasonal and environmental effects, different varieties and clones. Global historical data would be needed to define the correct values. Different consumer behaviour and appreciation in different regions should also be taken into account.

45. Copa-Cogeca stated that the World Apples and Pear Association (WAPA) supported them in their position and concluded that more time was needed for research to define accurate quality parameters for apples (3 years).

46. The representative of Freshfel supported the position of Copa-Cogeca.

47. A representative of the Deciduous Fruit Producers Trust in South Africa gave a presentation on their research, which had shown that there was only a low correlation of sizes and brix values for apples at harvest time.

48. The delegation of the European Commission, agreeing that quality was difficult to define, explained that the purpose of their proposal was to define a minimum brix level below which the fruit was not acceptable any more. From the research shown by the industry it seemed to them that the majority of

produce could reach the values they had proposed. They also said that the approach of minimum maturity parameters had proved useful in other standards.

49. New Zealand stated that any criteria for maturity should be simple and easily verifiable.

50. Some delegations supported the position of the industry and felt that more time for study was needed. It was mentioned that for some varieties no data were available and that the sampling procedure and the stage of marketing for testing should be defined.

51. Other delegations were of the opinion that the introduction of minimum maturity criteria would give quality inspectors an additional tool in the evaluation of lots which they could use in case of doubt as to whether the produce was fit for marketing. They also thought that if this provision would be included in the standard for a two-year trial period it could be tested in practice and adjusted on the basis of new experience or any new research results at a future session.

52. The delegation of Poland said that the testing of the brix value for apples did not need to be done in the centre of the fruit as the brix level did not vary in different parts of the fruit as much as in other fruit. The delegation felt that the word "taste" should not be used in the maturity requirements as this could be misleading especially for apples coming out of various storage conditions. However, they agreed that it could remain as an option for quality inspectors to quickly assess the fruit but that in any case other testing would be done before rejecting a lot.

53. The Specialized Section decided to propose to the Working Party:

- To adopt as a revised UNECE standard the inclusion of a section on minimum quality requirements but without recommending brix values at present:

"The apples must be sufficiently developed and display satisfactory ripeness".

The development and state of maturity of the apples must be such as to enable them to continue their ripening process and to reach the degree of ripeness required in relation to the varietal characteristics¹

In order to verify the minimum maturity requirements, several parameters can be considered (e.g. morphological aspect, taste, firmness and refractometric index)." (footnote 1 concerning the fuji variety is unchanged).

- To adopt as a new UNECE recommendation for a two-year trial period the following addition to the minimum maturity requirements concerning the brix values to be applied:

"and, if the refractometric index of the flesh is measured, the Brix degree must be greater than or equal to 9°. However, for the varieties Annurca, Cripps Pink, Fuji, Golden Delicious, Pinova, Rafzuben, Rafzubin, and their mutants, this value must be greater than or equal to 10°."

54. Having taken that decision, the Specialized Section stressed the importance of testing these requirements in practice and urged the industry to continue studies on quality parameters for apples so that the decision after the trial period could be taken on the basis of sufficient data.

55. The consolidated text of the revised standard and recommendation will be published in addendum 2 to this report.

List of varieties

56. At the last session, a number of varieties were accepted into the standard provisionally. Since then no new information has been received from the applying countries (Turkey and Lithuania). As a number of questions remained concerning these varieties (e.g. Rubin, Forele) the Specialized Section asked the secretariat to write to the countries requesting them to fill in the template for updating the list of varieties for apples (see TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.9) for each variety concerned.

57. The deadline for submitting this information was set at 1 October 2005 so that answers could be reviewed before the Working Party session. The Chairman of GE.1 would then, at that session, recommend how to proceed with these varieties.

Proposal from France to the Codex Alimentarius working group

58. The delegation of France reported that it had proposed to the Codex working group to adopt the same maturity requirements that had been proposed by the European Commission Services in INF.10, as well as a simplification of the minimum sizing requirements. It said that the Codex working group had not retained these proposals.

59. The Specialized Section was of the opinion that these proposals could be studied at a future session.

4(b) *Bilberries and blueberries*

60. The text proposed by the Specialized Section to the Working Party had been adopted as a recommendation for a 1-year trial period until November 2005, because it was felt that some research was needed to ensure the correct marking of the names "Bilberries" or "Blueberries" in different languages. The delegation of France and the secretariat enquired as to the correct denomination from different producer countries.

61. The delegation of France reported that from the replies received to date it was clear that there was confusion about the names and that they were used differently in different countries. The full results will be available at the next session.

62. The Specialized Section decided to propose to the Working Party to extend the trial period for this standard for one year until November 2006.

4(c) *Early and Ware Potatoes*

TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/7 (Text of the recommendation in trial period)

TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2005/11 (France)

INF.16 (Europatat)

63. The text of the recommendation will finish its trial period in November 2005. The joint standard for Early and Ware Potatoes (TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/7) was adopted as a UNECE recommendation for a one-year trial period to allow comments from interested parties.

64. The proposal of the delegation of France to amend the standard had already been submitted at the last session informally and was now available as an official document.

65. The Specialized Section decided to first discuss the status of the recommendation and then the proposal to amend the standard.

Status of the recommendation

66. The organization EUROPATAT, representing the potato trade in 17 countries, had already indicated to the secretariat that some of its members were not in favour of a joint standard and now provided a written statement in INF.16.

67. It considers that early and ware potatoes to be two different products (production period, storage capacity, period of marketing, physical characteristics) with a different customs code. It requests to maintain the two different standards and states that Europatat has taken this position with unanimity. It feels that merging the two standards could create more confusion both in the profession and on the level of the consumer.

68. Enquiries made by the delegation of France led them to doubt the accuracy of the statement made by EUROPATAT in INF.16.

69. A number of delegations said that they were very surprised about this position taken by the trade because in their countries a joint national standard or trade agreement existed without leading to any problems.

70. Some delegations said that they had consulted with their national organizations who had told them that they had no problems with merging the standards.

71. It was also mentioned that RUCIP, the trade rules created by EUROPATAT, treated both early and ware potatoes. And it was quite common in UNECE standards to include products with different customs codes in one standard (e.g. Citrus Fruit) and this had not led to any problems.

72. It was generally felt that probably there was some misunderstanding about the intention of the Specialized Section to join the two standards but that this was difficult to clarify in the absence of a delegation from EUROPATAT.

73. Some delegations felt that as the proposals had been on the table for some time and the trial period had not shown any problems it should be recommended to the Working Party to adopt the text as a revised UNECE Standard. It was also mentioned that the OECD was working on a brochure for potatoes and waiting for a decision in UNECE.

74. Other delegations felt that the trade should be consulted again and one more attempt should be made to have a thorough consultation with EUROPATAT explaining to their members what the intents of the merger were and to try to better understand their position.

75. After some discussion the Specialized Section decided to propose to the Working Party to extend the trial period for this recommendation for one further year. It recommends that the position of the Specialized Section should be presented at a EUROPATAT meeting.

Amendments to the standard

76. In their document the delegation of France proposed a number of amendments to the standard notably to the minimum requirements and also the introduction of quality classes based on the definitions in their national standard.

77. The delegation of Germany said that the German national standard also contained quality classes but that the definition was not based on the standard layout but on tolerances for certain defects. It considered shape and colour defects to be of minor importance in the trade of potatoes except, perhaps, for niche markets. It was of the opinion that the decision as to whether or not to amend the standard should be taken quickly as the OECD was waiting for the outcome at UNECE before proceeding with the publication of the brochure, which was in an advanced state.

78. The delegation would be in favour of discussing these issues in a working group to see if it was possible to create more transparency in trade by having a standard that could take into account the situation in countries having or not having a quality classification for potatoes.

79. A number of delegations stated that they would prefer to keep the present minimum standard.

80. The Specialized Section decided to form a Working Group to discuss issues on potatoes (members: France, Germany). All delegations were invited to provide the delegation of France with their national standards and to join the working group.

4(d) Plums

TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2005/13 (Germany)

81. In its document, the delegation of Germany proposed a way to deal with the inter-specific hybrids derived from plums and apricots in the standard. It proposed to mention them in the definition of produce and to consider them in general as large-fruited varieties and not include a specific list of hybrids in the annex. This would give an indication to quality inspectors of how to inspect these products while avoiding the mentioning of varieties that are little known because the products are generally marketed under trade names. It would allow for transparency and avoid the situation where they are sometimes inspected as plums and sometimes not depending the decision of the inspector.

82. A number of delegations were of the opinion that as the international trade volume for these products was not very high it was not necessary to include them in the standard, which would have the advantage of keeping the standard simple. They believed that, if needed, the question could be revisited at a future session.

83. The Specialized Section decided to recommend to the Working Party to delete the recommendation and to continue with the standard in force.

4(e) Cherries

INF.12 (United States)

84. This recommendation is in trial until November 2006.

85. The delegation informed the meeting that over the past three years the volume of stemless cherries produced in the United States and marketed internationally had exceeded 400 tonnes and that there was an annual growth of demand and production of stemless cherries of an average of 25%. They said that this did not concern special varieties but any varieties that were treated with a growth promoter prior to mechanical harvesting.

86. They proposed to amend the UNECE Standard for Cherries (FFV-13) to allow the standard to be used for both cherries with the stem attached and cherries without stem, provided that the skin is not leaking.

87. After some discussion the Specialized Section decided to integrate stemless cherries by:

- deleting the minimum requirement “with the stem intact”;
- amending the minimum requirement “intact” to ensure that cherries that have lost their stem are not damaged;
- including text on stemless cherries in the provisions for presentation and marking;
- maintaining the possibility to mark “Picota” as this was a denomination that was commonly used in trade.

88. The Specialized Section recommends to the Working Party to amend the recommendation as contained in Addendum 3 to this report for a trial period until November 2006.

4(f) Peaches and Nectarines

89. The Specialized Section decided to make a correction to this recommendation. In the section on minimum maturity requirements, the words “with the skin intact” were deleted.

4(g) Truffles

90. The delegation of France informed that the trial was proceeding well and an interprofessional agreement based on the UNECE recommendation had been concluded.

5. Proposals for new UNECE Standards

Draft UNECE Standard for Ceps

TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2005/14 (Finland)

91. The working group (Bulgaria, Finland, France, Slovakia) informed the Specialized Section that consensus had been reached on a text that could be tried out in practice. The following amendments were made to the text in 2005/14:

- The word “greenish” was removed from the minimum requirement concerning the pore layer.
- In Class II a greenish pore layer was allowed.
- The minimum requirement “whole” was amended to read:
intact; the stalk must be attached to the cap; the earth-soiled foot can be cut; ceps cut in half along the longitudinal axis are regarded as “intact”.

92. The Specialized Section decided to recommend to the Working Party to adopt the text for ceps as contained in Addendum 4 to this report as a new UNECE recommendation for a two-year trial period until November 2007.

6. Amendments to the general texts

(a) Control certificate/UNeDocs

INF.17 (United Kingdom)

93. At the last session of the Working Party a working group (United Kingdom, Secretariat, UN/CEFACT) was formed to align the present UNECE control certificate with the UN Layout Key (defining format and semantics) in line with the UNTDED (United Nations Trade Element Data Directories).
94. The working group reported that a meeting with a representative of UN/CEFACT and SITPRO (a government-funded organization in the United Kingdom with the goal of simplifying trade procedures) had been held earlier this year.
95. At that meeting, the problems with the present control certificate had been reviewed:
- No possibility to add continuation sheets to add more products on one certificate; the need to have such a sheet has led countries to use solutions that are not harmonized;
 - No field for a unique consignment reference to link consignments and control certificate;
 - Not harmonized with the UN Layout Key for trade documents. Harmonization with the layout key would harmonize the certificate with many other documents used in trade which share common data fields thus facilitating the use of the certificate and also preparing the document for use in UNeDocs and other electronic business applications.
96. Following the meeting, SITPRO created a new form (see INF.17), which is aligned with the Layout Key and has the possibility to add continuation sheets.
97. The Specialized Section welcomed the proposal and made a number of suggestions for amendments:
- The phrase "When there are several packing agents the entry "various" may be used" was deleted from the completion guidelines for box 5 because several countries do not allow this but require naming of each packer.
 - It was suggested to work together with UNeDocs and the World Customs Organization on the possibilities for using a code for the produce and the class which would make it possible to automate the form across language barriers.
 - A field for a seal or stamp should be included on the continuation sheet. Some delegations said that they would like to discuss the new form with their inspectors.
 - In Box 17 it could be clarified that not all lots are inspected but that sometimes auto control is accepted.
 - The descriptive box below box 4 should be rephrased to indicate for whom the form is intended.
98. The Specialized Section invited the United Kingdom to collect any further comments and to prepare a new version of the form, and to transmit it to the Working Party for discussion and adoption. The information on the new form should also be transmitted to Codex and the OECD Scheme so that in the future one harmonized form could be used. The secretariat was invited to hold further discussions with UN/CEFACT to see how the form could be integrated in electronic business applications.

99. The Specialized Section thanked SITPRO for its work on the control certificate.

(b) Point of application/Standard layout
TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2005/16 (Germany)

100. UNECE standards are applied at different stages of marketing and also in some countries for national trade. The revised UNECE Standard for Kiwi Fruit in the minimum maturity requirements makes explicit reference to stages following dispatch.

101. On the other hand, the Geneva Protocol and each standard contain the provision that “The purpose of the standard is to define the quality requirements of <PRODUCE NAME> at the export control stage, after preparation and packaging.”

102. At earlier sessions, different specialized sections and the Working Party discussed the possibility of reflecting this by deleting reference to the export control stage.

103. The proposal by Germany was based on the relevant European Community regulations and contains the deletion of reference to the export control stage, a paragraph allowing a slight deterioration and loss of freshness in stages following dispatch and a paragraph about the application of the standard at all marketing stages and the obligation for the holder not to market products unless in conformity with the standard.

104. There was a lengthy discussion following this proposal. All delegations acknowledged the fact that UNECE standards were applied in different stages of marketing but there was no consensus on deleting the reference to the export control stage or to the inclusion of paragraphs as suggested by Germany. It was felt that including further provisions in the standards might make their application more difficult rather than facilitating them.

105. Delegations generally agreed that UNECE standards were essentially technical and therefore should contain only provisions related to the produce and not to their application. This could be dealt with in the Geneva Protocol.

106. The Specialized Section invited delegations to consider this question and to send any comments to the secretariat. The Specialized Section also felt that the other specialized sections and the working group on the terms of reference should examine this issue. The secretariat will prepare a new proposal for the Working Party based on any comments received and the discussions held in other Specialized Sections.

(c) Experiences with the template for requesting inclusion of apple varieties
TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.9

107. At the last session an updated version of the template was created (See TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.9). Delegations were invited to report on their experiences with the template and to decide if templates for other products should be created.

108. There was a long discussion on this issue and delegations agreed that only varieties of commercial importance for international trade should be included in the standard, as the main goal of the standards was to facilitate exchanges between countries. Therefore the criteria for including varieties should be more clearly defined in the standard and the template than at present. The trade volume either as a certain percentage of international trade or x tonnes was mentioned.

109. The Specialized Section was of the view that not only new varieties proposed for inclusion should be considered but also that the existing list for apples was too long. It was mentioned that the fact that a variety was not included in the list did not prevent it from being traded.

110. The delegation of France said that it was also a possibility to amend the standards so that the lists would be simplified as a consequence as had been done in the case of table grapes, where an amendment to the standard had led to the deletion of a list.

111. The delegation of the United Kingdom offered to coordinate efforts to simplify the list for apples. It invited all delegations to send by December 2005 a list of a maximum of 30 varieties that they considered most important and that should remain in the list. The United Kingdom would prepare a new proposal for the 2006 session of the Specialized Section on the basis of the lists received.

(d) Terms of reference

112. The working group met during the session of the Working Party and made progress on the text but further work is needed before a proposal can be made to the Working Party.

(e) UNECE General Conditions of Sale, Arbitration Rules

113. The secretariat will scan these old publications and put them on the UNECE website so that delegations can study them and propose how to proceed with them. Different possibilities are:

- To leave them unchanged if they might still be a useful reference for trade;
- To delete them from the publications list if they are not considered relevant anymore;
- To start updating them.

7. Use of codes marks in UNECE Standards - possibility of internationally harmonized marks

114. The delegation of Germany recalled that at a previous session they had proposed that code marks that can be used in the standards to replace name and the address of the packer or dispatcher should be indicated on the package together with the ISO country code of the country that had issued the code mark.

115. This would make it possible to identify the packer even if the country of origin was not the same as the country that had issued the code mark. It would also avoid problems, as different countries could issue the same code mark for different packers.

116. It was decided that, as it also concerned other standards, this proposal should be discussed in the Working Party.

8. WHO strategy on diet, physical activity and health

117. The secretariat reported on activities related to the WHO Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health. A series of postcards had been produced to promote the consumption of fruit and vegetables and the secretariat had participated in a workshop on the same topic. The secretariat plans to produce posters based on the postcards in coordination with WHO, Codex and OECD.

118. The delegation of Germany believed that the slogan used (“How many did you eat today?”) could be improved. It also believed that the best approach to get children to eat fruit and vegetables was education from an early age.

119. The delegation of Sweden said that research in that country had shown that consumption of fruit and vegetables was closely linked to price.

120. The delegation of France suggested inviting to the meeting representatives of national programmes for promoting fruit and vegetable consumption to present their initiatives. The Specialized Section agreed that this could be interesting.

121. The secretariat invited all delegations to send any ideas for slogans for the posters, which would then be discussed with the other partners in the project.

9. List of authorities for exchange of information on non-conformity cases

122. The Specialized Section was of the view that such a list would be very useful and should be based on existing lists such as that of OECD or the new list of coordinating authorities prepared in the European Community. The secretariat will be provided with these list (or links to the lists) and either prepare a consolidated list or put a link to the existing lists on the website.

10. Application of UNECE Standards

TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2005/17

123. The delegation of Germany reviewed the list of acceptances and proposed to simplify it by not having a detailed list of options for application. It felt that the main interest was to know if the standard was accepted and if it was applied.

124. The Specialized Section welcomed the proposal and agreed that the most important issue was to define the terms “acceptance” and “application”.

125. After some discussion the Specialized Section agreed on definitions for the “acceptance” and the “application” for UNECE Standards for fresh fruit and vegetables:

“Acceptance of a UNECE standard” means that the text of the standard has been adopted by the UNECE WP.7 and/or the OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables (OECD Scheme).”

126. The Specialized Section assumes that in this case, the Working Party acts for all members of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (whether present in the room at adoption or not) and that the same holds for the members of the OECD Scheme. The Specialized Section invited the secretariats of WP.7 and the OECD Scheme to confirm with their legal advisors that this assumption was correct or if a written acceptance procedure was necessary for those countries not having attended the relevant meeting.

127. For non-members of UNECE and the OECD Scheme, the Specialized Section was of the view that acceptance could be assumed if they were represented at the relevant meeting or if they had confirmed so in writing. “Application” of the standards means implementation in the national legislation.

128. The option that industry and/or inspection services take the UNECE standards as a reference on a voluntary basis without any national legislation is reflected in the table.

129. The Specialized Section also decided not to assess in the list at which stage of marketing the standards were applied.

130. The Specialized Section believed that after clarification of the legal issues the other Specialized Sections should discuss the revised document so that the secretariat can prepare a consolidated proposal for the Working Party. Delegations were invited to provide any additional information to the secretariat.

11. Workshops, seminars, training courses and other activities concerning capacity building for the application of quality standards

131. The secretariat informed delegations that capacity-building events were planned in Kazakhstan jointly with other parts of the UNECE Trade Development and Timber Division and in Georgia as a joint OECD/UNECE activity. In organizing such events the secretariat was restricted by the limited resources available. Any suggestions on how to better assist countries wishing to apply the standards would be welcome.

132. The Chairperson of the OECD Scheme informed delegations that the event in Georgia was planned for July and that participation was also expected from other countries of region such as Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia.

133. The delegation of Slovakia reported on about its international training course, which will be held from 12 to 14 September 2005. The programme is under construction and contains as a general outline on day 1 the interpretation of standards, on day 2 an exchange on the training of inspectors and on day 3 a meeting with countries of the Central European Initiative to inform them about the work of OECD and UNECE. Any further suggestions for the programme would be welcome.

134. The delegation of Germany reported that their biannual international meeting of quality inspectors was held in Bonn in the week prior to the meeting of the Specialized Section with 216 representatives from 25 countries attending the session. In the practical assessment of standards interpretation, high agreement (90%) had been found on some samples. The answers to interpretation questions will be available on the BLE website shortly, the full report as soon as possible.

12. Other business

135. The delegation of France said that the number of informal documents received for this session had been very high with some documents available only on the Friday before the session. They felt that this should be restricted and a cut off date should be set after which no more informal documents would be accepted.

136. The secretariat explained that it was difficult to set a cut-off date for such documents as they were meant to offer an opportunity to submit statements in writing after the deadlines imposed by the United Nations to facilitate discussions. Further, they said that it was the right of any participant to oppose discussion of an informal document during the adoption of the report.

13. Future work and meetings

(a) Date of next session

137. The provisional date of the next session of the Specialized Section is from 15 to 19 May 2006.

(b) Future work

138. Future work will contain the items as indicated on the provisional agenda contained in Addendum 5 to this report. Further proposals should be indicated to the secretariat as early as possible and be submitted at least 12 weeks before the next session.

(c) Preparation of the next session of the Working Party

139. The decisions noted in the executive summary will be transmitted to the Working Party.

14. Election of officers

140. The Specialized Section re-elected Mr. D. Holliday (United Kingdom) as Chair and Ms. U. Bickelmann (Germany) as its Vice-Chair.

15. Adoption of the report

141. The Specialized Section adopted the report of its fifty-first session on the basis of a draft prepared by the secretariat.

The following addenda are published separately:

TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2005/18/Add.1	Melons, Table Grapes
TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2005/18/Add.2	Apples
TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2005/18/Add.3	Cherries
TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2005/18/Add.4	Ceps
TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2005/18/Add.5	Provisional Agenda for the 52 nd session