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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

COMMITTEE ON TRADE

Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce

Fifty-sixth session

Geneva, 22-26 June 2009

Item 2 (a) of the provisional agenda

Discussion on Restructuring

At the November 2008 meeting of the Working Party held in November 2008, it was decided to start a discussion on restructuring its work to accelerate the development and adoption of standards, taking into consideration implications of the Commission Regulation on marketing standards for fruits and vegetables on the work of UNECE on agricultural quality standards.

This document presents responses from the following countries: Australia, South Africa and the United Kingdom.

The Specialized Section is expected to agree on its position concerning the restructuring of the activities of the Working Party.

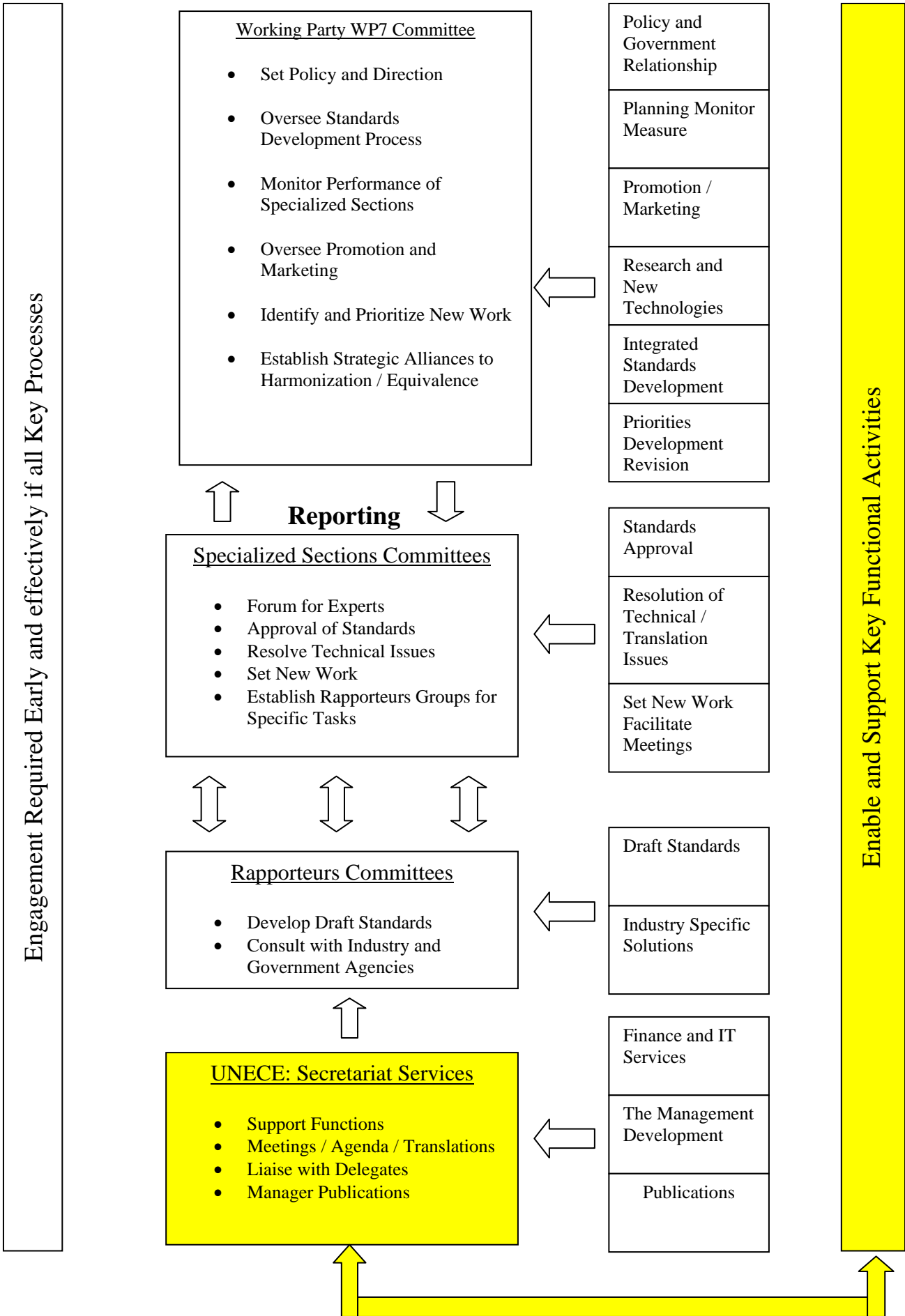
Australia

The focus of the “Working Party WP7 Committee” should be to set policies for identifying new work and overseeing the development of UN Standards to support initiatives (goals and objectives) of the committee for Trade and Development.

- To set policy for administration including planning, promotion / communication and training
- To monitor and measure the performance of the Specialized Sections
- To establish strategic alliances with OECD, Codes, FAO / WHO and other International / Global Standards Bodies
- To work with Governments to integrate / harmonise or seek equivalence to reduce T & T's (maintain Mark Access)
- To prioritise the revision of Standards to ensure that they remain dynamic and relevant to the market
- To set Policy for publications including targets for completion
- To provide direction to the Specialized Sections by identifying and prioritizing new work.
- To receive reports from the Specialized Sections on progress and the Approval of New Standards

Note: The Proposal supports the delegation of authority for approving Standards to the Specialized Section Committees.

UNECE Trade Development: Group



South Africa

Because the UNECE member States decisions are taken on a consensus basis, experts should provide scientific evidence to support their statements. The UNECE standard drafting and amendment process is not very favourable to countries outside the region and we are always in the minority when it comes to voting for consensus. But we should be able to insist that all proposals be justified.

South Africa feels the above-mentioned proposals will be of help to improve the work of UNECE on agricultural quality standards to be made effective and efficient.

United Kingdom

Current situation:

Each specialized section attends a one week meeting in Geneva and completes relevant areas of work. Delegates then attend the Working Party 7 in November to approve the work of each specialized section. In practice this has meant that the work is approved in November at WP7 by delegates from other specialized sections. In the case of the meat, seed potatoes and dry and dried this usually means that with the exception of the chair of that specialised section approval is given by delegates with little or no knowledge of the products. This results in unnecessary travel and time costs to all delegates for an essential but unproductive meeting.

Proposal:

To discontinue the WP.7 meeting in November and split the role of WP.7.

This would mean some small adjustment to the meetings of the specialized sections and end the WP.7 only meeting. This we believe would lead to more effective meetings for all specialized sections. The proposal is as follows:

Each specialized section meeting would have 3 parts as follows:

Day 1 – 13.00 – 18.00	The “WP7” part
Day 2 – 4	Specialized section agenda items, followed by,
Day 5 – 10.00 – 13.00	Report of meeting.

Such meetings would be held once a year for meat, seed potatoes, dry and dried and twice a year for fresh fruit and vegetables. (Dependent on negotiations with OECD on concentrating work at UNECE.) However specialized sections could negotiate with the Secretariat for additional meetings as considered necessary.

WP7 would be split into 4 or 5 parts as a result. So at each specialized section on the first day of the meeting all relevant news updates would be covered by the Secretariat. All decisions from the previous specialized section meeting would be approved or if not returned to the section for further discussion. Then at each meeting once WP.7 decisions and updates have been made the specialized section could then on the following days continue discussions on previously published agenda items.

Summary:

We do not believe that this proposed change, makes any difference to WP.7. It would simply operate in a number of parts rather than at one meeting as at present. The advantage would be that delegates with relevant knowledge would be voting/approving documents instead of many without the appropriate knowledge as at present. However it may be that changes to the Geneva protocol or other procedural changes are necessary. The Secretariat will have to advise us as to how easy it would be to make these changes.

Extraordinary meetings of WP.7 including all specialized sections could still be held if the Secretariat/delegates felt these were necessary.