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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-third session

Geneva, 13-16 June 2006

REPORT ON ITS FIFTY-THIRD SESSION

1. The meeting was opened by Ms. Virginia Cram-Martos, Director of the UNECE Trade and Timber Division. She summarized the results of the recent UNECE reform process and its consequences for the activities of the Specialized Section.
2. Representatives of the following countries attended the meeting: Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America.
3. The European Community was also represented.
4. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations participated in the session: International Nut Council.
5. The representatives of Bulgaria and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) could not attend the session and sent their apologies.

Item 1. Adoption of the agenda

Documentation: ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.2/2006/1

6. The delegations adopted the provisional agenda with agreed changes in the sequence of agenda items. The documents referred to in the agenda under symbols ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.2/2006/2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 were not submitted.

Documents with symbols from 2005 were used instead. The following documents were added to the agenda:

Code	Title	Contribution from
INF.1	Draft proposal to revise the Standard Layout for UNECE Standards	Germany (E/F)
INF.2	Proposal to review UNECE Standard: DF-08, Whole Dates	Germany (E/F)
INF.3	Proposal for a new UNECE Standard: Inshell Pecans	United States (E)
INF.4	Proposal for a new UNECE Standard: Pecan Kernels	United States (E)
INF.5	Proposal for a new UNECE Standard: Inshell Peanuts	United States (E)
INF.6	Proposal for a new UNECE Standard: Peanut Kernels	United States (E)
INF.7	Proposal for a new UNECE Standard: Inshell Macadamia Nuts	United States (E)
INF.8	Proposal for a new UNECE Standard: Macadamia Kernels	United States (E)
INF.9	Proposal to review UNECE Standard: DF-01, Inshell Walnuts	Germany (E)
INF.10	Proposal to review UNECE Standard: DF-03, Inshell Hazelnuts	Germany 2005 (E)
INF.11	Proposal for discussion under Agenda Item 8, Strengthening the work of the Section	United States (E)
INF.12	Strengthening Agricultural Quality Standards work in the UNECE	UNECE Secretariat

Annex 2 summarizes the actions that need to be taken to follow-up on the decisions of the Specialized Section meeting.

Item 2. Matters of interest since the last session

Documentation: ECE/TRADE/C/2006/3, ECE/TRADE/C/2006/10, INF.12

(a) UNECE and subsidiary bodies

7. The secretariat presented the main decisions taken at the sixty-first session of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (TRADE/WP.7/2005/9) concerning the work of the Specialized Section.

(b) Concentration of agricultural quality standards work in the UNECE

8. The Director of Trade and Timber Division explained the UNECE reform process. One of the results of that process was a request to initiate discussions with the OECD for the concentration of activities on agricultural quality standards in the UNECE. This had resulted in a decision to develop a draft transition plan for approval within the UNECE and then to transmit it to the OECD Scheme responsible for the work on explanatory brochures (based on UNECE

standards) for their consideration. The draft transition plan (INF.12) was presented and delegates were requested to send any comments that they might have to the secretariat.

9. The Specialized Section agreed that, subject to the acceptance of the plan by the OECD Scheme meeting in November 2006, the UNECE secretariat should start working on explanatory brochures without delay, as well as cooperating in the work on OECD brochures that are currently under preparation. It was suggested that the first explanatory brochure developed by the UNECE for dry and dried produce be for inshell walnuts and walnut kernels, a project already under development in the United States, which volunteered to be the rapporteur for this project. The OECD layout should be used.

(c) Other organizations

10. The representative of Germany summarized some recent developments within the OECD Scheme. A number of new explanatory brochures and guidelines had been adopted. Some of them can be downloaded free of charge from the Scheme's website. In the course of implementing its reform process, the Scheme had selected an agency for technical assistance, and a contract was currently being prepared. The work in progress includes brochures on hazelnuts and pistachios (both for inshell and kernels) and prunes.

11. The secretariat presented the colour chart for walnut kernels, developed jointly by UNECE and OECD. Some delegations expressed disappointment with the quality of the chart. The delegations stressed that quality control, particularly the colour proofing, should be stricter in the future.

Item 3. Revision of the Standard Layout

Documentation: Standard Layout for UNECE Standards on Dry and Dried Produce
INF.1 (Germany)

12. The Specialized Section considered the revised Standard Layout for UNECE Standards on Dry and Dried Produce. The proposal was presented by Germany on behalf of the working group, which had discussed the document in detail at its informal meeting on 12 June 2006. The new draft of the Standard Layout drew on the ideas and approaches suggested during the work on the recommendations for inshell hazelnuts and inshell walnuts in 2004-2005.

13. The European Commission submitted a reservation on the Standard Layout as well as the other revised documents that have been aligned with it, in order to give the Member States of the European Union time to express their opinion on the changes proposed.

14. The revised Layout makes clear that the standards are intended for produce for direct consumption or for mixing with other products without further processing.

15. The Specialized Section decided to retain the characteristic "free of abnormal external moisture" in the standard. External moisture can be caused by an accident and lead to higher moisture contents in parts of the lot or packages concerned.

16. The delegations agreed to avoid using fixed size scales or size codes in the definitions concerning sizing. This should facilitate the implementation of standards in countries with different trade and sizing habits. However, it needs to be seen how this general recommendation would affect the application of individual standards.

17. The indications of “net weight” and of the presence of preservatives have been dropped from the Standard Layout. These attributes should be dealt with in national legislation.

18. The Specialized Section decided to test the agreed-upon revised Layout on the new standards and on the recommendations under trial. The countries will discuss the results at the next meeting of the Section and decide whether or not to recommend the document to the Working Party for approval in 2007. The secretariat will circulate the final draft of the revised Standard Layout 4 months in advance before the meeting of WP.7 to let countries and other interested parties comment on the text.

19. No agreement could be reached on the definitions of preservatives and additives for the annex to the revised Standard Layout. For practical or other reasons, the definitions considered by the section were found unsuitable for referencing in the Layout. The Specialized Section decided to revisit this issue at its session next year.

20. The section agreed to avoid, in general, the use of decimal percentages in the table on tolerances in order to facilitate the application of standards. However, it needs to be seen how this general recommendation would affect the application of individual standards.

Item 4. Review of UNECE Standards

(a) Inshell Hazelnuts

Documentation: INF.10 (Germany)

21. The Specialized Section reviewed the revised standard on inshell hazelnuts, presented by Germany in the new Standard Layout. The delegations agreed to retain “commercial type” in the standard. The size range between a minimum and maximum size was changed to “not exceed 3 mm of difference” to make the standard more convenient to work with in both the metric and imperial systems of units of measurement. Two options for tolerances for produce not conforming to the minimum requirements were discussed. The decision should be taken after consultations with trade and inspection services.

22. The Specialized Section decided to recommend the text to the Working Party as a new recommendation and put it on trial through 2007.

(b) Inshell Walnuts

Documentation: INF.9 (Germany)

23. The delegation of Germany presented a revised version of the standard for inshell walnuts. The Specialized Section decided to keep the revised text as work in progress for one more year to let producers and exporters test the new figures in the table of tolerances. The question of including “crop year” as a mandatory or an optional commercial specification also needed to be clarified. Consumers may wish to know the crop year since the transformation of walnut kernel fats over time may affect negatively the quality of the product.

24. The Specialized Section asked the working group composed of France, Germany, Italy and the United States (rapporteur) to finalize the text and the colour chart for presentation at the next session as a recommendation to be on trial through 2007. The Specialized Section also asked the secretariat to invite other major producers of walnuts to take part in the work on the standard. To exchange information and to accelerate the work, the secretariat and the Section will use the list server.

Item 5. Review of UNECE recommendations

(a) Inshell Almonds – (trial until November 2006)

Documentation: Inshell Almonds
TRADE/WP.7/GE.2/2005/19/Add.1

25. The delegations aligned the revised recommendation for inshell almonds to the new Standard Layout. Some countries raised concerns regarding lower total tolerances in the minimum requirements as the new figures may affect negatively their exports. To allow the industry to test the new values in the table of tolerances, the Specialized Section decided to recommend to the Working Party to extend by one year the trial period for the amended version of the standard.

(b) Pistachio Kernels and Peeled Pistachio Kernels – (trial until November 2006)

Documentation: Pistachio Kernels and Peeled Pistachio Kernels
TRADE/WP.7/GE.2/2005/19/Add.2

26. The Specialized Section decided to recommend to the Working Party to extend the trial period by one year. The participants asked the working group composed of Italy, Turkey (rapporteur) and the United States to transfer the recommendation into the new Standard Layout and to present it to the next session. The Specialized Section asked the secretariat to find out if other pistachio producing countries would be interested in contributing to the work on the standard.

(c) Dried Tomatoes – (trial until November 2007)

Documentation: Dried Tomatoes
TRADE/WP.7/GE.2/2005/19/Add.3

27. The Specialized Section asked Italy and the United States (rapporteur) to place the recommendation to the new Standard Layout and to submit it to the next session. The secretariat should invite other producing countries to participate in the work on the standard.

Item 6. Draft new UNECE standards

(a) Blanched Almonds

Documentation: Blanched Almonds
TRADE/WP.7/GE.2/2005/6

28. The rapporteur of the working group (Spain) reported that they had received no comments during the past year.

29. The delegation of the United States pointed out that blanched almonds are considered as a processed product.

30. The text was corrected to indicate that when sized or screened, this must be done prior to blanching. All delegations were invited to study the text for a further year, in cooperation with their industry, and to send comments to the rapporteur. Spain will align the text in accordance with the new Standard Layout.

(b) Inshell Macadamia Nuts and Macadamia Kernels

Documentation: INF.7, INF.8 (United States)

31. The rapporteur of the working group (United States) reported that no comments had been received since the last session. The section noted that a very limited number of countries trade in inshell macadamia nuts. If these countries do not provide their comments on this category of macadamia nuts, the standard should be limited to macadamia kernels only. The United States will transform the text of the standard to the new Standard Layout. Producing countries have been invited to contribute to the work on the standard.

(c) Inshell Pecans and Pecan Kernels

Documentation: INF.3, INF.4 (United States)

32. The rapporteur of the working group (United States) suggested to exclude inshell pecans from the standard since international trade in it is small. The Section asked INC to provide statistics on volumes of trade in inshell nuts and kernels for different types of nuts. This information should help decide on the coverage of nuts in the standards. The rapporteur will update this standard with the new Layout.

(d) Dried Peaches

Documentation: Dried Peaches
TRADE/WP.7/GE.2/2005/15

33. The rapporteur of the working group (Spain) reported that no comments had been received since the last session. The delegation of the United States accepted a proposal to be the rapporteur of this standard. It was suggested that producing countries should be contacted. The delegation of Italy will provide contact information.

(e) Dried Peppers

34. No new proposal was available from the working group (Greece, Hungary, Spain (rapporteur)). The section recommended to suspend the work on this standard and come back to it if trading volumes increase in the future.

(f) Inshell Peanuts and Peanut Kernels

Documentation: INF.5, INF.6 (United States)

35. The rapporteur of the working group (United States) reported that no comments were received since the last session. The United States will transform the text of both standards to the new Layout. Countries were invited to submit justification, by the next session, for the development of these standards.

Item 7. Work by the OECD Scheme on sampling

36. Since the OECD delegation was not present at the meeting, this item was withdrawn from the agenda.

Item 8. Strengthening the work of the Section

Documentation: INF.11

37. The secretariat made a presentation on how to use the list server technology to improve communications and information sharing, and prompt broader participation in the work of the Section.

38. The Specialized Section welcomed the proposals by the United States (INF.11) on how to make the work of the Section more efficient and effective.

39. Some of these proposals recalled and reinforced provisions of the working procedures annexed to the Geneva Protocol. The delegations pointed out that the Specialized Section should not lose mechanisms allowing countries prepare draft proposals and present them to the plenary session.

40. The participants underlined the importance of the Monday informal session. All delegations are encouraged to attend and discuss the agenda items to better prepare for the plenary session. The secretariat will inform countries accordingly.

Item 9. Application of UNECE Standards

41. The secretariat will present a proposal to the next session of the Section on ways to improve the presentation of information about the application of UNECE standards on the UNECE website.

Item 10. Capacity-building activities

42. The secretariat provided information on the following capacity-building activities:

- A Joint OECD/UNECE/EC Workshop on Fruit and Vegetables scheduled for 3-7 July 2006 in Tbilisi, Georgia. The participants will discuss how to interpret standards and how to apply inspection procedures.
- A Joint Slovakia/OECD/UNECE international training course, from 19-21 June 2006 in Mojmírovce, Slovakia.
- The delegation of Germany confirmed that the 26th International Meeting on Quality Control of Fruit and Vegetables would be held from 5-7 March 2007 at the Gustav-Stresemann-Institut in Bonn.
- The delegation of the United Kingdom confirmed that the training course on harmonizing interpretation of standards would be held in Guildford, United Kingdom from 13-15 September 2006.

Item 11. Other business

43. The secretariat was requested to update references to the methods of determining the moisture content in documents for dried produce according to the definition existing in the Standard Layout.

44. Germany reported on problems at the import stage with dried raisins not respecting the minimum moisture content, and asked the delegations to exchange information to decide whether the minimum moisture content as stated in the standard is still appropriate.

Item 12. Future work

45. On behalf of Tunisia, the delegation of Germany presented proposals for amending the UNECE Standard for Whole Dates (document INF.2). The proposals had been briefly discussed at the working group informal meeting on 12 June. The Specialized Section asked Tunisia to include a justification note and the secretariat to circulate the document to countries for comment. Tunisia would incorporate the comments into a revised draft of the standard to be considered at the next session of the Section.

46. The delegation of Turkey proposed to align the text of the hazelnut kernel standard with the new Layout to facilitate the development of the OECD brochure.

47. Annex 1 contains the provisional agenda for the 2007 session of the Specialized Section. Further proposals should be submitted to the secretariat at least 12 weeks before the next session, tentatively scheduled for 25-29 June 2007. The deadline for submitting documents for the next session is 30 March 2007.

Item 13. Election of officers

48. The Specialized Section elected Mr. Csaba Gáspár (Hungary) as Chairperson and Mr. İlhami Köksal (Turkey) as Vice-Chairperson.

Item 14. Adoption of the report

49. The Specialized Section adopted its report.

The following addenda are published separately:

Add.1 Standard Layout

Add.2 Draft revised UNECE Standard for Dates

Add.3 Draft revised UNECE Standard for Inshell Almonds

Add.4 Draft revised UNECE Standard for Inshell Hazelnuts

Annex 1. Provisional Agenda 2007

1.	Adoption of the agenda	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.2/2007/1
2.	Matters of interest since the last session	
	(a) UNECE and subsidiary bodies	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.2/2007/2
	(b) Concentration of agricultural quality standards work in the UNECE	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.2/2007/3
	(c) Other organizations	
3.	Revision of the Standard Layout	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.2/2007/4
4.	Review of UNECE recommendations	
	(a) Inshell Almonds (trial until November 2007)	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.2/2007/5
	(b) Pistachio Kernels and Peeled Pistachio Kernels (trial until November 2007)	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.2/2007/6
	(c) Dried Tomatoes (trial until November 2007)	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.2/2007/7
	(d) Inshell Hazelnuts (trial until November 2007)	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.2/2007/8
5.	Review of UNECE Standards	
	(a) Hazelnuts Kernels	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.2/2007/9
	(b) Inshell Walnuts	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.2/2007/10
	(c) Dates, Whole	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.2/2007/11
6.	Draft new UNECE standards	
	(a) Blanched Almonds	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.2/2007/12
	(b) Inshell Macadamia Nuts and Macadamia Kernels	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.2/2007/13 ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.2/2007/14
	(c) Inshell Pecans and Pecan Kernels	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.2/2007/15 ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.2/2007/16
	(d) Dried Peaches	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.2/2007/17
	(e) Inshell Peanuts and Peanut Kernels	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.2/2007/18 ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.2/2007/19
7.	Work by the OECD Scheme on sampling	
8.	Strengthening the work of the Section	
9.	Application of UNECE Standards	
10.	Capacity-building activities	
11.	Other business	
12.	Future work	
13.	Election of officers	
14.	Adoption of the report	

Annex 2. Actions to follow-up on the decisions of the Specialized Section meeting

	Follow-up action	Deadline	Responsibility
1.	Survey national experiences in applying the revised Standard Layout to the new standards and recommendations under trial	16/04/2007	Countries/ Secretariat
2.	Circulate the final draft of the revised Layout 4 months before the 2007 meeting of WP.7 for comments	1/06/2007	Secretariat
3.	Ask countries for suggestions on the definitions of preservatives and additives for the annex to the revised Layout	1/06/2007	Countries/ Secretariat
4.	Ask countries about their experience in not using decimal percentages in the table on tolerances	16/04/2007	Countries/ Secretariat
5.	Prepare the standard for inshell hazelnuts (INF.10) for submission to WP.7	28/08/2006	Germany/ Secretariat
6.	Collect information on the results of testing the new figures in the table of tolerances and the "crop year" specification in the standard for inshell walnuts. Invite walnut producing countries to contribute	16/04/2007	Countries/ Secretariat
7.	Finalize the text and the colour chart of the standard for inshell walnuts	16/04/2007	France, Germany, Italy, United States (rapporteur) / Secretariat
8.	Transfer the recommendation on pistachio and peeled pistachio kernels into the new Standard Layout. Invite pistachio producing countries to contribute	9/04/2007	Italy, Turkey (rapporteur), United States / Secretariat
9.	Transfer the recommendation on dried tomatoes into the new Standard Layout. Invite countries producing dried tomatoes to contribute	9/04/2007	Italy, United States (rapporteur) / Secretariat
10.	Subject to the acceptance of the transition plan by the OECD, start work on the explanatory brochure for inshell walnuts and walnut kernels		United States / Secretariat
11.	Collect comments on the draft standard for blanched almonds. Transfer the standard to the new Layout	16/04/2007	Countries/ Spain/ Secretariat
12.	Decide whether to limit the coverage of the standards for macadamia nuts to macadamia kernels only. Transfer the standard to the new Layout	16/04/2007	Countries/ United States / Secretariat
13.	Draw up statistics on volumes of trade in inshell nuts and kernels for different types of nuts	8/01/2007	INC/Secretariat
14.	Decide whether to limit the coverage of the standards for pecans to pecan kernels only. Transfer the standard to the new Layout	16/04/2007	Countries/ United States / Secretariat
15.	Collect comments on the draft standard for dried peaches	9/04/2007	Countries/ United States / Secretariat
16.	Transfer the draft standards on inshell peanuts and peanut kernels into the new Standard Layout. Invite countries to submit justifications for the development of these standards	16/04/2007	Countries/ United States / Secretariat
17.	Draft a proposal on how to improve the presentation of information about the application of UNECE standards on the	19/02/2007	Secretariat

	UNECE website		
18.	Update references to the methods of determining the moisture content in documents for dried produce according to the definition in the Standard Layout	5/02/2007	Secretariat
19.	Collect information on whether the minimum moisture content as stated in the standard for dried raisins is still appropriate	15/01/2007	Countries/ Secretariat
20.	Circulate the draft standard for whole dates (with justification note) to countries for comment. Submit revised draft to the next session of the Section	14/08/2006	Countries/ Tunisia/ Secretariat
21.	Align the text of the hazelnut kernel standard with the new Layout	18/10/2006	Turkey/ Secretariat