



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.6/2008/9
4 April 2008

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

COMMITTEE ON TRADE

Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes

Thirty-eighth session
Geneva, 17-19 March 2008

**REPORT OF THE SPECIALIZED SECTION ON STANDARDIZATION
OF SEED POTATOES ON ITS THIRTY-EIGHTH SESSION**

Summary

The Specialized Section: (a) agreed on the assessment key for netted scab; (b) decided to continue work on procedures for assessment of non-compliance at destination; (c) selected images to complete the list of diseases and pests; (d) adopted questionnaires to collect information on crop inspection practices and post-harvest tests; (e) planned for promotional activities in 2008 and 2009; (f) agreed on its future work; and (g) defined its common position regarding vigour of seed potatoes:

- Plant vigour is a very important quality aspect of seed potatoes, especially in the southern regions with higher temperatures.
- Genotype determines loss of vigour; some varieties are very susceptible, while others are more tolerant. Growing and storage conditions, especially temperature, influence plant vigour.
- Determining plant vigour is still very difficult in seed lots.
- The only indirect reference to vigour in the UNECE Standard is a tolerance for shrivelled tubers.
- Stricter requirements for plant vigour cannot yet be prescribed by the Standard.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Mr. Pier Giacomo Bianchi (Italy), Chairperson of the Specialized Section, opened the meeting.

II. ATTENDANCE

2. Representatives of the following UNECE member countries attended the meeting: Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and United States of America.

3. The European Commission (EC) was also represented.

4. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations participated in the session: EUROPATAT.

III. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Agenda item 1)

Documentation: ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.6/2007/1

5. The delegations adopted the provisional agenda with proposed changes and amendments. The following documents were added to the agenda:

- (a) INF.4: Changins Meeting of the Bureau
- (b) INF.5: Excerpt from the IPPC Glossary of Phytosanitary Terms
- (c) INF.6: Designations of seed potato categories and generations
- (d) INF.7 (in lieu of document ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.6/2008/4): Assessment of non-compliance at destination
- (e) INF.8: Recent developments in the EU legislation.

IV. MATTERS OF INTEREST SINCE THE LAST SESSION (Agenda item 2)

Documentation: Report of the Working Party (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/27)
Terms of reference (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/12)
Working procedures (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/13)
Recent developments in the EU legislation (INF.8)

6. The Chairperson and the secretariat informed the participants about the outcomes of the November 2007 session of the Working Party. The delegates took note of the new terms of reference and working procedures and asked the secretariat to align section 5 of the Standard with the text in the terms of reference on the participation of countries in the work of WP.7 and its specialized sections. The Specialized Section decided to delete section 7 (Editorial note) from the Standard.

7. The delegation of Romania withdrew its reservation in annex III of the Standard.
8. In accordance with the decision by the Working Party, the questionnaire on national application of UNECE standards will be sent out to countries in 2008 for the first time, and then every second year.
9. The representative of the European Commission explained recent developments in the EU legislation on the marketing of seed and propagating material. The existing legislation will be evaluated to make recommendations on how to modernize it and to simplify the implementation of the rules for public authorities and private operators. The evaluators will also look into the consistency of the legislation on seed with the Community rules in other policy areas and with international standards, particularly with the UNECE Standard for Seed Potatoes. Draft revised legislation may be submitted for consideration by the Council in 2010. Information on how the evaluation proceeds and on its results can be found on:
http://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/propagation/index_en.htm.
10. The Specialized Section also noted that the Commission, in cooperation with Member States, is updating the scientific names of species of pests listed in annexes I and II to the Council Directive 2002/56/EC on the marketing of seed potatoes.

V. INFORMATION ON THE RESULTS OF THE MEETINGS OF THE BUREAU (Agenda item 3)

Documentation: Meeting of the Bureau (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.6/2008/2)
Changins meeting of the Bureau (INF.4)

11. The Chairman informed the participants about the results of the Bureau meetings held in Moscow and in Changins, Switzerland, in August and in February, respectively. The Specialized Section thanked the authorities of the Russian Federation and Switzerland for having hosted these meetings.

VI. REVIEW OF THE STANDARD (Agenda item 4)

Documentation: The Standard (S-1: Seed Potatoes)

A. Assessment key for common and netted scab, and powdery scab (Agenda item 4(a))

12. The secretariat presented the pictures of common and powdery scab whose surface area had been confirmed by the secretariat as being consistent with the Standard's tolerances of 33.3 and 10 per cent of tuber surface area coverage, respectively. The Specialized Section decided to accept the pictures of these two pests as they were in the Standard and to replace the picture of netted scab with the one selected from those presented by the Netherlands.

B. Sampling procedure for inclusion in the Standard (Agenda item 4(b))

Documentation: Definition of origin (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.6/2008/3)

13. In the Standard, the definition of "origin" is: "Officially defined area where a lot of seed potatoes was grown." This definition is interpreted by some countries as the definition of "field".

In this context, "field" means a plot of land on a farm on which potatoes are grown for certification. The potatoes shall be of one variety from one certified seed potato growing operation and shall be grown in physical separation from other fields.

14. In many countries "origin" refers to parentage. In practice, lots can be mixed even if they have been grown on different fields. In addition, lots of seed potatoes may be derived from a seed crop from different parentages but grown in the same field. Tests for specific diseases can be done for each individual field or for mixed lots. It is important that data held by the Certifying Authority allow for traceability of the seed potatoes.

15. In some countries "origin" means "field". It is considered that there may be a risk in merging seed potatoes from different crops because seed potatoes grown from the parent seed stocks but in different fields may have a different physiology. This may affect performance of crops grown from these seed potatoes.

16. The Specialized Section decided not to make any amendments to the definitions of "field", "lot" and "origin".

17. The representative of the European Commission informed the delegates that the current UNECE definitions do not contradict the EU legislation on seed potatoes.

VII. PROCEDURES FOR ASSESSMENT OF NON-COMPLIANCE AT DESTINATION (Agenda item 5)

Documentation: Non-compliance at destination (INF. 7)

18. The delegation of France presented a draft text on procedures for resolution of disputes that may occur in international trade in seed potatoes. The text distinguished between disputes concerning the violation of official regulations and those concerning the violation of contractual agreements between buyer and seller. It suggested specific actions and time delays for intervention to resolve disputes of both types.

19. If this text becomes part of the Standard, it should not duplicate or contradict the existing RUCIP and IPPC (International Plant Protection Convention) rules. Specific references were made to IPPC Guidelines for the notification of non-compliance and emergency action (ISPM No. 13) and IPPC Guidelines for a phytosanitary import regulatory system (ISPM No. 20).

20. The delegations decided to continue the discussion of the proposed text at the next session bearing in mind the outcome of the consideration by the October 2006 Extended Bureau meeting of the list of dispute situations (document ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.6/2007/4). The Specialized Section asked the secretariat to submit the French text for translation, so that it could become available in the three official languages for the next meeting of the Extended Bureau.

VIII. IMAGES FOR THE LIST OF DISEASES AND PESTS (Agenda item 6)

Documentation: List of diseases and pests (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/3)

21. The Specialized Section discussed and selected pictures presented by the delegations of France and the United Kingdom to complement the list of diseases and pests. Several suggestions were made concerning the format of the list. The secretariat was asked to complete the list with the selected photographs and to suggest how to incorporate into the list both small pictures for quick reference and links to larger photographs that could be used for training and other purposes.

22. The delegations agreed that the pictures in the list could have a sign indicating the source. That should not prevent them from being used by any interested person downloading the list from the UNECE website. The owners of the pictures were invited to provide the secretariat with letters of release.

IX. EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION ON CROP INSPECTION PRACTICES (Agenda item 7)

Documentation: Crop inspection questionnaire (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.6/2008/5)

23. The delegation of the United Kingdom presented a draft questionnaire to collect information on national crop inspection practices. This information should help develop provisions for including in the Standard how certified crop should be inspected. The Specialized Section reviewed the draft and asked the secretariat to finalize it, send it out to countries and summarize received information in a paper for discussion at the next meeting of the Extended Bureau.

X. CONTROL UNDER OFFICIAL SUPERVISION AND ACCREDITATION SYSTEM (Agenda item 8)

Documentation: Control Seed accreditation in EU (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.6/2008/7)
Excerpt from the IPPC Glossary of Phytosanitary Terms (INF.5)

24. The delegation of Italy presented a paper on the system in force in the European Union allowing control under official supervision in the framework of official certification. Seed potatoes are not covered by this system. The purpose of the discussion was to find out what elements of this system could be usefully borrowed and reflected in the UNECE Standard for Seed Potatoes.

25. Phytosanitary aspects in control of seed potatoes are much more important as compared to control of other seeds. This is why in most countries public authorities are responsible for seed potato inspections. Farmers and buyers of seed potatoes also prefer checks by independent official authorities.

26. Some countries delegate or consider the possibility of delegating certain inspection functions to officially accredited private bodies. For example, stricter inspection of basic seed

could be carried out by official authorities, and other categories of seed could be checked by accredited private companies. That may make inspections cheaper for farmers.

27. The Specialized Section decided to continue the discussion of this topic at its future meetings.

XI. EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION ON POST-HARVEST TESTS (Agenda item 9)

Documentation: Post-harvest tests questionnaire (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.6/2008/8)

28. The delegation of the United States presented a draft questionnaire to collect information on national practices in post-harvest tests. This information can be used to agree on common practices for post-harvest inspection/tests that could be reflected in the Standard. The Specialized Section reviewed the text of the questionnaire and asked the secretariat to circulate it to countries and to summarize replies in a paper for the next meeting of the Extended Bureau.

XII. ELECTRONIC CERTIFICATION (Agenda item 10)

29. The delegation of the Netherlands showed a video explaining the advantages of using electronic certificates. It also presented a web-based “CLIENT Export” system that issues electronic phytosanitary certificates for dairy products and seed potatoes. It will be extended to issue certificates for all agricultural and horticultural products. This system is obligatory for use by exporters and is part of the overall framework within which exporters communicate with different authorities. The phytosanitary authority gives final approval to issue the certificate. The system has inbuilt data cross-checking procedures to prevent shipping of goods inconsistent with importing country requirements.

30. The secretariat made a presentation on the work of UN/CEFACT (UN Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business) in electronic certificates.

31. The Specialized Section took note of the above presentations and decided to discuss at its future meetings the relevance of electronic certification for the work on the Standard.

XIII. VIGOUR (Agenda item 11)

32. The delegation of Switzerland made a presentation on how different temperatures and other conditions influence vigour of potatoes of different varieties. The Specialized Section agreed on its common position regarding vigour of seed potatoes:

- (a) Plant vigour is a very important quality aspect of seed potatoes, especially in the southern regions with higher temperatures.
- (b) Genotype determines loss of vigour; some varieties are very susceptible, while others are more tolerant. Growing and storage conditions, especially temperature, influence plant vigour.
- (c) Determining plant vigour is still very difficult in seed lots.

- (d) The only indirect reference to vigour in the UNECE Standard is a tolerance for shrivelled tubers.
- (e) Stricter requirements for plant vigour cannot yet be prescribed by the Standard.

XIV. PROMOTION OF THE STANDARD (Agenda item 12)

Documentation: Prototype training course (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.6/2008/INF.1)
 Draft promotional leaflet (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.6/2008/INF.2)

33. The secretariat provided information on the United Nations Development Account project and on the projects that may be financed from the Russian Federation contribution to promote international commercial agricultural quality standards. The Specialized Section welcomed the offers by the Russian Federation and Egypt to host regional workshops on seed potatoes in mid-September 2008 and in May 2009, respectively.

34. The delegations of France and the Netherlands volunteered to draft terms of reference for the Specialized Section's capacity-building workshops to explain their aim, target groups, topics, responsibilities of partners, selection of speakers and financial implications. The prototype training course should be used as a starting point for drawing up these terms of reference.

35. The Specialized Section approved the text of the leaflet prepared by the secretariat to promote the Standard (see Annex). The participants were invited to contribute photographs to illustrate the leaflet. The secretariat was asked to finalize the leaflet and to submit it for translation and printing.

XV. FUTURE WORK (Agenda item 13)

36. The delegations suggested the following items for future work:

- (a) assessment of non-compliance at destination (France)
- (b) list of diseases and pests (for secretariat to update the list)
- (c) crop inspection practices (for secretariat to summarize replies to the questionnaire)
- (d) control under official supervision
- (e) post-harvest tests (for secretariat to summarize replies to the questionnaire)
- (f) electronic certification (for Canada to report on the outcome of the Workshop on electronic certification to be held in autumn 2008)
- (g) promotion of the Standard
- (h) PTNRD, *Erwinia*, PCN (for the country hosting the Extended Bureau meeting to decide and to invite researchers/experts)
- (i) varietal identity (for France, Germany and Netherlands to prepare a draft questionnaire)

37. The delegations asked the representative of the European Commission to keep the Specialized Section informed about the progress in evaluating the EU legislation related to seed potatoes.

38. The Netherlands offered to host the Extended Bureau meeting in October 2008 (provisional dates: 20-21/22 October). Belgium and Luxembourg offered to jointly host the 2009 meeting of the Extended Bureau (provisional dates: 19-21 October). Canada confirmed its offer to host the Extended Bureau meeting in 2010.

39. The next session of the Specialized Section was tentatively planned for 16-18 March 2009.

XVI. OTHER BUSINESS (Agenda item 14)

Documentation: UNECE and RUCIP tolerances (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.6/2008/INF.3)
Designations of seed potato categories and generations (INF.6)

40. The representative of Europatat provided information on the results of the comparison of the table of tolerances in the RUCIP rules for seed potatoes with the tolerances in the UNECE Standard. The comparison has shown three minor differences regarding tolerances for powdery scab, *Rhizoctonia* and shrivelled tubers/silver scurf. The RUCIP Committee decided not to align its tolerances with those in the UNECE Standard.

41. The delegation of the Czech Republic suggested updating the table of national designations of seed potato categories and generations presented in document INF.6. The Specialized Section asked the secretariat to prepare a table, which countries were invited to complete, showing in a comparative way EU, UNECE and national tolerances for different pests by seed potato categories and classes.

42. The delegation of Canada provided an update on the IPPC's potato micropropagated material standard, the draft of which should be sent for country consultation in June 2008. The UNECE secretariat was asked to circulate it, and the participants were encouraged to comment on it.

43. The secretariat presented the new structure of the Working Party website (<http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/welcome.htm>). The delegations were invited to advise the secretariat on how the website could be made more useful for users.

XVII. ELECTION OF OFFICERS (Agenda item 15)

44. The Specialized Section elected Mr. Pier Giacomo Bianchi (Italy) as its Chairperson and Mr. Willem Schrage (United States of America) as its Vice-Chairperson.

XVIII. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT (Agenda item 16)

45. The Specialized Section adopted the report of the session.

ANNEX

UNECE Standard for Seed Potatoes

1. Potatoes are the world's fourth most important food after wheat, maize and rice. The quality of seed potatoes planted to produce potatoes for consumption is integral to productivity and health of crop.
2. The UNECE Standard for Seed Potatoes sets common terminology and minimum commercial quality requirements for the certification of high-quality seed intended for marketing internationally.
3. It is a unique international frame of reference, covering all aspects related to seed-potato certification:
 - (a) varietal identity and purity
 - (b) genealogy and traceability
 - (c) diseases and pests
 - (d) external quality
 - (e) sizing
 - (f) labelling.
4. A List of Diseases and Pests, containing a basic description of each disease with illustrative photographs, supplements the Standard.
5. The Standard takes into account issues falling under the WTO Agreements on Technical Barriers to Trade and on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures. It is intended to be used by national certification authorities to ensure that seed potatoes produced for international markets comply with agreed norms.
6. The use of the Standard's common terminology and harmonized quality requirements assists buyer and seller in understanding the quality of seed potatoes being marketed in different parts of the world and minimises the risk of technical barriers to trade.
7. The Standard provides a framework for joint work of public- and private-sector operators.
8. The UNECE Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes, made up of national certification experts, regularly reviews and updates the Standard to reflect changes in production and marketing, in the evolution of harmful organisms and in the development of new techniques for certification.
9. You can download the Standard free of charge and learn more about the UNECE work on seed potatoes by visiting our website:

<http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/welcome.htm>

Contact: agrstandards@unece.org

Contents of the Standard

Varieties

10. Varieties are accepted into the Standard only if an official description and a reference sample are available from the Designated Authority. The variety should be distinct, uniform and stable according to the guidelines of UPOV (International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants) and have a denomination so that it can be identified.

Quality requirements

11. The Standard defines minimum requirements for seed potatoes at the export-control point, after preparation and packaging (see table). Countries may set additional requirements to reflect their specific soil, climatic and other conditions.

Classification

12. The requirements are set for three main categories of seed potatoes: Pre-basic, Basic and Certified, in descending order of quality. Additional choice of quality is offered by two optional classes within each of the three categories. Classification by field generation is optional.

13. Within these categories, countries producing seed potatoes are free to create national classes that are subject to specific national requirements. The Designated Authority is responsible for the maintenance of classification data to provide traceability.

Minimum conditions

14. The Standard specifies minimum conditions to be satisfied:

- (a) in the production of Pre-basic TC (tissue culture) seed potatoes
- (b) by crop (limits for the proportion of growing plants not true to the variety, affected by blackleg and showing symptoms of virus diseases)
- (c) by lot
- (d) by direct progeny (succeeding crop; limits for the proportion of growing plants not true to the variety and showing symptoms of virus diseases).

15. It prescribes rules on packaging, sealing and labelling to ensure the identity of the seed.

16. It provides guidelines for comparative trials of plots grown from samples collected from lots of seed potatoes.

Minimum tolerances for seed potato pests
(Percentage)

| | Pre-basic TC | Pre-basic | Basic class I | Basic class II | Certified class I | Certified class II |
|---|--------------|-----------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Crop tolerances | | | | | | |
| Globodera rostochiensis (soil tolerance) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Globodera pallida (soil tolerance) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Black leg | 0 | 0 | 0.5 | 1 | 1.5 | 2 |
| Synchytrium endobioticum | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Clavibacter michiganensis | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ralstonia solanacearum | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Potato spindle tuber viroid | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Tomato stolbur | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Virus tolerance | 0 | 0.1 | 0.4 (0.2 severe) | 0.8 (0.4 severe) | 2 (1 severe) | 10 (2 severe) |
| Other varieties and off types | 0 | 0.01 | 0.25 | 0.25 | 0.5 | 0.5 |
| 2. Lot tolerances | | | | | | |
| Earth and extraneous matter | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Dry and wet rot (not caused by Synchytrium e., Clavibacter m., Ralstonia s.) | 0 | 0.2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| External defects | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Shrivelled tubers | 0 | 0.5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Scab (common and netted) | 0 | 5 (33.3)* | 5 (33.3) * | 5 (33.3) * | 5 (33.3) * | 5 (33.3) * |
| Powdery scab | 0 | 1 (10) * | 3 (10) * | 3 (10) * | 3 (10) * | 3 (10) * |
| Rhizoctonia | 0 | 1 (1) * | 5 (10) * | 5 (10) * | 5 (10) * | 5 (10) * |
| Total tolerances | 3 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Globodera rostochiensis | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Globodera pallida | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Synchytrium endobioticum | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Clavibacter michiganensis | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Potato spindle tuber viroid | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Tomato stolbur | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Meloidogyne chitwoodi and fallax | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ditylenchus destructor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 3. DIRECT PROGENY TOLERANCES | | | | | | |
| Other varieties and off types | 0 | 0.01 | 0.25 | 0.25 | 0.5 | 0.5 |
| Virus | 0 | 0.5 | 2 (1 severe) | 4 (2 severe) | 10 (5 severe) | 10 |
| * The figure in brackets is the allowable percentage surface area covered: a tuber is deemed to be affected by the disease only if surface area affected exceeds the specified allowable surface tolerance. | | | | | | |