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Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat

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**PROPOSAL TO REVIEW UNECE STANDARDS ON MEAT**

This document contains a proposal submitted by the Chair of the UNECE Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat (Australia).

## **PROPOSAL TO REVIEW UNECE STANDARDS ON MEAT**

### **Background**

The meat standards as developed and recommended by the Specialized Section serve as the commercial quality standards of the UNECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards. Their goal is to help facilitate international trade, encourage high-quality production, improve profitability and to protect consumer interests.

The language describes meat items commonly traded internationally and defines a coding system for communication and electronic trade.

In achieving agreement the Specialized Section has over the past decade contributed to a number of new internationally harmonized Standards that:

- Facilitate fair international trade and prevent technical barriers to trade
- Define a common trading language for sellers and buyers
- Promote a high quality, sustainable production
- Create market transparency for buyers and consumers

It is noted in the publications that the Standards for meat occupy a special place because of the complexity of the large number of product options that can be specified by the buyer.

For the technical experts that have participated in the activities of the Specialized Section on Meat Standards the task has been both challenging and rewarding.

The Standards are however a testimony to the commitment and dedication of many delegations with a wide range of skills and expertise representing member countries and the broader Global Supply Chain of Meat Products.

This has increased the knowledge on Meat Products marketed internationally that can now be traded using the UNECE Internationally recognised standards.

The list includes Bovine (Beef), Bovine (Veal), Porcine (Pork), Ovine (Sheep), Caprine (Goat), Llama/Alpaca, Chicken, Turkey, Duck, Edible Co-products and the revision of Edible Hen Eggs-in-Shell.

### **Revision of Standards**

Under the UNECE protocols these Standards are programmed to undergo a review process every three years.

Whilst desirable this has created a number of practical difficulties due to pressures on the development of new Standards and the capacity to attract back to the Specialized Section the expertise that were originally involved.

This acknowledges that the face of the Committee changes in accordance with the Agenda and that the specific Meat Standard being development requires different skills and levels of expertise.

This is in fact a strength of the Specialized Section and ensures that the standards developed are of a high quality and meet the expectations of the market.

In addition, the implementation / uptake of the Standards as developed are also an important measure of the success of the Specialized Sections activities.

A major difficulty in maintaining / updating the Standards that the development / approval / publication / revision cycle inevitably gets out of sync and the revision activity slips behind schedule. The Standards need to be dynamic in order to reflect the market requirements.

### **Proposal outcomes**

This proposal is intended to address these issues by creating a special forum in 2010 to review or overview all of the Meat Standards.

The key outcomes for the forum would be to report on the implementation and appropriateness of each of Standard and to draft a plan for future work.

The plan would in turn be presented to the Working Party for policy decisions and further direction.

The proposal has the capacity to re-engage many of the product specialists from countries that have previously participated in the development of the standards.

The agenda for the forum would include a workshop / revision for each standard lead by delegates with specific skills / history or knowledge of the standard.

Each delegation would also be asked to report on progress or impediments to the implementation of the current standard based on experience within their own country

The forum would also serve as a promotion of the standards to a wider audience attracted by the range of meat standards being revised.

The proposed review of all the UNECE Meat Standards would also act as a catalyst for future work and to gain broader “ownership” and recognition of the Standards in 2010.

### **Recommendation**

The UNECE Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat gives in principle support to convene a forum to review of all UNECE Meat Standards in 2010.