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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

**COMMITTEE ON TRADE**

**Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards**

Sixty-third session  
Geneva, 5-9 November 2007

**REPORT OF THE WORKING PARTY ON AGRICULTURAL QUALITY  
STANDARDS ON ITS SIXTY-THIRD SESSION**

**Summary**

The Working Party adopted: (a) revised standard layouts for fresh fruit and vegetables and for dry and dried produce for a trial period of one year; (b) new/revised standards for seed potatoes, cherries, table grapes, ceps, apples, inshell almonds, dried tomatoes, inshell hazelnuts, bovine meat, caprine meat and turkey meat; (c) revised texts on apricots, cucumbers, peaches and nectarines, pistachio kernels and peeled pistachio kernels, hazelnut kernels, blanched almond kernels, and dried peaches as recommendations on trial through 2008. It initiated work on new standards for chanterelles, fresh chilli peppers, dry chilli peppers and veal meat; decided to revise the standards for eggs and egg products; and suspended work on the standards for inshell pecans and pecan kernels, and inshell peanuts and peanut kernels.

The Working Party approved the initiation of work on UNECE brochures on sweet peppers and on inshell walnuts and walnut kernels.

The Working Party adopted its revised terms of reference and working procedures and submitted the terms of reference to the UNECE Committee on Trade and the Executive Committee for approval.

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The meeting was opened by Mr. Hans Hansell, Chief of the Trade Policy and Governmental Cooperation Section of the UNECE Trade and Timber Division. It was chaired by Ms. Viera Baričičová (Slovakia).

## II. ATTENDANCE

2. Representatives of the following countries attended the meeting: Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and United States of America.

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

4. The following States attended under Article 11: Australia, Morocco.

5. The following specialized agencies/programmes participated in the session: Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme.

6. A representative of the following intergovernmental organization also participated in the session: the OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables.

## III. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Agenda item 1)

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

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

- INF.4-revised Summary of outcome of the CODEX Alimentarius and UNECE informal meeting
- INF.5 Proposals for revision of the UNECE standard for sweet peppers
- INF.6 Draft UNECE brochure for sweet peppers

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

### A. Guidelines for the establishment and functioning of working parties within UNECE (Agenda item 2(a))

Documentation: Guidelines for the establishment and functioning of working parties within UNECE (ECE/EX/1)

8. The secretariat presented the above guidelines, which were approved by the UNECE Executive Committee in July 2006. The revised terms of reference for the Working Party discussed under item 2(c) draw on these guidelines.

**B. Concentrating agricultural quality standards work within UNECE  
(Agenda item 2(b))**

Documentation: Progress report on the concentration of work on agricultural quality standards within UNECE (ECE/TRADE/C/2007/6)

9. The UNECE and OECD task forces met jointly during the week of the Working Party meeting. They discussed progress made by working groups that they had established at their first joint meeting during the May 2007 session of the Specialized Section on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables. Conclusions of the meeting were presented to the Working Party in a document that should be circulated through the UNECE list server, together with the report of the Working Party session.

**C. Revised terms of reference and working procedures (Agenda item 2(c))**

Documentation: Draft terms of reference (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/12)  
Working procedures (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/13)

10. The Working Party approved its revised terms of reference, that had been prepared to lay the ground for the concentration of activities in the UNECE as requested in the UNECE reform plan (document E/ECE/1434/Rev.1), and asked the secretariat to forward these terms of reference to the UNECE Committee on Trade and the Executive Committee for approval.

11. The Working Party also approved its revised working procedures.

12. In 2009 both, the terms of reference and working procedures might be reviewed as necessary depending on the decision to be made by the OECD regarding the concentration of work on agricultural quality standards in the UNECE. Until that time, the Working Party will coordinate its work with the OECD to ensure that even if both organizations undertake similar activities, such as explanatory brochures, there will be no duplication in the actual content of the work.

13. The Working Party also agreed that this part of the report will be published, for example on the UNECE website, together with the terms of reference.

**D. Recent developments in other organizations (Agenda item 2(d))**

14. The EC delegation informed the meeting about the publication of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1182/2007 laying down specific rules as regards the fruit and vegetable sector. The text maintains the existing situation concerning the standards and gives more flexibility to the Commission, assisted by Member States, in drawing up legislation in the area of standards. The implementing rules concerning marketing standards are expected to be adopted in June 2008.

15. The EC delegation suggested that at the next meetings Member States would also have the opportunity to present recent developments regarding standards and their control.

16. The OECD representative informed the meeting about the activities that OECD had carried out or planned since the 2006 session of WP.7. The OECD Scheme had published the explanatory brochure on table grapes. The brochures on kiwifruit and cucumbers had been

adopted at the end of 2006 and were expected to be published in 2007. Work was continuing on brochures for apples, citrus fruits, potatoes, melons, hazelnuts, pears, peaches and nectarines, apricots and prunes. Electronic versions of brochures can be downloaded free of charge from the OECD website ([www.oecd.org/agr/fv](http://www.oecd.org/agr/fv)).

17. The OECD Scheme had set up working groups on Guidelines for Inspector Training and for Inspections. It also had adopted Guidelines on Risk Analysis and a document on the implementation of peer reviews. The first peer review of the Hungarian quality inspection system had been carried out in the third quarter of 2007. The 66<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting of the OECD Scheme would take place in Paris on 11 and 12 December 2007.

18. The representative of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme provided information on the status of work in the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables since the May 2007 session of the UNECE Specialized Section on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables. At its thirtieth session the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Rome, July 2007) had adopted the draft Codex Standard for Table Grapes, which was harmonized with the corresponding quality provisions of the UNECE Standard. The Commission had also adopted the proposed draft Codex Guidelines for the Quality Inspection and Certification of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables, which was currently being revised by a working group led by Canada. The Guidelines would be considered by the Committee at its next session in May 2008. The working group on apples met in Washington D.C. in September 2007 to revise various quality provisions. A revised version of the draft Codex Standard for Apples would be circulated for comments and would be considered by the Committee at its next session. The Committee would also consider the Mexican proposals on new standards for fresh chilli peppers and garlic.

19. The Working Party requested that the UNECE and Codex Alimentarius secretariats consult the bureaux of the Working Party and the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables to develop a paper with suggestions as to how these two bodies could increase their cooperation in order to make a better, combined use of both organizations' resources.

20. The Working Party noted the need to align the standard layouts of UNECE and Codex Alimentarius for fresh fruit and vegetables standards as closely as possible, and requested the two secretariats to prepare a report for the May 2008 meeting of the Specialized Section on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables identifying differences in the standard layouts and making proposals as to how they might be more fully aligned.

#### **AGENDA ITEMS 3-6**

21. The chairpersons of the specialized sections presented their work since the 2006 meeting of the Working Party. The delegates took note of the activities carried out by the specialized sections over the past year and asked the secretariat to put the chairpersons' PowerPoint presentations on the UNECE website to promote the work of the Working Party.

**V. SPECIALIZED SECTION ON STANDARDIZATION OF SEED POTATOES  
(Agenda item 3)**

Documentation: Report of the thirty-seventh session (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.6/2007/8)  
Standard on seed potatoes (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/2)  
List of diseases and pests (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/3)

22. The Working Party approved the amended texts of the Standard on seed potatoes and of the List of diseases and pests.

**VI. SPECIALIZED SECTION ON STANDARDIZATION OF FRESH FRUIT AND  
VEGETABLES (Agenda item 4)**

**A. Revised Standard Layout for UNECE standards on fresh fruit and vegetables  
(Agenda item 4(a))**

Documentation: Report of the fifty-third session (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.1/2007/11)  
Standard Layout (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/4)

23. The Working Party adopted the revised text of the Standard Layout for a trial period of one year.

**B. Texts for adoption as new/revised UNECE standards (Agenda item 4(b))**

Documentation: Cherries - revised (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/5)  
Table grapes - revised (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/6)  
Ceps - new (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/7)  
Apples - revised (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/8)

24. The Working Party adopted the amended texts of new/revised UNECE standards for cherries, table grapes, ceps and apples. The delegation of the United States confirmed its reservation on minimum maturity requirements in the standard for table grapes.

25. Maturity requirements in the standard for table grapes, and colour groups, list of varieties and uniformity in size in the standard for apples would be revisited.

**C. Texts for adoption as UNECE recommendations (Agenda item 4(c))**

Documentation: Apricots - revised (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/9)  
Cucumbers - revised (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/10)  
Peaches and nectarines - revised (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/11)

26. The Working Party adopted the revised texts on apricots, cucumbers, and peaches and nectarines as recommendations for trial use until the end of 2008. The delegation of Turkey reminded the delegates of the intention of the Specialized Section to revisit the sizing provisions in the standard for cucumbers.

**D. Initiation of work on new UNECE standards (Agenda item 4(d))**

27. The Working Party approved the initiation of work on two UNECE standards for chanterelles and fresh chilli peppers, proposed by the delegations of France and Mexico. The work on the new UNECE standard for chanterelles should take into account the existing Codex European regional standard for this product.

28. Work on the standard for early and ware potatoes would be continued.

**VII. SPECIALIZED SECTION ON STANDARDIZATION OF DRY AND DRIED PRODUCE (Agenda item 5)**

**A. Revised Standard Layout for UNECE standards on dry and dried produce (Agenda item 5(a))**

Documentation: Report of the fifty-fourth session (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.2/2007/14)  
Standard Layout (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/15)

29. The Working Party adopted the revised text of the Standard Layout for a trial period of one year.

**B. Texts for adoption as new/revised UNECE standards (Agenda item 5(b))**

Documentation: Inshell almonds - new (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/16)  
Dried tomatoes - new (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/18)  
Inshell hazelnuts - revised (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/19)

30. The Working Party adopted the amended texts of new/revised UNECE standards for inshell almonds, dried tomatoes and inshell hazelnuts. An adjustment was made to the standard for dried tomatoes to align the text concerning the treatment of high-moisture produce with similar text in other standards for dried produce.

**C. Texts for adoption/extension as UNECE recommendations (Agenda item 5(c))**

Documentation: Pistachios - new (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/17)  
Hazelnut kernels - extension (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/20)  
Inshell walnuts - extension (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/21)  
Blanched almond kernels - extension (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/22)  
Dried peaches - new (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/23)

31. The Working Party adopted the revised texts of recommendations for pistachio kernels and peeled pistachio kernels, hazelnut kernels, blanched almond kernels and dried peaches for trial use until the end of 2008. Based on comments submitted by the delegation of the United States supported by France, the Working Party did not approve the revised text of the recommendation for inshell walnuts, as it did not reflect industry practices. The text was returned to the Specialized Section for revision of the table of tolerances. The trial period of the 2002 recommendation (document TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.14) was extended for two more years.

**D. Initiation of work on new UNECE standards (Agenda item 5(d))**

32. The Working Party approved the initiation of work on the UNECE standard for dry chilli peppers proposed by the delegation of Mexico.

**E. Suspension of work (Agenda item 5(e))**

33. The Working Party approved the recommendation to suspend work on the standards for inshell pecans and pecan kernels, and inshell peanuts and peanut kernels.

**VIII. SPECIALIZED SECTION ON STANDARDIZATION OF MEAT (Agenda item 6)****A. Texts for adoption as new/revised UNECE standards (Agenda item 6(a))**

Documentation: Report of the sixteenth session (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.11/2007/6)  
Bovine meat - revised (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/24)  
Caprine meat - new (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/25)  
Turkey meat - amended (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/26)

34. The Working Party approved the revised text of the standard for bovine, the new standard for caprine and the amended standard for turkey meat. The delegation of France asked the secretariat to check and correct the French version of the bovine meat standard.

**B. Initiation of work on new UNECE standards (Agenda item 6(b))**

35. The Working Party approved the initiation of work on the new UNECE standard for veal meat and the revision of the standards for eggs and egg products. The delegation of Italy stressed the importance of the work on the standard for veal meat. The Working Party was informed about the progress in the work on fancy meats undertaken by the Specialized Section.

**IX. INTERPRETATION OF UNECE STANDARDS (Agenda item 7)****A. Colour gauge for walnut kernels (Agenda item 7(a))**

36. The Working Party considered the colour chart for walnut kernels printed by UNECE in 2006 and the draft colour gauge for walnut kernels published by the US walnut industry in 2007. Both were found inadequate and were returned to the Specialized Section for improvement.

**B. Brochures on sweet peppers and on inshell walnuts and walnut kernels (Agenda item 7(b))**

37. The Working Party approved the initiative of the specialized sections on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables and on Dry and Dried produce to start work on brochures on sweet peppers and on inshell walnuts and walnut kernels. The draft UNECE brochure on sweet peppers was presented under item 10 of the agenda. The delegation of the United States informed the meeting that the US walnut industry had volunteered to draw up and publish the brochure on

inshell walnuts and walnut kernels. These brochures are being prepared in the framework of the possible concentration of activities in UNECE.

## **X. GENERAL QUESTIONS (Agenda item 8)**

### **A. Questionnaire on the use of UNECE standards (Agenda item 8(a))**

Documentation: Questionnaire (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/14)

38. The Working Party discussed the questionnaire to collect information on practical application of UNECE agricultural quality standards, and asked the secretariat to prepare its final version using the changes introduced to it in document ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2007/14-Rev.1. The questionnaire should be sent out in electronic form every second year starting in 2008.

### **B. UNECE website (Agenda item 8(b))**

39. The secretariat presented the new structure of the Working Party website. The delegates asked the secretariat to include in it a table with the annual programme of the Working Party and specialized section meetings, and presentations explaining and promoting the work of the Working Party. The registration form should appear on the front page. The website may be further improved on the basis of the experience in its use.

### **C. Lists of authorities (Agenda item 8(c))**

40. The lists of authorities responsible for inspection of commercial quality of different groups of products are now part of the website and will be regularly updated by the secretariat.

### **D. OECD Scheme work on sampling (Agenda item 8(d))**

41. Annex II (Operating rules for the conformity checks of produce exported under the "Scheme") of the OECD Council decision C(2006)95 contains provisions on sampling. The representative of OECD provided additional information on the OECD work on sampling of produce in big packs and small packages and on notification of non-conformity.

## **XI. CAPACITY-BUILDING ACTIVITIES (Agenda item 9)**

42. The secretariat and delegations exchanged information on the capacity-building, training, promotional and other activities that have taken place since the November 2006 session of the Working Party or are planned for the near future. Information on these activities will be summarized in a table on the UNECE website.



## **XII. OTHER BUSINESS (Agenda item 10)**

Documentation:       Proposals for revision of the standard for sweet peppers (INF.5)  
                          Draft explanatory brochure for sweet peppers (INF.6)

43.     The Working Party took note of the proposed revisions to the standard for sweet peppers and of the draft explanatory brochure. It was agreed that the Specialized Section on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables should discuss the brochure, taking into account the OECD experience. Both documents should be submitted to the May 2008 meeting of the Specialized Section.

44.     The Chairperson of the UNECE Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies made a presentation on the use of standards in technical regulations.

## **XIII. FUTURE WORK (Agenda item 11)**

45.     Tentative timetable of meetings in 2008

Specialized Section on Seed Potatoes: 17-19 March

Specialized Section on Meat: 28-30 April

Specialized Section on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables: 26-30 May

Specialized Section on Dry and Dried Produce: 23-27 June

## **XIV. ELECTION OF OFFICERS (Agenda item 12)**

46.     The Working Party re-elected Ms. Viera Baričičová (Slovakia) as Chairperson and Ms. Niina Kauhajärvi (Finland) as Vice-Chairperson.

## **XV. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT (Agenda item 13)**

47.     The Working Party adopted its report.