

**Economic and Social Council**

Distr. General
24 November 2010

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Trade

Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

Sixty-sixth session

Geneva, 4-5 November 2010

Report of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards on its sixty-sixth session**I. Introduction**

1. The meeting was opened by Ms. Virginia Cram-Martos, Director of the Trade and Timber Division. It was chaired by Mr. Ian Hewett (United Kingdom).

II. Attendance

2. Representatives of the following countries attended the meeting: Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Kenya, Morocco, Netherlands, Poland, Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and United States of America.

3. The European Union was also represented.

4. The following specialized agency/programme participated in the session: Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme.

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

6. A representative of the following non-governmental organization participated in the session: INC (International Nut and Dried Fruit Council Foundation).

III. Adoption of the agenda

Documentation: ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.1/2010/1

7. The delegations adopted the provisional agenda with proposed changes and amendments.

IV. Matters of interest since the last session

(a) UNECE and other international organizations

8. Part of the reporting under this agenda item was done at the meeting of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables. The interventions by the representatives of the European Commission and Codex are reflected in document ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.1/2010/19, paragraphs 8-11.

9. In addition to the information given during the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables, the representative of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme informed the Working Party that the 33rd Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission had:

- recalled that the proposed renaming of UNECE to UN standards had already been discussed at previous sessions of the Commission including the response of the Legal Counsel of the United Nations concerning the global status of Codex standards as related to UNECE standards
- noted the reply of the Senior Legal Adviser of the UN Office at Geneva (February 2010), which reasserted the previous opinion of the UN Legal Counsel (November 1998)
- noted the view of the WHO legal adviser who advised to take note of the two legal opinions and offered to cooperate with the Office of Legal Affairs should there be any need for further clarifications on the FAO/WHO Joint Food Standards Programme and its standards
- reiterated its previous recommendation on the need for the CCFFV to cooperate and coordinate with UNECE towards the elaboration of harmonized standards without duplication of effort. While avoiding any unnecessary duplication of work, the collaboration would also benefit UNECE by giving international recognition to its standards as the Terms of Reference of the Committee allows the Commission to use UNECE standards and recommend them for worldwide application.

10. The representative of the OECD Scheme reported that the OECD Apricot, Peaches and Nectarines and Citrus Fruits Brochures had been published and distributed with a USB key containing hyperlinked, high-quality electronic versions of the publications. The publication of the OECD Apple Brochure was expected in November. The Scheme was currently working on the brochures for melons, hazelnuts, watermelons, garlic and onions. The Scheme also had made progress on the Guidelines on Quality Inspections and Inspector's Trainings.

11. The Scheme has published the 2009 peer review report on the Moroccan fruit and vegetables quality inspection system. It undertook a peer review on the Turkish quality inspection system in 2010.

12. The OECD Scheme secretariat will provide a market analysis of banana to the members at the 2010 Plenary Meeting.

13. The OECD Scheme secretariat discussed with the Codex Alimentarius secretariat possible areas of cooperation, such as work on brochures, guidelines, capacity-building

activities and the development of distance-learning tools.

14. The Scheme organized a Workshop in Kenya in April 2010 to facilitate the harmonization of their export quality inspection systems with OECD rules. An OECD-sponsored International Training Course was held from 21 to 23 September 2010 in Slovakia.

15. The representative of INC informed the Working Party that her organization had prepared an extensive collection of worldwide statistics on production, imports, exports and consumption of tree nuts, peanuts and dried fruits from 2004 to 2009. This Global Statistical Review presents data for 15 products (almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamias, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios, walnuts, peanuts, dates, dried apricots, dried figs, prunes and dried grapes) and includes a study on the estimated per capita consumption for the largest consuming countries. This report is available from INC upon request.

16. INC strongly supports global standardization and is currently working with the main cashew nut producing countries, namely India, Brazil and Viet Nam, and the African Cashew Association, in a Global Cashew Project that will involve 30 countries. The main objectives of the project are:

- to evaluate the trend of production and to set the rate of possible increase in consumption for a good balance between supply and demand
- to harmonize the Codes of Practice (CP) and Good Agricultural and Manufacturing Practices (GAP, GMP)
- to promote scientific research on nutrient facts and health
- to work actively on Global Quality Standards
- to cooperate with international institutions.

17. Regarding Amazonia (Brazil) nuts, INC is working with the main producing countries (Bolivia, Brazil and Peru) on the organization of a seminar by the end of January 2011 in Brazil that will bring together producers and other stakeholders.

18. INC is also monitoring the issue of the bitter after-taste of pine nuts from Asia, reported by several consumers in the US, Europe and Australia. INC is working with the China Chamber of Commerce for Imports and Exports of Foodstuffs (CFNA), and has requested several laboratories in the US, Europe and Asia to run tests on the composition of Asian varieties in order to find the cause of the taste alteration.

Agenda items 3-6

19. The chairs of the specialized sections, and the secretariat, presented the work of the sections since the 2009 meeting of the Working Party.

V. Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat

Documentation: Report of the nineteenth session

20. The secretariat on behalf of the re-elected Bureau of the Specialized Section (Mr. Ian King, Australia and Mr. Craig-Morris, US) reported on the Section's recently held meeting. The Working Party took note of the Section's agreement on opting for Internet-based publishing of the Standards and acknowledged the Section's progress in developing new standards for horse meat, goose meat, veal, and retail meat cuts. The secretariat also

informed the Working Party about recently held rapporteurs meetings in France, Russia, and the US, which had substantially helped advance the work on the Standards. The Working Party took note that the Specialized Section had discussed traceability and coding systems and had decided to discuss the issues further.

21. The Working Party adopted the following two new UNECE Standards which had been submitted by the Specialized Section following the end of their one-year trial period: UNECE Standard for Edible hen eggs-in-shell and UNECE Standard for Edible hen egg products for use in the food industry.

VI. Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes

Documentation: Report of the thirty-ninth session (ECE/ TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.6/2010/9)

Standard for Seed Potatoes

List of Diseases and Pests

22. The Specialized Section adopted the revised text of the Standard for Seed Potatoes and the updated List of Diseases and Pests.

VII. Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

Documentation: Report of the fifty-seventh session (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.1/2010/19)

(a) 2009 Standard Layout for UNECE standards on fresh fruit and vegetables

Documentation: 2009 Standard Layout

23. The Working Party adopted the revised Standard Layout.

(c) Alignment of standards with the 2010 Standard Layout and minor changes to standards

24. The Working Party adopted the aligned texts, including minor changes, of the standards for artichokes (FFV-03), asparagus (FFV-04), aubergines (FFV-05), beans (FFV-06), Brussels sprouts (FFV-08), headed cabbages (FFV-09), carrots (FFV-10), cauliflowers (FFV-11), ribbed celery (FFV-12), cherries (FFV-13), citrus fruit (FFV-14), cucumbers (FFV-15), fennel (FFV-16), fresh figs (FFV-17), garlic (FFV-18), table grapes (FFV-19), leeks (FFV-21), lettuces and endives (FFV-22), melons (FFV-23), cultivated mushrooms (FFV-24), onions (FFV-25), peas (FFV-27), plums (FFV-29), strawberries (FFV-35), tomatoes (FFV-36), watermelons (FFV-37), witloof chicory (FFV-38), edible sweet chestnuts (FFV-39), rhubarb (FFV-40), courgettes (FFV-41), Chinese cabbage (FFV-44), mangoes (FFV-45), kiwifruit (FFV-46), annonas (FFV-47), broccoli (FFV-48), pears (FFV-51), truffles (FFV-53) and ceps (FFV-54).

25. The Working Party approved the alignment of the following standards with the 2010 Standard Layout: for apricots (FFV-02, version 2009), peaches and nectarines (FFV-26, version 2009), sweet peppers (FFV-28, version 2009), avocados (FFV-42, version 2009),

apples (FFV-51, version 2009), early and ware potatoes (FFV-52, version 2009) and chanterelles (FFV-55, version 2009).

26. The Working Party adopted new standards for shallots (FFV-56), berry fruit (FFV-57), leafy vegetables (FFV-58), root and tubercle vegetables (FFV-59) and withdrew the standards for bilberries and blueberries (FFV-07), raspberries (FFV-32), horse radish (FFV-20), scorzonera (FFV-33), radishes (FFV-43), and spinach (FFV-34) which had become part of the new "group standards".

27. The Working Party thanked the Bureau of the Specialized Section and the delegations of France and Poland for their help in reviewing the standards in English and French.

VIII. Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce

Documentation: Report of the fifty-seventh session (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.2/2010/7)

28. The Chair of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce reviewed the work of the Section noting the active participation of main producing countries and industry groups in the Section's last meeting. He briefly described progress made with regard to the revision of the Standard for Cashew Kernels and the development of a new Standard for Whole Dried Chilli Peppers. He also mentioned that work on an Explanatory Brochure for Walnut Kernels was under way.

29. The Working Party adopted the following new and revised UNECE Standards which had been submitted by the Specialized Section for approval: Inshell Macadamia Nuts as new UNECE Standard DDP-22; Macadamia Kernels as new UNECE Standard DDP-23; Pistachio Kernels and Peeled Pistachio Kernels; and Hazelnut Kernels.

30. The Working Party adopted the revised Standard for Dates with the addition of a new text of Switzerland's reservation in the footnote of the table of tolerances. The new text reads: "When applying its national legislation, Switzerland does not admit a tolerance higher than 6% for produce damaged by pests" (in French: "Dans l'application de sa législation nationale, la Suisse n'admet pas de tolérance supérieure à 6% pour les produits endommagés par des parasites"). The text of the current reservations by Poland and the UK in the same footnote would remain unchanged for the time being.

31. The Working Party also approved the addition of a list of defined mixtures of varieties as a new annex to the current UNECE Standard for Inshell Walnuts. The revised draft Standard for Dried Pears was adopted for a one-year trial period as a UNECE Recommendation for Dried Pears.

IX. Interpretation of UNECE standards

32. The Working Party approved the decision by the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables to start work on the UNECE Brochure for Pineapples in parallel with revising the Standard.

X. Coordination of work between UNECE and OECD Scheme

Documentation: Guidelines for MoU (INF.34, Informal document)

33. The Working Party reviewed the guidelines for the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between UNECE and the OECD Scheme and asked the secretariat to forward the text to the OECD as the position of the Working Party on recommended ways for UNECE and OECD to work together on explanatory material.

34. Should the OECD Scheme decide, at its December 2010 plenary session, to have an MoU with UNECE, the Working Party's working group, composed of France, Germany, Israel, United States, United Kingdom and the European Commission, would assist in exploring in more detail the issues to be covered by the MoU.

35. The representative of OECD informed the Working Party that OECD welcomed cooperation with other international organizations involved in standardization of fruit and vegetables, such as UNECE and FAO/WHO Codex Commission in order to facilitate/harmonize the work and avoid duplication in mandates. He said that following extensive discussion at OECD, a draft MoU on the cooperation between the two organizations had been submitted to UNECE in 2005, which clarified responsibilities and areas of cooperation. UNECE had not followed up on the MoU but had responded with a proposal to transfer all activities of the OECD Scheme to UNECE. Scheme members discussed that proposal at length but there had been no consensus. UNECE had been informed that all Scheme activities, including the work on explanatory materials, would remain at OECD. As a follow-up, OECD proposed that the 2005 MoU could be reactivated as a basis for cooperation between the two organizations within the original mandates (e.g. UNECE - development of standards, OECD - technical aspects of quality inspection). Such an initiative could be discussed by Scheme members at its 2010 Plenary Meeting on 7 and 8 December 2010.

36. The UNECE secretariat pointed out that the situation had changed considerably since 2005, particularly with regard to the UNECE work on explanatory material, and that a new MoU would need to be negotiated to take into account these new developments.

XI. Capacity-building activities

37. The secretariat and delegations exchanged information on capacity-building, training and promotional and other activities that had taken place since the last session of the Working Party or were planned for the near future. The secretariat will update information on the dates and venues of the meetings and capacity-building activities in the international meetings calendar on the UNECE website.

XII. Other business

Documentation: Working procedures (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2010/9)

Working procedures, position of France (INF.61)

38. Based on legal advice received concerning the name change of its standards, the Working Party decided to retain "UNECE" in the title of UNECE standards.

39. The Working Party withdrew "United Nations Economic Commission for Europe" from the upper part of the cover page of the standards and asked the secretariat to spell out in full the name of UNECE in the Note to the standards.

40. The Working Party considered the amendments to its working procedures recommended for approval by the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit

and Vegetables. The amended version of the working procedures, adopted by the Working Party, would be published on the website.

41. The Working Party asked the secretariat to put the date of issue on every document placed on the web.

42. At the request of the Specialized Section on Dry and Dried Produce, the Working Party examined the issue of consensus in the terms of reference and found it sufficient to meet the needs of the Specialized Section.

XIII. Future work

43. The Working Party asked the specialized sections to start work on revising the Geneva Protocol and to report to the 2011 session of the Working Party on their progress.

44. The Working Party decided to revisit its terms of reference at its 2011 session.

45. The Working Party agreed to a two-day meeting in 2011.

XIV. Election of officers

46. The delegations elected Mr. Ian Hewett (United Kingdom) as Chair and Mr. Pier Giacomo Bianchi (Chair of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes, Italy) as Vice-Chair.

XV. Adoption of the report

47. The Working Party adopted the report of the session.
