



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

TRADE/WP.7/2003/6
27 November 2003

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

COMMITTEE FOR TRADE, INDUSTRY AND
ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards
Fifty-ninth session, Geneva, 4 - 6 November 2003

REPORT OF THE FIFTY-NINTH SESSION

SUMMARY

Fresh Fruit and Vegetables:

Revised or new UNECE standards adopted: Apples, Avocados, Citrus Fruit, Courgettes, Onions, Pears, Table Grapes: will be updated on the UNECE website.

Artichokes, Peaches and Nectarines, Pineapples: see TRADE/WP.7/2003/6/Add. 1, 2 and 3.

UNECE recommendations adopted: Apples (two-year trial), Citrus Fruit (one-year trial), Plums (trial period extended)(publication on the UNECE website).

Work on a UNECE Standard for Shallots continues.

The Working Party agreed the proposal to develop new standards for Truffles and Ceps.

An amendment to the standard layout concerning stickers on fruit was adopted.

Dry and Dried Produce (Fruit):

Revised UNECE standards adopted: Almond Kernels and Prunes (to be published on the UNECE website)

UNECE recommendations adopted for a one-year trial period: Inshell Almonds, Pistachio Kernels and Peeled Pistachio Kernels, Inshell Pistachio Nuts (to be published on the UNECE website)

Revision of the Standard Layout: Annex I of the Standard layout on determination of the moisture content for dried fruit and Annex III Terms recommended and definition of defects were adopted (both texts will be updated on the UNECE website).

Future work agreed: New standards for Dried Peaches, Inshell Peanuts and Peanut Kernels, Inshell Pecans and Pecan Kernels, Inshell Macademia Nuts and Macademia Kernels, Blanched Almonds, Dried Tomatoes and Dried Peppers and a revision of the UNECE Standard for Dates.

Walnut colour chart: The Working Party agreed that the secretariat will proceed with the publication of this document without the yellow kernel if no consensus can be reached on this question by 31 December 2003.

Early and Ware Potatoes: The Working Party agreed the recommendation to abolish the UNECE General Conditions of Sale for Potatoes. The Working Party agreed to integrate the work on early and ware potatoes into the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables and to propose to the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development to abolish the Specialized Section on Standardization of Early and Ware Potatoes.

Seed Potatoes: Amendments to the UNECE Standard for Seed Potatoes were adopted (the updated standard will be published on the UNECE website).

Meat: The new UNECE Standard for Chicken Meat – Carcasses and Parts was adopted (the standard will be published in 2004 on paper and the Internet). The Working Party was informed about the different meetings that had been held in the Russian Federation (Seminar on implementation of the bovine standard and meetings of rapporteurs on chicken meat and pork).

Working Group on Internationally Harmonized Produce Coding : The secretariat presented the work done so far in the Working Group (see TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2003/26/Add.9). The Working Party welcomed this information but requested further clarification on the future use of the codes, the relation to UNECE standards and the role of UNECE in this area, taking into account that several groups are working currently on codification of fresh produce.

Publications : The secretariat will publish in 2003 the UNECE Standard for Bovine and Ovine Meat and a promotional booklet on the work of the Working Party.

Procedure for revising/developing UNECE Standards: The procedure was changed to allow specialized sections to initiate work on revision of standards without prior approval of the Working Party (see TRADE/WP.7/2003/6/Add.4).

Standard Layout: The Working Party decided to amend the title of all standards to read “UNECE STANDARD concerning the marketing and commercial quality control of”.

Revision of the Geneva Protocol/ Terms of reference: The Working Party agreed that the secretariat should work on a consolidated text of terms of reference, which will be transmitted to delegations before the next session of the Working Group scheduled to be held during the next GE.1 session.

Revision of UNECE Standards for Eggs and Egg Products: The delegation of the Russian Federation proposed to revise these standards. Delegations will name experts on eggs to the secretariat who will then organise a meeting.

Workshops/ seminars: Delegations were informed of the different activities undertaken by the secretariat and the bureau for the promotion of the work of the Working Party.

Opening of the session

1. The meeting was held in Geneva from 4 to 6 November 2003. It was chaired by the Vice-Chairperson of the Working Party, Ms. Viera Baricicova (Slovakia). The session was opened by Ms. Virginia Cram-Martos, Chief of the Trade Policy and Governmental Cooperation Branch of the Trade Development and Timber Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

2. Ms. Cram-Martos welcomed delegations to Geneva for the 59th session of the Working Party. She said that unfortunately the Chairman, Mr. David Priester, had not been able to come to Geneva for personal reasons. He had informed the secretariat that he would be available to continue as Chairman for another year should this be the wish of the Working Party.

3. Ms. Cram-Martos thanked the Vice-Chair, Ms Viera Baricicova, for accepting to chair this session.

4. She recalled that the task of the Working Party was to review the work done in the specialized sections and any general questions related to the work and its future direction. This year 14 revised and 2 new standards were proposed for adoption as well as 5 standards for adoption as recommendations. For next year the different specialized sections proposed to revise 10 standards and to continue or start work on 10 new standards.

5. She congratulated the Working Party on the proposal to streamline the work by integrating the work on Early and Ware Potatoes in the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables.

6. On behalf of the secretariat and all delegations who attended the meetings, she thanked the Russian Federation for organizing and hosting several events in Moscow and St. Petersburg in September 2003 on development and implementation of UNECE Standards for Meat. The feedback from participants has been very positive, stressing the excellent organization and wonderful hospitality. She said that the secretariat looked forward to organizing similar events in the future. She also thanked Italy and the United Kingdom for hosting meetings of the extended bureau of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes.

7. Ms. Cram-Martos recalled that the overall role of agriculture and trade in agriculture was to provide healthy and good quality food that has been produced in a sustainable way. It should also be ensured that those who work in the field receive a fair income. She said that while she knew that UNECE's contribution to this goal was limited, she was confident that progress could be made when working together with other organizations such as Codex, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

8. She also said that keeping this goal in mind when working on standards would ensure that it supported the objectives from the Millennium Declaration for an "an open, equitable, rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system" and "support for the principles of sustainable development".

Participation

9. The session was attended by representatives of the following countries: Bulgaria; Finland; France; Georgia, Germany; Greece; Hungary; Italy; Morocco; Netherlands; Poland; Russian Federation; Slovakia; Spain, Switzerland; Turkey; United Kingdom and United States of America.

10. The European Community was also represented.

11. At the invitation of the secretariat, a representative of the OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables participated in the session.

12. Representatives of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) also participated in the session.

Item 1: Adoption of the agenda

13. The agenda was adopted with the following additions:

- Addition of TRADE/WP.7/2001/INF.1 (UNECE Resolution 222 on packaging)

14. Several delegations regretted that a number of documents for the meeting had only been available in English. The secretariat will discuss with the United Nations Conference Services on how to improve this situation in the future.

Item 2: Matters of interest arising since the last session

Item 2(a) UNECE

Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development

15. The secretariat informed on the discussion of the work of the Working Party at the seventh session of the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development.

16. At the session, the secretariat had presented the relevant documents TRADE/WP.7/2002/9 (report of the 58th session) and TRADE/2003/6 (report to the Committee prepared by the secretariat).

17. At the Committee session the delegations of the European Community and the Russian Federation reiterated their support for the work on agricultural quality standards and stressed that it was important to increase the resources available to this work area. The Chairman said that the bureau of the Committee was open to discussing any request for additional resources coming from the Working Party.

18. The Committee approved the decision of the Working Party to change its name. It endorsed TRADE/WP.7/2002/9 and noted TRADE/2003/6.

Working Party on Technical Harmonization and Standardization Policy

19. The secretary of the UNECE Working Party on Technical Harmonization and Standardization Policies (WP.6) informed on the WP.6 work in the area of regulatory convergence.

20. He provided information on the latest WP.6 projects (on harmonization of technical regulations in a telecom sector as a means of facilitation of trade; for more information, see document TRADE/WP6/2003/6) and on the draft technical harmonization agreement between CIS States (countries of the former Soviet Union) document: TRADE/WP6/2003/3.

21. These WP.6 projects might be of interest to WP.7 should they decide to embark on a regulatory convergence exercise regarding safety and other mandatory requirements for food and other products.

Item 2(b) Other organizations

OECD Scheme on the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables

22. The delegation of the OECD Scheme informed the Working Party on the outcome of the plenary meeting of the Scheme (Paris, 20 to 24 October 2003). The explanatory brochure for tomatoes has been published and the brochure for avocados will be published early next year in English, French and Spanish. The plenary meeting accepted to co-publish with UNECE the colour chart for walnut kernels.

23. Work is in progress on brochures for the following products: Citrus Fruit, Strawberries, Kiwis, Apples and Pears, Table Grapes, Cucumbers, Beans, Cultivated Mushrooms, Potatoes, Pistachios, Hazelnuts and Prunes.

24. Work has begun on the reform of the Scheme to improve its functioning and attract new members. A working group has been formed, which will discuss the conclusions that had been presented in an independent review of the work of the Scheme.

25. The Secretariat informed the Working Party that the Specialized Sections GE.1 and GE.2 had discussed possibilities for closer cooperation with the Scheme and proposed to the Working Party to further discuss them:

- To adopt OECD brochures as official interpretations of UNECE standards (which would also give the possibility to create official Russian versions of the brochures).
- To organize meetings in a way that would save time and money to delegations and would allow delegations from further afield to participate in the meetings of both organizations.

26. Concerning the meeting organization, the Working Party decided to ask the secretariats of UNECE and OECD to prepare several alternatives for meeting schedules that would facilitate participation of delegations at all meetings (e.g. organizing meetings of the Working Party and the Plenary Meeting in one week and in the same place etc.). In the proposals any expected savings or additional costs should be mentioned.

27. Concerning the possible adoption of OECD Standards as official interpretation of UNECE Standards, the Working Party felt that the best way to make progress on this issue was to discuss it in an informal UNECE/OECD working group.

28. The chairperson of the existing OECD task force on the reform of the scheme (consisting of Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands, the European Union, Slovakia, New Zealand, as well as the UNECE and OECD secretariats) suggested discussing these questions in an informal sub-group of the task force. This sub-group would be open to all participants of the Working Party including non-members of the Scheme.

29. The Working Party agreed to this proposal and the delegations of France, the United Kingdom and the United States expressed interest in participating in this group.

30. The main objective of this group is to explore the possibility of closer cooperation and mutual recognition between OECD and UNECE without slowing down the work of either organization.

31. The following points were made and should be further discussed in the working group:
- How can countries that are not members of the OECD Scheme make comments during the development of an explanatory brochure so that issues that are essential to them to be able to accept the brochure as official interpretation of the relevant UNECE Standard can be taken into account?
 - Mutual recognition is also a matter of confidence in the quality of work of the other party. It does not mean that the membership has to be the same.
 - How should the fact that texts/brochures are mutually recognized be made visible in the publications? The possibility of having both logos in the publications was mentioned.
32. The delegation of France had reservations as to the usefulness of creating such a working group.
33. The delegation of the United States said that it would be difficult for them to adopt a document as an official interpretation of a UNECE Standard without having had adequate possibility to make comments during its development.
34. The OECD secretariat informed the Working Party that they were in touch with their legal office to explore the consequences of the different membership.
35. The UNECE secretariat informed the Working Party that for UNECE there were no legal problems with adopting OECD brochures as soon as this was the consensus in the Working Party. OECD texts had been adopted before.

European Union

36. The delegation of the European Community informed the Working Party that since the last session a number of EU standards had been revised in accordance with UNECE Standards.
37. They also reported that there were currently nine non-EU countries for which the possibility for accreditation of quality controls in accordance with regulation 1148/2001 had been implemented: Cyprus; Czech Republic; Hungary; India; Israel; Morocco; Slovakia; South Africa and Switzerland. 15 more applications were pending of which 4 were close to completion.

Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme

38. In the absence of the Codex secretariat the UNECE secretariat presented the following written information:

Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC)(26th session, Rome 30 June to 7 July 2003)

39. The Commission adopted the draft revised provisions: Section 3 – Provisions concerning Sizing and Section 6.2.4 – Commercial Identification of the Codex Standards for Limes, Pummelos and Grapefruits at Step 8.
40. The Commission adopted the draft Codex Standard for Pitahayas, the draft Codex Standard for Sweet Cassava as well as the Draft Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables at Step 8 with this amendment. The delegations of Canada and Finland expressed their reservations regarding this amendment.

41. The Commission adopted the revised Guidelines Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point System at Step 8 as proposed. In doing so, it noted the importance of the document on the “*Obstacles to the Application of the HACCP, Particularly in Small and Less Developed Businesses and Approaches to Overcome Them*” being developed by FAO and WHO for future reference in the guidelines. The Commission encouraged the FAO and WHO to finalize plans for a project that will produce a report for government policy makers and small and/or less developed business based on the above paper as soon as possible and agreed to report on the progress made on this project at the next session of the Commission.

Codex Committee for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables (CCFFV)

42. The 11th Session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables was held in Mexico City from 8 to 12 September 2003. The Committee:

- Advanced the draft Codex Standard for Oranges to the Codex Alimentarius Commission for final adoption. It is harmonized with the relevant Sections of the UN/ECE Standards for Citrus Fruits.
- Recommended preliminary adoption of the proposed draft Codex Standard for Tomatoes by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.
- Retained the draft Codex Standard for Table Grapes pending finalization of the Section on Maturity Requirements and the Annex on a list of Small-berry varieties by the next session of the Committee.
- Retained the proposed draft Codex Standard for Apples and Rambutan as well as the proposed draft Codex Guidelines for the Quality Control of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables for redrafting, circulation for comments and consideration at the next session of the Committee.
- Amended the Priority List for the Standardization of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables by including Avocados (revision of the current Codex Standard for Avocados).
- Appended a proposal for a Standard Layout for Codex Standards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables for circulation, comments and consideration at the next Session of the Committee.

43. The standards for Table Grapes, Tomatoes and Apples have been developed on the basis of the corresponding UNECE Standards and discussions on these documents are being carried out in cooperation with the UNECE. The Guidelines for the Quality Control of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables also takes into account relevant documentation prepared by the OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruits and Vegetables, the UNECE and other pertinent international organizations.

44. The report of the meeting has been issued as ALINORM 04/27/35 and is available on the Codex website in English (<http://www.codexalimentarius.net/>). The French and Spanish versions will be made available shortly.

45. The 12th session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables is scheduled to be held from 16 – 20 May 2005 in Mexico City.

Item 3: Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

46. The Chairman of the Specialized Section, Mr. David Holliday (United Kingdom), introduced the report of the 49th session held in Geneva from 17 to 20 June 2003 (see: TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2003/26), which had been attended by 34 delegations.

47. He indicated that at the session a representative of the World Health Organization had informed delegations on emerging disease patterns showing an alarming increase of diseases caused by unbalanced

nutrition (e.g. cardiovascular diseases, diabetes) in all parts of the world, leading to a “double burden” in some countries where parts of the population suffer from malnutrition and others from unbalanced nutrition and lack of exercise. According to the findings of WHO, an appropriate consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables (400 grammes per day) is one of the key factors in avoiding nutrition-based diseases.

Items 3(a) Decisions concerning texts recommended for adoption as revised or new UNECE standards

48. **Apples:** The text contained in document TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2003/26/Add.1 was adopted as a revised UNECE Standard and will be published on the homepage of the UNECE at: http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/standard/fresh/fresh_e.htm

49. The request for the addition of new apple varieties received from Turkey was referred to the Specialized Section.

50. **Artichokes, Onions, Peaches and Nectarines and Pears:** The amendments contained in TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2003/26/Add.3 concerning these products were adopted. The revised standards will be published in Addendum 1 (Artichokes) and Addendum 2 (Peaches and Nectarines) (see TRADE/WP.7/2003/6/Add. 1 and 2).

51. The revised UNECE Standard for Onions and Pears will be updated on the homepage of the UNECE.

52. **Courgettes:** The text contained in document TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2003/26/Add.4 was adopted as a revised UNECE Standard and will be published on the UNECE homepage.

53. **Kiwifruit:** The secretariat informed the Working Party that some members of the Working Group on Kiwifruit (European Union, France, Greece; New Zealand, Spain, Switzerland, UNECE secretariat) had met in Paris after the OECD Plenary meeting and found a consensus on open questions concerning maturity requirements and sizing. The Working Group proposes to withdraw document TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2003/26/Add.5 and adopt a more complete revision of the standards next year.

54. The Working Party agreed to the proposal of the working group.

55. **Avocados:** The text contained in document TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2003/26/Add.6, based on the recommendation in force and including new amendments concerning Antillean varieties was adopted as a revised UNECE Standard and will be published on the UNECE homepage.

56. The delegation of the United States entered a reservation concerning Antillean varieties of avocados into the standard. They consider that these varieties are substantially different from other avocados and should thus not be included in the standard.

57. **Citrus Fruit:** The text contained in document TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2003/26/Add.8, based on the recommendation in force and including new amendments to align with the draft Codex standard, was adopted as a revised UNECE Standard and will be published on the UNECE homepage.

58. In C. Uniformity in the line for Satsumas, clementines, other mandarin varieties and their hybrids, the entry “1 – 4” was replaced with “1-xxx – 4”.

59. **Table Grapes:** The delegation of Greece pointed out the differences in the maturity requirements in the UNECE standard with the draft Codex text. Other delegations said that the text was a compromise which was probably not perfect but a good start.

60. The delegation of Hungary mentioned some corrections to the list of varieties and will make further proposals for addition of varieties at the next session.

61. The existing recommendation as contained in document TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.9 was adopted as a revised UNECE Standard with some additions to the list of varieties. The standard will be published on the UNECE homepage.

62. **Pineapples:** The existing recommendation as contained in document TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.12 was adopted as a new UNECE Standard with some editorial amendments and will be published in Addendum 4 to this report (TRADE/WP.7/2003/6/Add.3).

Item 3(b) Decisions concerning texts recommended for adoption as UNECE Recommendations

63. **Apples:** The text contained in Part 2 of document TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2003/26/Add.1 including new provisions for minimum sizes and size tolerances was adopted as a UNECE Recommendation for a two-year trial period and will be published on the UNECE homepage.

64. **Citrus Fruit:** The text contained in Part 2 of document TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2003/26/Add.8 including new provisions for maturity requirements for green skinned oranges was adopted as a UNECE Recommendation for a one-year trial period and will be published on the UNECE homepage.

65. The Working Party asked the Specialized Section to take into account the changes made at the Codex Committee for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables when reviewing this text at its next session.

66. The delegation of the Netherlands said that in principle they were not in favour of making reference to the growing area but that they could accept the text for a one-year trial period.

67. **Plums:** The trial period for the UNECE Recommendation for Plums was extended for one further year to allow correct classification/ naming of the interspecific hybrid varieties.

Item 3 (c) Proposal to create new UNECE Standards for Truffles and Ceps

68. The proposal to develop new UNECE Standards for Truffles and Ceps was adopted.

Item 3 (d): Revision to the standard layout

69. The revision to the standard layout contained in document TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2003/26/Add.3 was adopted. The text of the standard layout will be updated on the UNECE homepage at: <http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/info/layout/layout.htm>

Item 4: Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce (Fruit)

70. The Chairman of the Specialized Section, Mr. Bruno Cauquil (France), introduced the report of the 50th session held in Geneva from 24 to 27 June 2003 (see TRADE/WP.7/GE.2/2003/15). The session was attended by 14 delegations.

Items 4(a): Texts recommended for adoption as revised UNECE standards

71. **Almond Kernels:** The text contained in document TRADE/WP.7/GE.2/2003/15/Add.1 was adopted as a revised UNECE Standard and will be published on the UNECE homepage. Poland entered a reservation concerning the tolerance for mould in class II. In their opinion mould is not only a quality issue but a quality and health issue and they would thus prefer 0.5 tolerance in all classes.

72. **Prunes:** The amendments contained in TRADE/WP.7/GE.2/2003/15/Add.6 were adopted. The revised standard will be published on the UNECE website.

Item 4 (b) Texts recommended for adoption as UNECE recommendations

73. **Inshell Almonds:** The text contained in document TRADE/WP.7/GE.2/2003/15/Add.3 was adopted as a UNECE Recommendation for a one-year trial period and will be published on the UNECE homepage.

74. Poland entered the same reservation concerning the tolerances for mould (this time concerning classes I and II).

75. **Pistachio Kernels and Peeled Pistachio Kernels:** The text contained in document TRADE/WP.7/GE.2/2003/15/Add.4 was adopted as a UNECE Recommendation for a one-year trial period and will be published on the UNECE homepage.

76. The delegation of Turkey said that the colour classification should, in their opinion, be moved from the definition of produce back to the provisions concerning quality.

77. As the move had been done in accordance with the report of the Specialized Section (see TRADE/WP.7/GE.2/2003/15 para.53) and the Working Party cannot discuss technical issues, the delegation of Turkey was asked to make their proposal to the next meeting of the Specialized Section.

78. The delegation of Switzerland withdrew their reservation concerning mould after having discussed it with the relevant authorities. The reservations of other delegations were maintained.

79. **Inshell Pistachio Nuts:** The text contained in document TRADE/WP.7/GE.2/2003/15/Add.5 was adopted as a UNECE Recommendation for a one-year trial period and will be published on the UNECE homepage.

80. All existing reservations were maintained.

Item 4 (c) Future work

81. The proposals to create new UNECE Standards for Dried Peaches, Inshell Peanuts and Peanut Kernels, Inshell Pecans and Pecan Kernels, Inshell Macademia Nuts and Macademia Kernels, Blanched Almonds, Dried Tomatoes and Dried Peppers – with the possibility to include annexes on dried pepper powder were adopted as well as the proposal to revise the UNECE Standard for Dates

82. Hungary expressed the wish to join the working group on dried peppers.

Item 4 (d) Revision of the standard layout

83. The revised texts for Annexes I and III of the standard layout as contained in TRADE/WP.7/GE.2/2003/15/Add.7 (Annex I: Determination of the moisture content for dried fruit) and TRADE/WP.7/GE.2/2003/15/Add.8 (Annex III: Terms recommended and definition of defects) were adopted and will be published on the UNECE homepage.

84. It was clarified that the inclusion of these new texts in the individual standards would be decided on a standard by standard basis.

Item 4 (e) Colour chart for walnut kernels

85. The Working Party was informed of the progress made on the development of the colour chart for Walnut Kernels.

86. There was still some disagreement about the exact colour for the yellow kernel. It was decided that the delegation of France would make a new proposal for the colour. If no agreement is reached on this question by the end of the year, the secretariat will proceed with the publication of the chart without the image of the yellow kernel.

Item 4 (f) Dictionary of defects

87. The dictionary created by Italy had been completed with terms in Turkish and will be published on the UNECE homepage with a notice that this is not a legislative text but for information only.

Item 4 (g) Sampling plan

88. The Working Party was informed that the draft prepared by the working group (see TRADE/WP.7/GE.2/2003/15/Add.2) had been transmitted to the OECD Plenary Meeting together with the opinion of the Specialized Section that it is important to have harmonized inspection and sampling procedures for dry and dried fruit. All delegations were invited to transmit relevant comments either directly to the OECD Scheme or through the UNECE secretariat in case of non-members. The OECD plenary has, at its recent session, started work on this document and will inform the Specialized Section on the results.

Item 4 (h) Explanatory brochures for Hazelnuts

89. The delegation of Germany, speaking for the OECD Scheme, said that the relevant produce working group had reviewed a complete set of slides of good quality for this brochure. The work had shown that the text of the standard is difficult to apply because the classification criteria are defined mainly by the tolerances and the terms for defects but not in the quality classes. The provisions concerning quality are contradictory to the provisions concerning tolerances and difficult to illustrate. Turkey as rapporteur for the brochure, agreed with the statement from Germany.

90. These problems in application might have their origin in the standard layout. The delegations working on the hazelnuts brochure will inform the Specialized Section of this problem and make suggestions on how to solve it.

91. The Working Party felt that in the light of this information it would be appropriate to add an extra half-day to the next session of GE.2.

Item 5: Specialized Section on Standardization of Early and Ware Potatoes

92. In the absence of the Chairman of the Specialized Section, Mr. Philip de Nolf (Belgium), the secretariat introduced the report of the 16th session held in Geneva from 24 to 25 March 2003 (see TRADE/WP.7/GE.5/2003/6). The meeting was attended by eight delegations.

Item 5 (a) Request to delete the UNECE General Conditions for the Sale of Potatoes from the publication list

93. The proposal of the Specialized Section to abolish the UNECE General Conditions of Sale for Potatoes was agreed as the trade is now generally using the RUCIP 2000 rules.

Item 5 (b) Possible future organization of the work

94. The Specialized Section held a discussion was held on rationalizing the organization of the standardization work for early and ware potatoes by joining the work of the group to either the group on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables or the group on Seed Potatoes because the present participation and number of proposals did not justify keeping a separate regular meeting. This was agreed in principle but at the time of the meeting there was no consensus on which group it should be joined to (see TRADE/WP.7/GE.5/2003/6, paras. 32 to 35).

95. In their sessions the Specialized Sections on Standardization of Seed Potatoes and Fresh Fruit and Vegetables recommended that discussions on Early and Ware Potatoes should be held in the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables (see TRADE/WP.7/GE.6/2003/10, para. 94 and TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2003/26, paras. 158 to 161). Because of this clear opinion no further consultations, as foreseen in TRADE/WP.7/GE.5/2003/6, para. 35, were held.

96. The Working Party decided to follow this recommendation and to propose to the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development to abolish the Specialized Section on Standardization of Early and Ware Potatoes.

97. In the programme of work the tasks concerning early and ware potatoes will be included in the list of tasks of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables.

98. At the next session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables, France will propose a revision of the standard on potatoes.

Item 5 (c) Explanatory Brochures

99. The delegation of Germany, speaking for the OECD Scheme, said that the relevant produce working group has decided that the differences between the standards for early and ware potatoes are not big enough to justify two separate brochures. They also believe that it would be simpler to have only one combined standard for early and ware potatoes. They will present a proposal on this question to the next session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables.

Item 6: Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes

100. The Chairman of the Specialized Section, Mr. Giacomo Bianchi (Italy), introduced the report of the 33rd session held in Geneva from 26 to 27 March 2003 (see. TRADE/WP.7/GE.6/2003/10) and informed in detail about the proposals for the revision of the UNECE Standard for Seed Potatoes, other initiatives of the

Specialized Section, the extended bureau meetings in 2003 and the programme of work for 2004. The session was attended by 12 countries and a representative of the European Community.

Proposals of the Specialized Section to amend the standard

- New introduction: The objective of the new text is to explain the goals and purpose of the standard, what it means to apply it, as well as its relationship to texts of other organizations.
- Provisions concerning the variety: This was considered a priority issue by the Specialized Section, to allow maximum security in managing a certification scheme, more and more with current development of micro-propagation technique and to face, with reference to varietal identity and purity, the problem of GMO.
- National classes: The proposed amendment to the title of Section C will reflect that national classes are still allowed but on a derogation basis.
- Inclusion of a list of pests to be checked on the initial stock.
- Field tolerances were introduced for each of the international classes.
- Assessment key for percentage tuber surface area coverage of blemish diseases was amended for Rhizoctonia and is now showing a better representation of the percentage of coverage provided for by the Standard (1 and 10%).
- A summary table of tolerances was included.

Future topics/activities

- Destination tolerances: The Standard describes quality standards for the produce at the export control point. Nevertheless, importing countries also expect these tolerances to apply at the point of import. Such an expectation may not be achievable in some cases with progressive disease such as tuber rots, which can develop between export and delivery.
- Superficial necrosis caused by PVY^{nm} : A strain of potato virus Y (PVY^{nm}) may cause necrotic symptoms (PTNRD) on potato tubers. These symptoms make tubers unattractive for sale in the pre-packaged market.
- In order to deal with GMO issues in the standard it will be necessary to start from a common understanding of terminology and it will be considered whether the definition of Living Modified Organism (LMO) by the Cartagena Protocol could help in this discussion.
- Sizing: the present provisions are no longer in line with current practices and will be revised.
- Shrivelled Tubers: Rules concerning shrivelled tubers will be discussed as a way to regulate blemish disease such as silver scurf.
- Virus symptoms: A paper will be prepared in order to clarify in the glossary which are the viruses taken into account by the Standard, while talking about mild and severe viruses.
- Development of a prototype seminar is being discussed to offer to countries that want to improve their seed potato production or to importing countries that want to be more informed about ordering seed from other countries.
- Pest list: This list is further developed and will serve to identify future work for the group by identifying those which can be considered an obstacle to the international trade. A common understanding of methodologies and tests will also be desirable.
- The establishment of a recognizable UNECE label is considered as important for the Standard.

Publications

101. As a result of a questionnaire sent in 2001 to some 75 countries around the world interested in potato cultivation, an overview of domestic standards implemented by countries will be published on the

UNECE website. The Specialized Section attaches great importance to this project because it helps to promote the standard and to identify further areas of work.

102. The bureau recommended that the results of the questionnaire on national certification schemes for seed potatoes should be published on the UNECE homepage. A paper publication, as had been originally intended, would be quickly out of date, whereas the electronic publication would enable rapid changes and extensions.

103. The Working Party took note of this decision.

Meetings of the bureau

104. Mr. Bianchi thanked delegates and the secretariat for their active support of the Specialized Section and their participation at the extended bureau meetings held in Como, Italy (8 - 10 July) and Edinburgh, United Kingdom (7-10 October) and especially the Scottish colleagues for the excellent organization. The next extended bureau meeting is scheduled for mid-December 2003 in Geneva, to prepare the next session of the Specialized Section. An invitation to hold an Extended Bureau meeting in Dublin in the first half of 2004 has been received from the Irish authorities.

Item 7: Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat

105. The secretariat introduced the report of the 12th session held in Geneva from 6 to 9 March 2003 (see. TRADE/WP.7/GE.11/2003/12). The meeting was attended by 14 delegations. At the meeting the standards for bovine and ovine meat had been aligned with the layout used in the standard for chicken meat and prepared for publication. Work on the standard for chicken meat had been almost finalized with a couple of reservations remaining in the text. Work had begun on the development of a new UNECE standard for llama meat and the revision of the porcine standard.

Item 7 (a) New UNECE Standard for Chicken Meat - Carcasses and Parts

106. The secretariat informed the Working Party that at the meeting of rapporteurs on chicken meat (held in Moscow from 15 to 17 September) a consensus had been found on all major open items and all reservations had been lifted. Consequently, the Chairman of the Specialized Section, in accordance with para. 98 of the report, had recommended the adoption of the standard (as contained in document TRADE/WP.7/GE.11/2003/12/Add.1 and Add.2 and amended in Moscow).

107. Adoption of the standard at the current Working Party session would enable countries to start using the text and the secretariat to proceed with the publication of the standard for next year in the early summer.

108. The Working Party adopted the text as a new UNECE Standard for Chicken Meat – Carcasses and Parts.

Item 7 (b) Meetings of rapporteurs/ seminar on implementation of the bovine standard

109. The delegation of the Russian Federation informed about the meetings held in Moscow in September.

110. They thanked the secretariat for assisting in organizing the meetings and the participants for their contributions. They said that both meetings had been successful: the meeting of rapporteurs on chicken

meat had achieved the goal of finalizing the standard and the seminar on implementation of the beef standard had given the impetus for the introduction of the standard in the Russian Federation. The event had been well attended by high-level professionals in the meat industry.

111. The secretariat thanked the delegation of the Russian Federation for organizing these meetings and asked that their appreciation also be transmitted to the colleagues working in the Poultry Institute and the Meat Institute. The secretariat also thanked the V.B. Bobkov St. Petersburg branch of the Russian Customs Academy for the excellent organization of the meeting of rapporteurs on the revision of the porcine standard.

Item 8: Working Group on Internationally Harmonized Produce Coding

112. The secretariat informed the Working Party on the progress of the working group on internationally harmonized produce coding (see TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2003/26/Add.9).

113. The Working Party thanked the secretariat for preparing the document and summarizing the work that had been done up to the present. There was still insecurity in the group with regard to what the benefit of this work would be and where the work fits in connection with other organizations working on codification. Are others aware of what the Working Group are doing and is the Working Group sufficiently aware what others are doing in order to avoid duplication?

114. Several delegations nevertheless felt positive about being included in the codification work while sharing the concerns of other delegations concerning clearer definition of the goals and benefits. Possible applications of codification in quality inspection and tracking and tracing were mentioned.

115. It was decided that the secretariat should transmit to EAN International the opinion of the Working Party that it was essential to have detailed information about the main objectives, benefits, use of codification work with respect to standards and the role of UNECE before deciding on the future of this work. The secretariat said that EAN International had proposed to give a comprehensive presentation at the next meeting of the Specialized Section on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables. In the meantime:

- Delegations were invited to send to the secretariat comments on Add.9.
- The secretariat will begin coding a number of standards in accordance with the attributes found in the working group and transmit the results to the working group.
- The delegation of the European Community will explore the possibility of holding a meeting of the working group in Brussels prior to the GE.1 session to work on codification of further standards and to discuss the role of the working group directly with EAN International.

Item 9: Publications

(a) Compendium of standards

116. The Specialized Sections on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables and Dry and Dried Fruit stated that it was not necessary to publish a consolidated compendium of standards on paper and that they were content with the present practice of publication on the Internet.

(b) UNECE Standards for Meat

117. The secretariat informed the Working Party on the status of the publication of the updated standard for bovine meat - carcasses and cuts and the new standard for ovine meat - carcasses and cuts. The texts will be sent for printing before the end of 2003 and should become available in early 2004.

(c) Promotional booklet on the work and achievements of the Working Party

118. At the session the secretariat distributed a questionnaire concerning the contents of the promotional booklet. The secretariat will review the replies and prepare a draft text by the end of November and submit it to all delegations for review by 7 December before sending it for printing.

Item 10: General questions concerning the work of WP.7 and its Specialized Sections

Item 10 (a) Revision of the procedure to develop a UNECE Standard

119. The Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables asked the Working Party if the procedure to develop and update UNECE Standards could be simplified by:

- (i) Giving the authority to change entries in lists of varieties of standards to the Specialized Section.
- (ii) Giving the authority to begin work on a draft standard (new or revised) to the Specialized Section.

120. The Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce supports the request under (ii).

121. The Working Party adopted the proposal under (i).

122. The proposal under (ii) was discussed and many delegations felt that the Working Party should keep control on the decision of work on new standards.

123. It was thus decided to give authority on revising an existing standard to the Specialized Sections. For work on new standards, prior approval of the Working Party is needed.

124. It was stressed that the proposal for developing a new standard should be justified and could also be made directly to the Working Party. The revised procedure will be published in addendum 5 to this report (see TRADE/WP.7/2003/6/Add.5).

Item 10 (b) Proposed revisions to the standard layout for fresh fruit and vegetables and dry and dried fruit

125. Document TRADE/WP.7/2003/4 contains proposals for amending the standard layout for fresh fruit and vegetables and dry and dried fruit.

Name of the standards

126. The Working Group on Working Procedures has discussed these questions and agrees with the opinion of the Specialized Sections GE.1 and GE.2 that the phrase following the name of the produce in the title can be deleted. The title of the standards would then read in the standard layout:
“UNECE STANDARD FFV-.....(DDF....) concerning the marketing and commercial quality control of”

127. The Working Party adopted this amendment to the standard layout. The standard layouts will be updated on the UNECE homepage.

Point of application of UNECE standards

128. The Working Group on Working Procedures and the Specialized Section GE.1 and GE.2 felt that some clear reference to the point of application was necessary. One possibility would be to amend the relevant phrase in the standard layout to read:

“The purpose of the standard is to define the quality requirements of <name of the produce> after preparation and packaging.”

129. Several delegations thought that this proposal was interesting but they requested more time to make a decision. The question will be discussed again at the next session of the Working Group on Working Procedures.

Sales packages/consumer packages

130. The Specialized Section GE.2 asked the Working Party to harmonize the terms used for packages destined for the final consumer. At the moment different wording is used in different UNECE standards, which could lead to confusion in trade.

131. In general there are two types of packages destined to the final consumer, those that are closed and those that are open, but the terms used for them differ.

132. It was decided to create a working group to answer the following questions:

- Which are the different packages used for sale to final consumer?
- What would be the best term to describe them?
- How to define them?
- What are the implications on marking for the different packages?

133. The European Community and the United States offered to be members of this group, which will make a proposal to the next session of the Working Party.

Item 10 (c) Status and possible revision of the Geneva Protocol

Background: *TRADE/WP.7/2001/6*
TRADE/WP.7/2001/9, paras. 75 to 81

134. The Working Group on Working Procedures reported on its discussions on updating the framework in which the Working Party and its specialized sections operate and the status of the revision of the working procedures.

135. The Working Group reviewed a new proposal from the secretariat concerning the working procedures. Some amendments were discussed which will be submitted to the legal services of the United Nations for verification. The Working Party will be informed of the outcome at its next session.

136. The Working Group briefly discussed the present framework of the work of the Working Party and its specialized sections (Geneva Protocol, Standard Layout and Working Procedures) and felt that it would

be worthwhile to combine the information that is currently distributed in different documents into one text which would then also apply to the specialized sections on Standardization of Meat and Seed Potatoes.

137. The Working Group agreed with the assessment of the secretariat (see *TRADE/WP.7/2001/6*) that many of the provisions which are at present in the Geneva Protocol could be included as comments in the standard layout. Other provisions (e.g. concerning an international agreement) are obsolete or are dealt with in other organizations (application of inspection and control certificate). It was agreed that the secretariat should work on a consolidated text of terms of reference, which will be transmitted to delegations before the next session of the working group scheduled to be held during the next GE.1 session.

Item 10 (d) Assessment of the implementation of UNECE Standards

138. The Working Party decided to remain with the existing format for reporting the implementation of standards.

Item 10 (e) General Conditions for sale for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables and Dry and Dried Fruit, Arbitration Rules

139. A copy of these publications will be sent to interested delegations for review and possible discussion at the next session. A scanned version will be made available on the UNECE website at a later stage.

Item 10 (f) General Conditions for Marking and Labelling

140. The secretariat will try to find this document and send a copy to the members of the working group on consumer/sales/pre-packages.

Item 11: Workshops/Forum

FAO/BSEC

141. The secretariat informed the Working Party on a meeting organized in Istanbul by FAO and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation in which he participated. The meeting was attended by: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Romania and Turkey. Each country presented a report on the status of their agriculture (geographic, climatic conditions, work force, production figures, etc.) and a second report on the legislative framework for agriculture. The UNECE presentation was well received and many countries stated that they would be interested in hosting seminars on the implementation of quality standards.

Agribusiness Enterprise Development

142. The delegation of Slovakia informed the Working Party on a workshop on “Agribusiness Enterprise Development – UNECE“, which was held from 9 to 15 September 2003 in Israel, which she attended in her capacity as Vice-chair of the Working Party.

143. The Workshop was organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Israel, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, and the Centre for International Cooperation (CINADCO) in cooperation with UNECE. The Workshop was aimed at representatives from countries in transition as well as invited representatives from candidate countries to the EC.

144. Representatives of 12 countries took part in the workshop (Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Poland and Russian Federation).

145. During round-table discussions the following problems were mentioned:

- Countries would be willing to participate in international harmonization of standards for fruit and vegetables and in quality programmes for agricultural products, which are an important support to agribusiness development, but their financial resources are limited.
- Most delegations present received for the first time information on the international cooperation on quality standards.
- Agribusiness is strongly affected by transition to the new system – free market and quality improvement. Many delegations informed about problems with meeting quality requirements in their agricultural production, which led to loss of market opportunities.

146. The programme consisted of theoretical presentations on a comparison of the kibbutz and moshav system and new ways of implementation recent research and state policy in agriculture. In the second part different technical visits to agricultural enterprises around Israel were organized. Special attention was dedicated to the professional services of Ministry of Agriculture offered to producers.

Results: There is a need in many of the participating countries for special workshops and seminars concerning different questions in agriculture (quality, agricultural practices, marketing systems introduction etc). Because of the limited financial resources the relevant information should be brought directly to the place where it is most needed, e.g. to create in each country (or group of interested countries) groups of farmers and people involved in the agricultural market and organize specific training courses for them.

147. The delegation of Slovakia informed the meeting that they planned with other delegations to organize a Joint OECD/UNECE training course on quality standards for the South Caucasus and the Russian Federation for 2004 in Georgia.

Forum: Trade and Enterprise Development in a wider Europe

148. During the 2004 session of the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development, which will hold its annual session in the same week as the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables, an international forum will be organized on “Beyond enlargement: challenges for trade and enterprise development in a changing Europe”. The forum will include a mixture of presentations and participatory sessions and it is planned that one part will deal with trade in agriculture, which will offer an excellent opportunity for the promotion of UNECE’s work on agricultural standards. The secretariat will discuss with the Chairman of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables what the contribution to the session on agriculture within the forum could be.

Item 12: Other business

EurepGap

149. The delegation of the United States asked how the EurepGap standards, which are increasingly demanded by European importers, affected the existing quality standards.

150. The delegation of the European Community said that for them EurepGap was a private initiative that was currently not dealing with issues that UNECE deals with.

Pulses

151. The delegation of France informed the Working Party that at a meeting with producers of pulses they had reported a growing international trade and shown interest in international standards for these commodities.

152. The Working Party requested the secretariat to check the status of the former UNECE/Codex group on Pulses and the standards developed by it. The secretariat will also contact the Codex secretariat to find out what work is currently being done by Codex on this issue.

Item 13 Programme of work

153. The programme of work was amended to reflect the deletion of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Early and Ware Potatoes.

154. The delegation of the Russian Federation said that there was an interest in the Russian Federation to revise and clarify the UNECE Standards for Eggs and Egg Products. The delegation of the European Community was also interested in this work.

155. It was decided that delegations should, by the end of the year, name representatives who could serve as experts in the Specialized Section on Standardization of Eggs and Egg Products. The secretariat will then proceed with planning a meeting of this group.

Calendar of meetings

156. The date of the next session of the Working Party was set to be held from 8 to 10 November 2004.

157. The updated programme of work and calendar of meetings will be published in Addendum 5 to this report (see TRADE/WP.7/2003/6/Add.5)

Item 14 Election of officers

158. The Working Party re-elected the existing bureau:

Chair: Mr. D.L. Priester (United States of America)

Vice-Chair: Ms. V. Baricicova (Slovakia)

Vice-Chair: Ms. O. Vorovenci (Romania)

Item 15 Adoption of the report

160. The Working Party adopted the report of its fifty-ninth session on the basis of a draft prepared by the secretariat.

Addenda to this report published independently:

Addendum 1	TRADE/WP.7/2003/6/Add.1	Revised UNECE Standard for Artichokes
Addendum 2	TRADE/WP.7/2003/6/Add.2	Revised UNECE Standard for Peaches and Nectarines
Addendum 3	TRADE/WP.7/2003/6/Add.3	New UNECE Standard for Pineapples
Addendum 4	TRADE/WP.7/2003/6/Add.4	Procedure to create/revise UNECE Standards
Addendum 5	TRADE/WP.7/2003/6/Add.5	Programme of Work