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REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON COMMERCIAL QUALITY STANDARDS FOR FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLES FOR COUNTRIES OF LATIN AMERICA

Santiago de Chile 31 January - 4 February 2011



INTRODUCTION

1. The purpose of the workshop was to promote the use of UNECE standards for fresh fruit and vegetables as international references, to help strengthen the institutional and technical infrastructure needed for the implementation and control of standards in the countries of Latin America, to explain how the standards are interpreted in the European Union (EU), and to reinforce regional networks of national and international experts.
2. The workshop was jointly organized by the UNECE Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables, the UNECE secretariat, and Servicio Agrícola and Ganadero of Chile (SAG) with the support of Fundación para el Desarrollo Frutícola (FDF), Chilean Exporters Association ASOEX and the fruit growing federations (Fedefruta and Hortach).
3. It was attended by around 65 participants from both the public and private sectors of Chile and thirteen further Latin American countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Ecuador, and Uruguay).
4. The workshop was opened by Mr. Victor Venegas (National Director of SAG), Mr. Gustavo Rojas (for the Minister of Agriculture), Mr. Antonio Walker (Fedefruta), Mr. Ronald Bown (ASOEX) and Mr. Ian Hewett (Chairperson of the UNECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards). It was followed by a technical excursion to see growing and packing conditions in four companies all located in Chile's Central Valley close to the town of Paine. Participants visited growing farms and packing houses for table grapes as well as packing facilities for stone fruit (peaches, nectarines and plums).
5. Participants discussed the role of commercial agricultural quality standards and their connection to the broader concepts of quality assurance, food safety, phytosanitary and other requirements. Several presentations stressed the importance between quality and price and emphasized that quality can help install stability in trade relations. It was also repeatedly stressed that UNECE provided standards that are implemented in many ways including through national



governments, the European Union or the Codex Alimentarius. They are therefore of tremendous importance for international trade particularly in the UNECE region. Further presentations included explanations on the functioning and works of FAO in the region and the Codex Alimentarius Commission (FAO secretariat -Regional Office for Latin America), the work of UNECE in the area of agricultural quality standards (UNECE secretariat) and an analysis of agricultural trade in fresh fruit and vegetables in Latin America (ECLAC secretariat).

6. Some of the main issues which were particularly relevant to Latin American countries and which participants discussed and analyzed during the workshop included:

- The role of the UNECE quality standards as a base component for the elaboration of quality standards for international trade and their inclusion among others in Codex Alimentarius standards.
- The operating systems for commercial quality control for fresh fruit and vegetables in the Netherlands, United Kingdom and Spain.
- The legislation which regulates the application of quality control for agricultural produce in EU countries.
- A detailed analysis of the main features of quality control systems, their procedural, institutional and legal requirements in Argentina, Brazil, Mexico and Chile.
- The latest changes in the EU's legislation on quality standards for fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Risk analysis and related criteria to establish the frequency of produce inspections in the UK, Spain and the Netherlands.
- A presentation of the United Kingdom's Procedure for Electronic Application for Certificates from the Horticultural Marketing Inspectorate (PEACH) and its relevance for export/import certification in distinct areas including phytosanitary, food safety and commercial quality aspects.

7. Specialized Section experts from the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom presented the provisions of the UNECE standards for apples, berries, garlic, onions, pears, plums, table grapes and toad skin melons. In close collaboration with experts



from Chile, UNECE experts trained participants in the practical application of the standards for the aforementioned produce.

8. At the concluding session, participants discussed the attached conclusions. It was stressed that many of the countries of Latin America required more information and training. In addition, discussions revealed that there was a lack of understanding with regard to how the different major standardization and interpretation agencies (UNECE, Codex and OECD) worked and interacted. Participants called for closer coordination between them and better and easier access to information on their work and outputs. It was also felt that countries should attempt to attend UNECE and Codex Alimentarius meetings whenever possible and depending on the financial support of their governments or other sources.

9. The delegations received the workshop presentations, the standards in English and Spanish (translated by the co-organizers SAG), and training material on a memory stick. The material will also be placed on the UNECE website at: www.unece.org/trade/agr/welcome.htm and the SAG website www.sag.cl

10. The programme of the workshop and the list of participants are contained in annexes I and II, respectively.

CONCLUSIONS

During the last session of the workshop, workshop attendants agreed on the following general conclusions which were addressed also to UNECE and other international standardizations bodies. In particular, participants

- recognized that the promotion of the use of international quality standards for fresh fruit and vegetables could facilitate exports to any country in the world and help increase the trade competitiveness of all countries. It was also noted that in many Latin American countries the efficient use of international quality standards could result in an increase of their average trade-related income.
- stressed that the use of relevant international standards such as UNECE or Codex Standards contributed to an improved product quality, helped raise export



volumes and reach new markets by continually meeting and sustaining the quality requirements in major markets such as the EU.

- emphasized that the harmonization of quality standards among countries prevented barriers to trade and established more transparency on the market. When conditions of sale are previously established misunderstandings between buyers and sellers can be avoided.

- noted that the harmonized interpretation of the provisions of standards was essential for their uniform application

- suggested organizing frequent training workshops on the application of quality standards in Latin America as a way to harmonize their interpretation and their effective practical application. This could help ensure that fruit and vegetables from the Latin American region could access the importing countries' territories more easily.

- stressed that quality standards needed to be updated periodically to reflect new dynamics and changes in products, storage, transport, packaging and best practices on the market.

- suggested that including the bases of quality assurance concepts in the development of the new national standards would be desirable

- noted that in compliance with Codex Alimentarius procedures (Terms of Reference), UNECE's quality standards should be taken into consideration. For this reason it would be important for Latin American country representatives to participate in UNECE meetings. They would thus be aware of issues discussed and the criteria considered when the same produce will be discussed at the meetings of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables. This could help accelerate the approval of certain standards by Codex Alimentarius. Depending on the produce discussed, UNECE as well as the countries from the Latin American region could therefore consider funding the participation of Latin American country representatives in UNECE meeting.

- stressed that commercial quality standards were an important part of a broader system of quality assurance, including food safety, sanitary and phytosanitary aspects.

- noted that it was necessary to reinforce and/or promote the communication and interaction between institutions and producers to achieve and maintain consistent commercial quality levels for fruit and vegetables.

- emphasized that it was important to recognize the very relevant role of the private sector.



PROPOSALS

The participants of the workshop discussed and approved the following proposals which they considered of high importance:

- Participants suggested to all Latin American countries to continue intensifying their efforts to keep themselves informed about quality standards developed by UNECE and Codex Alimentarius and the activities of OCDE, as a way to ensure the commercial quality of produce to be exported to the EU.
- Attendants recognized that international standards such as those of UNECE defined minimum quality levels that allow producers who comply with these standards to enter export markets.
- Participants noted that priority in implementing commercial quality standards should be given to products for export. Nevertheless, they could also be applied on domestic markets provided that the countries have a sufficient level of economic development. There should be a technical and legal framework in line with national legislations for the implementation of quality standards for agricultural produce.
- They considered it necessary to establish quality inspection systems that operate efficiently and with a greater uniformity of technical criteria. The implementation of these systems should be done gradually, according to the needs, resources and legal framework of each country but, considering in each case the requirements of trading partners and risk analysis techniques.
- Attendants recommended that inspectors (public and private) should receive regular training to ensure that they use internationally recommended and agreed inspection procedures consistently and in a harmonized way. Their participation in international workshops was essential for harmonizing the interpretation of standards and inspection methods. To achieve this objective, participants proposed that UNECE should organize training activities in Latin America, by groups of countries and according to products they trade internationally.
- To increase the practical use of quality standards, participants considered it desirable to strengthen their promotion and the communication at national and regional levels, particularly among growers, producers, exporters (traders) and the public sector.
- Participants advised country representatives to participate more actively in the work of international standard-setting organizations.



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- Attendants suggested that UNECE promote and improve access to information, standards and contacts also with Latin America (via the web page).



ANNEX I

International Workshop on Commercial Quality Standards for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables for countries of Latin America (UNECE and SAG) 31 January to 4 February 2011

Hotel Manquehue,
Santiago de Chile

- Promoting the use of the UNECE standards for fresh fruit and vegetables as international references and their importance in the overall agricultural development agenda
- Strengthening the institutional and technical infrastructure needed for the implementation and control of standards in the countries of Latin America
- Explaining how the standards are interpreted in the European Union (EU), one of the world's major export markets
- Reinforcing regional networks of national and international experts
- Inviting participants to take part in UNECE substantive work on standards



PROGRAMME

Monday 31 January 2011

8:30-13:00 Arrival and registration of international participants

13:30 **Lunch**

15:00-18:00 Preparatory meeting (international participants, organizers/experts/speakers/UNECE secretariat)

20:00 **Dinner**

Tuesday 1 February 2011

OPENING AND TECHNICAL VISIT

8:30 **Registration**

9:00 **Opening of the workshop**

- Director ODEPA (Ministry of Agriculture)
- National Director of SAG
- Chairperson of the UNECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards
- Chairman, Chilean Exporters Association (ASOEX)
- Chairman, Fruit Growers Federation of Chile (FEDEFruta)

9:45 **Coffee break**

10:00 **Technical visit (packing facility-stone fruit)**

- Unifrutti Linderos
- David Del Curto Paine

13:30-14:30 **Lunch**

15:00 **Technical visit (table grape orchard and packing facility)**



- Packing Ongolmo (Unifrutti)
- Inversiones del Pacifico - Huelquen (Dole Chile)

19:00 **Welcome Dinner offered by ASOEX**

21:30 Return to hotel

Wednesday 2 February 2011

INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND COMPLIANCE

- 9:00 **Food safety and quality standards – the role of FAO and the FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission**
Focus: concepts and main tasks, scope of Codex, reference and links to the WTO, its rules and guidelines related to fruits and vegetables.
Ms. Maya Piñeiro, United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)
- 9:30 **UNECE and the development of standards for fresh fruit and vegetables for international trade**
Focus: how UNECE develops agricultural quality standards, who can participate, why they are important, who uses the standards
Ms. Liliana Annovazzi-Jakab, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)
- 10:00 **Agricultural trade: trends and challenges for Latin America**
Focus: short overview on recent trends in the trade of fresh fruit and vegetables; regional and inter-regional trade relations; challenges and recommendations
Ms. Monica Rodrigues, United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)
- 10:30 - 11:00 **Coffee break**
- 11:00 **The use of agricultural quality standards in the European Union (EU)**
Focus: Marketing standards and how they fit into a broader framework of phytosanitary, food safety, traceability, labeling and



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other regulations and requirements. Example: How EU standards are applied in Spain. EU Regulations on marketing standards for fruit and vegetables and procedures to follow to obtain access to EU markets.

Mr. José Luis López Carmona, Spain

- 11:30 **Ensuring and sustaining the commercial quality of fresh fruit and vegetables:**
Conclusions and Recommendations of previous UNECE Workshops
UNECE Experts
- 12:00 **Roundtable discussions on currently existing standards and quality control schemes in Latin America**
Note: Countries should refer to the questions at the end of this programme
- 12:45 **Case study: Implementation of international standards in Argentina**
Ms. Silvia Santos, Argentina

13:00-14:00 Lunch

PRACTICAL TRAINING 1

- 14:00 **Presentation of standards for the practical sessions**
Standard for Berries (Blueberries): Mr. Mat Kersten (Netherlands)
Standard for Plums (Japanese plums): Mr. José Luis López Carmona (Spain)
- 15:00 **Delegates move to training rooms 1 and 2**
Room 1/Group1: Berries (Blueberries)
UNECE: Mr. Mat Kersten (Netherlands)
Chile: Mr. Alvaro Acevedo (Vital Berry)

Room 2/Group2: Plums (Japanese plums)
UNECE: Mr. José Luis López Carmona (Spain)
Chile: Ms. Rita Rojas (Unifrutti Traders)



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- 16:00** **Coffee break**
- 16:30 Room 1/Group2: Berries (Blueberries)
 Room 2/Group1: Plums (Japanese plums)
- 17:30 – 18:00 Discussions, conclusions, questions
- 20:00** **Dinner**

Thursday 3 February 2011

QUALITY CONTROL AND INSPECTION SYSTEMS

- 9:00 **The Chilean fruit industry and its national and international importance**
 Focus: The importance of the fruit industry in Chile in terms of volume, value, infrastructure, and employment, and its share and role in the global trade in fresh fruit.
 Mr. Ronald Bown, Chairman, Chilean Exporters Association (ASOEX)
- 9:30 **Experience of Chile in using agricultural quality standards and practical application of UNECE standards in Chile.**
 Focus: The fresh fruit and vegetables sector in Chile.
 Mr. Edmundo Araya, Fundación para el Desarrollo Frutícola (FDF), Chile
- 10:30-11:00** **Coffee break**
- 11:00 **Fruit and Vegetable - Inspection and Risk Assessment**
 Example: United Kingdom
 Focus: How national quality inspection services control quality of imported produce by means of a risk-based system
 Mr. Ian Hewett, United Kingdom
- 11:30 **Inspection services, role and functioning**
 Example: Netherlands
 Focus: legal, institutional and organization aspects, practical steps, communication, registration and training



Mr. Mat Kersten, Netherlands

- 12:00 **Fruit and Vegetable - Inspection and Risk Assessment**
Presentation of the PEACH system (Procedure for Electronic Application for Certificates from the Horticultural Marketing Inspectorate)
Mr. Ian Hewett, United Kingdom
- 12:30 **Quality inspection services in Europe – Example: Spain**
Focus: legal basis, objectives and organization of the Spanish inspection service and its role in helping producers and exporters ensure quality. Examples from the assessment of the quality inspection system in Morocco and possible recommendations for the countries of Latin America
Mr. José Luis López Carmona, Spain

13:00-14:00 **Lunch**

PRACTICAL TRAINING 2

- 14:00-15:00 **Presentation of standards for the practical sessions**
Standard for Pears (Group 1) - Mr. Mat Kersten (Netherlands)
Standard for Onions and Garlic (Group 2) - Mr. Ian Hewett (UK)
- 15:00-16:00 **Delegates move to training rooms 1 and 2**
Room 1/Group1: Pears
UNECE: Mr. Mat Kersten (Netherlands)
Chile: Mr. Claudio Valdés (Copefrut S.A.)

Room 2/Group 2: Onions and Garlic
UNECE: Mr. Ian Hewett (United Kingdom)
Chile: Mr. Renzo Urriaga
- 16:00-16:30 **Coffee break**
- 16:30-17:30 Room 1/Group 2: Pears
Room 2/Group1: Onions and Garlic
- 17:30-18:00 Discussions, conclusions, questions



20:00 **Dinner**

Friday 4 February 2011

CREATING EXPORT OPPORTUNITIES – INTERNATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- 9:00 **Private standards in the international trade of fresh fruit: A growing trend in the 21st century.**
Focus: Retailers and consumer organizations setting up new and wider requirements.
Mr. Edmundo Araya, Fundación para el Desarrollo Frutícola (FDF), Chile
- 9:30 **Apples – production, packaging and export chain**
Focus: how produce is grown and packed to meet international standards and requirements on quality and food safety.
Mr. Riccardo Gatti (Unifrutti Traders)
- 10:00 **Table grapes – growing and packaging table grapes to meet export requirements**
Focus: how produce is grown and packed to meet international standards and requirements on quality and food safety.
Ms. Michelle Joui (Exportadora Subsole S.A.)
- 10:30-11:00 **Coffee break**
- 11:00 **The role of Port Authorities in meeting the increasing reefer traffic demand: The case of the Port of Algeciras**
Mr. Javier López (Algeciras Port Authority), Spain
- 11:30 **Case study: Implementation of international standards in Mexico**
Mr. Jesus Figueroa Gamboa, Mexico
- 11:45 **Case Study: Implementation and control of international standards in Brazil**
Ms. Ivonete Teixeira, Brazil

12:00 **Presentation of standards for the practical sessions**
Standard for Apples: Mr. Mat Kersten (Netherlands)
Standard for Table grapes: Mr. Ian Hewett (UK)

13:00-14:00 **Lunch**

PRACTICAL TRAINING 3

14:00-14:30 Presentation of standards for the practical sessions
Standard for Melons (toad skin melons): Mr. José Luis López
Carmona (Spain)

14:30 - 15:30 **Delegates move to training rooms 1, 2 and 3**

Room 1/Group1: Apples
UNECE: Mr. Mat Kersten (Netherlands)
Chile: Mr. Claudio Valdés (Copefrut S.A.)

Room 2/Group 2: Table grapes
UNECE: Mr. Ian Hewett (UK)
Chile: Ms. Alejandra Cifuentes (Dole-Chile S.A.)

Room 3/Group 3: Melons (toad skin melons)
UNECE: Mr. José Luis López Carmona (Spain)
Chile: Mr. Gonzalo Pardo

15:30-16:30 Room 1/Group 2: Apples
Room 2/Group 3: Table grapes
Room 3/Group1: Melons (toad skin melons)

16:30-17:00 **Coffee break**

17:00-18:00 Room 1/Group 3: Apples
Room 2/Group 1: Table grapes
Room 3/Group 2: Melons (toad skin melons)

18:00-19:00 **Questions and Conclusions: Main findings of the workshop and
recommendations**



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19:00 Closing of the workshop

20:00 Closing Dinner

Saturday 5 February 2011

12:00 Check out and departure of international participants



NOTE

Participating countries should reflect on the following questions:

- a. To what extent do you use or plan to use UNECE standards to ensure commercial quality of fresh fruit and vegetables?
- b. Do you have a legal basis for the implementation of commercial quality standards? Do you need to set it up or improve it?
- c. Do you have an inspection service to enforce the practical application of commercial quality standards? What do you intend to do to establish such a service?
- d. What kind of technical assistance/capacity-building do you think would be most effective for you?

Case studies will be presented by Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico



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ANNEX II

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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