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Integrated water resources management under review

With one year to go before the fifth meeting of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Geneva, 10-12 November 2009), the Convention's Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management will meet in Rome on 22-24 October to assess the work done since 2006 and lay the groundwork for 2010-2012.



The Working Group will focus on a range of issues, including those that relate more broadly to work under the Convention. Climate change and its impacts on water quantity and quality represent an additional challenge for integrated water resources management. So far, very few countries have instituted adaptation measures. The Working Group's draft Guidance on water and climate adaptation aims to support decision-makers with the development of adaptation strategies. The Group will take stock of progress made with the Guidance's preparation and examine ways to enhance its usefulness.

A further issue of importance is how to raise funds for the conservation and sustainable management of ecosystems such as forests and wetlands, which play an important role in regulating water quantity and improving water quality. Payments for ecosystem services (PES) are an innovative tool supporting water management, but their use is still in its infancy in the UNECE region. The Working Group will discuss possible ways to raise awareness of PES, as well as strategies to initiate pilot projects.

What does it entail in practice to implement the Water Convention? Responding to the requests of some UNECE member States, the Working Group and the Legal Board are



Russian producers learn how to cut meat according to UNECE standards

Serguei Malanitchev, head of the UNECE Agricultural Quality Standards Unit, on Russian harmonization with UNECE standards

The International Seminar on Standards for Meat and Meat Products, held in Moscow, on 30 September-2 October, was the third meeting on UNECE agricultural quality standards that you have organized in Russia over the past month. What prompts Russia to host such events?

Yes, indeed, this meat standards seminar came after the Kislovodsk workshop on seed potatoes and the Nizhny Novgorod seminar on eggs and egg products. The demand for this kind of event is actually quite understandable. The Russian economy is growing fast, real incomes of the population are increasing and consumers are looking for better quality products, whether imported or produced domestically. To meet this demand, national producers are looking for internationally agreed references that they can use to improve the quality of their products. And the Government is supporting this by drawing up new national standards and regulations.



Philippe Jouault, cutting plant manager from Gâtine Viandes, France and Steve C. Olson, livestock and meat marketing specialist from the US Department of Agriculture show how to process pig carcasses on the basis of the UNECE standard.

Why do they turn to UNECE standards?

New regulations in Russia are now meant to be harmonized as far as possible with European Union legislation. As you probably know, many EU regulations make reference to or are based on UNECE agricultural quality standards. So it is logical for Russian experts to turn to UNECE standards.



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developing a guide for ratification and implementation of the Convention. The Working Group will discuss this important new product, in particular the best transboundary practices in integrated water resources management which it will reflect.

The water crisis in Central Asia calls for long-term, sustainable solutions. With a number of partners, the Central Asian countries are increasing their efforts to address the crisis. The Working Group will discuss the needs of these countries as well as the role of the Convention in the subregion.

Living up to its name, the Working Group will bring together experts from different sectors. As the Rome meeting is being held during the European Forest Week (20-24 October), a special session on forests and water will be devoted to cooperation between these two sectors. ❖

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Who comes to these meetings?

The biggest group is producers. Also people from the Ministry of Agriculture, the Agency for Technical Regulation, Customs, consumer associations, research institutes and colleges. Experts from other countries also participate. In the three recent meetings we had delegates from Belarus, Mongolia, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, the United States and the European Commission.

What was special about the Moscow seminar?

This was the first seminar on the practical application of our meat standards. It was held at the training centre of the V.M. Gorbatov All-Russian Meat Research Institute. Two professional meat cutters from the United States and France were filmed showing how, on the basis of the UNECE standard, pig carcasses could be processed into retail cuts according to the US and French approaches. The five-hour video material will be used for training purposes.

Would harmonizing national standards with the UNECE ones be enough for Russian producers to start exporting meat to EU countries?

No. Imports of meat and meat products from third countries are only allowed if they comply with strict EU veterinary, food safety and animal health legislation. To meet these requirements, Russia and other CIS countries will have to develop legal and technical infrastructure that will need to be approved by the EU. Adopting UNECE standards will contribute to developing such an infrastructure.

Do these workshops and seminars cost a lot of money?

For financial resources we draw on the United Nations Development Account and the Russian Voluntary Contribution Fund. We organize our meetings in partnership with enterprises and research institutes in the host countries. Many participants cover their expenditures themselves. This allows us to spend our resources effectively and efficiently. And the technical expertise is readily available in the UNECE specialized sections on standardization of fresh fruit and vegetables, dry and dried produce, seed potatoes and meat. ❖

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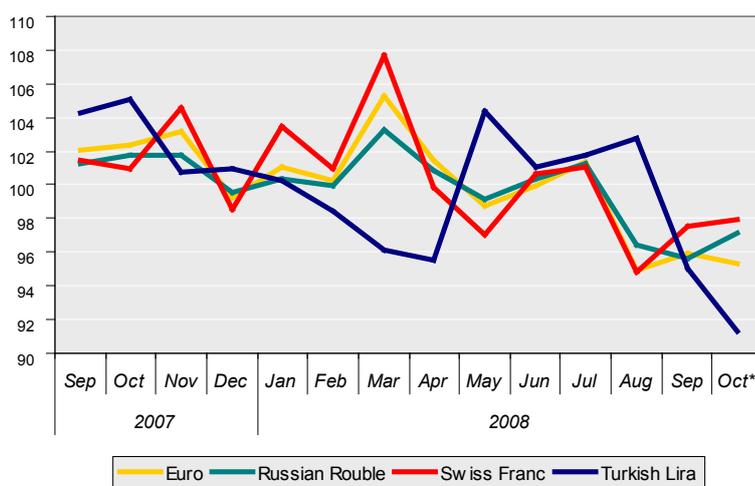
Facts and Figures

Turkish lira leads a downward trend ..

Many internationally traded currencies have appreciated strongly against the US dollar in the last several years. In September 2007, at the outset of the credit crunch, the euro was trading at 36% higher against the dollar than in December 2002, and the Swiss franc, as well as the Russian rouble and the new Turkish lira, were 22-27% higher in nominal terms. As the chart attests, except for the Turkish lira, the appreciation continued with little interruption throughout July 2008, but thereafter, as the financial crisis unfolded and major central banks attempted to inject liquidity into the markets, many currencies weakened against the dollar.

In the case of the Turkish lira, which had already been weakening against the dollar and other major currencies since January 2008, there was a rebound in May 2008 after the central bank had raised its reference interest rate, but more recently the currency trended downward again. On 10 October 2008 it hit its weakest level since December 2006 as fears about slowing economic activity and financial meltdown abounded.

Dynamics of nominal exchange rates against the US dollar* (per cent, previous month=100)



Source: UNECE Statistical database (<http://www.unece.org/stats/data/>) up to September 2008, and for October 2008, average of daily observations (1-15 October) provided by "XE the world's favorite currency site" (<http://www.xe.com/ucc/>).

* Decline denotes depreciation of the currencies concerned.