

# UNECE Seed Potato Standard

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The semi-annual meeting of the UNECE seed potato section, i.e. the meeting of the extended bureau, is generally held in October in one of the participating countries. However this year it was held in connection with the "Potato Russia Congress" in Moscow in August. US participation was funded by the US Potato Board. The UNECE Standard on Seed Potatoes is a product of many years of cooperation of some of the top people in seed potato certification. Below are some of the topics as they were discussed during the meeting.

## Promotion of the UNECE Standard on Seed Potatoes

After so many years it was suggested that promotion of the UNECE Standard should become a priority.

Russia is the second biggest producer of potatoes in the world. It has a fast changing industry after the end of collectivism. It seemed therefore to be an excellent location to promote the use of the UNECE standard.

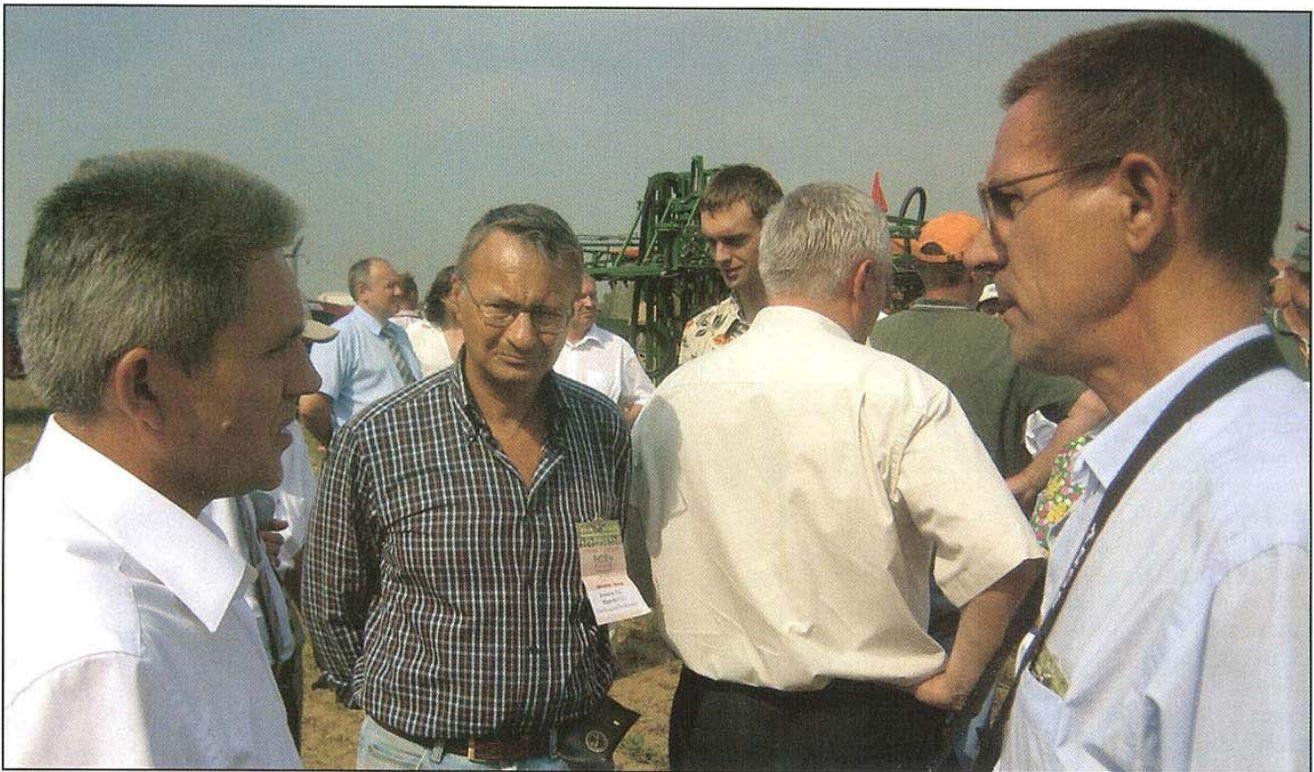
In Russia seed potato production is still insufficient. Seed potato certification is adapting to the new developments. "Potato Russia 2007" congress was to be held in August in Moscow. It was organized as a collaborative effort of the Russian Ministry of Agriculture and the Dutch organization Europoint. The UNECE seed potato section submitted a talk to the congress. The semi-annual meeting of the seed potato section therefore was planned to go alongside with the congress. Several people of the extended bureau

would be there anyway.

The intention is to make the UNECE seed potato talk part of the agenda of the seed certification meeting in December in Branson, Missouri.

## Use of the UNECE Standards

One UNECE official is quoted as saying that there are almost 100 UNECE standards for the different perishable products such as: fruit and vegetables, potatoes, dry produce, meat, eggs, flowers. Some of these commodities are major export commodities for the US. Since the European Union (EU) has adopted many UNECE Standards in their directives and as such made them mandatory, the US is involved in the development of these standards, which have



Dr. Simakov of the "All Russian Potato Research Institute" with Dr. Bianchi and Mr. Malanitchev of the Seed Potato Section of the UNECE discussing Russian participation in the UNECE Seed Potato Standard.





An exhibit of seed potatoes by variety, most of them protected.

a direct influence on US exports or export potential.

The UNECE Seed Potato Standard is most often used as reference and much of it can be found back in the EU Directive.

The use of international standards is supposed to define a common trading language, to simplify international trade, to create market transparency and to reduce the occurrence of technical barriers.

#### Disease List

To facilitate the use of the Seed Potato Standard, French officials have taken the initiative to compile a list of the diseases, referred to in certification. Other countries have added to this list, which is available on the UNECE website. During the meeting in August people observed pictures that had been collected from many of the countries. These pictures will be distributed for final selection and will be added to the website.

#### Sampling Survey, Definition of Lot

The survey on sampling that also has been answered by some of the US agencies had been distributed in order to try to focus on developing minimum guidance for sampling procedures to be adopted for lot inspection. However, it made people aware of the fact that seed lot numbers do not mean the same in all countries. For some countries a seed lot number refers to the production of one variety, one seed source from one field, while in others it may refer to the production of different fields as long as the seed source was the same. Before interpreting the "survey on sampling", a better definition of seed lot needs to be developed, preferably covering as much as possible what is actually happening in the field.

#### Surveys on Crop Inspection and Post Harvest Testing

A survey will be sent out on "crop inspection practices". Also a survey on "post harvest tests" will be sent out. The US survey may be used as a

model. If not too many changes are proposed, it will make the information available on the PAA internet site part of the survey.

#### Potato Russia Congress

After the UNECE meeting the participants attended the events of the "Potato Russia Congress" which included a congress, a show and a field demonstration. Most booths on the show were of potato producers in Russia, seed potato exporters from the Netherlands, the UK, Germany and machinery manufacturers and dealers from Western Europe. There was also a booth from Prince Edward Island, Canada. After the talks at the Congress, delegates went to the field demonstrations, where the ministers of Agriculture of the Russian Federation and the Netherlands took a tour. P.G. Bianchi, Italy, chair, W. Schrage USA, vice-chair, Seed Potato Section of the UNECE and S. Malanitchev secretariat of the UNECE used the opportunity to discuss with the director Dr. E. Simakov and deputy director Dr. B. Anisimov of the "All Russian Research Institute" the Russian participation in the UNECE seed potato discussions.

The Potato Russia show was a good opportunity to see how seed potatoes are marketed by suppliers in Western Europe. Almost all marketing is done by variety, most of which are protected. The most aggressive marketing is done for the protected varieties, although there are successful varieties that still command market share after their protection expired. Also there was reference to the cooperative projects where new machinery had been exported to Russia accompanied by people, who came from farms. They assisted in the implementation of the technology.