

UNECE STANDARD DDP-08

concerning the marketing and
commercial quality control of

DATES

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NOTE

Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

The commercial quality standards developed by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards help facilitate international trade, encourage high-quality production, improve profitability and protect consumer interests. UNECE standards are used by Governments, producers, traders, importers and exporters, and other international organizations. They cover a wide range of agricultural products, including fresh fruit and vegetables, dry and dried produce, seed potatoes, meat, cut flowers, eggs and egg products.

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The new Standard for Dates is based on document ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2010/12, reviewed and adopted by the Working Party at its sixty-sixth session.

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Please contact us at the following address with any comments or enquiries:

Agricultural Standards Unit
Trade and Timber Division
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
Palais des Nations
CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland
E-mail: agristandards@unece.org

UNECE Standard DDP-08 concerning the marketing and commercial quality control of dates

I. Definition of produce

This standard applies to pitted and unpitted dates in their natural state or washed, re-hydrated, dried, and/or coated and/or pasteurised from varieties (cultivars) grown from *Phoenix dactylifera* L. intended for direct consumption. It does not apply to dates for industrial processing.

II. Provisions concerning quality

The purpose of the standard is to define the quality requirements of dates at the export-control stage, after preparation and packaging.

However, if applied at stages following export, the holder shall be responsible for observing the requirements of the standard. The holder/seller of products not in conformity with this standard may not display such products or offer them for sale, or deliver or market them in any other manner.

A. Minimum requirements¹

In all classes, subject to the special provisions for each class and the tolerances allowed, the dates must display the following characteristics:

- intact; dates affected by mashing, tearing, breaking of the skin, leaving the pit visible so that the appearance of the fruit is noticeably affected is excluded
- sound; produce affected by rotting or deterioration such as to make it unfit for human consumption is excluded
- clean, practically free of any visible foreign matter; excluding coating ingredients
- free from living pests whatever their stage of development
- free from pest damage visible to the naked eye, including the presence of dead insects and/or mites, their debris or excreta
- free from mould filaments visible to the naked eye
- free of fermentation
- free of unripe fruit, i. e. fruit light in weight, stunted or distinctly rubbery in texture
- free of unpollinated fruit; i. e. fruit not pollinated, as indicated by stunted growth, immature characteristics and absence of pit

¹ Definitions of terms and defects are listed in Annex III of the Standard Layout – Recommended terms and definition of defects for standards of dry (Inshell Nuts and Nut Kernels) and dried produce
<http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/standard/dry/StandardLayout/StandardLayoutDDP_e.pdf>.

- free of blemished fruit; i. e. fruit scarred, discoloured or sunburnt, or having blacknose (noticeable darkening of the head, generally accompanied by severe checking or cracking of the flesh) or side-spot (a very dark patch extending into the flesh) or similar abnormalities affecting an area at least as large as a circle of 7 mm diameter
- free of abnormal external moisture
- free of foreign smell and/or taste.

The condition of the dates must be such as to enable them:

- to withstand transportation and handling
- to arrive in satisfactory condition at the place of destination.

B. Moisture content²

The dates shall have a moisture content not exceeding 26.0 per cent for cane sugar varieties and 30.0 per cent for invert sugar varieties³. In their natural state, however, for the variety Deglet Nour the maximum moisture content shall be 30.0 per cent.

C. Classification

In accordance with the defects allowed in Section IV. Provisions Concerning Tolerances, dates are classified into the following three classes: “Extra” Class, Class I and Class II.

The defects allowed must not affect the general appearance of the produce as regards quality, keeping quality and presentation in the package.

III. Provisions concerning sizing

Size is determined by the unit weight of the fruit.

The minimum weight of dates shall be 4.0 g.

IV. Provisions concerning tolerances

Tolerances in respect of quality and size shall be allowed in each lot for produce not satisfying the minimum requirements of the class indicated.

² The moisture content is determined by one of the methods given in Annex I of the Standard Layout – Determination of the moisture content for dried produce
<http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/standard/dry/StandardLayout/StandardLayoutDDP_e.pdf>. The laboratory reference method shall be used in cases of dispute.

³ A list of varieties classified by the nature of their principal sugar component is given in the annex of this standard.

A. Quality tolerances

<i>Defects allowed</i>	<i>Tolerances allowed percentage of defective produce, by number or weight</i>		
	<i>Extra</i>	<i>Class I</i>	<i>Class II</i>
(a) Tolerances for produce not satisfying the minimum requirements	5	10	20
of which no more than			
- Immature or unpollinated fruit	1	2	4
- Sour, decayed or mouldy fruit	0	1	1
- Damaged by pests ^{a,b}	3	6	10
- Blemished, discoloured or blacknose, sunburnt, cracking of the flesh	3	5	7
- Live insects (by number)	0	0	0
(b) Size tolerances			
- Unpitted among pitted fruit (by number)	2	2	2
- Foreign matter (by weight)	1	1	1
- Dates belonging to other varieties than that indicated on the package (by number)	10	10	10
(c) Tolerances for other defects			
For dates not conforming to the minimum size	10	10	10

^a Reservations of Poland and the United Kingdom, which wish to retain the former tolerances: Extra, 2 per cent; Class I, 4 per cent; Class II, 6 per cent.

^b When applying its national legislation, Switzerland does not admit a tolerance higher than 6 per cent for produce damaged by pests.

V. Provisions concerning presentation

A. Uniformity

The contents of each package must be uniform and contain only dates of the same origin, quality and variety.

The visible part of the contents of the package must be representative of the entire contents.

B. Packaging

Dates must be packed in such a way so as to protect the produce properly.

The materials used inside the package must be clean and of a quality such as to avoid causing any external or internal damage to the produce. The use of materials, particularly of paper and stamps bearing trade specifications, is allowed, provided the printing or labelling has been done with non-toxic ink or glue.

Packages must be free of all foreign matter, excluding decorated material (rachis, stems, plastic forks, etc.), in accordance with the table of tolerances in section “IV. Provisions concerning tolerances”.

C. Presentation

Dates must be presented in bags or solid containers. All sales packages within each package must be of the same weight.

Dates may be presented:

- in clusters (consisting mainly of the rachis and the stems to which the fruit is attached naturally)
- in stems (stems which are separated from the rachis and to which the fruit is attached naturally)
- separated in individual fruit, arranged in layers, or loose in the package.

Stems presented in clusters or separated from the rachis must be at least 10 cm in length and carry an average of four fruits per 10 cm of length.

Where the dates are presented in stems or clusters, there may be a maximum of 10 per cent of loose dates.

The ends of the stems must be cleanly cut.

VI. Provisions concerning marking

Each package⁴ must bear the following particulars in letters grouped on the same side, legibly and indelibly marked and visible from the outside:

A. Identification

Packer and/or Dispatcher:

Name and physical address (e.g. street/city/region/postal code and, if different from the country of origin, the country) or a code mark officially recognized by the national authority⁵.

B. Nature of produce

- “Dates”, when the contents are not visible from the outside

⁴ Package units of produce prepacked for direct sale to the consumer shall not be subject to these marking provisions, but shall conform to national requirements. However, the markings referred to shall in any event be shown on the transport packaging containing such package units.

⁵ The national legislation of a number of countries requires the explicit declaration of the name and address. However, in cases where a code mark is used, the reference “packer and/or dispatcher” (or equivalent abbreviations) must be indicated in close connection with the code mark, and the code mark should be preceded with the ISO 3166 alpha country code of the recognizing country, if not the country of origin.

- Name of the variety and/or commercial type (optional)
- “Cluster” or “stems”, where appropriate
- “Pitted”, where appropriate.

C. Origin of produce

- Country of origin and, optionally, district where grown, or national, regional or local place name.

D. Commercial specifications

- Class
- Crop year (optional)
- "Best before" followed by the date (optional).

E. Official control mark (optional)

This standard was first adopted as UNECE Standard for Dates in 1987.

Last revised in 2010

Annex

Non-exhausted list of cane sugar and invert sugar varieties of dates

A. Cane sugar varieties

Varieties which contain mainly sucrose, including:

<i>Name of the variety</i>
Deglet Nour
Deglet Beidha

B. Invert sugar varieties

Varieties which contain mainly invert sugar (glucose and fructose), including:

<i>Name of the variety</i>
Barhi
Saiidi
Khadhraawi
Hallaawi
Zahdi
Sayir
Amri
Deri
Alig
Medjoul
Khouet Alig
Kenta