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Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards
Fifty-eighth session, Geneva, 29 to 31 October 2002

REPORT OF THE FIFTY-EIGHTH SESSION

SUMMARY

Fresh Fruit and Vegetables:

Revised UNECE standards adopted: Annonas (see TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.2), Leeks (see ../Add.6), Melons (see ../Add.7), Plums (see ../Add.7), Strawberries (see ../Add.10), Table Grapes (see ../Add.8).

New UNECE Standards adopted: Apples (see ../Add.3), Pears (see ../Add.4).

UNECE recommendations adopted for a one year trial period: Avocados (see ../Add.11), Citrus Fruit (see ../Add.5), Plums (see ../Add.7), Table Grapes (see ../Add.8).

New UNECE Recommendation for Pineapples adopted (see TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.12)

Numbering system: The discussion will be continued in the specialized section.

Use of trademarks in UNECE standards: The implementation of the text agreed at the last session of the Working Party and refined by the Specialized Section was agreed and the standard layout and all relevant standards were amended accordingly.

Dry and Dried Produce (Fruit):

Revised UNECE standard for Inshell Walnuts adopted (see ../Add.14)

Revision of the Standard Layout : The annex on determination of the moisture content for dry fruit (nuts) was adopted and will be included automatically in all relevant standards.

Walnut colour chart: The document will be printed by the UN printing services and distributed through the UN publications department. The copyright will be held jointly by UNECE and OECD.

Seed Potatoes: Amendments to the UNECE Standard for Seed Potatoes were adopted (see ../Add.16).

Meat: The new UNECE Standard for Ovine Carcasses and Cuts was adopted (see ../Add.17 and ../Add.18)

Working Group on Internationally Harmonized Produce Coding : The working group presented their results and calls for joint meetings with other groups working on this issue.

UNECE Quality Standards and Organic Produce : The secretariat will send out a call to all participants of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables, other organisations who might give input on this question such as (ITC, UNCTAD, IFOAM) and consumer organizations to find out if UNECE Standards had caused problems for trade of organic produce. The Specialized section will discuss the question at its next session.

Publications : The secretariat will publish in 2003 the UNECE Standard for Ovine Carcasses and Cuts and a promotional booklet on the work of the Working Party. A call for contributions to this booklet will be sent to the bureaus of all specialized sections. Other publications will be produced subject to the progress of the work.

Application: Delegations were invited to check the document on application of UNECE standards and transmit any corrections to the secretariat.

Geneva Protocol: The Secretariat will prepare a proposal for amendments to the Geneva Protocol for the next session.

Working procedures: The revised working procedures were adopted (see ../Add.19)

Name of the working party: The name of the working party was changed to Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards.

Programme of work and calendar of meetings: The revised programme of work and a provisional calendar of meetings for 2003 and 2004 are published in TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.20.

New bureau: Mr. David Priester (United States) was elected Chairman and Olimpia Vorovenci (Romania) and Viera Baricicova (Slovakia) were elected Vice-Chairpersons of the Working Party.

Opening of the session

1. The meeting was held in Geneva from 29 to 31 October 2002. It was chaired by the vice-Chairman of the Working Party Mr. David Priester (United States) on 29 October and on 30 and 31 October by the newly elected Vice-Chairperson Viera Baricicova (Slovakia). The session was opened by the Director of the Trade Development and Timber Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), Ms. Carol Cosgrove-Sacks.

2. She said that the outgoing Chairman, Mr. Vilchez-Barros, had been promoted within the Spanish administration to the post of Commercial Counsellor at the Spanish Embassy in Paris and regretted that for work reasons it was impossible for him to chair the meeting. She expressed her gratitude and appreciation for Mr. Vilchez-Barros contributions to UNECE's work on Agricultural Quality Standards and mentioned especially his work on ensuring excellent cooperation with the European Commission.

3. She welcomed delegations to Geneva on behalf of the Executive Secretary of UNECE, Ms. Brigita Schmögnerova, who had been assigned this post in March and who was taking a keen interest in the work of the Working Party.

4. She congratulated the group on the work done in the specialized sections in 2002. Many standards were updated and some new standards agreed e.g. the UNECE Recommendation for Pineapples and the UNECE Standard for Ovine Meat. She said that the United Nations had shifted to a results-based budgeting system where it was important for each work area to have a relevant range of tangible outputs.

5. She thanked delegations for their commitment, and especially the delegations of France and Canada for hosting meetings on chicken meat and seed potatoes. She said that the Russian Federation placed a high priority on the work of the working party and increasingly more CIS countries were becoming interested in the work.

6. She informed the meeting about a Seminar on Safe and High Quality Food for International Trade which UNECE had organized together with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and EAN in New Delhi in April 2002. The seminar was hosted by the Government of India and a number of delegations contributed to its success by providing speakers. She said that it was hoped to deepen the cooperation with ESCAP and EAN at a follow-up event in Bangkok in 2003.

7. She said that beyond the adoption of standards she hoped that the group would make progress on some of the other issues on the agenda: e.g. the review of the working procedures, the mentioning of trademarks in the standards, quality standards and organic produce and harmonized produce coding.

8. She said that she felt that all these topics were timely and relevant and that the work of the Working Party in particular had the capacity to contribute to the following two objectives from the Millennium Declaration:

- (a) "an open, equitable, rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system".
- (b) "support for the principles of sustainable development".

9. Mr. Priestler thanked the Director for opening the session and also expressed his appreciation for the work of Mr. Vilchez-Barros first as Chair of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables and then as Chairman to the Working Party.

Participation

10. The session was attended by representatives of the following countries: Bulgaria; Denmark; Finland; France; Germany; Greece; Hungary; Israel; Italy; Morocco¹; Netherlands; Romania; Russian Federation; Slovakia; Switzerland; Turkey; United Kingdom and United States of America.

11. The European Community was also represented.

12. 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.

13. A representative of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme also attended the session.

Item 1: Adoption of the agenda

14. The agenda was adopted with the following amendments:

- Addition of TRADE/WP.7/2001/INF.1 (INTA, Information on trademarks)
- Addition of TRADE/WP.7/2001/INF.2 (COLEACP, Comments on the recommendation for pineapples)

ITEM 2: Matters of interest arising since the last session

Item 2(a) UNECE

15. The Working Party note document TRADE/WP.7/2002/2 containing the discussion of the work of the Working Party at the sixth session of the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development.

16. Ms. Cosgrove-Sacks informed delegations about decisions taken at higher levels within the United Nations which would eventually have repercussions on the work of the Working Party.

17. Earlier this year the Secretary-General launched a process called "Strengthening the Organization" which involved an in-depth self-assessment of all parts of the organization in order to improve efficiency and lower the costs. Delegations should be aware that they might receive queries concerning the work of UNECE in this respect.

¹ *Participating under Article 11 of the Commission's terms of reference. This article regulates participation of non-UNECE member States and is mentioned here for administrative reasons only. According to the working procedures of WP.7 and its specialized sections any Member State of the United Nations can participate in their work with the same rights as UNECE member States.*

18. Another development is the focus on implementation. UNECE will most likely do some research to assess to what extent UNECE Standards are implemented in different countries. This will also lead to stronger cooperation with WTO and the World Bank in order to increase the capacity of UNECE to assist countries with implementation.

19. The regional commissions have also been asked to contribute significantly to global events organized by the United Nations:

- follow-up to the Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development. In this context Mrs. Cosgrove-Sacks invited the Working Party to reflect on how commercial agricultural quality standards could contribute to sustainable development.
- preparation of the Geneva Summit on the Information Society. The Working Party should be prepared to report on its cooperation with EAN International on using modern information technology to optimize international food supply chains.

Item 2(b) Other organizations:

Codex Alimentarius Commission and Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

20. The delegation of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme introduced the decisions taken at the last Codex Committee on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables (see 2002/3)

European Union

21. The delegation of the European Community reported that two EC marketing standards had been revised (leeks and strawberries) and two new standards adopted (Cultivated Mushrooms, Inshell Hazelnuts) which would enter into force on 1 January 2003.

22. The new regulation on quality control has entered into force. This regulation allows the accreditation of quality controls in non-EU countries. At the moment this possibility has been implemented for Hungary, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Cyprus and Morocco but approvals with many other countries are in preparation.

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

The delegation of OECD reported on the activities of the OECD Scheme.

Publications

23. The interpretative brochures for the standards for plums and lettuces, curled-leaved endives and broad-leaved (batavian) endives have been published on paper and in electronic format. The brochure for tomatoes should be published before the end of the year.

Meeting of the Heads of National Control Services

24. The 11th session took place from 3 to 5 September 2002 in the Netherlands, at the invitation of the Dutch authorities. The following presentations and discussions took place :

- New methods to determine the maturity of fruit such as near infrared spectrophotometry; on this occasion several delegations stressed the necessity to include these new methods into the legal framework of quality controls, which meant integrating requirements concerning minimum maturity in the text of the standards and to test the new equipment according to the rules of metrology. Some delegations indicated, however, that according to them optimum maturity should not be part of the legal requirements. It was recalled that minimum maturity did not necessarily equal good taste or customer satisfaction.
 - Traceability of fruit and vegetables: Several case studies were presented concerning the implementation of this principle in the sector of fresh fruit and vegetables.
 - The majority of delegations expressed their preference for joint organization of different types of control which fresh fruit and vegetables have to undergo, in spite of some disadvantages such as loss of specialization of the inspectors.
 - The difficulties encountered by inspectors during the control of marking of the name of the variety because of the development of trade mark names. On this occasion several delegations repeated that they were opposed to accepting the replacement of the marking of the name of the variety with the trade mark name.
25. Some technical visits also took place to enterprises of the fresh fruit and vegetables sector and there was also the opportunity to visit the horticultural exhibition 'Floriade'.

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

26. The Chairman of the Specialized Section, Mr. David Holliday (United Kingdom), introduced the report of the 48th session held in Geneva from 23 to 26 April 2002 (see. TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2002/20).

27. The Working Party decided to refer document TRADE/WP.7/2002/8 on Latvian fruit varieties of apples, pears and plums to the Specialized Section because it was felt that more information especially on the relevant colour and size groups was needed before they could be included in the relevant standards. The secretariat will get in touch with Latvia to invite them to complete their document and to participate in the next session of the Specialized Section. If possible they should supplement their document with photographs of the varieties in question.

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

28. **Annonas:** The text contained in document TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2002/20/Add.1 was adopted as a revised UNECE Standard and will be published in Addendum 2 to this report (TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.2).

29. **Apples, Pears:** The texts contained in document TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2002/20/Add.2 and Add.3 were adopted as new UNECE Standards for Apples and Pears respectively and will be published in Addenda 3 and 4 to this report (TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.3 and Add.4).

30. **Citrus Fruit:** The delegations of Israel was not in favour of adopting the text contained in document TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2002/20/Add.5. They felt that the way sizing by count had been newly included in the standard would lead to loss of uniformity. They also feared that the possibility of using two adjacent size codes might be abused.

31. Other delegations were of the opinion that uniformity provisions were as strict as before and that the compromise reached, which had also been adopted by the Codex Committee for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables, was reasonable and should not be changed.

32. The delegation of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) pointed out that the same sizing provisions as in the UNECE standard had been adopted for the Codex Standards for limes, pummelos and grapefruits which were forwarded to the Codex Alimentarius Commission for final adoption. She said that in order to keep the standards harmonized with the UNECE Standard, proposals could still be sent to the Commission until 28 February 2003.

33. It was suggested that interested parties discuss this question informally outside of the meeting to see if an easy solution could be found which could be communicated directly to all interested parties.

34. The delegation of Israel also pointed out that the requirement concerning “the same degree of ripeness” for mixed packages of citrus fruit might be misunderstood to mean the same degree of ripeness between species, which was not possible. It was clarified that the requirement concerned only fruit of the same species and the text was amended to make this clearer.

35. The delegation of Greece stated that they were not in favour of sales packages of a net weight not exceeding 3kg of different species of citrus fruit.

36. It was agreed to adopt the text as a UNECE recommendation for a one-year trial period and to discuss it again in the Specialized Section to improve the text while maintaining the principle of the compromise concerning sizing. The text of the recommendation is reproduced in Addendum 5 to this report (see TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.5).

37. The proposals for harmonization with the Codex standards which the secretariat had included in the document were forwarded to the Specialized Section for discussion.

38. **Leeks, Melons and Plums:** The amendments contained in TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2002/20/Add.7 concerning leeks, melons and plums were adopted. The revised standards for leeks and melons will be published in Addenda 6 and 7 to this report (TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.6 and Add.7). For plums the amendments concerned both the standard in force as well as the recommendation in a trial period. The text is published in Addendum 8 to this report (TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.8).

39. **Table Grapes:** The delegations of Greece felt that the minimum brix values were too low.

40. The delegation of Israel said that as the UNECE Standards were considered to be minimum standards, the present brix values should be retained. They also felt that the sentence concerning “appropriate sugar acid levels” should not be included unless values were given.

41. It was clarified that the present text was proposed for trial and that the working group on maturity requirements for table grapes continued to work on this text under the lead of South Africa and should be contacted directly for comments and suggestions.

42. It was clarified that the text concerning late harvest varieties was also still in a trial period.

43. The proposals for harmonization with the Codex standards and other editorial amendments, which the secretariat had included in the document were forwarded to the Specialized Section for discussion. One consequential amendment at the beginning of section II was agreed.

44. The text contained in document TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2002/20/Add.9 was adopted as a revised UNECE Recommendation concerning maturity requirements and late harvest grapes and as a revised UNECE Standard for all other amendments. The text will be published in Addendum 9 to this report (TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.9).

45. **Strawberries:** The text contained in document TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2002/20/Add.8 was adopted as a revised UNECE Standard and will be published in Addendum 10 to this report (TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.10).

46. **Avocados:** The delegation of France said that changing again the minimum size for the Hass variety would lead to confusion for quality inspectors in the field who were not sure which version to apply. This is why this recommendation will not be tried out in France.

47. Other delegations felt that a further reduction in minimum size of the Hass variety to 80g was reasonable and were in favour of trying it out for a year.

48. The delegation of Israel felt that for the size 100-125g for the Hass variety the difference of 25g might have a negative effect on uniformity.

49. The text contained in document TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2002/20/Add.4 was adopted as a revised UNECE Recommendation for a one-year trial period and will be published in Addendum 11 to this report (TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.11).

50. **Pineapples:** The secretariat had included a number of questions in the text included in TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2002/20/Add.10, which had been answered by COLEACP in document INF.2. As a result no change was made to the maturity requirements and the section concerning "description of containers" was deleted. The text was adopted as a new UNECE Recommendation and will be published in Addendum 12 to this report (TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.12).

Item 3 (c) Numbering system of the standards

51. In document TRADE/WP.7/2002/4 the secretariat presented an example of a new legal numbering system that might be used in UNECE Standards on the basis of the Apples standard in order to:

- make references to all parts of the text more easily;
- avoid using letters in the numbering (which led to problems in the Cyrillic translations);
- bring the standards ~~are~~ in line with ISO standard 2145:1978 on "Numbering of divisions and sub-divisions in written documents".

52. While delegations found the principle of the new system interesting, they felt that more discussion was needed in the specialized section concerning the implementation, which should be consistent and only use numbers.

53. It was suggested to look at the OECD Seed Scheme, which uses a similar system.

54. The discussion on this question and other related amendments to the standard layout was referred to the Specialized Section.

Item 3 (d): Use of trademarks in UNECE standards

Documents: TRADE/WP.7/2002/5
INF.1 (Comments from INTA)

55. At the request of the Specialized Section the secretariat prepared a proposal to amend the standard layout to include provisions for lists of varieties and the mentioning of trademarks.

56. The secretariat introduced the comments from the International Trade Mark Association and said that in his opinion some of them were already included in the proposal. He mentioned that there were two additional proposals as follows:

- To include a statement in footnote 2 (of both options) indicating that upon receipt of the information from the trademark owner UNECE will amend the annex within a certain period of time.
- To include at the end of the first paragraph of the Annex of the three-column option a paragraph stating that:

“The presence of any trademarks in the third column does not constitute any licence or permission to use that trademark - such licence must come directly from the trademark owner. In addition, the absence of a trademark in the third column does not constitute any indication that there is no registered/ pending trademark for such a variety.”

57. It was decided to adopt the text proposed in document 2002/5 concerning the annex to the standard layout. The secretariat discussed the additional proposals from INTA with the legal advisor who agreed that they presented only clarifications to the adopted text which could be included without problems. The secretariat will contact INTA to communicate this decision and thank them for the information provided. All other amendments proposed by the secretariat in the main text of the document were referred to the Specialized Section. The revised text of the standard layout will be published in Addendum 13 to this report (TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.13).

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

Document: *TRADE/WP.7/GE.2/2002/14 (Report of the 49th session)*

58. The former Chairman of the Specialized Section, Mr. Wilfried Staub (Germany), informed the Working Party of the outcome of the forty-ninth session of the Specialized Section.

59. He said that he was very pleased with the progress made in the group and especially the good cooperation of delegations in the preparation of a complicated document on the determination of the moisture content for dry fruit, which was proposed for adoption as a revised annex to the standard layout.

60. He recalled that at its last session, the Working Party had decided that all amendments to the standard layout would automatically be included in all relevant standards.

61. The Chairman expressed his appreciation for the work done by Mr. Staub during his chairmanship and said that he would be missed. On behalf of the Working Party he wished him all the best for the future.

Items 4(a) and (b): Decisions concerning texts recommended for adoption

62. Inshell Walnuts: The amendments contained in document TRADE/WP.7/GE.2/2002/3 were adopted. The text of the revised UNECE Standard for Inshell Walnuts will be published in Addendum 14 to this report (TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.14).

63 Annex on determination of the moisture content for dry fruit (nuts): The text contained in document TRADE/WP.7/GE.2/2002/14/Add.1 was adopted. It was pointed out that the term “(nuts)” should remain in the English version but be deleted from the French version. The text will be published in Addendum 15 to this report (TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.15) and automatically included in all relevant standards.

Item 4 (c): Information on the publication of the colour chart for walnut kernels

64. The secretariat informed the Working Party of the progress made on this issue. Following discussions in the Specialized Section and an informal meeting with OECD and the delegation of France, a new layout was prepared by the secretariat including a lemon-coloured kernel and a trilingual publication which was reviewed by the meeting. The document will be printed by the UN printing services and distributed through the relevant services of the OECD and the UN. The final checking of the colours will be done by the secretariat, together with interested delegations.

65. UNECE and OECD will jointly hold the copyright of the publication to allow OECD to eventually include the chart in their explanatory material.

ITEM 5: Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes

Document: *TRADE/WP.7/GE.6/2002/15 (Report of the 32nd session)*

66. The Chairman of the Specialized Section, Mr. Giacomo Bianchi (Italy), informed the Working Party of the outcome of the thirty-second session of the Specialized Section as well as two extended bureau meetings which took place in France and Canada. He thanked the French and Canadian authorities for their invitation and the organisation of these meetings and regretted that the UNECE secretariat had not been able to participate due to insufficient travel funds.

67. At the meeting of the Specialized Section, among other items, a major proposal to amend the Standard was agreed. This amendment concerned the introduction of international classes, subdividing the categories of pre-basic, basic and certified seed. This had been discussed for several years and was aimed at combining the two main systems currently used: classification into categories and field generations. It is believed that the amendment will contribute to more transparency in international trade and also allow countries to have an international reference for their national classes.

68. He reported that during the session the group had the opportunity to clarify with a representative of WTO that the Standard considers issues falling under the WTO-TBT agreement as well as the WTO-SPS agreement. The WTO-TBT agreement encourages members to use international standards but only mentions principles and good practices for standardization without recommending any specific standard setting organisation. Organizations can be recognized as international standard-setting bodies if they are open to all WTO members.

69. Other work currently discussed in the Specialized Section and the bureau concerned:

- a new introduction to the standard
- the publication of the results of the questionnaire on national certification schemes
- the concept of variety (including GMO)
- a definition of national designated authority (NDA) and its responsibility in the implementation of the Standard
- harmonization of test methods
- a UNECE label
- field tolerances for viruses
- a list of pests to be checked on the nuclear (or initial) stock of pre-basic seed
- a list of pests of concern to seed potatoes
- visual aids for annex VIII for assessing the tuber surface area coverage of blemish diseases
- a new annex with a summary table of tolerances.

70. The next Bureau meeting is scheduled 21-22 November 2002 in Geneva in order to finalize the publication of national certification schemes and to prepare the next Specialized Section scheduled for 6 to 8 March 2003, just after the early and ware potato meeting, to allow experts to attend both meetings.

71. The Working Party adopted the text proposed in document TRADE/WP.7/GE.6/2002/15/Add.1 as a revised UNECE Standard, noting some corrections to countries' reservations in annex IV. The text will be published in Addendum 16 to this report (TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.16).

ITEM 6: Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat

Document: *TRADE/WP.7/GE.11/2002/13 (Report of the 11th session)*

72. The secretariat informed the Working Party on the eleventh session of the Specialized Section:

- The draft Standard for Ovine Carcasses and Cuts was finalized and is forwarded to the Working Party for adoption as a UNECE Standard (see TRADE/WP.7/GE.11/13/Add.1 and Add.2). The final text of the standard will be published on the Internet and in paper format.
- The Specialized Section decided that it was a high priority to review the UNECE Standard for Porcine Carcasses and Cuts and to integrate it into the system of UNECE standards for Meat. A maintenance group (Australia, France, Poland, United Kingdom and United States) was formed which will report to the next session.
- The secretariat is working on an Internet version of the bovine standard, which should be available before the end of the year. The maintenance group will review the standard and report to the next session.
- The secretariat will discuss the possibility for a trade mark for meat with the legal services of the United Nations. Countries will name authorities recognized by them for conformity assessment with the UNECE Standard.
- Future work will include information on preliminary work on veal, turkey and llama, as well as a discussion paper on traceability.
- A successful meeting of the rapporteurs on Chicken Meat was held in September in Rennes, France. The secretariat thanked the French authorities for the organization of this meeting and their hospitality. Several amendments were made to the standard. The next meeting will be held in conjunction with the next session of the Specialized Section to finalize the standard.

73. The Working Party adopted the new UNECE Standard for Ovine Carcasses and Cuts as contained in documents TRADE/WP.7/GE.11/2002/13/Add.1 and Add.2. The texts will be reformatted for publication by the secretariat and published in this format as Addenda 17 and 18 to this report (TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.17 and Add.18).

74. The delegation of the Russian Federation said that the chicken standard was of great importance to them, especially questions related to cooling and water content of the carcass because more water meant a higher profit for the seller.

75. They also suggested holding a discussion on how to deal with mechanically cut meat in the standards. One of their experts is working on a mathematical model for carcasses and cuts to be applied in this context and will prepare a discussion paper on the topic for the next session of the Specialized Section.

76. They proposed holding a seminar on this question in Moscow in May and to host a meeting of the rapporteurs on chicken meat in April or September next year.

ITEM 7: Working Group on Internationally Harmonized Produce Coding

Background: *TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2002/17*

TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2002/20/Add.12

77. The secretariat informed the Working Party on the progress of the working group on internationally harmonized produce coding. The group (European Community, Israel, Slovakia, United Kingdom and the UNECE Secretariat) had met the day before the session of the Working Party. It had taken the UNECE Standard for Apples as an example to define the mandatory attributes in the standard to be coded and their length.

Attribute	Length
Commodity	3
Variety/commercial type	3
Size	2
Class/grade	1
Packer/exporter	6
Origin	3
Mode of presentation/ packing type	2

78. This scheme could still be simplified by combining attributes that can logically be combined.

79. The Working Group agreed that as a next step it should be clearly defined what the role of UNECE should be in this area. The initiative for the coding exercise had come from EAN International and not directly from the trade and therefore it was deemed essential to meet with the trade (e.g. Freshfel, PMA, CPMA) as well as with other organizations working on coding (IFPC) to assess what their needs are and to define how UNECE could best contribute.

80. The secretariat will communicate the results of the group to EAN International in order to arrange a meeting with the other organizations mentioned above.

ITEM 8: UNECE Quality Standards and Organic Produce

81. The Secretary had been invited, together with Mr. Gianluca Sambucini from the UNECE Coordinating Unit for Operational Activities, to participate in a meeting on organic produce and quality standards organised by the Borsa Merci of Bologna. The goal of the meeting was to understand if there was a need to create separate quality standards for organic produce or if the existing standards could be extended. Some problems with the existing quality standards were mentioned e.g. minimum size for apples which was difficult to reach for organic produce.

82. Some delegations asked about the status of the organizers of the Bologna meeting. The secretariat replied that to him they were local users of the standards who were expressing concerns with the application of the standards. This had seemed interesting to him and confirmed in discussions with different delegations, which is why the item had been put on the agenda. The Bologna group was interested in cooperating with the UNECE but it had been clarified to them that for this, their status had to be official, either as part of the Italian delegation or of an international NGO .

83. The delegation of Israel said that to them the question of quality standards and organic produce was interesting and important. There is a growing demand for organic produce - people are becoming increasingly aware of health and ecological issues. When talking about organic produce one has to differentiate two different types of standards:

- production standards
- quality standards (which are the same as for other kind of produce)

84. He said that consumers who buy organic produce were clearly interested in the way the product was produced but that it was not clear what their relation was towards quality as defined by existing quality standards. He said that apparently consumers were willing to make compromises for certain aspects of quality for organically produced fruits and vegetables. Therefore he felt that there might be room for organic quality standards.

85. The delegation of the EU said the question had been studied twice in the European Commission, once in 1997/1998 and again in 2001. For the study people from both areas (organic production and quality) had been heard. The results had been as follows:

- The existing marketing standards do not represent an impediment to the trade of organic produce. Proof of this is that there is in Europe organic produce and organic produce usually has no problems meeting the requirements for Class II.
- There may be individual issues which could be treated on a case-by-case basis within the existing standards.

86. He mentioned that the changes made to the standard for leeks had also made it easier for organic produce to meet the requirements. He said further that it had been felt by people involved in the study (including those from organic production) that specific organic standards might undermine the image of organic produce.

87. The FAO delegation said that within the Codex Alimentarius the Committee on Food Labelling had developed “Guidelines for the production, processing, labelling and marketing of organically produced foods“, which include a section on certification of organic produce. These guidelines were adopted in 1999 and were currently being revised. She also said that organic produce had not yet been discussed in the Codex Committee for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables.

88. The delegation of Slovakia said that their control services inspect the growing methods but there are no separate rules for the commercial quality of organic produce in her country.

89. The delegation of Israel said that the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) as well as grower and consumer organizations should be contacted to find out if separate quality standards for organic produce were needed. If this evaluation showed the need for separate standards, he said that in his opinion they should then be done by UNECE.

90. The delegation of Romania said that in her opinion the commercial quality of organic produce as well as tolerances and sized were not the same as for traditional produce. She said that there were about 800 associations dealing with the production methods for organic produce but none dealing with the commercial quality. She suggested creating a Specialized Section to deal with the commercial quality of organic produce.

91. The delegation of the Netherlands said that commercial quality standards dealt with the product and not with the production method. He felt that it was not necessary to have two different standards for the same product. The delegation of Slovakia supported this view.

92. The delegation of Germany supported this and said that:

- having separate standards could lead to problems because no internationally agreed definition for organic existed;
- UNECE Standards should be valid for all products;
- if there are problems with tolerances and minimum sizes these should be treated standard by standard but for all products and not for organic produce only;
- it was out side her scope of work to speak about the establishment of a specialized section on organic produce.

93. The delegation of Israel said that the issue was difficult because there were different organic production standards. He said that the market forces in this area were very strong. Very often there was talk about organic produce being sold at inferior quality so that maybe there was a need to deal with this question.

94. The delegation of Germany said that a new practice in her country was that organic produce was sold in “normal” supermarkets where it could be directly compared to traditional produce. She suggested sending out a call to all participants of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables to find out where the standards UNECE had set for the market resulted in problems for organic produce.

95. The Working Party agreed on this proposal. The secretariat will get in touch with all participants to in GE.1 as well as other organizations who might give input on this question such as ITC, UNCTAD, IFOAM, as well as consumer organizations, and report back to the Specialized Section.

ITEM 9: Publications

96. The secretariat informed the Working Party that the following publications had been included in the printing budget for next year:

- UNECE Standards for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables and Dry and Dried Fruit
- ovine standard
- chicken standard
- promotional booklet on the work of the Working Party.

97. He said that the collections of standards would only be published if the amendments to the standard layout could be finalized during next year so that the publication would not quickly become outdated.

98. Concerning the promotional booklet, the secretariat will send a request to the bureaux of the Working Party and all specialized sections for a possible layout and contributions.

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

Item 10 (a) Revision of the Working Procedures

Document: TRADE/WP.7/2002/6

99. The Working Group (participants: European Community, Israel, Slovakia, United Kingdom and UNECE secretariat) met one day before the Working Party. The Group discussed the document prepared by the secretariat and made a number of changes.

100. The amended document was presented to the Working Party and again discussed in detail. A number of new amendments were made and a new paragraph concerning the responsibilities of the chairpersons was included.

101. The document was adopted by the Working Party as amended and will be published in Addendum 19 to this report (TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.19). The text will replace the revised working procedures agreed by the Working Party at its 53rd session, in November 1997, as soon as it is cleared by the legal advisor. Editorial changes, if necessary, will be made by the secretariat.

102. The delegation of Israel said that it was the first time that working procedures had been written down in such a comprehensive manner in a document. He commended the secretariat and the working group on their excellent work.

103. The Representative of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme requested clarification on Section 3.1.1 Participants and the actual membership of the UNECE which applied to countries belonging to this region, although countries outside the UNECE could participate at meetings of the Working Party and its specialized sections on the same basis as UNECE member countries. She said that some language specifying "membership" in addition to "participants" might be needed in this respect. In this connection, she referred to Section 1.2, which mentioned "internationally harmonized standards" and "reference point for international arbitration" and said that an international standard was the one developed by an international body which according to WTO should be open to at least all WTO members which might not be the case concerning membership of UNECE.

104. The secretariat replied that paragraph 3.1 of the new working procedures stated that “the rules for attendance and the work procedure are designed to give a wide range of opportunities to consult all interested parties...”. This is why in 3.1.1. participation allowed is wider than UNECE membership. Participation from beyond the UNECE region (all UN members) was already allowed in the existing working procedures and has been further widened in the new text.

105. He also clarified that the UNECE standards were harmonized standards built on the basis of national standards and trade practices within the UNECE region and beyond, which is why the term “international” had been used. The term “international arbitration” in 1.2 referred to arbitration between buyer and seller for example according to the 1961 European Convention on International Commercial Arbitration.

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

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

106. The secretariat informed the Working Party on the legal status of the Geneva Protocol. According to the legal advisors the Protocol is an example of so called “soft law”, because it has the writing style of a convention without containing measures to enforce/ control implementation.

107. Implementation of the Protocol is “enforced” through practical application of the standards by some trading partners. If they demand use of the standards in trade then this will lead others to apply them as well.

108. He said further that some of the changes made to the working procedures might also lead to changes in the Protocol. He said that he would prepare a proposal on this for the next session.

Item 10 (c) Name of the Working Party

109. The working group on the working procedures proposed that the new name of the Working Party should read: “Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards”.

110. The delegation of Romania said that she would prefer to maintain the term “perishable produce” as part of the name because “agricultural produce” was a wider term and also covered agricultural products not currently dealt with by the Working Party e.g. pulses.

111. The delegations of Israel and the Russian Federation said that they preferred using the wider term, which would be more flexible and keep open the option to discuss different agricultural products.

112. The Working Party followed the opinions expressed by Israel and the Russian Federation and adopted the proposal made by the working group.

ITEM 11: Follow-up concerning items discussed at earlier sessions

- (a) Exchange of information on non-conformity cases

Background document: TRADE/WP.7/2000/11/Add.21

113. The delegation of Germany proposed that UNECE and OECD should work together on this list as OECD already had an established list of members of the OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables which could serve as a basis and was available on the homepage of the OECD Scheme (<http://www.oecd.org>).

- (b) List of countries accepting/not accepting code marks

Background document: TRADE/WP.7/2000/11/Add.22

114. The secretariat informed the meeting that only a few countries had replied to the questionnaire but that the replies received to date would be published on the homepage. He said further that in the course of 2003 he would attempt to establish a more comprehensive list with the help of an intern.

ITEM 12: Application of UNECE Standards

115. The secretariat invited delegations to check the information contained on the homepage at:

<http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/info/accept.htm>

116. He said that this important to keep this information updated as it served as one indicator for evaluation of the work area in the framework of results-based budgeting.

ITEM 13: Workshops, seminars, training courses and other activities concerning capacity building for the application of quality standards

- (a) Report of the Asian Seminar on Safe and High Quality Food for International Trade and plans for follow-up events (Asia, Central Asia, South-East Europe)

Document: *TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2002/20/Add.14*

117. The secretariat informed the meeting that a follow-up event to this seminar was in preparation in cooperation with ESCAP, EAN Thailand and EAN International. The seminar will have as theme the "Globalization of food supply chains" and will be hosted at the UN headquarters in Bangkok on 22 and 23 May 2003.

- (b) Information on other capacity building activities

118. The delegation of the United Kingdom informed about the Guildford Harmonization Meeting which had been attended by 35 international participants and inspectors from the United Kingdom. A number of standards had been discussed in practical sessions to assess how different inspection bodies interpret the standards. The question of "prepared produce" which is produce that has been prepared to be "ready for the pot" was discussed. At the moment this kind of produce is in a grey zone, where the applicability of the standards stops. The discussion had been a first attempt on what should be done with this but further discussions were necessary. A technical excursion was held to a mushroom grower.

119. The delegation of Slovakia informed about the International Slovak Training course sponsored by OECD. Sixty-five participants from 11 countries had attended the three-day meeting. On the first day quality standard interpretation was discussed. On the second day presentations were given on research on growing systems and varieties for strawberries, the system of organic production in Slovakia as well as a presentation from EAN Slovakia. On the third day technical visits were held to producers of the products discussed during the first day of the meeting. The next International Training Course will be held in September 2003.

120. The delegation of Germany informed that the 24th Geisenheim Meeting would be held from 3-5 February 2003. The agenda will include Cultivated Mushrooms, Inshell Walnuts and Apples as well as practical approaches to the labelling of varieties, synonyms and trademarks. The invitations will be sent out within the next few weeks.

121. The delegation of the Russian Federation informed that they intend to hold a seminar on extending existing cuts standards to mechanical cutting and would invite experts in meat cuts to attend this meeting which would be held in May close to Moscow. They will give further details to the secretariat. They also stated that they were inviting the rapporteurs on chicken meat to hold a meeting in Moscow in April or September 2003.

122. Mr. Gianluca Sambucini from the UNECE Coordinating Unit for Operational activities informed delegations about the CEI (Central European Initiative) agricultural wholesale markets project, which was held in cooperation with FAO, in Poland, Hungary, Croatia and Romania. He said that the project aimed at exchange of information between wholesale markets and providing technical assistance either from within the project if possible or from the outside. As wholesale markets were places where different actors of the supply chain met, UNECE had also promoted application of their quality standards in this area. More information on this project is available from the secretariat.

ITEM 14: Other business

123. No discussion took place under this agenda item.

ITEM 15: Programme of work and calendar of meetings

Document: TRADE/WP.7/2002/7

124. The programme of work and the tentative calendar of sessions of the Working Party and its specialized sections were agreed. The possibility for some changes in the meeting calendar following requests from delegations will be checked by the secretariat and included in the document . Addendum 20 to this report (TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.20).

ITEM 16: Election of officers

125. Following the resignation of Mr. Miguel Vilchez-Barros as Chairman, the Working Party elected the following bureau:

Chairperson:	Mr. David Priester (United States of America)
Vice-Chairperson:	Ms. Olimpia Vorovenci (Romania)
Vice-Chairperson:	Ms. Viera Baricicova (Slovakia)

ITEM 17 Adoption of the report

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

Addenda to the current report

TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.1	Draft agenda for the 59th session of the Working Party
TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.2	Revised UNECE Standard for Annonas
TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.3	New UNECE Standard for Apples, FFV-50
TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.4	New UNECE Standard for Pears, FFV-51
TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.5	UNECE Recommendation for Citrus Fruit
TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.6	Revised UNECE Standard for Leeks
TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.7	Revised UNECE Standard for Melons
TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.8	Revised UNECE Standard/ Recommendation for Plums
TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.9	Revised UNECE Standard/ Recommendation for Table Grapes
TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.10	Revised UNECE Standard for Strawberries
TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.11	Revised UNECE Recommendation for Avocados
TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.12	New UNECE Recommendation for Pineapples
TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.13	Revised Standard Layout for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables
TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.14	Revised UNECE Standard for Inshell Walnuts
TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.15	Annex on determination of the moisture content for dry fruit (nuts)
TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.16	Revised UNECE Standard for Seed Potatoes
TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.17	New UNECE Standard for Ovine Meat: Ovine Specific Requirements
TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.18	New UNECE Standard for Ovine Meat : Carcasses and Cuts Descriptions
TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.19	Revised Working Procedures of the Working Party and its Specialized Sections
TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.20	Programme of Work and Calendar of Meetings