

Economic Commission for Europe

Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

Sixty-eighth session

Geneva, 6-8 May 2020

Item 3(a) of the provisional agenda

Revision of standards

Comment by the delegation of Spain – Citrus fruit standard

The following comments on the Standard for Citrus fruit were submitted by the delegation from Spain:

After having consulted the Spanish sector on citrus fruit, Spain would like to submit the following comments:

Note: Most of the following comments were made by Spain last meeting of the Specialized Section and were sent to the Secretariat last June. However those comments were not taking into account.

Format of the current standard

At its 2018 session, the Specialized Section confirmed its decision of 2017 to keep the format of the current Standard. Therefore Spain would like to confirm that the working document presented by the Specialized Section, which contains separate parts for each species is for simplify the revision process. **Spain wants to keep the format of the current Standard and opposes to separate the standard into different parts for each species.**

Hybrids

Spain consider necessary to maintain the wording related to hybrids, “hybrids thereof” for each species in the “Definition of produce”. This is for clarification regarding the products which are covered by the UNECE Standard for citrus fruit.

Minimum requirements: free of damage caused by low temperature or frost

Spain considers that this requirement can't be deleted as it can lead to trade frozen citrus fruits. **Therefore Spain opposes to delete this requirement.**

Colour-degreening

Spain disagrees with the proposals made concerning the elimination of the colour requirement as a parameter to be taken into account in the maturity characteristics of the fruits (Section II.B) and the proposals related to “degreening” (Option 1: delete all ref to degreening and Option 2: products meeting the minimum maturity requirements specified in the table above may be “degreened”), according to the following reasons:

1. First of all, Spain does not understand the reasons for the proposed changes. Sound technical and commercial arguments should be provided to justify the change in a market that historically has been trading coloured citrus fruit.
2. In case of the adoption of the proposed changes, a mixture of coloured and green fruits would be in the market, misleading consumers who are used to buy exclusively coloured oranges and mandarins. Exports of citrus fruits are destined to a large number of markets around the world, and not all markets have the same perception of the maturity of oranges and mandarins.
3. Spain could provide arguments from the organic side, food waste side, consumers side, and climate change side.

In relation to the options proposed on degreening:

- - In the case of oranges or mandarins, the ripe fruit reaches the typical colouring of the variety, a more or less intense orange or reddish, but not green.
- In the agricultural and botanical area, it is considered that the process of maturity involves various changes in the fruit such as changes in the compositional nature, development of aroma and flavour, development of colour and firmness. The decrease of the content of chlorophyll allows the appearance of carotenes and lycopene, which are a clear indicator of the maturity of the fruit.
- The UNECE standard itself and the EU Regulation indicates that fruits from Extra and I Class “ must be characteristic of the variety and/or commercial type” and in Category II, indicates that " this class includes citrus fruit that does not qualify for inclusion in the higher classes but satisfies the minimum requirements specified above ". Without any doubt, orange or reddish colouring is one of the characteristics of the variety of mandarins or oranges. This change in the standard would mean that green fruit could not, therefore, be classified in Extra or I Class (not having the colour of the variety), so it should necessarily be classified in Category II.
- Colouring is the only external maturity parameter, which allows consumers and inspectors, without trials of internal maturity, to get an idea of the degree of maturity of the fruit. This characteristic of colour is very useful for the vast majority of consumers of citrus fruits. Although it is a fact that there may be others who like the green colour in the fruit, this is not the majority in any case. With regard to the official controls, the elimination of the colouring requirement would lead to an increase of the number of inspections to check the maturity of the fruit.
- The CODEX standard for citrus fruit includes the colouring as a quality parameter, and the alignment to international quality standards is highly recommended. In particular, when the terms of reference of the CODEX standard was changed, extending them to temperate climate fruits, the harmonization with the UNECE standards was requested. Nowadays, a misalignment in this approach for standards would blur international markets, and there is not enough reason to do it.
- The standard in Florida for oranges, tangelo and tangerines includes the colour as a reference among the basic requirements. It is understandable because it is considered as an important requirement for assessing the quality of the product.

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- To delete the reference to degreening in the standard could lead to a facto ban of using this procedure. This ban would harm many of the citrus fruit production in many of the producing countries at certain times of the marketing year. And this damage could be much higher due to the climate change conditions exposed by countries requesting a change in the norm.
 - The degreening is not a treatment to turn the colour of products used by farmers on a whim. On the contrary, many producers are forced to collect the fruits before having the appropriated colouring, once the internal maturity is reached, to avoid attacks of plagues. We must not forget that we are dealing with a non-climatic product and they need to use ethylene which, on the other hand, it is used as a phytosanitary product.

Moreover, thanks to the degreening process, products affected by the attacks of plagues can show the damages and be detected at the warehouses and their sale can be avoided as they will be soon rotten, avoiding also food waste.

In conclusion Spain opposes to delete the current colouring requirements and to modify the wording related to “degreening”.

Provisions concerning marking, Nature of produce

In the section "Nature of the product" of the labelling provisions for mandarins has been included as a requirement to indicate the "Common name of the species" and have been modified the wording for satsumas and clementines. Spain opposes this proposal to modify the “nature of produce” marking of the product as this could create confusion. The new wording is less clear than what the standard now indicates, particularly in the case of hybrids, which do not always come from crossbreeding between members of the same species.

Therefore Spain wants to keep the current labelling provisions for mandarins:

- **for “Satsumas” and “Clementines”:** the common name of the species is required and the name of the variety is optional;
 - **for other mandarins and their hybrids thereof:** the name of the variety is required
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