

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 2(b) of the provisional agenda

Matters arising

Recent developments in other organizations

Update by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

The following update was provided by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

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

1. The OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme provides a complete and internationally harmonised export quality inspection system for member countries. The mutual recognition of inspections is strengthened through implementation of peer reviews on national quality inspection systems, organisation of meetings for the heads of national inspection services and workshops for the inspectors. Frequent meetings also allow for a comprehensive dialogue amongst stakeholders in reviewing and elaborating the OECD standards' interpretation, as well as defining inspection procedures.
2. The Scheme is well known for its explanatory brochures on international standards. Currently there are 33 explanatory brochures and new material is added each year.

UPDATE ON OECD EXPLANATORY BROCHURES

3. The Scheme is currently working on the following Explanatory Brochures.

Papayas were included in 2019 in the list of Standards Applicable under the OECD FVS Scheme, following a recommendation by the 77th Plenary Meeting of the Scheme.

Approved at the 78th Plenary Meeting held in December 2019, undergoing final editorial corrections before release: Berry Fruit (rapporteur Slovakia); Root and Tubercle Vegetables (rapporteur Slovakia).

Ongoing: Passion Fruit (Rapporteur Kenya)

Started in 2019: Papayas (Rapporteur Brazil); Bananas (Rapporteur Spain); Cauliflower (Rapporteur Hungary)

E-updates: Avocados, Apples, Mangoes, Pears, Plums, prepared by Germany with the latest OECD and UNECE layouts.

PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES

4. The OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme is open to any OECD or non-OECD country that is a member of the United Nations, or of the World Trade Organisation. There is also close co-operation with the UN family especially the FAO, WHO, UNECE, and UNESCAP as well as non-governmental and farmer organisations. Brazil joined the OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme on February 23, 2018, which set the number of participating countries to 26: Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kenya, Luxembourg, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey. The OECD Secretariat invited Chile and Costa Rica as observers.

OECD FRUIT AND VEGETABLES SCHEME MEETINGS

7. The OECD organised the following regular Scheme meetings: Working Group Meeting on internet sales and food waste, Bonn, Germany, 27 March 2019; Produce Group Meeting on Papayas, Mojmírovce, Slovak republic, 12 June 2019; Produce Group on Berry Fruits, Root Vegetables and Table Grapes, Geneva, Switzerland, 21 November 2019, hosted by UNECE; Produce Group Meeting on Berry Fruits, Root Vegetables, Passion Fruits, Papayas, Bananas, Cauliflowers, Table Grapes, 3 December 2019, Paris, France; 78th Plenary Meeting, 4-5 December 2019, Paris, France.

8. OECD at the Plenary Meeting agreed to discuss internet sales of fruit and vegetables and to hold special sessions on Brexit (the UK, Spain and the Netherlands shared the measures put in place by their governments to deal with fruit and vegetables trade after Brexit), tolerances (presentation by the U.S.) and climate change effects on fruit and vegetables quality (presentation by South Africa).

UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES ADJUSTMENTS TO COPE WITH THE CONSTRAINTS GENERATED BY COVID-19

9. OECD will hold all its meetings virtually, at least until summer 2020. This might evolve according to the international context. The produce group meetings scheduled back-to-back to the usual “physical” meetings of our partners (such as UNECE sessions or the harmonisation meetings) have been cancelled and will take place according to demand, with zoom or webex systems. The COVID-19 pandemic is a severe health problem that is creating an equally severe economic crisis. OECD has been gathering information across its members to help inform and guide them on the trade effects of this pandemic. OECD has prepared a report summarising the information and suggestions received by some delegates, as well as fruit and vegetables trade associations. The report lists some actions that could help limit the negative economic impacts of the pandemic. The report will be available shortly in our webpage: <https://www.oecd.org/agriculture/fruit-vegetables/>

MISSIONS AND OTHER MEETINGS

10. In 2019 OECD participated in the following international meetings: 32nd International meeting Quality Control fruit and vegetables, Bonn, Germany, 25-27 March 2019.; Session of the UNECE Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables, Geneva, Switzerland, 13-14 May 2019; 20th ITC Harmonization Meeting of the Fruit and Vegetables Quality Assessment, Mojmírovce, Slovak Republic, 11-13 June 2019; CODEX Committee on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables (CCFFV21), Monterrey, Mexico 06-10 October 2019; Session of the UNECE Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables, Geneva, Switzerland, 19-21 November 2019.

11. Update on international cooperation in joint workshops: The last couple of years OECD has been organising workshops in Asia and Latin America to disseminate its explanatory brochures and the standards. In 2019 OECD co-organised with the Costa Rican authorities a Joint Workshop on the “OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme” in San Jose, Costa Rica, on 4-

5 September 2019. This work is bearing fruits. Indeed, OECD is now getting requests for information on its explanatory brochures and the standards by Asian and Latin American producers.

PEER REVIEWS

13. The Scheme regularly undertakes Peer Reviews on national fruit and vegetables quality inspection systems on a voluntary basis, to examine and assess its performance by experts from other countries under the umbrella of the OECD. The ultimate goal is to help improve policy making, adopt best practices and comply with established international standards and principles. All Peer Reviews have been cancelled until further notice due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Previous Peer Review reports are available on our webpage: <http://www.oecd.org/agriculture/fruit-vegetables/>

GUIDELINES

14. The Scheme also develops and updates guidelines for fruit and vegetables inspectors. This helps harmonise interpretation and enhance trade amongst member countries. The following guidelines and recommendations are available from the official website of the OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme free of charges: Quality Inspection (2018); Recommendation of the OECD FVS Scheme on the verification of the country of origin (2018); Objective tests to determine quality of Fruit and Vegetables (updated 2018); Notification of Non-conformity; Risk Analysis; Inspector's trainings.

MEETINGS OF HEADS OF NATIONAL INSPECTION SERVICES

15. The Scheme also holds Meetings of Heads of National Inspection Services (HNIS) of its Members Countries every two years. The objective of these meetings is triple: to facilitate discussions between inspection services on major problems, developments and challenges in the fruit and vegetables sector and quality inspection system; to share and harmonise the application of the OECD Scheme; and to present developments in the fruit and vegetables sector and quality inspection system in the Host Country. The proceedings are available upon request. The latest HNIS meeting was hosted by Spain in May 2018. Although Brazil kindly volunteered to host the next HNIS Meeting in autumn 2020, the meeting is likely to be postponed until 2021 due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

CHALLENGES FOR 2020-21

16. Each year member countries decide, by consensus, new areas of work for the OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme: Internet Sales of Fruit and Vegetables. (Sub-Working Group): Belgium, France, Germany, Kenya, Netherlands, and Spain; Tolerances; Food Waste; New guidelines: The Scheme will also start discussions on the feasibility of developing OECD guidelines to deal with global trade disruptions of fresh fruit and vegetables. The current COVID-19 pandemic has shown the risks and the need to have a common plan to guarantee fruit and vegetables supply lines. Governments need to coordinate and have a harmonized policy response to ensure that food supply chains continue to function effectively.

17. The OECD explanatory brochures, guidelines and peer review reports are available from the official website of the OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme free of charges. <http://www.oecd.org/agriculture/fruit-vegetables/>

Contact

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