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Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

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Sustainable Development Goal 12 and sustainable practices: food loss and food waste

Minimum marketing quality guidelines or UNECE Minimum Quality Specifications for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables (UNECE-MQS)

Scope

The Minimum Marketing Quality Guideline (UNECE-MMQG) or UNECE Minimum Quality Specifications for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables (UNECE-MQS) provides a simple trading language that is easy to apply. The UNECE-MMQG or UNECE-MQS assures when applied at certain marketing stages or all along the marketing chain, that the recipient of the produce will receive a product of marketable quality and suitable for human consumption. Thus, the application of the UNECE-MMQG or UNECE-MQS helps to prevent food loss; while providing all the necessary information about the product including country of origin.

The application of the UNECE-MMQG or UNECE MQS is voluntary. The application of the UNECE-MMQG or UNECE -MQS does not replace or compete with any existing standard or legal provision in any country.

The UNECE-MMQG or UNECE MQS could ~~be~~

- be a first step of a country to introduce minimum marketing quality on all or specific marketing stages or
- ~~the minimum marketing quality applied for produce intended for home processing~~
- be for voluntary application by producers and/or traders in countries where no national quality standards exists or
- Facilitate the checking of the minimum quality.

Minimum marketing quality for fresh fruit and vegetables or UNECE Minimum Quality Specifications for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables (UNECE-MQS)

I. Definition of produce

This minimum marketing quality applies to fresh fruit and vegetables ~~[and in-shell nuts]~~ (hereafter: produce) to be supplied fresh to the consumer, produce for industrial processing being excluded.

II. Provisions concerning quality

The purpose of the minimum marketing quality or UNECE Minimum Quality Specifications for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables (UNECE-MQS) is to define the quality requirements for the produce after preparation and packaging.

However, if applied at stages following packing and/or export/dispatch, produce may show in relation to the requirements of the minimum marketing quality:

- a slight lack of freshness and turgidity
- a slight deterioration due to their development and their tendency to perish.

The holder/seller of products may not display such products or offer them for sale, or deliver or market them in any manner other than in conformity with this minimum marketing quality. The holder/seller shall be responsible for observing such conformity.

A. Minimum requirements

In all classes, subject to the special provisions for each class and the tolerances allowed, the produce must be:

- intact; however the following is allowed, provided the edibility and keeping quality is not affected:
 - ~~• a product specific preparation or trimming,~~
 - hollowness provided the surrounding tissue is sound, fresh and not discoloured,
 - slight damages and cracks
 - missing peduncle/calyx provided the adjacent tissue is not damaged
- sound; produce affected by rotting or deterioration such as to make it unfit for consumption is excluded
- clean, practically free of any visible foreign matter
- practically free from pests
- practically free from damage caused by pests
- free of abnormal external moisture
- free of any foreign smell and/or taste.

The development and condition of the produce must be such as to enable them:

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

B. Maturity requirements

Produce must be sufficiently developed and ripe for the intended purpose, but not over-developed or overripe.

III. Provisions concerning quality tolerances

At all marketing stages, tolerances in respect of quality and size shall be allowed in each lot ~~of~~ for produce not satisfying the requirements of ~~the class indicated~~ these specifications. ~~these specifications.~~

A total tolerance of 10 per cent, by number or weight, of produce not satisfying the minimum requirements is allowed. Within this tolerance not more than 2 per cent in total may consist of produce affected by decay.

IV. Provisions concerning presentation

A. Uniformity

The contents of each package must ~~be approximately the same size and~~ contain only produce of the same botanical species and origin.

~~However, a mixture of produce of distinctly different species, varieties, commercial types and/or colours may be packed together in a package and/or sales package, provided they are uniform in quality and, for each variety, commercial type and/or colour concerned, in origin.~~

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

B. Packaging

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

The package and/or 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 or stamps bearing trade specifications, is allowed, provided the printing or labelling has been done with non-toxic ink or glue.

Stickers individually affixed to the produce shall be such that, when removed, they neither leave visible traces of glue nor lead to skin defects. Information lasered on single ~~fruit~~ produce should not lead to flesh or skin defects.

Packages must be free of all foreign matter except for particles of packaging/cushioning material.

V. Provisions concerning marking

Each package¹ 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/exporter:

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 authority² if the country applying such a system is listed in the UNECE data base².

B. Nature of produce

- “Name of the produce” if the contents are not visible from the outside.
- ~~“Mixture of {name of produce}” or equivalent denomination, in the case of a mixture of distinctly different species, varieties, commercial types and/or colours of the same species, names of the different varieties’ commercial types and/or colours, if the produce is not visible from the outside.~~

C. Origin of produce

- Country of ~~origin⁴~~ origin³ and, optionally, district where grown, or national, regional or local place name.

~~In the case of a mixture of distinctly different species, varieties, commercial types and/or colours of the produce of different origins, the indication of each country of origin shall appear next to the name of the species, variety, commercial type and/or colour concerned.~~

D. Commercial specifications

¹ These marking provisions do not apply to sales packages presented in packages. However, they do apply to sales packages (pre-packages) presented individually.

² See <http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/codemarkregistry.html>

- [UNECE] Minimum-Marketing-Quality [or UNECEMMQ] or UNECE Minimum Quality Specifications for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables (UNECE-MQS)

E. Official control mark (optional)

Note: Information on application of quality provisions and tolerances may be obtained from the OECD Scheme for the application of international standards for fruit and vegetables: <http://www.oecd.org/agriculture/fruit-vegetables/>

² The national legislation of a number of countries requires the explicit declaration of the name and address. However, in the case where a code mark is used, the reference “packer and/or dispatcher (or equivalent abbreviations)” has to be indicated in close connection with the code mark, and the code mark should be preceded by the ISO 3166 (alpha) country/area code of the recognizing country, if not the country of origin.

³ ~~A trade name can be a trade mark for which protection has been sought or obtained or any other commercial denomination.~~

⁴ The full or a commonly used name should be indicated.